



New Zealand government withdraws asset forfeiture bill July 17, 2006

The New Zealand government has withdrawn its Criminal Proceeds and Instruments Bill from Parliament, putting on hold its plans to introduce a non-conviction-based asset forfeiture regime.

The bill was introduced to Parliament in June last year, and was removed from the Parliamentary Order Paper in the last week, before it had even received a first reading vote.

A spokesperson for the Minister of Justice refused to give a reason for the bill's withdrawal, saying only that there were "a couple of procedural issues that need to be dealt with".

The bill would establish a non-conviction-based asset forfeiture regime, which would allow the government to confiscate the assets of those suspected of involvement in serious crime. Suspected criminals would be required to prove on the balance of probabilities that their assets were legally acquired or else forfeit them to the crown. No criminal conviction would be required.

The scheme has attracted criticism from both sides of the House, with the Green Party calling it "an affront to the principles of justice and law", and the National Party demanding a much tougher regime. Given the stated positions

of parties on the bill, the most likely reason for its withdrawal is that the government does not have a majority to pass it in its present form.

Teacher found murdered in New Zealand classroom July 17, 2006

Lois Dear, a 66-year-old teacher at Strathmore Primary School, Tokoroa, has been murdered in her classroom at about noon on Sunday. She was found by two of her colleagues, lying face down. New Zealand Police say that the teacher had suffered head injuries, and her death was 'nasty'.

The police currently have no suspects.

School was supposed to return back to start term 3 but today the school was cordoned and being guarded by police while the 278 pupils got the day off.

The body was not removed from the scene until noon today, Monday 17, when it was carried off to a hearse and a karakia (Maori prayer) was performed in front of 70 people.

Staff will be offered counselling.

Ngaire Taikato, a colleague of Ms Dear, told Newstalk ZB "the school has been devastated at the killing. It will take a long time for the children at the school to get over Ms Dear's death, and a lot of counselling will be needed. Dear was never in the staff room,

because she was always out with the children who loved and respected her."

The school will no longer let teachers work by themselves out of school hours, the school will introduce a buddy system, for the teachers safety. However Pat Newman, New Zealand Principals' Association president, said "schools are generally secure places where teachers can work safely on their own."

Murray Kendrick, principal of Strathmore Primary School, said "the school had had the occasional break-in but no major problems." Detective Sergeant Karl Thornton, the officer in charge of the investigation, said "It was too soon to say whether robbery could be behind the attack."

Commerce Commission fines BNZ \$5 million July 18, 2006

The New Zealand Commerce Commission has fined the Bank of New Zealand (BNZ). It has been forced to pay NZ\$5 million in compensation to its customers, \$500,000 in fines and \$80,000 in costs to the Commerce Commission. The money will be placed into a bank account to be monitored by an auditor, and if there is any money left over it will be donated to a consumer organization.

BNZ has been forced to pay these fines for failing to disclose that

they were charging their customers for the exchange of foreign currency during February, 2002 until May, 2004 on its credit and debit cards, which is a breach of the Fair Trading Act. They pleaded guilty to 21 counts of breaching the act. The BNZ say that they will contact their affected customers and that they should get their compensation by November this year. The bank is responsible for contacting all their customers.

The BNZ is the third bank to be charged, the two others were ANZ and the National Bank, which were charged \$11.325 million combined as they had since become a single company.

There are still other ongoing prosecutions on these other financial services: Westpac, ASB, TSB, American Express, Diners Club and The Warehouse Financial Services. The Commission would not comment on these cases.

Paula Rebsotck, Commerce Commission Chairperson, said "the result was a victory for New Zealand consumers, many of whom would have unknowingly paid the currency transaction charges. While fees like these remain hidden, banks have no incentive to offer lower fees."

Row over NZ Police memo on issuing traffic tickets July 19, 2006

According to a leaked memorandum, sent to New Zealand Police officers in the Levin district last year, they will be penalised if they do not perform well in the issuing tickets.

The penalties for not reaching the target will be:

- Pay deductions, 20% loss of pay

- Loss of additional training courses or specialised duties
- 'Named and shamed'
- Demotion

The requirement for issuing tickets is one per hour and the requirement for catching a drunk driver is one per ten hours.

Simon Power, Law and Order spokesman for the New Zealand National Party, said "It is very disturbing that police officers are being put under internal and financial pressure to write traffic tickets. And just yesterday Annette King told me in answer to a written question that police do not receive incentives, financial or otherwise, if they issue a particular number of tickets."

Two weeks ago a different memo was leaked which showed the police officers have quotas, which the Police Minister, Annette King, dismissed.

However if police officers are performing well the Area or District Commanders will be informed which could lead to extra benefits.

The Police Central District Commander, Superintendent Mark Lammas, said that there was nothing wrong with the memo as it is reasonable for officers to be told they may not receive a pay increase if they consistently fail to enforce.

New Zealand policewoman found moonlighting as prostitute July 20, 2006

An Auckland, New Zealand policewoman, who has not been named, has been working part-time as a prostitute. Her employer, Auckland City Police,

did not know that she had been working as a prostitute for a limited time. She has been able to keep her police job.

Prostitution became legal in New Zealand in 2003.

The police officer was prostituting herself because of financial difficulties. A person working in the Christchurch sex industry said "It's usually either for debts or drugs."

She is now undergoing counselling.

The New Zealand Police would not comment on how long she had been acting as a prostitute.

Lyn Provost, Deputy Commissioner, said "the nature of the secondary employment was incompatible with policing and would never have been approved."

The police say that if a police officer was to seek secondary employment then it must be signed off, this job hadn't been. It would have been a conflict of interest.

Ron Mark, New Zealand First Party Law and Order spokesman, said "the case is concerning, because while prostitution is legal, it is associated with criminal activity."

A representative of the New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective (NZPC) said there were law students and doctors who were sex workers.

"NZPC's philosophy is that we support people that are in that secondary employment ... we support them for their sexual health needs or any other needs – emotionally, physically, spiritually – that we can accommodate." a representative of the New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective said.

Ninety New Zealanders evacuated from Lebanon July 21, 2006

Ninety New Zealanders have been evacuated from war-torn Lebanon and are on their way to the safety of Cyprus. Three ships are helping in the evacuations, two British Navy and one United Nations (UN) chartered ferry.

There are 1,500 people onboard the two British ships "There are definitely New Zealanders aboard, but there just isn't an actual passenger list. We're hoping there are quite good numbers of New Zealanders onboard," Helen Tunnah, a spokeswoman for the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), said.

Officer Andrew Greig's family, which includes his wife and two sons, are onboard the UN ferry.

This evacuation comes after Britain announced it will conduct a formal evacuation, which also includes New Zealand citizens because New Zealand does not have an embassy in Lebanon.

Israel has been attacking Lebanon for three weeks. Hundreds of civilians and two Israeli soldiers have already died due to this conflict as well as two Hizbollah fighters and about twenty Lebanese soldiers.

MFAT will help the New Zealand evacuees find accommodation and help them with getting travel arrangements. "Because of the sheer number of people wishing to leave, it is expected to take days before the evacuation is completed," Helen Tunnah said.

All Blacks defeat South Africa in Tri Nations rugby July 22, 2006

The All Blacks defeated South

Africa in the third match of the 2006 Tri Nations rugby union series. The final score was 35 points to 17. The match was played at Wellington's Westpac Stadium.

The previous week South Africa had gone down nil to 49 at the hands of Australia in Brisbane. The loss to Australia saw South Africa drop in the IRB international rankings. Prior to South Africa's opening Tri Nations match, they had unconvincingly beaten Scotland in a two-test series at home in June, which was followed by a loss to France. As expected, coming into the match in Wellington, head coach Jake White and his players were under considerable pressure to perform.

The crowd was shocked when South Africa scored the opening try of the match, when Fourie du Preez charged down a Dan Carter kick, to score just 17 seconds after kick-off. Percy Montgomery added the conversion for a surprising 7-0 lead to the South Africans. However, the All Blacks were able to get in front by halftime, with Carter kicking four penalty goals and Piri Weepu scoring on the stroke of half-time.

More New Zealand penalties followed within the second half, however, when Breyton Paulse scored an impressive try off a cross-field kick, South Africa were back in the game, with the All Blacks leading 25 to 17 with just under 10 minutes remaining. The match was sealed with another penalty kick by Carter, and a late try from All Black captain Richie McCaw.

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