

## HON JUDITH COLLINS, KC MP MINISTER OF DEFENCE

### Ministerial Overseas Travel 04-12-2023 to 06-12-2023

March 2024

This publication provides the Cabinet proposal and report back on Hon Judith Collins' travel to Noumea, New Caledonia to attend the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting.

The pack comprises the following documents:

- the December 2023 Cabinet paper and associated minute of decision *Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins KC* [CAB-23-SUB-0475 and CAB-23-MIN-0475]
- the January 2024 Cabinet paper and associated minute of decision *Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins KC - December 2023* [CAB-24-SUB-0006 and CAB-24-MIN-0006]

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

Certain information is withheld, where the making available of the information 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)] and
- the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on the basis of confidence by the Government of any other country [section 6(b)(i)].

In addition, certain information has been withheld in order to:

- maintain the constitutional conventions for the timing being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials [section 9(2)(f)(iv)] and
- to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any department or organisation in the course of their duty [section 9(2)(g)(i)].

Where information is withheld pursuant to section 9(2), it is not considered that the public interest in this information outweighs the need to protect it.



# 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 Judith Collins

**Portfolio**                      **Defence**

On 4 December 2023, Cabinet:

- 1        **authorised** the absence of Hon Judith Collins from New Zealand, from 4 to 6 December 2023, to travel to New Caledonia to attend the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting;
- 2        **agreed** that she be accompanied by one member of staff, whose costs will be met by the Ministry of Defence;
- 3        **approved** the estimated expenditure of up to \$3,025 for the travel expenses of the ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs (Members of the Executive – Travel);
- 4        **noted** that she will also be accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Defence and the New Zealand Defence Force, whose travel costs will be met by their respective departments;
- 5        **noted** that she and her delegation will travel via a New Zealand Defence Force aircraft;
- 6        **agreed** that in her absence:
  - 6.1      Hon Chris Penk act as Attorney General, Minister of Defence, and Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission's Report into the Terrorist Attack on the Christchurch Mosques;
  - 6.2      Hon Melissa Lee act as Minister for Digitising Government;
  - 6.3      Hon Andrew Bayly act as Minister Responsible for the GCSB and Minister Responsible for the NZSIS;
  - 6.4      Hon Todd McClay act as Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology;
  - 6.5      Hon Simon Watts act as Minister for Space;
- 7        **noted** that leave from Parliament has been approved.

Rachel Hayward  
Secretary of the Cabinet

Office of the Minister of Defence

Chair, Cabinet

### **Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins**

- 1 I seek Cabinet approval to travel to Noumea, New Caledonia from 4 – 6 December to attend the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting.
- 2 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle, and House leave has also been approved by the Chief Whip.

### **Purpose of Travel**

- 3 The purpose of my travel to New Caledonia is to attend the annual South Pacific Defence Ministers Meeting (SPDMM). SPDMM is the only formal setting in which the Pacific region's defence ministers meet together and is a valuable mechanism in the Pacific regional security architecture.
- 4 This year's SPDMM is likely to see the most senior-level attendance in recent history, with Australia, Fiji, France, Papua New Guinea and Tonga all being represented at Ministerial-level. Other members of SPDMM include Chile; and representatives from the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan also attend as observers.
- 5 Attendance at SPDMM would provide me with an important opportunity to engage with our regional partners, s6(a) in discussions on subjects such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, climate change, and other regional security issues. In addition to the meeting proper, there will also be opportunities to engage with my counterparts in individual bilateral meetings.
- 6 Pending Cabinet approval, I plan to depart New Zealand on Monday 4 December and return on Wednesday 6 December. Travel would be via a New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) aircraft, and the operational costs of doing so would be incurred by the NZDF. NZDF uses flights such as these to accrue flying hours, which are a necessary element of crew training and currency. Military aircraft is the preferred travel option as there are limited scheduled flight options to Noumea over this period - with no direct options available on Monday 4 or Thursday 7 December – therefore it is the most efficient option for timing and travel routes.

### **Ministerial Party**

- 7 I propose to travel with one staff member from my office, whose travel will be funded by the Ministry of Defence.

8 I will also be accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Defence and NZDF. Their costs would be met from their departmental budgets.

### Travel Costs

9 Indicative travel costs for my travel are:

Accommodation, meals, transport: \$1,750

Gifts: \$1,000

Contingency (@10%): \$275

**Total: \$3,025**

### Acting Ministers

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

**Attorney-General:** Hon Chris Penk

**Defence:** Hon Chris Penk

**Digitising Government:** Hon Melissa Lee

**GCSB:** Hon Andrew Bayly

**NZSIS:** Hon Andrew Bayly

**Science, Innovation and Technology:** Hon Todd McClay

**Space:** Hon Simon Watts

**Government's Response to the Royal Commission's Report into the Terrorist Attack on the Christchurch Mosques:** Hon Chris Penk

### Proactive release

11 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

1 I recommend that Cabinet:

1.1 **authorise** my absence from New Zealand from 4 to 6 December to travel to New Caledonia to attend the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting;

1.2 **note** that my delegation and I will travel via a New Zealand Defence Force aircraft;

- 1.3 **agree** that I will be accompanied by one member of staff, who will be funded by the Ministry of Defence;
- 1.4 **note** that I will be accompanied by officials from the Ministry of Defence and the New Zealand Defence Force whose travel costs will be met by their departments;
- 1.5 **approve** the estimated expenditure of \$3,025 for the travel expenses of the Ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs [Members of the Executive – Travel];
- 1.6 **agree** that in my absence:
- 1.6.1 Hon Chris Penk will be Acting Attorney General
  - 1.6.2 Hon Chris Penk will be Acting Minister of Defence
  - 1.6.3 Hon Melissa Lee will be Acting Minister for Digitising Government
  - 1.6.4 Hon Andrew Bayly will be Acting Minister Responsible for the GCSB
  - 1.6.5 Hon Andrew Bayly will be Acting Minister Responsible for the NZSIS
  - 1.6.6 Hon Todd McClay will be Acting Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology
  - 1.6.7 Hon Simon Watts will be Acting Minister for Space
  - 1.6.8 Hon Chris Penk will be Acting Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission's Report into the Terrorist Attack on the Christchurch Mosques
- 1.7 **note** that leave from Parliament has been approved by the Chief Whip.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Judith Collins

Minister of Defence



# Cabinet

## Minute of Decision

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### Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins KC - December 2023

**Portfolio**                      **Defence**

On 23 January 2024, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Judith Collins KC under CAB-24-SUB-0006 on her travel, from 4 to 6 December 2023, to Noumea, New Caledonia to attend the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting.

Rachel Hayward  
Secretary of the Cabinet

Released by the Minister of Defence

Office of the Minister of Defence

Chair, Cabinet

## Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Judith Collins KC – December 2023

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Noumea, New Caledonia from 4-6 December to attend the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting.

### Report

- 1 The purpose of my travel to New Caledonia was to attend the annual South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM). SPDMM is the only formal setting in which the Pacific region's defence ministers meet together and is a valuable mechanism in the Pacific regional security architecture. While the 8th iteration, the meeting marked the 10th anniversary since establishment. My attendance at SPDMM so early on in my tenure as Defence Minister was commented on throughout the meeting, as a sign of New Zealand prioritising the Pacific.
- 2 The two day programme featured a plethora of agenda items, covering climate change; maritime security; Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle; regional information sharing; peacekeeping operations; Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief; ship-riding; and interoperability, among others.
- 3 Initiatives in information sharing, ship-riding and training opportunities, plus a concept for a Pacific Response Group (PRG) were advanced.

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

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s9(2)(g)(i)

s6(a)

s9(2)(f)(iv)

6 SPDMM Ministers also signed a letter of intent on information sharing. [REDACTED]

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

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s6(a)

8 The SPDMM 2023 Joint Communiqué (Annex A) outlines the key discussions and decisions made this year, including that New Zealand will host SPDMM in 2024. I intend to host this in Auckland in the second half of next year.

#### *Bilateral engagement with Ministerial counterparts*

9 SPDMM was also a timely opportunity to engage with several of my counterparts from throughout the region on a range of topics, including Australian Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Minister for Defence Richard Marles.

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

11 I also conducted meetings with Chile's Vice-Minister for Defence Riccardo Montero; Fiji's Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration Pio Tikoduadua; Papua New Guinea's Minister for Defence Win Daki; and Tonga's Minister for Internal Affairs Lord Vaea (filling in for Prime Minister and Defence Minister Hu'akavameiliku). These were all valuable meetings which enabled me to build relationships with most of my Pacific counterparts so early in my tenure.

#### **Proactive release**

12 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.



## **Recommendation**

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Judith Collins KC MP

Minister of Defence

Released by the Minister of Defence



## SOUTH PACIFIC DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING

New Caledonia, France, 4-6 December 2023

### JOINT COMMUNIQUE

Defence Ministers and senior civilian and military officials from Australia, Chile, Fiji, France, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Tonga, as well as observers from Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, gathered in New Caledonia for the annual South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting (SPDMM) from 4 to 6 December 2023. This year marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of SPDMM and its 8<sup>th</sup> iteration.

The SPDMM is the premier ministerial dialogue for regional Defence Ministers to discuss defence and security cooperation in the South Pacific. Members work collectively to foster their prosperity, sovereignty and regional solidarity, by taking stock of regional security challenges, and identifying ways to improve cooperation and coordination on regional defence issues.

At this year's meeting, Members committed to deepen cooperation to jointly tackle the most acute of these challenges including climate-induced disasters, the increasing demand for rapid Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief responses, maritime security, and non-traditional security challenges, such as IUU fishing and transnational crime, as well as cyber threats.

Members also discussed the impact of strategic competition on the stability of the South Pacific.

#### **[Interoperability]**

Members noted that SPDMM celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023 and reflected on the significant interoperability gains made over the past decade. Members agreed to update the POVAI ENDEAVOUR Framework (a cooperative exercise framework), including amongst other activities, Exercise CROIX DU SUD and Regional Exercise LONGREACH. They thanked Papua New Guinea for hosting this year's Regional Exercise LONGREACH and accepted Australia's offers to host in 2024.

Recognising the lead role of national disaster management organisations, Members discussed mechanisms to increase and improve how South Pacific militaries work together in response to disasters. Member endorsed the SPDMM HADR Interoperability Guide (formally known as the Defence HADR Standard Operating Procedures), developed through Regional Exercise LONGREACH, as the backbone document that would support planning and participation in exercises and operations. They also welcomed the prominence of Women, Peace and Security considerations.

Because greater interoperability requires more consistent information sharing, Members committed to finalise a framework to facilitate greater information exchange by next year's meeting. They noted the value of agreeing information sharing norms and protocols between trusted partners.

Members supported the Pacific Response Group initiative proposed by Australia and asked Chiefs and Heads of Defence to work together to develop the initiative further for their consideration in 2024.

### **[Maritime security]**

Members committed to jointly combat regional maritime threats such as illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing and transnational crime in order to better protect resources in the vast Exclusive Economic Zones of the Blue Pacific Continent. They strongly agree to take the necessary steps to enhance shipriding operations according to each Members' requirements. They endorsed a joint declaration to enhance shipriding cooperation to this purpose.

### **[Training]**

Members committed to better coordinate their training offers and needs to strengthen our joint response to common security challenges. France proposed to develop a training framework within SPDMM, and Members tasked the Working Group to develop the concept by 2024. France used this opportunity to present its new Pacific Academy.

Following an initiative from Chile, Members committed to create a SPDMM academic network in order to build bridges between defence academic institutions to enhance the sharing of security analyses.

Members emphasised the need to broaden research sharing on technologies and innovation.

Australia offered to facilitate closer connections between the faith leaders and chaplains that support the defence forces in the South Pacific. Members accepted Australia's offer to host the 2025 edition of the SPDMM Young Leaders Forum, which New Zealand successfully organised this year.

### **[Resilience to climate change]**

Members supported France's proposed roadmap to operationalise the SPDMM 2019 study on the impact of climate change on defence and security infrastructure. Members agreed to stand up an officials-level intersessional Working Group to progress implementation of the growing SPDMM agenda throughout the year. France will chair the first working group with a focus on climate change.

New Zealand provided an update on the progress the SPDMM has made to address non-traditional security challenges for the consideration of SPDMM members and publication in 2024.

### **[Governance]**

Delegates thanked France for hosting SPDMM 2023 in New Caledonia and agreed that New Zealand would host SPDMM in 2024.

To ensure strong connections and close coordination with the region's architecture, Members agreed to share the SPDMM outcomes of the meeting with the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders.