



### **New Zealand minister calls for ban on using mobile phones while driving** **December 10, 2006**

Harry Duynhoven, minister for transport safety, has called for a ban on using mobile phones (cellphones) while driving in New Zealand. The ban comes just days after a teenager was killed after allegedly driving while texting on their mobile phone.

Mr Duynhoven said that it is time to ban hand-held mobile phones in cars. "I would love to ban it. If I were a benign dictator, it would be gone by lunchtime." Mr Duynhoven believes that a campaign to educate the public is needed to combat the number of people who die while using their mobile phones while driving. One of the new ways to combat this is suspected to be new road safety measure. The new initiatives will be announced on Wednesday.

"I hope that sufficient parliamentarians who read the reports of another young person who obviously wasn't concentrating on her driving will say it's about time something was done," Mr Duynhoven said, "However such a ban would be very difficult to police."

A report, prepared by the Ministry of Transport, will be shown to the government on the dangers of using a mobile phone while driving. Peter Burke, spokesman for the Ministry of Transport, said: "There's no law against using a cellphone at the

moment. There's the whole issue of driver distraction of which cellphone use is a part. But there's been no decision on it yet. Anyone who texts while you're driving is pushing the limits. I don't think anyone would condone texting while driving, it's a recipe for disaster."

Every year around four fatal crashes occur because the drivers are using their mobile phones while driving. Around 50 non fatal crashes occur each year for the same reason. However the police expect that the actual number is higher.

"A lot of drivers are unfortunately their own worst enemy - they're busy talking and texting on the phone and fail to pay attention to what's going on around them. The results can be, and often are, crashes which cause injury and death," Rob Lee, spokesman for the police, said.

Sharleen Lloyd, 16-years-old, was killed when she drove her car into a parked trailer after it left the road because she was allegedly texting (SMS) on her mobile phone. Her passenger and boyfriend, Matthew Smit, had non fatal injuries. Andrew Hicks died when he crashed into a powerpole as a result from using his cellphone while driving.

Many countries already have a ban in place of using a mobile phone while driving, including the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Mr Duynhoven said: "But in countries where they have bans, they still have

people using cellphones while driving. The issue is changing behaviour."

However New Zealand does currently have a law which enables police to prosecute someone who doesn't give attention or care to driving.

### **Fizzy drinks out of New Zealand schools from 2009** **December 11, 2006**

An agreement signed between the New Zealand government, Frucor Beverages Ltd, and the Coca-Cola Amatil (New Zealand) has secured that both full sugar fizzy drinks and energy drinks that are made by those two companies will not be sold in secondary schools coming into effect 2009.

The agreement was completely voluntary and is a world first as it was directly negotiated with the companies and the government.

It has been estimated that the agreement will remove around 1,105,000 litres of fizzy drinks from schools. That amount of fizzy drinks has about 118,000 kilograms of sugar. When one secondary school in Auckland introduced healthier drinks they saw around half a tonne of sugar removed.

Steve Maharey, minister of education, said: "The agreement will see the removal of 1.1 million litres of full sugar beverages from schools over the next three years. I welcome the industry's recognition that action is

needed on this issue. This agreement is a strong step forward that will support the work we are doing to ensure schools and communities can provide healthier alternatives for their students."

Pete Hodgson, minister of health, said that the agreement is what can happen when both government and industries work together. "I thank Coca Cola Amatil and Frucor for their leadership on this issue," Pete Hodgson said. "Today's agreement is a major step forward for the Food Industry Accord and shows once again what can be achieved when we reach for cooperative, rather than regulatory solutions.

Diet drinks will remain on sale that contain artificial sweetener, Aspartame. And in 2007 the government will recommend water and low-fat milk in early childhood centres and high schools. But there is a lot of controversy surrounding Aspartame which many consider to have serious long-term health effects. If there is only a choice between water, milk or soft-drink, nearly all kids would choose the latter.

The government has also announced a new programme called Mission-On that will promote nutrition and physical activity and will also try to improve the quality of food that children will be subject to in schools. It will also try to decrease the amount of advertising unhealthy food companies are given.

Mr Hodgson said: "This agreement forms only a small part of what will be necessary to address this challenge, but shows that the government and the food industry are serious about playing our part."

Mr Hodgson has confirmed that regulation will now not happen and has said that regulation would have

been too costly and too slow to implement.

Frucor Beverages Ltd and Coca-Cola Amatil are the only companies that provide drinks to schools.

### **New Zealand ex-politician gives valedictory speech December 12, 2006**

Doctor Don Brash has today given his valedictory speech in parliament on his departure from New Zealand politics.

Dr Brash had only been in politics for four and a half years and in that time he had risen to the ranks of leader of the National party and only participating in one election as leader, narrowly becoming the opposition.

Dr Brash described being a member of parliament (MP) as: "...A great privilege." And he said that "...I've had a fantastic opportunity..." "...I've had a lot of fantastic opportunities..."

He admits that he took a while to get the hang of the processes of parliament and the proceedings. He gave two examples, one when he went tried to get a haircut but was asked by his secretary, Anne Small, if he had gotten permission from the whips. And the other when he was confused why his office was located so far apart from that of the leaders even though he was ranked third in the party.

Dr Brash left his position as the Governor of the Reserve Bank and entered politics because he was worried about the direction the country was heading in, "...or perhaps more accurately not getting to." Dr Brash said: "Keeping inflation under control was very important, but it was not enough to lift living standards and prevent the exodus of tens of thousands of Kiwis across the Tasman and across the world." Dr Brash then

listed a number of reasons on why he left the reserve bank for politics including the problems of: the welfare system, the schooling system, the hospital system, safety and property issues and law equality, "And those were the things that desperately needed to be done."

Dr Brash said that over his political careers he had regrets that he "...never made it into government [and] I didn't change a single law."

"I made some mistakes," Dr Brash said. Those mistakes included: "...like remaining silent when the National Party caucus decided, under previous leadership, that, had National been in Government, we would've supported Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States in the invasion of Iraq, even though I had serious misgivings about the wisdom of that course of action."

Dr Brash said: "When I was approached to stand in the 2002 election, one of the people I talked to was David Caygill. He encouraged me to stand. He warned me that National was likely to lose the 2002 election, but he said that even in Opposition I might have some influence on the national discussion, on the national debate. And so it has proved to be."

"I even take some satisfaction on issues where I demonstrably failed."

Dr Brash announced: "Madam Speaker, I want to thank all those who've helped me over the last four and a half years."

Dr Brash then went on to thanks all those involved with his campaign and his colleagues. "I'm not sure whether I want to thank members of the Press Gallery or not! Sometimes I think I do,



but at other times I'm not so sure! But I certainly respect most members of the Gallery, and have developed a lasting friendship with several," he said. He also gave thanks to his family and friends, he said that without their help and support he wouldn't have "survived."

Dr Brash left parliament by saying: "Let me end by wishing my successor, John Key, and his team every success in promoting those policies that will be of lasting benefit to all New Zealanders."

### **New Zealand local loop unbundled** **December 13, 2006**

The New Zealand government has announced that the Telecommunications Amendment Bill, which will make Telecom unbundle the 'local loop', has passed in parliament only six months after it was introduced. The quick passing of the bill was because it was passed under urgency on the last sitting day of the year. The bill was opposed by two members of parliament from the ACT party while 119 voted for the proposed changes.

ACT voted against the bill as they did not want to split Telecom into three divisions. One division for, retail, business and network.

Unbundling the local loop means that Telecom, New Zealand's telecommunications monopoly company, will open its lines to competitors and provide "naked DSL", which some say will lead to equal and fair competition in the Internet sector. The Honourable David Cunliffe, minister of communications, said that "We now have a clear, firm mandate from the people of New Zealand. Kiwis are demanding fast, 'all you can eat' broadband, which this legislation

is designed to deliver."

Hon Cunliffe said that history has been made with the new bill as it will bring New Zealanders faster and better broadband. "The passing of the Telecommunications Amendment Bill marks the beginning of a new era."

"What some people said couldn't be done is being done. What some people said wouldn't work is being given the opportunity to work with an overwhelming majority. The bill equips New Zealand for the new digital age—an age where the smart use of technology will determine our continued prosperity as a country and make economic transformation a reality."

The bill will also enable Minister Cunliffe and the Commerce Commission the powers to split Telecom into the three divisions, after public consultation. The Telecommunications Commissioner will also have more power to implement the changes and monitor the implementation.

The bill will ensure that consumers do not have to purchase a phone account when signing up for an Internet account; before the bill was passed, a NZ\$10 fee was added to the bill if the phone account was not with the Internet provider.

Political staff at Radio New Zealand say that this is the best thing that has happened to Telecom in its 20 years operating as a private company.

"I welcome the fact that the telecommunications industry has already responded to the reforms in this legislation and is working collectively towards a digital future where Kiwis can realize their economic, social and cultural aspirations," Hon Cunliffe said.

The decision to unbundle the local

loop occurred earlier this year when a mole leaked the proposal and the government had to make the announcement earlier than planned.

### **Yahoo!7 creates joint venture with Xtra** **December 14, 2006**

Xtra, owned by New Zealand telecommunication monopoly company Telecom, has created a joint venture between themselves and Yahoo!7, creating Yahoo Xtra. Yahoo!7 is the joint venture between Yahoo! and Australian network, Seven.

The joint venture replaces the current and long-lasting partnership between Microsoft and Xtra, called XtraMSN. The current partnership's contract will expire at the end of this year. Telecom chose to change the partnership because Yahoo! has worked together with BT Group, Verizon and Rogers Communications.

The new site, along with new online content will go online on around March 1, 2007.

The partnership will result in Yahoo!7 taking 51% control of the partnership and Xtra taking the remaining 49%.

Kevin Kenrick, chief operating officer of Telecom, said that they will now be able to target the underdeveloped online advertising community. "We see there is a fantastic opportunity to grow online advertising and the share of the online market. Online advertising in New Zealand is getting to a tipping point of growth where there is a critical mass of online connections, broadband connections and an increase in the amount of time people are spending online."

When the new site is launched, it will include a range of news, sport, weather, enhanced e-mail spam and

virus protection, photo sharing, and internet radio.

Theresa Gattung, chief executive of Telecom, said: "The Yahoo Xtra joint venture will provide New Zealanders with access to the world's best online services in a localised way."

Ian Smith, chief executive of Yahoo!7, said: "The company was achieving market growth of online advertising of between 50 and 60 per cent a year in Australia and believed it could do the same in New Zealand." He said that the partnership will give them a great opportunity to showcase its tools, technology and platforms in New Zealand.

Mr Kenrick said that the reason they had gotten a partnership with Yahoo!7 was that it is very difficult for a small player to develop its services in a New Zealand size market.

One other online company Xtra had considered for the partnership was Google, among others. The reason they chose Yahoo!7 over other companies was because Yahoo!7 has the top position in big fields such as TV and video. Mr Kenrick said: "The whole area of content management is one we thought would benefit from others with greater expertise and more scope."

Telecom manages 80% of the telecommunication market.

### **Allegations New Zealand prison guards accept bribes from prisoners** **December 16, 2006**

The New Zealand Department of Corrections is currently investigating allegations at the Rimutaka prison in Wellington, New Zealand. The prison guards have allegedly accepted monetary bribes from prisoners in exchange for drugs and cellphones.

Two former officers, Ingrid and Mark Rijniers, have handed over a collection of documents on their encounters while working at Rimutaka prison. The pair, who were transferred from Holland, claim that Rimutaka prison is run by gang members who dominate the prison guards. They also claim that if the gang members don't get what they want they will intimidate and threaten the guards with their lives. However, Ingrid Rijniers is refusing to co-operate with the department because they refused to give her the money to return to Holland.

The New Zealand Corrections Department says it is taking these claims seriously but has not yet found sufficient evidence to back up the claims.

Simon Power, justice and corrections spokesman for the National party, said that the allegations are appalling and reflect heavily on the Corrections Department. Mr Powers said that Barry Matthews, chief executive of the Department of Corrections, does not know what is happening in his prisons. "That means the Minister, Damien O'Connor, will be equally clueless."

Twelve percent of 1,043 prisoners who were tested for drugs from the start of this year until June, tested positive for drugs. Most of the drugs taken was marijuana while fourteen tested positive for "P". In addition, a teenage prisoner, Liam Ashley, was recently strangled to death in a prison van by a much older adult prisoner. Mr Power said that with all these new claims emerging, Mr O'Conner should resign as the minister of corrections.

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