

Proactive Release

Published on or before: 1/09/2025

The following Cabinet papers and related Cabinet minutes have been proactively released by the Minister for Foreign Affairs

Title	Reference
<i>Report of the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee: Period ended 18 July 2025</i>	CAB-25-MIN-0235
<i>Minute of Decision: Solomon Islands - New Zealand Education Partnership 2025-2035</i>	FPS-25MIN-0011
<i>Solomon Islands - New Zealand Education Partnership 2025-2035</i>	

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 OIA). Where this is the case, the relevant sections of the OIA 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 OIA redaction codes:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government;
- 6(b)(i): to protect the passing of information from another government on a confidential basis;
- 9(2)(j): to avoid prejudice to negotiations.



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.

Report of the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee: Period Ended 18 July 2025

On 21 July 2025, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee for the period ended 18 July 2025:

FPS-25-MIN-0011 **Solomon Islands - New Zealand Education Partnership** CONFIRMED
2025-2035
Portfolio: Foreign Affairs

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet



Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee

Minute of Decision

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Solomon Islands - New Zealand Education Partnership 2025-2035

Portfolio Foreign Affairs

On 15 July 2025, the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee:

- 1 **noted** s6(a)
- 2 **noted** that New Zealand's support for Solomon Islands' education has contributed to the sector's recovery from the Tensions and other outcomes, such as near universal primary school attendance and some of the best literacy and numeracy test scores in the Pacific;
- 3 **noted** the key role education plays in encouraging positive economic, social, and civic development in Solomon Islands, which assists New Zealand's long-term interests in maintaining a peaceful, secure, and prosperous Pacific;
- 4 **approved** s6(a) from the International Development Cooperation appropriation to fund the proposed *Solomon Islands - New Zealand Education Partnership 2025-2035* (the Partnership), designed to deliver structural reform to strengthen Solomon Islands' Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development's governance, management and delivery of equitable access to quality education for all Solomon Islanders;
- 5 **noted** that the decision in paragraph 4 will not impact the Crown's operating balance nor result in changes to appropriations or expense forecasts, as it will be allocated from the existing International Development Cooperation appropriation within Vote Foreign Affairs;
- 6 **noted** that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade will commission independent mid-delivery reviews of the Partnership at the three- and six-year marks during its 10-year timeframe, and an end-of-programme evaluation at the nine-year mark, providing an opportunity to monitor and report back on the Partnership's progress and, if necessary, adjust its approach;
- 7 **noted** that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade will ensure a comprehensive public diplomacy approach for the Partnership to ensure visibility of New Zealand's contribution to Solomon Islands' education sector.

Jenny Vickers
Committee Secretary

Attendance: (see over)

Present:

Rt Hon Winston Peters (Chair)
Hon David Seymour
Hon Nicola Willis
Hon Todd McClay
Hon Nicola Grigg

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Officials Committee for FPS
Office of the Chair of FPS

Proactively Released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Chair, Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee (FPS)

Solomon Islands – New Zealand Education Partnership 2025-2035

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks approval for s6(a) to fund the *Solomon Islands-New Zealand Education Partnership 2025-2035* (the Partnership) over the next ten years, funded from within the existing International Development Cooperation appropriation. Cabinet approval is required for all New Zealand-managed activities with a whole-of-life cost above \$35 million.
- 2 If approved, the Partnership would assist Solomon Islands' Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development to undertake structural reforms and strengthen education service delivery to improve education for all Solomon Islanders. The proposed Partnership builds on New Zealand's long-standing and successful support for Solomon Islands' education sector over the last 20 years. Mid-delivery reviews of the Partnership at the 3- and 6-year marks would be commissioned to monitor delivery and impact.

Relation to government priorities

- 3 New Zealand's current policy approach to Solomon Islands aims to maintain our position as a key development partner, including for the education sector. This approach is aligned with New Zealand's Foreign Policy Reset, particularly with the goal of *Sustaining our deeper and comprehensive focus on the Pacific* and positioning New Zealand as a partner of first choice for development and security cooperation in the Pacific, s6(a)
- 4 A well-educated population plays a critical role in lifting broader economic, social, and civic outcomes and is a key factor in supporting long-term stability in Solomon Islands. The proposed Partnership aligns with the Government's priority to work with Australia and target New Zealand investment into supporting national security, economic prosperity, social cohesion, respect for rule of law, and democratic norms.

Executive Summary

- 5 s6(a)
- 6 New Zealand has supported Solomon Islands' education sector for over 20 years, during which time we have contributed to a range of positive achievements, including significant improvements in education access and outcomes. Our long-term, partnership-focused approach to education has strengthened New Zealand's reputation

as a trustworthy, responsive and respectful partner in Solomon Islands s6(a)

- 7 Significant challenges remain in ensuring quality education for all Solomon Islands' children, including low secondary school completion rates, poor teacher management systems, and inequalities in access. These challenges are further exacerbated by pressures of rapid population growth and the complexity of delivering education services in rural and remote areas (increasing costs), both of which are negatively impacting the government's ability to effectively manage education service delivery.
- 8 The Partnership aims to support the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development to strengthen its governance, management and leadership capabilities to deliver key reforms in support of equitable access to quality education. Key areas of focus include supporting the devolution of responsibility from central government to provincial education providers (as mandated under Solomon Islands' Education Act 2023), strengthening data management and evidence-informed decision making, improving teacher management and welfare, and ensuring effective sector and development partner coordination.
- 9 The Partnership was designed in close coordination with Solomon Islands and Australia. The approach builds on New Zealand's previous support and seeks to complement and enhance the support provided through other development partners' focus in areas such as curriculum development and school infrastructure.
- 10 If approved, the s6(a) 10-year Partnership would be funded from the International Development Cooperation appropriation's Solomon Islands Core Allocation within Vote Foreign Affairs. The Partnership would have no impact on the Crown's operating balance nor require changes to appropriations or expense forecasts.

Background

- 11 s6(a)
- 12 New Zealand is well-regarded by the Solomon Islands Government and people as a trusted, respectful and responsive partner to the education sector. New Zealand's education support of over NZ\$180 million over the past 20 years has assisted in the sector's recovery from near collapse during the civil unrest of the Tensions (1998-2003), which saw the shut down or destruction of many schools and the displacement of teachers and students. New Zealand support has contributed to a range of positive outcomes such as near universal primary school enrolment (approximately 99% for boys and 92% for girls), and some of the highest numeracy and literacy outcomes in

the Pacific region.¹ New Zealand's current education support via the Education Sector Support Programme in partnership with Australia has delivered 39 school infrastructure projects, training for 45% of the country's teachers, development of new curriculum resources, and the distribution of 100,000 new textbooks across the country.

- 13 Despite the positive outcomes achieved to date, there remains a role for continued support from New Zealand to protect and build upon these achievements while assisting Solomon Islands to address other significant challenges it faces in delivering quality education for all Solomon Islands children. Some of these challenges include low secondary school completion rates, poor teacher management systems resulting in regular teacher absences, and lingering inequalities in access (e.g. for girls and children with disabilities). Rapid population growth alongside the high cost of delivering education across Solomon Islands' dispersed geography means that its Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, while a high-performing ministry, faces significant challenges in realising effective education service delivery in line with its priorities stated in Solomon Islands' Education Act 2023. Given the critical role education plays in promoting wider positive economic and social outcomes and maintaining national security, it is in New Zealand's interest to remain a preferred partner of the Solomon Islands Government in the education sector pursuant to our goal of a prosperous, secure and peaceful Pacific.
- 14 s6(a), s6(b)(i)
New Zealand and Australia agreed to transition to independent but complementary bilateral education partnerships with Solomon Islands following the formal conclusion of the Education Sector Support Programme in March 2025. This would enable New Zealand and Australia to focus on delivering our greatest value-adds, with the intent for New Zealand to focus on the enabling systems and structural reforms not planned to be addressed by other partners. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development was consulted during these discussions.

Analysis

- 15 This paper proposes that New Zealand continues support for Solomon Islands' education sector through the Partnership, a s6(a) 10-year programme of reforms designed to promote equitable access to quality education for all Solomon Islanders.
- 16 Designed in consultation with Australia, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, and other education sector actors in Solomon Islands, the Partnership aims to support the 'engine-room' of education service delivery by supporting the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development and provincial education providers' capabilities to deliver key reforms. The Partnership is anticipated to deliver significant benefits in line with the Solomon Islands Government's priorities, including:

- 16.1 Supporting the devolution of responsibilities from central government to provincial education providers, thereby ensuring greater reach and impact of

¹ According to the most recent Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment, 93% of Year 4 and 94% of Year 6 students met or exceeded the expected proficiency in numeracy in Solomon Islands compared to the regional average of 67% for both metrics. In the case of reading, 60% of Year 4 and 70% of Year 6 students achieved the expected proficiency, compared to regional averages of 43% and 53% respectively.

education support by ensuring more efficient and equitable distribution of resources in Solomon Islands' provinces and isolated communities.

- 16.2 Stronger data systems to support evidence-informed decision making by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, including to support the analysis of existing inequalities.
 - 16.3 Strengthening teacher management processes and systems to address key challenges with teacher absenteeism, welfare and engagement.
 - 16.4 Improving the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development's capability to manage engagement with multiple stakeholders and coordinate partners' interventions to improve effectiveness of their interventions.
- 17 This proposed Partnership is in line with the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's activity-based review of our International Development Cooperation programme, commissioned to test alignment with this Government's priorities. The Partnership aligns with the review's recommendations, particularly through adopting a longer-term approach to development assistance through more consolidated and substantial investments. The 10-year programme also ensures sufficient time to achieve substantial reform across a set of complex reform areas.
- 18 s6(a)
- 19 Continued partnership with Australia and/or other actors were considered as alternative options. However, s6(a), s6(b)(i) and the opportunity to build on the progress we have made on education sector reform over the past 20 years, it was assessed that an independent, complementary programme would best enable New Zealand to deliver our value-add (a more effective and resilient Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development) and address areas not targeted by other partners. s6(a)
- . New Zealand would continue to work closely with Australia and other actors in the education sector beyond 2025.

Implementation

- 20 New Zealand's assistance would be delivered primarily through budget support for the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development to lead in the delivery of its reforms. This would be supported by additional staffing resources in the form of a Partnership Support Hub, an Education Development Specialist and independent audit services to facilitate the Partnership's delivery, including management of s9(2)(j)

The Partnership Support Hub would also administer grants to non-governmental organisations to advance locally led education through utilising local knowledge and languages.

- 21 As the Partnership targets complex and long-standing issues, progress will take time. The Partnership Support Hub would play a key role in supporting the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development in the more challenging aspects of

delivering on the Partnership while keeping the Ministry more firmly in the driver's seat for delivering on its reform agenda. Management and governance structures would be put in place to ensure effective delivery, address risks, and adjust approach as required.

- 22 The Partnership's delivery and progress would be monitored against the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development's priorities, with a full monitoring, evaluation, research and learning framework to be finalised during the Partnership's inception phase (New Zealand's 2025-26 financial year). In addition to ongoing monitoring through management and governance structures, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade would also commission independent mid-delivery reviews of the Partnership at the 3- and 6-year marks during its 10-year timeframe and an end-of-programme evaluation at the 9-year mark to monitor and report back on the Partnership's delivery and progress. These would provide assessments of the Partnership and opportunities to adjust the approach if necessary.

Financial Implications

- 23 The Partnership is envisaged to cost s6(a) over its 10-year delivery, consistent with previous levels of annual expenditure by New Zealand on education support. If approved, this would be earmarked from the Non-Departmental International Development Cooperation appropriation's Solomon Islands Core Allocation within Vote Foreign Affairs across the relevant trienniums spanning 2025-2035. No new funding would be sought for the Partnership. As such, it would have no impact on the Crown's operating balance nor result in changes to appropriations or expense forecasts.

Human Rights

- 24 The proposed Partnership is consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 or Human Rights Act 1993.
- 25 The Partnership would support the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development to better enable Solomon Islanders' access to quality education, a human right under the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including addressing current inequities in accessing education faced by traditionally disadvantaged groups, such as girls and children with disabilities.
- 26 The Partnership would take an active approach to safeguarding to ensure activities do not exacerbate existing inequalities alongside adopting, at minimum, a 'do no harm' approach that includes appropriate processes and structures to protect the welfare and human rights of people connected with the Partnership, in particular, children and young people.

Other Implications

- 27 This paper has no cost-of-living, legislative, regulatory, climate nor direct population implications for New Zealanders. As such, it does not require a regulatory impact statement nor a Climate Implications of Policy Assessment.

Use of External Resources

- 28 The Partnership was designed through a joint New Zealand-Australia design process conducted under the Education Sector Support Programme, which included the commissioning of a specialist team via *DT Global*, an international development contractor. This team undertook extensive document review and consultations with the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, other Solomon Islands Government officials, donors and non-governmental organisation partners to design the proposed Partnership between May-October 2024, utilising the insights and lessons attained through previous phases of support.
- 29 The s6(a) sought includes the costs of additional staffing resources in the form of the Partnership Support Hub, an Education Development Specialist, and independent auditor in Solomon Islands to assist in the delivery and assessment of the Partnership and its finances.

Consultation

- 30 The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's Policy Advisory Group and the Treasury were consulted in the preparation of this paper.

Communications

- 31 The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade would work closely with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development and the Partnership Support Hub to develop a strong public diplomacy strategy for the programme that ensures New Zealand's contribution to Solomon Islands' education is visible at all levels of society. This is likely to include high-level public announcements, launch events, civil society engagement, and a clear branding strategy (including a name for the Partnership in Solomon Islands Pijin).
- 32 Solomon Islands Prime Minister Jeremiah Manele's proposed visit to New Zealand in late July 2025 would present an opportunity for Prime Minister Luxon and Minister Peters to announce the Partnership jointly with Solomon Islands.

Proactive Release

- 33 The Minister of Foreign Affairs will proactively release this paper within 30 business days, subject to Cabinet's decision and public announcement of the Partnership. Some content may be withheld in line with the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

The Minister of Foreign Affairs recommends that the Committee:

- 1 **note** s6(a)
- 2
- 3 **note** New Zealand’s support for Solomon Islands education has contributed to the sector’s recovery from the Tensions and other outcomes such as near universal primary school attendance and some of the best literacy and numeracy test scores in the Pacific;
- 4 **note** the key role education plays in encouraging positive economic, social and civic development in Solomon Islands, which assists New Zealand’s long-term interests in maintaining a peaceful, secure and prosperous Pacific;
- 5 **approve** s6(a) from the International Development Cooperation appropriation to fund the proposed *Solomon Islands-New Zealand Education Partnership 2025-2035*, designed to deliver structural reform to strengthen Solomon Islands’ Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development’s governance, management and delivery of equitable access to quality education for all Solomon Islanders;
- 6 **note** funding this proposal would not impact the Crown’s operating balance nor result in changes to appropriations or expense forecasts as it would be allocated from the existing International Development Cooperation appropriation within Vote Foreign Affairs;
- 7 **note** the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade would commission independent mid-delivery reviews of the Partnership at the 3- and 6-year marks during its 10-year timeframe and an end-of-programme evaluation at the 9-year mark, providing opportunity to monitor and report back on the Partnership’s progress and, if necessary, adjust its approach; and
- 8 **note** the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade would ensure a comprehensive public diplomacy approach for the programme to ensure visibility of New Zealand’s contribution to Solomon Islands’ education sector.

Authorised for lodgement

Rt Hon Winston Peters

Minister of Foreign Affairs