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OIA-2025-5292

28th

March 2025

Rev Hamish Kirk
fyi-request-30267-a39f93d4@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Rev Hamish Kirk,

I refer to your email of 1 March 2025 requesting, under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), information on New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) Chaplaincy and NZDF Social Workers. A response to the various parts of your request is set out below.

1. *I seek a copy of any information that would explain why so many NZDF Chaplains do not meet the entry requirements of a tertiary Theology or equivalent degree to NZQA level 7*

It is preferable that candidates have a Theology or equivalent degree, but this is only one of the entry criteria. As part of the selection process, all candidates are interviewed by the Chaplains Defence Advisory Council, where a candidate must demonstrate they are theologically sound to be acceptable to go forward to the next step in the selection process. Their theological training and qualifications are weighed against their ministry experience, as well as the mandatory requirements of being an ordained minister and being in good standing with their sending church.

The NZDF Chaplaincy Employment Profile, under entry requirements, states that the minimum entry requirements for Chaplains “will normally require ... a tertiary Theology or equivalent degree to NZQA level seven”. It does not state that they “are to”. The relevant extract from the Chaplaincy Employment Profile is provided below.

41. Entry Requirements. *Chaplains are religious professionals who, prior to engagement by the NZDF, are to be credentialed in accordance with their relevant faith body through the Chaplains’ Defence Advisory Council (ChDAC). Minimum entry requirements for the CHAP EG will normally require that candidates:*

- a. Meet the citizenship and security requirements required for service and necessary to qualify for an appropriate security clearance;*
- b. be Ordained, Commissioned, or otherwise fully authorised to officiate on behalf of their sending religious or faith body;*
- c. have successfully completed a tertiary Theology or equivalent degree to NZQA level seven;*
- d. have completed five years full-time ministry and be in good standing with their sending faith body;*
- e. be medically fit for service; and*
- f. have successfully completed an approved Officer Selection Board.*

2. *What are the minimum academic qualifications needed to be recruited as a NZDF Social Worker?*

NZDF Social Workers are required to be registered by the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB) and must also hold an annual Practising Certificate. The SWRB maintains a list of qualifications that are

accepted by the Board, and these are publicly available on the SWRB website¹. The SWRB also provides an Experience Pathway for registration which recognises those who have been working in a social work related field for a number of years, but who do not hold a recognised social work qualification.

3. *How many line- social workers are employed in the NZDF.*

NZDF Social Workers are employed by local Camps and Bases Command with Technical Command provided by the Defence Health Directorate. There are currently 11 Social Workers employed in the NZDF with a further seven employed to provide direct support to the three Youth Development Units (YDU).

4. *How many direct senior (social worker) managers are there managing the line-social workers and what is their collective remuneration?*

There are three Senior Technical/Management leads, two service the NZDF and one services the YDU. The total collective annual salary midpoint for these positions is \$358,847.

5. *How many NZDF social workers have an undergraduate degree in social work?*

The NZDF does not maintain formal centralised records of an individual's qualifications. There is provision for individuals to voluntarily enter their qualifications in the ESS system. No individuals employed as NZDF Social Workers have chosen to enter Bachelor of Social Work qualifications.

6. *I seek a copy of any information around the consideration of deploying NZDF social workers either in uniform or as civilians.*

The NZDF has not considered deploying Social Workers. This part of your request is therefore declined in accordance with section 18(e) of the OIA as the information you requested does not exist.

7. *I request a copy of any information that might explain why clergy, in the NZDF, need the current level of management. (i.e four Principal Chaplains)*

A copy of the governance framework for the delivery of Chaplaincy Services in the NZDF is enclosed.

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.

Yours sincerely

GA Motley
Brigadier
Chief of Staff HQNZDF

Enclosure:

1. Defence Force Instruction 18.6 Chaplaincy, Chapter 4 – Governance Framework

¹ <https://swrb.govt.nz>

Chapter 4 - Governance Framework

4.1 Governance of New Zealand Defence Force Chaplaincy Services

The governance framework for the delivery of Chaplaincy Services in the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) consists of—

- (1) the Principal Defence Chaplain (PDC);
- (2) the Chaplaincy Leadership Team (CLT);
- (3) the Chaplains' Defence Advisory Council (ChDAC);
- (4) Defence Health Directorate governance; and
- (5) the Surgeon General.

4.2 Principal Defence Chaplain

a. The PDC is—

- (1) accountable to the Surgeon General for providing Chaplaincy Services within the NZDF; and
- (2) responsible for the—
 - (a) strategic direction of Chaplaincy Services within the NZDF and its alignment to Defence Health;
 - (b) professional/[technical control](#) of the NZDF Chaplaincy Service, including governance and regulatory compliance; and
 - (c) management of the NZDF Chaplaincy budget and cost centre. This includes allocating specified amounts for—
 - (i) Lead Chaplains;
 - (ii) Principal Chaplains, in the performance of their duties; and
 - (iii) each NZDF Regular Force Chaplain, for supervision and personal ministry purposes (refer to DHR 39 *Spiritual Health and Support Services* (on issue)).

b. The specific functions of the PDC are—

- (1) specifying the required standards of practice and the governance framework for NZDF Chaplaincy;
- (2) being the NZDF Chaplaincy Regulator in order to ensure—
 - (a) legal compliance;
 - (b) quality assurance;
 - (c) professional competence;

- (d) cultural competence;
- (e) the appropriate conduct of religious services; and
- (f) fiscal accountability; and
- (3) being a full member of ChDAC.
- c. In addition, the PDC is responsible for ensuring that NZDF Chaplains—
 - (1) are appropriately trained and credentialed prior to joining the NZDF; and
 - (2) maintain professional practice throughout their engagement with the NZDF.

4.3 Chaplaincy Leadership Team

- a. The CLT has a shared responsibility for delivering and managing chaplaincy in the NZDF.
- b. The key responsibilities of the CLT include the following—
 - (1) Assisting with the review and approval of policies, ensuring that they are—
 - (a) consistent with ongoing requirements of NZDF Chaplaincy Services; and
 - (b) in accordance with both the Defence Health Strategy 2025 and wider NZDF strategic direction.
 - (2) Ensuring that NZDF Chaplains are recruited, trained and managed to sustain the chaplaincy capability.
 - (3) Ensuring that NZDF Chaplains are adequately resourced in order to provide Chaplaincy Services to the NZDF Whānau.
 - (4) Providing guidance on the training of NZDF personnel on ethical and moral matters.
 - (5) Ensuring that operational deployments and exercises are appropriately resourced with Chaplaincy Services.
- c. All decisions made at CLT meetings are under the authority of the Surgeon General.
- d. The CLT membership consists of the—
 - (1) PDC;
 - (2) Principal Chaplain (Delivery);
 - (3) Principal Chaplain (Capability); and
 - (4) Principal Chaplain (Operations).
- e. Decision thresholds for the CLT are as follows—
 - (1) Approval of strategic and operational policy related to Chaplaincy Services.

- (2) Approval of operational chaplaincy decisions relating to workforce, training and equipment.
 - (3) Recommendations on appointments, promotions and extensions of service for NZDF Chaplains.
 - (4) Recommendations on the posting and deployment of NZDF Chaplains.
 - (5) Oversight of the provisions of chaplaincy input into ceremonial and commemorative events.
- f. The CLT is managed and conducted in accordance with the *Terms of Reference* stated in DHR 39 *Spiritual Health and Support Services* (on issue).