

# The Rangitoto Observer

Takapuna, Milford, Castor Bay, Forrest Hill and Sunnynook

DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY

Issue 54 – April 2, 2021

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE

**Simon Watts**

MP for North Shore

09 486 0005



Authorised by Simon Watts,  
Parliament Buildings, Wgtn.



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for North Shore... p2**

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## Historic barracks ‘not worth council support’ – board chair

The World War II-era barracks at Kennedy Park is not worth spending ratepayer money on, according to Devonport-Takapuna Local Board chair Aidan Bennett.

Saying he realised his position would not be welcomed by some, Bennett told the last board meeting that no ratepayer money should be spent on restoring the historic building.

“Let the money be found from the heritage sector if restoration is essential,” he suggested in his monthly chair’s report.

This stance has dismayed the Kennedy Park WWII Installations Preservation Trust which has battled for years to have the dilapidated wooden barracks at 139 Beach Rd, Castor Bay, restored and reopened. The heritage-listed

building had suffered “demolition by neglect” awaiting Auckland Council plans, said chair Chris Owen. He understood Auckland Council funding pressures, but hoped at the least the building could be made water-tight while options to save it could be canvassed.

What was designed to look like an old state house is a unique example of **To page 5**

## Fab five celebrate swim from Great Barrier



**Epic crossing... A five-man relay team of (from left to right) Richard Hart, Ian Jones, David Mitchell, Rick Wells and Karim Rostami celebrate with supporters after swimming from Great Barrier Island to Takapuna Beach to raise money for St John. Story, page 3.**

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## More nurses sought for Shore

Waitemata District Health Board aims to employ 100 new registered nurses by the end of June, around two-thirds of them to be assigned to the North Shore.

They will be shared between North Shore Hospital and the Wilson Home.

Waitemata is the country's largest DHB, and currently has 2281 nurses working across its territory of north and west Auckland.

The roles being recruited range from graduates to nurse specialists, spread across departments as diverse as cardiology and theatre. Chief executive Dr Dale Bramley says the extra positions will result in more nurses at patients' bedsides, aligning with a board promise of "best care for everyone". The board serves a population of almost 650,000, which is expected to grow to 800,000 by 2037.

The news comes in the same month as the "turning of the sod" to lay foundations for the building of a big new block at the hospital. The previously announced four-storey building, to be known as Totara Haumara, will provide four new operating theatres, new endoscopy suites to reduce waiting times for colonoscopy and gastroscopy procedures and will link to the main hospital by air bridge. Patient- and whanau-friendly design is promised.

One of the new nurses on the medical wards at North Shore Hospital is Ashleigh Bennett, who is of Ngāti Ranginui and Ngāi Te Rangi descent. She started in February and says she was attracted to the hospital by the support available there, including through He Kamaka Waiora (Māori health-



**On the wards... Ashleigh Bennett is a new nurse at North Shore Hospital**

services) in providing healthcare to serve cultural needs.

Recruiting Maori nurses is a priority to serve a DHB population that is 10 per cent Maori, says Dr Bramley, who is himself of Ngapuhi descent. However, nurses of all backgrounds are being sought to reflect the diverse communities they serve. The DHB last year employed a full-time Maori workforce recruitment consultant, believed to be a first role of its type in the country.

Asked if its nursing numbers prior to the recruitment drive were fully subscribed, the DHB replied that they had been adequate.

North Shore MP Simon Watts, a former deputy financial officer at Waitemata, told the Observer that North Shore had not been immune to the staff shortages that he had highlighted at a Health select committee last month. Counties-Manukau DHB admitted to the committee that it was 150 nurses short. Watts warned that shortages could jeopardise the speed of the Covid-19 vaccination programme.

He wants a clear government plan to close the health workforce gap that has been compounded by border restrictions on overseas workers. "The government needs to vaccinate an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 people on the Shore for Covid-19 by Christmas. This is a massive undertaking."

## Westlake Boys picked to host big kapa haka event

The North Shore will host a prestigious schools' kapa haka contest for only the second time in 26 years.

Te Ahurea Tino Rangatiranga 2021 will be staged at Westlake Boys High School in October. It is expected to attract up to 1800 students for a day of competition in the school's auditorium.

Like the larger Polyfest, the Auckland-wide event is a pathway for Auckland schools to the 2022 national championships.

Westlake's head of Maori, Matua Johnny Waititi, briefed the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board about the competition at its last community forum. He explained that unlike the higher-profile Polyfest, Te Ahurea's focus was purely Maori performing arts and accordingly it attracted top competitors. Westlake had become one of those schools, rising from division three status to division one in just two years.

Gaining hosting rights was significant, but the benefit would accrue to the wider community, said Waititi, who has driven the development of the school's programme.

Westlake would put out feelers to offer students from other Shore schools the chance to compete with it, he said. This would allow students at schools that did not have Maori performing arts taught at NCEA level, the chance to stand in competition and gain credits.

"The event is an opportunity for all North Shore to celebrate."

Te Ahurea was last hosted on the North Shore in 2004, by the now closed Hato Petera College.

Waititi, who was thanked for his report, told the board that he would be back to seek contestable funding towards the cost of hosting.

### 2 The Strand: empty for 1037 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 1037 days.

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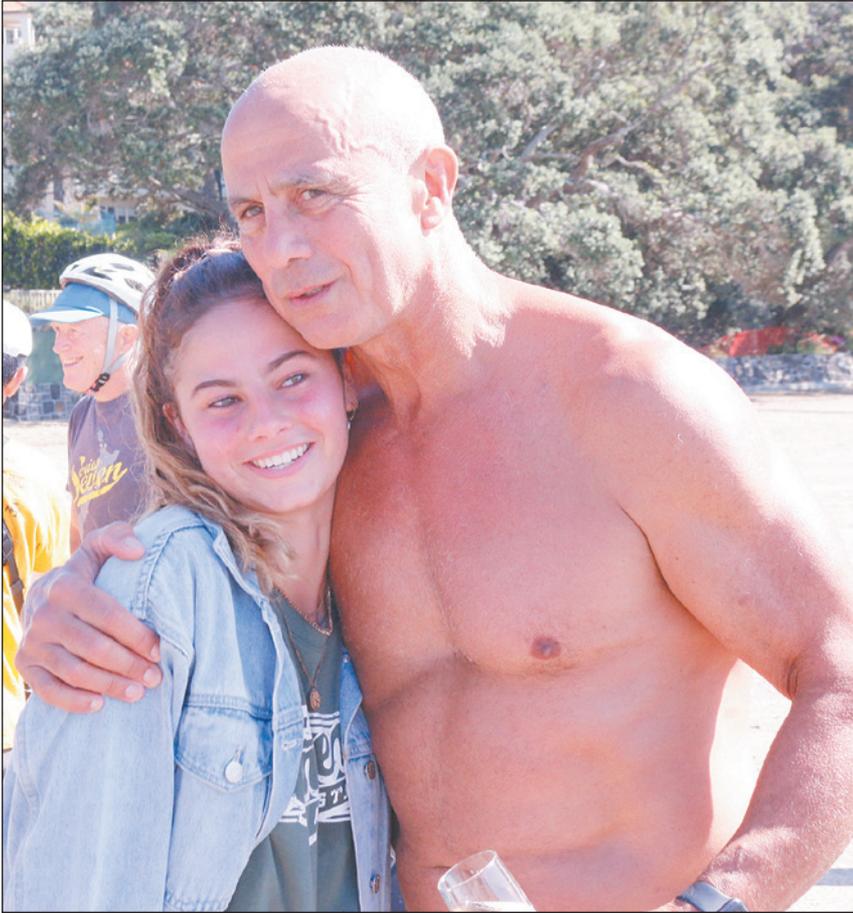
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## 'Old fellas' conquer epic swim from Great Barrier



**Well done, Dad... Rick Wells' daughter Sophie welcomes him ashore**

Former world triathlon champion and Commonwealth Games swimmer Rick Wells (58) reckons a 100km marathon swim relay from Great Barrier Island to Takapuna last week "wasn't a bad effort from a few old fellas".

Wells joined former All Black Ian Jones, Karim Rostami, David Mitchell and Richard Hart in the relay challenge, which raised close to \$250,000 for St John.

The team left Great Barrier at 10.30am on 23 March and reached Takapuna just after 11am the next day, swimming 30-minute legs each.

At night it was pitch black, but swimmers' hand movements were "reflecting like phosphorus off our goggles, like a scene from Star Wars," Wells said.

Jones, aged 53, described the fundraising epic as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

"Crazy is good, right? A crazy idea gets things done," he said.

Jones swam 12 cycles in the race and reckons he covered around 22km on the water.

"The conditions were rough at the start, but the water was warm so there was no shock factor when you were getting in which was a big help.

"The highlight was the night swimming – we spent some time with a pod of dolphins and a couple of hammerhead sharks came to have a look at us at one stage."

"I saw the North Shore coastline at day-break and that was a bit of relief," Jones said.

## Refunds in pipeline for 'postponed' festival shows

Dave Dobbyn belting out his hits by the seaside promised to be a highlight of the Waterbourne Beach Festival in Takapuna, along with shows by other top performers such as Tami Neilson and Hollie Smith, but it was not to be. Now ticket holders are wondering if the performances will ever happen.

The festival, part of a programme of America's Cup events, was unable to deliver its main shows.

Organiser Laurence Carey said he had no choice but to "postpone" his big four ticketed concerts, after raised Covid-19 alert levels threw preparations and performance dates up in the air.

A two-level grandstand and stage for the heavily promoted, near-month-long event were never fully erected on Takapuna Beach Reserve.

More than 5000 of up to 8000 tickets for the shows had been sold, Carey told the Observer.

"Considering it's been two years' work and having a large part of the event unable to run, it's pretty disappointing."

Carey said he was looking at running the ticketed events on another date. Asked if they would be staged in Takapuna, he said

they could be, but might be held elsewhere in the city and next summer. "I'm looking at options," he said.

Asked what was happening with refunds, Carey said one round had been offered to ticket holders, of whom 75 per cent had said they would wait to see what was happening. His focus had been on delivering what he still could for the last weeks of the festival, which ended with a fun run on 27 March. Post-event, in one or two months, he said he would do a second round of refunds.

A music fan who bought a ticket for the Dobbyn concert said Waterbourne needed to do a better job at communicating with its ticket holders. He hoped for a new concert date.

Carey has staged previous Waterbourne events, running them as a charitable trust with a focus on environmental awareness.

He said he had delivered on many of the free activities that made up the bulk of the Takapuna festival programme. Beach activities went ahead, including the paddleboard nationals on 13-15 March.

A big screen proved popular with America's Cup spectators, attracting up to 1000

people at times. Ocean-themed family movie evenings were held.

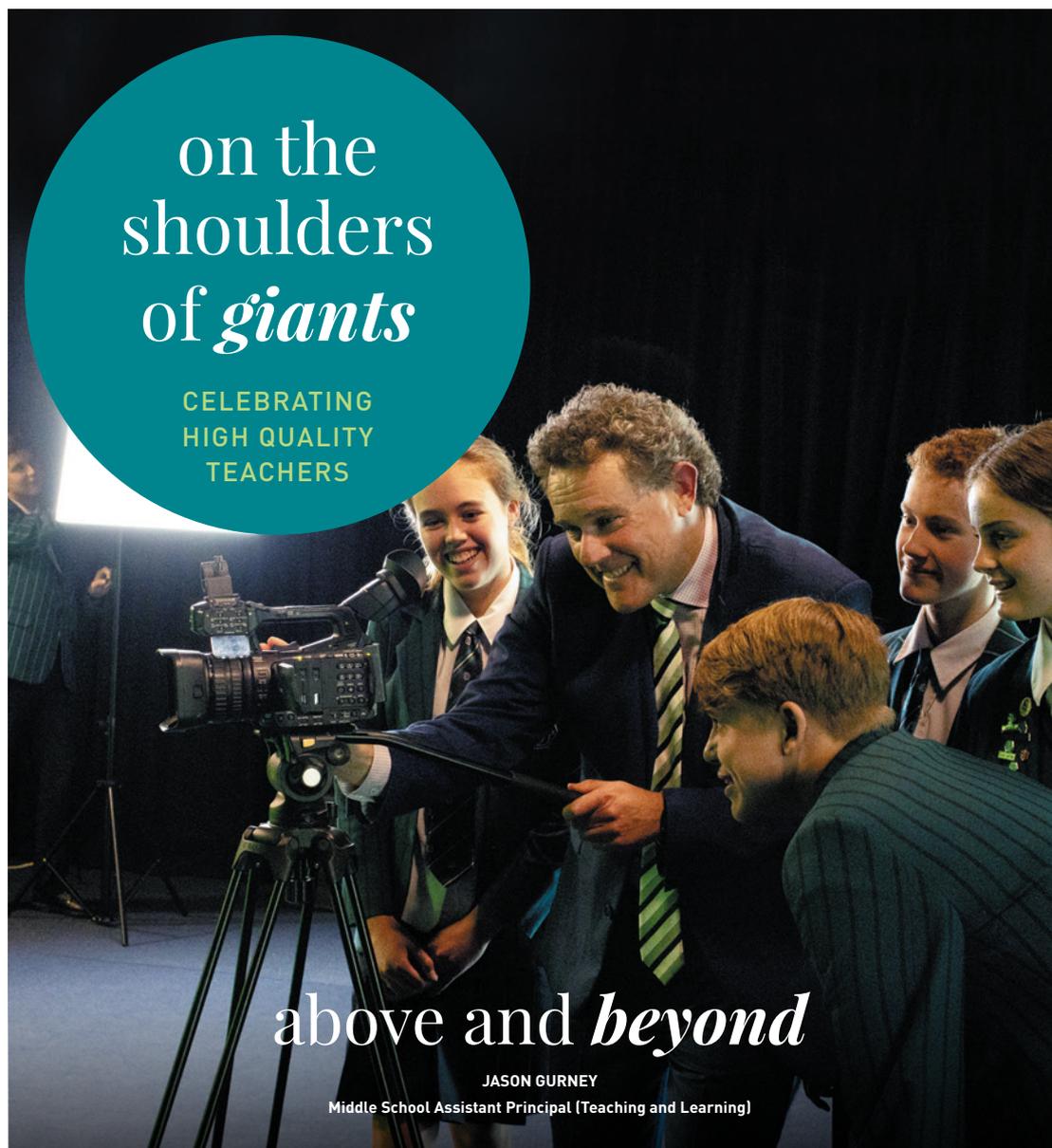
More than 500 people had registered for different water sports, said Carey, and various classes were delivered.

He acknowledged support from the Takapuna Beach Business Association, which helped advertise the festival, seeing it as a drawcard to attract visitors. Council promotional arm Auckland Unlimited promoted Waterbourne as a key event on its Summernova programme built around the America's Cup.

Auckland Unlimited last year urged the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board to grant Waterbourne consent to occupy the reserve, and said that the festival's application for a liquor licence was necessary to guarantee its success.

But without the big-name concerts, the crowds never really turned out in force to spend up large.

"Obviously, financially, Covid has very seriously impacted me and my business," said Carey. "I've got very supportive sponsors. Given the circumstances, the majority of my sponsors see the value of my charity and we should be able to bounce back."



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From page 1

## Barracks restoration ‘doesn’t stack up’

historic coastline military fortifications. In February, Bennett and two other board members donned personal protective equipment to check out its interior with council staff.

Bennett said estimates had put restoration to required heritage standards – virtually a rebuild – at between \$1.5 million and \$2 million.

“If it stacked up then I would support restoration,” he said. But the amount was too much for the cash-strapped council.

Over recent years concerns about the building, which contains asbestos and rotten timber, have grown. The barracks was bought by Auckland Council from Housing New Zealand in July 2014.

Owen said he had not seen the new costings and these were considerably more than the \$500,000 the trust was originally told fixing the building would cost some years ago. “There’s been a bit of silence from council for some time.”

The previous board had supported restoration and the trust had been expecting a report back from officials in February 2020. Then Covid-19 had hit and the trust had not had an update. It would raise the issue of what was a local and a national asset at the next Castor Bay Ratepayers and Residents Association meeting.

“If I put on my Machiavellian hat I’d say there is a view that if we do nothing the problem will simply go away.”

Demolition by neglect would set a very dangerous precedent for heritage buildings,



**Deceptive design... Kennedy Park’s old barracks were designed to look like a state house and for decades after WWII served as such**

he said. Failure to paint the exterior and leaks around window frames, plus exterior drainage issues, had compounded problems, Owen said.

The last word on the barracks’ fate will not rest solely with Bennett, as at some stage all board members will vote on a recommendation.

Incoming board chair Ruth Jackson, who visited the barracks with Bennett and member Toni van Tonder, said council staff were getting advice from heritage specialists to “try to find the best way forward from here”.

Bennett said in his report that if the board recommended funding restoration then this would be at the expense of other much-needed projects. “I just don’t believe the ratepayer should be footing the bill at this time.”

Owen hopes a “holding pattern” option that safeguards the barracks for now might be the best option at this stage.

Trust members run monthly tours at the park to explain its significance. The disguise of military buildings as homes was done to ward off any enemy aerial bombardment. The barracks is the last remnant of a row of residential houses.

Unitec lecturer Paul Woodruffe told Stuff in 2016 that loss by neglect would be a travesty. It was part of Auckland’s architectural and cultural history. “The old barracks house is an integral part of a globally unique historic military site,” he said.

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## Northern population growth 'calls for fresh thinking'

The pace of both population growth and property development in the top half of the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board area may necessitate some fresh thinking on priorities, says board deputy chair George Wood.

High-intensity building was bringing more people into northern areas that the last Census HAD identified as already growing faster than the south, he said.

Developers were swooping on 'mixed-use urban' zone properties. "They move in, take the house off and put in seven units," said Wood.

Over five years to the 2018 Census, the Takapuna population had grown 7.6 per cent. In the Westlake and Milford areas up to Sunset Rd, the growth was 6.1 per cent. In the south of the board's area, the Devonport Peninsula's growth was lower at 1.2 per cent.

"We've got to be very mindful of what is going on in the northern area," said Wood. "The

divisions of this board may be something we need to look at in the future."

It was rare to have board members from north of Milford, said Wood, who lives in Forrest Hill.

Of the other current members the chair Aidan Bennett comes from Takapuna, Jan O'Connor from Hauraki, Toni van Tonder from Bayswater, and Trish Deans from Devonport. Ruth Jackson lives out of the local-board area, but has family links to Devonport.

The issue of whether the local board's name is inclusive enough of its whole area has been raised in the past.

With both Devonport and Takapuna once having had councils of their own and Takapuna having been the seat of the North Shore City Council prior to amalgamation with Auckland, the legacy aspects see many council assets and influences vested in these

areas.

Chair Aidan Bennett has previously floated the idea of whether a new name might be a good idea.

Wood said trends in both population growth and ethnic makeup should be kept in mind when board decisions were made. The schools of the north had proved popular with migrants, he noted. Transport trends were also worth tracking. People in the northern area especially had embraced public transport, with 17 per cent of those commuting from Sunnynook using the Northern Busway. "We're doing very nicely here," he said.

The area had the lowest use of cars to commute in the larger metropolitan area, he said.

Wood has earlier noted that facilities such as Sunnynook Park and Community Centre are heavily used compared with those in other parts of the board area.

## Many applications for multi-unit projects

Resource consent applications to Auckland Council provide a snapshot of the scale of neighbourhood development. While intensified land use under the Unitary Plan is helping provide new houses it is also changing the character of the suburbs.

A large number of projects proceed on a non-notifiable basis, meaning neighbours may not be aware of what will be built until contractors turn up next door.

Of consent applications filed in the northern half of the Local Board area, many are for multi-unit homes on single sections. Those seeking planners' approval for three or more homes over the latest seven-week period were:

Sunnynook: 7 dwellings at 6 Aralia Rd; 4 terraced units at 12 Cassia Place; 4 dwellings at 11 Regency Pl.

Forrest Hill: 6 units at 10 Havelock Ave; 5 dwellings at 136 Forrest Hill Rd; 4 double-storey dwellings at 70 Bond St; 6 units at 10 Pax Ave; 6 dwellings at 11 Barman Rd.

Castor Bay: 3 dwellings at 128 Beach Rd. Milford: 6 dwellings at 6 Tobruk Cres; 5 standalone dwellings at 42 Gordon Ave; 5 dwellings at 30 Stanley Ave; 3 dwellings at 14 Muritai Rd.

Takapuna: 9 three-storey townhouses at 19 Killarney St; six-lot development at 12 Karaka St; 5 dwellings at 17 Lomond St.

## Bennett urges use of local suppliers for council jobs

If Auckland Council thought local it could boost business and efficiency, says the chair of Devonport-Takapuna Local Board, Aidan Bennett. He took this message to a forum of the city's 21 local board chairs and says he found ready ears.

One example given by another board was the dispatch of a truck from Onehunga to Upper Harbour for a minor job that turned out to be unnecessary.

Bennett believes the council should commit to use local suppliers in the renewal and construction of its assets. It should also use its size to leverage good deals. "Council appears to pay a premium," he reported back to the local board last month. Looking local might help it lower costs.

"They are part of the community and they know their own patch. It also provides local economic development and employment opportunities and can support Covid-19 economic recovery across local-board areas."

Shorter travel distances for council jobs might reduce congestion and emissions. "We need to make it easier for local suppliers to participate in general – less red tape."

## Esmonde Rd project to start by year's end

Work on the Amaia development on the large church site on Esmonde Rd will begin by the end of the year, after the first two stages gained Auckland Council planning consent this month.

To date, 54 of 86 apartments in the seven-storey block at the front of the site have been pre-sold.

This building will contain retail, health and childcare facilities on its lower level, with accommodation above.

The second consented block is to the east and will be mostly managed visitor accommodation. Stage three, closer to the water, is yet to be submitted for approval.

Part of the consent for the so-called "urban village" is for communal space and landscaping, including pedestrian and cyclist-friendly entrances and pathways.

Hopes these might connect on to Francis St, Hauraki, and eventually beyond, would depend on council funding.

## Hospice closes in Takapuna as \$20 million redevelopment begins

Harbour Hospice's redevelopment is underway, with its Takapuna facility to be closed for 12 weeks of initial work.

During this time, specialist services and support for patients and families will continue through community care and additional beds at the organisation's Hibiscus House at Whangaparaoa.

The \$20 million project at Shea Tce, Takapuna, will add facilities to cope with the

demands of a growing population.

A Maori blessing was held last week to mark its start. As part of this, a pare (carved panel) and a pou (post) were removed for safe-keeping, but the pou was found to be water damaged. A new pou will be carved and installed in the finished building.

Hospice chief executive Jan Nichols said the temporary closing might be unsettling for some hospice users, but staff would do all they

could to keep patient and family needs to the fore. From mid-year, the hospice would reopen and other work would be done in stages, until completion in 2023.

"We still need community support to enable us to complete this massive task," she said.

So far \$5 million of a \$10 million fundraising target had been met through generous donors, said Nichols. Another \$10 million came from the hospice's foundation.

## Magic time as Easter arrives early in Takapuna



**Mad hatter... Jimmy Marvel the Magician reveals a white rabbit to an eager crowd of young onlookers at the I Love Takapuna Easter Carnival. The annual event, held last Saturday 27 March, featured family entertainment and an egg hunt across the centre's shops.**



**Fairy good... Tessa (5) and Briar Kimpton (2) with fairy Katie Bell**



**Game on... Theo Mellor (2) lines up for table-top competition**

## Milford men's tennis sup from Chelsea Cup for second year in a row



**Winning team... Hyeok Min, Sion Wiggin, Junior Fanguna, Matt Shearer, Jack Loutit (in action also, at right) and Matt Alexander**

Promising junior Jack Loutit spear-headed Milford men's Chelsea Cup win over Campbells Bay at the North Harbour Tennis Centre last Friday.

Milford won 6-1, however, captain Matt Alexander said: "The scoreline looked comfortable, but there were a lot of tight matches."

Playing at number 2, Loutit beat Alex Klintcharov 6-3, 6-3 in a pivotal match. The title topped an excellent season for the 16-year-old. In December Loutit won both

the New Zealand under-18 and under-16 titles. Then in January, he won three junior International Tennis Federation titles in tournaments played in New Zealand, taking his world junior ranking to 124.

"If we have an Australian junior open Jack would make the main draw."

It is the second year Milford has taken the men's title. The Chelsea Cup double eluded Milford however, with its Milford Cats women's team going down to Northcote 6-1.





**Funny bunny... Maya Danks (1), and sister Hannah (3), delight in meeting the Easter Bunny in Takapuna**



**Brush strokes... Olivia Campbell (above), aged 5, of Takapuna, paints a shell shape and Blake Hambrook, 6, from Pinehill, is transformed into a tiger**



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**Young talent time**

Young at Art is a new events programme in public-performance hubs across Auckland, including Takapuna. Creatives aged 15 to 24 will perform dance, music and more at the 38 Hurstmere Rd open space, weekend until 18 April.

Not-for-profit group YouthArts New Zealand is the organiser. It is based at the newly opened Shore Junction youth centre in Northcote Rd.

**Centre opening, page 22**



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# Watts calls for 'laser focus' on government's roles

A large band of supporters attended the maiden speech in Parliament of North Shore MP Simon Watts.

His two National Party predecessors in the seat, Maggie Barry and Wayne Mapp, were among those who travelled to Wellington last week to witness the formal opportunity new MPs have to set out their credentials and ambitions. "It was a very special occasion and I was very proud to be joined by over 100 friends, family and supporters," Watts told the Observer.

He cited the continuity of "three generations" of MPs and also the humbling support he said he had received from across the political spectrum for his speech and the aspirations for the Shore that he had outlined.

Watts spoke of the need for New Zealand and its governments to do better in planning and action on housing, health and transport.

"Challenging times demand more than ever that we work together in the interests of all New Zealanders," he told the House. Informed decision-making should look long-term rather than in three-yearly electoral cycles.

Drawing on his experience as both a health executive from a banking background and ongoing work as a volunteer paramedic had helped shape his approach. "Working simultaneously at both ends of the system opened my eyes to the importance of a bold vision, co-ordinated approach – and action, not talk," he said

"As an ambulance officer for St. John I've been into homes with black mould on the walls; treated children with breathing problems in over-crowded housing; self-harm due to mental health, and I've been with colleagues on the roadside as we try to save yet another life blighted by drugs and crime."

Watts said wanting to make a difference had drawn him to using his financial skills in the health sector, then on to politics.

"Health and education can't be siloed out from our country's economic performance, our strategy for affordable housing, or the importance of providing a sense of self-worth for our citizens. It's all linked, and these challenges need action to sort not just the symptoms, but the root causes of these issues."

As a toddler, he had been diagnosed with



**House call... It's taken months, thanks to Covid-19 delays, but North Shore MP Simon Watts finally made his maiden speech in Parliament**

type 1 diabetes. "I've had a lifetime association with a system that's blessed with passionate professionals yet plagued by broken decision-making. It's time to fix that."

The need to clean up beaches united those from the left, centre and right of politics. The Harbour Bridge, clogged roads and ferry cuts were also concerns that deserved decent answers that improved the outcomes for everyone.

So was a well-functioning economy.

"An economic rebound that leaves the most disadvantaged behind and locks young people out of work and homeownership is a mirage. It might look good in the business pages, but if it fails where it counts, in our homes and communities, then it's not worth the paper it's printed on."

New Zealand had the land, resources and creative people to thrive.

"People from around the world are hammering on the doors to get into a country they know is exceptional, even if we don't quite believe it. Complacency will condemn us, as will future generations if we don't take this opportunity to lift up our country with both hands."

Individuals, families, and communities

should be at the heart of decision-making; not existing government structures and ways of doing things, he said.

"It's no secret that I believe in limited government, but 'limited' doesn't mean being constrained in our vision. It means having a laser focus on the stuff government is meant to be doing. The stuff only governments can do: regulate, legislate, investigate; but also cajole, inspire and lead."

In Parliament, Watts shares an office with a fellow newbie, the high-profile former Air New Zealand chief executive Christopher Luxon, who is now the MP for Botany. Watts is National's spokesperson on ACC and an associate spokesperson for health.

In his maiden speech he thanked the people of his electorate for showing faith in him.

His family supported his decision to enter Parliament, but wanted to see results. "I owe it to my two boys, Jack and Callum, and to my wife, Shannon... There has to be a reason why I will spend half the week away from my family in Wellington; we have to deliver outcomes that resonate beyond this chamber and continue to resonate for the generations that follow."

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# Seaside camping ground plans upgrade

Yachting lured Steve Edwards back to Takapuna Beach recently, as it did when he was a teenager. The operator of the Takapuna Beach Holiday Park took in some America's Cup racing and stayed in a tent, in a visit that coincided with the meeting of the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board where members considered his plans to redevelop facilities at the council-owned seaside site.

Edwards and wife Jeanette, who operate other holiday parks in the South Island, in 2019 won a long-term lease to run the Takapuna Beach Holiday Park.

Since then, they have been working on plans to improve the facility, which is run by managers day to day.

These plans, drawn up with Auckland Council property arm Panuku, propose the removal of older council buildings, along with eight exotic trees. This would allow more space for parking and camping, along with drainage and contouring improvements and the erection of new units and cabins.

The work is expected to take around 12 months. It will not affect public access to the adjoining Takapuna-to-Milford walking track.

Edwards told the meeting: "Rest assured we will be putting trees back in there." Campers liked shade, he said, but some of the existing trees were dangerous and not well situated and could be replaced with natives once the site was reconfigured.

Drainage work would allow for new grass to be planted. Concrete pads would provide



**Stepping up... The Takapuna Beach Holiday Park has plans for a smart upgrade as shown in these design drawings**

parking for motor homes, caravans or cars, with the option of erecting tents or canopies on the grass alongside.

Up to 20 tent sites would be available, with some new "boat-shed cabins", to offer basic accommodation to travellers who did not want to spend a lot.

Board members were told by Panuku officials that the old Rose Cottage building would be demolished. Member Trish Deans noted it did not carry heritage status, although it had a link to an early owner of the Mon Desir site.

Deputy chair George Wood noted that the public driveway to the camping ground had outrigger canoes sitting very close to it. "They seem to have also taken over the reserve."

Wood and Jan O'Connor were among op-

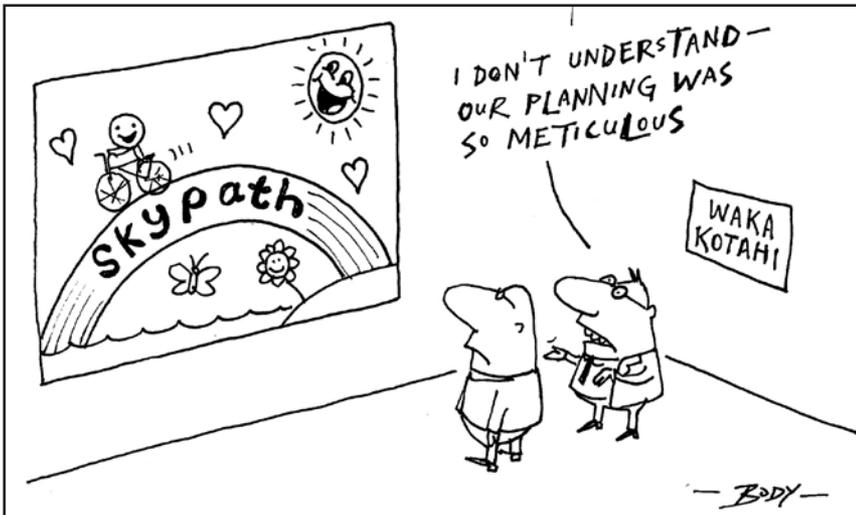
ponents of previous plans for Yachting New Zealand to take over the area.

O'Connor, who collected signatures against the move at Takapuna Market, recalled: "About 12 people wanted the boat sheds and the rest wanted to keep the camping ground and open space."

An official said the matter of boat storage was one for the community facilities team. More work was needed around the waka ama parked near the drive, she said.

Board chair Aidan Bennett urged board support as landowner for the council to approve the camping ground proposals, which are subject to resource consent requirements. Ruth Jackson said: "I'm excited we kept the camp ground in this lovely location by the seas. It's a real asset."

## Bodyline with Guy Body



### Skypath next steps awaited

The ball is in the government's court over when the public gets word on a likely replacement for Skypath.

With the combined cycle and pedestrian attachment to the Harbour Bridge appearing doomed, it is understood that Waka Kotahi / New Zealand Transport Agency is now working on alternative designs to present to the Minister of Transport. Bike lobby

groups have been quick to point out that the government and Auckland Council have committed to the cycleways that the bridge link connects in transport plans.

Bike Auckland had suggested a lane of the existing bridge be devoted to bikes, but a more likely outcome is a separate structure, carrying both bikes and buses.

## Letter

### Takapuna toilet-block upgrade unnecessary

A notice on The Strand toilets and changing sheds informs users that they will be upgraded from April to August this year.

A quick inspection reveals that the contents of this building are already in excellent condition. After travelling along the east coast of New Zealand and sampling the various wares on offer, this block would rate very highly.

The fittings look near new, and are clean and tidy, and look good for several years' more use.

It was my belief that due to Covid the Council is pleading poverty, which has led it to try to sell community green spaces and stop any extra spending on items such as libraries.

Yet this same Council is happy to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in upgrading a building that doesn't need it. Presumably they mean to replace the stainless steel inside with gold!

**John Potter, Takapuna**

## Community advocate puts the focus on resilience

Yvonne Powley's career has taken her from aid missions in the Pacific to tackling hyper-local concerns on the North Shore. She tells Helen Vause about a career that began after young motherhood – and the fresh challenge of helping local neighbourhoods prepare for emergencies.

Yvonne Powley grew up on a farm just over the Bombay Hills, but the country life wasn't the future she dreamed of for herself.

An avid reader as a child, she lived in her books and read widely as she moved through her teens at Pukekohe High School.

"I just couldn't wait to get away from the farm to the city and to explore much further-away places with different cultures. I had big dreams," says Powley, looking back now from the brink of retirement and a life that has taken her to plenty of places and through many challenges.

But the dreams and adventures went on ice for the impatient teen. Powley married young and at 18 had set up home in Pukekohe with her husband and baby son. She had another child, and for the next few years had her hands full raising children in a small town.

She'd hung onto those dreams though, and once the children were old enough, she began her professional journey.

She studied at Waikato University, by now a bit older than her student peers, where she attained a degree, majoring in community psychology and sociology.

"I was very, very idealistic with big ideas and a passion to know how structures worked and to be part of making changes happen," she says.

As a sure-fire way to put herself in the thick



**Networker... For the past 12 years, Yvonne Powley has helped lead the way in building community partnerships on the North Shore**

of the action, Powley joined RedR, an organisation that provides teams who are deployed to disaster zones to support and rebuild lives.

Before she could be deemed ready for action, she attended humanitarian-aid courses at Burnham Military camp, for some preparation and understanding of what she'd be likely to encounter on the ground, the stresses of disaster scenes and the issues of working with multiple agencies.

Powley's first trip was to a remote corner of Papua New Guinea, working with teams

from a local office under the broad banner of justice and peace. Her focus was working with women in an environment where corruption and violence loomed large.

"It was very, very tough for women there and very few of them ever voted. Part of my brief was targeting women to vote and travelling around reaching women in remote places. Violence against women was very common and we were working for funding to help support violence prevention.

"Of course it was a tremendous eye-opener.

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And you learn so much from an experience like that. But I loved it.”

She learned about self-protection first-hand too. After being accosted on her daily walk, she found it would be wise to start driving to work.

But it was also her first taste of the work she'd longed to be part of.

Later, Powley was deployed on the first of two trips to the northern coastline of the Solomon Islands as part of a UN effort after earthquakes and tsunamis.

“There was big devastation and there were plenty of aftershocks and a lot to be done. It was so hands-on every day that I had to sleep with my clothing and gear ready at the bottom of my bed in case we had to race out in the night.”

The next trip was to Samoa, working with a team charged with assessing what the impact of avian flu could be at a time when the spread was considered a real threat.

“These trips were all very different but they were all amazing experiences. They were exciting and very rewarding times for me. People are so very grateful for assistance. But really, people the world over are the same.”

For the last 12 years, her working life has been much closer to home and within her own community as the chief executive of the agency Auckland North Community and Development (ANCAD). It's an incorporated society, governed by a board.

When Powley took up the lead role in 2009, the organisation had been through such wobbly times that its very existence was in question.

Funding was in the balance and her appointment at first was only for three months. Powley was unfazed by this uncertain beginning.

“I believed I could build it up again. The first task was to put a strong board together – people who would be taken notice of. We have many skilled articulate people on the Shore. And building relationships was a big part of it. And of course chasing funding.”

Over the last decade, Powley and her small team have built ANCAD into a well-respected, dynamic and highly connected organisation, pulling together community partnerships and

funding, connecting providers with businesses and government agencies, holding funding, overseeing projects and providing a broad range of education for people working for community interests.

In one of their focus areas of capability building, they've grown into a large provider of governance and financial education.

The success of ANCAD's community accounting project, where they partnered with Massey University to provide education in the not-for-profit sector, landed the university's award for its business partnership of the year.

*“It's not a top-down approach any more. Every community and town across the North Shore is very different in terms of risks and hazards.”*

Today, the ANCAD networks are extensive, connecting all corners of community interest and services. During Covid lockdowns, ANCAD coordinated a lot of service delivery.

“My job has been about advocacy for the North Shore and about attracting funding and resources.

“People think we're wealthy in this area and we don't get the same services that go west and south in Auckland. But there is a lot of need here. The North Shore has high rates of family violence. There are plenty of people out there who can hardly make ends meet. There is a lot of anxiety in our communities and we have high rates of mental issues here. Currently, the biggest issue is probably housing.”

People are in community work for the love of it, says Powley. She felt so strongly about our

unsung heroes and their role in the history of the North Shore that with ANCAD she published a book featuring the stories of more than 50 community workers and leaders.

“Unless a conscientious effort is made to record examples of people's achievements and interests, the past can be quickly forgotten. Celebrities are often documented and celebrated but those who do community work just quietly get on with it and are not often recognised,” Powley wrote, when the book was published in 2016.

Although she's now stepped down as ANCAD chief executive, Powley sees plenty of work still ahead for her in the North Shore community in a mentoring and advisory capacity.

First up, following Covid lockdowns, earthquakes and tsunami threats, she is part of a push for very localised community-resilience plans.

The initiative has arisen out of community conversations, including one with a local-board member.

“There's a realisation that people would be asking exactly what they should do in the face of emergencies. Exactly where they should go to get to higher ground, for example. What should they have ready to take with them?”

“It's not a top-down approach any more. Every community and town across the North Shore is very different in terms of risks and hazards, regarding things like low-lying areas and a lot of other features.

“This resilience plan would be a real community development that we hope would result in people in every neighbourhood knowing exactly what to do and where to go in the event of an emergency. It would give us safer communities.

“I say good on the [Devonport-Takapuna] Local Board for being prepared to invest money in a resilience response at a very local level. It's very forward thinking.”

From her home office, high on the slopes of Takarunga, Powley is working behind the scenes on the first moves to get the community talking about resilience plans at a public meeting in Takapuna in late April.

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# Castor Bay neighbours soak up sounds in the sun



Castor Bay was the perfect backdrop to celebrate Neighbours Day Aotearoa on a sunny Sunday afternoon. The annual event held at the beach reserve was buoyed by music from the North Shore Brass Band, enjoyed by residents relaxing on the grass.

Organisers, the Castor Bay Ratepayers and Residents Association, turned on a popular sausage sizzle and signed up some new members. The main aim of the day, however, was simply to get people together, said association chair Hamish Anderson.

Many residents strolled to the gathering. Sarah Bird, who brought her two sons along, said: "You feel like if you go to a neighbours day you should walk. It's lovely to have community events."

Sarah Garlick, who moved to Castor Bay at the beginning of the year, said: "We're just loving the family stuff in the area. There's nothing like this in Parnell."

A number of people left with native plants provided by the Pupuke Birdsong Project. Co-ordinator Fiona Martin had around 200 to give away, along with advice on suitable planting to encourage birdlife.

The mellow sounds of Green Bullet rounded out a very neighbourly afternoon.



**Popular players... North Shore Brass Band, conducted by Harmen Vanhoorne, kept things up tempo in the shade of a pohutukawa tree**



**Green fingers... Francesca Feeney, aged 12, and sister Matilda, 9 (along with pet Coco), collected free plants provided by Pupuke Birdsong Project's co-ordinator Fiona Martin (left), who dispensed advice as well as native plants**



**Sizzling fun...** The sausages were popular with five-year-old Albert and two-year-old Malu, whose parents Carla and Joe Schmiege brought them down the hill to Castor Bay's Neighbours Day



**We're with the band...** Margaret Lommertz (left), Ron and Louise Hinvest (above) and Madeleine and Ian Wright (below, right) were sitting pretty. The Wrights had three family members in the brass band.



**Sun smart...** Imogen Bosworth with her girls Maia, 4, and Georgia, 2





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# Plant swap proves popular in Forrest Hill



A neighbourhood get-together and plant swap at Seine Reserve last month was an ideal seeding event for a hoped-for community garden at the back of the Forrest Hill site.

A turnout of around 30 people for Neighbours Day heartened garden champion and

local resident Phoebe Atkinson. People chatted about plants and plans, “exactly how we hoped it would be,” she said,

The Devonport-Takapuna Local Board needs to give its final approval as landowner for the garden to be built. The matter is expected to be decided within the month.

## News Briefs

### Spending a penny

Building work begins this month on a boat-shed-style toilet and shower block planned for Milford Reserve. The block is expected to be open by August. Four portaloos are in place until then. Auckland Council decided on the design in 2019.

### Vistas enhanced

A viewing platform is being built at the Killarney Park jetty at Lake Pupuke. Improvements to unsafe older barriers and paths are also underway.

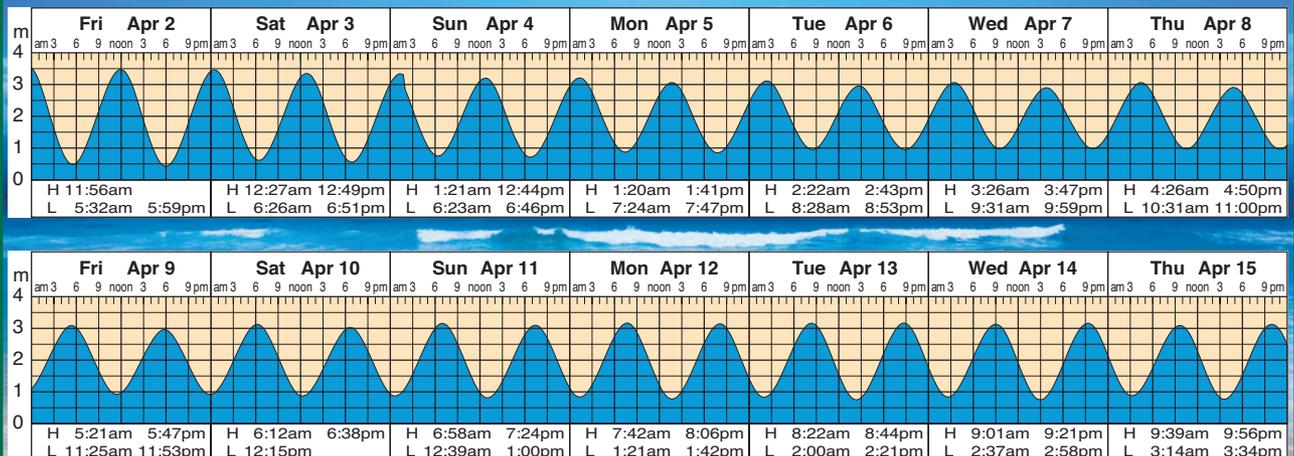
### Art and industry

A working bee at the Lake House Arts Centre last Sunday 28 March will bring spring colour to its surrounds, with new plants and watering helping pep up the parched gardens. Volunteer helpers were treated to a light lunch.

### Sucker fund rises

The NRG Rotary group raised \$4000 at a quiz night last month for a rubbish-sucking device for the Milford Estuary. A total of \$8000 has so far been raised for the \$13,000 project.

# Milford / Takapuna Tides



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# Creative youth hub Shore Junction opens in old RSA

Shore Junction has finally opened its doors to the region's young people, after a team of 100 testers spent around six months shaping the facilities at the former RSA in Northcote Rd, Takapuna.

The two-storey building has been transformed into a colourful space for those aged 13 to 24, complete with computers, dance and music spaces and lounging areas.

"If you have grandchildren, if you have children, encourage them to come here – there are trusted adults here," chief executive Sonia Thursby urged the mostly mature audience at the official opening last month.

The Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage, Carmel Sepuloni, opened the building, acknowledging the "amazing work" done to start it.

The not-for-profit venue, supported by the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board, donors and grants, has been 10 years in the making with work in earnest starting in 2016.

One of the youth testers, Leah Gaffley, a Year 13 student at Westlake Girls High School, said she was eager to spread the word so others in her age group would know Shore Junction was available for them.

"I would just like young people to feel comfortable in a space where they can say what is on their minds," she said.

Her own experience gaining skills advising at the venue showed that volunteering there could prove a stepping stone for young people.



**Youth voices... One of the venue's 'testers', Leah Gaffley, and Cam Calkoen were among speakers at the Shore Junction opening**

Another who will be recommending Shore Junction to his friends is Takapuna Grammar Year 9 student Josh Greenway, who has been using it to play drums and meet new people.

Thursby said the venue's value had been already shown when a Carmel College student ran there after school when a man tried to lure her into his car. "She knew it was a safe space."

Early support for the venue came from Youthline and the YMCA. Successive local board members and MPs were thanked, along with patron and donor Jackie Reeve and Rotary representatives, who attended.

Centre director Annaliese Hewitt told the Observer that groups already involved in the centre included Youth Arts and Rainbow Youth. "Everything at Shore Junction is free for people to do," she said.

The aim was to create an environment where young people could connect and grow.

The venue is open Tuesday to Friday, 3pm to 6.30pm for drop-ins, with plans to add Saturday hours later. University students wishing to study there during school hours are welcome to get in touch. Groups can also hire space and run classes.

• Learn more at [www.shorejunction.nz](http://www.shorejunction.nz)

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**Central force... Shore Junction (above) and its patron and Takapuna philanthropist Jackie Reeve (below) inside the youth centre**



**Youth champion... Sonia Thursby speaks about making a difference**

## Opportunities leader acknowledged

Sonia Thursby, a champion of empowerment for young people and those with disabilities, has been awarded a top honour by Rotary. The leader of both Takapuna-based Yes Disability Resource Centre and Shore Junction was recognised as a Paul Harris Fellow.

Rotary's Takapuna branch president, Neil Murray, said Thursby "helped build people's strengths". The award was made at the opening of Shore Junction, of which Thursby has been a driving force.

She still also runs Yes Disability, which was set up with support from Rotary.

Minister Carmel Sepuloni praised Thursby

for her work in providing opportunities to youth with disabilities.

All young people deserved access to employment and training, said Sepuloni, yet "we have never really talked about the fact that a large number of young people who are unemployed have a disability of some sort". The Government was committed to helping right this.

Several people with disabilities attended the opening, with Cam Calkoen, who has cerebral palsy, speaking about his gaining confidence through accessing services available at the Yes centre.

The honour is named for Rotary's founder.

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Godzilla vs. Kong (M) 113min	NEW
Mick Fleetwood & Friends (M) 145min	NEW
Raphael, the Young Prodigy (E) 83min	NEW
Tom & Jerry (G) 101min	Preview Screenings 2-5 APR

### COMING SOON

Girls Can't Surf (M) 108min	8 APR
Voyagers	8 APR
The Rocky Horror Picture Show with Hot and Flustered Shadowcast (M)	9 APR
Gunda (G) 93min	15 APR
Tom & Jerry (G) 101min	15 APR
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