



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**'Longitudinal' wins Speller a ticket to USA**

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A stunned Ryan McLellan of James Hargest College in Invercargill won first place in the final of The NZ Vegemite Spelling Bee today after correctly spelling the word 'longitudinal', meaning 'running lengthwise.'

"I can't quite believe that I've won, it's not sinking in!" says Ryan.

Ryan was one of 16 finalists from around the country attending the nation's top spelling contest. The Year Nine spellers showed their talent for putting the right letters in the right place, spelling words such as gargantuan, moratorium, ostentatious, and alabaster.

When the other 14 contestants had been knocked out of the competition, Ryan locked horns with Symone Robson, also from James Hargest College.

Symone took second place after stumbling on 'reticence', which left Ryan to take out the NZ Vegemite Spelling Bee champion title, appearing overwhelmed as the spelling bee's audience thundered its applause.

Ryan will now spend the next three months studying for the 85<sup>th</sup> Scripps National Spelling Bee in Maryland USA in June, where a win could earn him more than US\$40,000 and other prizes.

Roger Hall, Patron of the NZ Vegemite Spelling Bee, says: "It was one of the most exciting finals. The real drama came when contestants paused for a long time as they weighed up their next letter. Then the atmosphere became electric. Being in Circa Theatre really added to the tension, it seemed purpose built."

Debuting as the Bee's new announcer, Dr Matthew Trundle from Victoria University said he enjoyed his new role: "It felt like it went on for so long, because of the tension. Then it went down to the last two it fell really quickly, it was a play-off, one missed letter and it was over."

Ryan is nervous but excited about the prospect of representing New Zealand at the US Final.

"I've never flown out of New Zealand before."

Ryan's preparation for the US Spelling Bee will include studying the Scripps National Spelling Bee word list, and reading Webster's Third New International Dictionary, a 5kg monster with 470,000 words. Ryan will also try to master the differences in American - English spelling.

The winner of the 2012 final is this country's eighth representative at the US Spelling Bee, the world's longest running academic competition and held more times than the Academy Awards. In America it attracts more than eleven million competitors hopeful of winning a place in the championship final.

### Further Information on the NZ Vegemite Spelling Bee

Event Manager Janet Lucas says it is a great honour that New Zealand is able to participate in this competition.

"The event is just huge in the States. With so many millions of American kids dying to get a chance to go to the Scripps Spelling Bee, we are lucky to be able to send a Kiwi representative."

The spellers work through a series of rounds, with each speller given one word per round. If they spell it correctly, they progress to the next round. With an incorrect spelling, a bell is rung, signaling they are out of the competition.

The NZ Vegemite Spelling Bee 2013 is open to Year 8 students. Their school must register with Scripps National Spelling Bee in August 2012 to ensure the spellers can participate in the event.

Kraft Foods spokeswoman Melissa Le Mesurier said the company was delighted to again support the New Zealand Vegemite Spelling Bee.

"This is our fifth year as major sponsor. The spelling bee is a terrific fit with Vegemite, which is loaded with vitamins and minerals - great for vitality and keeping minds bright and attentive. The NZ Vegemite Spelling Bee is a great way for students to challenge their minds, extend their spelling and vocabulary skills and develop their confidence."

Other sponsors of the event are ZM and Franklin Electronic Publishers, while event supporters are Oxford University Press, and the New Zealand Dictionary Centre.

The competition's new pronouncer is Dr Matthew Trundle, Classics Associate Professor at Victoria University and Associate Dean in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, whose particular interests lie in the history and historiography of the ancient world.

Janet Lucas, organiser of the NZ Vegemite Spelling Bee, says Dr Trundle is a welcome addition to the event.

“Dr Trundle brings a wealth of experience in language and its origins. We’re thrilled and honoured to have him join the Bee.”

The New Zealand Vegemite Spelling Bee is administered by a charitable trust. Its’ purpose is to help students improve their spelling, increase their vocabularies, learn concepts, and develop correct English usage.

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