

The Rangitoto Observer

DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY

Issue 77 - March 18, 2022

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE

Sunnynook canvassed on blanket speed drop... p2

Panuku forced to scrap new crossing... p4

Novel brings famed actor to Takapuna... p14-15

Beach gripes expose council's complaint overload

Council inaction over illegal camping at North Shore beaches has been revealed to be part of a region-wide backlog of complaints to Auckland Council.

More than 1500 complaints about bylaw breaches are awaiting a response from the council as it struggles to cope with high staff

turnover, floods and protests.

Devonport-Takapuna Local Board chair Ruth Jackson detailed the backlog in making a presentation to the council's regulatory committee.

Along with the Kaipatiki and Hibiscus and Bays boards, Devonport-Takapuna wants

better enforcement of council bylaws covering matters such as illegal camping, noise and dog control, pollution run-off and rubbish dumping.

Illegal camping was an issue in the board area over summer, most noticeably at Castor Bay and around Devonport.

To page 2

Blokes on bikes go south for a good cause



Saddled up... Takapuna residents Paul Muir (left) and Bruce Cotterill are cycling 2600km from Cape Reinga to Bluff to raise money and awareness for men's health charities. Story, page 3.

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Suburb plays numbers game on speed limits

Sunnynook residents are being asked to have their say on turning the suburb into a 40km/h speed zone.

Separate from traffic-slowing plans being advanced by Auckland Transport (AT), the idea is being explored locally, with the Sunnynook Community Association surveying members and organising meetings to collect feedback.

Chair Melissa Powell says while views on the best speed limits vary, there is a groundswell to make safer the fast-intensifying suburb and parts of Forrest Hill, including opposite the Sunnynook Shopping Centre and by Wairau Intermediate on Becroft Dr.

“People are concerned around pedestrian crossings and safety for children,” she said.

Gift store owner Jimmy Fang agrees. Every day he sees people dash across Sycamore Dr by the Countdown supermarket. He worries about his own children who have to cross the feeder road to attend after-school language lessons in the community centre. “They easily go to 60km/h,” he says of drivers travelling downhill.

AT has already scoped out a 30km/h zone around Sunnynook Primary School to be introduced mid-year, but this does not extend down to the shopping area. While a small section of Sunnynook Rd carries a 40km/h sign, most of the suburb would remain at 50km/h.

Last year several locals concerned about speeding suggested a blanket 40km/h zone might be a better idea. The community association was keen, writing to Devonport-Takapuna Local Board member George Wood, who put the view to the board that 40km/h would be easier to win public support for than 30km/h.

Some board members picked up on the 40km/h idea and want it considered for other schools and town centres where AT is proposing 30km/h. But other members said AT had



Cross with care... Melissa Powell and Binna Jang, with her two-year-old son Wooju, agree this stretch of Sycamore Dr by the Sunnynook shopping centre and bus-stops is one of the suburb's safety issues

established the safety benefits of 30km/h zones and having varying zones would be confusing.

Powell said the association's online survey showed 42 per cent of people supported a suburb-wide 40km/h zone, though one person described it as being like using “a sledgehammer to crack a walnut”.

The association now wanted to hear from more residents to guide its advocacy to AT and the board. But it wasn't in doubt that residents wanted speed limits lowered around schools.

Locals have also asked for a zebra crossing

closer to the supermarket exit, and for the locations of two bus stops to be reviewed. An existing pedestrian refuge further down the road is not sited where most people heading to buses or the park go across.

“The kids run across,” says Powell.

Another suggestion is for more traffic-slowing speed bumps.

Binna Jang, a passerby with a pushchair, said she worried about safety, including on East Coast Rd near her home. “There's not many crossings,” she said.

From page 1

“A senior staff member told me there are 1600-1700 outstanding compliance issues,” Jackson told councillors. “And the reality is that most of those will never be attended to.”

Council regulatory director Craig Hobbs told the meeting “significant turnover” of staff had had an impact.

Complaints pile up at Auckland Council

He said complaints classed as ‘low harm’ to people or the environment were given a lower priority. This year's numbers had been a surprise, he admitted. Police had also been swamped due to more Aucklanders staying in the city than usual.

James Hassall, general manager of li-

censing and regulatory compliance, said the council took note of complaints even if there was not a quick response. Staff had been busy with floods and protests at Auckland Domain. A “huge increase in aggression” meant he was sending out animal control staff in pairs for safety.

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Quick-fingered teen snares Rubik's cube record

Angela Braganza started out trying to beat her dad at solving a Rubik's cube. Now she's a multiple record-holder.

The 14-year-old Carmel College student beat the New Zealand record for the fastest single solve of a 4x4x4 cube at an official World Cube Association (WCA) sanctioned speed-cubing competition event in Pukekohe in January, finishing the cube in 24.97 seconds on her fourth of five solves.

One solve later, she had a world record, for the female fastest average time – across multiple solves – of 27.84 seconds. This was also a national record for males or females. "I felt like I'd already got the national record so I could relax, which was good because it helped me get my best time," she says.

As a small child, Angela would watch dad Rohan try to solve the cube. "Once I learned, my next goal was to beat my dad," she says.

She went to her first competition at 8, and has since completed 1113 solves across 29 WCA events – including world championships in Paris and Melbourne.

"My goal was to get the national record, but now I think it would be to maybe get into the top 30 in the world," she says. She also wants to improve her times in the bigger 6x6x6 and 7x7x7 cubes.

Several hundred competitors take part in speed-cubing in New Zealand. Everyone at events is supportive and helpful, Angela says. Strict rules are observed, with contestants given the same 'scramble' for each cube.

Good memory, and muscle memory, helps. "You're not thinking about what your hands are doing – you're thinking about what's going to happen."

Along with cube-solving, Angela dances, plays piano, enters math competitions and is a debater.

Her plans for after high school? "I enjoy science a lot so probably a career to do with science, and also digital technology – maybe computers, engineering."



Twists and turns... Angela Braganza has been entering competitions since she was an eight-year-old

Fundraisers battle head winds on long journey to Bluff

Two Takapuna businessmen are approaching the end of a 26-day, 2600km bike trek from Cape Reinga to Bluff.

As the Observer went to print Bruce Cotterill and Paul Muir were approaching their destination at the bottom of the South Island.

Cotterill, a former executive turned business adviser, and Muir, who was the boss at RipCurl New Zealand for more than 30 years, started at Cape Reinga on 21 February.

They aimed to arrive in Bluff on 18 March, with just three rest days along the way. The pair hope to raise \$200,000 for men's health charities. By last Friday, they had \$130,000 of that in donations, Cotterill said.

Both of the men have family members and close mates who have been affected by mental health issues and prostate cancer.

And for the past couple of years they had

talked on and off about doing the ride – so decided to combine the two.

"For a couple of 60-year-old sets of legs we're ticking along pretty well," Cotterill told the Observer from Windwhistle, Mid-Canterbury, during their final rest day.

They were ahead of schedule, having tacked an extra 20km on the day before to get through the Rakaia Gorge, while the weather was good. "We've had one puncture between us which is an amazing run really."

But they had some tough days too, and a lot of headwinds – on 13 of their 16 days they'd been cycling into the wind. While they were coping well, it was hard going, Cotterill said.

They updated progress on their blog, noting 7 March out of Blenheim: "It only took an hour or so for the southerly to rise to a ridiculous state. Another five hours later saw us literally drag-

ging our butts into Kaikoura. Cold, tired and shattered, that was the toughest of days yet."

This was happily followed by "sunshine and a tailwind" for the 70 kilometres to Cheviot the next day.

As well as raising money – for Farmstrong and The Prostate Cancer Outcomes Registry – they want to get men talking more about their health, both physical and mental.

Supporters of their ride have shared their own health challenges.

"There are more men diagnosed with prostate cancer every year than there are women diagnosed with breast cancer," Cotterill said.

If more conversations about men's health were prompted by the ride "we feel like we've achieved something".

Donations can be made on the Bike for Blokes Givealittle page until the end of March.

Briefs

Local swims lake – twice

Endurance swimmer and former Carmel College student Caitlin O'Reilly, 17, has added being only the third person to make a double-crossing of Lake Taupo to her previous swimming milestones. These include swimming Cook Strait at age 12 and Foveaux Strait last year. O'Reilly, who is studying health science at AUT, completed the 80.4km Taupo swim this month in 28 hours, raising more than \$6500 for the Westpac rescue helicopter.

Local stalwart dies

Terry Dunleavy, until recently chair of the Takapuna Residents Association, died on Monday age 93. His funeral is at St Joseph's Church, Takapuna, 11am on March 18. The former wine industry leader and writer, was outspoken on local issues campaigning to save the campground and car park. Dunleavy was awarded an MBE in 1990.

Bright spot

Winter Lights is returning to Takapuna in late July, with plans for a bigger display than the drawcard first event held last year. Takapuna Beach Business Association chief executive Terence Harpur said its outdoor nature suited Covid times and would attract people to enjoy upgraded Hurstmere Rd and adjoining public spaces.

Bluebottle warnings

Beachgoers are warning of bluebottles washing up at Takapuna and Milford. The tentacles of a bluebottle can sting people and dogs. The Ministry of Health recommends flushing a stung area with water to remove tentacles then immersing it in heated tap water for 15 to 20 minutes. Repeat as directed in stages for up to two hours to allow the skin to cool.

Board member says told you so as Lake Rd crossing scrapped

A poorly sited Lake Rd pedestrian-island refuge that buses find hard to negotiate turning into Huron St is to be removed.

Before the island was installed in October last year, Devonport-Takapuna Local Board member Jan O'Connor spoke out at meetings to say it was being put in the wrong place.

Panuku has now acknowledged this, saying that although Auckland Transport (AT) had originally confirmed the turning curve would be workable, subsequent feedback from the bus operator was that "not all bus drivers are managing the manoeuvre." The refuge would be removed as soon as possible, once AT approved a traffic management plan for this to be done.

O'Connor said it was "absolutely crazy" that more money would be spent fixing a foreseeable error. The Observer asked Panuku what this would cost and was told installation and removal combined would be \$31,700, plus GST.

The refuge would have been better sited opposite Westpac Bank, just along Lake Rd south of Huron St, O'Connor said.

As it was placed, buses on the busy 82 route leaving Takapuna every 10 minutes had to turn right around the refuge to head into Huron St. Buses going the other direction had to make

a sharp left turn from Huron St into Lake Rd.

Panuku, the council's property arm, is involved in the transport matter because the refuge was installed as part of the Streets for People trial it implemented in Takapuna. Mostly funded by Waka Kotahi, this programme is a national initiative to make streets safer.

Locally, the trial saw traffic-slowing measures, including dotted paint jobs and giant pot plants, installed on both Huron and Northcroft St and some parking removed. Some of these measures have since been reversed.

The need for a crossing island had come from public feedback on what the trial should address, Panuku said. "Its purpose was to test safer crossing points for people at this intersection."

Panuku says it will update the board next month on its refined design for the streets. Possibly relocating the island not been decided.

Meanwhile, as part of its Takapuna town square development, a bus shelter and canopies diagonally opposite the Shore City mall entrance are being removed because they cover the entrance to Waiwharariki Anzac Square.

Seats from the shelter will be moved under other canopies, so seat numbers will not be reduced. Bus stops and routes remain the same.

Covid's sweep shows in stats and on shelves

Omicron's sweep through Auckland-schools and pressure on North Shore Hospital continues. Gaps on grocery shelves and reduced hours for businesses with staff off sick or isolating also remain commonplace.

In the 10 days to Monday, 86 per cent of Auckland's 567 schools and 44 per cent of its 1508 early childhood centres had reported a total of 19,401 learning-connected cases to the Ministry of Education.

The ministry's operations leader, Sean Teddy, said preventive measures were in place to make school/kura environments

lower risk for transmission, but "where we have cases in our community, we will also see cases in our schools/kura."

North Shore Hospital was caring for 185 Covid patients early this week. One death was reported the week before. The elective surgery centre closed for two days late last month, with 40 surgeries reallocated.

Waitemata District Health Board said people requiring hospital-level care care could be confident of getting it. It was working with the two other Auckland DHBs, including redeploying some staff.

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Ruling the greens... Takapuna Bowling Club members with their slew of Masters medals. From left: David Callaway, Garry Banks, Beryl Macdonald, Geraldine Wight, Adele Ineson and Connie Mathieson.

‘Club of the year’ enjoys successful national Masters

National Masters medals abounded for bowlers from Takapuna Bowling Club – including one who instigated the tournament.

Takapuna won six medals at the Bowls North Harbour NZ Masters held in Orewa last month.

Garry Banks, who lives in Birkenhead, was the individual success story, winning the age 75-plus pairs with David Callaway and the 75-plus mixed pairs with Beryl Macdonald. He also skipped the 75-plus men’s four to silver, playing with Callaway, Bryan Costello and Keith Stevens in a final they lost 12-11 to Mairangi Bay.

Adele Ineson and Connie Mathieson took silver in the women’s 60-74 pairs final, a feat matched by Geraldine Wight and Irene

Costello in the 75-plus pairs. Derek Brien was also a silver medallist partnering Bay of Plenty’s former international Mina Pau.

Banks introduced the masters format to North Harbour Bowls when he was on the organisation’s board.

“The sport has got a huge following with the older people and it gives us older people the chance to play among our peers,” he said.

With Bowls New Zealand’s sign-off, the masters ranks as a national title. North Harbour wants to keep hosting the tournament and make it its signature event.

“It’s just a shame we had the Covid. Otherwise a lot more people would have come,” Banks said.

Banks says bowls is a good team sport.

“It’s very good as people get older and their friends die and that sort of thing. They come here and it’s like a family.”

A number of people played in the tournament without belonging to a club, he said. “We find that very prevalent around the Shore.”

Meanwhile, Takapuna Bowling Club has been named North Harbour Sport’s Club of the Year, beating cricket, rowing, tennis, swimming and synchro clubs.

Board chairman Graham Dorreen said there were several contributing factors, including upgraded facilities attracting new members, new initiatives like shoot-out pairs and twilight events, and successes in national championships.

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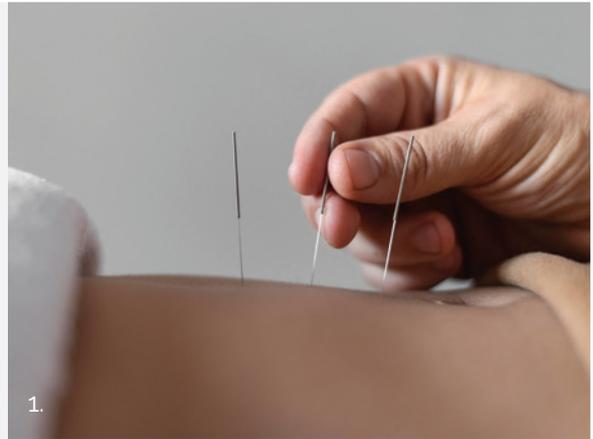
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Briefs

\$100k lakeside fix

A section of Lake Pupuke's public foreshore in Milford's Sylvan Park is closed for repairs. Auckland Council operations manager Sarah Jones said workers would install a silt fence, demolish the existing wall, stabilise the bank and concrete the base. Stone from the old wall will be reused for a new one, with steps. Topsoil will be spread ready for planting later in the year, along with matting to prevent erosion. The work should finish by the end of the month, weather permitting. It will likely cost \$100,000, but possibly less depending on how much stone can be reused.

In black and white

Property owners should expect to receive Auckland Council property valuations in the mail from next week. The valuations, up 34 per cent across the city, are already available online. Average rates in the Devonport-Takapuna area will rise to \$4268, up 4.6 per cent, whereas steeper rises apply in some less-affluent suburbs after steeper price surges. Takapuna is second to Remuera in Auckland in having the most properties valued at more than \$10 million, with 46 in this category. Herne Bay remains the suburb with the country's highest average property value.

'Have Your Say' a solo act

Just one person shared their views with the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board in a Have Your Say session, prompting board chair Ruth Jackson to say she had "had feedback that people have feedback fatigue".

Three hours were initially set aside last week for board members to hear views from the public and community organisations on Auckland Council's annual plan. But the evening session wrapped up early, after sole speaker Ruth Ell of Friends of Takapuna Library also noted: "I'm getting pretty jaded by consultation."

Long-time community advocate Ell said the council's Have Your Say information online did not detail priorities and her past experience with its property arm, Panuku, over consultations on Takapuna's town square showed little shift in position from its initial to final plans.

Tough financial decisions would need to be made to meet Covid impacts on council budgets, she acknowledged to board members, adding: "I do not envy you the flak you will take for the decisions council will make."

Ell urged board members to fight to ensure that Takapuna Library was guaranteed sufficient space under a range of indicative proposals Panuku has prepared for community assets. These will come back to the board for a recommended option this year.

They range from the status quo to selling off the library and other ageing assets, including the Mary Thomas Centre and Community Services Building, to be replaced with purpose-built levels in leased space within a commercial development in Waiwharariki Anzac Square.

Under this option, the library would have 40 per cent less space in a fast-growing and changing area, said Ell.

"We elect you to speak for us - make sure you are shouting," she said. "The library is a place everyone can come together."

Board member Aidan Bennett pointed to Te Manawa at Westgate as a great example of a combined council facility that delivered library and other services.

Jackson said she hoped more people would make their views known on the annual plan in other ways.

Public property disposal on agenda

The fate of the pocket park on Blomfeld Spa in Takapuna will be discussed by Auckland Council's Finance Committee this week. Staff have recommended its sale.

Steps to sell another small section of council land at 2 Forrest Hill Rd have ad-

vanced further. Intention to dispose of the 650msq residential site on the Wairau Rd corner, has been notified. Objections may be lodged until 22 April.

The land, bought in 2005 for now finished road works, is deemed surplus.

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PROTECTING THE WILLIAM SANDERS COMMUNITY

They may be staying apart in separate offices while Omicron cases continue to be reported in the community, but William Sanders Sales Advisors Dell Smythe and Scott Bremner are united in their efforts to welcome people in - while keeping COVID-19 out of the Ngataranga Road village!

"We just want to do our bit to keep our team, our residents and our visitors safe during this time," says Scott.

Along with the whole village team, Scott and Dell both complete a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) before work to make sure they are COVID-free and wear a face mask and face shield when moving around the village.

"It's made us even more aware of the benefits of being in a serviced apartment here in the village," says Dell.

"The residents don't have to worry about doing the grocery shopping because all their meals are provided."

Adds Scott: "It's definitely a place where our residents can feel they're being kept safe.



Online apartment tours prove a hit, say Dell and Scott

"The recent vaccination booster clinic we held in the village certainly added to that feeling."

Residents can still enjoy various activities being held in the village centre, such as the in-house Triple A exercise, movie sessions, card games, meeting in the café or booking a hair or beauty treatment.

There are plenty of online alternatives too.

"A recent online presentation was by Dr Tom Mulholland, called 'Building a Healthier Mind' which prompted a lot of positive feedback," says Scott

Due to COVID, there are now more online alternatives for a wide range of things, not just entertainment for residents.

Prospective residents who want to get a sense of life in the village or an idea of what the various apartments look like can now enjoy virtual walkthroughs and online information presentations.

For Scott and Dell, this exercise has prompted a quick but necessary lesson in presenting to camera!

Says Scott: "Dell is a natural and I'm like a wooden horse! But we have been sending the

links to all those that have enquired and I really think that's helped answer people's questions.

"It's amazing how many people in the community aren't aware of what we have got here.

"The perception of the 1970s resthome couldn't be further from the reality - this is a fabulous village, especially for our serviced apartment residents, it's like living in a hotel where you get your towels every day, your bed made, and your meals prepared like in a resort!"

Independent residents, some who moved into the village before the serviced apartments were completed, have also enjoyed a personalised tour to satisfy their curiosity of how they are laid out.

Says Dell: "Some of our residents might be thinking of their needs a few years down the track, and what life might look like if you're living in a serviced apartment, and the idea of no more cooking or vacuuming is very appealing!"

Meanwhile, the pair are taking plenty of enquiries for the new Stage 4 Patuone apartment block which is currently selling off the plans and is due for completion by the end of the year.

Says Scott: "It has fabulous views across the city so that's going really well. It's a great opportunity for people to secure an apartment while they still have a choice of aspect and a range of pricing."



OPEN BY APPOINTMENT

If you would like more information contact Scott and Dell who are available for appointments in the village or alternatively they can send information via email or discuss via a Zoom call.

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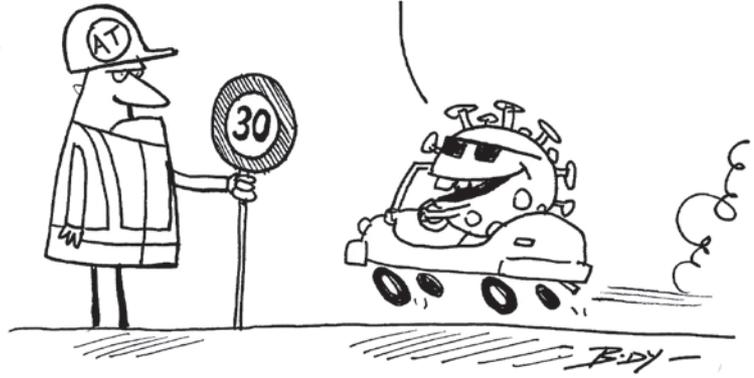
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Bodyline by Guy Body

BIT LATE ASKING
ME TO SLOW DOWN!



Letters

Good to know about great little local addition

The recent article on the old Rangitoto Superette [on Lake Rd] being reopened as Kinship was most appreciated and helpful.

My wife Barbara and I have just enjoyed excellent Ozone coffee and enormous delicious ice creams, in cone of course.

The dog, Barney, also loved his share of

the cone (with outside water bowl provided as well).

The young proprietress was most helpful and provided excellent service. Well done Rangitoto Observer team for bringing this great little local business to our attention.

Peter Burridge

Write to the Observer

We welcome letters. Please limit to 300 words on local topics. Noms de plume or unnamed letters will not be printed.

Email news@rangitoto-observer.co.nz or write to Letters, PO Box 32 275, Devonport.

Have your say



On proposed speed limit changes around the North Shore

Speed Limits Amendment Bylaw 2022 - Phase Three

Auckland Transport is proposing to set new permanent speed limits on approximately 1,646 roads around Auckland, including some roads in Belmont, Devonport Town Centre and Takapuna Town Centre.

Give your feedback by 3 April 2022

Hear from our project team at one of our online webinars.

Wednesday 9 March, 6.30pm - 7pm or Tuesday 15 March, 7.30pm - 8pm

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What goes around... Takapuna community librarian Anne Betts is given a book on 100 years of Rotary, from Takapuna Rotary members Geoff Pownall, Neil Murray and president Young-Shin Watkins

Local Rotary earns share of limelight

Takapuna Rotary stars in a new book celebrating 100 years of the volunteer group in New Zealand.

The first Rotary club in New Zealand was set up in Wellington in 1921, 16 years after the organisation was founded in the US, and a group established in Auckland soon after.

Its history here has been recorded in a book recently donated to Takapuna Library.

The Takapuna club, founded in 1953, merits being part of two stories in the book.

The first is about the Abilities Group, which it set up in 1959.

It provides employment for people with disabilities in sustainability and recycling, offering services like polystyrene recycling and certified destruction. The company employs 120 staff at a base in Glenfield, about half of whom have disabilities.

The second project the Takapuna club has been involved in is Romac (Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children). This brings kids into New Zealand or Australia

for medical surgeries they cannot get in their own countries.

“Even though we’re small, we’re an active club and we’re still involved at all levels of Rotary,” member Neil Murray said.

“We all made our living out of our local community so we give back to the community wherever we can because we believe in it.”

Murray will become district manager over multiple clubs between Takapuna and Kaitiaki, including Vanuatu and New Caledonia, in 2023.

Takapuna Rotary continues to help in many small ways around the community, painting facilities and helping at working bees. “It’s an outlet for those people who say ‘where can I serve my community?’” member Geoff Pownall said.

Those interested or needing help with a project can always contact the club, president Young-Shin Watkins said.

It has around 20 members and can be reached at takapunarotary@gmail.com.

Students farewell penguin killed on beach

A penguin which died after a dog attack on Takapuna Beach was buried and farewelled by a group of school students.

Students from the AGE School were learning at the beach last week when an assistant with them saw a dog go after the bird.

The school’s head of EQ and wellness, Bronwyn van der Geest, who was also there, heard the dog’s owner calling it and feared the dog was going after one of the kids.

“It was really scary,” she said. “I’m just grateful our kids didn’t see that.”

The assistant went to the aid of the penguin, but it died. He wrapped it in a towel and took it to the students, who decided they would like to hold a funeral for it. This included a karakia and a burial they got permission for.

The incident was one of several penguin

sightings at North Shore beaches recently. One was seen swimming at Takapuna the week before and another found dead at Castor Bay.

Van der Geest said death and acknowledging feelings around it was part of learning. She and a senior student called on dog owners to be vigilant around wildlife.

Department of Conservation biodiversity ranger Olivia Keane said penguin sightings were not unusual at this time of year, both dead and alive. People and animals should keep a safe distance from the protected species.

“If there are suspicious circumstances, such as bite marks, around the death it is investigated.” The Ministry for Primary Industries also gets involved for multiple deaths.

Sightings of injured birds can be made to 0800 DOC HOT (0800 362 468).





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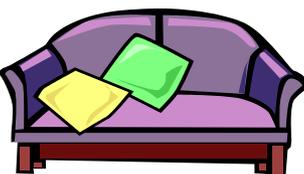
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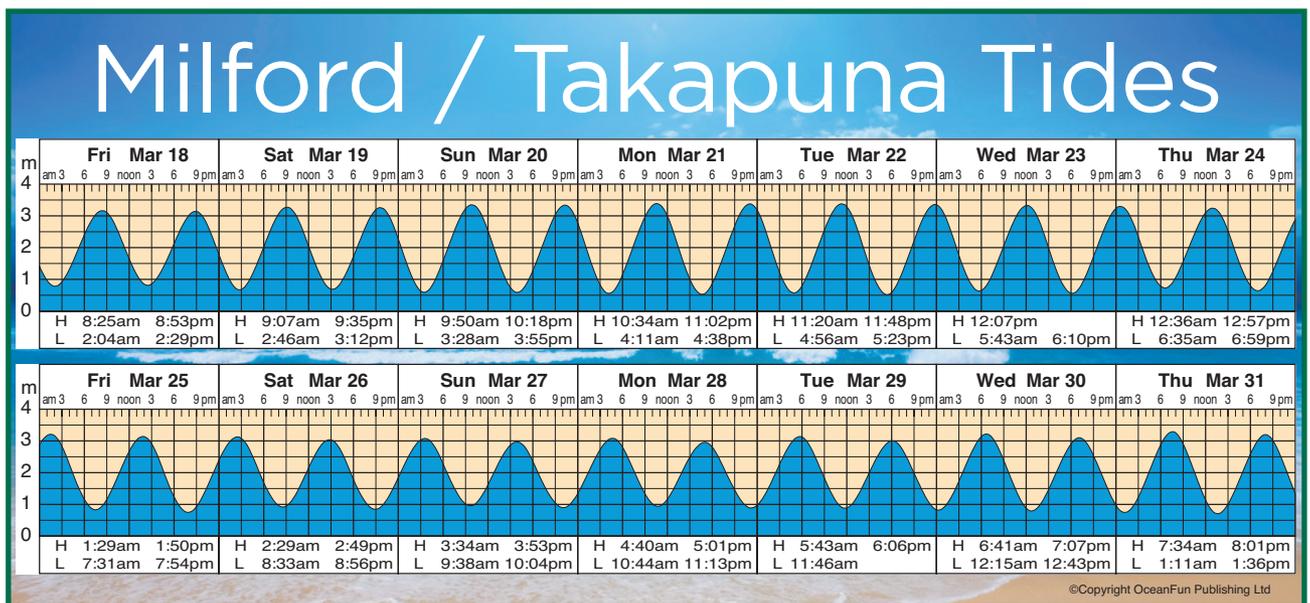
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Briefs

Marae build begins

The first sod has been turned in the construction of a new marae at North Shore Hospital. The whareniui (meeting house), set to open in June, will accommodate 100 people and 70 people sleeping. It will include store rooms and a 50-square metre deck. The second stage will be a kitchen, dining room and ablutions block, ready by year's end.

Camping correction

A story in the Observer issue of 4 March mistakenly reported that Devonport-Takapuna Local Board member Toni van Tonder had opposed asking Auckland Council to look at prosecuting freedom campers. The board request she opposed related to potentially charging campers a fee. The error, introduced in editing, is regretted.

Tenants major seekers of advice as CAB sees impact of Covid

Tenancy enquiries now make up more than double the number of cases of any other cause for concern brought to the Takapuna Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB).

The bureau, which helps people from Devonport to Sunnynook, dealt with 155 cases regarding residential tenancies in the last year, with employment contract matters next at 102 cases.

Covid-19 has had an impact for some tenants, as in other areas in which CAB can offer advice.

Takapuna manager Alison Munro told of a tenant who was having to work from home finding their landlord's renovation work interfering with Zoom meetings.

"We were able to advise that tenants are entitled to the quiet enjoyment of their home, and suggested a range of actions they could pursue."

Due to the high number of tenancy issues CAB deals with across the country, its national awareness week this week has focused on the subject. "This could not be more topical at our local branch in Takapuna," says Munro.

Changes to tenancy laws last year had improved renters' rights, but some tenants and landlords were not clear on these.

"Tenants are not expected to make good a property that has a certain amount of wear and tear or do a full commercial clean. This shouldn't be in a residential tenancy agreement."

Issues over bonds, inspections and damp accommodation also arose frequently.

Due to Covid's financial impact people had also been wanting advice on navigating the Covid-19 framework and how to access Work and Income support.

Other areas dealt with by CAB locally have been for budget and consumer advice,

Tenancy 101: Tips for renters

- Written tenancy agreements are legally required. These are a 'go-to' for any dispute and should set out agreed terms and comply with the law.
- In case of any problems, raise these first with the landlord. Doing so in writing provides a record of communication.
- Talking things over can help resolve issues. If these are not dealt with in a reasonable time, options include a polite follow-up discussion or email.
- Follow this with a 14-day notice to remedy the problem, or go to the Tenancy Tribunal to sort the matter out.
- If the landlord still doesn't act, the tenant can make an application to the tribunal. It costs around \$20 to apply to the tribunal, which you can do online or using a paper form.
- Learn more at www.cab.org.nz or visit Takapuna CAB (in the courtyard next to the library) at 7 The Strand, or ph 486-3139 for help on working out your options.

and people negotiating split relationships.

In some cases, CAB refers clients on to agencies offering specialised help.

The organisation relies heavily on volunteers and says there is always demand for more helpers across the North Shore. "Our volunteers find it a rewarding way to fill their time and use skills they've learned in their professional lives."

Munro said CAB was putting extra effort into keeping its own website and database up to date in changing circumstances.

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When Larry met Frank and other reinventions

Shore author Graeme Lay has woven local literary figures and cultural detail into a fictional love story centred on a real-life 1940s celebrity tour, finds Janetta Mackay

A story of burgeoning love paralleled by the complicated relationship of two of the most famous names of their time has kept Devonport author Graeme Lay busy for nearly two years.

His new book, *Larry & Viv*, centres on the 1948 tour to New Zealand of Sir Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. The stars of stage and screen led the Old Vic Theatre Company on a seven-month Australasian visit, as a British thank you for support during World War II.

"It's history now," says Lay. Few people remain who can remember the tour well. Travelling by boat, the company visited Australia first, before seasons in the four main centres in New Zealand.

"It took the country by storm," says Lay. "To have the two most famous people in the world here – as far as actors went – the public couldn't get enough of them." Crowds greeted their arrival in each city and shows sold out.

The tour transported international celebritydom, long before television arrived here. It transported Lay's imagination too, with his research helping create a number of "what if" scenarios, blending fact with fiction.

He has Olivier visiting leading New Zealand author Frank Sargeson, the incognito actor travelling by ferry to Devonport and on by bus to Takapuna. He walks the last block to Sargeson's still-standing home on the quiet cul de sac that Esmonde Rd once was.

"I thought it would be nice for Frank Sargeson to meet Laurence Olivier because he was a great admirer, so I contrived a meeting," explains Lay. Sargeson's letters told of him looking forward to seeing Oliver play Richard III.

Olivier and Leigh were then at the height of their fame. He was considered the greatest Shakespearean actor of his generation and she had won world renown as the captivating Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*, released nine years earlier.

Their attractiveness and continued top billing and awards in film and theatre made them mesmerising stars, including, in Lay's story, to young Jed, a conscientious objector turned stagehand and wannabe writer.

Lay uses Jed as a bridge to a host of other characters. Some, like Sargeson, are firmly



Lay lines... The author at home in Narrow Neck, where he has lived for four decades

"I thought it would be nice for Frank Sargeson to meet Laurence Olivier because he was a great admirer, so I contrived a meeting,"

based on fact, as are various of the diaspora of Jewish refugees who made their way here.

"There was a little group who lived on the North Shore. They formed a little enclave here," says Lay. They knew and socialised with Sargeson and poet A.R.D. Fairburn.

Hungarian refugee George Haydn was one of these. He built Sargeson's modest house in the year of the tour, and his name lives on in North Shore construction firm Haydn & Rollett. Another was poet Karl Wolfskehl who lived for a time in nearby Burns Ave, Takapuna.

Jed's path crosses with another refugee,

Natalia, with Takapuna Beach as a backdrop. Natalia's character is based on a pioneering woman architect, Renata Prince, who for a time took shelter in an old army hut at the back of Sargeson's property.

Jed and Natalia's story contrasts with the tumultuous relationship of Olivier and Leigh. "Everyone loves a good love story," says Lay. "I enjoyed tying them together. The counterpoint is the hate story, with Larry and Vivien getting further apart."

In writing fiction, Lay says research is vital for authenticity. "But you have to depend on characters you draw, not just events, in fiction."

Olivier was hampered with an injured knee that required surgery in Wellington before the journey home, and heavy smoker Leigh had a bad cough and a wandering eye. They finally divorced in 1960. "Laurence said later on he lost Vivien on that tour – they saw too much of each other," notes Lay.

The idea for *Larry & Viv* came after Lay was asked to review a biography of Olivier for a magazine. He had seen him in films and says: "He had a great stage presence and was an interesting man. Vivien was beautiful, a fabulous actress."

Other books he read about conscientious objectors – including by Ian Hamilton who lived in Ngataranga Rd and wrote *Till Human Voices Wake Us* – and the Jewish influence on cultural life here came into play. So too his archive dive and own observations that it was an unsophisticated time. "It was all very backward and provincial then; the great changes were yet to come in the 1960s, it was a quiet and insular society."

Local landscapes are lovingly described, with Rangitoto looming. Lay found some of his historical assumptions were challenged, including that

Takarunga had plenty of trees on it – "the ones there were planted later on" – and that the Takapuna beachfront was lined with old baches.

"But my friend Kevin Ireland who can remember – he was about 15 at the time of the tour – said it wasn't baches, it was very grand houses and the baches were further back."

Lay asked Ireland and fellow old mate and Takapuna playwright Sir Roger Hall to read his draft. He was happy to take their advice to focus more immediately on the tour. He reworked the book, so as not to "frontload" it with so much detail about Jed's wartime



incarceration. This made for a better, more personal story, he says. So too, did changing the title from *The Tour* to *Larry & Viv*.

But he concedes to artistic licence rather than accuracy there. "Nobody called them Larry and Viv, they were always Sir Laurence and Lady Olivier. It was only behind the scenes they dared called them that."

At age 78, Lay is happy to keep honing his craft, and says he – like Jed in *Larry & Viv* – owes Sargeson a debt of gratitude. He once sought out the master New Zealand writer for advice, after failing to attract interest in his first short stories.

"I wrote to Frank Sargeson about 1976-77. We were living nearby in Tennyson Ave. I saw him in Takapuna. He was a very distinctive figure – beret, a little goatee and pulling a little shopping cart because he didn't drive."

He received a letter of constructive criticism in reply. Soon after, *Thursday* magazine was the first to run one of Lay's stories, starting a prolific career that has produced internationally published books on Captain Cook and Captain Bligh of the Bounty, and a slew of travel titles.

He also got to meet and began visiting Sargeson, who died in 1982. "He always had a couple of old friends around," recalls Lay.

Later he was involved with the Sargeson Trust for more than 20 years, protecting Sargeson's house and promoting the Sargeson fellowship.

Lay will be back on the high seas with his



Perfectly Frank... Sargeson's home on Esmonde Rd, which Lay helped preserve through his time on the Sargeson Trust

next novel, *The Collector*, about botanist Joseph Banks. He hopes it will appeal to English publishers and that *Larry & Viv* might too. He finished *Larry & Viv* in August, but copies have been slow arriving.

Lay is not sure what comes next, but he likes to keep busy. In the meantime he is keeping up his swimming at Narrow Neck and enjoying the house and garden he shares with his green-fingered wife, Gillian. "We had our 40th anniversary in this house last year. I will stay as long as I'm able," he says.

Larry & Viv by Graeme Lay, Renaissance Publishing, \$35, at booksellers, including the Booklover in Milford.



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