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Standardisation of time

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History of Daylight Saving

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Development of New Zealand Standard Time

New Zealand was one of the first countries in the world to officially adopt a nationally observed standard time. New Zealand Mean Time, adopted on 2 November 1868, was set at 11 hours 30 minutes ahead of Greenwich Mean Time. Greenwich Mean Time was established by British Railways in the 1840s but was not made Great Britain's standard time until 1880.

In 1941, due to emergency regulations in the Second World War, clocks were advanced half an hour in New Zealand. This advance was made permanent by the Standard Time Act 1945. The Act provided that New Zealand Standard Time was set 12 hours in advance of Greenwich Mean Time or Universal Time.

In the late 1940s the development of the first atomic clock was announced and several laboratories began atomic time scales. A new time scale based on the readings of atomic clocks, known as Co-ordinated Universal Time, was adopted internationally in 1972.

"New Zealand Standard Time" is currently defined in the Time Act 1974 as meaning 12 hours in advance of Co-ordinated Universal Time. The time for the Chatham Islands was set 45 minutes in advance of New Zealand Standard Time.

Origins of Daylight Saving in New Zealand

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Entomologist and astronomer George Hudson was the earliest known advocate of daylight saving in New Zealand. Hudson presented a paper to the Wellington Philosophical Society in 1895 advocating for seasonal time adjustment. However society members ridiculed his idea. It was not until 1909 that the issue was next raised, by Parliamentarian Hon Sir Thomas Sidey who argued for putting clocks forward by one hour during summer so that there would be an additional hour of daylight in the evenings.



In that year he introduced a Member's Bill to put this idea into effect. The Bill was rejected, but Sidey was persistent, reintroducing it every year for the next 20 years. It almost became law in 1915 and again in 1926 when it was passed by the House of Representatives, but was rejected by the Legislative Council (which was New Zealand's upper house of Parliament until 1951). During the second reading of his Summer Time Bill in 1926, Sidey argued that:

the extra hour of daylight after working-hours during the summer months is of especial value to indoor workers and the community as a whole as it gives one additional hour for recreation of all kinds, whether playing games or working in garden plots...one cannot overlook the economic advantages that will also accrue. There will be a saving in the consumption of artificial light.

Much of the debate in the House of Representatives centered on the impact on people in rural areas and women in particular. Opponents of the Bill commented that:

[Summer Time] will bring no happiness to the women of New Zealand who live in the backblocks. [the Bill] does not make the case for now requiring the wife of the working-man to get up an hour earlier in order to get her husband away to his work.

In 1927 Sidey was successful. The passing of the Summer Time Act that year authorised the advancement of clocks by one hour between 6 November 1927 and 4 March 1928. The Act was only operative for one year, and when the Summer Time Act 1928 was passed extending the period of summer time from 14 October 1928 to 17 March 1929, the period of advancement was changed to just half an hour. This made New Zealand Summer Time 12 hours in advance of Greenwich Mean Time.

The Summer Time Act 1929 enacted the provision of a 30-minute time advance from the second Sunday in October to the third Sunday in March the following year. In 1933 the period was extended from the first Sunday in September to the last Sunday in April of the following year. This continued until 1941, when the period of Summer Time was extended by emergency regulations to cover the whole year. This change was made permanent in 1946 by the Standard Time Act.

Cartoon of T.K Sidey from New Zealand Free Lance, 30 September 1911. Courtesy of www.nzhistory.net.nz

Daylight Saving Since 1974

The Time Act 1974 provided that the Governor-General could declare, by Order in Council, a period of Daylight Time (daylight saving). Daylight Time is fixed as a one-hour advance on New Zealand Standard Time, and in the case of the Chatham Islands, is fixed at one hour forty-five minutes ahead of New Zealand Standard Time.

The public response to a trial period of daylight saving in 1974/75 was generally favourable and the New Zealand Time Order 1975 fixed the period of daylight saving from the last Sunday in October each year to the first Sunday in March of the year following.

In 1985, the Department of Internal Affairs undertook a comprehensive survey of public attitudes towards daylight saving and its effects on work, recreation and society. The results of the survey demonstrated that 76% of the population wanted daylight saving either continued or extended.

In 1988, as a consequence of the survey and further feedback from the public, the Minister of Internal Affairs arranged for a trial period of extended daylight saving to be held from the second Sunday in October to the third Sunday in March. The Minister invited the public to write to him with their views on the five-week extension.

Again the public response was generally favourable and a new Daylight Time Order was made in 1990. It declared that Daylight Time would run for 24 weeks from the first Sunday in October each year until the third Sunday in March of the following year.

Daylight Saving Review

The end of daylight saving in 2006 generated public debate, which led to a review of the period. A petition to extend daylight saving was presented to Parliament with an estimated 42,000 signatures.

The Minister of Internal Affairs Hon Rick Barker announced on 30 April 2007 that the period of daylight saving would be extended to run from the last Sunday in September until the first Sunday in April.

- [Daylight Saving Dates in New Zealand](#)
- [Public Attitude Survey \(2008\)](#)
- [Regulatory Impact Statement: Proposed extension to the period of Daylight Saving \(2007\)](#)

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