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**Q&As**

**What is a Kawenata?**

A Kawenata is a written promise or agreement that binds the parties in a permanent relationship, like a pact.

**What is the Kawenata that is being proposed?**

The Veterans’ Advisory Board has recommended a Kawenata to formalise the relationship between those who have served and the Government and people of New Zealand.

The Kawenata would essentially be a written promise to better recognise the contribution of service personnel to our country; ensure they do not face disadvantage because of their service and provide support to them and their whānau.

The details, including the wording of the Kawenata, its form (such as whether it should be included in legislation), and what it could offer, have not been developed. The Veterans’ Advisory Board is seeking New Zealanders views about a Kawenata and what it might include.

**What does the survey cover?**

The survey asks New Zealanders about recognition and support for service personnel, and what they think about establishing a Kawenata for New Zealand.

**Who are ‘service personnel’?**

Today, there are around 120,000 people who are currently serving, or have served, in the New Zealand Defence Force (uniformed staff in the Royal New Zealand Navy, New Zealand Army and the Royal New Zealand Air Force, including the reserve forces).

This group are considered ‘service personnel’ and would be central to any Kawenata, along with their whānau. It does not include former or current civilian employees, who have never served.

**What do service personnel do?**

The New Zealand Defence Force supports New Zealand’s security, resilience and wellbeing across a broad range of activities. Service personnel must train, prepare for, and deliver a range of tasks. Examples include:

* Operations contributing to global peace and security and humanitarian support.
* Responding at short notice to domestic emergencies and disasters and those outside New Zealand.
* Activities in New Zealand including explosive ordnance disposal, search and rescue, and supporting the Department of Conservation.
* Air Force and Naval maritime surveillance patrols and exercises within New Zealand’s Exclusive Economic Zone and the Asia-Pacific.
* Support to scientific programmes in Antarctica.

**Why now?**

This work is the result of a review of the Veterans’ Support Act conducted in 2018. Those who contributed to that review reflected on the impacts of service on all those who serve and their whānau. Many called for greater recognition of service personnel, and better and more equitable access to support.

The Minister for Veterans commissioned the Veterans’ Advisory Board to seek the views of New Zealanders about our service personnel and their whānau, and how they should be recognised and supported.

**Why would service personnel and their whānau need more recognition and support?**

Service personnel are, or have been, part of a unique environment and culture - one where there are extraordinary aspects to their service. While serving New Zealand, they do not have all the rights and freedoms of other citizens. They accept that they may be placed in harms’ way. They can spend long periods away from their whānau, which can affect whānau’ wellbeing.

International research indicates that service can have negative impacts on the health and wellbeing of service personnel, and that some face difficulties in transitioning to civilian life. Service personnel can also find it hard to ask for and accept help. In New Zealand, under 1.5% of eligible service personnel under 65 years of age access Government-funded veterans support, and recent research has shown that post-traumatic stress is highly prevalent amongst our service personnel.

**Don’t service personnel already receive the support they need through Defence, ACC, the health sector etc?**

Currently serving personnel do receive wellness support and other assistance from the New Zealand Defence Force. They may also be eligible for other services like accident and health care, on the same basis as other New Zealanders. Veterans support is only available to those who have been deployed on qualifying overseas operations.

However, a much wider group of current and former-service personnel may require services and support to help them transition to civilian life and to ensure that they and their whānau are not disadvantaged through having served. This can include things like help with mental health and family wellbeing, housing and community integration. This support is not just needed from central government, but from all New Zealanders: our communities, iwi, businesses, representative organisations and local services.

**When will the results of the survey be made available?**

The Veterans’ Advisory Board will report back to the Minister for Veterans by early August 2020.

**Do other countries have something similar?**

Yes. Prominent examples are the Armed Forces Covenant in the United Kingdom, and the Australian Defence Veterans’ Covenant. Find information about what those countries have done on [missionfeedback.co.nz](http://www.missionfeedback.co.nz)

**Does the Government intend to change the definition of veteran in the legislation?**

In 2019, the Veterans’ Advisory Board recommended that the definition of ‘veteran’ in the Veterans’ Support Act, is changed so that it covers all service personnel. Government officials have been directed to establish exactly what a definition change would mean and, if it were to go ahead, how it could be managed, including potential costs.