



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

OIA-2024-5022

17 June 2024

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I refer to your email to the Ministry of Health on 3 May 2024. Part 2 of your request was transferred to the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) in accordance with section 14 of the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) as follows:

2. The number of Veterans in the past ten years seeking help for brain injury or concussion during or after employment. incidence and prevalence.

It is noted that Veterans' Affairs New Zealand has already provided a response to you on 13 May 2024, concerning this information as it relates to their clients. While Veterans' Affairs clients do not include all former Service personnel, the NZDF does not maintain medical information for former Service personnel once they leave the NZDF.

With respect to those former Service personnel who may have sought help during their service in the Armed Forces, medical information of former Service members is stored in hard copy records for each individual. A substantial research and collation effort would be required in order to provide the requested information. This would involve a manual search of tens of thousands of personnel files to not only identify relevant information, but would also require analysis of the conditions as these generally record the diagnosis or description of the condition, rather than standardised labels (since a brain injury refers to a wide range of injuries including concussion, post-concussion syndrome, contusions to the head or neck, and head injuries). As a result, your request is declined in accordance with section 18(f) of the OIA.

The OIA requires consideration to be given to consulting with you to refine your request as that may result in providing some relevant information rather than declining your request. However, because of the way the information is stored, the decision would remain the same regardless of any refinement you could make (e.g. reducing the timeframe of your request and/or seeking data on just a single condition), unless it was information on a single identifiable individual (although this is a different request that requires different considerations before medical information could be provided to you).

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