

# THE NEWS

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## Drink-drive verdict disappoints

by Amelia Langford

The Coast's top cop is disappointed the drink-driving limit will remain unchanged.

The Government announced yesterday it would retain the current limit of 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millimetres of blood. It had considered reducing it to 50mg.

Transport Minister Steven Joyce has said public opinion is split over the issue and the limit will be reviewed again in two years after further research.

However the Government will introduce a zero drink drive limit for recidivist drink drivers and drivers under the age of 20 from early next year.

Inspector John Canning, area commander for the West Coast, was disappointed the Government hadn't reduced the legal limit.

He said most New Zealanders were worried about road safety, and reducing the limit was one way to improve it.

The current limit was a "fairly generous margin already".

"If you sit down and have a few beers, have a few drinks, and go and test yourself it takes a fair bit to get to the legal limit – far more than I would be prepared to have and venture out onto the road."

He was concerned drivers could be quite impaired and still be driving under the limit.

"Some political analysts are saying it's a political decision. It's not one based on anything else and I tend to agree with that," he said.

However, he supported the Government's decision to introduce a zero limit for repeat drink drivers and under 20-year-olds.

"Obviously some people who don't know their limits should have the limits set for them and obviously the Government has. They're saying to them 'your limit is none' and that's hard to confuse that."

Mr Canning said he "loved a beer" but never drank a drop if he planned to drive.

"You're probably speaking to the converted. I have a policy of zero...when my wife and I go out we toss a coin and the loser has to stay sober for the night."

He'd seen too many drink-driving related trag-

edies.

"My staff and I have picked up too many bodies and injured people over the years. Listen, we don't allow our pilots an (80mg) tolerance so why should we allow people on the roads?"

However, Westport fire chief Pat O'Dea said retaining the current limit was reasonable.

"The majority of people, who go out for a social drink, do so within the bounds of common sense and the law," he said.

The Government needed to target young drivers who caused the majority of carnage.

"It's high time that the Government passed legislation that enabled the courts to properly deal with the crisis that's running riot in New Zealand."

Underage drinking had to be addressed. "The publicans and that are getting the blame for it but a heck of a lot of it is the supermarkets and their cheap booze...I think that is irresponsible."

The Government should get tough, Mr O'Dea said.

"I'd want stricter penalties for those consistent law-breakers...anyone who is continually breaking the law and is putting New Zealanders at risk."

He'd seen more than 50 people killed in accidents, including many young people.

"I think it's a damn shame...to see young people mangled with a whole life in front of them."

Transport Minister Steven Joyce has said alcohol is a factor in almost one in three fatal crashes and current policies were not having a big enough impact.

Cabinet had asked for more work to be done on penalties for the most serious repeat drink drive offenders.

"By targeting those identified as most likely to break the law - namely those with a history of offending and young people - we're confident we'll have a significant impact," said Mr Joyce.

The government intended to make a final call on whether to lower the legal blood alcohol limit after conducting New Zealand-specific research on the level of risk posed by drivers with a blood alcohol limit between 0.05 and 0.08 (50mg - 80mg).



New toy: Deputy fire chief Terry Bruning with the new addition to Westport Volunteer Fire Brigade. (Photo – Chloe Vaughan).

## Fewer fire trucks could risk lives?

by Amelia Langford and Chloe Vaughan

Lives could be put at risk because Westport is losing one of its three fire trucks, says fire chief Pat O'Dea.

The Westport brigade gained a new Type 1 Iveco fire truck over the weekend.

"They're giving us a new fire engine, they're giving us a secondhand one from Christchurch, and they're taking three away from us," Mr O'Dea said.

That meant the brigade would be left with only two fire trucks instead of its previous three, possibly putting lives at risk.

"No one knows when there is going to be a major earthquake or major disaster here on the Coast and we just haven't got the backup that they have in other areas... I'm a bit disappointed and I've made my views known."

Mr O'Dea understood the change had been made

because it was decided Westport did not receive enough fire calls.

"In my view, that's not true. The fire calls have been going up and up."

The Westport service had over 30 unpaid personnel, he said.

"The suggestion from one of the (fire) hierarchy was we fundraise and buy a van to cart personnel."

Deputy fire chief Terry Bruning said the new \$320,000 automatic fire truck replaced a 19-year-old truck, which was going to a station in Amberley. Firefighters would start driver training on the new truck this week, and it would be in service in about two weeks.

The truck also had a Class A Foam delivery, which would improve fire-fighting efficiency. It could be used to put out scrub fires and could save water, he said.

West Coast area commander Mark Boere said the new Westport truck was part of the New Zealand Fire Service's national programme for management of its fleet.

The truck would soon be the frontline truck for Westport brigade.

It had more locker space for fire-fighting equipment, ABS braking for safety, and provided better driver handling compared with older models.

The modern design was also quieter which meant it was easier to hear radio transmissions and make plans while enroute to an incident, Mr Boere said.

The truck also had a Darley single stage pump able to deliver 1900 litres of water a minute and a 2000 litre onboard water tank.

It was the second new truck to arrive on the Coast following one in Greymouth in May. A third new fire truck was due in Hokitika in the middle of 2011.

## Museum patronage could double

by Lee Scanlon

Coaltown Museum's annual patronage is expected to almost double to 15,000 the year after the museum moves into Westport's main street, beside the Clocktower Chambers.

It will be co-located with the Westport iSite, where attendance is also expected to surge to 50,000 in the second year, according to a business case report for tomorrow's Buller District Council meeting.

The iSite currently caters for about 38,000 people a year.

Operating Coaltown and the iSite together would create considerable efficiencies and savings, the report said.

It predicted a loss of \$11,000 in the first year, mainly because of relocation and marketing costs. Also, the museum would be closed for about four months.

In year two a surplus of about \$4000 was predicted, growing to \$22,000 in year three.

After year three, the council's subsidy could progressively reduce.

The report said the museum and iSite would probably employ 5.4 full-time equivalent staff between them, plus volunteers for guided tours. Most paid staff would be part-time.

Salaries and wages were the biggest spending item, but integrating Coaltown and iSite staff would save about \$33,000 a year on current spending.

The budget included a market rental of \$45,000 for the new museum/iSite building.

Coaltown will become part of the Denniston Mine experience being developed by the Department of Conservation, and will probably be a tour orientation and dismissal point for the Denniston tour operator.

The Coaltown and district archive will move to the Clocktower Chambers, where people can delve further into Buller's history or research family records.

Coaltown and the iSite will be operated by a community charitable trust comprising community leaders.

The new building will form part of Westport's cultural hub, which currently features the NBS Theatre.

The social impact of 'saving' Coaltown, providing worthwhile and appropriate uses for the under-used Clocktower Chambers, and giving new life to the old community hall by transforming it into a theatre should not be underestimated, the report said.

Economically the cultural hub grew wealth for the wider community, particularly as a vital part of attracting visitors to the Denniston Mine experience.

The main risks for the project included the Denniston Experience performing below expectations, failure to convert iSite visits into Coaltown visits and a downturn in New Zealand tourism.

The business case report does not discuss the capital funding required to move the museum and iSite.

Council's community and environment manager Craig Scanlon recommended council proceed to detailed design and preparing tender documents, and confirm the project when it had found \$1 million of external funding.

The project is expected to cost about \$3.5m.

Construction was supposed to have been underway by now, but has been held up by lack of funding. The proposed opening date has pushed out to late next year.

Mayor Pat McManus told The News in May that council had secured \$750,000 external funding and had to find another \$1.25m. Ratepayers are putting in \$1.5m.

Council wanted to ensure the project was done properly, rather than taking a "second best" approach, Mr McManus said. "This is our 50-year Coaltown decision."

**Winner:** A Carters Beach home, built by Jennian Homes West Coast, has won the New Homes \$600,000 - \$1million category in the Westland Registered Master Builders 2010 House of the Year and RMB Commercial Project Awards. Jennian Homes also received a silver award for the property. (Photo – supplied)



## Tourism workshops start

The third round of collective tourism promotion (CTP) workshops will start at the Westport Solid Energy Centre tomorrow.

The workshop is on at 10.30am in the Holcim Room.

Promotions and development coordinator Dean Bermingham said the CTP had been the basis of his work for the last five months.

"We have developed a comprehensive 15-part package that gives us all the tools that we need to take Buller's tourism industry promotional material to the next level," he said.

The road show followed two others, which were held in March and May. It would be primarily for tourist operators but all Buller residents and ratepayers could attend.

The workshops would focus on the CTP package and present his project plan to implement it over the next 4-6 months.

"We will also discuss website concepts following on from the previous workshops on these in May."

Over the next four to five weeks he would be working closely with local businesses on the detail and content of Buller's new website and promotional package, he said.

There would be plenty of other opportunities during that period for people who are unable to attend this week's meetings to have their input.

Workshops would also be held in Karamea tomorrow at 3pm at the RSA, at the Reefton St John Rooms at 11am on Thursday, and in Punakaiki on Friday at 11am at Havenz, The Tree House.

## Charitable status lost

The Buller Promotion Association (BPA) has lost its charitable trust status.

Chairman Chris Hartigan said the Inland Revenue Department no longer recognised running iSites as charitable. BPA could no longer apply for grants from gaming trusts to subsidise costs.

When the museum and the iSite moved into Westport's new cultural hub, and combined in one building as one business under the same governance trust, they would have charitable trust status.

## Toy collection stolen

A Granity man wants his large vintage toy collection back.

The man, who wishes to remain anonymous, said 228 toys were stolen from his home early Saturday morning, including tractors, trucks and bulldozers.

The toys were made of aluminium, which the thief might use for scrap metal, he said. The man urged anyone with information to contact the Westport police station.