# Australian and New Zealand Assist in Evacuating Nationals from Unrest-Hit New Caledonia



### New Caledonia Unrest Prompts Evacuation Efforts by Australia and New Zealand

Australian and New Zealand governments have announced the deployment of planes to evacuate their nationals from New Caledonia amid violent protests. The French Pacific territory has been experiencing a week of unrest due to changes in voting rights introduced by the French government.

The unrest has led to the deaths of six individuals, including two gendarmes, and left hundreds injured. The violence erupted following the French government's plans to expand voting rights to non-indigenous residents, which has angered the indigenous Kanak population.

Foreign Minister Penny Wong confirmed that Australia received clearance for evacuation flights, with the first two already planned. New Zealand is also set to send a plane to evacuate its nationals from Noumea, the capital city.

The international airport in New Caledonia remains closed due to roadblocks and protests. France has deployed 1,000 security personnel to dismantle these blockades and restore order.

As of now, approximately 3,000 tourists are stranded in New Caledonia, including more than 300 Australians and nearly 250 New Zealanders. The evacuations are part of coordinated efforts following a call between the foreign ministers of New Zealand, Australia, and France.

French President Emmanuel Macron has indicated that military forces will remain deployed for some time. The protests, led by pro-independence Kanak activists, show no signs of abating, as roadblocks taken down by security forces have been rebuilt.

The electoral changes being protested are viewed by Kanak groups as a means to dilute their voting power. France's response has included significant security measures as well as condemnation of groups like the Ground Action Coordination Cell, accused of orchestrating the unrest.