



Headquarters
New Zealand Defence Force
Defence House
Private Bag 39997
Wellington Mail Centre
Lower Hutt 5045
New Zealand

OIA-2024-5011

25 June 2024

[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Dear [Redacted]

I refer to your email of 1 May 2024 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

Please release any advice provided to Ministers, or their offices, relating to the Government's plan to create Young Offender Military Academies.

The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) produced one briefing to the Minister of Defence regarding Young Offenders Military Academies. This is at Enclosure 1. Where indicated, information is withheld in accordance with section 9(2)(f)(iv) to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protects the confidentiality of advice tendered by officials. The NZDF also provided email advice to the Minister. These emails are at Enclosure 2. Where indicated, information is withheld in accordance with section 9(2)(g)(i) to allow the free and frank expression of opinion by officials in the course of their duty. Information is also withheld to protect the privacy of individuals in accordance with section 9(2)(a) of the OIA.

You have the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to ask an Ombudsman to review this response to your request. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that responses to official information requests are proactively released where possible. This response to your request will be published shortly on the NZDF website, with your personal information removed.

Yours sincerely

AJ WOODS

Air Commodore

Chief of Staff HQNZDF

Enclosures:

1. Brief
2. Emails



BRIEF FOR THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE – NZDF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OUTPUTS AND MILITARY ACADEMIES

Date: 29 Jan 24 **NZDF Tracking No.:** OMDRFI 2024-024

Purpose:

1. To provide a brief on NZDF Youth Development outputs with a focus on challenges since 2018 and advice on Youth Offender Military Academy (YOMA) options. This is intended to provide context for YOMA options under consideration by the Minister for Children and other ministers.

NZDF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OUTPUTS

Background

2. The Defence Act 1990 focuses the NZDF's core military capabilities primarily on external challenges to New Zealand's national interests. The NZDF also responds to domestic contingencies including civil defence emergencies, and making contributions to communities across New Zealand.
3. The NZDF is authorised to deliver a range of Youth Development programmes. Under the Purchase Agreement, Output 4.5 'Support to NZ Communities', the NZDF delivers training for around 5,500 young New Zealanders annually.
4. These efforts are highly valued by communities and NZDF's partners. Over the past 30 years, these efforts have assisted thousands of young New Zealanders to achieve better life outcomes through their own efforts.
5. The NZDF has approximately 180 permanent staff to deliver Youth Development outputs. This includes an established core of 102 uniformed Youth Development Specialists supported by civilian social workers, registered nurses and a range of other command and support staff. Staff are selected for their high motivation to improving life outcomes for young people across New Zealand and are selected, trained and cleared in accordance with relevant legislation as child workers.
6. Presently the uniformed core of Youth Development Specialists is operating at 67 per cent of established strength (approximately 34 personnel short) in line with the broader NZDF's workforce pressures. This is impacting staff morale, retention and, in some cases, safe delivery of training.

Youth Development outputs

7. In summary the NZDF's Youth Development outputs are:
 - a. **Limited Service Volunteers.** Focussed on supporting youth employment outcomes supporting up to 1,200 trainees per year in partnership with the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). Participants are adults of 18 to 24 years of age. This scheme has faced a number of challenges since 2018. These are outlined from paragraph 9 (below).
 - b. **Service Academies.** Focussed on reducing school truancy and raising academic attainment supporting up to 580 trainees per year in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MoE). MoE notes academic achievement is at a higher

rate than the National average. Participants are school students of 15 to 17 years of age.

- c. **Blue Light.** Focussed on deterring non-serious youth offenders supporting up to 360 trainees per year in partnership with the NZ Police-affiliated Blue Light Ventures trust. This impacts positively on individual connections with family and community, reducing recidivism or transition to more serious criminal activity. Participants are nominated by NZ Police or their families, and are from 15 to 17 years of age.
- d. **New Zealand Cadet Forces.** Focussed on high quality youth leadership and citizenship supporting up to 3,400 cadets (and their adult officers) in support of the three Cadet Associations (Sea, Army and Air). Cadets volunteer in their communities and are from 13 to 19 years of age.

8. The NZDF Annual Report FY22/23 confirms that, with the exception of the Limited Service Volunteer scheme, these programmes are performing to a high standard (ie. more than 90 per cent satisfaction of supported partners.) A summary of the NZDF Youth Development delivery performance and costs across FY23/24 is enclosed.

Challenges – Limited Service Volunteers scheme

9. Aside from the current workforce crisis impacting across all military outputs, the Limited Service Volunteer (LSV) scheme has experienced a range of complex challenges since 2018. Efforts to expand the scheme by 100 per cent (ie. from 800 up to 1600) during the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has been the greatest challenge for the NZDF.

10. MSD has found it difficult to generate the right number of trainees to match the increased investment by both agencies. Changes to benefit stand-down policies and the significant expansion of regionally based COVID response work programmes have in effect starved the LSV scheme of the right number of trainees who were both physically and mentally 'fit' for military style-training.

11. To address this, MSD provided more trainees who would not have been considered fit for the scheme prior to 2018. This saw a significant increase in the 'complexity' of LSV trainees. In this context, 'complexity' is a range of mental health, and other issues degrading the readiness of a trainee to commit to military-style training. This has impacted the NZDF capacity to support the scheme by raising the risk for both LSV trainees and staff and depressing the course graduation rate.

12. Prior to 2018, the NZDF deployed capability to safely absorb and support a ratio of up to 30 per cent trainee complexity on any course. Where the complexity ratio of trainees on a course is above 30 per cent, the course graduation rate falls sharply. More seriously, the risk to other trainees and NZDF staff spiked to the point where in 2022/23, with the complexity ratio of trainees rising to 50 and 60 per cent in some cases, 10 NZDF staff suffered serious mental harm including several cases of suicidal ideation.

13. The number of physical assaults on staff has also increased. Staff morale, wellbeing and retention has suffered accordingly and this has impacted families. From this experience, it is clear that NZDF staff are not trained to deal with more than 50 per cent trainee complexity before suffering serious harm.

14. Both MSD and the NZDF are partnered to address trainee complexity ratios as a matter of urgency. A new Memorandum of Understanding for the LSV Scheme (2023 to

2027) was signed last year. Both agencies are partnered to ensure the risk profile is reduced while the graduation rates are increased.

15. Lastly, the NZDF is mindful that Oranga Tamariki has been invited to provide options to Government on potential YOMA. Noting the potential implications for NZDF Youth Development outputs, NZDF advice on this subject follows.

NZDF ADVICE ON YOUTH OFFENDER MILITARY ACADEMIES

YOMA – Minister for Children guidance

16. The NZDF has been engaged with Oranga Tamariki in support of their work to develop options for a YOMA scheme since October 2023.

s.9(2)(f)(iv)



19. Further to this guidance, the Ministers for Children, Police and Justice have identified the requirement to deliver a 'pilot' programme before the end of 2024.

Implications for the NZDF

s.9(2)(f)(iv)



Enclosure:

1. NZDF Youth Development Performance FY 2022/2023

NZDF Youth Development Performance FY2022/2023

NZDF Youth Development Commitment Title	Partner AoG/NGO	Period committed	Trainee Capacity per year	NZDF YDS Specialist Roles ¹	Cost to Government per year (\$M) ²	Current Status per NZDF 2022/23 Annual Report ³
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)
YDU – Limited Service Volunteer (LSV)	Ministry of Social Development	To FY 26/27 4 Year MoU	1,200	68	\$16.25M (\$13.5K per trainee)	Amber: Due to low trainee and RF staff numbers. LSV Aim: Youth Employment.
YDU – Service Academies (SA)	Ministry of Education	To FY 26/27 4 Year MoU	580	20 (shared across programmes ⁴)	\$3.7M (\$6.7K per trainee)	Green: Ministry of Education aims were met. SA Aim: Attainment of School Qualifications.
YDU – Blue Light (BLV)	Blue Light Ventures (NZ Police affiliated)	To Dec 2023 Renewal imminent	360		\$50K to \$100K (Leverages LSV & SA)	Green: Blue Light Venture aims were met. Blue Light Venture Aims: Early intervention in Youth delinquency.
NZCF – NZ Cadet Forces (NZCF)	Three Cadet Associations' and the RNZRSA	160 year commitment (Charter of Support)	3,400	14	\$4.4M (\$1,300 per cadet)	Green: NZCF aims were met. Aim: Making great NZ Citizens and Leaders
Theoretical Totals			5,540 ⁵	102 ⁶	\$24.4M (\$4.4K per youth)	Green (Output 4.5: NZDF Support to Communities)
Current 'actual' Totals			4,800	68		

¹ The Youth Development Specialist (YDS) Trade is the backbone of NZDF YD training delivery.
² Total estimated NZDF and partner agency/NGO contributions (FY23/24 for both PERSEX and OPEX).
³ NZDF Annual Report 2023. LSV status impacted by MSD trainee recruitment and NZDF staff retention.
⁴ Service Academy and Blue Light use the same staff. Due to staff shortages this model is under stress.
⁵ NZDF generates capability to assure safe staff to trainee ratios and relevant partner/programme outcomes.
⁶ This is the total 'Instructor' number. This does not include vital Command, Coordination and Logistics staff.

From: s.9(2)(a)
Sent: Wednesday, 6 March 2024 12:55 p.m.
To: s.9(2)(a)
Cc: Ministerial Services; Woods, Andy, AIRCDRE; s.9(2)(a) s.9(2)(a)
MAJ; s.9(2)(a)
Subject: RE: Transcript Military Style Academies [Seemail]

Thank you Team. Will get this to the office.



s.9(2)(a)
NZDF Private Secretary | Office of Hon Judith Collins KC MP

Attorney-General | Minister of Defence | Minister for Digitising Government
Minister Responsible for the GCSB | Minister Responsible for the NZSIS
Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology | Minister for Space
Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission's Report into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques

DDI: s.9(2)(a)
Email: s.9(2)(a) | Website: www.Beehive.govt.nz
Private Bag 18041, Parliament Buildings, Wellington 6160, New Zealand

Authorised by Hon Judith Collins MP, Parliament Buildings, Wellington

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From: s.9(2)(a) <s.9(2)(a)>
Sent: Wednesday, March 6, 2024 11:34 AM
To: s.9(2)(a) <s.9(2)(a)>, s.9(2)(a) <s.9(2)(a)>
Cc: Ministerial Services <ministerialservices@nzdf.mil.nz>; Woods, Andy, AIRCDRE <s.9(2)(a)>, s.9(2)(a) <s.9(2)(a)>, s.9(2)(a) <s.9(2)(a)>
<s.9(2)(a)>, s.9(2)(a) <s.9(2)(a)>, s.9(2)(a) <s.9(2)(a)>
Subject: RE: Transcript Military Style Academies [Seemail]

*** [SEEMAIL] This message may contain classified information ***

Kia ora s.9(2)(a)

As discussed, here is the transcript from Minister Mitchell on RNZ this morning.

s.9(2)(g)(i) will be an “extended” LSV programme, staffed by NZDF – which is not accurate. The Minister’s comments about the success of the LSV course could lead to public misunderstanding about the nature and extent of NZDF’s role in YOMA.

The YOMA are not comparable with the LSV programme for the reasons below:

- LSV personnel are adults, YOMA are children.
- LSV is a volunteer programme, while YOMA is a custodial sentence handed down by Judges, for serious criminal offending (legislation changes required to do this are yet to occur)
- LSV has a low (less than 30%) complex cohort, YOMA is 100% complex cohort (Meaning major differences in needs/security etc)
- LSV is an eight-week residential course, YOMA is a 12 month residential detention
- LSV aims are for young adults (aged 18-24) to gain employment, YOMA is for court sentences for children up to 17-years-old following conviction for serious criminal activity

When asked about who will be involved in delivering YOMA, and that OT doesn’t have a good reputation, Minister Mitchell “points back to LSV” and states that it is NZDF-led.

The current proposal for YOMA is for NZDF to be involved at a Governance level, not staffing the facilities or delivering programmes (like in LSV).

Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Ngā mihi,

s.9(2)(a)

s.9(2)(a)

Strategic Advisor – Office of the Chief of Defence Force
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa | New Zealand Defence Force

s.9(2)(a)

www.nzdf.mil.nz

From: s.9(2)(a)

Sent: Wednesday, 6 March 2024 10:12 a.m.

To: s.9(2)(a) <s.9(2)(a)>; s.9(2)(a) <s.9(2)(a)>

Cc: Ministerial Services <ministerialservices@nzdf.mil.nz>; Woods, Andy, AIRCDRE

s.9(2)(a), s.9(2)(a), s.9(2)(a), s.9(2)(a)

s.9(2)(a), s.9(2)(a)

(Parliament External) s.9(2)(a)

Subject: Transcript Military Style Academies

Team,

I spoke to the office about the interview on Military Style academies. They have requested a copy of the transcript for their review and comment.

Could I also please ask that you produce a few bullet points on where you see the issues.



s.9(2)(a)

NZDF Private Secretary | Office of Hon Judith Collins KC MP

Attorney-General | Minister of Defence | Minister for Digitising Government
Minister Responsible for the GCSB | Minister Responsible for the NZSIS
Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology | Minister for Space
Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission's Report into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques

s.9(2)(a)

Email [s.9\(2\)\(a\)](mailto:s.9(2)(a)@nzdf.govt.nz) | Website: www.Beehive.govt.nz
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Authorised by Hon Judith Collins MP, Parliament Buildings, Wellington

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