

Veterans' Advisory Board members

Members of the Veterans' Advisory Board are appointed by the Minister for Veterans.

Leith Comer, Chair

- Served in the New Zealand Army for 21 years, including as a senior officer
- Has extensive knowledge of the workings of government, as well as leadership experience in the military, private and community sectors
- Has held senior positions as a public servant, including as the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Maori Development from 2001-2011, and the Deputy Secretary of Economic Development from 1997-2001
- Recently awarded the QSO.

Fiona Cassidy

- Previous military service in the Army
- Held the role of Director, Defence Communications Group.
- Over 20 years of experience managing communications at a strategic level.
- Extensive experience in working with Māori, Pacific, and hard-to-reach communities.
- Has held a number of Director and board appointments on business, government, and not-for-profit organisations.

BJ (Barry) Clark

- Former National President of the RNZRSA (2014–2022)
- RSA member since 1973, including service on executive at local, district and national level.
- 21 years in the Royal New Zealand Engineers, including service in Singapore, Moscow, Fiji, Antarctica and Sinai.

Baden Ewart

- 28 years of service in the New Zealand Army.
- Has worked in both primary and secondary health care.
- Has been the General Manager Operations for the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority and is currently the Canterbury Civil Defence and Emergency Management Group Recovery Manager.
- Experienced with central and local government engagement, including with the Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Social Development.

Denise Hutchins

- Career in the health sector spanned 44 years, commencing in the clinical area as a nurse in both hospital and community settings, progressing to a Chief Nursing Officer position.
- Moved into health management, working in organisational development with responsibilities for human resources, health, safety and wellbeing, learning and development and strategic quality improvement.
- Served as a Territorial in the New Zealand Army as a member of the Royal New Zealand Nursing Corps (Territorial) from 1979-1994, retiring as Lieutenant Colonel and Principal Nursing Officer 2 (GH) Field Hospital.

- Justice of the Peace since 2002 and is currently the Immediate Past President of the Royal Federation of New Zealand Justices' Associations.

Warrant Officer Class One Mark Mortiboy, Chief of Defence Force nominee

- Warrant Officer of the Defence Force, a principal advisor to CDF, and a member of the NZDF Senior Leadership Team.
- Serving veteran with overseas postings and deployments to Singapore, the Sinai, East Timor and Antarctica.
- Sergeant-Major of the Army from 2014-2017.

Glenis Philip-Barbara

- Deputy Chief Executive (Delivery) Ministry of Culture and Heritage
- Former Assistant Māori Commissioner for Children
- Has held a wide range of positions in New Zealand's public sector including being the Chief Executive of Te Taura Whiri I Te Reo Māori (the Māori Language Commission) and Deputy Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development.
- Has also held a range of teaching and managerial positions at tertiary education institutions, including lecturing in Sociology at Massey University.
- Has a family perspective on veterans through close family members who are former service personnel.

Deputy members

When a member is absent a member's deputy may attend a meeting in their place.

Commander Katherine Ayers

- Member of the Royal New Zealand Navy for over 20 years and currently the Business Partner (Navy) to the People Capability Portfolio.
- Has served as a Legal Officer, an Administration Officer, a Human Resources Officer, and a Military Complaints Officer.
- Commander Ayres has a Bachelor of Laws and a Masters in Strategic Policy.