

Proactive Release

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The following Cabinet papers and related Cabinet minutes have been proactively released by the Minister of Climate Change

Title	Reference
Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Simon Watts – July 2026	CAB-26-MIN-0271
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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 code:

- 6(b)(ii): to protect the passing of information from an international organisation on a confidential basis.



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Simon Watts – July 2026

Portfolio **Climate Change**

On 24 August 2026, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Simon Watts under CAB-26-SUB-0271 on his travel, from 20 to 22 July 2026, to Sydney, Australia to attend the New Zealand – Australia Climate Ministers Dialogue and the Pacific Climate Change Ministers Meeting, and to undertake bilateral engagements.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively Released by the Minister of Climate Change

In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Climate Change

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Simon Watts – July 2026

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on travel by the Minister of Climate Change to attend the *New Zealand – Australia Climate Ministers Dialogue (CMD)* and *Pacific Climate Change Ministers Meeting (PCMM)*, Australia, from 20-22 July 2026.

Report

1. Hon Simon Watts visited Sydney, Australia to participate in the CMD and PCMM. The CMD was 20 July, and the PCMM was 21 July. The Minister also met with the Australian Climate Change Authority on 21 July.

CMD (20 July 2026)

2. I travelled to Sydney, Australia to attend the inaugural New Zealand – Australia Climate Ministers Dialogue on 20 July 2026. The CMD was hosted by the Australian Government and led by Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Hon Chris Bowen.
3. The CMD succeeds the annual Australia-New Zealand Climate and Finance Ministerial Meetings (2+2). In 2025, Ministers agreed to transition the 2+2 format into separate, regular climate and energy, and finance and economic, bilaterals.
4. This year's CMD included a strong focus on climate issues, reflecting Australia's role as COP31 President of Negotiations this year.
5. The Dialogue provided an opportunity to strengthen the Australia-New Zealand climate cooperation, review progress on the 2025 climate and energy commitments, and discuss support for the delivery of Pre-COP in Fiji and COP31. It also enabled an early engagement ahead of the Pacific Climate Ministerial Meeting on 21 May.
6. Minister Bowen and I discussed three priority themes identified for this year's CMD: progress update on the 2025 2+2 climate and energy commitments; Pre-COP, COP 31 and Pacific Partnership; and electrification. From these discussions:
 - 6.1. We noted the significant progress made against the eight climate and energy commitments agreed in 2025, with a spotlight on the training initiative for Pacific energy regulators as one of the climate commitments from 2025. Australia and New Zealand officials collaborated to deliver this programme in early August which was attended by 27 energy regulators from 13 Pacific countries. This initiative demonstrates the practical outcomes that can be achieved through this Trans-Tasman bilateral cooperation.
 - 6.2. I reaffirmed New Zealand's active and ongoing engagement in the COP31 Pacific Partnership, and our support towards Australia's Pre-COP and COP31 preparation. I also extended an offer of further New Zealand support should it be required.

- 6.3. I welcomed Australia and Türkiye's focus for the COP31 Climate Action Agenda on electrification as a practical and forward-looking contribution to the global climate action agenda. We recognised the importance that initiatives emerging from the Climate Action Agenda are practical, accessible, and readily understood by Parties. I encouraged Australia to continue providing updates on these initiatives.
7. During the CMD I emphasised New Zealand's commitment to continuing to work closely with Australia in support of effective Pre-COP preparations, maintaining regular communication on planning and logistical arrangements and providing mutual support where required. I also reaffirmed New Zealand's ongoing engagement through the Pacific Senior Officials Taskforce and the Pacific Climate Change Ministerial Meeting.
8. Minister Bowen welcomed my commitment to strengthening the trans-Tasman cooperation on climate change. We agreed to continue working together to deliver practical outcomes for our region.

Bilateral meetings (20 July 2026)

9. I held a bilateral meeting on 20 July with Australia's Climate Change Authority (CCA) Hon. Matt Kean. Key discussion topics included:
- 9.1. Reflecting on recent engagement between the CCA and New Zealand in June 2026 and noted the value of ongoing trans-Tasman engagement in supporting regular information-sharing on climate policy priorities and developments.
- 9.2. Discussing similarities and differences in New Zealand and Australia's domestic climate contexts, while noting the shared focus of both countries on integrating climate considerations into decision-making. This included the CCA's emphasis on incorporating decarbonisation and adaptation into infrastructure planning and investment decisions, and New Zealand's recent publication of the second National Climate Change Risk Assessment.
- 9.3. Exchanging updates on the respective work programmes of the CCA and New Zealand's Climate Change Commission (CCC). This included the forthcoming publication of the CCC's 2026 Monitoring Report: Emissions reduction.

PCMM (21 July 2026)

10. The Pacific Climate Change Ministers Meeting serves as the primary ministerial oversight body for the Australia-Pacific COP31 Pacific Partnership, a regional collaboration mandated by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders to oversee preparations for COP31, the annual UN Climate Change Conference to be held in Türkiye in November, and the Pacific Pre-COP, the principal ministerial-level preparatory meeting to be held in Fiji in October. The Partnership aims to ensure that Pacific priorities are reflected in preparations for and outcomes from COP31, while providing a platform for Pacific climate leadership and raising international attention to the region's climate challenges and solutions.
11. The PCMM in Sydney was therefore an opportunity for Pacific Climate Change Ministers to take stock of progress and provide further direction on regional preparations. It was well attended by Pacific Climate Ministers and two Leaders, from Niue and Kiribati. Australian Climate Change Minister Chris Bowen (who is also President of Negotiations for COP31) co-chaired the meeting with Hon Wayne Ghemu, Solomon Islands' Minister of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology.

12. My objectives were to reaffirm New Zealand's strong support for Pacific leadership on climate change and climate resilience, support Australia in its Pacific Partnership convening role, and contribute to regional preparations for a successful Pacific Pre-COP and COP31 in a manner that advanced New Zealand's interests.
13. Eleven weeks out from the Pre-COP in early October, Climate Change Ministers assessed that preparations were in good shape, but that there remained a lot of work to do in the short time available, including through stepped-up engagement with key partners.
14. We discussed priorities under each pillar of the Pacific Partnership – keeping 1.5°C within reach, enhancing access to finance, elevating the ocean-climate nexus, and amplifying Pacific leadership – and directed officials (the Pacific Senior Officials Taskforce) to progress work in several areas, such as:
 - 14.1. s6(b)(ii)
 - 14.2. A Pacific Resilience Facility Pledging campaign event;
 - 14.3. Initiatives to seek investment in the Pacific's renewable energy transition; and
 - 14.4. Showcasing regional ocean-climate initiatives and science and advocating for the mainstreaming of ocean issues in UN climate change architecture.
15. Ministers also endorsed the advocacy plans of the Pacific's three COP31 Envoys s6(b)(ii)
s6(b)(ii)
16. Detailed outcomes of the PCMM will be reported to Pacific Islands Forum Leaders at their meeting in Palau later this month. Palau also provided an overview of the climate events/initiatives it envisaged for the Leaders' meeting and how they would support Pacific Partnership priorities and build momentum in the leadup to the Pre-COP.
17. My active participation was appreciated by Australia and Pacific Climate Ministers and provided an opportunity to hear first-hand the region's priorities. Attending the PCMM also gave me the opportunity to engage separately with Pacific counterparts at the welcome reception and in the margins of the meeting.
18. I propose to proactively release this paper within 30 business days in accordance with Cabinet Office Circular CO (18) 4. Proactive release is subject to redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Simon Watts

Minister of Climate Change