

Rural Bulletin

May 2007



Rural Women
NEW ZEALAND

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Budget 2007 at a Glance

Key Points in Budget

- \$3 billion to enhance the KiwiSaver scheme, including a tax credit of up to \$20 a week for employees contributing to the scheme. Compulsory employer contributions starting on 1 April 2008 beginning with 1% of an employee's gross salary with the rate of compulsory employer contributions increasing to 4% by 2011/12. Employers will be reimbursed for this, also with a tax credit of \$20 per week per employee;
- the company tax rate to be reduced from 33% to 30%, which will cost the government \$2.1 billion over four years in lost revenue;
- \$630 million over four years on a tax credit for research and development, \$87.8 million over four years to help firms take new products to new markets, and \$53 million over four years for industry training also part of the government's business tax reform package;
- the \$1890 rebate threshold on charitable donations made by individuals and the 5% deduction limit on donations made by companies and Maori authorities to be scrapped, a move estimated to cost the government \$65 million over four years in lost revenue;
- \$500 million in capital funding over four years towards the electrification of Auckland's rail network, upgrade and maintenance of Wellington's network and improvements to the national network. \$145 million set aside for unexpected costs associated with the state highway construction programme;
- provision for a regional fuel tax for specific transport projects. A regional fuel tax in Auckland would see 10 cents per litre added to the price of petrol and diesel, raising about \$120 million a year;
- an extra \$3 billion over four years for health which includes \$1.9 billion to sustain inflation-adjusted health costs per person;
- a tertiary reform package that sees \$259.1 million of operating funding over four years redirected to improve the sector;
- \$238.3 million of capita funding to include for the building of 14 new schools, 180 new classrooms, 10 new school gymnasiums, and for modernising existing buildings;
- \$133.4 million for 702 extra Year-1 teachers to bring the teacher to pupil ratio down to 1:18 by the start of the second term in 2008;
- an increase in the overseas aid budget to bring it to \$246 million by 2010/11 which means it will rise to 0.35% of gross national income (GNI);
- \$72.4 million towards energy efficiency initiatives including help fitting insulation and energy efficient heating into homes;
- \$194.6 million in operational funding and \$10.2 million capital costs for the second wave of the 1000 extra police previously announced;
- real gross domestic product growth is expected to slow to 1.6% in the March 2009 year, before increasing to around 3% in the following year; and
- an operating surplus at the end of the current financial year of \$6.3 billion, up from the \$5.8 billion forecast in December.

Government Spending & Revenue

Core Revenue: \$59.4 billion

- individual's income taxes: 44%;
- GST: 19%;
- corporate tax: 16%;
- other income tax: 4%;
- other indirect taxes: 4%;
- investment income: 4%;
- sales of goods and services: 2%;
- fees, fines: 1%; and
- other revenue: 1%.

Core Expenses: \$56.1 billion

- health: 21%;
- education: 16%;
- NZ Super: 13%;
- Domestic Purposes Benefit: 3%;
- Unemployment Benefit: 1%;
- other benefits: 18%;
- transport & communications: 8%;
- law and order: 5%;
- core government services: 4%;
- finance costs: 4%;
- defence: 3%; and
- other expenses: 8%.

Kiwisaver

Key facts on the Kiwisaver scheme and its latest enhancements:

- employees who sign up must contribute either 4 or 8% of their gross income;
- participants will receive \$1000 from the government to kickstart their account and will receive a tax credit of 4% of their gross income, capped at \$20 a week;
- participants' savings schemes will claim the tax credit on their behalf;
- starting from next year compulsory employer contributions will be phased in at 1% of an employee's income, building up to 4% by 2011-2012. This contribution is tax free;
- Kiwisaver scheme providers will be able to offer an option where participants can divert 2% of their contributions into their mortgage;
- first-home buyers can withdraw all of their savings to purchase their first home and after three years in the scheme will receive a deposit grant of \$1000 a year, capped at \$5000; and
- the government pays the administrative fees of Kiwisaver schemes.

Business

Some key points:

- company tax cut to 30%. Brings the company rate in line with Australia. Aimed at making NZ a more attractive location

internationally from which to generate profits, and helping companies to reinvest profits;

- research and development tax credit (15%). Under the new incentive, businesses investing in R&D can earn a 15% tax credit on that spending. For example, a company investing \$100,000 in research would get \$15,000 back in a tax rebate. Mirrors similar concessions in Australia and elsewhere. The aim is to help raise the rate of private sector R&D investment in NZ;
- international tax review. Introducing a tax exemption for active income (such as income from manufacturing and distribution) of NZ controlled companies based in overseas markets. Further information on the continuing review is set out in 'NZ's International Tax Review: an update', available at: <http://www.taxpolicy.ird.govt.nz>; and
- tax treatment of savings vehicles. Consistent with the aim to encourage savings, certain vehicles such as unit trusts and widely held superannuation schemes will also be taxed at the new 30% rate. The top tax rate for portfolio investment entities will also be capped at 30%.

To support firms tapping into offshore markets, more money goes to further building the "Beachheads programme", which uses private sector experience and practical business networks to give valuable in-market support to firms with high-growth potential which are looking to expand offshore. The Market Development Assistance Scheme (MDAS) has also been given a further boost to help more firms to explore and develop offshore markets [\$87.8 million over four years].

Details include:

- an extra \$6.3 million over four years to extend the Beachheads programme into China and India, place advisory boards in all Beachhead regional locations, and also expand Kea, a network of Kiwi expats;
- an extra \$19.4 million over four years to increase NZTE in-market assistance for NZ firms in China, India and Japan;
- \$1.6 million toward NZ's participation at the next World Expo in Shanghai in 2010; and
- a new U.S. contract bonding product for exporters who are bidding for U.S. Federal or State contracts where they are required to provide a bond (or cash) equal to at least 100% of the transaction size.

Education

Budget 2007 includes:

- \$238.3 million of capital funding over 2007/08 to 2009/10 for school property includes building 14 new schools, 180 new classrooms and 10 new school gyms, modernising existing schools and development for kura and wharekura;
- \$133.4 million over four years to provide 702 additional Year-1 teachers to bring the teacher:pupil ratio down to 1:18 by the start of the second term in 2008; and
- \$1.3 million in 2007/08 to fund laptops for teachers, and \$1.4 million will be spent on a two-year pilot leadership programme for aspiring principals.

Encouraging a more skilled workforce: A further \$76.3 million over the next four years and \$2.2 million of capital funding over the next two years [increasing industry training by \$53 million over the next four years]. Also:

- \$15.8 million over four years to support Industry Training Organisations to identify current and future industry skill and training needs, and work alongside other tertiary education

organisations to help them respond effectively to those needs. (Pre-Budget announcement); and

- \$7.5 million over four years and \$2.2 million of capital funding over the next two years to fund development and implementation of a national assessment tool for adult literacy, numeracy and language.

Tertiary Education

Budget 2007 sets aside \$285.1 million of operating funding over four years (and \$79.7 million of capital funding over four years). This includes:

- \$129 million over four years to support universities to build their capability and strengthen their international competitiveness;
- \$21 million of operating funding and \$55 million of capital funding over the next two years in Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) to support several capability enhancing initiatives; and
- \$35 million of capital funding over the next two years in the Quality Reinvestment Programme.

Other tertiary spending includes:

- \$76.3 million of operating funding over four years and \$2.2 million of capital funding over the next two years in initiatives that will improve skill levels among people in employment;
- \$14 million over four years for the Performance Based Research Fund to expand research by tertiary education organisations;
- \$6 million over four years specifically for wananga to use to boost their research capability and activity, particularly in the area of Maori knowledge; and
- \$16.2 million of operating funding over four years to ensure that more full-time tertiary students are eligible for government assistance by increasing the student allowance parental income thresholds.

In terms of tertiary student support:

- The parental income threshold for entitlement to a full student allowance will increase by 10%, to around \$44,330 per annum, from 1 January 2008 [Cost: \$16.2 million over four years];
- From 1 April 2008, the student allowance personal income abatement threshold will be adjusted for inflation each year [Cost: \$706,000 over four years];
- The Step Up Scholarship pilot will be expanded and redesigned to increase access and equity opportunities for students from low-income backgrounds [Cost: \$11.4 million over four years, to provide another 180 scholarships, an increase of 50%]; and
- The Ngarimu Scholarship fund will be strengthened in order to assist Maori leadership [Cost: \$595,000 over four years].

Health

More funding for sport and recreation to promote healthy active lifestyles. Funding increases from \$66.1 million in 2006/07 to \$69.5 million in 2007/08 (this is on top of lotteries grants funding of about \$30.9 million). Funding includes:

- \$11.1 million for programmes in the coming year targeting children and young people as part of Sport and Recreation NZ's (SPARC) contribution to the government's ongoing \$67.0 million four-year Mission-On initiative;

- \$666,000 more in direct athlete support through the Performance Enhancement Grants scheme [to \$4.2 million]; and
- doubling SPARC's investment in regional sports development to more than \$2.8 million in 2007/08.

Pharmac gets another \$20 million a year for more medicines for both people in the community and those needing pharmaceutical treatments in hospital such as cancer patients. This means in practice:

- an extra \$5.4 million for community pharmaceuticals that include preventative treatments such as asthma medications like inhalants and statins for lowering cholesterol; and
- \$14 million of the new money tagged to hospital cancer treatments [included in this is an allocation for the cost of a potential trial on the breast cancer drug herceptin - \$5 million].

Other announcements include:

- from next year every baby born in NZ will be eligible for a free vaccine to fight against pneumococcal meningitis. Spending of \$68 million over the next four years will go to fund Prevenar vaccine, and add it to the National Immunisation Schedule;
- extra funding of \$11.2 million is allocated in this budget to ensuring access to quality programmes such as programmes to prevent family violence;
- new funding of \$13.2 million a year for the next four years will mean the successful "Get Checked" diabetes programme can be widened to include a new programme to check for cardiovascular disease;
- \$10.2 million over four years towards improving bedside verification of drugs to patients, a step in reducing adverse events in hospitals;
- \$26 million over four years to implementing the Cancer Control Strategy to reduce the incidence and impact of cancer. The extra money is targeted at workforce development; and
- new money of \$8.4 million over four years will mean newborns and young adults will have better access to cochlear implants, giving babies born with serious hearing impairment the best possible start in life and ensuring adults who are profoundly deaf can lead as normal a life as possible.

Justice/Emergency Management/Human Rights

Budget 2007 includes:

- \$2.4 million over next four years to strengthen the Police Complaints Authority so that it can resolve complaints faster and further reduce its existing caseload;
- \$1.3 million over next year in the Supported Bail Programme for young people on remand from the Youth Court to ensure they comply with their bail conditions;
- \$1.4 million over the next year will go into intensive intervention programmes for the most serious and dangerous youth offenders;
- \$6.2 million of operating funding over the next four years and \$131,000 of capital funding over the next year for staff and services to support two additional judges: one High Court and one District Court;
- \$3.6 million has been allocated over the next four years to the Legal Services Agency for additional legal aid;
- \$4.3 million operating funding over four years and \$2.9 million capital from 2006/07 to 2008/09 to the Ministry of Civil Defence and Emergency Management; and

- the Human Rights Commission will receive an additional \$7.5 million over the next four years to strengthen its capacity to deliver key programmes and services.

Charitable Giving

Charitable giving is rewarded and encouraged by removing the current \$1,890 rebate threshold on donations made by individuals and the 5% deduction limit on donations made by companies and Maori authorities. The company deduction for charitable donations will be extended to include unlisted companies with five or fewer shareholders. Changes to take effect from 1 April 2008.

Senior Citizens

\$150 million over four years invested in residential care and another \$81.2 million in helping them stay in their own homes if they wish. Older and disabled people will get a further \$6 million over the next four years for respite services, building on the existing investment of the past year (to help both carers and clients a break from their living situation).

The Disabled

Initiatives include:

- \$32 million over the next four years to stabilise home-based disability support services;
- \$44 million over the next four years for residential services for disabled people under 65 years of age;
- \$10.5 million over four years for Autism Spectrum disorder work;
- \$6 million over the next four years for family caregiver support;
- \$12 million over four years for Intellectual Disability compulsory care and rehabilitation - high and complex services;
- Increased baseline funding for Environmental Support services (\$48.3 million over the next four years); and
- \$36.1 million to Disability Support Services for 2007/08 financial year to cover cost and demographic pressures.

Conservation

- Department of Conservation (DoC) gets an extra \$13.3 million over four years to boost its core capability, and fund the development of a national inventory of NZ's species;
- \$4 million of new funding will go towards enhancing DoC's ability to participate in the Treaty Settlement process; and
- new funding to allow DoC to develop a Natural Heritage Management System, which will provide the tools to monitor and evaluate the current state, and trends, in major natural areas, and species.

Research

A \$73.7 million funding increase for research, science and technology over the next four years, along with \$34.6 million in reallocated funding. Details include:

- lifting business performance through R&D (\$46.6 million): \$18.6 million of Technology NZ grants and services to boost private sector R&D, \$14 million for research into innovative foods, beverages and other new products and \$14 million for enhancing emerging and high value technologies and services;

- building science capability (\$25.2 million): includes \$16 million for Crown Research Institutes and \$8 million for the Marsden Fund;
- improving sustainability and primary sector productivity (\$28 million): \$8 million for climate change research, \$12 million additional funding for Pastoral 21 and \$8 million for research into increasing productivity and sustainability across primary sectors; and
- increasing global science collaboration (\$7.3 million): \$4.5 million over three years for Antarctic research as part of International Polar Year, and \$2.8 million for boosting research relationships with Asia.

Transport

- funding \$600 million over six years for improving the Auckland and Wellington rail passenger networks;
- support for electrification of Auckland's urban passenger network (by 2013). It is proposed that funding for this would come from a regional fuel tax. Proposed Auckland fuel tax is likely a 10 cents a litre on petrol and diesel, that could raise about \$120 million a year and could support a debt of about \$1.5 billion over 30 years;
- for Wellington commuters, new funding to replace worn out infrastructure, extend double tracking to Waikanae, and for enlarging tunnels on the Johnsonville line; and
- an additional \$145 million of capital in 2006/07 and 2007/08, to ensure the five-year State Highway Construction Plan is delivered in the event of any unanticipated input cost increases.

Housing

A \$43.6 million funding package extending two housing programmes:

- the Healthy Housing programme, which targets overcrowded households and assists them into more appropriate housing, is to be extended for three years and introduced into the Wellington region for the first time. It will receive \$21 million of capital funding for 2007/08 to 2009/10, and \$2.8 million of operating funding for 2008/09 to 2010/11; and
- the Housing Innovation Fund, which provides government assistance to local authorities and community groups in developing affordable housing, is also to be extended with \$12 million of capital funding for 2008/09, and \$7.8 million of operating funding over 2007/08 through to 2010/11.

\$1.4 million for the design of a shared equity housing scheme to help more young NZers own their own first home. Shared equity schemes are common overseas, and typically involve the government or a private entity taking a share in a house (sometimes up to 30%) at no cost to the homebuyer. The homebuyer then seeks a conventional mortgage on the remainder of the property, and when the property is sold, a percentage of the sale price, equivalent to the equity share, is returned to the supplier.

\$72.4 million over the next four years to help Kiwi families live in warm, dry, healthy homes that are energy efficient and better for the environment. Main elements include:

- \$23 million for an interest-free loans scheme to help homeowners pay for energy efficiency and clean heating upgrades;
- \$15.3 million to trial and implement a Home Energy Rating Scheme, a tool to measure the energy efficiency of a house and provide this information to home buyers;

- \$14.1 million for the Energy Wise Home Grants scheme, to continue with 12,000 energy efficiency retrofits a year for low-income households;
- \$6.8 million to do more research on energy efficient technologies, partner with industry to promote these technologies and develop new funding mechanisms, provide support for businesses that supply or install energy efficient technologies, and provide support for councils to implement the new Building Code and promote energy efficiency to households; and
- \$3.1 million for an information campaign to provide consumers with clear, practical advice on actions they can take to improve their homes.

A further \$14.6 million to Inland Revenue over three years to strengthen its auditing of property transactions - as a way of targeting property speculation.

Maori

- \$2 million over the next year in the training and support of people working to prevent violence in Maori whanau and communities;
- Kohanga reo gets increased funding of \$13.9 million over four years;
- \$27.1 million in new operating and capital funding over the next four years for Maori broadcasting [includes \$20.1 million more in operating funding for Maori Television and \$3 million in capital funding, along with an additional \$4 million over the next four years in the iwi radio network];
- \$102 million over four years to provide school property for kura kaupapa Maori and wharekura;
- \$7.7 million more for the Waitangi Tribunal over the next four years; and
- \$2.5 million for 2007/2008 to increase the capacity and capability of Maori Wardens.

Other Cultures

New funding for the Office of Ethnic Affairs to:

- expand its Ethnic Advisory service to Hamilton;
- expand Intercultural Awareness (IAC) training in government organisations; and
- expand the Building Bridges programme, which helps ethnic groups build relationships with the wider community and expand policy capacity to support ethnic communities to participate in and influence government policy-making.

NZ'S International Presence

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade receives extra funding of \$104.9 million over the next four years, to fund some new staff positions and cover offshore cost pressures;
- Asia NZ Foundation gets \$1.8 million for its "Seriously Asia" work programme in 2007/08;
- Pacific Cooperation Foundation gets \$900,000 in 2007/08 to extend their baseline for another year; and
- Antarctica NZ will receive a total of \$5.9 million over the next four years to boost its contribution to the joint NZ/United States Antarctic logistics pool.

Broadcasting

- NZ on Air gets a further \$8 million over next four years to develop programmes for the digital environment, and produce high quality local television; and
- Radio NZ gets \$521,000 over four years to extend transmission coverage to low density population areas, and a further \$4.6 million over four years for core services.

Films, Music & Heritage

Some key points include:

- restoration project for Government House receive \$2 million in capital funding, to develop design work, cost estimates, and resource consents;
- efforts to conserve newly-found Maori artifacts receive an additional \$120,000 over four years;
- a further \$120,000 over four years for authenticating protected objects such as taonga;
- NZ Music Industry Commission gets an additional \$533,000 next year to enable it to maintain support for the music industry;
- NZ Film Archive gets a further \$2 million over four years to collect and protect our heritage of moving images;
- NZ Film Commission gets \$946,000 in capital funding next year to cover relocation and fit-out costs as it moves to new premises;
- Ministry of Culture and Heritage baseline funding increases by around \$2 million a year;
- \$45.9 million of capital funding over 2007/08 and 2008/09 for the new Supreme Court building in Wellington;
- \$25.3 million for restoring the old High Court building; and
- A NZ Poet Laureate Award is to be established to recognise writers who have made an outstanding contribution to NZ poetry.

Archives/National Library

- \$8.5 million over four years for Archives NZ to develop a strategy for archiving 'born digital' materials, material that originated in a digital environment; and
- funding for a programme to better manage ministers' and security-classified papers, which will identify sensitive information in ministers' records, classify and archive them appropriately.

Consultation

Family Protection under CYPF: Have Your Say

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) is reviewing and updating the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (CYPF) Act 1989, and it wants to hear your views about any changes/additions needed to strengthen its provisions.

When it was introduced 18 years ago the CYPF Act introduced principles that changed the way decisions were made about children and young people. It required families to become partners in the decision-making process through Family Group Conferences and to remain involved in the future of their children. The idea of this was to promote:

- family empowerment;
- cultural responsiveness;
- due process; and
- the use of other procedures as an alternative to formal criminal procedures.

In a recently released discussion paper, the Ministry says the Act is generally working well and has served as a model for similar laws in a number of other countries. However, its wording can be difficult to understand and this sometimes gets in the way of best practice. Also it is now sometimes at odds with more recent legislation, for example the Care of Children Act 2004, the Victims' Rights Act 2002 and the Sentencing Act 2002.

MSD would like your views on:

- how the Act could better support good practices;
- whether any current provisions are not working well or need to be fixed;
- what might be missing from the Act; and
- what, if any, changes or additions people would like to see made to the Act to support the achievement of its objectives and fulfilment of its principles.

The Ministry will report its findings and proposals for updating the Act to the government later on in the year.

Submissions close 1 June. The discussion paper and online submission form are at: www.msd.govt.nz/work-areas/children-and-young-people/cypf-act-update/index.html, email: cypfactupdate@msd.govt.nz, fax: 04-917 5583, or post to CYPF Act Update Team, Social Services Policy, Ministry of Social Development, PO Box 1556, Wellington 6140

Combined Rural-Urban Fire Service Proposed

Proposals for changing the way NZ's fire services are organised are outlined in a Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) discussion paper called "New Fire Legislation - a framework for NZ's fire and rescue services and their funding".

Currently, fire risk management is through urban Fire Services and Rural Fire Authorities. The discussion paper proposes that these two fire services be merged into one so there:

- is just one fire management system;
- is one organisation with responsibility for rescue functions;
- is protection for fire and rescue workers;
- are minimum national standards established; and
- is a broader funding base.

A new Act would establish the new Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), a national organisation with responsibility for overseeing all aspects of fire risk management. Fire Authorities would only be responsible for preventing and responding to vegetation fires in their area, and other activities relating to fire and rescue would be carried out by the FRS.

Funding of the Proposed Fire & Rescue Service

The Fire Service Commission is currently funded from a levy based on property insurance values, which applies to almost all property covered against fire risk. Fire Authorities are funded from a much wider variety of sources.

For the new structure a national fund would be set up with funding from a new Fire and Rescue levy on all property insured against any kind of loss or damage - not just property insured against fire risk. Contributions would come from:

- residential dwellings;
- household and personal property;
- commercial and industrial buildings and their contents;
- industrial plant and equipment;
- stocks of raw materials and other goods;
- forests and agricultural crops; and
- motor vehicles.

Fire Authorities continuing to operate would continue to use their own resources to fund the management of vegetation fires, but would receive contributions and support from the national fund.

The rationale for the change is that attendance by the Fire Service at floods, storms and other natural events, as well as hazardous substance incidents, medical assists, and industrial and other rescues, is common and will continue to grow, and that it is not fair to fund all these incidents solely from fire-insured property.

Submissions close on 30 June. The paper can be downloaded from the Department of Internal Affairs website at: [http://www.dia.govt.nz/Pubforms.nsf/URL/NewFireLegislation07.pdf/\\$file/NewFireLegislation07.pdf](http://www.dia.govt.nz/Pubforms.nsf/URL/NewFireLegislation07.pdf/$file/NewFireLegislation07.pdf)

Price Control for the Electricity Sector?

The Ministry of Economic Development (MED) is reviewing the price control provisions of the Commerce Act, and any changes made will directly affect energy supply companies.

In a discussion paper on the subject, MED says it is necessary to make sure that consumers are protected from "excessive prices or the possibility of poor quality service from monopoly suppliers, such as gas pipeline or electricity lines companies".

It is a balancing act though, because the government also needs to make sure that firms will still want to invest in these kinds of businesses.

MED is specifically reviewing:

- Part 4 of the Commerce Act, which allows goods or services to be placed under price and quality control where competition is limited and control would be in the long-term interests of consumers;
- Part 4A, which applies specifically to electricity lines businesses, and allows the Commerce Commission to place them under regulatory control if they breach thresholds set by the Commission; and
- Part 5, which requires the Commerce Commission to authorise the prices of controlled goods and services.

Among options for change are the provision of quite "light-handed" forms of regulation like compulsory disclosing of information including prices, costs and service quality, and a negotiation/arbitration system. The proposals also include limited challenges to Commerce Commission decisions being based on merit rather than just process and points of law.

Submissions close on 6 July. You can download a copy of the discussion paper, as a pdf file, from: <http://www.med.govt.nz/upload/45379/discussion-document.pdf>

Health Information Project: Discussion Paper

The Ministry of Health (MoH) has started developing a health information system which is aimed at offering self-management of health issues by individual people, families and communities. The system is also being developed for health practitioners so they can decide on things like practice evidence to support their clinical interventions.

A consultation paper called "Primary Health Care Strategy: Key Directions for the Information Environment", outlines health information proposals under which a person would be able to:

- access their own health records more easily;
- find out about their progress in health treatment plans or self-management goals;
- obtain more information when they want to make a decision;
- get information that might reduce the need to repeat tests or provide information for different providers;
- make sure that important information is available in an emergency so they can be sure of appropriate and effective care; and
- develop their skills to meet personal health goals.

There are similar objectives for families.

Health practitioners would be able to:

- more easily find evidence of best practice to support their clinical interventions;
- evaluate and monitor the performance of the health service;
- improve quality through better supported clinical governance;
- determine more astute research questions for future health gains;
- reduce duplication of effort by enabling information to be recorded once and then be securely and appropriately seen where and when it is needed; and
- reduce the cost (in both time and resources) of collecting and submitting data.

A series of workshops on the proposals will be held over May, and the Ministry expects to release a second consultation paper and a "strategic road map" later in the year.

Submissions close on 1 June. Copies of the consultation paper can be found at: <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/primary-health-care-information-environment-consultation-apr07>

Newborn Blood Tests - Other Uses? Consultation

The blood taken from babies soon after birth could be used in the future for scientific research. Taken by a pin prick to the heel, the blood spots (around 59,000 annually) are used to identify rare but potentially life-threatening disorders. The blood is stored on a Guthrie card, which, at present, is kept indefinitely.

The Ministry of Health has published a consultation paper raising the possibility that the blood spots could be used for other purposes, including research. The consultation process will include an internet-based questionnaire and public focus group discussions.

Submissions close on 20 June. You can download the consultation paper from: <http://www.nsu.govt.nz/survey/nsurvey.aspx?surveyid=19cbb4417924e5685cfd73621b7a0e>

Art Resale: Royalties Being Considered

There has been significant growth in the local art auction sector, with total sales across our six main art auction houses alone doubling over the past decade. Sales reached a peak of nearly \$19.5 million in 2003 and have settled back to around \$14 million for each of the past two years. Art commentators predict another surge in art auction sales in the next year or two.

In spite of this growth, as things currently stand, most artists only see returns from the first time they sell a piece. As a consequence of this, the government has released a discussion paper inviting public feedback on options for a resale royalty right for visual artists. Also known as an "artist's resale right", the arrangement is in place in about 50 countries. It allows visual artists to receive a royalty payment each time an original art work is resold on the secondary art market.

Specific issues in the discussion paper include:

- the range of art works covered by a scheme;
- the scope of re-sales;
- the royalty rate;
- who would be liable for the payment;
- whether payment would be made to living artists and/or the estates of deceased artists;
- reciprocity with countries operating similar schemes; and
- which agency or agencies would collect the royalty.

Submissions close 22 June 2007. The discussion paper is on the Ministry for Culture and Heritage website: www.mch.govt.nz/publications/resale-royalty. Copies are also available from the Ministry

Public Feedback Sought on Serious Harm Definition

The government is seeking public feedback on the definition of "serious harm" in Schedule 1 of the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992. "Serious harm" has four uses under the Act (as amended in 2002). It defines:

- what a “significant hazard is” that must be managed by an employer;
- which kinds of harm or accidents have to be reported to the Department of Labour (or Maritime NZ or the Civil Aviation Authority), and when an accident scene must be protected until investigated;
- the degree of harm that creates the most serious offences under the Act; and
- the work that employees may refuse because it is likely to cause them serious harm.

The Department of Labour (DoL) discussion paper contains a draft revised definition, as well as a summary of questions for consultation.

Submissions close 15 June. The discussion paper and more information can be found at the DoL website: www.osh.dol.govt.nz/serious-harm/

Protecting Cultural Treasures: Discussion Paper

A discussion paper from the Ministry of Culture and Heritage is now available for comment.

New Zealand signed the Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict in 1954, and the government is currently considering whether should ratify the Convention and agree to its two Protocols. Amongst the questions posed for response by the public are:

- which cultural property of great importance to NZers should be protected by the Convention (not all cultural property will qualify)?
- which cultural property of the greatest importance for humanity as a whole should be protected by the enhanced protections offered under the Second Protocol? (it is anticipated that very few items of cultural property will be included in this category)? and
- should the protections offered under the Convention be binding for all qualifying cultural property, or can owners elect not to be protected?

Submissions close 15 June. The discussion paper is at: <http://www.mch.govt.nz/publications/hague/index.html> All questionnaires should be sent (hard copy or electronically) to: the Hague Convention Consultation Paper, Policy Group, Ministry for Culture and Heritage, PO Box 5364, Wellington, email: hagueconvention@mch.govt.nz, direct dial: 04 495 2562; Ministry for Culture and Heritage: 04 499 4229

Protecting Cultural Expression: Have Your Say

The government is seeking feedback about whether NZ should become a party to the UNESCO “Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions”.

This Convention aims to:

- reaffirm the right of states to draw up cultural policies;
- recognise that cultural activities, goods and services specifically affirm identity, values and meaning; and

- strengthen international cooperation with a view to favouring the cultural expressions of all countries.

The Ministry of Culture and Heritage wants to know:

- whether you agree or disagree that NZ should accede to the Convention;
- what the advantages and disadvantages would be if NZ acceded to it; and
- what the economic, social, cultural and environmental effects would be if NZ became a party to it.

Submissions close 6 June. They go to M Tait, Policy Group, Ministry for Culture and Heritage, PO Box 5364, Wellington, tel 04-496 6356, email: matt.tait@mch.govt.nz. More information is available at: www.mch.govt.nz

International Education: Discussion Paper

New Zealand’s tertiary education system is to be “internationalised” to make it internationally competitive so it attracts more overseas students. Income from international education has fallen since 2003, partly as a result of the poor performance and/or financial failure of a small number of NZ’s international schools.

At present, around 93,000 international students from 150 countries are studying in NZ. The economic returns are in the order of \$1.9 billion annually, making it the country’s third largest services export.

A policy paper called “International Education Agenda” outlines proposals to:

- lift the quality and integrity of the services NZ provides;
- improve the quality of students enrolled; and
- provide pathways to further study or employment in NZ, students’ home countries and elsewhere.

Submissions close 25 May. A discussion paper and feedback form are at: <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=11950&indexid=6663&indexparentid=1010>. A policy paper is at: http://www.minedu.govt.nz/web/downloadable/dl11950_v1/moe-1.pdf. You can also obtain these by telephoning 04-463 8289 or emailing ie.agenda@minedu.govt.nz

Rural

Medical Students: Rural Immersion Programme

The first rural medical immersion programme for medical students will see six Otago University students spend their fifth year of study working in rural communities in Queenstown, the West Coast and Southland. (Currently students from around the country spend only two to six weeks working in rural practices.) The students will study the same curriculum as their city counterparts and the programme will be fully evaluated at the end of its pilot year.

Studies have shown students who complete a rural medical immersion programme are more likely to choose rural practice as a career pathway.

Agricultural Production Statistics: June 2006

According to Statistics NZ, South Island dairy cattle numbers are more than six times the number they were in 1981. Figures from the 2006 Agricultural Production Survey show that the national dairy herd is now 5.2 million. With 1.5 million cattle, the South Island has 28% of the national herd, whereas in 1981 it had 8%, or 225,000 dairy cattle.

Sheep numbers are estimated at 40.1 million in 2006, down from a peak of 70.3 million in 1982. Over the 25-year period from 1981 there have been similar proportions of sheep in both islands. In 1981 the North Island had 53% of the national flock and in 2006 the South Island had 51%.

Beef cattle numbers totalled 4.4 million in 2006. Of the main livestock sectors, beef numbers have changed the least over the last 25 years, with a high of 5.2 million recorded in 1995. South Island numbers have remained relatively stable while there has been a decline in the North Island.

In 2006 the national deer herd totalled 1.6 million. This compares with 109,000 deer 25 years ago when deer farming was in its infancy. The deer industry has centred in the South Island, which now has 1.1 million or 69% of the national deer herd.

More information is at: <http://www.stats.govt.nz/products-and-services/media-releases/agricultural-production/agricultural-production-statistics-final-jun06-mr.htm>

Australian Honey Imports Allowed

A High Court decision has supported Biosecurity NZ's actions in allowing imports of honey products from Australia. The case, the latest attempt to prevent Australian honey entering NZ, follows a long process, started in 2001, when the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) started developing a new Import Health Standard for honey and related bee products from Australia. The decision noted that new organisms will be brought into NZ every day as passenger organisms on people, their clothes and their goods, and that "to be too absolute is to require the border to be shut to all traffic."

The High Court has also ordered the lifting of the current injunction placed on imported honey: this decision is subject to appeal.

Rural Communities Trust Funding

The Rural Communities Trust allocates funding to people living in rural communities. Applications are sought from:

- people with specific health, educational or social needs who live in rural areas and who fall outside the criteria for government agency assistance;
- rural community groups and organisations who have shown some self help, and require top-up assistance for specific projects; and
- rural community groups and or individuals who may have received assistance from government agencies, or other funding groups who require top-up assistance.

The Trust's next funding round closes 31 May. More information is at: <http://www.ruralcommunitiestrust.org.nz/apply.htm>, or you can contact: Rural Communities Trust, PO Box 715, Wellington, freephone 0800 472 843, email receptionwgton@fedfarm.org.nz

Rabobank: Business Programs for Farmers

Applications are now open for a place on Rabobank's two business management programmes for farmers, the Executive Development Program (EDP) and the Farm Managers Program (FMP).

The EDP has been designed for farm owners and senior managers who are the main decision makers in the farm business. The FMP is geared to the needs of the next generation of farm owners and senior managers.

Both programmes provide access to the latest management thinking by leading academics and business advisors from throughout Australia and NZ, and both include presentations on a range of topics including leadership, communication, financial management, negotiation skills and succession planning presented.

The programmes also offer participants the opportunity to learn from each other and develop a network of progressive farmers with whom they can share knowledge and experience.

Applications close 25 May (note that places in each programme are limited to 36 so there is a selection process). For more information visit www.rabobank.co.nz/bmp. For application packs email Kobie.Tesoriero@rabobank.com

Telecom eFarmer of the Year Competition

Telecom, in conjunction with Rural News, is searching for the Telecom eFarmer of the Year - a competition to find and reward the farmer who demonstrates the best use of communications technology on the farm.

Applicants need to list the communication products and services they currently use, and answer two questions expanding on how these services improve productivity and efficiencies on their farm. This year Telecom is also asking entrants about products or technologies (real or imagined) that would add some serious benefits to the way they run their farm. Total prize value is over \$4,500.

Applications close 30 May. To enter complete and submit online entry form at Rural News website (www.ruralnews.co.nz), or complete entry form in Rural News publication and post to Telecom

Mystery Creek Fieldays Competitions

The Fieldays at Mystery Creek (between Hamilton and Cambridge) are the largest agricultural event in the southern hemisphere. They attract 1000 agricultural products and services

exhibitors, and around 115,000 visitors, and last year resulted in sales in excess of \$300 million.

Alongside the showcasing and networking visitors will see some earnest (and possibly, some not so earnest) physical and creative competitions, including:

- No. 8 Wire National Art Award: twist, bend, weld, sculpt : create a sculpture using predominantly No 8 wire;
- Ag Art Wear Competition: gives designers of all ages an opportunity to create wearable art. There are four categories: Avant Garde; Under 21 section; Designer; and Landcare. (this one is sponsored by the Landcare Trust and it encourages designers to create a garment made solely from natural products unique to NZ that may also reflect NZ's environmental issues);
- Sonic Arts Challenge: construct and play instruments made only from agricultural products. Sections include pre-schoolers, primary (yrs 0 - 6); junior secondary (yrs 7 - 11); senior secondary (yrs 12 - 13), and community (any group that is a mix of the above, e.g. a business house, a retirement complex, a family, a club, a marae, a church group, etc). Finalists will be invited to play at the Fieldays;
- AgTrader Sculpture Competition: take some materials from the scrap heap and create an art masterpiece with an agricultural flair. There are categories for serious designs and humorous designs, and an award for "people's choice". Now extended to include a country schools prize;
- Rural Bachelor of the Year: entrants have to be over 18, work in the rural industry, ooze Kiwi bloke charm and be single;
- Waikato Draught Wiremark Fencing Championships: get your best pliers out to compete for the Golden Pliers (for individual entrants) and Silver Spades (a doubles fencing competition) awards;
- Stihl Chainsaw Competitions: include: Waikato Draught Carving Challenge; Castrol Festival of Logging Skills; Teams Event; Women's Race; Stihl Hotsaw Race;
- Woodsplitting; and Bar & Chain Fitting; and
- Tractor Pull Competition: If you have a tractor with a manufacturer's PTO rating between 70-190hp you are eligible to enter this competition.

There are site awards as well.

The Fieldays are held 13-16 June. Pre-purchase ticket prices (available until 1 June 2007) are adult (15 years and above): \$13; child (5 - 14 years): \$6; under-5s: free. More information is on the Fieldays website at <http://www.fieldays.co.nz>. For more information about the competitions click on the Competitions section

Rural Recycling: AgRecovery Scheme

AgRecovery is a national recycling "stewardship scheme" which provides growers, farmers, foresters, and other primary industry chemical users with an environmentally safe way of disposing of their unwanted plastic containers. Stewardship schemes share the responsibility for the disposal of a product throughout its life cycle - from the designer to the end user.

Foundation members of the scheme (which received initial funding from the government's Sustainable Management Fund),

include Horticulture NZ, Federated Farmers, Agcarm, Fonterra and Environment Waikato.

Research Investment in Pastoral Sector

More than \$34 million in agricultural research was recently announced by a partnership involving the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST) and three pastoral industry groups (Dairy InSight, Fonterra and Meat and Wool NZ). Each of the partners is investing \$4.3 million (GST inclusive) a year for four years.

Successful bids for the investment funds came from AgResearch for two programmes:

- one, focused on the environment, aims to provide individual farmers with tools and technologies for reducing contamination from farm run-off; and
- the other, focused on forage, targets increases in productivity through improved quantity, quality and utilisation of animal feed.

More information is at: http://www.frst.govt.nz/news/2007/Investment_pastoral_Apr07.cfm

River Flow Online Survey...

The Foundation for Research, Science and Technology has funded a research programme called the Water Allocation and Protection of Instream Values, to support improved approaches to water allocation. The contract is being carried out by the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research Ltd (NIWA), and part of it includes identifying the main landscape characteristics of flows within different river types. It is hoped that this will lead to improved understanding and more reliable ways of incorporating landscape and visual values into water allocation decision-making. Boffa Miskell Ltd (the researcher) has invited Regional Councils, energy providers, recreation users, researchers and farmers, to fill out an online survey.

The survey is at <http://www.rivers.info/>

...& Online Research: Rural Opinions Sought

Market research company AC Nielsen invites farmers to become members of its Online Research Panel "Your Voice". Registration is free, and once registered, participants choose which online surveys they want to participate in. The surveys cover a range of topics, some of which are based around agriculture and rural issues. Participation includes providing an opinion on topics/products and panel members are rewarded each time they participate. No personal information is linked back to you or passed on to third parties. The panel is used for research purposes only.

To join go to: www.acnielsen.co.nz/fmi

Environment

Crown "Sensitive Land": LINZ to Review

Land Information (LINZ) is in charge of reviewing any Crown land coming up for disposal until a wider review of the land disposal process has been completed. This means that Departments and Crown agencies will have to notify LINZ when considering the disposal of land that meets the definition of "sensitive land" under the Overseas Investment Act, or has the value of \$1 million or more. LINZ will then assess the land and notify the Minister of Land Information and the Minister for State Owned Enterprises. The criteria for the LINZ assessments are:

- conservation, recreational, ecological, and biodiversity value of the land;
- heritage value and historical ownership of the land;
- cultural significance of the land to groups other than the Crown;
- potential value to the community if retained in Crown ownership;
- location of the land in relation to scenery such as the coastline; and
- any wider public interest considerations specific to that piece of land.

The review of the way disposal of Crown land is handled will:

- develop elements of "wider national interest" to be considered when agencies are disposing of land;
- define "disposal" so it encompasses a range of possible transactions;
- identify land held that may attract wider national interest considerations;
- investigate existing policies and processes and assess them against the aim of allowing for sensitive land to remain in Crown hands; and
- assess options for improvements to the current processes.

More information is at: <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=29029>. The relevant Cabinet papers and minutes are at: 04-19 land review process cab papers.pdf(2,346 kb)

Resource Consents: Survey Results

A Ministry for the Environment (MfE) survey covering resource consent applications over 2005/2006 has shown that 73% of resource consents were processed within the time specified. Fewer than 1% were declined and only 1% were appealed to the Environment Court. Of the consents which were granted, later monitoring showed that 74% fully complied with their resource consent conditions.

The figures come from the bi-annual survey of local authorities (carried out by the MfE), which examines their performance under the Resource Management Act.

The survey can be downloaded from: <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/rma/annual-survey/2005-2006/rma-survey-2005-2006-report.pdf>

NZ's Geospatial Strategy Approved

Geospatial technology is a technology which enables people to display information about the geographic, time and space aspects of a location. We increasingly rely on geospatial information for a very wide range of activity: from emergency services and national defence to utilities, resource management, biosecurity and economic development.

A new Geospatial Strategy is now in place. This will allow for NZ's geospatial resources to be developed and managed in a co-ordinated and directed way. It will mean there is compatibility when information is collected by different government departments, and it will also reduce the risk of different departments duplicating work.

You can access the Strategy from: <http://www.li.govt.nz/publications/geospatial-strategy-2007-geospatial-strategy-2007.pdf>

Arbor Day is on 5 June

Arbor Day marks the beginning of the planting season and it has traditionally been a time to celebrate NZ's biodiversity: it is a reminder that everyone can play a part in protecting native forests and wildlife. Traditional Arbor Day activity focuses on restoring habitats that have been damaged or destroyed by humans or by invasive pests and weeds.

The day was first celebrated in Nebraska, USA, in 1872, and the first Arbor Day planting in was in Greytown in the Wairarapa on 3 July 1890. The first official Arbor Day celebration took place in Wellington in August 1892, when pohutukawa and Norfolk pines were planted along Thorndon Esplanade.

Renewable Energy Systems Needed

The latest figures released in NZ's annual Greenhouse Gas Inventory - those for 2005 - show NZ's emissions rose 2.8% between 2004 and 2005. The rise was mainly due to an increased use of coal and gas to guarantee electricity supply, after a sustained dry period in 2005 caused storage levels in hydro lakes to drop. The Inventory, which is required by the Framework on Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC) of the United Nations and the Kyoto Protocol, went to the UNFCCC this month.

Climate Change Resources Available

The Ministry for the Environment (MfE) has developed a series of booklets on climate change. They cover the science of climate change, the likely impacts on NZ, new policies and initiatives, tips for taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and the importance of preparing for climate change. There is also a poster in A1 and A3 format.

To order the booklets/poster, email: publications@mfe.govt.nz, call 04-439 7546, or visit the MfE website: www.mfe.govt.nz

Climate Research Centre Opens

A new research centre for studying climate history in the Southern Hemisphere opened recently. The \$1.4 million facility at GNS

Science's National Isotope Centre in Lower Hutt includes laboratories, analytical equipment, and refrigerated rooms for the safe long-term storage of hundreds of metres of ice core from Antarctica and glaciers.

Ice cores are extracted from glaciers by special drilling equipment. They store dust particles and chemicals in chronological sequence. These reveal important information about past climate including air temperatures, rainfall, and wind speed and direction.

Scientists use ice cores to reconstruct environmental and climatic conditions going back many thousands of years. The information provides a base for modelling past and present climates (both in and on a global scale) and improving climate projections.

More information is at: http://www.gns.cri.nz/news/release/20070412_ice_core.html

Energy Efficient Home Loans

Westpac has set up a Green Home Loan designed to help homeowners make their houses more energy efficient and environmentally friendly. As part of the scheme, home-loan customers are given a voucher booklet that contains heavily discounted environmental products such as solar hot water heaters, insulation and energy-efficient appliances, courtesy of several NZ businesses.

A growing number of other businesses are also taking positive "green" action: BNZ recently revealed plans to go carbon neutral by 2010, and insurance company IAG has announced it aims to be carbon neutral by 2012. Contact Energy has undertaken to reduce emissions from all of its non-generation activities as far as possible, and then pay to offset the remainder through Landcare Research's Carbonzero certification scheme. Meridian Energy is now a certified Carbon Neutral electricity generator for electricity generation as well as administration.

The Westpac scheme has been supported by the Ministry for the Environment as part of its sustainable industry programme.

Three Weeks More of Daylight Saving

The next Daylight Saving will start a week earlier - on the last Sunday in September, and end two weeks later - on the first Sunday in April.

Tourism

More NZers Choosing Home over International Travel

Figures released by the Ministry of Tourism show that NZers are making more domestic journeys and are spending significantly more money on overnight trips. Spending on overnight trips in-

creased by 15.5% to \$4.8 billion in the year to December 2006, compared with the 2005 calendar year. Overall spending by domestic travellers increased by 9.3% to \$7.5 billion in the same period. The number of overnight trips increased by 3.3% over the 2005 calendar year.

A range of data and reports from the survey are available on the Ministry of Tourism's research website at: www.tourismresearch.govt.nz

Internet is Top Tourism Information Supplier

Regional Visitor Monitor (RVM) research released by the Ministry of Tourism reveals the Internet is now the number one information source for domestic tourists. Internet has now surpassed family and friends, as a source of information for regional trip planning. Over half of all domestic travellers interviewed (51%) had used the Internet to plan their trip to their destination region for the last quarter of 2006, up from 38% in the first quarter of 2006.

International visitors surveyed were also increasing their use of the Internet to research their destination region. Nearly half (49%) of the international respondents said the web was a source of information for the last quarter of 2006, up from 37% in the first quarter. However, for international travellers the Internet is still less significant than guide books and word of mouth.

Actual Internet booking of tourism related products by both international and domestic travellers has trended upwards for accommodation (38% to 42%) and activities and attractions (33% to 43%). Internet bookings for transport over the period softened (50% to 46%).

More tourism information is at <http://www.tourism.govt.nz/>

Health

Pneumococcal Meningitis Vaccine Funded

The government is to spend \$68 million over the next four years to fund Prevenar, a vaccine that fights against pneumococcal meningitis. All babies born in NZ from 1 January 2008 will be eligible to receive the vaccine at six weeks, three months, five months and 15 months through their GP or Primary Health Organisation. Vaccinations will begin in June 2008. Vaccinating infants against the disease has been found to also reduce the rates of the disease in the parents and grandparents of vaccinated children.

New Zealand has relatively high rates of pneumococcal disease, particularly among Maori and Pacific children. Last year 151 children under the age of five contracted pneumococcal invasive disease.

More Playing in the Dirt?

New British research indicates that people who suffer from depression could benefit from a bacteria called *Mycobacterium vaccae* (*M. vaccae*). Mice altered their behaviour and appeared more relaxed after being treated with *M. vaccae*. This is a "friendly" bacteria found in soil and it appears to have same effect as anti-depressant drugs.

The scientists at Bristol University and University College London found that the bacteria stimulated the immune system and activated a group of neurons in the brain which produce the mood enhancing chemical serotonin. The soil which carries the bacteria is found almost anywhere, and the scientists are now examining ways of getting it into the system.

The studies were undertaken to help find out how the body communicates with the brain and why a healthy immune system is important for maintaining mental health. They appear to support the "hygiene hypothesis" which argues that a rise in conditions like asthma and allergies could be linked to a lack of exposure to various micro-organisms. The emphasis on cleaning and hygiene, particularly in urban Western environments, could be affecting people's immune systems, according to the theory.

Interest in the idea arose after human cancer patients being treated with *M. vaccae* unexpectedly reported feeling their quality of life had improved. The scientists wanted to test if the effect could be caused by the activation of neurons in the brain that contained serotonin. A lack of this chemical in the brain has been linked to depression. The findings, which are published in "Neuroscience", support the idea that increasing the release of serotonin in parts of the brain regulates mood. Further studies are planned to see if the bacteria stimulates this process.

Food Safety Authority: Stand-Alone?

The State Services Commission is advising the Minister of State Services on the implications of separating the Food Safety Authority from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF). If the separation goes ahead a new Public Service department administering food safety will be created. The Commission will report this month, and Ministers will then decide whether or not to continue with the process.

Disability Research Placement Programme

A new Disability Research Placement Programme has been set up to help recruit research students who would like to carry out disability research. Through the programme students are placed with research teams in the health and disability sector so they can learn how to develop research proposals.

Applications for funding close on 28 May. More information: Research Co-ordinator, Investment Process Group, Health Research Council of NZ, tel 09-303 5210, email: mhadfield@hrc.govt.nz, or visit: http://www.hrc.govt.nz/root/pages_research_funding/Career_Development_Awards_Forms.html

Alcohol Advertising Report Released

A report into alcohol advertising has been released for public comment, and one of its main conclusions is that alcohol advertising does play a role in shaping NZ's drinking culture.

The report's recommendations include:

- strengthening the self-regulatory system;
- widening the system to cover more marketing techniques across all media, including packaging, labelling, merchandising and all "in store" promotions and price promotions;
- creating new powers to investigate breaches of the rules;
- an independently audited monitoring of the system;
- a planned programme of research; and
- a review after two years.

Interested organisations and individuals can provide feedback on the report which is at: <http://www.ndp.govt.nz/alcohol/publicationsandstatistics.html>. Submissions go to: susan_edwards@moh.govt.nz

Childproofing for Grandparents & Babysitters

A pamphlet called "Keeping Our Kids Safe as Houses: A Guide to Childproofing for Grandparents, Babysitters and other Occasional Childminders" has been published by Barfoot & Thompson, in collaboration with Age Concern and Safekids. The brochure focuses on four areas around the home:

- keeping potentially harmful items out of reach and out of sight;
- supervising children near water - including baths, pools and garden ponds;
- simple steps to reduce the risk of children being burned; and
- driveway safety.

The pamphlet will be distributed throughout Auckland and Northland by Barfoot and Thompson agents, and throughout the rest of the country by Safekids and Age Concern.

It can be ordered from Hstretton@adhb.govt.nz

Identifying Barriers to Sexual Violence Reporting

The government has committed \$900,000 to fund research to identify the barriers to adult victims reporting sexual violence attacks, in order to better support victims through a difficult process and achieve better conviction rates.

People who are sexually violence generally rely on their victim's silence to avoid being held to account for the damage they do.

NZ Disability Strategy Review

The Disability Strategy (in place since April 2001) is currently being reviewed. The reviewers are Litmus Ltd, who have been contracted by the Office for Disability Issues to assess:

- how effective the setting up of the Disability Strategy has been; and
- the impact of the strategy on the lives of disabled people over the past five years.

The review report is due later on this year.

The terms of reference for the implementation review are at: <http://www.odi.govt.nz/nzds/terms-reference.html>

Breast Screening: Going Digital

Routine breast screening - available to women between the ages of 45 and 69 to reduce the chance of women in this age group dying of breast cancer - is going digital. Two of Breast Screen Aotearoa's (BSA) 29 Mammography Screening Units (those in Auckland and Dunedin) are now using digital mammography. The process has the following benefits:

- it will not take as long so more women can be screened in a shorter time;
- results can be processed faster so women can know the results faster;
- images can be transferred electronically between sites for second readings and reviews;
- people at two different sites can view the images simultaneously;
- it eliminates the cost of developing films and transporting them; and
- it means no longer having to handle developing chemicals.

More information is at: <http://www.healthywomen.org.nz/BSA/DEFAULT.aspx>

Education

Student Loans: Changes

Changes under the Student Loan Amendment Bill which was recently passed include a repayment holiday of up to three years for borrowers who are overseas, new repayment obligations, extension of interest-free loans to full-time undergraduates, and extension of an amnesty for those who have fallen into arrears with their payments. They also include a reduction in the late payment penalty for all borrowers, and allowing data matching between Inland Revenue and Customs to ensure correct entitlement to interest-free loans.

These bring the student loan scheme rules into line with the aims of interest-free loans, one of which is to reduce barriers to the return of skilled NZers.

More information is at: <http://www.taxpolicy.ird.govt.nz/index.php?view=517>

Maori Education: Te Mana Programme

The Education Ministry has another Te Mana programme underway. Te Mana uses a variety of promotional and encouragement tools to encourage rangatahi Maori (Maori youth) en-

agement in education, including TV and radio advertisements and other resource material. One of the main resources is the Taiohi study guide which offers practical advice to get rangatahi past obstacles that affect their studies.

Te Mana is supported by Former Black Ferns Captain Dr Farah Palmer, TV 3's Mike McRoberts, Former Fat Freddy's Drop member Warren Maxwell, broadcaster Stacey Morrison, and golfer Michael Campbell.

Te Mana also includes a new interactive website for rangatahi to refer and contribute to at: <http://www.taiohi.co.nz/>

Other Money Matters

Law Change to Relax Tax Penalties

Legislation being introduced this month will relax a whole range of tax penalties and update tax legislation to help encourage people to comply voluntarily with tax laws.

The current system of penalties does not always distinguish between people who try to do the right thing but fail, and people who have little regard for the law. There are also several areas in the law where the rules could be clearer, more consistent and better targeted at making people want to comply with the law.

One of the main changes to be introduced will reduce the number of penalties faced by people who have a tax shortfall if they tell Inland Revenue about it before being advised that they are to be audited. This change will apply from the date of introduction of the Bill. Other changes include updating the definition of "tax agent" to allow the Commissioner of Inland Revenue to exclude certain people from being a tax agent in limited circumstances. The new legislation will also clarify when a shortfall penalty for not taking reasonable care may be imposed on taxpayers who have used a tax agent, an area that is not black and white under current law.

Community Groups: Superannuation Scheme

From 1 July community groups employing staff will be required to offer them a superannuation scheme, and a group of people in the community/voluntary sector are looking at creating a "CommunitySuper" scheme.

The idea is to help the sector to reduce its dependency on government and philanthropic funding, and also to enable members to control the products and/or firms in which their funds are invested.

The proposed CommunitySuper fund would invest its funds in social and ethically responsible investment products. It is envisaged that further down the track funds will also be invested in community organisations and projects that meet acceptable credit risk criteria.

Look out for further information, or contact COSS to register your interest: sharon@cos.org.nz, tel 03 366 2050. More information is at: www.community.net.nz/communitycentre/news/national/community-groups-super.htm

Income after Leaving Study: Latest Figures

A recent Statistics NZ (SNZ) survey shows that five years after leaving study the income of men is consistently higher than that of women, across every field of study. The average income one year after leaving study for men who left study in 2000 was 6% higher than the average income for women who left in the same year. Men's average income five years after leaving study was 20% higher than women's for the same group of students who left study in 2000.

Students who last studied health courses in 2000 had the highest average income of all fields of study one year and five years after they finished studying. The average income for those students was \$31,300 in 2001 and \$39,530 in 2005, an increase of 26%. Students who last studied food, hospitality and personal service courses in 2000 had the lowest income of all fields of study one year and five years post-study, earning, on average, \$16,420 in 2001 and \$23,650 in 2005.

The average leaving debt of students who borrowed under the Student Loan Scheme increased from \$11,220 for those who left study in 1997 to \$14,780 for those who left study in 2004 (an increase of 32%).

The proportion of debt repaid within five years of finishing study has decreased over time. Borrowers who left study in 1995 had paid off, on average, 32% of their loan five years later. Students who left in 2000 had paid off, on average, 21% of their loan five years after leaving study.

The number of students receiving only a student allowance nearly halved between 2000 and 2005, decreasing 44% from 12,873 in 2000 to 7,251 in 2005. The number of students receiving a loan and an allowance also decreased 13% between 2000 and 2005, down from 52,275 in 2000 to 45,420 in 2005. While the number of students receiving allowances had decreased, students who had both a loan and an allowance borrowed less, on average, than students who had a loan only (17% less in 2000 and 13% less in 2005).

More information in a companion Hot off the Press release is at: <http://www.stats.govt.nz/products-and-services/hot-off-the-press/student-loans-and-allowances/student-loans-and-allowances-2005-hotp.htm>

Business

Asian Perceptions of NZ Businesspeople...

The "Reality Check: Asian Perceptions of Business People" report gives an overview of how NZ business people are perceived in Asian economies such as China, Japan, South

Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong. While the report finds that although NZers may be well perceived in many areas, it says it is essential that the country does not "relax in light of this fast-changing and dynamic economic environment in Asia". It also suggests that NZers need to develop their business skills to take advantage of opportunities in Asia. The report recommends the development of stronger university and research institutional relationships between and Asia if the country is to "leverage capability and acquire technological expertise".

The release of the report comes at a time when a number of manufacturers like Fisher and Paykel and Sleepyhead are either establishing production in or considering moving it to Asian countries.

The Reality Check report will be one of the focal points for the Action Asia Business Summit being held by the Asia Foundation at the Sky City Convention Centre in Auckland on 9-10 July.

The Reality Check: Asian Perceptions of Business People report is at: http://www.asia.org.nz/files/asia_realitycheck.pdf

...& Asia Foundation Business Summit

The Asia Foundation is to host a business summit called Action Asia. It is being held in conjunction with NZ Trade and Enterprise's Export Year 2007, and is aimed at enhancing the NZ business community's awareness, knowledge, skills and confidence in engaging with Asian economies. The summit will offer access to key market intelligence, case studies and leading international experts on why they should, and how they can, effectively engage with the world's fastest growing region, Asia. Economist Clyde Prestowitz, president and founder of the Economic Strategy Institute in Washington (and author of "Three Billion New Capitalists: The Great Shift of Wealth and Power to the East") is a keynote speaker at the summit.

The Summit runs over 9-10 July. The venue is the Sky City Convention Centre (Auckland). More information is at: <http://www.asia.org.nz/> or email: cmabbett@asia.org.nz

Regional Development: Big Projects Encouraged

The twenty regions funded by the government for regional development are to be reduced to fourteen to make each one larger and more able to take on bigger economic development projects.

From this July:

- the Regional Partnerships Programme will go. It will be replaced with a contestable Enterprising Partnerships Fund for substantial commercial projects which bring considerable economic benefits to the region, and which fit with NZ's goals for economic transformation;
- funding will be about \$9 million in 2007/2008, \$10.5 million in each of the following two years and \$11.5 million a year after that;
- each region will have access to a new Regional Strategy Fund, and each will have access to a maximum of \$750,000 from it over three years for development of a regional economic development strategy; and

- Auckland will get an additional \$1 million annually for the next three years in addition to the two new funds. This will contribute to initiatives in Auckland that reinforce linkages between the economic transformation agenda and the region's regional economic development strategy.

The government's reasons for making the changes are in a Cabinet Paper on the website of the Ministry of Economic Development (MED) at: http://www.med.govt.nz/templates/MultipageDocumentTOC____25592.aspx

ACC Employed/Self-Employed Accounts Merged

ACC's employer and self-employed work accounts have been merged into one work account. The good news is that 70% of self-employed farmers will see lower levies but the not so good news is that a few will have increases of more than \$500. The change in levy varies by income level (the higher the annual earnings the more likely there will be a larger increase). Levies will also be influenced by other factors such as forecast claim levels. Invoicing for most self-employed people begins in July, but those on Cover Plus Extra will already be seeing the changes through the annual renewal process.

ACC encourages people concerned about the implications for their levies to contact its business service centre 0508 426 837

Using the Internet: Manual Available

A do-it-yourself manual is now available on how community groups, not-for-profit organisations and iwi groups can use the internet more effectively. A partnership with government and community groups initially created a website www.web-guide.net.nz, then funding was received for a printed version of the guide. The projects followed University of Waikato Management School research on the impacts of information and communication technologies on workplaces and communities.

The manual "Connect Your Community: The Web guide" is available free of charge from Citizens' Advice Bureaux, regional Te Puni Kokiri offices, and at public libraries

If you want to talk about *what you think of TV shows* go to <http://www.throng.co.nz> Throng was set up towards the end of last year, and the site had 200,000 visitors to its site in its first two months. It is starting to attract the attention of broadcasters.

The *On Wheels Trust* has set up a website in blog format at <http://www.onwheels.co.nz> The Trust is keen to hear from anyone who uses a wheelchair and is interested in submitting a review about their experiences with travel or accommodation in to the site.

The *Goodworks* jobs website is at www.goodworks.co.nz. This site lists not-for-profit, community and government job vacancies. Paid work ads are \$45+ GST and voluntary work ads are free.

School Transport information is at www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/schooltransport. Eleven fact sheets now available on school transport address questions like: Who is eligible for school transport assistance? What if a student doesn't attend the nearest school? What if the nearest school doesn't offer education in the desired language? What types of assistance can a student get? How is transport assistance provided for students with special needs? What should I know about school bus services? Student behaviour on buses: What is expected? What is good practice for school bus safety? Who has a responsibility for school bus safety? What is a Conveyance Allowance and who can receive it? Who can I contact about school transport?

An *Independent Maori News* site is at <http://tangata-whenua.com/> It is Maori owned and operated and aims to provide independent news, events and information to Maori and people working with, and interested in, indigenous communities, in an effort to strengthen online Maori networks and businesses.

Internet

Internet & Mobile Phone Use

According to Statistics almost two-thirds (or 1 million) of NZ homes are connected to the Internet. Results from the Household Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Survey: 2006 show that just over half the connections use broadband technology while the remainder are dial-up connections. Auckland, Wellington and Canterbury have higher-than-average household broadband access, with Auckland having the highest, at 43.1%.

In the 12 months to the December 2006 quarter, 69.0% (2.2 million) of NZers used the Internet. Over 900,000 people made an online purchase, with those aged 25-44 years being the most likely to do so (38.9%). The Household Use of ICT Survey also revealed that most people used the Internet to email, browse the web generally, and obtain information on goods and services.

Almost 2.6 million people had personal use of a mobile phone. In the 15-24 year age group, 90.6% had personal use of a mobile phone.

More information is at: <http://www.stats.govt.nz/products-and-services/hot-off-the-press/household-use-of-information-and-communication-technologies-survey-2006/household-use-ict-2006-hotp.html>

Arts

International Verse/Haiku Competition

The NZ Poetry Society's International Verse and Haiku competitions are now open. The competitions feature adult and junior sections, and the Society publishes an annual anthology of prize-winning and commended entries, and editor's picks.

The NZPS aims to advance education by promoting, developing and supporting poetry and poets in NZ.

Competitions close 30 May. Entry forms and instructions are available at: <http://www.poetrysociety.org.nz/>; from: info@poetrysociety.org.nz, or by sending a stamped self-addressed envelope to: the Competition Secretary, NZ Poetry Society, PO Box 5283, Wellington 6145

"We Can End Poverty" Children's Art Competition

This competition - to design a United Nations stamp on the theme of "We Can End Poverty" - commemorates the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (October 17th) and the First Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006). It has been organised by the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Department of Public Information and the United Nations Postal Administration.

The best six designs will be presented during the commemoration of the International Day on the Eradication of Poverty, on 17 October and will be issued as stamps of the United Nations Postal Administration. Another 20 designs will receive special commendation. All winning entries will be displayed in a special exhibition at United Nations Headquarters in New York in 2007.

Entries close: 30 June 2007. Children from all around the world from age 5 to 15 years can participate. The rules of the competition are at: www.un.org/esa/socdev/poverty, where you can also learn more about poverty issues

Reminder: Nominate an Outstanding Writer

NZers are invited to nominate their choice of an outstanding NZ writer whose work they admire and who has made a significant contribution to NZ literature in the genres of poetry, fiction or non-fiction.

Nominations close on 15 June. You can download nomination forms from Creative NZ's website: www.creativenz.govt.nz

General

Matariki: Marking a New Year

The Maori New Year is marked by the rise of Matariki, a small but distinctive star cluster (the Pleiades star cluster - see box).

Matariki appears in the north eastern pre-dawn sky in late May, early June, and traditionally marks the start of a new phase of life, and a new year. New Year celebrations most often begin at the next new moon in June. As with similar "moveable feasts" in

the western calendar, such as Easter, the exact timing of Matariki varies from year to year. The timing of the Matariki celebrations can also vary from area to area.

In ancient times Matariki arrived at the end of the harvest so it was a time of plenty. The kumara and other root foods had been gathered. The migration of fish such as moki and korokoro also made Matariki a time of bountiful catches. It was the time to plant trees, to prepare the land for planting crops, and to renew associations with whanau, family and friends. Visitors were often showered with gifts of specially preserved eel, birds and other delicacies, because Matariki was a time to share and present offerings to others.

As well as marking the start of a new year, Matariki signals other new beginnings. Today it is a time to pause and reflect on the year that was and the year that will be, to reawaken old skills or try out new ones, and to set new goals.

"Matariki" can be translated in two ways - Mata Riki (Tiny eyes) and Mata Arika (Eyes of God). Either way the eyes are thought to watch over the land and its people.

Two of the many sites with information on Matariki are: http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/english/matariki_e/celebrating.shtml. and: <http://www.taitokerau.co.nz/matariki.htm>

The Pleiades

The Pleiades, or the Seven Sisters are also known as "Subaru" to the Japanese, as well as being known as Matariki.

They are an open cluster of stars located in Taurus. The cluster began forming within the past 50 to 60 million years, and its youngest members may be as young as 2 million years, so it is described as a very young open cluster.

The brightest star in the cluster is Tauri (Alcyone), at magnitude 2.9. Another bright star: Tauri (Pleione) is a shell star which throws off rings of gas at irregular intervals, making it fluctuate between magnitudes 5.0 and 5.5. The brightest stars rotate about their axes very rapidly - up to 100 times faster than the sun.

If you have good eyesight, under ideal conditions you may be able to see nine of the Pleiades stars. In a lighted suburban area, you would only be able to distinguish five or six. If you have binoculars you will see dozens of stars, and in the best conditions, binoculars will also show up the brightest part of the nebula (gases and dust particles) around the star Tauri (Merope).

What you can see with the binoculars, though, is only the core of a much larger group of as many as 500 stars which are up to 30 light years across (the cluster also contains clouds of dust).

NZ Cities Up There With the Best...

The 2007 Quality of Living Survey has found that Auckland and Wellington are up there with the best cities in the world in terms of health and quality of living. The survey, conducted by Mercer Human Resource Consultants looked at 215 cities worldwide, and some of the main findings are:

- in overall quality of living Auckland ranked fifth equal with Dusseldorf, Germany, and Wellington 12th. Zurich in Switzerland was first and Baghdad in Iraq last;
- in terms of health and sanitation, both Auckland and Wellington ranked 18th, with Canada's Calgary taking the top spot and Baku in Azerbaijan the last; and
- Sydney, Australia, ranked ninth equal with Bern in Switzerland in overall quality of living, but 62nd in terms of health and sanitation.

You can access more information at the Mercer website at: <http://www.mercerhr.com/summary.jhtml?idContent=1128060>

But... Heading South?

If so you are not alone. NZ is one of the most highly urbanised countries in the world and between 1881 and 2001 our rural population increased 83% compared with an urban population growth of 1500%. But our choice of towns is changing. Traditionally there has been a drift north, but in the last three census the trend has reversed, and Auckland has been on the losing end. The 2006 census saw South Island with a net gain of 5,000 Aucklanders, while Waikato scored a net 1300 from the City of Sails. In fact Auckland lost to all seven South Island regions, including the West Coast.

New Survey on Government Performance

A new survey from Massey University's Department of Marketing indicates that the government gets a tick from the public in some areas (protecting the environment, fighting unemployment and dealing with security threats), a lower rating in some (standards of living for the old and health care for the sick) and a thumbs down in others (controlling crime and taxation).

The survey is part of the International Social Survey Programme, run by academic institutions in 40 countries. The surveys in the programme cover a different topic every year in a roughly seven-year cycle (the last one on the role of government was in 1997).

The survey's findings include:

- perceptions of the role of government have changed relatively little over the past 10 years, except for a sharp decline in the expectation that the government should provide a job for everyone who wants one;
- most people favour cuts in government spending but there is strong support for more spending in health, education and law enforcement;
- the belief that low and middle-income earners pay too much tax is widespread and has increased since 1997, most sharply amongst middle-income earners;
- the introduction of proportional representation (MMP) has reduced dissatisfaction with the political system, but the feeling that ordinary people have little influence over the government remains widespread;
- NZers have liberal views on actions designed to challenge the government. Most believe organising public meetings, protest marches and demonstrations should be permitted. Even when people with extreme views want to overthrow the

government, most believe they should be allowed to publish books or hold public meetings to express these views;

- concerns about terrorism are reflected in widespread support for measures such as phone tapping, detention without trial and random stopping and searching, if the government suspects a terrorist act is about to happen;
- NZ is generally regarded as free of the corruption that characterises some other countries. But about 15% believe there is corruption among some politicians and public officials. And there is a strong perception that the treatment people get from public officials depends on who they know;
- concerns about smoking, drinking and obesity show up in strong support for interventions designed to reduce the undesirable effects of cigarettes, alcohol and unhealthy food. Nearly half support extending the smoking ban to include all public places, and 75% support returning the drinking age to 20;
- there is strong support for stricter enforcement of existing liquor laws, and some support for requiring warning labels on alcohol; and
- there is strong support for removing GST on fresh fruit and vegetables and for more regulation of food advertising, particularly advertising to children.

The full report is available at: <http://marketing.massey.ac.nz/issp.asp>

Seasonal Climate Outlook: April-June 2007

Cooler conditions are likely during April over much of NZ, but conditions for autumn as a whole are likely to be about average, according to the latest predictions from the NIWA National Climate Centre.

Here is the overall picture:

Temperature: Air temperatures are expected to be average over the North Island, and average or below average over the South Island. Normal sea surface temperatures are expected in the region.

Rainfall, soil moisture, and stream flows: Rainfall is expected to be normal over most of the country, with normal or below normal rainfall in the east of the South Island. Normal or above normal soil moisture levels are likely in the north of the North Island. Below normal soil moisture and stream flows are likely in the east of the South Island. Elsewhere normal soil moisture and stream flows are expected.

Regional predictions for the next three months are:

- Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty: Average temperatures are likely. Normal rainfall and streamflows are likely. Normal or above normal soil moisture levels are likely;
- Central North Island, Taranaki, Wanganui, Manawatu and Wellington: Average temperatures are likely. Normal rainfall, soil moisture, and stream flows are likely;
- Gisborne, Hawkes Bay, Wairarapa: Average temperatures are likely, with normal rainfall, soil moisture and stream flows expected;
- Nelson, Marlborough, Buller: Average or below average temperatures are likely. Normal rainfall, soil moisture, and stream flows are likely;

- West Coast, Alps and Foothills, Inland Otago, Southland: Average or below average temperatures are likely. Normal rainfall, soil moisture, and streamflows are expected; and
- Coastal Canterbury, East Otago: Average temperatures are likely. Normal or below normal rainfall is likely, with below normal soil moisture and streamflows.

Promoting Cultural and Religious Understanding

This month NZ is hosting two international meetings aimed at promoting understanding across civilisations, culture, and religion.

An Alliance of Civilisations Symposium in Auckland on 24 May will bring together around forty current and former government ministers and eminent people, including academics and other experts, and religious and media figures, drawn mainly from the Asia-Pacific region. The participants will be developing a regional response to a report presented late last year to the United Nations by the Alliance of Civilisations's High Level Group of Experts. This report proposed actions to reduce the barriers between civilisations, including strengthening education about other cultures and religions; encouraging media literacy; expanding internet access, particularly in Muslim countries; promoting youth exchanges; and improving the way in which migrants can be included into their new country. The meeting is seen as a way of building relationships between civilisations, and of working to reduce the level of suspicion and fear which has grown between the Islamic world and the West.

A second meeting: the Third Asia-Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogue will be held at Waitangi from 29 to 31 May. Co-sponsored by NZ, Australia, the Philippines, and Indonesia, this one will bring together Asia-Pacific faith and community leaders from fifteen Southeast Asian and South Pacific countries. They will be focusing on building bridges between the diverse communities in the region in the key areas of peace, development, security, and education in order to address potential causes of religious conflict and extremism.

More information is at: <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=29211>

Legal Aid Changes

Several amendments to the legal aid system are underway in order to make legal aid more readily available to victims of family violence, and to improve the availability of Legal Aid lawyers. The changes include:

- raising the income threshold for eligibility for legal aid for Orders applied for under the Domestic Violence Act. The new criteria will mean that 40% more people will be eligible for legal aid;
- improving the provision of information about legal aid;
- reviewing the rates paid to legal aid lawyers; and
- trialling a fixed-fee system for family legal aid, including domestic violence (to be led by Legal Service Agency throughout 2007 and 2008).

More information is at: www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=28513

Free-To-Air Digital TV Has Arrived

A consortium of broadcasters including TVNZ, CanWest, Maori TV and Radio NZ have launched a free-to-air digital television service called Freeview.

Free-to-air digital TV viewers can receive free satellite broadcasts of TV1, TV2, TV3, C4 and Maori TV, and National and Concert Radio, after paying one-off set-up costs of up to \$700 (for the set up box and a satellite dish). Two more channels - TV News 24 and TVNZ Home - are expected around the end of the year.

More information on free-to-air digital television can be found at: www.freeviewnz.tv/

Grants for Positive Ageing & Employment Research

The Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST) recently announced investment of almost \$13 million in five research projects which look at positive ageing and employment and are aimed at improving future living standards and work opportunities for NZers.

Details are:

- Massey University receives \$750,000 a year for five years for a study examining factors required for positive ageing and older people's contribution to society;
- a second Massey University study receives \$625,580 a year for five years for research aimed at improving the economic integration of immigrants and their families into the workforce and into business;
- A Lincoln University-based research project investigating improved links between education and employment for young people receives annual investment of \$400,000 a year for five years;
- Investment of \$450,000 annually, also for five years, goes to the Centre for Research, Evaluation and Social Assessment (CRESA), to identify services and programmes to improve opportunities for older people to remain in their own homes; and
- Victoria University is investigating the increasing gender disparity and changing pathways in education and employment outcomes for men and women. The Foundation has approved investment of \$590,000 a year for this three-year study.

More information can be found on the FRST website at: www.frst.govt.nz

Counting Non-Profit Institutions in NZ: Report

A new report called "Counting Non-profit Institutions in NZ: 2005" from Statistics NZ (SNZ) says there were 97,000 non-profit organisations in NZ in 2005, 10% of which employed paid staff. They included organisations working in social services, culture, sport and recreational organisations, and religious organisations.

More than a million NZers carry out voluntary work both in and overseas each year.

The report is the first stage in an ongoing programme of work to identify the contribution to the economy of non-profit activity in NZ. The full contribution of this sector will be measured when the "Non-Profit Institutions Satellite Account" report is released by SNZ in August.

The report is at www.stats.govt.nz

Volunteer Awareness Week Coming

Volunteer Awareness Week is 17-23 June. The Awareness Week offers a chance to show appreciation of the support given by the many volunteers in NZ.

Information on local and national Volunteer Awareness Week activities will be available soon on: <http://www.volunteering.org.nz> If you would like your activities to be available, email: office@volunteering.org.nz

Vehicle ID for Imported Cars

The government is introducing a mandatory new identification system for all new and used vehicles imported into the country to try to reduce vehicle thefts. The system, which is called "whole of vehicle marking" (WOVM), gives a 17-digit vehicle identification number to each vehicle imported into NZ. The numbers - in the form of microdots - are put on different parts of the vehicle to make it more difficult to alter its identity, and to make it easier to recognise and identify stolen vehicles and parts. The system will apply to all light-passenger vehicles with nine seats or less and under 15 years old.

It is anticipated that the WOVM system will come into effect in about a year, and from then on it is expected that about 200,000 vehicles a year will be required to have WOVM applied before they can be registered and sold.

Existing vehicles will not be required to have WOVM applied.

Iwi/Maori Organisations & Charities Act

The Charities Commission has produced a fact sheet on Iwi/Maori organisations and the Charities Act. The Commission says the Act has some implications for Maori, in particular:

- organisations that provide benefits to a group with common ancestry, such as hapu or iwi, may be considered charitable; and
- marae may be accepted as having a charitable purpose if the marae is physically located on land that is a Maori reservation and other requirements are met.

Fact Sheet 13 covers marae and charitable purpose, trusts under Te Ture Whenua Maori Act and the Maori Trust Boards Act 1955.

The fact sheet is at: www.charities.govt.nz/news/fact_sheets/maori_orgs_charities_act.htm, or you can freephone 0508 242 748 for a copy. Charities Commission registration packs are at: www.charities.govt.nz (follow the link from the homepage)

Neighbouring Area Calling: Price Drop

There has been a drop in the price of Telecom Favourite Place Neighbouring Area. This allowed you to make as many calls as you like, night and day, to a neighbouring calling area for \$19.95 a month. The price has dropped to \$5 a month.

There are new national and international plans out as well.

Customers can either register online (go to: www.telecom.co.nz/fpna - you can also check which are your neighbouring calling areas here) or by calling 0800 100 100

Advice on Phone Outages

Telecom has recently set up a website page that gives customers simple recommendations to help minimise the impact of phone outages caused by severe weather etc.

Go to: www.telecom.co.nz/phoneoutages

Board Nominations Sought: People with Disabilities

The Office for Disability Issues (ODI) has a Nominations Service to nominate skilled disabled people for appointment to government boards and committees. There are a range of government boards from advisory committees focusing on specialised subjects, to boards of state owned enterprises that want people with different kinds of skills and experiences.

If you are interested in applying to be in its nominations database you will need to provide ODI with information about yourself, your skills and experience. Many different types of positions become vacant each year, with each position requiring a person with a particular set of skills and experience.

[Note that there is no guarantee that you will be appointed to a board. A number of government agencies make nominations, and the appointing agency considers all nominees on their merits.]

More information on the ODI Nominations service is at: <http://www.od.govt.nz/leaders-achievers/nominations-service/>

Other Government Departments with a Nominations Service

ODI is just one of several government agencies who nominate people for positions on government boards. Others include:

- the Crown Company Monitoring Advisory Unit (CCMAU) at: <http://www.ccmau.govt.nz/boards-and-appointments.html>;
- the Ministry for Culture and Heritage at: <http://www.mch.govt.nz/agency/boards/index.html>;
- the Ministry of Maori Development (Te Puni Kokiri) at: <http://www.tpk.govt.nz/government/nominations/default.asp> ;
- the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs at: http://www.minpac.govt.nz/contactus_nominationsdatabase.htm;

- the Ministry of Women's Affairs at: <http://www.mwa.govt.nz/women-on-boards>; and
- the Office of Ethnic Affairs at: http://www.ethnicaffairs.govt.nz/oeawebsite.nsf/wpg_URL/Resources-Nominations-Database-Index.

Children Benefit from Family Court Counselling

A recent study of 26 children clearly shows that children benefit from inclusion in counselling sessions with their parents. It had previously been assumed that children would benefit indirectly from their parents' counselling. The results showed that in the study cases of 17 couples, the presence of the children helped reduce conflict, improved the possibility of satisfactory agreements and assisted them in adaptation to their new situation.

An article is in the March issue of Family Voice, obtainable from The Families Commission, P O Box 2839, Wellington, tel 04-917 70 40, or visit: www.families.org.nz

Dreamz for Wider Audience...

Dreamz Productions is an Auckland-based television production house catering for the Indian community whose programmes screen on Triangle TV. Producer Rachel Singh says the previous productions have established themselves within the Indian community but now the aim is to reach non-Hindi speaking audiences with programmes such as Inside Out and From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk. Inside Out is a current affairs and informative programme about issues and events going on in Auckland, while From the Sidewalk to the Catwalk is a reality television show based on fashion "make overs" for candidates of all ethnicities.

For more information about Dreamz Productions, contact Rachel Singh at: dreamzproductions@xtra.co.nz

...and Triangle TV in Wellington

Triangle Television Wellington is now available on UHF Channels 40 and 41 providing coverage to the Greater Wellington region and some parts of Marlborough and Blenheim. The channel's programming is specific to Wellington and differs from the Auckland schedule.

Families Commission Research Fund Open

The Families Commission is calling research proposals for funding under its new Families Commission Research Fund on the themes of family friendly environments, fathering, inter-generational transmission, family assets, the impact of climate change on families and families benefiting communities.

The Commission aims to fund a mix of differently-sized projects with some in the \$5,000-\$75,000 range and a limited number over \$75,000. Proposed budgets should reflect the study appropriately, and the Commission is encouraging researchers to consider collaborative projects with co-funding from other sources. Projects funded in the first year may run for up to two years.

Proposals must be submitted by 13 July. For more information go to: <http://www.families.org.nz/research/research-fund-call.php>

Lottery Community Facilities Funding

The Lottery Community Facilities Fund makes grants to not for profit organisations for building projects to construct or improve community facilities that support participation in community activities and social interaction. Projects must be over \$30,000 total cost.

Applications close on 27 July. More information/application forms are at Grants Online at: www.cdgo.govt.nz

Funding for Vocational Services Training

Applications to the Federation of Vocational & Support Services' (VASS) Training and Workforce Development Fund are now open. This funding enables people working at any level in vocational and support services to attend training courses related to their work.

Applications close 30 June. More information: VASS, PO Box 19209, Courtenay Place, Wellington, tel: 04 384 2000, email: admin.vass@actrix.co.nz

JR McKenzie Trust

JR McKenzie Trust funds projects to support NZers who face special needs or face disadvantage. The next closing date for application from groups without a national structure is 31 May. For national groups the next closing date is 31 August.

Contact: JR McKenzie Trust, PO Box 10 006, The Terrace, Wellington. Ph. (04) 472 8876, fax 472 5367, email info@jrmckenzie.org.nz, web www.jrmckenzie.org.nz

Community Action Fund

Communities which aim to tackle family violence may be eligible for funding from the Community Action Fund's second funding round coming up in June/July. Local community organisations and networks that:

- have a track record of working in family violence prevention;
- have community-wide support;
- have a well thought-out plan to effect change in the community; and
- can apply to this \$500,000 fund.

For more information go to <http://www.familyservices.govt.nz/our-work/preventing-violence/community-action.html>

Conference Brief

- The NZ Community Boards conference is 7-9 June 2007 in Manukau City. Programmes/speakers are at www.lg.co.nz/communityboards
- Workforce Action - Ready for the Future: two day health workforce conference in Wellington 18-19 June. Enquiries judith_mercer@moh.govt.nz
- The Office for Women and the Asian Pacific Women Information Network Centre are holding the APEC Digital Economy Forum for Women on 22-23 June 2007 in Port Douglas. This will explore the digital technologies, knowledge and tools that advance the sustainable socio-economic future for women. For more information please contact Ms HanKyeul Oh apwinc@sookmyung.ac.kr or <http://webiz.women.or.kr/forum>
- APEC Women Leaders Network (public-private network of women from the 21 APEC economies representing senior levels in business, academia, government and non-government organisations). Network meeting on 24-27 June in Australia at the Sheraton Mirage Port Douglas Resort, North Queensland (about one hour's drive north of Cairns).
- The Adult and Community Education (ACE) Aotearoa Conference: Te Karanga o Te Whanaungatanga "The Call Of The Community" annual conference is on 26-28 June 2007 at Waikato University in Hamilton. The conference will explore adult and community education issues involving environmental, cultural, economic and social sustainability. Information & registration are at www.aceaotearoa.org.nz
- Body Matters: Children and young people's physical well-being and rights conference is on 28-29 June in Dunedin. It is for people from a range of disciplines who are involved with

the physical well-being of children. Find out more at: www.otago.ac./cic/events.php

Appointments/Departures

Hamilton lawyer Melanie Harland has been appointed a *District Court Judge*. Errol Millar (the new *deputy chair*), and Captain Ross Crawford have been appointed to the *Civil Aviation Authority*. Fran Wilde, Garry Moore, Murray King and Gregory Presland have been appointed to the *Transit NZ Board*. Appointees to the new *Workplace Health and Safety Council* (who will provide leadership and co-ordination, and advice to government on relevant legislation, standards and policies) are: Carol Beaumont, Andrew Cassidy, Paul Jarvie, and Paul Raea. *Ex officio members* of the Council are Ruth Dyson, Ross Wilson, and Phil O'Reilly. The two successful candidates in the recent *QEII National Trust* election are James Hunter and Jo Ritchie. *Environment Southland* has appointed Ciaran Keogh as its new *Chief Executive*.

Graham Peachey, *CEO of Food Standards Australia NZ* has resigned. Dean Stockwell, *General Manager Food Standards (Wellington)*, and Melanie Fisher, *General Manager Food Standards (Canberra)* are to alternate as *acting CEO*, each for a period of 2 months, until the position is filled. *Standards NZ's Chief Executive*, Rob Steele, has resigned.

Craig Matthews and Paddy Twist
Editors
Rural Bulletin

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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