



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Extending the COVID-19 New Zealanders Stranded Overseas Support Programme

Portfolio Social Development

On 21 September 2020, Cabinet:

- 1 **noted** that on 3 April 2020, the COVID-19 Ministerial Group agreed to resume or continue payment of certain benefits and pensions to Ministry of Social Development (MSD) clients stranded abroad as a result of COVID-19;
- 2 **noted** that:
 - 2.1 on 20 April 2020, the Minister for Social Development established the COVID-19 New Zealanders Stranded Overseas Support Programme (the Programme) to enable payment of benefits and pensions to those stranded overseas;
 - 2.2 the Programme is due to expire on 20 October 2020;
- 3 **noted** that there are still MSD clients stranded overseas who are reliant on the support provided by the Programme, and that travel options to return to New Zealand prior to 20 October 2020 are limited;
- 4 **noted** that the Minister for Social Development intends to extend the Programme, for up to six months;
- 5 **agreed** to extend the Programme for six months to 27 April 2021;
- 6 **noted** that, to implement the extension agreed to in paragraph 5 above, the Minister for Social Development will establish an amended welfare programme with immediate effect prior to the expiry of the current programme on 20 October 2020, to allow the payments that are currently being made under the existing programme to continue to eligible clients;

- 7 **approved** the following change to appropriations to fund a six-month extension of payments being made under the amended welfare programme, with a nil impact on the operating balance and net core Crown debt:

Vote Social Development	\$m - increase/(decrease)				
	2020/21	2021/2 2	2022/2 3	2023/2 4	2024/25 & outyears
Minister for Social Development					
Benefits or Related Expenses:					
NZ Beneficiaries Stranded Overseas	34.864	-	-	-	-
Disability Assistance	(0.035)	-	-	-	-
New Zealand Superannuation	(34.388)	-	-	-	-
Orphan's/Unsupported Child's Benefit	(0.049)	-	-	-	-
Hardship Assistance	(0.029)	-	-	-	-
Minister for Veterans:					
Veterans' Pension	(0.159)	-	-	-	-
Minister of Housing:					
Accommodation Assistance	(0.204)	-	-	-	-
Total Operating	-	-	-	-	-

- 8 **agreed** that the changes to appropriations for 2020/21 in paragraph 7 above be included in the 2020/21 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increase be met from Imprest Supply;
- 9 **authorised** the Minister of Finance, Minister of Housing, Minister for Social Development, and Minister for Veterans to jointly approve any fiscally neutral transfers required for any future extension(s) to the Programme;
- 10 **noted** that MSD officials will report back to the Minister for Social Development by 27 February 2021 with advice on whether any further extension or amendment to the Programme is recommended beyond the new expiry date.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet