



Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

Minute of Decision

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Extending Support for Temporary Visa Holders in New Zealand

Portfolio **Social Development and Employment**

On 17 February 2021, the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee, having been authorised by Cabinet to have Power to Act [CAB-21-MIN-0021]:

- 1 **noted** that due to the impacts of COVID-19, some temporary visa holders became stranded and are in hardship in New Zealand;
- 2 **noted** that:
 - 2.1 in June 2020, Cabinet agreed that the Department of Internal Affairs establish a temporary Assistance for Foreign Nationals Impacted by COVID-19 Programme (the Programme) [CAB-20-MIN-0283];
 - 2.2 in September 2020, Cabinet agreed to extend the Programme until 30 November 2020 [CAB-20-MIN-0436];
 - 2.3 the Programme has supported 12,794 temporary visa holders with in-kind assistance from 1 July 2020 to 30 November 2020;
- 3 **noted** that in November 2020, Cabinet agreed to continue to provide financial support to temporary visa holders in hardship through the provision of Emergency Benefits under section 64 of the Social Security Act 2018 (the Act) from 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021 [CAB-20-MIN-0476];
- 4 **noted** that between 1 December 2020 and 24 January 2021, the Ministry of Social Development supported 249 temporary visa holders through the provision of Emergency Benefits at a total cost of approximately \$0.41 million (\$0.37 million in Emergency Benefit-related expenditure and \$0.04 million for applicable tax credits);
- 5 **noted** that COVID-19 is still causing some limitations in returning to certain countries and that as at 6 January 2021, 257,000 temporary visa holders remain in New Zealand;
- 6 **noted** that analysis of current Emergency Benefit recipients shows that if support were to end on 28 February 2021, there will still be a group of temporary visa holders who are in hardship and who cannot return home, or are waiting for flights to return home;
- 7 **agreed** that the Ministry of Social Development continue to provide Emergency Benefits to support temporary visa holders who are in hardship in New Zealand for a further six months, from 1 March 2021 to 31 August 2021, under section 64 of the Act;

- 8 **noted** that eligibility for the Emergency Benefit under section 64 of the Act also extends eligibility to the Family Tax Credit, Best Start Tax Credit and Winter Energy Payment as applicable;
- 9 **noted** that the Emergency Benefit is paid at the rate of the analogous main benefit and is subject to all usual benefit rules and settings including income and cash asset tests and abatement regimes under the Social Security Act 2018;
- 10 **noted** that the Minister for Social Development and Employment will reissue written approval to the Ministry of Social Development under section 64 of the Act to allow the continued provision of Emergency Benefits to temporary visa holders in hardship in New Zealand;
- 11 **noted** that in September and November 2020, Cabinet agreed that funding in Immigration New Zealand’s Integrity and Security of the New Zealand Immigration System appropriation be used to assist with the costs of repatriation for those assessed as eligible for the Emergency Benefit [CAB-20-MIN-0436, CAB-20-MIN-0476];
- 12 **agreed** that the remaining funding from Immigration New Zealand’s Integrity and Security of the New Zealand Immigration System appropriation continue to be used to assist with the costs of repatriation for those assessed as eligible for the Emergency Benefit;

s9(2)(f)(iv)

- 14 **noted** that the overall estimated cost of the six-month extension to Emergency Benefit for temporary visa holders is approximately \$2.557 million, of which:
- 14.1 expenditure of \$1.573 million in 2020/21 financial year can be funded by the underspend from the initial provision of Emergency Benefit;
- 14.2 expenditure of approximately \$0.984 million in the 2021/22 financial year (July– August 2021) will require additional funding;
- 15 **agreed** to increase spending to provide for the costs associated with the policy decision in paragraph 7 above, with the following impact on the operating balance and net core Crown debt:

Vote Social Development	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 & Outyears
Operating Balance and Net Core Crown Debt Impact	-	0.841	-	-	-
Net Core Crown Debt Only Impact	-	-	-	-	-
No impact (tax revenue on benefit)	-	0.106	-	-	-
Sub Total	-	0.947	-	-	-
Vote Revenue					
Operating Balance and Net Core Crown Debt Impact	-	0.036	-	-	-
Net Core Crown Debt Only Impact	-	-	-	-	-
No impact	-	-	-	-	-
Sub Total	-	0.036	-	-	-
Total	-	0.984	-	-	-

- 16 **approved** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the policy decision in paragraph 7 above:

Vote Social Development Minister for Social Development and Employment	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 & Outyears
Benefits or Related Expenses:					
Jobseeker Support and Emergency Benefit	-	0.885	-	-	-
Winter Energy Payment	-	0.062	-	-	-
Vote Revenue Minister of Revenue Benefits or Related Expenses:					
Best Start Tax Credit PLA	-	0.006			
Family Tax Credit PLA	-	0.030			
Total Operating	-	0.984	-	-	-

- 17 **agreed** that the operating balance and net core Crown debt impact in paragraph 15 above of expenses incurred under paragraph 16 above be charged against the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund established as part of Budget 2020;
- 18 **authorised** the Minister for Social Development and Employment to make minor and technical policy, design and implementation decisions regarding the Emergency Benefit for temporary visa holders.

Rachel Clarke
Committee Secretary

Present:

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern
Hon Grant Robertson
Hon Kelvin Davis
Hon Dr Megan Woods
Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Hon Andrew Little
Hon Nanaia Mahuta
Hon Poto Williams
Hon Kris Faafoi
Hon Willie Jackson
Hon Jan Tinetti
Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall
Hon Aupito William Sio
Hon Meka Whaitiri
Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan
Hon Marama Davidson

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Officials Committee for SWC