AFFAIRS
New Zealand

Video transcript of the Minister for Veterans talking about Mission: Feedback.

Tēnā koutou katoa.

Today the Veterans' Advisory Board will be launching a survey to find out if New Zealanders think we should do more for the military personnel who serve our country. As a nation we recently held a moving Anzac Day commemoration and now is a good time to reflect on how we treat our military personnel during and after their service.

Military personnel live and operate in a unique environment and culture, one where there are extraordinary and demanding aspects to their service. While serving New Zealand they do not have all the rights and the freedoms of other citizens. They accept that they may be placed in harm's way and be maimed, killed, or mentally broken in serving their country.

Research indicates that service can have negative impacts on their health and wellbeing, and that some face difficulties in transitioning into civilian life when they've completed their service. They can spend long periods away from home, from whānau, which can affect negatively their whānau and themselves for the rest of their lives.

Service personnel can also find it hard to ask for and accept help, a cultural quick that is a consequence of service culture which promotes self-reliance, resilience, toughness of character. A mindset that frowns on weakness and which demands high expectations of devotion to service at the expense of self and even one's family.

We all know the stories of our great uncles, great grandfathers grandmothers, uncles, and auntie's who have served before us. And we know that often they were not cared for well at all when they finished their service. Sadly, the impact of that is often reflected and some very negative statistics around substance abuse, and violence, and family violence.

This survey asks New Zealanders about recognition and support for service personnel, and what they think about establishing a formal agreement — a Kawenata or Covenant — between the government and the people of New Zealand and military personnel and their families.

Military people do not have a union to fight to protect their pay or their service conditions or their allowances like other government services — Police, Customs, Corrections — do. This leaves them vulnerable to the whim of any government of the day who wishes to cut costs or cut service to those service personnel or their families.

A Kawenata would formally recognise the contribution of service personnel and their whānau to New Zealand's health, wealth, and prosperity, and that of its people. It could give an undertaking that they should not be disadvantaged or left behind because of their service.

The aim of the national engagement is to ensure that all New Zealanders have the chance to have their say.

I've asked the Veterans' Advisory Board to report back to me in early August and I intend to publish their report shortly thereafter.

If you have a view as to how our veterans, our service personnel, should be cared for , should be treated by their country, and looked after, after they have left the service, please share that view. Please participate, please engage with the VAB.

He mih maioha i to toku aroha, he mihi maioha i to tautoko. Nō reira, tēnā koutou tēnā koutou, kia ora tatou katoa.