MINISTRY OF BUSINESS, INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

COVERSHEET

Minister	Hon Shane Jones	**Portfolio**	Regional Development
Title of Cabinet paper	Regional Infrastructure Fund: Investing in Critical Minerals Projects	**Date to be published**	24 August 2026

List of documents that have been proactively released		
Date	**Title**	**Author**
May 2026	Regional Infrastructure Fund: Investing in Critical Minerals Projects	Office of the Minister for Regional Development
May 2026	Critical Minerals Information pack	MBIE
27 May 2026	Regional Infrastructure Fund: Investing in Critical Minerals Projects ECO-26-MIN-008 Minute	Cabinet Office
27 May 2026	Regional Infrastructure Fund: Investing in Critical Minerals Projects ECO-26-SUB-008 Summary	Cabinet Office

Information redacted **YES** / **NO** *(please select)*

Any information redacted in this document is redacted in accordance with MBIE's policy on Proactive Release and is labelled with the reason for redaction. This may include information that would be redacted if this information was requested under Official Information Act 1982. Where this is the case, the reasons for withholding information are listed below. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Some information has been withheld for the reasons of Commercial Information, Confidential Advice to Government, Legal Professional Privilege and International Relations.

ECO-26-MIN-0088

Cabinet Economic Policy Committee

Minute of Decision

Regional Infrastructure Fund: Investing in Critical Minerals Projects

Portfolio **Regional Development**

On 27 May 2026, the Cabinet Economic Policy Committee:

Background

1 **noted** that in June 2024, Cabinet agreed the detailed settings of the $1.200 billion Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF), including that the single overarching objective of the RIF was to achieve a lift in the productivity potential of the regions through the delivery of regional infrastructure initiatives [CAB-24-MIN-0214];

2 **noted** that Cabinet also agreed to eligibility criteria for RIF investments, including specific requirements for investments in individual businesses;

Critical minerals projects

3 **noted** that critical minerals are essential inputs across a range of strategically important industries;

4 **noted** that developing domestic processing capability would enable New Zealand to capture greater value from its mineral resources while supporting participation in increasingly diversified global supply chains as a supplier of higher-value processed material;

5 **noted** that expanding processing capability supports the critical minerals sector to scale over time by improving the economics of extraction and enabling more consistent, higher-value production;

6 **noted** that in December 2025, the Regional Development Ministerial Group (RDMG) agreed to set aside $80.000 million of RIF funding for critical minerals projects, however critical minerals are not included as an eligible primary focus area in the Cabinet-approved RIF eligibility requirements for individual businesses;

7 **noted** that the two projects outlined in the paper under ECO-26-SUB-0088, the New Zealand Critical Minerals Separation Facility project (Westport project) and the Tāiko Critical Minerals Sand Separation Plant project (Barrytown project), do not meet the RIF's Cabinet-approved eligibility criteria for investment in individual businesses due to their primary focus on critical minerals;

8 **noted** that, if successful, the Westport and the Barrytown projects could achieve significant benefits, including:

8.1 creating or re-establishing an estimated 170 permanent high-value jobs;

8.2 International relations ;

8.3 generating more than $ Commercia million in additional GDP;

9 **noted** that the Westport and the Barrytown projects are Commercial Information and that, while some risks can be mitigated through funding conditions, material residual risk would remain;

10 **noted** that RDMG considers that, on balance, the potential scale of regional development benefits, alongside the strategic importance of critical minerals, is sufficient to justify RIF investment and an exception to the eligibility criteria;

11 **noted** that section 65L of the Public Finance Act 1989 (PFA) empowers the Minister of Finance to provide a loan to any person or organisation if it appears to the Minister to be necessary or expedient in the public interest to do so (the public interest test);

12 **noted** that Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit (Kānoa) will separately seek approval from the Minister of Finance to provide loans under section 65L of the PFA;

13 **agreed** to waive the requirement for the proposed investments in the Westport and the Barrytown projects to meet the RIF's eligibility criteria for investment in individual businesses, on the basis that the proposals could:

13.1 lift regional productivity;

13.2 International relations

13.3 support high-value employment;

Westport Project approvals

14 **agreed** to provide a Commercial Information loan as the investment instrument and to the following key terms from the RIF for the New Zealand Critical Minerals Separation Facility project:

Term	Proposed terms for this project
Borrower	Westland Mineral Sands Co Limited (WMS)
Loan Amount	Up to $Comm million
Term	Up to C years
Interest	Commercial Information
Repayment	Commercial Information
Security	Commercial Information
Option to convert to equity	
Entity	Westland Mineral Sands Co Limited
Shareholding	Commercial Information
Shares	Comme
Director	Commercial Information

15 **agreed** that the above is subject to the standard conditions precedent and the following additional conditions being met to the satisfaction of Kānoa within Commercia of Cabinet approving the investment (unless otherwise agreed by Kānoa):

Commercial Information

Barrytown project approvals

16 **agreed** to provide a Commercial Information loan as the investment instrument and to the following key terms from the RIF for the Tāiko Critical Minerals Sand Separation Plant project:

Term	Proposed terms for this project
Borrower	Tāiko Critical Minerals Limited (TCM) Commercial Information
Loan Amount	Up to $Comm million
Term	Up to C years
Interest	Commercial Information
Repayment	Commercial Information ears
Security	Commercial Information
Option to convert to equity	
Entity	Tāiko Critical Minerals Limited Commercial Information
Shareholding	Commercial Information
Shares	Comme
Director	Commercial Information

17 **agreed** that the above is subject to the standard conditions precedent and the following additional conditions being met to the satisfaction of Kānoa within Commercia of Cabinet approving this investment (unless otherwise agreed by Kānoa):

Commercial Information

Next steps

18 **noted** that:

18.1 if Cabinet agrees to fund the two projects above totalling $50.000 million, $Commercial Inform [redacted] million of funding will remain in the Critical Minerals $80.000 million RIF allocation;

18.2 Commercial Information, Negotiations [redacted]

19 **agreed** to amend one of the RIF eligibility criteria for individual businesses agreed under CAB-24-MIN-0214 to the following (*changes italicised*), to enable RDMG to approve otherwise-eligible critical minerals proposals for RIF funding:

19.1 be a business that has a primary focus on one of the following areas:

19.1.1 energy security, water security, food security, connectivity (transport solutions or digital connectivity), *critical minerals,* or growth of a Māori-owned business that is critical to enabling outcomes throughout a community or region;

20 **noted** that both the Westport and the Barrytown projects have requested funding for their own critical minerals testing facility, however, internationally sector-wide testing facilities for multiple firms are more common and generate greater economic efficiencies;

21 **noted** Negotiations [redacted]

Rachel Clarke
Committee Secretary

Present:
Rt Hon Winston Peters
Hon Nicola Willis (Chair)
Hon Chris Bishop
Hon Shane Jones
Hon Simeon Brown
Hon Paul Goldsmith
Hon Louise Upston
Hon Tama Potaka
Hon Simon Watts
Hon Chris Penk
Hon Penny Simmonds
Hon Andrew Hoggard
Hon Nicola Grigg
Hon Mark Patterson
Hon Scott Simpson
Hon James Meager
Hon Cameron Brewer
Simon Court MP

Officials present from:
Office of Hon Simon Watts
Office of Hon Cameron Brewer
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
Officials Committee for ECO