

## Hon Judith Collins KC

Attorney General  
Minister of Defence  
Minister for Digitising Government  
Minister Responsible for the GCSB  
Minister Responsible for the NZSIS  
Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology  
Minister for Space  
Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the  
Royal Commission's Report into the Terrorist Attack on the Christchurch Mosques



Erin Speedy  
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Dear Erin

Thank you for your email of 7 May 2024 to Hon Chris Penk and myself, outlining your personal situation as the wife of a member of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF). I am responding on behalf of both of us.

I appreciated the frankness of your email, and let me say from the outset that both Minister Penk and I have the utmost empathy for you and for all spouses and partners of our military personnel. It must be hard enough to feel that you are a 'solo parent', let alone having to live with the stress and worry that must occur while partners are deployed for days, weeks or months at a time.

As I have said previously, I am concerned about the overall state of the NZDF but I am equally committed to ensuring the organisation can meet Government requirements with NZDF people at the centre of this commitment. I have heard first-hand that many people are finding it very difficult to manage financially during this economically challenging period. I have visited NZDF camps and bases and have listened to our people.

In July last year, the NZDF was able to raise pay bands across the organisation, bringing the majority of personnel's base pay from 10 percent below the market-rate, to at - or within - five percent. In addition to the 2023 remuneration package, the NZDF has also delivered a series of retention initiatives including the introduction of an Interim Sustainment Allowance (Maritime \$75 and Land \$50 per day); targeted retention payments for strategically significant trades; and changes in policies governing conditions of service for members of the Armed Forces.

The NZDF acknowledges that there is still work to be done in this space, and has an interim workforce plan in place that is focused on retaining, recruiting and re-enlisting people.

As part of the annual Budget process, the Government invited the NZDF to put in a budget bid for funding to assist with lifting the wages and salaries of NZDF members.

On 10 May, I announced that the NZDF will receive \$163 million, over four years, to go towards remuneration for uniformed personnel. This is particularly focussed on the military factor and allowances that recognise the unique duty and service of our people in the NZDF.

The NZDF has already invested more than \$35 million in making Defence houses healthier places to live. I am advised that all NZDF housing occupied by Regular Force personnel and their families meets the requirements of the Residential Tenancies (Health Homes Standards) Regulations 2019, but the NZDF is conscious that more needs to be done to ensure homes are fit for future generations to live in.

When complete, the NZDF Homes for Families Programme will support a major improvement in Defence housing nationwide and provide more housing in the areas where it is most needed. The aim is to deliver 1,628 modern, high-quality houses that support health and wellbeing, help mitigate attrition and deliver value for money.

While the Defence housing and barrack rental rates that came into effect in April were an increase, I am advised that they are still significantly lower than local market rates. There is a standard process that the NZDF has to follow in order to apply rents at a discounted rate from the local market, and the rent for Defence Housing and Barrack Accommodation is renegotiated with the IRD Commissioner every three years. This is the best option available to the NZDF for the majority of people using barracks and Defence housing, within the constraints of New Zealand tax laws.

The rental rates that came into effect from 1 April 2024 will last until 31 March 2027, which will allow for some stability in budget planning during that time. Unfortunately, because of the increases in the New Zealand rental housing market over the past three years, the new Defence housing rates have meant a significant increase for some housing tenants and occupants of barracks. Again, I acknowledge that while these new rental rates are significantly lower than the local market, a number of NZDF personnel still face economic challenges.

I was sorry to read that demand currently exceeds supply at the kindergarten service where you are based. I have inferred that it is at Waiouru Army Camp as you say the only other kindergarten service is more than an hour's drive away. The Waiouru Kindergarten and Early Childcare Education service is an important part of the Waiouru community, and the NZDF has committed to funding the service to ensure its ongoing viability. This commitment has been made even though the funding is not part of core NZDF operational outputs or the general responsibility of the NZDF. The service continues to be subject to unique challenges, however, such as its location and a lack of other Early Childcare Education or preschool childcare options in the area.

Erin, I have read your email carefully and I want to emphasise how grateful I am for the sacrifices made daily by you, other spouses and partners, and the men and women of our Defence Force. I cannot promise a fix today, but please be assured that the NZDF and I continue to discuss ways of improving conditions for all members of the Defence Force and their families.

I hope that on reflection you may find some positive aspects looking forward. For my part I will continue to do my best to make it easier and rewarding for our Service personnel to serve.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judith Collins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Hon Judith Collins KC  
**Minister of Defence**