

Proactive Release

This document is proactively released by Te Manatū Waka the Ministry of Transport.

Some information has been withheld on the basis that it would not, if requested under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), be released. Where that is the case, the relevant section of the OIA has been noted and no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Listed below are the most commonly used grounds from the OIA.

<u>Section</u>	<u>Description of ground</u>
6(a)	as release would be likely to prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government
6(b)	as release would be likely to prejudice the entrusting of information to the Government of New Zealand on a basis of confidence by (i) the Government of any other country or any agency of such a Government; or (ii) any international organisation
6(c)	prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation, and detection of offences, and the right to a fair trial
9(2)(a)	to protect the privacy of natural persons
9(2)(b)(ii)	to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information
9(2)(ba)(i)	to protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence or which any person has been or could be compelled to provide under the authority of any enactment, where the making available of the information would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public
9(2)(ba)(ii)	to protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence or which any person has been or could be compelled to provide under the authority of any enactment, where the making available of the information would be likely otherwise to damage the public interest
9(2)(f)(ii)	to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect collective and individual ministerial responsibility
9(2)(f)(iv)	to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials
9(2)(g)(i)	to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any public service agency or organisation in the course of their duty
9(2)(h)	to maintain legal professional privilege
9(2)(i)	to enable a Minister of the Crown or any public service agency or organisation holding the information to carry out, without prejudice or disadvantage, commercial activities
9(2)(j)	to enable a Minister of the Crown or any public service agency or organisation holding the information to carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations (including commercial and industrial negotiations)

Office of the Associate Minister of Transport

Cabinet Economic Policy Committee

Nelson/Tasman weather radar funding

Proposal

This paper seeks Cabinet agreement to reprioritise funding of s 9(2)(b)(ii) within Vote Transport in 2025/26 to fund MetService for the operating costs of a new weather radar for the Nelson/Tasman region through to 30 June 2027.

Relation to government priorities

- 1 New Zealand faces frequent and severe storms, floods, and droughts – events that cost billions and pose growing threats to lives, infrastructure, and the economy.
- 2 Following the recent significant weather events in the Nelson/Tasman region, the Prime Minister announced a new weather radar procurement for the region on 19 July 2025.
- 3 The new Nelson/Tasman weather radar will safeguard lives and property by targeting high-risk, region-specific weather threats.

Executive Summary

- 4 The Nelson/Tasman region currently experiences limited weather radar coverage, relying on the Wellington radar which does not adequately serve northwest Tasman. Given the region's vulnerability to severe flooding, improved radar capability is urgently needed.
- 5 On 19 July 2025, the Prime Minister announced a new radar procurement for the region, which will enhance short-term forecasting and rainfall mapping, supporting emergency response and flood prediction efforts.
- 6 To support this decision, I am seeking approval to reprioritise one-off funding s 9(2)(b)(ii) from the Ministry of Transport's (the Ministry) 2025/26 departmental appropriation which is no longer required for the original purpose. Cabinet approval is required for this fiscally neutral adjustment as the funding will cross multiple years. This will enable MetService to proceed with procurement for the new weather radar this financial year and ensure coverage of operating costs until the Ministry's existing contract with MetService (which funds public good weather forecasting services) ends on 30 June 2027.
- 7 The new radar is estimated to cost between \$3.5 million and \$5 million, with annual operating costs of approximately s 9(2)(b)(ii). MetService will fund the capital and lifecycle costs through its balance sheet, recovering expenses via a variation to its existing contract with the Ministry.

- 8 Based on the upper limit cost estimate of \$5 million, the total additional payments to MetService required in the current contract period (ending 30 June 2027) are estimated at s 9(2)(b)(ii)
- 9 Funding of the Nelson/Tasman radar demonstrates the Government's strategic commitment to building resilient infrastructure that protects communities from severe weather hazards.

Background

- 10 The Minister of Transport is required under the Meteorological Services Act 1990 to provide an authorised meteorological warning service in New Zealand. The Minister of Transport meets this obligation through a contract with MetService that aims to:
- 10.1 Minimise weather-related risk to life and property in New Zealand and the surrounding region (including severe weather forecasts and warnings).
 - 10.2 Provide emergency support, for example for search and rescue and other emergency services.
 - 10.3 Represent New Zealand at the World Meteorological Organisation.
- 11 The contract with MetService has a full term of 12 years (from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2027) with renewal options every four years. The current final renewal period expires on 30 June 2027.
- 12 The total annual fee for MetService's contracted services is \$30.0 million. s 9(2)(b)(ii)

Weather radars are MetService's highest-value capital assets

- 13 New Zealand's national network of weather radar stations was established in the late 1980s. The network now consists of 10 radar stations (Annex 1 refers). The weather radars are strategically located to maximise coverage across both the North and South Islands, with a focus on population centres and regions prone to severe weather (Annex 2 refers). The weather radars provide crucial information on precipitation type (snow versus rain) and intensity, with updates every seven and a half minutes.
- 14 The Nelson/Tasman region currently relies on the Wellington radar for weather monitoring, but coverage is limited – especially in northwest Tasman – due to distance and geographical barriers. Given the region's history of severe flooding, there is an urgent need for better weather radar coverage. Funding for the proposed new radar will substantially improve short-term weather forecasting and rainfall mapping, enabling more timely and effective emergency response and flood prediction across the region.

- 15 The Nelson/Tasman weather radar will be the 11th addition to the national network, featuring advanced technology for enhanced weather monitoring in the region. MetService will fund both the initial capital and lifecycle management through its balance sheet and will recover these costs via a variation to its existing contract with the Ministry of Transport, which accounts for its cost of capital and ongoing maintenance.

Funding for the new weather radar is available from reprioritising within Vote Transport in 2025/26

- 16 s 9(2)(b)(ii)
This work has now been classified as capital and the funding can be reprioritised to support the cost of a new weather radar for the Nelson/Tasman region through to 30 June 2027, aligning with the end of the existing contract with the Ministry.

- 17 s 9(2)(g)(i)
Cabinet approval is required because the funding is required to be transferred across multiple financial years.

The new weather radar in Nelson/Tasman region

MetService is confident that the radar will be operational by the summer of 2026/27

- 19 Under normal procurement and commissioning timelines, it can take several years to bring a new radar online. MetService is taking a fast-track approach for the procurement of this radar and, subject to confirmation about available funding, is confident that it can be installed and start operating in the summer of 2026/27. The key milestones and a timeline are outlined in **Error! Reference source not found.** below.

Chart 1. Timeline for the Nelson/Tasman radar project



- 20 The primary risks to the project's timeline and cost are delays in securing a suitable site and uncertainties surrounding the cost and time of civil works, particularly for road access and power supply. The most unpredictable aspect of radar installation is reaching an agreement with the landowner for site use.
- 21 To mitigate these risks, MetService will work collaboratively with Tasman District Council to support site assessment work and constructive landowner engagement.
- 22 The Nelson/Tasman weather radar project will engage key personnel from MetService's observing network engineering teams and this may impact other high-priority initiatives. These risks will be mitigated through internal work prioritisation, and the use of external project management and radar engineering expertise for the Nelson/Tasman radar project.

The total cost of the project is subject to change, with the costs for several critical components undefined at this stage

- 23 The initial capital cost of the Nelson/Tasman radar is expected to be in the range of \$3.5 - \$5 million. The range reflects uncertainty about the cost of civil works, the cost of the radar purchase from an international supplier, along with shipping costs and exchange rate fluctuations.



- 28 Should the contract result in costs lower than the amount agreed I will look to return or reprioritise the residual through Budget 2026.

Cost-of-living Implications

- 29 There are no direct cost-of-living implications associated with this Cabinet paper.

Financial Implications

- 30 The MetService annual contract fee is currently funded through a baseline appropriation (\$30.76 million per annum). These funding arrangements need to be updated to include new cost pressures arising from the Nelson/Tasman radar project.
- 31 The current annual contract fee accounts for approximately 40% of MetService's total annual revenue.¹ Investing in the new weather radar constitutes a significant long-term financial commitment for MetService. MetService's current financial position supports the up-front capital investment required for the project.

32

s 9(2)(b)(ii)

- 33 MetService is seeking assurance from the Crown that funding for the weather radar will be maintained under the existing contract (until 30 June 2027) through a contract variation following the funding arrangements outlined in this Cabinet paper. MetService is also seeking confirmation that ongoing operational and maintenance costs of the Nelson/Tasman weather radar will be covered in the new contract, which will begin on 1 July 2027. The cost of this contract has not yet been determined, and this would need to be considered through the 2027 Budget process. Funding the new radar now will not necessarily mean that the Crown will need to pay more for the next contract. However, it will create an additional cost pressure which will need to be met either through additional funding or reprioritisation to maintain existing service levels beyond 2027.

Legislative Implications

- 34 This cabinet paper contains no legislative implications.

Impact Analysis

Regulatory Impact Statement

- 35 A regulatory impact analysis is not required as this paper does not propose any regulatory changes.

¹ The current contract with the Ministry includes capital and depreciation charges for the upgrades of the Christchurch and Auckland weather radars.

Human Rights

- 36 There are no human rights implications arising from decisions in this paper.

Use of external Resources

- 37 The development of this Cabinet paper did not require the use of any external resources.

Consultation

- 38 The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has been advised of this paper. Consultation was undertaken with officials from the Treasury and the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment.

Communications

- 39 No public announcement will be made as consequence of this paper.

Proactive Release

- 40 We intend to proactively release this Cabinet paper within 30 business days of confirmation of Cabinet's decisions.

Recommendations

The Associate Minister of Transport recommend that the Committee:

- 41 **note** that funding of s 9(2)(b)(i) within Vote Transport is available for reprioritisation in 2025/26 to fund MetService for the operating costs of a new weather radar for the Nelson/Tasman region through to 30 June 2027

- 42 **note** that funding the Nelson/Tasman weather radar reflects the Government's strategic commitment to climate resilience by addressing region-specific risks, supporting infrastructure planning, and mitigating the growing impacts of severe weather events

- 43 s 9(2)(b)(ii)

- 44 **note** that, based on the existing analysis including sensitivity and contingency buffers, the costs to operate the new Nelson/Tasman weather radar will be accommodated within the reprioritised s 9(2)(b)(ii) Any remaining funds after this allocation will be redirected to other Government priority projects

- 45 s 9(2)(g)(i)

- 46 **note** that MetService is confident that new Nelson/Tasman weather radar will be operational by the summer of 2026/27

- 47 **approve** the following changes to appropriations to fund the cost of the new weather radar for the Nelson/Tasman region to 30 June 2027, with no impact on the operating balance and/or net core Crown debt:

	\$m – increase/(decrease)
s 9(2)(b)(ii)	

- 48 **agree** that the proposed changes to appropriations for 2025/26 above be included in the 2025/26 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increase be met from Imprest Supply
- 49 **note** that the Nelson/Tasman weather radar has a lifespan of 25 years. The reprioritisation of funding proposed in this Cabinet paper will manage the operating costs of the radar during the current MetService contract period, which ends on 30 June 2027, but this creates a long-term cost pressure from 1 July 2027 onwards
- 50 **note** that the ongoing costs associated with the Nelson/Tasman weather radar will be included in the renegotiation of the MetService contract to be implemented on 1 July 2027. If the Crown wants to purchase services from MetService that exceed the current level of baseline funding, additional funding, whether from reprioritisation or new Crown funding, will be considered through the Budget process.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon James Meager

Associate Minister of Transport

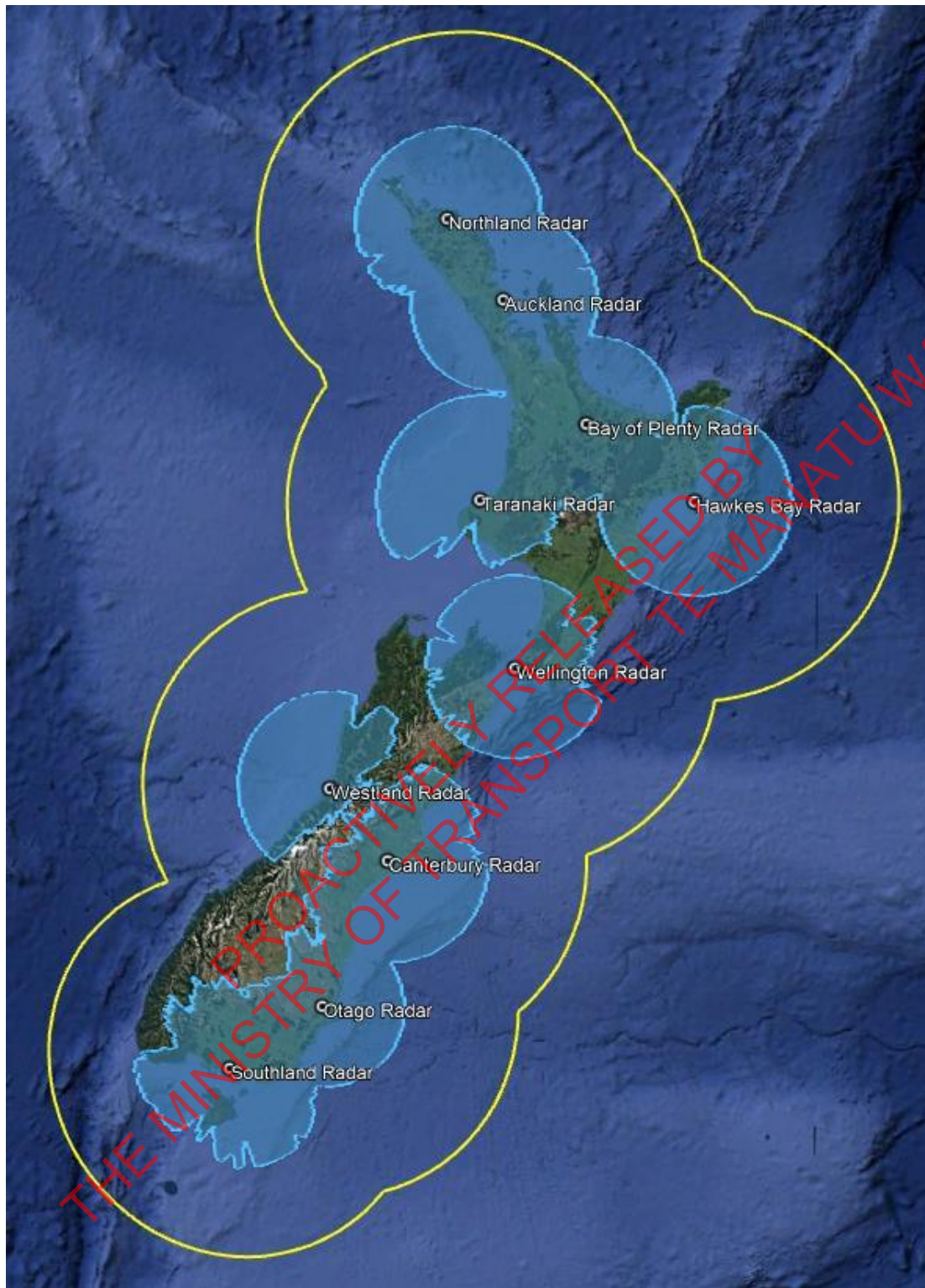
Annex 1. Weather radar network in New Zealand

	Radar location	Regions covered	Commissioning date	Technology ²	Upgrade notes
1	Kaeo, Northland	Northland	2014	Doppler Dual Polarisation	Mid-life upgrade planned for FY27
2	Mt Tamahunga, Warkworth, Auckland	Northland, Auckland, Waikato	1989	Doppler	Scheduled for replacement in 2027
3	Mamaku, Rotorua, Bay of Plenty	Waikato, Bay of Plenty	2010	Doppler Dual Polarisation	Mid-life upgrade scheduled for FY26
4	New Plymouth Airport, Taranaki	Taranaki	1987 ³	Doppler	End of life. Replacement to be addressed in next contract term.
5	Mahia Peninsula, Hawkes Bay	Gisborne, Hawkes Bay	2009	Doppler Dual Polarisation	Mid-life upgrade scheduled for FY26
6	Outlook Hill, Wellington	Wellington, Wairarapa, Marlborough	2023	Doppler Dual Polarisation	Replacement completed May 2023
7	Blue Spur, Hokitika, Westland	West Coast	2011	Doppler Dual Polarisation	Mid-life upgrade planned for FY27
8	Rakaia, Canterbury	Canterbury	2024	Doppler Dual Polarisation	Replacement completed in Nov 2024
9	Lamb Hill, Otago	Dunedin, Eastern Otago	2020	Doppler Dual Polarisation	New install in 2020
10	Invercargill Airport, Southland	Southland	1990 ¹	Doppler	End of life. Replacement to be addressed in next contract term.
New radar project					
11	Nelson/Tasman	Nelson, Tasman	Planned in summer 2026/27	Doppler Dual Polarisation	Infill radar to cover Nelson/Tasman
New radar project under discussion					
12	South Auckland (second radar)	Auckland, Waikato	Proposed FY27	Doppler Dual Polarisation	Under discussion with Auckland Council

² The primary difference between doppler and dual polarisation radar is how they analyse precipitation. Dual polarisation technology offers more accurate precipitation estimates compared to traditional doppler radar.

³ Radars originally purchased to track weather balloons.

Annex 2. National weather radar network map



Note: Theoretical coverage of the Network at 300 km range (yellow). Actual coverage at 7000 feet elevation (light blue) showing effects of terrain reducing coverage below the 150 km range required for thunderstorm warning services. The effect of terrain blocking is evident over Manawatu, northern Wairarapa, Nelson/Tasman, and inland parts of the South Island, notably Central Otago.



Cabinet Economic Policy Committee

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Nelson/Tasman Weather Radar Funding

Portfolio **Associate Transport**

On 15 October 2025, the Cabinet Economic Policy Committee:

- 1 **noted** that funding of s 9(2)(b)(ii) within Vote Transport is available for reprioritisation in 2025/26 to fund MetService for the operating costs of a new weather radar for the Nelson/Tasman region through to 30 June 2027;
- 2 **noted** that funding the Nelson/Tasman weather radar reflects the Government's strategic commitment to climate resilience by addressing region-specific risks, supporting infrastructure planning, and mitigating the growing impacts of severe weather events;
- 3 **noted** that the estimated increase in the contract value to MetService for the period ending 30 June 2027 is up to s 9(2)(b)(ii);
- 4 **noted** that based on the existing analysis, including sensitivity and contingency buffers, the costs to operate the new Nelson/Tasman weather radar will be accommodated within the reprioritised s 9(2)(b)(ii) and that any remaining funds after this allocation will be redirected to other Government priority projects;
- 5 s 9(2)(g)(i)
- 6 **noted** that MetService is confident that the new Nelson/Tasman weather radar will be operational by the summer of 2026/27;
- 7 **approved** the following changes to appropriations to fund the cost of the new weather radar for the Nelson/Tasman region to 30 June 2027, with no impact on the operating balance and/or net core Crown debt:

	\$m – increase/(decrease)
s 9(2)(b)(ii)	

- 8 **agreed** that the changes to appropriations for 2025/26 above be included in the 2025/26 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increase be met from Imprest Supply;
- 9 **noted** that the Nelson/Tasman weather radar has a lifespan of 25 years, and that the reprioritisation of the above funding will manage the operating costs of the radar during the current MetService contract period, which ends on 30 June 2027, but this creates a long-term cost pressure from 1 July 2027 onwards;
- 10 **noted** that:
- 10.1 the ongoing costs associated with the Nelson/Tasman weather radar will be included in the renegotiation of the MetService contract to be implemented on 1 July 2027;
- 10.2 if the Crown wants to purchase services from MetService that exceed the current level of baseline funding, additional funding, whether from reprioritisation or new Crown funding, will be considered through the Budget process.

Rachel Clarke
Committee Secretary

Present:

Hon David Seymour
Rt Hon Winston Peters
Hon Shane Jones
Hon Paul Goldsmith (Chair)
Hon Louise Upston
Hon Todd McClay
Hon Tama Potaka
Hon Simon Watts
Hon Chris Penk
Hon Andrew Hoggard
Hon Mark Patterson
Hon James Meager
Hon Scott Simpson
Simon Court MP

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Office of Hon Scott Simpson
Officials Committee for ECO



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report of the Cabinet Economic Policy Committee: Period Ended 17 October 2025

On 20 October 2025, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Economic Policy Committee for the period ended 17 October 2025:

Out of Scope



ECO-25-MIN-0160

Nelson/Tasman Weather Radar Funding

CONFIRMED

Portfolio: Associate Transport

Out of Scope



Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet