

The Rangitoto Observer

DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY

Issue 70 - November 12, 2021

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE

Density push 'will lead to slum city'... p2

Bowls club takes stand on vaccinations... p17

Pack of pooches invades beach... p23

Santa sidelined – but hopes still held for Xmas cheer

Father Christmas won't be mobbed by crowds of children on the main streets of Takapuna and Milford this year, but retailers are still hoping for a seasonal shopping stampede.

Beleaguered business owners, who counted down to the reopening of stores and malls

this week, hope pent-up consumer demand will lead to sustained steady trading until Christmas, followed by a busy New Year, with Aucklanders spending in their own beachside town centres.

"It is with great disappointment that the beloved Takapuna Christmas Carnival will

not go ahead," said Takapuna Beach Business Association chief executive Terence Harpur. Scheduled for 4 December, the event normally draws more than 5000 people.

Mall Santas are on the outer too, but a six-metre Christmas tree will soon rise on Hurstmere Green. **To page 4**

School deputy wields supreme ruler



Mind the gap... Westlake Girls High deputy principal Paul Davis (at rear) adds a humorous touch to his duties as "social distancing enforcer" at the school, checking up on seniors (from left) Molly Couch, Sophie Lean, Ella-Jane Collins and Ryder Clegg. Schools update, page 5

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Intensification push ‘will create slum city’

Dismayed local politicians have called on central government to reconsider housing intensification moves they say will produce dire outcomes on the North Shore.

The Devonport-Takapuna Local Board wants the government to halt its intensification push and consult with Auckland Council.

A new government bill would allow medium density development (three three-storey homes) on most sites across Auckland – without resource consent.

Board members were shocked at the government overruling Auckland’s density controls, as laid out in the region’s Unitary Plan, and the effective end of the Single House and Mixed Housing Suburban zones.

The “Golden Mile” of North Shore coastline – from Clifton Rd, through Takapuna Beach to Milford – would be opened up to development under the new government law, which is expected to change the ambience of the foreshore for the public as well as existing property owners.

The board has put its concerns to Auckland

Council’s planning committee and councillors, saying the Unitary Plan already provides for enough housing in the city.

The bill “undermined the very role” of local government and the regulations rules and guidelines that had evolved over decades of hearings, legal judgements, planning work and community consultation, the board said.

Board chair Ruth Jackson said she was “quite angry” about the bill. “I personally find it highly inappropriate for government to undo the plans of councils.”

The outcomes of intensification would be dire, she said.

Back yards would be small and virtually unusable. Side yards of one metre would leave homes so close on the ground floor that residents could lean out windows and “shake hands with the person next door”.

The massive increase in density was also at odds with Auckland City’s climate-change objectives. “Virtually every tree would be gone”, which meant birds and bees would disappear as well.

“I really fear for the future of Auckland if

this is the route the government is taking us down,” Jackson said.

Member Jan O’Connor said large amounts of intensification were already taking place due to zoning changes in the Unitary Plan.

The new law would wreak havoc. “Auckland will become the slum city of New Zealand,” O’Connor said.

Member Toni Van Tonder was “quite concerned” by the bill, especially as the Unitary Plan already provided for growth in a “measured way”.

Auckland needed to focus on priorities like open space and transport, rather than sweeping reforms, she said.

Van Tonder hoped pressure from local boards and Auckland Council could “shift” the government.

North Shore MP Simon Watts was to be sent the board resolution and alerted to concern over his party’s support of the bill, which is scheduled to become law by August 2022.

• **More on housing: Milford residents group speaks out and planners briefing to board, page 13; letter, page 15.**

Three sections combined for new beachside home

A three-storey family home is being built on an expansive multimillion-dollar site perched above Takapuna Beach.

The site (pictured at right) – next to the Takapuna Boating Club and accessed from The Strand – was recently swiftly cleared of three timber homes dating from the 1940s.

Each property had carried an Auckland council valuation of just under \$7 million. The homes occupied sections in front of the Takapuna Sands apartments.

The construction company working on the site is operating under a confidentiality clause.

A spokesman for the property owner told the Observer that the development was for a local North Shore family who wished their privacy to be respected.



Their three-storey home would take about two years to build, he said.

Records show 41 The Strand sold for

\$5.7 million last year and that 45 The Strand sold for a similar sum the previous year.

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Who's a good boy? Still life with dogs pops up at beach



Dog hours... Forrest Hill two-year-old Alfie Smyth and sister Florence, 4, amid a pop-up art exhibition of canine sculptures on Takapuna Beach. The life-sized wooden sculptures are by North Shore artist Christian Nicolson. Story, page 23.

Briefs

Building's fate on agenda

The fate of 2 The Strand was to come up at Auckland Council this week. The former Takapuna Library building is considered surplus by council property arm Panuku, which wants it sold. Devonport-Takapuna Local Board member Toni van Tonder, who asked for an update, was told by an official the process had been delayed, but that the building was to be discussed at November's meeting of the council's Finance and Performance committee.

Library open for C and C

Libraries can open under alert level 3, step 2, but Takapuna Library will only be offering click and collect. No activity programmes will be available at this step level.

Sculpture wins award

Popular Milford Reserve sculpture *Beacon* has won another award – in Taiwan. The Milford Residents Association congratulated North Shore artist Lang Na on the latest accolade for her purple-lit aluminium sphere.

Drunk duo trespassed

Police were called to Kitchener Rd, outside New World Milford, to deal with two disruptive men last week. A police spokesman said the incident happened about 7.15pm on 2 November. "Police spoke to two males who were intoxicated and verbally abusive." The pair were trespassed from the area.

Mental-health unit does Covid duty as hospital gears up response

Part of a mental health unit at North Shore Hospital has been pressed into use for Covid patients with psychiatric needs.

Waitemata District Health Board, which manages both the hospital and the He Puna Waiora mental health facility, said a wing of the in-patient unit had been upgraded to cater to Covid-positive patients. It was now in use.

"Going forward, we will be upgrading rooms in ICU/HDU, parts of our EDs and also our birthing suites, to provide enhanced environments for the care of Covid-19 patients," a spokesperson said.

He Puna Waiora normally provides 35 in-patient beds along with other mental-health support services.

In an overview of Covid readiness moves asked for by the Observer, the DHB says North Shore and Waitakere hospitals have 37 negative pressure beds servicing its area. The vast majority of those are at North Shore Hospital, a spokesperson said.

Negative-pressure rooms were available for acute Covid-positive cases that presented at hospital. At the beginning of this week, there were 26 Covid patients at North Shore, of a total 81 cases in hospitals across the city.

"We are planning and commissioning an additional eight intensive care unit (ICU) beds at the Elective Surgery Centre [at North Shore Hospital], to support any Covid-19 patients who may need this higher level of support and care," the spokesperson said.

It was too early to comment on the effects of the Covid vaccination mandate on mid-

wives, the spokesperson said, following an Observer inquiry about a workforce that in some parts of the country has shown some vaccination hesitancy.

The first part of the Health Order mandating vaccinations did not come into effect until Monday. But the spokesperson said Waitematā DHB had 98 per cent of all staff having had at least one dose of Covid vaccine and 95.3 per cent fully vaccinated.

Staff were praised for working "incredibly hard" over the last two years and through the current Delta outbreak.

The DHB says it has recruited 91.6 full-time-equivalent registered nurses into new roles. Those allocated to North Shore, from a commitment to fund 100 new nurses made earlier in the year, were "in line" with the original plan that the hospital would get two-thirds of those, it said.

Since three staff from North Shore Hospital's Covid ward tested positive for the virus late last month, testing has not found further cases, but a precautionary review of ward systems was launched.

Two locations of interest remained in the local area early this week. Countdown Sunnynook and Life Pharmacy, Takapuna, were both listed from 22 October. Life Pharmacy had earlier been listed four days in a row.

The Ministry of Health is no longer publishing low-risk Auckland sites, such as supermarkets and drive-throughs, saying no positive cases have occurred from such locations. Higher vaccination rates helped.

Hopes high for North Shore business bounce-back

From page 1

Decorations will soon go up as usual.

With Hurstmere Rd construction work having progressed throughout lockdown and final concreting now being done, returning shoppers will find wider pavements and room for more outdoor seating. Landscaping and planting is yet to be finished, but the much delayed major project is on track to finish ahead of the December rush.

To suggestions from community members for a street takeover for an al fresco event, Harpur said although the idea was enticing, closing the road cost \$5500. With Covid regulations and costs constraining hospitality, the immediate need was for people to get vaccinated to allow a widening of possibilities.

“Once Hurstmere Rd opens, I think we will see the future.”

Multiple events are planned in the New Year. By then more people should be able to gather under the signalled traffic light regulations, he said. Events would draw people back to Takapuna and included big swimming and waka-ama gatherings, a rescheduled Takapuna Classic Rocks and Easter Carnival.

In the short-term, Harpur is hoping pent-up shopping demand will provide a boost. Business has dropped 80 per cent across the centre under lockdown, compared with trading last year. Established café Ragazzi was the latest business to close. More might be expected if lockdown lingered.

Hard-hit bars, restaurants and cafes deserved all the support they could get, said Harpur.

“Town centres aren’t just about goods and services, they’re about hospitality.” Auckland Council could ensure a successful summer by extending its limited granting of permission for more outdoor dining and cutting compliance costs for businesses.



Out on the street... Takapuna Beach Business Association chief Terence Harpur and his dog Shadow check out Hurstmere Rd’s pedestrian-friendly upgrade

Despite the double-whammy of road works and Covid, Harpur remains optimistic that Takapuna’s growth as a metropolitan centre and its unique location will see it bounce back. Business owners had told him they just wanted to open their doors. “Generally they’re in the game because they like serving customers.”

• For children sad not to be seeing Father Christmas in person, look out for special mail boxes around the town centre. Post a letter with a return address for a reply from the man in the red suit.

Our arms are open wide says Milford

Milford businesses are so keen to get back into action after the Covid hiatus that some are looking at opening extra hours, says the town centre business manager Murray Hill.

While some stores had been “ticking along OK” in step one of Alert Level 3, the change to step two would be welcome. It allowed the reopening of more fashion stores and businesses without a strong online presence, he said.

“The [businesses] I’ve spoken to are obviously pretty frustrated but they are keen to get back into action.”

Some that were usually not open seven days a week were planning longer hours until Christmas, he said. “I think there’s a pent-up demand with how people have been locked down so long.”

It was hard to tell the full impact of lockdown yet, he said. “The last lockdown we had we came out of it really well to be honest – I think we only had two shops that didn’t open.”

Hill said builders were preparing sites for a handful of new shops, and one business had rung him last week to ask about moving to Milford. “We’re fairly positive.”

Milford Centre has a new opening in Repertoire, a women’s fashion store, which has shifted from Takapuna, although it is retaining an outlet store there. Chemist Warehouse will open at the centre next year.

One Milford casualty is Christmas events, which have been canned. Hill said gathering limits were a factor and given they were not ticketed managing any vaccine certificates was also an issue. But he was upbeat overall and said Rotary and his gardener had the area looking ship-shape.

“Milford’s pretty positive... We’ll be welcoming people back with open arms.”

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Decent bunch... Rhiannon Crabb of Wholesale Flowers Takapuna with bunches of peonies

Flower power backs good cause

A Takapuna flower shop has embraced Peonies for a Purpose – a campaign raising funds for mental health.

Until 14 November, a dollar from each bunch of peonies sold goes to the Mental Health Foundation. The blooms are sometimes used to symbolise compassion.

Wholesale Flowers Takapuna owner Lisa

Van Der Linden said especially in the current uncertain times, people were struggling mentally to cope.

“I really feel that we need to support the Mental Health Foundation in every way we can, so they can be there to give all the resources available to those in need.”

Florienne florist is also donating locally.

Prizegivings go online

Students will have to wait to collect certificates and cups due to prize-giving ceremonies going online this year.

Both Westlake Girls and Boys have switched to remote senior prizegiving and sports awards, in changes forced by the Delta outbreak.

Westlake Boys had a very strong return-to-school turnout from its seniors. It is back doing managed PE classes, as is Rosmini and Westlake Girls outdoors. Inter-school summer sports have been abandoned.

Westlake Girls said around 65 per cent of its students chose to return to class. Some were coming in for particular classes, such as technical subjects where they were unable to complete work at home. Others were working online. But for many the chance to reconnect was good for mental wellbeing and ensuring they were on track for NCEA.

Carmel College has switched back to remote learning, except for seniors who need to be on site for practical subjects. About 50 per cent of students had returned to school after the government restrictions were lifted.

Rosmini said most students had returned to class, but on a flexible timetable.

Schools are continuing evidence gathering for Unexpected Event Grades. The better of grades or end of year exams determines final NCEA results.

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Shore families dot down to keep whanau safe

Westlake Boys High School played host to the only North Shore location for the Get ya Dot campaign last weekend. Centred at Eden Park, but with five vaccination clinics across the city, 80 people were “dotted” locally.

While numbers at Westlake were a little down on early hopes, local initiator and the school’s Te Pouarataki Maori, Johnny Waititi, put this down to already high Shore vaccinations rates – along with anti-vaccination protesters gathered along the school frontage on Forrest Hill Rd.

“A mother came in and said it looked quite intimidating, but she had some resolve,” he said. Protesters had to be asked to move away from the school entrance. They numbered around 20 early on Saturday afternoon and up to 40 the next day, attracting toots.

Inside, the vibe was much friendlier, with what a woman who travelled from Wellsford described as a supportive wairua or spirit.

Volunteer school staff and students made people welcome, before and after nurses issued vaccinations, referred to as an ira or dot.

Among helpers was the dean of Maori studies / Te Pouarahi, Clare Nasey, who dispensed T-shirts and hats to attendees over both days. Spot prizes from sponsors were a bonus, including electronic goods and shopping vouchers, and there was a free coffee cart and Mr Whippy truck in the car park.

Ngati Whatua Orakei supplied native-plants and vegetable seedlings from its nursery that people could take home to grow.

Waititi said Westlake Boys had high vaccination rates. It had contacted other Shore schools to attract their rangitahi and whanau. The event – open to all – had succeeded in its goal of boosting Maori and Pacific people’s vaccination rates and the city’s overall tally.

A Westlake Girls Year 13 volunteer, Jumanama Maash, said: “It’s an easy way to help and why wouldn’t you?” It was an important cause and she was happy to help get even a few more people dotted, she said.



Back for seconds... Takapuna food store worker Kobe Shaw (left) and partner Wiki Hiku took five-year-old Parker along when they were fully vaccinated at Westlake Boys High School on Sunday



Iced it... Mihi Tutaki (left) and Rangimarie Bloxham chose vaccination so they can visit family out of Auckland. With whanau at Westlake, they wanted to support the clinic there. Ice cream was a bonus.

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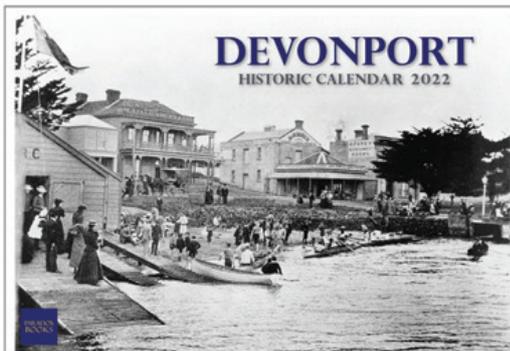
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Family escapes as Sunnynook home burns

One person suffered from smoke inhalation in a house fire in Sunnynook last week.

Firefighters were called to Tonkin Dr at 7.25am on 1 November after multiple reports of a house fire. "We located a house well involved in fire," a Fire and Emergency spokesperson said. "We requested more appliances to respond for assistance."

Four fire trucks attended the fire on the first floor of a two-storey private home. It was extinguished at 7.56am and a fire investigator was notified. "Ambulance was notified of one person with smoke inhalation."

On social media, the homeowners said they were grateful everyone got out safely. It was understood a child found matches.

Offers to help flooded in. A Givealittle page set up by a friend said the family had lost their home and contents. "They have three beautiful children who have lost all their favourite possessions."

The page gathered just over \$6000 in 20 hours, and by Monday \$17,531 had been donated. The homeowner expressed his gratitude for the outpouring of community support.

"We have been inundated with clothing, toys and everything to get us moving again and most of all got our kids playing again," he said on Facebook.

Grounded Halloween ghouls



Green-lit for fun... Forrest Hill's Greg Turner laid on his display despite Level 3 lockdown

Halloween was not entirely cancelled by Covid on the North Shore despite Level 3 lockdown, with some homes set up for socially distanced treat-giving and others getting decorative.

But Forrest Hill resident Greg Turner stood out for stepping up the special effects at his Tyne Ave home.

"We do stuff every year. I've got a sound and lighting business so I've got a garage full of all this stuff."

The "stuff" included smoke and bubble machines, creating an atmospheric front yard contained fake gravestones, models of severed body parts and plastic skeletons.

"It's been non-stop all day," he told the Flagstaff on 31 October. "We've had about 90 bags of sweets go out already."

Turner runs his business, Pretty Lights Productions, from the home he has lived in for about eight years.

"We usually go a bit more but we weren't quite sure what we were going to get this year. It's actually quite amazing seeing how many people are coming out."

Across most suburbs costumed children took to the streets in smaller numbers than usual. But in Devonport where the business association ran a pumpkin trail around the shops, more than 500 youngsters took a path to supplied treats across the day. Hauraki Countdown also laid on lollies, attracting 200 plus people over several hours.



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still offer a horrific helping of frightful fun

Clever chef makes the choux fit



Bryan Bae started his first business in Takapuna last year to showcase his skills and despite tough Covid-19 conditions, has remained determined to innovate.

Halloween inspired the talented pastry chef to whip up some devilishly good eclairs, and he plans Christmas-themed versions too in a further bid to grow his business.

Bae, who trained at AUT, has won competitions for his work. His skills were honed during a six-year stint at SkyCity and then in high-end catering. He also tutored part-time at Manukau Institute of Technology.

Starting his store, Choux by Bryan Bae, on Barrys Pt Rd was the next step. "I think normally chefs want to have their own goals," he says.

For the Windsor Park resident that meant focusing on eclairs, with chocolate and macarons also part of his repertoire. Less familiar eclair fillings, such as yuzu, tiramisu and feijoa, sit beside classic favourites such as chocolate and raspberry.

When Bae came to New Zealand from Korea in 2002, it was just "for a look", but he ended up meeting the woman who is now his wife and deciding to stay.

"I just liked it here," he says.

To hone his business ideas he travelled back to his home country and to Australia, because, as he says there is little in the way of choux patisserie here.

Bae shows his choux sweet treats on Instagram and hopes word of mouth will also lead to more orders from sweet tooths.

Devilishly delectable... Bryan Bae's eye-catching Halloween eclairs kept the Takapuna chef busy. He sold 80 boxed sets.



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Simon Watts MP: one year in the job

Life as a lockdown MP is treating Simon Watts well. Just over a year since being elected as the National Party representative for North Shore, he hasn't spent anywhere as much time in Parliament as expected.

"The benefit is I'm in my local community." This he says has put him on the spot at a time of challenging circumstances, when the local MP's role as an advocate has been amplified.

"I haven't been isolated from the impact of the lockdown and the community, as I might have been in a bubble in Wellington," he says.

Instead, Watts has been enjoying his Belmont neighbourhood with wife Shannon and their two young sons – in between work Zoom calls and preparing policy pitches

"When I want to clear my head I run at low tide around the rocks between Cheltenham and Narrow Neck."

If the kids have anything to do with it, it's the beach or a bike ride. "Generally down to the Cheltenham Milk Bar, for cookies-and-cream ice creams."

Although Watts has had busy jobs before – in finance and health administration at the Waitemata DHB – one concern about entering Parliament was how the life would fit with family.

But lockdown has allowed an easier introduction, free of the stress of travel and time away. "With elements of my job, I feel like I'm more productive," he says. "We do it all online, like everyone else is having to. Parliament has had to adapt."

Being a glass half-full personality he says "the year like no other" has provided opportunities that sitting on the Opposition back benches Monday to Thursday may not have offered.

"I've really enjoyed it. I'm someone who thrives on difficult challenges and ever-changing environments. It's been a great opportunity to learn and that's something I've taken the bull by the horns on."

National was left with only a small caucus after a horror election result in October 2020, but this has also given its new MPs a chance to make their mark in a party he says needs to show it listens and is stable and relevant.

Recently he's been firing out plenty of posts criticising the government on lack of delivery, but in person he's more likely to talk about policies and the need for long-term infrastructure planning than in attack-dog sound bites.

From when the Observer first interviewed Watts before he was elected, he has been clear that he wants to be both an active local MP and to one day ascend to Cabinet.

As one of four MPs who was tasked with writing National's Covid response plan, he is already getting stuck in for the long haul.

Watts say he relished a key additional role in developing new ideas on tax policies to support small businesses and on being asked by the leader to speak on behalf of National's Auckland MPs. He has also taken satisfaction from being a local advocate, helping constituents gain special-education funding and MIQ spots. He has met Auckland Transport and Fullers to gain



Keeping it local... Covid has freed parliamentary freshman Simon Watts from the capital bubble

a clearer view of their decision-making, hosted community meetings on crime and water quality and joined in at local sports groups. Some hot-button topics he says are more local-body matters to deal with, but on Lake Rd he says the upgrade project can't come soon enough.

Protecting "our ocean playground" and ensuring water flowing into it is not polluted are complex issues he would like more done on locally – not through the government's Three Waters reforms

On accelerating housing supply – and the National Party's unexpected recent support of the government's intensification directive – he is clear. "Housing affordability is the key issue for Kiwis and particularly those who live in Auckland and particularly those who are under the age of 50 and trying to get into [the market]."

"I think it's positive that the parties can put aside their political differences and can work together. It's no silver bullet of course, but it's a key aspect."

Watts has learned the art of the political segue, continuing the conversation with: "We just

hope now they will pick up our Covid plan."

In fact, he claims the government had adopted nearly half of the plan's initiatives within three weeks of it being announced.

Whether moves around opening up the economy, more rapid Covid testing and revising the MIQ system can be credited to National beyond a nudge on timing is open to debate, but Watts reckons "they are picking up the ideas and in the end that's good for New Zealand".

He hopes that Parliament will sit with MPs in attendance before Christmas. Watts is looking forward to some water-cooler conversations and getting to know colleagues better face-to-face. "And to working together on policy ideas that we can take to the New Zealand people to solve the problems that we face."

But Watts says he also always wants to be accessible – to be "the local guy focused on the local issues".

Bumping into people down on the beach is part of that, as is knowing "absolutely the best decision I've made is living here on the Shore".

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Residents group criticises Milford development

Milford Residents Association has raised concerns about a 32-dwelling development planned for East Coast Rd.

The need to ensure more communal open space is among issues it has raised in a submission on the consent application lodged last month with Auckland Council.

Applicant Milford Villas Ltd seeks to develop blocks of terrace-style housing and two standalone properties on a combined property made up of three back sections. Two of the three adjoining sections are at 80 and 82 East Coast Rd and the other is accessed from 7 Stanley Ave, behind the corner shops.

The association says the sizable development for the Mixed Housing Suburban zone – first reported in the Observer last month – will make the site “very cramped”. Typically, sites of 800-1000sqm in the zone

were being permitted five to six units, it said. Scaling this on the combined 3844sqm site (including driveways) would suggest an allowable number of units nearer to 20-24 than the 32 proposed.

Removing six units from the plan would provide a better result, the association said.

More open central space was needed for residents, in keeping with the best European designs. This would provide a play area for children and a communal meeting area for social wellbeing.

To achieve this, four inner units should go. “They occupy the open space, pleasant spatial outlook and recreational amenity the common area for such a large development requires,” the association said.

By taking out a further two units, the central space could be expanded further, while providing better parking and rubbish

collection areas.

A rubbish collection contractor was assumed, given that 32 wheelie bins on the street would clutter footpaths.

Breaking up the continuous building facades and widening pathways to units was also recommended, along with landscaping to “relieve the banality and sense of overcrowding” and to provide shade trees.

“The need for adequate green space is becoming increasingly relevant with climate change in cities, to counter the heat build-up and provide for bird-life and a sense of peace and calm as noted in academic articles, the submission stated.

The development would have little visual impact from the street, it acknowledged, apart from the number of cars entering East Coast Rd which might cause traffic frustration.

No room for argument on density – officials

Debate on density is “not an option” when it comes to applying intensification directives, local representatives were told in a housing briefing by Auckland Council officials.

Attention had focused on government moves to instruct larger city councils to permit three-storey, three-unit suburban developments as of right and without the need for on-site parking. But other significant impacts of proposed legislation and how many changes this will force to the Auckland Unitary Plan (UP) were still being worked through, Devonport-Takapuna Local Board members were told by city planners.

Locally, the Resource Management (Enabling Housing Supply and Other Matters) Amendment Bill’s intent seems set not only to over-ride the coveted single-house zone, but also to see further intensification in areas that are already under active development. Medium-density standards will hold sway generally over the UP’s existing residential zones.

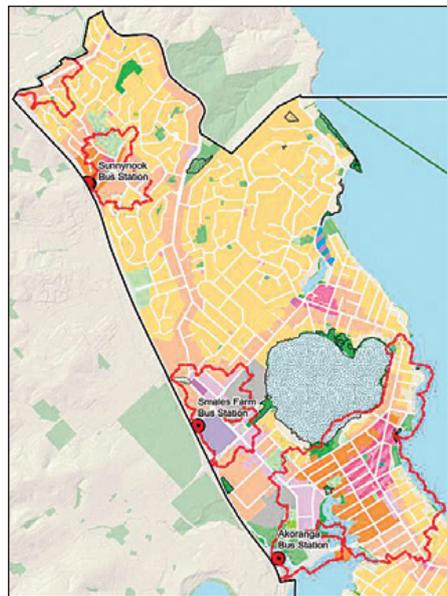
Controls on building height to boundary distance, external space and design expectations have all been undercut by the bill. It is expected to pass through Parliament by the end of the year.

The board voted unanimously at a subsequent meeting to raise its concerns about the council being railroaded. (See page 2)

In response to the briefing, member George Wood said: “People were told the Unitary Plan was going to be the Bible for the future, now it’s very uncertain.”

Wood said residents would feel pressure to sell if developers came knocking, fearing they may end up sandwiched between tall buildings. “For other people who aren’t in a position to sell, it leaves them in a very difficult position.”

Board chair Ruth Jackson said she feared the Bondification of the coastal strip. Wood asked if single homes might be replaced by six-storey blocks near the beach if the single-house zone was lost, particularly if they sat within Takapuna’s 800m walkable catchment, which already allows for greater building heights.



Strolling distance... ‘Walkable catchment’ intensification zones stretch from Hauraki north to Sunnynook. These red-ringed borders are indicative only

Officials could not reassure them otherwise. “The developers will be rubbing their hands,” said board member Jan O’Connor. Labour and National had not thought through the implications. “It’s overriding the Unitary Plan which [already] allows intensification.”

Peter Vari, team leader in the council’s Plans and Places Department, flagged that not just the Takapuna metropolitan centre, but the neighbourhood, local and town centres and surrounds would have to be considered for intensification beyond that envisaged in the UP, based on their level of commercial activity and community services. “We must provide for height and intensity commensurate with these areas – it’s a bit of a change on what council intended to do.”

The council was required to determine what each centre could accommodate. This was

even in areas where special-character overlays applied. “If very high quality our proposition is not to intensify to the same extent.”

Debate on density was not an option, Vari said. But if qualifying matters could be justified, some specific locations of high importance would be set apart. This could cover environmental, heritage, open space and other factors.

Van Tonder asked about design, especially tall buildings on small sites.

Ross Moffatt, leader in the Urban Development process, said the council did not want poor design outcomes, but this aim had been “tempered somewhat” by government directions. “We’re not allowed to make anything less permissive than those medium-density standards.”

Vari said because three-storey builds were to be a permitted activity “no consent is required, so not much we can do”. With taller buildings, which would still go through the planning process, work was being done on whether more design controls were needed.

He noted the council had no right of appeal against decisions made by an independent hearings panel. “The minister is the final decisionmaker.”

Jackson wanted members to see a map with all the local overlays that could be applied. She mentioned the Significant Ecological Area at Shoal Bay, but wondered about Lake Pupuke, Smiths Bush and Lyford Reserve.

The officials’ briefing was originally meant as an update on council progress in implementing the National Policy Statement – Urban Development issued in late 2020. Work includes defining walking catchments for Takapuna and the Northern Busways stops for inclusion in the UP.

But the bill has added layers of complexity to the work which must be fitted into the same tight timelines of coming up with a draft response by February, before further council workshoping and public engagement.

The 800m catchment zones from Takapuna and busway stops allow extra intensification.

More accessible facilities on the way

In the next few weeks, work starts on replacing the aging toilet and change facilities at Takapuna Beach.

The old block is being replaced with more modern facilities being built in Gould Reserve, and have been designed to enable people with profound and complex disabilities will be able to use.

A key component of the local board-funded project is a Changing Places room, which will be big enough to enable the user and a couple of carers and features specialised equipment including a chair hoist and adult-sized adjustable changing table.

These additional features have been enabled with funding from the Reeve family, who were the key funders and driving forces behind the fabulous destination playground nearby.

The new block will also include:

- four standard unisex toilets
- one all-accessible size unisex toilet
- a family-sized toilet, including a baby change table
- male and female changing rooms, each with a toilet and shower
- a drinking fountain and seating.
- Energy and water saving fixtures.

The new changing and toilet block



Artist impression of the new toilet and change facilities in Gould Reserve will feature specialised equipment for people with profound and complex disabilities.

will replace the existing facilities which has reached the end of its life and is no longer fit for purpose.

They will remain open during construction of the new facilities, which are due to be finished in Autumn 2022.

Nature inspired design

The building's circular 'tree trunk' shaped design references the trees of the ancient forests that once stood here. Lava flows from the Pupuke volcano buried parts of

the forests, fossilising and casting moulds of trees – which is reflected with the partially buried design of the building. The basalt stone and timber materials will connect it to the landscape.

This project aligns with outcomes from the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board Plan and the Takapuna Beach Reserve South Concept Plan.

The total cost of the project is \$1.2M and is expected to be finished in Autumn next year.

Accessible play

In April the local board approved the concept design for additional play equipment to be installed in the space where the existing toilet and changing block is located.

More work is being done on the detail design for the play space which will focus on more accessible play for children of all abilities including a wheelchair swing and other elements.

Focus on parks, facilities, and open spaces

One of the focus areas of the 2020 Devonport-Takapuna Local Board Plan is to have parks, facilities and opens spaces that are well maintained, and meet the recreation and social needs of the area's growing population.

In brief

It's been a busy time for the local board during the past few months as business and decision-making carries on. This is just some of the things we've been up to.

On 9 November we met to finalise the board's feedback on the resource consent application by Bayswater Marina Limited to develop the landward portion of Bayswater Marina.

On 19 October we approved the first tranche of locations that we will invite mana whenua to provide Māori names for several local parks in our area. This will result in some local parks having dual names, their existing and a Māori name.

In September we agreed to allocate just over **\$83,782** in community grants to local applicants. The largest was \$9240 allocated to the Rotary Club of Devonport Charitable Trust for materials to improve drainage and tree root protection under the surface of the pump track at Woodall Park.

Go to aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/devonporttakapuna and click on the meetings section to find workshop presentations or infocouncil.govt.nz for agendas and minutes and link to recordings of business meetings and community forums.

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Centralised, knee-jerk response tramples on 'most-liveable' boast

Auckland Council adopted its current Unitary Plan after much effort, which, though not liked, was finally accepted, with intensive housing zones along main transport corridors and commercial hubs, graduated down to single-family zones in heritage areas, coastal locations and other unique character environments.

The Resource Management (Enabling Housing Supply and Other Matters) Amendment Bill containing Medium Density Residential Standards (MDRS) proposed by the two main political parties allows densification with up to three units of three-storey height occupying 50 per cent site cover for any site area, and a permitted 6m-high wall located 1m from the boundary with a 60 degree roof slope.

The causal effects will be reduction of sunlight, and a sense of dominance to spaces in adjacent properties, especially those on the southern boundary.

In the neighbourhood context, the stacking of three-storey boxes on sites from single family to Mixed Housing Urban purports to unify large swathes of the city in an egalitarian, repetitive and monotonous pattern of uniformity.

"Not the world's most liveable city," to

adapt a marketing line from Auckland Council's recent past.

The proposal appears to centralise all decision-making in the Wellington political bureaucracy, apparently with no credible consultation with the Planning Institute and New Zealand Institute of Architects.

This centralised knee-jerk reaction to solve a housing shortfall, supposedly for the betterment of people, conflicts with the ideals of the localism concept supported by Local Government New Zealand.

This UK concept has devolved powers down to local government in collaboration with community stakeholders since 2008, as a way of reinvigorating local democracy and civic participation.

Why have there been no neighbourhood-scale perspectives for people to understand the impact and context of these rules on the many unique neighbourhood environments?

Why is there no policy or reference to the infrastructure requirements, community facilities, amenities, parks and green public spaces that will be necessary for the wellbeing of people who live there?

People need to trust and have faith in a humanised model of governance which approaches people and listens constantly to hear their concerns and help identify what they need and want, to promote a stable democracy.

A premise for democratic institutions is to empower communities, and central government and councils need to give more decision-making to people nearer the local communities, to encourage civic participation, to foster a sense of ownership, and a sense of pride, place and belonging.

It appears that the Medium Density Residential Standards are more about boxes in the air and not about wellbeing and a quality environment.

Peter Carter, on behalf of the Milford Residents Association

Grove risks can be managed without draconian boardwalk removal

Your newspaper dated 20 October has an article saying there has been no progress in finding who damaged trees in the Sacred Grove. It quotes council officers who, having closed the boardwalk for more than three years, plan to remove it, citing tree fragility, safety and cost factors.

The reason why council elected to close the boardwalk is due to perceived health and safety risk. There is an assessed risk that failure of a tree or branch could injure users of the boardwalk. What the report fails to acknowledge is that users of the beach are equally at risk.

Representations to council have advocated that the risks can be managed without the draconian step of removing the boardwalk.

The quote to remove the boardwalk is nearly \$900,000. Yet other qualified observers estimate repairs would be around a quarter of that cost.

If the boardwalk is removed, then what? The council legally cannot fence off the Sacred Grove, as it is an Esplanade Reserve.

Without the boardwalk, the public will trample through the Grove at high tides, causing damage to tree roots.

The council arborist is reluctant to allow trimming of the trees, saying they may die, yet pohutukawa all over the North Island are regularly trimmed and thrive. There is historical evidence of trees within the grove being trimmed and thriving. A further view held is that the trees should remain in their natural state. So if a tree should fail then it should lie where it falls? Within a bush or forest setting this would be an acceptable approach. However, in an urban setting this is far from satisfactory. It introduces a new health and safety issue.

We know the area can be managed in a way that delivers a community asset and meets the interests of iwi.

Tony and Rachel Lewis

Correction: The petition to Save the Boardwalk was signed by more than 2500 people, not 1500, as wrongly reported previously, due to a typographical error.



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Adventure interrupted... The combined Westlake schools adventure racing team (from left) Hunter Wilson, Daniella Hall, Kate Jobbins, Chloe Broderick, Maeve Lockett, Ezra Coyle, Cade Gillies and Conall McClean will have to wait until next year to compete in the sport again

Scrapping of sport robs team of early crack at nationals

Daniella Hall is among students looking to next year to work towards their sporting goals after the combined Westlake high schools junior adventure racing team she is in learned that the national championships next month had been put off.

Like others anticipating summer inter-school competition after winter school sports had to be abandoned, the students' hopes were knocked by ongoing Covid conditions.

During lockdown, Daniella, aged 15, had kept up her training in case the finals could go ahead on Great Barrier Island. But with Auckland still cut off from the rest of the country that was not possible.

After dealing with that disappointment, the team's spirits were lifted by word last week that the final would be moved to Tongariro and held in late January. Even though the timing will mean competing in mid-summer heat on the Central Plateau, rather than holidaying at the beach, she is keen.

For sporty kids like Daniella, this year has turned from juggling practice sessions and games to dealing with no-play frustration.

Having something to aim for in the nationals had helped her get through.

The Year 10 student from Castor Bay is a North Harbour hockey representative, who co-captained the under-13 A side.

She plays for Westlake Girls and in a Premier 3 club side, describing herself as a "committed" hockey player. She is also a keen runner, with triathlons under her belt, and a mountain biker.

"I hope to do adventure racing next year as a senior," she says. "This year, most of the [earlier] trainings clashed with my school hockey training, so that's made it tricky."

Fitness training in a gym set up in the garage at home has helped her through the last few months of doing school work remotely. "I'm self-motivated and I'd go nuts if I didn't have training to do," she said.

Daniella said she took up adventure racing as a new challenge this year. "I've played lots of different sports over the years so this looked great as it includes lots of variety."

Adventure racing is a mix of off-trail running, biking and water-based activities mixed with problem-solving challenges.

Daniella wrote about the regional competition for her school magazine. Westlake finished just behind Epsom Girls Grammar last August, with both sides gaining places in the Hillary five-day Get2Go national finals.

When lockdown hit, the training the team was doing turned from group runs to individual ones. That was okay, said Daniella: "I get to run at my own pace (which can be bad... and good), and at any time of the day."

She kept up with core training and weight workouts at home and also did road biking and ocean swimming. As lockdown levels allowed, her Harbour hockey team also held workouts in groups of 10.

Daniella is clinging to the hope that despite school sport being over for the year, she might at least get back to class, pending government announcements about Year 1 to 10 attendance.

"I wish I was going to back to school," she says.

"I find it hard to motivate myself to learn at home – I wish I was learning at school, with my friends."

Bowling club gives non-vaxxed a no-play message

Takapuna Bowling Club has unanimously supported moving to a "vaccinated club" status starting on 1 December or as soon as the traffic light protocols come into play in Auckland, its board chairman Graham Doreen said.

All members, visitors, suppliers and contractors will need to be double vaccinated to enter the bowling club premises.

"Health and safety of our members is the priority" Doreen said.

The Rangitoto Observer surveyed nine sports clubs on their vaccine stance following Belmont Racquets club "no vax, no play" decision last month.

Milford Tennis Club has not introduced a "no vax no play" policy as yet, its club manager Catherine Woodward said: "Our Covid 19 protocols are reviewed regularly and we are guided by advice from our governing body Tennis Northern.

"We encourage and recommend our members to get vaccinated," she said.

Takapuna AFC is waiting on clearer policy statements from Government and our governing body, New Zealand Football, its club chairman Glyn Taylor said.

While Takapuna Rugby Club did not respond by the Observer deadline, North Harbour Rugby announced late last week that it will implement a mandatory vaccination policy from next year.

The union's board passed in principle a resolution to support the policy at an October meeting, meaning all clubs and schools in the union will need to be double vaccinated. North Harbour Rugby chief executive Gerard van Tilborg said: "Anything other than a mandatory vaccination policy will be unmanageable for our clubs and schools."

Takapuna's Les Mills gym sent a message to members last week saying under the

government's red and orange settings gyms that do not request proof of vaccine will not be able to operate.

"So we can operate at all levels of the Covid-19 Protection Framework, Les Mills will be requiring members to be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 prior to entry to our clubs," Takapuna club manager Peter Peerless said.

People who don't want to be vaccinated are being offered a Cover-19 pause to membership for six months, which will include access to Les Mills programmes at home for \$3.50 per week. Memberships can also be cancelled.

"We do realise that the choice to be vaccinated or not is a personal one and we respect that," Peerless said. "However, for us to do what we do best, we need to be open and vaccinations are the key for us being able to do so," he said in an email.

Write to the Observer

We welcome letters. Please limit to 300 words on local topics.

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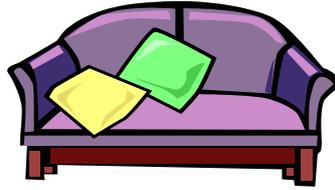
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Fundraisers take a rose-tinted view



Sister act... Monique Pearce (left) of Takapuna and her sister Daniella, from Hauraki, were among fundraisers who hit the footpaths for this year's Pink Ribbon Appeal

Every year for the past five years, Monique Pearce has donned something pink and gone walking in memory of her grandmother – and as an encouragement to other women to get checked for breast cancer.

This year the Takapuna resident was joined by her sister Daniella, who lives in Hauraki. Wet weather on the morning of their Pink Ribbon walk did not deter them from getting dressed up and heading out – with pink umbrellas just in case.

October was Breast Cancer Awareness month, but with Auckland in lockdown the Pink Ribbon street appeal could not take place, leaving a big fundraising gap. Instead the Breast Cancer Foundation encouraged people to walk on Sunday, 31 October.

Monique said her grandmother, Marjorie Buckby, passed away “a long time ago now” but it was not a pleasant way to go.

“It’s important to me because everybody should have mammograms, everybody should

check themselves, because you leave so many people behind if you get cancer.”

She would also like the government to subsidise mammograms beyond the age of 69. “People are living longer and people still get it after 69.”

The sisters walked 13.5km. “[It’s] amazing the reaction you get from the public,” Monique said. “People stop to tell you their stories.”

Donations can be made at pinkribbonappeal.co.nz.

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Protect Bayswater Marina and the maritime precinct

A massive residential development is proposed which will change the Bayswater marina environment for ever.

Bayswater is a focal point for boaties on the North Shore, offering easy access to the water for trailer boat launching, the rowing club, the public and marina users.

Your support is needed to stop this development in its current highly intensive form. We strongly believe it will degrade the Bayswater maritime environment and diminish opportunities for marine-based and outdoor activities for present and future generations of Aucklanders. For all time.

Auckland's Unitary Plan (AUP) makes it clear that the Bayswater marina's primary purpose is as a community and marina-oriented place focusing on recreation, public open space, access to and along the coastal area, public transport, boating, maritime activities and facilities.

Residential development is a discretionary activity and qualifies as such only if the primary focus on public access, recreation and marine-related activities and facilities is achieved. Residential is not a permitted (as of right) activity in this environment. We are not anti-development, but the proposed development is far too intensive for this precious marine site.

If this project goes ahead, four-storey buildings will sprout up and dominate. The proposal involves subdividing the area into almost 100 lots which will be sold off and developed individually – consequently the area will be a major construction site for potentially over a decade. Vehicle traffic in and around the marina will increase significantly. The open vistas and airy ambience of the area will disappear.

Despite Auckland being in Lockdown Level 3, the Council has allowed the developer's resource consent notification process to begin. The clock is ticking.

To help us put the brakes on this project, please:

- Send a submission to Auckland Council before 11.59pm, 19 November 2021. Go to Auckland Council website and enter "bayswater" in search box. Next box should be application site. Or: type Notified Resource Consent Submission (auckland-council.govt.nz) and scroll down.
- If you are a berth holder but not yet a member, sign up at <http://bayswaterbha.mailchimpsites.com>
- Contribute to the marina association's "fighting fund" which will help pay for required experts.

Donations please to the association's official account, 12-3019-0006596-00 noting name and berth number if appropriate.

BAYSWATER
BHA

Water fountain coming for Becroft Park

A new water fountain will be installed at Becroft Park in Forrest Hill thanks to a school girl's environmentally-friendly project, funded by toilet paper sales.

Lilah McDonald started her business, Water Us, in February to raise funds for her water fountain foundation. Lilah, aged 11, wants to help the environment by allowing people to reuse their plastic water bottles instead of throwing them away.

It's taken time and been hit by shipping delays, but she hopes to have the fountain in place by the end of the year. Aiding this is the Milford branch of Barfoot and Thompson which has donated \$30,000 for three fountains. Becroft Park and Bayswater Park are on the list, but the timing for each installation and the third site are still being determined.

Lilah, who lives in Hauraki, spent three days off school in the early days of lockdown after her first shipment of toilet paper arrived, working on the 450 orders that had come through a PledgeMe campaign earlier in the year. A second container load of rolls has now been ordered, but the profits will drop due to increased shipping costs under Covid. "Fifty per cent of profits are going to buy a water fountain," Lilah said.

Currently, Auckland has just 370 water fountains.. "My first goal is to double that amount but that's still not that many fountains... then there's still the rest of New Zealand. I kind of just want to keep this going and get as many in as possible.

"I enjoy sending out the orders. I find it quite satisfying."

But although she plans to keep the business going for a while, she says: "I don't want to just do this. I also want to do other stuff to help different causes."



No hoarding... Lilah McDonald was kept busy in the early days of lockdown sending out toilet paper

Board ponders funding for Wairau Stream clean-up

Pollution in the Wairau Stream and who should be responsible for its clean-up was debated at a Devonport-Takapuna Local Board meeting last month.

At a workshop on the board's plan, members discussed continuing to fund pollution prevention in the stream.

Contaminated water flowing into the Wairau estuary and out to sea at Milford, prompted the setting-up of a joint working group to tackle pollution issues. This should remain a focus for board funding, members agreed.

Member Jan O'Connor said the issues stemmed from the part of the stream across the ward border in Kaipatiki. That local board puts in \$40,000 a year, compared with Devon-

port-Takapuna's \$7000 this year.

Board member George Wood said the two boards should be working closely. "I would like to see us put a reasonable sum of money in this one, like Kaipatiki do," he said. "We might not be as involved as Kaipatiki but we should be there."

Chair Ruth Jackson noted there had been lots of social-media posts of what looked like "very polluted foam" coming downstream from the Wairau Valley area. It was unclear if this was from industrial dumping or storm related.

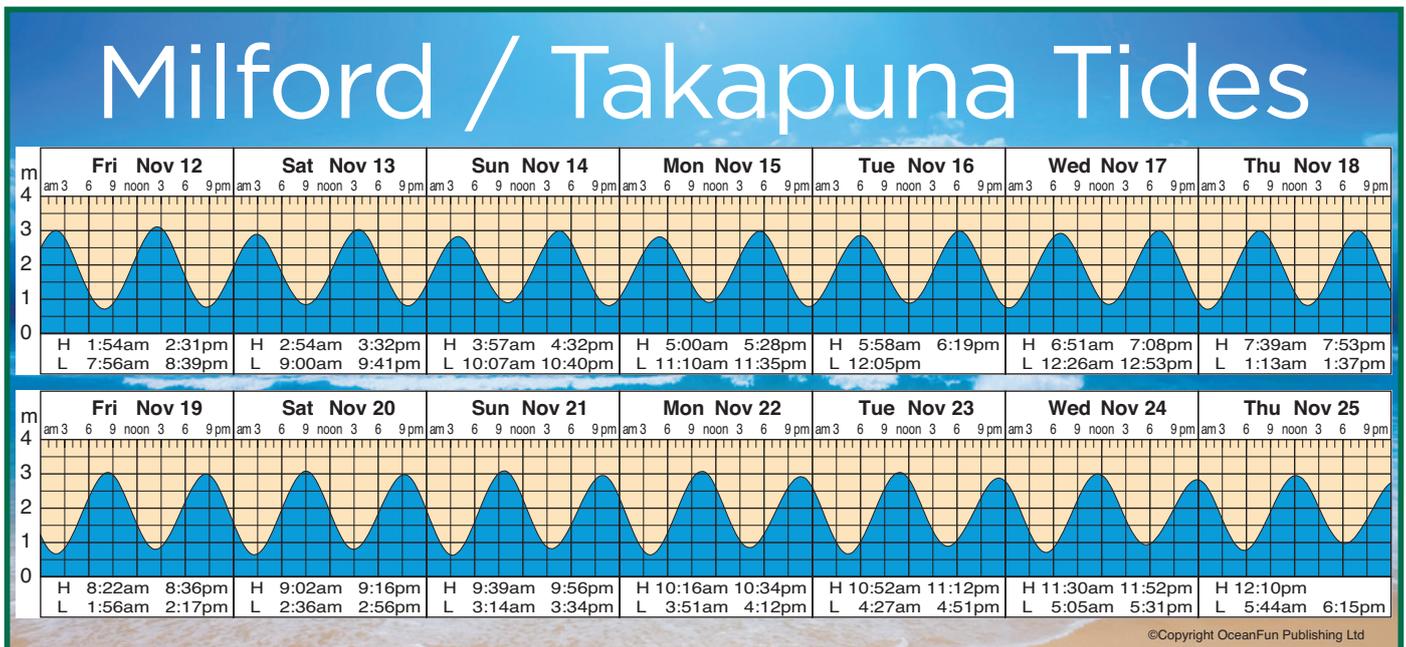
"This is worth every dollar we've put into it to get these big organisations of council to act in our area," she said.

Member Toni van Tonder asked officials

what more could be done on communication, as people were unaware that when they washed their cars or dumped dog poo in the gutter it ended up in the stormwater.

Staff noted the board wanted the water-quality issue prioritised in the board plan. Members also requested information on what other local boards were doing in environmental and sustainability areas.

Eco-neighbourhood programmes which had worked well during lockdown in other areas could be considered for 2022/23. Eco-neighbourhoods bring together neighbours to learn to 'live lightly' - which includes growing food or buying it locally, setting up pest control, keeping chickens, minimising waste, composting, and harvesting rainwater.





Sculpture on Shore moves from cliff top to online

Sculpture on Shore has switched to online this month, promising a virtual artistic journey of discovery after Covid-19 put paid to the spectacular clifftop experience at Fort Takapuna for a second year in a row.

The country's largest outdoor sculpture exhibition also functions as the major fundraiser for Women's Refuge.

Sally Dewar, who is board chair for the event, said the organisers were committed to raising \$100,000.

"If you're one of the tens of thousands of people who would usually buy a ticket to Sculpture on Shore, please go online today and give generously to this important cause," said Dewar.

"If you've not been to the exhibition before, this is a great opportunity to do so," she added.

From Friday 5 November, more than 100 works can be viewed on a purpose-built online platform. Curator Sally Lush said

moving the event online had been a mammoth task, bringing together a wide variety of work.

"There are quirky and thought-provoking works, soaring monumental sculptures, sound-and-light art works and site-specific installations. Also, there will be many accessible works specifically for adding that special touch to home gardens."

Organisers say a cut of the artists' sales proceeds and any donations will go towards a Women's Refuge campaign called Kids in the Middle. This is raising funds for comforting and creative spaces for children staying at 40 Women's Refuge safe houses.

Dewar said the global pandemic was hitting local communities. "More New Zealand women and children than ever before are fleeing from dangerous situations."

Sculpture on Shore is normally held every two years, rather than annually, due to its large scale.

It regularly attracts a roster of established and emerging talent.

The scheduled 2020 exhibition was put back to 2021 because of Covid-19 conditions. Despite hopes that the delayed event would proceed in October, the Delta lockdown forced the decision to switch online.

The sponsored event has a 25-year history, raising more than \$2.1 million in that time. It began in a private garden in Takapuna in 1996 and moved to Narrow Neck from 2004.

Women's Refuge chief executive Dr Ang Jury says she is humbled by the huge effort organisers and the artists put into salvaging this year's show. "For a quarter of a century, this event has pulled together an extraordinary range of art.

"They've refused to let Covid and lockdown get in the way and we just can't thank Friends of Women's Refuge Trust enough."

• View at nzsculptureonshore.co.nz



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Sculptor casts chair in bronze for Covid-constrained online exhibition

Noted sculptor Helen Pollock (pictured right) has been involved in Sculpture on Shore since its inception in a Takapuna garden 25 years ago.

This year she is showing *The Empty Chair*, a bronze work. Its creation – like the event's staging – has been affected by Covid conditions, with the casting process delayed.

"It's currently still being finished, so that is going right to the wire," she told the Observer shortly before the exhibition went online last week.

"It's sad because 3D is desirable to look at." Walking around works is part of experiencing them and with Sculpture on Shore the outdoors added another dimension, she says.

"It's a different thing online, but we are all getting used to it, with meetings and so on."

Pollock notes the event has successfully evolved before, from what she recalls as an intimate "garden party" affair held for the first time above Lake Pupuke. That show featured only around 40 works from invited artists and was hosted by Takapuna champion of the arts Genevieve Becroft.

"It's done a huge amount for many artists, raising their profile."

It has been a busy time for Pollock, a Shore resident of 40 years' standing. A work commissioned by her old school, Otago Girls High, was unveiled for its 150th anniversary last week. Travel restrictions meant she could not attend.

Pollock describes her Sculpture on Shore piece as "just a plain old-fashioned wooden chair cast in bronze". But it has a meaning drawn from the death of her father when she was very young. The empty chair symbolises absence, which in these Covid times also has a wider resonance.

Her father served in World War I and this



too has been an influence in her work. The Navy Museum at Torpedo Bay houses *Falls the Shadow*, showing upstretched arms. It is one of several of her pieces it holds.

Other sculptures she has done with military references have toured widely and are in museums in France and Belgium.

The Devonport resident hopes Sculpture on Shore will return to Fort Takapuna next time round, but for now she is just happy it is going ahead.

"It's a very dedicated team and they give it a heap for a very good cause. People like the combination of a well-organised event and a very good cause – and the art," she adds.



Off-lead... artist Christian Nicolson with his dog sculptures on Takapuna Beach

Artist organises dog day afternoons at Takapuna Beach

Forty-two cut-out dogs were twice let loose on Takapuna Beach in a guerrilla art installation that set cameras clicking.

Onlookers delighted in the sight of Christian Nicolson's painted macrocarpa sculptures, which were originally destined for display at Sculpture on Shore at Fort Takapuna.

When Covid put paid to that as a live event, the artist decided he would still like the public to see the animals spread out as he intended, rather than online only. So for four hours across the middle of the day on Saturday, 30 October, and a similar length of time the previous Tuesday afternoon, he set the life-sized sculptures up on the sand.

The initial aim was to take photographs to document his work grouped outdoors. But the steady stream of passersby stopping to look, pose and chat prompted his repeat visit and others to Piha and Browns Bay.

"It's what every artist dreams of," said the Torbay Shore artist. "In a short period of time it gathered a lot of momentum. Sometimes there seemed to be more people there than dogs."

Although he sold a sculpture on the spot on his first day and received other interest, Nicolson said that wasn't the purpose of the display. "I thought it was just a good idea to put them up and see what reaction I got."



The breeds range from chihuahuas to great danes. Walkers, children and some free-range dogs – including a couple who cocked a leg at the wooden visitors – were curious about them, he said.

Nicolson told the Observer the name of his intended Sculpture on Shore installation was *Where's Mummy?*

"It's about all those dogs that get left at home alone – not so much at the moment – when their owners go to work. Little do they know they've been barking for four hours," Nicolson said as someone who worked from home he heard them. Although not a dog owner himself, he is well disposed to them and their ever-hopeful natures which he set out to capture.

"Whenever I see dogs they are such happy little things."

That is, barring the odd few he encountered when working as a postie while a teenager, before developing his art practice.

Nicolson's last exhibition was a pop-art tribute to his New Zealand musical heroes, which was held at Art by the Sea in Takapuna this year. Luckily it opened pre-lockdown.

He has shown at previous Sculpture on Shore and Sculpture on the Gulf exhibitions, including with attention-grabbing nude cut-outs and an elephant in 2010. The cheeky approach continues with the dog show – one is pictured mid-squat.

Losing the physical outlet of Sculpture on Shore this year was unfortunate, he said. "It's a major blow, financially it's harder to sell the work [online]." But he hoped for good sales nonetheless and was happy to contribute his cut to the big fundraiser for Women's Refuge.

The dog sculptures, suitable for the garden, cost between \$700 and \$2500, he said. To make them he worked from photographs he took or sourced, then he drew the dogs and painted them onto the timber.

The need to create a solid base for the works meant most were depicted in a sitting position, rather than, say, being shown on the run.

While he's happy to cock a leg to convention, there are after all artistic limits.

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