

NZ First Responses – Questions by RSA

Please note as a disclaimer that for a lot of areas, the party has yet to finalize its policies. The questions answered draw inspiration from publicly announced policies for the upcoming elections, party principles and past party policies - which may or may not be part of NZ First Election Manifesto for 2026.

1. Veterans' Support Act 2014

Does your party support changes to the Veterans' Support Act 2014? If so, what would you like to see changed, particularly when it comes to fair access to support for different generations of veterans?

New Zealand First supports amending the Veterans' Support Act 2014 to ensure equitable entitlement and access across all generations of service personnel.

We oppose arbitrary administrative distinctions that create unequal treatment between contemporary veterans and older operational cohorts.

In government, NZ First will review the Act to ensure the statutory definition of qualifying operational service reflects modern deployment risks and eliminates equity gaps in support entitlements for all who served.

2. Eligibility for support

What is your party's position on who should be eligible for government-funded veteran support, and on the difference between being recognised as a veteran and qualifying for support under the Veterans' Support Act?

New Zealand First believes that anyone who has taken the oath to serve in the New Zealand Defence Force and deployed on operational or high-risk service is a veteran deserving of Crown support.

While recognizing official veteran status for all service, NZ First supports simplifying qualifying criteria under the Veterans' Support Act so that eligibility for medical, financial, and rehabilitation entitlements is based on service impact and clinical need, rather than restrictive bureaucratic categories.

3. Veterans' Affairs

What would your party do to make sure Veterans' Affairs has the people, funding and resources it needs to provide veterans and their whānau with timely and effective support?

New Zealand First treats veterans' support as an unyielding national obligation, not a balance sheet item.

In line with our 2023 Coalition Agreement commitments, we support cutting Wellington core bureaucratic overheads and redirecting funding straight into Veterans' Affairs operational delivery.

We will properly resource case management staffing, reduce claim processing backlogs, and ensure Veterans' Affairs provides responsive, timely, and compassionate support to veterans and their whānau across every region.

4. Health and mental health

What would your party do to improve access to physical and mental-health support for veterans, particularly where an illness or injury is linked to military service?

New Zealand First prioritizes immediate, comprehensive healthcare access for service-related physical and mental injuries. Under our policy platform, we support removing ACC barriers and streamlining Veterans' Affairs medical cover, so veterans receive immediate treatment without administrative delays.

Furthermore, NZ First secured \$6 million per year for Gumboot Friday free mental health counselling in the Coalition Agreement and expanded primary care funding, ensuring accessible, non-stigmatizing mental health support for veterans and service personnel.

5. Transition from service

How would your party support NZDF personnel as they move from military service into civilian life, including with employment, health, housing, financial wellbeing and access to support?

NZ First supports a structured, fully funded "Transition from Service" pathway for departing NZDF personnel.

We support targeted career transition advice, priority trade training under the Apprenticeship Boost scheme, recognition of military qualifications, and seamless healthcare continuity between NZDF Medical Services and primary health providers.

We also support housing transition assistance and financial advice to ensure former service members and their families successfully integrate into civilian communities.

6. Older veterans and independence

What is your party's position on helping older veterans, and veterans living with impairment, to stay independent and connected with their communities?

Grounded in our Seniors and Veterans platform, NZ First protects the independence and dignity of aging and impaired veterans.

We maintain Superannuation at 65, secured SuperGold Card and Veterans' Card upgrades in our Coalition Agreement, and support expanded local rates rebates and two free annual doctor's visits for cardholders.

We also fund community transport, home-based support services, and low-cost pensioner housing to keep veterans living comfortably in their communities.

7. Families and whānau

How would your party recognise and support families and whānau where military service has had an ongoing impact on them?

New Zealand First recognizes that military service impacts the entire family unit. We support extending Veterans' Affairs case management, counselling, and respite care entitlements to spouses, partners, and dependents of veterans.

Through our broader social policies such as FamilyBoost childcare tax credits, expanded Family Start programmes, and increased funding for community support organizations we ensure families affected by service-related trauma receive comprehensive practical and financial support.

8. Recognition of service

Beyond commemorations and medals, what practical steps would your party support to recognise the particular obligations, risks and consequences that come with military service?

NZ First believes military service involves unique obligations and lifelong risks that demand practical state recognition.

Beyond medals and commemorations, we support upgrading the Veterans' Card to deliver tangible discounts and medical benefits, expanding ACC coverage for service injuries, enforcing preference for veterans in relevant public sector employment, and ensuring that veterans receive priority access to specialized healthcare, housing, and social support services.

9. Listening to veterans

How would your party make sure veterans and organisations supporting the veteran community have a genuine voice when government policy affecting veterans is developed?

Grounded in NZ First Principle 2 (Open, Accountable Government), NZ First ensures the veteran community has a direct voice in executive decision-making.

We support regular formal consultation between Ministers, Veterans' Affairs, the RNZRSA, and frontline veterans' advocacy groups.

NZ First supports establishing a structured Veterans' Advisory Panel to review legislative changes, monitor service delivery, and ensure government policy directly reflects the lived experiences and needs of veterans.

10. Your top priority

If your party forms, or is part of, the next Government, what is the single most important change you would like to make for New Zealand veterans during the next Parliamentary term?

This will be outlined in our election manifesto which will be published soon.

However, New Zealand First's top priority has always been to guarantee long-term financial security, healthcare access, and administrative dignity for all veterans.