



Our people, your Veterans' Affairs—Alma Shaw



VA News sat down to talk with Alma Shaw, a Policy Advisor here at Veterans' Affairs.

Can you describe a typical day at VA?

Much of my work is demand driven. My official title is 'Policy Advisor', but I wear a number of different hats. I need to have a general overview of all our policies and what is going on in the veteran arena. Primarily, I am responsible for the coordination and preparation of general correspondence for the Head of VA, requests for official information, and issues received via the complaints process. I am also responsible for ensuring privacy issues and requests are looked after appropriately, and providing privacy training to our staff. I assist with the coordination of papers going to the Minister, which sees me liaising with colleagues in the wider NZDF and in the Minister's office.

What's been your highlight of working at VA?

Learning. When I started in my role my knowledge of war and conflict came from watching *Saving Private Ryan* in Sixth Form English. During my training I was surprised—but also very grateful—to learn the number of ways New Zealand's Armed Forces have been involved at an international level, as well as at home.

I've also learned a bit of family history. My Great Koro—Tiweka Brown—was a member of the 28th Maori Battalion and embarked with the 10th Reinforcements. Regrettably while serving he was injured and sent home. While I had heard stories about him, it wasn't until I began working here that I really started looking into his service. I was able to use NZ Archives' Archway service to look at his service records. It's an amazing learning tool. How long have you worked at VA? I started at Veterans' Affairs in June 2013—coming up to my fifth anniversary. Prior to this role I was with the British High Commission working as a qualified Consular Assistant and Passport Examiner.

What are you looking forward to in 2018?

I'm looking forward to the changes that are being made with our communications and how they will work for all of you. I'm particularly excited about our new website due for release next month. Most of all I am looking forward to the outcome of the Review of the operation of the Veterans' Support Act, and the changes that may arise from it.

At a personal level—my big goal for the year is to start learning Te Reo. I'm also looking forward to watching my daughters—8 and 4—grow. They already both have such solid personalities.

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