

**POST-CABINET PRESS CONFERENCE: MONDAY, 15 MARCH 2021
HANSARD TRANSCRIPT**

PM: Kia ora koutou katoa, good afternoon, and al salam alaikum. I'm pleased to announce that Cook Islands Prime Minister Mark Brown will visit New Zealand next week from 25 March to 3 April. He'll be the first international leader to visit New Zealand since the COVID-19 border closure. While we have personally met before in the Cook Islands, I look forward to welcoming Prime Minister Brown on his first visit to New Zealand as Prime Minister.

Two years ago today, 51 New Zealanders' lives were taken in the March 15 mosque attack. Our thoughts continue to be with the victims, injured survivors, families, and all those affected by the events of that day. I know we're all committed to ensuring such an attack never happens on our soil again. And, for our part, that's why we've put in place an extensive programme of work to implement the recommendations of the royal commission of inquiry into the attack, for which Minister Little is playing the role as lead coordinating Minister and is available for questions should you have them.

But first, we listened. Since the release of the royal commission we've held 33 hui nationwide with members of our Muslim community, pan-ethnic and multi-faith communities. We learnt much from those hui, and I want to thank everyone who took the time and travelled across regions to participate and share their thoughts in a frank and open manner. We heard that there are some responses to the commission that are immediate and that we need to just get on with, and some where we need to continue to design solutions with the community themselves.

In the short term, we're establishing a \$1 million community engagement response fund to help more people engage with the work that we'll be doing on the royal commission. Most community representative groups involved in the royal commission engagement are non-profit and have unpaid voluntary staff. This fund will support them to stay involved as we work to implement the commission's findings, and it was one of the things that communities asked for us to implement.

We're also setting up an advisory group to ensure the timely and effective and accountable implementation of the Government's response—also something that was asked for.

We're establishing a collective impact board, which will enable affected whānau of March 15 to guide and advise on the services required to support their long-term recovery needs. This, of course, sits alongside individual case management, which we've also worked to improve, recently bringing together MSD, ACC, and Immigration staff under one roof with access to dedicated work brokers for those families directly impacted by March 15—again, something the community has asked for. And we've set up an ethnic communities graduate programme, aimed at increasing diversity in the public sector. Applications for the first 2021 cohort are open now. We've also extended a safer communities fund with \$3.2 million available to provide more communities with funding to upgrade and implement security measures, intended to reduce vulnerabilities and give a greater sense of security and safety.

Our longer-term work programme covers issues of hate speech and our national security architecture, and, obviously, several other significant actions have followed since March 15. Shortly after the attack, the Government banned all types of semi-automatic weapons and assault rifles in New Zealand. There's also been significant progress on the Christchurch Call, which aims to ensure that we prevent online platforms being used in the way they were on March 15. Fifty countries and international organisations now support the Call, and for the first time, Governments and major tech companies are working together. We've established crisis protocols, and the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism is now a standalone entity. Last week I spoke to President Macron of France. He too is pleased with the progress to date, but we both believe there is more to do, and the Call gives us the platform to do that work, including domestically.

Here in New Zealand, legislation which would make live streaming objectionable material a crime punishable by up to 14 years in prison or a fine of up to \$200,000 passed its first reading

in Parliament last month. It will now go through a select committee process. I'm committed to ensuring that New Zealand continues to play a strong role in countering violent extremism, and, of course, we all remain absolutely committed to honouring the 51 lives lost on March 15. Shukran lakum. Happy to take your questions. Feel free to step up to the podium, Minister Little.

Media: Just on another matter, are you aware of a 15-year-old being deported from Australia?

PM: Yeah, look, I've only—as a result of some of the inquiries from members of the media, I've only just become aware of the fact that, I'm told or advised, within a group of 501s that we have returned recently, there was what we would consider to be a minor in that group. I have asked for a briefing on that. I don't have full details, but, of course, you know, we would have an expectation that regardless of the background, we do treat minors in a particular way when we're dealing with deportation.

Media: Is it even legal to deport minors in this way, and what support is being offered to the teenager?

PM: As you'd expect, officials that have responsibility for dealing with cases that involve minors, as I understand, are involved. But I do want to go back and look at the circumstances under which this deportation happened, because we do want to make sure that particularly when we're dealing with young people, that's been dealt with appropriately, regardless of the circumstances of their deportation.

Media: Now that we know that there is a teenager who was on that flight, does that make Peter Dutton's comments even more reprehensible?

PM: Well, look, obviously I didn't agree with what he did at the time. We've never agreed with the policy, in fact. And so I maintain that position. Again, you know, regardless of the circumstances, when you're dealing with minors, is it appropriate to have them in these circumstances and deported in that way? But, look, we will be going back and looking at the details involved here.

Media: Will you also be talking to Prime Minister Morrison about it?

PM: Look, I haven't got a specific—we actually don't tend to schedule calls. He knows my position on the deportation policy. So, actually, regardless of whether or not we're dealing with a minor or whether or not we're dealing with someone who's older, I have a specific objection to the fact that we have people being deported from Australia who we consider to be Australians. Now, I don't have the specific details of this particular individual, but it is a minor, and I would expect particular care to have been taken in the way that a minor is dealt with.

Media: Would you not have expected to have known about this, given the nature of this policy and the—

PM: Look, I would expect our officials to know, yes. Not necessarily—I don't get a breakdown every time there is a flight of 501s. I don't personally get a breakdown of the profile of those people being deported, but I would expect—and we have worked very hard to say to our Australian counterparts, even though we object to this policy, the least we can do is make sure we've got a protocol where we know where they're coming, we know what offences apply, and we know the profile of those being deported.

Media: Did our officials know in this case?

PM: That's why—I don't want to go too far. I've only just been briefed on this. I know certainly that at this point, right now, those who need to know do, but how much advance notice I would need to check.

Media: Are you aware of any minors being deported previously?

PM: This has been an issue raised before. I would need to go back and look at the ages, but this has been an issue raised before, and we've also raised our objections before as well.

Media: What do mean, "those who need to know knew about it"?

PM: As in the specific agencies that would be dealing with young people on the New Zealand side.

Media: Did you rush the Ihumātao deal?

PM: No. In fact, I think that "rushed" is the last way that anyone in this gallery has described that decision. It obviously took quite some time and quite a lot of thought, because we wanted to make sure that we didn't create a precedent and we wanted an enduring solution.

Media: And so you didn't rush it in the final throes?

PM: No, not at all. Again, it was something that we spent a significant amount of time developing.

Media: Are you comfortable with how the deal was done?

PM: Yes. Yes, I am. Different departments will take different views, but we are very comfortable with the position we took.

Media: Prime Minister, Australia's looking at a bubble with Singapore now. How would that affect our talks?

PM: I think this is one of the reasons why original talks with our counterparts in Australia were at a country-by-country level, and so that's the initial formulation. That's because we wanted to deal with issues like how would we deal with transit passengers? Where would they quarantine if they needed to before then travelling between Australia and New Zealand? Who would be eligible in terms of residency status? What would be the process we'd go through if either country wanted to bring in a third country? So that was why we had been trying to negotiate an Australia - New Zealand arrangement, not a state-by-state arrangement. Obviously, things have shifted. So we're now having to reconfigure our entire formulation, and that's why—that's the position we're in now and that's the work that we're doing now.

Media: So does it make it look more unlikely for us?

PM: Look, not necessarily, because first of all I'd say that this is—Singapore have been floating the idea of opening up to New Zealand and Australia for some time. What I'd be interested in is how this has been received by different states, because, obviously, Queensland, if I'm correct, still doesn't have an opening with New Zealand right now, so that gives you a sense of their risk appetite. So it is not changing the work that we are doing. If Australia makes the decision to open up, and we think that that poses risk to us, then we'll reconsider what our arrangements look like.

Media: On cannabis, Kris Faafoi has said Labour would treat it as a conscience issue. For you personally, would decriminalising cannabis be seen as a rejection of the referendum, or are they separate issues?

PM: Oh, look, we've seen them as—you know, I do see them as separate issues. You know, decriminalisation, you know, just a rung below, in that regard. But, for us, any time a member's bill comes up, we will take it to caucus; caucus will determine whether or not they see it, therefore, sitting as a conscience vote, and therefore whether individual members will vote according to their conscience.

Media: On that, have you sorted out a process yet for how to deal with bills that have not yet been pulled from the ballot—

PM: We wait until—

Media: —and have an MP seeking support to get—

PM: No, no, so we always wait for a bill to be pulled, because otherwise you're debating in caucus a hypothetical of 120 bills that could just sit there for a very long time.

Media: So does that mean that no Labour non-executive MPs are allowed to publicly back other parties' members' bills? Because there was a new process that allows bills to skip the ballot if 61 non-executive—

PM: Then in that case, I would imagine we would bring that—we just bring that forward, that process, to caucus, and have that discussion. Yep. I don't see it as insurmountable at all.

Media: On the bubble, you've previously said that one of the biggest issues that is preventing the Australia - New Zealand bubble from happening is what to do with Australian passengers, you know, if there was an outbreak—

PM: One of the complications.

Media: Yeah. Do you consider that's the primary issue at this stage, or—what are the other issues, because I'm just keen to get a sense of what is holding it back?

PM: Yeah. Well, as I've just described, we were working previously on a completely different negotiation, an arrangement that was between New Zealand and Australia, one where we were seeking consensus on—because there are, actually, a number of complicating factors. I mean, who's eligible to travel, you know—because New Zealand and Australia have different rules around who are able to come into their country, so are they still able to participate in the trans-Tasman quarantine-free arrangements? What would you do if another country wants to open up and you want to set up a third bubble or a fourth bubble? Those were all things we were working through in those protocols. Since then, obviously, we've had states open up. So, look, we're starting again with those plans, and that's fine, but it does mean we need to set up different protocols to work around that and make that work.

One of the things to keep in consideration is, you know, it's—perhaps, at the moment, you don't hear a lot of people raising issues about being stranded. But I can guarantee if we had a two-way quarantine-free arrangement, you would certainly hear—if we had issues in Australia that caused us to take a pause and shut down flights, you would certainly hear concerns around people being stranded. So we need to be prepared for how we would manage that, particularly if people needed to get home.

Media: Regarding the mosque attack, what support is still available for the women who lost husbands during the mosque attack, and have there been any additional programmes or funding going towards those women?

PM: Minister Little has had the most recent engagement, so very aware of some of the individual issues being raised. So I'll ask him to speak to that.

Hon Andrew Little: Yeah, there is ongoing support in the mental health area. Additional funding was provided to the Canterbury District Health Board to provide ongoing trauma support, and support was also available through the Ministry of Social Development. One of the reasons we've set up the collective impact board—that came out of the consultations we held at the end of last year after the release of the report, when a lot of the families were saying that support that had been provided to them in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attack was no longer there. We wanted it to be there, and we thought it was important that we bring together not only the senior officials from the relevant departments that have been providing that support but, actually, members of the community who sit alongside those officials, so there's a level of accountability and those officials can hear directly from the community what ongoing support is needed.

Media: Yeah, and other than that mental health support, has there been any sort of social support helping get people into work, or teaching people what kind of jobs they can go into, because I know some women have never worked in their lives—

PM: It's actually been, you know—in fact, with the individual case management, we've had quite a range of different programmes available and responses available, depending on need. So we've had everything from driver training programmes to make sure people have the independence to be able to transport themselves, because, they, you know, may have lost that within their household; there's been issues around financial literacy and support as well, opening bank accounts—a whole range of things that we've tried to make available if that's been needed. And, equally, as I just mentioned, a request for specific work broker support, and so that's something we're bringing into the individual case management as well. Anything further that you want to—

Hon Andrew Little: I think that that's it. And, look, we know there will be ongoing needs, and the role of the collective impact board is to make sure that those needs are heard, those requests are heard, and that everything that can be done is being done to provide that support.

Media: Do you feel that you're moving fast enough on the recommendations of the inquiry, and, I guess, how would you sum up the progress made so far?

PM: Yeah, so I'll give a general view, and then I'll, again, hand over to Minister Little. You know, when you read the royal commission, you get a real sense of the emphasis on things like our national security architecture and some of the redesign there. When you go and talk to the community, they still talk about things like, you know, what's affecting them in their day-to-day lives: whether or not their children are going to school and experiencing discrimination, whether or not they have work opportunities. So I think there is a real job for us to do to make sure we're prioritising the things that are affecting people's daily lives while not losing sight of the things the royal commission called on us to do around, for instance, national security and our legislative framework. So we've prioritised the things that we think will have an immediate effect, but still working through those issues that are bigger and more structural but we need to take a bit of time on.

Hon Andrew Little: And on the issue—look, we got the report at the end of November. We've taken the opportunity over January-February to consult widely, not just with the Muslim community in Canterbury but the Muslim community around the country and other faith and minority ethnic communities. What is very important is establishing the oversight advisory group, because that is a real point of accountability, and it's an opportunity for all those communities to have influence and to have a say, but, most importantly, to see the Government following through on those recommendations to feed in from their communities and to feed back from the Government. So that's the work that's going in place at the moment. Some recommendations we can implement in a reasonably short time frame; others will take a lot longer. But that body will be there to provide the oversight and support.

Media: Is it ethical for your MPs in the Hutt South to have been running this sublease arrangement where they're charging taxpayers four times more for their rent than they're actually paying in rent, and keeping that money for the Labour Party?

PM: Well, obviously, the right person to make those judgments is not me. We need someone other than me making those calls, and that would, of course, be parliamentary services. They're the ones that approve whether or not they consider those lease arrangements to be appropriate.

Media: But parliamentary services told us last week that they have no ability to look at anything other than their arrangement with the MP. They said, "Hey, look, it's below market rates; we're happy with that." They can't look into what's going on in the background, and, I mean, you are the boss of these MPs.

PM: Yeah, well, essentially, what parliamentary services are rightly mindful of is "Does this represent value for money for the taxpayer? Are they getting something below market rent?" They've made a declaration here that they are, and therefore are happy with the arrangement, and they're the ones that really need to keep that oversight on whether those arrangements are suitable.

Media: But aren't your MPs ripping off taxpayers here? They're taking thousands of dollars every year and giving it straight to the Labour Party.

PM: Ultimately, this is a lease arrangement that, according to those who oversee all of our lease arrangements, has declared that it's below market value in terms of the rent, and therefore, from their perspective, doesn't present a problem.

Media: The births, deaths, and marriage bill is back in the headlines after Jan Tinetti said it was going to be a priority for her to pass it this year. Would you be able to walk us through what the process is from here and what Cabinet needs to do to get it across the line?

PM: Yeah, so probably—and, look, I might have to give you the process from here in written form, because I haven't refreshed where exactly we are, but what I can give you is what the problem was for us before. Last time, of course, we were part-way through a process when, while it was at select committee, after it had received public submissions, the issue was raised around whether or not we were dealing with gender identity appropriately. The select committee, understandably, wanted to respond to that, and put a proposal on the table to deal with it. The issue we had was, from my recollection, a Crown Law opinion that suggested that that may be challenged or open to challenge because it hadn't gone through a full process. So what we need to do is, essentially, deal with the issue, but in such a way that we have the proper consultation so that the changes will stick.

Media: So that was two years ago. So have Crown Law formed an opinion about how it can be legally airtight now?

PM: Yep, and, look, we had a different Government then. Now we have a fresh mandate, and working through some issues that otherwise we weren't able to resolve last time.

Media: So are you blaming New Zealand First for the hold-up?

PM: No, no, not at all—not at all. But there were some complexities there that were taking a bit of time. You know, we've given a commitment that we believe we can resolve them.

Media: One of the advantages which has been brought up with the idea of this bubble is that nearly 40 to 50 percent of the people in MIQ are coming from Australia. So if you've got a bubble, you open up a lot of spaces. Those people coming from Australia generally don't have COVID. It's hard to find when's the last person tested positive coming from Australia. Has this been part of your calculation?

PM: We've had about nine, I think, so not a lot at all.

Media: Yeah. Has this been part of your calculation, that if a bubble were to open you would almost double the amount of risk coming into the country and—

PM: Oh, look, it is not a reason, you know, for us to not proceed with a trans-Tasman arrangement. So I should be clear on that. This idea that we need to keep low-risk people in MIQ in order to lessen our overall risk profile is not a reason to not enter into an arrangement. However, we are mindful of the fact that that may be one of the effects of opening up that space. There's been some consideration around how we can continue to minimise the overall risk profile that we have.

Media: A few months ago you guys brought in pre-flight testing, and since then the number of people testing positive at the border has only increased—we're up to 93 active cases now, up from about an average of 40 to 60 last year. Has that system been working the way that it was meant to be working? Are you happy that all of those pre-flight tests are valid?

PM: Well, for the most part, yes. But I don't think that we can make an assumption that all pre-flight testing is the same. So as it's been described to me, the way that we run our PCR tests in New Zealand is that we will run a sample multiple times through our process, up to as many as 40 times, in order to see whether or not we have any viral load in there. So that means that we can pick up the early stages or the late stages or even the historic stages

of an infection. I don't think all countries are necessarily as rigorous as us. What has been really critical is that day zero testing and the rules around keeping people in their rooms until those are returned, because we do get a large number of day zero tests.

Media: Which countries are the ones that you do have an issue with?

PM: Oh look, you know, ultimately I think the point that I'd make is I can't necessarily make a blanket statement that says this country is or isn't performing testing appropriately, because people are providing their tests before they fly, and you do get in-flight infection. And so it's not a case that we can say this country is or isn't, but—yeah. We require the same of everyone.

Media: Just going back on to Benedict's questions earlier, how much money has Labour obtained through this Hutt South sublease deal?

PM: Oh, look, if you wanted to make sure that I was able to provide you specific detail, then you are by all means free to put those questions to us and we can provide that to you. As you can imagine, I haven't brought down with me today for our general press conference the specific details of the lease arrangements for one of our MPs.

Media: Minister Little, what's stopping changes being made to ACC to provide support for witnesses of the mosque attacks? Because they're currently excluded.

Hon Andrew Little: ACC doesn't currently cover that, that form of need, and to make that change is a significant piece of work. It's a significant policy change for our ACC regime. So it's not something that would be done quickly and it would require considerable consideration before we would take that step.

PM: Keeping in mind, though, you know, I do remember well the conversation—we had a significant debate at Cabinet over this issue, and one of the things that we were conscious of is we didn't want to leave this group, who would so clearly be traumatised by what they experienced, without any form of support. So, firstly, making sure they could access, through Health, mental health support—specific funding was provided to the Canterbury DHB for the extra needs that might exist. And secondly, making sure that people were not discriminated based on their visa status for accessing support through our welfare system. So we made that change in the hope that we might be able to pick up anyone who did have loss of earnings because of the trauma they experienced.

Media: The films, videos and publications classification amendment bill—do you have any concerns about the safeguards and oversight for the internet filtering portion in particular in that bill? Do you think there's enough there to make sure that there isn't a misuse of those powers?

PM: Yeah, I think so, because, of course, we've used these systems specifically before on child pornography, so there's a framework there. But again, you know, going through a proper process will allow us to get input as to whether or not people feel like those appropriate safeguards are in place.

Media: Why did New Zealand elect to produce a joint statement with Australia on Hong Kong?

PM: Yeah, well, obviously we're not members of the G7, but shared similar concerns, and it was timely. The changes that will be material around their processes in Hong Kong had only recently come into place. The G7 issued a statement; we shared those concerns, and so together, rather than individual ones, we decided at a Foreign Ministers level to issue our own statement.

Media: This wasn't some sort of attempt to kind of—a sort of substitute for Five Eyes, was it? I mean, it looked like "Two Eyes".

PM: Ha, ha! Look, I think it would be wrong to make this assumption that the only way that New Zealand can collectively articulate a view is through one single platform. We often use collections of countries based on a position within the Human Rights Council, within the

UN—on occasion, Five Eyes. We are not confined to who we can or cannot take positions alongside and who we can issue joint statements with, and, often, we will do it on our own.

Media: On the climate change emergency and the Auckland Transport plan, are you comfortable that the Government's going to spend \$31 billion and still have a 6 percent increase in emissions?

PM: Well, obviously, the issue we have there is population growth, for what it's doing for our overall emissions profile. So whilst my recollection is, on a per capita basis, population growth means overall that's what the profile looks like, do we need overall to be changing up the way that our investment profile looks in the transport space so that overall we're seeing those emissions come down? Absolutely—absolutely. One of the discussions we had as a team was, "How, through this ATAP process, can we change up to make sure that we are much more responsive to the climate commission?" We've obviously just received their draft report, and our view is that we have to do better in the future. The final thing I'd say is that one of the challenges is we have a housing crisis and we have a climate crisis, and we need to make sure that we're able to tick both boxes in our ATAP response, rather than at the moment, where we seem to be trading one off against the other.

Media: On that population growth, if that's going to cause us to miss our Paris targets, why not slow population growth?

PM: Oh, the first thing I'd say is by no means is ATAP going to cause us to miss our Paris targets. You know, ultimately, we have a job to do across multiple sectors. Transport is one of them, and anything here that is causing further issue for us we have to be able to make up for in other forms in the way that we're operating. The vehicles on the roads which are being constructed for new developments, for instance—the type of vehicles—makes a difference. Biofuels makes a difference. Clean car standards makes a difference. And so what I am pointing to, though, is ATAP has come in at a particular point. The climate draft commission report—had it been a bit earlier, maybe we'd have had a bit more of a run-in, but we know that we have to change things up in the future.

Media: On the Cook Islands PM visiting next week, how significant is that to have, that first foreign head of State visit since the pandemic began, and also what will be on the agenda?

PM: It is significant. You know, regardless of whether or not it's a country we have a very close association with, obviously, it is still significant. We have not been receiving guests, something that is so core to who we are as a nation, for a long time, and so, as you can imagine, as we would for our Pacific neighbours, we'll be really making sure that PM Brown is well looked after. On the agenda, as you can imagine, the impact of a lack of tourism, full stop, for the Cook Islands has been significant, so no doubt that we'll be talking about that together; talking about vaccine roll-out, which we'll be working on together; and just what the next 12 months looks like for us.

Media: Does this signal the opening of a Cook Islands bubble?

PM: Look, I imagine that we'll have a range of issues on the table, but actually I'd say that vaccine roll-out will be right up there, as well, because, regardless of what movements we experience, that's something that can provide an extra buffer against risk.

Media: Given Australia's now looking to Singapore for a travel bubble, does that suggest that negotiations have broken down between New Zealand and Australia?

PM: No, not at all. In fact, the issue of Singapore's been on the table for a long time. It's been raised with us; it's been raised with Australia. So I don't see that as a new development. Of course, what we'll need to do is feature that into and factor that into our thinking as we work through our trans-Tasman arrangements. The last thing I would say is there's been a lot of speculation around whether or not it will happen at all. We have never stopped working on the issue of the trans-Tasman bubble. Yes, we've had cases here; we've had cases in Australia. Sometimes that's slowed things down, but the work has never stopped. We remain committed to it.

Media: Prime Minister, would you back National's call for the Auditor-General to look into that Hutt South arrangement?

PM: Oh, look, as far as I'm concerned, the people that we need to be checking on these arrangements are involved in checking on those arrangements. Yeah, I'll take a last couple, because I feel like we're getting everywhere—everyone.

Media: What do you say to people who might be thinking, why bother upskilling, investing in education, or putting in extra hours at work to earn an extra \$2,000, \$3,000, \$5,000 a year, maybe \$10,000 in salary, when they're looking at people sitting on houses that are earning a couple of thousand dollars a day in some cases? Is that kind of a Labour Government good arrangement?

PM: You know I'm not going to ever say or concede that what's happening in the housing market is OK; it is not. And all of the issues that you've raised around houses, you know, and the house price growth and value that we're seeing in houses is exactly why we've said we know we need to bring to the table things that will make a difference. The issue we have is there is no single answer here, and so what I'm not going to present are simplistic solutions that won't shift the dial. We have to do something that will be meaningful. OK, I'm going to take the last couple.

Media: Is the solution still sustained moderation?

PM: We don't want to continue to see the exorbitant house price growth that we have seen across the country in the last few months. But this is not an issue that New Zealand alone is dealing with. So we have to factor into the work that we're doing: why is it that there is, at the moment, an extra psychological imperative for people to say that housing in this COVID environment feels like the safest thing for them to invest in? So that means we've got to do multiple things to make sure that we have encouraging people to build and encouraging people to look at alternative investments that contribute to our productive economy.

Media: Can you give me an update on the tourism package that Stuart Nash was bringing to Cabinet and sort of what the hold-up is there and if—

PM: No.

Media: —towns can expect support by winter?

PM: No, I cannot. He will be speaking on Friday. I'll leave it for him to speak in general terms around the work that's been done. OK, I'm going to take the last two, here and here.

Media: Do you agree that China's now in ongoing non-compliance of the joint declaration which governs, you know, what Hong Kong is, and what can be done about that?

PM: You would have seen that the basis of our statement was concern over the fact that, you know, we're seeing now what we consider to be the agreement that out to 2047 that we would have at least, you know, a level of autonomy—that that is now being undermined. So that was the basis on which we were issuing that statement. That is our view.

Media: It's not—New Zealand's view is not that it's a direct breach of that declaration, though?

PM: Well, our view is it is absolutely being undermined—you know, that we have not seen—the moves in recent times have not been in keeping with that declaration.

Media: And what about the national security system—when will we first see a change to that?

PM: Sorry, in the national security system?

Media: Yeah.

Hon Andrew Little: That work will be later this year. At the moment, we're getting on with the work that is to support the Muslim community; also to advance the work on social cohesion, so putting those groups together. Minister Priyanca Radhakrishnan will be getting

on with her project work. And then the national security apparatus we'll look at in the latter part of this year.

Media: Has it been delayed? I mean, I thought there was an impression that it might occur sooner. How many months away is it now?

PM: It hasn't been delayed.

Hon Andrew Little: No delay, it's just the order of priority. It'll be later this year.

PM: And, in fact, from the community, I mean, their order of priority, of course, are some of the things I listed up front, but also, you know, having some voice on things like, you know, hate speech, and so on. So, very rarely do I hear the architecture around national security being on top of people's lists.

Hon Andrew Little: And, in fact, when we—the consultation round we did with the 33 hui, when we laid out all the things—actually, no one went to the national security and machinery of Government stuff first. That was lower order stuff, so that is a lower order priority.

Media: It's necessary work, though, isn't it?

PM: It is, it is. Absolutely, but it is also—machinery of Government changes will take some time. But, no, there hasn't been any delay. Ben—although, forgive me, you never had one, but Ben. I'm sorry; I did say last question.

Media: One of the legacies of the terrorist attack appears to be, at least from my perspective, Kiwis and New Zealanders are having really tough conversations about racism and white supremacy in this country. Your colleagues at Australian Labor today put out a statement, and one of the lines that really struck me—it said, "We've never had a proper and honest conversation about the extent to which the Christchurch terrorist was radicalised on our shores"—that is, Australia. Would you encourage Australia to have those similar conversations?

PM: Well, I think the world needs to have those conversations, and, you know, I mean, in the aftermath of March 15, it was incumbent on us to get our own house in order, and I don't think anyone would've thought it was fair to say that just because the terrorist in this case came from Australian shores, that meant we didn't have a responsibility to take a look at ourselves—we did, because members of our Muslim community were experiencing some pretty horrific racism before that attack here, in their own communities. But I would say that, actually, globally, you know, there are no boundaries, really, any more, when it comes to really hateful speech and language. Every leader needs to take into account that their voice can be broadcast anywhere at any time. Countries need to take that into account. So I think it's for all of us to reflect on what we've seen with those violent extremist attacks since that time.

Media: Do you think New Zealand is a safer place to be a Muslim today than it was two years ago?

PM: That has to be our goal. I'm not the person that can answer that; only the Muslim community can. I'd say right now, there's still work to be done. Thank you.

conclusion of press conference