



New Zealand's new small change July 31, 2006

Today New Zealand's new coins have been released. The new coins replace the 10, 20 and 50 cent coins, while the 5-cent coin is being removed from circulation for good.

The new coins retain the same design as before but the 10-cent coin is now copper coloured. All coins except the 10-cent are now made from plated steel and nickel, making them lighter and cheaper to produce. The 10-cent coin is made from plated steel and copper.

Brian Lang, Reserve Bank of New Zealand Currency Manager, said: "The introduction of smaller, lighter coins is one of New Zealand's biggest currency changes since the introduction of decimal currency on 10 July 1967."

The Reserve Bank reports that they have issued 1,037 million coins since the introduction of decimal currency.

However, people can still use their old change between now and 1 November 2006, when the old coins will cease being legal tender.

A survey conducted by ACNielsen, on behalf of the Reserve Bank, in January 2004 shows that 51% liked the idea of the new coins initially.

The ANZ Bank are asking for people to donate their old 5-cent coins to Plunket in their '5s for under fives' appeal.

New Zealand suicide rate decreases August 1, 2006

A new report released by the New Zealand Ministry of Health titled "Suicide Trends" shows that the suicide rate in New Zealand has decreased 15% since its peak in the late 1990's, but the attempted suicide rate is increasing.

There were 12 deaths per 100,000 people between 1983-'85. 16.7 deaths per 100,000 people between 1996-'98. And 14.2 deaths per 100,000 people between 2001-'03. But there were 73.1 attempted suicides per 100,000 people between 1995-'97 compared to 82.5 in 2002-'04.

Jim Anderton, Associate Health Minister, said "It provides some comfort to see the long-term trend still appears to be heading in the right direction, with a continued decline or levelling off of self-inflicted deaths but there is no room for complacency."

The suicide report also shows that:

- The 25- to 34-year-old age group has the highest suicide rate.
- Between 2000-'03 Maori has the highest suicide rate
- Men were less likely than

woman to go to hospital for attempted suicide because more men died from suicide.

The New Zealand Government has put NZ\$10.3 million towards direct suicide prevention. New Zealand News agencies are banned by law from reporting suicide deaths.

Rotorua, New Zealand bans criminals from CBD August 2, 2006

Rotorua has banned criminals with five or more dishonesty convictions from entering the Central Business District (CBD). The criminals will be issued with trespass notices banning them from the main streets of Rotorua.

Eleven out of twelve councillors, including the Rotorua mayor, supported the by-law along with support from the police.

Kevin Winters, Mayor of Rotorua, said "The ban also had the support of local businesses, who wanted an end to the thefts, assaults, shoplifting and other street crime on Rotorua streets. Crime was an issue in the area. Five strikes and you're out."

The trespass notice would ban the offenders from the CBD for three months, but would allow them to enter if they had appointments or emergencies.

They would have CCTV cameras operated by volunteers to catch offenders breaking the trespass

notice.

However Bill Hodge, constitutional law expert, said "It's the king's highway and you've got a right to go down the king's highway...so I don't think they can treat you as a trespasser for going down the street."

The councillors would review the impact of the legislation in three years time.

Rotorua already has legislation similar to this one acting at the Kuirau Park, Government Gardens and the Lakefront.

New Zealand policeman charged with drunk driving August 3, 2006

Taranaki, New Zealand policeman, Constable Jonathan Erwood, has been charged with drunk driving after responding to a double fatality emergency call on July 9, his day off. He had been giving the driver first aid and then after 20 minutes at the scene another police officer turned up and breathalysed him.

He appeared in court today and entered no plea to the charges laid against him.

He was then taken to the police station and undertook an elected blood test, which he failed. The limit is 80-milligrams per 100-millilitres and Erwood had 106-milligrams of alcohol per 100-millilitres.

The crash was between Taranaki and Waikato, which is on State Highway 3.

Supporters of Erwood said he had no choice but to go to the scene of the crash.

Greg O'Conner, Police Association President, said that he does not condone drink driving, but these are exceptional circumstances,

adding "The association will be actively advocating that the officer should keep his job."

James Cameron to use Weta Digital for next film August 4, 2006

James Cameron, director of the \$2.8 billion grossing film, Titanic, has signed up special effects studio, Weta Digital of Wellington, New Zealand for his next sci-fi film, Avatar.

Weta Digital, owned by Peter Jackson, Richard Taylor and Jamie Selkirk, will provide the visual effects, of which the movie will be mostly of, excluding some action shots in the USA, for the NZ\$322 million film. The visual effects will also include performance capture animation where the actors movements are translated onto an animated character. Weta Digital is famous for this with characters Gollum in The Lord of the Rings and King Kong in King Kong modelled after actor Andy Serkis.

The reason that Cameron chose Weta Digital over other special effects studios is "Weta have proven themselves a leader in visionary effects. Along with their world-class capability comes a genuine passion to blaze new trails." Cameron said.

Cameron also added that "We may end up with stars in Avatar but it's not a requirement."

The Avatar film is a movie about a war veteran that is fighting aliens on other planets. The movie will be launched in 2008.

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