

PRINCIPLES

Question

Does your party accept the two principles stated by the Law Commission above? If, not, why not.

Green Party policy in this regard was developed before the Law Commission reported its Discussion Paper "Towards a Veterans Entitlement Scheme". Green policy is to ensure that veterans who have served in conflict and emergencies receive adequate, fair and appropriate support, including income support and treatment and compensation for injuries, psychological and emotional health problems and occupational diseases acquired as a result of their service.

This policy is supportive of the Principles developed by the Law Commission.

1. WAR DISABLEMENT PENSION RATES

Questions

1. Notwithstanding changes to the general social security environment over the years, would your Party agree at least in principle that the current War Disablement Pension Rates need once again to be adjusted to a "deemed to be fair" level relative to the average wage.

Green Party policy is to ensure that social security entitlements are linked to a percentage of the average wage. That logically extends to the War Disablement Pension. The Green Party would therefore support a one-off adjustment to the level of the War Disablement Pension to bring it closer its 1954 percentage of the average wage.

2. Would you Party keep previous Government promises of regular indexation?

The Green Party supports the War Disablement Pension being regularly adjusted by indexing the rate to a basket of food, energy and housing price indices and legislating for a floor to ensure it cannot fall below a fixed percentage of the average wage.

2. ACC AND AN EQUITABLE BASIS

Questions

Given the two principles stated by the Law Commission, does your Party:

1. Agree that all veterans with attributable conditions should be treated in the same way regarding compensatory payments for these conditions?

Yes.

2. Agree that a good starting point would be entitlements equivalent to those under the ACC.

Yes. Green Party policy supports moving towards a greater emphasis on social justice and equitable compensation for all people suffering impairment, regardless of the causation of that impairment.

3. Agree also that veterans should receive those ACC-level entitlements plus a veteran increment.

The Green Party does not have policy specifically directed to a veteran increment additional to lump sum compensation at an ACC level. We would be open to argument in support of this.

3. EX GRATIA PAYMENTS

Questions

1. Does your Party agree with the principle that veterans should be paid a lump sum commensurate with the ACC total impairment scale as well as their periodic War Disablement pension payments?

Yes, the purposes of lump sum compensation and the periodic War Disablement Pension are different, so the Green Party does not believe receipt of one should impact upon entitlement to the other.

2. Would your Party include the two cancers prostate and lung as qualifying for ex-gratia payment conditions as per the MOU (This applies specifically and only for Vietnam Veterans exposed to Agent Orange and the toxic environment encountered in Vietnam).

Yes, provided the epidemiological evidence supports on the balance of probabilities a causal relationship between Agent Orange exposure and prostate and lung cancer.

4. TAX PAID BY VIETNAM VETERANS

Questions

1. Would your Party support a project to determine the historical facts in this matter, once and for all?

Yes, the Green Party believes that this is a grievance that needs to be fully investigated to ensure that Vietnam Veterans have been treated fairly and legally with regard to income tax liability.

2. If the result shows that the Vietnam cohort was not treated fairly in accord with precedent, would your Party support making a generic payment of \$8000 to each Vietnam veteran (including estates) in line with the JWG's recommendation?

The Green Party would support equitable compensation being paid, including to estates, if it is found that Vietnam Veterans have been treated unfairly with regard to income tax liability. We would not want to make a commitment on the proposed level of compensation until this issue has been fully investigated.

5. ACCESS TO THE VETERANS' PENSION

Questions

1. Does your party agree that to require a veteran to have a War Disablement Pension of 70% or more before he or she qualifies for a Veterans' Pension is discriminatory; and unlike NZ Super it implies a compensatory element in the Veterans Pension?

Yes, the Green Party believes there is little point in restricting Veterans' Pension entitlement according to the level of disablement of the veteran, and such a restriction is discriminatory.

2. Would your Party agree with RNZRSA that all veterans on obtaining the age of 65 should automatically qualify for the Veterans' Pension in place of NZ Super?

In accordance with the Green Party social security principle of universality, all veterans should qualify for Veterans' Pension upon reaching the age of 65.

6. SUPPORT TO THE RNZRSA WELFARE INFRASTRUCTURE

Questions

1. Does your Party agree with the need for assistance to be given to the RNZRSA for its welfare support work to the 60,000 veterans of the nation, and their families, as a cost-effective NGO service provider.

The Green Party, recognising that projects and programmes must have infrastructure support to be sustainable, believes that government funding to NGOs should cover an equitable share of all necessary overheads. The RNZSA provides an invaluable welfare service to veterans and their families, and should receive Government support for the infrastructure and administration of this service.

2. Would your Party provide annual funding on an ongoing basis of an appropriate sum?

Where a voluntary welfare programme is ongoing, the Green Party believes the default position should be three year funding, subject to normal accountability requirements being met, and to changes that may occur in the external situation.

7. A MEDAL FOR SERVICE TO THE NATION

Question

Would your Party support the award of a medal recognising non-operational service in the NZDF since World War 2 covering Regulars, Territorials, and CMT/SMY personnel?

The Green Party does not have a definite position on this issue but will consider the arguments in support of this put forward by the RNZRSA.

8. MEDALS HERITAGE

Question

Would your Party support the strengthening of the criteria to prevent the sale or disposal overseas of Orders, Decorations and Medals awarded to New Zealanders?

The Green Party is committed to preserving New Zealand's heritage, of which this is an important part. We would therefore support strengthening criteria preventing service medals etc being disposed of overseas.

9. DEFENCE POLICY

Question

Would your party support the proposition that our defence policy leans to heavily upon our friends and allies to provide combat capability?

The Green Party believes New Zealand should ensure that its armed forces are capable of performing across a range of operations: from peacekeeping, disaster relief and resource protection through to defensive combat operations. New Zealand should develop an independent defence policy, but remain capable of cooperating with neighbouring countries as appropriate as well as being familiar with key operational areas.

10. WAR VETERANS HOMES AND HOSPITALS

Questions:

1. Would your party agree that the current qualified and restrictive loans should be converted to grants (Among other things, this would erase the discriminatory cut-off at World War II)?

The Green Party can see no justification in requiring loan repayments by Veterans' Homes when the last World War II resident leaves. These facilities provide a valuable service, and the Green Party believes Government should support them through the provision of a sustainable funding path.

2. Would your Party support the reinstatement of regular veterans' residential support payments to the five Homes, and accredit their purpose as providing special service to veterans?

While the Green Party supports the provision of a sustainable funding path for the five War Veterans' Homes, we are open to suggestion as to the best mechanism to achieve this.