

From: Withheld under section 9(2)(g)(ii), VANZ

Sent: Thursday, May 30, 2024 2:54 PM

To: Withheld under section 9(2)(a), Veterans' Affairs PPS, Office of Hon Chris Penk

Subject: Meeting between Minister and Leith Comer, Chair of VAB - and follow-up

Security classification

*** Security classification ***

Hi s9(2)(a) as discussed, please find attached a background note which it may be helpful for the Minister to read before he meets with Leith Comer on Tuesday morning – it summarises the work that the Board has done under Leith's chairmanship, over the past five years.

Out of scope

s9(2)(g)(ii)

s9(2)(g)(ii)

Principal Adviser

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Reports provided by the Veterans' Advisory Board 2019 – 2023

2019

Who is a veteran and how should they be recognised

This report was commissioned by Minister Ron Mark. It was described, at the Minister's request, as an interim report, but a later version was never developed. It is published on the Beehive website (linked to a press release from Minister Mark) and there is a link to the report on the Veterans' Affairs website..

The Board recommended that all who have served should be considered veterans, and they should receive services and support on the basis of need if they have been injured or made ill by their service in the armed forces, irrespective of where that service took place.

Ron Mark noted that this would be a substantial change to the current situation in New Zealand and that there were a number of implications (including significant financial implications) to be worked through.

Minister Mark took a paper to Cabinet about the Board's work, which had also included several other recommendations. While Cabinet noted the work that had been done, the only Board recommendation that they agreed to progress was that which called for them to undertake a national conversation on how New Zealanders think that those who have served in the armed forces should be recognised, and specifically their views about establishing a Covenant (Kawenata) between the Government and people of New Zealand and service personnel and their families.

2020

A Military Kawenata for New Zealand

This report was commissioned by Minister Ron Mark. It is published on the Veterans' Affairs website (under the heading Mission Feedback).

The Board conducted a national conversation, focusing particularly on the possibility of establishing a kawenata in New Zealand and how it could work.

Covid-19 meant that this was conducted largely through online and telephone surveys, although 47 people took part in eight focus groups around the country. 6152 completed the online survey (70 percent of whom were current or former service people). The telephone survey reached 776 respondents.

The report was presented to the Minister in July 2020.

2021

Options to better recognise New Zealand veterans

This report was commissioned by Minister Meka Whaitiri. It is published on the VA website under the title *Better recognition of service people (former and serving) and their whānau*.

She requested advice on "how New Zealand may better recognise military veterans who have served New Zealand, in particular through development of a Covenant or Kawenata; and through marae-based recognition.

With regard to a Kawenata she asked for advice on what form it could take; and what recognition it could provide.

The Board reported in 2021. The report largely focused on a Kawenata and related matters. It recommended that

- a Kawenata should be agreed to in principle; and that it was desirable that it be a legislative instrument.

- the Board should be resourced to undertake further work to develop this, including partnering with iwi, hapu and business; undertaking awareness raising and education; clarifying scope, content and parties; and considering any budget implications;
- appropriate agencies should be identified to develop a Budget bid to improve recognition of service people and their whānau on marae (and in the wider community);
- the Honours list should be reviewed to assess whether it adequately recognises service; and
- the Board should be tasked to design a recognition card.

2022

Looking at overseas Defence Covenants

This report was commissioned by Hon Meka Whaitiri. It is published on the Veterans' Affairs website.

The Board provided a brief report in September 2022.

With regard to this and the previous report, the Minister advised the Board that she would not be able to advance a Kawenata as Minister for Veterans, until she had obtained the agreement of the Minister of Defence to take this forward jointly. This was because a Kawenata was intended to be a broad document, including all who have ever served (including still serving personnel) as well as those who are veterans under the VSA 2014. ■

s9(2)(g)(i)

2023

s9(2)(g)(i)

General comment

s9(2)(g)(i)

Nonetheless, members were excellent advocates for the veteran community; and have consistently sought to keep alive the concept of recognition for those who have served, in particular, the potential value of a Kawenata.

All of their reports (apart from the last one which is still under ministerial consideration) are available to veterans and the general public through the Veterans' Affairs website.

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