

The Rangitoto Observer

DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY

Issue 33 – June 26, 2020

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE

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Shore centres?... p2**

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finds new role... p4, 5**

Machete swung around supermarket

Shoppers and supermarket workers were stunned to witness two men – one with a machete – chase another man into Takapuna Countdown last Friday afternoon.

Carolyn Collett had just picked up her 16-year-old son and his mate from Rosmini College before driving round the corner to

Barrys Pt Rd to nip in for a few supplies. Around 3.30pm the trio were about to leave the supermarket when they got caught up in the incident.

Collett had gone through the self-checkout first and headed across to the pharmacy, leaving son Max and friend Henry behind

to do their own check-out.

“As I was talking to the pharmacist, I heard someone run in.” At first she thought the ruckus was school students clowning about, but when she turned round she saw something more sinister was going on, with

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Mid-winter swimmers brave the chill



Taking the plunge... (from left) Sheree Davis, Cathy Denne, Tracey Bellingham, and Joanne Ollerenshaw emerge from the water at a Takapuna Beach mid-winter swim last Saturday. More pictures, pages 22 and 23.

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Street events mooted for North Shore

'Al Fresco Fridays' could be launched to invigorate North Shore town centres post Covid-19.

Takapuna, Milford and Devonport would hold the Friday street events if a \$300,000 budget from the New Zealand Transport Agency's Innovating Streets for People pilot fund is secured.

Pop-up outdoor dining and entertainment will be the main drawcards.

"The project has economic development benefits by bringing people into town centres, which will support local businesses following Covid-19," a report to the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board said.

Shared spaces would also be trialled by closing local roads.

The Al Fresco Fridays project will be considered this week by the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board, which would need

to put \$30,000 into the project.

Council staff seem to support the idea, but local-board members are divided going into this week's meeting.

Trish Deans, Ruth Jackson and Jan O'Connor "provided feedback that they do not support the Al Fresco Fridays Project", the report said.

The Devonport Business Association also did not support the proposal, "because the impact would be too significant on local businesses following Covid-19".

If the board fails to put up the \$30,000 contribution, the application will be withdrawn from consideration by council's planning committee on 26 June.

Other projects initially considered for the NZTA streets funding included: a transport project at Campbells Bay Primary School; road calming in Devonport town centre; town-centre improvements at Milford; safety improvements at Sunnynook Bus Station and temporary footpath widening on Kitchener and Hurstmere Rds.

From page 1

Supermarket machete attack

two men in pursuit.

"They were swinging a machete around." The weapon was "a good foot and a half [long] at least," she told the Rangitoto Observer.

"I said to the pharmacist 'you should ring the cops'.

Max saw the first man run deeper into the supermarket, before he turned to find two more near him in the self-service section. His mother watched as the machete swished through the air near her son's face. Max kept still as the men called unsuccessfully for the one they were chasing to come out. They soon took off outside. They walked close to Collett – within around a metre and a half, she reckons – with one still twirling the machete about.

Police arrived quickly and made an arrest soon after. A police spokesman said a 20-year-old man had been charged with possession of an offensive weapon and threatening behaviour. He was due to appear in the North Shore District Court last Tuesday. No injuries were reported.

However Collett said the incident could easily have been much more serious. "All I could think about was if a mum and her little child were walking out of that store and a

man with a machete was running in at full speed like they were... and they'd banged into him..."

It was a reality check that had left her stunned. Her son came over with his friend and put his arm around her shoulder. "The boys are 6 foot 2 tall, big guys, you know, no chickens". They ushered her out of the store, one on either side.

"They said: 'Get in the car now mum, we're going'." It was then she realised the chasers could have been lurking in the bushes, waiting for the other man to come out of the supermarket. The business owner quickly locked her car doors and headed home.

"It was all quiet surreal," said Collett, looking back on the incident. "You read about these sorts of situations... but don't expect it to happen at the local Countdown. It's not what you expect on a Friday afternoon when you go to the supermarket to get your bottle of wine."

The store manager referred the Observer to head office for comment when approached about the incident later. "It's not a usual thing in Takapuna," he said. The store had security and support would be offered to staff.

An official response from Countdown had not been received deadline.

2 The Strand: empty for 836 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 836 days. At some point, its future will be determined by Auckland Council.

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Observer

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Northern Pathway project pushes ahead

Public feedback on the route for the Northern Pathway cycleway will help determine its entry points and which side of the motorway it sits on.

The 7km shared route for cyclists and walkers between Akoranga Drive and Constellation Drive is in the design stages and will link with a section already under construction north to Albany. To the south, it is hoped work will be under way on the Akoranga to Westhaven section next year, taking in the fast-tracked Sky Path over the Harbour Bridge.

The aim of the New Zealand Transport Agency project is to connect the North Shore to the growing cycle network in the city and encourage "active" transport.

Submissions about the Akoranga to Constellation section closed mid-month, and NZTA will report back in due course. It sought comment on access to route segments and intersection crossings along the way, which includes bus stations at each end, AUT, Smales Farm business centre, Westlake Girls High School and sports facilities at Onewa Domain.

NZTA says its focus is to deliver the whole length of the Northern Pathway as soon as possible. At some point along the route the path will need to switch sides, because the Westhaven to Akoranga pathway will finish on the western side of the motorway, and the Constellation Drive to Albany pathway begins on the eastern side.

Rock ruckus sparks flurry of council action



Removal required... Auckland Council has issued 22 abatement notices and set a 10 July deadline for the removal of rocks dumped on Milford Beach in early June. The dumped rocks are lighter in colour than those already on the beach.

Large rocks illegally dumped on Milford Beach must be removed by 10 July, the Auckland Council has ordered.

Four property owners and a contractor were issued abatement notices on Wednesday, 17 June, around 10 days after the first rocks were dumped on the sand just south of Milford Rd.

Beach users were enraged to find their progress along the sand at high tide impeded by rocks scattered metres out from existing rock walls. A local resident reported that a truck had made around 14 trips onto the beach.

It is understood the rocks were transported to the beach to bolster the rock walls at the seaward end of properties accessed from Holiday Rd.

North Shore councillor Chris Darby said the work was unconsented.

Spurred on by the public outcry, he called in the council compliance team, which issued a total of 22 abatement notices.

"It's very unusual," Darby said. "We might [usually] issue one abatement notice on a property." Negotiations were preferred to issuing notices.

Those served with notices were told to

stop bringing rocks to the site and to remove rocks already there in a way approved by council staff. The contractor was also warned that driving on the beach was not allowed.

Darby praised people for speaking out. "My gratitude is to people who have a strong sense of ownership about their community."

The council's manager of regulatory compliance, Steve Pearce, told the Observer that his team expected rock removal to be done carefully. "We have set deadlines for them to supply a methodology, remove the rocks and complete any other necessary remedial works. We expect this to be completed by 10 July.

Failure to comply with an abatement notice would be an offence under the Resource Management Act, he said. Penalties ranged from issuing infringement notices (\$750), to taking a prosecution if appropriate. Fines under the RMA went as high as \$300,000 for individuals and \$600,000 for companies.

The rocks were delivered over the weekend of 6-7 June and possibly later, said Pearce. "We attended the site on 9 June and advised the contractor to cease bringing

rocks on the same day."

He could not confirm at this stage how many trucks and loads were involved.

Pearce said the properties in question had title that extended beyond the existing rock wall. "However, the Auckland Unitary Plan prevents any hard structures such as the rock wall from being established in the Coastal Marine Area (effectively below the high tide line) without consent. It also limits structures immediately above the CMA as this area is prone to flooding and erosion."

Darby said: "People want to protect their properties but if you require a consent you have to get a consent. Rules govern all."

Heart back ticking

Heartbeats – A community based heart group – is restarting at the Mary Thomas Centre Takapuna at 10am on July 2.

Originally set up in Orewa started in Takapuna in March, but was mothballed due to Covid-19. It is a free support group.

Turbulent times – pilot flies into uncharted future

Chris Harvey is one of 300 pilots made redundant by Air New Zealand, as world travel has been shut down by Covid-19. He spoke to Janetta Mackay.



Flight disruption... Chris Harvey has had to 'pivot' into a different career

From schoolboy days at Takapuna Grammar School, Chris Harvey had his eyes set on a career as a pilot. Lift-off came early for the determined young man, but so too an abrupt grounding, when he became a Covid casualty losing his dream job at Air New Zealand.

After nearly 10 years flying overseas – including three years in hotspots for the United Nations – Harvey’s goal was “to come home and have a family and fly for the flag carrier”.

That mission was partly accomplished 18 months ago, when he began flying South Pacific routes for Air New Zealand. He and his fiancée Alexandra next bought a do-up in Hauraki, and added a dog to their household.

Then came the devastating news that he would be one of 300 of the airline’s pilots to be made redundant, due to the pandemic.

Harvey accepts he won’t be going anywhere far soon, and instead is branching out, with new appreciation of what his own parents went through when he was still at school.

Kevin and Christine Harvey ran the Takapuna Beach Holiday Park. When they were unable to secure a long-time lease extension on the property, they sold up in the early 2000s. “I didn’t realise the impact of it, losing their business and house all at once.”

The couple, who now live in Coatesville, started afresh and Harvey has come to appreciate their resilience. They supported him in taking flying lessons as a teenager, and during lockdown he helped them with their current business, dealing in temporary shelters. These were used to house virus-testing stations, so it was a busy time that happened out of the blue.

“That’s what came out of the whole Covid thing: you don’t know what is going to affect you and how.”

While Harvey was personally down about Covid’s impact on aviation and the loss of jobs across so many sectors, he is determined to remain positive. “Never say never is what came out of it to me.”

It was the same attitude that first took him overseas after attending flight school in Christchurch, and then working from Taupo on scenic trips and out of Gisborne internationally on low-level aerial surveying flights.

Harvey later based himself in Canada to build up experience in bigger planes, ending up working for a Toronto-based company that contracted to the United Nations.

“At the time I didn’t realise it would be in such hotspots.”

Flying in Central America, Africa and Afghanistan followed. In both Somalia and Afghanistan, he came under small-arms fire from the ground. Making medical evacuations across the border from the Somali capital, Mogadishu, for six months has left ingrained memories. “I can still smell the skin and stuff burning.”

In Afghanistan, transport routes had to be varied for safety’s sake. For three months, he flew humanitarian flights moving cargo and passengers. Although the country was war-torn, from a four-engine turbo-prop aircraft above the mountains he also recalls it as “so beautiful”.

One experience in the Afghan capital, Kabul, was particularly hair-raising. During elections, when independent supervisors were targeted, those on his UN base had to take cover. Following protocol, he grabbed his ‘go bag’ and headed for a bunker under a central hall.

“When I got there, I thought I was the first person, but there were already 50 people. I thought, ‘How did they get there so quick?’” They all spent five hours holed up, with soldiers above fighting off insurgents.

In Liberia, Harvey experienced his first pandemic scare, the deadly ebola virus that was being held at bay, after an outbreak in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Precautions included dousings of hand sanitiser made from bleach.

Milford ASB reopens

ASB says its Milford branch will reopen by next week or earlier.

The branch had remained closed after the Covid-19 lockdown, raising fears among some locals that the closure might be permanent.

ASB executive general manager of retail banking Craig Sims said the branch had remained closed because branch teams were dealing with customers who needed urgent advice as their Covid-19 support packages were ending.

Open and shut cases

- Plunket has reopened its Takapuna clinic on The Strand, after a slow resumption of full service post-lockdown. Clinics in Milford, Sunnynook and Devonport are also back open for appointments for mothers and babies.
- New Zealand designer brand Ruby has shut its Hurstmere Rd store after around five years in business. It was the quietest of the four fashion stores the Auckland family-owned business runs, so it decided to wind up operations in Takapuna and put greater focus on online business.

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In Hong Kong – where he worked for Cathay Pacific for three years before coming home – local experience of a SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) outbreak and then a MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome) scare meant the sort of hygiene measures urged under Covid-19 weren't so surprising.

Harvey is pleased New Zealand has staved off the virus and has closed its borders for now. But he says: "The world is not going to give up access to international markets and travelling freely," and one day he hopes to take to the skies again.

However, a surprise offer of work made the day after his redundancy notice has proved to be just the lift he needed.

Sue Evans, the mother of a school friend, sounded him out about joining her in working as a real estate agent for Barfoot & Thompson in Milford.

During lockdown, Harvey swotted up on the trade online and has now just passed an oral examination to finish his certification. He is determined to give this lucky break a good go in the years ahead, saying many of his pilot and life experience skills transfer to real estate.

"I take from flying being able to understand and listen, follow criteria and rules, plus the liability aspects." He has also gained an appreciation of cultural differences from his adventurous career.

To his "forced pivot" he would bring the bonus of being a local who was genuine in his love of the area he would be selling.

"My mindset of this is it's opened up an opportunity to try something different."



African adventures... Flying for the United Nations took Chris Harvey to many of the world's hotspots

Hurstmere Rd works hit a speed bump

Hurstmere Rd's disruptive improvements are at risk of dragging on, with a budget freeze on the beach-improving stormwater-drainage component of the project.

The works – designed as a package deal to improve the street environment, drainage and outflows to the sea – are proceeding ahead of schedule, but it has emerged that Auckland Council's Healthy Waterways programme has deferred until 2022 the installation of large rain gardens to be built into the roadway.

The deferral is part of budget cuts called for across Auckland Council.

Environment committee chairman and North Shore councillor Richard Hills said he was shocked when he heard about the deferral, buried in budget revision work.

The Hurstmere project, involving multiple agencies, wasn't designed to be done in stages, he said.

"In my opinion there is no way it can be split into two."

Digging up the road later shouldn't be an option as unpicking work already done would

cost more, Hills said.

Councillors Hill and Chris Darby, the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board chairman Aidan Bennett and the Takapuna Business Association are all lobbying for the matter to be resolved, appealing for common sense to prevail.

"I'm trying to convince everyone it [delay] would be a disaster," Hills said.

He put the Healthy Waterways deferral down to the two-week scramble council staff had to come up with revised budget proposals.

Blanket cuts and deferrals were imposed on much spending, but as work continued on finalising budgets, specific implications were being looked at.

Local board member Trish Deans said she was concerned to learn Hurstmere Rd disruptions could drag on.

If that was the case, she said, the Anzac St car-park should remain available for shoppers to use.

Darby said getting the project contracted and under way this year had been hard work. "The design is what the community expects – with stormwater works."

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Brianna Parkinson who runs Kaitahi Kitchen, which is distributing food to elderly people in Belmont-Bayswater and Sunnynook

Food deliveries offered to Sunnynook seniors

Sunnynook senior citizens are benefitting from a new food distribution scheme targeting those in need or who are socially isolated.

The food deliveries are made each Monday from donated food cooked by volunteers and transported from a kitchen in Belmont.

A grant from the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board supports the trial project run by Kaitahi Kitchen, which is now in its second week.

Kaitahi delivers food in Belmont-Bayswater as well. For the Sunnynook outreach it has teamed with CMA, a support agency for elderly people living in the community.

CMA's North Shore manager, Rachel Quin Gilbert says the group has bought a second-hand freezer for its Sunnynook day centre to store

food before its volunteers deliver the meals to people's homes.

It is targeting people who already use the centre's services and also working with other organisations to find more deserving recipients. These include Haumanu Housing, Age Concern and the Salvation Army.

Although CMA deals with people aged 65 and older, many it helps are 80+. Offering support helps them stay in their own homes in the community.

Quin Gilbert says some people approached said, "No we don't want it, give it to people who need it more," while others were overcome with gratitude. For those who had struggled in the last three months or who struggled to get to supermarkets, the deliveries were particularly welcome.

Arts outreach stretches to US

Making art classes more accessible was a lesson learned from lockdown at the Lake House Arts Centre.

Now, the Takapuna centre will 'Zoom' its classes as far as Silicon Valley in the United States in a pilot online programme.

Operations manager Grae Burton says the pandemic had caused a loss of about \$100,000 in revenue at the centre.

Though offering digital classes didn't cover the shortfall, it was a way of helping bridge the gap.

It also provided more opportunities for people to take arts and crafts courses, so an online-learning component would continue to be part of what the centre offered, even with in-person classes restarted.

"We're trying to extend our community with what we can now offer with our Zoom courses," Burton says.

Tutors at the centre were given a crash course in working by Zoom just before lockdown began.

While some of the more hands-on classes, such as ceramics, didn't translate, others worked well. Animation and cartooning sessions, run by a former Disney staffer, were especially popular with younger audiences. The centre's Maori-carving tutor switched to taking to reo lessons online.

The chance to develop a pilot learning programme for a large Silicon Valley company with 2000 staff in lockdown came

about by word of mouth, through a family connection in New Zealand.

Three teachers are involved, but the programme might be extended, Burton says.

The centre also plans to provide up to 200 scholarships to online classes for children and adults in need in Auckland and Northland.

"We're developing a new programme for people who are experiencing hardship, people who want to learn art but can't."

The centre will work with community organisations to identify those who would most benefit.

This might lead to an organisation hosting a group class on a large-screen TV for people who may not have access to suitable devices or the internet at home.

Home schoolers might also be catered for.

Burton says that after 10 weeks of working online he was over the moon that with the centre's doors open again the local community is keen to be involved.

"Having arts thrive in this time is key to recovery," he says.

• Lake House Arts Centre is looking for more volunteers to help support its work. A working bee, assisted by Rotary, is planned for Sunday, 28 June. Volunteers are also needed to take turns helping out in the garden, galleries and behind the scenes. Find out more by emailing manager@lakehousearts.org.nz

Budget bites

The Devonport-Takapuna Community Board's discretionary spending fund for community projects is in the balance as part of Auckland Council budget cuts.

The board was to be expected to receive about \$1.3 million to allocate next year, but board member Trish Deans said this amount was likely to be cut by between 10 and 20 per cent.

The final amount would depend on what level of rates rise the council settled on as part of its moves city-wide to make up for Covid-19 revenue shortfalls.

Each year the board makes a number of small grants, supporting projects including environmental, heritage, cultural and community work.

Public feedback on the revised annual budget closed last Friday.

Weeks of council deliberation will follow, with the delayed 2020-21 annual budget to be set by the end of July.

Around 27,000 public submissions were received on the plans, nearly 10 times the number the original budget for the year attracted.

Locally, Milford's stormwater upgrade on the corner of Kitchener and Shakespeare Rds was halted and a start on Lake Rd improvements deferred for a year. As well as these bigger council projects and signalled cuts to community facilities and maintenance, time will tell more about the impact at community-board level.

Harbour teen wins US basketball scholarship

Rising basketball talent Emme Shearer is the latest North Harbour player to win a top-flight college scholarship to the United States.

The 18-year-old, who has represented New Zealand at age-group level in both basketball and volleyball, was the 2019 Westlake Girls High School sportswoman of the year.

Shearer told the Rangitoto Observer it was at school that she realised she could aim to go further and become a professional athlete.

Soon, she will head to the University of Portland in Oregon, which plays in division one of the US college competition, to play and study there for the next four years.

Shearer says she has always loved sport. She started playing basketball around the age of nine and more competitively in her mid-teens. "I like to get across the court, transition, push the ball and attack."

In 2019, she played every game for Harbour Breeze in the Women's Basketball Championship. The Breeze finished runners-up in the competition.

Also a schoolgirl North Harbour netball representative, Shearer made the call to switch her tournament focus to basketball. She also continued to play volleyball at high level, before deciding basketball offered more opportunities.

"My mum and dad have definitely been my best supporters, they always want me to do my best and have always encouraged

me," she said.

During lockdown, Shearer kept up her training, lifting weights and working up a sweat down at the courts.

"I think what has motivated me was seeing people use what little resources and opportunities they had."

Shearer's good friend and Harbour teammate Tayla Dalton is also on an American scholarship. The former Carmel College head girl has a scholarship in California. Both aim to graduate from age-group honours to playing for their country at the highest level.

Emme said missing out on making teams was a learning curve. "There were a lot of challenges getting here – the disappointment of not winning big games and not making teams. I have definitely lost my fair share of semi-final games" she said.

She did not make the under-17 national side, but was called up to the Tall Ferns wider training group when just 17.

A career highlight she says she will not forget was winning the under-19 nationals with Harbour, with a team she had long played with. Shearer was named MVP.

An earlier defining moment was in high-school basketball, when Westlake finally beat Auckland Girls Grammar School in a match at the secondary schools national championships, after losing to them in the regular season.



America-bound... Emme Shearer has been recruited by the University of Portland

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Coffee-and-arts tale reprised for fundraisers

An appetising slice of New Zealand's cultural history will be celebrated in a live show to be staged next month to help raise funds for the Lake House Arts Centre in Takapuna and the Rose Centre in Belmont.

Both community facilities have been hard hit by Covid-19, which robbed them of the chance to attract audiences and earn revenue.

Local creative Grae Burton aims to do both when he stages *Coffee with Eelco* on four successive Sundays.

His work tells the story of Dutch immigrant Eelco Boswijk, a hospitality pioneer and arts patron credited with helping transform socialising in New Zealand.

Burton grew up in Nelson, where Boswijk's Chez Eelco cafe was a drawcard for decades. It provided an evening option for entertainment, where people could gather for a coffee or a bite and stay on for theatre shows. The cafe also ushered in an era where al fresco dining became accepted.

Burton said he used to hang out at the café. Boswijk was a patron of Burton's early arts endeavours, backing him to put on Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* in 1995. "We did the deal over a coffee. [The coffee] was awful, bloody awful but he was writing a cheque out at the time, so I couldn't say anything."

Over the years Boswijk shared his colourful life story, which included settling first in Auckland, where he worked for another Dutch hospitality pioneer, Otto Groen, at the Hi Diddle Griddle on Karangahape Rd. Groen also had The Gourmet restaurant in Shortland St, which in 1961 won the first liquor licence allowing wine to be legally sold with lunch or dinner.

That same year, Boswijk opened his own place in Nelson, where he died as a much-loved citizen in 2013.

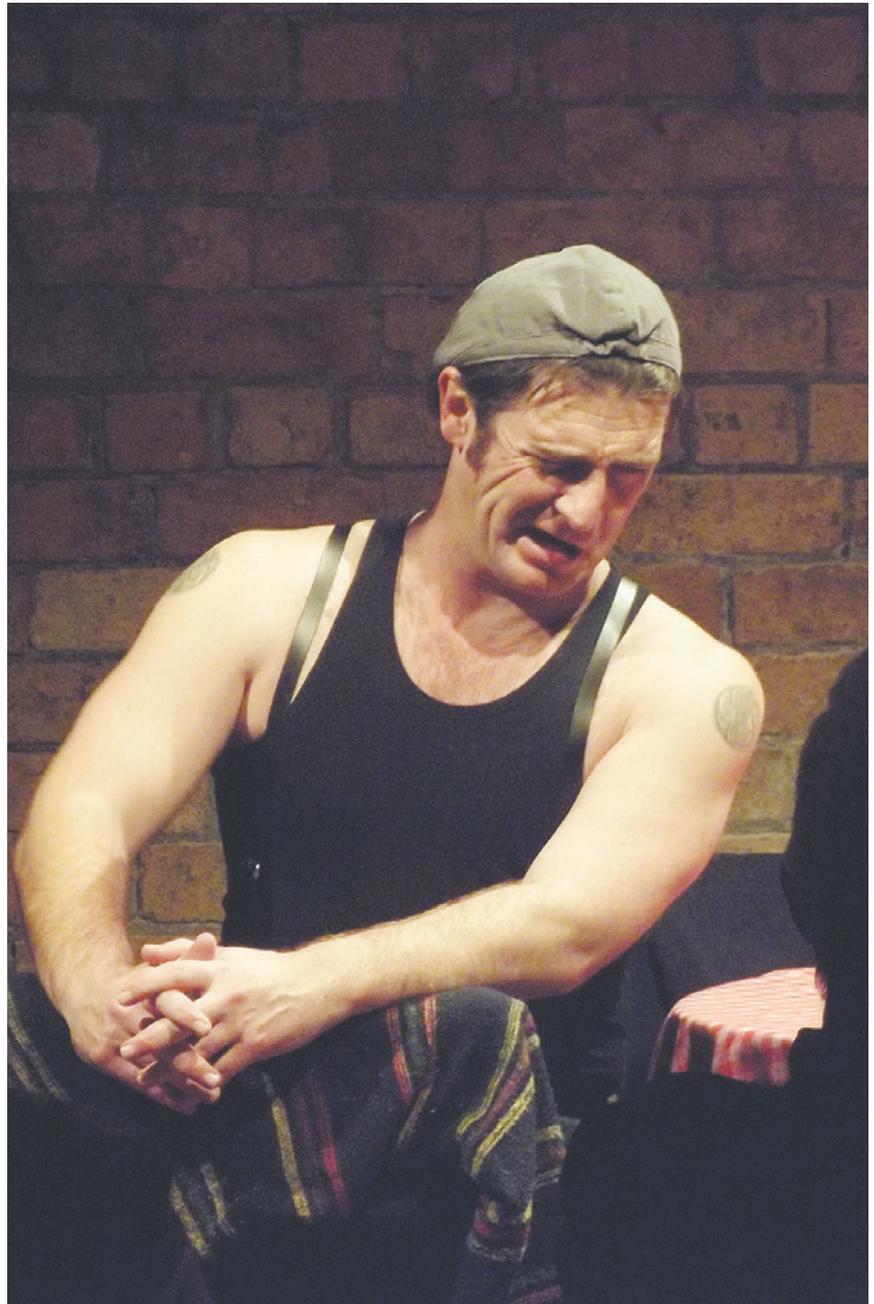
Chez Eelco at the top of Trafalgar St closed in the early 2000s, after Boswijk's retirement.

Burton kept in touch and when his Independent Theatre and Arts Centre originally staged *Coffee with Eelco* in 2008, its subject came to the show every night. It was on the programme of the Auckland Fringe Festival in 2012. Boswijk last saw it at his retirement centre a month before he died.

It is five years since Burton has performed at all, being busy juggling fatherhood and his role as operations manager at the Lake House Arts Centre. But he was keen to get back on the boards to tell this particular story, saying it resonates with the times, when the arts need help.

Burton says he was influenced by Boswijk's welcoming ideas of hospitality – manaakitanga – and art being at the centre of people's perspectives on the world.

"It's all about what he was about, making sure there was enough access to the arts."



Cafe culture... Grae Burton performing *Coffee with Eelco*, the story of hospitality pioneer and arts patron Eelco Boswijk

In a newspaper interview, Boswijk once said: "I'm not an artist, but I appreciate it. I enjoyed artistic people – they got an idea and had the energy. I was happy if I could help by listening and putting a bit of energy into it. Yes, there were lots of dreamers but I listened to them. I take people as they present themselves."

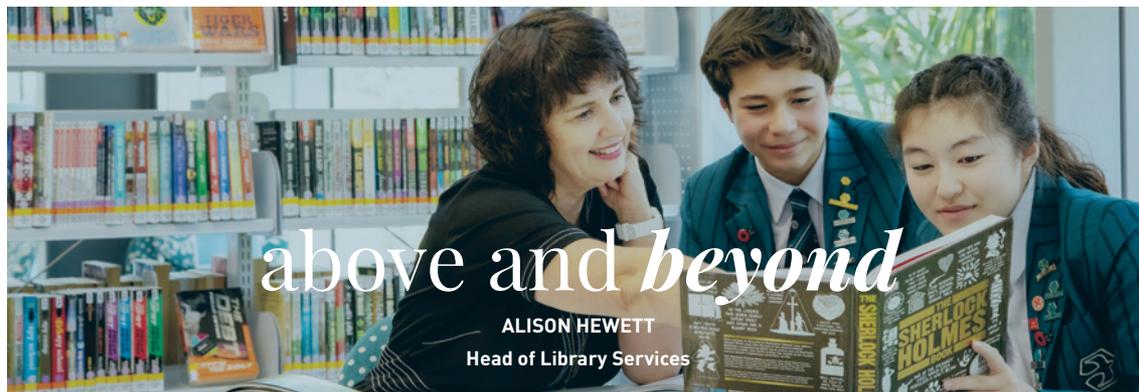
Burton says the first step in helping the arts recover is for audiences to return to support performances.

One of the attractions of the coming performances is that a cup of coffee and a chocolate éclair – both synonymous with shows

at the Chez – are part of the ticket price.

The limited tickets have had some early takers. Burton's old headmaster at Nelson Boys High School, who was also mentored by Boswijk, has booked six seats and plans to travel up for the show.

After costs, all money raised goes to the hosting venue. At the Lake House it will be performed in the café on July 12 and 19, with bookings via the centre. The bigger shows at the Rose Centre will be held on July 5 and 26 at 3pm, with a choice of seats at tables on the stage or in standard seating. Bookings can be made at Eventfinda.



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Taking flight a family tradition

Former Carmel College student Carmen Haybittle is following in the footsteps of her great-grandfather in carving out a career flying for her country.

The 19-year-old has just graduated from the Royal New Zealand Air Force's half-year officer commissioning course and is moving to Base Ohakea for pilot training.

With a private pilot's licence already

under her belt, Pilot Officer Haybittle has long held a passion for aviation.

"I aspire to become an instructor and train pilots, just like my great-granddad did. I have always wanted motivate others by sharing my experiences," she says. He was a pilot in the RNZAF and served as an instructor in World War II. Her father was also in the RNZAF, as an aircraft engineer, and her older brother is currently serving as an avionics technician.

While in Year 12, Haybittle attended a Schools to Skies familiarisation course to learn more about what RNZAF careers had to offer.

"We spent a handful of days living on base and experiencing many different trades," she recalls. Meeting passionate Air Force members was inspiring. "It was a very hands-on experience and a highly beneficial exposure to a range of different careers in the RNZAF."

The officer course, completed at Base Woodbourne, Blenheim, was both rewarding and fatiguing, she said.

The comradeship gained with a motivated group would stand her in good stead. "We've made life-long friendships and networks through shared experiences... and have a heap of fun memories to look back on."

She expected the next phase of her training at Ohakea would prove challenging. "I



Flying high... Pilot Officer Carmen Haybittle hopes her experiences in the Royal New Zealand Air Force can help motivate others

have had a chat to a bunch of RNZAF pilots in all different phases of their careers and they love what they do. I look forward to especially making the most of the training, flying a T-6 Texan, and taking it one day at a time."

Pilot Officer Haybittle's advice for anyone considering an Air Force career is to take up as many opportunities as possible while still at school, such as going to Outward Bound, sailing on the Spirit of Adventure or attending a School to Skies immersion course.

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BETTER TOGETHER

HOUSE OF TRAVEL

Club members revive Lake Rd seating

Shoppers in Takapuna now have more inviting benches to rest on, thanks to a local Rotary club project.

Members sanded and painted tired-looking timber public seating along Lake Rd, eyeing the weather forecast to get the work done in stints this month.

About 10 benches along Lake Rd, including those outside the Westpac and ANZ banks and the former Noel Leeming store, have been given a makeover.

Como St benches have also been renovated by around 10 volunteers on weekday and weekend working bees.

The project, supported by the Takapuna Business Association, seems to have done the trick, with more people seen sitting on the benches.

“They looked pretty grubby to sit on

before,” said club member and Hauraki resident John Gould.

Club president Geoff Pownall said: “The highlight is we’re making a difference.”

The service organisation was always on the lookout for ways to help the community, he said. New members were also sought.

With lockdown having seen the club use Zoom meetings and email for updates, Pownall said Rotary was adapting to the times, and for those who did not want to commit fully to attending weekly club meetings, monthly e-meetings were a model being considered. Associate members, often those with busy work or family schedules, might opt to participate in projects only.

For more information email geoff@pownall.kiwi



Making a stand for seating... Rotary’s Geoff Pownall (left) and John Gould

Prettification possible for two Takapuna streets

Improvements to two Takapuna streetscapes are on a shortlist of around a dozen projects the Auckland Council has put forward for government funding.

Huron St and Northcroft St are in the running for a pedestrian-friendly facelift under the Innovating Streets programme run by the New Zealand Transport Agency.

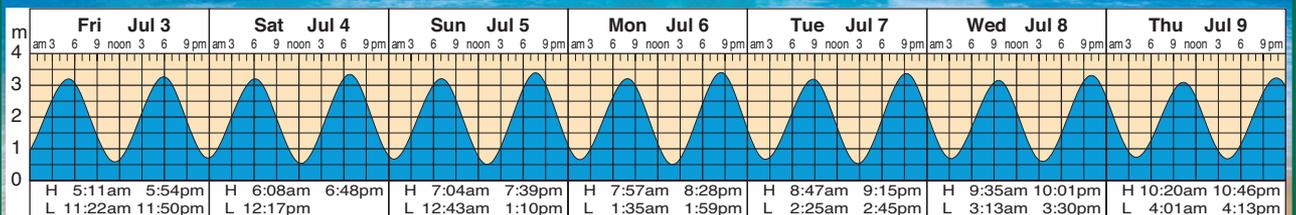
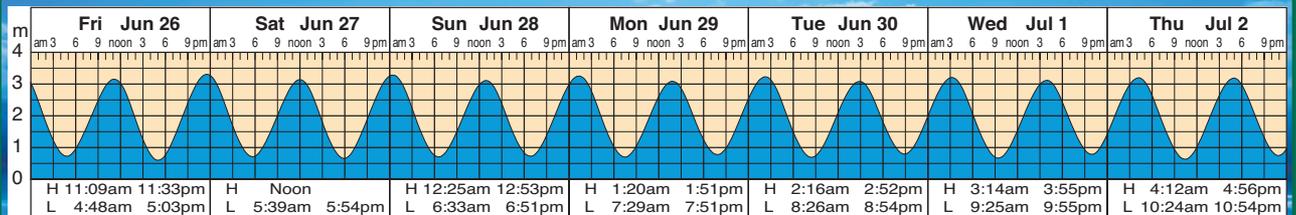
The Associate Transport Minister, Julie Anne Genter, is expected to make an announcement soon on which projects will proceed.

North Shore councillor Chris Darby said the streets would be key routes connecting the Gasometer parking site (now under construction) with the shopping area of Takapuna, making them overdue for a tidy-up.

He was “moderately hopeful” that Huron St, at least, would get over the line. A strong case for its improvement had been put up by council planning agency Panuku, he said.

The Devonport-Takapuna Community Board had also advocated for Northcroft St to be included.

Milford / Takapuna Tides



The North Shore Patient: one man's experience



Laid up... A Rob Drent selfie after surgery at North Shore Hospital

Three weeks after lockdown was lifted and life at our hospitals returned to normal, Observer editor Rob Drent unexpectedly found himself putting the health service through a check-up.

My nurse Sue was using a nifty system of short, sheer plastic tubes to help slip on compression socks. I couldn't put the socks on myself as my pain was so intense. It was five o'clock on a Sunday afternoon and I was being prepared for emergency surgery on an abscess – cause unknown – but common in New Zealand at the moment apparently.

My weekend was meant to have taken a different course. I should have been in the stand at Eden Park cheering the Blues.

But my unreliable body had different ideas. I was in the Short Stay Ward at North Shore Hospital, along with many others who would have also rather have been somewhere else.

The road to surgery began the previous Thursday. I'd played squash the night before (losing in the regular Devonport-Belmont club challenge), had nothing to drink, but woke with what felt like a crashing hangover. Over the next couple of days I felt cold and listless and started going to bed early. By Saturday

the tiredness had become chronic and I'd developed pain in the upper groin.

After my first interclub tennis match of the winter season that day, movement was becoming difficult, exhaustion gathering pace. From the neighbouring court, former NZ number one Mark Nielsen paused in his coaching to observe: "You're not doing much work to help your partner, Rob."

Yep, the unreliable body wasn't playing ball. Next day, it was worse. Trying to get up the motivation to head into work for a couple of hours, I was instead glued to the couch.

With a trip to the Blues looking unlikely, my partner Jo decided a trip to Shorecare was needed.

By the time I got there, I was seriously crook. My temperature was closing in on 39, signing the admission forms was a major effort and I was getting muddled: I gave my two previous trips to hospital as happening in 1918 and 1919 instead of 2018 and 2019.

I'd already google-diagnosed my condition as haemorrhoids, which I'd had once before. Wrong. Doctor Andy immediately suspected an abscess: treatment needed immediately.

After a couple of calls, he got through to the North Shore Hospital general-surgery doctor on duty. Forms were sent over and I was booked in without having to sit for hours

in the Emergency Department. I only had to collect my Robert Michael Drent wrist band at the desk. I was amazed at the efficiency.

It was the first of many ticks I would give New Zealand's health service over the next few days. Hiccups did occur. Jo ran into a nurse friend on the ferry to the Blues match who said: "He's most likely got a blocked duct – they'll fit him at the end of the day after all the more important operations."

In fact, my operation was bumped. Two emergency cases came in. I left nurse Sue's socks on hoping to get a lucky break first thing the next day.

I seem to have a personality that can endure airline terminals, long flights and hospital wards. The feeling of entrapment and interminable waiting that drives many people nuts has never bothered me too much. In fact, I find the opposite: there's always heaps going on. Humans in transit – at airports to foreign countries, in hospitals to destinations unknown – creates a tension. No one can really predict what their outcome will be.

My ward-mate that Sunday was a woman in her 70s who had been transported by wheelchair from a nearby rest home. She had had bowel problems for days, but they had worsened.

Medical institutions and ethics committees stress and fuss over the intricacies of patient privacy and confidentiality, but the irony is that once you reach a medical ward there is no privacy at all. After a couple hours lying less than a metre away from your neighbour, you often know almost everything about them, including often-lengthy medical histories and their drug-taking regimen, all broadcast through a curtain of supposed separation.

My ward mate was plagued with numerous conditions and tired of a body more unreliable than mine. But she had a sense of humour: "I tell you what," she said to a friend on the phone, "if I knew it was going to be like this in my 70s, I'd have had more fun in my 50s."

She had a full life too. A list of dinners, lunches, appointments and catch-ups with mates needed to be cancelled. She called next-door neighbours and asked them to water her new plants: "Just a little drink – I know you can be a little heavy-handed."

Doctors were working on a plan for her, but her pain got worse as the evening wore on. Before midnight, a throng of medical staff were next door pushing and prodding, asking more questions. Had a scan revealed new information?

"Don't worry my darling we're taking care of you," a nurse with a northern-English accent said. As she was moved to another ward for more critical care, I silently wished her well.

Day Two: Mornings can start early in hospital. Just after midnight, it was announced I would be moved to Cullen – an elective surgical ward – at 2 am, in the hope I would be prepped and ready to be first up the next day.

Since my arrival, I'd been gingerly asking hospital staff what their feelings were about Covid-19. From the main entry, through the emergency department, to the corridors and wards, there was a we've-dodged-a-bullet kind of euphoria. If Covid had taken hold, "We wouldn't have coped," said one nurse. New Zealand simply didn't have enough beds or ventilators. Hospital staff were also relieved PPE equipment didn't have to be put to the test. "There is no way it can protect you completely," she said. Another staffer: "We're really happy to see the patients back."

A hospital devoid of most of its patients must have been a strange place indeed.

The Cullen Ward was set up as a Covid-19 receptacle ready to take the expected influx of cases. It didn't host any. The only case at North Shore Hospital was housed in the infectious-diseases ward.

Cullen is eight years old, I'm told, which surprises me: it appears brand-new. Perhaps it is the pre-Covid cleaning.

But then the whole hospital is spick and span. I've been a patient half a dozen times over the last couple of years (heart issues), and while the hospital was never dirty, the level of cleanliness last week was next-level. Wards and rooms were regularly cleaned when I was there, and it wasn't a quick sweep

or dust either.

I watched one cleaner meticulously wipe down doors, door knobs, a wall clock, along tops of picture frames and window sills. It appeared to be systematic. "Cleanliness and hygiene are top priorities," a new graduate nurse told me almost mantra-like.

It was reassuring as I moved towards the uncertainty of the surgical ward. Suddenly, just after 7.30am, nurse Kara arrived: "We've got to get you ready."

More blood tests, temperature checks, blood pressure and then we're off. No orderly comes quickly, so Kara decides she can drive the bed. She's joined by a charge nurse,

belt had crept in a couple of notches from the 10,000 plus steps he was doing on the wards every day.

In radiology, a well-dressed woman is in for deep vein thrombosis testing. Her phone goes off and its her son wanting money transferred over for some takeaways. "Kids sucking you dry even when we're in hospital," she says. "Cell phones are the problem," I say.

I'm tested by an experienced operator and a trainee, who are using a new machine. Numerous times during my visit an experienced health professional showed a more recent graduate correct techniques during my treatment. Student nurses were common: expertise

If Covid had taken hold, "We wouldn't have coped," said one nurse. New Zealand simply didn't have enough beds or ventilators. Hospital staff were also relieved PPE equipment didn't have to be put to the test.

and as we spin towards the pre-op room a hospital support worker mocks her cornering technique.

It struck me as a happy workplace. Jokes and banter are missing on miserable job sites.

In pre-op, the unreliable status of my body was confirmed by the anaesthetist and surgeon, with my heart history (underlying heart condition, plus stent and atrial fibrillation operations) described as "complicated" and "difficult".

The anaesthetist asked me about exercise. I was back tramping, playing tennis and squash, I replied. He was also a squash player – who seemed to have B grade aspirations. I found this strangely comforting as we filled in the usual consent forms informing of the risk of death on the operating table.

"Genetic predisposition" was the likely cause of my abscess, the surgeon said. Unreliable body conspiring against me again, I thought.

The operation went smoothly, and an hour later I was back in Cullen sleeping off the anaesthetic alongside a dose of daytime TV. I never knew Suzanne Paul was back on screen (Thin Lizzy Puffer Eye Remover – seven minutes a day removes 15 years), and I must watch more of Al Jazeera's news coverage. I was kept in overnight to have doses of antibiotics intravenously.

I was ready to head home first thing next day, but there was a complication: swollen testicles. My doctor says this needs a scan. North Shore Hospital gets another tick for thoroughness.

On the way to the radiology room, the orderly says he's only been in the job eight weeks. Between jobs when lockdown hit, he took the role as a safe employment option with uncertain months ahead. "It's been a great job, though, with great people and I like meeting the patients." He was also happy his

was being passed on, institutional knowledge was being built. The system was working.

The scan revealed nothing exceptional and almost on cue, my mate Dr Doom (a friend known for fatalistic view on life) arrived to offer a lift home. My brief test of the health system was concluded.

Except it wasn't. Once home the abscess plug fell out and I was back at the emergency department, being readmitted.

There, I turned to a policeman at my shoulder, in charge of a man slumped in a chair. It was "Bob", sometimes known as "walkie talkie man", who has spent the last couple of decades walking up and down Lake Rd, often sleeping rough on Maungauika.

The abrasions to his face and hands were suffered in a fall on Lake Rd, the policeman said. Form filling was difficult, as he was "homeless". Later, I thought I should have said Devonport was his home. I know locals have helped him out of a few scrapes over the years, and here was an obvious extension: wider community care for the most vulnerable.

A massive review of District Health Boards was announced during my second stay. But from my patient-centric view, many things at North Shore Hospital are working just fine.

On the way home my taxidriver, originally from Pakistan, has lived in New Zealand since 1993. Without tourists, taxi drivers are doing it hard, but he's with Co-op and is fortunate the company has contracts with the three district health boards to take people for dialysis, ACC appointments and the like.

"We are so lucky to live here – in Pakistan people are dying everywhere (from Covid-19)," he said.

After a difficult few months running a newspaper business through Covid-19 – only made survivable by the government wage subsidy – and my brief trip through the health system, I agreed. "Yes we are very lucky," I said.

The cap fits in Westlake Boys rugby tradition

The latest crop of top Westlake Boys High School rugby players has been honoured with traditional caps.

Sponsored by the Takapuna Rugby club, the caps represent 15 games played – which must be regular competition matches or traditional exchanges.

If a player reaches 50 games, the white tassel on the cap is replaced with a gold version.

The team's first competition game of the year is at noon tomorrow, at Westlake, against Whangarei Boys High School, the team Westlake defeated in last year's final.



Peak performance... Members of the Westlake Boys High School 1st XV in the caps earned when they clocked up 15 full games. Back row: Righard Snyman, Brook Robson (captain), Jake Martin, Caleb Tangitau, Caleb Falloon and Chace Keremete-Harris. Front row: Eliakim Tiakia, Taufui Lolohea and Zamian Martin.

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Westlake biker wins latest school-series event

Reigning national secondary schools under-20 mountain-biking champion Sam Buckley continued his winning way in the latest round of the Auckland school cross-country series, held at Waitawa Regional Park on 14 June.

The Westlake Boys High School student – who is still only 17 – won the event’s under-20 category. Sixteen Westlake riders competed in the event.

In the under-17 boys category, Lewis Bower was fourth – and second among the Auckland competitors.

Under-16 boys Jack Lockett, Zach Flexman and Campbell Bain placed third, sixth and eighth.

The park provided a a stunning location, with expansive views over the Hauraki Gulf, and a tough course with gruelling climbs.

The next race, the third in the series, will be held at Woodhill on 9 August.

Pedal power... (right) Sam Buckley on top of the podium after winning the Under-20 boys event in the second round of the Auckland School Mountain Bike Cross Country Series. Below: Lewis Bower (No 727) was fourth in the Under 17 boys event, and second among Auckland riders



Rosmini expands to serve the multitudes



Space mission... A new block at Rosmini College will provide 12 extra classrooms to help the school cope with high demand for places at the school

A new three-storey classroom block being built at Rosmini College will allow the school to accept more students.

“The school is bursting at the seams,” says headmaster Nixon Cooper, who explains that while the roll is nominally capped at 1200, the school can only fit 1080 students.

“We’re unable to take all the applicants because of teaching space.”

The new block will provide 12 classrooms, including specialist rooms for music, art, food technology and Maori studies.

It is being built beside the Tom Gerrard

Gymnasium, overlooking playing fields next to Fred Thomas Drive.

The building is expected to be finished by the middle of next year. Work began in December 2019, and stopped with the Covid-19 lockdown, but the block has taken shape since, with a large crane on site recently and framework going up fast.

Cooper says the \$11 million project was originally due to be finished by April or May, but hopes were high that the time lost during lockdown would only add a month or two.

The building is funded by the Auckland Catholic diocese, with the school contributing around \$1 million.

Demand for places at Rosmini is high, Cooper says, reflecting the popularity among parents of integrated Catholic schools across the city generally, and the fact the college was the only Catholic boys secondary school on the North Shore. Population growth in the wider area, particularly with new housing developments around Albany and the Hibiscus Coast, has boosted the number of prospective students.

Click-and-pay system opens club courts to all-comers

If you want to play tennis without the commitment of joining a club, Takapuna Tennis Club has the solution.

The Bracken Ave club is the first in Auckland to introduce a new web-based booking system that allows non-members access to the club’s courts, not only during the day, but also under lights at night.

The new system to allow non-members to play under lights cost \$8000 and was a joint venture with Tennis NZ.

Club president Peter Dean says it’s already proved popular and the club sees opening the club to the community as an important part of its growth strategy.

“Although the club has a strong membership base who come along to our club nights and play competitively for our interclub teams, we know that there are some people who just want to play casually with friends,” says Dean.

“We want those people to have the oppor-

tunity to use our courts. There’s a growing number of people living in apartments in the area and if they want to play after work, now they can, at times the courts aren’t required for club activities.”

Players book and pay online at the club’s website, takapunatennis.co.nz, then are emailed a code to open the gates to the courts.

At night, the lights come on automatically at the time the courts are booked.

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Swimmers hit the beach for mid-winter dip



Chilling out... A group of around 40 mid-winter swimmers took to the water off Takapuna Beach last Saturday. Members of the “8 O’Clock at the toilet block” swim group abandoned their usual winter wetsuits, taking to the water in togs for a swim to a buoy off the beach and back.

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Now or never... Dogs dressed for the winter were among observers who preferred to stick to dry land

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