

Proactive Release

Date: 19 September 2019

The following Cabinet paper and related Cabinet minute has been proactively released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade:

***Proposed Overseas Travel:
Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth: Hon Damien O'Connor***

Beijing, China 1 to 8 August 2019

(CAB-19-MIN-0349 refers)

Some parts of this information release would not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Where this is the case, the relevant sections of the Act that would apply have been identified. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Key to redaction codes:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the international relations of the New Zealand Government;
- 9(2)(f)(iv): to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials;
- 9(2)(g)(i): to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty; and
- 9(2)(j): to enable a Minister of the Crown or any department or organisation holding the information to carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations (including commercial and industrial negotiations)



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor

Portfolio **Trade and Export Growth**

On 22 July 2019, Cabinet:

- 1 **authorised** the absence of Hon Damien O'Connor from New Zealand, subject to leave from Parliament being secured, from 1 to 8 August 2019, to travel to Beijing, China to attend a Ministerial meeting of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) free trade agreement and to hold bilateral meetings;
- 2 **agreed** that he be accompanied by one member of staff;
- 3 **approved** the estimated expenditure of up to ^{s9(2)(f)(iv)} for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs (Members of the Executive – Travel);
- 4 **noted** that he will be accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, whose travel costs will be met by the Ministry;
- 5 **agreed** that in his absence Hon Stuart Nash act as Minister of Agriculture, Minister for Biosecurity, Minister for Food Safety and Minister for Rural Communities.

Martin Bell
for Secretary of the Cabinet

Hard-copy distribution:

Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister
Hon Damien O'Connor

Office of the Minister of State of for Trade and Export Growth

Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor

- 1 I seek Cabinet approval to travel to Beijing, China from 2 – 7 August 2019. I will represent New Zealand at a Ministerial-level negotiating meeting of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) free trade agreement on 3 August, and then undertake bilateral calls with my Chinese agriculture and trade counterparts in Beijing on 5 – 6 August.
- 2 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle.

Purpose of Travel

RCEP Ministerial Meeting

- 3 At a time when the international rules-based trading system is under threat, it is critical that New Zealand continues to participate in significant regional economic initiatives. RCEP covers over three billion people, over 30% of world GDP and crucially includes both China and India. s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i), s9(2)(j)
- 4 Following elections across a number of RCEP participating countries in the first half of 2019 (India, Indonesia, Australia, Thailand, Upper House elections in Japan and Congressional elections in the Philippines), this meeting will be the first RCEP Ministerial since March 2019.
- 5 The meeting will be focussed on delivering progress on the pledge made by Leaders at the RCEP Summit in November 2018 - that countries were “determined to conclude a modern, comprehensive, high-quality and mutually beneficial RCEP in 2019.” s6(a)
- 6 As we enter the final phases of the negotiations, it will be important to continue to show a strong political-level commitment to RCEP, and also support ASEAN’s goal of conclusion this year. s6(a), s9(2)(j)

s6(a)

- 7 s6(a), s9(2)(j)

I will take the opportunity to meet bilaterally with these countries at this meeting to continue to

prosecute New Zealand's requests, defend our core needs, reconfirm positions negotiated with former administrations and seek beneficial market access outcomes for New Zealand.

- 8 While a specific agenda (and a list of issues for Ministerial decision or guidance) is yet to be confirmed for this meeting, indications from previous meetings suggest that the Chair will use this meeting to discuss potential landing zones on a broad range of issues across the negotiation, paving the way for further decisions at a subsequent Ministerial in September and the Leaders' Summit in November. ^{s9(2)(j)}
- 9 I will be attending this RCEP meeting in my capacity as Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth. Hon David Parker has asked me to attend this upcoming meeting in Beijing to continue to defend New Zealand's interests in the RCEP negotiation as it moves into its final stages, and ensure that a final RCEP agreement delivers meaningful outcomes for New Zealand.
- 10 I will also take the opportunity to further strengthen my relationships with my Trade Ministerial counterparts (and meet newly-elected counterparts) from RCEP participating countries, many of whom will be useful to ensure that New Zealand's interests are advanced and protected in the negotiation.

Bilateral calls

- 11 China is New Zealand's largest market for primary products and food, and has significant potential for continued growth in exports of high value products. The Chinese government has recently undergone major restructuring, including significant changes within the agencies that my officials have traditionally engaged with.
- 12 Leveraging the Prime Minister's successful visit to Beijing earlier this year, my visit will be an important opportunity to establish key relationships with New Zealand's new counterpart agencies – which will be key to doing business and making continual progress in China. New Zealand has historically enjoyed strong relationships with Chinese Ministers and the officials responsible for access of New Zealand's primary products and food, ^{s9(2)(g)(i)}
- 13 I intend to seek calls on my counterparts from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the State Administration for Market Regulation (the agency responsible for regulating food safety), and the General Administration of Customs China (the agency responsible for clearance of products at the border). The visit also provides the opportunity to ^{s6(a), s9(2)(j)}

food safety cooperation with the State Administration for Market Regulation, and to host an Agriculture and Trade function at the New Zealand Embassy.

Ministerial Party

- 14 I will be accompanied by one staff member, my Private Secretary (Trade and Export Growth).
- 15 Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade will also attend this meeting; their travel costs will be met by the departmental budget.

Travel Costs

- 16 The estimate cost of travel is s9(2)(f)(iv) and broken down as follows:

Airfares: s9(2)(f)(iv)

Accommodation:

Meals, incidentals and communications:

Ground transport (contingency):

Airport facilitation (contingency)

Ministerial gifts:

Events/hospitality:

Contingency (10%):

Total:

Acting Ministers

- 17 If my travel is approved, Hon Stuart Nash will act in my Agriculture, Biosecurity, Food Safety and Rural Communities portfolio.

Proactive release

- 18 This paper will be proactively released as per Cabinet Office Circular CO (18) 4, on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's website. Proactive release is subject to redaction as appropriate under the [Official Information Act 1982](#).

Recommendations

- 19 I recommend that Cabinet:
- 19.1 authorise my absence from New Zealand, from 1 – 8 August to travel to Beijing to attend a Ministerial meeting of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) free trade agreement and undertake bilateral calls with my Chinese counterparts;
- 19.2 agree that I be accompanied by one members of staff;

- 19.3 approve the estimated expenditure of ^{s9(2)(f)(iv)} for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
- 19.4 note that I will be accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, whose travel costs will be met by the Ministry;
- 19.5 agree that in my absence Hon Stuart Nash will act in my Agriculture, Biosecurity, Food Safety and Rural Communities portfolios.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Damien O'Connor

Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth

Proactively released by the
Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth