

Proactive Release

Published on or before: 9 November 2026

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

Title	Reference
<i>Cabinet Minute of Decision – Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Simon Watts – October 2026</i>	CAB-26-MIN-0318
<i>Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Simon Watts – October 2026</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; and
- 9(2)(f)(iv): to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials.



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 Simon Watts – October 2026

Portfolio Climate Change

On 28 September 2026, Cabinet:

- 1 **authorised** the absence of Hon Simon Watts from New Zealand, from 5 to 9 October 2026, to travel to Fiji and Tuvalu to lead New Zealand's delegation to the Pre-COP31 Leaders' Event and High-Level Ministerial Meeting and undertake bilateral engagements;
- 2 **agreed** that he be accompanied by two members of staff, one of whose costs will be met by the Ministry of Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport (MCERT);
- 3 **approved** the estimated expenditure of up to \$17,364 for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party as a charge to Vote Internal Affairs (Members of the Executive – Travel);
- 4 **noted** that he will also be accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and MCERT, whose costs will be met by their respective agencies;
- 5 **agreed** that in his absence:
 - 5.1 Hon Simeon Brown will act as Minister for Auckland and Minister of Local Government;
 - 5.2 Hon Nicola Grigg will act as Minister of Climate Change;
 - 5.3 Hon Cameron Brewer will act as Minister for Building and Construction and Minister of Revenue;
- 6 **noted** that the House is not sitting during his absence.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Climate Change

Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Simon Watts – 5 – 9 October 2026

1. I seek Cabinet approval to travel to Fiji and Tuvalu from 5 – 9 October to lead New Zealand's delegation to the Pre-COP31 Leaders' Event and High-Level Ministerial Meeting in my capacity as Minister of Climate Change.
2. The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle, and House leave has been approved by the Party Whip.

Purpose of Travel

3. Pre-COP31 is the principal Ministerial level preparatory meeting for COP31, the annual UN Climate Change Conference to be held in Türkiye in November. The Pre-COP will be held in Nadi, Fiji, hosted by the Governments of Australia, Fiji, and Tuvalu. It will bring together Climate Change Ministers from around the world, senior negotiators and stakeholders to discuss key political issues, and build convergence towards outcomes at COP31.
4. This year, the Pre-COP includes significant bilateral and regional equities: the Pre-COP is the regional centrepiece of the COP31 Pacific Partnership;
s6(a)
5. s9(2)(f)(iv) and serving as New Zealand's representative in the COP31 Pacific Partnership, there is an expectation that I will attend the Pre-COP.
6. Participation will enable me to reinforce New Zealand's commitment to Australia's success as COP31 President of Negotiations and to regional priorities for climate action, and to shape outcomes of negotiations at COP31 in line with New Zealand's priorities for international engagement on climate change.
7. I will also represent New Zealand on behalf of the Prime Minister at the associated Pre-COP31 Leaders' event in Tuvalu on 6 October. The Prime Minister is unable to attend given the event's proximity to the New Zealand general election. The Leaders' event is an important opportunity for world leaders to see the impacts of climate change in the Pacific first-hand and to highlight Pacific climate leadership.

8. I intend to use the presence of international counterparts to advance a programme of bilateral engagement focused on strengthening climate change partnerships, including ones that support New Zealand's transition to a low-emissions, climate-resilient economy through innovation, technology and investment.

Ministerial Party

9. I will be accompanied by one staff member from my office – the seconded Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) Private Secretary. Travel costs for this delegation would be a charge to Vote Internal Affairs: Members of the Executive – Travel.
10. A Ministry of Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport (MCERT) Private Secretary from my Office will also travel. All costs for the MCERT Private Secretary will be covered from within the Ministry's baseline budget. I will be supported by officials from MFAT and MCERT.

Travel Costs

11. Indicative costs two people (myself and one Ministerial staffer) are:

Airfares:	\$8,186
Accommodation:	\$6,251
Hospitality and meals:	\$1500
Gifts:	\$200
Ground transport	\$400
Contingency (5%):	\$827
Total:	\$17,364

Acting Ministers

12. If my travel is approved, I propose that the following colleagues act in my portfolios.
13. Minister Brown – Auckland
14. Minister Brewer – Building and Construction
15. Minister Grigg – Climate Change
16. Minister Brown – Local Government
17. Minister Brewer – Revenue

Proactive release

18. I propose to release the paper proactively in part within 30 business days of decisions being confirmed by Cabinet. All redactions will be made in line with the *Official Information Act 1982*.

Recommendations

19. I recommend that Cabinet:
- 1 authorise my absence from New Zealand from 5 – 9 October to travel to Fiji and Tuvalu to lead New Zealand's delegation to the Pre-COP31 and attend the High-Level Ministerial Meeting.
 - 2 agree that I be accompanied by one member of staff;
 - 3 approve the estimated expenditure of \$17,364 for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
 - 4 note that an MCERT Private Secretary will also travel, whose costs will be met by the Ministry;
 - 5 agree that in my absence:
 - 5.1.1 Hon Simeon Brown will act as Minister for Auckland.
 - 5.1.2 Hon Cameron Brewer will act as Minister for Building and Construction
 - 5.1.3 Hon Nicola Grigg will act as Minister of Climate Change
 - 5.1.4 Hon Simeon Brown will act as Minister of Local Government.
 - 5.1.5 Hon Cameron Brewer will act as Minister of Revenue
 - 6 note that the House is not sitting during my absence;
 - 7 note that leave from Parliament has been approved by the Party Whip.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Simon Watts

Minister of Climate Change