

The Rangitoto Observer

DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY

Issue 21 – December 20, 2019

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE

Survey raises fears of
library sell-off... p3

Controversial fire station
plans revisited... p5

Poet's life is sociable on
popular walkway... p19

Inspector does U-turn after meeting bar owner

Despite observing people urinating and vomiting in public spaces, littering and making a racket around closing time, an alcohol licensing inspector reversed her opposition to a Takapuna bar's late-closing application, after an 11th-hour meeting with the owner.

Inspector Clare Sturzaker had opposed the application for the Elephant Wrestler to extend its closing time from 1am to 3am from Wednesday to Saturday, based on the antisocial behaviour she saw over five nights' observations outside the premises in June.

But in a 27 November report, she said that, after meeting with bar owner Steven Shute, she believed the employment of a street warden and stopping selling drinks at 2.30am – allowing 30 minutes for patrons to drink up before leaving the Hurstmere Rd

To page 2

King of the Bays reigns in Takapuna once more



Raring to go... Takapuna's Rebecca Bryant was thrilled to swim in King of the Bays, which returned to Takapuna Beach on 7 December, after a two-year hiatus due to water-quality issues. More pictures, page 4.



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From page 1

Late-night closing opposed by neighbours

bar by 3am – would address her concerns.

Takapuna residents turned out in force at the licensing hearing from 4 to 9 December.

In 65 objections, they told of assaults, people urinating, defecating and having sex in apartment gardens, vomiting, vandalising property, leaving litter and broken glass and keeping them awake with noise.

Four supporters of the application said Takapuna was being developed as a metropolitan centre, where apartment dwellers would benefit from local nightlife, and that later closing created local jobs. They were

keen to have a local venue at which to watch major sports events.

Shute's counsel, John Young, said his client was not targeting the 18 to 25-year-old drinkers that earlier events at Bin Bin Deluxe had, when behaviour got out of hand.

He conceded drinkers who stayed very late tend to be younger.

Young said the street warden, required under an amended resource consent, would prevent the antisocial behaviour residents were unhappy about.

Young said the warden could actually

improve public behaviour in the area.

Later closing would give punters an opportunity to finish their evening in the relative safety of Takapuna, rather than heading into the CBD or elsewhere.

Auckland District Licensing Committee panel chair Gavin Campbell said he had never previously seen a resource consent requiring a street warden to monitor an area beyond the footprint of the bar.

"Licensees have reason to be afraid of this consent," Campbell said.

A decision is expected in late January.

Police too short-staffed to manage extended trading hours

Police opposed the later closing at The Elephant Wrestler because they have an increased demand for personnel around closing time, but fewer staff on duty at 3am than 1am.

Waitemata police sent officers to the area at closing time on busy nights to keep order and prevent crime, Waitemata East Area Commander Inspector Sunny Patel said at the hearing.

However, they changed shifts at 2am, and had fewer staff on at 3am. They would have to bring staff from west Auckland, drawing them away from policing there.

The police report to the committee described residents' concerns about antisocial behaviour as "valid".

Auckland Regional Public Health Service compliance officer Ying Li presented evidence for the medical officer of health citing research showing longer opening hours for taverns were associated with alcohol-related harm.

John Young, counsel for the bar owner, Steven Shute, asked whether Li had evidence specific to the venue.

Li said she had visited the bar on four or five occasions, which didn't raise specific concerns, and conceded she did not have sufficient data to present it as evidence.

Two bars withdraw bids for 3am closing

The owner of neighbouring Hurstmere Rd bars Florrie McGreals and Master and Apprentice, Kevin Schwass, had also applied for extended licences to 3am, Wednesday to Saturday, but withdrew his application shortly before the hearing.

He was not prepared to comment on the reason and had "no idea" whether he would lodge it again.

Letters to the Editor

Topics should be local.

Noms-de-plume or submissions

without a name will not be printed.

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NEXT ISSUE: Jan 24
ADVERTISING DEADLINE: Jan 17

Barrys Pt goes to dogs

A dog park at Barrys Point Reserve has been given the green light.

The reserve has been confirmed as the best location for a dog park in the Devonport-Takapuna area, after a service assessment by Auckland Council.

A detailed design will now be prepared with work expected between 2020 and 2021.



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2 The Strand: empty for 647 days

The former Takapuna Library building at 2 The Strand has been vacant since an earthquake notice was issued in March 2018. The 1956 heritage-listed public building has now been unoccupied for 647 days. At some point, its future will be determined by Auckland Council.



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New \$4.7 million bridge progressing

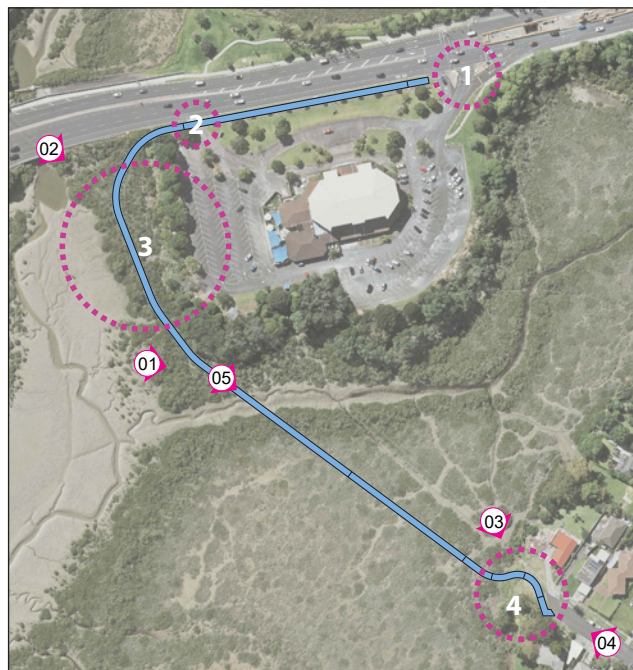
A \$4.7 million timber bridge providing a walkway/cycle link between Francis St and Esmonde Rd is at an advanced stage of investigation.

Auckland Transport and Auckland Council has commissioned various studies and reports on the link since 2015. A number of options have been considered, but a direct bridge across the mangroves from Francis St to Esmonde Rd has been selected as the best, documents put to a closed Devonport-Takapuna Local Board workshop show.

Unknowns in the project include possible cost overruns, its effects on the environment and the likely need to apply for notified planning consent, an AT report to the board said.

The board will make a decision on final designs in the new year, after which it will go out for public consultation.

The Observer wanted to report on board members' opinions and put questions to officers, but was banned from the meeting.



New walkway and cycleway in the offing... the preferred route (above) and an artist's impression of what the bridge will look like (left)



Survey provokes fears for Takapuna Library

A council survey is raising fears Takapuna Library could be moved, sold or downsized.

Auckland Council says the survey is part of a "community needs assessment" of what services the community uses and what people think of them.

"It will also consider the implications for council-owned facilities, with a focus on the Mary Thomas Centre, Takapuna Community Services Building, Takapuna War Memorial Hall and Takapuna Library, including the potential to explore opportunities within planned development in the central Takapuna area," head of service and asset planning Justine Haves says.

The council contracted Mobius Research to undertake the survey, which had a rough ride after launching on 22 November.

It was withdrawn for a few days at the end of November and early December, while Age Concern was deleted from the list of services under consideration, and three other services added: Takapuna North Community Trust, Positive Ageing Centre and North Shore Centres of Mutual Aid.

The deadline was extended to 10 January, but Friends of Takapuna Library chair Jenny Cole is worried the survey results will be confused by the false start, and that the extension takes the quiz through the holiday period, when people are less likely to be at their computers.

The survey has been poorly publicised, Cole says. It hasn't been advertised in local papers, for example.

But her real fears are for the library, which could end up being moved or rebuilt.

"If the library's area was reduced, which has started with the council's service desk moving into there, Takapuna would be in danger of losing Research North, which is a key part of the library.

"It offers extensive local history documents and photographs, and houses important collections, such as the Angela Morton art collection. The records relate to key figures on the North Shore, like (RAK) Mason and (ARD) Fairburn."

People visit the centre from far and wide to access those records, Cole adds.

The needs assessment will result in recommendations to the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board, which will make decisions on them, Haves says.

Panuku development manager Kate Cumberpatch says Panuku would only get involved after any decisions were made.

However, an optimisation process must be cost-neutral, where the proceeds from any sales are reinvested in new facilities in the same area.

The survey is on the council's Have Your Say web page, and hard copies are available at Takapuna Library.



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LIMITED SPACES FOR 2020

King of Bays makes a splash back in home waters



Right royal success... Sebastien Priscott wins the 2.8km King of the Bays swim between Milford and Takapuna Beaches



Back on shore... Martin Cooper hands out medals



Going coastal... Swimmers round a buoy on their way from Milford Beach to Takapuna Beach, where the Harcourts Cooper & Co King of the Bays programme of swims ran through the day

Fire station developer revisits controversial consent

Controversial plans for a large retirement home bordering Takapuna's Killarney Park have resurfaced, with the developer applying to vary its consent.

The former Takapuna Fire Station has been put up for sale by McConnell Clearmont, which bought it in 2015 with plans for an aged-care facility.

The company's first notified consent application in May 2016, for a seven-storey building with 101 units, was dropped in the face of community opposition, but a revised non-notified consent for a six-level facility with 96 units was approved.

Prior to putting the property on the market, on 29 August 2019, McConnell Clearmont applied for a variation to the consent including changes at the basement and ground floor levels, according to information supplied under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987.

If approved, the mix of units would change, providing for 40 high-care units, rather than the 12 in the existing consent. Consequently, staff would increase from 20 to 30. In addition, the number of units increase from 96 to 105 and car-parking spaces would rise from 75 to 95, after new excavations. The tallest roof peak increase in height by about 40cm.

Since lodging the application, the company has twice put it on hold. The council says any notification or decision on the application, which would be made by an independent commissioner, would likely to be made in the first half of next year.

A traffic consultant's report supporting the application estimates the changes would add six more vehicle trips in the morning and evening to and from the facility, which would be a "negligible" effect.

A Takapuna resident who submitted in favour of the property being added to Killarney Park says the consent should be notified, because one reason submitters opposed the larger building was concern about traffic.



In addition, Franco Belgiorno-Nettis would like the council to review its zoning decision methods for the site and reconsider purchasing the property for a park. (See his letter, page 9.)

McConnell Clearmont business manager Charlotte Seath did not wish to comment.

Prime site...

The former Takapuna fire station site is for sale again, as the building becomes increasingly derelict



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PROPERTY UPDATE - NOVEMBER 2019

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Written and produced by Alistair Helm, Licensed real estate salesperson



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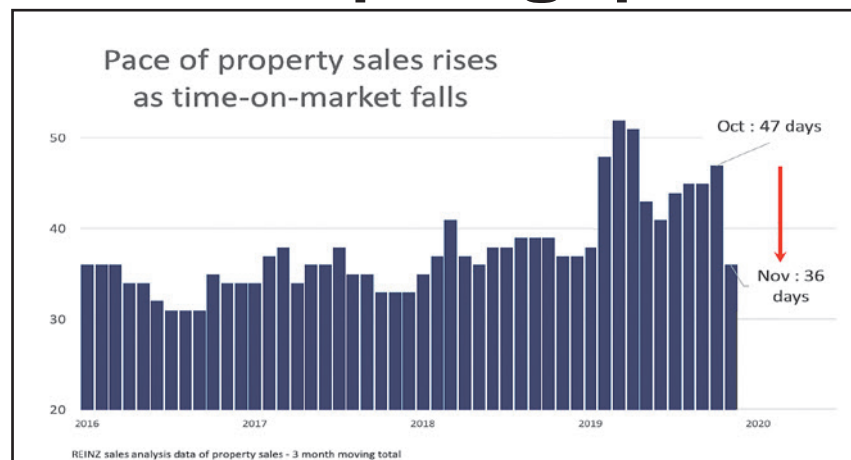


Pace of the market picking up

The local property market has certainly come alive in just the past month as the pace of the sales has increased. The typical 'time-on-market' for properties for sale has fallen from 47 days in October to just 36 days last month.

This is in stark contrast to the pace of the market over the past year when typically, a property was taking around 45 days to sell, peaking at 52 days in March. This pick up in the market is reflective of the wider North Shore City that has seen 'time-on-market' also fall to 36 days in November, with Auckland overall at 37 days, both of these markets were experiencing up to 47 days to sell earlier this year.

Whilst properties are selling faster, reflective of growing buyer demand; total sales are still low. For the past 3 months, sales totalled 165. This is up 14% as compared to this time last year but is relatively low when compared to typical sales of well over 225 a month back in 2015 and 2016. The key reason for this slow level of sales is the shortage of properties coming onto the market. This limited choice is frustrating buyers who are eager to buy and driving this faster



pace of the market.

As buyer demand grows so prices tend to rise, and whilst the median sale price of \$1.16m slipped 3%, the trend is that prices are rising. The median sale price for Auckland was a \$885,000 up 2.9%. This is a significant rise, given the fact that the median price has been hovering around \$850,000 for close on 4 years – peaking at \$900,000 way back in March 2017.

The property market now heads into a quieter period over Christmas, closing off the second of two very quiet years in which activity has been subdued.

I feel that we are seeing strong indicators for a healthier market for 2020. What could hold the market back will be listings.

Without confident sellers looking to make their next move, all that demand from buyers will be left unsatisfied.

Property Report – November 2019

ALL \$ 1,160,000 -3%

1&2 \$ 800,000 +7%

3&4 \$ 1,320,000 +6%

Takapuna \$ 1,075,000 +9%

Milford \$ 1,195,000 -1%

Forrest Hill \$ 1,050,500 -9%

Source: Real Estate Institute of NZ

Making Xmas decorations a welcome diversion



Christmas therapy... Waitemata District Health Board chief executive Dale Bramley (front) embraced the Christmas spirit on show at North Shore Hospital's Ward 6, where patients had made many of the decorations.

Director of nursing and midwifery Jocelyn Peach recently told a DHB committee that patients on the ward found making decorations took their minds off their illness.

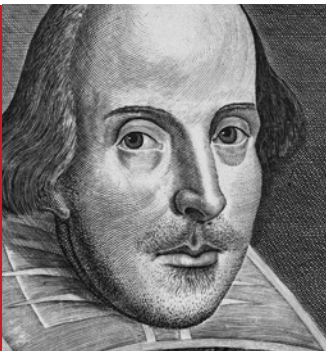
Joining Bramley in the photograph are (left to right) staff Youngjoo Jung, Lemlem Tafete, Monica Smith, Narissa Smuts, Coralyn Cruz, Dhorey Gabinete, Eun Park and Ashleigh Selling, with Maryanne Miranda next to Bramley.

Decision on Sacred Grove due in New Year

Final decisions on Sacred Grove on Takapuna Beach will be made by the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board at its February or March meeting.

Auckland Council is currently working on detailed designs.

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WWII barracks years from opening

Moves to allow immediate public use of the old barracks in Kennedy Park on Beach Rd, Castor Bay, have been scotched – due to the dilapidated state of the building.

Architectural designs are being drawn up by Auckland Council, with the aim of upgrading the barracks for community use. However, the rebuild is likely to be years away.

Devonport-Takapuna Local Board member Ruth Jackson wondered at the board meeting last week if a quick tidy-up of the building was possible so community groups

could start using it – even on a limited basis.

Buildings only deteriorated further if they were unoccupied, she said.

However local-board senior advisor Tristan Coulson said the building was a safety risk to the public. It has borer, asbestos and an unstable chimney.

If the board allowed groups to use the barracks now, it would be breaching its health and safety responsibilities, he said.

Once the upgraded designs were finished and approved, budgets were likely to be brought forward, Coulson said.

Council moves on solution for Lake Pupuke's water quality

Water "mixing" has been selected as the best option to improve water quality in Lake Pupuke.

The mixing technique involves creating a current that circulates water in the lake to improve its condition.

However, Auckland Council head of healthy waters strategy Andrew Chin said an independent report noted that "more monitoring work is required before we decide how feasible the mixing option is".

The council's healthy waters team has been investigating the most feasible and effective ways to address the water quality issues on the lake, which suffers from increasing biodiversity, and a consequent build-up of nutrients.

"With any lake as large and deep as Lake Pupuke, remediation can sometimes inadvertently have the opposite effect and make the water quality worse," Chin said.

"To mitigate this we need to carefully assess all options, so we can be confident we

are choosing the best approach for the lake.

"When this level of investigation is finished we will then focus on the best way to carry out the work, including consenting requirements."

Kennedy Park stairs may reopen

The fire-damaged Kennedy Park staircase may be open by Christmas.

The project was delayed due a Guy Fawkes fire, which burnt part of the staircase and nearby vegetation.

The staircase was not expected to reopen until the new year.

However, Devonport-Takapuna Local Board member George Wood said he had talked to site contractors who were working quickly.

"They think it may be finished by Christmas," Wood told the board at its meeting last week.

Maori art to give car park a lift

Maori artists have been selected to design artwork for four lift shaft walls in Takapuna's new Gasometer car park, running the building's full height, Panuku says. They are: Graham Tipene from Te Wheke Moko and Tessa Harris from Taonga Toi. It is too early to say how much the work will cost.

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Residents' call for park should be revisited

The recommendation by the Independent Hearings Panel in 2016 of Terrace Houses Apartment Buildings (THAB) zoning for the site of the ex-Takapuna Fire Station was made, like all the specific rezoning requests, without adequate reasons for the rejection of the submissions by many Takapuna residents calling for the land to be annexed to Killarney Park.

This showed total disregard for the community, and also a complete lack of respect of the law, according to an appeal decision in my favour (*Belgiorno-Nettis v Auckland Unitary Plan Independent Hearings Panel* [2019] NZCA 175).

The land was bought "unconditionally" for well over six times the CV value (\$14.3 million) in 2015, when the Unitary Plan was in the middle of its process and indeed over one year before the recommendation by the panel.

At that time, the recommended zone was

Mixed House Suburban, or two storeys, yet minutes from meetings between Auckland Council planners and the developer, released under official information legislation, show the developer's resource-consent consultant was confident zoning in the Unitary Plan would support plans for a retirement village or care facility.

In April 2016, the panel went ahead with hearing the submitters opposing THAB zoning and calling for a park, as if it was still subject to a consideration. I believe this was a total farce of a democratic process.

Now the land is for sale again, many residents believe the best use of the land would be as "open space", extending Killarney Park, as requested by the submitters, other than the landowner.

This is mainly because of the thousands of apartments that will be built in the future in the area near the park.

The council accepted the Independent

Hearings Panel's recommendation for THAB zoning without any discussion – the North Shore councillors didn't even raise the issue at an important August 2016 council governing body meeting, even though it was expressly requested by me in emails.

With the current sales process under way, it seems that there are again calls for extending Killarney Park into this area and indeed I think that would certainly be the best solution.

Auckland Council should investigate of the process that ended with the sale to McConnell Clearmont Limited Partnership, and review the recommendation and decision made during the Unitary Plan process.

Franco Belgiorno-Nettis

Sanitised information, drip-fed to public, is no longer acceptable

It was not surprising that Devonport-Takapuna Local Board chair Aidan Bennett and his loyal cronies were very quick off the mark trying to defend the indefensible. The facts remain the same: the local board is a "toothless tiger"; it can make a lot of noise but has no decision-making powers and can only recommend.

The members of the board need to remember they are not on the board of the Ford Motor Company, General Motors, BMW, Apple, Samsung, Twitter, Facebook, Netflix, Saatchi and Saatchi, the New

York Times or the Washington Post – yet!

If some members can't stand the heat from ever-increasing numbers of educated voters demanding open local government, and to see all available information on issues, perhaps they might be better off "out of the kitchen". We now know when the wool is being pulled over our eyes.

In 2019, the drip-feeding of sanitised information is no longer acceptable,

Bruce Tubb

PS. What pathetic, stingy Christmas decorations by council and the Devonport and Takapuna Business Associations!

Glenfield Greyhounds claim their pedigree

In the article "Council delays costly for Forrest Hill United" (22 November), we incorrectly referred to the "Glenfield Rovers" when in fact the rugby league club, based in Sunnynook Park, is called the "Glenfield Greyhounds".

Glenfield Rovers is a football club based at McFetridge Park.

Apologies for any confusion caused.

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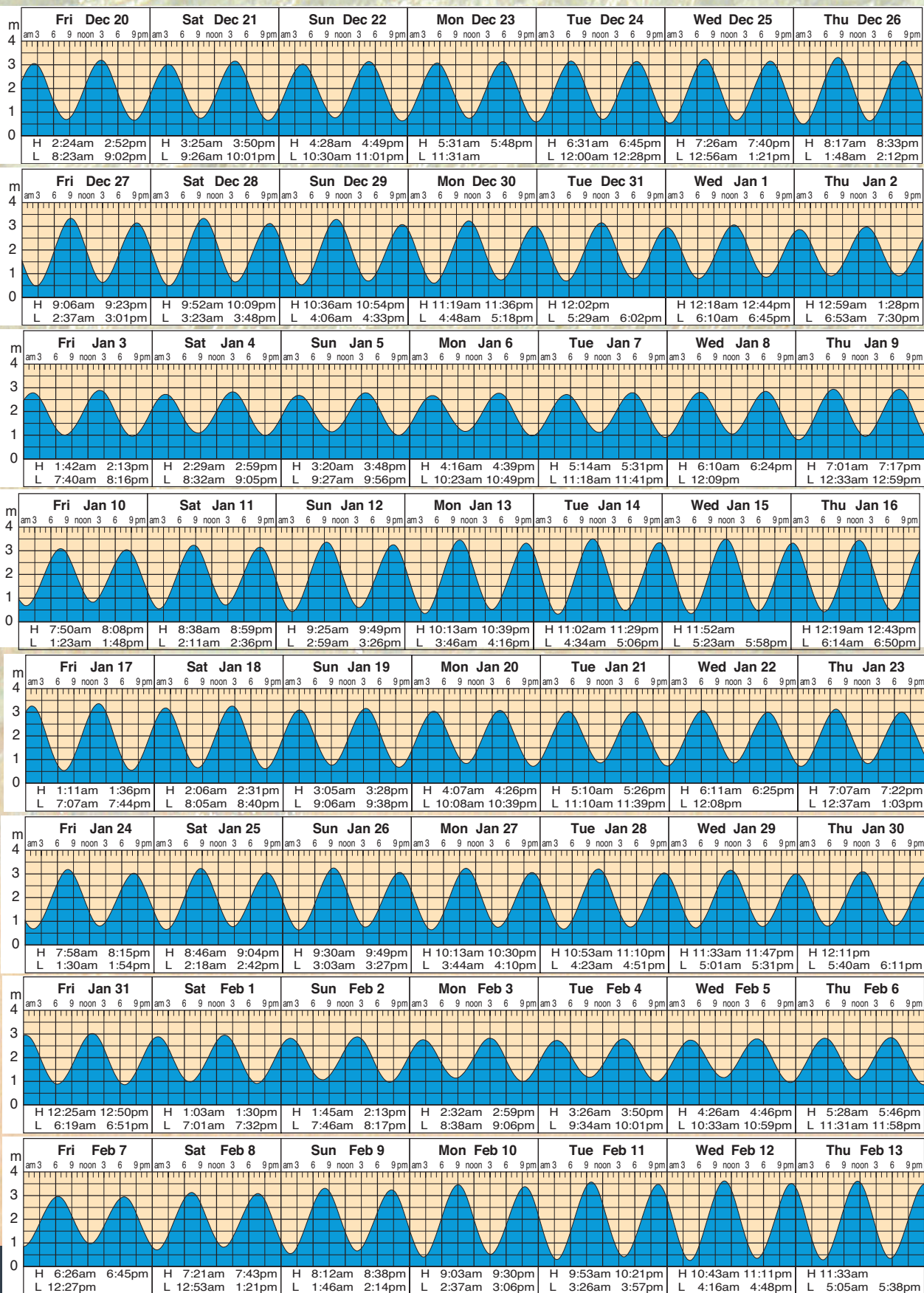
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Rangitoto Observer Tides



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Early meeting times shut out public

As an active participant in several areas of the community, I thoroughly enjoy the times that I have been able to attend Devonport-Takapuna Local Board Tuesday meetings.

I have at times also enjoyed the opportunity of presenting to, or debating with, the board on the subject of the day.

I am now bitterly disappointed to see that the meetings have been brought forward to 2pm, effectively excluding the majority of residents who work full-time.

It would be fantastic to go to a meeting and debate this subject, especially with Mr. Bennett. But alas, I can't get there at that time of the day.

It seems like another tightening of the muzzle on the voices of interested and concerned members of the public. Why are some members of this board appearing to be afraid of others' opinions?

Gavin Sheehan

Community support for open public meetings

In supporting in principle the views of managing editor Rob Drent about public attendance at workshop meetings of the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board (DTLB) (Flagstaff, 22 November), I'd like to suggest a compromise.

Payers of rates, on properties within the board's boundaries, should be entitled to apply for, and receive, a ticket to attend any and all such meetings during the term of office of the board as spectators in the public gallery, on the strict understanding that they

have no rights to speak or to try to influence the course of the discussion in any overt way. This would also include the media.

Thus, interested ratepayers would have the transparency to enable them to hear the background to any issue of importance to them, so informing whatever they might wish to say on the matter during the public forum of a subsequent regular board meeting, or otherwise to raise the matter privately with one or other of the elected board members.

Just as board members are elected to serve

DTLB ratepayers, so officials owe a duty to those whose rate payments cover their salaries and operating costs; if this makes them feel uncomfortable, they are in the wrong jobs.

And the chairman may need to be reminded of the generally accepted convention that a casting vote is used to maintain the status quo.

**Terry Dunleavy,
Chairman**

Takapuna Residents Association

Personal attack unnecessary

Bruce Tubb's attack on Aidan Bennett is unnecessarily personal (Flagstaff, 6 December), just because Bennett voted to exclude the public from council workshops. To suggest that this decision is a threat to democracy is a nonsense. Workshops for whatever organisation are usually in-house and the chance for staff to be

better informed and to test opinions, free from any public scrutiny.

I often disagree with decisions made by the council (and will do so again), but in this case they should be free to have workshops behind closed doors.

Roger Hall

Observer's cultural competency falls short

I have just read the current issue of the Rangitoto Observer, dated 6 December, 2019.

I was quite pleased to see the Forrest Hill School Cultural Festival on the front page.

Continuing on to page 7, I was disappointed to see the header "Konnichiwa from Forrest Hill School", when clearly the picture below was of two girls, one wearing a kimono representing Japan and the other wearing the traditional Korean dress called Hanbok.

The caption below the photo further high-

lighted this by noting "Stella Oh and Miya Aitken wore kimonos".

It is very disappointing to see that rather than choosing to correctly represent the cultural diversity present at the Cultural Festival, the Rangitoto Observer appears to have made no effort to research and to represent the two distinct cultures correctly.

In the future, I hope all cultures are represented correctly and appropriately as they should be.

Han Lee

Letters to the editor

Letters are welcome. They should be on topics relating to Milford, Takapuna and nearby suburbs. Noms-de-plume or submissions without a name will not be printed. Length under 500 words. Email news@rangitoto-observer.co.nz

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Lampooned then framed, but Bennett sees the funny side

You can say what you like about Aidan Bennett, the new Devonport-Takapuna Local Board chair – but he's got a sense of humour.

The Devonport Flagstaff, and our sister publication the Rangitoto Observer, have been heavily critical of Bennett's push for closed board workshops.

Last week, Bennett turned up for a chat with managing editor Rob Drent, along with a framed copy of the Guy Body cartoon of him, which ran in both papers.

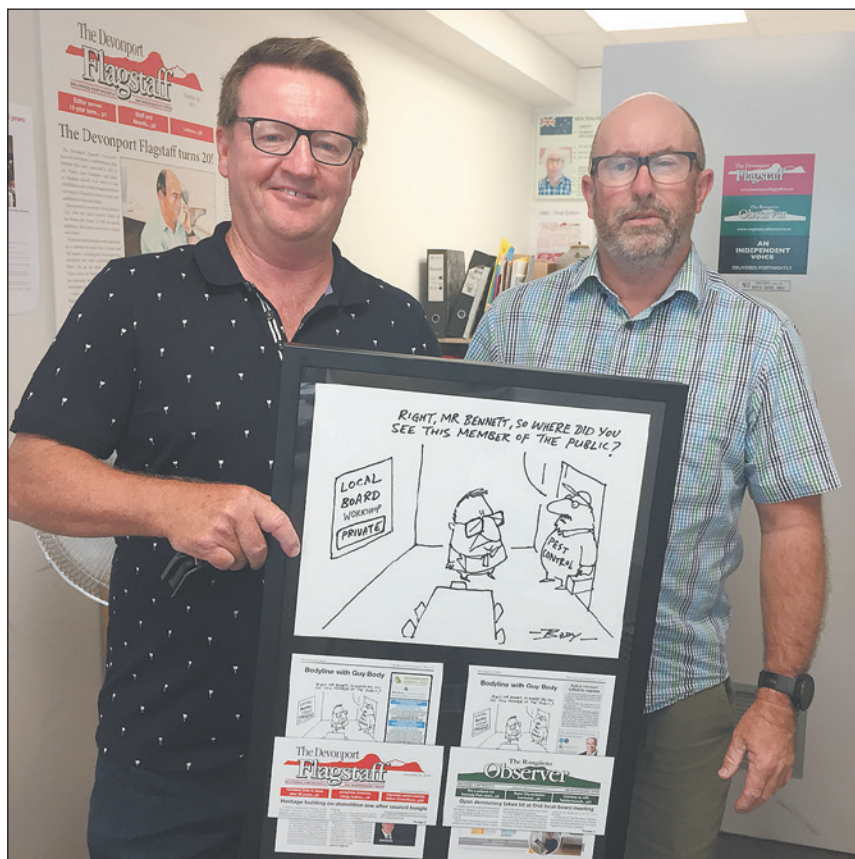
It had been blown up and presented to Bennett by staff at the Christmas party for his company, Benefitz.

Overall, Bennett was relaxed about the exposure.

He said he was annoyed initially by the cartoon, but it had grown on him.

And he was impressed by the likeness Body had created.

Picture perfect... Devonport-Takapuna Local Board chair Aidan Bennett (left), and Flagstaff and Observer managing editor Rob Drent, with the framed version of Guy Body's cartoon of the politician



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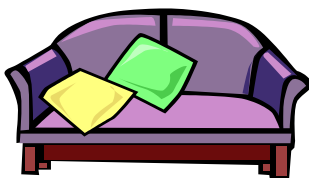
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Christmas cheer at Wilson Home concert



Christmas tunes... the Navy Saxophone Quartet

The Wilson Home chapel was full for its annual community Christmas concert last Sunday.

The audience sang Christmas carols and was entertained by the Royal New Zealand Navy Band Saxophone Quartet and pianist Se Joon Park.

Crowd-pleasers...

Organisers Chris Jones (left), Felicity Hendricks and John Wol, and the audience (below)



Better hospital food on menu

Pleas for better hospital food have prompted health advocate Sandra Coney to make improving the notorious fare a goal for her next term on the Waitemata District Health Board.

Coney, who was re-elected to the health board this year, told the Hospital Advisory Committee meeting on 4 December she had received three letters from patients praising the care they received in hospital, but imploring her to get the food improved.

"I am interested not only in the food, but the presentation," Coney said.

Board members commented that visiting

patients overseas confirmed hospital food can be well presented and delicious.

The committee asked for a paper to be prepared on options for improving food, and agreed it should be a permanent item on the agenda for full board meetings.

Judy McGregor, board chair, said the hospitals had already achieved food that was less fatty and sugary, proving changes could be made.

North Shore Hospital and Waitakere both use Compass Group for catering.

Compass Group did not respond to a request for comment.

Mental health support team heads to Samoa

A psychiatrist and mental health nurse from Waitemata DHB will head to Samoa in the coming weeks to support people coping with its measles outbreak.

Samoa is under a state of emergency due to the epidemic. The death toll stood at 72 as the *Observer* went to press, with 61 of the victims children under the age of four.

MFAT asked Waitemata DHB to deploy specific medical staff in response to a request by the Samoan government.

Two teams of nurses left in late November and early December, with another on standby to go and help with the government's compulsory mass vaccination programme.

Toiletries for domestic violence victims

Zonta North Shore is collecting toiletries for women who arrive at the North Shore Hospital emergency department as victims of violence. Often they arrive with their children and the clothes they stand up in. Zonta works with the A&E social workers to assist these women with money for immediate needs, such as taxis to the refuge, as well as nappies, footwear and the emergency toiletry packs. Donations of toiletries (unused, unopened) would be greatly appreciated. Contact aucklandnorthshore@zonta.org.au or phone Fiona (0274 899 147) or Gail (021 686516) to arrange drop off.



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For more information contact our friendly library team on 377-0209, check out our Events page on the Auckland Libraries website www.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz or email us at TakapunaEvents@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz to find out more.



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Crowds feel Christmassy love



Man in red... No Christmas carnival is complete without Santa, pictured here with Baxter (5) and Sophie (3) Alexander

Sunshine, street performers, face-painting, games, a market and a chance to tell Santa what you want for Christmas – the I Love Takapuna Christmas Carnival had it all, drawing a crowd to Hurstmere Rd on Saturday 30 November. There was even a pop-up circus performance.



Tall order... Stilt walkers were among entertainers at the carnival



Fun times... Layla Welch (2) bounces joyfully in an inflated castle

Paul Firth shares home and history with walkers

Of the thousand or so people who cross his front garden every day, on the coastal walkway between Takapuna and Milford, Paul Firth reckons he greets around half.

"People stop all the time – that's why I haven't done any gardening," Firth says.

People stop to make family connections with Firth, who was born in the seaside cottage in 1944, or talk about the enlarged photographs he leaves displayed on bushes beside the walkway on fine days.

One shows a whale, washed up near the cottage in 1952. His mother earlier saw it swimming.

Firth's great-grandfather, Josiah Clifton Firth, built a castle-inspired home in concrete in Mt Eden in 1871, and another concrete farmstead in Matamata, now preserved as a museum.

His son and grandsons built on his experiments, founding the Firth concrete business.

Clifton Firth was the artistic son, who assisted his brothers with advertising at the same time as building up his portrait photography work, for which he became well-known. His studio work took off during the Second World War, when there was an increased demand for portrait photography.

"I was born into that, which is partly why I have that sense of history," says Firth.

It's why, he says, he would like his home, one of the most historic on the walkway, preserved as a museum or artist's residency, something like Frank Sargeson's cottage.

"Even on a stormy day, people come. There's always something to look at."

The other owner of the property, a relative, agrees with the idea of gifting the property to the people of Takapuna.

Firth says he his lawyer keeps in touch with Auckland Council over ideas for keeping the property for the city.

As a first step, the 75-year-old has been lobbying Auckland Council officers for a formal acknowledgement of the cottage's history.

Not only is it one of the original holiday homes from the 1920s, which Firth's family moved into, it became a gathering place for North Shore artists and writers.

Among the many visitors to the family's cottage were artist Molly Macalister, Frank Sargeson – whom Clifton Firth photographed, Carl (CK) Stead, Ron (RAK) Mason and Rex (ARD) Fairburn.

Firth's parents were dedicated communists, who went to China several times, and visited writer Rewi Alley.

Their brand of communism was more to do with a way of life than a creed, Firth says.

"If you contributed to the benefit of society, that was communism.

"For Dad, it was the idea of giving to people who deserve it, not just who need it."

Firth started his working life using his



Popular spot... Paul Firth recalls artists and intellectuals visiting his parents, Melva and portrait photographer Clifton Firth

talent for maths to work in agricultural research, then moved into sales for demolition yards.

He has life-long injuries from falling off a roof in Milford. Latterly, he worked for the Corban winemaking family, planting and grafting vines.

Firth has had girlfriends, but never married or – a source of sadness – had children.

After returning to his family home around 25 years ago, he has discovered he

enjoys owning dogs, as well as the social side of living on the popular walkway.

Firth enjoys writing poetry, and often thinks about Christianity, prompted partly by his flatmate, a nurse, who also cares for him. A mural by his father, *Annunciation* (pictured) – showing among other things Adam and Eve, and Joseph and Mary – is another influence. In the Christmas-themed poem on this page, he imagines the latter choosing his home for Jesus's birth.

The Second Coming

For 20 centuries we waited for your call
from grave.

Many winters on we greet the saviour
with Gentiles to save.

Come heavy laden, a royal manger gives you rest.

Emerald Inn is full this year,

fit for a king of the land.

Go next way by a star with your findings on rocks & sand.

Apostles follow on the shore from bend of bay to headland reef on a shining
Manet Sunday.

Another Galilee they see the mullet run

& birds to soar past the crown of Thornes Bay, hear

the cup runneth over to

Goliath's giant chair

by castle walls

where Herod's temple stands with sentinels in marble halls.

Soon a simple cottage looks your way –

Eden gardens – nasturtiums climbing trees

Tiger lilies & dandelions

On cottage steps

Black rock shack fits well.

With a bed of straw,

open door

Christmas set in stone.

Disciples fish & swim.

Baptised from head to limb, pilgrim souls never feel alone.

Paul Firth

Takapuna project wins 'Green Star' rating

Events at the council-owned space at 38 Hurstmere Rd, which aim to bring the community together, are among the initiatives that have earned Auckland Council's development arm groundbreaking "green" certification for its Unlock Takapuna development project.

Panuku has been working towards the Green Star – Communities rating in Takapuna in conjunction with the New Zealand Green Building Council. Development manager Kate Cumberpatch says the rating is a first of its kind, recognising a community rather than an individual building.

"It looks at all the projects and whether the community will be sustainable for the future," Cumberpatch says.

The plans had to meet more than 100 criteria to get the accreditation, she says.

These included liveability, walkability, fresh food, local employment, opportunities to get outside and relax, meet other people from the community and to exercise.

Some of the activities already held at 38 Hurstmere meet some of these needs – such as a bicycle cafe, workshops, concerts and tables for eating lunch.

Commercial buildings will be required to meet high environmental standards.

Landscape designers Isthmus are working on a concept design for the new public



Blowing their trumpet... Events such as this have helped earn Panuku Green Star accreditation

space, where the Anzac St car park and 38 Hurstmere are now.

There may be features such as a large chess set or basketball hoops to encourage outdoor activities.

The two large trees, an oak and a gum,

will be retained in the design and new trees planted, Cumberpatch says.

The design team has found a way to slow traffic using the service lane that crosses the public space, so pedestrians take priority, rather than cars.

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Thousands of plastic beads found on Milford Beach

Thousands, possibly millions, of plastic beads proved too much for a patient group of Rosmini College students and teachers at a clean-up of Milford Beach.

The most likely culprit was the nearby Wairau Estuary, raising suspicions businesses are not taking enough care, according to Takapuna North Environmental Coordinator Fiona Martin.

One student claimed it would be impossible to clean them all up, she says.

Another suggested "manufacturers should have filter socks on all their storm-water drains, so any spilled beads don't get into the Wairau Stream."

Nearly 30 students took part in the 27 November beach clean-up.

Vast quantities of lentil-sized plastic nurdles are used in manufacturing and can end up in oceans. They do not go away, but rather break into ever smaller fragments in the sea, potentially entering the food chain.

The other most common items found on Milford Beach were hundred of cigarette butts, Martin says.

"Next year I will be looking to address water quality concerns in the Wairau Estuary, Lake Pupuke, and other small streams in the catchment that flow out to our beaches.

"Our streams need to be protected and



Beads and butts... Rosmini College boys cleaning up Milford Beach

kept in pristine condition, not only for the aquatic ecosystem that lives within, but also having consideration to the impact they have flowing out into the marine environment," Martin says.

"The marine life mistakenly ingest the plastics, and various microplastics. Plus the cigarettes, and toxins leaching out of waste products into the water are actually toxic pollutants."



Founded in 1905, Waitemata Golf Club is a beautiful 18-hole course with a flat contour that allows easy walking through beautiful park-like surroundings with well-established trees, shrubs and water features.

Nestled between Mt. Victoria and Narrow Neck Beach, the course is one of Devonport's iconic attractions. Originally the home of the Takapuna Jockey Club, the contours of the infamous 'Back Straight' are still discernible when playing the par 5 13th. The course was originally nine holes within the perimeter of a horse-racing track. Motorbike racing, horse racing, greyhound and professional foot racing shared Alison

Park until 1934. The first full season of the Waitemata Golf Club on Alison Park took place in 1906, with annual subs of one guinea for men, and ten shillings and sixpence for women. Players were to use caddies and pay them sixpence for the afternoon and one penny for each ball found.

Waitemata Golf Club is committed to growing the game among young people and has seen a large growth in junior membership, offering support for both new and experienced golfers. Junior membership is open to all those under 19 years old, with competition days on Sundays. It includes free term-time coaching every Friday after school.

The recently renovated club rooms offer the ideal '19th' of your round. Our relaxing lounge bar and comfortable dining area are complemented by spacious outdoor decking providing panoramic views of the course. The Waitemata Cafe and Bar menu is extensive and very reasonably priced.

The ProShop stocks the latest and greatest products from Ping, Titleist, Mizuno and Wilson, along with apparel and a range of accessories.

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Bags of fun... Sackracing sisters Briana (3) and Bianca (6) Bhattarai were among the kids enjoying themselves at the Auckland Transport-funded Sunnynook Christmas Wheels Trail on 12 December. Starting at the Sunnynook Community Centre, the trail followed the newly opened path around Sunnynook Park, with various stations offering fun and treats.



Having a ball... Adriaan (3) and Reinhardt (5) Watkins kept their bike helmets on for a game of swing ball

Sunnynook event spins children's wheels



Eggcellent concentration... Kristie Wu (6) shows her mastery of egg-and-spoon technique



Sweet ride... Quinn Selfe (2), with his festively decorated bike

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