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Still plenty of time for Spelling Bee

Year Nine students interested in the New Zealand Vegemite Spelling Bee still have plenty of time to prepare says Janet Lucas, event manager of the Spelling Bee.

The regional Spelling Bees kick off in less than three weeks time.

“Students who put aside a bit of time each evening should be able to master the word list which will be used in the first round of the competition,” says Janet.

This is Spelling Bee’s fourth year and Janet says it will be interesting to see who will represent New Zealand at the 81st US Scripps Spelling Bee in Washington DC.

“Whilst an equal number of boys and girls enter the Spelling Bee, the champion speller for the past three years has been a girl.

“In the US it has been the opposite. Since 2000 it had a stream of boy winners until a girl wrestled the title back in 2006 but last year the champion speller was a boy again,” says Janet.

“I think this shows that whilst good spellers are often voracious readers, know basic spelling rules and understand how words are formed, winning a Spelling Bee often involves an element of luck.” she says..

The New Zealand Vegemite Spelling Bee 2008 is open to all Year 9 students under the age of 16 and eligible for a passport.

“There is about \$20,000 worth of prizes so it is a great incentive to take part, says Janet.

Hamish McDouall, a 39-year-old author, (and the Labour Party's candidate for Whanganui in this year's general election) is the word pronouncer at the New Zealand Vegemite Spelling Bee National Final in Wellington – a role he has filled since the event started.

Hamish shot to prominence in 1989 when he won *Sale of the Century*, followed by *Mastermind* in 1990 on his expert topic of the life and works of David Bowie.

A former lawyer, Hamish says it is an honour to be asked to front the Spelling Bee final.

“I was honestly completely thrilled to be asked to be involved. It is such an enjoyable experience – I wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

Hamish says there is a lot of similarity between game shows and the Spelling Bee competition. “Both are time pressured and demand performing in front of an

audience and cameras. The pressure can affect you and it can be quite nerve-racking.

The competition, inspired by the American Oscar-nominated movie documentary Spellbound, is overseen by a charitable trust. __For information about competition dates, registration, study and the rules, go to www.spellingbee.co.nz. __For more information contact: _Janet Lucas_Event Manager_New Zealand Vegemite Spelling Bee 2008_Phone 021 709 124_Email info@spellingbee.co.nz