



## Veterans' Affairs offers more support for veterans and whānau

Thanks to changes to the Veterans' Support Act 2014, Veterans' Affairs can offer more flexible support to veterans and their whānau. The changes address a number of recommendations included in the 2018 Paterson Report.

### Support for veterans

Previously veterans lost eligibility for support if their injury or illness resulted from criminal behaviour or substance abuse. Now, where there is evidence of a link between service-related trauma and criminal or self-destructive behaviours, such as a veteran injuring themselves during a mental health episode triggered by post-traumatic stress, we can recognise that in decision making. This applies to injuries, illness, or death which occurred when a veteran was committing a minor offence while enlisted or after they have left service.

Veterans with urgent mental health needs can receive support funded by us before their eligibility for coverage has been established. Treatment and rehabilitation services already underway can continue to be provided to veterans if they are imprisoned.

Mental health treatment (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/mental-health-treatment/>)

### Support for families

Counselling can now be funded for veterans' whānau, support people, and caregivers where it will support the veteran's wellbeing. The definition of a child of a veteran has been extended to include all circumstances in which a veteran becomes a guardian of or acts as a parent to a child. This includes whāngai, grandchildren, children of former spouses and partners, and any child that a veteran has acted as a parent towards. Any entitlements, such as the Children's Pension, received by a veteran's whānau will not be affected if a veteran is imprisoned.

The Children's Bursary, which is available to the children of veterans who served before 1974 or in Vietnam, has been extended to cover those who live overseas. It now also covers a wider range of education and vocational training. The five-year restriction on child care assistance has also been removed and funding for child care can now continue until the child reaches the age of 14.

Types of support for family or whānau (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/get-support/family-and-whanau/when-a-family-member-is-injured/>)

Counselling for Family Members or Support People (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/counselling-for-family-members-or-support-people/>)

Children's Pension (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/childrens-pension/>)

Children's Bursary (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/childrens-bursary/>)

### End of life support

It is now easier for surviving spouses or partners to access pensions and be reimbursed for funeral expenses when a veteran dies as they only need to show that the veteran had Qualifying Operational Service. Veterans' Independence Programme services can now continue for the spouse or partner of a veteran for 12 months after a veteran goes into long-

Programme services can now continue for the spouse or partner of a veteran for 12 months after a veteran goes into long-term residential care. A standard grace period of 28 days following the death of a veteran now applies to all pensions to minimise the chances of their whānau going into debt.

[Surviving Spouse or Partner Pension \(https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/surviving-spouse-or-partner-pension/\)](https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/surviving-spouse-or-partner-pension/)

[Funeral Expenses \(https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/funeral-expenses/\)](https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/funeral-expenses/)

[Veterans' Independence Programme \(https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/veterans-independence-programme/\)](https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/veterans-independence-programme/)

## Changes to how we work

It is now easier for declarations of Qualifying Operational Service to be made. Declarations will now be published on the Veterans' Affairs website rather than by a notice in the Gazette. Publication of a declaration of Qualifying Operational Service is not required if there are security or operational reasons not to publish the details.

The 30-day turnaround time for decisions has been scrapped and instead flexibility for decision-making timeframes has been increased. This means that the right decisions can be made and Veterans Affairs is required to focus on ensuring veterans are informed and engaged in the course of their application.

The process for setting Veteran's Pension rates has been aligned with the process for setting entitlements under the Veterans' Support Act 2014.

[Qualifying Service \(https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/eligibility/qualifying-service/\)](https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/eligibility/qualifying-service/)

[How we make decisions \(https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/for-clients/how-we-make-decisions/\)](https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/for-clients/how-we-make-decisions/)

[Veteran's Pension \(https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/veterans-pension/\)](https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/a-z/veterans-pension/)

[Check your eligibility \(https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/eligibility/check-your-eligibility/\)](https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/eligibility/check-your-eligibility/)

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Tags

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