



Peace Movement Aotearoa

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Defence Review based on "enduring conflict" Public meetings start 5 September

The Defence Review 2009 public meetings start tomorrow, Saturday 5 September, in Auckland and go on until 29 September in different parts of the country. The schedule of meetings, released by the Minister and Associate Minister of Defence last night, is attached to this document and available on the Defence Review page of our site at <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/defrev09.htm>

The public meetings are being advertised as "a chance for face-to-face engagement with the government on the direction of the Defence Force in the coming decades".ⁱ However, there are several reasons to question whether or not this Review, which was supposed to "involve a fundamental assessment of New Zealand's security environment, as well as the roles and tasks the Defence Force is expected to fulfill and the capabilities it requires to achieve these"ⁱⁱ will in fact involve any thing other than a continuation of the same old thinking about armed forces and armed force.

Firstly, while there are ten questions on the public written submissions form, the obvious first question was curiously and conspicuously not asked - that is, whether or not we actually need armed forces. If this was a genuine review, then the starting point would surely be to carry out a fundamental assessment of what the threats to New Zealand's security (in the widest sense of the word) are, and then to examine whether or not a Defence Force can provide a solution to any of them.

Secondly, in a speech the week before the closing date for written submissions, Wayne Mapp said this: "Our Defence Review is making solid progress towards its publication early next year. Major strategic priorities have been identified. The implications of these priorities on our capabilities, both now and in the future, are being worked through. Concurrently with this work we have been undertaking wider public consultation. Although the public consultation is not completed, it is apparent there is a broad consensus on New Zealand's fundamental security priorities".ⁱⁱⁱ Identifying priorities and deciding what the consensus is before any public consultation process is complete is apparently now the norm for the current government.

Thirdly, as if that wasn't sufficient cause for concern, in a speech on Wednesday, the Minister of Defence spoke about his concept of "enduring conflict" - apparently continuous operational deployment overseas is the background to the Defence Review and "has become the expectation of our Defence Force".^{iv}

If "enduring conflict" is not part of your expectation for either the Defence Force or the future of this country more generally, then perhaps you should go along to one or more of the public meetings and make your views known.

In addition to the main focus of the review, a reminder that "during the period of the Review itself, the Associate Minister of Defence will lead concurrent companion studies into: New Zealand's Defence Industry, examining options for economic improvement in the sector; The role of the New Zealand Defence Force in Youth Programmes and the New Zealand Cadet Force; and Voluntary National Service, including examining future options for a whole of government strategy." ^v

The terms of reference for these three studies are now available ^{vi} and it seems our initial concerns were well founded. Rather than asking whether or not this country should be involved in military and weapons related production and export, the study into the "defence" industry asks questions such as what impediments to growth currently exist and what measures should be implemented to assist the growth of that industry.

With regard to involving the armed forces in youth programmes and young people in military activities, the terms of reference do not even mention New Zealand's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child's Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, nor ask if such involvement is anyway desirable, instead the document includes questions such as "what is the opportunity cost for the NZDF in terms of its involvement in youth programmes at the current level?".

As for the concept of Voluntary National Service (VNS), if you don't know what that is, have a look at the article earlier this year which explains: "School leavers could be offered a gap year in the military that helps pay for their tertiary education as the Government examines introducing "voluntary national service". Students would spend a year in the Army, Navy or Air Force before going on to university and earn a salary or credit off their student loan. Defence Minister Wayne Mapp said the military gap year was being investigated by Chief of Defence Force Lieutenant-General Jerry Mateparae as a way of involving more New Zealanders in the armed forces." ^{vii}

Other VNS possibilities are outlined on the Associate Minister of Defence's web page ^{viii} in a section headed 'Voluntary National Service A Logical Choice' which includes ideas such as: "The VNS concept - being developed under the working title of 'Your Country - Your Choice' - offers significant citizenship-building potential and would be the first scheme for decades that enables new arrivals to New Zealand to identify with their country, flag and anthem, and share a bond with those Kiwis who gave so much to build this nation".

Finally, we are interested in hearing about your experiences at any of the Defence Review public meetings, please contact Peace Movement Aotearoa, PO Box 9314, Wellington 6141, email pma@xtra.co.nz or tel (04) 382 8129, thank you.

References:

ⁱ Defence Review public meetings get under way, Wayne Mapp and Heather Roy, 3 September 2009 - <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/defence+review+public+meetings+get+under+way>

ⁱⁱ Defence Review 2009 - <http://www.defence.govt.nz/defence-review.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Speech to the Australia New Zealand Leadership Forum, Wayne Mapp, 21 August 2009 - <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/speech+australia+new+zealand+leadership+forum>

^{iv} 'Enduring Conflict: Challenges and Responses', Speech to the Chief of Army's Conference, Wayne Mapp, 2 September 2009 - <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/speech+chief+army039s+conference+039enduring+conflict+challenges+and+responses039>

^v Defence Review 2009 Terms of Reference, Scope: point 10

^{vi} New Zealand Defence Review 2009: Companion Studies Terms of Reference - <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/defrev09cstor.pdf>

^{vii} Year in military could pay for study, Patrick Gower, 22 April 2009 -

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10567855

^{viii} <http://www.roy.org.nz/content/national-security> - approximately half-way down the page

Defence Review 2009 – Public Meetings Schedule

Date	Location	Venue
Saturday 5 September	Auckland Central (2.00pm-5.00pm)	The Edge, Auckland Convention Centre, Level 4, Aotea Centre
Sunday 6 September	North Shore (2.00pm-5.00pm)	St Georges Community Centre 2 The Terrace Takapuna
Thursday 10 September	Wellington (6.00pm-9.00pm)	Lion Harbour View Lounge (Wellington Convention Centre) 111 Wakefield St
Monday 14 September	Whangarei (5.30pm-8.30pm)	Royal New Zealand Returned Services Association 9 Rust Street Whangarei
Tuesday 15 September	Tauranga (5.30pm-8.30pm)	Royal New Zealand Returned Services Association 889 Cameron Rd, Gate Pa, Tauranga
Wednesday 16 September	Hastings (5.30pm-8.30pm)	Hastings City Art Gallery 201 Eastbourne Street Hastings
Thursday 17 September	Palmerston North (5.30pm-8.30pm)	Te Manawa Museum 326 Main Street Palmerston North
Friday 18 September	Wanganui (5.30pm-8.30pm)	Royal New Zealand Returned Services Association 170 St Hill St, Wanganui
Friday 18 September	Dunedin (1.30-4.30pm)	Dunedin City Council Fullwood Room 1 Harrop Street, Dunedin
Monday 21 September	Blenheim (5.30pm-8.30pm)	Royal New Zealand Returned Services Association Clubs of Marlborough
Tuesday 22 September	Westport (5.30pm-8.30pm)	Royal New Zealand Returned Services Association 137-139 Palmerston Street, Westport
Wednesday 23 September	Christchurch (5.30pm-8.30pm)	The Arts Centre Christchurch Hurst Seager Room
Monday 28 September	New Plymouth 2.30-5.30pm	Brian Bellringer Pavilion Pukekura Park New Plymouth
Tuesday 29 September	Upper Hutt (5.30-8.30pm)	Expressions Art and Entertainment Centre, 836 Fergusson Drive Upper Hutt