

POST-CABINET PRESS CONFERENCE: MONDAY, 23 NOVEMBER 2020
HANSARD TRANSCRIPT

PM: Kia ora koutou katoa, good afternoon. Today I'm joined by the environment Minister, David Parker, as we announce further action by the Government to accelerate our economic recovery from COVID-19. But first I'll run through the week ahead, a week that will see the opening of the 53rd New Zealand Parliament. Tomorrow I'll speak at the primary industry summit. Our food and fibre sectors continue to be the backbone of our economy and our response in terms of ensuring that we're holding up well, with exports up 3.6 percent to the year ending June—and that is despite the impact of COVID, so they will play a critical role in our recovery. I will also attend caucus, a little late, where we'll have the official team photo. Wednesday is the Commission Opening of Parliament, where we elect a Speaker and MPs are sworn in. Thursday is the State Opening of Parliament, including the Speech from the Throne and the Address in Reply debate that I will take part in. On Friday I'll be in Gisborne for the charter parade and civic reception to mark the inaugural visit of HMNZS *Manawanui* to her home port of Gisborne. I was honoured to become the *Manawanui's* sponsor in June 2019; I'm very much looking forward to catching up with captain Andy Mahoney, and also with the crew, while they are there.

This afternoon I had a very positive and warm phone call with US President-Elect Joe Biden. I passed on New Zealand's congratulation on his election victory. Much of the call focused on the desire of our two countries to work cooperatively on a range of issues of mutual interest. We discussed COVID-19, and the President-Elect spoke positively about New Zealand's response to the pandemic. The President-Elect also stated that it was his number one priority, and I offered to him and his team access to the New Zealand team and health officials in order to share our experience and the things that we've learnt on our COVID-19 journey. While New Zealand has a number of natural advantages that have assisted us in managing the virus, I do absolutely believe that international cooperation continues to be key to getting the virus under control, and we are happy to work with any country to share our knowledge and data if it's helpful. But, again, I do acknowledge that we have some natural additions, such as our border, which has enabled us to be in the position that we are.

We also discussed climate change and the President-Elect's plan around emissions within the United States, his goals by 2050, the Pacific region, and global trade. The President-Elect said he would like to reinvigorate the relationship, noting the breadth of areas where there is agreement while recalling the longstanding nature of the relationship between our countries, as well.

Coming back to today's announcement, which is the next step in the Government's acceleration of New Zealand's economic recovery from COVID, today we are announcing additional projects that have been approved by Cabinet to go through the RMA fast-track process. The COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act came into effect in July, and it's one of our levers to boost jobs, speed up infrastructure development, and still improve environmental outcomes in response to the economic impacts of COVID-19. Infrastructure is core to our recovery, and ensuring we get key projects running quickly will provide the construction sector with that certainty within their pipeline. And, of course, 17 projects were named in the fast-track law, and the environment protection agency has already given the green light to the first one, a water storage reservoir in Kaikohe that is estimated to result in 60 fulltime-equivalent jobs and increase local GDP by \$9 million a year.

Speeding up the consenting process means that the projects are able to deliver much-needed short- and long-term employment opportunity in the regions and act as a catalyst for regional economic growth sooner. Importantly, some will also add to the delivery of much-needed housing. I'll hand over to Minister Parker now to share details on the process, and the projects themselves and their expected benefit. Minister Parker.

Hon David Parker: Thank you, Prime Minister. Today we're announcing another three projects from various parts of the country that are being referred to expert panels for

consenting under the fast-track consenting Act. These three projects are all private sector projects. The three projects are, firstly, a Dominion Road mixed-use commercial and residential development in Auckland, a factory, the Ōhinewai foam factory in Huntly, and the Vines subdivision in Richmond. So that's a large development in Auckland and two that will boost the regions. To give you an example of the scale of the Ōhinewai foam factory, the site is 27 hectares. The factory that's going to be built, if it gets a consent, is 23,710 square metres—it's a big project—and involves its own rail spur.

Speeding up the consenting processes means that these private sector projects have the potential to deliver jobs sooner. If all three of the projects gain approval, together they would create an estimated 2,000 jobs during the construction phase and around 200 permanent jobs once the projects are completed. They'll also enable up to 160 new dwellings in areas of high demand for housing.

The COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act is one of the Government's levers to boost jobs. It can speed up infrastructure development and improve environmental outcomes. It doesn't replace or circumvent the environmental test that is in the RMA, but it provides alternative process pathways for speeding up decisions on resource consents, and, as I said, preserves the environmental safeguards that are in the Act, and also Treaty of Waitangi provisions and settlement agreements are also adhered to.

There are three routes under that fast-track Act, as some of you might recall. The first of those were the projects that were named in the Act. The second is referrals such as those which we've named today. The most recent application that we've received that will proceed through this is the—will be considered as to whether it should proceed in this is the new Dunedin Hospital. That will be coming through probably after Christmas by the time that's processed. The third route is the repair and minor upgrade and maintenance works on existing infrastructure that's done by KiwiRail or New Zealand Transport Agency. Subject to certain standards those sorts of work can be done as of right now rather than requiring a resource consent.

As the Prime Minister's already said, the fast-track process has already seen the Matawai water storage reservoir in Kaitiāia approved. It was one of the projects that was named in the Act. That's already been approved by an expert consenting panel. It took 55 days. That's half the time it would take in a normal process, even if it wasn't appealed. And even if it was appealed, obviously that could take an extra year or so.

Decisions on the projects that are announced today are expected early in 2021, by an expert panel.

PM: Thank you, Minister Parker. Look, we're now happy, though, to take questions.

Media: Did you extend an invitation to Joe Biden and did you receive one to visit the White House?

PM: Yes, I did extend an invitation. Look, we know that there has already been an invitation extended via Australia as part of the anniversary of ANZUS next year, and so it seemed only natural, of course, that we extend equally that invitation to New Zealand as well. I can tell you that was very warmly received by the President-Elect. He spoke of his fond memories of visiting New Zealand several years ago. You could tell from the conversation he sensed a real connection to New Zealand, felt very welcomed here, and was very pleased to receive the invitation to come back here.

Media: Did you get invited to the White House as part of that phone call?

PM: Oh, look, whether or not or when a visit like that may take place is entirely a matter for the White House. Obviously, everyone will be taking into account the fact that we have border closures right now. So that is something that I leave to the White House. But we did talk about the fact we're both looking forward to the opportunity to meet face to face.

Media: [*Inaudible*] invitations did you tell us, or?

PM: Oh, I would probably be quite caveated about that.

Media: Did you discuss with him Donald Trump's position in refusing to concede the election?

PM: No. Look, it was very much, you know, looking to the future. As you can imagine, I wanted to focus the time that we had on the areas where we're really keen to work together—issues like, for instance, trade. We spoke about the importance of organisations like the World Trade Organization to a country like New Zealand, the ambition that we have for resolving those issues, the role we've played to date, and our eagerness to support work to unblock some of the issues that we've experienced. So, mostly, the time was dominated by talking about the next steps in our relationship.

Media: In terms of COVID, what did he say about the situation the US is facing and any concerns that he'd had—or the challenge ahead for that country?

PM: Look, you can see, actually, from the statements that have been made publicly by the President-Elect that a real priority—the number one priority, as he said—was the response to COVID-19. He spoke very favourably about what he had seen happening in New Zealand, and the desire to exchange further information and discuss what we had learnt. So that was an offer that I said we would be happy to help with. I imagine that there will be ongoing dialogue that may take place at an officials' level, but that's an offer we were very keen to respond to.

Media: When the President-Elect said that our relationship needed to be reinvigorated, what did you take that as meaning?

PM: I think that was a way of expressing more, actually, the enthusiasm that I heard in the call to work together on areas where we have, really, some common goals. I would add to that list climate change and also, as I've said, a desire to work constructively on trade issues. And he has an interest in our region, not only stemming, clearly, from his visit here and the positive impact that had but he spoke of the time that his uncle served in the war in this region. Obviously that has impacted on him and his interest in making sure that the United States is present in its engagement across the globe but particularly here.

Media: Following that phone call, do you think our relationship with the United States under Joe Biden will be a lot different to our relationship with the United States under Donald Trump?

PM: There will always be differences in the way that leaders will operate, in the relationships that they may already have, in their engagement with a country, that they bring into the job. But, certainly from that first call, I detected a huge amount of enthusiasm for the relationship that we already have, but the potential of that relationship too.

Media: Prime Minister, would it be fair to say—it probably goes without saying—that this is a formal acknowledgment that Donald Trump has lost the election and Joe Biden has won?

PM: Well, as you will have seen, we already have extended, as a Government, on behalf of New Zealand—we had already extended our congratulations to the President-Elect, so had recognised the electoral outcome, and this phone call was a follow-up to that. You will see that we are in the company of a number of other countries that have done the same, and so we're amongst company in that regard.

Media: When he said he wanted to reinvigorate the relationship, what do you take from that to mean?

PM: Again, that's my characterisation of the phone call—that there was a real enthusiasm for us to work together in areas of common interest and the opportunities that existed across both talking about our COVID response, the work that we all want to be doing, and now, obviously, the United States are adding themselves to that list around climate change and trade issues as well.

Media: So it's you that thinks that the relationship needs to be reinvigorated?

PM: I want to go back and exactly check the wording there, whether or not that was the precise word that was used. But that would be my characterisation of the phone call.

Media: Prime Minister, when you offered expertise on the virus, did it sound like President-Elect Biden will take you up on that offer?

PM: Sorry, what was that?

Media: Do you think President-Elect Biden—

PM: Will take us up on the—yeah. Oh, look, I doubt that he would have said that he wanted to discuss the issue further, unless that was something he wanted to do. Whether or not that's done at officials' level or whether or not that's done at leader level, in my view the impact or what we can offer is the same. So that was something that he offered that he was interested in engaging further on on COVID issues.

Media: Do you think New Zealand could be a model for the US in some ways?

PM: Well, the one caveat I—you know, as I've said, we're always aware of the fact that we have natural attributes that have added to our ability to respond to COVID in the way we have. Our borders is one element of that. So it has meant that we've had some natural advantage, but keep in mind we've acted on that. We've had that advantage and we've used it to positive effect. But it does mean that I'm very aware that what we've done won't be able to be replicated exactly everywhere. But there are many other learnings within that that we're of course happy to share. No one country's experience has been linear or has been perfect, and we've all learnt things from one another along the way, but I think we should all share both those areas where we've had to learn hard lessons or where we've had positive lessons.

Media: Prime Minister, what sort of learnings could New Zealand offer to America that are applicable?

PM: That we could offer? Look, I think, you know, what has been really at the centre of our response has been some fundamentals around testing, contact tracing, isolation. That's over and above, of course, what we've done at our borders. So those elements have been key, but we of course have also tried to use technology but keeping in mind that we've done it in a way that fits with, you know, social licence. We've used technology with people's permission. In some countries, they've used technology in a range of different ways. I think in our case we've tried to bring people with us in that use, and so we've learnt, I think, from that too. So those are just a couple. Not all will be applicable in every economy, but we can only share what we've done.

Media: Do you take it as a positive signal that New Zealand has been included in the relatively early calls as opposed to when Donald Trump was elected and it was actually February until he contacted the Prime Minister?

PM: Oh, look, I do take it as a positive. I think it's a signal that, actually, relationships are about more than size. They're about more than, necessarily, you know, what groups you belong to as a nation; actually, it's about relationships as well, and I do think we have, through different leaders of all persuasions—we have had very strong, solid relationships with the United States. My intention is to continue and to strengthen that.

Media: Would you hope that they do take a more multilateral, outward-looking approach than under Donald Trump in terms of trade and various other areas that New Zealand really does rely on?

PM: And that is certainly the sense I've come away from that initial conversation with, is that not only was I offering the view that, you know, in areas like, for instance, the WTO, we've been a big advocate of revitalising the organisation and working through a number of issues, actually, previously under the leadership of Minister Parker, and we want to continue in that. I get the sense that there's a real appreciation there for the importance of those organisations to us.

Media: Just on the RMA announcements today, I mean, there's 160 dwellings, you said in the press release, which is quite a lot. Given the fact that your Government is under a lot of pressure in terms of delivering housing at the moment, can we expect to see more fast-tracking of the RMA process to get more of these developments?

PM: I'll let Minister Parker speak to that as well, but what I would say is that it is triggered by those developers coming forward and making those applications and ensuring that their project is able to be considered for fast tracking, and I really encourage that. These are opportunities to utilise a process to expedite both housing, both jobs, and a pipeline of work for the construction industry.

Hon David Parker: Yes, if I could just endorse those comments. We're trying to improve the supply of both houses and house-building opportunities by increasing the supply of both. We've done that through changes to the national policy statement already under the RMA, and this is another route to assist for those who bring their applications to us.

Media: And the Prime Minister was saying that people have to come forward, and developers. Are there many people in the pipeline at the moment, many developers, that have already got something lodged, or do you understand that they will be lodging something?

Hon David Parker: We've had a constant stream of them. The initial ones were more around retirement villages; this latest batch includes both houses and a subdivision, and we're interested in receiving more.

Media: Can you give an indication of how many houses we're talking about that could be in the pipeline and could be used through the fast-track process?

Hon David Parker: No, I can't just off the top of my head, but I can come back to you on that.

Media: And on the announcement today of the 200 jobs, can you just explain—the ones in the future, the permanent jobs. Can you explain where they come from? Are they, basically, all the foam factory?

Hon David Parker: They would be mainly in the foam factory. I don't think we've counted the jobs in respect of the houses that would be built on the subdivision near Blenheim.

Media: Minister Parker, on the New Zealand RMA Act, could you envisage some of the big roading projects like the Mount Messenger one in Taranaki and also the Manawatū Gorge being used with this Act to get them going quicker?

Hon David Parker: Perhaps, yes. There's no prohibition on those sorts of activities. Indeed, the list that was in the original Act—did that include Manawatū? I can come back to you on that.

Media: Prime Minister, how much does diversity of gender, age, ethnicity contribute to diversity of thought?

PM: Hmm, it's a good question. I think, you know, there's no doubt that we strive to make sure that we have a representative place in Parliament, because you bring your life experience to this place, you bring your connection to community, and you can speak to those experiences. And it does mean that we therefore consider our responses in a way that is reflective of the communities that we are meant to serve. I never, however, take it as a given that simply because you're a woman, you'll always speak favourably on issues that are supportive of, for instance, women's rights, and I say that having been in this Parliament as I've watched Ministers for women's affairs in the past vote down extensions to things like paid parental leave. So I don't take it as a given, but you can assume that greater diversity does lead to that being reflected in the decisions made.

Media: And just back on our COVID response, do you think that that could be replicated in the United States in such a divided country? Part of the, I guess, success of New Zealand was being—you know, the country uniting behind it.

PM: And, look, we have to keep in mind, there is advantage to the way that our system works, to the fact that we are a population of roughly 5 million, that we have, in that sense, the ability to operate a response across our entire country. It's not complicated by multiple layers of system and governance, and that has been to our advantage. So I never assume that what we do or have done can be easily replicated. However, there are some elements that, actually, just by sharing we leave up to other countries to determine whether or not that is something that can be usefully used. I should say, we also utilise the research that we see coming out of, for instance, the CDC and others. So it isn't one way. We are constantly looking into the information that is coming out of other countries, and I would include in that the United States. It is very much a two-way learning street.

Media: Prime Minister, what action can we expect from the Government after the Children's Commissioner's report that was out today?

PM: Yeah, look, I said this morning, and I stand by this, in the wake of the release of that report, no one wants to see children uplifted from their families' homes, but we all want to see children safe. So, ultimately, the debate we're having is about how to reach that objective where children aren't needing to be uplifted anymore. I do think that, you know, we have started to make some progress by working much more closely with organisations that have those relationships on the ground with iwi, with whānau. We want to do more of that. We've already seen a reduction in the number of Māori children who are being uplifted. So it's all about expediting and speeding up what we're already doing. Minister Davis, though, has a very clear view on these issues. He is meeting now with Oranga Tamariki's harshest critics to work through how we continue to work in the best interests of all children, including Māori children. I'll let you ask a follow-up question.

Media: Will you commit to transformational change in that system?

PM: Well, one of the things that I've said this morning was that ultimately, at the moment, the responsibility for making a decision around the uplift of a child sits with the State, because that is one of the hardest decisions I think that can be made and then one of the hardest things to carry out. You know, I think the conversation that needs to be had is: does—you know, it sits with us for very good reason, because it is such a significant use of power. But the way it has been done has been hugely problematic, and so rightly now we've had four reports, all looking into this issue, and now it's our job to act on that, but we're not going to do it unilaterally; otherwise, we'll end up repeating our mistakes.

Hon David Parker: Prime Minister, can I just add to that about something that's currently happening in the Family Court. We've got a new Chief District Court Judge who is of Māori ethnicity, and he's focussed on trying to improve outcomes for Māori children, and so he's just in the process of rolling out the alcohol and other drug therapeutic courts to Hamilton. But they've traditionally only been used in respect of criminal courts. They're now going to be available to the Family Courts. So, where there is a problem within a family which relates to alcohol or drug dependency of, perhaps, the mother, there will now be a therapeutic route to dealing with those issues rather than relying on Oranga Tamariki to perhaps pursue other remedies.

PM: Keep in mind, of course, we've got the Waitangi Tribunal also yet to report too, so I imagine it will also point to some of these issues and the path we need to go.

Media: Prime Minister, would you introduce a land tax to crack down on land bankers, and also speculation—how would you rein that in?

PM: Yeah, look, roughly, we're talking 5 to 20 percent of land a 2018 report has pointed to as possibly being in the category of being land-banked. I think this is something that we are all not just frustrated by, I think it's probably a source of people being infuriated by it when we're in a situation where we're trying to develop housing for those who critically need it. We have already moved on a national policy statement that says to councils, look, we want development up and out but land banking is also one of the issues we're trying to commission some advice to see what is it that we can meaningfully do to deal with this frustration.

Media: But will that include a land tax? That advice that you're seeking, have you asked them to look into a land tax?

PM: We've asked for advice on what to do around land banking, but, of course, you'll know the position we've taken on those issues at the election, and we'll be sticking to that.

Media: Just back on this morning's report, the key recommendation in it was to transfer power and resources to a by Māori, for Māori approach. Do you fundamentally agree that that is the right model?

PM: You'll see that we are already moving towards agreements and arrangements with Māori, with the Māori Women's Welfare League, with iwi, to take on a much greater role in some of the preventative work that previously would have been part of Oranga Tamariki's remit—so you're already seeing that. One of the things that Minister Davis has been right to point out, though, you know, roughly—when you've got more than 5,000 children in care, if all of those children were suddenly changed up in where they were being cared for and how, are we ready for that? We do need to keep making change. It does need to be in partnership; it's just the speed at which we can safely do that.

Media: Because some Māori organisations would say that at the moment it's when things get really bad then they're consulted, and that they're not actually running the programme; it's still a State programme and, yes, they might have a consultative role at an iwi level or whatever, but the recommendation is for Māori to actually own it and to actually resource it.

PM: Whereas, actually, what I'd say is that one of the issues is that some of those arrangements have been very much in the preventative space and in the early space, and where we've had a lot of our issues is around the exercise of that big decision around a child coming into care—those statutory decisions—and that's the area where, of course, rightly, there's been criticism over the way that has been done. We do need to change that. A lot of trauma and damage has been caused. But, equally, at the same time, whether or not the basis on which those decisions are being made, we all want to get in earlier—everyone. We all want to change the situation where there's been uplifts in the first place, but we also need to keep an eye on, when those decisions are made, who should that sit with.

Media: Prime Minister, on Wellington, the Mayor of Wellington's been spotted putting up tents at Shelly Bay, seemingly in protest against a decision by his own council. Would you ever consider putting in a commissioner to run Wellington City Council?

PM: These are not decisions that are taken lightly, and nor would I make flippant comment on an issue that is just for the council. So this is a council issue, and I need to leave that with council.

Media: So any talk of a commissioner is a long, long way away?

PM: Look, as I say, these are issues that people are democratically elected to resolve and work through. We do not take lightly the involvement of central government in what are local issues.

Media: What about with the Tauranga City Council—has Cabinet discussed what you're going to do about that?

PM: And, again, as I say, because we don't take those issues lightly, we do need the Minister—because these decisions can be reviewed—to make sure that she's given proper advice before we make any public comment on that. It's fair to say, though, that I think all of us will be looking to what's happening in Tauranga with concern. This is a growing city who need to be providing critical infrastructure for their people. I know what's happening there isn't welcomed locally, because they're very concerned about what it will mean for their city. But we are waiting for Minister Mahuta to receive some of that advice and make those key decisions. The time frame will keep relatively short, though.

Media: Have you had any update at all on the Air New Zealand crew member who's tested positive for COVID-19? Are they New Zealand - based, or do you know their whereabouts two weeks before that flight to China?

PM: So what I can tell you is that they were tested, they were cabin crew—they are, as I understand, New Zealand - based cabin crew who were tested on 18 November in accordance with our surveillance protocols. They tested negative. They arrived in Shanghai on 22 November and returned a positive test as part of the routine screening. They are reportedly asymptomatic, in isolation—as all crew are when they travel into China. As I understand, I believe there may be further testing possibly under way, but I need to confirm that.

Media: Just back on Joe's question before, do you have confidence in the chief executive of Oranga Tamariki?

PM: Yeah, so, look, what I've said here is that I think it would be wrong for us—and I've said this in the past, you know, these are issues that have been brewing for a long period of time. I'm not going to squarely place on the shoulders of one individual systemic change that we all need to take responsibility for. But I also do want to give Minister Davis the space in his own portfolio to work through the direction he wishes to take it.

Media: What did you make of China's comments following the Five Eyes statement in relation to Hong Kong and what will that mean for our relationship?

PM: Look, it's not unexpected that these comments have been made by China. What we have said, though, equally won't be unexpected from our side because we have been really consistent. What's been happening in Hong Kong is of concern to New Zealand. We have New Zealanders who live there, who do business there, who rely on that open system, and we have been consistent in the statements we've made to China both in open forums in bilaterals and also in written statements.

Media: Should it be taken, then, as tough talk simply from both sides, or do you expect there to be any tangible, you know—

PM: In my view, this is the sign of a mature relationship. We will raise issues when we see them, as all New Zealanders would expect us to do so, and, at the same time, I have a view that we can work through those, and that's what we intend to do. But we do have an independent foreign policy, we do need to raise concerns where we see them, and it's absolutely the right of China to then respond to that.

Media: Prime Minister, on housing, is it enough of a crisis that the Government should relook at its 8,000 houses to build over the next four years? Should it increase that?

PM: So that—I mean, taken in its totality, obviously, it's 18,000 if you take into account the existing goal that we had. What we have to also take into account is what we're able to deliver. We are working very hard to make sure that we have a workforce who is able to take on record consents in Auckland. Our house building programme, which is already surpassing what any Government has built since the 1970s—we've doubled the number of apprentices engaged in the last year, but when we set those goals we also have to make sure we can deliver on them. We're scaling up as quickly as we can, but I'd be loath to set a number that I then couldn't reach.

Media: But those housing consents are actually lower per head of population than we had in the 60s and 70s. Why can't we do much better than that?

PM: Well, again, we are very much trying to rebuild a sector that I do think has had a depleted workforce, and so keep in mind, we've also learnt from what we saw happen in the GFC. So at that time, obviously, employers, the shock of the GFC, they let go some of the training workforce they had, and, right at the time when we needed a continuation of a house building programme, we saw dips. And so that's why we've done two things: subsidised employers to keep their trainees on, so we not only keep our workforce but we grow it, made apprenticeships free, and, at the same time, put in a scheme to help support developers who

may have issues around access to finance to keep building because we need to keep building houses.

Media: Just going back to the Air New Zealand crew member who tested positive. Where exactly have they been in the last two weeks and where is it thought that they [*Inaudible*] the virus from?

PM: So it's important to reiterate: they tested negative on 18 November, but we are—as a precautionary approach, even while we await full retesting—undertaking contact tracing. So treating it as you would expect us to, but keep in mind: only four days before they had that test in Shanghai they had already tested negative in New Zealand.

Media: Right, so it's very likely that they could've picked it up in New Zealand?

PM: So two things to keep in mind: my understanding is they are being retested. So as you'd imagine, we always want to make sure that we are dealing with a positive case here. So they are being retested, we are contact tracing, and then we'll work through, of course, the source identification. The thing we always prioritise is, before we find out what has happened, make sure we get everyone that we need to proactively get into isolation into isolation.

Media: On the RMA, are we to understand that with the other 10 projects—I believe it's 10 that were in the Act in addition to that water storage one. Are they currently before panels or yet to be considered by panels?

Hon David Parker: Some of them are. Some of them have had applications filed with the panel and are being considered. Others, the applications have not yet been filed by the applicant.

Media: Do you have a breakdown of the numbers? Was it 10 that are still—there's the water storage plus 10, is that right?

Hon David Parker: Can I get back to you on the number? I thought it was 10, from memory.

Media: Prime Minister, were there any—

PM: OK, last—yeah, last two questions. Yep?

Media: When you discussed trade with Biden, did he talk about the possibility of an FTA at all, or if you're—

PM: No, I kept it fairly general. So, in total, our conversation was about 20 minutes long, and my reference to trade was quite specific to institutions such as the WTO, the work we've done there, and just the importance of those open flows, particularly in the environment we're in at the moment. So not too specific beyond that.

Media: No discussion of the CPTPP either?

PM: No—no, not in that call. But I don't expect it will be the only chance we have for conversation.

Media: He praised you for being a—your leadership after March 15, the COVID-19 response, and also being a working mother in a statement that he just put out.

PM: Oh!

Media: How did that feel?

PM: Well, obviously, they weren't the things that I decided to highlight, because, you know, the substance of our conversation was very much directed towards our relationship. But, you know, those kinds of conversations all lend themselves to strong personal relationships, which are really important to us in the long term. But, obviously, it demonstrated that he knows exactly what's going on over here.

Media: Did you swap mobile numbers?

PM: That's not something that is a matter of course, I would expect, from a leader in the United States. We all, of course, have our own security arrangements, but as you can imagine, in a first phone call I don't necessarily ask for someone's phone number. The normal rules of personal etiquette apply, I have to say.

Media: Did you just ask for his biography at all? You know, this is not a first attempt at being elected; he's also had a life kind of wrecked by losses—

PM: So you're suggesting that in my first call with the President-Elect, I raise his unsuccessful points in his career in politics?

Media: Or his journey to be the President. He, obviously, talked about, you know, the fact that you're a mother—that's somewhat personal.

PM: Oh yeah, and, look, we did have some personal discussion—you know, quite a discussion about his Irish heritage, his views on, you know, his experience here in New Zealand, the fact that my grandfather and his uncle served in the Pacific. So, yeah, there were moments where it was, you know—well, it was very much an unscripted call, as you can hear from my read out.

All right, thank you, everyone.

conclusion of press conference