

Proactive Release

Date: 13 November 2019

The following Cabinet paper and related Cabinet minute have been proactively released by the Minister for Trade and Export Growth

***Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor [Bangkok]:
(CAB-19-MIN-0516 refers)***

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 codes:

- 9(2)(j): to avoid prejudice to negotiations.

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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 Damien O'Connor

Portfolio **Trade and Export Growth**

On 30 September 2019, Cabinet:

- 1 **authorised** the absence of Hon Damien O'Connor from New Zealand, from 11 to 14 October 2019, to travel to Bangkok, Thailand, to attend an urgent Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Ministerial Meeting;
- 2 **agreed** that he be accompanied by one member of staff;
- 3 **approved** the estimated expenditure of up to \$19,789 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 be accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, whose travel costs will be met by the Ministry;
- 5 **agreed** that in his absence Hon Stuart Nash act as Minister of Agriculture, Minister for Biosecurity, Minister for Food Safety and Minister for Rural Communities;
- 6 **noted** that the House is not sitting during his absence.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Hard-copy distribution:

Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister
Hon Damien O'Connor

Office of the Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth

Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor

- 1 I seek Cabinet approval to travel to Bangkok, Thailand from 11 – 12 October 2019 to attend an urgent RCEP Ministerial Meeting (departing Friday 11 October and returning on the morning of Monday 14 October).
- 2 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle.

Purpose of Travel

- 3 The purpose of my travel to Bangkok is to represent New Zealand at a two-day Ministerial Meeting of the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** free trade agreement negotiation.
- 4 This urgent additional Ministerial Meeting was agreed to at the last RCEP Meeting I attended on 8 September, also in Bangkok. ^{s9(2)(i)}
- 5 At a time when the international rules-based trading system is under threat, it is critical that New Zealand continues to participate in significant regional economic initiatives. RCEP covers over three billion people, over 30% of world GDP and crucially includes both China and India. ^{s9(2)(i)}
- 6 In Bangkok, my focus will be on securing commercially meaningful market access in goods, services and investment. I will take the opportunity to meet bilaterally with other countries to continue to prosecute New Zealand's requests, defend our core needs and seek beneficial market access outcomes for New Zealand. ^{s9(2)(i)}
- 7 Hon David Parker has asked me to attend this upcoming meeting in Bangkok to continue to defend New Zealand's interests in the RCEP negotiation, and ensure that a final RCEP agreement delivers meaningful outcomes for New Zealand. During these final stages of the negotiations it is critical that New Zealand is represented at Ministerial level.
- 8 I do not propose to undertake any additional calls in Bangkok as I completed a successful bilateral programme in Thailand earlier this month.

Ministerial Party

- 9 I will be accompanied by one staff member, my Private Secretary (Trade and Export Growth).
- 10 Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade will also attend this meeting; their travel costs will be met by the departmental budget.

Travel Costs

- 11 The estimate cost of travel is **\$ 19,789** and broken down as follows:

Airfares	\$ 13,390
Accommodation*	\$ 2,100
Meals, incidentals and communications	\$ 700
Airport facilitation* (contingency)	\$ 1,500
Ministerial gifts	\$ 300
Contingency (10%):	\$ 1,799

Total: \$ 19,789

*It is likely that Thailand may provide complimentary accommodation and airport facilitation for Ministers (thereby reducing these costs), however this has not yet been confirmed.

Acting Minister

- 12 Hon Stuart Nash will act in my Agriculture, Biosecurity, Food Safety and Rural Communities portfolio.

Proactive release

- 13 This paper will be proactively released as per Cabinet Office Circular CO (18) 4, on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's website. Proactive release is subject to redaction as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

- 14 I recommend that Cabinet:
- 14.1 authorise my absence from New Zealand from 11 – 14 October to attend an urgent RCEP Ministerial Meeting;
 - 14.2 note that I do not propose to undertake a bilateral programme during this visit;
 - 14.3 agree that I be accompanied by one member of staff;

- 14.4 approve the estimated expenditure of **\$19,789** for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
- 14.5 note that I will be accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, whose travel costs will be met by the Ministry;
- 14.6 agree that in my absence Hon Stuart Nash will act in my Agriculture, Biosecurity, Food Safety and Rural Communities portfolios;

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Damien O'Connor

Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth

Proactively released by the Minister of State for Trade and Export Growth