

Date: 3 June 2019

## **Submission on the Veterans Support Amendment Bill**

### **To the Social Services and Community Committee**

This submission is made on behalf of the Royal New Zealand Navy Communicators Association (RNZNCA).

### **Submission**

The RNZNCA, which has a membership of over 600, supports the intent of the Veterans Support Amendment Bill (VSAB). However, by restricting the bill to only post-1974 deployments it negates work that is currently underway by the Office of the Chief of Defence Force (CDF) regarding deployments in an earlier period.

We wish to make the following comments:

- Since 2015, the RNZNCA has been seeking a review of 'Qualifying Operational Service' in the period 1966 to 1975 from Veteran Affairs New Zealand (VANZ) and the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF). There has been a distinct reluctance by VANZ to acknowledge any operational military service during this period. NZDF has only recently agreed to further investigate the matter, following relevant information that was provided to it by the Association. The result of this investigation, under the Office of the CDF, is expected by 30 June 2019, with a recommendation to the Minister of Defence in the third quarter 2019.
- The bill seeks to fix a 'drafting error' in the Veterans Support Act 2014 and to provide certainty around the Minister's ability to recognise Qualifying Operational Service under the act. However, the fix is presently restrictive in that it only covers deployments post-1974 and, generally, those that have been identified on the VANZ website.
- The RNZNCA wholeheartedly supports the intent of the VSAB. However, it seeks a broadening of its scope to cover any deployment that is deemed as being Qualifying Operational Service from 1955 to the present day. This broadening would negate further amendments to the act, thus precluding valuable time of the house being taken up in debating why this was not taken into consideration when the act was first amended.
- Pertinent to the broadening of scope of the bill and worthy of note by the committee is the fact that on 8 August 2007, following a Social Services Appeal Authority decision in 2005 and a High Court decision in 2007, the Secretary for War Pensions issued Directive 2/2007, RNZN Service in Malayan Conflicts. This directive included the decision and direction that "With immediate effect, all RNZN personnel stationed with the British Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve are to be deemed to have war/emergency service for the purpose of the War Pensions Act 1954." The Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR) was in existence from 2 July 1955 to 30 October 1971. However, service with this force by NZDF personnel has yet to be officially recognised and VANZ has ignored the direction given in the Directive.

## **Recommendation**

The RNZNCA supports the bill, but strongly recommends that its scope be broadened to cover the period from 1955 to the present day.

**PRESIDENT  
RNZNCA**