

Rural Bulletin

April 2009



Rural Women

NEW ZEALAND

www.ruralwomen.org.nz

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Consultation

Ultra-Fast Broadband: Proposals

The Government is seeking feedback on proposals for investment in ultra-fast broadband.

Under these proposals, ultra fast broadband would be made available to 75% of NZers over the next 10 years.

A Crown-owned investment company called Crown Fibre Investment Co. or CFIC would drive the government's investment. CFIC would invest in partnership with private company "co-investors" in regional fibre companies. The joint ventures would lay fibre optic cable in the ground or on poles so internet service providers or telecommunications firms could buy access to the cable and add or create their own electronics to provide a retail service to the 25 towns and cities covered by the initiative.

The Crown company would have a budget of \$4 million. It would appoint directors to the boards of the local fibre companies, in proportion to its shareholding. Existing retail telecommunications would be able to be involved in the local fibre companies but they would be prevented from appointing chairs or controlling their boards.

In the first six year "priority users" such as businesses, schools and health services plus new developments and some residential areas would be targeted.

Submissions close on 27 April 2009. Information on making submission, together with a paper called the "NZ Government Broadband Initiative: Draft Proposal For Comment" is available at www.med.govt.nz/broadband

Foreshore & Seabed Act: Review

A three person panel (Justice Edward Taihakurei Durie, Richard Boast and Hana O'Regan) is to review whether the Foreshore and Seabed Act as it stands adequately balances Maori customary interests and the rights and interests of all NZers in using the beach.

If the panel is not satisfied it does, it will outline options on the most workable and efficient methods by which both customary and public interests in the foreshore and seabed area could be recognised and provided for.

The reviewers will consider the state of the law around Maori customary interests in the foreshore and seabed before the Court of Appeal's 2003 decision in Attorney-General v Ngati Apa. They will also look at the options that were open to the government in deciding how it chose to respond to the court's decision, and revisit the submissions that were made to Parliament when the original Act was being passed.

The panel is holding hui/public meetings in the following areas:

Hui		Public Meetings	
Place	Date	Place	Date
Invercargill	20 April 2009	Invercargill	20 April 2009
Christchurch	21 April 2009	Christchurch	21 April 2009
Wellington	23 April 2009	Wellington	22 April 2009
Hamilton	24 April 2009	Hamilton	24 April 2009
Maketu	27 April 2009	Tauranga	27 April 2009
Tokomaru Bay (East Cape)	28 April 2009	Napier	29 April 2009
Hastings	29 April 2009	Auckland	7 May 2009
Auckland	9 May 2009	Whangarei	15 May 2009
Moerewa	15 May 2009	Whanganui	17 May 2009
Taranaki (Waitara)	16 May 2009		
Whanganui	17 May 2009		
Blenheim	19 May 2009		

Submissions close on 19 May 2009. A submission form, terms of reference, a consultation paper and an issues paper are at <http://www.justice.govt.nz/ministerial-review/>. You can also post your submission to Foreshore and Seabed Act Review, Ministry of Justice, PO Box 140, Wellington 6140, or email it to foreshorereview_submit@justice.govt.nz

Minimising Leftover Waste

A discussion paper on the Waste Minimisation Act 2008 has been published for comment. And your views are sought on five aspects:

- revising targets for the NZ Waste Strategy;
- identifying products that are priorities for product stewardship;
- identifying funding criteria for the Waste Minimisation Fund;
- monitoring waste in NZ; and
- improving the operation of the waste levy.

Submissions close on 15 May 2009. An electronic submission form is at <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/survey/x09wastediscdoc.htm>, or you can email your submission to waste@mfe.govt.nz. The discussion paper is at <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/waste/consultation.html>

Invasion of Privacy...

The Law Commission is examining the laws relating to the invasion of privacy and it has released an issues paper on which your views are sought. At the heart of the paper is whether the law on privacy, which has developed over time to become a common law tort* of invasion of privacy, should be allowed to continue to develop incrementally (step by step), or whether it should be covered by a statute. The paper concludes that, while the law on privacy offers some protection for privacy interests, it is piecemeal, and there are some significant gaps and anomalies. In particular, surveillance and intrusion are not comprehensively covered by any of the current modes of enforcement.

The paper poses a number of questions on which the Commission is seeking comment, among them being:

Are any new offences needed to deal with specific types of intrusion?

Should closed circuit television surveillance be regulated?

Should there be criminal or civil liability for certain uses of surveillance devices when they are used outside the law enforcement arena?

Are any reforms to the law needed to deal with voyeurism not related to the use of recording devices, including reform of the "peeping and peering" offence?

Should the media be subject to any greater or lesser legal restrictions concerning privacy intrusions than other members of the public?

Matters which must be weighed in the balance with privacy include: the public interest, the rights and freedoms in the Bill of Rights Act, and compliance costs.

*Tort describes any wrongdoing for which an action for damages may be brought.

Submissions close on 29 May 2009. They go to General Manager, Law Commission, PO Box 2590, Wellington 6140, email privacy@lawcom.govt.nz. The paper can be downloaded from <http://www.lawcom.govt.nz/ProjectIssuesPaper.aspx?ProjectID=129>

...& Privacy Bill: Cross-border Information

The Privacy (Cross-border Information) Amendment Bill is aimed at enabling NZers and NZ businesses to assure their trade partners that their privacy is protected by NZ law. It would enable the Privacy Commissioner to prohibit information received from overseas being transferred outside NZ to a jurisdiction without adequate privacy protection. The Commissioner would also be able to cooperate with overseas privacy enforcement authorities in consulting on, and transferring complaints.

Submissions close on 14 May 2009. They go to the Justice and Electoral Committee, Parliament Buildings, Wellington. The Bill is at <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2008/0221-1/latest/DLM1362804.html>

Sentencing and Parole Reform Bill

The purpose of this Bill is to create a three-tier system of increasing consequences for the worst repeat violent offenders, as follows:

1: an offender incurs a recorded first warning when he or she receives a first qualifying sentence for a serious violent offence committed after he or she turns 18;

2: an offender incurs a recorded final warning when he or she receives a further qualifying sentence (other than life imprisonment for murder) for a serious violent offence committed after receiving the first warning. If the offender is sentenced to a finite number of years in prison, the court must also order that the offender serve this sentence without parole; then

3: an offender receives a life sentence if he or she commits a further serious violent offence after receiving a final warning. The definition of serious violent offence includes murder,

manslaughter, sexual offences, wounding with intent, using a firearm in crime, kidnapping, and robbery.

The court must impose a minimum non-parole period of 25 years on the life sentence unless satisfied that it would be manifestly unjust to do so.

The Bill also provides the courts with the option of sentencing an offender to life without parole in the worst cases of murder.

Submissions close on 24 April 2009. Two copies go to the Law and Order Committee, Parliament Buildings, Wellington. The Bill is at <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2009/0017-1/latest/DLM1845301.html>

Sentencing Young Offenders: Changes

The Children, Young Persons and Their Families (Youth Courts Jurisdiction and Orders) Amendment Bill would amend the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act to expand the jurisdiction of Youth Courts. It would make 12- and 13-year-olds liable to prosecution for certain serious offences other than murder or manslaughter. It would also allow for longer sentencing of youth who are found to have committed a crime by strengthening and expanding the orders available to Youth Courts, and creating some new orders, e.g., an order requiring a parent, guardian, or usual caregivers and also parents-to-be young offenders a parenting education programme. There are also new sentencing options for repeat offenders.

Submissions close on 17 April 2009. Two copies go to the Social Services Committee, Parliament Buildings, Wellington. The Bill is at <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2009/0016-1/latest/versions.aspx>

Contract Management of Prisons

It is Government policy to allow for the competitive tendering of prison management (on a case-by-case basis). The Corrections (Contract Management of Prisons) Amendment Bill would (among other things) require prison management contractors to comply with all relevant international obligations/standards, and with instructions and guidelines from the Corrections Ministry's chief executive.

Submissions close on 22 May 2009. They go to the Justice and Electoral Committee, Parliament Buildings, Wellington. The Bill is at <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2009/0020-1/latest/versions.aspx>

Disputes Tribunals Amendment Bill

This Bill would increase the maximum claim levels of the Disputes Tribunal to \$15,000, or \$20,000 with the consent of both parties. The increase is aimed at:

- improving access to the Disputes Tribunal for both individuals and small businesses; and
- reducing the costs that individuals and small businesses face when resolving civil disputes by enabling more cases to fall within the Disputes Tribunal's jurisdiction.

Submissions close on 27 April 2009. Two copies go to the Justice and Electoral Committee, Parliament Buildings, Wellington. The Bill is at <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2009/0022-1/latest/versions.aspx>

National Super/Vets Pensions Bill

The Social Assistance (Payment of NZ Superannuation and Veterans Pension Overseas) Amendment Bill amends the NZ Superannuation and Retirement Income Act 2001, and the War Pensions Act 1954, to make it easier for superannuitants and veterans pensioners to travel or retire overseas.

Submissions close on 29 May 2009. They go to the Social Services Committee, Parliament Buildings, Wellington. The Bill is at <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2008/0301-1/latest/versions.aspx>

Sale & Supply of Alcohol

The Sale and Supply of Liquor and Liquor Enforcement Bill is aimed at addressing the problems associated with the availability of alcohol, youth binge drinking, and alcohol advertising. It would:

- enable local councils to create local alcohol plans setting restrictions on the number of outlets in an area and where they are located (these plans must be given effect to in liquor licensing decisions);
- clarify types of premises eligible for an off-licence: grocery-selling stores will generally not be able to obtain a liquor licence unless they have a floor area of at least 150 square metres;
- make it an offence for adults to supply liquor to minors without the consent of their parent or guardian;
- reduce to zero the allowable blood-alcohol content for drivers under 20 who do not have a full licence; and
- provide for a system of "enforced self-regulation" of alcohol advertising.

Submissions close on 23 April 2009. Two copies go to the Justice and Electoral Committee, Parliament Buildings, Wellington. The Bill is at <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2008/0254-1/latest/versions.aspx>

Evaluation of GM Soybean

Food Standards Australia NZ (FSANZ) has invited people to provide feedback on an application to amend the Australia NZ Food Standards Code. The application is seeking approval for food derived from a genetically modified soybean, which must undergo a safety evaluation by FSANZ before it can be sold in Australia and NZ. FSANZ is seeking comments on its safety assessment.

Submissions close 1 May 2009. FSANZ prefers that you lodge your submissions electronically through the FSANZ website using the "lodge a submission" tab, or by visiting <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/standardsdevelopment/documentsforpublicco868.cfm>. You can also send submissions standards.management@foodstandards.gov.au

Building & Managing Units

Your comments are sought on a Bill intended to modernise the way apartment blocks are built and managed. The Unit Titles Bill aims to make setting up unit title developments easier and more flexible, and it is also aimed at streamlining and simplifying the way multi-unit developments are managed.

There are over 16,000 unit title developments in NZ with nearly 96,000 units. Around 70 percent of these are residential. This trend is set to increase: within 50 years it is estimated that half a million people will be living in multi-unit developments in Auckland alone.

Submissions close on 24 April 2009. Two copies go to the Social Services Committee, Parliament Buildings, Wellington. The bill is at <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2008/0212-1/latest/versions.aspx>

Trade (Safeguard Measures) Bill

This Bill would set up a new safeguards system for NZ. "Safeguards" are emergency measures applied at the border, usually in the form of a duty, which provides temporary protection to a domestic industry when there is a surge in imported goods that was not foreseen.

The new system fits with World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules.

Submissions close on 14 April 2009. Two copies go to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, Parliament Buildings, Wellington. More on the Bill is at <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2008/0294-1/latest/versions.aspx>

Insolvency Amendment Bill

The Insolvency Amendment Bill prevents fraudulent debts from being written off under the "No Asset Procedure". This procedure is an alternative to bankruptcy, and essentially writes off debts of up to \$40,000 for people who are in financial difficulty and have no realisable assets to pay off those debts. Amongst other things the Bill would also amend the public register to record the names of those who have had debts discharged and restore the Official Assignee's ability to recover gifts made before bankruptcy to avoid payments to creditors.

Submissions close on 16 April. They go to the Commerce Committee Parliament Buildings, Wellington. The Bill is at <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2009/0019-1/latest/versions.aspx>

East Otago Taiapure - Local Fishery

Your views are sought on a position paper setting out the Ministry of Fisheries' (MFish) initial position on a proposal by the East Otago Taiapure Local Fishery Management Committee to recommend regulations for the East Otago Taiapure.

Submissions close on 24 April 2009. They go to T Steel, Ministry of Fisheries, PO Box 1020, Wellington, fax 04 819 4208, email tracey.steel@fish.govt.nz. More is at <http://www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Consultations/default.htm>

Threatened NZ Freshwater Fish

The Department of Conservation (DoC) is seeking submissions about any changes in the status of any NZ freshwater fish species. All organisms known to occur in a wild state in NZ are listed according to their conservation status/risk of extinction, and DoC is currently updating the freshwater fish species list.

Submissions close on 22 May 2009. You can make an online submission or post or email your submission to: Scientific Officer (Species), Terrestrial Conservation Unit, Department of Conservation, PO Box 10-420, Wellington 6143, email threatstatus@doc.govt.nz, or tel 04 471 3249. More is at <http://www.doc.govt.nz/getting-involved/consultations/current>

ERMA Consultations

The Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA) is calling for public submissions on the use of the herbicide methylarsinic acid and the insecticide azinphos methyl as part of regular review of hazardous substances. Methylarsinic acid is used in NZ to control paspalum and kikuyu in fine turf. Azinphos methyl is a broad-spectrum organo-phosphate insecticide used in NZ for controlling insects on crops such as strawberries, summerfruit and potatoes.

Submissions close on 15 May 2009. They can be made in writing, either by letter or email, or through the ERMA website. The application for methylarsinic acid is at: <http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/consultations/make-submission.html?aid=HRC08006>, and the one for azinphos methyl is at: <http://www.ermanz.govt.nz/search/registers.html?aid=HRC07002>. For more information email lesley.meadows@ermanz.govt.nz, or tel 04 918 4835

Rural

Enterprising Rural Woman Award: Finalists

Three finalists have now been shortlisted for the RWNZ Enterprising Rural Woman Award 2009, which is to be presented at Parliament on 15 May. Their outstanding entries were picked from a strong field of 46 by judges Theresa Gattung of Wool Partners International, Amber Quinnell of BNZ, and RWNZ's National President, Margaret Chapman. The finalists are (in no particular order):

- Jan Bolton of Kaingaroa Roding Contractors Ltd, Murupara;
- Beverley Forrester of Blackhills in North Canterbury; and
- the three principals of Tora Coastal Walk in South Wairarapa – Jenny Bargh, and Kiri and Kath Elworthy.

Sponsors of the award are BNZ, Access Homehealth and Precise Print & Design.

For more information about the finalists' businesses contact J Edkins, Communications Officer, Rural Women NZ, email jackie.edkins@ruralwomen.org.nz, or tel 04 473 5524

Maori in the Primary Sector: Snapshot

From the March issue of MAF Biosecurity's "Biosecurity" newsletter comes the following snapshot of the significant economic interest Maori have in land and forestry assets/their collective contribution to the primary sector. It includes:

- ownership of approximately 1.5 million hectares of land valued at approximately \$7.5 billion;
- farming of approximately 10–15% of NZ sheep and cattle on Maori land;
- shareholding in Fonterra valued at approximately \$1 billion, with Maori dairy enterprises producing in excess of 800,000 kg/milk solids seasonally; and
- turnover of Maori trusts and incorporations being as large as the top half of companies listed on the NZ stock exchange

The March issue of the newsletter also includes an article on the need for a broader view of what might constitute a "Maori perspective" on biosecurity (there being no single Maori view), which covers a range of relevant issues.

The March issue of "Biosecurity" is at <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/biosec/pubs-news/pubs/biosecurity/issue-90>

Treat Tractors with Respect

ACC has reviewed a sample of 470 ACC claims it received for tractor-related incidents (received from 1st July 2007 to 30th June 2008)*. Key points from the review are:

- fatal claims: two fatal claims related to male farmers (55-60 years old). One fatal incident involved a tractor roll-over while the farmer was spraying a paddock. The other involved tractor forks coming down while the farmer was driving along a road (resulting in the farmer being pinned under the tractor);
- roll-overs: there were at least 18 such incidents, including one fatality. All the cases resulted in serious injuries (such as crushed chests and/or multiple fractures). Eleven incidents involved males, one involved a female;
- slips and falls: almost 100 farmers were injured while getting down from tractors. Typically they either slipped while climbing down, or were injured as a result of jumping onto uneven surfaces;
- industrial deafness: male farmers made 145 industrial deafness claims that could be attributed to years of working with tractors. Ten claims were made by females; and
- other incidents: other fairly common incidents included being run over by a tractor that is left in gear, shoulder injuries from twisting the body to adjust the tractor, and injuries while working on or around the vehicle itself.

However, tractor incidents can be minimised by putting in place a few safety rules on the farm. For your own safety and the safety of those around you, FarmSafe advises all farm staff to:

- ensure tractors are regularly serviced and maintained;
- make sure the operator knows about any hazards on the farm where he or she is working;
- ensure there is a suitable shield/guard covering the PTO shaft;
- avoid walking under an elevated front-end loader;
- not to wear any loose clothing while operating the machine, and ensure long hair is tied back;
- never work underneath an unsupported trailer when tipping it;
- ensure loads are secured correctly and safely;
- check for overhead power lines and other such hazards, before tipping the trailer; and
- ensure people get the training, skills and supervision needed to operate the tractor safely (for instance, by enrolling all farm staff on a FarmSafe Skills Tractor workshop).

*This review followed a request from Federated Farmers, and was conducted by Peter Jones ACC Programme Manager (Agriculture).

Bee Week is 4-8 May

Bees (both honey and bumble) are to get a full week of celebration, thanks to the NZ Beekeepers' Association, Organics Aotearoa, Plant & Food Research, and Horticulture NZ. The main aim of Bee Week is to lift awareness of the importance of bees to the rural sector - and therefore the nation's economy.

The Bee Week theme is: the honey bee cannot survive without human intervention — and we can't survive without them. On Monday the theme will be the value of honey bee products; on Tuesday: the value of pollination; on Wednesday: the responsible use of agrichemicals to look after bees; on Thursday: research and development; and on Friday: biosecurity and the need to protect bees. A function is also being held at Parliament.

More is at <http://www.nba.org.nz/node/581>

Rural Residents Happiest, Says Survey

Rural residents are happier with where they live than people who live elsewhere, a survey has found. The UMR Research survey of 750 NZers aged 18 and over found 90% of rural residents would most like to live in a rural area. For those living in a small town the figure was 76%, with 75% for respondents in the suburbs and 64% of those living in the central city.

Wool Meetings

Wool Partners International have been meeting with growers throughout NZ for discussions centring around linking growers with the market. Some of the meetings have already taken place - here's the timetable for the ones that remain:

15 April (10:00 am): *Timaru* - Harlequins Sports Club; (2:30 pm): *Oamaru* - Kingsate Brydone Hotel;

16 April (10:00 am) *Outram* - West Taieri Rugby Club; (3:00 pm): *Lawrence* - Simpson Pk Sports Complex;

17 April (2:00 pm): *Ranfurly* Bowling Club, 19 John Street;

20 April (12:00 pm): *Wairoa*; (5:30 pm) tba: *Gisborne* - Tatapouri Sports Fishing Club;

21 April (1:00 pm): *Napier* - Chapman Pavilion, McLean Park; (7:30 pm): *Waipukurau* - Civic Theatre;

22 April (10:00 am): *Dannevirke* - RSA, 1 Princess Street; 23 April (3:00 pm): *Rotorua* - Sudima Hotel;

24 April (10:00 am): *Ohinewai* - Waikare Golf Club, 66 Waerenga Road;

27 April (10:00 am): *Cheviot* Rugby Club Rooms, Ward Road; (3:00 pm): *Culverden* Rugby Club Rooms;

28 April (10:00 am): *Winton* Memorial Hall; (3:00 pm): *Mossburn* Community Centre;

29 April (10:00 am): *Otautau* Combined Sports Complex; (3:00 pm): *Invercargill* - Wyndham Town and Country Club; and

30 April (1:30 pm): *Gore* - Scenic Circle Croydon Hotel.

For more information email info@woolpartners.com.

Environment

Global Low-Carbon Prosperity Taskforce

Responding to an invitation made at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, 52 international companies have joined forces with 32 experts and organisations from around the world to create a low-carbon prosperity Taskforce. They represent a wide range of sectors: airlines, oil and gas, utilities, manufacturing, technology, finance and investment.

This Taskforce will work alongside government and UN officials to develop a set of practical projects and policy proposals that will significantly stimulate the low-carbon economy from 2010 onward. Its main focus is to identify exactly how to create millions of green jobs in the short term and deflect economic growth onto a more sustainable, low-carbon path for the longer term.

It will also be working with organisations like the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Foundation and others to develop practical ideas on how to get significant flows of green technology and investment into developing countries quickly.

Recommendations for ready-to-implement "low-carbon projects" will be sent to the UN Secretary-General in September.

More is on the World Economic Forum's website at <http://www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/ghg/index.htm>

NZ Attitudes to Climate Change

A new national survey of NZers' attitudes to climate change reveals that 64% say the time has passed to doubt whether or not climate change is happening as a result of human activities. They believe climate change is a problem (76%) and its effects have already begun to happen (65%). In addition, a majority (53%) say they personally worry about climate change.

The survey finds nearly six out of 10 rank climate change as a problem which may have a serious impact on them and their families (the eighth highest ranking issue concerning NZers). Some 44% believe it will be a threat to their personal lifestyle within their own lifetime. It is seen as a more serious issue than interest rates and personal employment prospects, but less important than the cost of living, crime and the economic recession. It shows the recession has not reduced concern over climate change.

Other findings include:

- 42% of respondents would prefer the country to provide global leadership on the issue compared with 36% who want to move at the same pace as other countries;
- the country is evenly split on whether there are more or fewer economic opportunities available as a result of climate change (27% more opportunities, 20% fewer opportunities, 27% no difference, 25% don't know); but
- business decision makers certainly believe that climate change presents more economic opportunities (42% more, 16% fewer, 26% no difference, 16% don't know).

The information comes from a ShapeNZ national survey of 2,851 people (taken between 9 and 11 February 2009) commissioned by the NZ Business Council for Sustainable Development.

Find out more at <http://www.nzbcscd.org.nz/>

A Sustainable Global Economic Recovery

According to a report from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), strong investment into five key areas, from renewable energy to sustainable transport, could help revive the global economy and boost employment while accelerating the fight against climate change, environmental degradation and poverty. And the cost? One percent of global GDP, or around \$US750 billion. The five areas are:

- raising the energy efficiency of old and new buildings;
- renewable energies including wind, solar, geothermal and biomass;
- sustainable transport including hybrid vehicles, high speed rail, and bus rapid transit systems;
- the planet's ecological infrastructure including freshwaters, forests, soils and coral reefs; and
- sustainable agriculture including organic production.

The Policy Brief for a Global Green New Deal can be downloaded from <http://www.unep.org/greeneconomy/>

Water in a Changing World

A report from the United Nations (UN) called "Water in a Changing World" indicates that some countries have already reached the limits of their water resources.

The report, which was compiled by 24 UN agencies, says that global population growth (to six billion people), together with climate change, mismanagement of water and increasing demand for energy, have tightened the grip on the world's water supplies.

It estimates that, because of climate change, almost half the world's population will be living in areas of high water stress by 2030, including between 75 million and 250 million people in Africa. In addition, water scarcity in some arid and semi-arid places will displace between 24 million and 700 million people.

The report which is based on a 3-yearly assessment of the world's freshwater resources notes a strong link between poverty and water resources, with the number of people living on less than US\$1.25 a day roughly coinciding with the number of those without access to safe drinking water.

Find out more at <http://www.unesco.org/water/wwap/wwdr/index.shtml>

Renewable Forests: Importance Increasing

Planted forests that provide wood that is renewable, energy efficient and environmentally friendly have become increasingly critical to future supplies, according to a new study by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

The agency noted that in 2005, planted forests made up just seven percent of the global forest area, or 270 million hectares, compared to a total four billion hectares of forest covering 30% of the world's land area.

But, says the FAO, the importance of planted forests is expected to grow steadily with wood becoming an increasingly vital feedstock for industry, and an increasingly competitive source of bio-energy due to the role of forests in mitigating the negative effects of climate change.

The 13-page report is at "Wood from Planted Forests: A Global Outlook 2005-2030" from <http://www.forestprod.org/dec08-f.pdf>

Climate Change Toolkit

The Australian branch of Communities for Climate Protection (CCP) has launched a Local Government Climate Change Adaptation Toolkit which can be used by NZ local authorities. CCP was launched in NZ in 2005 and has 34 participating members (covering 83% of the population), including most city councils and regional authorities. Its objective is to empower local government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from councils' operations and from their communities.

Download the toolkit from <http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=adaptation-toolkit>

Didymo Effect of Didymo on Whio?

Didymo has been confirmed in six more waterways in Nelson, including the Waimea River, and the Department of Conservation (DoC) is worried about the potential impact of didymo on Whio (Blue Ducks).

Whio are a threatened species of native waterfowl. They are "one-offs", having no close relatives anywhere in the world. They feed on invertebrates, and didymo can form dense mats which may affect invertebrate populations and reduce the food source for these important native ducks.

DoC is seeking the help of trampers, anglers and other people: Make sure you "Check, Clean, Dry" gear so you don't spread didymo

Kakapo Bouncing Back?

The Department of Conservation's Kakapo Recovery Team have been closely watching a handful of chicks born recently on Whenua Hou/Codfish Island – the kakapo sanctuary off Stewart Island.

All the new chicks have survived their first few critical days, meaning the world's kakapo headcount is now officially 103 birds - more than double the total number of kakapo alive a little over a decade ago.

Water & Wastes Assn Now Water NZ

The trading name of the NZ Water and Wastes Association has changed to Water NZ (from 20 March 2009). The legal description of the organisation continues to be NZ Water and Wastes Association.

Water NZ's website has changed from www.nzwwa.org.nz to www.waternz.org.nz

Tourism

\$\$ for Tourist Promotion in Oz

Tourism NZ is to receive an additional \$2.5 million to boost tourism promotion in Australia. The money will go towards:

- extending the current 100% Pure NZ and "What's On" activity in Australia to increase autumn and winter arrivals;
- increasing public relations activity; and
- working being undertaken with industry partners to convert awareness of NZ into actual travel.

Currently, Australians make up nearly 40% of NZ's visitor arrivals.

International Travel down/Migration Up

Statistics NZ says that short-term arrivals by overseas visitors and short-term departures by NZ residents were both lower in February 2009.

However, net permanent and long-term (PLT) migration increased, and this was mainly due to 1,200 fewer PLT departures. This included 1,000 fewer departures to Australia. PLT arrivals were up 400 compared with February 2008, with 200 more NZ citizen arrivals and 200 more non-NZ citizen arrivals.

Tourism Competitiveness Report 2009

Switzerland, Austria and Germany have the most attractive environments for developing the travel and tourism industry, according to the third annual Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report, published by the World Economic Forum. Among the top ten, France (4), Canada (5), Sweden (8) and Singapore (10) post improvements. This year, NZ comes in at number 20 (from a total of 133 countries surveyed).

The rankings are based on the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), which considers the different regulations and business-related issues that make it attractive to develop the travel and tourism industry of an individual country.

This year's report, published under the theme "Managing in a Time of Turbulence", reflects the difficulties the industry currently faces, that need to be overcome to ensure strong growth in the future. It therefore includes chapters on such things as the impact of oil prices on the tourism industry, the importance of price competitiveness for attracting tourists, and the extent to which the Index explains differences in the intensity of travel between countries.

The report is at <http://www.weforum.org/en/initiatives/qcp/TravelandTourismReport/index.htm>

Health and Welfare

Health of NZ's Workforce...

Seven out of ten (71%) NZ workers have a state of health worse than their actual age, according to a survey conducted

by the Southern Cross Medical Care Society. The survey revealed that nearly a fifth (18%) of the workforce has a health status equivalent to someone 10 or more years older than they are, while more than half (53%) have a health status 1-9 years greater than their actual age. Only 22% were rated as having a state of health 1-9 years below their age, and 2% at 10-years plus.

The formula used to determine workers' state of health took into account smoking dependence, blood pressure, cholesterol levels, alcohol consumption, nutrition, Body Mass Index (BMI), stress, quality of life and job satisfaction.

...& the Cost of Illness

The cost of illness to NZ employers is likely to be more than \$1,500 per employee, or over \$2 billion across the whole workforce, according to new research findings from the Southern Cross Medical Care Society. Surprisingly, the research shows the biggest part of those costs is not absence from work but lost productivity of employees who still go to work when they're sick.

The research found the average time off work due to illness was 4.2 days per year, while the average number of days where employees went to work when they were too sick to be fully functioning and productive was 11.1 days.

Where does the figure of \$2 billion come from? If you assume an unwell employee is half as productive as they normally would be, the cost to employers for a staff member on the average wage is around \$900. That's a higher average annual cost to employers than days off work, which is around \$700 per employee. Multiply those numbers by the equivalent of 1.4 million full time workers in the NZ workforce and you have a \$2 billion impact on productivity.

Amokura Family Violence Prevention: NY Award

The Amokura-Family Violence Prevention Consortium has received international recognition by being awarded the Alumni Human Rights Prize by the Leitner Centre for International Law and Justice in New York. The consortium is made up of seven iwi authorities: Te Aupouri, Te Rarawa, Ngati Kahu, Whaingaroa, Ngapuhi, Ngati Whatua and Ngati Wai, who have made a long term commitment to violence prevention. Amokura is dedicated to the goals of promoting safety in all the homes of the North by using innovative strategies to increase community awareness, and to provide simple messages for change.

The mission of the Leitner Centre is to contribute to the promotion of social justice around the world by encouraging knowledge of and respect for international law and international human rights standards in particular.

More on the Leitner Centre is at <http://law.fordham.edu/leitner.htm>

Rural GPs: More Say on Funding

Rural GPs and the Ministry of Health are to work together on how to use the Rural Bonus fund (of up of \$4 million) and the Rural Premium fund (of \$11 million) to best support rural general. An additional \$5 million will be shared among general practices active in providing rural after-hours services. This is funding set aside by the previous government.

Rural general practice faces particular challenges from working in more remote areas – for example, issues of recruitment and retention continue to be of concern.

Patient Travel Allowance Increased

The mileage allowance that patients can claim under the National Travel Assistance (NTA) policy has been increased from 20 cents to 28 cents per kilometre. The NTA policy is for patients who are referred by a specialist to another specialist and the patient has to travel long distances, or travel frequently, for appointments. The maximum accommodation rate for eligible clients has also been increased to \$100 per night for all of NZ.

Information about who is eligible for travel assistance is available from the Ministry of Health's website, www.moh.govt.nz under Travel in the A-Z section

Access by Maori to Healthcare...

Mauri Ora Associates has released research findings on access by Maori to healthcare in a report called "He Ritenga Whakaaro".

The research indicates that most of the 651 participants surveyed are reasonably satisfied with their health services.

Barriers to accessing healthcare include organisational issues (such as lack of choice, waiting times, poor experiences), perceptions of negative provider attitudes, cultural fit (perceptions of being patronised); and cost.

Survey participants were split over whether seeing a doctor was "value for money", and the researchers say this indicates that cost is an ongoing barrier as far as using healthcare services goes, and that it may also influence Maori participants in their attitudes towards taking medication.

Younger respondents were less likely to report that their relationship with their doctor was good, respectful and enabling of rapport, and more likely to be cynical about the care provided by doctors to Maori patients. They were also more likely to say that they would be better looked after by Maori health professionals.

The report is available for download at <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/he-ritenga-whakaaro-mar09>

...& Traditional Maori Healing: Report

A recently-released 2008 report on the Ministry of Health's website called "The Future of Rongoa Maori Wellbeing and Sustainability" describes the benefits of traditional Maori healing in terms of its contribution to Maori wellbeing and development.

In the report the health benefits associated with rongoa Maori (the traditional Maori medical system) are identified.

The rongoa itself comes from trees, leaves, berries, fruits, bark and moss; mirimiri (similar to massage); wai (water for healing), and surgical interventions.

The report also looks at the problem of sustainability in terms of environmental wellbeing which affects the supply of rongoa, and at how the knowledge about it can be upheld, the practices validated, and the intellectual property rights associated with the traditions protected.

The report was prepared for the Ministry of Health in September 2008 by the Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR) and Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiarangi, with Nga Ringa Whakahaere o te Iwi Maori.

The report is at <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/future-of-rongoa-maori-mar09>

2008 HIV Statistics

The latest annual HIV statistics report shows that 184 people were diagnosed with HIV infection last year, the highest number of diagnoses ever in NZ. Last year, about 70% of HIV infections occurring in NZ were diagnosed amongst men having sex with other men. Rising rates of infections through homosexual contact have also been observed in Australia, Canada, the United States and Western European countries in recent years. The annual statistics report also showed that most people who acquired the infection through heterosexual contact were infected overseas.

The prevalence of HIV infection in the NZ population is very low compared to other countries. From 1985 to 2008, some 3000 people have been diagnosed with HIV and about a thousand are recorded to have developed AIDS.

Healthcare Providers Share Projects

Two large healthcare providers, St John and Access Homehealth, have agreed to work closely together on a range of projects. Areas of future collaboration include training, property and resource use, relationships with the Crown, and home help and care services.

St John is NZ's largest ambulance service and a significant provider of community services. Access Homehealth is one of the country's largest home healthcare providers, with branches nationwide. Access Homehealth is owned by Rural Women NZ, and provides home help and district nursing services across NZ. St John has been in NZ for more than 120 years, and Access Homehealth for more than 80 years.

Find out about the two organisations at <http://www.access.org.nz/> and <http://www.stjohn.org.nz/>

The Nursing Council: Elections Coming...

Nurses on the nursing register will shortly be able to elect members of the Nursing Council. At the moment, the six nurses on the council and the two lay people have been appointed by the Minister of Health.

In September, elections will be held for two of the six health professionals on the council and they will serve a two year term. When the next elections are held in 2011 there will be three positions open for election for a term of three years.

...& Training of Enrolled Nurses

The Government has asked the Nursing Council to work with District Health Boards and the Ministry of Health to expand the role and training of enrolled nurses in NZ. The move follows the release of September 2008 findings of a Nursing Advisory Committee, called "Clinical Workforce to Support Registered Nurses". The work will take around six months.

The Nursing Advisory Committee report is at www.moh.govt.nz

Family Violence Review C'ttee: Nominations?

The Ministry of Health is calling for nominations for two vacancies on the Family Violence Death Review Committee.

For more information and an online application form go to www.moh.govt.nz/statutorybodies

Education

Funding for School Buildings

Eighty-one schools around the country will get new or expanded buildings through the first allocation of property funding to schools under the government's recently announced infrastructure package. Seventy-four schools will receive \$30 million to extend existing buildings, and seven schools will receive \$11 million to replace buildings that are no longer economically viable to maintain. A ranking system is applied to ensure that schools with the greatest need have their space deficiencies and building issues addressed first, regardless of school type.

Student Loans: Repayment Bonus

The Government is introducing a bonus system for people who make voluntary repayments on their Student Loan. The aim is to encourage borrowers to repay their loans sooner.

From 1 April 2009, voluntary repayments made to Inland Revenue (IRD) totalling \$500 or more in a tax year get a bonus 10% of the amount repaid credited to their Student Loan account. For example, a student who makes voluntary repayments totalling \$500.00 in a tax year will have their loan account reduced by \$550.00.

For anyone who repays their Student Loans in full, the bonus will be credited at the time of final payment, otherwise the bonus will be credited by IRD after the end of the tax year. Repayments made to StudyLink before the loan is transferred to Inland Revenue will not qualify for the 10% bonus.

More information is at <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/voluntary+repayment+bonus+exceeds+promise>

OCC Inquiry into Student Safety...

An inquiry by the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) into the safety of students at school says:

- almost all of the telephone and written communication received by the OCC involved parents, principals and other professionals seeking advice and advocacy for students when there were issues of concern;
- more schools than not are committed to providing a safe learning environment. However, some schools choose not to acknowledge bullying that has occurred or to report specific incidents of violence and abuse;
- the schools defined bullying, violence and abuse differently and in some cases responded differently to the various incidents they experienced, so there are

inconsistencies and gaps in the reporting procedures of some schools, e.g. notifying the Police in cases of serious assault;

- the key concern of parents was the slow response of schools and the perceived inaction of teachers;
- children and young people consulted for this inquiry consider that one reason students choose not to disclose incidents of bullying to teachers is because they perceive that the bullying will not be addressed;
- however, teachers cannot respond to bullying if they do not know it is happening (though there may be cues that students are involved in bullying, which can be picked up from their behaviour and demeanour in the classroom);
- bullying can happen to any student. Being victimised by hurtful teasing, untrue gossip and exclusion from friendship groups were common for many of the students who participated in the inquiry;
- the report proposes that schools, wherever possible, follow the same broad guidelines in respect of bullying, while recognising the individuality of each school to make their own informed decisions;
- if peers are part of the problem they should also be part of the solution. Effective schools understand the importance of involving their students in a whole school approach to eradicate bullying;
- the programmes that are effective in addressing the problems of violence and aggression in schools are those that attempt to alter the school environment rather than focusing on the bullies and victims alone. A whole school approach encourages students, teachers and parents to share responsibility for changing the school culture and developing positive school climates that discourage bullying and encourage students to care about each other;
- restoring relationships rather than attributing blame and exacting retribution is an effective response to bullying behaviour. Bullied students just want the bullying to stop and tend to be less worried about making sure the bullies are punished;
- to maximise success, schools must first have effective policies and procedures in place. The school community should be involved and prevention made a publicly announced priority; and
- bullying will still happen despite schools' best efforts, and teachers need to know how to deal with it when it does.

Note: the Children's Commissioner says that her report should be read with the proviso that her Office does not typically receive calls about "things going well" for children.

The OCC's report is at http://www.occ.org.nz/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/6028/OCC_SchoolSafetyReport_160309.pdf

...& School Violence Report: HRC...

The Human Rights Commission has also released a report on school violence that identifies significant human rights issues. The analysis was prompted by a request from the parents of students experiencing violence in their school that the Commission report on the adequacy of the law in protecting the rights of children and young people subject to violence in school. The report also focuses on how well the principles of human rights and natural justice are reflected in school policies and practices managing peer-to-peer violence in schools.

It noted that schools require clear guidelines stating that parents should be informed if their child is bullied, abused or attacked at school. The report also said that there was little or no information or guidance from government agencies on how to deal with bullying between peers. These left schools with no clear steer about when or how to involve the Police or Child, Youth and Family.

To view "School Violence, Bullying and Abuse: A Human Rights Analysis", go to http://www.hrc.co.nz/hrc_new/hrc/cms/files/documents/16-Mar-2009_09-29-58_HumanRightsSchoolViolence_final.pdf

Employment

Nine-Day Fortnights for Some...

The Government is to provide financial assistance to private sector businesses with over 100 full-time employees to encourage them to retain workers. Under its Job Support Scheme employers, workers and unions will negotiate voluntary agreements to reduce their hours of work to a nine-day fortnight. The government will pay employers \$12.50 (the adult minimum wage) an hour per worker, for up to five hours a fortnight. While workers are in the scheme they cannot be made redundant.

... & Training on the Tenth Day?

Five institutes of technology and polytechnics will provide training to employers and employees who take up the Government's Job Support Scheme. They are the Aoraki Polytechnic, the Eastern Institute of Technology, Otago Polytechnic, The Open Polytechnic, and the Wellington Institute of Technology.

Their offer means that workers on reduced hours in the government nine-day fortnight scheme can potentially use time off to train - in everything from literacy and numeracy to computer skills or upskilling in the trades.

Declining Trade Hits Women's Jobs

A decline in trade resulting from shrinking global markets may cost many women in developing countries their jobs, the United Nations agency that promotes commerce to fight poverty (UNCTAD) has warned.

Due to rapid growth in exports at the beginning of the new millennium, women have been heavily employed in the export sector, accounting for as many as 80 percent of the textile industry workforce in developing countries, and making them vulnerable to the turmoil in global trading.

The International Labour Office (ILO) is predicting a global rise in unemployment this year of up to 51 million, some 22 million of whom will be women. Although the crisis had its initial impact largely on male-dominated sectors such as finance, insurance and construction, it is now spreading into fields where women are widely employed.

More is at <http://www.unctad.org>

Transport

Transport System Funding: Changes

The government is changing the way NZ's transport system is funded, and the changes include:

- replacing regional fuel taxes with smaller increases in national fuel excise and road user charges, which feed into the National Land Transport Fund;
- confirming the government's commitment to Auckland rail electrification;
- committing an additional \$258 million of the government's capital allocation to land transport over the next two years (this is in addition to that announced in the February infrastructure package); and
- amending the Government Policy Statement on Land Transport Funding to make more money available for state highway construction.

The biggest effect of the changes will be almost \$1 billion in additional investment in state highway construction over the next three years. The idea is to help NZ get through the recession, while also improving the state highway network.

ACC Motor Vehicle Levy Rising

The ACC motor vehicle levy is to rise by \$32 on 1 July. The license fee for a petrol car will increase from \$136.44 to \$168.46 and the ACC petrol levy will rise from 9.34 cents per litre to 9.90 cents per litre.

Street Works: New Voluntary Code

The new National Code for Utilities in the Transport Corridor, which was developed by the industry, has now been circulated for voluntary use. Utilities are companies and services dealing with such things as electricity, gas, water and sewerage.

The aim of the code is to provide a structure so corridor managers and utility operators can manage the corridor while maintaining the utility operators' access rights.

The code is at <http://www.nzuaq.org.nz/national-code/>

Street Works Survey: UK

The National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) in the UK has conducted a major public opinion survey into the attitudes of the public to street works. The survey found, contrary to expectations, "that 85% of the public agree "making sure that electricity and water supplies are maintained is more important than reducing congestion on the roads", while "94% of people said they were willing to accept the inconvenience of those works undertaken in order to maintain utility supplies." However another key message was the importance of good (and advanced) communication about works in the road, including how they can be avoided.

Top Cars: AA Excellence Awards

The AA has announced the winners of the 2009 AA Motoring Excellence Awards, the "Oscars" of the NZ motoring industry. The annual awards aim to identify and reward excellence amongst new vehicles and in areas of concern to motorists. They also provide NZ motorists with an independent

assessment to assist with their car purchases. Each of the 52 vehicles entered in this year's awards was assessed by an expert panel of judges on design, performance, dynamics, practicality, execution, value for money, and safety.

The 2009 Supreme Winner and winner of the compact car class is the Hyundai i30 Diesel Elite.

The other 2009 Excellence Award winners are: Small Car – Fiat 500 1.4 Sport; Medium Car – Ford Mondeo Zetec Diesel; Large Car – Holden Sportwagon SV6; Executive Car – Skoda Superb 2.0 TDI 125; Premium Car – Audi A6 3.0 TFSI; Small Crossover – Volkswagen Tiguan 2.0 TDI; Large Crossover – Volvo XC60 DS; Performance Car – Ford Focus XR5 Turbo; Customer Satisfaction – Honda; Safest Car – Peugeot 308 XSP; and Environmental Car – Volkswagen Polo BlueMotion Diesel.

More information on the 2009 Awards can be found at www.aa.co.nz

Housing

Starter Home Design Winners

The winners of a Starter Home Design Competition organised by the Department of Building and Housing (DBH), which attracted 140 entries, are:

- Category 1 (in which designs had to stick to DBH's design document specifications: Tony Koia of Koia Architects, Queenstown;
- Category 2 (which allowed the specifications to be applied more innovatively): Stephen Smith, S3 Architects Ltd, Auckland; and
- Overall Winning Home Design: Stephen Smith.

The winning home will be built in Mangere by the Housing NZ Corporation and showcased to the public.

DBH organised the competition to encourage architects, designers, and building industry people to come up with designs and solutions for good quality, affordable homes that show what can be done with limited resources.

DBH's website is at <http://www.dbh.govt.nz/>

Building Amendment Bill (No 2)

This Bill (on which submissions closed on 9 April) would streamline the consent process for house designs to be replicated on a substantial scale, and the process for making minor alterations to work already consented to. It would also make obtaining a Project Information Memorandum (PIM) voluntary which will also save time and lower building costs.

The Government has indicated it will be taking another look at the Building Act "in order to cut red tape and better control costs without compromising building quality".

A copy of the Building Amendment Bill (No 2) is available electronically from www.legislation.govt.nz

A CD for Landlords

The Department of Building and Housing (DBH) has released an interactive CD which gives landlords advice and information on managing properties effectively and giving tenants value for

money. It also includes video clips of landlords sharing useful tips on running a successful tenancy business.

Users of the CD can view a range of clips for each topic in the usual chronology of a tenancy, from attracting tenants to terminating the tenancy. The CD has four main sections: getting started, managing your tenancy, maximising value, and managing disputes. Also included are downloadable documents needed by landlords, information on dealing with property managers, and links to relevant web pages. These documents are also available in the paper-based landlord pack.

The CD is free. It can be ordered at www.dbh.govt.nz. DBH also offers landlords free public seminars on the basics of running a tenancy: a schedule of these seminars is at www.dbh.govt.nz/landlordsevents-contacts

Energy

Electricity Sector: Review Underway

A Ministerial review of the electricity sector is underway. The review is expected to be in two parts: the first will look at regulatory and governance issues, and the second will address issues of electricity market performance*.

A specially appointed advisory group will liaise with Ministers between March and May 2009. A discussion paper will be prepared by June 2009 and public consultation on the discussion paper will be held in July 2009. Analysis of submissions and development of final recommendations will occur during August to September 2009. Final Cabinet discussion and preparation of any necessary legislation is expected take place by the end of the year.

*Note: The review process will not be considering the ownership of SOEs or economic regulation of electricity lines.

Renewable Electricity Generation

The latest NZEnergy Quarterly reports that new geothermal plants, increased levels of wind generation, and a return to normal hydro lake levels has seen a big jump in renewable electricity generation during the latter part of 2008.

Main points include:

- 74% of electricity is supplied from renewable sources, the highest quarterly level of renewable sources in five years;
- geothermal electricity generation contributed 11% of generation in the December quarter 2008;
- electricity generation from wind* set a new quarterly record of 304 gigawatt hours, providing 3% of NZ's electricity generation; and
- greenhouse gas emissions were 14% down from previous December quarter, the lowest quarterly emissions since the March quarter 2005.

*Note: It's expected that 2009 will see further growth in wind generation. Wind energy capacity is set to grow by over 50% this year, to nearly 500MW, with the commissioning of Meridian Energy's West Wind, near Wellington, and stage two of NZ Windfarm's Te Rere Hau, in the Manawatu.

Parliament

Electoral Finance Reform

Papers on the current Electoral Finance Reform review have been released. This review will cover:

- *the guiding principles*. What are the principles that should guide the regulation of electoral finance reform? These principles help to decide what the rules should achieve.
- *candidate and political party funding*. How should constituency candidates and political parties be funded, including private donations and other sources of funding?
- *campaign spending*. What rules should there be for spending by constituency candidates and political parties during election campaigns?
- *advertising*. What rules should there be for campaign advertising by constituency candidates and political parties, including broadcasting?
- *parallel campaigning*. What rules should there be for campaigning by individuals, organisations or groups who are not standing for election?
- *monitoring and compliance*. What rules should there be for constituency candidates and political parties to declare the funding they receive and money that they spend on campaigning?

The review has three stages, at each of which you will be able to have your say: an issues paper will be released next month, a paper setting out the proposed reforms will be published in August, and then a special cross-party select committee will consider the Bill.

More is at www.justice.govt.nz/electoralfinancereform

State Sector

Government Administration Staff Numbers Capped

The number of core government administration staff in the Public Service and selected Crown entities has now been limited to 38,859 full time equivalent (FTE) staff positions.

The cap applies to:

- all Public Service departments (excluding the Community Probation & Psychological Service and Prison Service sections of the Department of Corrections, and the Work & Income and Child, Youth & Family sections of the Ministry of Social Development); and
- five Crown entities: Housing NZ Corporation; NZ Qualifications Authority (NZQA); NZ Transport Agency (NZTA); NZ Trade & Enterprise (NZTE); and Tertiary Education Commission (TEC).

It is also expected that the numbers of communications and public relations staff will be reduced.

More information, including the Cabinet paper and Cabinet Minute of Decision, is at www.ssc.govt.nz/capping

Auditor-General: Performance Audits in 2007

A recent report from the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG) looks at the follow-up actions taken by 14 government organisation following OAG performance audits of aspects of their performance in 2007. (A performance audit is a significant, in-depth audit covering issues of effectiveness and efficiency. It provides Parliament with assurance about specific issues or programmes and their management by the relevant public agency.) The OAG holds off publishing the follow-up actions report to give the organisation time to put the actions in place.

The 2007 OAG audits were of:

- the NZ Qualifications Authority: monitoring the quality of polytechnic education;
- the effectiveness of the NZ Debt Management Office;
- the NZ Customs Service: collecting customs revenue;
- the Department of Internal Affairs: the effectiveness of controls on non-casino gaming machines;
- the management of conflicts of interest in the three Auckland District Health Boards;
- the Ministry of Health and district health boards: the effectiveness of the "Get Checked" diabetes programme;
- liquor licensing by territorial authorities;
- sustainable development: implementing the "Programme of Action";
- waste management planning by territorial authorities;
- implementing the Maori Language Strategy;
- Te Puni Kokiri: administration of grant programmes;
- arrangements for jointly maintaining state highways and local roads;
- the Department of Labour: the management of immigration identity fraud; and
- statements of corporate intent: legislative compliance and performance reporting.

This report can be downloaded from <http://www.oag.govt.nz/2009/performance-audits/> and the full text of each of the 14 performance audit reports published in 2007 is available at www.oag.govt.nz

Justice/the Law

Legal Aid System: Review

The Government is to carry out a review of NZ's legal aid system. The review will look at how the system can best deliver effective legal services to those who need them most, in a cost-effective and sustainable way. It will also consider alternative ways of managing or reducing the costs associated with legal aid.

Public consultation will start soon and proposals will be announced early next year. Dame Margaret Bazley will chair the review team, the team members of which are yet to be announced.

By funding legal aid services, governments give effect to the principles of equality before the law and of natural justice.

Bill: How Laws Affect People

A Regulatory Responsibility Taskforce is to provide independent advice on the Regulatory Responsibility Bill that was considered by the Parliament's Commerce Select Committee in 2008. This Bill has been introduced to provide a basis to law making that will ensure transparency and accountability, so people will know how a proposed law will affect them.

More Parole Conditions for Some

The Parole (Extended Supervision Orders) Amendment Bill was recently passed. The orders referred to in its title require released child-sex offenders who were not sentenced to preventive detention but who still present a high risk of re-offending to be on parole-type conditions for up to 10 years.

Prisoner Contraband Bill Now Law

The Corrections Amendment Act creates new search, detection, drug-testing and offence provisions to help control contraband in prisons. It includes increased search powers for corrections officers and increases penalties for prisoners using contraband as well as for those found to be supplying illicit items. It also makes it an imprisonable offence for a prisoner to possess or use an electronic communication device such as a cellphone, and for anyone to possess an unauthorised item without reasonable excuse while visiting or working in a prison.

Not-for-Profits

Charities Commission Update

To date the Charities Commission has now received just over 28,000 applications for registration, and around 20,000 charities are now registered under the Charities Act.

Charities have to be registered with the Commission to be eligible for charitable purpose tax exemptions. To be eligible for registration an organisation has to be established/maintained exclusively for charitable purposes that are beneficial to the community.

Now that registration is almost completed, the Commission will be offering charities education resources and support on good governance. It will also be promoting public trust and confidence in charities and their work.

The Charities Register, at www.charities.govt.nz makes information about charities available to the public.

CommunityNet Aotearoa Advisory Group: Nominations

Nominations are open for one community sector position on the CommunityNet Aotearoa Advisory Group. CommunityNet Aotearoa is an online resource offering Maori and community and voluntary organisations useful information and access to resources. The advisory group helps set CommunityNet's editorial policies and strategies, and contributes to the governance of the organisation.

Nominations close on 30 April 2009. More is at <http://www.community.net.nz/communitycentre/news/>

Parliament

New Minister for SFO

The Police Minister has taken over responsibility for the Serious Fraud Office (SFO). Previously, the Attorney-General has been responsible for the SFO, a Government Department that detects, investigates and prosecutes cases of serious and complex fraud.

Business

SMEs: Tax Relief Legislation

Legislation giving effect to a \$480 million package of tax relief measures for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) has now been passed. The package includes removing the 5% "uplift" that businesses pay on provisional tax instalments for the 2008-09 and 2009-10 income years, and changes to certain GST limits.

Details of the legislation are at <http://taxpolicy.ird.govt.nz/news/archive.php?year=&view=653>

Exports and Imports Decline

Merchandise exports fell \$243 million (6.6%) in February 2009 compared with February 2008, Statistics NZ said recently. The value of merchandise imports fell \$490 million (14.2%) over the same period.

This is the first fall in exports since August 2007. The fall was led by decreases in milk powder, butter and cheese, down \$288 million mainly due to a decrease in whole milk powder. Prices were generally lower for commodities throughout this category. The largest offsetting increase was from a \$120 million rise in meat and edible offal, led by lamb cuts.

This month's fall in imports (14.2%) is the largest in 16 years, and was led by a fall in crude oil imports of \$265 million (70.1%). The fall in crude oil was mainly due to much lower quantities being imported. Passenger motor cars were down \$158 million (62.5%) to their lowest value for any month since January 1994.

In February 2009, the monthly trade balance was a surplus of \$489 million, or 14.2% of exports. The trade balance tends to be in surplus in February months; however, as a percentage of exports, this month recorded the highest February surplus since 2001.

International Trademark Registrations 2008

A record number of applications for international registration of trademarks were filed in 2008, though activity slowed in the second half of the year, says the United Nations agency entrusted with protecting intellectual property rights. The 42,075 applications filed last year under the 84-member Madrid system for the international registration of trademarks

represented a 5.3% rate of growth, according to a report by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).

WIPO said that applicants from Germany topped the list of top filers last year for the 16th consecutive year, followed by users in France, the United States, the European Community (EC), Switzerland, Italy, Benelux (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg), China, Japan and Austria.

More is at <http://www.wipo.int/portal/index.html.en>

Business Emails: Four Tips

They are:

- *Say it up front:* whatever the purpose of your email, say it in the first line;
- *Do the thinking:* how many times have you received an email asking "What are your thoughts?" followed by a forwarded chain of messages. When you write, make sure you've explained what you're thinking and what you want the reader to spend time on;
- *Assume nothing:* let the reader know what thinking has gone on behind the scenes. And when following up, don't assume everyone remembers everything you've said. If you've got any worries that an acronym, term, or reference is going to elicit a confused moment, just explain it; and
- *Call to action:* the number one thing that separates a memo, report, or PowerPoint from "A Tale of Two Cities" is a call to action. A novel is to be enjoyed. Business writing is intended to get the audience to do something.

Adapted from online blog, David Silverman, URL: <http://blogs.harvardbusiness.org/silverman/2009/03/4-tips-for-better-business-wri.html>

Money Matters

Foreign Investment Rules: Review

The government is reviewing overseas investment rules to make foreign investment in NZ simpler and more attractive, while at the same time protecting sensitive land, assets and resources. There are three broad parts to the review:

- making some immediate changes, that will not need legislating, e.g., making sure that more applications are decided by the Overseas Investment Office, rather than Ministers;
- considering changes to the Overseas Investment Regulations (these would require Cabinet approval); and
- considering changes to the scope of the overseas investment screening system generally, e.g., considering whether the way of deciding which land is considered "sensitive" should be changed (that would be likely to require amendments to the Overseas Investment Act).

More is at <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government+simplify+foreign+investment+rules>

Fourth Quarter of Economic Contraction

According to Statistics NZ, the economy contracted 0.9% in the December 2008 quarter. This is the fourth consecutive decline in economic activity, as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The main drivers of the decline in economic activity in the latest quarter were the manufacturing and wholesale trade industries.

On an annual basis, GDP was up 0.2% for the December 2008 year. Annual GDP was higher than for the December 2007 year, despite the four quarters of declining activity. This occurred because the economy grew at a faster rate in 2007 than it contracted in 2008.

A Turning Point for Retail?

Statistics NZ says the total value of electronic card transactions increased 0.6% in February 2009 compared with January 2009. This followed a 0.2% increase in January, and decreases in November and December 2008. The fuel retailing and non-retail industries were the main contributors to this latest rise, which was partly offset by a fall in the consumables industry. Transactions in the retail industries were up 0.5% in February 2009, following three months of decreases. The February increase was led by the fuel retailing industry, with petrol prices rising significantly from January to February.

The retail trend appears to have reached a turning point and is now showing a decline since November 2008. The trend for both total transactions, and transactions in the retail industries, had been declining since about September 2008, but both are now showing signs that these declines are easing. (Note, though, that initial trend estimates can be revised so the information should be used with caution until more data is available.)

International Bank Safety Rankings

Australia's four biggest banks - which between them control more than 90% of NZ's banking - are among the world's 20 safest, a survey has found. The twice-yearly assessment - which examines the 500 largest banks in the world - is based on a comparison of the long-term credit ratings from agencies Standard & Poor's, Moody's and Fitch, as well as banks' total assets.

National Australia Bank (NAB), owner of the BNZ, reached number 11 on the US-based Global Finance magazine list. NAB is followed by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia - owner of the ASB Bank - at number 12. ANZ Banking Group (which includes the National Bank of NZ) is ranked 15th, followed by Westpac in 16th place.

The credit ratings of the NZ subsidiaries of the big four Australian banks are similar to those of their parents, which are largely uniform. For example, ASB Bank itself comes in at number 18.

The list and associated press release is at http://www.gtmag.com/admin/mods/abmRepository/root/Docs/2009/safest_mid_year.pdf

Benefit Increases

Under the Annual General Adjustment that came into force on 1 April, many payments increased, including:

- NZ Super or Veteran's Pension payments for qualifying couples rise by up to \$15.64 a week, to \$478.38 a week, compared to 1 October last year;
- for a single person living alone, super and veteran's payments go up by \$13.16 a week to \$310.95;
- a married couple on the unemployment benefit gets an extra \$10.38 a week, or \$5.19 each;
- the allowance for a single student aged 18-23 living away from home goes up \$5.20 a week to \$158.65, and the amount he or she can earn increases by \$6.28 to \$192.01 a week before their allowance starts to reduce; and
- 7747 families receiving Orphan's and Unsupported Child Benefits will have their weekly payments increased to match the Foster Care Allowance weekly board rates (the new weekly rates range from \$132.32 for a child aged under 5 years to \$185.25 for a child aged 14 years and over).

More information on the increases to benefit rates, NZ Super, Veteran's Pensions and student allowances is at www.msd.govt.nz

Tax Problems? Talk to IRD

People finding it difficult to pay their taxes in the current economic climate are being encouraged to contact the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) at the earliest opportunity.

If people get in touch with IRD early, there are a number of things the Department can do to help them, depending on the individual situation. Tax payment by instalment is one option. At the end of December 2008, IRD had \$902 million being paid under instalment arrangements. Such arrangements can be renegotiated if people's situations worsen.

People with reduced income may find themselves eligible for Working for Families Tax Credits. Other people may be eligible for the Independent Earner Tax Credit which became available from 1 April.

Options are also available in the case of Child Support and Student Loans repayments, and people unable to meet their KiwiSaver obligations can take a contributions holiday after being in the scheme for a year. Before that, they can apply for a financial hardship holiday.

For more information go to www.ird.govt.nz/how-to/debt/ or call 0800 227 771 for individual taxpayers, or 0800 377 771 for employers. People can check their entitlements to Working for Families Tax Credit using the online calculator at www.ird.govt.nz. Information about the Independent Earner Tax Credit (in place from 1 April), is available at www.ird.govt.nz/ietc

New Private Equity Fund

The NZ Venture Investment Fund (NZVIF) is investing up to \$20 million into a new private equity fund being established by Endeavour Capital Ltd, which is aiming to invest \$100-\$150 million. Specifically, investment will be targeted at young NZ companies with high growth potential.

Find out more at <http://www.nzvif.com>

NZ & Oz: A Single Economic Market?

Australia and NZ are to begin work on streamlining trans-Tasman cross-border insolvency arrangements. The work will cover all aspects of both countries' insolvency structure, including (among other things) streamlining the recognition of cross-border insolvency proceedings; facilitating information gathering; dealing with attempts at corporate reorganisation; improving coordination between administrations; providing Court and administrative assistance; improving dispute resolution; and addressing any regulatory gaps.

Internet/ICT

ICT Development Index

The latest information and communication technology (ICT) Development Index, produced by the UN International Telecommunication Union, has compared developments in 154 countries from 2002 to 2007.

Using indicators such as households with a computer, the number of Internet users and computer literacy levels, the research found that the most advanced countries in ICT are from northern Europe. The exception is the Republic of Korea, which ranked second behind Sweden, followed by Denmark, the Netherlands, Iceland and Norway.

These countries are followed by other, mainly high-income countries from Europe, Asia and North America. NZ rated 16th out of the 154 countries. At the time of the last survey (in 2002) we were 19th.

All but one country showed improvement in ICT scores over the five years.

The data also showed that there has been a clear shift away from fixed to mobile cellular telephone use, and that by the end of 2008, there were over three times more mobile cellular subscriptions than fixed telephone lines globally. Two thirds of those are now in the developing world (compared with less than half in 2002).

The report is at http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/publications/idi/2009/material/IDI2009_w5.pdf

Managed Spectrum Park: Applications

Applications are invited to access the Managed Spectrum Park in the 2.5 GHz radio spectrum band. This spectrum band offers potential for new regional wireless broadband services to be rolled out, ultimately benefiting consumers by providing more competitive service offerings, especially in rural areas.

The 2.5 GHz Managed Spectrum Park is a new concept in NZ. It is intended for local and regional broadband services, such as WiMAX, and seeks to encourage a flexible, cooperative, low cost and self-managed approach to allocation and use of the radio spectrum resource. It will be of interest to smaller industry players, local and regional councils and iwi groups who are considering the deployment of wireless broadband services. Initial licences will be allocated towards the end of 2009.

Protect Yourself from Online Fraud

InternetNZ has developed a checklist to enable Internet users to review their computer security practices and make sure their online safety is as good as it can be:

- check your virus, firewall and anti-spyware software is up-to-date and always switched on. If you don't have these on your computer then install them now. Don't switch them off to speed up your computer - and be aware that your children may be switching them off when they play online games;
- check your operating system (Windows, Apple OSX, Linux) has the latest security updates. This can be usually be set to happen automatically, or you can visit the vendor's website;
- change your passwords for the websites you use and mark a regular period in your calendar to change them again. Don't use the same password for everything.
- if you bank online, use any additional password security tools that are offered;
- change the password on your broadband modem (you will need to look up the user guide for this). Many such devices are set to default passwords known to malicious computer hackers. If you are using wifi (wireless), then they could be hacked from the street outside your house; and
- if you are using wifi (wireless) then set the security settings on your wifi box to encrypt the information that travels across it.

More information is at <http://www.consumeraffairs.govt.nz/scamwatch/fraud-awareness/faw2009.html>

Copyright Law: a New S92a

A new section of the Copyright Act that was due to come into force on 28 March this year will now be replaced. Section 92a required Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to warn and then disconnect users accused of repeatedly breaching copyright through such activities as unauthorised music and movie downloads.

While there is seen to be a need for legislation in the area, critics of Section 92a argued that it was costly and unlikely to work as it breached the principle of innocent till proven guilty, and would result in businesses and traditional ISPs being caught unwittingly in the middle.

A Handful of Websites

A new website aiming to reduce the cost of sending money from NZ to the Pacific is at www.sendmoneypacific.org. Pacific people remitting money from NZ and Australia play an important part in supporting sustainable economic development in many Pacific Island countries. Remittances to the Pacific are substantial - amounting to over USD\$425 million a year. The website is a joint NZAID and AusAID funded project. It provides details for transferring money from NZ or Australia to Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Visitors to the website can easily compare the costs, transfer methods, speed and exchange rates of different remittance service providers.

A blog site providing a simple route to improving your skills with words is at <http://www.dailywritingtips.com/>. At Daily Writing Tips you can read the latest entries on the opening page and access previous ones placed in handy categories from the panel on the left. There are sections on grammar, expressions, vocabulary and advice for fiction and business writing. They even run fairly frequent short story competitions, which can be a nice safe way to test your literary skills on the general public.

If you need an expert go to <http://www.expertvillage.com/?> We cannot all know everything so it is good to know there is a place on the web where you can find someone who does. This site contains heaps of instructional videos to help you accomplish a variety of tasks from using a block plane to applying the perfect mascara for your wedding day. Click the categories tab to browse through the content by subject. Most films are placed in a series, allowing you to step through the various stages of a topic in small bites. These people are experts, not presenters, so some of the content is quite dry - but the level of detail and knowledge contained in them is very impressive, and it is all totally free to watch.

An online Ouija board that brings dead nouns, verbs, and adjectives to life is at <http://www.savethewords.org/>. Each of the words you'll find here was once a living, breathing part of our language. Roll your cursor over it, and it'll cry out: "Over here!" or "Yo! Pick me!" Click, and you'll see a succinct definition, an example sentence, and an invitation to use the word you've picked in your everyday conversation and correspondence.

A free mind-mapping tool is available at <http://www.mindmeister.com>. Mind mapping is a way of mapping out thoughts, and when it's used collaboratively, it can help speed up the process of understanding others' ideas. Mindmeister.com offers an easy-to-use mind-mapping tool, the basic version of which is free (you can also sign-up for versions with more features, but these are not free). There is also a 3-minute tutorial that goes with it. Using the application you can share your map with collaborators, or other people you'd like to view it. You can also export your mind map in a number of formats and distribute it, or print it if you refer a hard copy.

An free online art institute is at <http://www.smarthistory.org/>. ArtsmARThistory was created by two art historians, and it features 150-plus podcasts, 220 images, and dozens of direct links to the Louvre and other world-class museums. The lectures address individual artists, specific themes, and historical movements, e.g., click on HIGH RENAISSANCE and listen to a thorough analysis of Leonardo's "Last Supper", or check out an 18 minute rundown of the reception Manet's "Olympia" received in Paris in 1865.

A site where you can launch your creative talents is at <http://www.thebigidea.co.nz/>. The Big Idea has been set up as an online home for NZ's creative community, where you can update your profile, submit and read news, interviews and reviews, look for work and add free job listings, connect and list events and media releases, show and sell your creative work, find education news, tips, tools and resources.

The People's Times at www.peopletimes.org.nz is a new community web service dedicated to supporting NZ's grassroots groups to communicate, organise and promote their activities. It offers three services: "People's Times Communities" - offering homepages for groups with networking tools and online storage built in; "People's Times News" - a "citizen journalism" platform: anyone can submit original articles and pictures or link to stories elsewhere; and "People's Times NoticeBoard" - searchable, community-oriented free listings (also accessible directly at www.noticeboard.org.nz). The site is non-commercial.

Treaty Matters

Speeding Up Treat Settlements: Hui

A hui of iwi leaders representing Treaty settlement groups and the Crown are to get together in Auckland on 22 April to discuss the best ways to meet the government's goal of completing the settlement of all historical claims under the Treaty of Waitangi by 2014. Te Kokiri Ngatahi (Moving Forward Together) will be hosted by the Minister for Treaty Negotiations and attended by the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Maori Affairs and the Minister of Conservation. The Ministers will propose ways of speeding the settlement process up and the settling groups will have the opportunity to respond on the proposals, and say how they think the process can move more quickly. A follow up meeting is planned for June.

Crown/Maori Relationships: Studies

Last year the Human Rights Commission carried out case studies on the relationships between the Crown and tangata whenua. The studies relate to Nga Rauru Kitahi and the Crown, Ngati Raukawa and the Kapiti District Council, Ngati Porou and the Ministry of Education, Te Arawa and the Rotorua Lakes Restoration Programme, Mana Whenua and the Waitakere City Council, and Mana whenua and the Manukau City Council. More studies are in the pipeline and the Commission is bringing the people involved together to identify some initial characteristics of effective relationships and how they can be sustained.

The case studies are available on the Commission's website <http://www.hrc.co.nz/home/hrc/home.php> - go to the "Treaty section" and click on "Crown - Tangata Whenua Engagement"

Arts & Culture

Oddest Book Title of the Year

The Bookseller/Diagram Prize for Oddest Title of the Year, also known as the Diagram Prize, is a humorous literary award that is given to the book with the oddest title. The award was created by publisher Bruce Robertson to provide entertainment during the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1978. The following year, the award was organised by Horace Bent, the diarist of British literary magazine The Bookseller.

Nominees are selected from submissions sent in by librarians, publishers, and booksellers, although people cannot select books they publish themselves. However, since 1993, readers of The Bookseller have been allowed to nominate titles. Titles which are deliberately designed to be funny are normally rejected.

Here are some of the winners: 1978, "Proceedings of the Second International Workshop on Nude Mice"; 1980, "The Joy of Chickens"; 1984, "The Book of Marmalade: Its Antecedents, Its History, and Its Role in the World Today"; 1986, "Oral Sadism and the Vegetarian Personality"; 1992, "How to Avoid Huge Ships"; 2001, "Butterworths Corporate Manslaughter Service"; 2004, "Bombproof Your Horse"; 2006, "The Stray Shopping Carts of Eastern North America: A Guide to Field Identification".

or a table of all of the winners since 1978, go to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bookseller/Diagram_Prize_for_Oddest_Title_of_the_Year

Horticulture NZ Art Award 2009

The aim of these awards is to take horticulture further into the community and to obtain others' perspectives on the industry. The 2009 theme is "People in Horticulture". Any NZ citizen can enter, and the work can be of any media – though the entries do need to be easily transportable and non-perishable. The winning artist will receive \$1500. All entries will be displayed at the Hawke's Bay A&P Showgrounds Exhibition Hall on 26 June, and the winning entry will also be displayed at the Horticulture NZ conference in Christchurch in July.

Entries close 6 June 2009. Entry forms and terms and conditions are on the Hawke's Bay Fruitgrowers Association website www.hbfruitgrowers.co.nz or Horticulture NZ's website www.hortnz.co.nz

Awards for Maori Writers

The categories for Pikihuia Awards for Maori Writers 2009 are: best short story in Maori; best short story in English; best novel extract (up to 5,000 words); best short film script; and best short story in English or Maori by a secondary school student.

There are cash prizes for the winners of each category, and entry is free.

More is at <http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/WhoWeAre/News/tabid/59/ArticleType/ArticleView/ArticleID/133/language/en-NZ/Default.aspx>

Fishing

Review of NZ's Fishing

A review of NZ's fishing by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) says that internationally, what NZ has achieved with its management of fisheries is outstanding. We have sustainable fisheries; an internationally competitive commercial fishing sector that operates without subsidy and pays its share of management costs; a high quality amateur fishery; and resolution of fisheries and aquaculture Treaty claims.

However, the report says, most fisheries management systems operating around the world have multiple and conflicting objectives, multiple stakeholders with different interests, and high levels of uncertainty about the ecosystem and fish resources being managed - and NZ is no different.

While our fisheries management is amongst the world's best, there is significant potential to create economic, cultural, social and environmental value by developing new organisational arrangements and ways of managing the fisheries. Suggestions include lowering sector costs through increased effectiveness and efficiency of services; enabling stakeholders to undertake collective management action; and new approaches to decision-making and the use of information to ensure the sustainability of fish stocks.

The report is at <http://www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Fisheries+2030/default.htm>

West Coast Snapper from One Nursery

NIWA scientists have discovered that nearly all snapper on the west coast of the North Island come from nurseries in just one harbour. Some 98% of the 140 adult snapper collected from commercial catches, from Ninety Mile Beach to Mana Island in Wellington, were originally juveniles from Kaipara Harbour.

Snapper is NZ's largest recreational fishery, and one of the country's largest coastal commercial fisheries with an annual export value of \$32 million (2008). But in recent years some stocks have failed to recover from historical overfishing, with some commercial catch quotas for snapper being cut recently to protect the species.

The findings are important because they show how fragile some NZ snapper and other coastal fish stocks could be, as well as highlighting the importance of protecting natural habitats like Kaipara Harbour.

General

Outlook: a Mild Autumn & Winter...

The NIWA National Climate Centre outlook indicates that the moderate La Niña in the tropical Pacific is expected to weaken to neutral conditions by early winter. For April, May and June 2009, you can expect average or above average temperatures in all regions. While most regions are expected to experience near normal rainfalls for the three months as a whole, below normal rainfall is likely for the eastern South Island, and normal or above normal rainfall is likely over the north of the North Island.

Normal or above normal soil moisture and stream flows are likely in the northern North Island, while near normal conditions are likely over the rest of the North Island and northern South Island. Normal or below normal soil moisture and stream flows are expected in the rest of the South Island.

Mean sea-level pressures are likely to be higher than normal to the east and south of the country, and lower than normal to the north of NZ, resulting in a northeast flow anomaly, especially over the North Island.

For the remainder of the tropical cyclone season (through to May 2009), there is an average chance of an ex-tropical cyclone passing within 500 km of the country.

NZ's Race Relations: a Mixed Bag

The Human Rights Commission's fifth annual review of race, "Tui Tui Tuituia: Race Relations in 2008", was released recently.

The economic recession is seen as the most challenging issue for race relations in 2009. The report says that, after a gradual process of economic and social recovery for Maori and Pacific peoples, progress threatens to be halted and even reversed in terms of employment, standard of living and, consequently, other social conditions.

Perceived discrimination against Asian people increased, but at the same time a greater number of NZers felt warmly towards them, and there was increased personal interaction, particularly in urban areas.

In the 2008 election campaign race relations were something of a positive issue, with party lists, especially those of the major parties, giving high places to Maori, Pacific and Asian candidates. The election produced not only the most diverse Parliament ever with increased numbers of Pacific and Asian MPs, but also resulted in a confidence and supply agreement between the National Party and the Maori Party.

The Commissioner says 2008 was an extraordinary year for Treaty settlements and other Treaty issues, with several key people re-energising the settlement process. The most significant milestone was the completion of the Central North Island forests settlement, which involved the transfer of more than \$400 million in forest assets and rentals to the iwi concerned.

NZ's human rights and race relations record will come under scrutiny in the international context when the United Nations Human Rights Council reviews NZ as part of its Universal Periodic Review Programme in May. Issues identified for consideration include the place of the Treaty in our constitutional arrangements, recognition and realisation of the rights set out in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the disproportionate number of Maori in prison, the elimination of poverty, equal access to education and respect for human rights in immigration policy.

The Race Relations Report is at http://www.hrc.co.nz/hrc_new/hrc/cms/files/documents/09-Mar-2009_12-52-05_RRReport_web.pdf

Governing Auckland: Royal Commission Report

The Report of the Royal Commission into Auckland Governance has recommended that

- the Auckland Regional Council and the seven territorial authorities be dissolved;
- it would be replaced with an Auckland Council whose functions would include developing policies for the region; investment, and planning; regional infrastructure and networks; and service delivery;
- it would develop one long-term council community plan, one spatial plan, one district plan, one rating system, one rates bill, and "one voice for Auckland";
- within the Auckland Council six elected local councils in four urban and two rural districts would oversee delivery of services by Auckland Council staff, and act as an advocate for the residents, ratepayers, and communities of their areas;
- community boards would no longer be required, except for Great Barrier and Waiheke Islands, and for the central city and waterfront;
- there would be an "inspirational leader, inclusive in approach and decisive in action" (the mayor), who would be elected by all Aucklanders and would "chart and lead an agenda for Auckland";
- 23 councillors would be elected: 10 by all Aucklanders, eight in four urban wards, two in two rural wards, and two by voters on the Maori electoral roll. One councillor would be appointed by mana whenua:

About 3,500 individuals and organisations made submissions to the Commission on the future of Auckland and 500 spoke to their submissions.

The report is at
<http://www.royalcommission.govt.nz/rccms.nsf/0/B764F57542CB4EC1CC25758500470729?open>

“Sir”, “Dame”, “Lady” Reinstated

Titles at the two highest levels of The NZ Order of Merit have been reinstated. They are Knight and Dame Grand Companion (GNZM); and Knight and Dame Companion (KNZM/DNZM). The reinstatement provides:

- the opportunity for Principal and Distinguished Companions of the Order to elect to be re-designated within the Order as Knights or Dames;
- the opportunity for Principal and Distinguished Companions of the Order who already enjoy a title in another Order of Chivalry, or as a Knight Bachelor, to be re-designated within The NZ Order of Merit Order as a Knight or Dame;
- an opportunity for the small number of widows of deceased former Principal and Distinguished Companions of the Order to elect to use the courtesy title of “Lady” for the remainder of their lives; and
- those who elect not to accept a title to remain Principal or Distinguished Companions of the Order, and to retain their existing privileges and styles.

The Governor-General, who holds the office of Chancellor of the NZ Order of Merit, has been re-designated as a Knight Grand Companion of the Order (GNZM). This means his new title and style are now: His Excellency The Honourable Sir Anand Satyanand, GNZM, QSO. As the wife of a knight, the new style of the Governor-General's wife is Her Excellency Lady Satyanand.

Religious Diversity Guide Revised

A new edition of the NZ Police's “A Practical Reference to Religious Diversity” was launched recently. The new edition of the guide contains updated material on various faiths and religious practices in NZ and is designed to assist police in working with different religious communities. It also includes the national Statement on Religious Diversity, which sets out some basic human rights principles.

The religious diversity guide can be downloaded from the NZ Police website:
www.police.govt.nz

Capital Wears Two Crowns ...

The winner of the greenest and cleanest city (out of a total of 12 NZ cities) recognised through the TopSpot report is Wellington. It's the second title for the windy capital, who also took top honours in the “Best families” report. Coming in a close second is Rodney - a district often placed in the TopSpots reports as one of the top places to live in NZ.

Each of the cities were measured against 10 criteria: air pollution, water pollution, noise pollution, volume of recyclable material collected, domestic water consumption, ease of access to green open space, ease of access to public transport facilities, frequency of use of public transport in the last year, satisfaction with work/life balance, and overall quality of life.

For more go to <http://www.iwantahome.co.nz/index.html> and click on “Topspots: NZs Greenest Cities”

... Our Best City Communities ...

Also from the TopSpot series comes a list of our best cities: 1 Dunedin City; 2 Rodney District; 3 Wellington City; 4 Porirua City; 5 Hutt City; 6 Tauranga City; 7 Christchurch City; 8 Hamilton City; 9 North Shore City; 10 Manukau City; 11 Auckland City; 12 Waitakere City.

To find out more go to <http://www.iwantahome.co.nz/index.html> and click on “Top Spots NZ's Best City Communities”

... & Our Most Affluent Places

Again from the TopSpot series, our most affluent places are: 1 Queenstown Lakes District; 2 North Shore City; 3 Wellington City; 4 Auckland City; 5 Rodney District; 6 Selwyn District; 7 Franklin District; 8 Porirua City; 9 Manukau City; 10 Tauranga City; 11 Tasman District; 12 Central Otago District; 13 Waitakere City; 14 Kapiti Coast District; 15 Thames Coromandel District; 16 South Wairarapa District; 17 Lower Hutt City; 18 Taupo District; 19 Christchurch City; 20 Nelson City.

For more go to <http://www.iwantahome.co.nz/index.html> and click on “Topspots: NZ's Most Affluent Places”

Women in Parliaments in 2008

A record number of women now hold seats in parliament around the world following elections and renewals that took place in 54 countries in 2008, according to the latest analysis undertaken by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The IPU report says that on average, women hold 18.3% of the seats across all chambers of parliament globally, which is a 60% increase in the number of women parliamentarians since 1995, when women held 11.3% of seats.

For the first time, 15% of parliamentary chambers (39 out of 264) in 32 countries have reached 30 percent or more women members. Forty percent of these chambers are in Europe, one third in Africa and 23% in Latin America. At the other end of the spectrum, however, one quarter of all parliamentary chambers have less than 10 percent women members.

More is at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

Global Youth Service Day (GYSD)

This is an annual event, held from 24-26 April this year, and it highlights the contributions of youth to their communities through volunteer service. During GYSD, youth in 100 countries around the world organise community service projects to address the needs of their local communities through service.

More about GYSD is at <http://www.gysd.org/>

NZ Sign Language (NZSL) Week

NZSL Week will be held from 4-10 May, with the theme “NZ Sign Language Is In Your Hands”, a theme designed to inspire and empower hearing and Deaf that anyone can learn sign language and use it. There are many events planned for NZSL Week 2009, including stalls at Westfield Shopping malls around the country, taster NZSL classes, NZSL toolkits for

schools, the NZSL in Action Awards and the Deaf Short Film Festival. An American Deaf performer John Maucere will also tour the country performing Deafywood in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Wellington and Christchurch.

For more details see the NZSL website at <http://www.nzsign.co.nz/>

National Refugee Network

A national network of organisations representing former refugees is in the process of being set up to share information and look at how to develop ways for communities to talk to each other. Its long term aim is to provide a shared voice on issues of common concern.

A national steering committee will oversee the work of the Network.

The Network invites groups with a refugee focus to join the network. For more information email kafeba96@hotmail.com

Some Conferences/Events

Rural Women NZ: National Conference 2009

This conference is being held from 15-17 May 2009, at the Duxton Hotel, Wellington. The conference will be opened by her Excellency Lady Susan Satyanand, followed by guest speaker John Key.

More information on workshops and speakers is at www.ruralwomen.org.nz. Conference registration forms are at http://www.ruralwomen.org/documents/ConferenceRegistration_000.pdf

Action Plan for NZ Women

The Ministry of Women's Affairs CEO is holding a series of meetings around NZ to discuss emerging challenges for women, and develop an action plan. The meetings start on 22 April in Nelson and take in Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill, Gisborne, Napier, New Plymouth, Hamilton, Rotorua, Auckland, Whangarei, and Hokitika/Greymouth, finishing on 24 June.

More is at www.mwa.govt.nz/news-and-pubs/publications/action-plan.html

Alcohol Advisory Council of NZ

ALAC's conference is from 14-15 May 2009 at the InterContinental Hotel, Wellington. It will highlight changes in community action and programmes addressing problems people have with alcohol.

For more information/to register go to <http://www.alac.co.nz/UpComingEvents.aspx>

FAGASA Conference

The 2009 Faalapopotoga mo le Aoaiina o le Gagana Samoa i Aotearoa (FAGASA) Annual Conference will be held from 14-17 April at the Ascot Park Hotel, Invercargill. Speakers will explore the critical nature of language and learning, and the use of a first language for learning purposes and for learning a second language.

More information: Vaoga Maualaivao Eddie Fata at globalgroundcontrol@woosh.co.nz

Museums Aotearoa Conference

This is being held from 15-18 April in Gisborne. Its theme is Culture–Access–Innovation.

For more information visit www.museums-aotearoa.org.nz, or email mail@museums-aotearoa.org.nz

Dairy Women's Network Conference

This conference is being held at the Chateau in the Park in Christchurch on 13 and 14 May. The keynote speech will focus on dairying women moving up the ranks of industry leadership.

Visit www.dwn.co.nz for registration and more information

Asian Pacific Conference on Biomechanics

AP Biomech is being held from 14-16 April 2009 at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch. "Biomechanics" is the study of the mechanics of a living body (especially of the forces exerted by muscles and gravity on the skeletal structure).

For more information/to register go to <http://www.uco.canterbury.ac.nz/conference/apab2009/>

2009 South Pacific Stormwater Conference

This is being held from 29 April -1 May at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Auckland. It is being hosted by the Stormwater Special Interest Group (SIG) of Water NZ.

More information and registration form are at <http://www.waternz.org.nz/stormwaterconference.html>

National Pacific Recovery Conference

The inaugural National Pacific Recovery Conference for mental health and addiction consumers and their families will be held on 7 & 8 May 2009 at the Waipuna Lodge, Auckland.

More at <http://www.community.net.nz/communitycentre/events/national/pacificrecovery.htm?region=default>

Hindu Youth Conference

The Hindu Youth Foundation of NZ is holding the first NZ Hindu Youth Conference on 2 May at the Hindu Heritage Centre, Bukem Place, Mangere East, Auckland. The conference theme is "Living in Modern NZ with Traditional Values".

To register e-mail hinduconference@gmail.com

Funding/Awards

National Community Committee

Lottery Community considers applications for developmental or preventative projects, welfare and support services, or projects that help to improve the wellbeing of people in the community.

Applications may include: activity, resource and programme costs; administration costs; care and support; domestic travel; projects encouraging people to participate in their communities; salaries (up to \$30,000); training and

supervision; feasibility studies; one-off projects and new initiatives; regional and national gatherings; volunteer costs and expenses; community awareness; and minor capital works (up to \$30,000).

Applications close on 8 May 2009. More information, including how to apply is at <http://www.cdgo.govt.nz/apply-for-funding/>

Outdoor Safety Committee

The Lottery Outdoor Safety Committee is a national committee providing funding for outdoor safety and water safety at a regional and national level.

Note: Groups that do not have outdoor safety or water safety as their main purpose, which seek funds for projects that have an outdoor safety or water safety component, are not eligible to apply to Lottery Outdoor Safety.

Applications close on 24 April 2009. More information, including how to apply is at <http://www.cdgo.govt.nz/apply-for-funding/>

Marae Heritage and Facilities

The following are eligible for funding under this fund: building of: wharenui, wharekai, wharepaku, whare taonga, tangata whenua or manuhiri shelters and waka shelters; conservation of: wharekarakia, urupa, pataka, tukutuku, whakairo, kowhaiwhai, photographs within the marae, memorials and flagpoles; parts of capital works projects: whakairo, fixed equipment, land purchase and local authority costs; and feasibility studies and conservation reports.

Applications close on 24 April 2009. More information, including how to apply is at <http://www.cdgo.govt.nz/apply-for-funding/>

Save the Children's Small Grants

This fund is targeted at local projects advancing the rights of NZ children, and, in particular, local projects that build the capacity of children and young people to reach their full potential. Projects must focus on child participation, protection and poverty. Consideration will be given to funding research, project development, start-up costs, training, and appropriate resources, conferences and meetings. The maximum Small Grants Fund award is \$10,000.

Applications close on 15 April 2009. More is at http://savethechildren.org.nz/new_zealand/nz_programme/small_grants_fund/ma.html, email mercy.jumo@scnz.org.nz or tel 04 385-6847

Early Childhood Discretionary Grant Scheme

This scheme (the DGS) is allocated to eligible community-based groups. It aims to increase early childhood education participation by funding projects which: increase the number of places available in existing early childhood centres; help those that may be forced to close/relocate by circumstances beyond their control; establish new services in areas where participation is low and also in areas where the population is growing; enable groups to become licensed; remove health and safety hazards in services; and encourage centres to respond to the needs of their community. Priority will be given to applications in respect of low socio-economic, rural and/or isolated; Maori; Pasifika; and refugee/migrant communities.

Applications close on 24 April 2009. More information/application forms are at <http://www.lead.ece.govt.nz/Funding/DiscretionaryGrantsScheme/default.htm>

Where There's Water: Grants

"Where There's Water" Community Environmental Grants provide funding to help the community understand, maintain, protect and improve their water environment. Streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, estuaries and beaches in urban and rural areas are all included under the scheme. Grants are available to schools, community groups and other non-profit organisations, for environmental projects that have a water focus and focus on public benefit rather than private gain. Water NZ administers the grants, which are funded by BOC.

Applications close on 15 May 2009. For application details/more information go to <http://www.waternz.org.nz/wherethereswater.html>

Appointments

Helen Clark has been selected as the new *head* of the *United Nations Development Programme* (UNDP). Jim McLay has been named as *NZ's next Permanent Representative to the United Nations*. Career diplomat Dell Higgie will be *NZ's next Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva and Ambassador for Disarmament*. Kate Wilkinson has been made an *Associate Minister of Conservation*, and Tariana Turia has been made an *Associate Minister for Disability Issues*.

The reconfigured *Board of ACC* is: John Judge (*Chair*) Peter Neilson (*Deputy Chair*) with *members* Marie Bismark, Philippa Dunphy, Rob Campbell, Murray Hilder, Jane Huria and John McCliskie. Paul Swain has been appointed as the *Crown's lead negotiator in talks with the Ngati Porou* iwi around the settlement of historical grievances. Sir Douglas Graham has the job of *facilitating a settlement of historical claims in the Tamaki-Makaurau region*. Vaoga Mauala Eti Fata has been elected to the *Department of Internal Affairs' Pacific Island Consultation and Advisory Group* (PICAG). Rino Tirikatene (Ngai Tahu, Ngati Hine) is the new *CEO of Federation of Maori Authorities* (FoMA). Mark Berry has been appointed *chair of the Commerce Commission* for a period of eighteen months and Anita Mazzoleni is a new *member*. Mary Holm has joined the *Capital Market Development Taskforce* (this taskforce will be producing an action plan for developing NZ's capital markets later on this year). Juliet Gerrard, Grant Scobie and Rod Downey have been appointed to the *Marsden Fund Council*. Four new recently-appointed *lay members to the High Court* are Professor David Round, Professor Glenn Boyle, Professor Tony van Zijl and Dr Ralph Lattimore (lay members assist the Court in cases involving appeals from decisions of the Commerce Commission and in other matters under the Commerce Act). Dr Meaola Amituanai-Tolosa has been appointed *NZ's first Associate Dean, Pasifika to the Faculty of Education at the University of Auckland*. Ian Cox has been appointed as the new *chair of the NZ Utilities Advisory Group* (NZUAG). Paul Menzies is the new *chair of the Southland District Health Board*. Crawford Falconer has been appointed *Deputy Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade* (MFAT),

A new panel that will oversee improvements to the Department of Corrections' Community Probation and Psychological Service (CPPS) includes Paula Rebstock, Peter Hughes and Andrew Bridges, and two department staff. The chair of the Regulatory Responsibility Taskforce is Dr Graham Scott, and its members are Paul Baines, Richard Clarke QC, Jack Hodder, Hon David Caygill, Dr Bryce Wilkinson and Dr Don Turkington.

Seven iwi and business leaders are to head a *government taskforce on how Maori can avoid the worst impacts of the recession, and strengthen the Maori economy* in the longer term. The members are: Mark Solomon, Ngahiwi Tomoana, Bentham Ohia, Daphne Luke, John Tamihere, June McCabe, and Rob McLeod.

Members of the Technical Advisory Group carrying out a review of the electricity sector are Brent Layton, David Russell, Lewis Evans, Stephen Franks, Toby Stevenson, and Miriam Dean.

Members of a panel reviewing the enforcement structure in section 36 of the Commerce Act (which prohibits a person or business with a substantial degree of market power in a market from taking advantage of their market power to prevent competition in any market) are the Right Honourable Thomas Gault, Professor Sir John Vickers, Professor Stephen Calkins, James Farmer QC and Peter Hinton.

The members of the steering committee of the new National Refugee Network are: Anne Uma George (vice-chair), Zenebe Tsega, Ismail Gamadid, Sadiya Ali, Adam Awad, Jean-Claude Sacheun, Ahmad Tani, Bashir Ahmad Nooristani, and Kafeba Mundele (chair).

Rural Bulletin is a free publication produced by Rural Women New Zealand. Its aim is to build community capacity by circulating relevant information, so people in rural and other communities have an opportunity to make informed decisions about, and have their say on, issues and changes that may affect them.

Rural Bulletin may be copied in full and circulated, and individual items may be reproduced providing the source is acknowledged. If you would like more information about Rural Bulletin or its contents, please contact:

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Rural Women New Zealand has the aim of strengthening rural communities. It is a forum for the exchange of information on rural health, education, social issues and land issues. It advocates for legislative change that improves the wellbeing of rural families by making submissions and representations to the government of the day. The goals of the organisation are:

- To promote informed public debate on issues affecting rural communities;
- To participate in the formulation and evaluation of public policy that impacts on rural families and their livelihoods;
- To promote research and disseminate knowledge relevant to the wellbeing of rural New Zealanders;
- To support and encourage the development of a trained and effective rural workforce; and
- To be a strong and informed advocate for rural issues.

Membership of Rural Women New Zealand is open to all people who are interested in issues affecting rural communities. To become a member, contact Belinda Hunt at enquiries@ruralwomen.org.nz