

# Proactive Release

Date: 28 November 2019

The following Cabinet paper and related Cabinet minute have been proactively released by the Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth:

***Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor***

***(CAB-19-MIN-0568 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; and
- 9(2)(j): to avoid prejudice to negotiations.

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# 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 4 November 2019, Cabinet:

- 1        **authorised**, retrospectively, the absence of Hon Damien O'Connor from New Zealand, from 1 to 8 November 2019, to travel to:
  - 1.1      Bangkok, Thailand to represent New Zealand at the final Ministerial-level negotiating meeting of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, in the margins of the East Asia Summit;
  - 1.2      India for a bilateral visit;
- 2        **noted** that he is being accompanied by one member of staff;
- 3        **approved** the estimated expenditure of up to \$35,354 for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs (Members of the Executive – Travel);
- 4        **noted** that he is also being accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, whose travel costs will be met by the Ministry;
- 5        **noted** that in his absence Hon Stuart Nash will 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 retrospectively to travel to Bangkok, Thailand, for the RCEP Ministerial and Leaders meetings 1 - 4 November and then onto India for a bilateral visit from 5 - 8 November.
- 2 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle.

### **Purpose of Travel**

#### *Thailand*

- 3 The purpose of my travel to Bangkok is to represent New Zealand at the final Ministerial-level negotiating meeting of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), in the margins of the East Asia Summit (EAS) which you will attend.
- 4 At the RCEP Leaders Summit in November 2018, Leaders made a pledge to conclude a “modern, comprehensive, high-quality and mutually beneficial RCEP in 2019.” Most of the other fifteen RCEP participants want to substantially conclude negotiations this year and the November meetings will be a watershed moment after 8 years of negotiations.
- 5 In Bangkok, I will meet with Trade Ministers in the lead up to the Leaders Meeting to complete negotiations on any elements of text that are still outstanding. At present, a number of issues in the negotiations remain unresolved and my focus will be on securing commercially meaningful market access in goods, services and investment.
- 6 s6(a)
- 7 Hon David Parker has asked me to attend this 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.

## India

- 8 The purpose of my bilateral visit to India is to support the Government's goal of lifting the bilateral relationship with India, <sup>s6(a)</sup>

I will visit India as both Minister of Agriculture and Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth.

- 9 A ministerial visit to India in 2019 is a high priority for both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI). India is an important trading partner - our seventh largest export market overall and fourth largest in terms of favourable balance of trade, including trade in goods and services. <sup>s6(a)</sup>

- 10 Regardless of whether RCEP substantially concludes at the November Summit, my visit provides an opportunity to continue to advocate for New Zealand's trade interests, including helping to secure political support for any final RCEP deal. <sup>s9(2)(i)</sup>

- 11 Beyond RCEP, my visit would enable New Zealand to reinforce our value proposition with respect to the Indian agricultural sector's growth objectives. <sup>s6(a)</sup>

This would include highlighting the value New Zealand could add to India's agricultural and food processing sectors. Engagement with New Zealand businesses active in the India market would also support these objectives.

## Ministerial Party

- 12 I will be accompanied by one staff member, my Private Secretary (Trade and Export Growth).
- 13 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

- 14 The estimate cost of travel is **\$ 35,354** and broken down as follows:

Airfares	\$ 26,590
Accommodation	\$ 3,400
Meals, incidentals and communications	\$ 940

Airport facilitation & ground transport	\$	710
Ministerial gifts	\$	500
Contingency (10%):	\$	3,214

**Total: \$ 35,354**

### **Acting Minister**

- 15 Hon Stuart Nash will act in my Agriculture, Biosecurity, Food Safety and Rural Communities portfolio.

### **Proactive release**

- 16 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**

- 17 I recommend that Cabinet:
- 17.1 authorise my absence from New Zealand from 1 – 8 November to travel to Thailand and India;
  - 17.2 agree that I be accompanied by one member of staff;
  - 17.3 approve the estimated expenditure of **\$35,354** for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
  - 17.4 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;
  - 17.5 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**