

A way forward for veterans' health and wellbeing

Veterans' Affairs has launched *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* — a detailed examination of the mental health and wellbeing needs of Aotearoa New Zealand's veterans.

Most veterans leave service and transition into civilian life successfully, but some experience mental health or addiction issues. Some are at risk of other outcomes including social withdrawal, poverty, homelessness, intimate partner violence, and suicide.

He Ara Oranga, the 2018 report of the Government's inquiry into mental health and addiction, identified veterans as a vulnerable group. However, a framework was never developed to address their needs.

In 2021, Veterans' Affairs began the process to do that and brought together key defence and health organisations, veteran advocacy groups, health practitioners, and veterans to focus on the mental health and wellbeing of veterans and their families.

The aim of this roundtable group was to develop a cohesive and compelling resource explaining why we need to focus on the needs of veterans, and how we can better meet their needs.



Head of Veterans' Affairs, Bernadine MacKenzie at the event

"We realised there are problems and issues here," said Head of Veterans' Affairs, Bernadine MacKenzie.

"We wanted to look at the evidence, and identify what New Zealand can do to improve the mental health and wellbeing of veterans, their families, and whānau."

The roundtable highlighted the need for system improvements, increased awareness, effective prevention, and enhanced support. They recommended that organisations — both military and civilian, government and non-government — should collaborate better to take immediate and effective steps to improve the wellbeing of our veterans, their families and whānau.

Veterans' Affairs will work hard to make this happen and will ensure that the priorities identified have been embraced and

taken forward.



Hon Peeni Henare, Willie Apiata VC, and Hon Meka Whaitiri

Minister for Veterans Meka Whaitiri welcomed the resource. “I’m impressed with the hard work and dedication of so many in the sector who’ve made this Framework happen” she said. “What they’ve produced is a great guide to the needs of veterans, and how best to improve their mental health and wellbeing — and also that of the families and whānau who support them and help to shoulder their burdens.”

Minister Whaitiri’s support for the framework is shared by Minister of Health Andrew Little and Minister of Defence Peeni Henare, who will all speak at the launch.

To encourage more collaboration between government agencies, for the benefit of veterans, many senior executives from their ministries will also be there. Importantly, veterans and members of the roundtable will also be there. They include Willie Apiata (VC), Vic Timu, Ben Peckham, Tina Grant, Andy Peters and Chief of Army Major General John Boswell, who are all veterans.

**"Kia ea ai hoki te kōrero rā ko te mūrau o te tini,
ko te wenerau a te mano
Let us acknowledge the few that shelter the many"**

The framework launched on Wednesday 29 June at the Parliament Visitor Centre.


More information about the framework (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/about-veterans-affairs/our-programmes/mental-health-framework/>)

Read the policy framework

You can view a PDF of the document.



(<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/assets/Work-Programmes/The-Veteran-Family-and-Whanau-Mental-Health-and-Wellbeing-Policy-Framework.PDF>)

 The Veteran, Family and Whānau Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy Framework [PDF, 2.3 MB]
(<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/assets/Work-Programmes/The-Veteran-Family-and-Whanau-Mental-Health-and-Wellbeing-Policy-Framework.PDF>)

You can also contact us to request a printed version of the document.

Contact us (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/contact-us/>)

Date

29 June 2022

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Last Modified: 29 June 2022