

# Rural Bulletin

February 2007



Rural Women  
NEW ZEALAND

<http://www.ruralwomen.org>

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# Consultation

## Draft Energy Strategy Released

A new draft Energy Strategy called “Powering Our Future – Towards a Sustainable Low Emissions Energy System” proposes that as much new electricity generation as possible should be renewable, except to the extent necessary to maintain security of supply.

Other proposals in the strategy include:

- introducing renewable fuels as substitutes for petrol and diesel;
- improving efficiency of the vehicle fleet, through age/technology standards;
- improving consumer choice through vehicle efficiency information standards;
- biofuels increasing over time and the introduction of plug-in electric vehicles;
- increasing support for public transport and non-motorised forms of transport;
- developing a NZ shipping strategy and other different ways to move freight;
- more solar water heating;
- more energy efficient homes and buildings;
- funding for the early deployment of marine-based electricity generation such as wave or tidal, worth \$8 million over four years;
- increasing competition in the electricity market by reducing restrictions on generation and retailing by lines companies;
- creating a pathway for “internalisation” of fossil fuel emissions in the electricity sector so costs are met by those who create them; and
- consideration of RMA consent applications for wind and geothermal electricity generation projects in groups, to better compare national benefits and environmental impacts.

As well as the draft Energy Strategy two additional discussion papers are available for comment. One covers the longer-term options for addressing greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors of the economy beyond 2012, and the other proposes ways to encourage renewable energy and/or limit greenhouse gas emissions in the electricity and industrial energy industries.

Submissions close 30 March 2007. More information is at [http://www.med.govt.nz/templates/ContentTopicSummary\\_\\_\\_\\_19431.aspx](http://www.med.govt.nz/templates/ContentTopicSummary____19431.aspx)

## Developing a Medicines Strategy

A significant first step towards developing a medicines strategy is underway with the release of a public consultation paper called “Towards a NZ Medicines Strategy”. The paper describes the existing systems for regulating, obtaining and managing the use of medicines and it also looks at potential improvements for the future. It covers a range of areas from ensuring people make the best use of their prescription medicines to increasing the transparency of the decision-making process used to determine which medicines are funded and which are not.

The proposed strategy has three main objectives. The first objective is around the quality of medicines, in particular the regulation of medicines.

The second objective is about access to medicines, irrespective of an individual’s ability to pay. Proposed areas of focus include improving transparency of how decisions about funding medicines are made, and improving how the community pharmaceutical budget is set.

The third objective is about ensuring the optimal use of medicines. This includes identifying initiatives to ensure that choices about medicines, the ways medicines are delivered, and the ways people use them, are safe choices and result in the best health gain possible.

Written submissions close on 30 March. For a copy of the document go to: [www.moh.govt.nz/publicationsbydate](http://www.moh.govt.nz/publicationsbydate)

## Public Inquiries in NZ: Review

The Law Commission is reviewing the law relating to public inquiries, and your views are sought.

In Britain it has been said that that “if public inquiries are to be known by their fruits, and if their proper fruits are reforms and improvements in law and practice, there is probably not a great deal to be said for them.” (Law Commission paper IP 1).

There are a variety of inquiries and investigations available to the government here, ranging from day to day departmental or inter-departmental work, and ad hoc departmental inquiries, ministerial inquiries and specialised or narrow inquiries under other statutes, to formal commissions of inquiry under the 1908 Inquiries Act, and royal commissions established under the Letters Patent.

Other quotes from the paper:

“...Inquiries are the most powerful inquisitorial and public tool available to ministers, but their coercive nature, particularly when combined with their flexibility should not be underestimated ... While they are therefore very effective mechanisms for obtaining the truth, there is a danger they can be used oppressively...”

“...A question arises as to how successful inquiries have been in “adding value” in the sense of having their recommendations effectively implemented. This is difficult to measure, since there may be many reasons why an inquiry’s recommendations are not implemented. Dame Silvia Cartwright’s cervical cancer inquiry was successful in resulting in the creation of the Health and Disability Commissioner and a number of other significant reforms. Not all of her recommendations were adopted, however, and a further inquiry relating to cervical cancer was held in 2001. Also, a 1988 inquiry into “procedures in certain psychiatric hospitals” listed the numerous previous inquiries into the same issues since the early 1970s whose recommendations had not been adopted...”

Submissions close 2 March. Submission goes to: Submissions, Law Commission, PO Box 2590, Wellington, or email it to [inquiriesproject@lawcom.govt.nz](mailto:inquiriesproject@lawcom.govt.nz). The paper is at <http://www.lawcom.govt.nz/ProjectMiscellaneousPaper.aspx?ProjectID=127>

## Agriculture/Forestry: Climate Change Consultation

The government has released a discussion paper called “Sustainable Land Management and Climate Change”, which outlines options for addressing the risks and opportunities of climate

change in farming and forestry. Feedback is sought on the proposals (which were developed following earlier consultation).

The discussion paper identifies four key areas where options are presented for consultation:

- adapting to climate change;
- reducing emissions and creating carbon sinks;
- capitalising on business opportunities; and
- working together.

Some specific options are outlined, especially in the area of reducing emissions. For example, a forestry-planting programme involving thousands of hectares is one of the options being put forward to reduce NZ's "carbon footprint". The government is also looking at a tradable permits scheme to deal with deforestation, and it is also considering the devolution of carbon credits for new forests.

"Nitrification inhibitors" have been successfully developed by NZ researchers, and are now available for widespread use (they reduce nitrous oxide emissions and improve water quality but don't affect farm productivity). The paper sets out proposals for encouraging their use.

The draft also considers business opportunities arising from the world's focus on climate change.

Submissions close 30 March 2007. Oral submissions are being heard at meetings/hui around the country in February and March. The discussion document is available online at [www.maf.govt.nz/climatechange](http://www.maf.govt.nz/climatechange). Paper copies can be requested from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Pastoral House, 25 The Terrace, PO Box 2526, Wellington, Tel 0800 CLIMATE (254 628).

## Energy Efficiency/Conservation: Have Your Say

The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) seeks views from the public on a new energy strategy. Released at the end of last year, the "Draft NZ Energy Efficiency and Conservation Strategy" would require government departments to develop and stick to their own set of energy efficiency and conservation requirements.

The Govt3 agencies (the departments and ministries which have signed up to the government's sustainable development policies) will also be required to, amongst other things:

- have a sustainable purchasing policy (which would include the purchasing of energy efficient products), in place by 2008;
- make sure that any new government buildings and new leases above a certain size meet an energy efficiency standard that delivers the "best value over whole-of-life" (e.g. by using the GreenStar building rating system) by 2012;
- achieve a 10% reduction in building energy use, per full-time employee, by 2012 compared with 2006;
- stabilise the net emissions of air travel by staff at 2006 levels by 2012; and
- reduce their energy intensive consumables use using a target of less than 30 kg of waste to landfill per full-time employee per year by 2012.

Other goals:

- 70% of government departments would be using vehicles that are in the top 20% in terms of fuel efficiency for that class of vehicle - by 2009; and
- 70% of agencies would have a workplace travel plan in place by 2010.

Submissions close 30 March 2007. You can download the draft strategy, as a PDF file, from: <http://www.eeca.govt.nz/eeca-library/eeca-reports/neecs/report/draft-nzeecs-06.pdf>

## Home Equity Schemes Code: Consultation

The Office for Senior Citizens is circulating a discussion paper on a proposed code of practice for home equity conversion schemes.

Home equity conversion schemes are generally loans or advances made against the capital value of the homes of people over 60 years, and drawn down in the form of one or more lump sums or periodic payments or annuities. A mortgage is secured over the home and the loans usually do not have to be repaid until the owner sells the property or dies.

There are a number of the schemes available in NZ, and while they operate on similar principles, there are variations in terms and conditions: some schemes involve the sale of the home to a third party with the resident having a guaranteed right of continued occupancy, while others lend against the value of the home.

The schemes involve legally and socially complex issues and these are likely to become increasingly significant as our population ages. The issues are likely to affect NZers of all ages, because the use of home equity by older people impacts on the inheritance available to their families.

The Office for Senior Citizens wants to develop appropriate standards and controls for the schemes in order to protect consumers and their families, and you are invited to have your say on these.

The discussion paper is at <http://www.osc.govt.nz/hec/hec-part-one.html> and an online form for submissions is at <http://www.osc.govt.nz/hec/hec-online-form.html>

## Radio Licences Discussion Paper

A discussion paper considers options for improving the security of tenure for radio licences. It follows a 2005 Review of Radio Spectrum Policy, which indicated that there should be changes to the radio licence system if the highest value use of spectrum is to be obtained. Under the current system, radio licences can be revoked even though the people owning the licence might have developed quite significant systems and networks, and this lack of security could affect their investment decisions.

Submissions close on 14 March 2007. The discussion paper is at <http://www.rsm.govt.nz/spp/security-of-tenure/>

# Rural

## Animal Disease Threats: NZ/EU Agreement

NZ and European Union negotiators have agreed to an “insurance policy” against the threat of animal diseases, such as Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD). The proposal is expected to have economic benefits should NZ ever have a serious animal health disease outbreak, and is now awaiting ratification with the EU Commission.

The proposal establishes conditions allowing trade to continue that would be applied to NZ exports such as dairy and meat products if there were a serious animal disease here. The conditions, in general terms, provide for a government-to-government assurance that the animal products being exported have undergone certain treatments (such as heat treatments in the case of dairy products) or have been kept separate from other (possibly affected) products during stages of production, storage and transport. The new conditions would become effective from the moment official notification of a serious animal disease outbreak was given.

Up until now, if a serious animal disease was discovered on a farm in NZ, planned exports of all animal products would automatically stop for an indeterminate time. This might result in thousands of jobs being lost and business confidence in the country plummeting. If Foot and Mouth Disease was discovered in NZ, estimated losses of \$6 billion after one year would result, followed by \$10 billion after two years.

More at <http://www.nzfsa.govt.nz/publications/media-releases/eu-agreement-press-release.htm>

## Money for Rural Midwives

From this year \$2 million a year will be available to support rural midwives. The money is to be allocated to rural midwives through the rural ranking scale – in much the same way as funding for rural GPs. Midwives are vital to the rural health workforce, and the aim is to encourage new midwives while retaining the existing workforce. As well as the funding, a pilot scheme will be trialled to support the services that midwives provide in remote rural locations. Professional development and continuing education relief and short-term locum funding will also be trialled.

Go to <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=27943>

## Wine Labelling: New Agreement

A new agreement on rules for wine labelling in “new world” wine markets will apply to trade between members of the World Wine Trade Group (WWTG) - NZ, Australia, Canada, the US, Chile and Argentina. The agreement establishes common rules for presenting key basic information - product name, alcohol content, volume and country of origin - on wine labels, while giving producers and importing countries flexibility on other aspects of labelling.

We send just under half our wine to WWTG markets, and we also bring in around three-quarters of our wine imports from these countries. The new rules will make it easier, more predictable and less costly for NZ’s wine industry to export, and there will also be more choice for the consumer.

Industry projections are that wine exports will exceed 70 million litres, worth nearly \$700 million, this year, with further increases to over a billion dollars forecast within a few years.

The agreement will now be submitted to Parliament for ratification.

## Sustainable Management Fund Open...

The 2007 funding round for the Sustainable Management Fund (SMF) is now open for projects starting on 1 July 2007. The SMF has \$4.32 million available per year to support the community, iwi, industry and/or local government in taking practically focused action which produces long-term environmental benefits. Projects which demonstrate a contribution to one of the key priorities listed below will be viewed favourably in the assessment process:

- freshwater management initiatives;
- making our cities liveable;
- meeting the challenges of climate change;
- waste minimisation and resource recovery; and
- communities making a difference.

Applications must reach Wellington by 12pm Monday 26 February. More information is at <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/withyou/funding/smf/index.html>

## ...and Rural Innovations Fund Open

The Rural Innovations Fund was set up to assist and support rural health practices in delivering effective services and programmes.

The programme offers one-off funding to allow the development of good ideas and new ways of doing things in rural areas.

Applications for the 2007/08 financial year close on 31 March. For more information about the purpose of the fund, reporting requirements, details of the eligibility criteria and how to apply go to <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmhr/rural-innovations-fund>

## 2006 Rural Innovation Fund Award Recipients

- Schizophrenia Fellowship Central Otago: funds for development of a local website and forum;
- Te Whanau A Apanui Community Health: a project that will employ a new manager who will work to reduce the number of patients who do not attend hospital post-discharge appointments;
- NZ Institute of Rural Health: a research project to identify ways to respond to an identified service gap in rural health using a different model of care involving the Allied Health Assistant;
- Gore Health: initial development and a feasibility study for NZ implementation of “My Personal Health Record”, a tool for patient self-management in rural areas;
- KatiKati Medical Centre: provision of equipment to enable accessible investigation and treatment for patients suffering from exertional chest pain and breathlessness in this rural community; and
- Northland Collaboration of General Practitioners: funding for a person to assist and support medical students and locums to engage with the local community while on placement in Northland.

More information is at <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/rural-innovations-fund-applicants>

## Extra Transpower Grants Round

A special Transpower Grants Programme funding round is now open. It will include up to two grants of up to \$10,000 each, depending on the quality of applications. The grants are for sustainable land management projects, and they are particularly aimed at providing a community contribution towards larger funding packages.

Applications close on 28 February. Forms are available from [grants@landcare.org.nz](mailto:grants@landcare.org.nz) More information is at [www.landcare.org.nz](http://www.landcare.org.nz)

## Grid Upgrade - Electricity Commission Decision

The Electricity Commission has given notice of its intention to approve Transpower's proposal for its North Island grid upgrade. Requests for a public conference closed on 15 February, and the Commission anticipates holding the conference in late April or early May 2007. The conference process includes the opportunity to make written submissions about the Commission's decision, and the Commission can confirm or amend the proposal after this. If no public conference is held, the Commission's decision, as it is set out in the notice of intention, is final.

More information: <http://www.electricitycommission.govt.nz/opdev/transmis/auckgridinvest/Decision/view%20>

## Know Any Good Bush Stories?

The next theme for 'Te Ara, the Encyclopaedia of NZ' is "The Bush", covering landscape and fauna/flora of NZ. Staff at Te Ara are currently seeking personal stories from NZers about their experience and recollections of what different people call "the bush". The organisers are keen to get stories about discoveries and experiences from field scientists and technicians such as ecologists, foresters, and geologists who have worked in the bush.

More information is at <http://www.teara.govt.nz/ENZ-Utility/News/Item17/en>

## Varroa Bee Mite Management Plan

Biosecurity NZ, in consultation with the South Island Varroa Control Group, the National Beekeepers' Association, the Bee Industry Group of Federated Farmers, and Varroa Agency Incorporated has announced a programme of management and control of the varroa bee mite in the South Island. Varroa has spread since the government agreed in August 2006 to support an industry-led elimination programme involving poisoning all feral populations. Recent finds of varroa outside the previously known infested areas have made eliminating varroa unrealistic.

More information is at <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests-diseases/animals/varroa>

## Research: Rural Families

The Families Commission's "Blue Skies" research fund is funding a study called "Strengthening Rural Families: An Exploration of Industry Transformation, Community and Social Capital". The researchers will look at rural communities and families to explore "shared social capital". In particular, they will examine how social networks, civic participation, voluntary engagements and various other formal and informal arrangements contribute to the wellbeing of rural families. They will also look at how rural families have balanced paid work, family and community commitments in the context of local industry change.

The Families Commission will be calling for research proposals again in March.

More information about Blue Skies latest allocations is at <http://www.spear.govt.nz/news/2006/blue-skies-allocations.html>. Information on the Blue Skies Fund is at <http://www.familiescommission.govt.nz/research/blueskies.php>

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# Environment

## Climate Resets "Doomsday Clock"

Experts assessing the dangers posed to civilisation have added climate change to the prospect of nuclear annihilation as the greatest threats to humankind.

As a result, the group has moved the minute hand on its famous "Doomsday Clock" two minutes closer to midnight. The concept timepiece, devised by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, now stands at five minutes to the hour.

The clock was first featured by the magazine 60 years ago, shortly after the US dropped its A-bombs on Japan. Not since the Cold War has the Bulletin, which covers global security issues, felt the need to place the minute hand so close to midnight. Over the past 60 years, the Doomsday Clock has now moved backwards and forwards 18 times. It advanced to two minutes before midnight - its closest proximity to doom - in 1953 after the United States and the Soviet Union detonated hydrogen bombs. Its keepers last moved the clock's hand in 2002 after the United States withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and amid alarm about the acquisition of nuclear weapons and materials by terrorists.

You can look at the clock at: <http://www.thebulletin.org/>

## DoC Biosecurity Strategy: Review

The Department of Conservation (DoC) has announced an independent review of the NZ Biodiversity Strategy. The strategy was launched in 2000 to guide the work of six government agencies and thousands of community groups around the country of halting the decline in NZ's biodiversity. Following the review, a system to monitor and report on the state of NZ's species and landscapes is to be introduced, along with national guidelines for protecting indigenous biodiversity on private land.

More information is at <http://www.doc.govt.nz/templates/news.aspx?id=42416>

## Fuel Economy Moves

The government has directed the Ministry of Transport to work with the motor industry on a regulated sales-weighted fuel economy standard for new and second-hand vehicles. This will involve options for improving the average fuel economy of vehicles entering the country.

Options for restricting the age of second-hand vehicles being imported into NZ (to help reduce vehicle emissions) will also be examined.

More information is at <http://www.mot.govt.nz/vehicle-imports-need-to-lift-their-game/>

## New Threatened Species List

The Department of Conservation has released a new list of NZ's threatened plants and animals, which is up by 416 on the last one. There are 2,788 species listed, with increases of 23 species in the "nationally critical" category, 32 species in "nationally endangered" and 10 species in "nationally vulnerable", a reduction of 8 in the total listed as in "serious decline", and increases of 23 in "gradual decline", 72 in "sparse" and 264 in "range restricted". These are the net changes: in each category with some species being added and others removed from lists. The changes also include movements between categories.

An additional 984 species were newly listed as "data deficient" - that is, likely to be threatened, but with too little information about them to fit them into a threatened category. This brings the total in this category to 3,031.

The majority of the newly listed threatened and data deficient species were added as a result of new information about their status rather than a sudden change in status. However, there have also been some genuine declines and recoveries.

The list is available on the DOC website at <http://www.doc.govt.nz/templates/MultiPageDocumentTOC.aspx?id=42704>

## White Pointers: Now Protected...

As of April this year White Pointer sharks will be fully protected within the 200 nautical miles of water around NZ, and also from fishing by NZ-flagged boats further afield.

## ...and Hector's Dolphins: More Protection

Non-commercial set-netting restrictions are being introduced in North Canterbury and in Western Southland to protect NZ's endangered Hector's dolphins. The new restrictions require non-commercial fishers to stay with their nets at all times when setting nets between the Waiau and Clarence Rivers on the east coast of the South Island, and in Te Waewae Bay in Western Southland.

You can find out more about the Hector's dolphin at: <http://www.fish.govt.nz/en-nz/Environmental/Hectors+Dolphins.htm?WBCMODE=PresentationUnpublished>

## PCE20 Forum: Registrations

The Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment celebrates its 20th anniversary with a PCE20 Forum being held in Wellington on 1-2 March. Under the theme "Advancing Environmental Sustainability", the forum will be taking a close look at NZ's sustainability progress over the past 20 years, and at what lies ahead in the next 20 years. Other events in Christchurch and Auckland that have been convened by local government and business groups will be held on 4-7 March.

More information is at [http://www.pce.govt.nz/anniversary/pce\\_anniversary.shtml](http://www.pce.govt.nz/anniversary/pce_anniversary.shtml).

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# Education

## Early Childhood Grants: Applications Open

The Discretionary Grants Scheme (DGS) is an annual scheme designed to increase participation in early childhood education services by providing assistance to eligible community based groups for building projects. The DGS has \$16.239 million (GST inclusive) available this financial year, and the funding will be allocated to projects that specifically address participation through the creation of new, or retention of existing, places in licensed ECE services.

The first allocation round for 2007 opened on 29 January and closes on 27 April.

More information is available at: <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=4387&data=>

## Early Childhood Education Funding

Around \$6 million was recently earmarked for 400 places for children at 28 new and expanding early childhood education centres across the country, and in particular for children from low socio-economic and isolated communities.

The money will help implement the government's policy of 20 hours free early childhood education for all three and four year-olds in teacher-led services from July 2007.

More information is at <http://mediacentre.minedu.govt.nz/>

## Strengthened Truancy Service

Following a year-long review, District Truancy Services are to get a \$2 million funding boost over the next four years. A sharpening of the services' role will be supported by:

- better information to schools and parents;
- an improved process for referrals to other agencies where needed;
- services that are more responsive to local needs; and

- extended funding contracts that will provide more certainty for services.

The new service will comprise around 75 local providers, based around territorial authorities, and this means that some of the 112 existing local services will need to amalgamate over time, though funding levels for existing services will not be reduced.

More information is at <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=27943>

## 2nd Tertiary Education Strategy Released

The second Tertiary Education Strategy has now been released. It sets out how tertiary education will contribute to transforming our economy through:

- success for all NZers through lifelong learning;
- creating and applying knowledge to drive innovation; and
- strong connections between tertiary education organisations and the communities they serve.

The strategy lists the government's immediate priorities for tertiary education as:

- increasing educational success for young NZers – more people achieving qualifications at level 4 and above by age 25;
- increasing literacy and numeracy levels for the workforce;
- increasing the achievement of advanced trade, technical and professional qualifications to meet regional and industry needs; and
- improving research connections and linkages to create economic opportunities.

From 2008 the new tertiary system will be based on:

- the Tertiary Education Strategy, containing the government's overall priorities for the sector; and
- three-year plans, which will be agreed between individual tertiary education organisations and the Tertiary Education Commission. These set out what the commission will fund and how the organisation will meet the priorities identified in the strategy.

More information is at: <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=11727&data=1>

## Sugar Fizzy Drinks to Go From Schools

Full sugar fizzy and energy drinks are to be removed from secondary schools by 2009 under a world-leading agreement between the government and two of NZ's biggest beverage companies. The agreement with Coca Cola Amatil and Frucor will see the removal of 1.1 million litres of full sugar beverages from schools over the next three years. The agreement follows the launch of the government's "Mission-On" package of initiatives to:

- improve the quality of food served in schools;
- reduce children's exposure to advertising of unhealthy food; and
- promote physical activity.

# Health

## New Public Health Bill

A proposed Public Health Bill would replace the Health Act 1956 and the Tuberculosis Act 1948. The Health Act is NZ's main statute for public health, including environmental health and the control of communicable diseases. The Health Act also has provisions on health information, quarantine, limited emergency powers and cervical screening. In addition, it sets out the roles, duties and powers of the Minister of Health, Director-General of Health, Director of Public Health, public health officers and territorial authorities.

The bill would provide for a risk management approach to the detection, assessment and management of significant or emerging risks to public health. It would operate at three levels:

- locally, (through various statutory officers);
- regionally, (through District Health Board -based public health providers and territorial authorities); and
- nationally, primarily through the roles of the Minister of Health, the Director-General of Health, and the Director of Public Health.

More information is at <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/by-unid/D87B49D2E33A872BCC257245000F1F5A?Open>

## NZ Health Survey Includes Oral Health

Planning is underway for a nationwide NZ Oral Health Survey in 2007/08 which will be repeated every 10 years. The survey will collect information on oral health status, oral health beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and practices. Interviewing will be face-to-face and it will include an oral health examination carried out by trained interviewers in people's homes. About 6,000 to 8,000 NZers of all ages will be interviewed.

The survey is a new addition to the NZ Health Survey being undertaken by the Ministry of Health (MoH) this year. This survey is carried out regularly and it gathers information on mental health, nutrition, including child nutrition, tobacco use, alcohol use and sexual health.

It will provide MoH with reliable information about the health of different groups of NZers, and also about the way they use the health system. The results will be available in mid-2008.

More information is at <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/238fd5fb4fd051844c256669006aed57/3029131d7f109924cc256e45007ec41c?OpenDocument>

## Pandemic Legislation Passed

NZ's preparation for a possible flu pandemic now includes a new law called "The Epidemic Preparedness Bill", which gives the government the power to respond to a major outbreak of an infectious disease. Outbreaks of infectious diseases pose different challenges today than they did 50 years ago, and the bill reflects the need for need legal powers that better acknowledge modern realities.

A copy of the bill is at <http://www.knowledge-basket.co.nz/gpprint/docs/bills/20060393A.txt>

More information is at <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/by-unid/06E1C5F9A7E9BD45CC257257006E0E4A?Open>

## Kiwi Grocery Shoppers Use The Tick

Recent research commissioned by the Heart Foundation Tick Programme shows the Foundation's Tick is embedded in the NZ grocery shopping ritual with the majority of shoppers using the Tick to help them choose healthier food.

According to the research three out of four grocery shoppers will buy a product with the Tick over a similar product without the Tick. Four out of five shoppers also place some importance on the Tick when making purchasing decisions with 9% rating the Tick as extremely important, 33% as very important and 40% as somewhat important.

The survey indicates strong awareness of the Tick with 95% of shoppers able to recall seeing a Tick symbol on food packaging, and this places the Tick among the list of iconic Kiwi brands that most people easily recall.

The Tick Programme works in collaboration with the food industry influencing food manufacturers to make healthier products. Currently the Tick is on nearly 1,000 food products in over 50 food categories, from everyday foods like cereal, bread, milk and lean meat to occasional foods like pies, ice-cream and chicken nuggets.

Find out more about the Tick campaign on the NZ Heart Foundation website at: <http://www.nhf.org.nz>

## Palliative Care/Hospices: More \$\$

Hospices and palliative care service providers are to receive an additional \$4.7 million as demand for palliative care services continues to grow. Palliative care is delivered by acute care hospitals, residential care services, and primary care services, as well as by hospices, with the expressed preference of the majority of dying patients being to be cared for in their home. The new funding will help ease funding shortfalls, and go towards further development and coordination of palliative care services.

Improving access to palliative care is a major objective of the Cancer Control Action Plan, which is jointly managed by DHBs, the Ministry of Health, and non-governmental organisations.

More information about the palliative care funding increase is available at <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=28149> and more information about the Cancer Control Action Plan is available at: <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/0/ABED0BA681A637E1CC256FBC006F22D7>

## New Diabetes Eye-Screening System

A new Diabetes Retinal Screening Grading System (which includes guidelines for referral) is now available. Eye-screening of people with diabetes can prevent avoidable loss of vision. The screening involves retinal photography every two years for people with diabetes who do not have retinopathy (a disease of the retina). For those people for whom eye screening is not possible the alternative is a clinical assessment.

## UN Adoption of Disability Convention

The United Nations has adopted the International Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the first human rights treaty of the 21st century. NZ is expected to ratify the convention next year, and once that happens, the Human Rights Commission will monitor compliance.

Countries ratifying the treaty will have to enact laws and other measures to improve disability rights. They will also have to combat negative stereotypes and prejudices and promote an awareness of people's abilities and contribution to society. In addition, ratifying governments will need to guarantee that disabled people have a right to life on an equal basis with others, and also check that people with disabilities have access to public spaces, buildings, transport, information and communications.

More information (including the text of the Convention) is at <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/>

# Housing

## Leaky Homes Bill Passed

The Weathertight Homes Resolution Services (WHRS) Bill 2006 was recently passed. The new legislation aims to help people access a faster, lower-cost alternative to court proceedings to get compensation from the liable parties and get their homes fixed, so they can get on with their lives. Most of the provisions will come into force on 1 April 2007, but some provisions establishing the Weathertight Homes Tribunal will start from the date of enactment.

The WHRS Act provides for:

- more comprehensive assessment reports for WHRS claimants so people can claim for potential, as well as actual, weathertightness-related damage;
- a new streamlined process for lower-value claims;
- a new process for standard claims, which involves preliminary conferences and time-limited mediation before claims move to adjudication;
- the establishment of a new Weathertight Homes Tribunal under the administration of the Ministry of Justice to provide more independent adjudication services;
- greater power and authority of members of the new Tribunal, including new criminal offence provisions when parties fail to appear when summoned, or disobey an order of the Tribunal;
- clear objectives for Tribunal members, to facilitate a more investigative approach;
- appointment of a registrar for the new Weathertight Homes Tribunal;

- WHRS settlements and determinations to be enforced in the District Court regardless of value;
- an easier class action approach to be taken by owners of units within apartment blocks;
- territorial authorities to place WHRS notices of new and existing claims brought, and their outcomes, on Land Information Memorandum (LIM) reports; and
- claims relating to multi-unit complexes that will not be eligible under new criteria, to withdraw and be brought under the correct provision within one year, without affecting limitation periods.

The main benefits for homeowners include the ability to claim for a wider scope of damage; an accurate and comprehensive assessment of the damage to their house and the work needed to repair it; improved information and case management; a reduction in the average time for claims to be resolved; lower legal and evidential costs; and a reduction in barriers to claims by bodies corporate and owners of homes in multi-unit complexes.

A two-year lending assistance pilot for leaky home claimants who are unable to access finance from private lending institutions is expected to be in place for 1 April 2007, at the same time as the planned start date for the changes brought about by the new Act. The scheme will be run by Housing NZ Corporation.

More information is at <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=28072>

## Leaky Home Ruling: Council to Pay?

In a recent landmark court ruling on a leaky home that was built in 1994 the judgement laid the blame for the leak problems on the local council issuing the resource consent: the council was found to have an unacceptable resource consent process.

The judgement, in which the owner was awarded \$250,900 in damages, came after the builder of the house defaulted on a settlement.

The council was then left with the full bill.

Local authorities are responsible for a number of checks to prevent building failures. These include the issuing of building consents, building inspections and the issuing of code compliance certificates.

If the ruling stands (following an appeal), the case may be cited as a precedent, and that may help people going through the Weathertight Homes Resolution Service and the Weathertight Tribunal. The ruling may also encourage councils (and other parties) to settle claims early and avoid the court process.

For an article on the case go to <http://www.grimshaw.co.nz/viewArticle.php?id=1037&cat=98>

## Rents On the Rise Again...

The latest statistics from the Massey University Real Estate Analysis Unit show that the weekly national level of median rent moved from \$260 to \$265 in August, to \$270 in October and remained at \$270 for November. Before September this year the national median had been level at \$260 a week since 2004. Strong migration figures are the most likely reason for the change.

In percentage terms, median national weekly rents increased by 3.8% over the past 12 months, marginally ahead of the consumer price index.

The strongest annual rent increases occurred in Gisborne (24.7%), Palmerston North (14.2%), Invercargill (13.3%), New Plymouth (12.5%), Wanganui (11.1%) and Wellington (10%). No cities recorded a decline in rents.

The full report can be accessed at <http://property-group.massey.ac.nz>

## ...House Prices Slowing...

New figures show that growth in the NZ housing market has dropped dramatically compared with the rest of the world. A survey by "The Economist" shows NZ ranks 12th in an international table measuring value growth over the past 10 years. NZ topped the same survey in 2002, when the magazine used Quotable Value figures that showed us with the world's fastest-rising house prices, ahead of Denmark and Switzerland. At that time our house prices rose 22% in one quarter.

The latest figures show house price indicators as a percentage change between 1997 and 2006: South Africa 327, Ireland 252, Britain 192, Spain 173, Australia 132, France 127, Sweden 123, Belgium 118, Denmark 115, United States 100, Netherlands 97, NZ 94, Italy 88, Canada 69, Switzerland 16, Germany -1, Japan -32, Hong Kong -44.

## ...But Houses (Even) Less Affordable

A recent Massey University quarterly survey clearly indicates that housing is now less affordable than in early 1989 - when mortgage interest rates were as high as 15.5%.

Home affordability declined by 5.1% over the quarter ending November 2006. The decline was due to a rebound in the national median house price (up by 6.4%) outstripping increases in the average weekly wage (1.5%). Mortgage interest rates were also up slightly, by 0.03%.

National home affordability has been in decline for each quarter over the past four and a half years. In the quarter ending November, Central Otago Lakes was the only area to show improved affordability, of 14.7% - but it is still the least affordable region. The largest declines in affordability were in Otago (10.9%), Wellington (9.4%) and Taranaki (8.9%).

On an annual basis, home affordability declined by 7.3%. This reflects an increase in house prices of 10%, well ahead of a 6% increase in the average weekly wage, and of increases in the weighted average interest rates on home loans of 3.4%.

Central Otago Lakes showed a 4.3% annual improvement in affordability but all other regions recorded annual declines. The largest was in Taranaki, down 24.3%, followed by Nelson-Marlborough, down 21.4%, and Southland, down 18.1%. The smallest decline was for Hawke's Bay (0.2%) followed by Canterbury/Westland (2.8%) and Otago (6.2%).

Southland is clearly the most affordable region, with the index at 51.4% of the national average of 100%. Manawatu-Wanganui at 70.3% remains in second place followed by Otago on 78.4%.

The least affordable region, the Central Lakes Otago area, has an index of 131.1% of the national average. The Auckland region takes second place on 121.8%, followed by Nelson-Marlborough on 111.4%.

Massey University has been reporting on home affordability since 1989, using the variables of house prices, wage rates and mortgage interest rates.

The December quarterly survey is available at: [http://property-group.massey.ac.nz/fileadmin/research\\_outputs/HomeAffordabilityReportDec\\_06.pdf](http://property-group.massey.ac.nz/fileadmin/research_outputs/HomeAffordabilityReportDec_06.pdf)

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## Business

### NZ Biotechnology: New Report

A report on NZ's biotechnology businesses - the first in a series from NZ Trade & Enterprise ('NZTE'), the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology ('MoRST'), and NZBio examines their growth, and finds that:

- biotechnology as a sector is continuing to grow at a strong pace, mainly through growth in private sector biotechnology activities, but also supported by a stable public sector;
- a wide range of technologies and products are available: NZ has particular strengths in the fields of agriculture, animal health, forestry, human "nutraceuticals" and pharmaceutical medical research;
- funding remains an issue, but the overall trends are positive, with more venture capital funds available, an increase in public offerings, and the creation of the SciTech index on the NZX increasing biotechnology's profile in the public markets;
- products and technologies continue to mature: NZ organisations currently have almost a dozen pharmaceutical products in advanced clinical development. There have also been some important launches of agricultural products, medical devices and industrial biotechnology products and diagnostics; and
- biotechnology businesses are active collaborators, with more than 75% of collaborations involving international organisations.

The report indicates that overall, NZ remains a great place for investing in and supporting biotechnology activities. The small number of businesses, combined with their successful growth pattern, has created a close and vibrant community which is committed to success and characterised by an ease of "doing business", and a high degree of public/private cooperation. Participants and observers predict continued sector growth and success.

You can download a copy of this document, as a 136-page PDF file, from: [http://www.nzbio.org.nz/uploaded/NZBio\\_Growth\\_Report1.pdf](http://www.nzbio.org.nz/uploaded/NZBio_Growth_Report1.pdf)

### Funding for Kiwi Expat Network

The Kea network, made up of NZers living abroad, is to receive a grant of \$250,000 from the Regional and Industry Development Fund. The network runs a website which allows members to use a searchable database, access news and information about NZ and NZers around the world and share information about their businesses (including job and investment opportunities). Net-

work members' skills are available to public and private organisations, and other "friends of NZ". There are around 22,000 web subscribers to Kea in more than 170 countries. The grant will enable Kea to engage a Global Operations Manager, a Technology Manager, and a UK Regional Manager.

More information is available on the Kea website at [www.keanewzealand.com](http://www.keanewzealand.com)

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## Employment

### Increases to Minimum Wages...

Workers earning the minimum wage (which applies to people 18 years and over) will shortly receive a 9.8% pay rise. Minimum wages increase from \$10.25 to \$11.25 an hour (\$450 for a 40 hour week) from 1 April 2007, when about 110,000 people will find more money in the pay packet. The youth minimum rate, for workers aged 16 and 17 years, will increase from \$8.20 an hour to \$9.00 an hour, to stay at 80% of the adult minimum wage. The minimum training wage will increase to the same rate.

The minimum wage rate is reviewed annually, in consultation with employer, union, Pacific, Maori and women's groups.

More information is at [www.ers.dol.govt.nz](http://www.ers.dol.govt.nz) or free phone 0800 20 90 20.

### ...and Four Weeks Annual Leave

Changes to the Holidays Act 2003 mean that on 1 April the minimum annual holiday entitlement will increase from three to four weeks. Employees will become eligible for their extra week's holiday on their first anniversary date (the date when they started their current job) after 1 April 2007.

Employees already receiving four weeks' annual holidays will not automatically get five weeks – an increase will depend on whether their employment agreement makes it clear that the entitlement increases. As always however, employers and employees can agree on a greater number of annual holidays than the minimum.

More information on annual holidays and other holiday entitlements is available on the Department of Labour's website [www.dol.govt.nz](http://www.dol.govt.nz) or freephone 0800 20 90 20

### More Worker Permits/New Residents

The annual Department of Labour's Migration Trends report shows that almost 100,000 people were issued temporary work permits in the 2005/06 year, up 21 per cent from the previous year and continuing a steady rise from just 34,000 in 1999/2000. Working holiday agreements between NZ and other countries have played a big role in the increase. New agreements with Norway and Thailand began during the year, and there are no longer limits on the number of British, German, Swedish and Dutch people who can take up working holiday permits to NZ.

New Zealanders will also see more working holiday-makers, with numbers due to rise to 40,000 in 2006/07 (up from 36,000 in

2005/06), and also more temporary workers working on specific events like sporting activities, entertainment, and film and production work.

Permanent residency numbers have increased as well: just over 51,000 people gained approval to be a permanent resident in NZ in 2005/06, up from almost 49,000, and well up on 2003/04, when approvals slipped to 39,000.

Currently somewhat fewer people are coming from Asia (largely because of falling international student numbers), and more are arriving from Europe, and particularly from the United Kingdom.

More information is at <http://www.dol.govt.nz/publications/research/migration-trends/index.asp>

## Benefits of Working in a Trade

A recent study from the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA) indicates that women could be \$15,000 a year better off if they went into male-dominated trades. The research showed that annual full-time wages in male-dominated occupations for those who are qualified and have some experience are nearly 50 percent higher (at \$50,000) than in traditionally female-dominated occupations (at \$34,000). This is despite the fact that starting wages are generally the same in male and female dominated trade-related occupations. Another inequality revealed in the study is that training costs in male-dominated occupations are largely paid for by employers rather than employees, but this is not the case for female dominated occupations.

Gender-based occupational segregation is a key area of work for the MWA as this is a major cause of the gender pay gap. While the gap is slowly decreasing, women's median hourly earnings are still 12 percent less than men's.

For more information go to <http://www.mwa.govt.nz>

## Volunteer Guide Updated

"Volunteers: A Guide for Volunteers and Their Organisations" has been updated. The guide includes twelve chapters on management systems, motivation, maintaining standards, overcoming problems, improving the organisational climate, and on the special requirements of committees and boards, and church, sport and welfare groups.

Contact M Woods, 23 Ramahana Rd, Huntsbury, Christchurch

# Money Matters

## KiwiSaver Tax Exemption Extended

The tax exemption for employer contributions to KiwiSaver is to be extended to other registered superannuation schemes. Currently employers currently pay SSCWT - specified superannuation contribution withholding tax - on their contributions to registered superannuation schemes - though contributions to KiwiSaver schemes were exempted under legislation enacted in September.

Under the changes, employer contributions to other registered schemes will become exempt from tax for amounts of up to 4 percent of an employee's gross salary. A tax-free employer contribution will mean, for example, an extra \$660 a year in savings for people earning \$50,000 a year who contribute 4% of their salary, and whose employers contribute another 4%.

The tax exemption will be available only for contributions to schemes that have lock-in rules similar to those of KiwiSaver, for which schemes will have to amend their trust deeds.

More information on the KiwiSaver scheme is at: <http://www.kiwisaver.govt.nz/>

## Economic Freedom Index: NZ 5th

NZ has regained fifth place on the annual Index of Economic Freedom, having slipped from fifth to ninth spot last year. Hong Kong, for the 13th consecutive year, tops the index. Ranking countries on a 0-100 scale, Hong Kong is rated on 89.29, followed by Singapore 85.65, Australia 82.69, United States 81.98, NZ 81.59 and United Kingdom 81.55. North Korea is a distant 157th and bottom on 3.00.

Economic freedom is measured within 10 categories: business freedom, labour freedom, trade freedom, fiscal freedom, freedom from government, monetary freedom, investment freedom, financial freedom, property rights and freedom from corruption.

Go to <http://www.heritage.org/research/features/index/index.cfm> for more information

## Global Investment Up In 2006

Around the world foreign direct investment (FDI) grew in 2006 for the third consecutive year to reach US\$1.2 trillion, according to a report presented at a United Nations conference. This is a 34% increase from 2005, although it is still short of the record of US\$1.4 trillion set in 2000. The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) says the continued rise in FDI largely reflects high economic growth and strong economic performance in many parts of the world. UNCTAD is predicting a moderate slowdown with continuing global external imbalances, sharp exchange rate fluctuations, rising interest rates, and increasing inflationary pressures, as well as high and volatile commodity prices - posing risks that may also hinder global FDI flows. The combination could lead to a slowdown in the fast growth in the global FDI registered over the past few years.

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

# Internet

## Broadband Bill Passed...

Broadband is fast internet. A basic broadband connection will be at least six times faster than dialing up the internet (which most NZers currently do). Some overseas broadband services are

much, much faster. Most broadband connections are provided through a home phone line, but there are other options available, like satellite, wireless and cable connections.

A new Broadband Bill is aimed at:

- helping the NZ telecommunications sector “catch up” with leading OECD countries;
- enabling the Minister of Communications to settle a three-way operational separation with Telecom;
- bringing NZ into line with international best practice by unbundling the local telephone loop and ensuring access to “naked DSL”(i.e. it removes restrictions on the existing unbundled bitstream service so that broadband can be purchased without having to purchase a phone service); and
- allowing the Telecommunications Commissioner to regulate, monitor and enforce telecommunications services.

Its provisions include:

- requiring the unbundling of the local loop and sub-loop copper-wire lines between telephone exchanges and homes and businesses, allowing other Internet Service Providers to compete fully with Telecom to provide faster, cheaper broadband;
- regulatory action to cover disclosing of information, accounting separation of Telecom’s business operations and a greater Commerce Commission monitoring role to ensure improved competition;
- removing restrictions on the current regulated Unbundled Bitstream Service so that Internet Service Providers can offer better and cheaper broadband at upload speeds faster than 128kps;
- encouraging investment in alternative networks such as fibre, wireless and satellite networks;
- reviewing whether Telecom’s ability to reduce local prices solely in response to new competing network investment should be controlled; and
- developing a rural package and expansion of the Digital Strategy Broadband Challenge Fund.

More information is at <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=25636>

## ...and Free Phone Agreement Review

The Kiwi Share agreement between the government and Telecom that means we have free local phone calls is being reviewed to make sure that it takes account of fast-changing technologies. The review will include looking at whether to include rural broadband internet access in the range of Telecommunications Service Obligations services. It will be carried out alongside the government’s Rural Broadband Strategy work so that basic telephone and internet access services of an acceptable standard can be made available to residential users in rural areas. A discussion paper being published in the first half of this year will invite submissions from the industry, user groups and other interested people. NB: the government has said it will not be moving away from the basic principle in the Kiwi Share agreement of preserving free local calling for residential telephone users.

## Some Internet Sites

***Te Kahui Mangai: Directory of Iwi and Maori Organisations*** is an online directory at <http://www.tkm.govt.nz/>. This directory provides a national list of iwi and Māori organisations whose

right to represent their iwi/organisation has been recognised:

- under the Maori Fisheries Act 2004;
- for Treaty of Waitangi settlements;
- as Iwi authorities;
- as groups which represent hapu who have asked that they be listed on the site for the purposes of section 35A of the RMA; and/or
- as national Maori organisations.

Te Puni Kokiri also lists ***other Māori organisations*** at <http://www.tkm.govt.nz/OMO.aspx>

Schools around the country are holding campaigns for the school trustee elections and the NZ ***School Trustees Association’s*** website [www.trustee-election.co.nz](http://www.trustee-election.co.nz) has the timetable for these elections. School boards are required to reflect the cultural make-up of the school community. They need people who can be active decision-makers who want to make sure every student at their school reaches their potential.

If you have skills and experiences that would help the students at your local school, or know someone else who does, you can find out more about standing for election or making a nomination, and also about voting in the election, by contacting your local school.

***Skykiwi, the Auckland-based Chinese language community website*** at [www.skykiwi.com](http://www.skykiwi.com), has received a top award in the latest Hitwise website survey. For the quarter ending in September, Skykiwi ranked first by visits of all NZ websites in the News and Media – Community Directories and Guides category. Skykiwi also qualified for a Hitwise Top Ten award for the same quarter by ranking third by visits in the Computers and Internet – Net Communities and Chat category. The site has 90,000 registered members and 70,000 Daily IP visits and 1.3 million page views.

***MySpace*** at <http://www.myspace.com/> is to launch a version aimed at NZers. The site has more than 60 million users worldwide – reputedly some 500,000 of them from here - and is a popular place for musicians to market themselves. With the NZ site the number of Kiwis using MySpace is likely to rise, as numbers did when Myspace Australia was launched last year.

The ***Ministry of Social Development’s Centre for Social Research and Evaluation*** publishes quarterly information on the numbers of working people receiving main benefits at websites <http://www.msd.govt.nz/media-information/benefit-factsheets/national-benefit-factsheets.html> and <http://www.msd.govt.nz/media-information/benefit-factsheets/wiregion-benefit-factsheets.html>. The fact sheets include national information as well as regional breakdowns. There are also fact sheets on each benefit which provide a picture of recent trends.

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# General

## NZ National Climate Summary 2006

Erratic and sometimes extreme, NZ’s climate for 2006 will probably be most remembered for one of the severest winter snowstorms in decades, a very windy spring, and a cold start to summer late in the year. So it may surprise people to hear that

2006 was also very sunny in the southeast of the South Island, and generally sunny in many other regions.

The year saw a swing from a La Niña to an El Niño climate pattern. The first quarter of the year was dominated by weak La Niña-like characteristics in the equatorial Pacific, and frequent troughs of low pressure often over NZ. From September onwards weak-moderate El Niño conditions in the tropical Pacific had developed, with a noticeable increase in windiness and more frequent south westerlies than normal over the country.

There were numerous heavy rainfall events during 2006, about 18 of which produced floods. Notable snowfall events occurred on nine occasions, mainly in high country areas from mid-autumn to late winter, with ski areas having an extended season. Other climate extremes included a summer heat-wave, four tornado incidents, three severe hailstorms, and many damaging windstorms.

The national average temperature in 2006 was 12.4 °C, only 0.2 °C below the 1971 – 2000 normal. This was because the very warm months of April and September offset the very cold months of March, June, and December.

Sunshine hours were more than 110 percent of normal in Bay of Plenty, Southland, coastal Otago, and inland South Canterbury, with Invercargill recording its sunniest year on record. Totals were at least 105 percent of normal in many South Island regions, as well as Northland, Auckland, and Gisborne. Sunshine hours were near normal elsewhere. Nelson was the sunniest centre in 2006, recording 2580 hours, followed by Blenheim with 2,528 hours, and then Tauranga with 2,507 hours.

It was much drier than average in 2006 (with totals less than 75 percent of normal) throughout parts of Central Otago and the Awatere Valley in Marlborough. Clyde in Central Otago recording its driest year in more than 20 years, with only 286 mm for the year. Rainfall was also below average (75 to 90 percent of normal) in parts of Northland, Coromandel, North Taranaki, Buller, Nelson, Marlborough, north and east Otago, and South Westland. However, rainfall was well above average (at least 125 percent of normal) in parts of Wairarapa, Wanganui, Wellington, and Canterbury, and at least 110 percent of normal in Taupo, Manawatu, Kapiti, North Westland, and coastal areas of Southland.

Dunedin was easily the driest of the five main centres with 641 mm and Wellington the wettest with 1,579 mm. Hamilton received 1,155 mm, Auckland 1,263 mm, and Christchurch 884 mm. Nelson was the sunniest centre in 2006, recording 2580 hours, followed by Blenheim with 2,528 hours, and Tauranga with 2,507 hours. Auckland was the sunniest of the five main centres with 2,189 sunshine hours, followed closely by Christchurch (2,169 hours), and Wellington (2,159 hours). Dunedin recorded 1960 hours, and Hamilton 1,996 hours.

## A Trans-Tasman Justice System?

NZ's and Australia's civil and criminal systems are likely to draw closer following proposals from a trans-Tasman working group established in 2003. The Working Group examined the effectiveness and appropriateness of current arrangements which relate to civil (including family) proceedings, civil penalty proceedings and certain criminal proceedings relating to regulations.

The group has recommended that the NZ and Australian governments establish a trans-Tasman system, which would, among other things:

- allow the initiating process in civil proceedings issued out of a court in Australia or NZ to be served in the other country, with the same effect as if service had occurred in the country of issue;

- broaden the range of enforceable judgments in both countries with judgments only being refused enforcement if they conflicted with the public policy of the other country;
- allow for civil pecuniary penalties from one country to be enforceable in the other unless specifically excluded;
- enable subpoenas in criminal proceedings to be served across the Tasman with the leave of a judge under the Evidence and Procedure (NZ) Act 1994 and the Evidence Amendment Act 1994 (NZ) to facilitate the taking of evidence; and
- allow for criminal fines imposed for certain regulatory offences in one country to be enforceable in the other in the same way as a civil judgment debt.

Matching legislation will be required if both governments accept the proposals.

For more information go to <http://www.justice.govt.nz/pubs/reports/2006/trans-tasman-working-group-report/chapter-3.html>

## End Date for Lodging Treaty Claims

The Treaty of Waitangi Amendment Act was passed by Parliament late last year. The Act sets a closing date of 1 September 2008 for lodging all historical Treaty of Waitangi claims with the Waitangi Tribunal.

The government, which has a target of resolving all historical claims by 2020, is working with over 20 claimant groups, each of which involves a number of claims ranging from 2 to 70.

The Amendment is at [http://www.legislation.govt.nz/browse\\_vw.asp?content-set=pal\\_statutes](http://www.legislation.govt.nz/browse_vw.asp?content-set=pal_statutes)

## Older Driver Test Ends

Drivers aged 80 and over no longer have to undergo a mandatory driving test. Under a new system in place for older drivers:

- at age 75, 80, 82 and at two yearly intervals, drivers renewing their licence will require a medical certificate showing they are fit to drive, as presently required;
- the Medical Certificate for Driver Licence has been revised to make it simpler and easier for doctors to complete;
- GPs will have the option of referring any medically fit driver aged 75 and over to take an on-road safety test if they are concerned about their ability to drive;
- supporting education and information will be available for older people, their families and the community, as well as for GPs; and
- any older driver who attends a "Safe With Age" driver refresher course will be eligible for a subsidised private on-road driving lesson.

## Te Ohu Kai Moana Profits

The role of Maori Fisheries Trust/Te Ohu Kaimoana is to allocate to mandated iwi organisations, the fisheries assets that are held in trust through the 1989 and 1992 Māori Commercial Fisheries Settlements (the mandate comes after each organisation's right to represent their iwi is verified).

The organisation reported a net profit of \$19.9 million, one of its most successful annual results, as it urges iwi to claim their

slice of the \$67 million in fisheries assets it has the job of distributing.

The organisation has mandated 35 iwi organisations. There are 22 more iwi still needing to meet requirements: until they do their allocations (i.e. their share of the fisheries settlement) will remain with Te Ohu Kaimoana.

The Te Ohu Kaimoana Homepage is at <http://teohu.maori.nz/>

## Most of Us Fish Legally

Ministry of Fisheries figures for December 2006 show that 95% of recreational fishers inspected by honorary fisheries officers have been fishing legally, with fewer than 5% in breach of the regulations. The surveillance staff keeping an eye on recreational fisheries:

- conducted 1,833 separate inspections including inspection of 1075 recreational vessels;
- conducted 345 patrols on land and at sea (using two fisheries surveillance officers patrolling for 8 hours);
- had up to 11 active patrols around the country on any one day; and
- issued 77 infringements and prosecuted 5 people.

The Coastwatch programme has raised awareness of the need to play by the rules, and also of fisheries regulations and the penalties for illegal fishing.

Professional poachers are responsible for most illegal fishing around the coast, and trained fisheries officers are used to target them.

Anyone can report any suspicious activities that may lead to catching poachers by contacting the Ministry of Fisheries on the 0800 4 POACHER number (0800 476 224).

## Lottery Community Facilities Fund Back

The Lottery Community Facilities Fund (LCFF) has been reintroduced following an increase in NZ Lotteries profits over the last few years. The LCFF, which was discontinued four years ago, will be supporting a wide range of projects to build or improve community facilities.

To be considered for funding, projects need to have a total cost of more than \$30,000. Projects that will be considered include:

- the development, upgrade or extension of new and existing buildings (including the addition of meeting rooms or changes to spaces to make them more useable);
- assistance in land purchase as part of wider development projects; and
- the undertaking of feasibility studies for proposed community facilities.

More information is at [http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/wpg\\_URL/Services-Lottery-Grants-Lottery-Community-Facilities-Fund?OpenDocument](http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/wpg_URL/Services-Lottery-Grants-Lottery-Community-Facilities-Fund?OpenDocument)

## Human Rights in Pacific Nations...

The Human Rights Commission has been working with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to research a paper examining human rights systems in a number of Pacific Island states.

The paper indicates that while there are a variety of structures in place for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Pacific, the region faces quite significant human rights issues, including:

- freedom from discrimination;
- protection and equal treatment of people living with HIV/AIDS;
- violence against women and children;
- the right to health;
- environmental degradation and associated climate change concerns;
- the rights of those detained; and
- incidents related to tribal or land disputes.

The Commission held consultations in Samoa, Tuvalu and Niue last year. They found that the desire to make progress was coupled with caution about limited resources. They also found that each state needs to give its own expression to international standards of human rights, and that discussions about national human rights institutions in the Pacific need to draw on and acknowledge the culture, language and traditions of the Pacific region.

More information is at <http://www.hrc.co.nz/home/hrc/newsandissues/paperseeksfeedbackonpacifichumanrights.php>

## ...and Pacific Law and Custom Paper

The Law Commission has issued a study paper called "Converging Current: Customs and Human Rights in the Pacific". This covers the perceived conflict between customary and human rights law, and tensions between individual and collective cultural expectations. The paper comes in response to a NZ Maori Council proposal for a Pacific Court of Human Rights and the study analyses the present situations country by country.

Go to [www.lawcom.govt.nz](http://www.lawcom.govt.nz)

## Al Jazeera News: Available in English

Al Jazeera English began broadcasting on November 15 last year, reaching an audience of eight million subscribers. It is the world's first English-language news channel with headquarters in the Middle East (they are in Qatar) and it is the sister channel to the original Arabic language service. Al Jazeera has four international broadcast centres that include its headquarters in Doha, London, Washington and an Asia bureau headed by NZer Trish Carter, a former TVNZ and Maori Television executive. The Asia bureau is based in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur.

The service covers cultural, economic, social and political issues, and it reports from some of the regions rarely given access to other news channels. One of the presenters, a former BBC and CNN news anchor, is quoted as saying "With Al Jazeera, we are no longer saying they are like this. Now we are saying we are like this."

Selected programmes from Al Jazeera English are being screened live on Triangle Television, the multicultural community broadcasting station that is available in Auckland and Wellington. They include a one-hour long weekly current affairs programme hosted by Sir David Frost.

Visit Triangle at [www.tritv.co.nz](http://www.tritv.co.nz).

## State Sector Governance: New Guidelines...

The State Services Commission (SSC) has published an updated "Board Appointment and Induction Guidelines (2006)" for the hundreds of State sector boards, tribunals and advisory bodies in NZ. Many of these have a major impact on society and economy because of their broad range of powers and functions. The new guidelines replace the original guidelines issued in 1999, which have become outdated, particularly since the passing of the Crown Entities Act 2004.

The Guidelines can be downloaded as a PDF file, from the following page on the SSC website at: [http://www.ssc.govt.nz/upload/downloadable\\_files/board-appt-guidelines-dec06.pdf](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/upload/downloadable_files/board-appt-guidelines-dec06.pdf)

## ...and State Sector Code of Conduct

A new code of conduct being developed for state servants will also apply to crown entities, e.g. the district health boards, the Children's Commissioner, the Charities Commission, etc. Attention has been paid to make sure that the code, which outlines standards of integrity, does not cut across existing professional codes (such as those already in place in the health sector).

## Carter Observatory Redevelopment

The government is to provide \$2.2 million to support the redevelopment of Wellington's Carter Observatory. The funding will support the Board's plans to develop Carter into a state-of-the-art observatory offering both educational and tourist facilities. The new-look observatory will include a larger planetarium with new technology and new exhibition spaces, and will continue to give visitors the chance to interact with real astronomers.

The government will contribute operating funding of \$1.5 million (GST exclusive) in 2006/07 and \$700,000 (GST exclusive) in 2007/08 to support the redevelopment. Ongoing support will come from Wellington City Council, which has agreed to provide annual funding of \$300,000 for the next ten years. This will comprise \$150,000 for operating funding and \$150,000 to service a loan required for the redevelopment.

You can find out about the Carter Observatory at: <http://www.carterobs.ac.nz/>

## Immigration Law Revamp Coming

NZ's 20-year-old immigration laws are getting a revamp in a move to:

- enhance security;
- help recruit skilled people from overseas (will include having a simplified visa system);

- draft more flexible powers to enforce immigration law; and
- improve the ability to collect and use biometric information (this is information using, for example, a face scan).

An Immigration Bill with the changes, will be drafted ready for introduction to Parliament in April 2007.

## TV Current Affairs: Live Captioning

TVNZ's current affairs show Close Up is now offering live captioning. Over 400,000 NZers are deaf or hearing-impaired, affecting their ability to understand and enjoy television, and the captions will address the communication requirements of this group. The captioning service is available free on television sets capable of receiving captioning data via Teletext.

## Baby Names: 2006...

Charlotte has topped the list of most popular names for baby girls, while Kiwi parents are sticking with Jack as the most-chosen name for boys. Based on birth registrations for 2006, Charlotte is joined by Ella, Sophie, Emma and Olivia in the top five spots for most favoured girls' names. Jack, Joshua, Samuel, Daniel and James were the most popular boys' names.

## ...and Children's Day Coming Up

Children's Day, a day set aside to celebrate how special children are, is now scheduled for the first Sunday in March. This falls on 4 March this year.

For ideas/events planning visit <http://www.childrensday.org.nz> or phone 0800 10 33 22

## National Lamb Day

February 15, NZ's first National Lamb Day, marked the 125th anniversary of the first shipment of frozen meat from Port Chalmers in Otago on the SS Dunedin. The 5,000 sheep carcasses arrived in London on February 15th 1882 in excellent condition, 98 days after embarkation and found an enthusiastic and ready market. The idea of National Lamb Day is to enjoy lamb at the table.

## Over 500 NZers Aged Over 100

Figures from the Statistics NZ 2006 Census show more and more people are hitting their centenary – and the numbers of birthday candles are predicted to keep rising. NZ boasted 531 people aged 100 or over at the last census, up from 300 in 1999. The increased longevity is attributed to improvements in diet, medical care and overall health.

The trend is set to keep rising, with projections for 2051 predicting that a staggering 12,000 people, including a raft of long-in-the-tooth baby boomers, will celebrate their 100th birthday. By 2051 the median age is expected to have risen from 35.9 in the 2006 census to 45.

## Following in Big Footsteps

A new NZ-based international organisation named in recognition of the achievements and leadership of Sir Edmund Hillary is to be launched in November of this year.

The Hillary Institute, the aim of which is to foster leadership worldwide, is creating a new international award. To be known as the Hillary Step, it will be awarded to a person who displays great leadership in their chosen field. The award, which will be worth \$1 million, will be awarded every four years.

## Te Papa's Taonga in Japan

An exhibition called "Mauri Ora: Treasures from the Museum of NZ Te Papa Tongarewa" opened on 22 January at Tokyo National Museum with a Maori dawn ceremony attended by Maori King Tukeita Paki (on his first overseas engagement). The exhibition includes 122 items - the largest collection of Maori taonga to travel overseas since Te Maori in 1984, and it will run until 18 March.

Mauri Ora was developed by Te Papa under a cultural exchange programme with the Tokyo National Museum. In March 2006, Te Papa showcased Splendours of Japan, showing over 130 Japanese treasures compiled by the Tokyo National Museum.

## Body Count: "Return of the King"

The Return Of The King had the highest body count of any movie in history, according to a website for film fans. Director Peter Jackson killed off 836 characters in the third part of the Lord Of The Rings saga, made in 2003, which featured one of the biggest battles seen on film, according to the website moviebodycounts.com. The website counted only the corpses whose faces could be seen.

Jackson also scored a quinella on the cinema slaughter list by killing off 468 characters in the second part of the LOTR trilogy, The Two Towers, in 2002. A 1992 Hong Kong action movie, Hard Boiled, directed by John Woo, placed third with 307 corpses.

## NZ's Most Popular Dog Breeds

Labrador Retrievers are still NZ's most popular dogs according to 2006 registrations with the NZ Kennel Club. Over 1,320 of these chocolate or yellow or black purebred dogs were registered last year - up 9% for the breed on 2005. The second most popular dog is the German Shepherd, of which over 820 dogs were registered. Others to make up the Top 10 are: 3rd Golden Retrievers; 4th Border Collies (There were no changes in rank in the top four places); 5th Rottweilers (up from 6th in 2005 and 8th in 2004); 6th Boxers (dropped from 5th); 7th Bulldogs (up from 8th in 2005 and 9th in 2004); 8th Staffordshire Bull Terriers (dropped from 7th); 9th Cavalier King Charles Spaniels (no change from 2005, was 14th in 2004); 10th Chihuahuas (long coat) (no change from 2005, was 15th in 2004). No breeds dropped out of the top 10 in 2006.

More information is at [massey.ac.nz/fileadmin/research\\_outputs/HomeAffordabilityReportDec\\_06.pdf](http://massey.ac.nz/fileadmin/research_outputs/HomeAffordabilityReportDec_06.pdf)

## Appointments

District Court Judge Neil MacLean has been appointed as *the first Chief Coroner* under the new Coroners Act. Three new District Court Judges have been appointed: Elizabeth Margaret Aitken; Philippa Anne Cunningham; and Stephen Maxwell Harpor. Dr Graham Stoop has been appointed as *Chief Executive*

*and Chief Review Officer, Education Review Office*. Recent appointments to the Takeovers Panel are: David Jones who will take over as *chair* from 8 March 2007 to 7 March 2011; and Alastair Lawrence who will take over as *deputy chair* from 8 March 2007 to 24 September 2008. In addition three new members have also been appointed for five year terms: John Waller, Keith Taylor, and Pip Greenwood.

Chairman Phil Lough and board members Craig Ellison and Peter Menzies have been re-appointed to the *NZ Trade and Enterprise (NZTE) board*. They and the other board incumbents will be shortly joined by Peter Conway.

New appointments to the *Asia: NZ Board* are: Philip Burdon Chair, Rob McLeod, Mai Chen, Gavin Ellis, and Richard Nottage. Four Board members have been reappointed: Ken Douglas, Lex Henry, Vino Ramayah, and MP Pansy Wong. Anne McDermott and Mark Peychers have been appointed to the *Fiordland Marine Guardians advisory committee*. Murray Mouat has been re-appointed to the *NZ Historic Places Trust Board*. Peter Harris, the deputy chair of the Electricity Commission, is to be an *associate member of the Commerce Commission*. Newly appointed committee members for the *Lottery Community Facilities Fund* are: Hon Margaret Shields (Porirua), Presiding Member; Basil Morrison (Paeroa); Colin Dale (Auckland); Enid Leighton (Whakatane), and Frana Cardno (Te Anau). Three new members appointed to the *Tourism Board* are John Barrett, Chairperson of the NZ Maori Tourism Council, Glenys Coughlan, Te Papa Director, and Kay McKelvie, Media Pictures Ltd Director. In July, a fourth, Malcolm Johns, CEO of Intercity Group (NZ) Ltd, will join the board.

Australian-based actuarial expert John Evans has been appointed a *member of the Board of Guardians of NZ Superannuation*.

*The Small Business Advisory Group (SBAG)* is taking on a new look with twelve new appointments: Jenny Agnew [Auckland, skin care products]; Paul Bayly [Auckland, financial sector]; Lynn Currie [Arrowtown, fashion sector]; Robyn de Bruin-Judge [North Shore, furniture design and manufacture]; Bernadette (Bernie) Graham [Dunedin, clothing sector]; Deborah Hart [Wellington photography]; John Holm [Christchurch, engineer, manufacturer]; Daphne Luke [Otaki, Maori economic development]; Ronnie Matafeo [Auckland, quantity surveying]; Rod Meharry [Rotorua, event signage]; Frank van der Velden [Auckland, IT and marketing]; and Claire Vogtherr [Hawkes Bay food sector]. SBAG has provided business sector perspectives to the government on policy development relating to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) since 2003.

You can find out more about SBAG at: [http://www.med.govt.nz/templates/StandardSummary\\_\\_\\_161.aspx](http://www.med.govt.nz/templates/StandardSummary___161.aspx)

Craig Matthews and Paddy Twist  
*Editors*  
**Rural Bulletin**

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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.

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