

HON CHRIS PENK, ASSOCIATE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

MINISTERIAL TRAVEL 21 – 26 OCTOBER 2025

January 2026

This publication provides the Cabinet proposal and report back on Hon Chris Penk's travel over the period 21 – 26 October 2025 to Chile in order to attend the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting.

The pack comprises the following documents:

- The October 2025 Cabinet paper and associated minute of decision *Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Chris Penk – October 2025* [CAB-25-MIN-0358 and CAB-25-SUB-0358]
- the November 2025 Cabinet paper and associated minute of decision *Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Chris Penk – October 2025* [CAB-25-MIN-0415 and CAB-25-SUB-0415].

This pack has been released on the Ministry of Defence website, available at: www.defence.govt.nz/publications/.

It has been necessary to withhold certain information in accordance with the following provisions of the Official Information Act 1982. Where information is withheld, the relevant sections of the Act are indicated in the body of the document. Information is withheld where making it available would be likely to prejudice:

- the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand [section 6(a)]
- the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on a basis of confidence by the government of any other country [section 6(b)(i)].



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 Chris Penk – October 2025

Portfolio Associate Defence

On 13 October 2025, Cabinet:

- 1 **authorised** the absence of Hon Chris Penk from New Zealand, subject to leave from Parliament being secured, from 21 to 26 October 2025, to travel to Chile to attend the annual South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting;
- 2 **agreed** that he be accompanied by two members of staff, one of whose costs will be met by the Ministry of Defence;
- 3 **approved** the estimated expenditure of up to \$31,605 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 the New Zealand Defence Force, whose costs will be met by their agencies;
- 5 **agreed** that in his absence:
 - 5.1 Hon James Meager act as Minister for Building and Construction;
 - 5.2 Hon Nicola Grigg act as Minister for Land Information;
 - 5.3 Hon Scott Simpson act as Minister for Small Business and Manufacturing;
 - 5.4 Hon Penny Simmonds act as Minister for Veterans from 21 to 22 October 2025;
 - 5.5 Hon Judith Collins KC act as Minister for Veterans from 23 to 26 October 2025;
- 6 **noted** that leave from the House has been sought.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Office of the Associate Minister of Defence
Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Chris Penk – October 2025

- 1 I seek Cabinet approval to travel to Chile from 21-26 October under my Associate Defence portfolio.
- 2 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle, and House leave has been sought.

Purpose of Travel

- 3 The annual South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM) brings together Defence Ministers and Chiefs of Defence from New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, Tonga, Chile and Papua New Guinea.
- 4 Collaboration through SPDMM each year is an important component of New Zealand's defence relationships with our closest neighbours. On the margins of the SPDMM, this trip will also provide the opportunity to hold bilateral meetings with counterparts from member countries, some of our closest Defence partners.

Ministerial Party

- 5 I would be accompanied by one member of staff from my Office (travel costs met by Vote Internal Affairs: Members of the Executive – Travel), and a Defence Private Secretary (travel costs met by Vote Defence).
- 6 A delegation from the Ministry of Defence and the New Zealand Defence Force would also accompany me at departmental cost.

Travel Costs

- 7 The estimated costs of the travel (including my staff members travel) are:

Airfares:	\$24,000.00
Accommodation:	\$5,000.00
Meals	\$600.00
Other expenses	\$500.00
Contingency (5%)	\$1,505.00
Total:	\$31,605.00

Acting Ministers

8 In my absence, Acting Ministers in my portfolios will be:

Building and Construction	Hon James Meager
Land Information	Hon Nicola Grigg
Small Business and Manufacturing	Hon Scott Simpson
Veterans	Hon Judith Collins

Proactive release

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

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- 1 **authorise** my absence from New Zealand, subject to leave from Parliament being secured, from approximately 21-26 October, to travel to Chile;
- 2 **note** that leave from Parliament has been sought from the Party Whip;
- 3 **agree** that I be accompanied by one member of staff from my office and a Defence Private Secretary.
- 4 **note** that I will be accompanied by a delegation from the Ministry of Defence and the New Zealand Defence Force, whose costs will be met by departmental budgets;
- 5 **approve** the estimated expenditure of **\$31,605** for my travel expenses and a member of staff from my office, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
- 6 **agree** that in my absence, Acting Ministers in my portfolios will be:

6.1	Building and Construction	Hon James Meager
6.2	Land Information	Hon Nicola Grigg
6.3	Small Business and Manufacturing	Hon Scott Simpson
6.4	Veterans	Hon Judith Collins

- 7 **note** that this Cabinet paper will be proactively released following return to New Zealand by the Ministry of Defence.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Chris Penk

Associate Minister of Defence



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Chris Penk – October 2025

Portfolio	Associate Defence
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On 24 November 2025, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Chris Penk under CAB-25-SUB-0415 on his travel, from 21 to 26 October 2025, to Chile to attend the annual South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Office of the Associate Minister of Defence
Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Chris Penk – October 2025

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Viña Del Mar, Chile, from 21 to 26 October to participate in the 10th South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting.

Report

- 1 Chile hosted the 10th South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM) in Viña del Mar from 22-24 October 2025. Associate Minister of Defence, Hon Chris Penk, led New Zealand's delegation, supported by Chief of Defence Force, Air Marshal Tony Davies.
- 2 The annual SPDMM brings together defence ministers from Fiji, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Tonga, Chile, France, Australia and New Zealand to discuss regional defence and security issues; it also includes Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States as observer nations.
- 3 SPDMM 2025 generated numerous Ministerial decisions. It has also been a big year for SPDMM, with the launch of both its Regional Training Framework and the SPDMM website. This year's theme was an 'integrated Pacific' and plenary discussions canvassed climate change, regional dynamics, and Women, Peace and Security, while initiatives such as a possible SPDMM Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and the Pacific Response Group (PRG) mandate were considered during the members-only closed session. Other key themes included Transnational Organised Crime, maritime security and strategic competition. Chile made a strong impression on attendees, showcasing their Polynesian cultural links through Rapa Nui and highlighting their desire to engage further with the South Pacific, including through the PRG and a proposal to explore a SPDMM exercise on Rapa Nui.
- 4 Key outcomes from SPDMM 2025, endorsed by Ministers include:
 - 4.1 New Zealand to host the PRG headquarters from 1 July 2026 at Trentham Military Camp;
 - 4.2 PRG to explore expanding its remit to include stabilisation activities;
 - 4.3 Members to commence consultations on a SPDMM Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA);
 - 4.4 A SPDMM information sharing framework was endorsed, to formalise how and what official unclassified information is exchanged between and among SPDMM members, observers and third parties;

- 4.5 A continuation of NZ's initiative to coordinate the regional defence architecture and develop a coordination mechanism to leverage existing structures; and
- 4.6 Fijis to host the next SPDMM in Nadi, Fiji, in 2026.

5 Additionally, I met with Defence counterparts from Chile, Australia, Tonga, PNG, and Fiji. The bilateral engagements were constructive and positive, covering a broad range of security themes, among other topics.

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

Released by the Associate Minister of Defence

Proactive release

13 This paper will be proactively released within 30 business days of Cabinet's decision, subject to any appropriate redactions.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement
Hon Chris Penk
Associate Minister of Defence