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## Kiwi teenager first minor to be deported to New Zealand from Australia

By Stuff | 3:32pm Mar 15, 2021

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The Australian Government has deported a 15-year-old boy to [New Zealand](#), understood to be the first minor to be sent back across the Tasman.

But New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was in the dark about the removal until calls from the media.

The touchdown of a flight from Brisbane to Auckland last week reignited a row over Australia's hardline enforcement of a populist immigration policy that has dogged diplomatic relations since 2014.

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The flight from Australia flew a new batch of deportees to Auckland last week. (Nine)

The removal of the teenager is set to further inflame tensions, with one Australian lawyer suggesting Scott Morrison's government has breached international laws.

His background and circumstance was said to be "complicated" and "messy."

It's understood Oranga Tamariki were looking after his interests.

Speaking at post-Cabinet news conference on Monday, Ardern said she was unaware of the deportation until calls from *Stuff* earlier that day.

Usually, two weeks prior to deportations, the Australian Border Force share details of the deportees with New Zealand counterparts in police and corrections.

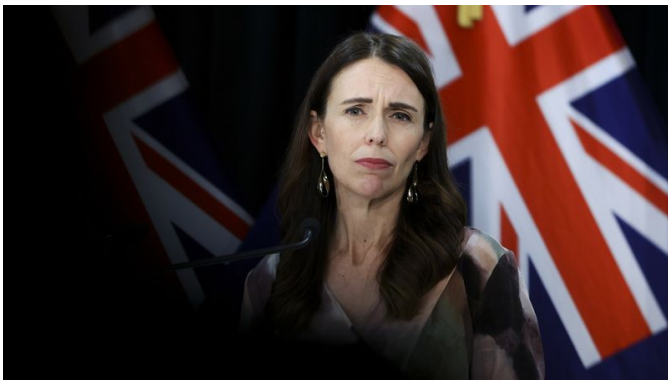
This includes their criminal history, and any gang links. It's not clear if that happened in this case.

Ardern said she did not receive that breakdown.

She has asked officials for a briefing and wants to look at the circumstances of the deportation.

"At this point, those who need to know do," Ardern said.

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Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was not told of the deportation of a minor from Australia last week. (Getty)

Morrison "knows my position" on the policy, she said.

Last week Peter Dutton, the Australian home affairs minister, was interviewed for a Nine News report about the deportations and said: "It's taking out the trash, then we can make Australia a safer place".

New Zealand Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta said Dutton's comments "only serve to trash his own reputation".

More than 2000 citizens have been sent back to New Zealand, although the wave of deportations has slowed during the coronavirus pandemic.

The Australian Government signalled in 2018 that it was prepared to change the law to start deporting under-18s.

This presented New Zealand with a further headache. Legally, minors cannot be subject to an adult supervision regime for deportees established in 2015.

Officials, led by Oranga Tamariki, began working on an "inter-departmental plan" to handle this new problem. It's not clear if that was ever finalised.

*Stuff* knows of two cases where the Australian Government has attempted to send back a minor, but failed because of the intervention of the courts.

The Foreign and Justice Ministers Winston Peters and Andrew Little publicly took up the case of a 17-year-old, with Little appearing on an Australian current affairs show.

The decision was later overturned by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, the body that hears visa cancellation appeals.

**READ MORE: [NZ marks two years since Christchurch shooting](#)**



Peter Dutton, the Australian home affairs minister, said of deportees: "It's taking out the trash, then we can make Australia a safer place". (Nine)

Leading immigration lawyer Greg Barns represented the 17-year-old, who was removed from Sydney and placed in a Melbourne adult detention centre. He'd lived in Australia since the age of 10.

"To deport an unaccompanied child is just inhumane and a clear breach of Australia's international obligations including under the convention of the rights of child," he said.

"No child should ever be deported. And the fact that the minister described that child as part of taking the rubbish out, just shows you how bereft of any humanity this current government is.

"New Zealand would be right to see Australia as a human rights pariah on this issue."

Police refused to answer questions from *Stuff* on the deportation and would only say, in a written statement: "All deportees are entitled to privacy and as such we are unable to provide any information."

Mahuta declined a request for an interview, citing privacy reasons. In a statement, she said: "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade was providing consular assistance to a minor in detention in Australia, which included making the appropriate arrangements for the care of a minor.

"For privacy reasons no further information will be provided."

Reported by Andrea Vance. Republished with permission from [stuff.co.nz](http://stuff.co.nz)

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