

Hon Chris Penk

Minister for Building and Construction
Minister for Land Information
Minister for Veterans
Associate Minister of Defence
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16 April 2024

Gavin Smith and Jack Steer
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Dear Gavin and Jack

Report of the Veterans' Health Advisory Panel: Review and Summary of Information on the Health Impacts of Exposure to Ionising Radiation

In March 2023, the Veterans' Health Advisory Panel (VHAP) sent the then Minister for Veterans the above report that reviewed the most up-to-date information on the health impact of exposure to nuclear radiation on veterans and their descendants.

That report contained several recommendations, which I have considered since becoming Minister.

As you are aware, there are some additional entitlements available to the children of Operation Grapple veterans that are not currently available to the children of veterans from New Zealand's other nuclear deployments - Jayforce and Mururoa.

These resulted from decisions made by Cabinet in 2001 and 2002. If the recommendations in the VHAP report were to be actioned, I needed to seek Cabinet agreement to extending those additional entitlements to the children of Jayforce and Mururoa veterans.

I am writing to let you know that I have now taken these recommendations to Cabinet. They were considered and supported last week by the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee, and Cabinet has now agreed, in the interests of equity:

- to extend access to genetic counselling (including genetic testing) to the children of those veterans who served in the Jayforce and Mururoa deployments; and
- to extend access to out-of-pocket expenses to children of Jayforce and Mururoa veterans who have accepted conditions.

Cabinet also agreed with the recommendation of the VHAP that a review of studies on the health impacts of nuclear radiation should be repeated every seven to ten years to ensure New Zealand is aware of the most up-to-date information on this topic.

I will be making an announcement about this change but I wanted to let your organisation know ahead of my media release. I am pleased to be able to pass this good news to you and your members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CP', followed by a period.

Hon Chris Penk
Minister for Veterans