



# PATRONS' BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 2025

## COMMANDING OFFICER'S UPDATE



**Lieutenant Colonel Mark Blythen**  
Commanding Officer,  
Youth Development Unit

Welcome to the third edition of the Patrons' Bulletin, a twice yearly update which aims to keep you abreast of the Limited Service Volunteer programme.

This bulletin provides an opportunity to introduce myself to you as the new Commanding Officer YDU. I am passionate about the work we do with youth and having worked in YDU HQ since 2022 the transition has been smooth. Having served with the NZ Defence Force for over three decades, I appreciate the growth and opportunities our organisation provides to people from all walks of life. The LSV programme is a great example of this and it continues to deliver tangible benefits to all our participants.

In this edition you'll find the courses and graduation dates for all LSV courses through to the end of the year. You'll also find some images of the Northern and Central Patron Events held late last year. These were great opportunities to re-engage with the LSV team, meet other patrons and introduce potential patrons to the programme. We are planning on hosting a Patrons Event in each of the regions in 2025 so keep an eye out for dates in the future.

Since the last bulletin, the Minister of Defence's Tohu Awards was held in Wellington and you will find an article about that fantastic event on page 6. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank those of you who responded to the Ministry of Social Development's letter sent earlier in the year. Your input is appreciated and Shane Carter (MSD) is very pleased with the feedback.

Looking ahead to the key activities this year, we have eleven LSV courses programmed in 2025 and MSD is working hard to ensure they are all full. They've had a great start by marching in a full course of 100 trainees for our first course of the year at Burnham. YDU is working hard on recruiting and training new staff to meet the anticipated increase in trainee numbers.

Thank you for your continued support to the LSV programme and the wider NZDF. I look forward to meeting you soon at a graduation or Patrons Events.

He waka eke noa (We are all in this canoe together, no exceptions).





Between 1 July 2024 - 28 February 2025 (YTD):

**413**

**LSV TRAINEES MARCHED IN**

**297**

**GRADUATED**

**72%**  
GRADUATION RATE









# HE WAKA EKE NOA

**We are all in this canoe  
together, no exceptions**

## FROM LSV TO NZDF

LSV Trainees take on all sorts of new pathways after graduating, some of them joining the New Zealand Defence Force.

## FROM TRAINEE TO RECRUIT

Roman\* had dreamed of serving in the forces since he was a young child. After leaving school, Roman picked up work at a local supermarket, however it was clear that this was not his long-term calling. With a lack of other opportunities, LSV seemed like the perfect opportunity to test whether the military was the right career path

Although Roman was shy and reserved to begin with, he underwent a remarkable transformation over the 6 weeks and marched out a confident young man with excellent leadership skills. On top of this, he had a high standard of self-discipline and was an outstanding role model for all. This was recognised by his fellow trainees, as he received the Peers Choice award.

Roman returned home and picked up the odd shift at his local supermarket, however he was more determined than ever to succeed in his application for the defence force.

Roman wrote to Rachel Unuia, the LSV Work Broker at Trentham, confirming that he had been accepted to the Navy in February 2024: "[I am] just emailing you to say thank you to you, and all the staff at LSV. Even though it was only six weeks my time at LSV was a highlight of my life. I'm off to Navy basic training today to start my next journey, who knows you might see me walking around Trentham base one day.

Wish me luck and again thank you."

\*Name changed.



## A FAMILY AFFAIR

Inspired by whānau, Curtis\* secured employment before his course graduation.

### IMMEDIATE EMPLOYMENT

Curtis\* admired the progress his brother and sister made at LSV over 10 years ago, however attending himself seemed an impossible dream in 2021-2022. Curtis was in prison. During that period, he had time to reflect, and began the steps to building a better future for himself. In 2023, he wanted to emulate his siblings, to make his whānau proud, and to attend LSV for himself.

In Curtis' application, it was clear that he was determined: "I think by pursuing this course I will gain the confidence within myself to be a better person, a better Dad and one day a partner. But also, this will have positive effects on whānau. I see this as an opportunity to ground myself in who I am and where I want to be in life. A change, a positive change that is. A chance to make it right."

During the course, Curtis flourished. He gained a restricted license and employment at a building firm before the course was finished. It was, however, the personal growth that may have the most lasting impact. He challenged his own beliefs, constantly strived for a better future, and learned how to deal with his emotions. It was a remarkable turnaround in six weeks.

Curtis exited a benefit on the Monday after graduation, which was a massive step in his journey. His progress and potential were not only recognised by his new employer. The MSD team at Trentham also noted this: "In the right environment, he proved to be a loyal and dedicated team member. Curtis should take great pride in the personal growth that he has achieved."

\*Name changed.



## CELEBRATING SUCCESS



Winners of the Annual Tohu Awards pictured with Minister of Defence, Hon Chris Penk, Chair of the Defence Employer Support Council and Senior NZDF Leadership. Jenny Pewhairangi (bottom left), winner of the Outstanding Contribution to the LSV Programme, Kayzian Bevan (bottom row, sixth from the left), winner of the LSV of the Year Award and FENZ, winner of the Employer Recognition to the LSV Programme were celebrated on the day.

## CELEBRATING OUR SUPPORT CREW

### NEW “LSV OF THE YEAR” AWARDED AT THE 2024 ANNUAL TOHU AWARDS

The Minister of Defence's 2024 Tohu Awards recognise excellence from members of our Reserve Force, Cadet Force Officers and Limited Service Volunteer (LSV) graduates and celebrates the commitment from the organisations who support them.

The awards, run by the Defence Employer Support Council (DESC), acknowledge the employers who support part time NZDF personnel, allowing them to attend training and development opportunities so they may effectively supplement our Regular Force members when required.

The Tohu Awards also celebrate employers who support the Limited Service Volunteer (LSV) programme and its graduates. The LSV programme supports youth in developing skills to seek employment and make positive, long-term contributions to their community

Congratulations to our 2024 award winners and thank you to those who nominated organisations that show their support for our people and the role they play in the New Zealand Defence Force.

#### **Limited Service Volunteer of the Year**

The Limited Service Volunteer of the Year is awarded to Kayzian Bevan who graduated at Burnham Military Camp in July 2023. Kayzian saw the LSV programme as an opportunity to challenge himself and make positive changes in his life. Kayzian's confidence grew, he rediscovered his passion for Te Ao Māori and Kapa Haka, which in turn reignited his desire to reconnect with his whakapapa. Since graduating Kayzian was offered and

accepted a job with Te Wānanga o Raukawa as a Waste Management Officer, while also enrolling in Poupou Huia Te Reo (level 4) classes. He is an inspiration to any LSV trainee and a fantastic example of the personal growth that can be achieved with hard work and perseverance.

#### **Outstanding Contribution to the Limited Service Volunteer Programme**

Jenny Pewhairangi is recognised for an Outstanding Contribution to the Limited Service Volunteer Programme. Jenny has been the Regional Champion for Taranaki since 2011, she understands the vision and purpose of the LSV programme and remains passionate about the difference it can make to the trainees. She offers support to prepare them for the course, ensures they get transport to their location and makes sure they have ongoing support afterwards. With Jenny's help, trainees feel safe, strong and independent throughout the process.

#### **Employer Recognition to the Limited Service Volunteer Programme award**

Employer FENZ has received the Employer Recognition to the Limited Service Volunteer Programme award. Mark Elstone and his team from FENZ have been engaging with the programme since 2019. The FENZ team actively participate in each course encouraging trainees during their time in the programme. Their support is continuing to increase and they are a key enabler of the LSV programme.

The Tohu Awards are celebrated annually in November. Each award category is open for nominations for six weeks, beginning in April 2025.

Story originally published by the Defence Employer Support Council (DESC).



# CELEBRATING PATRONS

We'd like to extend our sincere thanks to the following people who were Course Patrons since the last bulletin:



## YDU North

Mark Cross, Director Chorus, ACC and Xero



## YDU Central

Megan Elmiger, CentrePort People, Safety and Marine  
Gagau Annadale-Stone, Regional Commissioner for Social Development



## YDU South

Lee Gardiner, General Manager - Transformation and Social Infrastructure Citycare  
Laura Burke, Downer National Tendering Manager  
Steve Abley, Chief Executive Abley

## PATRONS' EVENTS

YDU North held a Patrons' Event on Thursday 24 November 2024 at Shakespeare Regional Park during Field Exercise #3 for past patrons to reconnect. We saw a good turnout which is growing each year.

It is intended that a Patrons' Event be planned for all regions on an annual basis. The purpose is to provide an opportunity for past patrons to re-engage with LSV, introduce potential patrons to the programme and enjoy some good company.

The Patrons and staff in the Northern region took on the trainees in a tug-o-war and lets just say, youth were the winner on the day!

### ***Keen to get involved?***

Further details on Patrons' Events will be provided by the Officers Commanding of those regions.

- YDU (N): Date to be confirmed by the region.
- YDU (C): Date to be confirmed by the region.
- YDU (S): 10 April 2025, Burnham (Evening event)



# INTRODUCING OUR PATRONS

***Steve Abley (Patron of LSV South 04/24) reflects on his employment journey and the Limited Service Volunteer Course.***

My simple story is that I grew up in a single parent household from the age of 14 months and my mum was on a benefit for almost all that time. I left school aged 16 with the equivalent of NCEA Level 2. The year was 1988 and there was limited work in NZ given the share market crash a year prior. Over the next few years unemployment rose to a peak of 11.2% which is the highest ever recorded. Simplistically, NZ was a dire place to be.

I had been introduced to surveying at school and I had an interest in technical drawing. I needed to find work so I door knocked every surveyor in Christchurch that had an advertisement in the Yellow Pages. This took about a week and resulted in zero job offers. Nevertheless, I made an impact with one potential employer who about three months later invited me back for a competitive interview as an engineering technician. That was the only result of my door knocking, one lead.

Even so, that one lead was enough. I gained that role and was appointed as a 'junior office boy' and yes, that was the actual job title. The job paid so little I could not afford to leave home and regardless; my mother did not want me to. Although I grew up in a poor family, I was provided with a safe, structured, and loving household.

I worked hard at my new job, and I learnt a lot. My employer offered me time off and I undertook part-time engineering classes at Polytechnic. I took that opportunity, and then I did a few more classes, and a few more and then even more. After 5 years part-time study I gained a level 5 qualification.

After that success I had a renewed thirst for education and after working some more, and even harder, I went to university. I was the first in my wider family to do that, ever. University was very difficult for me academically, but I found I had other skills that compensated. My greatest talent was perseverance that meant I gained my Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering (with Honours) (a level 8 qualification) and in short time and my career and life evolved.

Today, at 53, I'm the chief executive of Abley, a professional services firm I founded roughly 20 years ago which employs about 80 people from three offices in NZ and undertakes work in Canada, USA, Australia, Brunei and Indonesia (via Australia). More impressive though is my long-time Christchurch girlfriend and I married some 20 years ago in London and today we have a family of three aged, 16, 13 and 11.

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Limited Service Volunteer  
Course S04/24

COURSE PATRON

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Mr Steve Abley





# UPCOMING COURSES

Short Name	Trainees	Location	Start date (March in)	End date (Graduation)	Point of Contact
LSV N01/25	120	Whenuapai	24-Mar-25	3-May-25	Major Steve Bougen Officer Commanding YDU North, <a href="mailto:steve.bougen@nzdf.mil.nz">steve.bougen@nzdf.mil.nz</a>
LSV N02/25	120	Whenuapai	30-Jun-25	9-Aug-25	
LSV N03/25	150	Whenuapai	6-Oct-25	15-Nov-25	
LSV C01/25	70	Trentham	14-Apr-25	24-May-25	Major Sheridan Cooper, Officer Commanding YDU Central, <a href="mailto:sheridan.cooper@nzdf.mil.nz">sheridan.cooper@nzdf.mil.nz</a>
LSV C02/25	70	Trentham	16-Jun-25	26-Jul-25	
LSV C03/25	90	Trentham	18-Aug-25	27-Sep-25	
LSV C04/25	90	Trentham	28-Oct-25	6-Dec-25	
LSV S01/25	100	Burnham	27-Jan-25	8-Mar-25	Major Stephen Challies Officer Commanding YDU South <a href="mailto:stephen.challies@nzdf.mil.nz">stephen.challies@nzdf.mil.nz</a>
LSV S02/25	60	Burnham	28-Apr-25	7-Jun-25	
LSV S03/25	100	Burnham	4-Aug-25	13-Sep-25	
LSV S04/25	100	Burnham	20-Oct-25	29-Nov-25	





## Follow us!

You can watch past LSV Graduations, live or in your own time, and get real-time updates and behind the scene glimpses of each LSV course via the following links on Facebook:

[LSV – Limited Service Volunteer - Auckland](#),  
[LSV – Limited Service Volunteer - Trentham](#)  
[LSV – Limited Service Volunteer - Canterbury](#).

### ***What's involved in an LSV Course?***

For video content about the LSV Programme, please enjoy the following links, published in our previous bulletin:

About Us video (01:42 minutes): Check it out [here](#).

Maori TV (12 Minutes): Check it out [here](#).

Police video on LSV, filmed in Burnham last year: Check it out [here](#).

### ***Get in touch:***

If you have any suggestions for this bulletin or want to discuss anything to do with the LSV course, including recommending patrons, please contact:

Tua Atkinson,  
Training & Engagement Manager,  
[tua.atkinson@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:tua.atkinson@nzdf.mil.nz) or scan the QR code for contact details and LSV videos and articles.

Thank you for reading along, and please do get in touch with us at any time at [ydu.patron@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:ydu.patron@nzdf.mil.nz)  
If you wish to unsubscribe, please contact us on [ydu.patron@nzdf.mil.nz](mailto:ydu.patron@nzdf.mil.nz)

