



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 Peeni Henare

Portfolio Defence

On 14 March 2022, Cabinet:

- 1 **authorised** the absence of Hon Peeni Henare from New Zealand, from 21 to 26 March 2022, to travel to Suva, Fiji, and Canberra and Brisbane, Australia for bilateral discussions;
- 2 **agreed** that he be accompanied by two members of staff, one of whom will have their travel costs met by the Ministry of Defence;
- 3 **approved** the estimated expenditure of up to \$20,892.00 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 Defence and a senior officer from the New Zealand Defence Force whose travel costs will be met by their departments;
- 5 **agreed** that in his absence:
 - 5.1 Hon Nanaia Mahuta act as Minister of Defence;
 - 5.2 Hon Willie Jackson act as Minister for Whānau Ora;
- 6 **noted** that the House is not sitting during his absence.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Office of the Minister for Defence

Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Peeni Henare

- 1 I seek Cabinet approval to travel to Fiji (Suva) and Australia (Canberra and Brisbane) from 21 to 26 March 2022.
- 2 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle. House leave is not required as the House is in recess.

Purpose of Travel

- 3 I have deliberately chosen Australia and Fiji as the destinations for my first overseas visit as Defence Minister following the re-opening of New Zealand's borders. Travel to these countries reflects the weight that New Zealand places on its bilateral defence relationships with Australia and Fiji, and aligns with my priority focus on the Pacific as New Zealand Defence's primary area of influence. Discussions with counterparts will also enable me to advance my *People* priority. Cooperation with key partners will be a crucial part of regenerating New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) readiness and capability post-COVID-19.
- 4 Australia is New Zealand's most important defence partner and is our only ally. They are also an essential partner in contributing to Pacific regional security, which is highly topical given recent events in Solomon Islands and Tonga. s6(a)

Outline of Visit

- 5 I intend to begin my visit in **Suva** where I have secured a meeting with Minister for Defence, National Security and Policing Inia Seruiratu. s6(a)
- 6 As this will be the first visit by a Minister of Defence since Fiji's re-opening, I intend to stay in Suva from 21 - 23 March to allow time for ceremonial events, a courtesy call on Prime Minister Bainimarama (subject to his availability) and

visit sites of current and historical importance for the Fiji - New Zealand bilateral defence relationship. Options being explored include visits to the Blackrock Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Camp, and Momi Battery Historic Park – one of three sites on Fiji's main island of Viti Levu that was created by the New Zealand Army to assist in protecting the South Pacific in the early 1940s.

- 7 From Fiji, I plan to travel to **Canberra** via Sydney. A day visit in Canberra would provide an opportunity to engage with the wider Australian defence establishment on long-term strategic challenges and priorities for Australia, New Zealand and our region. Officials are exploring the option for a roundtable discussion hosted by a distinguished think tank – the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) – with representatives from the Australian Department of Defence and Australian Defence Force (ADF). In this setting, I would look to share my defence portfolio priorities (*People, Infrastructure* and the *Pacific*) and reflect on the findings of the New Zealand's recent Defence Assessment. Insights gained would provide valuable input to the upcoming review of New Zealand's defence policy settings.
- 8 Other visits being explored in Canberra are to the Australian War College where I would address the students of the Defence and Strategic Studies course (including several NZDF personnel), and laying a wreath at the Australian National War Memorial in recognition of the many times that Australian and New Zealand forces have served alongside each other.
- 9 I would then travel to **Brisbane** on 24 March to meet with the Australian Minister of Defence Peter Dutton. This would be our first meeting in-person, and provide an opportunity to exchange ideas and perspectives in more depth than previous virtual encounters.
- 10 In line with my *People* priority, a meeting with Minister Dutton would serve as an important mechanism for setting future direction on training and interoperability between the NZDF and the ADF as the COVID-19 military response drawdown and removal of border restrictions facilitates greater movement of defence personnel across our borders. A meeting would also be an opportunity for us to reflect on lessons learned from recent deployments to the Solomon Islands and Tonga, and identify ways to achieve greater defence coordination between partners in the Pacific – such as increasing joint NZDF and ADF training with Pacific partner militaries.
- 11 While Minister Dutton's electorate in Brisbane is not a hub for Australian Defence like Canberra, there are opportunities to view key industry activities relevant to my *People* priority of ensuring that the NZDF's equipment allows them to operate safely and effectively. In particular, there is an opportunity to visit Thales Australia which is building the Protected Mobility Vehicles that we agreed to acquire in 2020.

Ministerial Party

- 12 I would be accompanied by two staff members from my office, one of whom would be funded by the Ministry of Defence. The Secretary of Defence, one official from the Ministry of Defence and a senior officer from the NZDF would also accompany me during my visit to Fiji. An additional senior Ministry of Defence official will join the delegation for my visit to Australia. Their costs would be met from the departmental budgets.

Travel Costs

- 13 List the estimated costs of the travel:

Airfares:	\$11,042.00
Accommodation, meals and transport:	\$ 7,950.00
Contingency (10%)	\$ 1,900.00
Total: \$ (rounded up to nearest \$)	\$20,892.00

Acting Ministers

- 14 In my absence, Acting Ministers in my portfolios will be:

Defence: Hon Nanaia Mahuta
Whānau Ora: Hon Willie Jackson

Proactive release

- 15 This paper will be proactively released on the Ministry of Defence's website. Proactive release is subject to redaction as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

- 1 I recommend that Cabinet:
- 1.1 authorise my absence from New Zealand from 21 to 26 March 2022 to travel to Fiji and Australia;
 - 1.2 agree that I be accompanied by two members of staff, one of whom will have their travel costs met by the Ministry of Defence;
 - 1.3 approve the estimated expenditure of \$20,892.00 for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
 - 1.4 note that I will be accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Defence and a senior officer from the New Zealand Defence Force whose travel costs will be met by their departments;

- 1.5 agree that Hon Nanaia Mahuta (Defence) and Hon Willie Jackson (Whānau Ora) will be Acting Ministers in my absence;
- 1.6 note that the House is not sitting during my absence.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Peeni Henare

Minister for Defence

Released by the Minister of Defence



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Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Peeni Henare

Portfolio **Defence**

On 30 May 2022, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Peeni Henare under CAB-22-SUB-0197 on his travel, from 21 to 26 March 2022, to Suva, Fiji and Canberra and Brisbane, Australia for bilateral discussions.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Released by the Minister of Defence

Office of the Minister for Defence

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Peeni Henare

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Fiji (Nadi and Suva) and Australia (Canberra and Brisbane) from 21 March to 26 March 2022 to conduct counterpart visits.

Report

Fiji

1 The purpose of my visit to Fiji was to demonstrate the priority that New Zealand places on the Pacific, and build on the positive relationship that I have established with my Fijian counterpart – Minister of Defence, National Security and Policing Inia Seruiratu – virtually over the past two years.

2

3 Following the meeting, we announced that a non-legally binding Statement of Intent (SOI) would be developed outlining how Fiji and New Zealand would work together in regenerating and reinvigorating our defence workforces in the post COVID-19 era. ^{s6(a)}

It was further agreed that New Zealand would fund the development of Fiji's Maritime Security Strategy, and a Status of Forces Agreement would be negotiated to provide a framework for the high tempo of defence cooperation between our militaries.

4

5 My programme dedicated time to important elements of Fijian protocol, including a traditional sevusevu ceremony and a wreath laying at the National War Memorial. I also visited the recently opened Blackrock Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Camp and Fiji's Maritime Surveillance Rescue Coordination Centre.

6

s6(a)

Australia

s6(a)

- 9 My other engagements included a speech to the Defence and Strategic Studies course at the Australian War College, a round table event hosted by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) and Australian defence officials, an industry visit to Rheinmetall Defence Australia and a wreath laying at the Australian War Memorial. My positive interactions with academia and industry, and reflections on our Anzac history at the Australian War Memorial, underscored the enduring breadth and depth of the Defence relationship.

Proactive release

- 10 I propose to proactively release this paper within 30 business days. Proactive release will be subject to redaction as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Peeni Henare

Minister for Defence