



Meeting of the COVID-19 Ministerial Group

Minute of Decision

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Repatriation of New Zealanders Stranded Overseas

The group of Ministers with Power to Act on COVID-19 matters [CAB-20-MIN-0130] convened on 16 April 2020 at 10.30am, and in accordance with their Power to Act:

- 1 **noted** that hundreds of thousands of New Zealanders remain offshore and that a demand for government-assisted repatriation could come from between one and several thousand of them affected by the COVID-19 emergency;
- 2 **noted** that:
 - 2.1 New Zealand Government repatriations carried out to date have been expensive and resource intensive;
 - 2.2 the government cannot bring home all New Zealanders who wish to return;
 - 2.3 with finite resources, there is a need to prioritise future repatriations s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i);
- 3 **noted** that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) is applying a repatriations framework that:
 - 3.1 categorises countries where New Zealanders are located as being high risk, medium risk, and low risk;
 - 3.2 deploys the most effective and resource-efficient transport options available;
- 4 s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i)

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- 6 **noted** that the operationalisation of the repatriations will continue to be undertaken by MFAT, in consultation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs where a Ministerial decision is required;
- 7 **noted** that careful sequencing and coordinated planning of repatriation flights will be required to manage the impact on available capacity for managed isolation/quarantine, as well as any potential flow-on impacts for the health system and the provision of other services;
- 8 **noted** that the decision not to prioritise repatriation for New Zealanders in low-risk countries will be communicated publicly as soon as possible to encourage New Zealanders to use commercial options to return home while they are still available;
- 9 **noted** that
- 9.1 applying this prioritisation approach, MFAT estimates that the cost of repatriation charter flights is likely to be in the order of \$10-\$14 million;
- 9.2 this would be reprioritised from within Vote Foreign Affairs baseline through a joint Ministers process, by way of a fiscally neutral output expense transfer to increase the Consular appropriation.

Rachel Hayward
for Secretary of the Cabinet

Distribution:
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