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MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

Hon Ron Mark, Minister for Veterans

On October 26, I was honoured to be sworn in as Minister for Veterans and Minister of Defence. The two portfolios go hand in hand, and are deeply personal to me.

A few days after being sworn in, I attended the RNZRSA's 101st National Conference. When I looked around the room, I saw my past, and the faces of people who helped me become the person I am today. It was moving to see so many, who had such an impact on my life during the time that I served.

One of the key areas that I want to focus on in my role as Minister for Veterans is supporting those whose health has been affected by their service—and in particular those suffering from PTSD. Every one of us who has served, or who is currently serving, knows at least one person who is affected by this.

I believe that the support systems available need to be solid, and they need to work well; so that those who

need help know enough to recognise that they do; and are encouraged to put their hand up without fear and ask for it.

I've been pleased to see that this is something Veterans' Affairs is giving priority to. You will see this in the way that mental health claims are being handled. Those who need help are given access to support such as counselling or treatment, even before decisions on their claims have been made. In the future I want to look at what more we might do to increase personal awareness of the condition and how to defeat it.

Next year is significant—it marks a century since the end of what people once thought would be “the war to end all wars”. It wasn't of course, and new veterans are still being created. I believe that those who put their lives on the line for their country should be recognised and respected—and I am delighted to have a ministerial role that can do exactly that.



I'm looking forward to learning and growing my role as your Minister. I also look forward to seeing some old faces, and meeting some new ones when I am out and about. I particularly look forward to engaging with more contemporary veterans.

I wish you and your families a very warm and wonderful Christmas filled with happiness and love.

Ron.

Support over the festive period

The Veterans' Affairs office will close at 4pm on Friday 22 December 2017. We will reopen at 8am on Monday 8 January 2018. If you need help over the festive season, contact:

- 111, in an emergency
- 0800 NZDF4U (0800 693 348), a confidential telephone helpline staffed by trained mental health professional
- RSA District Support Advisors, through your local RSA

- No Duff on 022 307 1557 or noduff.ngo@gmail.com

If you have concerns with services funded by us, please contact your service provider directly.

Changes to payments over the festive period

New Zealand bank accounts:

- Payments due to be paid on 26 December 2017 will now be paid 19 December 2017.
- All other payments will be paid as normal.

Overseas bank accounts will not be affected by the festive period.

MESSAGE FROM BERNADINE

Bernadine Mackenzie, Head of Veterans' Affairs

Tēnā koutou katoa,

Christmas is a time when we try to be better to others, when we celebrate the present, and—for many—to reflect on years past.

It is a year since I came into this role, and I thought it was opportune to share some of my reflections and aspirations as the year ends.

I have met many of you through our community forums, commemorations, by phone, email and letter. I have learnt a lot and thank you for your ideas and honest constructive feedback.

This year we sat with representatives from veteran groups, government and non-government agencies in a 'round table' setting to talk about how best to work together to improve rehabilitation services for veterans. We know that to do the best we need to work with

others, we need to listen to what you tell us and continuously improve what and how we do things.

For those with qualifying operational service, I see that we are with you for life and beyond. Other organisations will come and go in your life but we don't. You can choose if and when to engage with us. We will be there for you.

You will find inside this edition of VA News a fridge magnet with our contact details. I encourage you to put it where it's easy to find.

We are always working to improve our ways of doing things and increase the range of services and our responsiveness to you. We are not where we want to be yet.

We have great plans for the next year. We will see the range of VIP services increase, forms and the claims



process simplified, and our ways of communicating with you modernised.

I am proud to lead Veterans' Affairs, along with my committed staff, to support those who have fought in our country's best interests—to ensure New Zealand stays a free and safe country for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

I wish you and your whānau Meri Kirihimete.

Most Successful Invictus Games yet for NZDF team

The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) left the 2017 Invictus Games in Toronto with its highest medal count yet.

The Kiwi team picked up 11 medals during the eight days of competition in five different adaptive sports. The NZDF team of 24 athletes battled it out alongside more than 550 competitors from 17 allied nations.

NZDF Invictus team captain Jason Pore said the Games for the team had been about doing the best each individual could do for themselves and their families.



"It has not been about the medals for the team—making the finals has been an added bonus to the success of their individual achievements at the Games, and making it on to the podium has added to their personal successes, Pore said.

"The medals won have been for the team, their families and for New Zealand."

The Invictus Games are the only international adaptive sporting event for wounded, injured and ill active duty and veteran service men and women.

The team's vice-captain, Flight Lieutenant Jules Gilligan, said it was

hard to describe how proud she was of the team.

"Everyone has given their all, regardless of the huge challenges they face. Each person will be changed from this experience," Flight Lieutenant Gilligan said.

"This team's members are some of the strongest and most determined people I have ever met. They have such heart. They are the epitome of what the word 'team' means to me. This is why I rejoined the Defence Force and it is a true privilege to watch their victories."

Adaptive sport allows those who have

Results of the VIP survey

Earlier this year we commissioned an independent survey of three of the services delivered under the Veterans' Independence Programme.

The survey asked you for feedback on how you think Chemwash, Crewcut and Red Wolf are doing. We wanted to know if the service providers are delivering a service which meets your needs. We will also use this information to help us improve the national contracts.

A total of 2,679 survey invitations were sent out to veterans by our independent survey provider. Thank you to the 1,693 veterans who responded to the survey. You told us:

- 86%** were either **satisfied** or **very satisfied** with Chemwash
- 85%** were either **satisfied** or **very satisfied** with Crewcut
- 88%** were either **satisfied** or **very satisfied** with Red Wolf.

It's good to know the programme seems generally to be working well. The results are also helping us to identify any areas where people are not so satisfied. In the coming year we'll look at other ways to grow and develop services that can make life easier for the men and women who have served New Zealand.

If you need to return your medical alarm

Everyone's situation changes from time to time. If you no longer require or want your medical alarm please let us know.

You can contact your Case Manager, who will organise for a pre-paid courier bag to be sent out to you. Then you just need to send all parts of the device back in the courier bag provided by Red Wolf.

Please also let your family know that, should you have a change of circumstances and are unable to return the device yourself, they will need to do this for you.

If you have any questions, speak to your Case Manager on Freephone 0800 483 8372.

been wounded, injured or ill as part of their service to our country to look forward and focus on the possibilities and the future.

Invictus Games Toronto 2017 chief executive Michael Burns said it had meant a lot to have the New Zealand team at the Games.

"We have always had a great relationship with New Zealand and served with them shoulder to shoulder in many wars and peacekeeping missions," Burns said.

"We were honoured to welcome all of their competitors and their families and friends and hope that their time in Toronto will further their healing and recovery."

New Zealand High Commissioner to Canada Daniel Mellsop was with the team during the game and said he

had been extremely honoured to be able to support the Kiwis.

"The stories of how training for these Invictus Games has supported their recovery is inspirational," he said. "The team and their vocal band of supporters are doing a great job raising New Zealand's profile in North America's fourth-largest city. It makes me proud to see the black uniforms and hear the Kiwi chants occupying downtown Toronto."

"The powerful Invictus haka has been very popular with locals and the other teams. It makes New Zealand stand out and shows the world there is something special about our nation and our people."

The NZDF team was sponsored by Auckland RSA, Christchurch Memorial RSA, Fulton Hogan, BLK and Offlimits Trust.



Improving how we pay GPs

This summer we're improving how we process and pay invoices from GPs. The new way of working will mean we pay GPs faster.

I'm a veteran, what does this mean for me?

Nothing will change—this improvement will just make life easier for the medical practices that look after you. You should continue to see your GP of choice. If your GP visit relates to any approved conditions (as shown on your treatment card or letter), you still won't have to pay.

Your GP will now send their invoices to our partner Green Cross Health. This process has been successfully trialled with 40 medical centres since August, and with all pharmacies since February 2016.



2017 in Review



In September about 40 schoolchildren, members of the RSA, staff from Foodstuffs and Z Energy, and New Zealand Defence Force personnel packed hundreds of Christmas treats for personnel serving overseas.



Representatives from veteran groups, government and non-government agencies after attending a 'round table' session on how to best work together to improve rehabilitation services for veterans.



His Royal Highness The Duke of Cambridge and Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid, Princess of Belgium watch as Youth Ambassadors Amy Vallance and Priya Clark plant the Tree of Remembrance after the New Zealand National Commemorative Service for the Battle of Passchendaele at Tyne Cot Cemetery, Belgium.



A long-standing and committed relationship was reinforced in February when General Jang Jun Gyu, Chief of Staff Republic of Korea Army, met up with serving Army personnel and Korean veterans in Wellington. Mr Chris Nevill, a Korean veteran, shares a light moment with a Korean officer.



A New Zealand soldier reads an address to New Zealand, Australian and coalition personnel gathered for the Anzac Day Dawn Service at Taji Military Camp, Iraq.



Veterans' Affairs staff travelled to Northland for VA Forums in Whangarei and Kaikohe. While up north they paid their respects at the local memorials and Services cemeteries.



The artists Gunner Matt Gaudie (centre) with SGT Trevor Mills (right) and former soldier and airman Tim Wilson at the opening of the 'Soldiers Five: A Veteran's Journey' exhibition at Parliament. The exhibition highlighted the feelings of isolation, determination, and hope that many veterans face while they transition out of the Armed Forces.

