



PATRONS' BULLETIN

Edition 4: OCTOBER 2025

COMMANDING OFFICER'S UPDATE



Lieutenant Colonel Mark Blythen
Commanding Officer,
Youth Development Unit

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Patrons' Bulletin, a twice yearly update which aims to keep you abreast of the Limited Service Volunteer programme and the work we do at YDU.

It's been a busy year, particularly from 01 July with LSV course numbers increasing. The plotted trajectory sees a return to 1,200 course spaces per year which for YDU means 150 LSV trainees on each course at Whenuapai, 90 trainees on each course at Trentham, and 100 on each of the Burnham courses. Given the personnel pressures across the NZDF, this will be challenging for us to meet, so our staff are working hard to absorb the new normal.

In this edition there's the usual good news story of an ex-trainee who is now working for Fulton Hogan. Read about Te Arawhiti – an accelerated pathway pilot that successfully saw an LSV join the Navy two weeks after graduating. You'll also find some stories of an ex-Service Academy student and ex-LSV graduate, who's goal is to give back to youth, through serving at YDU.

You'll find the graduation dates for all 2026 LSV courses and remember that as a past patron you are always welcome to these inspiring milestone occasions – just reach out to the Officer Commanding in your region to arrange (contact details are inside).

I'll take this opportunity to welcome our new patrons that have joined us since the last edition; and you'll find some images of the Southern Patrons' Event held in April. We are planning on hosting a Patrons Event in each of the regions in 2026 so keep an eye out for dates in the future.

Thank you for your continued support to the LSV programme and the wider NZDF.

He waka eke noa (We are all in this canoe together, no exceptions).



Between 1 January - 1 October 2025 (YTD):

721

LSV TRAINEES MARCHED IN

496

GRADUATED

69%
GRADUATION RATE





HE WAKA EKE NOA

We are all in this canoe together, no exceptions

MALAKAI PRITCHARD

Malakai Pritchard impressed recruiters from Fulton Hogan during the LSV Discovery Day Career Expo.

Malakai Pritchard, a 20-year-old from Auckland, graduated from LSV Whenuapai Military Camp in Intake N02/2024. His story reflects the transformative impact of the LSV programme, which equips young New Zealanders with the confidence, discipline, and skills needed to thrive in employment and life.

Before joining LSV, Malakai struggled with low confidence and lacked a clear career direction, moving between jobs without long-term prospects. He saw LSV as a chance to build his self-belief and prepare for a future with purpose and growth.

Throughout the course, Malakai was a quiet but reliable trainee who built strong relationships with staff and peers. He consistently demonstrated professionalism, a positive attitude, and a willingness to engage in all tasks assigned to him.

Following graduation, Malakai impressed recruiters from Fulton Hogan at the LSV Discovery Day Career Expo. He was invited to interview for their Cadetship Programme, successfully completed post-LSV training, and chose to pursue a career in Traffic Management.

Over a year later, Malakai remains employed with Fulton Hogan, where he continues to grow and perform consistently.

Malakai credits LSV with helping him develop resilience, communication skills, and a strong work ethic. He is now a motivated and disciplined employee who shows up consistently and contributes positively to his team. He is proud of his LSV journey and sees long-term potential within Fulton Hogan, with aspirations to advance further.

Lead: Karen Hocking, Group General Manager, Enablement Service Delivery



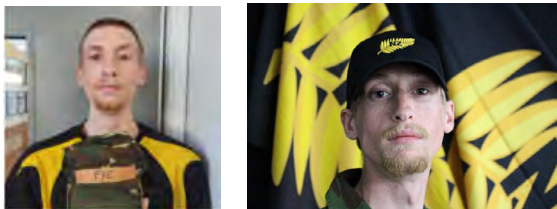
Malakai Pritchard (left)



Trainees successfully attaining their drivers licence

KURTIS PYE

*Lead: Karen Hocking, Group General Manager,
Enablement Service Delivery*



Kurtis Pye at march in Kurtis Pye at graduation

Kurtis Pye graduated from the Limited Service Volunteer programme at Trentham Military Camp as part of Intake C01/25. His journey is a powerful example of how LSV can unlock potential and transform lives — even when the odds seem stacked against someone.

Kurtis came to LSV from a background marked by hardship. Growing up in a toxic environment, he was exposed to hard drugs and negativity from a young age. When asked why he applied, his response was simple but telling: “To try and find myself, need a refresh, something to get me back on track in life.” His entry into the programme was unexpected — a last-minute call-up on the morning of the march-in after another participant dropped out. Despite the short notice, Kurtis didn’t hesitate. He was picked up from home and arrived at camp full of energy, especially when talking about anything military-related. It was clear this wasn’t just a ride to camp — it was a turning point.

The first few weeks were challenging. Kurtis was detoxing and emotionally raw. He struggled with emotional regulation and came close to being removed from the course. But LSV staff saw something in him — someone worth fighting for. They gave him a chance to turn things around, and he did.

By week five, Kurtis began to thrive. He was working hard, earning respect, and starting to believe in himself. In week six, he wrote and delivered a deeply moving speech at the graduation dinner, sharing his journey with guests and fellow trainees. His family proudly watched him march out, a moment of pride and connection that hadn’t happened in a long time.

After graduation, Kurtis was honest about his concerns. He knew the environment back home hadn’t changed — but he had. Determined to stay strong, he worked with his local Work and Income office to pursue employment. Within two weeks, he secured full-time work with Breadcraft in Masterton, becoming the first person from his platoon and company to be hired immediately after the course. Kurtis remains employed there today. His older sister reached out to reconnect, and they celebrated his birthday together — a real family moment. His story is a testament to the power of second chances and the impact of believing in someone’s potential.

From July 2024 to July 2025, 1135 trainees attended LSV courses across the country, with 768 successfully graduating. Of those, 329 exited a benefit within 22 weeks and 352 within 52 weeks of starting their LSV courses. Kurtis’s success adds to these outcomes — a win not just for him, but for everyone who supported his journey.



TE ARAWHITI

An accelerated pathway into the New Zealand Defence Force



Naval Officer in charge of Navy Recruit Training (LTCDR Mark Harvey) and his Warrant Officer Ben Owens celebrating their newest LSV Graduating from LSV.

During LSV N02/25 the NZDF collaborated with MSD to trial an accelerated pathway for LSV trainees into the NZ Navy. The trial aimed to test if the NZDF Recruiting process could be significantly reduced in length with elements of the recruiting requirements being conducted during the LSV course.

The process was successful and a young trainee met all the requirements for enlistment into the NZDF and marched onto his Navy Basic Common Training Course two weeks after graduating from LSV.

YDU aims to explore how we can scale the results of this trial so that more LSV's have the opportunity to join the NZDF.



Naval Cadet Hepi as part of the colour guard at the Church Service

Liam was one of three trainees chosen from 74 to share their reflections at our Family Church Service Sat 4 Oct. The service marked the end of Phase 1, which comprises 6 weeks of initial training. It was the first time families have been able to see their loved ones in person.

The Officer in Charge of Recruit Training School said, "He's a humble young man from Opotiki driven to make his family, his community and now the NZDF proud. After hearing Liam's words and reflecting on the road he has travelled, I think that his story (and performance to date) is a timely reminder why we need to keep pushing ahead with Te Arawhiti. There are many more 'Liam Hepi' out there – just waiting for the opportunity to shine and serve."

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY



SELWYN YOUTH WEEK

The Burnham LSV Trainees supported the Selwyn Youth Week Fair on Saturday 24th May at the Rolleston Town Centre. This year the Youth Week Theme was “Take Our Place – Whai Wahitanga” showcasing youth culture, passions, perspectives, and connections.

This is the first event where all 3 partners jointly promoted the LSV course in a community event. The trainees managed the stall promoting and sharing their experience on the course. The LSV Police Mentor jumped in with the trainees and provided the interactive jumping pole and MSD had the promotional material along with some giveaways while the Officer Commanding overseen the event.

The trainees had a great day engaging with the community, participated in the team challenges, and encouraging youth to consider the LSV course.





Wairoa woman takes RNZAF chance as teen, now to help rangatahi find their purpose

Corporal Nikara Ross's Services Academy experience was boosted by a supportive instructor, setting the trajectory of her career towards joining the Royal New Zealand Air Force and becoming a Youth Development Specialist.

In 2013, in the small town of Kotemaori, Wairoa, Hawke's Bay, 16-year-old Nikara Ross watched her sister join the Services Academy programme through their local school, so the next year she did too. Now, more than 10 years later, she has the opportunity to make an impact on the youth of New Zealand and is giving back to the unit that first introduced her to the New Zealand Defence Force.

"I saw the uniform my sister was provided and I honestly joined Services Academy so I could get something of my own, something that was mine and fitted just me, so I signed up," said Corporal Ross.

Once Corporal Ross was in the environment she found she really enjoyed the military lifestyle as a whole and that made her want to stay for both her Year 12 and 13 school years.

“The instructors really made it for me. The way they spoke to us and treated us, they gave us confidence and showed us that we could achieve. It made me think I could actually do this for a job.”

"I had thought about joining the New Zealand Army as a career option, as from our town most people would go and get a job at the meat works, which I did temporarily, but that really didn't interest me.

"I had a female instructor during both my years at the services academy and she told me that she believed I was destined to do something great in my future and talked me through options of things I could do in the military and that's ultimately what made my decision about joining the Air Force.

"I had preconceived ideas of the Air Force, and I didn't think there would be a place for a girl like me, but I couldn't have been more wrong.

Before teaching others, Corporal Ross wanted to make sure she had experience under her belt so she wasn't just talking the talk, and could give trainees a bigger world view of things to help them see there is more out there for them.

"I joined the Air Force in 2019 to be a Logistics Specialist and after trade training I was posted to Air Movements. I have had so many opportunities and have travelled to 12 countries. The most notable for me would be Japan and Solomon Islands which I actually got an operational medal for, but my plan was always to become a Youth Development Specialist and work in the unit that started it all for me. Having instructors that made an impact on me was my motivation to do the same for others.

"For me it goes beyond teaching stability and discipline. It's about shaping futures and opening doors that many young people never imagined were possible."

Corporal Ross got choked up when reflecting on the parts of the role that mean the most to her.

"Seeing them marching out at the end of the course, knowing they may have entered with no confidence in the hope they may learn skills to gain employment, but seeing how much they've grown as people, the gratitude they have, and knowing they are leaving with more than they expected is so meaningful."



"If I can change one person's life like that instructor did for me then I'm set. That's what makes this one of the most fulfilling jobs I've ever had."

The Youth Development Unit within the NZDF runs Services Academy programmes for year 12 and 13 students, alongside Ministry of Education, Limited Services Volunteer programmes, for adult volunteers aged 18-24, alongside Ministry of Social Development, and the Blue Light programme alongside NZ Police. The courses help young people gain life skills, confidence for employment, education and community participation, for the benefit of New Zealand's communities and young people.



NZ Army caterer puts stock in developing youth

Corporal Bryan Procter is looking to come full circle and become a Youth Development Specialist in the NZDF's Youth Development Unit (YDU), joining instructors who taught him when he himself went through the Limited Services Volunteer back in 2014.

Corporal Procter who joined the Army as a Caterer, is from Whangarei, and was studying to become an electrician when a friend mentioned to him they were thinking about doing the Limited Services Volunteer programme. "I looked into the programme and as I had previously thought about joining the Army or Navy I thought I might enjoy it. I heard you get a lot of life skills and learn a good routine and I thought it might help me with future employment. Once I was there I enjoyed the routine and having the consistency every day. The training we were offered was progressive so we could see ourselves improving and learning. The way things were happening you could definitely see how it was going to set you up well for civvy street.



The instructors had good values, were good people to look up to, and it kind of made me want to join the Army more."

After completing the LSV programme Corporal Procter decided the Army was the place for him though the trades he initially wanted to join had a wait list and he wanted to get his foot in immediately so he joined as a caterer (originally called chef). "When I got to my unit I really like the people I was working with. That made me want to stay and not consider changing to another trade. Though it was always in my plan to do a posting to YDU as having been through a course myself it is really beneficial how you can help others."

So this year Corporal Procter decided to do the course and train to become a Youth Development Specialist. "One of the tutors on the YDS course was actually one of my instructors when I did the LSV programme so that was definitely a full circle moment. And I have bumped into a few other instructors over the last 10 years at various exercises or fitness tests and have been able to have funny "hey I remember you" moments."

"Getting to YDU and being an instructor has always been my goal. Being about to pass on knowledge and experience just like my instructors did and help the attendees with their routines and just getting to be a role model to others and be someone they can look up to is what I see as meaningful.

The Youth Development Unit within the NZDF runs Services Academy programmes for year 12 and 13 students, alongside Ministry of Education, Limited Services Volunteer programmes, for adult volunteers aged 18-24, alongside Ministry of Social Development, and the Blue Light programme alongside NZ Police. The courses help young people gain life skills, confidence for employment, education and community participation, for the benefit of New Zealand's communities and young people.

CELEBRATING PATRONS

We'd like to extend our sincere thanks to the following people who were Course Patrons since the last bulletin:



YDU North

Emma Lovett, PAE
Michael O'Sullivan, Architect



YDU Central

Daran Ponter, Greater Wellington Regional Council
Andrew Tripe, Mayor of Whanganui
Olivia Dhanjee, Ministry of Education



YDU South

Laura Burke, Downer
Stephen Lowe, Fulton Hogan
Simo Faitaua, Ara Institute

PATRONS' EVENTS



YDU South hosted six patrons at Burnham Military Camp on 10 Apr 25 (Patrons L-R: Steve Albey, Bede-Cammock-Elliott; Jane Grey; and Bevan Killick).

It is intended that a Patrons' Event be planned for all regions on an annual basis. The purpose is to provide an opportunity for past patrons to re-engage with LSV, introduce potential patrons to the programme and enjoy some good company.

YOU'RE INVITED

YDU North will hold a Patrons' Event on Thursday 23 Oct 25, during LSV N03/25, Field Training Exercise 2 (Longest Day).

This will be an opportunity to observe or participate as you wish.

Please do contact us if you would like to join or observe the longest day at YDU North. The day is followed by being hosted at the Warrant Officers and Senior NCO's Mess.

Keen to get involved in future?

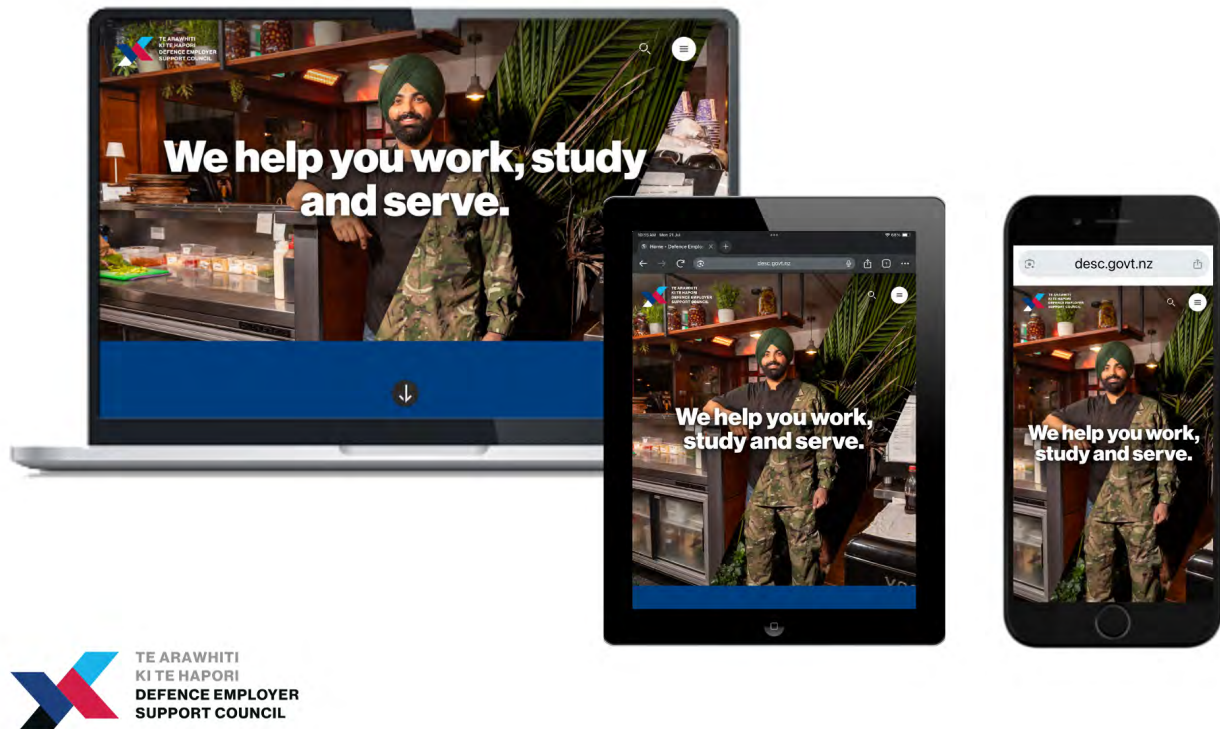
Further details on Patrons' Events will be provided by the Officers Commanding of those regions.



UPCOMING COURSES

Short Name	Trainees	Location	Start date (March in)	End date (Graduation)	Point of Contact
LSV N01/26	150	Whenuapai	30-Mar-26	9-May-26	LTCDR Sarah Campbell Officer Commanding YDU North, sarah.campbell@nzdf.mil.nz
LSV N02/26	150	Whenuapai	22-Jun-26	1-Aug-26	
LSV N03/26	150	Whenuapai	19-Oct-26	28-Nov-26	
LSV C01/26	90	Trentham	7-Apr-26	16-May-26	MAJ Sheridan Cooper, Officer Commanding YDU Central, sheridan.cooper@nzdf.mil.nz
LSV C02/26	90	Trentham	15-Jun-26	25-Jul-26	
LSV C03/26	90	Trentham	31-Aug-26	10-Oct-26	
LSV C04/26	90	Trentham	2-Nov-26	12-Dec-26	
LSV S01/26	100	Burnham	2-Feb-26	14-Mar-26	MAJ Stephen Challies Officer Commanding YDU South stephen.challies@nzdf.mil.nz
LSV S02/26	100	Burnham	28-Apr-26	6-Jun-26	
LSV S03/26	100	Burnham	3-Aug-26	12-Sep-26	
LSV S04/26	100	Burnham	27-Oct-26	5-Dec-26	

MODERNISED DESC WEBSITE



The Defence Employer Support Council (DESC) works to facilitate good working relationships between Reservists, Cadet Force Officers and LSV Graduates, with their external employers.

The DESC has modernised their website to better serve part-time people, youth and their communities. YDU are delighted to see the development of this website which includes targeted information and practical resources for LSV Graduates and Employers of LSV Graduates in an easy to navigate format.

Support from employers is vital to the ongoing success and development of our LSV graduates and this improved capability offers a modern, centralised online environment for up-to-date information and practical resources.

The DESC website is publicly available and can be found at www.desc.govt.nz

Information for LSV Graduates can be found at:

<https://www.desc.govt.nz/home/defence-people/youth-graduates/>

Information for Employers of LSV Graduates can be found at:

<https://www.desc.govt.nz/home/employers/employers-of-youth-graduates/>

With a commitment to ongoing improvements, the DESC welcomes any feedback and ideas to continually improve service and support to Reservists, Cadet Force Officers, LSV Graduates and their Employers. Please contact enquiries@desc.govt.nz



FOLLOW US

You can watch past LSV Graduations, live or in your own time, and get real-time updates and behind the scene glimpses of each LSV course via the following links on Facebook:

[LSV – Limited Service Volunteer - Auckland](#),
[LSV – Limited Service Volunteer - Trentham](#)
[LSV – Limited Service Volunteer - Canterbury](#).

What's involved in an LSV Course?

For video content about the LSV Programme, please enjoy the following links, published in our previous bulletin:

About Us video (01:42 minutes): Check it out [here](#).

Maori TV (12 Minutes): Check it out [here](#).

Police video on LSV, filmed in Burnham last year: Check it out [here](#).

GET IN TOUCH

If you have any suggestions for this bulletin or want to discuss anything to do with the LSV course, including recommending patrons, please contact:

Tua Atkinson,
Training & Engagement Manager,
tua.atkinson@nzdf.mil.nz or scan the QR code for contact details and LSV videos and articles.

Thank you for reading along, and please do get in touch with us at any time at
ydu.patron@nzdf.mil.nz

If you wish to unsubscribe, please contact us on ydu.patron@nzdf.mil.nz

