

**Te Arataki mō te Hauora Ngākau mō
ngā Mōrehu a Tū me ō rātou Whānau**
The Veteran, Family and Whānau Mental
Health and Wellbeing Policy Framework

**July 2023 – December 2024
Work Programme**





Introduction

In mid-2022 Veterans' Affairs New Zealand released Te Arataki mō te Hauora Ngākau mō ngā Mōrehu a Tū me ō rātou Whānau: The Veteran, Family and Whānau Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy Framework.

This was the first time that evidence and personal experience had been brought together to describe the mental health and wellbeing challenges, and appropriate responses, for Aotearoa New Zealand's veterans and their whānau.

After Te Arataki's release, Veterans' Affairs New Zealand and Veterans Advisor Willie Apiata VC met with over 25 government and non-government agencies. We discussed what those agencies could do to better understand and improve the mental health and wellbeing of veterans and their whānau. Those agencies are listed in Appendix 1.

Much of that discussion and early work with agencies focused on education, exploring opportunities and assessing the current state of play. For many outside the veterans sector, it was the first time they had participated in an in-depth discussion about veterans and their whānau, and the first time thinking about their role and how they could contribute to improving the lives of those who have served their country.

On the basis of those meetings, we developed a draft Strategic Action Plan for Te Arataki. The draft was tested with the Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Roundtable and attendees at the March 2023 Te Arataki Symposium, amended to reflect their views, and discussed with the Minister for Veterans. The Strategic Action Plan is attached as Appendix 2. It is a high level and long-term (3 to 4 year) list of actions that will support the implementation of Te Arataki.

We have also been working with key agencies to agree an initial Te Arataki work programme that sits beneath the Strategic Action Plan. These actions are for the period from 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2024, although some actions are already under way and others may extend past that date. The initial work programme actions cluster around 3 themes that align with the initial priorities identified during the development of Te Arataki:

1. Investigating what we know about the mental health and wellbeing of Aotearoa New Zealand's veterans, and the use of veteran identifiers.
2. Better connecting with those veterans who may be missing out.
3. Educating/training public sector workers around veteran and whānau needs and responses, and ensuring that strategies, plans and service delivery align with, and support, Te Arataki.

Other responses to Te Arataki have already been implemented. These include: extending access to transition support so that it is available for up to 2 years after leaving the NZDF; and bringing together a veterans network. The Te Arataki symposium was the first gathering of that network, and there was interest and commitment to continue to meet and share information and actions.

The July 2023 – December 2024 work programme begins on page 6. The table includes the action, responsible agency and which parts of the Strategic Action Plan it links to. It may expand to include new actions from agencies over the life of the work programme.



Te Arataki:

July 2023 – December 2024 Work

Action	Agency	Links
Make veteran research and key information available through the Social Wellbeing Agency Research Hub when developed.	Social Wellbeing Agency	1a
Collaborate with NZDF and Veterans' Affairs to produce data and insights to better understand mental health and wellbeing outcomes for veterans.	Social Wellbeing Agency	1c
Establish information sharing arrangements between Veterans' Affairs and Te Whatu Ora, including incorporating a universal veteran identifier within the health information system.	Te Whatu Ora (in collaboration with Veterans' Affairs)	1c
Begin to investigate options for establishing a veteran identifier/marker within the Ministry of Social Development's systems.	Ministry of Social Development	1c
Introduce an information sharing agreement between the Ministry of Social Development and Veterans' Affairs and, if possible, consider initial process improvements to support information sharing and relationship arrangements.	Ministry of Social Development (in collaboration with Veterans' Affairs)	1c
Raise awareness and understanding of veterans and their families/whānau through: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. advertising programmes on the Ministry of Social Development's website; and 2. supporting service centre staff to participate in programmes/training on veterans' issues, where these are available. 	Ministry of Social Development	2g/4a
Support the RNZRSA employment initiative to link ex-service personnel to employment opportunities, as the first trial of full-time Support Advisors focused on veteran wellbeing and employment.	Ministry of Social Development (in collaboration with the RNZRSA)	2h/4e
Investigate the gaps in data and explore avenues to improve information around veteran suicide.	Suicide Prevention Office (in collaboration with Veterans' Affairs)	1b
Monitor the insights and recommendations coming out of the Australian Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.	Suicide Prevention Office	1b
Undertake a stocktake of existing RNZRSA residential beds and consider how resources need to shift to better focus on prevention, promotion and transition.	RNZRSA	1g + 2 and 3
Ensure Government grant funding is used to support veteran wellbeing – in particular, to support veterans with PTSD and mental injury, and to help them lead healthy and productive lives.	RNZRSA	2a/4d
Review the effectiveness and value of the <i>weserved.nz</i> directory of veterans' support services.	Ranfurlly Veterans' Trust	1g/2h
Scope the inclusion of a veteran marker in Department of Corrections' updated medical database.	Department of Corrections	1c
Support and lead the development of a public sector veteran network.	Department of Corrections	2i/4a

Programme

Action	Agency	Links
Scope and develop a support and rehabilitation pathway for veterans entering the criminal justice system.	Department of Corrections	4d
Promote the wellbeing resources and self-management tools for serving and civilian staff, veterans, and their families, that are available through the NZDF Health and Force4Families websites.	NZDF	2a/2e/2h
Roll out a NZDF-wide peer support programme, including to those on operations.	NZDF	2f/3a
Enhance NZDF transition support by providing an online career development hub to help people build their career skills and employability through customisable career programmes (including CV development and translating skills to civilian workplaces).	NZDF	2h/3a
Develop a Transition Action Plan that responds to Te Arataki, and implement approved initiatives.	NZDF	3a
Consider actions that respond to Te Arataki, and implement approved initiatives within Te Whatu Ora's wider work programme.	Te Whatu Ora	2f/4
Provide opportunities for veterans and their whānau to contribute to development of the final Hauora Māori Strategy.	Te Aka Whai Ora	2g/4a
Promote and encourage the use of ACC Navigation Services and Kaupapa Māori Navigation Services to those veterans struggling to navigate the complexities within the ACC system.	ACC	2h/4e
Use the Public Service Pacific Fono to promote understanding of veterans' issues and the implementation of Te Arataki.	Ministry for Pacific Peoples and Veterans' Affairs	4a
Explore opportunities to communicate the needs of veterans to primary care providers.	The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners	4b
Develop a sustainable mental health and rehabilitation programme designed for defence personnel, veterans, first responders and their families.	Te Kiwi Māia	4d
Review and renew the Veteran Rehabilitation Strategy 2018–2021, and its associated workplan, to incorporate the intent and outcomes of Te Arataki.	Veterans' Affairs	4d/2g
Establish multi-disciplinary rehabilitation co-ordination for all recipients of Veterans' Affairs' rehabilitation plans.	Veterans' Affairs	4d/4e



Appendix 1

Organisations briefed about Te Arataki

Veterans and service organisations

Defence Employer Support Council

New Zealand Defence Force

New Zealand Remembrance Army

New Zealand Vietnam Veterans' Association

No Duff Charitable Trust

Ranfurlly Veterans' Trust

Royal New Zealand Air Force Association Inc

Royal New Zealand Artillery Association Inc

Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association

Sisters in Arms

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Association of New Zealand

South East Asia Veterans' Association

Taskforce Kiwi

Te Kiwi Māia

Viet Nam Veterans and Their Families Trust

Health organisations

College of Nurses Aotearoa New Zealand

Health Quality and Safety Commission

Health Research Council of New Zealand

Manatū Hauora/Ministry of Health
(including the Suicide Prevention Office)

Te Aka Whai Ora/Māori Health Authority

Te Hiringa Mahara/Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission

Te Whatu Ora/Health New Zealand

The Nursing Council of New Zealand

The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners

Other central organisations

ACC

Department of Corrections NZ/Ara Poutama Aotearoa

Ministry for Pacific Peoples

Ministry for Women

Ministry of Social Development

Social Wellbeing Agency

Te Puni Kōkiri

Appendix 2

Te Arataki Strategic Action Plan

This Strategic Action Plan sets out a 3 to 4-year plan to implement Te Arataki. It responds to, and is organised around, the 4 priority areas in the policy framework.

1 Data and Research

- 1a. Develop an Aotearoa New Zealand veteran, family and whānau wellbeing research hub, to make key information and research available, and build momentum amongst researchers and research agencies. The hub will provide up-to-date data and links to information and research about our veterans, their families and whānau, relevant international data and research, and guidance around research priorities.
- 1b. Establish the feasibility of reviewing suicide amongst Aotearoa New Zealand veterans. Undertake the review, including identifying risk factors and effective prevention initiatives.
- 1c. Investigate options for establishing a veteran identifier/marker across or within agency systems. Implement identifiers and arrangements for data collation and sharing.
- 1d. Investigate the possibility of including a question about military service in a future Census.
- 1e. Support the design and implementation of a significant, multi-year, study of the wellbeing of Aotearoa New Zealand veterans and their families and whānau (while in service, and beyond).
- 1f. Support research on the wellbeing of priority populations of veterans and their family members: Māori, Pacific people, Women, LGBTIQ+ veterans, and family and whānau, and on other high needs groups.
- 1g. Evaluate the effectiveness and value of existing veteran services and supports, including the experience of veterans and their families and whānau.

2 Prevention and wellbeing promotion

- 2a. Investigate, then implement, injury prevention, wellbeing promotion and education initiatives targeted at serving staff, veterans and their families and whānau. Embed Te Ao Māori approaches in these initiatives.
- 2b. Assist service people to maintain their wider civilian connections, including to whānau, hapū and iwi while in service, and to continue those relationships after release.
- 2c. Assist service people and their families and whānau to develop and maintain connections with those who have already left.
- 2d. Assist bereaved family members and whānau to maintain military connections and support.
- 2e. Expand and promote existing NZDF mental health, addiction and wellbeing resources and 0800 help line/counselling support. Introduce enhancements to make these more accessible and widely available to veterans and their families, including partners and children. These could include: extending NZDF counselling support to family issues; introducing new mechanisms such as text-based support for children, and making civilian help lines/counselling more welcoming to veterans and their families.
- 2f. Explore and define roles for peer support in an Aotearoa New Zealand veterans' and families' context. Seek opportunities to develop these roles within and across government and non-government agencies.
- 2g. Improve and streamline the way government agencies connect with veterans and their families and whānau. This includes: sharing and integrating communication and social media opportunities, and providing opportunities for veterans and their whānau to contribute to strategy and service development and delivery.
- 2h. Provide active, up-to-date and individualised information and connections to networks and support. Ensure that multiple pathways are available to access information, and that it is available in both digital and non-digital forms. Investigate the development of mechanisms such as veteran hubs and online portals, for bringing information and support together in a veteran and whānau-centric way.
- 2i. Provide recognition for veterans and their service, including focusing on what veterans have contributed to Aotearoa New Zealand, and highlighting their roles within agencies/sectors. Investigate establishing and supporting a commemoration day.

3 Transition processes and support

3a. Enhance and expand the NZDF transition service, to respond to the evidence around at-risk groups, and the needs of veterans and their families and whānau. Expansion is likely to focus on:

- taking a more proactive and long-term view of transition, and beginning to prepare people earlier in their careers
- assisting service people to maintain their military connections once they leave service
- identifying at-risk veterans, and providing them with individualised plans and intensive wrap-around navigation and support
- ensuring a smooth handover of veterans to Veterans' Affairs and civilian agencies, including to dental and medical care, and their health records to civilian health services
- extending eligibility to all veterans, so that those who left service some time ago can access support
- removing the 12-month time-limit for transition support, and providing more proactive and frequent reach-out to veterans
- providing more comprehensive and targeted transition support for family and whānau members (e.g. for families of those medically releasing)
- adding new elements, such as a career development toolkit/job search platform, mentoring programme, and programme evaluation.

4 Professional and service development

- 4a. Raise awareness and understanding of veterans and their families and whānau within government and other agencies. Provide information and training in order to improve staff awareness, and the experience of veterans, families and whānau accessing services and supports. Consider establishment of a 'veteran friendly' endorsement for participating agencies.
- 4b. Develop and introduce veteran and family-focused information resources, training and endorsement/certification for key health professionals. This could include: GPs, psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, mental health and addiction support workers, Māori health providers, and navigators (including Whānau Ora navigators).
- 4c. Identify opportunities to develop mental health, addiction and wellbeing service providers with a shared cultural understanding of both Te Ao Māori and Aotearoa New Zealand Veterans.
- 4d. Support veteran, family and whānau-specific mental health, addiction and wellbeing services. For example, veteran-centric rehabilitation.
- 4e. Provide intensive navigation support for veterans whose high and complex needs cannot be managed by other services and organisations.
- 4f. Enable veteran NGO workers and volunteers to access appropriate professional mental health and addiction training and development opportunities.

A range of information and resources for veterans,
their families and whānau can be found at:

veteransaffairs.mil.nz

health.nzdf.mil.nz

Get in touch



0800 483 8372 (Freephone NZ)
1800 483 837 (Freephone Australia)
64 4 495 2070 (Rest of the world)



www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/contact-us



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