



NEW ZEALAND VETERAN'S ASSOCIATION INC (50239947)

INAUGURAL JOURNAL

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PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Supporting Veterans. Strengthening Clubs. Protecting Local Independence.

From the President

Dear Members,

Welcome to the inaugural Journal of the **New Zealand Veterans Association (NZVA)**.

This publication marks the beginning of a new chapter for veteran organisations throughout New Zealand. The NZVA has not been established lightly, nor has it been created because of a single disagreement with the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association (RNZRSA). Rather, it is the result of concerns that have been building within many Returned and Services Associations over several years.

The issue that has brought these concerns to the surface is the recent increase in national capitation fees from **\$10.00 (\$11.50) to \$17.25 inc gst per member**. A 50% increase together with advice that clubs failing to pay **may face suspension** from the national organisation. For many committees, this was not simply another annual subscription increase. It became the tipping point that prompted clubs to reassess their relationship with the RNZRSA and to ask whether the national organisation continues to fulfil the role for which it was originally created.

- However, this Journal is about much more than capitation.
- Yes it has been triggered in response to clubs facing the financial threats by RNZRSA
- It is about the future of the RSA movement.
- It is about the independence of community clubs that have served veterans and their local communities for generations.
- It is about ensuring that veterans remain at the centre of every decision.

Above all, it is about recognising that the strength of the RSA movement has always rested with its local clubs - not with its national office.

For over a century, local RSAs have been the face of the organisation. They have supported veterans and their families, organised commemorative services, maintained memorials, cared for those in need and provided places of friendship and fellowship within their communities. The national organisation was created to support those clubs, represent their collective interests, and provide leadership where required. Many clubs now question whether that relationship has changed.

The New Zealand Veterans Association has been established because an increasing number of clubs believe the balance has shifted. They are concerned that decision-making has become increasingly centralised, that local voices are no longer being heard, and that the relationship between the national organisation and affiliated clubs has become one of bullied direction rather than support.

Whether every reader agrees with that assessment is a matter for them to decide. Our purpose is not to dictate opinions but to encourage informed discussion based upon facts, experience, and a shared commitment to veterans.

This first edition is necessarily more detailed than a normal newsletter because many clubs will know little about the NZVA or the circumstances that led to its establishment. We believe it is important that the history is recorded openly so committees throughout New Zealand can make informed decisions about their own future.

Throughout these pages we will examine the issues that have led many clubs to reconsider their relationship with the RNZRSA, explain why the NZVA has been formed, and outline the principles that will guide our organisation into the future.

The NZVA is not opposed to change. Indeed, change is essential if the RSA movement is to remain relevant to younger veterans and their families. What we do believe is that change should occur with the support of member clubs, not despite them.

Our vision is straightforward.

- A national organisation should exist to strengthen local clubs - not control them.
- It should provide leadership - not bureaucracy.
- It should earn the confidence of its members - not assume it.
- Most importantly, it should always remember that it exists because of the clubs and veterans it represents.
- That is the philosophy upon which the New Zealand Veterans Association has been founded.

I invite you to read this Journal with an open mind, discuss it within your committee and membership, and consider how we can work together to ensure that the next generation inherits an RSA movement that is financially sustainable, democratically accountable, and worthy of the service and sacrifice it commemorates.

Yours aye,

Keith Ingram MNZM JP

President

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why We Were Established and What We Stand For

The **New Zealand Veterans Association (NZVA)** has been established at a time of significant change within New Zealand's veteran community and the wider RSA movement.

For more than a century, Returned and Services Associations have played a vital role in supporting veterans, honouring service and providing places of friendship and connection within communities throughout New Zealand.

That proud history must be protected.

However, many clubs now face significant challenges, including declining membership, increasing operating costs, changing expectations from newer generations of veterans, and growing concerns about the relationship between local RSA clubs and the national organisation.

The recent 50% increase in RNZRSA capitation fees **to \$17.25 per member**, including associate and social members, became the catalyst for many clubs to reconsider their future direction.

For many committees, the issue was not simply the additional financial burden. It was the wider concern that decisions affecting independent clubs were increasingly being made centrally, without sufficient consultation or recognition of the pressures faced by local organisations.

Many clubs believe the traditional relationship between a national supporting body and independent community clubs has changed.

They believe the RSA movement was founded on a principle of cooperation between strong local clubs - not centralised control.

Why the NZVA Was Formed

The New Zealand Veterans Association was created to provide clubs and veterans with an alternative safe national organisation founded on:

Support — not control.

The NZVA believes national organisations exist to strengthen local clubs, aid, and advocate for veterans.

Respect for independence

Local RSA clubs are community organisations with their own histories, members, and responsibilities. Their autonomy should be respected.

Accountability and transparency

Veterans and club members deserve organisations that listen, communicate openly, and remain accountable to those they serve.

A focus on the future

The veteran community is changing. Today's veterans require organisations that recognise their experiences, embrace new generations, and remain relevant for the future.

The Issues That Have Led Us Here

The NZVA has been formed following a period of increasing concern among some clubs regarding:

- the impact of rising capitation costs
- declining membership numbers
- governance and accountability arrangements
- constitutional changes, including Constitution V118
- the ability of clubs to meaningfully influence national direction.
- the future relationship between independent clubs and a national organisation.

The targeted removal of two senior respected leaders in the veteran community by the RNZRSA has raised more questions in regard to its unlawful discipline policies – questions that remain unresolved today.

Five Auckland RSA clubs challenged aspects of the constitutional process through legal proceedings, with the matter now before the Court of Appeal.

The NZVA respects the legal process and recognises that individual clubs must make their own decisions based on their circumstances and responsibilities to their members.

What the NZVA Offers

The New Zealand Veterans Association exists to provide:

- support and advice to clubs navigating constitutional and governance challenges.
- a national network for like-minded veteran organisations.
- advocacy on issues affecting veterans and their communities.
- assistance in preserving remembrance traditions.
- opportunities to engage with younger veterans and their families.
- cooperation between clubs while respecting their individual identity.

The NZVA does not seek to dictate how clubs operate.

Every club is unique. We are not here to tell you how to run your business.

Every community is different.

The strength of the veteran movement has always come from local people serving local communities.

Our Vision

The NZVA believes the future of New Zealand's veteran community should be built on a simple principle:

A national organisation should support local clubs - not replace them.

We believe the next chapter of the RSA movement must honour the past while responding to the future.

That means:

- respecting those who served before us.
- supporting today's veterans.
- welcoming the next generation.
- ensuring clubs remain strong, sustainable, and connected to their communities.

The New Zealand Veterans Association invites clubs, veterans, and service organisations throughout New Zealand to join in a conversation about the future.

- A conversation based on respect.
- A conversation based on cooperation.
- A conversation focused on one shared purpose:

Serving those who served.

The Time Has Come

Every organisation eventually reaches a point where it must pause and ask a simple but important question:

"Are we still fulfilling the purpose for which we were created?"

For many Returned and Services Associations throughout New Zealand, that moment has now arrived.

The immediate issue attracting attention is the increase in national capitation fees. Yet to view the current debate solely through the lens of finance is to misunderstand the concerns being expressed by many clubs.

The capitation increase has become the catalyst - not the cause.

The issues raised by clubs extend much further. They include governance, constitutional change, financial sustainability, declining membership, accountability and, above all, the relationship between the RNZRSA and the independent community clubs that have traditionally formed the foundation of the RSA movement.

Many committees believe that the national organisation has gradually moved away from its traditional role as a federation of member clubs towards a more centralised model of ‘command and control’ governance. Whether one agrees with that assessment or not, it is a perception now being expressed by clubs in many parts of the country.

The recent increase in capitation has brought those concerns into sharper focus.

For many committees, the issue is not simply the additional cost. Rather, it is the belief that decisions affecting every club are increasingly being made without meaningful consultation and are then presented as requirements rather than matters for discussion.

This concern has been reinforced by correspondence advising clubs that failure to pay the increased capitation could result in suspension from the national organisation.

For committees already facing declining membership, rising operating costs and increasing pressure to remain financially viable, such correspondence has been interpreted by many as evidence of a relationship that has fundamentally changed.

The NZVA recognises that the RNZRSA has genuine responsibilities. It must maintain national services, advocate on behalf of veterans and ensure its own financial sustainability. Those responsibilities are not in dispute.

What is in dispute is how those responsibilities should be exercised and where the balance should lie between national leadership and local autonomy.

For over one hundred years, local RSAs have been independent community organisations governed by their own members. They have raised funds locally, managed their own facilities, supported veterans within their own communities and maintained the traditions of remembrance that define the RSA movement.

Many clubs now ask whether that independence is being progressively eroded.

That question deserves open discussion.

It also deserves respectful debate.

The New Zealand Veterans Association has not been established to create division within the veteran community. It has been established to ensure that clubs have a national organisation that places local autonomy, democratic accountability, and practical support at the centre of its mission.

As you read the articles that follow, we encourage you to consider not only the events that have brought us to this point, but also the future that you want for your own club and for the wider veteran community.

Ultimately, that future will not be determined by any national office.

It will be determined by the clubs themselves.

And that is exactly as it should be.

The Capitation Crisis

The Tipping Point for Many Clubs

For many years, RSA clubs have quietly adapted to changing circumstances.

They have coped with declining membership, rising operating costs, changing community expectations and the challenge of attracting a new generation of veterans and their families. Most have done so with limited resources, relying heavily on volunteers and committees who give countless hours in service to their members and communities.

Like every community organisation, they have accepted that change is inevitable.

What many clubs find difficult to accept is change that appears to be imposed without meaningful consultation.

That concern came sharply into focus with the recent increase in RNZRSA capitation fees.

The annual levy has increased 50% **to \$17.25 per member**, and applies equally to veteran, service, associate, and social members.

For larger clubs this represents a substantial additional annual cost. For smaller clubs already operating on narrow financial margins, it raises serious questions about affordability and long-term sustainability.

Yet, for many committees, the amount itself is only part of the issue.

The greater concern is that clubs have been asked to contribute significantly more without a clear explanation of the long-term financial strategy behind the increase. Many are asking what measures are being taken to reduce expenditure, improve efficiency and restore financial sustainability before additional costs are passed on to affiliated clubs.

These are reasonable questions.

Every local RSA committee is expected to prepare budgets, manage expenditure responsibly and account to its members for every dollar spent. Many believe the same standard should apply at national level.

The concern expressed by many clubs is not simply about paying more. It is about understanding why more is required and what measurable benefit will result.?

Why Associate and Social Members?

Perhaps the most contentious aspect of the capitation structure is the inclusion of associate and social members.

Historically, these members have played a vital role in sustaining local clubs. They volunteer, organise events, support commemorations and provide the financial stability that enables clubs to continue serving veterans.

Many clubs therefore question why these members should attract the same national levy as those who have served.

Committees argue that while associate and social members strengthen their local club, they receive little direct benefit from the national organisation. As a result, many believe the existing and now increased levy effectively transfers local club resources to National Office without a corresponding increase in services.

Whether that perception is justified or not, it is now widely held among many clubs and has become one of the central issues in the current debate.

The Response That Changed the Conversation

Financial decisions can often be debated and resolved through discussion.

What has caused greater concern for many clubs has been the response to those questioning the increase.

Rather than encouraging dialogue, committees report receiving correspondence advising that failure to pay could result in immediate suspension or the loss of affiliation.

For many volunteers who have dedicated years - often decades - to supporting the RSA movement, this was a deeply disappointing development.

They expected discussion.

Instead, many felt they received direction or dictatorship.

Whether intended or not, the effect has been to reinforce the perception that the relationship between National Office and local clubs has fundamentally changed.

A Broader Question

The capitation debate has therefore become about far more than annual subscriptions.

It has prompted clubs to ask broader questions about governance and accountability.

Has the balance between National Office and local clubs shifted too far?

Are clubs still genuine partners in the organisation, or have they become primarily a source of revenue?

How should a national body engage with independent incorporated societies that have served their own communities for generations?

These are not questions that can be answered by simply increasing or decreasing an annual levy.

They go to the heart of what the RSA movement is - and what it should become.

A Decade of Change

How Did We Get Here?

To understand why so many clubs are now questioning their future relationship with the RNZRSA, it is necessary to look beyond recent events.

The challenges facing the RSA movement have been developing for many years.

Membership has steadily declined.

The veteran community has changed.

Operating costs have increased.

Many traditional RSA clubs have struggled to remain financially viable, while others have closed altogether.

At the same time, New Zealand's veteran population has changed significantly.

Today's veteran community includes those who served in Vietnam, Timor-Leste, Bosnia, the Gulf, Afghanistan and numerous peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. Many are still in employment, raising families and balancing military service with civilian careers.

Their expectations are different from those of previous generations.

Many seek flexible ways to remain connected with fellow veterans rather than traditional club membership.

The challenge facing every veteran organisation is therefore not simply preserving its proud history but ensuring that it remains relevant to those who have served in more recent conflicts.

This challenge is reflected in membership figures.

In 2014, RNZRSA membership was reported to exceed **103,000 members across 184 clubs**.

Today, membership has fallen to fewer than **62,000 members**, despite there still being around **182 affiliated clubs**.

Only a relatively small proportion of total membership now comprises serving or former service personnel.

For many clubs, these figures raise an important question.

If membership has fallen so significantly over the past decade, why?

No single answer explains the decline.

Social change has undoubtedly played a part.

Younger veterans have different lifestyles, different expectations, and different ways of maintaining connections.

Community organisations generally face greater competition for people's time than ever before.

However, many committees also believe the national organisation has not adapted quickly enough to meet these changing expectations.

Some argue that too much attention has been devoted to governance and constitutional reform, while insufficient emphasis has been placed on helping local clubs attract younger veterans, strengthen community engagement, and remain financially sustainable.

Others question whether the national organisation has developed a compelling vision capable of inspiring the next generation of veterans to become active participants in the RSA movement.

Whatever the reasons, one fact is beyond dispute.

- Membership continues to decline dramatically.
- No organisation can ignore such a trend.
- For many clubs, this is why the current debate is so important.
- The issue is not simply today's capitation fee.
- It is tomorrow's future.

Unless meaningful action is taken to strengthen local clubs, support volunteers and engage the next generation of veterans, membership is unlikely to recover through administrative or constitutional change alone.

That challenge belongs to every organisation committed to supporting New Zealand's veteran community.

The New Zealand Veterans Association believes the answer begins where the RSA movement itself began - within strong local clubs supported by, rather than directed by a national organisation.

That principle lies at the heart of the NZVA's vision for the future.

Governance, Constitution and Accountability

Why Many Clubs Believe the Relationship Has Changed

Every organisation evolves over time. Constitutions are amended, governance structures change, and new legislation requires organisations to adapt. The RNZRSA has been no exception.

The introduction of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 required incorporated societies throughout New Zealand to review and update their constitutions. Few clubs questioned the need to comply with the new legislation. The issue for many was never **whether** change was required - it was **how** those changes were made and what they meant for the future relationship between the RNZRSA and its affiliated clubs.

For many years the RSA movement operated as a federation of independent clubs. Each club was governed by its own members and committee, while the national organisation existed to coordinate national policy, advocate for veterans, and provide services that individual clubs could not easily deliver themselves.

Many clubs now believe that balance has shifted.

They argue that the revised constitutional arrangements have strengthened the authority of the National Board while reducing the influence of member clubs over the organisation's future direction. Whether one agrees with that assessment or not, it is a concern that has been raised repeatedly by clubs throughout the country.

Just why is it that RNZRSA Board remains self-appointed – unelected with huge powers and no accountability to the members?

The Question of Accountability

Good governance is built on accountability.

Every club committee is elected by its members, reports to its members, and is ultimately accountable to those members for the decisions it makes. Many clubs believe the same principle should apply at national level.

A concern expressed by several clubs is that the current Board appointment process does not provide the same level of direct accountability to the membership as existed under earlier arrangements. Critics argue that this has created a perception of increasing separation between National Office and the clubs that provide the organisation's foundation.

The issue is not simply who serves on the Board.

It is whether member clubs feel they have an effective voice in determining the organisation's direction and in holding its leadership to account.

Confidence in governance depends as much upon trust as it does upon constitutional provisions.

The Remit Process

The annual remit process has traditionally provided clubs with an opportunity to influence national policy and constitutional change.

Some clubs now question whether that process continues to provide meaningful participation.

Among the concerns expressed are that remits raising significant governance issues have not always progressed to debate, and that procedural requirements have become increasingly difficult for clubs to navigate.

In fact, it is now impossible to move a motion of no confidence in the President or Board because the final say, whether a remit will stand - rests with them the Board. Lost in V118 is the ability for members to hold the management to account.

The NZVA believes that constitutional debate should encourage participation rather than discourage it. Member clubs should feel confident that well-prepared remits will receive fair consideration, even where they challenge existing policy or governance arrangements.

Healthy organisations do not fear debate.

They welcome it.

Constitution V118

The adoption of Constitution Version 118 has become one of the most significant and controversial issues facing the RSA movement.

Supporters argue that the revised constitution was necessary to meet the requirements of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 and to modernise the governance framework of the organisation.

Opponents accept that legislative compliance was essential but question whether aspects of the constitutional process altered the historic relationship between National Office and affiliated clubs. They argue that many changes centralised authority and reduced the practical ability of member clubs to influence governance.

These differing views continue to divide opinion across the RSA movement.

The Court Proceedings

The constitutional debate ultimately moved beyond internal discussion.

Five Auckland RSAs commenced legal proceedings challenging aspects of the process adopted to approve Constitution V118.

The proceedings raised questions concerning the constitutional process, voting arrangements and the application of the transitional provisions contained within the Incorporated Societies Act 2022.

The High Court dismissed the application. The Judge although clearly compromised, failed to recuse himself. For whatever reasons the optics did not look good nor was the decision seen to be fair.

The applicant clubs have since exercised their legal right to appeal, and the matter is now before the Court of Appeal due 3 February 2027.

The existence of those proceedings demonstrates the depth of concern held by several clubs. At the same time, the legal process should be respected, and it would be inappropriate to speculate on the outcome while the appeal remains before the Court.

Regardless of the eventual decision, the proceedings have highlighted the importance of ensuring that constitutional reform commands the confidence of the membership as well as complying with the law.

More than a constitution

Many clubs now recognise that the debate is no longer simply about Constitution V118.

It is about the future culture of the organisation.

Should the RSA movement continue to operate primarily as a federation of strong, independent community clubs working together through a national body?

Or should greater authority rest with the national organisation in pursuit of greater consistency and efficiency?

Reasonable people may answer that question differently.

The NZVA's position is clear.

- It believes the long-term strength of the RSA movement has always rested with its local clubs.
- National organisations are at their strongest when they support those clubs, advocate on their behalf, and respect their independence.
- Constitutions establish legal authority.
- Trust is earned through leadership.
- As this Journal goes to print, many clubs continue to reflect on these issues and consider what they mean for their own future.
- Those discussions are healthy.
- They reflect an enduring commitment to the values that have sustained the RSA movement for more than a century.
- Whatever conclusions individual clubs ultimately reach, one principle should remain beyond question.
- The voices of member clubs deserve to be heard.

The future of the RSA movement depends upon it.

A Principal Worth Remembering

The RNZRSA was established to support New Zealand's Returned and Services Associations.

- **It was never intended to own them.**
 - **Local RSAs are independent incorporated societies governed by their own members, committees and constitutions.**
 - **The New Zealand Veterans Association believes that a national organisation earns its authority by supporting those clubs - not by exercising control over them.**
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The Auckland Experience

Why Auckland Believed a Different Path Was Necessary

The establishment of the New Zealand Veterans Association did not occur overnight.

Nor was it the result of a single disagreement or isolated event.

It followed several years during which many Auckland RSA clubs became increasingly concerned about the direction of the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association and the relationship developing between National Office and affiliated clubs.

Like many districts throughout New Zealand, Auckland initially sought to resolve those concerns through the organisation's established constitutional processes. Questions were raised through the Presidents' Forum, remits were prepared, and repeated efforts were made to encourage discussion on matters affecting governance, accountability, and the future of the RSA movement.

Many of those efforts, in Auckland's view, failed to get aired - or to produce any meaningful change.

As concerns grew, Auckland's focus broadened beyond individual issues to a more fundamental question.

Was the traditional relationship between the national organisation and local clubs changing?

For many within Auckland, the answer had become yes.

Auckland firmly believes and apology is over-due.

Clearly the RNZRSA is focused on a beat up on Auckland. This is confirmed by their media statements that the problem within the RSA fraternity is being caused by a few Auckland Rebel clubs. We dispute this.

One of the most disappointing episodes for many Auckland members arose during the legal proceedings.

The RNZRSA advised the Registrar of Incorporated Societies claiming that they did not know the ADRSA, it was not a member and was not entitled to use the name RSA and so asked the Incorporated Societies (IS) to force us to change our name.

The Incorporated Societies Register subsequently instructed the organisation to change its name.

On legal advice, and without prejudice to its position during the ongoing legal proceedings, Auckland complied with that instruction and adopted the name **Auckland Veterans Association Incorporated (AVA)**.

For many Auckland members, this was more than an administrative matter.

The Auckland District RSA had been incorporated since 2006. Its constitution had previously been approved by the RNZRSA. It remains the only district that is incorporated.

Its representatives had participated in national governance through the Presidents' Forum.

For many years it had actively supported national initiatives and contributed significantly to the wider RSA movement.

Against that background, many Auckland members found it difficult to understand why its standing was now being questioned.

Auckland has obtained documents relating to that process under the Official Information Act and maintains that the events surrounding the name change warrant further explanation. Clearly these actions were made on the back of false statements made - leading to a gross miscarriage of justice.

Adding insult to injury the RNZRSA orchestrated the removal of two senior respected leaders through questionable manner that would fail any basic lawful scrutiny in court. These removals followed the previous removal of several respected leaders who had spoken out. Members could clearly see the pattern of command and control developing here.

The NZVA believes openness and transparency remain important in resolving those issues.

A Record of Support

Despite the differences that emerged, Auckland continued to support veterans and national initiatives.

Over many years Auckland clubs have contributed substantial financial and practical assistance to veteran welfare, commemorative activities, and national events.

One example frequently referred to by Auckland members concerns support for the New Zealand Invictus Team.

When a previously anticipated national contribution did not eventuate, Auckland clubs worked together to raise approximately **\$52,000 within a matter of days**, ensuring the full New Zealand team could attend the Invictus Games.

That effort reflected the generosity of Auckland clubs and their continuing commitment to veterans.

For many members, however, it also reinforced the importance of local initiative and the capacity of community-based organisations to respond quickly when veterans need support.

Now we have been advised that the RNZRSA are going to be a 'Gold' sponsor for the next INVICTUS Games. How can they commit to this expenditure when they are clearly broke and reneged on the last games. This begs the question as to which RSA's will be tapped to save their bacon this time. Or are they going to take it out of the National Poppy Trust?

Either way this would be a gross abuse of power and morally wrong.

Why Auckland Chose a Different Path

As discussions continued, many Auckland clubs concluded that they needed to prepare for the possibility that constitutional differences with the RNZRSA might not be resolved.

They also recognised that other clubs throughout New Zealand were expressing similar concerns.

The question became:

If clubs wished to preserve their independence while continuing to work together nationally, what alternative existed?

At that time, there was none.

The answer was not to create a competing bureaucracy.

Nor was it to establish another organisation that sought to direct clubs from the centre.

Instead, Auckland proposed a different model.

- One built on cooperation rather than control.
- Support rather than direction.
- Representation rather than administration.
- Local autonomy rather than centralised authority.

Those principles formed the foundation of the Auckland Veterans Association and ultimately led to the establishment of the **New Zealand Veterans Association**.

Looking Forward

The formation of the NZVA should not be seen as the end of one chapter.

It is the beginning of another.

Its purpose is not to divide the veteran community but to ensure that clubs always have a genuine choice.

- Choice strengthens democracy.
- Choice encourages accountability.
- Choice ensures that organisations remain responsive to the members they serve.

Whether clubs ultimately choose to remain affiliated with the RNZRSA, become independent or join the NZVA is a decision for each committee and its members.

The New Zealand Veterans Association exists to respect those choices, to support clubs in whatever path they take, and to provide a national organisation founded on a simple principle:

The strength of New Zealand's veteran community will always begin with strong local clubs.

The Future of New Zealand's Veteran Community

A New Chapter Begins

The establishment of the New Zealand Veterans Association represents an important moment in the history of New Zealand's veteran organisations.

It has emerged from a period of significant change, difficult conversations, and genuine concern among many RSA clubs about the future direction of the movement.

The issues discussed throughout this Journal are not insignificant.

They include financial sustainability, membership decline, governance, constitutional change, accountability and the relationship between national leadership and local clubs.

However, at the centre of all these discussions is one fundamental question:

What kind of veteran organisation does New Zealand need for the future?

The answer must begin with those who have always been the foundation of the RSA movement - local clubs and the communities they serve.

For more than a century, RSA clubs have provided places of friendship, remembrance, support, and fellowship. They have cared for veterans, honoured those who made the ultimate sacrifice and supported families through generations of service.

That proud history must not be lost.

But history alone is not enough.

The veteran community of today is changing. Modern veterans come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. They served in different conflicts, different operations and different environments from previous generations. Many are younger, more geographically mobile and have different expectations about how they connect with their veteran community.

The challenge before all veteran organisations is therefore clear:

Respect the past while building a future that remains relevant.

The New Zealand Veterans Association has been established on that principle.

Our purpose is simple:

- To support veteran organisations and community clubs.
- To protect local club independence.
- To provide practical assistance where clubs need it.
- To advocate for veterans and their families.
- To ensure remembrance and service continue to have a meaningful place in New Zealand society.

- To encourage the next generation of veterans to become part of a strong and welcoming community.

The NZVA is not here to tell clubs how to operate.

Every club has its own identity, traditions, and community responsibilities. Those differences are strengths, not weaknesses.

Our role is to provide a national network where clubs can cooperate, share ideas, access support and work together for the benefit of veterans.

A strong national organisation should not replace local clubs.

It should strengthen them.

A successful veterans' movement is not measured by the size of its administration or the number of policies it produces.

It is measured by the difference it makes in the lives of veterans, families, and communities.

That is the standard by which the NZVA intends to operate.

An Invitation to Work Together

The New Zealand Veterans Association welcomes discussion with all RSA clubs, veteran organisations and service associations that share a commitment to supporting those who have served New Zealand.

We recognise that every club must make decisions based on its own circumstances and the needs of its own members.

Our commitment is that clubs will always be treated with respect, their independence will be valued, and their voices will be heard.

The future of New Zealand's veteran community will not be created by one organisation alone.

It will be created by veterans, volunteers, clubs, and communities working together with a shared purpose.

- The time has come for a new conversation.
- A conversation based on cooperation.
- A conversation based on respect.
- A conversation focused not on what divides us, but on what unites us.

Serving those who served.

That remains our purpose.

So, if you share in any of the comments or concerns laid out above, please feel free to reach out and share your considered thoughts and a potential way forward with us.

Final Message

The future of the RSA movement belongs to the veterans and communities it serves.

Together, we can ensure that future generations inherit an organisation that honours the past, supports the present and prepares for the future.

Contact the NZVA

For information, support or to discuss how your club can engage with the New Zealand Veterans Association:

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