

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?

More than a decade after the Act came into force, Labour understands concerns remain about whether it provides fair and consistent access to support across different generations of veterans.

Contemporary service can involve exposure to toxic environments, cumulative physical harm, hearing loss, cancer, psychological injury and other conditions that may emerge years after someone leaves the NZDF.

That is why Labour will commission an independent review of the Veterans' Support Act 2014, in order to establish how the Act, and the services it governs, can be improved.

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?

Labour believes support should be based on the nature of a person's service, their needs, and the effects that service has had on them and their whānau.

Recognition as a veteran acknowledges service, while statutory eligibility determines access to particular forms of government support. They are not identical, but the gap between them must be understandable, justified and fair.

We are concerned that some former personnel may be recognised as veterans yet find themselves unable to access assistance when a serious health condition or other need emerges. Different deployment dates or administrative categories should not create arbitrary barriers between people whose service produced comparable harm.

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 whanau with timely and effective support?

Labour is committed to ensuring Veterans' Affairs is well equipped to provide timely, practical and respectful assistance.

Veterans should not receive warm words followed by months of silence, repeated referrals or promises that are never fulfilled.

Labour would expect clear service standards, proper follow-up, transparent decision-making and individual accountability for unresolved cases. Leadership experience within defence alone is not enough. Veterans' services need people who understand delivery, case management and the importance of doing what has been promised.

Veterans should not have to chase the system while they are sick.

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?

Labour believes veterans must have timely access to physical and mental-health care where illness or injury may be connected to military service.

We also recognise that those effects do not always appear during service. Cancer, respiratory illness, hearing loss, musculoskeletal injuries, chronic pain and mental-health conditions may emerge or worsen years later.

Labour supports stronger coordination between Veterans' Affairs, the NZDF and the public health system, with access to people who understand military service. Veterans should have help obtaining relevant service and medical information rather than being left to navigate several agencies alone.

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?

Labour believes transition planning should begin years before discharge and provide continuity afterwards. It should include a complete health assessment, transfer of medical and exposure records, cross-crediting of military qualifications, employment support, financial guidance, housing assistance, and direct introductions to relevant health and veteran services.

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?

Labour supports helping older veterans and veterans living with impairment to remain independent, secure and connected to their communities.

Our goal is straightforward: veterans should be able to live with dignity, remain part of their communities and obtain practical help before a manageable problem becomes a crisis.

Families and whanau

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

Labour recognises that military service affects the whole family. Partners and whānau often manage long absences, frequent moves, uncertainty, disrupted employment, health crises and the long-term consequences of physical or psychological injury.

Labour believes the veteran support system should recognise whānau as an important part of a veteran's wellbeing. That may include access to clear information, counselling, carer support, respite, financial guidance and assistance during serious illness or transition from service.

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?

Recognition must mean more than medals, speeches and attendance at commemorations.

Practical recognition means having a support system that responds when a veteran becomes ill, is injured, struggles after leaving service or needs help keeping their family secure. A veteran who is praised on Anzac Day but cannot obtain assistance later in the year will understandably question what that recognition really means.

Our goal is straightforward: veterans should be able to live with dignity, remain part of their communities and obtain practical help before a manageable problem becomes a crisis.

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?

Labour supports structured and transparent engagement that includes people with direct lived experience, particularly veterans who found existing systems unresponsive. Consultation should occur early enough to influence policy, not after the main decisions have been made.

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?

Labour will lead a government that builds a fairer and more responsive system for veterans.

The central problem is not a shortage of goodwill or ceremonial recognition. It is the distance between what veterans are promised and what they receive.

Our test would be simple: when a veteran asks for help, does someone take responsibility, follow through and deliver it?

That is why Labour will commission an independent review of the Veterans' Support Act 2014, in order to establish how the Act, and the services it governs, can be improved.