

17 October 2023

Personal details removed for  
proactive release

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OIA 28786

I refer to your email of 23 August 2023 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

*I would like a copy of all briefings and reports commissioned by the DPMC or Prime Minister's Office regarding the Prime Minister attending a dinner held by the New Zealand Chinese Business Club on May 10.*

On 20 September 2023, the timeframes for responding to your request were extended by an additional 20 working days due to the consultations necessary to make a decision on your request. (15A(1)(b) of the OIA refers).

The information relevant to your request is attached. We have withheld some parts of this information under the following sections of the OIA:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government; and,
- 9(2)(g)(i): to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by Ministers and officials.

Where the information has been withheld under section 9 of the OIA, we have identified no public interest in releasing the information that would override the reasons for withholding it.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Therefore, our response to your request (with your personal information removed) may be published on the Ministry website: [www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/](http://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/)

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: [DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz](mailto:DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz). You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision by contacting [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā



Sarah Corbett  
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

## Briefing for PM's attendance at NZ Chinese Business Club,

10 May 2023

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### Talking Points

- New Zealand's relationship with China is one of our most important and far-reaching. We have long-standing and vibrant links between our people, including strong trade and economic ties. This is, in large part, a testament to the success and expertise of many of you in attendance today.
- Bilateral trade proved resilient during COVID-19 with our goods trade performing exceptionally well, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. Overall two-way trade exceeded \$40 billion in the year ending December 2022.
- With borders now open, we look forward to reconnecting in-person and rebuilding our services exports post-COVID. Welcoming Chinese visitors to New Zealand will continue to be important to our tourism and international education sectors, as it was prior to the pandemic.
- We are pleased to see business people travelling in both directions again and renewing business connections, as air connectivity improves.
- Growing our international connections is a key focus of New Zealand's economic strategy as the region reopens. From a trade, economic, education and tourism perspective, New Zealand is now fully open for business.
- Our existing bilateral FTA with China from 2008 has been a strong platform for closer trade and economic cooperation. This was further deepened last year when the NZ-China FTA Upgrade entered into force. China and New Zealand also work together in APEC and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.
- Our Government is also focused on resuming in-person connections with China, post COVID. The Minister of Foreign Affairs' recent visit to China was an excellent opportunity to discuss a wide-range of topics in the relationship.
- As you will be aware, I hope to visit China myself this year with a trade delegation. Officials are working on options.
- Government continues to invest in the trade and economic relationship, including through the wide range of formal relationships and dialogues between New Zealand and Chinese agencies.
- I would be interested to hear from you today about the issues that are important to you.

### *If raised topics*

- *[If asked: why is New Zealand focused on trade diversification?]*: China is an important market for New Zealand and will continue to be so. The Government's trade recovery

strategy seeks to give business options, including through an expanding network of FTAs, and aims to build awareness and resilience into trading relationships. Government encourages businesses to regularly consider the risks of over-reliance on any one market.

- *[If raised – visa processing delays]*: I'm aware visa delays have been an issue for some looking to travel. Our systems are going through a period of adjustment. In good news, for those wanting to travel to China I understand that they are now accepting virtual APEC Business Traveller Cards (ABTC) (from 1 May), which will make the travel process for those card-holders considerably easier. For those *not* holding ABTCs, it's important to apply for business visas early.
- s9(2)(g)(i), s6(a) The New Zealand Government has not taken any decisions regarding specific companies. Each government agency makes its own decisions on procurement, in accordance with New Zealand's procurement rules.
- *[If raised - Tik Tok]* The government has not banned the use of TikTok. The public are free to use it. Government agencies make decisions on the use of apps on staff devices based on New Zealand's Information Security Manual (NZISM).
- *[If raised - investment]* New Zealand welcomes all high-quality and productive foreign investment from any investor, including Chinese investors. Recent changes to the Overseas Investment Act are country-neutral.
- s9(2)(g)(i), s6(a) New Zealand supports growing the CPTPP through accession by those economies willing and able to meet the Agreement's high standard. Decisions on accession to the CPTPP require consensus among all members, which is why New Zealand has consistently taken care not to pronounce on the merits of any one accession candidate.
- s9(2)(g)(i), s6(a) As CPTPP Chair, New Zealand's focus is on finding consensus on the range of issues on the table for CPTPP members, and ensuring the Agreement remains gold standard.

## Background

### New Zealand Chinese Business Club

This is the first engagement by the Government with the New Zealand Chinese Business Club. The club was founded recently by former National MP Jian Yang, with former New Zealand Prime Minister John Key involved in the launch. The primary audience is the Chinese business community in New Zealand.

The event will be co-hosted by Simon Bridges, CEO of the Auckland Business Chamber.

### China's economic situation

China has now reopened after relaxing its strict zero-COVID policy at the end 2022. China's economy grew by 4.5% in the first three months of 2023 compared with the same period last year. Predictions for China's economic growth for 2023 remain bullish at 4-6%.

China's post-COVID economy nevertheless still faces challenges including a depressed and highly indebted property sector, low export growth, and high youth unemployment. <sup>s9(2)</sup>  
(g)(i)

*NZ-China bilateral relationship*

The Government remains committed to New Zealand's relationship with China. We continue to pursue areas of cooperation where our interests align, such as trade and climate change, but also deal with issues where we have differences in a consistent, predictable and respectful manner. We continue to speak about those differences both in private with China and publicly.

Both sides benefit from strong trade and economic ties. The New Zealand-China FTA was signed in 2008; China's first with a developed country. The upgrade to the FTA entered into force in April 2022 and includes new chapters on environment, competition and e-commerce; various improvements around goods clearance processes; and tariff elimination over a 10 year implementation period on a number of wood and paper products amounting to annual tariff savings of \$1.7m. Since entry into force, tariffs on the majority of these wood and paper products have already been removed by China.

s6(a)

*North Asia Division  
May 2023*