



EXECUTIVE COUNCIL CHAMBERS

12 May 2026



Ref: O A-2025/26-0662

Tēnā koe 

Official Information Act request: Eligibility for state honours

Thank you for your Official Information Act (the Act) request received on 16 April 2026. You requested:

“Pursuant to the Official Information Act can you write explaining the characteristics of persons (eg being of good standing/ no previous criminal history etc) for candidates to be eligible for state honors (knighthoods etc) please?”

Does this regulation come under a statute? Can you please forward a printed copy or copy/paste of the section of such a statute / regulation / policy etc please

Also, in accepting knighthoods, do recipients sign a declaration of no previous criminal offending; and furthermore agree to a code of conduct (and can you provide a copy of such declaration and code of conduct) please?”

Response to your request

Your request was transferred to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) from the Ministry of Justice because the information you have requested is more closely connected with the functions of DPMC. The Honours Unit, which is responsible for administration of the New Zealand Royal Honours system, is part of DPMC.

I have interpreted ‘state honors’ to mean New Zealand Royal Honours. New Zealand Royal Honours include the Order of New Zealand; the New Zealand Order of Merit; the King's Service Order and associated King's Service Medal; and other awards including the New Zealand Bravery and Gallantry Awards; the New Zealand Distinguished Service Decoration and the New Zealand Antarctic Medal.

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CABINET OFFICE, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, WELLINGTON 6011, NEW ZEALAND

Telephone: +64 (4) 830 5010. Email: CabinetOffice@dpmc.govt.nz

www.dpmc.govt.nz

Attached to this response is an A3 poster showing an overview of the New Zealand Royal Honours system. Beneath each honour is a description of the service and/or contributions required for appointment to that order, or award.

Eligibility for appointment to the above orders or awards is given in the statutes of each order or award, issued by Royal Warrant, or in medal regulations. The relevant sections of these statutes are included in the attached release document.

In accepting a Knighthood, or any of the other honours or awards listed above, recipients are not asked to sign a declaration that they have no previous criminal offending and there is no code of conduct to which they are asked to agree. Therefore, I refuse this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Act because DPMC holds no such document or declaration.

However, when a person is offered an honour, the Honours Unit asks them whether there is any conduct in their background which could be seen to undermine their credibility, including any criminal convictions not covered by the Criminal Records (Clean Slate) Act 2004, regulatory offences, civil proceedings, employment-related matters, professional association actions (such as disciplinary action), pending criminal charges, or any other current legal proceedings or investigations related to personal conduct. National security screening may also occur.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

This response will be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Nāku noa, nā



Rachel Hayward
Clerk of the Executive Council

THE NEW ZEALAND ROYAL HONOURS, ORDERS AND AWARDS

STATE ORDERS

THE ORDER OF NEW ZEALAND



The ONZ is New Zealand's most senior honour. Queen Elizabeth II established this order in 1987 to recognise outstanding service to the Crown and people of New Zealand. Ordinary membership of the Order is restricted to 20 living persons.

THE NEW ZEALAND ORDER OF MERIT

Queen Elizabeth II established the New Zealand Order of Merit in 1996 as a unique New Zealand Order to recognise New Zealanders who have given meritorious service to the Crown and Nation, or have become distinguished by their contribution to their individual fields.



DAME / KNIGHT GRAND COMPANION (GNZM)

Awarded for pre-eminent contribution in any field over a sustained period. Services have usually brought international recognition.



DAME / KNIGHT COMPANION (DNZM / KNZM)

Awarded for pre-eminent contribution in any field, achieving at a national or international level, recognised by peers and demonstrating sustained commitment.



COMPANION (CNZM)

Awarded for a prominent national or international leading role in regional affairs or distinguished contribution to an area of activity.



OFFICER (ONZM)

Awarded for distinguished regional or national role in an field.



MEMBER (MNZM)

Awarded for achievement or service to the community, usually in a regional or national role.

THE KING'S SERVICE ORDER

Queen Elizabeth II established the Queen's Service Order (QSO) with its associated Queen's Service Medal (QSM) in 1975. In 2024 the Order was renamed to the "King's Service Order" to acknowledge the new Sovereign. The awards recognise voluntary service to the community and service through elected and appointed office.



THE KING'S SERVICE ORDER (KSO)

The KSO is usually awarded for service at a national level.



THE KING'S SERVICE MEDAL (KSM)

The KSM is usually awarded for voluntary service to the community at a local or regional level.

NEW ZEALAND STATE AWARDS

Queen Elizabeth II instituted the New Zealand Antarctic Medal (NZAM) in 2006 and the The New Zealand Distinguished Service Decoration (DSD) in 2007.



THE NEW ZEALAND ANTARCTIC MEDAL (NZAM)

Instituted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2006, this is awarded to recognise New Zealanders and others who have made an outstanding contribution to exploration, scientific research, conservation, environmental protection, or knowledge of the Antarctic region.



THE NEW ZEALAND DISTINGUISHED SERVICE DECORATION (DSD)

Instituted by Queen Elizabeth II in 2007 to recognise distinguished military service, by regular, territorial and reserve members of the New Zealand Defence Force, including command, leadership and service in an operational environment, or in support of operations.

NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY AWARDS

The New Zealand Bravery Awards were instituted in 1999. These awards for civilians and military personnel are designed to recognise the actions of those persons who save or attempt to save the life of another person and in doing so place their own safety or life at risk.



THE NEW ZEALAND CROSS (NZC)

Awarded for 'acts of great bravery in situations of extreme danger'.



THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY STAR (NZBS)

Awarded for 'acts of outstanding bravery in situations of danger'.



THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY DECORATION (NZBD)

Awarded for 'acts of exceptional bravery in situations of danger'.



THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY MEDAL (NZBM)

Awarded for 'acts of bravery'.

THE NEW ZEALAND GALLANTRY AWARDS

The New Zealand Gallantry Awards were instituted in 1999. These awards are designed to recognise those military personnel, who perform acts of gallantry while involved in war and non-warlike operational service (including peacekeeping). Gallantry awards do not necessarily involve the saving or attempting to save the life of another person.



THE VICTORIA CROSS FOR NEW ZEALAND (VC)

Awarded for 'most conspicuous gallantry, or some daring or a pre-eminent act of valour, or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty in the face of the enemy or belligerents'.



THE NEW ZEALAND GALLANTRY STAR (NZGS)

Awarded for 'outstanding acts of gallantry in situations of danger'.



THE NEW ZEALAND GALLANTRY DECORATION (NZGD)

Awarded for 'acts of exceptional gallantry in situations of danger'.



THE NEW ZEALAND GALLANTRY MEDAL (NZGM)

Awarded for 'acts of gallantry'.

NOMINATIONS FOR A NEW ZEALAND ROYAL HONOUR

Anyone can nominate a person they think is worthy of a New Zealand Royal Honour.

Nomination forms and information on the honours system can be found at:

www.dpmc.govt.nz/honours/nominations

or you can contact the Honours Unit of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet:

Honours Unit, Cabinet Office
Parliament Buildings, PO Box 55, Wellington 6140

Phone: (04) 830 5011

Email: honours@dpmc.govt.nz

Website: www.dpmc.govt.nz/honours

Extracts of statutes and regulations of New Zealand Royal Honours

The Order of New Zealand

Statutes of the Order of New Zealand – Royal Warrant

Clause 9 Qualifications for Membership

Persons eligible to be admitted as Ordinary or Honorary Members shall be those who have rendered outstanding service to the Crown and people of New Zealand.

New Zealand Order of Merit

Statutes of the New Zealand Order of Merit – Royal Warrant

Clause 6 Persons eligible to be admitted to the Order

Persons to be admitted to the Order shall be such persons being citizens of New Zealand or citizens of Commonwealth Nations of which We are Sovereign, who, in any field of endeavour, have rendered meritorious service to the Crown and the nation or who have become distinguished by their eminence, talents, contributions, or other merits.

The King's Service Order

Statutes of the King's Service Order – Royal Warrant

Clause 10 Qualifications

Persons to be admitted as Companions of the Order shall be those who have rendered either or both—

- (a) valuable voluntary service to the community;*
- (b) meritorious and faithful services to the Crown or similar services within the public sector, whether in elected or appointed office.*

Clause 21 Qualifications

The [King's Service] medal shall be awarded to those persons who have rendered either or both—

- (a) valuable voluntary service to the community;*
- (b) meritorious and faithful services to the Crown or similar services within the public sector, whether in elected or appointed office.*

The New Zealand Gallantry Awards

The New Zealand Gallantry Awards – Royal Warrant

Clause 5 Criteria

The criteria for each Award shall be—

- a) the Victoria Cross for New Zealand: for most conspicuous gallantry, or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice or extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy or of belligerents;*
- b) the New Zealand Gallantry Star: for acts of outstanding gallantry in situations of danger;*
- c) the New Zealand Gallantry Decoration: for acts of exceptional gallantry in situations of danger;*
- d) the New Zealand Gallantry Medal: for acts of gallantry.*

Clause 6 Eligibility for Awards

(1) The following persons, while involved in warlike or non-warlike operational service (including peacekeeping), shall be eligible for the Awards and Bars to the Awards:

- (a) members of the New Zealand Defence Force, including Territorial and other auxiliary units established from time to time, and including members on secondment or attachment to, or deployment with, other Commonwealth and foreign nations; and*
 - (b) members of the New Zealand Defence Force and other New Zealand personnel serving with United Nations and other peacekeeping or peace enforcement missions; and*
 - (c) military personnel of other Commonwealth and foreign nations while on secondment or attachment to, or deployment with, the New Zealand Defence Force; and*
 - (d) members of the New Zealand Merchant Navy and crews of civil airlines, registered in New Zealand, and members of recognised New Zealand philanthropic and welfare organisations, operating under the direction or supervision of the New Zealand Defence Force; and*
 - (e) civilians working on a permanent or temporary basis under the direction or supervision of the New Zealand Defence Force; and*
 - (f) such other persons whom Our Governor General of New Zealand, on the advice of Our Prime Minister of New Zealand or a Minister of the Crown acting for Our Prime Minister, may determine from time to time.*
- (2) Citizens of other Commonwealth and foreign countries who satisfy the criteria specified in subclause (1) are eligible for the Awards and Bars to the Awards.*

The New Zealand Bravery Awards

The New Zealand Bravery Awards – Royal Warrant

Clause 5 Criteria

The criteria for each Award shall be—

- (a) the New Zealand Cross: for acts of great bravery in situations of extreme danger;*
- (b) the New Zealand Bravery Star: for acts of outstanding bravery in situations of danger;*
- (c) the New Zealand Bravery Decoration: for acts of exceptional bravery in situations of danger;*
- (d) the New Zealand Bravery Medal: for acts of bravery.*

Clause 6 Eligibility for Awards

(1) Civilians and military personnel who satisfy the criteria specified in clause 5 shall be eligible for the Awards and Bars to the Awards for acts of bravery for which a New Zealand Gallantry Award or other award may be inappropriate.

(2) Citizens of other Commonwealth and foreign countries who satisfy the criteria specified in clause 5 shall be eligible for the Awards and Bars to the Awards.

The New Zealand Distinguished Service Decoration

The New Zealand Distinguished Service Decoration – Royal Warrant

Clause 14 Eligibility

Serving members of the New Zealand Armed Forces, Regular, Territorial, and Reserve, shall be eligible for the decoration and bars to the decoration.

Clause 15 Eligibility: honorary

Commonwealth and foreign military personnel serving with, alongside, or on exchange with the New Zealand Armed Forces shall be eligible for an honorary decoration and bars to the decoration.

New Zealand Distinguished Service Decoration Regulations 2007

Clause 5 Qualifications for Decoration and Bar

(1) This regulation sets out the qualifications—

(a) in respect of serving members of the New Zealand Armed Forces, Regular, Territorial, and Reserve (who are eligible under clause 14 of the Warrant); and

(b) in respect of Commonwealth and foreign military personnel serving with, alongside, or on exchange with the New Zealand Armed Forces (who are eligible under clause 15 of the Warrant).

(2) The Decoration or Bar to the Decoration may be awarded to persons who have rendered distinguished or meritorious service to New Zealand that consists of outstanding performance of military duties in either warlike or non-warlike operations, or individual efforts toward peacetime and humanitarian service, and that—

(a) brings great credit to the New Zealand Armed Forces; and

(b) contributes significantly, through exceptional devotion to duty, dedication, judgment, or application of skills, to 1 or more of the following:

(i) the conduct of an operation;

(ii) the conduct of military training;

(iii) the management and implementation of a project or activity with significant implications for the current or future capability of the New Zealand Armed Forces.

The New Zealand Antarctic Medal

The New Zealand Antarctic Medal – Royal Warrant

Clause 4 Qualifications for the medal

The medal may be awarded to those New Zealanders and other persons who either individually or as members of a New Zealand programme in the Antarctic region have made an outstanding contribution—

(a) to exploration, scientific research, conservation, environmental protection, or knowledge of the Antarctic region; or
(b) in support of New Zealand's objectives or operations, or both, in the Antarctic region.

Proactively Released