

The Rangitoto Observer

DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY

Issue 68 – October 15, 2021

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE

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over Pupuke... p3**

**Locals frustrated by MIQ
mayhem... p8-9**

**Tree vandalism at
Sacred Grove... p13**

Big Milford development part of record consent surge

A 32-unit housing development for Milford is among a record number of resource consents lodged in Auckland during lockdown.

The proposal to build on three combined sections near the East Coast Rd and Stanley Ave corner shops was lodged in late September. It shows the ambitious scale of some

suburban developments on the drawing board.

Latest figures from Auckland Council also show that attached multi-unit dwellings make up the vast bulk of planning consent applications across the city.

“We’re at record consent numbers. We’ve never seen anything like this in the history of

the city,” North Shore councillor and Planning Committee chairman Chris Darby told the Observer.

The private sector was responding to the need for more housing.

Darby said that of applications that won consent from city planners, **To page 2**

Agency lowers the volume on road markings



Colour change... Takapuna hairdresser Hayley Williams is one of many salon owners with customers desperate to visit when lockdown rules allow. Those returning to her Huron St business will notice some changes to these controversial road markings which council agency Panuku has decided to tone down. Story, page 6.

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Three homes to make way for 32 under Milford development plan

From page 1

90 per cent were signed off as completed homes within two years.

The Milford application, in the name of Milford Villas Ltd, is one of the largest in the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board area for some time. It is for permission to demolish three existing homes on adjoining properties at 80 and 82 East Coast Rd and 7 Stanley Ave and to replace them with 30 two-storey attached dwellings and two standalone two-storey homes.

The blocks of terrace-style homes would have 2-3 bedrooms and a single parking space. The developers propose that the dual access would have one-way entry from East Coast Rd and exit onto Stanley Ave. They maintain the scale and design would be appropriate to the area, in the mixed-housing suburban zone.

Over the last few months, several other applications have been lodged from Sunny-nook to Belmont for multi-unit developments containing a dozen or so dwellings.

Demand from developers for larger sections is adding fuel to the real-estate pricing fire.

Applications for consents in September for the local-board area are tracking at a similar number to pre-lockdown times. Most are to build additional homes on what have often been single-home properties.

The latest Auckland Monthly Housing Update shows that in August (during which lockdown was imposed from 17 August), a total of 2162 dwellings were consented city wide. In the year to August, 19,928 consents to build were issued and 14,178 completed homes had a code compliance certificate issued.

For the board area, 787 consents were lodged over 12 months, which is 18 per cent higher than the previous year. But figures were up even more, by 25 per cent, for the six months to August, compared with the same six-month period in 2020.

Of the city's August consents, 65 per cent were for townhouses, flats, units, retirement village or other attached dwellings; 29 per cent were for houses and 6 per cent for apartments.



High density... 30 two-storey attached homes and two standalone homes are planned for this Milford suburban site

New residential parcels of land under 5000m² were created under 907 consents in August. The total for the year was 8709.

Public-housing stock was also boosted, with land owned by Kainga Ora or the Tamaki Regeneration Company land making up 175 of the total dwellings consented in August.

A quarter of the city's new housing development consented in August was inside the 1500m 'walking catchments' of the rapid transport network, the housing report shows. This proximity allows greater intensification and will come further into play as the council responds to the Government's National Policy Statement on Urban Development.

Darby said attempting to hold the line on design provisions while it works through responding to the Government directive would be a challenge. "The Government is interested in quantities, Aucklanders too, but they [residents] will not like it if they just get quantity outcomes and not quality outcomes that will last forever."

A non-notified proposal for a project on a similar scale to the Milford one was made last year for back sections opposite Takapuna Grammar. Neighbours were concerned about a shared driveway, safety and space issues. Council planners sent the proposal back to the applicants for more work to meet Unitary Plan rules. Later, one of the properties was put up for sale.

Briefs

Spills investigated

Six complaints have been made about recent pollution incidents in Wairau Stream, Auckland Council says. Four complaints related to oil residue and other contaminants entering the water, apparently from a fire at a food storage facility on Porana Rd, Glenfield, on 18 September. Another related to an engine oil spill on 21 September, and the sixth was determined to be a natural discharge of iron oxide from the surrounding environment. Pollution specialists have assisted with the clean-ups. The person responsible for the oil spill was fined.

New playgrounds

New playgrounds are being built in Milford and Forrest Hill. Work at Nile Reserve is expected to be finished by mid-November. The design features a new 'play module' with slides and climbing walls and ropes. Swings will be refurbished and a new see-saw, balancing spheres and a ramp for better mobility access added. A new playground is also coming to Linwood Reserve.

Landmark levelled



A speedy demolition of the former Harbourside church on its prime Esmonde Rd site (above) two weekends ago has paved the way for building the high-rise Amaia apartments. Multiple diggers have been clearing rubble in preparation for construction to start in the new year. Pylons will be removed in due course. A spokesperson for the developers said plans for a public boardwalk through the site were being developed in conjunction with council.

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Class act: Forrest Hill pupils lobby for Lake Pupuke

Primary pupils are doing their bit for the local environment and learning about democracy in action with an ambitious petition to Parliament to protect the site of their Waterwise classes



Speaking out... Forrest Hill School students Ella Ahn and Max Yates talk about their class petition

Forrest Hill School pupils are taking a project to protect Lake Pupuke to Parliament.

They are circulating a petition which calls on the House of Representatives to pass legislation formally placing Lake Pupuke within the protection of the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park.

“We try to mold the curriculum into the world that is around the tamariki,” Year 6 teacher Aaron Joyes said. “Lake Pupuke is so important to the schools of the area.”

“It’s a really good way to open the door of te ao Maori (Maori culture) to the students. It is the te ao approach to learning.”

North Shore MP Simon Watts has agreed to sponsor the petition in Parliament.

The pupils have been researching the condition of the lake. Before lockdown they were also presenting to other schools.

“Like many of you, we have had some awesome times learning how to sail, kayak

and swim in Lake Pupuke as part of our Waterwise programme,” they said in their presentations. “But lately we have noticed a change in the mauri of the lake.”

They were worried about the lake’s health and wanted to do something about it.

The students have interviewed public figures and others about Pupuke, including Auckland Council Environment Committee chairman and North Shore councillor Richard Hills, Tom Rowlands from the Auckland Museum, Dean Ogilvy and Alex Rogers from the Hauraki Gulf Forum and representatives from the Aotearoa Lakes organisation. Daisy Proctor from the council’s Sustainable Schools initiative taught them how to test the health of the lake water.

Joyes said the real-life experience of students, such as seeing a dead swan floating on the water “makes that environmental leadership message really real for them.”

“They’re getting to stand up and take

environmental and civic action in front of their community.”

The project’s name, Pupuke Taniwha – meaning Guardians of Lake Pupuke – had been given the blessing of Ngati Paoa kaumatua, Joyes said. “The backing of mana whenua is really important”.

The petition closes on 30 November. It had 1100 signatures on paper by last week and 53 signatures on the Parliament website.

It states that Lake Pupuke and the public parks that surround it would benefit from being formally included in the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, as the managers of the lake and surrounding public land would then have to consider the purposes of the Marine Park. This would lead to “greater recognition of the significance of the lake and land, including the historic and cultural significance for mana whenua; increased protection for the ecology and natural features; and sustenance of the lake’s life-supporting capacity”.

Eking out a living tough going but hopes of brighter days ahead

A Milford cafe owner is dipping into her retirement fund to keep her business afloat under Covid restrictions – and she says she’s one of the lucky ones.

Shirley Stapleton, owner of Crop on Kitchener Rd, said the lockdown had cost her more than \$100,000. “These level changes make no functional difference whatsoever.

“I’m getting the wage subsidy and I’d rather have people productive and doing something than sitting at home. That’s the only reason we’re open,” she said. Unlike some people at least she had savings to dip into, even if it was her retirement fund.

Some small businesses, such as hairdressers, were in even worse straits than cafes, in not being able to open at all, said Stapleton. “At least we can do something.”

The Takapuna Beach Business Association chief executive, Terence Harpur, said businesses needed more and ongoing support, including getting resurgence payments from the Government weekly, rather than in a lump sum every three weeks.

Auckland businesses trading at a 30-40 per cent drop in business should be able to continue to get wage subsidies even when Alert Level 2 was reached, he said. South Island businesses in Level 1, were currently getting this support, so it would only be fair to extend this to Auckland in recognition of its tough times.

Harpur said established takeaways were generally busier than those cafes and restaurants which had had to try to adapt from relying mostly on inside trade. But all were hurting, he added, especially bars and those other stores which could not trade at all.

A bright spot was to see Takapuna really busy last weekend, soon after it was named the city’s best picnic spot. Harpur said people were mostly proving good at social



Quick meal... Michelle Chae at Manna Sushi & Don in Takapuna is making online and street-front sales, with sushi proving popular

distancing and mask wearing, showing the way until vaccination rates increased.

“The sooner we get that second shot mark up over 80 per cent then the sooner we can go down the levels.”

By summer, Hurstmere Rd upgrades would be finished. Events were planned. It would also be better able to fit outdoor dining, Harpur said. Auckland Council had now relaxed trader fees for this which was a help.

Stapleton says she is not at the point of closing her doors, but “it’s not a pretty picture.” Money trickling in was not enough.

“All you can do is put one foot in front of the other, she says. “I’m just working from wage subsidy application to wage subsidy application. That’s a really hollow way of running your business.”



Tough times... Shirley Stapleton of Crop cafe in Milford is relying on the wage subsidy and dipping into her savings

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Package deal... Catherine Woodward dishing up a sausage at the Milford Tennis Club vaccination event last week

Covid locations close to home as jabs tally up

Milford leads the way in uptake of second vaccinations in the suburbs of the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board area, with 63.3 per cent of its eligible residents fully vaccinated.

First vaccinations are tracking universally well, with rates around 90 per cent across the board area, above city and national averages.

Total second dose rates across the board area sit at more than 50 per cent, latest figures show.

North Shore MP Simon Watts urged the around 4000 local residents who had not yet had a first vaccination to step up.

Several Takapuna and Milford sites have been listed as Covid-19 locations of interest in the community this month. Countdown in Milford and BP on Taharoto Rd, along with Takapuna eateries Glass Sushi Boutique on Hurstmere Rd and That Cafe, Byron Ave, have all been recently visited by Covid cases, while the Spencer on Byron hotel has had three exposure events. Sites in Devonport and Belmont have also popped up. Times and health advice are on the Ministry of Health website.

A person who tested Covid positive visited the dialysis unit adjacent to North Shore Hospital last Saturday, 9 October. On Monday it was confirmed two staff members tested positive. Eighteen workers were stood down initially.

Protection measures for staff and all dialysis patients had been stepped up, the email said. "We are introducing rapid antigen testing for all staff," the email said.

The testing method was welcomed by Watts, who said hospitals also needed Government help to fast-track staff recruitment to cope.

Between 9 August and 10 October, 11,949 North Shore people were tested for Covid-19, the Northern Region Health Coordination Centre said. This equates to 20 per cent of residents.

North Shore had five of the city's 33 Covid patients in hospital at the start of the week.

Tennis club aces vaccination day

The sausages and the Covid jabs flew out the door at the Milford Tennis Club on Thursday last week.

A club member who is a doctor sent out an email recommending vaccination, which prompted a pharmacy manager to suggest a vaccination event, organiser and club member Catherine Woodward said.

A long queue formed from 10am. "We've had to bring in another vaccinator," she said.

Sausages, cups of tea, and Sal's Pizza vouchers were offered to those getting

jabbed. Woodward's husband, Mark, was on duty at the door.

The turnout was really pleasing, she said. At least 140 people were vaccinated at the club, with at least 20 walk-ins turned away, because they ran out of vaccine.

"Lots of children turn up with their parents. They can see it's not a scary thing; it's just part of keeping our community safe."

The Prime Minister talked about getting back to what people enjoyed doing, and tennis was part of that for club members, Woodward said.

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Work in lockdown tones down 'Willy Wonka' streets

Night shifts have hastened work to scale back Takapuna's 'dotty' streets, described by one survey responder as looking like "either the Wiggles or Willy Wonka designed it".

Since the rethink was announced at the end of September, after public feedback was assessed, the Panuku project team has backtracked on a lot of the installations made mid-year.

This includes removing road art and picnic tables, reducing footpath painting in front of the Sentinel Plaza and reducing the stripes on the planter boxes on Northcroft St.

Among the reversals – expected to cost about \$50,000 – five parallel car parks will be returned on Huron St.

The chief executive of the Takapuna Beach Business Association, Terence Harpur, said he was pleased Panuku (Auckland Council's property arm) had listened. "The changes were far greater than what suited those streets."

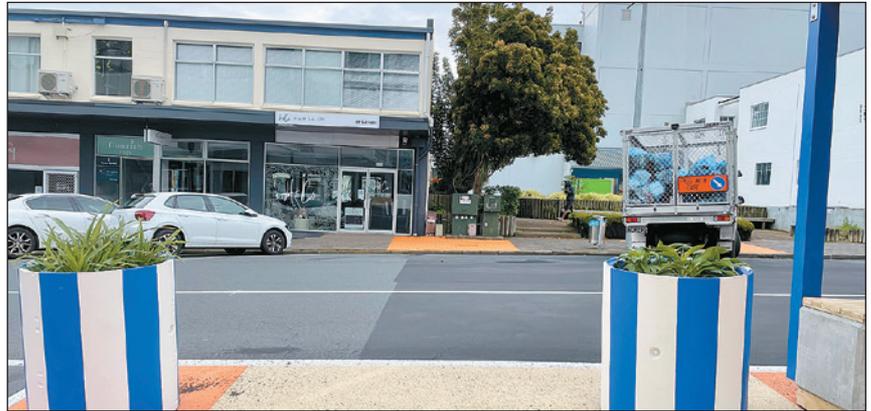
The Panuku project was part of a nationwide Innovating Streets programme by Waka Kotahi (New Zealand Transport Agency), which is aimed at making streets "safer and more liveable spaces".

Initial moves removed car parks on Huron and Northcroft Sts and added a shelter, planter boxes and road decoration, all in blue and orange themes.

Local businesses were upset at the loss of parking, fearing customers would be deterred from making quick stops at their small outlets.

Hairdresser Hayley Williams called the work "circus-like". Orange dots on the road in front of her Huron St salon have now been removed.

More than 400 submissions were received in a public consultation on the project. Responses included concerns that the road painting was



Loud and clear... Some Takapuna locals objected to the blue-and-white striped and orange paint scheme chosen by Panuku. Many of the coloured road dots (as seen on the front page) have now been removed.

confusing and a continuous undercover pedestrian shelter was needed rather than just at one spot. Concerns were also raised about the number and speed of buses on the street and the importance of safe crossing points.

Responders in support of the changes said it made the area more pedestrian-friendly and suggested Panuku "go crazy here, it's cool".

Panuku said the latest changes would enable it to "test and monitor a few new design options while we are moving through Covid alert levels".

Work was scheduled to take two weeks from 28 September. It would be completed on Huron and Northcroft Sts in night shifts.

A new pedestrian refuge island would be installed on Lake Rd. This would be done in the daytime to prevent disruption to residents

at night, a spokesperson said.

"This work is not expected to interrupt the traffic flow, nor will buses be affected."

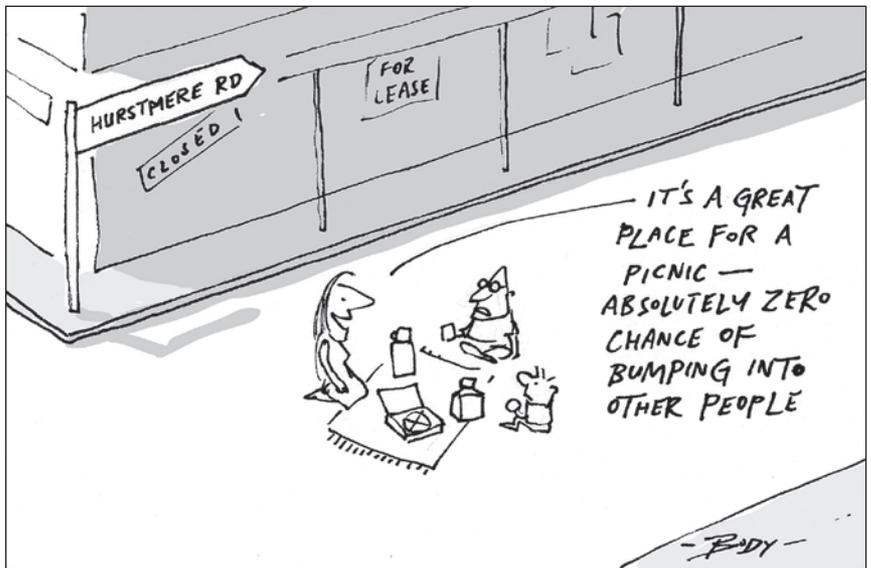
But Devonport-Takapuna Local Board member Jan O'Connor questioned the positioning of the island, saying it might be another traffic impediment to bus drivers turning out onto Lake Rd in a busy area.

The cost of changes had been factored into the original budget, the spokesperson said, with the idea always having been that it could be adjusted. The cost was likely to be about \$50,000.

"It's an estimate for now and could change should there be delays to the programme due to factors outside our control."

Members of the public are still being asked to provide feedback as Panuku develops a long-term solution.

Bodyline by Guy Body



Simon Watts MP for North Shore

National Party Spokesperson for ACC,
Associate Health & Associate Revenue

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Grounded man works to get Kiwis flying again

Two Shore locals put a human face on the stress of pandemic separation and the issues it raises

When Mike Moore and his wife Vikashni first visited Devonport during a holiday in Auckland it reminded him of home. "For me it was quintessentially British," he recalls.

The sight of the Esplanade Hotel and the old main street appealed during that short break from his executive job at Fiji Airways. Seven years ago, the couple decided to move to New Zealand. "I said if we're going to stay here I want somewhere it feels really nice to come home for."

Pre-global pandemic, Moore got his Shore thing, heading away internationally two to three weeks a month to run workshops for airlines as a travel technology consultant, then flying happily home to Devonport.

Now, he is grounded, working less and by Zoom to differing time zones. "This was an enforced move to retirement," the 64-year-old says.

But he's been busier than ever, due to his involvement in the online Grounded Kiwis group. "I've been trying to help other people with their questions and concerns," he says of the support group known also for lobbying for a fairer way of letting people in and out of the country.

Moore has been quoted in the media speaking for the group about MIQ allocations. "It's a bit manic, with the new system," he tells the Flagstaff. "They say it is fair, but the chances are the same whether you're entering the draw for the first time or have been waiting for months."

In its first week, 25,000 people tried to get a spot in an isolation hotel. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern ascribed much of this demand to people wanting a Christmas holiday at home, but Moore says that is untrue and downplays overall numbers impacted.

More spots were made available in the system this month than in December and all were snapped up.

There could be as many as 200,000 Kiwis wanting to come home, Moore says, adding "we honestly don't know". Efforts to get data have been unsuccessful, but Moore is sure "the number is in six digits, not five".

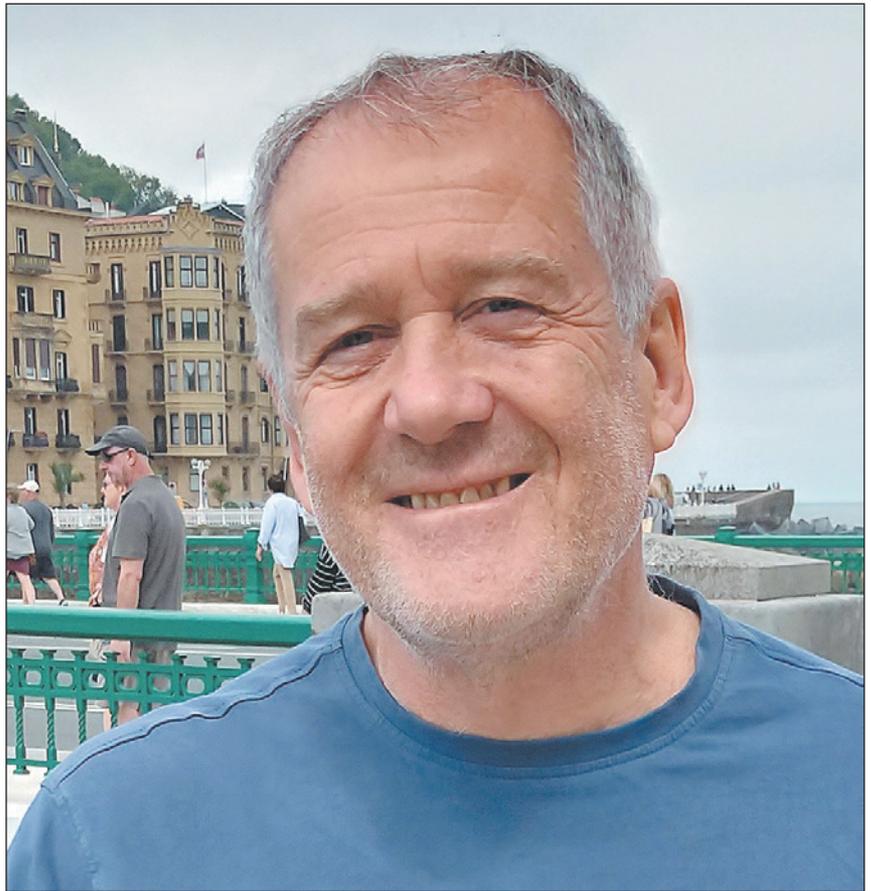
Since people first registered on the MIQ site over a year ago some have just given up applying for MIQ places, he says. "Some people say my problem isn't as bad as some other people. I'm going to step away."

Others are holding off applying for now, hoping vaccination and testing will usher in home isolation.

Moore is frustrated by how opaque the system is and says MIQ is operating below capacity. Emergency allocations are also extremely limited and inflexible. "People don't die to order," he says.

His own personal experience in trying to get a room is what led Moore to Grounded Kiwis. In May, his brother, who was bipolar, died suddenly.

"I was the go-to person for his son and



Grounded... Mike Moore, pictured on his travels in pre-pandemic times, wants the government to move on from mandatory MIQ

daughter. Not being able to be there was awful."

Moore told his adult niece and nephew he would try to get vaccinated and come over to the UK to support them after his wife had scheduled surgery. "That's when we found we couldn't come home."

Since then he has heard many other stories of separated families, including people who have been brought into New Zealand to work, but are now leaving.

One man told him: "When I left my son was a child, now his voice has broken." Another had a son in a coma in Canada so had to travel, taking a chance on getting back some day.

People – including a number of North Shore locals he knows of – are jumping through so many hoops, Moore says.

He and his wife still want to visit the UK, but having come very much at the back of the MIQ lobby list – No. 24,893 of 25,000 – it won't be this year, unless the system changes.

Moore's prescription for that is for the government to first free up more rooms and then move away from mandatory MIQ.

"Insist on vaccinations, testing pre and after flight, saliva kits at home and isolation at home. Every other country in the world is

doing this." Australia is looking at reopening in December. Yet New Zealand is only talking about running a small trial of business people self-isolating, when it could tap into large overseas data sets on what is already working.

The country's initial Covid-19 response of going hard and early was correct, says Moore, but Delta has changed things and the world has changed.

Insular thinking is eroding early advantages, he says. "We're going to end up with a country that is bankrupt."

Moore believes travel will bounce back, especially for leisure. "There's huge pent-up demand."

In the UK over summer, passenger numbers were up to 75 per cent of pre-pandemic loads. "Vaccination status will become built in, the same way as visas." Business travel may be slower to recover, says Moore, given it is highly discretionary.

In the meantime, those Kiwis who need to travel but can't can add their chapters to the stories Grounded Kiwis collates.

"It's hard to keep on doing it – it's emotionally gruelling," says Moore. "You go on the Facebook page and there's more stories and more stories and I'm still dealing with the fact that I can't go and see my own family."

Hope dwindles for losers in government's MIQ lottery

Dugald MacDonald and his wife June have all but given up hope of securing a spot in MIQ, despite spending many harrowing months trying.

MacDonald's mother died in Scotland in mid-2020, and in May this year his mother-in-law, over whom his wife has guardianship, was hospitalised and had to be admitted to a dementia home.

"We've got no end of things to try to sort," he says.

For the Takapuna residents not being able to get home to Scotland last year was tough. But it was easier to be resigned about that than than the plight they and thousands of others still find themselves in.

"There was no chance of going back last year," says MacDonald. Recent months have been an altogether more frustrating scenario. "You want some kind of certainty."

To allow a trip to Edinburgh where he grew up, the busy technology executive has been grappling with the vagaries of the MIQ system to secure a spot in an insolation hotel for the couple's return to New Zealand.

They have lived here for nearly 30 years, shifting up from Devonport this year, closer to their daughter in Takapuna. (MacDonald was actually born in Christchurch, when his Scots father, a geologist, worked there for a couple of years.)

In the new MIQ lobby booking system – introduced by the government last month to replace the cruel need to search against the clock – MacDonald's number hasn't come up for one of the few thousand places available at a time.

In the first lobby he ranked in the 24,000s and in second lobby in the 11,000s.

It's a lottery, he says, with few winners. While he appreciates the trickiness of

prioritising, he thinks the government could have done more, earlier, to organise systems.

"The whole MIQ seems like it didn't have any care."

MacDonald says reading stories on the Grounded Kiwis website is heart-wrenching. He is quick to point out the plight of others worse off than he is. But he wonders if some New Zealanders realise quite how hard a time some people are having. There seems to be something of a public view that those caught abroad have only themselves to blame for not returning earlier, he says.

'The whole MIQ seems like it didn't have any care'

This overlooks that life is complex and people's situations vary, he believes, meaning many were not able to drop everything to get back when the call was made by the government before it closed the borders last year.

A complacency around the vaccine roll-out also seems to have developed before the Covid-19 Delta variant arrived, he says, costing valuable months of preparedness. Now the issues are around priorities and transparency.

He also sees a need to ready more ICU beds and for the government to lay out and create a clearer pathway ahead.

His son, who moved to Melbourne in April, told him that despite that city's far-worse outbreak, the state government had now set out a clear chart of what could be



Frustrated... Dugald MacDonald is among many unable to travel to take care of family matters

done and when.

"You can't pin your plan on anything here."

For now, the MacDonalds are sadly resigned to putting Scotland on the back-burner until next year. They hope higher vaccination rates will lead to changes in MIQ arrangements.

They also hope that next year may allow them a second trip to see their son. A talented bagpiper who has represented New Zealand, he is aiming to travel to an international competition in Edinburgh next August.

"It skipped a generation," says MacDonald.



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Customers reignite expert butcher's retail passion

Butcher Todd Treadwell's butchery career has almost come full circle with his purchase of Well Hung Artisan Butchers in Milford last month.

After spending much of his 30 years in the industry contract boning and working for other butchers, taking ownership of a retail business returns him to a role he first experienced when he owned a butchery in Whangaparaoa in his early 20s.

Looking back, he thinks he was too young to own that first shop. He soon sold out of the business, preferring to work for others.

But after taking on the Executive Butcher role at Well Hung three years ago, the engagement he enjoys with his Milford customers has inspired him to return to butchery ownership.

"Our Milford customers are such lovely people it reignited my passion for owning a retail business again," he says.

"Having been Well Hung's Executive Butcher for the past three years, I am excited for the opportunity to now take ownership of the business and to continue delivering quality products and service to our customers."

It's a familiar part of the world for Treadwell, who grew up in Forrest Hill.

Well Hung has two stores effectively over the road from each other, one on Kitchener Rd and the other in the Milford Mall, each offering a slightly different focus.

"Our Milford Mall shop is more of a grab-and-go store, whereas our Kitchener Rd premises is our destination store," says Treadwell.

The grab-and-go store inside the mall offers single cuts of all meat as well as delicious ready-to-eat meals prepared by the Well Hung team.

Everything is sourced from the highest-quality livestock and is entirely gluten free. The only thing not made in-store are the gourmet condiments.

The Kitchener Rd store is where most of the meat preparation happens and where Well Hung's tempting selection of dry-aged meats is displayed in several chic glass-door fridges.

Treadwell says that keeping things simple is key to the business, offering some new items but focusing tightly on the needs of the customer.

"We like to engage each customer and understand their needs, so sometimes other customers wait to get served. But they will also



get the same personalised service from our experienced team.

"Our most popular cut is the bone-in ribeye, but some of our new offerings like the chicken mignon and lamb koftas are also selling really well in our mall store," he says.

"Our 'cooked-to-order' rotisserie options of pork, lamb, and chicken (not to mention our duck-fat roasted potatoes) have also been exceptionally popular – so much so that we purchased a second rotisserie for our Milford Mall store."

In either store, the customer's requirements are paramount. "If we don't have what a customer wants, we will do our best to get it," says Treadwell.

Well Hung is known for its award-winning sausages, with more than 40 popular recipes it rolls out through the year to set sausage lovers' mouths watering. Like everything at Well Hung, all the sausages are made from quality ingredients and all are gluten-free.

"We've won awards for our sausages and, more importantly, our customers keep coming back for more!" he says.

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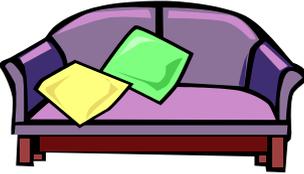
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Tree vandalism at Sacred Grove still a mystery

Feedback from the community is being examined in pursuit of those responsible for damaging trees at Sacred Grove / Te Uru Tapu overlooking Takapuna Beach.

The damage on the protected reserve in front of apartments at the north end of the beach was discovered by council arborists during a routine inspection in late September.

Various native species were chopped down, including a tree around five metres tall. Drill holes indicated poisoning of others. In all, interference to 14 trees and additional shrubs has been established, including four trees that were likely poisoned.

“Sadly, it is unlikely any of the damaged trees will survive as they have either been cut at ground level or declined beyond recovery,” said Auckland Council’s Regional Arborists and Ecological Manager, David Stejskal.

The grove’s precious beachfront pohutukawa were apparently unscathed, but Stejskal told the Observer officials feared they might be targeted in future.

Police have been advised of the vandalism. Stejskal said investigations were continuing.

This had included letters dropped to residents at 47 The Strand (The Sands) and 7 The Promenade (The Rocks) seeking assistance with any information they may have.

The Sands body corporate had also been asked for any CCTV footage it may have.

“At this stage we cannot speculate or say

Darby hopes grove gets wider recognition

North Shore councillor Chris Darby hopes a wider recognition of the Sacred Grove’s preciousness may emerge in the wake of the “reckless destruction” there.

“Maybe we can all learn from this,” he told the Observer. “Many people will see the stunning natural environment, but it’s substantially more than that,” he said. “That sort of vandalism is not just an attack on very significant trees, but they have enormous cultural significance as well.”

Apartment dwellers were among those who were really upset, he said. “They are good people who have always looked out for the Sacred Grove.”

Asked what he thought should happen in terms of the grove’s future, Darby said it was a matter that fell under local-board jurisdiction, but he expected advice to the board would have taken full account of environmental and cultural matters.

why the damage has occurred,” said Stejskal.

It is not the first time trees in the area have been damaged, with the most recent case

being in January this year.

“A lot of effort has gone into protecting the trees in Te Uru Tapu, so our arborist was extremely disappointed when he made this discovery,” said Stejskal.

In terms of next steps, he said the investigation would continue and the council officers would speak with mana whenua before any decisions were made about replanting or removal of damaged trees.

The Sacred Grove has been fenced off to the public for three years. Its boardwalk was a popular passage for beach walkers at high tide. After council staff recommended the area stay closed, a petition was launched, which drew 2513 signatures calling for its reopening.

The Devonport-Takapuna Local Board has asked council staff to report back on further options for the area.

Council staff reported in June that the fragility of the trees – a number of which require propping and wiring to stay upright – and the cultural significance of the area meant it should remain closed. A lookout closer to The Promenade could be kept open.

Staff recommended the boardwalk be dismantled, citing its poor condition, costly repairs and the likely inability to gain planning consent for any rebuilding, partly due to the area’s cultural significance.

Mana whenua historically used the trees to hang wrapped bodies prior to their burial.



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Marathon effort creates winning vibes in Sunnynook



Golden boy... Seven-year-old Cameron McCracken loved doing the community marathon with his family – and receiving his prize. The Sunnynook School student wrote about the experience (right) of covering the 42km in much less than the allocated month.

MY MARATHON

By Cameron McCracken

We saw the advertisement for the Sunnynook Marathon on the Sunnynook Facebook page.

We got interested and excited about the marathon and decided to give it a go.

We started on 1 September by going on a 3km walk. After a few days of walking the same area we decided to make it more fun by letting a coin decide where we would walk.

We tossed the coin and if it landed on heads we went right or straight and if it landed on tails we went left or straight.

We found a huge amount of walkways, one mystery street, met heaps of dogs and as usual we had lots of fun.

My favourite walk, following the coin toss, took us down to Castor Bay.

We finished the marathon on 12 September.

Hitting the road gives a lockdown boost to many

A little lockdown lift came the way of some lucky participants in the Sunnynook Marathon, with the awarding of spot prizes and medals.

The community “marathon”, which ran as a cumulative daily exercise target for local residents throughout September, was organised by the Sunnynook Community Association. It drew 128 registrations, ranging from octogenarians to toddlers in tow with their families, mostly choosing to walk tracks through Sunnynook Park, although some people ventured further afield.

The event’s big achiever was a man with a background in ultra-marathon running who managed to clock up 296km over the month, or the equivalent of around seven marathons

The oldest participant who completed the marathon distance was 89.

Association committee member Soriya Em, who was a driving force of the event, said it has been heart-warming to see pic-

tures and comments participants had posted.

This included people saying having a focus to get out of the house had made their lockdowns easier. “I was really touched by it,” said Em. “It was the very first time we did it, so it was a bit of an experiment.”

Residents of Parklane Village on Becroft Dr were among those who joined in, with some making daily “runs” in circuits of the retirement complex.

“We had about 16 people doing it,” said village resident Peter McNee.

Some walked a track of around 2.6km and others 800m loops around the village streets. McNee himself managed more than 70km.

“They haven’t stopped,” he said of some of his fellow residents who found the exercise motivating.

Originally, the event was meant to have started with a community get-together, and while lockdown put paid to that, daily walks and runs could carry on because people

could do them in a socially distanced way at times to suit their own schedules.

Em said one participant had said her mental health benefited from participating.

“The feedback has been really fantastic – to know that this sort of event has made a difference in people’s lives.”

The community response had exceeded expectations, she said. This extended to local business Apex Trophies and Awards supplying medals, along with other business support.

The intention was to hold the marathon again next spring, said Em, with the hope it could function further as a community building exercise.



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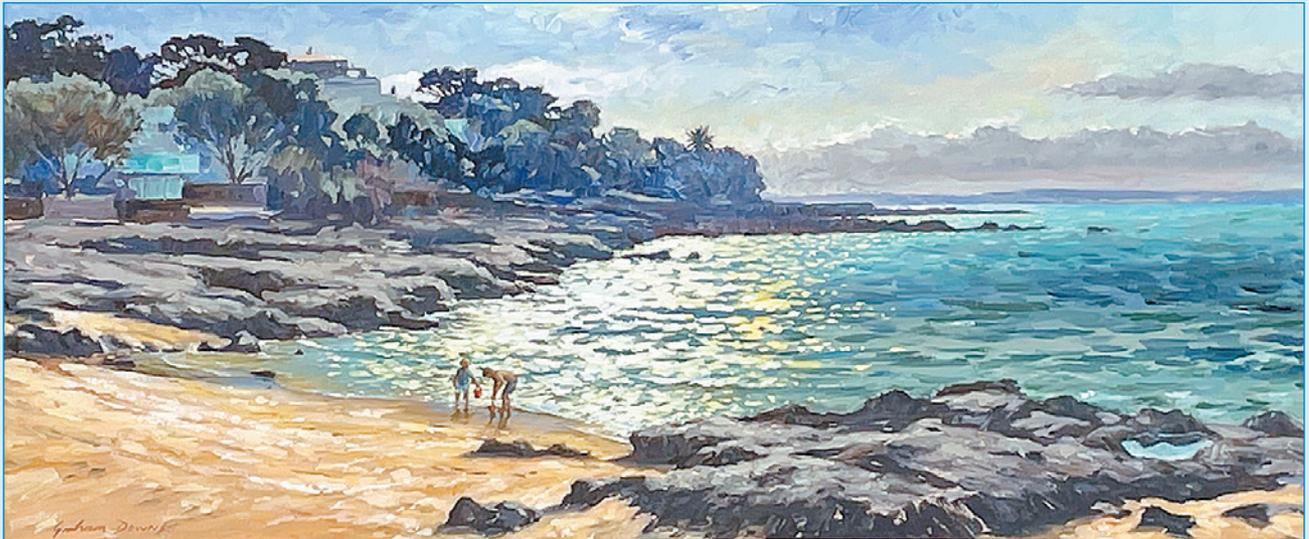


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Golden weather... Shore artist Graham Downs captures the light at Thorne Bay for his latest exhibition

Memory serves artist well in show with stymied opening

The clink of glasses and gallery chatter normally welcome an exhibition opening, but the latest show by artist Graham Downs is for now a more remote affair.

His exhibition – visible through the windows at Takapuna gallery Art by the Sea – has been hung in lockdown. While Downs hopes the doors may be able to open in time for the public to see the paintings up close, he says: “It is what it is – we have to deal with what it is.”

The established artist’s lifelong love of the sea is evident in many of the works, including a beachside scene at Thorne Bay. To complete this under lockdown conditions he worked from memory, guided by a small gouache done at the bay before Alert Level 4 was imposed.

While Downs usually works like this from a watercolour, completing his work in his home studio in Devonport, he would normally spend more time developing his paintings outdoors. This time round, it was not possible, especially when subject matter was at a distance, such as

a scene he had sketched in Mahurangi.

Under lockdown, Downs turned to his own backyard for inspiration, including several striking floral paintings among his 25 works. “I hope they’re uplifting,” he says of the colourful canvasses. These feature his beloved wildflowers and some slightly fantastical interpretations, including one work which has a villa he had sketched on a neighbourhood ramble in the background.

Were it not for the lockdown, he says, “I probably wouldn’t have done the garden paintings.” He says he is “very much into nature”, but it is the seascapes he is best known for. “I like to be near the water. It’s a subject I’m interested in.”

His exhibition, *From the Wellspring*, seeks to tap into the notion of where ideas come from. It features 25 works, including some cityscapes. Downs says he likes to be in the gallery to talk about and add context around his paintings, such as showing the sketches he

works from beside the finished works.

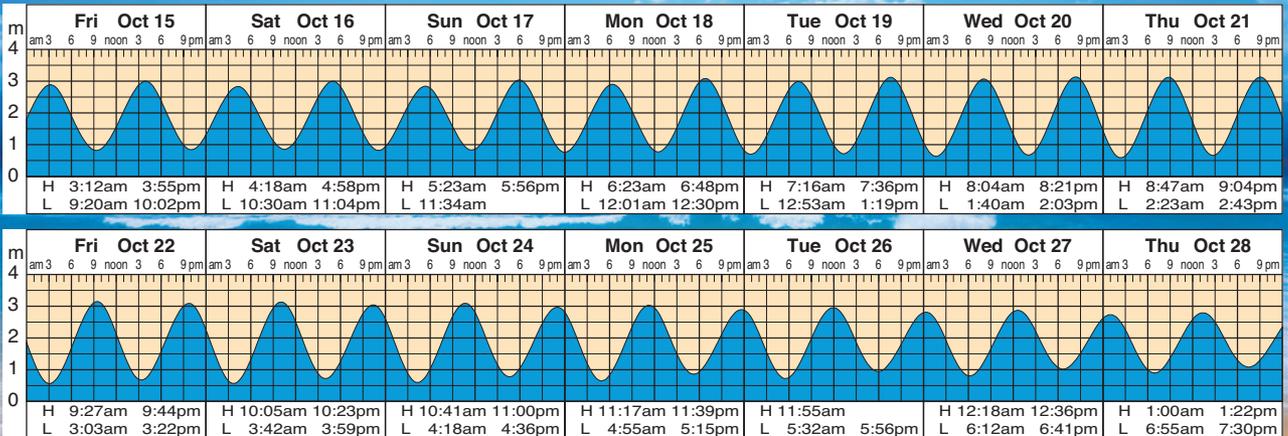
“It’s a pity because when I put on my exhibitions I try to put up supporting stuff, so people can see what led to the final painting.”

Several of his initial sketches were done during New Zealand’s first Covid-19 lockdown, so have been well over a year in the making. Time and costs went into showing, he said. “You’re down before you’ve even started.” Because of this, he had been heartened to hear from gallery owner Mike Geers that there had already been interest from clients. “Hopefully they’ll get out the chequebooks,” he says, adding: “I’m grateful people can just have a look at them.”

While lockdowns have made it tough on artists commercially, in practical terms, having had a show to prepare, Downs didn’t find it too different: “I’m just in a studio.”

From the Wellspring is online and at Art by the Sea, 162 Hurstmere Rd, Takapuna, until 26 October.

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