



COVERSHEET

Minister	Hon Michael Wood	Portfolio	Immigration
Title of Cabinet paper	Resettling Afghan evacuees – settlement support, COVID-19 and considering options to extend our response	Date to be published	26 August 2022

List of documents that have been proactively released		
Date	Title	Author
October 2021	Resettling Afghan evacuees – settlement support, COVID-19 and considering options to extend our response	Office of the Minister of Immigration
8 November 2021	Resettling Afghan evacuees – settlement support, COVID-19 and considering options to extend our response CAB-21-MIN-0454.01 Minute	Cabinet Office

Information redacted

YES

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Some information has been withheld for the reasons of international relations, privacy of natural persons and confidential advice to government.



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.

Resettling Afghan Evacuees: Settlement Support, COVID-19, and Options to Extend New Zealand's Response

Portfolios Foreign Affairs / Immigration

On 8 November 2021, following reference from the Cabinet Business Committee, Cabinet:

The situation in Afghanistan and New Zealand's response

- 1 **noted** that the situation in Afghanistan is dangerous and uncertain;
- 2 **noted** that New Zealand's response is comprehensive, extensive and resource intensive;
- 3 **noted** that 449 Afghanistan evacuees have made it to New Zealand, and approximately 1,129 more could arrive;
- 4 **noted** that the context for repatriation operations is extremely challenging, and flows of potential evacuees to New Zealand remain uncertain as a result of complex security, political, logistical, weather, and documentation-related issues;
- 5 **noted** that comprehensive wrap-around services need to be available to Afghan evacuees once they arrive in New Zealand;

COVID-19 travel requirements

- 6 **noted** that officials will undertake a public health assessment to inform consideration by the Director-General of Health of a potential class exemption to the COVID-19 'very high risk country' policy for eligible Afghan nationals;
- 7 **noted** that on 4 October 2021, Cabinet agreed that people seeking to travel to New Zealand as part of the Refugee Quota Programme will be exempted from the requirement to be fully vaccinated before travelling [CAB-21-MIN-0403];
- 8 **agreed** that, as well as the Refugee Quota Programme, the exemption for refugees from the requirement to be fully vaccinated before travelling to New Zealand is intended to apply to any eligible Afghan nationals and family members seeking to travel to New Zealand as part of the current government response to the situation in Afghanistan;

MIQ capacity

- 9 **noted** that the Minister for COVID-19 Response has agreed to grant MIQ spaces to evacuees from the Emergency Allocation;
- 10 **noted** that, due to MIQ pressures resulting from the community outbreak of COVID-19, there is a significant risk of no MIQ rooms being available for Afghan evacuees in the coming weeks;
- 11 **noted** that system-wide changes to MIQ currently under development will ease MIQ pressures in the coming weeks (if ultimately approved by Cabinet), but that a sudden increase in numbers of travellers arising would still pose a challenge to MIQ's ability to accommodate evacuees at short notice;

MIQ fees

- 12 **agreed** to amend the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Managed Isolation and Quarantine Charges) Regulations 2020 to include a Ministerial class waiver power for groups of people included in the Afghanistan resettlement response;
- 13 **invited** the Minister for COVID-19 Response to issue drafting instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel Office to give effect to the above paragraph;
- 14 **authorised** the Minister for COVID-19 Response to make decisions consistent with Cabinet's decisions on any technical issues that may arise during the drafting process;

Funding for resettlement support

- 15 **noted** that since Ministers with Power to Act agreed on 16 September 2021 to reprioritise an estimated \$6.14 million from baseline international development cooperation and consular funding from within Vote Foreign Affairs for travel costs for evacuees from Afghanistan, eligible Afghan nationals granted visas have increased by several hundred people;
- 16 **noted** that the temporary accommodation provided by Immigration New Zealand for the Afghan evacuees who have already arrived needs to be extended while permanent housing is secured;
- 17 **noted** that the approximately 1,129 Afghan evacuees who may arrive in New Zealand in addition to the current cohort will create new costs for agencies, with the total cost depending on how many Afghan evacuees ultimately arrive in New Zealand;
- 18 **agreed** to make Afghan evacuees eligible for Re-establishment Grants, including upon being granted permanent residence under the Afghan Emergency Resettlement Resident Visa Category;
- 19 **invited** the Minister for Social Development to amend the Special Needs Grant Programme as set out in the above paragraph;
- 20 **agreed** to provide additional funding for:
- 20.1 Immigration New Zealand to fund temporary accommodation, settlement-related support, and visa processing costs for Afghan evacuees;
- 20.2 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to cover potential travel-related costs of travelling to New Zealand for further eligible Afghan evacuees;

- 20.3 Oranga Tamariki to provide social work services, meet the cost of children coming into care, and cover social service support for 12-14 Afghan evacuee families for a year;
- 20.4 the Ministry of Social Development to provide a one-off Re-establishment Grant to help Afghan arrivals to resettle in New Zealand;
- 20.5 the Ministry of Education to support increased demand on English for Speakers of Other Languages provision within the tertiary sector and learning support within schooling for Afghan evacuees;

21 **agreed** to expenditure of up to \$38.513 million to give effect to paragraph 20 above, with \$16.729 million of the funding being appropriated as set out in paragraph 22 and decision-making on the remaining up to \$21.784 million of funding being delegated to joint Ministers as set out in paragraph 26 below;

22 **approved** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the policy decisions in paragraph 20 above, with a corresponding impact on the operating balance and net core Crown debt:

	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26 & out years
Vote Labour Market Minister of Immigration					
Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure: Immigration Services MCA					
Departmental Output Expenses: Settlement and Integration of Refugees and Other Migrants (funded by revenue Crown)	9.387	-	-	-	-
Assessment and Processing Services (funded by revenue Crown)	0.613	-	-	-	-
Sub-total: Vote Labour Market	10.000	-	-	-	-
Vote Oranga Tamariki Minister for Children					
Investing in Children and Young people MCA: Departmental Output Expenses: Prevention and Early Support (funded by revenue Crown)	0.105	-	-	-	-
Statutory Intervention and Transition (funded by revenue Crown)	0.402	-	-	-	-
Sub-total: Vote Oranga	0.507	-	-	-	-

Tamariki					
	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26 & out years
Vote Social Development Minister for Social Development and Employment					
Benefits or Related Expenses Hardship Assistance	3.213	1.606	-	-	-
Sub-total: Vote Social Development	3.213	1.606	-	-	-
Vote Tertiary Education Minister of Education					
Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure: Tertiary Tuition and Training (MCA)					
Non-Departmental Output Expense: Community Education	0.638	0.544	-	-	-
Sub-total: Vote Tertiary Education	0.638	0.544	-	-	-
Vote Education Minister of Education					
Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure: Outcomes for Target Student Groups (MCA)					
Departmental Output Expenses: Interventions for Target Student Groups (funded by revenue Crown)	0.221	-	-	-	-
Sub-total: Vote Education	0.221	-	-	-	-
Total operating	14.579	2.150	-	-	-
Total capital	-	-	-	-	-

- 23 **agreed** that the expenses incurred under paragraph 22 above be charged against the between-Budget contingency established as part of Budget 2021;
- 24 **agreed** that the changes to appropriations above be included in the 2021/22 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increases be met from Imprest Supply;
- 25 **noted** that the funding in paragraph 22 above is time limited, and that any further funding would need to be considered as part of future Budgets, should costs not be able to be managed within baselines;


- 26 **authorised** the relevant appropriation Minister(s) and Minister of Finance jointly to agree to any additional funding up to the \$21.784 million approved under paragraph 21 above and to approve necessary changes to appropriations, their inclusion in the 2021/22 or 2022/23 Supplementary Estimates (as relevant), and increases being met from Imprest Supply in the interim, with the \$21.784 million broken down as follows:
- 26.1 Immigration/Finance: up to \$19.584 million to give effect to paragraph 20.1 above;
- 26.2 Foreign Affairs/Finance: up to \$2.200 million to give effect to paragraph 20.2 above;
- 27 **agreed** that funding approved by joint Ministers above be charged against the between-Budget contingency (if there is still funding available) or, if there is not, as a pre-commitment against Budget 2022 or Budget 2023 (as relevant);

Access to tertiary student financial support

- 28 **agreed** to remove the requirement to have held a residence class visa and have lived in New Zealand for at least three years, and the requirement to be ordinarily resident in New Zealand, for student loans, student allowances and Fees Free Tertiary Education and Training for study starting on or after 1 January 2022 for those with an Afghan Emergency Resettlement Residency Visa;
- 29 **invited** the Minister for Social Development to issue drafting instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel Office for the necessary changes to the Student Allowances Regulations 1998, as set out above;
- 30 **noted** that the financial implications incurred under paragraph 28 above are expected to be minimal and well within the normal variability of Student Loan Scheme and Student Allowances forecasts, and within Fees Free payment baselines, and will be met within existing Vote Social Development, Vote Revenue and Vote Tertiary Education baselines;

Further resettlement offers to Afghan nationals

- 31 **noted** that New Zealand cannot bring more Afghan refugees into the country through the Refugee Quota Programme in the current year;
- 32 **agreed** that the allocation of places for Afghan nationals under the Refugee Quota Programme cycle start from 2023/24;
- 33 **noted** that the refugee quota includes 200 places (+/- 10%) for large-scale crisis situations and at least 150 places for women at risk, and that these places may be allocated to Afghan refugees and other existing crises, as well as other situations that emerge throughout the Refugee Quota Programme cycle;
- 34 **noted** that it is not possible within the Refugee Quota Programme to target specific individuals or groups of individuals (e.g. women judges, human rights defenders or LGBTQI groups) beyond the existing broad United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) categories of women at risk, children at risk, individuals with medical needs or disabilities, survivors of violence or torture, and individuals with heightened legal and physical protection needs;
- 35 **agreed** to defer decisions on other categories and sub-categories within the quota until March 2022, to allow officials time to properly consider the advice of the UNHCR regarding priorities for the next three years;

- 36 **agreed** that New Zealand has already made a substantial and internationally credible commitment to resettling Afghan nationals;
- 37 Confidential advice to Government

- 38 **invited** the Associate Minister of Immigration to report back to the relevant Cabinet committee on the process to support the priority allocation of up to 100 additional Afghan nationals over and above the Refugee Quota Programme timeframe;
- 39 **authorised** the Minister of Immigration and Minister of Foreign Affairs to take decisions on the mechanisms and planning (subject to any further funding requirements).

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Secretary's Note: This minute replaces CBC-21-MIN-0122. Cabinet amended paragraph 38.