

The Rangitoto Observer

DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY

Issue 64 – August 20, 2021

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE

Takapuna could face
speed-limit cuts... p4

Site confirmed for new
Sunnynook skate park... p5

Artistic inspiration from
polluted creek... p15

Dotty street trial prompts early rethink

Businesses are suffering due to a Takapuna street-improvements trial which reduced car parking – but plans to take away even more parks have been put on hold.

The \$700,000 project, on Huron and Northcroft Sts, includes temporary measures such as median strips, decorative planter boxes, colourful dots on the road and speed bumps.

Part of a nationwide Innovating Streets programme run by Waka Kotahi (New Zealand Transport Agency), but implemented locally by Auckland Council-controlled organisations Panuku and Auckland Transport (AT), it has removed 17 parking spaces from Huron St and 13 from Northcroft St.

The programme's aim is "making it faster

and easier to transition our streets to safer and more liveable spaces".

Hayley Williams, owner of H&Co hairdressing in Huron St, is one of those opposed to the changes. "Our clients just can't park," she said.

Parks over the road from her salon had been removed. By 11.30 one morning, the Toka Puia

To page 2

Restaurant cooks up a storm for hospice fundraising



Pork of the town... Staff from Takapuna restaurant Nanam were crowd pleasers with their delectable carve-up at a big charity event for Harbour Hospice. Story, page 2



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TERMS AND
CONDITIONS APPLY

'Circus-like' upgrade takes toll on businesses

From page 1

public car park down the street, which has 420 spaces, already had its full sign out.

Nor was the work aesthetically pleasing, she said. The main response from clients was "What the hell's going on outside?"

Williams also thought anything painted on the road should be in the road code. "It is circus-like."

Bopha Lang, the owner of Thai Heng Fruit and Vegies, said customers were complaining about parking. "Everyone is complaining. They say if there's no parking they won't be coming back here.

"It's really bad for the business. They're going to remove all the parking here in front of our shop, so that's even worse."

Terence Harpur, chief executive of the Takapuna Beach Business Association, said the group strongly opposed the extent of the trial measures, but changes were on the horizon.

"The association is in direct contact with senior executives of Eke Panuku on resolving the issues, including revising plans and more consultation with local businesses, with



changes to be implemented soon," he said.

A long-term food-business owner, who did not want to be named, was another who reported a downturn, while a woman who has worked in the area for 18 years said her customers complained about the parking, and couldn't carry heavy items to the shop from far away. "It's really not pretty."

Customers at Honey Cafe were also complaining, owner Han Sun said.

Another local worker said the street looked "beautiful", but businesses needed the parking.

The trial included changes to on-street parking due to the availability of parking at the new Toka Puia car park, Panuku said. "We have had both positive and negative feedback on the removal of on-street car parks."

The group is working with AT to consider extending Toka Puia opening hours and the potential to make further street-parking changes to enable pickups.

"In response to feedback to date, a section of work on Huron St, the Lake Rd end, that would remove further car parks, has been put on hold, pending investigations with Auckland Transport around on-street parking time limits and loading bays."

About \$550,000 of the project's \$700,000 budget - 90 per cent of which is funded by Waka Kotahi - has been spent. "The team has been working with local residents and business owners since November 2020 to help guide the project." All feedback was being reviewed, as was traffic monitoring, and changes would be considered for "the next iteration of the trial".

Feedback remains open, with more than 300 people already having done surveys online.



**Hostess with the mostest...
Event co-host and Hospice patron
Judy Bailey**

Takapuna chefs star at Hospice event

Takapuna restaurant Nanam was the toast of the town at a successful fundraising event for Harbour Hospice.

The Hurstmere Rd eatery, which celebrates Filipino cooking, was voted the top food provider at a swept-up brunch held at the Cordis Hotel this month. The 24th Vintners' Brunch raised \$362,000 towards hospice's redevelopment project at its Shea Rd hospice facility, near North Shore Hospital.

The Hospice patron, broadcaster Judy Bailey, and wine expert Vic Williams co-hosted the event. It attracted 400 guests, who enjoyed 5000 plates of food and matching wines served in a 12-course feast over several hours, and vied for more than 100 items in live and silent auctions.

Nanam was among 26 popular Auckland eateries and wineries competing to offer the food and wine match of the year.

Its chefs presented a six-hour roasted crispy pork belly lechon with lemongrass stuffing, served with Tohu Gisborne Chardonnay.

Harbour Hospice chief executive Jan Nichols said she was deeply humbled by the support of the hospitality providers who had remained committed to supporting the event despite navigating their own recoveries after the financial impact of Covid 19. "They've given up so many hours to be here and we're very grateful," she said.

Meanwhile, the first North Shore patients and whanau will return to the refurbished inpatient unit in mid-September, with other work ongoing. Nine beds will be available initially, with an additional six to come. Hospice's clinical teams continue to work in the community.

The inpatient unit is stage one of the project with the old administration block next in line for a makeover. The focus for the rest of the year is to convert this area into outpatient rooms, complementary therapy and counselling spaces, a lounge and new reception area. A training room for staff, volunteers and the wider healthcare community will follow.

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Birthday belles... Holly Bellett (right) of Takapuna stands poised backstage at the Bruce Mason Centre's 25th anniversary celebrations, with Devonport School of Dance classmates Maya Willis (left) and Mollie Granger (centre). The trio were among performers who took to the stage to mark the occasion on Saturday, 7 August, with free public performances. Centre story, page 14.

Brazen daytime incident at bus stop in Takapuna

An angry father is calling for the community to stand up against inappropriate behaviour after a man exposed himself to his teenage daughter, and tried to grab her.

Graham Rush said the 16-year-old was doing okay after the incident at the bus stops on Lake Rd, central Takapuna, after school on Friday, 6 August, but he wanted the community to report any similar incidents to police.

"I'm really keen for the community to stop allowing some of this behaviour," he said. "There were some girls chased in that area – this is in broad daylight, by the way.

"The police advised me the best thing we can do as a community is keep ringing them.

"If the community sees anything, if you see someone who looks a little bit suspicious, they still want you to ring."

The community had been fantastic in helping his daughter, as had her school, he said. Passers-by had come to her aid. "We're focusing on positives and not being scared by this.

"I said to her: 'Look, these things can either define you as a victim or you can be stronger from it'.

"So she's going to be going to self-defence with her mum and her older sister."

Rush said that on another occasion, a man in his 20s sat next to her and spoke inappropriately.

"We have to start saying no, and saying this is not acceptable."

A police media spokesman said a 51-year-old man had been arrested and had appeared in the North Shore District Court on charges relating to common assault, performing an indecent act and resisting police. He is next scheduled to appear on 27 August.

Robbers raid Forrest Hill dairy

A Forrest Hill dairy owner was left shaken after four people robbed his shop on a Sunday afternoon.

Acting detective senior sergeant Ash Matthews from Waitemata CIB said police were investigating the aggravated robbery in Raines Ave. "Four offenders entered the store just after 4pm on Sunday and stole the till," he said. "The store owner has suffered minor injuries after being assaulted during the robbery, and is understandably shaken by what has occurred."

Matthews said the four people fled in a stolen Subaru, later found near the store. "It has since been reported to police that the offenders have then got into a silver vehicle and fled the area." Police want to hear from anyone who has any information to assist their investigation: Call on 105, quoting the file number 210808/4300.

Commons bar in liquidation

Takapuna bar The Commons and The Gardens went into liquidation last week.

A 26 July report by receivers Khov Jones said the creditors were owed more than \$1.2 million. The Commons opened at 21 Hurstmere Rd in the upmarket walk-through McKenzies development in August 2018. It featured a generous outdoor area and a restaurant to the sea side. Initially it

attracted good crowds. But since Covid, it has been quieter.

Prosper Hospitality Ltd owned the bar and restaurant, with its sole director listed as Aman Jain, holder of half the shares and Stuti Jain the other half.

The company went into receivership in May, with the liquidation notified on 12 August.

Bowlers mull legal action over lease

A bowling club told its lease on a council-owned site will not be renewed is taking legal advice on being compensated for lost assets.

The Takapuna Services and Social Bowling Club says more than \$250,000 was put into the Northcote Rd site's artificial green and lights by the defunct Takapuna Returned Services Association and the club itself. Club secretary Bruce Woodley says Auckland Council are "complete idiots" in moving to end the lease,

with officials citing the club's declining membership. It has a dozen keen members, says Woodley, and enough money to keep operating for five to 10 years. "The membership, though small, is very active, using the club grounds and facilities up to three times weekly."

The council told the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board last month that it was seeking expressions of interest from other community groups wanting to lease the site.

More speed limit restrictions eyed for Takapuna town centre

Speed-limit reductions for central Takapuna are being considered by Auckland Transport (AT) and business, local government and community representatives.

The first focus of the Safe Speeds project is to decide which streets in the town centre should have lower-speed traffic, then to work on ideas for suitable measures to achieve this, from signage to modifications such as speed bumps or a lower speed limit of 30km/h.

AT briefed a Devonport-Takapuna Local Board workshop on the measures last week, explaining why they were being pursued.

It revealed that over the last five years the proportion of crash deaths and serious injuries among people not in vehicles – including pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists – was higher in the board area than the average across greater Auckland. The local figure was 70 per cent, compared with 60 per cent city-wide.

“It’s a trend as cities intensify,” said AT

Safe Speeds programme manager, Nathan Cammock. He noted that Takapuna and Devonport both had high levels of pedestrian activity, befitting areas that were hubs that attracted residents and visitors.

Takapuna’s population was growing and it was timely to look at safety measures in tandem with town-centre development by Auckland Council property arm Panuku.

Traffic engineer Betty Diao said a 20 per cent drop in speed made for much lower pedestrian risks. The workshop also heard that speed was a factor in just over half of fatalities.

AT did not list the specific Takapuna streets being looked at, saying this was still a work in progress. Board chair Ruth Jackson wanted the information provided soon, to inform the feedback requested.

Cammock said these would be reported back soon and refined after consultation, with any speed-limit changes likely in mid-2022.



Orange invasion

Clusters of orange e-scooters (shown parked on the Lake Rd and Byron Ave corner) landed in Takapuna and Devonport this month. They are part of an expansion by Singapore-founded rental company Neuron Mobility, which announced that its move into the North Shore from the CBD – with 200 extra scooters – would “provide access to popular North Shore beaches, cafes and shopping precincts”. The company has been in New Zealand since early 2020. A trip costs \$1 to unlock the e-scooter, then 45 cents per minute.

East Coast Rd traffic worries ‘ignored by AT’

Traffic safety concerns along busy East Coast Rd have been ignored for too long, says Devonport-Takapuna Local Board member George Wood.

Promises of pedestrian crossings had come to nothing, he said. “Those people up there deserve more than what it looks like is going to happen.”

Wood was speaking at a Safe Streets workshop briefing by Auckland Transport (AT) officials which focussed on speed reduction plans AT has underway in Takapuna and Devonport town centres and around several schools.

Campbells Bay Primary was not among

them. “A huge number of their kids have to cross East Coast Rd,” Wood said.

“Why have you persisted in going to Devonport – I’m not aware of anyone dying on Victoria Rd,” he said to officials, pointing out that one woman had died on East Coast Rd by the Aberdeen Rd junction and two on Forrest Hill Rd in the last few years.

He doubted if the volume of traffic through Takapuna centre would match that of East Coast Rd. The northern section of the board area also carried traffic exiting the motorway at Tristram Rd and was affected by “rat running”.

Bus users had to dodge traffic to cross East Coast Rd. “I want to see more bus users,

but to get people on the buses you need safe crossings.”

Wood highlighted the lack of action around expected upgrades by Blakeborough Rd and at Kenmure Rd. Kowhai Rd was another area of which he asked: “When will we see some progress?”

His questions went unanswered by AT officials, but member Jan O’Connor added her voice saying it was very sad the area was not part of the Safe Streets project.

Wood put on record: “I’m concerned about the validity of the project you are working on at the moment, I think we’ve got greater concerns.”

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Sunnynook skate park on a roll at last

A Sunnynook skate park is a step closer and will be sited at Sunnynook Square on Sunnynook Rd, near the existing basketball court. It will replace the old and isolated skate bowl in Sunnynook Park.

Progress on Auckland Council providing a BMX bike pump track is less advanced, but council officials this month told the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board that the preferred site was south of the existing skate bowl, in a more central spot where the park narrows.

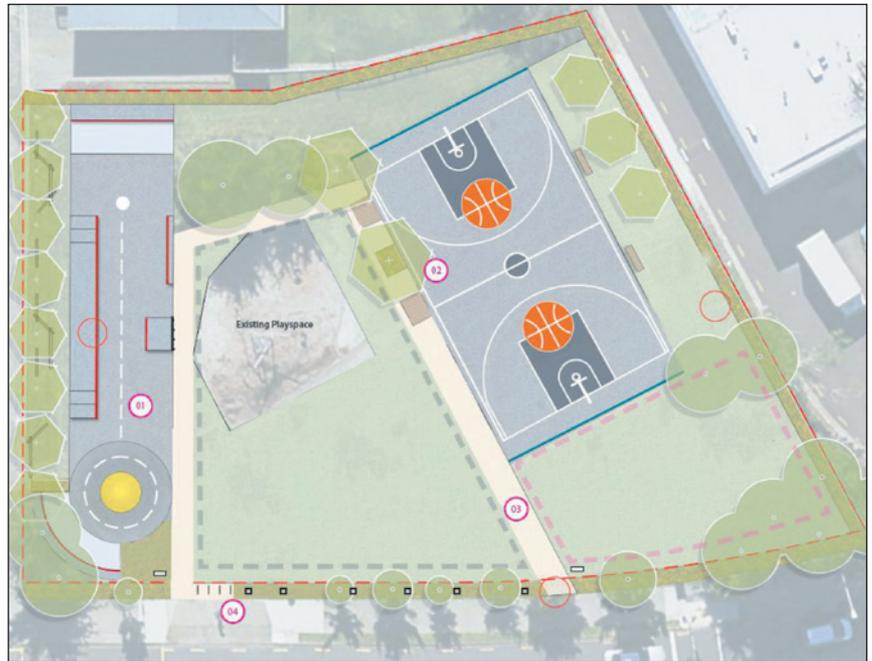
The matters were discussed at a board workshop, with sign-off on the board's intentions to come at a monthly meeting, after which designs will go out for public consultation later in the year.

Sunnynook community representatives, including the local police constable, Penny Rusbatch, attended the workshop in support of seeing the projects advanced. After long-time lobbying and a draft skate-park design put up by the community in 2016, the Sunnynook Plan 2018 committed to investigating the "delivery of wheeled sports options" to cope with the area's growing population. Given current council funding constraints, board members indicated they favoured the option of going ahead with the skatepark and doing more work on the pump track later, rather than trying to split the money between the two and being left with an inferior skate park.

Money for the skatepark comes mostly from a renewals budget of \$350,000 for the old bowl, which will go into the 2022/23 capital works programme to "renew to today's standards" in the new location.

The council's Community Facilities team senior project manager, Kaitlyn White, explained the creative thinking, which also includes mopping up some money left over from work on the new playground behind the Sunnynook community centre, saying: "The community really, really want it, so we want to make it happen."

The site in the square, between the supermarket and local shops, was preferred partly due to affinity with basketball-court users,



Skates on... An Auckland Council image showing the site of the new Sunnynook skatepark (01), in Sunnynook Square close to an existing basketball court

who had a target age over 10. Officials said the feedback they had had from community members, including the constable, was that it was a better site than the current one, where some anti-social behaviour had occurred. Being more visible, it would be safer. The skate park would be to the side of the existing basketball court, differing from an earlier idea of officials that would have seen it cut it to a half-court.

A call for lighting to be part of the skate park development was made by board members Toni van Tonder and George Wood.

Wood suggested council staff check out the floodlights he said were being sold cheaply when the Takapuna Services and Social Bowling Club is soon made to vacate its lease. Officials said this might be false economy, given moving and rewiring costs, but suitable lighting would anyway

be considered for the square.

Member Jan O'Connor said calls for more for youth to do in the area dated back some years. She recalled a petition from Target Rd school. "If we don't hurry up, they will all be grandparents."

Officials indicated they might be able to consult on the pump-track plans at the same time as the skate park ones, although it would need to be made clear to the community "that they're not going to be both funded at the gold-plated level".

A pump track similar to the one at the Birkenhead War Memorial Park would be expected to cost \$150,000, officials reported.

Securing all the money for that any time in the next few years is much less certain, although the community has indicated a willingness to help fundraise.

Go-slow zone to surround Sunnynook Primary

Sunnynook Primary School in Lyford Cres will have a go-slow zone in surrounding streets.

Auckland Transport (AT) has identified the school as one which would benefit from the early and easy implementation of a drop to 30km/h speed limits in its feeder streets, as a step in a 10-year programme to roll out more such safety measures to schools across the city.

AT officials told the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board last week that Sunnynook and Hauraki Primary School had been chosen for the measure in the board area.

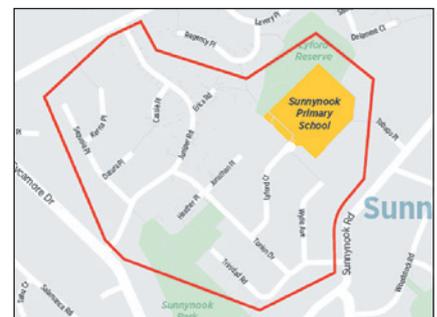
This was because the speeds travelled by drivers in the vicinity were already generally lower than the 50km/h standard urban limit, so

locking in the practice was a priority.

The school was being informed and consultation would follow, with a by-law likely to be enacted by mid-2022.

Officials said other schools would be identified for go-slow zones in a second group to be included in the Safe Speeds programme. But in many cases these would require more work and cost to install and pay for traffic-calming measures. Sunnynook and Hauraki qualified early because further speed calming was not anticipated.

Board members were happy with the nominated schools being included, but mentioned other areas they would like looked at.



Low-speed area... A reduction to 30 km/h limits is planned for streets around the school

New classroom block expands Rosmini capacity

Rosmini College will be able to meet demand for more enrolments next year, thanks to its new classroom block (pictured at right).

The Mary Thomas building, officially opened last week, has 12 classrooms, including seven conventional rooms and specialist facilities for music, food technology, art and Maori studies. Named for a generous benefactor to the school, who had two sons and numerous grandsons go through Rosmini, the building was officially opened by Bishop Michael Gielen on 10 August.

Headmaster Nixon Cooper said the building meant the college now had room to increase its roll to up to 1200 next year. The demand was there for Catholic education on the Shore, but previously it had been unable to accept more than 1050 students.



Among those at the opening were members of the Thomas family, North Shore member of Parliament Simon Watts and the Auckland Diocese Vicar for Education, Catherine Ryan. Cooper said the building was very popular

with the boys, thanks to its bright and attractive learning spaces.

“They are also enjoying the sunny forecourt and hard-surface playing areas with two basketball hoops.”

Why put the brakes on progress?

Our local board chair, Ruth Jackson, and members Trish Deans and Jan O’Connor have pushed for the Takapuna Town Square to be a notified consent. Doing this raises a huge amount of delay, a massive amount of cost, and will result in further uncertainty for the businesses of Takapuna. Why are these people putting the handbrake on progress? Let’s get on with making Takapuna a fantastic metropolitan centre.

Laura Foote



Devonport

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Letters

Stop politicking and give Takapuna the civic heart people want

How long does it take to consult and plan with the community for the building of a new public space in Takapuna? Eleven years is not long enough for some it seems.

The first plans to develop the asphalt car park in the centre of Takapuna came out in 2010.

Since then there have been many, many consultations, polls, surveys and workshops on its development, adjusting the plans each time with this feedback.

All this feedback over the years showed the overwhelming majority of the community, businesses, residents and visitors want the low-density car park developed and a public space created.

Most recently, after a lot of political publicity and negativity about it, another large consultation was held at the end of 2018.

Auckland Council’s consultation had massive public engagement, with a record number of submissions for a single project ever of 5385 submissions, with the majority of 55 per cent of people supporting the plan.

Colmar Brunton did a large public survey which found overall support of 69 per cent for the planned development.

How much more consultation does it need? People clearly want it developed from the car park it is now.

This new space will be a space where events can be held, the Sunday market can take place and new shops, restaurants, cafes, homes and offices can be enjoyed.

It’s a place where the community can gather, laugh, play and enjoy life. It will revitalise the very centre of Takapuna, creating a civic heart and stimulating business activity and further private investment.

Yet some are still wanting to save a low-density asphalt car park and have further consultation and delays? Is 11 years planning and consultations not enough time?

Let’s just get on with it, please. Stop politicking and being so negative – let’s get this thing built!

Terence Harpur, CEO Takapuna Beach Business Association

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Heavenly Service from Hell Takapuna

Hell Pizza franchise owner Chaman Singh says that great customer service is the key to success for his Takapuna Hell outlet, which began operation in March this year. "Our customer service encompasses all aspects of the business: the service of a welcome smile, the service of a friendly voice when ordering, the service of timely delivery and the service of having great quality ingredients and consistency of quality," he says.

Chaman and wife Gurmandeep also have the Hell Glenfield store, and previously ran the franchise in Belmont.

When they took over the Belmont Hell franchise in 2016, Chaman says it had low customer-service ratings and low employee satisfaction. But after 12 months the couple were able to turn the shop around to rank number one for customer service across the Hell franchises before they gave up the lease last year.

"We took the Belmont franchise business about as far as we could so when the lease ran out last year we made the big decision to give up that location and move up to Takapuna – a fast-growing location which enables us to deliver into Milford, Forrest Hill and Sunnynook.

"In combination with our Glenfield store, this gives us seamless coverage of a wide area on the Shore," he says.

A former Westlake Boys College student, Chaman gave up a job at ANZ bank to run a popular city nightclub, The Lounge, for eight years. He says this experience gave him the skills necessary to make Hell Pizza franchises succeed.

"I had three big takeaway lessons from my time running the nightclub: understanding what customers want, negotiating deals with suppliers and dealing with council regulators.

"One of the biggest challenges we had when opening the Takapuna store was dealing with the Council to get all the compliance approved as well as dealing with Vector to get all of our energy needs sorted."

The couple maintain the highest food-handling standards, insist on top-quality ingredients and as Hell franchisees offer great options for vegans and vegetarians.

Hell Pizza has strict processes in place so



that vegan and vegetarian trays and ingredients are not mixed with non-vegetarian or non-vegan food preparation. "Our vegan and vegetarian meals need to be separate from the rest of our meal prep. We even change gloves depending on which work benches we are making our food at," says Chaman. He says he got his work ethic from his parents, who were immigrants from Punjab in India. "They worked long hours and weekends and were extremely detail-oriented in their business and loyal to their employer," he says.

"I've taken what I've learned from them

and believe that employee loyalty must be earned, so I create an atmosphere of support and respect in our franchises for all employees."

Chaman says the biggest challenge facing most restaurant owners right now is filling full-time roles that also include weekend work.

But he says his Takapuna team – like the staff in Glenfield – have bought in to his customer-service priorities. Customers calling or visiting the store can be sure of a friendly reception – and consistently great pizza.

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Harbour champs! Westlake rugby girls claim first trophy



Top side... Westlake girls after taking the North Harbour title

Westlake Girls High School's top rugby team (pictured with its coaches) won the North Harbour secondary girls championship, beating Rangitoto 52-17 at North Harbour stadium – with one of its best players cheering from the sideline.

The match was the curtain raiser to the Farah Palmer Cup match between North Harbour and Taranaki, with Westlake star Madisson Mataafa selected in the North Harbour team, coming on from the bench having earlier watched her schoolmates' victory.

Westlake girls Ava Jericevich and Holly Williams were also selected for the Harbour Farah Palmer Cup squad.

Williams (Year 12) was top try scorer for Westlake's season. She played in five of the seven games and scored 13 tries. Tausala Tanimu scored 10 tries in seven games.

The team scored 396 points for and 49 points against. It was Westlake's first title. The school was shaping to win the trophy in 2020, but the season was disrupted by Covid-19.

In 2021, Westlake won five pool games and a semi-final before the final, which was recorded and televised by Sky Sport. Having it on TV was "a great thrill for the girls," says Westlake director of sports Liz Page.

The team is now focusing on the national secondary school competition. It will face

Northland's top school next and, if it wins that match, will play Auckland's best side.

Another win will see it progress to the national top four finals in October.

Only four Year 13 players were leaving Westlake at the end of the year, so it would have the nucleus of a strong team in 2022, Page said.

The 2020 Westlake team was: Christabelle Onesemo, Madisson Mataafa, Ashlee Matapo, Isabella East, Ava Jericevich, Demielle Onesemo, Katrina Hall, Maddy, Gorst, Maia Gorst, Zara Hooks, Kalei Morgan-Tafea, Tausala Tanimu, Rikiana Hawkins, Holly Williams, Alailupe Taufa-teau, Lani Onesemo and Riley Pasese.

Takapuna AFC in hunt for title, promotion

A top-of-the-table clash between Takapuna AFC and Waiheke United on 24 August will have a huge bearing on who wins the Northern Regional Football league division this season.

After last Saturday's matches Waiheke and Takapuna are 34 and 33 points. With four matches of the season remaining Takapuna coach Chris Milicich said the side still had everything to play for.

However Takapuna's 4-2 loss against Mt Albert Ponsonby last weekend, puts a lot a pressure on the side for its home game against East Coast Bays at home this Saturday (21 August, kickoff at 3pm). The season finishes on 4 September.

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Briefs

Bike-minded outlook

Auckland Transport (AT) is defending its under-used Takapuna bike-park facility, saying it was built with the future in mind. The \$36.1 million Toka Puia car park includes 56 little-used free parks for bikes plus a further 28 charging stations for e-bikes. An AT spokesman said planning was under way for protected cycle lanes on Lake Rd, and Auckland Council's Hurstmere Rd upgrade included a cycle lane. "These will all make cycling a much more attractive option in Takapuna." Two shared-path bridges had also just opened to complete the Northcote safe cycle route across State Highway 1. In the short term, the spare space would be used for AT-funded cycle training courses.

Lofty Lake Rd plans

A planning consent application has been lodged to build a five-storey apartment building at 433 Lake Rd. The property, on the block between Tennyson St and Bracken Ave, would feature six apartments with commercial space and parking on the ground floor. My Dream Space Ltd is the applicant intending to replace a two-storey building in use as offices.

Make a run for it

The Sunnynook September Marathon is looming, a fun and family friendly event run by the community association aimed at getting people to take a daily bite-sized chunk of exercise around the park, adding up to an achievable 42km or half-marathon milestone. A registration session will be held at Sunnynook Community Centre on Sunday 29 August from 2pm to 5pm. Or to register online visit sunnynookcommunity.org.nz

Gymnast of many ambitions



Mary Markova (pictured in action) wants to be a surgeon, a doctor or a criminologist – after going to the Olympic Games as a rhythmic gymnast.

The 13-year-old Westlake Girls student is on track for her gymnastic ambitions, having just won the Junior International category at the NZ Gymnastics Nationals at Trust Arena. Mary completed four routines, and had the highest collective score.

"I was really happy to win because it was my first time competing in junior international at nationals," Mary said. "That means that you can travel around the world to compete."

Mary, who competes for North Harbour Gymnastics, received a score of 12.50 for the

hoop, 13.50 for the ball (for the gold medal), 11.70 for clubs (silver medal) and 11.85 for ribbon (also a silver medal). Her overall score of 49.55 was 2.20 points above her closest competitor. She also won gold in the group event.

It's not her first success: she won gold at level 4 national championships in 2017, gold at level 5 in 2018 and silver at level 6 in 2019. She was promoted to junior international level two years ago.

Mary has been doing gymnastics since she was four. "I just love everything about it. It's my passion. It just brings me joy."

She still has other long-term career ambitions in mind. "But before I do those jobs I want to go to the Olympics for gym."



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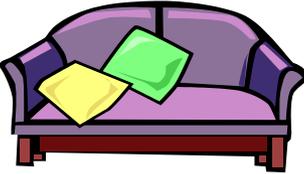
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New Birdsong organiser says ‘appreciate your backyard’

A Sunnynook mother has landed her dream job – organising volunteers to look after the environment.

Tabitha Becroft has just been appointed coordinator of the Pupuke Birdsong Project, the hub for environmental volunteers in Takapuna and the northern Devonport-Takapuna Local Board area.

Under the umbrella of the Takapuna North Community Trust, the project supports activities like tree planting, pest control and improving water quality, supported by grants from the board and Auckland Council.

“I love working with people and the environment,” the mother-of-four said. “It’s perfect, and I grew up in the area, so I know it well.

“It ticks a lot of boxes – working close to where you live reduces your carbon footprint, and working with people I already know.”

Her job mainly involves supporting volunteers who are already working to reach their goals, as well as encouraging new people to come along. It also includes writing grant applications and financial reports.

She has previously been a volunteer herself, as well as a contractor to Auckland Council, running pest- and weed-control workshops. She is also part of the Sunnynook Community Association involvement in restoring Lyford Reserve.

“One of my goals would be to get the people of this area appreciating nature and appreciating what we have in our backyard, which is not just the beach.”

Becroft gave the example of the rare urban puriri forest on the shores of Lake Pupuke in Sylvan Park and Kitchener Park.

To raise awareness of the forest and how the community can help its restoration, a public meeting will be held at Milford Kindergarten on 1 September at 5.30pm.



For the birds... Tabitha Becroft has landed her dream job as coordinator for the Pupuke Birdsong Project

Milford residents urged to set traps

A local group wants the residents of one in five homes on three Milford streets to trap pests in their gardens.

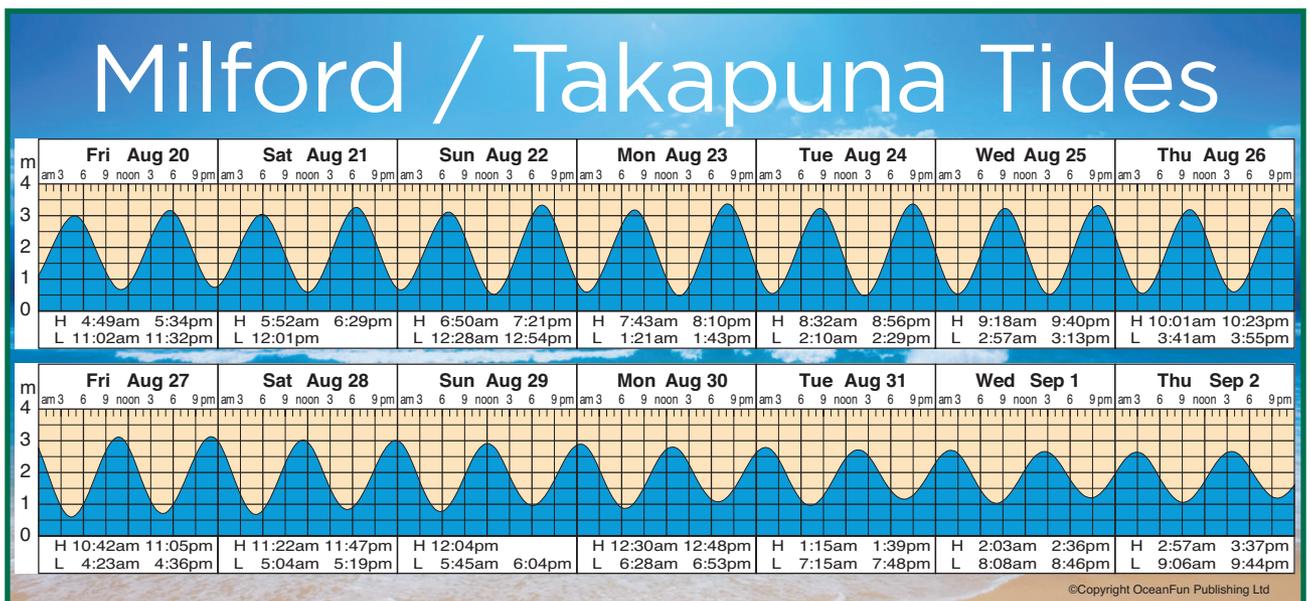
The Milford Residents Association, together with Pupuke Birdsong, is urging residents on Inga Rd, Rangitoto Tce, and Prospect Tce to have a trap or bait station in order to create a halo of pest control.

Association co-chair Norma Bott said it was their first attempt at getting the campaign out into the neighbourhood.

For years they had concentrated on the Wairau Creek and East Coast Rd area. “We’re sort of hoping to ripple out from Wairau Creek.”

They will host an information station in the area from 2.30pm on 29 August. Pupuke Birdsong coordinator Tabitha Becroft underlined the importance of trapping.

It was timed to remove the pests at the times when they were most affecting birds, she said.





'Incendiary' efforts laid ground for Bruce Mason Centre

The North Shore's landmark Bruce Mason Centre has turned 25 and one of the founders has recalled the long haul to get to its opening.

North Shore Operatic, as it was then, initiated the project in 1984, but more than a decade passed before the centre, on The Promenade in Takapuna, was officially opened by then Governor-General, Sir Michael Hardie Boys.

Angela Antony, QSM, who was heavily involved in getting the now-council-run theatre in motion, said it was "a bit surreal" to look at it now.

"I'm the incendiary device. Sometimes that was complimentary and sometimes it wasn't," she said.

In 1984, the Shore was growing. "We just didn't want to go to town for everything. We needed a heart for the Shore."

A celebration of the centre's birthday was held on 8 August with family entertainment, including a performance from The Dust Palace circus and a showcase by North Shore dance groups.

Antony, who is now involved in Tadpole Theatre, highlights the importance of having art in society, and said Creative NZ statistics show more Kiwis are involved in art than sport. "If you don't have culture in a society, you don't have a civilised society."

Bruce Mason had been the obvious choice as the name for the centre, with his "being North Shore's most famous playwright". Takapuna-born, he was a leading force in



In at the start... Angela Antony outside the centre she helped campaign for in the 1980s

New Zealand's early professional theatre, and wrote 34 plays. He was awarded a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in 1980 and died two years later. He would have been 100 this year, with plays being staged in his honour.

The Bruce Mason Centre is still going strong. Shows ranging from the Royal New

Zealand Navy Band, to stand-up comic Urzila Carlson and the Royal New Zealand Ballet's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are on the books between now and Christmas.

"I drive past and have a smile on my face," Antony said.

"My grandchildren refer to it as Nana's theatre."

PumpHouse Theatre launches memory treasure hunt

The PumpHouse Theatre wants to preserve its past and reunite its supporters.

"The idea is to get everyone together that has some involvement to reminisce," says theatre manager James Bell.

But the plans for a morning tea on 13 September go deeper than just organising a reunion chat over a cuppa – they are part of an outreach to collate memories to recognise the rich four-decade history of Takapuna's community theatre and arts venue.

"Forty years is a long-time," says Bell. He hopes people with theatre memorabilia will consider donating or loaning it, to build on the resources already at hand.

The aim is to produce a book on the theatre's history, building on a timeline already prepared. Old photographs and programmes would be appreciated to add to the theatre's own records and those held at the Takapuna Library.

Bell said that while the Friends of the PumpHouse was an active group of supporters, who enjoyed the benefit of ticket discounts, many of those who were once involved have moved to other areas.

"We're keen to catch up with some of

those people and get their recollections," says Bell.

They want to find people who might remember the days when the theatre had no dressing room, or had one occupied by possums, or who raised funds for its restoration with bake sales and helped physically by chipping cement from old bricks.

The morning tea would be an opportunity for such people to socialise or for interested others to learn more about the theatre's foundations as a trust battling to save the heritage building.

"We're talking to the adult children of people whose parents were involved in the early days and they have fond memories of running round the PumpHouse."

The trust continues to run the theatre, with support from the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board.

Bell hopes the get-together for morning tea may become a regular thing.

It may rekindle former members of the Friends to join up again, or just socialise over a cuppa.

He is also interested in hearing directly from anyone with theatre stories to share.

Briefs

Boon for booklovers

Takapuna Methodist Church has opened a little library outside its building on Lake Rd. Donated children's and adults books will be available, with the hope that when people take a book, some will replace it with another they are ready to pass on.

Student art on show

A showcase of student art will be held at Lake House on Fred Thomas Dr this month. Work from primary schools, Belmont Intermediate and Takapuna Grammar will be on display. The *From the Peninsula* exhibition opens on 24 August and runs until 11 September.

Cutting a dash

Takapuna-based Label Federation is among those showing during New Zealand Fashion Week which starts next week. The casual and streetwear label was founded in 2000, with Jenny Joblin, one of the two co-founders, still at the helm. Another label with a strong Takapuna presence, Augustine, which has a store on Hurstmere Rd, has a sell-out during the event's public weekend.



Artist builds on personal link to polluted waterway

Polluted Wairau Creek is the subject of Sonja Drake's exhibition of delicate watercolours, but the inspiration goes beyond the artist's ecological interests to a personal connection with the troublesome waterway.

In the 1940s, Drake's mother's parents farmed 14 acres of land near the creek, including a section it regularly flooded. "They owned a market garden on Porana Rd, right by where Pak n Save and King's Plant Barn are now."

Drake's mother told her they had 14 cows who contributed to the town milk supply and ducks that free-ranged on the block.

The family moved on after the early death of her grandfather, selling parcels of land in the early 1950s for what was destined to be a commercial subdivision. Extensive concrete channelling was installed in the 1970s and 1980s to control the creek. "The flooding was a big part of what motivated that to happen," said Drake, who has done some research on the area's history.

The channelled creek now carries a lot of run-off from the built-up Wairau Valley, its rooftops and roadways through to Milford Estuary, where dredged sludge shows high-levels of toxicity. Efforts to improve the run-off, through pollution traps and planting, are underway – along with tracing illegal discharges that can flow through to Milford Beach – but concerns that this is taking too long have in recent years seen public pressure grow for faster action from Auckland Council.

Drake, who lives in Mairangi Bay, says she follows the debate and the Wairau Estuary Environment Protection Society's website. She attended a recent public meeting on water quality held at Pupuke Golf Course and would love to see more done. While she says she swims at Milford Beach, she adds "but not at the north end".

She is studying for a Master of Fine Arts,



Water colour... shoots of new life emerge in a work by Sonja Drake

adding to the bachelor's degree she attained at the University of Auckland's Elam school in 1987.

She is enjoying the challenge of pushing herself a "bit further". Her study is mostly off-campus and self-directed.

Another notable difference from when she was first at art school is that the choice was then to be a painter, a printmaker or a sculptor, whereas nowadays there is a more multi-disciplinary approach that focuses more

on the message than the medium.

After graduation from art school, Drake went on to study textile printing and design, using her skills to set up an apparel business.

She supplied Department of Conservation stores and also did freelance illustrations for stationery companies for more than a decade. The idea was this would fund her to also find the time to paint, but when her children were younger painting went on the backburner.

Over the last decade she has got back into it, including exhibiting, and supplying a gallery in Newmarket.

The Wairau Creek exhibition, entitled *Ecotones*, is one Drake has pulled together from observational work, photographing and sketching the fragile environment in journals before returning to her studio to paint. She is drawn to the embodiment of water and its flow through soil, to aquifers and their meeting with the stream and the life that dwells there.

Drake hopes her show will highlight the fragile environment.

"Anything that draws attention to heighten people's awareness of the issues can act as a potentially motivating force to change."

Ecotones is at the Angela Morton Room, upstairs at Takapuna Library. On Saturday, 28 August, Drake will be on site from 2pm to 4pm to discuss her work.



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