



A message from the Minister



**Hon Michael Woodhouse,
Minister of Veterans' Affairs**

It is with satisfaction that I can report a number of significant milestones have been achieved in 2013

It's the end of the year and report-card time. It is with satisfaction that I can report a number of significant milestones have been achieved in 2013. We marked the 70th Anniversary of the War in the Pacific, both in New Caledonia around Anzac Day and later in Wellington for those veterans who were not able to travel earlier in the year. This was the first opportunity I had to lead a group of veterans, an honour I repeated to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Signing of the Armistice in the Republic of Korea. These commemorations were very moving and it was amazing to see how gratified the people of Korea were both with New Zealand's engagement during the conflict, and the strength of the contingent we sent to mark this significant event. The extended Veterans' Affairs New Zealand team and other New Zealand Defence Force personnel who planned these commemorations and then accompanied and supported the veterans were simply magnificent.

Other milestones included the increase to the War Disablement Pension by an additional five percent over the annual Consumer Price Index increase, and most significantly, the introduction of the Veterans' Support Bill which passed its First Reading on 22 October. This is a keystone in modernising the War Pensions Act 1954 in Response to the Law Commission's Report on the Review of the Act. The Social Services Select Committee is due to report back to the House by 27 March 2014.

I am also pleased to report that planning is well underway for the two commemorations planned for next year at Cassino, for the Italian Campaign, and for the D-Day Landings. There will be New Zealand based ceremonies for those veterans who are not able to participate in the international events. Next year we will also hold events to mark the start of the WWI centennial commemorations, and draw the ballot for places at the 2015 Gallipoli Commemorations.

Looking to the future, it is worth noting that recently at Burnham Military Camp the latest Class of New Zealand Defence Force medics marched out from their training programme at the Defence Health School which is part of the Defence Training Institute. This new cohort of medics is well prepared to care for current and future veterans serving in the New Zealand Defence Force. Among those attending was the President of the Papanui Returned and Services Association. They have committed to presenting an award to the top student for each graduation. They become aware of the programme the medics are undertaking and wanted to provide a tangible form of support. This is a great example of how an established veterans group can support currently serving members of the Defence Force, and at the same time forge links between the two groups. I think this is a very positive initiative, and I am sure the medics appreciate it.

As the Christmas season is again upon us, I would very much like to extend my best wishes to all veterans and their families.

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CDF'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE TO VETERANS

As the year and my tenure as Chief of Defence Force comes to close, I'd like to thank you for the support you continue to give the New Zealand Defence Force.

The Veterans' Support Bill was introduced to Parliament on 14 October. This is the most comprehensive review of veterans' legislation since the War Pensions Act was introduced in 1954 and is supported by a \$60 million package from the Government. The deadline for submissions to Select Committee closed on 25 November and the NZDF community has taken a keen interest in how this new legislation will affect current and future veterans.

This year, we took veterans to the 70th anniversary commemoration of the War in the Pacific in Noumea and the 60th anniversary of the Korean Armistice. Next year, we will support veterans to attend the 70th anniversaries of the D-Day Landings in France and of Monte Cassino in Italy. We continue to support these opportunities for veterans to have their service recognised, and to pay respects to those who did not return to New Zealand.

I attended the ceremony to mark the end of our decade long commitment to Bamyán Province, Afghanistan. We can be very proud of what we have achieved in Afghanistan; however ten of our soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice. We will always remember them and their family and friends are especially in our thoughts as Christmas approaches.

We also welcomed home personnel following the ten year commitment to the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands, or RAMSI. We have left behind a more stable country with a very bright future and strengthened our position as a key contributor within the Pacific region.

2014 marks the beginning of the First World War centenary and the service and sacrifice of all veterans will be commemorated, remembered and reflected upon by New Zealand and the world. There are also significant NZDF anniversaries in the coming years. The Queen Alexandra's Mounted Rifles and the New Zealand Cadet Forces both celebrate 150 years of service in 2014 with the Royal New Zealand Nursing Corps celebrating their 100th anniversary in 2015.

In January I hand over the role of Chief of Defence Force. It has been an honour to serve you in this role for the past three years. Thank you for everything that you have done. I wish you all the best for the festive season and the coming year.

NEWS FROM THE VANZ MEDICAL DESK

By Doctor Anne Campbell, VANZ Medical Adviser

It has been another very busy year for all our veterans and VANZ wishes you all the best for the festive season and we certainly look forward to assisting you all in 2014.

Without sounding like a Christmas Grinch, some general reminders from the VANZ Medical desk...

Family - 'tis the time to enjoy each other's company no matter what.

Summer sun - along with our neighbour across the Tasman in Australia, we have the highest rates of skin cancer, so slip on a shirt, slop on the sunscreen, slap on the hat, or just don't sit in the sun.

Cars - if travelling long distance don't drive when tired; don't drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs; and

remember the 100km/hr speed limit; watch out for idiots on the road and there will likely be delays with Christmas traffic so be tolerant.

Stress - for many it is not an easy time, so manage the stress, take time out for yourself, quiet time to reflect, time to share old stories with family and friends, time to read that book, time to take a walk and feel the sand between your toes.

Money - have a budget and stick to it, because you will always need money tomorrow, that plastic fantastic (credit card) ain't that fantastic in January.

Food - just enjoy it because it is the Season to be Jolly!

Finally, may you all have a very Merry Christmas with family and/or friends.

VIETNAM VETERANS ANNUAL MEDICAL ASSESSMENT (AMA)

In recognition of the fact that Vietnam veterans were exposed to a toxic environment during their service in Vietnam, the Government made the decision to introduce a free yearly medical assessment for all Vietnam veterans recorded on the Vietnam veterans' register held by VANZ.

To continue to ensure that the health and well-being of individual veterans is being monitored and to enable the Government to fully understand the issues relating to the veteran's service-related health, it is vital that as many veterans as possible undertake the assessment.

All Vietnam veterans are encouraged to take up the Government's offer of a free annual medical assessment and to encourage those veterans not already registered to do so by downloading a registration form from the VANZ website at www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz or by contacting VANZ directly.

For further information, veterans should contact the VANZ Enquiry Line on Freephone 0800 483 8372 (or 64 4 495 2070 if living outside New Zealand) or email veterans@xtra.co.nz

CLAIMS FOR PRIVATE VEHICLE TRAVEL UNDER THE TRAVEL CONCESSION

The process to submit Travel Concession claims was simplified in 2012 following feedback from veterans. It is timely to remind our veterans what those changes were.

In summary the key changes were:

- If you are undertaking a long one-way or return journey over a number of days you do not need to claim for each days travel as a separate journey.
- If you claim for a journey based on travel between your starting location and your furthest destination, you will be paid based on the most direct route between the two localities, subject to verification by VANZ.
- If your journey consists of travel to a number of different destinations, you may claim each individual leg of your journey that is 80km or more as a separate journey.
- When purchasing fuel, it is important to note that if you cannot purchase fuel from either your starting location or destination, you will need to obtain a receipt from a fuel supplier at the closest place to that location, based on the route you travelled, plus you will need to provide evidence that substantiates your visit to your final destination.
- If you begin or end a journey at a place where fuel is available, you must buy fuel from that location.

Copies of the Information Sheet and Application Form reflecting all of the changes can be obtained from the VANZ website (www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz) or by calling the VANZ Enquiry Line or your Case Manager on Freephone 0800 483 8372.

MOVING HOUSE? CHANGE OF ADDRESS?

Have you moved or are about to move?

If so, please do not forget to let VANZ know your new contact details so we can keep all your details up to date.

Please call us on Freephone 0800 483 8372 if in New Zealand; 64 4 495 2070 if calling from overseas; or email us at veterans@xtra.co.nz to advise of any changes.



Gallipoli 2015 Ballot

The ballot for attendance passes for Anzac Day commemorations at Gallipoli in 2015 closes on 31 January 2014.

All New Zealand residents and holders of a New Zealand permanent residents visa, regardless of where they currently live, are eligible to enter the ballot.

Direct descendants of veterans who fought at Gallipoli are eligible in a special category. Veterans who hold the New Zealand War Service Medal 1939-45 or the New Zealand Operational Service Medal are also eligible in a special category.

Those who enter in the Direct Descendants and/or the Veterans categories of the Gallipoli 2015 Ballot and are unsuccessful in that category will automatically be entered into the general ballot. Successful attendance pass holders will receive two passes to the commemorations and can give the second pass to anyone they wish.

The attendance passes are free of charge and successful attendance pass holders will need to arrange and pay for all costs associated with travel to Turkey and back. This includes all accommodation.

You can enter the ballot online at www.Gallipoli2015.govt.nz or request a manual form by calling 0800 336 547.

UPDATE ON VETERANS' SUPPORT BILL

The introduction into the House of Representatives of the Veterans' Support Bill by Hon Michael Woodhouse, Minister of Veterans' Affairs, occurred on 14 October 2013. Subsequently submissions to the Social Services Select Committee were invited. The closing date for submissions was 25 November 2013 at which time 27 submissions had been received. The Select Committee process continues.

Keeping in touch with Veterans' Affairs New Zealand

Please tell us as soon as you

- Change your address
- Change your bank account
- Change your marital status
- Plan to go overseas to live
- Move to a rest home or hospital
- Have someone come to live with you

In the sad event of your death

- your family or the executor of your estate needs to tell us as soon as you pass away
- your partner or family may have some entitlements in respect of
 - a funeral grant
 - a ex-services memorial plaque or headstone for your grave in a public or private cemetery
- you may be receiving help that needs to be cancelled or reassessed
- your pension will be paid until the date of your death. If it is not stopped immediately after your death it can quickly build up a debt that your estate will have to repay

We suggest you leave this note with your Will or personal papers so the person looking after your affairs knows to get in touch with us.

Veterans' Affairs New Zealand
ph 0800 483 8372 in NZ
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email veterans@xtra.co.nz