



Vietnam Veterans' Association's MOU with the Crown remains a living document

It's almost 18 years since representatives of Vietnam veterans signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Crown. This MOU summarised all the actions that New Zealand undertook to do to recognise the service of those who went to Vietnam. For many years their exposure to the toxic chemical, Agent Orange, and the resulting health problems, weren't recognised.

The MOU, signed in December 2006, aimed to acknowledge the past, put things right, and improve services to Vietnam veterans. This document still guides New Zealand's treatment of those veterans and their families today.

Most significantly, two years ago the Crown and Vietnam veterans worked together to develop a process to add new conditions known to be associated with Agent Orange exposure to the list of those that would result in an ex gratia payment to a veteran.

We meet twice each year with the NZ Vietnam Veterans' Association (NZVVA) working group to talk through how the MOU is going, what new things are happening, and how it can still remain relevant.

The two groups agree on the status of each provision of the MOU, updating it where that's required, and the resulting document is published on both organisations' websites. You can check it out on our website (<https://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/about-veterans-affairs/our-programmes/working-with-viet-nam-veterans/viet-nam-veteran-memorandum-of-understanding/>).

Of most interest at the moment, are some developments we bring in relation to making it easier for Vietnam veterans and their GPs to manage the veterans' annual medical assessments; and making sure that veterans' families, and in particular their children, know what their entitlements are as well.

We and the NZVVA have an excellent close working relationship, and this helps to make sure that there is a clear and positive focus on what needs to be done to ensure that the MOU is delivering what it was always intended to deliver for this group of veterans and their families.

This is also the view of the National President of the Association, Graham Gibson.

“The MOU is important to our Vietnam veteran community - and it's good to know it's important to the Crown as well. Actions speak louder than words - and some solid actions

are coming out of our work on the MOU with Veterans' Affairs”.

He also notes that the MOU was negotiated with all veteran cohorts in mind. “It was formulated in such a way that no veterans in the future should have to suffer or fight to gain fair treatment for themselves and their whānau, like the Vietnam veterans did. And we’re continuing to work to get the best possible outcomes for veterans and their families, now and in years to come”.

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Tags

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