

# Press conference with the Right Honourable Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand

**PRIME MINISTER:** Good morning and Jacinda, welcome.

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** Thank you, thank you very much.

**PRIME MINISTER:** We've had a great meeting, a great discussion. We hit it off the first time we spoke and that friendship has developed as I knew it would. We've had some really good discussions and covered a lot of ground. But I just want to say that what is most important, is the enduring bond of friendship, partnership, of history between our two nations. We've been partners in freedom's cause, forever.

We saw that in Israel just a few days ago, at the commemorations for the Battle of Beersheba. The way in which ANZACs fought in freedom's cause there, bringing to an end the Ottoman domination of the Middle East. Jacinda it was your Governor General who represented you there, magnificently and we honoured the sacrifice of the New Zealand mounted infantry, their Light Horse. We commemorated the Charge of the Australian Light Horse. It was a moment when we could reflect on the way in which, again and again, Australians and New Zealanders, put their lives on the line and paid the ultimate price, the supreme sacrifice in freedom's cause. There at Beersheba 100 years ago and today, now, in the Middle East.

Our combined Task Group Taji has trained – this is in Iraq – has trained 26,000 Iraqi soldiers and police. To defeat, to enable them to defeat ISIL – as they are doing, as they are doing successfully – and of course then to maintain the peace. This why the scope of the Task Group's training expanded to include the police.

So it is a great history, it's a shared history, shared values, strong friendship. We're family and we have a shared future.

Now we discussed a lot of issues. We went through the TPP. We share a strong commitment to free trade and open markets. We discussed the way in which we're working together to defeat terrorism around the world and indeed to keep our people safe at home. We discussed the threats to regional security and reconfirmed our commitment to ensuring the North Korean regime is brought to its senses and stops its reckless and illegal destabilisations and threats of nuclear war. We are working very closely together in the Pacific and I want to say Jacinda, your understanding of the Pacific is second to none, from your own experience, your own life and of course your father was the [inaudible] for New Zealand.

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** [Inaudible].

**PRIME MINISTER:** Yes, that's right. Fantastic, I can see that we'll be working very closely together there. We'll be going, both of us, to APEC and the East Asia Summit. We'll be working together there, defending our values and our agendas. I want to just finally conclude these introductory remarks by just making the point that I made with Jacinda earlier in the bilateral; you know, Australia is a much bigger economy than New Zealand and a much bigger country of course, but we have so much to learn from New Zealand.

Many of you have heard me say this before, but there are so many areas where New Zealanders, for whatever reason – John Key used to say it was because New Zealand didn't have as much money to throw around as we do, not that we have much to play with, that's for sure – but New Zealanders do a lot of things very, very efficiently. Very efficiently in terms of public administration and the way they approach a lot of their administrative issues and policy issues. So I have always been an Australian politician and an Australian Prime Minister that looks across to New Zealand as an example of good government, good administration and real innovation. I'm sure that we'll continue to learn from each other and work together under your leadership. So, welcome.

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** Thank you Prime Minister and can I say what a pleasure it is to be here, to have been hosted at Kirribilli. I placed a special emphasis, quite deliberately on making my first visit as Prime Minister to Australia. I think it speaks to the strength of our relationship that within such a tight timeframe, we were able to make that visit happen because I believe that both of us prioritised that. So Malcolm, I thank you for that. The fact, of course, that this visit has been preceded by several conversations on the phone, I think, already laying the foundation for what I know will be a strong and genuine relationship.

It was also a priority for me to make sure that I had that opportunity to strengthen that relationship face to face before APEC, before the summit we're both heading to. To make sure that some of those conversations that we want to prioritise were being had face to face, particularly when it comes to issues like the TPP, like our shared interest as trading nations and furthering both of our own nations' causes in that regard.

It is absolutely fair to say that we are family. That's quite literal from my perspective, as I mentioned you briefly. You host several of my family members here and that'll be the case so many New Zealanders. So the depth of that relationship is important and also our ongoing advocacy on behalf of those guests is also important. I thank you for the advocacy that you've undertaken on behalf of those New Zealanders on occasion as well. Of course, that relationship goes beyond people. It speaks to investment, it speaks to trade, those are areas I hope to see us strengthen, particularly when we have our meeting in March where we will be looking for additional opportunities to again strengthen the ability for us to work together more closely and creating an even closer economy for the two of us than we already have.

Some of the issues that we have discussed today have been challenging, but I appreciate that as close friends and allies, we've been able to discuss them frankly and fully. I appreciate that.

Of course, most importantly, I have extended the invitation for the Prime Minister, for Malcolm to come and join me in some fishing. We [inaudible] in New Zealand, I'm no kayaker or paddleboarder but I can fish, so I welcome you, I welcome you to New Zealand at your next opportunity you're over there to come and go fishing.

**PRIME MINISTER:** Well thank you. Its been a great meeting and again, thanks very much for joining us today. We needed the rain, but it would have been nice if it hadn't been raining this morning. So, some questions? I think the first is from Siobahn Fogarty from the ABC.

**JOURNALIST:** Did you discuss Manus Island in your talks today? Ms Ardern, did you renew New Zealand's offer to take 150 refugees from offshore detention centres and do you believe that New Zealand has a humanitarian obligation to make this offer?

Is the treatment of the men and women on Manus and Nauru, do you believe that is morally justifiable?

As a follow up, Mr Turnbull, what was your response to any offer from Ms Ardern and if you refused it, what was your rationale?

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** So, was that one question?

[Laughter]

**PRIME MINISTER:** I think there were some supplementaries there, yeah.

**JOURNALIST:** That is one question. That is one question.

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** Yes, I did renew again New Zealand's offer to take 150 refugees from both Manus Island and Nauru. New Zealand holds an obligation generally, to make sure that we maintain our obligations to the United Nations to take refugees. We have set ourselves a quota that we extended to 1000 over the course of the next year. So that was the offer under which that was made and we firmly keep that on the table. It is a very genuine offer.

As I've said in New Zealand, we of course do not have the circumstances that Australia operating under, but we can also cannot ignore the human face of what Australia is dealing with as well. The offer is very genuine and absolutely remains on the table.

**PRIME MINISTER:** Well thank you very much and I want to thank Jacinda for renewing, or reconfirming the offer which was originally made by her predecessor John Key to Julia Gillard, quite some years ago.

Can I just make a few observations though about the situation with people smuggling and refugees in general. After the Labor government came into power in Australia in 2007, John Howard's strong border protection policies were altered. As a result, we saw over 50,000 unlawful arrivals and 1200 deaths at sea.

Australia's immigration policy had been outsourced to people smugglers, the worst of the worst criminals. There were 8,000 children in detention at one point, it was a catastrophe.

Rudd, as you know, was replaced by Julia Gillard and then came back briefly before an election and it was during that period that he recognised the failure of his changes to border protection policy and asylum seekers who had been intercepted were taken to Nauru and Manus.

Since then, the boats have stopped. There has not been a successful people smuggling operation directed at Australia for well over a thousand days. There no children in detention. That has been a great achievement.

Many of those people smugglers were trying to get people to New Zealand. New Zealand obviously benefits from the strong border protection policies that we have. We appreciate, as I said, the offer that has been made and restated today. Now what we are seeking to do is to ensure that there are opportunities for resettlement for the people on Manus Island and Nauru. As you know, we have an arrangement with the United States whereby a substantial number, 1250, can, subject to the United States rigorous vetting, be resettled in the United States. We are pursuing those arrangements at the moment and that is our commitment. So we want to pursue those, conclude those arrangements and then in the wake of that, obviously we can consider other ones. The priority right now is the US arrangement.

I want to emphasise that we know what the alternative looks like. Tens of thousands of unlawful arrivals and over 1,000 men, women and children drowning at sea. We have put the people smugglers out of business and we will keep them out of business.

**JOURNALIST:** Ms Ardern, would you consider making this offer directly to Papua New Guinea, keeping Australia out of the loop?

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** No, because the offer is still under active consideration by Australia, so there's no need to do so. I absolutely understand the priority that has been placed around the offer by the agreement with the United States. Of course that agreement will lead to a substantial number of those who have refugee status, being resettled. So it's understandable that priority has been placed on that offer. Of course, from New Zealand's perspective, we want our offer to remain on the table, of course, so we can assist as much as we are able at expediting a resolution on this issue.

**PRIME MINISTER:** Can I just add that in the last year, Australia has taken through its humanitarian programme over 20,000 refugees to Australia. We have one of the largest rates of refugee acceptance through UN programs on a per capita basis, of any country in the world. So Australia is a very generous nation when it comes to refugees.

But I stress, we determine which refugees come to Australia. We will not have our immigration program, our sovereignty, our borders, outsourced to people smugglers. That's the point, that's the why we have been able to stop the

boats, keep the people smugglers out of business, stop women and children drowning at sea.

**JOURNALIST:** [Inaudible] from Fairfax in New Zealand, can I just clarify here, is the offer still on the table? Because you're not rejecting it outright. Ms Ardern, further to that, are there still concerns though [inaudible] main concerns about that offer was that reciprocal travel agreement made between New Zealand and Australia, that it would become a backdoor way into Australia for some of those refugees? And is there a way of accepting that offer without triggering a backdoor entry into Australia?

**PRIME MINISTER:** Well if that is addressed to me, I think the offer has been restated and we thank New Zealand for making that offer. We're not taking it up at this time, because of the reasons I explained earlier.

OK? I think the next one was Jonathan Lea from Ten News.

**JOURNALIST:** Thank you. Prime Minister Ardern firstly welcome and congratulations. Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said during your campaign, in her words were that she would find it very hard to build trust with those involved with allegations designed to undermine the Government of Australia. Were those comments raised today in your meeting with Prime Minister Turnbull and how would you characterise potentially any damage done by those comments?

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** No, they weren't raised and I think that speaks to the strength of the relationship. I don't see those events of the past as being relevant to our current relationship, which as I said, has been strong.

**JOURNALIST:** Prime Minister?

**PRIME MINISTER:** Yeah, I agree. We get on very well. We trust each other totally. New Zealand and Australia are as close as can be and we always will be. The fact that we are from different political traditions is irrelevant, John Howard and Helen Clarke worked very, very closely together.

Australian and New Zealand prime ministers have always walked closely together. Jacinda and I – believe, you share this view Jacinda – we've got on very well from the outset. We are very open and candid people. We've hit us off well and will continue to do so.

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** It's our Hamilton heritage.

**PRIME MINISTER:** Yes, that's right! We'll just share – you've got a great experience as being a DJ, haven't you?

[Laughter]

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** This did not come up during talks!

[Laughter]

**PRIME MINISTER:** I read about this and of course I made a rather feeble

attempt at rapping on a television show recently, so I don't know –

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** This is not announcing our joint act.

[Laughter]

**PRIME MINISTER:** No, that's right, that'd empty the room. But interestingly – Jacinda was born in Hamilton in the North Island – and quite a while before you are born, my mother lived in Hamilton. She was there for a few years before she moved to the United States. So, we were having a chat about my childhood memories of Mount Pirongia and clambering over Maori Paths and eating a very large quantity of feijoas. So I think I reduced the New Zealand feijoa population quite materially in my visit.

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** That's actually impossible.

[Laughter]

**PRIME MINISTER:** Just chipped away at it, yeah. Okay, Stephen Fitzpatrick from *the Australian*?

**JOURNALIST:** Prime Minister Turnbull given the growing number of Australians, eminent Australians expressing concern that your own Referendum Council's recommendations for substantive constitutional, for an constitutionally enshrined Voice to the Parliament, was ditched despite having broad support including from the Law Society, the New South Wales Bar Association, from former Australian of the Year Fiona Stanley. Will you reconsider your closing down of public discussion on this and perhaps even link it to the section 44 matter of MPs citizenship?

And Prime Minister Ardern, given that your country has much greater substantive Maori participation in policy making and in democratic life than Australia does, I wonder whether you've got an observation to make on this, on indeed on the broader section 44 matters, given New Zealand's direct involvement in those.

**PRIME MINISTER:** Well, you asked me? Okay I'll go first. We recognise, understand, support a stronger voice for Indigenous Australians in every aspect of Australia's government, our nation, our society.

We are proud that now we have five Indigenous Australians who are Members of the House and the Senate. In the House of course, you have the first Indigenous woman to be elected to the House Linda Burney and on our side, Ken Wyatt, the first Indigenous man to be elected to the House. Indeed, the first Indigenous Australian to be Minister of a Federal Australian Government, appointed by me. Of course, we have our Senators, Malarndirri McCarthy, Pat Dodson and Jacqui Lambie as well.

Those are all Indigenous voices in our Parliament.

As you know we have a commitment to empowered communities, seeking stronger Aboriginal voices throughout our community. What the Referendum Council recommended, is that there should be a national, elected representative

assembly of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, which would be, it was said, an advisory group to the Federal Parliament and it would be entrenched in the constitution.

Now, the reality is and no detail was provided as to how these should be chosen, or how it should be elected or anything. That was literally a general proposition.

Our view, the view of the Government's, is that it is not a model that is desirable. The reason for that is that our national representative institutions are based on the proposition that they are open to every Australian. Of course, we want to see more Indigenous Australians elected to the House and the Senate.

But to have a national representative assembly, which is what we are talking about here, which would be in the Constitution and to which only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders could be elected, this is contrary to the principles of equality of citizenship in Australia. It's contrary to that and it would inevitably be seen as a third chamber. Now I know that is contested. But it would inevitably be seen as a third chamber of Parliament. Moreover it would have, in our judgement, no prospect at all of being successful in a referendum.

So, we believe it is important to focus on, to deliver recognition, to focus on things that are achievable. The Referendum Council's recommendation of this, a national representative assembly, elected assembly, I wouldn't say it came completely out of left field, but it was not consistent with all of the work that had been done on the recognition agenda previously.

So, I think that it's important for the Government to state its view on both the desirability and achievability of that proposal; I have just restated what I said previously, but absolutely committed to a stronger and more empowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices. But above all, actually in the Parliament, elected to the Parliament, like Ken, Linda and Pat and Malarndirri and Jacqui in the Parliament, the Australian Parliament. Our First Australians joining all the other Australians in the Parliament on the basis of the equal rights of Australian citizens.

**JOURNALIST:** So I guess the Referendum Council's efforts was just a total waste of time, was it?

**PRIME MINISTER:** I don't comment on that. That proposal that was made, that particular proposal is not one – look, let me put this to you; you don't respect people by telling them what they want to hear or by kicking ideas you think have no merit off into the long grass, or into a Committee.

You've got to be fair dinkum, you've got to be forthright. What I have said to you about that particular proposal, is consistent with the values and principles of our nation, which is that all Australians – every single Australian whether they are a First Australian, whose forebears have been here for 60,000 years or whether they've just got their citizenship at a ceremony last week – every single Australian has the same right to vote and

stand for and serve in our Parliament.

Our national representative assemblies are our Parliament, our House and our Senate. Every Australian can aspire to that and that is critically important.

We want to see more Indigenous Australians elected to the Parliament and of course we have. We have seen that. That is the great outcome and we want to see – and I'm very confident we will – see more of that.

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** It's obviously not for me to comment on our friend and ally's domestic politics. But of course, I can only reflect on New Zealand's experience, New Zealand's domestic laws in that regard. New Zealand is unique in the fact that we have, applicable to us, several Maori-distinct seats that overlay our electorates. In part, that has certainly made a significant difference to representation in New Zealand Parliament.

But as have different individual political parties focused on representation in our Parliament. So I am proud that a quarter of our Caucus are now made up of Maori representatives. Fantastic representatives who will absolutely serve our party and New Zealand well.

When it comes to your question more generally about the citizenship issue, I would contend that that actually has absolutely nothing to do with New Zealand and nor has it had ever had anything to do with New Zealand.

**PRIME MINISTER:** Very good. Well, that's all? Thank you all very much.

**JOURNALIST:** Prime Minister just a question just about President Trump's tour of Asia? How big a test will this be for him and what will you be discussing with him in your meeting?

**PRIME MINISTER:** Well, just in terms of the discussions that I'll be having with President Trump, they will cover the full range of issues. National security, the battle against ISIL globally, counter-terrorism and of course our economic and trade agendas. So we've had a number of discussions and meetings, as you know, we will have a full agenda.

Now, you had one for Jacinda.

**JOURNALIST:** [Inaudible] both your countries' largest trading partner China. There is APEC summit and also ASEAN will be happening soon. President Xi will second term in Government, have you both discuss about this matter and how does [inaudible]?

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** Of course when you discuss regional politics, it's inevitable that you have a discussion around all of our partnerships and all of the important relationships that we have. Obviously I can speak to New Zealand's relationship with China, incredibly important. I personally look forward to strengthening those in my new role as Prime Minister. APEC provides an opportunity for me to do that. So I will personally be undertaking that when I –

**JOURNALIST:** Do you have a plan to organize a meeting at APEC, first time



meeting with President Xi?

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** As you'd understand, sometimes those bilaterals take a little bit of time to tie down. Certainly if the opportunity arises, I will have one.

**PRIME MINISTER:** Very good, thank you very much.

**JOURNALIST:** We have some New Zealand questions?

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** I think they've only had one.

**PRIME MINISTER:** Yeah that's right, let's have a couple of New Zealand only questions.

**JOURNALIST:** Prime Minister Turnbull –

**PRIME MINISTER:** Let's have a bit of Trans-Tasman equity. No, you had your hand up?

**JOURNALIST:** Yeah on the TPP, you've seen the changes that the New Zealand Government would like to make to the TPP, do think they can succeed and do you think that the TPP partners will go along with New Zealand continuing to be part of the TPP, with those changes?

**PRIME MINISTER:** Well, I'll leave that to my New Zealand counterpart, to answer.

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** Obviously we continue to advocate strongly around ISDS causes, something I made very clear domestically and something I think the population would want us to pursue, to ensure we are protecting New Zealand's domestic best interests.

At the same time we've also said we want to pursue the best interests of our exporters. There's no denying the TPP provides distinct opportunities, particularly in the arrangement with Japan. But at this stage, that will not stop us from pursuing the ISDS clauses as far as we are able.

**PRIME MINISTER:** We're very committed to the TPP. I gave quite lengthy speech about trade and the TPP in Perth yesterday and I won't repeat it today. But free trade and open markets are absolutely key priorities.

**PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND:** Can I just add on that, obviously we have discussed a side letter between New Zealand and Australia on ISDS clauses which is something that we see as being mutually beneficial. So that acknowledges of course, our positioning on ISDS, at least between each other, but as they say, New Zealand will continue to pursue that going into APEC as well. I don't want to pre-determine the outcome.

**JOURNALIST:** My question is for Prime Minister Turnbull. The New Zealand Labour Party has been critical the past of Australia's Government's treatment of Kiwi citizens, particularly over deportations of Kiwis from Australia and the proposals to increase tertiary fees. Prime Minister Ardern has said she

would retaliate if some of those changes went through, what would that do to the Trans Tasman relationship and does it make you reconsider those policies?

**PRIME MINISTER:** Well, we are committed to our policies and as you know, I understand the criticism that we have seen on the other side of the Tasman. But I think that just as we respect New Zealand's right to manage its affairs and determine its university arrangements as it sees fit, I know that New Zealand respects our right to do the same.

**JOURNALIST:** Does that mean you're not concerned about a tit-for-tat war over rights in your respective countries?

**PRIME MINISTER:** No, that means that we respect each other's rights to lead and govern our own nations.

Thank you very much.