

# Annual Report

Year 26 January 2025 to 30 June 2025



Brendan Horsley  
Inspector-General of Defence  
November 2025

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Cover Photo: HMNZS Te Kaha sails past the Point Halswell lighthouse on her arrival into Wellington on a three-day port visit. *LAC Williams*

## FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the inaugural annual report for the newly established office of the Inspector-General of Defence. It is fair to say the role of the Inspector-General of Defence (IGD) has been a long time coming. Its origins were in the July 2020 Report of the Government Inquiry into Operation Burnham and related matters. In that report, Sir Terence Arnold KC and Sir Geoffrey Palmer KC recommended the establishment of an office of the “Independent Inspector-General of Defence ... to facilitate independent oversight of NZDF and to enhance its democratic accountability.” Government accepted that recommendation. In July 2023 the Inspector-General of Defence Act 2023 was passed, but did not enter into force until 26 January 2025.

I was honoured to be appointed as IGD from commencement of the role to 30 November 2025. This report covers the period from 26 January 2025 to 30 June 2025. During this time my efforts have primarily focused on establishing the office, ensuring appropriate supporting systems are in place, and recruiting investigative staff. I also received extensive and valuable briefings from multiple units within NZDF and the Ministry of Defence. I am most grateful for the efforts of both agencies in supporting the establishment of the office. The briefings, and other consultations, helped me to formulate a work programme for the future direction of the office and they have set the tone for engagement between the IGD and NZDF. As a result, I am confident that the office will be well positioned to undertake its important role of exercising effective independent oversight when I hand over the reins to the next IGD in December.

I look forward to working with the new IGD and their office. As I noted in the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security’s Annual Report, “there are important and valuable synergies between the offices of the IGIS and the IGD. I expect the offices will work closely together as the only oversight bodies working predominantly with classified material. The offices also have complementary areas of interest in overlapping activities of the intelligence agencies and the NZDF, such as, intelligence, support to military operations and the security of the South Pacific. Having both an IGIS and IGD will reinforce the integrity of our national security framework, ensuring independent oversight across a wider scope of government activity.”



Brendan Horsley  
Inspector-General of Defence



# THE OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR-GENERAL

The Inspector-General of Defence is an independent statutory officer responsible for the oversight of the activities of the New Zealand Defence Force. The Inspector-General can investigate matters in relation to the activities of the NZDF and can undertake assessments of Defence Force policies or procedures.

The Inspector-General must act independently, fairly, impartially, and in the public interest. They must also have regard to the military context in which the NZDF operates.

The purpose of the Inspector-General of Defence is to:

- provide the Minister with dedicated independent oversight of the NZDF;
- support the Minister in their responsibility to the House of Representatives for the activities of the NZDF; and
- assure the public that the activities of the NZDF are subject to independent scrutiny, including in relation to the NZDF's compliance with New Zealand's obligations under international law.

The work of Inspector-General's office involves:

- investigating incidents that have occurred in the course of activities of the Defence Force; and any subsequent acts or omissions of the Defence Force in relation to those incidents (the **investigation function**);
- assessing, and identifying potential improvements or additions to, policies and procedures governing activities of the Defence Force (the **assessment function**);
- receiving protected disclosures relating to the New Zealand Defence Force; and
- any other function conferred on the Inspector-General by the IGD Act or any other legislation or rule of law.

The office can carry out an investigation or assessment either on the Inspector-General's own initiative (including acting on information received from any person under section 23 of the IGD Act or disclosed under the Protected Disclosures (Protection of Whistleblowers Act 2022), or at the request of the Minister of Defence, the Secretary of Defence, or the Chief of Defence Force.

## GENERAL UPDATE

For the first half of this year, the office consisted solely of myself and my irreplaceable office Manager/EA, Nola McKean. I am pleased to report that we have successfully recruited staff for the office and three Senior Investigators commenced work in July 2025. As foreshadowed in my Work Programme 2025/2026, I also assisted in the appointment of a Deputy IGD. Ms Natalie Pierce will commence in that role from early November 2025. I am delighted with Ms Pierce's appointment, she brings a wealth of inquiry and oversight experience to the office and I am sure she will provide for a smooth transition to my successor. Supporting office management and EA functions are still heavily reliant upon staff from the office of the IGIS. Longer term, it will be necessary to appoint a permanent staff member to assist in the administration of the office, and in supporting the IGD and the Deputy IGD.

A website for the office has been created, providing details about the functions of the IGD and other useful information - including the IGD Work Programme 2025/2026. In future the site will also host our annual reports, work programmes, and investigation and assessment reports where appropriate.

Early engagement and consultation with NZDF and the Ministry of Defence has been appreciated. I have provided feedback on proposed Cabinet papers and some policies that impact on the relationship between NZDF and the office of the Inspector-General. I look forward to continuing to work toward a constructive and open relationship between my office, the NZDF, and the Ministry. The introductory briefings offered by NZDF have also proven useful in creating connections with NZDF leadership. To maintain these connections, regular sessions have been established between myself and the Vice Chief of Defence Force.

I have one further observation from my engagements with NZDF to date. Despite the efforts of members of the NZDF, securing full and direct access to records and information remains problematic. The NZDF is a complicated repository of data and information. It can be held in differently classified systems (sometimes compartmentalised), some is held centrally or within the various services or at unit level. Accessing and extracting relevant data and information requires knowing where it is, obtaining requisite administrative privileges, and having fully functioning document management systems. All of the above also assumes relevant data has been captured in the first place. Having full, direct access to all defence records in the possession or control of the Defence Force is essential if the office is to fulfil its statutory obligations. At this time, I am unconvinced that the NZDF has sufficiently captured data and information in a way that renders it accessible and able to facilitate effective oversight.

I was pleased to receive correspondence from and meet with (over video link) the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force, Mr James Gaynor CSC. His office has commenced an independent inquiry into allegations and perceptions that the Australian military justice system has been, or has the potential to be, 'weaponised', such that it may cause harm. I look forward to learning more about this inquiry, and building an ongoing relationship with my Australian counterparts.

I am conscious of the need to raise awareness of this new role and the work of the office. To that end I have accepted a number of speaking engagements in the reporting period. These have included addressing attendees at the NZDF Advanced Command and Staff Course and presenting at the NZ Security Sector Professional Development Programme for Officials.

## INVESTIGATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

As the primary focus of the last year has been to establish the office and recruit investigative staff, no formal investigations or assessments were completed. Three tranches of investigative and assessment work have been planned however, and a work programme for 2025-26 was developed and published online. Planned investigations or assessments will focus on the following subject areas:

- Assessment of NZDF's internal complaint policies and processes;
- Implementation of the recommendations from the Manawanui sinking; and
- The military justice system and its interface with civilian prosecutions.

Provisional work has been undertaken on some of the areas of the work programme, and NZDF has offered to deliver relevant briefings in due course. The provisional work completed to date will assist in the preparation of draft terms of reference. The office's draft terms of reference for each investigation or assessment will, in accordance with the Act, be shared with the Secretary of Defence and Chief of Defence Force prior to formally embarking upon the planned activity.

Over the period of this report I did not receive any requests, under section 15 of the Act, from the Minister, the Secretary, or the Chief of Defence Force to conduct an investigation or assessment. Accordingly, no requests under section 15 have been declined or deferred.

Some individuals have contacted my office requesting that matters of particular interest to them receive investigation. These requests have been assessed on their merits, and in some cases a degree of scoping and consultation has been undertaken as a result. All requests have been responded to, but none have met the threshold necessary for me to embark upon a formal assessment or investigation.

In total, four such matters were brought to my attention. One of these matters was outside my jurisdiction, and I was satisfied that the remaining three were neither appropriate nor necessary to progress further.

## OBLIGATIONS UNDER SECTION 27

If an incident has been referred to a court of inquiry under the Armed Forces Discipline Act 1971, the office must not carry out an investigation in relation to that incident unless the investigation is an own-motion investigation and the court of inquiry has concluded, or the court of inquiry has (in the Inspector-General's opinion) been unreasonably delayed. The office may also investigate the matter at the request of the Minister of Defence or the Chief of Defence Force.

The NZDF has already taken steps to comply with section 27 of the Inspector-General of Defence Act 2023, providing my office with notice of current courts of inquiry, their purpose, and status. I expect this to be a regular feature of future reporting and engagement with the NZDF.

# FINANCES AND ADMINISTRATION

## Funding and resourcing

The IGD office is funded through two channels. A Permanent Legislative Authority (PLA) covers the remuneration of the Inspector-General and the Deputy Inspector-General. Operating costs are funded through Vote Justice, as a non-departmental output expense. Total expenditure for 2024-25 was approximately 15% of budget. The underspend was largely due to establishment costs being considerably less than anticipated (including fitting out the office in a secure environment). Another factor was the lack of meaningful remuneration costs. My role as IGD was effectively “part-time”, as I was also the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security over this period, and the office had no permanent staff.

Office of the Inspector-General of Defence 2024-2025 Budget		
	Actual (\$000s)	Budget
Establishment of the IGD	419	2508
Non-Departmental Output Expenses	30	546
<b>Total</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>3054</b>

At year end, the office had a total staff of two: myself and an office manager. Three Senior Investigators will commence work from 7 July 2025.

## Premises and systems

Since 26 January 2025 my office has operated from secure premises in Wellington.

The office operates a highly secure computer network, accredited as compliant with the requirements of the New Zealand Information Security Manual.

## Administrative support

The GCSB provides IT support to the office, for some of our systems, on a cost-recovery basis. The Ministry of Justice provides some administrative assistance, including: finance, communications (media), and human resources support. These arrangements are efficient and appropriate given the size of the office. I am grateful for the ongoing assistance provided by the Ministry of Justice and the GCSB.