

# 20 ANNUAL 24 REPORT



TE ARAWHITI  
KI TE HAPORI  
DEFENCE EMPLOYER  
SUPPORT COUNCIL



# PŪRONGO Ā TAU

## 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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# Introduction

The purpose of this report is to inform the Minister of Defence of the work streams and achievements of the Defence Employer Support Council (“DESC”) for the year ended 30 June 2024. This report will also be used to inform broader stakeholders.

With the current backdrop of heightened geopolitical tensions, both regionally and globally and a squeeze on the Defence workforce, our work seems more critical than ever. This gives a heightened importance to the work we do to enable the mobilisation of a Reserve Force to protect New Zealand’s interests. While the demand side of our equation is heightened, the supply side also has the tension of the need for prudent use of resources. The Council has applied ourselves as best we can with understandably constrained resources.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bevan Killick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Bevan Killick**  
Honorary Captain (Navy)  
Chair, DESC

# The need for the Defence Employer Support Council

There have been times in the past when the New Zealand Defence Force has attempted to call up Reservists to serve in deployments and this has been met with resistance from the Employers of those Reservists. This was most noticeable when New Zealand Defence Force personnel were sent to East Timor (Timor-Leste) some years ago. Many Employers of the Reservists called up, were unaware of their staff being Reservists and even less aware of the legislative obligations relating to this. Additionally, those Employers were often unaware of the training being received by their own staff and the skills and

**“ For the sake of Aotearoa New Zealand, these Reservists, their supportive Employers and their training and experiences, need to be celebrated. ”**

experience which those staff members brought back to those businesses. For the sake of our nation, these Reservists, their supportive Employers and their training and experiences, need to be celebrated. Also, those less enthusiastic Employers need to be taken on the journey to learn of the benefits of employing Reservists, rather than seeing those who serve as a burden. Reserve service is good for the individuals concerned, their employers, our nation and often, international impact results from overseas deployments. The Territorial Force Employer Support Council was born. It is now known as the Te Arawhiti ki te Hapori / Defence Employer Support Council (“DESC”) and has an expanded scope.



**We help volunteer  
defence people and  
employers build  
positive, mutually  
beneficial relationships**









# Scope

The Minister of Defence has empowered the DESC to assist with four aspects of the Defence landscape where NZDF meets “civvy street”. In summary, these are:

- Employers of Reservists
- Employers of Cadet Force Officers
- NZDF Youth programmes (such as the Limited Service Volunteers (“LSV”), Cadets and Blue Light Programmes)
- Regular Force personnel transitioning to civilian employment or in some way exiting the NZDF


While not strictly within the scope of our terms of reference, the DESC has also taken an interest in recruitment and retention of personnel. Typically personnel who leave the Regular Force remain on the Reserve list as part of their transition into civilian employment. The relationship with their new civilian employer is important. A smooth transition at this time helps to increase the likelihood of re-enlistment in the future. Work is being completed to suggest to the Minister of Defence a modest broadening of our scope. This would better align our Terms of Reference to current NZDF strategy.

# Tohu Awards

**The Tohu Awards are our flagship event. The ceremony celebrates excellence from members of our Defence Reserve Force, Cadet Force Officers and Limited Service Volunteer Graduates and the commitment from the organisations who support them.**

**We enjoyed an increase in both quantity and quality of applications for the 2023 Awards. The quantity has increased by several magnitude from the previous year. While additional workload to judge these applications, we are delighted to see this increase.**

In previous years applications would detail allowing release at short notice or allowing leave to be taken. This year we have seen some great examples of better explicit policy for Reserve service leave, including various forms of paid or 'top up' paid leave, protected employment for deployments of up to one year, assistance for expenses, as well as greater integration of the skills and experience being leveraged back into the workplace. Examples include, Service development goals and outcomes being included in employee's civilian performance reviews and organisations sharing the benefits of Reservists' training and experience. Organisations have also been seen to offer assistance in Service specific development goals. These provide us with great case studies of best practice and many organisations have allowed us to share their best practice policies with other organisations. This clearly demonstrates the value Reserve Service repays to organisations employing Reservists.

A man in a military uniform is speaking at a podium. He is looking to his right. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a stage or event space with some greenery on the left.

The 2023 Tohu Awards Dinner was held at the Public Trust Hall on Lambton Quay. While unknown when the venue was selected, the Public Trust Hall had a deep connection to the purpose of the evening. New Zealand's first Victoria Cross recipient Charles Heaphy VC was not only a Public Trust employee, but also a Reservist.

The evening was well attended and similar to previous years' attendance included the Chief of Defence, Vice Chief of Defence, the Secretary of Defence and all but one of the Service Chiefs. The NZDF Chief People Officer Jacinda Funnell and the Public Trust Chief Executive Officer Glenys Talivai were also in attendance and presented some of the awards. Being just after the General Election no Members of Parliament attended. Our hope is that November 2024 may see the return of Ministerial attendance, particularly as these are the Minister of Defence's Awards.

We have established a three year cycle of events, covering all three services and the three major metropolitan centres. This will have the Royal New Zealand Navy host at Devonport (Auckland), the Army host in Wellington and the Royal New Zealand Air Force host at the Airforce Museum at Wigram (Christchurch). In an effort to constrain costs we have decided to move the 2024 Tohu Awards from Devonport to Wellington. It will still be hosted by the Navy.

The Tohu awards officially acknowledge how Employers of our Reserve Force and Cadet Force Officers are vital to our Defence Force effectiveness, enabling attendance of training, fulfilment of deployment opportunities and supplementation to our Regular Force members.

The awards recognise that Employers also benefit in employing and supporting members of our Reserve and Cadet Force Officers, as well as our Limited Service Volunteer Graduates, as the training they received through the NZDF helps develop and sharpen their skills in leadership, teamwork, communication, discipline, planning, management, and much more.

Positive relationships between Employers and Reservists or Cadet Force Officers in their civilian workplace often results in personnel remaining engaged in their work and are more likely to be motivated and committed to their employer.

Congratulations to our 2023 award winners and thank you to those who nominated organisations that show their support for our people and the role they play in New Zealand's Defence Force.

# Award Winners

## **Reservist of the year – Winner (Jointly Awarded)** **Lance Corporal Rhys Dillon**

Lance Corporal Rhys Dillon is an outstanding performer within the NZDF Reserve Force and this has been recognised by his unit, Southern Health Support Squadron, Deployable Health Organisation.

One of his major accomplishments was identifying a communication gap within the Reserve unit and introducing a new, local software platform that enabled effective information sharing among team members. This software has been essential in coordinating the activities and outputs of the unit and Lance Corporal Dillon's efforts have been widely praised.

Lance Corporal Dillon's commitment to the NZDF is remarkable, especially given his demanding civilian job as a pilot for Air New Zealand. Despite his busy schedule, he has demonstrated exceptional dedication to his work within the NZDF Reserve Force.

## **Reservist of the year – Winner (Jointly Awarded)** **Sergeant Caroline (Daisy) Williams**

Sergeant Daisy Williams is an outstanding performer within the NZDF Reserve Force and this has been recognised by her unit, the Directorate of Army Reserves, AGS.

She has raised the profile of the Army Reserve Forces through her commitment in the role as a photographer and journalist. The quality of her images and the work she has produced has drawn praise and is a direct reflection of her enthusiasm, creative imagination and work ethos to produce exemplary media products. Her professionalism, dedication and ethical standards make her an exemplary Reservist.

Sergeant Williams is an asset to both the unit and the wider Defence Force, and she is thoroughly deserving of the Reservist of the Year Award.

## **Reserve Employer of the year (Large Employer Category) KPMG (NZ)**

KPMG (NZ) are interested in the careers of Reservists and willingly support their careers in the military alongside a civilian career within KPMG NZ.

KPMG recognise and embrace Reservists and the skills they have gained through military training, enabling cover of civilian engagements while Reservists attend NZDF training. Additional emergency response leave is also considered for Reservists when they are required to respond to domestic emergency events at short or even no notice.

KPMG enable a supportive work environment through an HR Policy which includes 10 days of Reservist Leave, enabling Reservists to attend training without having to take unpaid leave.

## **Reserve Employer of the year (Small Employer Category) Reswax (Resin and Wax Holdings Ltd)**

Reswax actively acknowledge the benefits of military service as a contribution to its business by providing flexible working arrangements as required, enabling time to be spent on both Reserve and civilian tasks. This is formally provided for in employment contracts.

Reswax recognise the unique skills Reservists bring to their workplace. These skills are valued and seen as beneficial to the company. The company acknowledges the benefits of employing Reservists by granting extensive leave when required and providing flexible day-to-day working arrangements.

# Award Winners

## **Outstanding Contribution to the Limited Service Volunteer Programme Glenn Dawson, NZ Police**

The Outstanding Contribution to the Limited Service Volunteer (LSV) Programme Award for 2023 was awarded to Glenn Dawson in recognition of his enduring support and actions as an LSV Course Police Mentor, specifically his devotion and participation in course activities where he engaged with trainees and staff with consistent professionalism, enthusiasm and passion.

During his time as a Police Mentor for the LSV course, Glenn's sole focus was the success of trainees on the course. Glenn made the most of his opportunities throughout his time, to create a rapport and bond with the course trainees. He is an engaging person who has the confidence to establish effective relationships with all youth, enabling him to gain their trust and break down perceptions and barriers.

Glenn has regularly sought guidance and provided counsel and direction, allowing youth to make a positive change in their lives and give themselves options for a pathway towards a better life, including briefing them on the LSV course.

## **Employer Contribution to the Limited Service Volunteer Programme Taylor Preston**

Taylor Preston is an enduring supporter of the Limited Service Volunteer (LSV) Programme and the company's Recruitment Manager, Barry Walsh, is a long-time active benefactor of the LSV programme. Over many years, Barry has given up evenings to speak with the trainees in an open and honest approach about what working in the meat industry looks like, the type of work, and the opportunities that come from working in the industry.

Since the LSV programme returned to the Wellington region in 2019, Taylor Preston have employed over 30 graduates and these graduates are given time off to talk to current trainees about their LSV experience and work journey.

The values, vision and purpose of the LSV programme continue to be reinforced by Taylor Preston with graduates who accept employment opportunities with the company.





**New Zealand Cadet Force Officer Employer of the year  
Toi Ohomai – Te Pūkenga**

The New Zealand Cadet Force Officer Employer of the Year was awarded to Toi Ohomai – Te Pūkenga, Tauranga, nominated by Cadet Force Officer, Major Eli Crawshaw.

Toi Ohomai has demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting the New Zealand Cadet Forces (NZCF) and has consistently provided support to Major Eli Crawshaw and the Cadet Units in Western Bay of Plenty.

Toi Ohomai – Te Pūkenga have HR policies that prioritise service in the organisation and recognise the value of skills obtained through the NZCF training programme, regularly utilising skills gained from NZCF in the workplace.

Leadership and guidance provided by line managers at Toi Ohomai - Te Pūkenga have been instrumental in helping Major Eli Crawshaw achieve success in his role as a senior Cadet Force Officer.

# International connections and a search for best practice



We continue to have particularly strong relationships with our Australian counterparts through our bilateral meetings with the Australian team led by Major General Douglas Laidlaw, Head of Joint Support Services Division and Head of ADF Reserves and Employer Support. In 2022 a contingent led by General Laidlaw visited us for our Awards Dinner and a bilateral meeting. In 2023 we had a contingent visit Sydney for bilateral meetings and their National Employer Support Awards, their version of our Tohu Awards.

While our international travel has been reduced, Major Megan McKenna attended the National Reserve Force Committee meeting in Washington DC in February 2024. The DESC was briefed on her return.

The NATO National Reserve Force Committee (“NRF”) International Conference on Employer Support for the Reserves (“ICESR”) is held every two years. ICESR’s primary aim is to share information and experiences on methods of support by (and for) civilian employers of Defence Reservists and to explore future directions for the development and use of Reserves. In 2022 the ICESR was held in Copenhagen and attended virtually by the DESC Chair and the then AC DRY, Captain Quentin Randall RNZN. There was a suggestion that New Zealand could host the 2024 ICESR Conference, however we have declined as we felt the distance for others to travel would have been prohibitive. The venue for the 2024 ICESR has not been advised at the time of writing.

Many other countries have supportive defence employer certification, similar to the one Fire and Emergency New Zealand (“FENZ”) uses for employers of volunteer firefighters. Other countries, and clearly FENZ, see value in these initiatives. Given greater resources we would establish a similar certification.

# Data Collection

A common theme from previous reports and our international engagement has been that we are data poor. The NZDF Pulse Survey only had a 6-7% take up rate amongst Reservists. This is largely due to the limited ability for Reservists to access the NZDF systems to complete the Pulse Survey. Recently a Reservist specific survey has been run outside of NZDF systems and promoted through LinkedIn. While results are still being collated, response rates are significantly better. This will provide us with a paradigm shift in the information available to us. This will be extremely valuable when seeking specialist skills from the Reserve Force that are not commonly available within the Regular Force.



**While internationally, Reserves have significant differences between nations, many of the challenges are consistent. We will continue these useful engagements.**



# Communications



One of the best ways to engage with employers and the business community is via the LinkedIn social media platform and to a lesser degree Facebook. However, many of our serving service people are for good security reasons, a little shy when it comes to social media. When the DESC re-established in mid-2019 there were fewer than 20 LinkedIn followers. An informal target of 1000 Linked In followers was set which was achieved during the year. At 30 June 2024 there were approaching 1400 Linked In followers on the DESC page, an increase of 16% in the year. We now have an informal target of 2500 LinkedIn followers. Significant investment of time and resource has gone into growing this audience with posts regularly receiving around 4000 views. Pleasingly, the LinkedIn posts with the highest views were those celebrating the Tohu Awards.

Significant time and effort has been invested in building a good relationship with Defence Public Affairs. This has resulted in all three service publications (“Navy Today”, “Army News” and “Air Force News”) publishing advertisements promoting the Tohu Awards.

Work continues on our public facing website, which now includes details of previous Tohu Award winners and biographical details of the Council members. Significantly more resources need to be available for Reservists and their Employers.

# Veterans' Affairs



DESC keeps in close contact with Veterans' Affairs given that most recent veterans are Reservists by default. This is also an important pillar for the reenlistment strategy of the NZDF. Where appropriate DESC is represented at Veteran Expos and symposiums.

As service personnel leave the Regular Force they typically become Reservists in some capacity. We are also using our established social media channels to be a catalyst for Veterans' Affairs to connect with more contemporary Veterans who don't necessarily identify with the traditional perception of being a Veteran. These events also provide useful anecdotes of personnel transferring to civilian life and Reserve Force service.

## Networks and soft power

The DESC has developed solid relationships with key contacts within close organisations. We need to continue to build our profile and keep connecting with target organisations to tell our story. Over the coming years we intend on connecting with Chambers of Commerce, Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission and broader Public Sector, the Iwi Leaders' Forum, Human Resource forums and other similar groups.

The DESC members are some of most supportive and best networked groups available for the NZDF. One great example of this was the meeting that was arranged in London for Chief of Navy, Rear Admiral David Proctor to meet with the incoming Lord Mayor of London, the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor Michael Mainelli KStJ and his wife Mrs Elisabeth Mainelli. Some fruitful discussions around world trade and military procurement resulted.

# Legislative changes

## Legislative Changes

We continue to monitor and receive briefings from NZDF personnel regarding their work on the Volunteer Employment Protection Act (“VEPA”) and any potential amendments. The Act is administered by the Ministry for Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE). We are working to gain better understanding of the individuals responsible to the VEPA within MBIE.

## Other initiatives

The DESC contributes to NZDF by providing connections to industry and employers. This is particularly helpful for thought leadership and strategic advice on areas such as cyber, digital, Information Technology, future workforce architecture, health, e-sports and equity and inclusion.

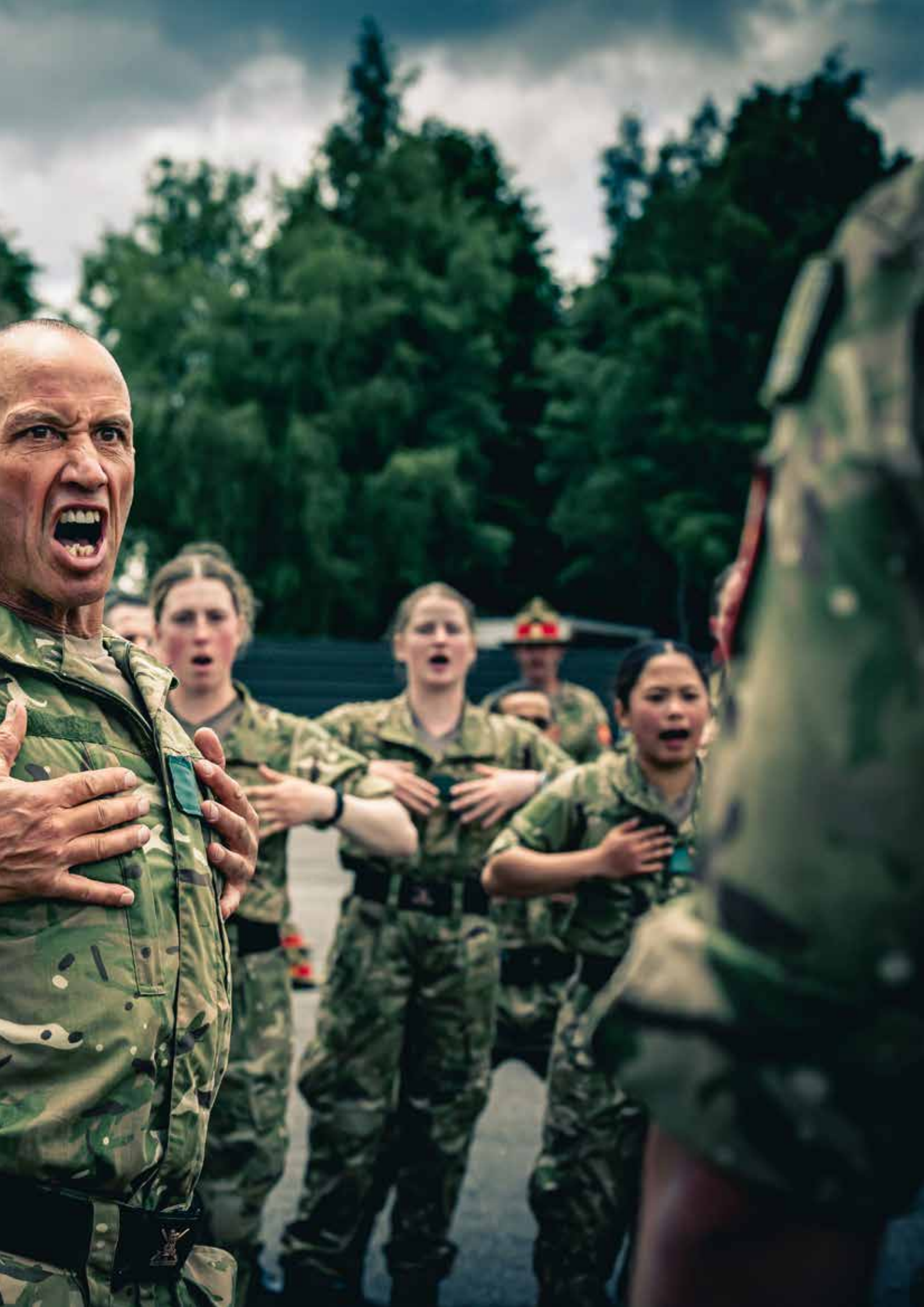
We have also pushed for Reserve Units to better document who their significant employers are. This was found to be absent when senior NZDF leaders suggested they meet with Reserve Force Employers. There is also a role for Regional Engagement Officers (“REOs”) to add value in this space, but in essence the intelligence for this will be held at the unit level. We have been supportive of the reinvigoration of the REO roles throughout the regions.

Eventually, when funding is available we would like to reinstitute “BOSS LIFT”. This would likely be through the REO network. In the past this has taken employers abroad to see their Reservists in the field or on exercise. This is more likely to be a domestic visit to a training ground such as Waiouru or Tekapō, to view an exercise.

DESC members continue to refer suitable industry and community leaders for the role of Limited Service Volunteer (“LSV”) Course Patrons and have also stepped up to fill in when Patrons become unavailable. Most of the DESC Members have been LSV Patrons and are passionate about the work of the Youth Development Units. Former DESC Member Tui Te Hau has recently been a LSV Course Patron and her journey was appropriately covered on social media.

Material and resources for Employers continues to be developed and this will all become more visible with a future refresh of the website.

The DESC has received various briefings on Remuneration initiatives, Retention efforts, Cyber, Security and other issues that are top of mind for NZDF leadership.



## **Team arrivals and departures**

We farewelled Colonel Jason Dyhrberg DSD as Assistant Chief Defence Reserves Youth and Sport (“AC DRYS”). Colonel Dyhrberg has not moved far as he is now the Chief of Staff for the Chief People Officer. This is a key relationship so it has been helpful to have him in that role.

Colonel Roger Margetts ONZM was appointed to the role of AC DRYS replacing Colonel Dyhrberg at the beginning of the year under review. Under Colonel Margett’s tenure we have seen a great work force applied to the Reservist sphere. Lieutenant Colonel Cory Neale, Lieutenant Colonel Mark Ogilvie and Major Megan McKenna have all joined the team.





MAJGEN John Boswell, DSD  
Chief of Army and CDF Rep  
**Farewelled**



Captain David Morgan



Bevan Killick  
Honorary Captain (Navy),  
Chair



Felicity Evans



Brenda Steele



Jules Fulton



Warner Cowin



CAPT Corina Bruce RNZNR,  
Deputy Chair



Kirk Hope



COL Jason Dyhrberg, DSD  
**ACDRYS Farewelled**



Richard Waggott



COL Roger Margetts, ONZM  
**ACDRYS Welcomed**

**Our Council  
members are  
engaged and  
enthusiastic about  
the work of the  
DESC.**

# DESC Council Members

All DESC Council and Secretariat Members are engaged and enthusiastic about the work of the DESC. We began the year with a vacancy on the Council. We had identified Richard Waggott to fill the vacancy. Our recommendation to appoint Richard was approved by the Minister of Defence. The individual DESC members all have exceptional careers in their respective fields. The DESC Members have all gone above and beyond during the year in their contribution to DESC matters. The DESC Members and their meeting attendance is as follows:

Council Member	Meeting attendance			
	6 September 2023	8 November 2023	24 February 2024	18 June 2024
Hon CAPT (Navy) Bevan Killick, Chair	Present	Present	Present	Present
CAPT Corina Bruce, RNZNR, Deputy Chair	Present	Present	Present	Present
MAJGEN John Boswell, DSD (CDF Rep)	Apology	Present	Present	N/A
BRIG Rose King (CDF Rep)	N/A	N/A	N/A	Present
Felicity Evans	Present	Present	Present	Present
Jules Fulton	Apology	Present	Apology	Present
Kirk Hope	Present	Present	Apology	Present
Captain David Morgan	Present	Apology	Present	Present
Brenda Steele	Present	Apology	Present	Present
Warner Cowin	Present	Apology	Present	Present
Richard Waggott	Present	Present	Present	Present

We have been superbly supported by the DESC Secretariat team, including Marika Trotter, John Harvey and Shiloh Dobie. The DESC Members record their gratitude for the team's hard work, dedication and outstanding achievements during the year.

# Finance

ALL VALUES '000	Financial Year			
	FY 23/24	FY 22/23	FY 21/22	FY20/21
Budget	142.2	81	n/a	n/a
Tohu Awards Venue	41.1	72.1	34.3	17.2
Tohu Awards Communications & Media	46.7	58.4	10.5	12.1
Council Members' fees	22.0	28.4	20.6	21.7
Council Members' travel	13.8	13.1	19.5	17.5
Council Operating costs	17.0			
	<b>140.6</b>	<b>172.0</b>	<b>84.9</b>	<b>68.5</b>

# Finance

The table illustrates a slight decrease in spending in the Tohu Awards, Communications & Media and the Council Members' fees categories.

The decrease in final cost for Tohu24 is reflected in:

- tighter controls over catering and entertainment expenditure,
- the Wellington based venue, and
- a reduction of attendees.

A decrease in spending on Communications & Media for FY23/24 reflects the now well established set of resources, to be drawn upon to produce Tohu, now and into the future. These resources are paramount to the acknowledgement and celebration of award recipients.

The Tohu awards costs are split into those related to the venue and those related to Communications & Media. The venue costs relate to the cost of the venue, catering, AV support and travel and related expenses for finalists & HQ support. The Communications and Media costs relate to the costs of producing the films, social media, meeting, event Design, production of resources and travel and related expenses for the Comms team.

The resources will be made available on the DESC website. LinkedIn and Facebook followers, visitors to the DESC website and social media clicks, continue to steadily increase.

Council members' travel expenditure remains consistent with last year. The number of meetings held during the year and the venues have largely, remained the same. Wellington has been the location for DESC meetings which has enabled travel costs to be kept to a minimum. Council Operating costs include associated cost for meetings, the DESC website and the production of the 2022/23 Annual Report, a requirement as per the Terms of Reference.



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AIR CADETS

# Conclusion

It is evident from our international counterparts that the work of the DESC is increasingly important, particularly if the NZDF is likely to need to flex its capabilities. This is increasingly more likely as a result of global geopolitics.

The well-defined strategy work, rebranding of our Awards, increased social media presence, general profile of DESC and the Tohu Awards, have been significantly enhanced over the past few years. This year we have seen some of the results of this work and it has been very pleasing.

NZDF recruitment, retention, increased workload, importance of youth programmes have all contributed to our work becoming vital for the effective operation of NZDF and better societal outcomes for Aotearoa New Zealand.

