

The Rangitoto Observer

DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY Issue 35 - July 24, 2020 AN INDEPENDENT VOICE



Romy Udanga
for North Shore

 **Labour**

labour.org.nz/romyudanga
Authorised by Dianna Lacy,
160 Willis Street, Wellington.

Council puts Shore assets on the block... p2

Local board misses key meeting... p4

Sunnynook celebrates park makeover... p12

Massive apartment complex planned for Esmonde Rd

A major apartment development rising to seven storeys is planned to replace the Harbourside Church on Esmonde Rd.

Four blocks of varying heights are proposed, with plans for these to incorporate a cafe and other facilities open to the public.

An application has been lodged by Kingstone Properties Ltd for two of an envisaged three stages of development on the property at 48 Esmonde Rd.

The 2.1ha waterfront site sold for \$40 million last year.

The Stage 1 block on the eastern edge of the site would be run as managed hotel-style accommodation.

Stage 2 groups together three buildings of mostly studio and one-bedroom apartments aimed at first-home buyers. **To page 6**

Rosmini wins local derby with Takapuna



Winners are grinners... Rosmini fullback Keano Kini scored two tries in its 31-5 win over Takapuna Grammar last weekend. Story, pictures, page 10

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Asset sales for the North Shore

Community buildings and some public land across the Devonport-Takapuna Local areaBoard area will be sold off by the cash-strapped Auckland Council.

They include: 2 Forrest Hill Rd, a section of vacant land at 650sqm; 130 sqm² of a recreation reserve at 24R Linwood Rd, Forrest Hill; 4 Bloomfield Spa, Takapuna (496sqm of vacant land which was a former service lane but is now open space); 2 The Strand Takapuna (a category B heritage building on 486 sqm²); and the former Devonport Borough Council building at 3 Victoria Rd – a category-A heritage building on 468 sqm of land, described as an earthquake prone building, which has been vacant for three years.

Council’s Finance and Performance Committee last Thursday voted to include the properties for “asset recycling.”

Final terms and conditions for the sale will be subject to council approval.

North Shore Councillors Chris Darby and Richard Hills voted against selling off 3 Victoria Rd.

The Devonport-Takapuna Local Board voted in a split vote at its last meeting to approve any sales seen as necessary by the council.

Board members Aidan Bennett, George Wood and Toni van Tonder voted to support the sales process.

Ruth Jackson, Trish Deans and Jan O’Connor were vehemently opposed.

Chair Aidan Bennett used his casting vote to get the approval through.



Empty and now for sale...2 The Strand, Takapuna

**2 The Strand:
empty for
864 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 864 days. At some point, its future will be determined by Auckland Council.

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news@rangitoto-observer.co.nz
Website: www.rangitoto-observer.co.nz

MANAGING EDITOR: Rob Drent
PUBLISHER: Peter Wilson
ADVERTISING: Liz Cannon
CHIEF REPORTER: Janetta Mackay
REPORTER: Anneka Brown

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Production throws kitchen sink at award-winning play



Emotional journey... Ryan Wood and Rebekah Dack during kitchen rehearsals for Skylight at the PumpHouse

A romantic rollercoaster play, *Skylight*, is set to come alive at the PumpHouse Theatre at the end of the month, with a full working kitchen being built for the set.

The Olivier and Tony Award-winning David Hare play is the first full-scale production at the PumpHouse since lock-down.

Director Suzy Sampson saw the play in London in 2015. "I remember this show left such an impact on me that I sat in the theatre for 15 minutes after the show just to absorb it all," she says.

"The actors have been on an emotional journey with the play as well and I think it will really resonate with the audience."

First performed in 1995, the play follows the story of Tom Sergeant, a rich restaurant

owner still suffering from guilt and grief over the death of his wife a year earlier.

He seeks consolation from former lover Kyra, and finds that she has achieved fulfilment by teaching difficult kids in an East End school.

The play stars Rebekah Dack, Joseph Wycoff, and 16-year-old Takapuna Grammar School student Ryan Wood, who plays Tom's son.

During the Covid-19 lockdown, the actors began weekly rehearsals via Zoom video calls, which Sampson found was particularly useful in helping the actors develop their characters without the director being visible to them.

Now they also meet in person on the

weekends to rehearse.

Sampson was inspired to claim the rights to produce the play after its recent revival in the UK.

She last directed Ben Elton's play *Popcorn* at The Rose Centre, a production that received the Auckland Community Theatre Trust outstanding comedy award in 2018.

Skylight opens on 31 July for a run of seven shows.

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Local board missing from key meeting

Elected members on the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board were missing from a key Auckland Council emergency-budget meeting last Tuesday.

It's understood that members from all other local boards across Auckland attended.

In an email, Devonport-Takapuna Local Board chair Aidan Bennett said he was unable to go as he was "consumed by Covid-related business problems unfortunately. It has been a busy week.

"I put in my apologies. I would have got George (Wood, deputy chair) to go in my absence as I normally do but George was away down country.

"George is filling in for me for another meeting this coming Monday which is another one that has been sprung on us at a late stage (as last Tuesday's was) and I can't attend as I have prior meetings organised."

Bennett said he attended a chairs' monthly meeting last Monday and a chairs-only session with Desley Simpson, emergency budget meeting chair.

"This provided all chairs with a good opportunity to address budget issues directly with Desley. Which we/I did. As part of the chairs meeting we also had a presentation from Kevin Ramsay, head of finance for Auckland Council, and the opportunity to ask him questions related to the budget. Which we/I did."

"Me presenting in the five-minute slot at Tuesday's emergency budget committee would not have changed anything that the [Governing Body] has done (on Thursday.)"

He also attended a meeting on Wednesday 8 July, which also covered the budget extensively.

Another board member, Toni van Tonder, who is part of Bennett's ticket was also out of

Auckland at the time of the meeting.

Board member Trish Deans is "furious" the community – through the board – was not represented at last Tuesday's meeting.

"We should have been there as representatives of the community." She said other local boards called her asking "why we weren't there."

Devonport-Takapuna Local Board staff had also failed to let other board members, (herself, Jan O'Connor and Ruth Jackson) know about the meeting, Deans said. All could have attended on the day, and answered any questions the Governing Body asking them.

Bennett said as far as asset recycling sales went, board resolutions "clearly show that I support sensible asset recycling/sales and have not hidden that fact. I also haven't pushed the fact either during these GB meetings."

Editorial

Is the non-attendance by Devonport Community Board members at council's emergency budget meeting last week really good enough?

Chair Aidan Bennett (ratepayer paid salary \$85,100) was too busy on his commercial business, deputy chair George Wood (\$51,000) was out of town, as was Toni van Tonder (\$43,000).

Board members work long and often thankless hours. But on this occasion, when vital council decisions affecting our local area were discussed, it was an inopportune time to be

missing in action.

Why not ask one of the other three board members to go along? The board has been divided on many issues, but it seems nonsensical to have no one there. After all, it is less than a year before Ruth Jackson takes over as board chair. Moreover, something is seriously wrong if half the board were not offered the chance to attend.

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Rangitoto Observer**

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Al Fresco nights given green light for possible funding

Al Fresco Fridays in Takapuna, Milford and Devonport are a step closer after being selected for consideration by the government's Innovating Streets for People Fund.

The fund set up by the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) has \$7 million up for grabs, and offers 90 per cent funding assistance for projects selected. The Devonport-Takapuna Local Board has pledged \$30,000 towards the Al Fresco Fridays, which would see pop-up outdoor dining and entertainment in town centres.

Al Fresco Fridays were one of 29 projects approved by Auckland Council and Auckland Transport for submission for the fund.

The outcome is a bit of a turnaround for the board, as the Al Fresco idea was initially given only a "medium" ranking by council staff, but was then changed to "high".

Another local project, "Devonport Safer Streets Initiative" by Ken Davis, was put forward by councillor Chris Darby and initially had a "high" rating. However, this idea did not make the cut.

Takapuna Beach CEO Terence Harpur said: "It is fantastic news that our local initiative, Al Fresco Nights, has been chosen as a preferred project."

Local businesses needed support to keep town centres thriving. "It was fantastic to see

Toni van Tonder and Aidan Bennett advocate strongly for this additional funding to support local businesses with Al Fresco Nights."

Harpur said the initiative would strongly support local hospitality and retail businesses, in particular.

Milford Business Association manager Murray Hill was excited that Al Fresco Fridays "has got past the first hurdle" for funding.

"A lot of work has been put into this application by the three [Business Improvement District] managers and local board members and as we know, our communities love events in the streets.

"Having a project like this that has simultaneous dining-out in the streets of all three shopping centres will be a fantastic event. With street entertainment at each centre and additional seating in the street for our hospitality businesses on these Al Fresco Friday nights, the Shore will be buzzing," Hill said.

Hill said it was hoped a bus service in conjunction with Auckland Transport would allow residents to travel to neighbouring centres without the need to drive their vehicles.

Local board member Toni van Tonder, who led the project for the board, said she was delighted the project had been selected to go forward for NZTA's consideration.

"Our town centres are the beating hearts of our communities and every time our business associations carve more space out for people, bringing them together to connect, it's always a massive success and we're left wondering why our town centres weren't designed to do it more freely."

The 90 per cent funding support was "an amazing opportunity that we have tried to seize", van Tonder said.

"The project gives us an opportunity to experiment with urban design and see how we can continue to build that shop, eat, play local mindset by creating the opportunity to bring people into temporary town squares.

"Now, more than ever, we need to rekindle our love affair with our town centres because we really want them to survive what has been a challenging year," she said.

NZTA will announce the successful applicants by 31 July.

• Cr Darby declared an interest when the Ken Davis project was discussed.

"I am asking staff if there is likely to be a third round of applications," he said. "With or without that third round, I'll be working with Ken Davis, who put in an enormous effort, on progressing the Clarence St [Devonport] public space improvements."

Ice-free curling brings holiday fun to Takapuna



Slip-slidin' away... Children made the most of the chance to try a version of curling during the school holidays, as part of the 'I Love Takapuna' programme

Parents and children challenged each other to find the curling champs of their families in a free school-holiday activity in Takapuna.

The Scottish sport, usually played on the ice, this was replicated at the former

Department Store premises with a hard plastic surface and metal 'stones'.

The opportunity was a part of the 'I Love Takapuna' campaign.

Parents just had to show a receipt for more than \$20 from their lunch, coffee

date or shopping trip to try the sport for free. Winners could take a photo with the Curling Cup Trophy.

Some also had the chance to appear in television coverage of the weekend-long activity.

From page 1

Four blocks proposed for church site

These linked buildings would be grouped around a communal central zone, with the aim of creating a “village character”.

The bottom two levels of the block would be accessible to residents, visitors and the public. Facilities envisaged included a cafe, gymnasium and childcare.

The church would be removed first and then earthworks needed to create building platforms would be undertaken, the proposal to Auckland Council said.

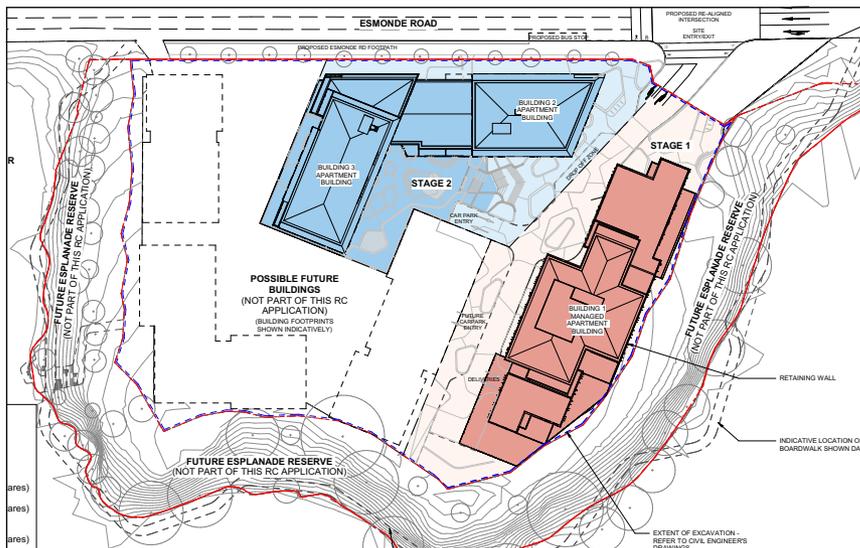
Access to the site would be from the existing controlled traffic intersection, although work with Auckland Transport towards some upgrades to this were anticipated.

Planners will review the application before a decision is made.

The application exceeds height restrictions in the zone. The church rises to around three storeys; much of the new development will be more than two times this height.

The developers submitted that the design, by architectural firm Jasmax, took into account how it might sympathetically fit into the area: “The distribution of the buildings into various bulk, height, form and architectural appearance was an attempt to offer a group of buildings in village form instead of two large buildings.”

Wall claddings would be mixed metal and draw on a natural palette including green, brown and black.



Application in... A plan showing the development’s first two stages

Site could link with paths and cycleways

Public paths and cycleways around the apartment-complex site could one day connect south via boardwalks to the Francis St cycleway and also out to Esmonde Rd and onto the planned SeaPath towards the Harbour Bridge.

A proposed accessway to the site creates a thoroughfare in the form of a public easement

which could enable the connections.

The traffic entrance layout would need modifications before accommodation was opened, the application says.

A lit landscaped road-level public plaza with seating could act as a transitional area between the road and communal open space.



Have your say on the future of Devonport-Takapuna

20-PRC-2052_RO_2

Our local board has come up with a three-year plan outlining the key initiatives we want to focus on to help our communities thrive and support the recovery from the impacts of Covid-19.

Now we need your help to check if we’ve got it right.

So love local and get vocal about your local community, and don’t forget to provide your feedback before **4pm, Thursday 13 August.**

For more information, a copy of the draft Devonport Takapuna Local Board Plan 2020 and to provide your feedback go to akhaveyoursay.co.nz/lovelocal

Together we can love local.

Devonport-Takapuna Local Board
Auckland Council



‘Affordable’ apartments included in plans

Views from Takapuna and Hauraki across the water to the city are set to be transformed by the multi-level property development proposed for Esmonde Rd.

The complex itself will have several penthouses and some apartments with sweeping views to the city, although most of the 270 units are oriented in other directions to benefit from the sun.

Details of the buildings and their visual impact as seen from nearby suburban streets formed part of Kingstone Property’s planning consent application.

Extensive planting of coastal shrubs was proposed, and the site would be ringed with a public walkway and a cycleway, it said.

The value of a strip of pohutukawa along the street frontage of the site and other trees was recognised for screening part of the existing church building.

“Buffering vegetation would also affect public perceptions of the proposed development,” said a visual and amenity effects assessment which formed part of the developer’s submission to Auckland Council.

Under Stage 1 of the proposal, a managed visitor-accommodation block would rise over seven floors. All units would face east or west.

The internal configuration is not finalised, but proposed for now are 164 studios, 18 one-bedroom apartments and five penthouses. Accommodation would take 6800sq m of a total floor area of 10,877sq m. The ground



Village character... An artist’s impression of buildings planned for the Harbourside Church site on Esmonde Rd

floor would be a common area for check-in and support services. The first floor would include a restaurant. Half of the top floor would be set aside as a roof garden.

Under Stage 2, three interconnected buildings in the middle of the site would be built around a central courtyard. The central block would be four storeys high, the western seven and eastern six. These would add up to 10,587sq m in floor area and provide some 86 apartments, with final numbers to be confirmed.

The majority were said to be in the affordable category, with 37 one-bedroom, 32 two-bedroom and 17 three-bedroom apartments. Below the apartments would be community facilities, including a cafe and fitness centre, a business centre, healthcare and childcare spaces, a convenience store and bike and car parking.

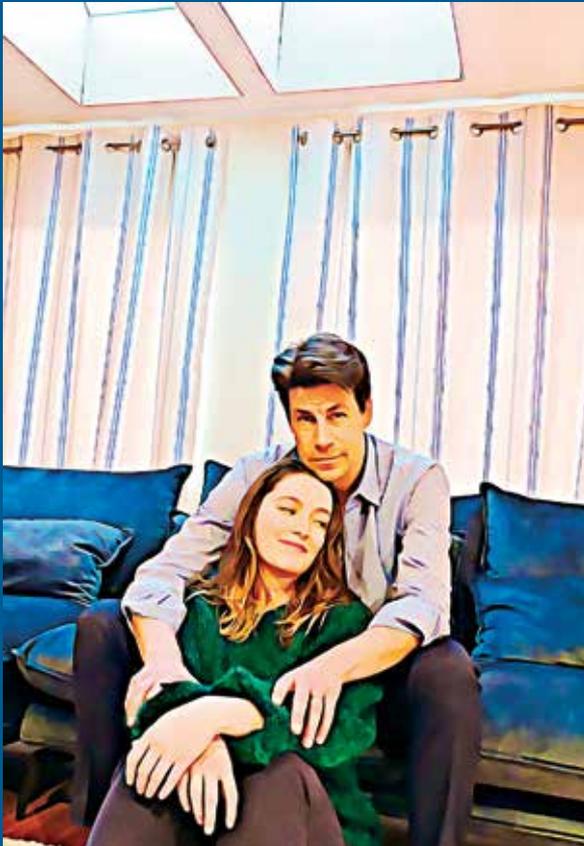
Eighty covered car parks will be provided for both stages of the development. Most of these will be in a 3-tier vertical stack parking system.

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Park saga shows Auckland Council just doesn't work

I have often been asked "how does council work?". I used to half-jokingly reply, "when you find out let me know, I have been part of this council for 10 years now and I still haven't worked it out".

The recent asset sales in our Devonport-Takapuna Local Board area are illustrative, and I will use 2 Forrest Hill Rd, as an example.

Auckland Council Parks Department did an analysis of our park area and found we were short of space in the Forrest Hill area. It just happened that we had a spare bit of land left over from road widening at 2 Forrest Hill Rd. It was not in an ideal situation, but if we sold it we could not invest the money in a better location. The proceeds will go elsewhere.

This is because Devonport-Takapuna has been categorised as a 'Brown Fields' area and new parkland is only being purchased (by council policy) in 'Green Fields' areas such as West Auckland and South.

So the board decided to try and make the

small section into something useful. But, then council decided to sell it. The board submitted to the appropriate committee of council which determined that it should not be sold. As part of our submission I promised that the board would develop the area into a useful park amenity.

But, when we tried to fund some consultation work to determine what sort of park would be best for the community, we were told the board couldn't do so. The reason I was given, as then chair, was that the Parks Department refused to accept the park into our portfolio.

The Parks Department apparently didn't want the park and still wanted it sold. This was despite council agreeing not to divest the area, and the local board wanting the park. When parcels of land are transferred into parks the relevant board 'owns' them and has decision-making over them. But, without the transfer, from one council entity to another, the local board cannot invest in the area.

This explains why 2 Forrest Hill Rd has

been sitting there apparently unloved, with cars parking all over the grass. The board wanted to make it a great amenity for the community but was obstructed.

This week, the park has once again been put in front of council to be sold. Unfortunately, the local board, by casting vote, has agreed to it (along with other parks and community buildings) being 'optimised', possibly because they thought 'optimised' meant 'made better'. But, in Council-speak it means sold.

So, the Forrest Hill community still has a shortfall of park space with almost no hope of gaining any more space. This is just plain dumb, and it is happening all the time. Can you understand it? I can't. But when I am asked how council works, this example comes to mind. Sometimes it just doesn't work.

Grant Gillon

Fresh concerns about future of barracks

Demolition by neglect threatens the historic barracks at Kennedy Park if it slips down the funding priority pecking order post Covid-19 lockdown, say conservationists.

The chairman of the Kennedy Park WWII Installations Preservations Trust, Chris Owen, made a submission to the council's emergency budget review process last month and will follow up with the local board, urging recognition of its value.

Over the school holidays, the park's other historic two-storey building – played host to activity programmes for students aged 10 to 13. The more dilapidated one-storey barracks – built as a disguise to look like a

state house and later used as one – needs significant repair work.

Owen told the Observer community facilities were needed in Castor Bay and the barracks would be ideal for this. Among those interested was the Kennedy Park Petanque Club which wanted to make it a clubrooms.

Trust members would also like to set up a small museum inside to explain its significance.

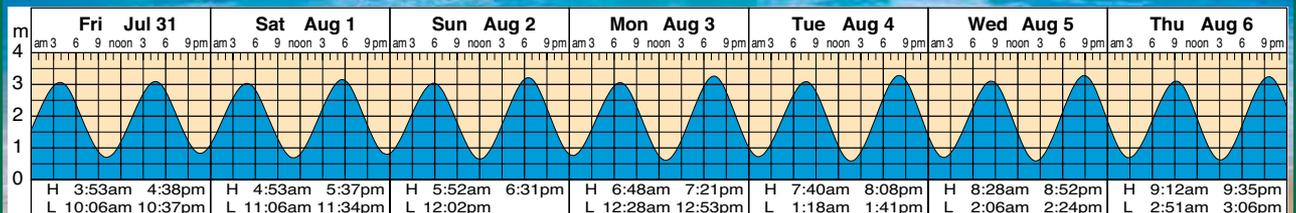
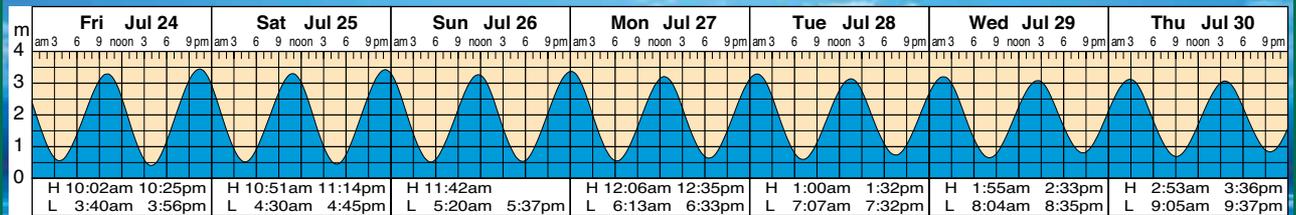
The trust also runs tours of the military tunnels in the park on the second Sunday of each month. These take place between 11am and 2pm, with entry by a gold coin donation. Take a torch.

Rocky road to removal

The extended deadline for a plan to be filed to remove the rocks dumped on Milford beach has come and gone, but the Auckland Council was early this week unable to tell the Rangitoto Observer if it had been complied with.

The council had extended the timeline for removal after legal letters were exchanged. The rocks, dumped in early June, were originally meant to be removed by July 10, but this was pushed back to July 24, with the proviso that a satisfactory plan on how this would be done must be submitted by July 10. Asked last week if the plan had been filed, the Observer was told no update was available. A follow-up query this week, also went unanswered by publication deadline.

Milford / Takapuna Tides



Rosmini puts in solid performance against young TGS side

Rosmini College First XV scored five tries to one in a 31-5 win against Takapuna Grammar at home last Saturday.

After a 24-19 loss to Westlake Boys recently, Rosmini bounced back with a solid performance against TGS.

Rosmini's fullback Keano Kini scored two tries. Flanker Ben Clarke was the team's standout player on defence and also scored a try. Co-captain Rory Taylor and Carlos Phillips also scored.

Rosmini's 1st XV head coach Jacob Corbett said: "We are pretty happy this was a really good opportunity for the boys to show they have improved."

"It was a very good game. A big part for us was our defence and being patient with our attack.

"The Takapuna Grammar team is a really young and exciting team, We weren't sure what was going to happen on the field but we kept accurate with our defence in the first 20 minutes and then scored points quickly," said Corbett.

Rosmini plays Massey at Massey this Saturday, while Takapuna Grammar plays Westlake at TGS.



Try time... Ben Clarke dots down for Rosmini last Saturday



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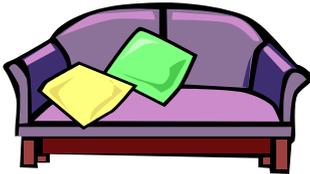
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Turf times but community gets run of the green

The community is being invited to Sunnynook Park on Saturday, 26 July to an unofficial opening to celebrate the three-year transformation of its playing fields.

The Auckland Council project has improved playing surfaces and drainage and added lighting, making evening sports practices possible.

"It's like Disneyland for us," said Glenfield Rugby League Club chairman Simon Watson of the flood-lighting. "We're training a lot longer and the surface is fantastic."

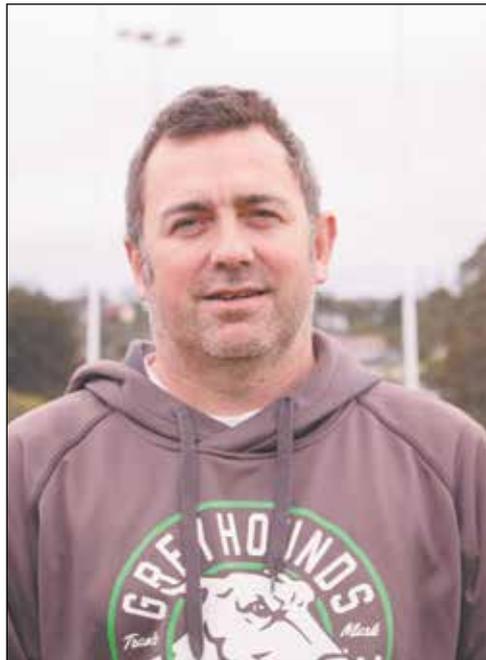
After several years of being displaced from its home ground, the club, known as the Greyhounds, is relishing being back on the Sunnynook No. 1 field in front of its club rooms. With three other improved fields, teams from juniors to seniors are again putting the park to good use.

To mark this, an open-to-everyone club day is being held from 9am to 5pm, complete with sausage sizzles, stalls and a bouncy castle. Watson, who is also chairman of the Sunnynook Community Centre committee, has invited members of the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board along, with plans for a few words around 10am to mark the opening of the park. Covid-19 put paid to doing this earlier.

Community centre manager Bronwyn Bound said children on its holiday activities programmes had also been making use of the fields when the weather allowed for outdoor play. Around 60 children a day were attending. She had watched the transformation of what was one of the most used parks on the North Shore. "We knew there would be a lot of disruption, but it's been worth it," she said.

The playing fields function as a "dry pond" for the area, allowing for water to drain slowly in times of extreme rainfall, thus avoiding flooding further down in Wairau. The council's Healthy Waters arm ran the project, in which the main field was lowered to enhance this safeguard. Drainage to be improved and better turf laid.

Part of the job saw excavated soil used to raise the playing fields at nearby Wairau Intermediate, pro-



Glad to be back... Glenfield Greyhounds chairman Simon Watson

viding the school with better grounds as well, which could be used as extra fields for community sport. "So it gives six fields," said Watson. Bound praised contractor Dempsey Wood's work on this major part of the project.

Touch and cricket are among other sports which regularly used the park. The placement of the main floodlights on two poles either end of a cricket pitch had confused some people, but these were removable for the summer months, Watson said.

The park includes paths, a playground and ample space for passive recreation. A petanque area may be a future community driven project.

The Rangitoto
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Volunteers back on the job at Sunnynook reserve

Community volunteers are regrouping to start planting again at Sunnynook's Lyford Reserve, after work stopped during lockdown.

Volunteer coordinator Tabitha Becroft has recently laid out a new and improved predator-control line at the reserve.

Also known as Sunnynook Bush, the reserve is an important bird habitat, said Becroft, who can't wait to start weeding and planting around the reserve.

It has been almost four months since any maintenance has been done

Becroft recently put five possum traps through the middle of the reserve and is back testing water quality in the stream that runs through the reserve out to the Wairau estuary.

"We have noticed our work has made a difference. There have been more birds in the area including tuis and fantails," she said.

The Lyford Reserve Restoration Project has run for the last four years, with

Auckland Council providing traps and bait stations for the borders of the reserve.

Co-chair of the Sunnynook Community Association Peter McNee said the reserve became a really popular place to walk over the Covid-19 lockdown.

A walkway through the reserve connects Lyford Cres with Regency Place and Mandica Place in Sunnynook.

During lockdown, nature-art pieces were left along the reserve, including small painted wooden and rock trinkets, some with encouraging messages written on them for others to find.

Becroft said the project is still seeking more volunteers for its family-friendly working bees.

Planting and weeding at the Lyford restoration project is done on the third Saturday of each month from 9.30am to 11.30pm.

Gardening work around the Sunnynook Community centre once a month is also planned.



Planting to resume... Lyford Reserve volunteer coordinator Tabitha Becroft

Gardener wanted for community house

A volunteer gardener is needed at the Sunnynook Community Centre.

The position requires one hour of work per month to maintain the gardens.

If interested, contact Bronwyn or Debbie at the Sunnynook Community Centre office on 410 4902.

Have your say

on the Takapuna town square design

Takapuna's new town square will be a vibrant place where the community can come together to meet and relax.

We're seeking your views to confirm that the design of the town square includes the things that matter most to you.

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For more information, a copy of the supporting materials and to give your feedback, go to akhaveyoursay.co.nz





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Poetry hits the target at Takapuna Library

Slam poetry hit the North Shore at the at Takapuna Library last week.

Despite wet weather, around 40 people visited the library for a poetry evening featuring internationally recognised poet Carrie Rudzinski.

In 2019, Rudzinski won the Pussy Riot award at the Auckland Fringe Festival and performed at Pussy Riot's last show in the country. She has published four collections of poetry.

The event, hosted by Charitable Trust Action Education Inc, was the organisation's first live event since lockdown

Trust manager Ramon Narayan said they could not be prouder to be kicking things off at Takapuna Library.

Most slam poetry sessions are held at bars and pubs, which doesn't give younger people and their families the opportunity to be a part of the events, said Narayan.

"It was really heartwarming to see the community come together, especially after so many of us have had such a hard time with lockdown," he said.

Takapuna library has always been encouraging and supportive of stand-up poetry events and has plans to arrange another event in September.

"Originally, we were just doing stand-up poetry in South Auckland but schools, community centres and teachers on the Shore were keen to see live slam poetry too.

"The best part is that young people can really speak their truth in a way that is welcomed by the community," said Narayan.

Slam poetry on the North Shore continues with the Auckland inter-high school slam poetry competition, with young performers from across the shore and groups from Birkenhead College, Northcote College and Rangitoto College.



Poet Carrie Rudzinski drew an audience at Takapuna Library

Water sought from Lake Pupuke due to crisis

Lake Pupuke will be used for emergency water if Auckland Council has its way.

Council's Healthy Waters department will lodge a resource consent department later this month.

"The application is being undertaken under emergency works provisions of the RMA, in response to the drought and water supply crises currently affecting the Auckland region," an Auckland Council spokesperson said.

"It will provide a non-potable water site for businesses and the construction industry to use as an alternative water source so they can keep operating during the water restrictions," she said.

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