

**In confidence**

Office of the Minister of Social Development and Employment  
Cabinet Business Committee

**EXTENDING THE COVID-19 NEW ZEALANDERS STRANDED OVERSEAS SUPPORT PROGRAMME**

**Proposal**

- 1 This paper seeks Cabinet agreement to fund an extension of the COVID-19 New Zealanders Stranded Overseas Support Programme (the NZSOS programme) for a further four months, to 31 August 2021.

**Relation to government priorities**

- 2 This proposal relates to the Government's ongoing COVID-19 response.

**Executive Summary**

- 3 Following the COVID-19 outbreak, a group of Ministry of Social Development (MSD) clients were prevented from returning home due to pandemic-related border and travel restrictions. Many of these clients were at risk of experiencing hardship as the length of time they remained outside of New Zealand endured, and their usual benefit and pension payments ended.
- 4 In April 2020, a Ministerial Welfare Programme was established to support these clients. The NZSOS programme enables special financial support to be provided to recipients of New Zealand Superannuation (NZS), Veterans' Pension (VP), Main Benefit and Supplementary Assistance who are unable to return to New Zealand due to COVID-19, until it can reasonably be expected that the client is able to do so. The programme is scheduled to expire on 27 April 2021.
- 5 There are 1,298 clients (1,227 pensioners and 71 main beneficiaries) who remain overseas and continue to be supported by the NZSOS programme. Factors such as flight and MIQ availability, pre-departure testing requirements, and travel-related health concerns may be making it difficult for some clients to return home before the current expiry of the programme.
- 6 I propose to extend the NZSOS programme for a further four months, to 31 August 2021. That ensures that no eligible clients will remain overseas without financial support for that period, and aligns the end dates of the programme and the Emergency Benefit offered to temporary visa holders in New Zealand.
- 7 MSD will make it clear to clients that the programme will not be extended beyond August 2021. A four-month extension therefore also provides time for MSD to undertake a check of clients' eligibility for:

- 7.1 Ongoing support under the NZSOS programme. MSD will gather information about the location and circumstances of all clients being supported by the programme to ensure they meet the criteria and better understand what is preventing them from returning home.
- 7.2 Alternative support options. NZS and VP clients may be eligible for payment under statutory portability provisions and reciprocal social security agreements. If they are, MSD will work to transition them before the NZSOS programme ends. Not all clients will be eligible for payments under these settings, and the rate of payment received may be less, or nil, for many clients.
- 8 MSD will encourage the 71 beneficiaries currently being supported by the programme to return to New Zealand as soon as possible.<sup>1</sup> This is necessary because there are no portable payment options available to these clients.<sup>2</sup>
- 9 A timeline of the eligibility check processes is attached as Appendix One.
- 10 I am seeking your approval to fund this \$12.1 million extension from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund (CRRF). I will implement the extension by amending the existing NZSOS programme before its expiry on 27 April 2021. To ensure the amendment takes effect before the expiry of the current NZSOS programme, I intend to waive the 28-day rule.

**The NZSOS Programme was established to provide special financial support to eligible MSD clients unable to return to New Zealand due to COVID-19**

*The effects of COVID-19 have left a cohort of MSD clients outside of New Zealand since at least March 2020*

- 11 When the Epidemic Preparedness (COVID-19) Notice 2020 came into force on 25 March 2020, there were 7,243 MSD clients temporarily overseas.<sup>3</sup> Many of these clients were prevented from returning to New Zealand by pandemic-related border and travel restrictions. Some clients were at risk of experiencing hardship as the length of time they were required to remain overseas endured, and their usual benefit and pension payments ended.<sup>4</sup>

*A Ministerial Welfare Programme was established to support these clients*

- 12 On 3 April 2020, the COVID-19 Ministerial Group agreed that payments of certain benefits and pensions could be resumed, or continue to be paid, to

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<sup>1</sup> Note that NZSOS clients will not be liable for MIQ fees. Fees only apply if the person left New Zealand after 10 August 2020. All NZSOS clients left on or before 26 March 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Payments can continue for beneficiaries in specified circumstances, usually only with an approved reason for travel, for up to 28 days. Whereas, pensioners can continue receiving their payments while absent from New Zealand for up to 26 weeks. If their absence is expected to be longer than this, there is also flexibility to apply for open-ended proportional payments under general or special portability, or under a reciprocal social security agreement.

<sup>3</sup> Of these 7,243 clients, 5,165 were pensioners and 2,078 were beneficiaries.

<sup>4</sup> For example, when the client's absence has exceeded the statutory absence provisions, which enable payment of pensions for up to 26 weeks and benefits for up to 28 days.

people who are unable to return to New Zealand because of COVID-19. I established the *COVID-19 New Zealanders Stranded Overseas Support Programme* on 20 April 2020.

- 13 Under the NZSOS programme, special financial support can be provided to MSD clients who are unable to return to New Zealand because of the impact of COVID-19.<sup>5</sup> Payments made under the programme are equivalent to the rate of NZS, VP, Main benefit or Supplementary Assistance<sup>6</sup> the client would have received had they been in New Zealand.
- 14 A new demand-driven Benefit or Related Expenses appropriation (*New Zealand Beneficiaries Stranded Overseas*) was established by the Ministerial Group to make payments under the NZSOS programme. Changes to appropriations have been approved to ensure sufficient funding has been available in this appropriation to support continued payments being made under the programme. To date, all payments made under the programme have been considered fiscally neutral – the increased cost of paying overseas clients is offset by a corresponding saving in domestic payments.

*The current NZSOS programme is scheduled to expire on 27 April 2021*

- 15 The NZSOS programme was established for a six-month period, expiring on 20 October 2020. In September 2020, there was ongoing demand for the support provided by the programme, and many of the clients relying on it for financial support continued to face issues returning home. As a result, Cabinet agreed to fund a six-month extension of the programme in September 2020 [CAB-20-MIN-0452 refers]. It is scheduled to expire on 27 April 2021.
- 16 Since April 2020, the programme has supported 2,893 clients, at a total cost of \$20.2 million.<sup>7</sup>

**Some clients may be facing challenges returning to New Zealand and are being supported by the NZSOS programme while they remain overseas**

*MSD is currently supporting 1,298 clients through the NZSOS programme*

- 17 As at 22 March 2021, there were 1,298 clients receiving payment under the NZSOS programme. 1,227 were pensioners (receiving the equivalent of NZS or VP) and 71 were beneficiaries (receiving the equivalent of a main benefit).

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to other eligibility criteria, clients were not entitled to assistance under the NZSOS programme if they left New Zealand on or after 26 March 2020 (when the Epidemic Preparedness (COVID-19) Notice 2020 came into force).

<sup>6</sup> Supplementary Assistance is defined in the NZSOS programme as Accommodation Supplement, Child Disability Allowance, Disability Allowance, Orphan's Benefit, Special Benefit, Special Disability Allowance, Temporary Additional Support, Unsupported Child's Benefit, Winter Energy Payment, and support paid under specified Ministerial Welfare Programmes and Regulations.

<sup>7</sup> This information was accurate as at 31 January 2021.

18 The location of these clients is not well-known. Officials surveyed just over 1,800 clients who were receiving support under the NZSOS programme in July 2020. Of the 596 clients who anonymously responded:

- nearly 300 clients were in Australia
- groupings of more than 15 clients were in the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States, China, India and other Asian nations
- smaller groupings were in various other countries across the globe.

19 More information is available about the location of the 71 beneficiaries who are being supported by the NZSOS programme. This is because these clients were required to tell MSD about their travel plans and reasons for travel before leaving New Zealand, pursuant to section 114 of the Social Security Act 2018. These 71 clients are located in the following countries:

**Table 1: Location of 71 beneficiaries being supported by the NZSOS programmes, as at March 2021**

Country	Number of clients	Country	Number of clients
Afghanistan	■ <sup>8</sup>	Japan	■
Australia	33	Jordan	■
Canada	■	Peru	■
China	■	Samoa	■
Ecuador	■	Somalia	■
Ethiopia	■	Tonga	■
India	9	Tuvalu	■
Ireland	■	United States	■
Israel	■		

20 Several communications have been sent to clients since the NZSOS programme was established in April 2020.<sup>9</sup> These communications have reiterated the eligibility criteria for continued payment under the programme, emphasised the need to return to New Zealand as soon as travel allows, prompted clients to check travel requirements and reminded them of their obligation to inform MSD of changes in their circumstances.

*The impact of COVID-19 may be limiting clients' ability to return home before the current expiry of the NZSOS programme in April 2021*

21 At present, there are commercial pathways available from most of the countries where we know at least some of the clients being supported by the NZSOS programme are located. However, these flights may not be considered a reasonable travel option for all clients (e.g. long and

<sup>8</sup> Suppressed to protect the privacy of individuals given very low numbers.

<sup>9</sup> MSD has sent out mass communications to clients who are being paid under the NZSOS programme, who MSD have known email addresses for, in April 2020, July 2020, August 2020 and October 2020. There are approximately 500 clients that MSD does not have current email addresses for. For these 500 clients, MSD is sending hard copy letters to the clients' domestic addresses and relying on these letters being relayed or redirected to the client.

unpredictable transit requirements may be considered unreasonable for older people who are more vulnerable to COVID-19).

- 22 Securing a place in MIQ, health concerns, and accessing pre-departure flight testing may also be making travel more difficult for some of these clients. All spaces on the Managed Isolation Allocation System (the MIQ online booking system) are booked through to mid-June 2021. Further voucher releases for June and July are planned for the coming weeks.

**I propose to extend the NZSOS programme for a further four months**

*I propose to extend the NZSOS programme because reasonable travel options for some clients to return to New Zealand continue to be limited by COVID-19 ...*

- 23 Based on the information MSD has about the NZSOS client cohort, it is likely that at least some of these clients continue to be prevented from returning home, and are unlikely to be able to return before the NZSOS programme's current expiry in April 2021.

- 24 Extending the NZSOS programme:

24.1 aligns with the original policy intent of the programme, to provide financial support to eligible New Zealand beneficiaries and pensioners who are unable to return to New Zealand due to COVID-19

24.2 aligns with the approach taken by comparable international jurisdictions, most of whom are continuing payment of pensions to nationals who are unable to return home, as part of existing pension portability settings, or settings introduced in response to COVID-19

24.3 reflects the ongoing uncertainties around flight, border, and quarantine requirements across the globe resulting from COVID-19

24.4 will ensure continued financial assistance is provided to clients, helping to alleviate financial hardship and barriers to their return

24.5 will provide officials with more time to transition clients who are unable to return before the programme's expiry to alternative support options.

- 25 Ending the NZSOS programme in April 2021 would reinforce that support for New Zealanders who are unable to return home because of the pandemic was intended to be temporary in nature, and that the expectation is that people in this situation return to New Zealand as soon as possible. However, it may also leave any eligible clients who are unable to return home right now without government support, potentially risking their welfare and wellbeing.

*... And that this extension be for four months until 31 August 2021*

- 26 I considered differing time periods to extend the NZSOS programme, of four, six and twelve months. On balance, the four-month extension is preferable because this option:

- 26.1 reflects that the support provided by the programme is temporary in nature, while acknowledging that the need for support remains, given the ongoing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic
- 26.2 aligns with the government support being offered to temporary visa holders in New Zealand, via the Emergency Benefit, which is continuing until 31 August 2021 [CAB-21-MIN-024 refers]. A four-month extension aligns the end dates of support for both cohorts.
- 27 Longer extension periods were discounted because these options do not reinforce the temporary nature of support and represent time periods in which the impacts of COVID-19 may have changed in some significant ways, particularly under the twelve-month option.

*No other amendments to the NZSOS programme are being proposed*

- 28 Other than amending the expiry of the NZSOS programme, I am not making any other amendments to the programme.

**MSD will check clients' eligibility for the NZSOS programme, explore alternative support options and support clients to return home**

*MSD will prioritise checking all clients' eligibility for the NZSOS programme...*

- 29 While payments under the NZSOS programme will be available for another four months under this extension, this does not automatically mean that all clients currently receiving support under the programme will continue receiving payments for this whole time period. Although clients currently being paid under the programme would not need to reapply to continue receiving their payments, MSD will undertake an eligibility check on all clients receiving payment under the programme.
- 30 This eligibility check will confirm each client's eligibility for continued payment under the NZSOS programme, and provide MSD with more information about their location and circumstances. It will commence within two weeks of Cabinet's decision to extend the programme. MSD expects to determine the eligibility of most clients who respond to the check by the end of May 2021.
- 31 Clients who do not respond to this eligibility check, or who provide information that indicates they are ineligible for continued payment, will have their payments stopped unless MSD is satisfied they remain eligible. Several prompts must be provided to clients before their payments are stopped. Payments will be stopped to all clients who do not respond to the check by 6 June 2021.
- 32 As travel restrictions ease, including when any Quarantine-Free Travel (QFT) zones are announced, MSD will proactively reach out to all clients receiving payments under the NZSOS programme to inform them that their eligibility for continued payment may be impacted by these announcements (as reasonable travel options to New Zealand may now be available) and reiterate the importance of affected clients returning to New Zealand.

- 33 Once the eligibility check is completed, MSD will know the location of the clients being supported by the NZSOS programme. It can then identify and contact clients in countries impacted by QFT zone announcements as those announcements are made to re-confirm their eligibility for payment.
- 34 These clients' payments under the programme will be stopped unless MSD is satisfied they remain eligible. Because MIQ availability is only one of the barriers preventing clients' return to New Zealand, some clients in these locations may continue to be eligible for payment under the programme despite quarantine free travel being available.
- 35 Where MSD can identify that MIQ availability is the only barrier to a client returning home, it will contact these clients and ask them to book and provide confirmation of flights within 10 working days. This contact will also provide clients with an opportunity to inform MSD of any changes in their circumstances that may be preventing them from booking return flights right now. If clients do not respond to this request for proof of flight confirmation within a maximum of a further 20 working days, and if MSD has no further information it can rely on, MSD will suspend these clients' payments as they cannot confirm ongoing eligibility for special assistance under the programme.
- 36 For clients who book their flights, and provide confirmation of this to MSD, their special assistance payments will continue under the NZSOS programme until their return to New Zealand, or the end of the programme, whichever is sooner.

*... And check NZS and VP recipients' eligibility for alternative supports*

- 37 While MSD undertakes the eligibility check discussed in paragraphs 29 and 30 above, additional information will also be sought from NZS and VP clients about the length of their New Zealand working age residency. This will assist MSD to transition NZS and VP clients who are unable to return to New Zealand before 31 August 2021 to receive their NZS or VP payments under:
- 37.1 Statutory portability provisions. A client typically needs to apply for portable proportional payments<sup>10</sup> before leaving New Zealand, but applications can be made after the client's departure if their enduring absence is due to circumstances beyond their control.<sup>11</sup> Some NZSOS clients may be eligible for portable payments under this exception.
- 37.2 Reciprocal social security agreements. New Zealand has a network of reciprocal social security agreements that enable New Zealanders to receive certain benefits or pensions while residing in agreement countries, if they meet certain eligibility criteria.<sup>12</sup> If NZSOS clients have been in an agreement country for more than 26 weeks, they may be

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<sup>10</sup> The rate of payment payable under the NZSOS payment is equivalent to what the client would have been entitled to in New Zealand – the domestic rate of payment.

<sup>11</sup> Refer to section 27 of the New Zealand Superannuation and Retirement Income Act 2001.

<sup>12</sup> New Zealand currently has a reciprocal social security agreement with Australia, Canada, Denmark, Republic of Ireland, Jersey and Guernsey, Greece, Malta, Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

able to apply to receive a proportional payment of NZS or VP under our agreement with that country.<sup>13</sup> This option will not be widely available to NZSOS clients, as payment under most agreements is conditional on the client having a valid resident visa, and legal right to live in, that agreement country.<sup>14</sup>

- 38 Eligible clients will be encouraged to apply to receive NZS and VP payments under these existing policy settings. MSD will work with them to gather any additional information it requires, verify their travel movements with the New Zealand Customs Service and process their applications before the expiry of the programme. Although this process will be complex, due to the different eligibility requirements for portable payments and benefits or pensions in each agreement country, MSD will endeavour to ensure that as many clients as possible have been transitioned to alternative supports by the end of the programme.
- 39 MSD officials will report back to the Minister for Social Development and Employment by 1 July 2021 on:
  - 39.1 the number of people being supported by the NZSOS programme
  - 39.2 the number of people who have exited the programme
  - 39.3 the number of people who are eligible to transition to alternative support options, and have been transitioned, and
  - 39.4 any issues it is experiencing with the transition process.

*There are no alternative support options for the 71 main beneficiaries being supported by the NZSOS programme, so officials will instead focus on exploring options to assist their return to New Zealand*

- 40 Benefit payments are typically only payable for up to 28 days, in specified circumstances. There are no options for portable benefit payments beyond this period.
- 41 Given this, officials will prioritise the processing of eligibility check responses from the 71 beneficiaries being supported by the NZSOS programme. This will enable payments being made to clients who are no longer eligible for

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<sup>13</sup> One exception is the reciprocal social security agreement with the United Kingdom. This Agreement does not allow for payment of NZS or VP to New Zealanders in the United Kingdom. Instead, a person may be eligible for payment of a United Kingdom State Retirement Pension.

<sup>14</sup> s 9(2)(h) [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



payment to be stopped, and information about the location of clients to be captured, as quickly as possible.<sup>15</sup>

- 42 MSD will work with this group of 71 clients to encourage them to return to New Zealand as soon as possible.

*There are limited options to support clients who may be facing financial barriers to returning home*

- 43 NZSOS clients will not be liable for MIQ fees. Fees only apply if the person left New Zealand after 10 August 2020. All NZSOS clients left on or before 26 March 2020.
- 44 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade provides consular support to New Zealanders overseas. Financial assistance may be provided in exceptional circumstances via a consular loan, which the New Zealander must agree to pay back. This is not an ongoing support option for clients receiving payments under the NZSOS programme.<sup>16</sup>

### **Implementation**

- 45 A decision is needed to fund the extension of the NZSOS programme on 6 April 2021. This will provide MSD sufficient time to complete the IT, operational and communications work required to continue payments under the NZSOS programme and initiate the eligibility check by 28 April 2021.

### **Financial Implications**

- 46 The overall estimated cost of extending the NZSOS programme for four months is approximately \$12.1 million net, over 2020/21 and 2021/22. I seek funding of \$12.1 million net from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, established as part of Budget 2020, to fund this extension.
- 47 The funding being sought for the proposed four-month extension is proportionally higher than the \$20.2 million required to fund the NZSOS programme between April 2020 and January 2021. During the beginning of the programme, many clients were being paid under statutory absence provisions, which allow for a 26-week absence from New Zealand. As the statutory absence period was exceeded by clients, they progressively shifted to being paid under the NZSOS programme. By mid-September, all clients who were eligible for payment under the programme had been out of New Zealand for more than 26 weeks and were shifted to the programme.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> These clients will still be afforded the same amount of time to respond to the eligibility check as pensioners, and will also receive the same number of reminders before payments are ended, where appropriate.

<sup>16</sup> The purpose of a consular loan is to assist a New Zealander who is overseas and requires resources to ensure their immediate safety and well-being, or to assist a New Zealander who requires assistance to pay for a flight to New Zealand. It is not a means of ongoing support.

<sup>17</sup> Clients needed to have left New Zealand before 26 March 2020 to be eligible for financial support under the NZSOS programme.

### Legislative Implications

- 48 An amendment to the NZSOS programme is required, which I intend to make before the end of the current NZSOS programme on 27 April 2021. This will be made under section 101 of the Social Security Act 2018.
- 49 To ensure the amendment takes effect before the expiry of the current NZSOS programme, and because the amendment will only confer benefits to the public, I intend to waive the 28-day rule.

### Regulatory Impact Statement

- 50 The Treasury has determined that the proposal to extend the COVID-19 New Zealanders Stranded Overseas Support Programme is exempt from the requirement to provide a Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) because it is intended to temporarily defer or extend legislative deadlines and is required urgently to be effective, making a complete, robust and timely RIS unfeasible. MSD has previously prepared an Impact Summary which considers this proposal, [Funding an extension to the COVID-19 New Zealanders Stranded Overseas Support Programme](#) [CAB-20-MIN-0452 refers].

### Climate Implications of Policy Assessment

- 51 The Climate Implications of Policy Assessment (CIPA) team has been consulted and confirms that the CIPA requirements do not apply to this proposal as the threshold for significance is not met.

### Population Implications

- 52 There are no immediate gender or disability implications from this paper.
- 53 Older people, who make up the majority of the clients currently being supported by the NZSOS programme (1,227 of 1,298 clients), will be positively impacted by the extension.

### Human Rights

- 54 This paper has no immediate implications for the rights and freedoms affirmed in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

### Consultation

- 55 This paper has been prepared by MSD in consultation with MFAT, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Veterans' Affairs, and the Treasury.

### Communications

- 56 Officials will develop key messages on the provision of assistance to eligible MSD clients who may be unable to return to New Zealand due to COVID-19, and will communicate these messages to those clients. MSD's website will be updated to reflect the NZSOS programme extension.

- 57 Subsequent communications will also be sent to clients during the new extension period, reminding clients of the NZSOS programme's new expiry date and that it will not be extended further. Sending these communications will ensure clients have time to plan for the cessation of the programme.

### Proactive Release

- 58 MSD will proactively release this paper in accordance with Cabinet guidelines. Any redactions made will be consistent with the Official Information Act 1982.

### Recommendations

The Minister for Social Development and Employment recommends that the Committee:

- 1 **note** that the Minister for Social Development and Employment established the NZSOS programme on 20 April 2020, to provide special financial support to eligible MSD clients who are unable to return to New Zealand due to COVID-19
- 2 **note** that Cabinet agreed to extend the expiry of the NZSOS programme from 20 October 2020 to 27 April 2021 in September 2020 [CAB-20-MIN-0452]
- 3 **note** that as at 22 March 2021, 1,298 clients were being supported by the NZSOS programme, and the impact of COVID-19 may be limiting these clients' ability to return to New Zealand before the expiry of the programme
- 4 **agree** to extend the NZSOS programme for four months, to 31 August 2021
- 5 **note** that the Minister for Social Development and Employment will amend the NZSOS programme with immediate effect before 27 April 2021, to implement the decision in recommendation 4, and to allow payments currently being made under the existing programme to continue to eligible clients
- 6 **direct** MSD officials to clearly communicate to clients that the NZSOS programme will not be extended further beyond 31 August 2021
- 7 **direct** MSD officials to undertake a check of the location and eligibility of all clients being supported by the NZSOS programme to receive ongoing support under the programme commencing in the week of 12 April 2021
- 8 **note** that MSD officials will determine the eligibility of most clients who respond to the check referred to in recommendation 7 above by the end of May 2021 and payments will be stopped for those who do not respond to the check by 6 June 2021
- 9 **direct** MSD officials to undertake a check of the eligibility of NZS and VP clients being supported by the NZSOS programme to alternative support options, including payment under statutory portability provisions and reciprocal social security agreements, and to transition as many clients as possible to alternative supports

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- 10 **direct** MSD officials to actively work to transition NZS and VP clients to alternative support options and encourage the 71 beneficiaries currently being supported by the programme to return to New Zealand
- 11 **note** that once MSD has gathered information about clients' locations, as part of the eligibility check noted in recommendation 7 above, if quarantine free travel opens with another country (including Australia), MSD will directly communicate with clients in that country to re-assess their eligibility for continued payment under the NZSOS programme and payments will be stopped within seven weeks, unless MSD is satisfied they remain eligible
- 12 **note** that MSD officials will report back to the Minister for Social Development and Employment on the number of people being supported by the NZSOS programme, who have exited the programme and who are eligible to transition to alternative support options by 1 July 2021
- 13 **note** that the Minister for Social Development and Employment intends to waive the 28-day rule for the amendment to the welfare programme noted at recommendation 5, so that it can have immediate effect before the expiry of the current programme
- 14 **agree** to increase spending to provide for the costs associated with the decision in recommendation 4 above, with the following impact on the operating balance and net core Crown debt:

Vote Social Development	\$m - increase/(decrease)				
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 & Outyears
Operating Balance Impact	6.012	6.111	-	-	-
Debt Impact	-	-	-	-	-
No Impact	0.904	0.921	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.916</b>	<b>7.032</b>	-	-	-

- 15 **approve** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the decision in recommendation 14 above:

Vote Social Development Minister for Social Development and Employment	\$m - increase/(decrease)				
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 & Outyears
<b>Benefits or Related Expenses:</b> NZ Beneficiaries Stranded Overseas	6.916	7.032	-	-	

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<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>6.916</b>	<b>7.032</b>	-	-	
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- 16 **agree** that the proposed changes to appropriations for 2020/21 above be included in the 20/21 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increases be met from Imprest Supply
- 17 **agree** that the operating balance impact and net core Crown debt impact in recommendation 14 above of the expenses incurred under recommendation 15 above be charged against the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund established as part of Budget 2020
- 18 **authorise** the Minister for Social Development and Employment to make minor and technical policy, design, and implementation decisions regarding the NZSOS programme

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Carmel Sepuloni

Minister for Social Development and Employment

Appendix One – Indicative timeframes to complete client eligibility checks

TIMELINE		NZSOS ELIGIBILITY	ELIGIBILITY FOR PORTABLE/AGREEMENT PAYMENTS	EXITED AND REFERRED TO INTERNATIONAL SERVICES
WEEK BEG	29-Mar			
WEEK BEG	5-Apr			
WEEK BEG	12-Apr	Letter 1	No	
WEEK BEG	19-Apr		Yes	
WEEK BEG	26-Apr	Letter 2	No	
WEEK BEG	3-May		Yes	
WEEK BEG	10-May			
WEEK BEG	17-May	Letter 3	No	
WEEK BEG	24-May		Yes	
WEEK BEG	31-May	Letter 4 - No response; advising clients payments will stop. Bulk suspension due end of the week (IT to confirm).	MSD will work with clients to gather any additional information following receipt of client's completed web form, travel movements verified with Customs, applications for payment portability/agreement processed. Applications typically take 2 hours to process, with the MSD-Customs NZ information match taking up to 20 working days.	

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WEEK BEG	7- Jun			
WEEK BEG	14- Jun			
WEEK BEG	21- Jun			
WEEK BEG	28- Jun			
WEEK BEG	5- Jul	NZSOS Programme and eligibility update (Note: MSD may not have collated all information for second eligibility check based on back-and-forth required with individual clients, update may be indicative)		
WEEK BEG	12- Jul			
WEEK BEG	19- Jul			
WEEK BEG	26- Jul			
WEEK BEG	2- Aug			
WEEK BEG	9- Aug			
WEEK BEG	16- Aug			
WEEK BEG	23- Aug			
WEEK BEG	30- Aug	<b>PROGRAMME END</b>		

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