

Proactive Release

Date: 24 May 2023

The following Cabinet paper has been proactively released by the Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs

Title	Reference
Minute of Decision: Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Hon Barbara Edmonds and Hon James Shaw	CAB-23-MIN-0145
Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Hon Barbara Edmonds and Hon James Shaw	

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Key to redaction codes:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government.



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 Carmel Sepuloni, Hon Barbara Edmonds and Hon James Shaw

Portfolio Deputy Prime Minister

On 11 April 2023, Cabinet:

- 1 **authorised** the absence of Hon Carmel Sepuloni from New Zealand, and that of Hon Barbara Edmonds and Hon James Shaw, from 16 to 21 April 2023, to travel to Solomon Islands, Fiji and Tonga for the 2023 Pacific Trade Mission;
- 2 **agreed** that they be accompanied by a delegation of approximately 50 people consisting of representatives from Parliament, civil society, iwi and the Pacific community, business and media;
- 3 **approved** the expenditure of up to \$51,354 for the travel expenses of the ministerial and parliamentary parties as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs (Members of the Executive – Travel);
- 4 **noted** that they will also be accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and other NZ Inc. agencies, whose travel costs will be met by their agencies;
- 5 **noted** that travel for the entirety of the Pacific Mission will be by RNZAF Boeing 757;
- 6 **noted** that accommodation and incidental costs for delegation members not included in paragraphs 3 or 4 above will be met either by MFAT or directly by non-subsidised delegation members as appropriate;
- 7 **agreed** that in their absence:
 - 7.1 Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan act as Minister for Social Development and Employment and Minister for Pacific Peoples;
 - 7.2 Hon Willow-Jean Prime act as Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage;
 - 7.3 Hon Jan Tinetti act as Minister of Internal Affairs;
 - 7.4 Hon David Parker act as Minister of Climate Change;
- 8 **noted** that the House is not sitting during their absence.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Hon Barbara Edmonds and Hon James Shaw

- 1 I seek Cabinet approval for myself, Minister Edmonds and Minister Shaw to travel to Solomon Islands, Fiji and Tonga for the 2023 Pacific Mission. The proposed dates for travel are 16-21 April, inclusive.
- 2 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle.

Purpose of Travel

- 3 This travel forms part of our prioritisation of regular high-level travel to establish and maintain relationships ^{s6(a)}. Regular engagement reflects our close whakapapa ties and the mutual benefit we accrue from our partnerships across political, security, economic and people-to-people connections.
- 4 Pacific Missions showcase the breadth of our relationships. They have in the past been scheduled annually or biannually. If approved, this will be Aotearoa New Zealand's first Pacific Mission since 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 5 The proposed Mission will have a strong outward facing dimension – connecting with communities, civil society, Aotearoa New Zealand diaspora and the business sector. This will complement the essential high level political engagement. The programme will ensure appropriate media participation.
- 6 I will use the opportunity to:
 - 6.1 Reinforce Aotearoa New Zealand as a natural partner for Solomon Islands, Fiji and Tonga;
 - 6.2 Meet with senior political leaders to strengthen in-person relationships; and discuss the pressing issues facing our region - such as climate change, responding to natural disasters, and economic resilience in a post-COVID context;
 - 6.3 Reinforce the mutual value of connections between Aotearoa New Zealand civil society, business, community, parliamentarians and media and their counterparts in Solomon Islands, Fiji and Tonga;

- 6.4 Showcase the contribution that Aotearoa New Zealand's International Development Cooperation activities play to support partner led long-term social, economic and cultural resilience.

Outline of Proposed Visit

- 7 The proposed travel dates are between 16 and 21 April (inclusive), to Solomon Islands, Fiji and Tonga.
- 8 The themes for the Mission will be reconnection, resilience and partnership and will be woven through the programme in each country. The themes will provide a backdrop for engagement on issues which we know are priorities for us and our partners. They will allow a deeper exploration on our broader regional priorities, which include: climate resilience, labour mobility and workforce pressures, trade and economic links, scholarships and vocational training, recovery from natural disasters, health sector capability and pandemic readiness; community policing; wider development cooperation and cultural links.
- 9 The objectives for engagement at each destination are as follows:
- 9.1 **Solomon Islands:** the visit to Solomon Islands is a valuable opportunity to rebuild connections that were interrupted by the pandemic. ^{s6(a)}
^{s6(a)} Meetings with leaders in Honiara will reinforce the importance that Aotearoa New Zealand places on our relationship. The visit also will profile the breadth of our partnership, including Aotearoa New Zealand's important role in economic resilience (our business, trade and industry connections) and human development (our government, cultural, and Civil Society Organisation connections).
- 9.2 **Fiji:** the visit to Fiji will allow me to build off the momentum generated by the inwards and outwards visits that have occurred since the new Government of Fiji was elected in December last year. Fiji is a key regional leader for the Pacific Region, and is the headquarters for the Pacific Islands Forum and the University of the South Pacific. Given the breadth of its bilateral relationship with New Zealand, there will be opportunities to highlight our deep security relationship, our emerging cooperation on climate change, the strength of our people-to-people connections, and the economic opportunities present in Fiji.
- 9.3 **Tonga:** the visit to Tonga is an opportunity to engage with a key partner and reaffirm Aotearoa New Zealand's commitment to the relationship. It has been 15 months since the Hunga Tonga – Hunga Ha'apai volcanic eruption and tsunami and the subsequent COVID-19 outbreak. The visit will profile Aotearoa New Zealand's partnership across a range of sectors including climate change, law and justice, agriculture, health, and education.

- 10 While in these countries, calls will be sought with priority Pacific regional entities: the Forum Fisheries Agency in Solomon Islands, and the University of the South Pacific.
- 11 If travel is approved, the delegation will depart Aotearoa New Zealand for the Solomon Islands on 16 April via the RNZAF Boeing 757 and return to Whenuapai on Friday 21 April. The Boeing 757 will be utilised for the entirety of the Pacific Mission.

Ministerial Party

- 12 I propose to be accompanied by political staff, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and a wider delegation reflecting the span of the Mission programme (as is the established practice from previous Pacific Missions). This will include approximately 50 individuals, including: the Minister for Pacific Peoples, Hon Barbara Edmonds, the Minister of Climate Change, Hon James Shaw, parliamentarians, civil society, iwi and Pacific community representatives as well as business and media.

Travel Costs

- 13 The estimated costs of travel are:

Airfares:	\$0
Accommodation:	\$17,340
Per Diems:	\$1,480
Transport:	\$6,000
Gifts:	\$3,960
Representation:	\$14,000
Subtotal:	\$42,870
Contingency (20%)	\$8,574
Total:	\$51,354

Acting Ministers

- 14 In my absence, Minister Radhakrishnan will be the Acting Minister for Social Development and Employment and Minister Prime will be the Acting Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage.
- 15 During the absence of Minister Edmonds, Minister Tinetti will be the Acting Minister of Internal Affairs and Minister Radhakrishnan will be the Acting Minister for Pacific Peoples.
- 16 During the absence of Minister Shaw, Minister Parker will be the Acting Minister of Climate Change.

Proactive release

- 17 Once the proposed travel has occurred, I will proactively release this paper in part, withholding any sections that are sensitive for either budgetary reasons, or that could have an impact on Aotearoa New Zealand's bilateral relationships.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- 1 authorise my absence and the absence of Minister Edmonds and Minister Shaw from Aotearoa New Zealand from 16 April to 21 April (inclusive), to travel to Solomon Islands, Fiji and Tonga for the 2023 Pacific Mission;
- 2 agree that I be accompanied by approximately 50 delegation members;
- 3 approve the estimated expenditure of \$51,354 for the travel expenses associated with the Ministerial and broader parliamentary delegation, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
- 4 note that I will be accompanied by senior government officials from MFAT and other NZ Inc. agencies, whose travel costs will be met by the relevant government agencies, on a case-by-case basis;
- 5 note that I will be accompanied by a delegation of approximately 50 individuals. Accommodation and incidental costs for delegation members not covered by recommendations 3 or 4 will be charged back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Domestic travel and other costs will be borne directly by non-subsidised delegation members (as appropriate);
- 6 agree that in my absence and in the absence of Minister Edmonds and Minister Shaw:
 - 6.1 Minister Radhakrishnan will be the Acting Minister for Social Development and Employment;
 - 6.2 Minister Prime will be the Acting Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage;
 - 6.3 Minister Tinetti will be the Acting Minister of Internal Affairs;
 - 6.4 Minister Radhakrishnan will be the Acting Minister for Pacific Peoples;
 - 6.5 Minister Parker will be the Acting Minister of Climate Change;

7 note that the House is not sitting during my absence and the absence of Minister Edmonds and Minister Shaw.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Deputy Prime Minister
Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs (Pacific Region)

Proactively Released by the Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs