

# Mahurangi matters

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Mururoa Veterans executive member Cyril Goulsbro, left, and Warkworth RSA president Bob Harrison were eventually awarded medals for observing the 1973 nuclear test in 2002.

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## Mururoa vets fear nuclear health fallout

A Mururoa Nuclear Veterans Group (MNVG) meeting at the Warkworth RSA last month has launched a national search for descendants of service personnel who witnessed a nuclear test at Mururoa.

One of the servicemen who witnessed the test was Warkworth RSA president Bob Harrison, who was among 600

men aboard New Zealand Navy frigates HMSNZ Otago and HMSNZ Canterbury, sent to observe and protest French nuclear testing in the Pacific in 1973.

Now the MNVG is looking at assisting children of nuclear veterans, who it believes have been affected by their parents' exposure to radiation. They

want them to come forward for a 'first of its kind' genetic study.

Donna Weir, whose father witnessed the test, is spearheading the search because she wants to know whether her miscarriages and her child's deformities are caused from defects in her genes.

"It wasn't until I became a part of this group and we got together that I realised

we all seemed to be having problems ranging from physical deformities to genetic quirks," she says.

"I have two sisters born before my father went to Mururoa and their children haven't been born with the same issues."

Associate Professor David McBride, an epidemiologist from Otago University,

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off the drawing board . . .



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# Mururoa vets fear nuclear health fallout

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and geneticist Andrea Miller have agreed to conduct the study on the genes of veterans and their offspring to see if exposure to radiation has had an impact.

But, MNVG president Gavin Smith says the crew lists of the ship have been 'lost' by the government and the group is having to rely on participants coming forward to carry out the study.

Mr Smith says the Government has been reluctant to acknowledge the plight of nuclear veterans because it would open a Pandora's box of multi-generational health issues that it would have to address. Witnesses of the Mururoa test only officially received veteran status in 2002, after years of petitioning the Government.

"I finally got my recognition from a courier driver who knocked on the door and delivered my medal," Mr Smith says.

In 2015, Veterans Affairs commissioned a report from Environmental Science and Research (ESR) which retrospectively reviewed radiation-related records from the voyages and concluded the crews of the Otago and Canterbury were not exposed to "significant radiation".

But the MNVG says they were denied access to the information the report based its findings on, including measurements from personal radiation detectors.

The group prepared a detailed response in July 2016, cataloguing the illnesses and ailments of 130 nuclear veterans and their progeny, but it largely fell on deaf ears. The key point of disagreement between the ESR and the MNVG is on

whether seawater in the area had been contaminated by radiation.

"Seawater was drawn and boiled, and used for everything on the ship from laundry to brushing your teeth," Mr Smith says.

Maungaturoto's Charlie Lamb, who is on the executive board of the MNVG, says they have provided these details again to current Defence Minister Ron Mark.

"We've just got to keep pushing and

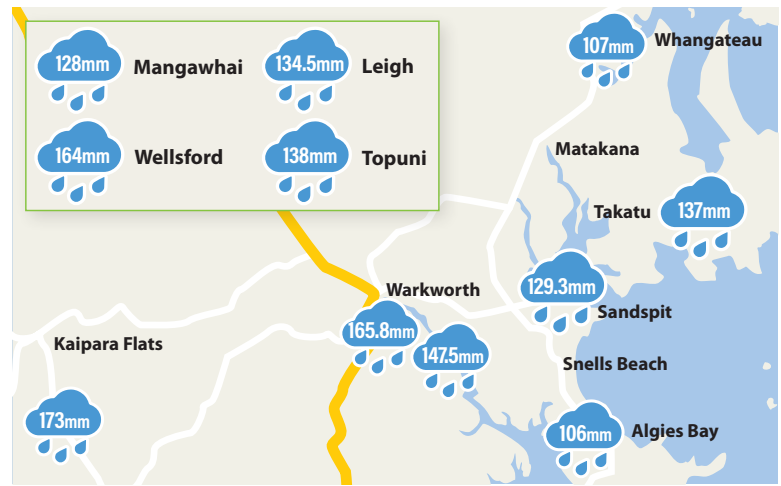
we'll get there. The tricky part is that the government changes all the time," he says.

Meanwhile, Warkworth RSA president Bob Harrison didn't know there were four other veterans in the area who had witnessed the detonation of a nuclear weapon until he joined the MNVG.

"My last two mates from navy service passed away from cancer 20 years ago."

Info: [mururoaveterans73.nz](http://mururoaveterans73.nz)

## Rainfall figures for July



### Spotlight on Warkworth

Highest rainfall day July 5 - 50mm

Total rainfall for the year: 554.5mm

**Fact:** There was no shortage of rain days in July, with only seven days without rain. However, despite 24 days of rain, brief showers have meant that the total still comes to 147.5mm, which is 37mm below the average for July.

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