



John O'Sullivan

## Trust's new executive director

The New Zealand Business and Parliament Trust has appointed John O'Sullivan to be its new executive director, effective 1 April 2005.

Trust chairman Barry Dineen said "As the former head of the Parliamentary Service and previous deputy head of the Department of Internal Affairs, John brings to the Trust considerable experience of the parliamentary scene and top-level management. I am confident he will provide the necessary skills to maintain and, where possible, enhance the Trust's endeavours to bridge the gap of understanding between parliament and the business community."

John O'Sullivan succeeds Lindsay McCallum who retires in April after 13 years as the Trust's founding executive director.

John completed 42 years with the public service in March 2003. He spent most of his working life in the Department of Internal Affairs, undertaking a variety of senior management and policy roles in the department, with particular focus on local government and community development. In later years he was also involved with the organisation and direction of many visits to New Zealand by members of the royal family, including the Queen, and heads of government on a number of state occasions.

In 1993 he was appointed general manager of the Parliamentary Service, a chief executive level position, responsible for the provision of administrative and support services to the House of Representatives. One of his key responsibilities was

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Chairman welcomes new Trust president

At the Trust's 9 March annual general meeting, held in parliament's Legislative Council Chamber, chairman Barry Dineen welcomed Speaker Margaret Wilson who had earlier accepted the Trust's invitation to become president of the Trust.

"We are rather proud of the fact that successive Speakers since 1991, – Sir Robin Grey, Sir Peter Tapsell, Hon Doug Kidd and the Rt Hon Jonathan Hunt – have all lent their names to the Trust, providing authority and neutrality to its work", he said.

In response Margaret Wilson said she was delighted to follow in the steps of her predecessors in presiding over the activities of the Trust. "I am very happy to continue the convention of the Speaker, taking on the responsibilities of president of the Trust and to give it every support that I can." said Madam Speaker. "Having just attended my first board of management meeting, I see



Hon Margaret Wilson

the \$175 million refurbishment of the parliamentary complex and the change to MMP and consequent increase in the size of parliament.

Since retiring in 2003, John has continued his interest in the parliamentary scene and was project coordinator for the 150th anniversary of parliament last year.

John is married with three adult children and lives in Lower Hutt. He was made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2003, a Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order in 1977 and is currently a Justice of the Peace. He has a BCA and Diploma in Public Administration from Victoria University.

my role as being one of the more pleasurable ones that I have inherited with my new position as Speaker."

In his remarks, chairman Barry Dineen said the year 2004 had been a particularly active one: "The strong support of our corporate members, particularly those who organised study programmes and seminars, was most gratifying. Nothing seemed to be too much trouble and I know from personal experience orchestrating a five-to-ten day Business Study Programme calls for commitment, time and attention to detail to enable the visiting MP to get the most out of his or her study of the company's culture, philosophy and operational activities."

He reminded the membership that study programmes, to be successful, needed to be integrated and well-conceived and, above all, logical. "They must reflect each MP's interests and meet the MP's requirements for information. I am pleased to say that reports that the board of management received during the year from MPs indicate a high level of satisfaction with the study programme scheme", said Mr Dineen.

"On the other side of the coin, the parliamentary seminars last year attracted record attendances and this, despite the fact that we have had to limit numbers. In fact some of the seminars had a larger number of participants than is perhaps ideal. Trying to squeeze 45 or so people into a select committee room is not an easy task and moving around the corridors of Parliament and taking up a lot of available space in the public galleries does cause us some concern. Because of this, we have decided to limit participant numbers to 36 per seminar as a trial run for this year. We have, as you probably know, been experiencing strong demand for places at these parliamentary seminars and this will obviously reduce availability of places but I can say that each corporate member will be guaranteed at least one place in one of the three seminars in the course of the year", said Mr Dineen.

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# My time as a Youth Member of Parliament

by Polly Higbee

**Polly Higbee of St Hilda's Collegiate School in Dunedin was the winner of the 2004 Youth Parliament essay competition sponsored by the Trust. Polly was presented with her \$2000 cheque by the Trust's patron Sir Patrick Goodman at a brief ceremony hosted by the Rt Hon Jonathan Hunt in parliament.**

*During the three days I spent as a Youth MP for the 2004 Youth Parliament, I learnt more about how New Zealand's government works than I think the average New Zealander will learn in their lifetime. Yet it was not the opportunities that Youth Parliament gave me that I enjoyed the most, but the experiences I had, that made the time so special.*

*To meet with 119 other young people from varying backgrounds, ethnicities and parts of New Zealand, was an experience in itself: The fact that they all cared about politics, they all had opinions (strong ones too) and they were all ready to voice those opinions, to defend them and to argue others, was what made our parliament so enjoyable, challenging and dynamic. The diversity of viewpoints and political stances I heard broadened my mind and made me think outside the normal square of the political battlefield (the fact that I was seated next to a very vocal liberalist probably helped that; the calls of "What about privatisation?" still ring clear in my mind.)*

*Aside from the rousing vernacular that we too often hear from the parliamentary debating chamber, there were two particular languages of interest that I had the chance to see and hear a great amount of during those three days. They changed my way of thinking about the country we live in, a country that I often don't fully appreciate in the more isolated south; the first was New Zealand Sign Language, and the second, Te Reo Maori. It made me think about the way in which we communicate, and the importance of relaying the ideas and goings-on of the system of governance, which we live by.*



**Polly Higbee, seated on the steps of parliament after the presentation of her cheque and certificate**

*To see a translator translate every word that was said, either in English, or in Maori, to the two deaf Youth Parliamentarians was astounding. What was even more spectacular was to see one of those parliamentarians rise and give a speech persuading the government to make New Zealand Sign Language an official language of our country. It made me appreciate the importance of being able to voice our standpoints and to debate the issue before us, the ability to participate in a democracy.*

*When I was assigned to the Te Puni Kokiri Review Committee I was placed out of my comfort zone. I was one of two on the twelve-strong committee who couldn't speak fluent Te Reo Maori and one of four visually Pakeha members. Admittedly a lot of what was said went straight over my head, but by the end of the review process I had seen the 'other' official language of New Zealand in a practical, working form, something you don't often get' down south'. I realised the value of making New Zealand Sign Language an official language of New Zealand, like Te Reo Maori, and appreciated the effect that doing so would have. The more parts of society that everybody can communicate with, especially in such an important role as parliament, the better that the many sections of New Zealand can work together.*

*Of course the fact that the arguments fought at Youth Parliament, whether in Maori, English, or sign language, took place in our nation's parliament buildings, made them carry far more gravity than in other contexts youth get to discuss issues in. Watching the government ministers squirm while you asked them a question, or rushing back to the debating chamber from Bellamy's when the bells began to ring, made our views, and our time feel important and appreciated. To give the youth of New Zealand the opportunity to say their piece is an important one; letting them discuss it with Don Brash will ensure they remember it forever.*

*Not everybody will have the experience I was able to have at Youth Parliament, because unfortunately there's only 120 places available every few years. That's why I believe it's important to encourage and to value as much discussion, debate and civilized argument as possible between not only youth themselves, but between youth and the 'adults' who make the decisions.*

*Since my time back at home from Youth Parliament, I've taken the topics that were the most contentious in the debating chamber, and used them as starting points for argument within the various debating societies I belong to in Dunedin. Promoting the issues discussed at a national level among regional youth will result in a more informed and opinionated generation, vital attributes which we must enhance within our society so our nation can keep on developing, and most importantly, communicating.*

*Ka Pai to Youth Parliament for broadening the base of informed, articulate, young New Zealanders who can discuss the wider issues that affect our country and participate in New Zealand's democracy.*

**(Polly travelled to Wellington courtesy of Air New Zealand)**

