

Aide-Mémoire

Meeting with Australian Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Hon Mark Butler MP

Date due to MO: 11 November 2025 **Date of Meeting:** 13 November 2025

Security level: IN CONFIDENCE **Reference:** H2025070639

To: Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Health

Consulted: Health New Zealand: ☐

Proactive release: This **title** is proposed by the Ministry of Health for proactive release: ☒

Contact for telephone discussion

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About the Meeting

Purpose of Meeting: The meeting with Australian Minister for Health and Ageing, Hon Mark Butler, follows your letter congratulating him on his reappointment in May 2025. Minister Butler accepted your offer of a virtual meeting to advance shared health interests.

Details of Meeting

Date: Wednesday 13 November 2025
Time: 5:00pm – 5:30pm
Venue: Via Teams

Attendees Hon Mark Butler, Minister for Health, and Ageing

Ministry representatives Not currently attending.
 An official (Salli Davidson, Group Manager, Global Health) can attend at your request.

Media TBC

Comment/ Summary:

- This introductory meeting follows a similar meeting between Hon Mark Butler and the previous Minister of Health, Hon Shane Reti, last year.
- In his letter to you on 23 June 2025, Hon Mark Butler expressed interest in discussing:
 - primary healthcare reform
 - pandemic preparedness
 - collaboration with the World Health Organization
 - Pacific engagement.
- Aged care and measles response have been added to the agenda since this letter.

Background and context

Biography: Hon Mark Butler, Minister for Health and Ageing



Hon Minister Butler is the federal Minister for Health and Ageing. He has been a Labor member of federal parliament since 2007.

Minister Butler previously served as Minister for Ageing and Australia's first Minister for Mental Health. He has also held portfolios for Housing, Homelessness, Social Inclusion, Climate Change, Water, and the Environment.

Before being elected to parliament, he worked as an official with the United Workers Union (then United Voice) for over 15 years, including 11 years as State Secretary.

He was a member of the South Australian Social Inclusion Board during its major review of the South Australian mental health system. In 2013 he was awarded the Alzheimer's Disease International Award for Outstanding Global Contribution to the Fight Against Dementia.

Minister Butler is the author of *Advanced Australia – The Politics of Ageing*, published in 2015; and *Climate Wars*, published in 2017. He holds a Law degree, an arts degree, and a Masters degree in International Relations.

New Zealand – Australia bilateral health relationship and engagement

1. Australia is home to the largest diaspora of New Zealanders. New Zealand's bilateral relationship with Australia is our closest, and most significant. Australia is our only formal ally and most important security and economic partner. We work together on almost every area of government, including international matters.
2. Australia and New Zealand have a long history of cooperation on health issues, working together from officials-level upwards to exchange best practice, strengthen regional health security, and improve the operations of the World Health Organization.
3. We also work closely on aid and development initiatives, particularly in the Pacific region.

Overview of the Australian health system

4. Australia's health system is a mixed public/private model with responsibilities shared between the Commonwealth (federal) government and the six states and two territories.
5. **Universal coverage** is supported by Medicare, which entitles Australian residents to free treatment in public hospitals and subsidised services in out of hospital settings (e.g., GP and specialist visits). Medicare is the publicly funded health insurance scheme managed by the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. Medicines are subsidised under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and emergency care in public hospitals is provided free of charge.
6. A sizable **private sector** includes private hospitals, medical specialists, diagnostics, and allied health. This is funded through a user-pays approach and private health insurance.
7. The **role of the Commonwealth** is primarily policy, regulation, and financing. It funds Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, sets national priorities, regulates

private health insurance, and supports aged care and veterans' health programmes. It commissions primary care and after-hours services and leads national digital health services.

8. **States and territories** are responsible for planning, funding, and operating the public hospital system. This includes emergency departments, ambulance services, many community and public health programmes, and much of the specialist mental health, and alcohol and other drug services.
9. **Aboriginal** and Torres Strait Islander health is delivered through both mainstream services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, supported by both levels of government.
10. The Australian **primary care** system has a blended payment model with providers mainly paid via fee for service and performance-based funding. The *Primary Health Care 10-year Plan 2022-2032* aims to reform the sector, including developing future focussed primary equipped to deliver better outcomes, to become more person-centred, and deliver more integrated care in local areas.
11. Australia recently reformed its **aged care system**. A new Aged Care Act came into effect on 1 November 2025, which focuses on empowering older people and upholding their rights, needs, and personal choices, and encouraging aged care providers to deliver high-quality care. It addresses around 60 recommendations from Australia's Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.
12. The **Australian Centre for Disease Control** was formally established following the passage of legislation in late 2025, to strengthen Australia's public health infrastructure and pandemic preparedness, with operations set to begin on 1 January 2026.
13. Australia is currently experiencing a **resurgence of measles** in 2025, with 157 cases this year. Australia's national immunisation coverage has declined due to pandemic related disruptions, vaccine hesitancy and delays in childhood immunisation, and is below the 95% required for herd immunity for measles.
14. The Australian Centre for Disease Control and state health departments are issuing alerts and exposure site lists, encouraging catch-up vaccinations for adults and children, and recommending MMR vaccinations for travellers, including infants 6-11 months.

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Salli Davidson
Group Manager, Global Health
Public Health Agency

Appendix 1: Australia Country Paper 2025

New Zealand's relationship with Australia

Shared history, values and institutions, personal connections, geographic proximity, and a healthy sporting rivalry combine to make New Zealand's relationship with Australia our closest and most significant.

In 2023 Australia and New Zealand celebrated a series of important anniversaries: 40 years since the establishment of our Closer Economic Relations FTA (CER), 50 years since our Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement that enabled our residents to freely travel between our countries, and 80 years since the establishment of High Commissions in each other's capitals.

Political connections

New Zealand and Australia share a longstanding and close political relationship. Each year our Prime Ministers hold formal talks called the Australia New Zealand Leaders' Meeting (ANZLM). The last ANZLM took place in August 2024 between Prime Minister Luxon and Prime Minister Albanese in Canberra. During the 2024 ANZLM, Prime Ministers recommitted to the [Trans-Tasman Roadmap to 2035](#) as a guiding framework for how we work together to achieve the shared vision of our bilateral relationship. Beyond these formal talks, our Prime Ministers are in regular contact through visits, meetings in the margins of international engagements, and phone calls.

Ministers regularly meet in Australia or New Zealand and at regional and international meetings.

International collaboration

Our countries work closely together on a range of diverse foreign policy, human rights, security, and trade issues. We regularly support each other's cases against third countries in the World Trade Organization, and work closely on messaging around international announcements where our positions align.

New Zealand and Australia work closely on aid and development strategies and initiatives, particularly in respect of the Pacific region. As long-term development partners in the Pacific we jointly focus on aid coordination, transparent donor practices and good governance.

Trade

Australia is New Zealand's most important economic partner and, in many ways, offers a five-fold extension to New Zealand's domestic market. Australia is our second largest export destination after China, our third largest services export market, and our leading source of foreign investment by a large margin.

People links

The freedom to move across the Tasman (to visit, work or live), as a result of our 50-year-old Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement, is foundational in our relationship. It provides benefits to our economies and the well-being of our people. Hundreds of thousands of Australians and New Zealanders typically cross the Tasman each year as tourists, for business purposes, or to visit friends and family. Australia is now home to New Zealand's largest diaspora, with over 700,000 Kiwis making Australia their home – this equates to around 14 percent of the population living in New Zealand.

In April 2023, the Australian government announced a direct pathway to citizenship for New Zealander's living in Australia. From 1 July 2023, New Zealanders living in Australia for four or more years could apply for citizenship and for a much lower fee. More than 70,000 New Zealanders have lodged applications and more than 40,000 have been granted Australian citizenship.

Defence and security

Australia and New Zealand have a long-standing defence and security relationship based on their shared history, cultural ties, and common security interests.

Australia is New Zealand's only formal defence ally and the strategic partnership between Australia and New Zealand continues to have global dimensions established in the days of the first ANZACs. As close neighbours and allies, we have a mutual commitment to support each other's security, closely coordinate our efforts in the Pacific, and maintain a shared focus on the security and stability of our broader region.

In addition to defence cooperation both countries are members of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing arrangement and work closely across the breadth of security issues, including on issues such as counter-terrorism, cyber security and trans-national organised crime.

Recent high level visits

To Australia

- Prime Minister Luxon to Sydney, December 2023
- Deputy Prime Minister Peters and Minister of Defence Collins to Melbourne for ANZMIN "2+2", February 2024
- Minister of Finance Willis visit to Sydney, February 2024
- Digitising Government Minister Collins visit to Sydney, February 2024
- Justice Minister Goldsmith visit to Melbourne for Standing Committee of Attorneys General, February 2024
- Commerce and Consumer Affairs Minister Bayly visit to Canberra and Sydney, February 2024
- Police Minister Mitchell visit to Canberra, April 2024
- Justice Minister Goldsmith visit to Canberra for Standing Committee of Attorneys General, May 2024
- Resources Minister Jones visit to Western Australia and Victoria, July 2024
- Minister of Finance Willis and Climate Change Minister Watts to Brisbane for the Finance/Climate Change Ministerial "2+2", July 2024
- Prime Minister Luxon to Sydney and Canberra for Australia New Zealand Leaders' Meeting, August 2024 (accompanied by Ministers Bishop, Brown, and Jones)
- Deputy Prime Minister Peters to Canberra for Raisina "Down Under" Dialogue, November 2024
- Trade Minister McClay to Melbourne, January 2025
- Associate Health Minister Costello to Melbourne and Sydney, February 2025
- Justice Minister Goldsmith visit to Melbourne for Standing Committee of Attorneys General, February 2025
- Transport and Infrastructure Minister Bishop to Sydney, April 2025
- Minister of Foreign Affairs Peters to Adelaide for Foreign Minister Consultations, 23 May 2025

To New Zealand

- Foreign Minister Wong to Wellington for Foreign Minister Consultations, June 2022
- Minister of Defence Marles to Wellington, April 2023
- Home Affairs Minister O'Neill to Wellington for Five Country Ministerial, June 2023
- Prime Minister Albanese to Wellington for Australia New Zealand Leaders' Meeting, August 2023
- Trade Minister Farrell to Rotorua for CER Ministerial, September 2024
- DPM Marles and Foreign Minister Wong to Auckland for ANZMIN "2+2", December 2024
- Assistant Treasurer Jones to Wellington to meet Commerce and Consumer Affairs Minister Bayly, December 2024
- Prime Minister Albanese to Queenstown for Australia New Zealand Leaders' Meeting, 9-10 August 2025