



***Hon Chester Borrows***  
*MP for Whanganui*

I hope that everyone has enjoyed a restful break, whatever the weather wherever you may have been!

The parliamentary year has begun. The seamless transition to Bill English and Paula Bennett leading the country has meant new initiatives are already under way. These are tangible measures which will benefit every family in New Zealand.

The country is in a relatively healthy financial position, putting it in a strong position for opportunities or challenges. We have a strong and fast growing economy; our books are in order and our debt levels low, allowing us to invest in building infrastructure throughout a growing New Zealand.

The New Zealand economy is expected to grow 3.5 per cent over the year, with construction, tourism, and household spending to lift inflation from its record lows.

Unemployment is expected to drop to 4.7 per cent this quarter, from 4.9 per cent as of September 2016.

House price growth across the country on the QV Index is expected to decline during the year, from 10.7 per cent as of September 2016 to 9.7 per cent as of March and down to 3.5 per cent by December.

The Government has announced a 3.3 per cent increase to the minimum wage from April 1 to \$15.75 per hour. This will directly benefit almost 120,000 workers and lift wages throughout the economy by \$65 million a year. This hike will give our lowest paid workers more money in their pockets, without hindering job growth and improving undue pressure on business.

Tourism and expenditure is forecast to grow by 65 per cent to \$16 billion in 2022, and the Manawatu-Whanganui district is one of the fastest growing regions at 8.8 per cent.

Locally, things are happening, including the very welcome ultra-fast broadband roll out which will make a huge difference to many in this region. To think, UFB didn't exist at the turn of the century and now, less than a generation on, it is so essential for business people and educators to engage with others all around the world. It's a great step forward to have this advancement of a vital communications enabler.

The Prime Minister's recent announcement of the Safer Communities package has three main areas of focus for improvement. Targeting offenders to ensure they are off our streets, crime prevention, preventing victimisation, and delivering a more responsive system. It will be great to welcome the first of the new recruits to some of our local stations later this year.

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## Master's Games

I must congratulate the organisers, sponsors and participants for their passionate pursuit of great sporting endeavours. From motocross, to stair racing and waka ama to rock n' roll, this is a wonderful event for Whanganui to host every second year.

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## Solidarity Rally

I was pleased to be part of this outpouring of support of Muslim and refugee communities, and the clear message that refugees are welcome here. The work of the Red Cross in supporting refugees benefitted from the collection that day.

I attended the opening of Hawera's new corrections facility on behalf of Corrections Minister, Hon Louise Upston. She recently described it as the best modern facility in New Zealand. The new site includes an improved community work area and dedicated

rooms where work and living skills, as well as rehabilitation, motivation and maintenance programmes, can be delivered. A new whānau room provides a comfortable space where staff can meet the families of offenders.

One of the biggest components of my job as your MP is helping people. If you need any assistance please don't hesitate to contact me with your concerns or questions through your nearest electorate office.

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All the best for 2017, and I look forward to catching up soon.



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