



New Zealand MP to be present at state funeral of Gerald Ford January 1, 2007

New Zealand member of Parliament (MP), minister of ethnic affairs, conservation, and housing, the Honourable Chris Carter is to represent New Zealand at the state funeral of the late United States President, Gerald Ford held in Washington.

The state funeral will include the family of President Ford, foreign representatives and senior politicians from America. The funeral is to be held in the Washington National Cathedral in Washington DC, on the morning of January 2, 2007.

Hon Carter, said: "The prime minister [Helen Clark] considers it important ... to show at a time of national mourning in the US that we are prepared to send someone in the middle of our summer holidays, when our parliament is not sitting, because we value the relationship."

MP Honourable Trevor Mallard, who made the announcement, said: "President Ford won respect for the decent, down to earth qualities that he brought back to government after assuming the Presidency in 1974 in the difficult circumstances of the aftermath of the Watergate scandal and the resignation of former President Richard Nixon."

The announcement of Hon Carter representing New Zealand overseas is strange because the Right Honourable Winston Peters is the minister of foreign affairs for New Zealand.

After the funeral on the national day of mourning, Hon Carter should meet America's secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice.

Hon Mallard, said: "The United States is a fundamentally important partner for New Zealand. It is appropriate that we mark our respect for the strength of US democracy and the many other enduring values that we share in common with the United States in this way."

Hon Carter left for America last night (NZDT), December 31, 2006.

President Ford was in office for only two years, 1974 - 1976. President Ford took over from President Nixon following the Watergate scandal. President Ford was 93-years-old when he passed on.

21-year-old man sexually assaulted in New Zealand January 2, 2007

A 21-year-old New Zealander, who has not been named, was sexually assaulted by another man early yesterday morning (NZDT) in Wellington, New Zealand. The New Zealand police have described the sexual attack as "prolonged and

terrifying".

The man was first threatened with a weapon at a shopping center located in Riddiford Street, Newtown, Wellington and was then forced into a dark and isolated carpark where the sexual attack occurred.

Detective Sergeant Zane Smith, said that they have been given a very good description of the attacker and with that description have released an identikit picture. The attacker is a male Māori aged between mid-20s and early 30s, measures around 1.8 metres and has a solid build. The most identifiable feature is a Māori tattoo located on his chin. The attacker was also wearing a '50 Cent' green hooded top, faded black baggy jeans and was wearing sneakers coloured red and white.

The attacker has still not been found and police are asking for anyone who may have been in the Riddiford Street shopping centre between 2:00 a.m. and 3:30 a.m.

CCTV (closed-circuit television) cameras are being examined.

New Zealand holiday road toll at 26-year low January 3, 2007

The New Zealand Christmas holiday road toll has been the lowest it has ever been with nine deaths in 26-years, 1981.

The annual road toll is also the lowest

it has ever been since 1963, with 387 deaths for the whole of 2006.

The Chirstmas holiday period starts at 4:00 p.m. (UTC+13) on Christmas Eve and runs until 6:00 a.m. January 3, 2007.

John McLelland, national road policing inspector, said: "I'd like to think that people are taking more care when travelling and hopefully with the advertising...people are more aware of the consequences of poor decision making if they are involved in a crash." Mr McLelland is starting to think that drivers are concentrating more but still believes that drivers are speeding, not wearing compulsory seat-belts and drinking and driving. He is also urging drivers to take care of both themselves and the other road users. "...we need to think about our driving and how we go about it on the road."

Mr McLelland, said: "Drivers aged 25 to 60 made up the majority of road crash fatalities. And that's also probably got something to do with the aging population as well."

Even though the holiday period is over, Mr McLelland is still asking drivers to be cautious as many people will be returning home from their holidays.

In 2006 the holiday road toll was 22, and in 2005 the toll was at 11.

Record low amount of organs donated in New Zealand January 5, 2007

Figures released today show that the number of organs donated by New Zealanders in 2006 has decreased by four to a new record low of 25. In 2005 the number of organs donated equalled 29, a previous record low in New Zealand.

Before 2005 the number of organ donations averaged 40, an already low number by international standards.

Andy Tookey, campaigner for GiveLife New Zealand, said: "It is important not to lose donors through families overriding donors wishes or the doctors not asking families in the first place." In the Intensive Care Units an audit showed that there were a possible of 104 donors and only 69 of those families were asked if the organs could be donated. And 31 families refused to donate the organs.

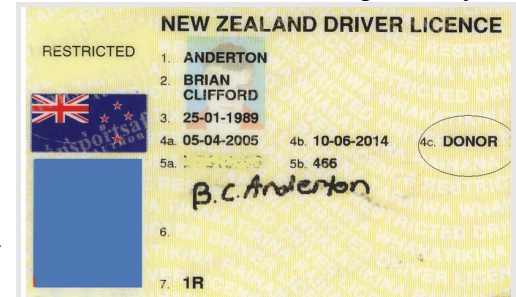
GiveLife suggested that the main reason for the lack of donors could be the low road toll and the better healthcare.

Doctor Jackie Blue, National member of Parliament, and Mr Tookey have together proposed a change to the current law, in opposition to the latest change in the law proposed by the government, which he claims will give more power to help reverse the decline in organ donations. Mr Tookey said that the government's proposal bestows power upon others to "veto your wish to be a donor."

Mr Tookey said: "With doctors not asking families and other families saying no, we need to give the power back to the individual. What is the point of someone specifying they want to be a donor if it means nothing and can be overridden by everyone else? Why are doctors asking for a second consent when they have a perfectly legal one already from the person concerned, who made the decision whilst in sound and calm mind and then they are replacing it with a decision made by others made at a fraught and distressing time?"

In world league tables of organ donations, New Zealand currently stands between Iceland and Mexico for the numbers of organs donated.

Spain, the United States, and the United Kingdom top the table, with 25 donors per million population, 21 donors and 10.7 donors respectively.



Donor highlighted on New Zealand driver licence.

A1GP New Zealand speeds its way into record books January 6, 2007

Jonny Reid, co-driver for the A1GP New Zealand team, today made history by driving the fastest over the 48-year-old Auckland Harbour Bridge, New Zealand, legally.

Mr Reid managed to drive the New Zealand's A1GP car, Black Beauty at speeds over 160km/h seven times over the bridge. The New Zealand police had trouble using their speed radar guns to see how fast Mr Reid was going because of how low Black Beauty is, and the only time the police managed to clock Mr Reid was when he slowed down to 160km/h.

Black Beauty, like all the other A1 Grand Prix cars, is powered by a V8 engine, 3.4 litres and has a top speed of 300km/h. During the record attempt, it managed to get to 160km/h from zero in under three seconds.

The stunt was to promote the upcoming A1GP sixth round at Taupo in a couple of weeks, which Mr Reid will be racing because of his two wins at Indonesia, instead of other co-driver, Matt Halliday.

Mr Reid performed the record on the clipon lanes of the bridge which were

closed at Christmas because the lanes were being resurfaced. The lanes will be open this Monday, January 8.

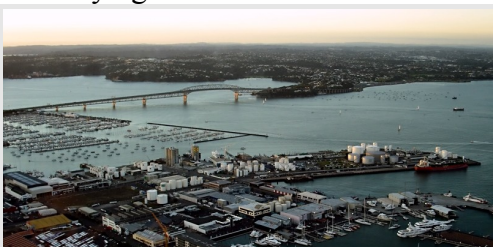
Mr Reid said the surface at the top of the bridge hadn't been swept so it was quite slippery. "It was mega slippery at the top but we always knew that would be the situation and it was just great to show the public a little bit of what we were about." However he also said that "It was fully under control."

Mr Reid said the buzz from doing that, especially with the help from police, was huge. "I absolutely thrived on it. It was a very unique experience which you don't come across every day. It was mega, it really was."

Mr Reid assures everyone that the speeds he will be reaching in Taupo will be much, much faster than what he achieved today.

Once Mr Reid had finished crossing the bridge seven times, he finished with a few donuts.

Two cars were involved in a nose to tail crash on one of the northbound lanes trying to watch the action.



Auckland Harbour Bridge. Photograph by Karsten Sperling.

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