

Notification to Minister: Temporary Post Closure – COVID19

Post	Chengdu
Reason for closure	In current circumstances we are not able to guarantee satisfactory health care or other forms of support to Chengdu. Accordingly we plan to withdraw both seconded staff and pick up the post's functions from other parts of the network until we are in a position to consider reopening (e.g. Beijing and Wellington).
Likely timing of post closure and staff withdrawal	Wednesday 25 March (subject to flight availability)
How many seconded staff	Two
How will the consular workload of the Post be managed? Include number of NZers registered on Safetravel	Chengdu's consular work will be directed to the online 24/7 consular number, and from there to Beijing if required.
How will the diplomatic accreditations be managed?	Beijing manages the diplomatic relationship with China so there will be no impact resulting from the temporary closure of Chengdu on managing diplomatic accreditations. The work of Chengdu will be folded into the Beijing operations and the Head of Post Chengdu will maintain engagement with Chengdu contacts as required through online communication.
Media points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the increasing unavailability of air links and the pressure on the local health system at this time, we have decided to temporarily withdraw our two seconded staff from Chengdu for health and safety reasons. • As a result of withdrawing our seconded staff, we have also decided to temporarily close the New Zealand Consulate in Chengdu. • The New Zealand government travel advice is do not travel overseas. • We will be reviewing the temporary closure of the Embassy/ High Commission in 4 weeks' time. • Consular services continue to be provided to New Zealanders through the Ministry's 24/7 Consular helpline (0800 30 10 30 or +64 99 20 20 20). • New Zealand's Embassy to China, in Beijing, is open and managing our engagement with China. We are also in contact with the Chinese Ambassador to New Zealand in Wellington.
Anything else MFA should know	No.


Approved by: Chris Seed
Date: 24 March

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Chengdu

18. New Zealand's Consulate-General in Chengdu opened in 2014 and is one of five posts in China – the others being Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong. The post was opened in response to growing commercial interest from New Zealand companies, the importance of Chengdu in the Chinese government's western development strategy and a desire to have better consular coverage in western China. Fifteen other countries have a consulate-general in Chengdu and twelve in nearby Chongqing.
19. The post is temporarily closed due to COVID-19, with the other China posts covering many of its responsibilities. This model has proved workable given the overall strength of the China post network, the significant reduction in the already-small New Zealand community as a result of COVID-19, the relatively light commercial presence – particularly when compared with Shanghai – and the low consular load for the post (only 10 cases in 2019).
20. While four locally-engaged staff continue to work on a range of administrative tasks, and a locally-engaged NZTE staff member is handling any business enquiries, this is largely a skeleton operation.

s6(a)
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s9(2)
(g)
(i),
s9(2)
(f)
(iv)

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i), s9(2)(f)(iv)

21.