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Albanese and Luxon Prioritize Defence, Trade in Queenstown Talks

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Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese arrived in Queenstown, New Zealand, on August 9, 2025, for the annual Australia–New Zealand Leaders’ Meeting with New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon. The summit was held in the South Island resort town and covered cooperation in defence, trade, and humanitarian concerns relating to Gaza, as well as discussions on Palestinian statehood. Albanese was accompanied by his fiancée Jodie Haydon.

Defence and security cooperation were key topics, following the 2024 Canberra meeting where both governments outlined plans for enhanced military collaboration and regional security initiatives. Victoria University of Wellington foreign policy expert David Capie stated that the Luxon government has pursued closer alignment with Australia to address

international challenges, including recent trade disruptions connected to tariff measures introduced by the United States and tensions in the Middle East.

Two-way trade between Australia and New Zealand was valued at approximately NZ\$32.76 billion in 2024, according to the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Leaders from both nations reaffirmed their commitment to expand this trade relationship through the Single Economic Market agenda, which aims to reduce regulatory differences and improve business integration.

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the status of Palestinian statehood were also discussed. Australia and New Zealand officially support a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. As of August 2025, Australia has not formally recognized Palestine, although the government has held discussions on the matter. New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters has described recognition as a matter of “when, not if” but stated that conditions such as governance capacity and security guarantees should be met before recognition occurs.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong has stated that the permanent forced displacement of people from Gaza would be contrary to international law. Both countries have expressed concern about humanitarian access and the protection of civilians. Luxon has stated that providing humanitarian aid and reducing conflict in the region are priorities.

The issue of Australia’s policy on deporting New Zealand–born individuals convicted of crimes, which has been a point of contention, was also raised. Discussions on this matter were ongoing, with both governments agreeing to continue consultations.

Albanese’s visit included a pōwhiri, a formal Māori welcoming ceremony, and participation in a business roundtable hosted by the Australia New Zealand Leadership Forum. These events focused on trade and economic cooperation, as well as the cultural links between the two countries.