



## Veterans Support Amendment Bill No 2 passes third reading

The Veterans' Support Amendment Bill No 2 passed its third reading in the House on 30 July 2020. The Bill amends the Veterans' Support Act 2014 and addresses a number of recommendations included in the 2018 Paterson Report. The changes come into effect on 1 October.

### Provisions in the Veterans' Support Amendment Bill No 2

- Veterans' Affairs can now fund mental health services for veterans with urgent needs before a decision has been made about whether to accept the veteran's application for support.
- Veterans' Affairs may continue to fund treatment and rehabilitation services when a veteran receiving them is imprisoned.
- Counselling can be extended to whānau when it is necessary for a veteran's wellbeing.
- Definitions in the Act have been modernised, such as the term 'child', to better reflect the make-up of modern families.
- The Children's Bursary has been extended to cover situations where a veteran's child lives overseas. The definition of recognised tertiary institutions has also been extended.
- The five-year restriction on childcare assistance has been removed.
- Some Veterans' Independence Programme services can now continue for the spouse or partner of a veteran for 12 months after a veteran goes into long-term residential care.
- It will be easier for surviving spouses or partners to access pensions and be reimbursed for funeral costs when a veteran dies.
- There is now a standard grace period of 28 days following the death of a veteran who has been receiving weekly compensation to minimise the chances of their whānau going into debt.
- Veterans' Affairs has more flexibility in individual cases to make decisions that take into account links between service related trauma and criminal or self-destructive behaviours.
- Veterans' Affairs now has discretion to recognise injuries, illness, or death if they occurred when a veteran was briefly absent without leave or committing a minor offence.
- Entitlements of other claimants (such as a veteran's child, or spouse or partner) will not be affected when a veteran is imprisoned.
- Veterans Affairs is required to focus on ensuring veterans are informed and engaged in the course of an application, and the flexibility for decision-making timeframes has been increased.
- Declarations of Qualifying Operational Service will now be published on the Veterans' Affairs website rather than by a notice in the Gazette.
- Publication of a declaration of Qualifying Operational Service is not required if there are security or operational reasons not to publish the details.

- The process for setting Veteran's Pension rates has been aligned with the process for setting entitlements under the Veterans' Support Act 2014.

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Date

**31 July 2020**

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