

Proactive Release

Date: 8 October 2019

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

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor: CAB-19-MIN-0446

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;
- 6(e)(vi): to avoid damage to the New Zealand economy by the premature disclosure of decisions relating to entering into of overseas trade agreements; and
- 9(2)(j): to avoid prejudice to negotiations.

[© Crown Copyright, Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)



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 2 September 2019, Cabinet:

- 1 **authorised** the absence of Hon Damien O'Connor from New Zealand, subject to leave from Parliament being secured, from 7 to 13 September 2019, to travel to Bangkok, Thailand to participate in a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership negotiations Ministerial meeting, ASEAN-CER consultations, and the East Asia Summit Economic Ministers' Meeting;
- 2 **agreed** that he be accompanied by one member of staff;
- 3 **approved** the estimated expenditure up to \$22,630 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 **noted** that he will undertake four days of personal leave from 13 to 17 September to travel to Japan to attend and participate in the Parliamentary World Cup tournament, the costs of which he will meet personally;
- 6 **agreed** that in his absence Hon David Parker act as Minister of Agriculture, Minister for Biosecurity, Minister for Food Safety and Minister for Rural Communities.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Hard-copy distribution:

Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister
Hon Damien O'Connor

Office of the Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth

Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor

- 1 I seek Cabinet approval to travel to Bangkok from 7 – 13 September to attend a suite of RCEP and ASEAN Ministerial meetings and undertake bilateral calls with my Thai counterparts.
- 2 I will undertake personal travel to Japan from 13 – 17 September to attend and play in the first game of the Parliamentary Rugby World Cup. There will be no extra cost to the Crown as additional flight charges and accommodation will be at my personal cost.
- 3 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle.

Purpose of Travel

RCEP/ASEAN Ministerial Meetings

- 4 The purpose of my travel to Bangkok is to represent New Zealand at three meetings that occur in the margins of the annual Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Ministers' Meetings each year. I will be attending these meetings in my capacity as Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth, on behalf of Hon David Parker.
- 5 Specifically, these three meetings will be:
 - 5.1 A two-day Ministerial meeting of the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** free trade agreement negotiation, similar to meetings I have previously attended (including my recent trip to Beijing on 1 – 3 August). With the RCEP negotiations drawing to a close, it is expected that final decisions will be made at this meeting, in advance of the RCEP Leaders Meeting which you will attend at the beginning of November. If negotiations are to conclude this year, this Ministerial Meeting will be a critical juncture for progress.
 - 5.2 The **ASEAN – CER Dialogue Partner Consultations**, which will be an important opportunity to discuss the next steps in our trade and economic relationship with ASEAN. The dialogue will include a discussion on the upgrade of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand FTA s9(2)(j) and take stock of ongoing work under the existing AANZFTA agreement (including our economic cooperation programme with ASEAN);

- 5.3 The **East Asia Summit Economic Ministers' Meeting**, a useful forum for high level discussion on significant regional economic issues with Economic Ministers from ASEAN and other major economies (including China, India, Russia and the US), s6(a)

- 6 RCEP negotiations have gained significant momentum this year as countries work towards concluding negotiations at the next RCEP Leaders' Meeting in November. In order to reach this goal, several RCEP Ministerial Meetings have been held this year (in Cambodia in March which Under-Secretary Wood attended and in China which I attended). All outstanding political-level issues must be resolved in Bangkok if negotiations are to conclude this year. Attendance at a senior official level would be unworkable given the late stage of the negotiations. Most importantly, this meeting will be the final time that Trade Ministers meet before the Leaders' Summit in November.
- 7 Hon David Parker has asked me to attend this upcoming meeting in Bangkok to continue to defend New Zealand's interests in the RCEP negotiation, and ensure that a final RCEP agreement delivers meaningful outcomes for New Zealand.

Bilateral calls

- 8 While in Bangkok, I will seek meetings with my counterparts including Thailand's Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Commerce and other relevant economic Ministers to discuss our bilateral and regional interests. This will be an excellent opportunity to engage with newly appointed Ministers following Thailand's recent elections s6(e)(vi)
- 9 s6(e)(vi)

Parliamentary Rugby World Cup

- 10 As Co-Chair of the Parliamentary Rugby Team, I will be taking personal leave from 13 to 17 September to travel from Bangkok to Japan to attend and participate in the first Parliamentary Rugby World Cup game. There will be no extra cost to the Crown as additional flight charges and accommodation will be at my personal cost.

Ministerial Party

- 11 I will be accompanied by one staff member, my Private Secretary (Trade and Export Growth).
- 12 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

- 13 The estimate cost of travel is **\$ 22,630** and broken down as follows:

Airfares:	\$ 13,390
Accommodation:	\$ 3,290
Meals, incidentals and communications:	\$ 1,800
Airport facilitation (contingency)	\$ 1,500
Ministerial gifts:	\$ 600
Contingency (10%):	\$ 2,058

Total: \$ 22,638

Acting Ministers

- 14 If my travel is approved, Hon David Parker will act in my Agriculture, Biosecurity, Food Safety and Rural Communities portfolio.

Proactive release

- 15 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

- 16 I recommend that Cabinet:
 - 16.1 authorise my absence from New Zealand, from 7 – 13 September to travel to Bangkok, Thailand to represent New Zealand at three meetings that occur in the margins of the annual Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Economic Ministers' Meetings each year, including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Ministerial Meeting, and undertake bilateral calls with my Thai counterparts;
 - 16.2 agree that I be accompanied by one member of staff;

- 16.3 approve the estimated expenditure of **\$22,630** for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
- 16.4 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;
- 16.5 agree that in my absence Hon David Parker will act in my Agriculture, Biosecurity, Food Safety and Rural Communities portfolios;
- 16.6 note that I will take personal leave to travel onto Japan after Bangkok from 13 – 17 September to attend and participate in the Parliamentary World Cup tournament at no extra cost to the Crown as additional flight charges and accommodation will be at my personal cost.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Damien O'Connor

Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth