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About VA News

VA News is published four times a year by Veterans' Affairs New Zealand—Te Tira Ahu Ika a Whiro.

Our team takes care in writing great content and—to the best of our knowledge—has sourced accurate information.

The views expressed in VA News are not necessarily those of Veterans' Affairs or the New Zealand Defence Force.


Contact us


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Cover image: Veteran Felicity Gapes – full story on page 11.



New Zealand Government

From the Head of Veterans' Affairs

Tēnā koutou katoa

This month Veterans' Affairs, in partnership with Ranfurly Veterans' Trust, will host a health and wellbeing expo for Vietnam veterans and their whānau who live in the lower North Island. The expo will bring together providers and support organisations so that Vietnam veterans in the area can find information about the support and services available to them. It will also be a great opportunity to catch up with others they have served with. I do encourage Vietnam veterans and their whānau to attend, so please help us spread the word. The expo will be held in Lower Hutt on 19 October 2019. There's more information about it on our website at www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/vvhwe or you can give us a call.

We've taken action to follow up on the feedback we've received from the expos we've held this year. In Christchurch, we've funded a positive ageing programme, which the RSA will be running, and Pegasus Health is running a Senior Chef cooking programme exclusively for veterans. There's been great uptake of these programmes, and I'm looking forward to sharing more about these initiatives with you in the next edition of VA News.

In recent months I have attended the national commemorations for Vietnam Veterans' Day and Post War Malaya/Malaysian Operations Day, at Pukeahu National War Memorial Park. I'm always astounded by how resilient our veterans are. The numbers in these cohorts might be slowly dwindling but it's very humbling to see them come together, share stories, and remember those who are no longer with us.



Bernadine Mackenzie,
Head of Veterans' Affairs

There have also been a number of activities happening recently that involve our younger veterans. It has been just over 25 years since the first NZDF company group deployed to the Former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as part of Operation RADIANT. More than 80 members of the company (some still serving in the NZDF) recently gathered in Wellington for a reunion and a wreathlaying ceremony at Pukeahu National Memorial Park. In September, twenty-one serving members of the NZDF who deployed to what is now Timor-Leste between 1999 and 2002 took part in commemorations in Dili to mark the 20th anniversary of the International Force East Timor (INTERFET) mission.

If you are a contemporary veteran but you're unsure about whether or not you are eligible for services from Veterans' Affairs, I encourage you to check your eligibility by visiting our website or checking our Facebook page.

 [facebook.com/NZVeteransAffairs](https://www.facebook.com/NZVeteransAffairs)

The opening of the Anzac English Language School in Same, Timor-Leste.



School project brings INTERFET veterans together

INTERFET veterans worked together to bring educational opportunities to Timorese youth in the town of Same, Timor-Leste.

Lieutenant Colonel Martin Dransfield, former commander of NZBATT 2 in 2000 and now the Strategic Advisor to the Falantil-Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste, has been working with



Riak Leman and Lieutenant Colonel Martin Dransfield at the Anzac English Language School in Same, Timor-Leste.

Australian veteran Mick Jones and Timorese veteran Falantil Commander Riak Leman to build an English language school, called the Anzac English Language School.

In July, LTCOL Dransfield visited Same with Warrant Officer Class 1 Phil Burgess and met Riak, who donated land for the school, which is also the site of a post-graduate university focussing on health education and engineering.

“A lot of Timorese veterans are now giving back to their communities and their dream is that the young Timorese get the opportunities that they didn’t have,” said LTCOL Dransfield.

“The ability for young Timorese to learn English gives them opportunities to go overseas, not to stay because they are really proud of their nation, but to bring back skills from overseas to develop their country.”

LTCOL Dransfield and WO1 Burgess, along with Australian veterans, cleared the land of scrub and waste and spent two days digging the foundations for the school. After the foundations were dug, the students at the university

used the project as a learning opportunity and the school was officially opened in September.

“It demonstrates that when people work together for a common cause, anything can be achieved,” said LTCOL Dransfield.

The Anzac English Language School’s aspiration is to encourage ex-service personnel to teach English at the school. Accommodation blocks have been built and there is a place overlooking the valley for quiet reflection and remembrance.

Thinking of returning to Timor-Leste?

The Commemorative Travel Contribution is available for New Zealand veterans to return to their place of Qualifying Operational Service, including Timor-Leste. Interested veterans can apply through Veterans’ Affairs.

The NZDF contingent with Minister of Defence and Minister for Veterans the Honourable Ron Mark at the 20th anniversary of the INTERFET deployment commemoration.



Timor-Leste hosts INTERFET commemorations

On 20 September the government of Timor-Leste hosted commemorations for the 20th Anniversary of International Force East Timor (INTERFET). Twenty-one New Zealand veterans attended as part of the New Zealand Defence Force delegation, led by Chief of Navy Rear Admiral David Proctor.

The delegation included former New Zealand Senior National Officer and Deputy Commander INTERFET Major General (retired) Martyn Dunne, former commanding officer of HMNZS Te Kaha Commodore (retired) Ross Smith, former commanding officer of the 1st Battalion Colonel (retired) Kevin Burnett, and former commanding officer of No.3 Squadron Wing Commander (retired) Russell Pirihi.

The commemoration was held at Dili's Palacio de Governo and featured speeches by Republic of Timor-Leste President Francisco Guterres Lú Olo, the Australian former Commander INTERFET General (retired) Sir Peter Cosgrove, and Timorese youth.

Following the Timorese youth reading, President Guterres and General Cosgrove unveiled the

INTERFET commemorative plaque and laid a wreath.

"It was also wonderful to see Timorese youth involved in the commemoration," Rear-Admiral Proctor said. "Their future was the reason we were here in 1999. Seeing them today in a stable and prosperous Timor-Leste is all we could hope for."

Led by the Australian Defence Force, INTERFET deployed to Timor-Leste in September 1999 after violence erupted when 78% of Timor-Leste voted for independence from Indonesia. Over 1000 people are believed to have died in the violence. From 1999 to 2002 New Zealand deployed 5,000 personnel to INTERFET, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), and the

Minister of Defence and Minister for Veterans the Honourable Ron Mark and Chief of Navy Rear-Admiral David Proctor lay a wreath at the 20th anniversary of the INTERFET deployment commemoration.



United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET). It was the largest deployment of New Zealand military personnel since the Korean War. New Zealand's contribution included border security, helicopter support, staffing officers at the two United Nations Headquarters, and providing training for the Timor-Leste Defence Force.

Between November 1999 and March 2001 five New Zealand personnel died in Timor-Leste. Nepalese, Fijian, and Irish units attached to the New Zealand battalion also suffered one fatality each.

Right: New Zealand INTERFET veterans in the commemoration parade in Dili.





The story of Te Tira Ahu Ika a Whiro

Veterans' Affairs sat down with Kura Moeahu, Parliament's Tumu Whakarae (Principal Cultural Advisor), during Te Wiki o te Reo Māori (Māori Language Week) to learn the story and meaning of our name – Te Tira Ahu Ika a Whiro.



The name Te Tira Ahu Ika a Whiro was gifted to Veterans' Affairs by Rangitihī (John) Tahupārae, the first officially appointed Kaumātua O Te Whare Pāremata (Kaumātua of Parliament). Rangitihī gifted the name to Veterans' Affairs in the lead up to Tribute 08, the national commemoration for Vietnam veterans held in May 2008. Having known many Vietnam veterans himself, Rangitihī wanted to offer a form of acknowledgment for those veterans who died in Vietnam and also for those who had returned from service in Vietnam and were not acknowledged.

Kura explained that "te tira" is another name for a rōpū (group) that travels and "ahu" is a mound. "Te ika a Whiro" is a term for those who have passed away as "the fish of Whiro" – Whiro is the atua (god) who lost all his battles against his tuākana. Te Tira Ahu Ika a Whiro refers to those who traveled away, who lost their lives, and who have now returned to the earth. "The legacy of those that lost their lives overseas in Vietnam and never returned home, that's what, for me, Te Tira Ahu Ika a Whiro really means" he said.

When asked about the legacy of Rangitihī and Te Tira Ahu Ika a Whiro,

Kura said "I think the legacy from this is the ability for veterans to tell their stories; it's about acknowledging those that have fallen in whatever wars that they participated in. I don't think it's only the legacy of that particular period [in Vietnam], there are a number of wars in different periods of time that need to be acknowledged."

Kura told us that he sees honouring veterans' service as a way of upholding their mana, and recognizing the sacrifices they made - "and some pay the ultimate price" he said.

Veterans' Affairs strives to give meaning to Te Tira Ahu Ika a Whiro today by doing exactly these things – honouring service and recognising sacrifice. This also means looking to the needs of those who returned. Providing support and services to veterans of all conflicts when these are needed is a way of acknowledging the debt New Zealand owes to those who are put in harm's way on our behalf.

**Above: Rangitihī Tahupārae (right) leading the Tribute 08 whakanoa ceremony at Parliament, May 2008;
Left: Bernadine Mackenzie and Kura Moeahu in Matangireia, Parliament.**

Update on the deployment review

In the last week of July the Veterans' Support Amendment Act was signed into law by the Governor-General. The Act corrected an unintended issue in the 2014 legislation which had meant that Veterans' Affairs' deployment review project was unable to progress.

Following the update to the legislation, we have completed the review of the three largest deployments being


considered in the project – the Former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Timor-Leste, and the Solomon Islands.

These declarations of Qualifying Operational Service cover all operations in the Former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (where previously only three deployments had coverage), all maritime elements for Timor-Leste, and deployments to the Solomon Islands prior to Operation RATA.

The review is now considering a second tranche, which includes deployments without coverage to the Gulf Region, Somalia, and other areas

that may meet the required threshold to be declared Qualifying Operational Service. We're doing this review to make sure that support is available to all those who the Government intended us to support through the Veterans' Support Act 2014.

As part of the review, VA is seeking input from those who have served with New Zealand's armed forces. You can find it on the VA website:

 www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/deployment-review

New declarations

Veterans are eligible for support from Veterans' Affairs if they served in:

Former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
Between 1 January 1992
and 31 July 2019



Solomon Islands
Between 1 April 2000
and 31 July 2019



Timor-Leste
Between 1 August 1999
and 31 July 2019



Sharon's Corner



VA News sat down with Sharon Cavanagh, Manager of Veterans' Services, to talk about what has been happening at Veterans' Affairs over the last few months.

VA News: *Kia ora Sharon, what's been happening at VA?*

Sharon: We held our first three case management clinics at Ranfurly House in Auckland, which were very successful. The appointment slots have been filling up fast and it's been great to see our veterans kanohi ki te kanohi. Our next clinic is on Tuesday 22 October and our final clinic of the year is on Wednesday 27 November. Appointments are still available, people just need to give us a call to book one.

Planning is also well under way for the Lower North Island Vietnam Veteran Health and Wellbeing Expo in Lower Hutt. This event follows on from the success of the Vietnam veteran expos

held in Christchurch and Auckland. Our veteran connectors are hard at work getting veterans and their whānau registered for the expo, which is on 19 October.

VA News: *And what have some of the other teams at VA been up to?*

Sharon: We continue to see more and more people use our "Check your eligibility" tool on our website – over the last four months there has been a 168% increase in people using it. It has been great to see so many people checking their eligibility, and submitting applications. Since early August we also have staff working overtime to help clear our backlog of applications. This might mean that people will receive calls from us outside normal working hours, like in the early evening, or on Saturdays. Our aim is that those who have submitted applications receive a response before Christmas.


VA News: *Why might a case manager need to follow up on an application?*


Sharon: Sometimes people fill out the wrong form or don't include all the information that we need. Case

managers have also had to contact a number of clients about the costs for private treatment. Coverage for these costs has to be pre-approved by VA, so it's really important that clients and their support people get this approval before they make arrangements.

VA News: *It sounds like things are ramping up at VA, do other teams have applications coming in too?*

Sharon: Yes! Our commemorations team re-launched the Veteran's Pin and Certificate of Appreciation in August, which can now be applied for through the VA website. The pin and certificate recognise Operational Service and since the re-launch there have been over 600 applications! The team is now putting in the hard yards to check the service records of those applying and getting the pins and certificates sent out.


 0800 483 8372

 www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz


Lower North Island Vietnam Veteran Health and Wellbeing Expo

All Vietnam veterans, their whānau, and support people are welcome to attend the expo. If you know a Vietnam veteran who should attend, please encourage them to get in touch.

OCT
19 Saturday, 19 October 2019,
9am to 3pm

 Lower Hutt Event Centre,
30 Laings Road, Lower Hutt 5010

Find out more

 0800 483 8372

 www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/vvhwe

VA case management clinics

Case management clinics are a chance to book a one-on-one appointment with a member of one of VA's case management teams.

These clinics are designed for:


- current clients – both veterans and “whānau”
- veterans who are not already getting support from us.

Appointments are for up to 40 minutes.

Upcoming clinics

OCT
22 Tuesday, 22 October 2019

NOV
27 Wednesday, 27 November

 Ranfurly House, 539 Mount Albert Road,
Three Kings, Auckland 1042

To book an appointment get in touch with us:

 0800 483 8372

 veteransaffairs@nzdf.mil.nz

Funding available for descendants of veterans


Heritage Canterbury provides financial assistance to children and grandchildren – including young adults – who are the descendants of those who have served in the New Zealand Armed Forces, overseas or in New Zealand.

Financial assistance for other educational or special needs is available. Each application is assessed on its merits. Recipients, or their family, must have their primary place of residence in Canterbury.

For more information contact the Secretary, Heritage (Canterbury) Inc.:

Mrs Karen Clarke:

 c/- 24 Westlake Drive, Christchurch, 8025


 +64 3 3 379 7122

 heritagecanterburyinc@gmail.com

Viet Nam Veterans and their Families Trust Annual General Meeting

Veterans and their families can meet with trustees and representatives from Veterans' Affairs at the upcoming Viet Nam Veterans and their Families Trust Annual General Meeting

NOV
30 Saturday 30 November 2019,
10:30am

 Petone Workingmen's Club,
45–47 Udy Street, Petone 5012

Morning tea will be provided and the meeting will be followed by a light lunch.

For more information, please contact Viet Nam Veterans and their Families Trust:

 0800 824 824

 trusts@dia.govt.nz

NEED TO TALK?



This 4-digit number is free to call or text, and will connect you to a trained counsellor. It's available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

25th Anniversary reunion for Operation RADIANT

On the weekend of 14 and 15 September the 25th anniversary reunion for Kiwi Company's 1994 deployment to Bosnia and Herzegovina was held in Wellington. Over 80 veterans attended events that celebrated and commemorated the deployment that was part of Operation RADIANT, a joint task force under the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR).

On the evening of 14 September veterans and their spouses gathered at The Establishment for a social function, where veterans were presented with Veteran's Pins and Certificates of Appreciation supplied by Veterans' Affairs. "It was very satisfying to see that the important work we carried out in the mid-90s remained relevant" Lieutenant Colonel (retired) Gerard Wood said. "There was a sense of pride for those who participated."

The official commemorative service was held at Pukeahu National War Memorial on 15 September and was officiated by Chaplain Class 3 Ra Koia and Chaplain Class 3 (retired) Jack Teepa with involvement from reunion organisers. Brigadier Jon Broadley read the reading, Major General Dave Gawn and Lance Corporal (retired) Toby Yorke laid the commemorative wreath, and LTCOL (retired) Gerard Wood read the Roll of Honour. The Ode was recited by Warrant Officer Class 1 Mario Ropatini and Warrant Officer Class 2 Mark Compain.



Jody May and Mark Bacon place poppies on the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior.



Operation RADIANT veterans in the Hall of Memories at Pukeahu National War Memorial.



Former Army nurse receives top honour

Veteran Felicity Gapes has been awarded the Florence Nightingale Medal, the highest international nursing distinction, for her work with the Red Cross in regions of conflict and political instability. A Registered Nurse since 1985, Felicity joined the Red Cross in 2004 prompted by her peacekeeping and disaster relief experience with the Royal New Zealand Nursing Corps. Felicity deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Timor-Leste, and Papua New Guinea during her service with the New Zealand Army. Her deployments

with the Red Cross include the Pacific, Somalia, South Sudan, and Myanmar.

“Conflict brings out the best and the worst in people and working in this environment is challenging, heartbreaking, and frustrating, but also incredibly rewarding. The people I have worked with and met make this more than a job, and the support from family, friends, and the New Zealand Red Cross is, and will always remain, instrumental for me” Felicity said.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) awards the

Florence Nightingale Medal to nurses in recognition of exceptional courage and devotion to victims of armed conflict or natural disaster, as well as exemplary service or a pioneering spirit in the areas of public health or nursing education. Felicity is one of 29 nurses from 19 countries to be recognised in 2019, and is the 32nd New Zealander to be awarded the medal in its 104-year history.



Merchant Navy service commemorated

On 3 September the National Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Merchant Navy was held at Pukeahu National War Memorial. Veterans were joined by members of the New Zealand Defence Force, Veterans' Affairs, the RNZRSA, and members of the diplomatic corps.

Merchant Navy Day commemorates the contribution of civilian seafarers in wartime. Some 70 New Zealand Merchant Sailors are known to have lost their lives during the First World War, and at least 130 during the Second World War, with a similar number taken prisoner. The date, 3 September, marks the sinking of a British merchant ship, the Athenia, hours after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

The commemorative address was delivered by the Honourable Ron Mark, Minister for Veterans, with historical readings from Captain Tony Date from the New Zealand Merchant Navy Association, and Jacob Blaikie.



Above: Chief of Navy Rear Admiral David Proctor.

Bottom right: Minister for Veterans the Honourable Ron Mark pays his respects at the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior with veterans.