

POST-CABINET PRESS CONFERENCE: MONDAY, 26 AUGUST 2019

PM: Good afternoon, everyone. Look, before I start, I do want to make acknowledgment of the passing of Pita Paraone overnight, which I know will have come as a great shock to many who have worked with Pita, but especially to his whānau and his family. I did want to acknowledge his passing, and in particular acknowledge his colleagues in New Zealand First, who will be mourning his loss.

I want to start with the week ahead. Tomorrow evening, I am speaking and presenting at the Prime Minister's Pacific Youth Awards, here at Parliament. I will be in Parliament on Wednesday. On Thursday, I will travel to Rotorua for a child wellbeing announcement with Minister Martin. On Friday, I will be speaking to the Going Global Music Summit in Auckland, and in the evening, I will be going along to support the Warriors as they take on South Sydney at Mt Smart. Looking further ahead, I can share with you that on Sunday, I, alongside Minister Clark, will be delivering our cancer action plan in Auckland, and Minister Woods will be announcing the KiwiBuild reset on Wednesday of next week.

I want to recap some of the key actions the Government took last week as we continue our work to tackle some of the long-term challenges facing New Zealand. The Commerce Commission Fuel Market Study proved that petrol companies are charging New Zealanders too much for petrol. The Government will act once we've received the final report, reversing the previous Government's position of ignoring the issue and allowing consumers, as I've said, to be fleeced at the pump.

Last week, Tūhoe and Oranga Tamariki announced that they will work together, to work alongside families and at-risk children to have them moved out of State care and into safe homes connected with their wider whānau, under a relationship agreement that was signed last week. Now, that means Tūhoe now joins Waikato-Tainui, Ngai Tahu, and Ngā Puhī in signing agreements with the Ministry for Children. Working with Māori, defined by Māori, for Māori solutions to reduce the number of Maori children entering State care is an explicit goal of our Government.

The latest milestone in the regeneration of Christchurch and the transition to local leadership continued with the Minister for Greater Christchurch Regeneration, Megan Woods, announcing the approval of the Ōtākaro Avon River Corridor Regeneration Plan. This provides a vision and objectives for future land use, and opportunities for what is a 602-hectare area in east Christchurch.

Before I come to an announcement off the back of Cabinet, I do also want to give an update on decisions that Cabinet made around the data security breach that has come via the ministry of arts, culture, and heritage commissioned site for Tuia 250. Cabinet, today, made a set of interim decisions, and that includes interim steps, with immediate effect, as mandatory requirements for small agencies. Just to give some clarity, small agencies for these purposes aren't defined by size of department but by ICT capability, so will include the likes of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Treasury, State Services Commission, Te Arawhiti, Ministry for Women, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Transport, Crown Law, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, and the Education Review Office.

Those small agencies, with immediate effect, must procure products and services from the all-of-Government ICT common capabilities list, which approved providers are on. They must review current and future planned ICT projects, implement Common Capability security and privacy-related Government Chief Digital Officer guidance. They must follow the Government Chief Information Officer's information security standards and policy, and they must obtain the Government Chief Digital Officer's certification that they are compliant with these requirements.

I can confirm that in the case of the provider who established the Tuia 250 website, they were not on the all-of-Government ICT common capabilities list. My understanding is that list has not been mandatory, but as I've set out, as an interim step, while we work through what needs to occur to prevent this ever happening again, we will now be requiring those small agencies to procure from that list over the near future while we work to ensure the security of all New Zealanders' data and restore confidence in the systems and the agencies who are providing services to the New Zealand public. Look, obviously I'll be happy to take questions on that issue at the conclusion of my opening remarks.

I do also want to outline an additional decision that was made by Cabinet today. I'm pleased to share the good news about the men's Rugby World Cup. I can confirm no wins at this stage, solely the policy framework that will be established in New Zealand to deal with those who wish to serve alcohol during the course of the World Cup. We have agreed to introduce the Sale and Supply of Alcohol (Rugby World Cup 2019 Extended Trading Hours) Amendment Bill, and that will be put before Parliament essentially immediately. It will mean that fans will be able to watch the matches at bars and cafes if they choose. Importantly, it also means that clubs across the country, including RSAs and rugby clubs, can open to televise the matches, meaning fans living in rural areas in particular will be able to gather and watch the games.

Now, as you'll know—or as you may assume—the bill mirrors the changes made to the Act as a result of the Rugby World Cup in 2015 to allow venues to open to screen games that are played outside normal trading hours. That tournament had an 11-hour time difference with the UK. Japan is only three hours behind New Zealand; for once, daylight saving begins at the end of September. So fewer premises will need to take advantage of the changes, but those that choose to will now be able to open. They will be able to open one hour before they begin screening a match, and must stop selling alcohol 30 minutes after it ends. As I said, Cabinet approved the changes today. It will now go to the Business Committee tomorrow to be discussed with all parties before going to the House later this week, in time to be in place well before the Rugby World Cup begins.

The bill needs to be enacted by 10 September because licensees will need to give at least seven days' notice to their council and police if they're going to extend their trading hours. The changes will apply until the final, where I hope, of course, as a nation, we will be joining together to watch our All Blacks in that final.

I am happy to take questions.

Media: Prime Minister, with the suicide rate going up, isn't it time for a suicide reduction target?

PM: Actually, you will recall that this is something we spent a lot of time deliberating on, as a Government. There is no question that our suicide rate is too high. There is no question that, as a Government, we have to put our all into turning that around. It is one of our biggest long-term challenges as a nation, not just as a Government—as a nation. But I ask the question as to whether or not a target would have the effect of causing that number to go down, and no one could produce any evidence to me that a target would do that. And I was concerned, and so was Cabinet, that a target implies that we have a tolerance for suicide, and we do not. So that is why we made the decision that we will continue to focus as a Government, as a country, on bringing that rate down, but for us, of course, the goal has to be no one lost to suicide.

Media: Are you disappointed that this stat leaked, and are you taking any steps to stop it happening again?

PM: I'm disappointed that there has been an increase in suicides. You know, regardless of how that data has been revealed, it's the number and what it represents that upsets me the most.

Media: Do you feel like you could have moved on it quicker, rather than having the inquiry when there have already been so many mental health inquiries whose

recommendations have not been acted upon—rather than having an inquiry do you wish you maybe had gone quicker in Government on this?

PM: Yeah, as you'll recall, I mean, this is one of the biggest long-term challenges we are facing as a nation, and that's why when we came in, straight away we did two things. We started work on the areas we already knew could make a difference, so rolling out health teams into schools, trying to improve the access of mental health support, even for children in areas like Christchurch and Kaikōura, where we knew the effects of the quakes and that impact it was having on mental health. And then to be able to, within roughly, you know, 18 months of being in office, put the biggest investment into mental health that this country has ever seen—we are moving quickly, but this is going to take time to create the kind of change that we need as a nation. It's a huge challenge.

Media: Figures from Alcohol Watch say that up to 30 percent of deaths from suicides and self-inflicted injuries are estimated to be attributable to alcohol. Is the Government doing enough to reduce alcohol-related harm?

PM: Well, that's actually one of the benefits that taking alongside that immediate investment when we came into mental health—actually, taking time to go out and talk to those affected by suicide, mental health, and working in the system told us that we needed to bring in addiction services, as well. We needed to bring in drug and alcohol treatment, as well. And that's why you'll see that in that last Budget, yes we put over a billion dollars into mental health support, a large portion of that is into increasing drug and alcohol treatment programmes and facilities, because we know that it impacts on people's mental health.

Media: On Tuia 250, how much of people's personal data is still out there, still accessible?

PM: You'll know that the ministry of arts, culture, and heritage—you will have heard that they set about immediately after recognising the scale of what had happened to shut down the site on which that information was able to be accessed. Now they're continuing to work alongside Google to remove the caching around that information. So that's ongoing work. They have, however—that's something that they're still working on. The way it's been described to me is that it's not exactly the same as what people were able if they could directly access the website as what would be cached by Google. However, they have to recognise that this breach is significant, that for those individuals they have moved to office support immediately, including the replacement of those documents that have been compromised, and they are facilitating that in covering the cost of that—but, at the same time, acknowledging that for those individuals, this is extraordinarily stressful and a significant breach.

Media: Are they moving fast enough, in your opinion, to deal with this, if that information in some way is still accessible?

PM: Well, again, they've moved on the immediate removal of that information via the site, and that happened on the day that they were advised, by an individual involved, of what had potentially happened here. What they are now doing is working alongside Google to try and retrieve or stop the ability to access any further information that may have been cached since the point at which someone was able to access that information. So that is a bigger, harder piece of work, and the ministry is still working very hard alongside Google on that. Jessica, I'll take another one, and then I'll pan across.

Media: You've announced changes today. Should you have done that in May when we had the Treasury review, or should Government departments have been looking at it then?

PM: Yes—well, what I would say is that, of course, after the Treasury incident did cause, of course, advice to go out immediately to all departments to check the protocols around their direct sites, and I'm given an assurance by the ministry of arts, culture, and heritage that they did that. This, as you're aware, was a separate site. This was a site that the ministry contracted a provider to provide, and it was separately for the Tuia 250 commemorations, so it wasn't linked into that departmental—them as a ministry and as part

of that departmental infrastructure. However, that doesn't mean that we should not still have confidence that a site that is contracted by an agency, a department, has the same level of data protection that we would expect if it were directly provided by a department. As the ministry said, they are now working through the nature of the contract, the expectations that should have been had with that company, and I do need to allow them to do that, because obviously there will be, possibly, legal ramifications here.

Media: In your view, who is responsible for the data breach, and should they lose their job?

PM: Well, look, you know, again, I'm going to be careful here not to be seen to, you know, ultimately not accept that this is a Government department, and we are the Government. So I stand here and have to take responsibility that, you know, departments, yes, they offer—sorry, they provide services, they, day to day, provide the functions of their websites, but, ultimately, we need to set the tone around our expectations for data security. And this is an increasing issue, not just in New Zealand but globally, and we need to be exemplars of our expectations for data security. We, of course, have hundreds and thousands of transactions between New Zealanders and Government departments, and, by and large, they are conducted successfully, but we cannot allow people's confidence to be undermined by situations like this, which is why we are taking it very seriously.

Media: How responsive has Google been considering their track record in the past hasn't been that great?

PM: I would need to ask the chief executive directly. I understand they've been liaising directly with the ministry. I certainly haven't had a suggestion to date that that has been a problem, but I would need to check how responsive that's been. For me, I can't tell you whether or not it's the technical side of that that has been an issue or the engagement—but I can ask that question.

Media: Has your chief executive offered you her resignation?

PM: She has apologised, and I do not expect a resignation, but I do—

Media: Did she offer you one?

PM: No, but nor do I expect one. I've, of course, followed closely what steps the ministry has taken since becoming aware of this breach, and I'm confident that they have prioritised the needs of those affected, moving directly to contact all those who had information that was provided to the ministry via this website. They've deployed other departments to assist them in trying to contact as many people as possible as quickly as possible. They successfully made contact with a large majority, and at least passed on information to those they were unable to reach directly. And that was their priority, with the individuals affected. Of course, we have expectations, and we do need to lift the standards—there is no question here—but, for me, I do not expect a resignation; I do expect, though, better results.

Media: Will anyone lose their job over it?

PM: Of course, keeping in mind here we are doing a review of the nature of the contract that was involved here and whether or not the expectations of that contract were fulfilled. So there are a few more questions to be answered yet, but I have to say this: the way that the ministry has worked swiftly in the aftermath, I have confidence in the process since they identified the issue. The fact the issue occurred is something that we as a Government need to look across the board at.

Media: Has the name "KiwiBuild" survived the reset? Is it still going to be the name of the policy?

PM: Of course, I won't be making announcements on behalf of the Minister, but I have given you an indication that you won't need to wait too much longer.

Media: At the G7 summit, the Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has announced that Australia, New Zealand, and the OECD have been working together to develop protocols for social media companies to prevent, detect, and remove terror content. What more can you tell us about these protocols, given your Government's involvement?

PM: You'll know that our focus has been on working collaboratively with both Governments, with the civil society, but also alongside, particularly, social media companies who were part of the dissemination of the video of the terrorist attack on 15 March. So I'm looking to give an update off the back of the work from the Christchurch Call in September. That will be our next check-in, during the United Nations General Assembly, but it is fair to say that work has been ongoing. Of course, given that what we're trying to do is give effect to something not just within our own domestic borders but internationally, for us the focus has been on pursuing some of those avenues, that it go beyond domestic legislation. I know Australia, on the other hand, has been quite focused on their domestic legislation; we've been doing a bit of both.

Media: The recording protocols that Scott Morrison has announced—have they really been driven by the Australian Government?

PM: Well, certainly, you'll know who was around the table at the Christchurch Call—those are the Government's representatives, who've we've continued to engage as we've been working on making the Christchurch Call operational, really.

Media: Have the US been any more interested in it than they were in the original Christchurch Call meeting?

PM: My understanding is we've had ongoing engagement. You'll remember, of course, that even though they didn't strictly sign up to the call, they really acknowledged the aims of the call, they put out a statement explicitly saying that they essentially agreed with a lot of the work programme we were looking at. So my understanding is that they have been engaged.

Media: Sorry, just on that code, how much funding is New Zealand putting towards it? I understand it's jointly funded—

PM: On the—

Media: The social media code announced by Prime Minister Morrison. It's funded by Australia and New Zealand.

PM: Unfortunately, I cannot answer that question right here and right now, but I'm happy to come back to you.

Media: Will you ever raise the retirement age, or is it completely off the table while you're Prime Minister?

PM: It's off the table. I've been very clear, while I am Prime Minister or while I lead any form of Government, I will not increase the retirement age.

Media: Why is that?

PM: You know, I've said for some time now that when it comes to the retirement age, we do have a duty to make sure that it's sustainable, and that is why we renewed and re-established contributions to the New Zealand Superannuation Fund that, of course, the last Government stopped. So if they were worried about the sustainability of superannuation, then that could have been a contribution they could have made.

Media: Is super at 65 really sustainable?

PM: Yes. Of course, you've got to save for the future, and that's why we brought back and restarted those contributions to the super fund when we came in. Basically, as soon as we took office, that was something we delivered on.

Media: Did you change your mind, because back when you were in Opposition, you had lobbied to increase the retirement age to 67.

PM: I was—firstly, of course, we always made the point that the super fund contributions need to be reinstated, and that's something that we've done. We also made the argument that that, of course, existed in order to ensure the sustainability of superannuation. But one of the issues that, actually, throughout that debate was an issue for the Labour Party—and we were quite open about that—was ensuring that you didn't disproportionately impact on those who had lower life expectancy and who were in predominately manual labour jobs. It was something that an increase in the retirement age deals with in a very blunt way, and I've not been satisfied that a simple lift in age deals with that issue, and, equally, I believe we can ensure its sustainability through the kinds of measures that we've taken.

Media: What are your thoughts about doubling the amount of time that people would need to reside in New Zealand to qualify for superannuation?

PM: That's been a debate for some time. Of course, at the moment, there's a range of eligibility criteria. We've made some changes that allow you to still be able to live over in the Realm countries and count that as part of your time for eligibility. That, essentially, was at the call of Realm countries, and an acknowledgement that, actually, there were some areas that we need to make some tweaks. We have had Labour policy in this area, but, again, once we have Government policy, that's when we make statements on that.

Media: Would you ever consider extending the amount of time that migrants are to live here before they're eligible for super?

PM: Of course, framing it in that way—of course, it's about the amount of time that taxpayers live here, not just migrants. And, of course, that's something that Labour's had policy on, but we haven't made any formal announcements as a Government.

Media: Can I just ask for your thoughts on the Amazon fires, and if there's anything that New Zealand can do?

PM: I have made a direct request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade that they do reach out to their counterparts in Brazil to raise New Zealand's concerns alongside the international community's. You'll know that, actually, New Zealand takes a really cautious approach when it comes to commenting on domestic policies and domestic legislation, but this is not just a domestic policy or domestic legislation. This is an example of an environmental issue that impacts on the entire world. The Amazon are the lungs of the world, and so I've not only asked the ministry to raise those concerns. Of course, if there were an ask, we'd consider it. We haven't had that yet, and, of course, you would hope that there would be resource available in the region to try and deal with what we're seeing in the forest.

Media: Why does the Government not require employers of KiwiSaver members who are over 65 to contribute to their KiwiSaver? So at the moment it's optional. Why is it not mandatory?

PM: Generally, some of those KiwiSaver settings are something that Minister Kris Faafoi has been looking at. So I'll leave that to him for now.

Media: Prime Minister, you acknowledged the passing of Pita Paraone earlier. What are your memories of working alongside him here in Parliament?

PM: He was very considered. He was a very thoughtful man, and, of course, I've had a bit to do with him as well while he was involved with the Waitangi commemorations and the Waitangi National Trust, and I found him to be thoughtful, considered, a kind man, and I know he'll be a real loss to the north in particular.

Media: What do you hope to achieve with the KiwiBuild reset?

PM: Again, I'll leave the Minister to make detailed announcements but, of course, we came into office with a number of challenges to address head-on. One of them was our housing crisis. Now, of course, KiwiBuild is one part of the picture. The rest of it is, of

course, what we do around public housing. We have increased the number of State houses that we are building. We cancelled the sale of State houses.

PM: We have increased the Housing First places for the chronically homeless. We have stopped foreign buyers being able to buy residential properties, and that's increased the percentage of first-home buyers in the market. But we need to keep trying to stimulate the building of affordable homes. KiwiBuild's part of that. We know there are things we need to get fixed to make that a more effective programme, and that's what the KiwiBuild reset's about. OK. Thanks, everyone.

conclusion of press conference