

Office of the Minister for Social Development and Employment

Chair

Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

EXTENSION TO THE CHRISTCHURCH MOSQUES ATTACK WELFARE PROGRAMME

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks agreement:
 - 1.1 For the Christchurch Mosques Attack Welfare Programme to be extended for 12 months from 5 June 2021 to 4 June 2022
 - 1.2 For the extension to be funded through a fiscally neutral adjustment from the *Improved Employment and Social Outcomes Support* Multi-Category Appropriation to the *Benefits or Related Expenses, Hardship Assistance* appropriation.

Relation to government priorities

- 2 This proposal aligns with the Government's commitment to enact the recommendations from the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019. In particular, Recommendation 25 proposed that the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) facilitates coordinated access to ongoing recovery support for affected whānau, survivors and witnesses.

Background

- 3 After the Christchurch mosques attacks of 15 March 2019, people present during the attacks and their immediate families became eligible to apply for the Christchurch Response (2019) – permanent residence visa (the Christchurch visa). People granted the Christchurch visa are eligible for most types of financial assistance from MSD.
- 4 However, there were some temporary visa holders affected by the attacks who were not able to get this support. This included:
 - 4.1 people eligible for, but who had not yet been granted, the Christchurch visa;
 - 4.2 non-dependent adult children and non-dependent adult siblings (of those who died in the terrorist attacks or those who were injured or present) living in New Zealand on temporary visas; and
 - 4.3 those who were part of, or connected to, the two mosques or the Christchurch Muslim community experiencing mental trauma due to the attacks, and were present in New Zealand on 15 March 2019.
- 5 Cabinet agreed to the establishment of a new Welfare Programme under section 101 of the Social Security Act 2018 to ensure that those affected by the attacks were able to access financial support, even where their residency status may otherwise have made them ineligible for standard assistance from the income support system [CBC-19-MIN-0021].

- 6 The Christchurch Mosques Attack Welfare Programme (the Programme) was introduced on 3 June 2019 for a period of 12 months. The Programme was established to enable financial support for those who have applied for, but not yet been granted, the Christchurch visa, and those affected by the attacks who are living in New Zealand on a temporary visa. Alongside the Programme, MSD has provided additional community support to those affected by the attacks, including driver licencing support, English lessons, and building financial capability services. MSD also provided funding for immigration advocacy support through the NZ Association of Migration and Investment.
- 7 I agreed in February 2020 to extend the Programme for a further 12 months, ending on 4 June 2021. The funding for the extension was approved by myself and the Minister of Finance (under delegated authority from Cabinet) through a pre-commitment against Budget 2020. This was because:
- 7.1 people continued to rely on the Programme to access financial support
 - 7.2 the previous expiration date of the Programme coincided with the attacker's sentencing.

Some people may continue to require financial support from the Programme after June 2021

- 8 111 clients have received support through the Programme at a total cost of \$1.065m (from June 2019 to December 2020). 14 people continue to receive support through the Programme.
- 9 MSD understands that a small number of recipients of the Programme (around 10) are likely to continue to need financial assistance between June 2021 and June 2022.
- 10 For example, some recipients are still awaiting the outcomes of Special Direction Applications, which could result in special approval from the Minister of Immigration for a residence visa. When they move onto that visa, other financial assistance from MSD may become available.

I propose to extend the Programme for 12 months to ensure that those affected by the Christchurch mosques attack are able to receive financial support

- 11 The intent of the Programme was to ensure that those affected by the attacks were able to access financial support, even where their residency status may otherwise have made them ineligible.
- 12 The previous extension showed our commitment to continuing to support those that were still in these circumstances. I propose to continue this commitment with a second extension for twelve months.
- 13 Further extending the Programme would also be in line with recommendations from the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019. In particular, Recommendation 25 proposed that MSD facilitates coordinated access to ongoing recovery support for affected whānau, survivors and witnesses.

- 14 MSD anticipates that most, if not all, Special Direction Application outcomes should be decided before June 2022.
- 15 There may be a very small number of people whose future residency statuses are unknown. For example, if someone's Special Direction Application is declined, they may be able to move to another temporary visa or have their current temporary visa extended. There is a small chance that these people will need financial assistance through the Programme beyond June 2022. MSD officials will continue to monitor the situations of recipients of the Programme.
- 16 It is estimated that a 12-month extension to the Programme will cost an estimated \$57,000 in payments to recipients.

Implementation

- 17 The Programme has been active since 3 June 2019. If the proposed extension is approved, the existing operational and IT processes will continue as-is for a further 12 months.

Financial Implications

- 18 MSD estimates that a 12-month extension to the Programme will cost an estimated \$57,000 in payments to recipients. Given the low cost of the extension, I propose funding this with a fiscally neutral adjustment from the *Improved Employment and Social Outcomes Support* Multi-Category Appropriation to the *Benefits or Related Expenses, Hardship Assistance* appropriation.
- 19 The operational cost of administering the Programme is currently met from MSD's baseline funding. MSD will continue to meet this cost for the duration of the extension.

Legislative Implications

- 20 The proposed extension requires a minor amendment to the Christchurch Mosques Attack Programme made under section 101 of the Social Security Act 2018. This would amend the expiry date of the Christchurch Mosques Attack Programme to 4 June 2022.

Impact Analysis

Regulatory Impact Statement

- 21 The Regulatory Quality Team at the Treasury has determined that the regulatory proposals in this paper are exempt from the requirement to provide a Regulatory Impact Statement on the basis that they have no or minor impacts on businesses, individuals or not for profit entities [CBC-19-MIN-0021].

Population Implications

- 22 This proposal will impact a small group of temporary visa holders that have been affected by the Christchurch mosques attacks, and whose residency status makes them ineligible for standard assistance from the income support system. This is a group that Cabinet has previously agreed to support through the Programme [CBC-19-MIN-0021]. More recently, Cabinet has agreed, in principle, to the 44

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recommendations of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019 [CAB-20-MIN-0516]. This includes Recommendation 25, which proposes that MSD facilitates coordinated access to ongoing recovery support for affected whānau, survivors and witnesses.

- 23 MSD estimates that a small number of people will be impacted by the proposal. As at February 2020, 14 people continue to receive support through the Programme. If the Programme is extended from 5 June 2021, MSD estimates that 10 or fewer people will continue to need support through the Programme, and that this number will steadily decrease over the year.
- 24 For those affected, the proposed extension will allow them to access the same financial support they would be eligible for if they were not excluded by their residency status. This includes special assistance at the rate of the Emergency Benefit, Temporary Additional Support, the Winter Energy Payment, and the Best Start tax credit.
- 25 I do not foresee any negative impacts for this group.
- 26 There are no immediate disability implications resulting from this paper.

Human Rights

- 27 These proposals will improve the position of certain groups relative to the status quo under the income support system. Members of the groups being affected will generally be Muslim, but this is not the primary reason to distinguish them from other groups who are not also being affected. The Programme includes people in, or connected to, the two mosques or Christchurch Muslim community experiencing mental trauma. This criterion does not require the person to be a member of a religious community or exclude other religious groups. § 9(2)(h)

Consultation

- 28 The Treasury and Immigration NZ were consulted. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Ministry of Education were informed.

Communications

- 29 Officials will develop key messages on the extension of the Programme for those affected. MSD's website will be updated to reflect the extension.

Proactive Release

- 30 I intend to proactively release this Cabinet paper within standard timeframes.

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Recommendations

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

- 1 **note** that in May 2019, Cabinet agreed to the establishment of the Christchurch Mosques Attack Welfare Programme under section 101 of the Social Security Act 2018 to ensure that those affected by the Christchurch mosques attacks were able to access financial support, even where their residency status may otherwise have made them ineligible for standard assistance from the income support system [CBC-19-MIN-0021]
- 2 **note** that the Christchurch Mosques Attack Welfare Programme is currently set to expire on 4 June 2021
- 3 **note** that a small number of people affected by the mosques attack may continue to require financial support from the Christchurch Mosques Attack Welfare Programme after this date
- 4 **agree** to the extension of the Christchurch Mosques Attack Welfare Programme for 12 months from 5 June 2021 to 4 June 2022
- 5 **note** that a 12-month extension to the Christchurch Mosques Attack Welfare Programme is estimated to cost an estimated \$57,000 in payments to recipients
- 6 **approve** the following fiscally neutral adjustment to appropriations to give effect to the decision in recommendation 4 above, with no impact on the operating balance and /or net core Crown debt:

Vote Social Development Minister for Social Development and Employment	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 & Outyears
Multi-category Expenses and Capital Expenditure Improved Employment and Social Outcomes Support					
Departmental Output Expense: Administering Income Support (funded by revenue Crown)	(0.007)	(0.050)	-	-	-
Benefits or Related Expenses: Hardship Assistance	0.007	0.050	-	-	-
Total Operating	-	-	-	-	-

- 7 **agree** that the proposed changes to appropriations above be included in the 2020/21 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increases be met from Imprest Supply

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- 8 **note** that to give effect to recommendation 4, the Minister for Social Development and Employment will amend the Christchurch Mosques Attack Programme under section 101 of the Social Security Act 2018 to extend its expiry date to 4 June 2022.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Carmel Sepuloni

Minister for Social Development and Employment

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