Discussion document: Defence White Paper 2015
Thank you for the invitation to provide feedback on the above discussion document regarding the role of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) and the provision of its services. The New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists (NZSA) welcomes this opportunity to provide our views and considerations on this paper.

About NZSA
The New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists Inc., (NZSA) is a professional medical education society established in 1948. It represents almost 500 medical anaesthetists in New Zealand and works to foster education and research into anaesthesia, and support the professional interests of its members. Members include specialist anaesthetists in public and private practice, and trainee anaesthetists. NZSA is a member society of the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA) and is represented at Executive level of the WFSA.

To further the education of our members we organize conferences involving other anaesthesia societies from around the world including the Pacific Society of Anaesthetists. We recently hosted the 2014 Combined AACA ASURA conference and inaugural Pacific Super Meeting in Auckland.

Introduction
Our interests with regard to the Defence White Paper lie in the areas of disaster relief both in New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, and emergency management within New Zealand alongside government departments.

The NZSA shares interests and staffing with NZMAT and the Pacifika Medical Association, giving us a unique insight into the medical and civilian aid requirements in the Pacific, and sharing that expertise with NZDF would potentially improve the aid response by the NZDF.

Through our Overseas Aid Committee (OAS) we organise emergency and relief cover for the Pacific Islands and work with government agencies and other organisations to ensure support is available when disasters occur in the Pacific region. Organisations we work with include the Ministry of Health New Zealand Medical Assistance Teams (NZMAT), the Australian Medical Assistance Teams (AUSMAT), the New Zealand Fire Service Urban Search Rescue team (NZFS USAR) and the Pacifika Medical Association (PMA).

As a member of the WFSA we are committed to improving and supporting anaesthetic services in the region of Asia Australasia, specifically with our Pacific neighbours. This work is also carried out through our OAS, which has spent some years fostering improved anaesthetic services and providing training for

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Pacific Island anaesthetists. Through this work and these connections our anaesthetists are also most effective in disaster response situations.

**Effects of climate change**

It is well documented that over time climate change will affect public health and have an impact on what health services are required. I draw your attention to *A Human Health Perspective on Climate Change*[^3], *New Zealand Medical Journal*, November 2014, Volume 127[^4], Climate Change: Potential effects on Human Health in New Zealand, 2001[^5].

The Australian Defence Force has also assessed that climate change will be a contributing driver to its defence activities in the Pacific in the next 20 years in its *Defence White Paper 2013[^6]*, detailed in related articles *Sydney Morning Herald[^7]*, and the report *The Securitisation of Climate Change: a military perspective[^8]*.

These reports detail that climate change will cause increased weather disturbances affecting public health and the health services required, including an increased frequency of floods, droughts, earthquakes, tsunamis and hurricanes. In the next 25 years we can expect an increase in disasters in the South Pacific region, affecting the populations of Pacific Island countries and New Zealanders holidaying in the region.

**Emergency Management – Pacific Islands**

Anaesthetists occupy a central role in disaster medical emergency work. We run the operating theatres, help organize pre-op resuscitation and are involved in post-op ICU and pain management. New Zealand anaesthetists have got involved in helping out in the Pacific for many years and there is a core group who frequently go to the Pacific to work in some cases for years at remote locations and have extensive experience of local people being frequently able to speak the local languages and are good friends with the staff in the major hospitals in the Pacific Islands. This knowledge and experience has been called upon by NZMAT and the Pasifika Medical Association for disaster relief work.

**Recent disasters**

New Zealand anaesthetists have been involved in disaster response in the following recent events:

- **Tropical Cyclone Pam, Vanuatu, 2015** – Dr Tony Diprose, of NZSA OAS and NZMAT, worked in Port Vila Hospital for 2 years and assessed needs at short notice for NZMAT. Dr Diprose continues a training programme for Pacific Island anaesthetists at Hawkes Bay Hospital with a 12-month training attachment.

- **Cyclone Ita, Solomon Islands, 2014** - Dr Alan Goodey, of NZSA OAS and NZMAT, went to Samoa as part of the New Zealand government response for needs assessment. Dr Goodey has worked regularly doing plastic surgery procedures in Samoa at Apia hospital.

- **Tsunami, Western Samoa, 2009** - Dr Goodey and Dr Ted Hughes (NZSA OAS committee) were both “chef-de-mission”, coordinated medical and surgical work, and worked in the operating theatres. Dr Hughes is a part-Cook Islander and has extensive experience in Rarotonga Hospital in anaesthetics, including theatre and ICU work, and the retrieval of critically-ill patients.

[^3]: New Zealand Medical Journal, November 2014, Volume 127
[^4]: Climate Change: Potential effects on Human Health in New Zealand, 2001
[^5]: Defence White Paper 2013
[^6]: Sydney Morning Herald
[^7]: The Securitisation of Climate Change: a military perspective

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New Zealand anaesthetist Dr Maurice Lee (NZSA OAS) also recently went to Nepal following the May 2015 earthquake, setting up a remote hospital with aid agency Samaritans Purse and surgeons.

Our anaesthetists who respond in these emergencies are most valuable because they usually have significant experience in the locations, have key contacts, and often know the native language. This allows them to provide effective and timely assistance in emergency response situations.

The anaesthetists from these recent deployments have all reported to us that utilizing their contacts with other medical professionals they knew at the location, enabled their work to be most effective.

**Current status**
Currently New Zealand anaesthetists are called to respond to disasters such as those listed above by various methods – through the Pasifika Medical Association as part of the NZMAT response, by aid agencies, or occasionally independently through their own contacts.

This system has worked for the above disasters, but going forward, with more disaster events likely, we believe the responding agencies would benefit from working closer with the NZDF to strengthen our communications around these deployments.

Currently a meeting occurs between the NZSA President, the Pasifika Medical Association, and Army representatives approximately every three months in Auckland. This is a useful meeting and we would like to see continued support of the NZDF for this and also that it be extended to include more groups.

**Recommendations**
We submit that the New Zealand government Defence White Paper 2015 needs to plan for the likelihood that the NZDF will be required to respond to more disasters in future. We believe the following recommendations would be useful to build links and plan disaster response both in the Pacific Islands and domestically in New Zealand.

We suggest:
- a closer liaison be developed between NZDF staff and disaster relief staff in New Zealand with particular expertise in Pacific deployments and aid efforts, in order to increase the efficiency and timeliness of NZDF assistance with Pacific aid work
- regular meetings throughout the year especially before the Pacific Cyclone season (between November and April) between the following agencies: NZDF, NZMAT, NZFS USAR, Pasifika Medical Association, NZSA OAS

**Conclusion**
New Zealand has a responsibility to provide medical aid to Pacific Island countries. It is acknowledged that we can expect more extreme weather events, requiring emergency response, in the Pacific Rim area in the next 25 years and beyond.

It is important that government agencies and medical organisations plan together so that New Zealand can respond most effectively. Anaesthetists have specialist services, expertise and knowledge that are needed in disaster events. These services are available to support the NZDF medical teams in disaster and emergency response situations in both the New Zealand and the Pacific Islands.
New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists
(Incorporated)

We recommend closer liaisons between the agencies involved, as outline above, and we look forward to continuing to work with the NZDF and other government agencies on planning and response for emergency events both in New Zealand and in the Pacific.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on this important topic. I am happy to discuss this submission further. Please feel free to contact me at president@anaesthesia.org.nz.

Yours faithfully,

EW(Ted) Hughes

Dr Ted Hughes
President

References:
1 World Federation of Anaesthesiologists, http://www.wfsahq.org/
2 NZSA Overseas Aid Sub-Committee, http://anaesthetist.digiwebhosting.com/about/nzsa-overseas-aid-sub-committee/
8 The Securitisation of Climate Change: a military perspective, Major Michael Thomas, Australian Army, http://www.academia.edu/9850971/Climate_SECURITISATION