

## From the Minister for Veterans—Summer 2018

### Hon Ron Mark, Minister for Veterans

With Christmas almost upon us, I'd like to extend my best wishes to you, our veterans, and your families. It's been another busy year, so it's important we now take time to relax and reflect with our loved ones.

This time last year, I indicated that one of the key areas I wanted to focus on in my role as Minister for Veterans was supporting those whose health has been affected by their service—in particular, those suffering from PTSD.

I am pleased to see that this is something to which Veterans' Affairs continues to give priority. Those who need help are able to access support such as counselling or treatment, even before decisions on their claims have been made.

After the release in May of Professor Ron Paterson's report into the operation of the Veterans' Support Act 2014, follow-up work has continued on many of the recommendations and I believe that the outcome will be very positive for our New Zealand veterans.

This year was significant in that it marked the end of the First World War Centenary. The people who lost their lives serving our country, and all those who went to war, were recognised, respected and acknowledged appropriately. There were many sacrifices made during the 'war to end all wars', not only by those serving overseas, but by the families and loved ones left here at home. Today we continue to create new veterans, and with that comes the knowledge that at Christmas time, there will be many families whose loved ones will be serving overseas.

As one of those veterans whose service overseas resulted in my being separated from my wife and children over Christmas, several times, and who understands what a difficult time this can be, I wish all our veterans, wherever you may be in the world, a safe and happy festive season. I know the sacrifice that families make, and the sadness experienced at both ends.

The gift of hope, freedom and peace you have given—and continue to give— is one we all value beyond measure. Of course, some of our veterans' are paying a price for this gift. Christmas is a time of year when those who are struggling mentally can find themselves in an even darker place. As veterans we must be there for one another when one of our number needs help.

If you know someone who is doing it tough this year, reach out and offer to link them to support services like the RSA or No Duff. Remind them they're not in this alone, and there is a way through it. We are a family, and families look out for one another—especially during the holiday season.

I wish you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and all the best for 2019, and please stay safe over the holidays!

Ron



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10 December 2018

Tags

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