

**POST-CABINET PRESS CONFERENCE: MONDAY, 10 JUNE 2019**

**PM:** All right. Good afternoon, everyone. This week, I head to Mystery Creek on Wednesday to speak at an agricultural leaders' breakfast, attend an iwi accord hui, and officially open the Fieldays at midday alongside Ministers O'Connor and Mahuta and Robertson. I will then join Minister O'Connor and Minister Parker later in the afternoon for a well-being Budget sustainable land package event. On Thursday, I have regional visits around the Waikato, including to the Matamata Medical Practice, which recently won Rural General Practice Team of the Year. The nominator for that prize was the caregiver of a young man with signs of depression, who said the practice heard him, took him seriously, spent 45 minutes with him, and followed up with a home visit on the weekend. And these are exactly the kinds of services we need across our rural communities, where isolation can be a barrier to services, and this is what Budget 2019's billion-dollar investment in tackling mental health and taking mental health seriously was ultimately all about.

Then I'm back to the Fieldays on Friday for a visit with several other Ministers and MPs, and it is an opportunity for me to get to see a bit more of the Fieldays than, you may recall, I had a chance to last year, because that was, of course, my last public engagement before Neve came along. So a chance for me to listen in a little more detail to some of the issues within our rural community.

Today, though, I want to speak to decisions that have been made by Cabinet. Today, I can confirm that Cabinet has made decisions on several New Zealand Defence Force deployments and peace-keeping missions that I can now share with you.

Firstly, the Government will change but, ultimately, continue its deployment in Afghanistan for 18 months until 31 December 2020. I am also announcing that we will conclude our training mission in Iraq by 30 June 2020. In 2015, New Zealand made a commitment to the Iraqi Government to train the Iraqi security forces to help rid Iraq of the global terrorist threat posed by ISIS. Within the next 12 months, New Zealand will have fulfilled that commitment and the current non-combat training mission involving 95 personnel at Taji will end. They currently take part in a joint Australia-New Zealand building partner capacity training mission at Taji Military Complex in Iraq. Significant progress has been made at Taji, with the Iraqi security forces having increased their capability to defeat and prevent the resurgence of ISIS. Those forces will now take on a greater role in the delivery of basic training, and the focus of New Zealand and Australian personnel can shift to training Iraqi trainers. As a result of this success, our deployment at Taji will reduce to a maximum of 75 from July, and then move down to a maximum of 45 from January before the mission's ultimate completion in June 2020. This wind-down allows the training mission to be completed fully, with resources being withdrawn as soon as is practical.

To date, the joint mission has trained over 44,000 members of the Iraqi security forces. This deployment has been complemented by development and humanitarian assistance. Since 2015, New Zealand has provided a total of \$7.75 million in development assistance to Iraq. While New Zealand will conclude its Iraq training mission, we will contribute to the rebuild by increasing our stabilisation funding contribution to Iraq—approximately \$3 million a year for the next three years—to help affected communities recover, a recovery that, as many of you will have heard, has been estimated will cost somewhere in the order of US\$88 billion. New Zealand's targeted funding can support the large numbers of Iraqi people who are returning home and beginning to rebuild their lives and communities.

New Zealand has also made a long-term and substantial commitment to Afghanistan's security and well-being since 2001. The instability in Afghanistan remains, and, as a result, no nation has withdrawn from the non-combat, NATO-led Resolute Support Mission.

Our contribution to development assistance funding, which goes into the UNDP-administered law and order fund for Afghanistan, is \$2 million a year. This is an annual and

ongoing contribution. This advances New Zealand's global security interests and the interests of the Afghan people in preventing their country from being used, once again, as a safe-haven for extremist groups. At this time, continued support by the international community also bolsters prospects that meaningful peace negotiations can take place.

The focus and size of the deployment, however, will change over the coming year. The number of personnel deployed in training and planning roles will reduce from 13 to six. We do, however, intend to bid for roles around women and peace and security. So that means, in the future, our presence in Afghanistan will look like this: six in the Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy, with this number to be reviewed and reduced in step with partners as the ANAOA becomes increasingly self-sufficient, and this just represents just under half our current contribution; two will be deployed to the NATO Resolute Support Mission headquarters, as we currently deploy; and then up to three personnel to support women, peace, and security reconciliation and reintegration efforts in Afghanistan—subject, of course, to bidding for and securing such roles within the NATO mission.

So just to be clear, we are reducing our deployment to the Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy but seeking instead roles in the women, peace, and security and reconciliation area. We see that as fitting New Zealand's values and, ultimately, our ambition for Afghanistan going forward.

New Zealand will also continue to participate in the multinational information-sharing and intelligence mission Operation Gallant Phoenix, based in Jordan. This contribution was publicly discussed for the first time when the case of a New Zealand hostage in Syria was raised. This operation was initiated in 2013, and New Zealand joined in 2014 to support efforts to uncover information relating to the location of a New Zealander taken hostage by ISIS. Through that initial involvement, New Zealand was made aware of the broader work of the operation and the benefits to New Zealand's national security of further collaboration, and in 2017, the previous Government agreed to expand New Zealand's involvement to include the broader work of the operation. The Government recently agreed to continue the mandate for a small number of personnel—less than 10—to the operation for 18 months, until December 2020.

Operation Gallant Phoenix enhances contributing nations' ability to understand and respond to current, evolving, and future terrorist and, more broadly, violent extremist threats, through information sharing and intelligence relating to violent extremism in Iraq and Syria and globally. This information is then passed on to relevant law enforcement agencies.

The decision to deploy defence force personnel overseas is one of the hardest for any Government to take, especially when these deployments are to challenging and dangerous environments. The Government has weighed a number of factors, including carefully considering the risks to our servicemen and women based on advice from the New Zealand Defence Force. The decisions themselves were taken following careful Cabinet deliberations, and to speak further on that, I would like to hand over to Minister Mark.

**Hon Ron Mark:** Thank you, Prime Minister. In February last year, I visited the deployments at Taji in Iraq and I visited troops in Afghanistan. It was clear to me that our New Zealand Defence Force personnel on the ground were making a difference, that that difference and their presence was highly valued, and that people felt that we made a strong contribution. All of our partners and friends made that very clear to me. They particularly commented on the manner by which our defence force personnel went about their job—with humour, humility, and a unique cultural competency.

In Iraq, our joint training mission with Australia has accomplished what it set out to do. Upon our departure we will leave behind an institution that, thanks to our combined efforts, is well positioned for the Iraqi army to take over the delivery of their own training. In Afghanistan, New Zealand will continue to make a valued effort to security and stability through training and mentoring and institution building. For example, the Afghan National Army Officer Academy, in partnership with the United Kingdom, has trained over 4,250 Afghanistan officer cadets, which includes 242 female graduates. I'm particularly proud that we are also

seeking positions related to women, peace and security, and reconciliation and reintegration, areas crucially important to prospects for peace. I'd like to personally thank all those who served in these deployments and who serve around the world on behalf of our nation. New Zealanders can be very proud of what our Defence Force personnel have accomplished in these missions for the benefit of the global community.

**PM:** I'm happy to take questions. If we stick to the deployment questions first, and then Minister Mark can depart once we've done with those.

**Media:** Prime Minister, how confident are you following New Zealand's exit in 2020 we won't see a resurgence of Islamic State?

**PM:** Yeah, and that's something that we've of course factored into our decision making. New Zealand has made an enormous contribution in Iraq, but it's time for that contribution to change. We have made a decision based on the international environment, and that's why, at the same time, our contribution, while altering, will remain in Afghanistan, because we are taking a wider view to the global environment and the threat that remains. But when it comes to Iraq, it's time to go.

**Media:** Have you informed Scott Morrison of the decision?

**PM:** Yes.

**Media:** How did he react?

**PM:** Oh, positively. We've had ongoing discussions about the deployment. Of course, we work together, so, as you'd imagine, this is something that we've discussed with our Australian counterparts over a period of time. But I've also spoken to him personally about it. No issues; no—absolutely not.

**Media:** On Operation Gallant Phoenix, are we making any progress in finding the New Zealander over there?

**Mark:** We don't comment on operations of that nature, for obvious reasons.

**PM:** No, that's right. It is fair to say though, of course, the fact that we're talking about Operation Gallant Phoenix is because, obviously, that mission, whilst having been under way since 2014, was not something that was publicly commented on, because of the nature of that deployment. Obviously, now, that deployment has been in the public domain. Where possible, and where security allows, we like to be transparent around those deployments, and now we're in a position to do so.

**Media:** Labour in Opposition opposed the Iraq deployment—

**PM:** Yes.

**Media:** —and the extension of it, saying it was mission creep. What's taken you so long to get our troops out of there?

**PM:** Well, we did also, though, in coming into office, have to acknowledge that we had a commitment that had been made—not only a commitment that had been made to the Iraqi Government but also a commitment in conjunction with Australia to work together to offer this training mission. This was about honouring that commitment, completing the job that we said we'd do, and, now that the time is right, ultimately, leaving.

**Media:** Was there any request either way to stay or draw down—

**PM:** I think there was general understanding and, actually, gratitude for the role that New Zealand has played. When you talk about Afghanistan, I think it's a different environment again. Things in Afghanistan—the Minister may wish to comment on this—are obviously at a very particular point in time now, but also a very different environment. Negotiations, obviously, are under way between the United States and the Taliban, and so, ultimately, as I've said, no one has withdrawn their contribution, because we are in such a delicate point in time. That doesn't mean, however, that New Zealand cannot alter its

contribution, and it is a significant change to both draw down some of our training but look to make a contribution around peace and reconciliation.

Is there anything, first, further you'd like to say on Afghanistan?

**Hon Ron Mark:** Yes. I'd like to emphasise how pleased I am that we will have the opportunity of deploying some of our top-tier female officers into Afghanistan to assist with the programme of women, peace and security. That we have been recognised as having a high-end capability in that sector, that we have been recognised as a nation that can play a valuable role in crossing some of those cultural barriers, and that we can play a solid part in integrating female leadership and improving female leadership and their role in Afghanistan security forces I think is a very good thing and a very big thing. It gives some recognition to some of our female officers who have performed outstandingly in places like Sudan and other places in Africa.

**Media:** Would you have preferred to have stayed in Iraq?

**PM:** No, I think, when you look on balance, the Government's decided what's in the best interests of New Zealand and its partners. Sorry, in Iraq, did you say? Iraq—no, I think you've got to factor in a couple of things. Our role, our mission, is nearing an end. The role was to train the Iraqi security forces so that they could lead themselves, so that they could train themselves. Our people have done a tremendous job training over 42,000 of them. Now, it's about mentoring and training the trainers, and then, alongside of Australia, exiting and having an exit plan. Now, it's not just New Zealand that's downsizing here. We took a role of about a third, two-thirds contribution in partnership with Australia. This reduces down to three-quarters, a quarter, and we will be downsizing alongside of them, working with them, not just walking away from the mission. I think it's a carefully planned exit strategy and it's one in which all partners and everybody supports.

**Media:** This was, obviously, discussed at Cabinet level, but was it also discussed at a New Zealand First party level, and what was the consensus on staying in Iraq—

**Mark:** No, caucus fully supports the decision that we have made.

**Media:** Iraq is where a lot of the conflict remains, as opposed to Afghanistan. Why have you chosen one over the other?

**PM:** Actually, I don't know that that's necessarily fair to say that Afghanistan is any less of a volatile situation. In fact, quite the opposite. Certainly, Afghanistan—the view is that it will be a generational project to bring stability and reconstruction and to bring back a normal way of life into Afghanistan. Ultimately, we, however, wish to change our role there to move more towards that peace and security role, and that's why you see a decrease in our contribution around the training academy, and a new addition that we will be seeking—new roles around peace and reconciliation. But, again, I think just look at the contribution of the international community in Afghanistan to see that ongoing role.

**Media:** Prime Minister, given Labour's opposition to the deployment, are you proud of what the troops have done there?

**PM:** I'm always proud of the work our servicemen and women do abroad. Absolutely. Because, ultimately, they respond to the call that's made at the time by any Government of the day. They perform duties in line with the decisions of the Government of the day and they serve us incredibly well. No matter where I go in the world, the feedback I always have is that our troops, whether it's been historically in places like East Timor or in the Pacific, always work alongside the community that they are deployed to, and that is a significant distinction in the way that many other armed forces operate.

**Media:** Reflecting, do you think it was the right decision to send them there in the first place?

**PM:** It's not my job now to make that decision. It's my job now to determine whether they should stay. I think they've done an incredible job, but their job is coming to an end,

and now it's time to bring them home and to look at the contribution that our Defence Force can make elsewhere.

**Media:** Would you say that job has been successful?

**PM:** Look, the job was to train, and they have done that, and now they're in the position of training trainers. Our focus often is to try and ensure that we are in a position to leave. You never want a situation where, of course, you build reliance. It's about increasing the capability and capacity, and supporting those who are in Government, and ultimately we were there at the invitation of, and that is what has happened.

**Media:** The small number of support staff—NZDF support staff that are staying on at this point—how likely are they to stay on post June?

**PM:** Those in headquarters that are supporting the training role stay through to the point that the deployment ends, and then that concludes at the same time.

**Media:** Will any SAS troops remain in Iraq or Afghanistan?

**Mark:** We wouldn't discuss SAS troops per se—that's special operations. If you're asking us are the trainers withdrawing, the trainers are part and parcel of this deployment, and as you, Prime Minister, have stated, the numbers will go down to 75, down to 45, and then they will withdraw all of the elements.

**Media:** This coalition—the press release says that'll be reconsidered by Cabinet next year.

**PM:** Sorry, are you talking about Afghanistan, Henry? Just to clarify.

**Media:** No. In Iraq—a small number of support staff in the Defeat ISIS Coalition.

**PM:** Yes, in the headquarters.

**Media:** Are they definitely coming home?

**PM:** Yes, my recollection of those individual staff is that they're currently supporting the deployment out to June 2020.

**Media:** Why is there no role for New Zealand in rebuilding Iraq?

**PM:** A role in rebuilding? Yeah, well, at the moment, of course, we're talking about continuing that support through stabilisation funding, and the amount that we're looking to provide is an increase on what we've previously provided. So that's the amount. That is the way in which we're supporting that at this point.

**Media:** Did you consider a commitment of personnel?

**PM:** Not seriously or in great detail. Of course, there are different deployments at present in that space, within NATO and the EU, but those are very specific roles at the moment that we didn't necessarily believe we were best placed to fill.

**Media:** Are you—just to clarify your earlier comment, did Australia say that they're—have you had indication from Australia that they're withdrawing as well?

**PM:** It's not for us to announce Australia's long-term plans in Iraq, but what I can tell you is they are aware of ours and supportive of our decisions. There is absolutely no issue with our decision to make that withdrawal in June 2020, but, ultimately, it's for Australia to talk about their own timelines. Their deployment has changed, though. *[Interruption]* Yes, I think their deployment has changed, but it's not for me to ultimately put a date on their decisions or the end of their deployment.

**Media:** Does the same go for the United States?

**PM:** Around their—they're absolute—

**Media:** Keeping them informed.

**PM:** We keep our partners who we work alongside informed of our deployment decisions.

**Mark:** Including NATO.

**PM:** Yeah, and NATO, of course.

**Media:** Golriz Ghahraman said it's been a very constructive exercise working with you on these issues. She says, "The Greens strongly advocated for an end to our military deployments in the Middle East, and I congratulate Cabinet on its decision." What did she say to you that was convincing and constructive?

**Mark:** I think she's talking generically—that we are always in discussions. It doesn't matter whether it's capability or whether it's deployments—those sort of things. There is no specific push for me to advocate. The Greens, being part of the Government and confidence and supply partners, understand the decisions made by Cabinet—that we are looking at New Zealand's interests as a whole, and they understood that we would have to have conversations with our partners—our strategic partners—and with NATO as well.

**Media:** Let me flip that around and say, "Well, what did you say to them that produced this laudatory press statement?"

**Mark:** Well, probably a number of things.

**PM:** It's not that surprising that we actually manage to build some consensus from time to time. There's no need to be shocked.

**Mark:** I'm proud of the relationship that we've been able to forge with the Green Party, and I find our discussions very helpful.

**Media:** Just going back on Audrey's question, what do you say to those who are disappointed that New Zealand won't play a rebuild role?

**PM:** Well, I guess I would push back and say that we are. There are multiple ways that that can be played. One is by the kind of role we've played to date, which has been training thousands of individuals and then training trainers. So that will have its own legacy. The second role, of course, that can be played, and the one that the international community has been asked to contribute to, is stabilisation funding. We have sought to increase our contribution in that regard. Not every request that is made is around personnel, and we, of course, have limited resourcing capability, and we have to look at whether or not that is, going forward, the place that we should, in the future, continue to contribute, or whether or not we should look to contribute closer to home.

**Media:** Is three years enough for that funding?

**PM:** That's the decision that's been made for now. I wouldn't rule out down the track there being an ongoing conversation, but that's the decision Cabinet has made for now.

**Media:** Could I ask a question about cannabis?

**PM:** Sure—any other questions on deployment?

**Media:** It sounds like you're saying, basically, "Mission accomplished." Why isn't Australia saying the same thing and so leaving at the same time?

**PM:** We're not saying—those are questions for Australia. It's not for us to determine their timetable.

**Mark:** That's true.

**PM:** Sorry, did you want to—

**Mark:** No, I couldn't agree more. Australia has its plan, and you'd have to ask them.

**Media:** Prime Minister, could I just ask one last question. Has NATO expressed any disappointment? Because I know they did just recently request New Zealand increase its training role.

**PM:** Actually, I had a conversation with the general secretary of NATO in January, when I visited Brussels, and, in fact, one of the things we discussed was the possibility of New Zealand making a contribution around peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan, which are now the roles that we will seek to take. So, no, that wouldn't be my interpretation of their reaction to our decision. OK. Thank you.

**Mark:** Thank you very much.

**Media:** In our latest poll, most New Zealanders don't want recreational cannabis legalised—48 percent don't want it legalised; 41.7 do. Will that affect the Government's decision? Would you maybe not push on with the referendum?

**PM:** The only decision we've taken is to, ultimately, ask members of the public, in the same way that you've asked in your poll. The Government has no position on the legalisation of cannabis. Our only position is that we want the public to have their say and to decide on behalf of New Zealand.

**Media:** What do you make about last night's polls being "polls apart"?

**PM:** Oh, well, as you know, as you can imagine, when you've been in politics for a long time, of course you see a range of polls, and now we've seen two taken at pretty much the same period of time. My guide is always the feedback I get from the public—the messages that we hear. I take my guidance from them, and that has been fairly consistent—that, actually, they do have confidence in the Government, and I think that's borne out by the fact that, overall, the polls that we've seen have shown that we have increased our support as a Government since the election.

**Media:** Is your internal polling more in line with Reid Research or Colmar?

**PM:** You know that I don't comment publicly on our internal polling, but I would just make the same statement I've just made to you now.

**Media:** Would you like to see recreational cannabis legalised?

**PM:** I've been asked over a number of years of my view, and the two things that I've always said that I think need to be taken to account for this question are protecting young people but also ensuring that we don't see people imprisoned. Ultimately, though, that is the debate that this question for the public will bear out, and I want the public to decide, not me.

**Media:** Does it surprise you that the public mood is against legalising cannabis?

**PM:** No. In fact, I've seen polls like that before. So, ultimately, this again reinforces to me why we should actually just put it to bed by asking the public in a full and final way.

**Media:** Have you been told it won't happen?

**PM:** I have no expectation. I think the debate needs to be had, but this allows us to put it to bed, and the public can be the ones that can determine which way it goes.

**Media:** But you'll be making your position public on how you will be voting?

**PM:** At this point, my inclination is perhaps not to, because this is a public decision. We don't have a Government position, and this is something I want people to only be persuaded by their own personal opinion and the facts that are before them.

**Media:** Do you expect other members of your Government to also not?

**PM:** No. Not necessarily at all. No—people will have their own views. This is, ultimately, a conscience vote. There is no Government position. People will vote individually as individual voters in the same way that every member of the public will. My vote will be as good as my neighbours vote.

**Media:** So you will vote, or you'll—

**PM:** Yes. I will vote—but debating whether or not that's something that I'll publicly share which way I'll go, because I actually want the public to decide.

**Media:** When will you make a decision on that, because don't people sort of look to you for the good example of—

**PM:** Yeah. But I think, ultimately, what they also will need from me is ensuring that there is good public information available from trusted sources, and so I see my role as well as making sure that we can facilitate that. People will want to consider their options. So I do think I have a role to play there. So that's something I'm giving consideration to.

**Media:** How many people are in prison for smoking marijuana at the moment?

**PM:** It's a small number. The last time I looked, I think the issue is separating out whether or not they have multiple offences, but for the single offence it's been a small number. But there are people imprisoned.

**Media:** Prime Minister, why did you sit on the GCSB advice the day before the Budget and not release that in the—

**PM:** I don't think that's a fair characterisation. I'm happy to clarify statements that I've seen, because there does seem to have been some confusion. And, whilst, ultimately, I do think this is something that we need to await the SSC to independently get into some of that detail, what I am happy to clarify now is of course that at the time that the statements were made by Treasury and indeed the Minister of Finance, no Minister received any advice at that point by the GCSB at the time those statements were made.

**Media:** Can you say what time Andrew Little received that advice?

**PM:** After the fact. It was later in the evening, but it was absolutely after Treasury put out their statements and after the fact that the Minister of Finance put out his.

**Media:** So why didn't Grant Robertson then put out another statement clarifying or correcting his previous one?

**PM:** It's fair to say there whilst there were different views on the language, there was no clarity around what in fact had happened. Of course, that information was not received until Wednesday evening. *[Interruption]* Again, this is where I want to allow the State Services Commission to get into some of that detail to provide—*[Interruption]* If I can finish my answer. The State Services Commission, of course, have outlined that they will be looking into the advice and information that was provided to Ministers and the reliability of that advice and information. It's fair to say that, whilst no Minister received any advice from the GCSB at the time that the Treasury put out their statement and at the time that the Minister of Finance put out his, later on in the evening, later in the evening by several hours, GCSB then disputed some of the language that was used. You'll see from that point Ministers did change their language. But this was a matter for the police, not a matter for us, and so that is where it was left.

**Media:** When did Andrew Little pass on those concerns, because he—

**PM:** Sorry, Jessica, what was that?

**Media:** When he received that information from GCSB, how did he convey that to you and to the Finance Minister, and in what way?

**PM:** Again, this is where I do want to leave the State Services Commission to get into the details of that, but it was absolutely after the fact that all public statements had been made. It was that same evening, and of course, though, that level of detail—I think it is helpful if we have it independently explored, and that time line built in that regard. Henry? I'll take Henry, and then I'll take Tova.

**Media:** Do you expect the State Services Commission to look into communications between Ministers that had no involvement of any—



**PM:** I think the advice—it's absolutely fair and reasonable that SSC will look at the advice provided by departments to Ministers.

**Media:** Are you just referring to Little talking to you and Robertson, which is not advice—

**PM:** Again, what I've set out is that all of that information and advice was provided after statements were provided, and that conversations were had later in the evening, both with Ministers and between Ministers, but all of it was after the fact that statements were put out. And I do think it's helped to clarify that.

**Media:** How soon did Andrew Little pass on that advice to you or Grant Robertson?

**PM:** Again, Ministers were receiving different information from different sources over the course of that evening. We all found out generally later in the evening, around similar time frames. All of it was after the fact, though.

**Media:** Will you reveal all that in the report?

**PM:** I expect that that kind of information will likely be revealed. I imagine it would; I see no reason why it wouldn't. Again, the important, I think, time frames to, again, highlight are that it was after the fact on the Tuesday and that we actually had no clarity—again, I want to put emphasis on this—as to what actually had happened until the Wednesday early evening. So that was when we finally had some sense of what in fact had happened. Tuesday night, it was simply a dispute over language, but we still had no clarity. The only one who had any clarity was Simon Bridges. Jo?

**Media:** Are you saying the conversations between Minister Little and Minister Robertson and potentially yourself will all be part of the State Services Commission report despite the fact that that doesn't fit the terms of reference? Are you promising the public that that information—

**PM:** I'm telling you here and now that Ministers—it was brought to our attention later in the evening. So I am giving you clarity now that, yes, later in the evening it was brought to our attention. Regardless of who or how or the wherefore, the most important thing is that all of it was after statements had already come out from the Treasury and the Minister of Finance. Those statements were made without any information from the GCSB.

**Media:** So the Ministers conversations are outside of an investigation and we take your word for it, yet Gabriel Makhoul's statements have to be investigated? What's the difference?

**PM:** I'm giving you clarity now around that. It was after those statements were made. And, again, regardless of who had the information, Ministers were informed later that evening, and I think that really answers the question at the heart of this, which is "Did we know at the time the statements were made?" The answer was no. Did we know what exactly had happened? Not until Wednesday. We knew there was a dispute over the language that was being used. You'll notice, from then on, Ministers used the word unauthorised access, and that was very deliberate. I'm just going to wrap soon, because I notice we've got—

**Media:** It doesn't instil a lot of confidence in the Government, does it, that Ministers and departments including your spies in the Treasury were all talking at cross purposes and no one seemed to know what was going on—

**PM:** I think, again, that's why it is important we allow the State Services Commission to do their job. They are looking into the information that was provided to Ministers. They're looking into the reliability of the information that was provided, and that is really at the heart of this. And so we await what they will provide. Of course, we are also answering the questions that are being put to us through the parliamentary system—written questions, oral questions, and, of course, OIAs—and cooperating fully with the State Services Commission. But, again, I just want to highlight that I think I've provided here the most

important information regardless of the sequence of events later in the evening. Ministers simply did not know at the time statements were made. I'll take last question. Derek?

**Media:** You have Simon Bridges up there saying Grant Robertson is a liar for implying that we hacked the Treasury. If you have advice about the language of hacking, why not say something at that point?

**PM:** Because we still, at that point, of course, did not know exactly what had happened. It wasn't until the Wednesday that we had any full picture of what had happened on that day. All we knew was that there was a dispute over the language that was being used, and that was "unauthorised access", which is why we, of course, changed our language again. I would highlight there was one person who could've clarified everything, and that would've been the Leader of the Opposition. Last question.

**Media:** The GCSB were unequivocal in their advice to Treasury—it wasn't a hack—so why would the dispute sort of, I guess, favour Treasury's definition of a hack over GCSB's?

**PM:** No, and look, to be clear on that, we did change the language at that point. But if you're asking me whether or not there was a full picture at that point of what exactly had happened, no; that didn't come until later on Wednesday. We knew there was a dispute over language. The language changed from that point forward. But, again, this at this point was a matter for the police, not for us. All right, I'm going to take—this is the last—Richard. Last question.

**Media:** What does this say about the ability of the National Cyber Security Centre to monitor and evaluate threats to cyber security if by Tuesday night they did not have any clarity on what had happened to Treasury?

**PM:** Well, of course, they had a view on what it was not. At that point, they did not have a view exactly of what had occurred, and that, of course, is why it's so important that we have that independent view of the State Services Commission. You'll understand why I'm very keen to allow them to do their job. All right—thanks, everyone.

### **conclusion of press conference**