

ROLL CALL – How Our MPs Performed In 2007

Trans Tasman's Editors have run their rule over NZ's MPs and rated their performances in 2007. Roll Call looks at how well they've performed in Caucus, Cabinet, Committee, the House and Electorate and the influence they bring to bear in various forums.

Takes into account Labour's new Cabinet portfolios.

Labour					
Name	Seat/list	Responsibilities	Comments	2006 Rating	This Year's Rating
<i>Barker, Hon Rick</i>	List	Minister of Internal Affairs Minister of Civil Defence Minister for Courts Minister of Veterans' Affairs Associate Minister of Justice	Tried hard, without much distinction. No promotion in the reshuffle.	4.5	4
<i>Barnett, Tim</i>	Chch Central	Senior Whip	A two-issue politician - Civil Union and Prostitution Law Reform - got his way. Future uncertain, thinking about becoming a list MP which isn't the height of ambition. People expected more of him.	5	2.5
<i>Benson-Pope, David</i>	Dunedin South		Won't win Dunedin South nomination. Continued presence unnecessary. Setchell debacle ended his career.	4	0
<i>Burton, Hon Mark</i>	Taupo		Says he quit Cabinet because he wanted to but few believe he chose a downward career path from senior Minister to dull backbencher.	5	2.5
<i>Carter, Chris</i>	Te Atatu	Minister of Education Minister Responsible for the Education Review Office Minister for Ethnic Affairs	Education is a big step up. He'll have to prove he can handle it. Clark rates him - has to do better than Conservation. Arrogant approach a turn-off.	3.5	4
<i>Chadwick, Steve</i>	Rotorua	Minister of Conservation Minister of Women's Affairs Associate Minister of Health	Cabinet newcomer who isn't headed for great heights, but she worked for the promotion.	4	4.5
<i>Chauvel, Charles</i>	List	Finance and Expenditure Committee chair	Overlooked for Cabinet and let his displeasure show. Apparently others don't share his opinion of himself. New chair of Finex gives him a chance to impress - he's still being slated as one of the party's rising stars.	1	3
<i>Choudhary QSO, Dr Ashraf</i>	List		Went on a Parliamentary junket, asked a few patsies. That's about it - again. Another disappointing year.	1	1
<i>Clark, Rt Hon Helen</i>	Mt Albert	Prime Minister Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Ministerial Services Minister in Charge of the NZ Security Intelligence Service Minister Responsible for the GCSB	Really does want a fourth term and if Labour gets it, she'll have won it. More popular than her party at present, huge asset. Will the demands of MMP prove her downfall?	8	8.5
<i>Cosgrove, Hon Clayton</i>	Waimakariri	Minister of Immigration Minister for Sport and Recreation Minister for Small Business Minister for the Rugby World Cup Associate Minister of Finance Associate Minister of Justice	Stepping out of Tamihere's shadow has done wonders. Promoted but should be on the front bench. Aggressive and competent, loves to hate National.	6	7
<i>Cullen, Hon Dr Michael</i>	List	Deputy Prime Minister Minister of Finance Attorney-General [Includes responsibility for Serious Fraud Office] Minister in Charge of Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations Leader of the House	Rumours of replacement were wrong. Kept his cool in a hard year, gets the better of most opponents in debates and has PM's total confidence. How he introduces tax cuts will prove interesting.	7	7.5

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<i>Cunliffe, Hon David</i>	New Lynn	Minister of Health Minister for Communications and Information Technology	Health is a hot portfolio, he's going to have to prove he can take the heat. Did well to get it - might live to regret saying, "I'm running the show" about his new Health portfolio.	5	6
<i>Dalziel, Hon Lianne</i>	Chch East	Minister of Commerce Minister for Food Safety Associate Minister of Justice	Consistently competent in a low-profile way. Most of her work goes unnoticed by the media but she mostly delivers the goods.	5	5.5
<i>Duynhoven, Hon Hary</i>	New Plymouth	Minister for Transport Safety Associate Minister of Energy	Works hard on transport safety, Minister outside Cabinet who can't quite make it into the tent.	4.5	4.5
<i>Dyson, Hon Ruth</i>	Banks Peninsula	Minister for Social Development and Employment Minister for Senior Citizens Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector Minister for Disability Issues	Wanted social development and got it. Tribal Labour who doesn't cover her utter contempt for the National party.	5.5	5.5
<i>Fairbrother, Russell</i>	List	Social Services Committee chair	Winning the Napier nomination has shown a fighting spirit from the oddly aloof MP but he could still be history.	3.5	2
<i>Fenton, Darien</i>	List		Hasn't done anything to make anyone notice her - sorry, no pain no gain.	2	2
<i>Gallagher, Martin</i>	Hamilton West	Law and Order Committee chair	More of a presence in the chamber this year, but it's taken a long time. Good in his electorate.	4.5	4
<i>Goff, Hon Phil</i>	Mt Roskill	Minister of Defence Minister of Corrections Minister of Trade Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control Associate Minister of Finance	One of the safest pairs of hands in the Cabinet and it shows. A real pro and a good attack MP. With Maharey gone, leadership ambitions revive.	7.5	8
<i>Gosche, Hon Mark</i>	Maungakiekie	Transport and Industrial Relations Committee chair	Should be used more in the House. Good when he does but hangs back too often.	4	3.5
<i>Hartley, Ann</i>	List		Assistant Speaker never handled the House well. It's a relief she's going.	3	2
<i>Hawkins, Hon George</i>	Manurewa		His year was a non-event, should call it quits. Health problems haven't helped.	1	1
<i>Hereora, Dave</i>	List	Maori Affairs Committee chair	Presence as a list MP is a mystery to most and probably himself.	2	1
<i>Hobbs, Hon Marian</i>	Wellington Central		We tipped her as a retiree and she's going. Never realised what seemed to be her potential.	3	2
<i>Hodgson, Hon Pete</i>	Dunedin North	Minister for Economic Development Minister for Tertiary Education Minister of Research, Science and Technology	Health was obviously bad for him but Clark respects his abilities. Back in jobs he originally wanted.	5.5	4.5
<i>Horomia, Hon Parekura</i>	Ikaroa-Rawhiti	Minister of Maori Affairs Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment Associate Minister of Education Associate Minister of State Services Associate Minister of Fisheries	Strangely disconnected while Maori Party makes the running. Has to take them on more often.	6	4
<i>Hughes, Darren</i>	Otaki	Minister of Statistics Deputy Leader of the House Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment	Another one we tipped for promotion and he got it. Junior Minister will move up the ranks. The boy wonder.	5.5	6
<i>Jones, Shane Geoffery</i>	List	Minister for Building and Construction Associate Minister in Charge of Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations Associate Minister of Immigration Associate Minister of Trade	Another new Cabinet Minister who has to prove himself. Good debater with a smart mouth, must be careful it doesn't get him into trouble.	5.5	6

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<i>King, Hon Annette</i>	Rongotai	Minister of Justice Minister of Police Minister of Transport Minister Responsible for the Law Commission	Given Justice in the reshuffle with a huge workload she handles well. Nats admit she's good, and she is. Frustrated in debates on electoral funding Bill when handed a hospital pass. Deserves better.	7	7.5
<i>Laban, Luamanuvao Winnie</i>	Mana	Minister of Pacific Island Affairs Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment Associate Minister of Trade Associate Minister for Economic Development	Good choice for Pacific Island Affairs. Quiet and composed, respected around the House.	6	6
<i>Mackey, Moana</i>	List		A bit more noise this year, not much of an impression though.	3	3
<i>Maharey, Hon Steve</i>	Palmerston North		Graceful exit from Cabinet, and a loss to the front bench. We said ambitions were fading, and they did.	6	4.5
<i>Mahuta, Hon Nanaia</i>	Tainui	Minister of Customs Minister of Local Government Minister of Youth Affairs Associate Minister for the Environment Associate Minister of Tourism	More competent than she usually gets credit for. Handled portfolio issues well this year.	4.5	5
<i>Mallard, Hon Trevor</i>	Hutt South	Minister for the Environment Minister of Labour Minister of Broadcasting Minister for State Owned Enterprises Associate Minister of Finance	Deserves points for biffing Tau Henare but he caused a problem Clark didn't need. Feeling the pain of demotion, but still Helen's Rottweiler. Managed a vicious attack on Erin Leigh. Repentant! (Yeah, right).	6	4
<i>Moroney, Sue</i>	List		Labour's new Junior Whip, making progress in a sensible way.	3	3.5
<i>O'Connor, Hon Damien</i>	West Coast-Tasman	Minister of Tourism Minister for Rural Affairs Associate Minister of Health	Damaged goods after corrections mauling and the rugby team blunder. Will have to rehabilitate himself - if he wants to. Phillip Field could still haunt him.	4.5	3
<i>Okeo, Hon Mahara</i>	Te Tai Tonga	Minister of State Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Associate Minister of Conservation	Expected to lose his seat to Maori Party. Doesn't deserve to come back on the list. Negligible contribution overall.	2	1
<i>Parker, Hon David</i>	List	Minister of State Services Minister of Energy Minister for Land Information Minister Responsible for Climate Change Issues	Promotion deserved. Not a great performer in the House but Clark trusts him to handle tricky climate change policies. In trouble on Curran affair. If he doesn't rise to the occasion for Labour, who will?	6	6.5
<i>Pettis, Jill</i>	List		We tipped her for the hit list, and she's going. Served her time as a backbencher. Still manages to annoy the Nats.	2	2
<i>Pillay, Lynne</i>	Waitakere	Justice and Electoral Law Committee chair	Nats don't rate her as Justice and Electoral Committee chair but she kept the job. Unlikely to advance beyond it.	4	3.5
<i>Ririnui, Hon Mita</i>	List	Minister of State Associate Minister of Corrections Associate Minister in Charge of Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations Associate Minister of Forestry Associate Minister of Health	Still a force in Labour's Maori caucus although rarely used in the House. Needs to work on raising his profile.	5	4
<i>Robertson, H V Ross</i>	Manukau East	Assistant Speaker	Continuing with his life's work - a code of conduct for MPs. Not much headway though. Runs House well as an assistant speaker, should have been deputy.	5.5	5

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<i>Samuels, Hon Dover</i>	List		Another retiree. Has no regrets as the old fire isn't burning brightly now.	4	3
<i>Soper, Lesley</i>			Georgina Beyer's replacement. Feminist union organiser hasn't made much impact yet. Distinctive dress sense.	-	2.5
<i>Street, Maryan</i>	List	Minister for ACC Minister of Housing Associate Minister for Economic Development Associate Minister for Tertiary Education	Chosen for Cabinet. Yet to prove her abilities but she's made a solid start. Honest dealer, doesn't over-estimate herself.	4	4.5
<i>Swain, Hon Paul</i>	Rimutaka		He'll be missed, despite maintaining a low-key role since quitting Cabinet. Lifestyle choice robbed Labour of a good Minister.	4.5	4.5
<i>Tizard, Hon Judith</i>	Auckland Central	Minister of Consumer Affairs Minister Responsible for Archives New Zealand Minister Responsible for the National Library Associate Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Associate Minister of Commerce Associate Minister of Transport	Nats treat her like a joke, sometimes a bad one. Didn't do much to prove she isn't. A real Clark hanger-on. Detracts rather than contributes. No help to Auckland.	2	1
<i>Wilson, Hon Margaret</i>	List	Speaker of the House of Representatives	Question mark over her future. The Speaker doesn't seem happy in her job at times. Could decide there are better things to do.	5.5	5
<i>Yates, Dianne</i>	List	Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee chair	Rejuvenation victim who never distinguished herself but a good Committee member.	4.5	4
National					
<i>Arderm, Shane</i>	Taranaki-King Country	Government Administration Committee chair	Hard to notice him. Potential Associate Minister of something in the rural area.	3.5	3
<i>Auchinvole, Chris</i>	List		Complained his name wasn't being pronounced properly. That's all we can remember.	3	2
<i>Bennett, David</i>	Hamilton East		Associate Transport puts him in Maurice Williamson's shadow - rarely emerges from it.	4	3
<i>Bennett, Paula</i>	List		Refreshing. Feisty and full-on, she's good value. Ran interference on childhood education issues. Moving up. TV presentation training will help to bring out her true personality.	4	6
<i>Blue, Jackie</i>	List		Another high value MP, good on women's health. She'll be an Associate for Tony Ryall if National get to form a Cabinet.	5	5
<i>Blumsky, Mark</i>	List		Decided to quit after one term. Good move.	2.5	2
<i>Borrows, Chester</i>	Whanganui		Experience as former officer makes him a good police spokesman. Deals carefully with issues. Delivers sensible speeches but too low-profile.	4.5	5.5
<i>Brownlee, Gerry</i>	Ilam	Strategy Committee, Commerce Committee chair	Not so noisy this year. He's still a key player. Very sharp in the House. Not used effectively by Key after minding Brash last year.	6.5	7
<i>Carter, Hon David</i>	List	Primary Production Committee chair	Sure to be Agriculture Minister in a National Cabinet. Knows his stuff and gets around the farms but still stuck with a "First Past The Post" electoral mentality.	4	4.5
<i>Carter, John</i>	Northland		Ineffective. Low-grade delivery on Local Govt and Civil Defence. Going down.	3	2
<i>Clarkson, Bob</i>	Tauranga		Still a misfit. Starting to realise it. A straight shooter - in the wrong place to hit anything.	3.5	2.5

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<i>Coleman, Jonathan</i>	Northcote		Another potential Associate Health Minister. Quiet, tough when Ryall makes all the running.	4	4
<i>Collins, Judith</i>	Clevedon		Now she no longer thinks she is a Margaret Thatcher clone, she has had a strong year.	7	7.5
<i>Connell, Brian</i>	Rakaia		Knew he wasn't going to survive. Disastrous career about to end. Gains half a point for being honest about it.	0.5	1
<i>Dean, Jacqui</i>	Otago		Messy year. Responsible for RMA but focused on party pills. Unfortunately fell for the old water is poison trick.	4	3
<i>English, Hon Bill</i>	Clutha-Southland	Deputy Leader	Up with the best on Labour's front bench. Powerful speeches, puts grunt into the leadership team.	8	8
<i>Finlayson, Christopher</i>	List		Legal eagle will be Attorney-General under National. Deep thinker is a fine speaker, usually on issues which aren't reported.	6	6
<i>Foss, Craig</i>	Tukituki		In the back room as Associate Finance spokesman and backs himself as another John Key.	4.5	5.5
<i>Goodhew, Jo</i>	Aoraki		Another with Associate Health duties. Quiet in the House but good work on aged care policy.	4.5	4.5
<i>Goudie, Sandra</i>	Coromandel		Not much opportunity to shine. Seems happiest behind the scenes. Well-liked in rural areas. A good electorate worker.	2.5	4
<i>Groser, Tim</i>	List		When he speaks, he's worth listening to. Former trade negotiator has valuable niche, doesn't get involved in the rough stuff.	6	6
<i>Guy, Nathan</i>	List		Junior Whip has proven very effective in Caucus.	3.5	4.5
<i>Hayes, John</i>	Wairarapa		Isn't living up to expectations. The former diplomat's special skills are noticeably lacking in Parliament.	3.5	3
<i>Heatley, Phil</i>	Whangarei		Hot pursuit of housing scandals gave Ministers problems. Had a good year.	4	6
<i>Henare, Tau</i>	List		In-your-face MP likes it rough which is what he got from Mallard. Didn't get to grips with Maori issues, which is what he's there for. Doesn't bring Nats any mana - divisive personality.	4.5	3
<i>Hutchison, Dr Paul</i>	Port Waikato		Hard worker but not much to show for it. Medical man has misfit portfolios. Under-valued because he's sincere.	5	5.5
<i>Key, John</i>	Helensville	Leader	Honeymoon's over, he's getting to grips with real life. Swerved between brilliance and botch-ups. He's National's best option to take on the battle-hardened Clark. Crucial for him to follow his own instincts and take control.	8	8
<i>King, Colin</i>	Kaikoura		Profile slipped below the horizon this year. Responsible for trade training. Said something about gasfitters in February.	3.5	2.5
<i>Mapp, Dr Wayne</i>	North Shore		He was an Associate professor of commercial law and now he's defence spokesman. Seems bored. Intelligent MP who should be better used.	5	4.5
<i>McCully, Hon Murray</i>	East Coast Bays		Top quality handling of National's role in the terrorism debate. Safe hands on foreign policy issues. Needed for his deviousness.	5.5	6

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<i>Peachey, Allan</i>	Tamaki		Despite illness, education specialist should have more to say for himself. Disappointing.	3	2.5
<i>Power, Simon</i>	Rangitikei	Privileges Committee chair	National's fast reaction force. Works well with the media. Hammered Ministers on law and order issues, had a strong year.	6.5	7.5
<i>Rich, Katherine</i>	List		Strong year on education, managed to upset Ministers. Asset for National. Needs to be used more - high-profile women are scarce on Nats' front bench.	7	7
<i>Roy, Eric</i>	Invercargill		Outdoor recreation and Associate conservation don't stretch his abilities. Quiet and likeable, should be given more to do.	4.5	4
<i>Ryall, Hon Tony</i>	Bay of Plenty		High work rate on health. Doctors' fee blunder spoiled his year but he's bounced back. Front bench fighter plunged into electoral law row as well. "Funeral director" image doesn't help.	7.5	6.5
<i>Shanks, Katrina</i>	List		List MP who replaced Don Brash. She's made a reasonable start with Associate portfolios. Seems keen.	-	3
<i>Simich, Hon Clem</i>	List		Another good year in the chair as Deputy Speaker. Controls the House better than anyone.	5	6
<i>Smith, Dr the Hon Lockwood</i>	Rodney		Old pro is a clever questioner. On top of immigration. Solid experience valuable behind the scenes.	6.5	6.5
<i>Smith, Hon Dr Nick</i>	Nelson		Bad-tempered MP thinks being nasty is a virtue. Debating chamber aggro tends to overshadow climate change competence - worked hard on both.	6.5	6
<i>te Heuheu QSO, Hon Georgina</i>	List		Minor role in Maori affairs is absurd - she's way better than Henare and probably knows it.	6	6
<i>Tisch, Lindsay</i>	Piako		Quiet and diligent MP works away on minor portfolios. Stays out of trouble.	5	5
<i>Tolley, Anne</i>	East Coast		Best Chief Whip National has had in 15 years and a strong presence in the House.	5	6
<i>Tremain, Chris</i>	Napier		Very thorough, hardworking, and likely to be a Minister if National gets to form the next Govt.	4.5	5
<i>Wagner, Nicky</i>	List		We said she needed to do better. She didn't.	2.5	2
<i>Wilkinson, Kate</i>	List		Gaining experience. Mixed it with Labour on industrial relations. Good in the House.	4	5
<i>Williamson, Hon Maurice</i>	Pakuranga		Great debater. Strong on Auckland's transport problems - no real answers. Star may be waning.	5.5	3.5
<i>Wong, Pansy</i>	List		Asset to National as an Asian networker but she didn't make her mark with new ACC responsibilities. Expects to be in Cabinet.	4	3.5
<i>Worth OBE, Richard</i>	List	Regulation Review Committee chair	Still seems strangely disconnected from the engine room. Highly capable MP and a thoughtful speaker, but he's rarely heard. Some good contributions.	3	4
NZ First					
<i>Brown, Peter</i>	List	Deputy Leader	A sensible contributor but out of his depth as Deputy Leader. Always good on transport, unconvincing on other issues.	4	3

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<i>Donnelly, Hon Brian</i>	List	Education and Science Committee chair	Still a respected politician but his profile is diminishing as he waits for his diplomatic appointment and an exit from Parliament.	4.5	2.5
<i>Mark, Ron</i>	List		Moved up a gear this year. Strong on law and order and made the most of the terror debate.	4	5.5
<i>Paraone MNZM, Pita</i>	List		Maori issues spokesman. Limited himself too much when the party needed broader action.	4.5	3
<i>Peters, Rt Hon Winston</i>	List	Leader Minister of Foreign Affairs Minister for Racing Associate Minister for Senior Citizens	Made an impact as foreign Minister with NZ-US relations and the North Korea trip. Powerful speeches as party leader but it's hard to be both. Condi's friend.	7.5	7.5
<i>Stewart, Barbara</i>	List		Persistently unobtrusive manner isn't what NZ First needs. Tries hard but not very often.	2.5	2.5
<i>Woolerton, R Doug</i>	List		Lead speaker on Electoral Finance Bill. Protecting party rather than voter. Much better year. Where has he been all this time?	4.5	4.5
United Future					
<i>Dunne, Hon Peter</i>	Ohariu-Belmont	Minister of Revenue Associate Minister of Health	More assertive this year, covered more issues. Big decision looms on political allegiance.	5	5.5
<i>Turner, Judy</i>	List		Thoughtful, articulate. Doesn't make waves and the price is obscurity. Deserves more credit - and publicity - than she gets.	4	4.5
ACT					
<i>Hide, Rodney</i>	Epsom	Leader	Must retain Epsom to keep his party alive - it's a distraction. More focused on being the prima donna. Disappearing like his weight.	4	3.5
<i>Roy, Heather</i>	List		Solo effort most of the time. Maintains ACT's presence in Parliament. Tireless optimist.	4.5	5
Greens					
<i>Bradford, Sue</i>	List		First it was anti-smacking, then equal pay, then voting age. She's used Labour to the fullest under MMP which has allowed her too much say.	4	3.5
<i>Fitzsimons, Jeanette</i>	List		High integrity. Thought about standing down, decided not to. Capable co-leader and MMP dealer, Greens need her but how long will she put them first? They'll be history without her.	6	6.5
<i>Kedgley, Sue</i>	List	Health Committee chair	Big score with flexible hours Bill, vigorous chair of Health Committee. Has potential but has the knack of sometimes picking the wrong issues.	4	5
<i>Locke, Keith</i>	List		Far-left fringer who became excited over police raids. Supporter of the underdog. Will he ever put NZ's interests first?	3	3
<i>Tanczos, Nandor</i>	List		Waste management is his thing but becoming irrelevant otherwise. Barely holds his rating.	2	1
<i>Turei, Meteria</i>	List		Maturing MP deftly handled tricky issues on Electoral Finance Bill. An asset to the Greens.	5	5.5
Progressive Coalition					
<i>Anderton, Hon Jim</i>	Wigram	Minister of Agriculture Minister for Bio-Security Minister of Fisheries Minister of Forestry Minister Responsible for the Public Trust Associate Minister of Health Associate Minister for Tertiary Education	Professional Cabinet Minister whose party is off the radar screens. If he cares, he's soon going to have to show it. Making a good fist of his Agriculture duties - farmers appreciate him. High Cabinet ranking helps.	5.5	5.5

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Maori					
<i>Turia, Hon Tariana</i>	Te Tai Hauauru	Co-leader	Talked about standing down. Less active than last year. Still has clout but is she improving the situation for Maori in the long run?	5.5	3.5
<i>Flavell, Te Ururoa</i>	Wairiki	Whip	Kept his head when others were losing theirs. Moderate force in the party - an asset for future deal-making.	4.5	4.5
<i>Harawira, Hone Pani Tamati</i>	Te Tai Tokerau		Hothead - showed his true colours this year. Frenzied opposition to police raids and outback walkabout may be what his voters want but it's scary stuff for the main parties.	4.5	3.5
<i>Sharples, Pita</i>	Tamaki Makarau	Co-leader	Has mana - seen as the star to unite the nation but totally misread the Ureweras raids. De facto leader is calling the shots for the party's future. Likely to keep the party independent of the main parties - but could be a tough call.	6	6
Independents					
<i>Copeland, Gordon</i>			Serial bloopers made him a figure of fun after he quit UF to form a new Christian party. Survival may require Divine intervention. In this PC world, we can't call him a loser.	4.5 United Future	0.5
<i>Field, Taito Phillip</i>			Silly man. Mired in legal strife, still drawing his pay. Shows up now and then and says he'll stand again. Could still embarrass Labour.	0	0

Plays Of The Year

- Michael Cullen.** Tax cuts are unaffordable and inflationary – no, they're not – blame Treasury.
- Helen Clark.** Blame Treasury – or anyone else, just not me.
- Trevor Mallard.** Giving Tau Henare a slap.
- Taito Phillip Field.** Dragging NZ politics into infamy by being the first MP charged with bribery.
- Tony Ryall.** Let's drop the cap on GP's fees – no, let's not.
- Bill English.** Let's partially privatise some State Owned Enterprises – no, let's not.
- David Cunliffe.** May live to regret saying, "I'm running the show" about his Health portfolio.
- Winston Peters.** In a sense he's indispensable, but will the electorate think so next year?
- David Benson-Pope.** The truth is out there – somewhere.
- Gordon Copeland.** Where am I?

Politician Of The Year

Several nominations for Politician of the Year came under the spotlight:

- Winston Peters** for his diplomatic forays, particularly to North Korea, but also for his parliamentary performance (he acts as if he owns the place).
- Jeanette Fitzsimons** for keeping the Green flag flying as every other party (except ACT) rushes to be a climate change champion.
- John Key** for lifting National high in the polls, where it has stayed.
- Phil Goff** for reviving his claims to be a future Labour leader, as *Steve Maharey* makes a graceful exit.

Rodney Hide ruled himself out after having tried to re-invent himself, *Sue Bradford* for a time was in contention with her anti-smacking legislation, and *Pita Sharples* looked likely until he stumbled with his judgment on the anti-terror raids.

So our panel had no alternative but to name **Helen Clark** as *Trans-Tasman's Politician of the Year*. At the peak of her powers, she kept Labour's hopes of a fourth term alive, even as some of her Ministers crashed and burned. She pushed *Michael Cullen* into an uncharacteristic somersault on personal tax cuts. She is now a senior figure in clubs like the Commonwealth (with *John Howard* and *Tony Blair* gone), the Pacific Forum and the East Asian Summit. Without her, Labour would be in a shambolic state. She exercises authority which has kept the party under control when it was about to fly apart. She is still most people's preferred PM - a consummate politician. Whether she can negotiate the electoral tightrope in 2008 remains to be seen. Ironically, her Achilles' heel may be her mastery of MMP and bringing in unpopular special interest legislation to maintain power.

Release: December 9, 2007.

