

**BACKGROUND NOTES FOR VISIT TO MINISTER FOR VETERANS HON CHRIS PENK BY
MEMBERS OF THE VETERANS' ADVISORY BOARD: 22 FEBRUARY 2024**

- The Veterans' Advisory Board was established under the Veterans' Support Act 2014 (the Act). It has been operating since 2015.

Membership

- The Act specifies membership (not more than seven members plus one serving veteran nominated by the Chief of Defence Force – ex officio).
- Members are appointed as individuals, not as representatives of an organisation.
- At present the Board has six members plus the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) appointee and his deputy:
 - Chair – Leith Comer
 - Fiona Cassidy
 - BJ Clark
 - Baden Ewart
 - Denise Hutchins
 - Glenis Philip-Barbara
 - WO1 Mark Mortiboy (NZDF ex officio appointee)
 - CDR Kate Ayres (deputy member for ex officio NZDF appointee)
- There is one vacancy – the Deputy Chair, Chester Borrowes, died in 2023 and was not replaced.
- All appointments are due to lapse in July 2024.

Function

- The Board's function is to provide advice to the Minister for Veterans, including advice on policies to be applied in respect of veterans' entitlements.

Reports

- Since its inception, the Board has provided reports to responsible Ministers on a number of topics, including the following:
 - Family and whānau members covered by the Veterans' Support Act 2014 (2016).
 - Support for a spouse or partner under the Veterans' Independence Programme (2016).
 - The ability of estates to continue claims, reviews and appeals following the death of a veteran (2017).

- The circumstances that should limit the rights of a spouse or partner to receive a surviving spouse or partner pension (2017).
- Consideration of repatriation policy relating to New Zealanders interred overseas as a result of a military burial between 1 January 1948 and mid-1970 (2017).
- What constitutes a veteran and how should their service in the armed forces be recognised? (2019).
- A possible Covenant between Service personnel and the Government and People of New Zealand (2020).
- Better recognition of serving people (serving and former) and their whānau (2021).
- Kawenata – overseas-based covenants (2022).
- Review of the principles relating to recognition of service through the burial and memorialisation of veterans (2023).

Major Issues

- The Board has previously indicated that it is disappointed that its recommendations on the two issues of definition and Kawenata have not been actioned by government(s).
- It is particularly keen to continue work on the Kawenata concept and how this can be implemented.
- These two issues are broader than simply the Veterans portfolio. Both relate to the entire Defence community (serving personnel, and all former service personnel, not only those covered by the Veterans' Support Act 2014). They raise questions that would need inter-departmental consultation and Government policy decisions.