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The Wikinews team would like to wish you a very merry Christmas!

Minimum wage to be increased in New Zealand December 18, 2006

The minimum wage in New Zealand will be increased by 9.8% on 1 April, 2007, the biggest increase in New Zealand for seven years.

The announcement was made today by Labour minister, Ruth Dyson, and will make the current minimum wage for workers over 18-years NZ\$11.25 per hour, an increase \$1.00 from the current wage of \$10.25. Youth workers and youth workers being trained aged 16-years and 17-years will see an increase of \$0.80 to \$9.00, remaining at 80% of the adult minimum wage.

Ms Dyson said: "The boost in the minimum wage will ensure that lower paid workers share the benefits of economic growth, encourage people to join the workforce and provide protection for some of New Zealand's most vulnerable workers."

The Green Party of Aotearoa New Zealand has welcomed the announcement. Sue Bradford, spokesperson for the Greens' Industrial Relations, said: "There is no better time than during a strong economy for New Zealand to boost the current poverty level minimum wages."

Ms Bradford said: "The rise announced today is not overly generous. When cost of living

adjustments are taken into account, the \$12 an hour minimum wage level called for by the Greens during the 2005 election campaign, has now moved to just over \$13 per hour. If one applied the European Union social standard - which sets the minimum wage at two thirds of the average wage - we would be setting New Zealand's minimum wage at \$13.66."

However HealthCare Providers New Zealand is criticising the wage increases as currently the difference in minimum wage and the average caregiver wage rate is 10% (\$10.25 and \$11.33 respectively). Martin Taylor, chief executive officer, said: "If more funding is not made available then the government is agreeing to caregiving becoming a minimum wage occupation."

Mr Taylor said: "We believe caregiving is an important job that deserves better wages, but you cannot pay out more than you are funded for. This sector is depended on government funding and we have already been waiting 9 months for DHBs to agree to our funding claim for the last minimum wage increase."

The government believes that the change will benefit 110,000 adults of which the majority are woman, and 9,200 youth workers.

"With four months till the changes come into effect, businesses will have time to prepare. The date of 1 April

was chosen to reduce compliance costs for businesses as it will coincide with the implementation date of four weeks' annual holidays," Ms Dyson said.

The government wishes that by the end of 2008 they will be able to increase the minimum wage of adults to at least \$12.00 per hour, however the government will be keeping a close eye on the economy.



Collection of New Zealand money. Photograph by Gabriel Pollard.

New Zealand's worst behaved politicians list released December 20, 2006

The Honourable Peter Dunne, New Zealand Member of Parliament of Ohariu-Belmont and leader of the United Future party, has today released a list of the worst-behaved MPs in Parliament for 2006.

Nick Smith, MP for the New Zealand National party, is listed as the worst-behaved on the list. Dunne said: "The winner by a country mile this year is National's Nelson MP, Dr Nick Smith, who is consistently among the worst-behaved MPs."

The list awards one point if Madam Speaker Margaret Wilson asks an MP to retract and apologise for a statement, and three points if he is asked to leave the House.

Smith was first on the list as he had 21 points, six retractions and five for being forced from the House. Smith was placed second equal in 2002, third in 2003, first in 2004 but didn't register on the list last year, 2005.

The Honourable Tau Henare is second with 14 points. He had to retract and apologise for five statements and was asked to leave the house three times.

Gerry Brownlee is ranked third both on the worst behaved list and the National party list. Mr Brownlee had twelve points because he had to retract and apologise for twelve statements. Mr Brownlee appeared on the list in 2004 in second place and in 2005 was placed fourth equal.

The leader of New Zealand First and MP Right Honourable Winston Peters appears on the list this year at fourth place with 11 points, from having to retract two statements and being asked to leave the House three times. Peters has been improving his behaviour every year, appearing on the list in first place in 2002 and 2003, fourth in 2004 and third in 2005.

Honourable Trevor Mallard is fifth place this year with nine points. Six points for having to apologise for a statement and three points for being asked to leave the House. He appeared third on the list in 2004 and fourth equal in 2005.

Hon Dover Samuels was expelled from the House twice and had to withdraw and apologise for three statements and because of that he is sixth on the list this year.

Recently the deputy leader of National and seventh on the bad MP list is Hon

Bill English for six statements requiring retraction, and being expelled from the House once. Dunne described him as a person to watch.

Rodney Hide, leader of the ACT party, didn't appear on the list this year even though he was first place last year. Also Honourable Chris Carter didn't appear on the list, despite placing second last year.

Minimum purchasing age of fireworks raised in New Zealand December 22, 2006

The New Zealand government has announced that the new minimum purchasing age to buy fireworks in New Zealand is 18-years instead of the current age of 14-years. Also the amount of time fireworks are available for sale during Guy Fawkes has been restricted to three days before Guy Fawkes night instead of ten days. The New Zealand Fire Service has welcomed the new restrictions despite them calling for a complete ban.

The Environment minister, Honourable David Benson-Pope, said: "This aims to restrict young teenagers from purchasing these potentially harmful explosives, and to make the Guy Fawkes season less taxing for the Fire Service and Police. We want to see fireworks users behaving responsibly, being aware of and avoiding fire risk, guarding the personal safety of themselves and others, and being aware of the effect the noise has on animals."

Further restrictions have also been announced which will ban the separate sale of sparklers. Sparklers will only be available for purchase in packs contained with other fireworks. This restriction is to try and prevent the dangerous, home-made "sparkler bombs."

Mike Hall, chief executive of the New Zealand Fire Service, said that he is pleased with the new restrictions around the sale of fireworks. "I met with the minister in November and expressed the Fire Service's concerns, and it's good to see that some action has come out of that."

In response to why the government had not banned the complete sale of fireworks, Hon Benson-Pope said: "I have listened to the various groups that do want a ban, and I am still open to that possibility in the future, but I believe the best approach at this stage is to tighten up the laws around sale."

The government has asked the Environmental Risk Management Authority to investigate the fireworks available for purchase in regards to the style, design and the construction of the various fireworks. "...and next year government will consult with industry about new regulations in this area," Hon Benson-Pope said.

Mr Hall said: "Obviously we won't know whether or not the measures Mr Benson-Pope has introduced will go far enough until the Guy Fawkes period in 2007, but we certainly hope they will limit the chaos we have seen in the past couple of years."

Hon Benson-Pope said: "Guy Fawkes is a fun event for thousands of families, and fireworks-related damage is caused by a small group of mostly young people. I don't feel it's fair on New Zealanders to ban fireworks sales at this stage because of the actions of a minority."

"I understand the frustration the Police and Fire Service teams feel when faced with problems over Guy Fawkes, and I hope these new restrictions will send a message that deliberate harm or damage is criminal and is being clamped down on," Mr Benson-Pope said.

The next Guy Fawkes day is November 5, 2007.



Photographs by Gabriel Pollard (3), R Neil Marshman and Dougie Macdonald respectively.

New Zealand secures hosting rights of World Netball Championships in 2007 December 23, 2006

The International Federation of Netball Associations announced the decision today that New Zealand has secured the rights to host the World Netball Championships in 2007 after Fiji were stripped of the rights following their military coup this year.

Kareyn Smith, vice president of the IFNA, said: "New Zealand was really the only viable option, and participating nations will just have to accept it. One big issue which will have to be looked at is the number of people who had already booked to travel to Fiji for the tournament in July, including more than 1,000 New Zealanders."

New Zealand has been given extra time to prepare for the two week event, with the postponement of the

championship's start from July to November. Ruth Aitken, coach of New Zealand's netball team, the Silver Ferns, said that the time they have to prepare is usually when the team has its rest period. However she is delighted that New Zealand is the host.

Netball New Zealand has not yet announced the venue where the championships will be played but have announced that it will be either Auckland or Christchurch. Don Mackinnon, chair of the Netball New Zealand board, said that other venues are not being considered because it would become too difficult because of the time constraints. The decision will be announced within the next couple weeks.

New Zealand are the current world champions since winning the last championships held in Jamaica. New Zealand also held the championship in 1999.

Australia was unable to host the championships as they could not prepare in the allocated time. Jamaica and England both showed interest in hosting the championships.

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