



Meeting of the COVID-19 Ministerial Group

Minute of Decision

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COVID-19 Antarctic Issues: Providing Emergency and Essential Support to Antarctic Stations Through New Zealand

The group of Ministers with Power to Act on COVID-19 matters [CAB-20-MIN-0130] convened on 3 April 2020 at 10.30am, and in accordance with their Power to Act:

Essential support to Antarctic stations

- 1 **noted** that in March 2020, Cabinet directed the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to provide further advice to Ministers on issues concerning Antarctica travel [CVD-20-MIN-0017] ;
- 2 **noted** that the Ministry of Health has confirmed that there are currently no COVID-19 related risks associated with people coming from Antarctica, and that COVID-19 is not present in Antarctica;
- 3 **noted** that as an Antarctic 'gateway' country, New Zealand has an essential role in supporting Antarctic stations in the Ross Sea region;
- 4 **noted** that April is a critical month for preparing Antarctic stations for the winter;
- 5 **noted** that provision for essential and emergency support to Antarctic stations through New Zealand is required as part of New Zealand's Antarctic responsibilities, as well as to keep New Zealanders in Antarctica safe, and can be delivered whilst preventing increased COVID-19 related risks to people in New Zealand or in Antarctica;
- 6 **noted** that:
 - 6.1 all personnel proposed to return from Antarctica to New Zealand, as part of the movements described in the paper *COVID-19 Antarctic Issues: Providing Emergency and Essential Support to Antarctic Stations Through New Zealand*, will go into self-funded self-isolation on arrival in New Zealand;
 - 6.2 for the foreign nationals, this will be until such time as they are evacuated from New Zealand (and in accordance with any requirements for the evacuation of foreign nationals) or the 14 days have passed, after which they would be required to comply with the alert level 4 restrictions;
 - 6.3 plans for self-isolation will be scrutinised before arrival in New Zealand and government officials, including from the Ministry of Health, will also need to be satisfied as to the adequacy of the proposed self-isolation arrangements upon arrival;

- 7 **noted** that the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment has confirmed that the provision of support to Scott Base is an essential service;
- 8 **noted** that officials will report back to COVID-19 Ministers by August 2020 to seek decisions on the essential support required to prepare the stations for the 'spring' transition;

Flights to Scott Base and McMurdo in April 2020

- 9 **agreed** to flights by an Australian aircraft, planned for April 2020, to take essential supplies to Scott Base and McMurdo Station and bring United States and New Zealand personnel from Antarctica to New Zealand (in accordance with paragraph 6 above);

Republic of Korea Ice Breaker – Araon

- 10 **agreed** that the Republic of Korea Ice Breaker the *Araon* be permitted to berth, re-provision, and bunker at Lyttelton, and that the five New Zealand citizens and one resident, and associated cargo disembark (in accordance with paragraph 6 above);
- 11 **agreed** that the 14 Italian and one Canadian passengers on the *Araon* be permitted to disembark (in accordance with paragraph 6 above);

Search and rescue

- 12 **noted** that New Zealand agencies will continue to meet search and rescue obligations for the Ross Sea Sector, including permitting aircraft undertaking any medical evacuations that may be required.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Distribution:
The Cabinet
Hon James Shaw

Copied to officials via email