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Thursday January 29, 2026



Today 14-20



Friday 14-20



Saturday 15-20



Sunday 15-20

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Standing on list

By Frank Neill

Long serving Ōhāriu MP Greg O'Connor has announced that he will seek to stand as a Labour list MP in the 7 November election.

This follows the disestablishment of the Ōhāriu electorate.

Continued on page 2.

Ōhāriu MP Greg O'Connor in the Speaker's chair. Photo: Frank Neill.



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How to reach us

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REPORTER
Frank Neill
herald@wsn.co.nz
027 490 3916



NATIONAL SALES
Les Whiteside
les@wsn.co.nz
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MP has plenty of political life left

Continued from page 1.

A Khandallah resident, he announced on 21 January that he will seek a spot on the party's list.

"I've still got plenty of political life left in me – plenty to offer, so I thought I'd put my name forward to be on the Labour list," he told the Independent Herald.

The Labour Party has yet to select its list MPs.

Mr O'Connor sought the nomination for the Wellington North electorate in December, but was unsuccessful.

Ayesha Verrall was selected as Labour's Wellington North candidate.

"I don't have many alternatives now as far as an electorate goes in the Wellington area," he says.

"I would like to stay and work as a list MP in the area which represents the old Ōhāriu, which is now part of Hutt South, part of Wellington North and part of Kenepuru, and assist the MPs in those areas to represent the people."

Mr O'Connor was elected to Parliament in 2017, so he will have served as an MP for nine years when the election comes around.

After being selected as Labour's Ōhāriu candidate, he aimed to challenge long serving MP Peter Dunne.

However Mr Dunne withdrew shortly before election, and Mr O'Connor won the seat ahead of

National list MP Brett Hudson with a margin of 1,051 votes.

He then retained the seat in the 2020 election with a big margin of 11,961 votes.

At the last election in 2023 he defeated National's Deputy Leader and Finance Minister Nicola Willis in winning Ōhāriu with a margin of 1,260 votes.

"I was in the Police for 41 years before [being elected to Parliament], including being elected by the Police officers to be the President of the Police Association."

He was the Police Association President, the union that represents Police officers and employees, for 20 years.

This saw him lead a 40 million dollar organisation, providing a wide range of services to both serving and retired Police officers and their families, while also serving as a Police officer.

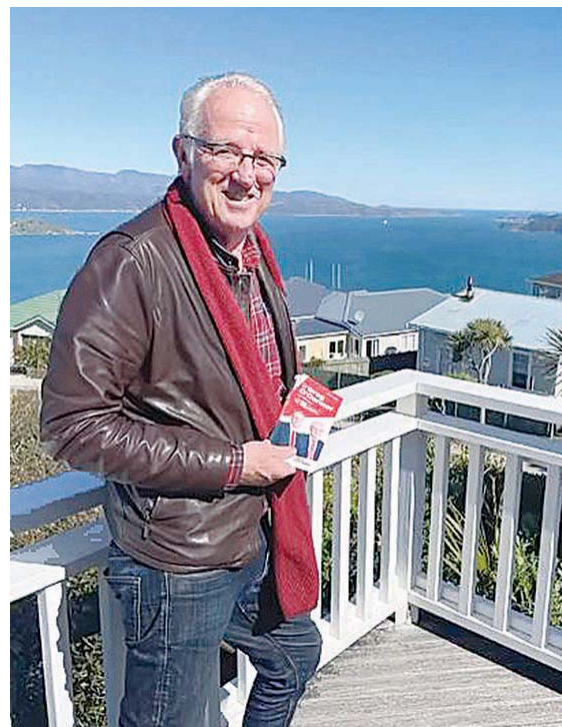
If Labour forms the next government "I would like to be considered for Speaker," Mr O'Connor says.

Labour's former Speaker Adrian Ruawhe announced his retirement on 20 January.

Mr O'Connor says he has been talking to Mr Ruawhe and he "recommends I would be a good speaker, that I could do the job well.

"I think I'm suited to it," particularly being older and having served as a Police officer.

Mr O'Connor is currently Parliament's Assistant Speaker and was



Ōhāriu MP Greg O'Connor. Photo: Supplied.

previously the Deputy Speaker.

"I would like to think that all the parties think that I'm pretty impartial when I'm in the chair and fair, which is important."

As well as being the Assistant Speaker, Mr O'Connor is currently Labour's spokesperson for Courts and Veterans.

Before his move to the Speaker's chair, Mr O'Connor was Chair of the Transport and Infrastructure Committee and Deputy Chair of the Finance and Expenditure Committee. He and Melissa Lee Co-Chair the New Zealand – South and South East Asia Parliamentary Friendship Group.



Greg O'Connor
MP for Ōhāriu

The political year began last week when politicians of all parties descended on Rātana. Like Waitangi, all parties get equal billing and there is always a bit of jostling for space. The leaders or spokespeople then get to outline their position on matters impacting Māori. Last year, the Treaty Settlements Bill was to the fore and topical to say the least. This year it was more about the economy, and just before we began, the inflation figures were released, which showed inflation is trending back up, measuring at 3.1%. Like the rest of us, high inflation and high unemployment impact Māori as much as anything, so naturally there was considerable disappointment that both are high and trending higher. We don't seem to have been able to recover from the COVID years as well as most other countries, especially Australia, where higher wages in particular continue to lure New Zealanders. There, unions are

strong enough to demand decent wages, something the New Zealand worker doesn't have. It is something we will need to address here to get New Zealanders to come back home. Also, at Rātana, the Rt Honourable Adrian Ruawhe, Parliament's previous Speaker, announced his retirement. I have indicated it's a position I would like to be considered for if the opportunity arises in the future, especially as the Ōhāriu electorate will disappear at the next election. Nothing ever remains the same and it is important to be able to adapt to changed circumstances. I'm still here and available for the people of Ōhāriu. Finally, our thoughts go out to the victims and families of the recent weather catastrophe in the Upper North Island, especially those buried under the landslide in Mt Maunganui. We are reminded every year, of the vulnerabilities of our environment, and as a result people, to extreme weather events.

You can contact my office on **04 478 3332** or email **Greg.OConnor@parliament.govt.nz**.



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Council should take back Karori Events Centre



The Karori Event Centre Trust is hopeful that the new Mayor and Council will reconsider their position in relation to the Karori Event Centre (KEC), especially in light of the work the Trust and their advisors have done in the last few months, the KEC's Chair Heather Baldwin says.

That work shows that the building can be completed and opened for less than \$1.9m – the amount that the council had previously committed when the building was gifted to them in 2022.

The Trust believes the KEC should be retained by the Council, finished and operated as a community facility.

That was always the intention, and what successive Councils had committed to, as far back as 2006.

Following decisions by the last Council in June 2025, the Trust has engaged a number of professional advisors to assess the scope of

work and costs to complete the KEC.

Last year the Council said it would cost \$3.3 million to finish and used this to justify cutting their funding.

They decided instead to offer the KEC back to the Trust, or to sell it. They also withdrew any future operational funding.

Heather says that several professional advisors contacted her following publicity in the middle of last year about the Council's decision.

Since then a team of project managers, specialist architects and a major national construction firm have worked with the Trust to review what is required to complete the KEC.

That professional and independent work has confirmed it can be finished for less than the \$1.9 million the Council had previously promised.

"It had always been our view that this was

possible," Heather says.

"It's great to have had this confirmed by experts.

"We presented this information to Council officers in early December, and they have accepted that the costings and work completed by the Trust's experts is robust.

"I have asked to meet with Mayor Andrew Little. I am hopeful he and the new Council will reinstate their original commitment to complete the building and operate it as a community facility.

"I know Andrew strongly supported this outcome during his election campaign.

"The advice the Trust has received is that there is less than six months of building work.

"In our view, with the right support and management there is no reason that the building cannot be completed by the end of this year," Heather says.

inbrief news

Book fair

The Onslow College Rowing Club is running a mini book fair on Saturday 21 February. The fair will take place between 8am and 5pm and will be held in classrooms 60 and 61 at Onslow College. As well as selling books, there will also be a barbecue at the fair. It is being held to raise money for Onslow College rowing.



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Greg O'Connor MP for Ōhāriu

Spokesperson for Courts and Veterans' Affairs
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Get in touch

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[f /GregOhariu](https://www.facebook.com/GregOhariu)



Authorised by Greg O'Connor MP,
Parliament Buildings Wellington.

Huge lineup at Fringe Festival

The New Zealand Fringe Festival returns to the capital next month.

The festival runs from 13 February to 7 March with a series of events taking place in the greater Wellington region.

Across the three-week season 178 events will be open to the public, ranging from whānau-friendly showcases, interactive outdoor spectacles, racy burlesque shows, moving theatre and dance pieces, hilarious comedy shows, and much more.

Some of the events are free.

"We're so excited to release our stellar 2026 NZ Fringe programme," the Director of the NZ Fringe Festival, Vanessa Stacey, says.

"Fringe shows will take place across the region in 30 plus venues including theatres, community halls, bars, parks and the Wellington waterfront – not to mention closing the festival out with one heck of a 70-piece choir singing 'Bangers and Mash!'"

"This mass karaoke phenomenon has sold out every show since its world premiere at Adelaide Fringe in 2024, from Brisbane to Cairns, Townsville to their UK tour in Brighton and Bath.

"Now they're bringing this interactive singalong sensation to Pōneke for the ultimate festival finale.

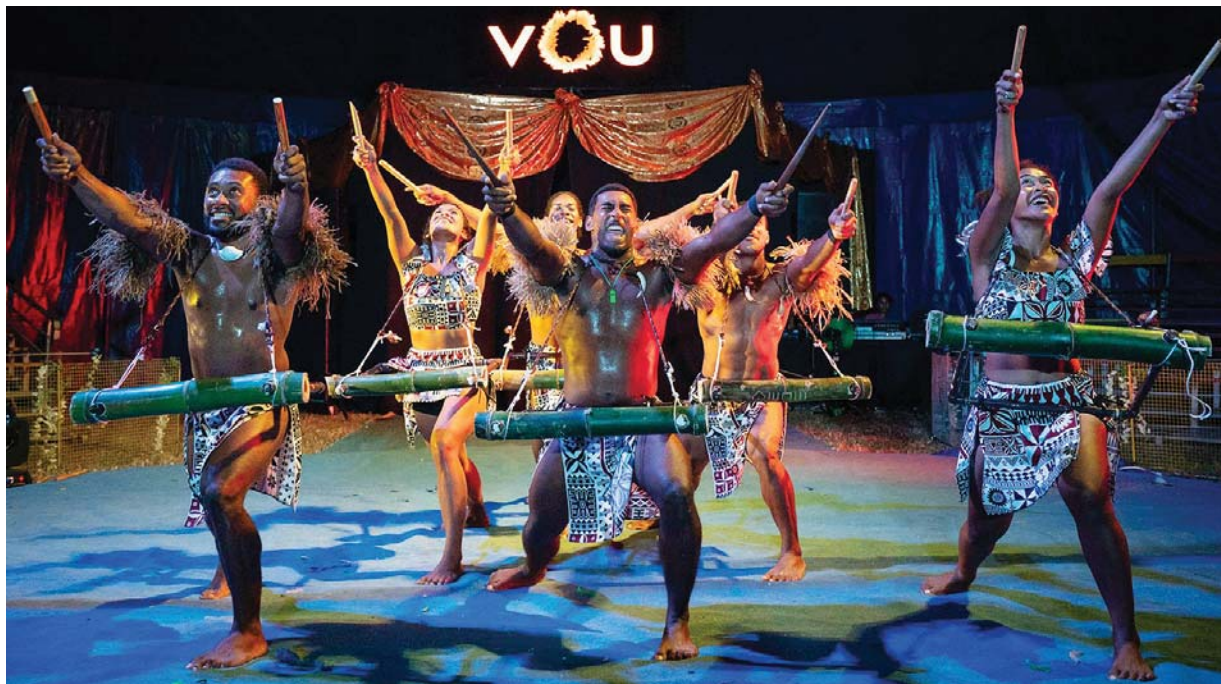
"NZ Fringe is bringing the HEAT to Pōneke for 23 days in summer 2026. Come, get amongst it," Vanessa says.

NZ Fringe 2026 is bringing some spectacular large-scale productions and exciting international collaborations to Pōneke for the festival.

Making their debut is The Fijian Flying Circus, bringing a colourful explosion of talent to Hannah Playhouse.

The 20-strong ensemble holds special significance for Vanessa, who grew up in Fiji where they host their own thriving Fringe festival each April.

The festival's opening weekend features The Beatles Dub Club



The Fijian Flying Circus performing. Photo: Supplied.

from the UK, fresh off their Glasstonbury festival performance.

They'll take the stage at the Gods Paramount on 13 February. Expect a special DJ set showcasing The Fab Four like you've never heard before in a rhythmic celebration.

Other festival highlights include The Eco Fashion Runway on 14 February, where the Sustainable Trust/Te Aro Zero Waste will transform their Forrester Lane space into a glamorous eco runway with four continuous runways spotlighting local eco designers.

The festival's grand finale sees eight of the most acclaimed emerging playwrights in Pōneke taking the BATS stage for Tolerance, pairing up to create four short plays exploring the theme 'in joyous creative harmony'. Tolerance runs from 4 to 7 March over the festival's closing nights.

The Gods Paramount will make

its highly anticipated debut at NZ Fringe, with two new venues.

Every Friday night, at The Paramount, The Fools presents Fringe tasters, offering audiences a chance to catch up on the festival's hottest shows all in one spot.

Homegrown talent will also shine with TNT! featuring the Capital City Big Band, which incorporates the explosive power of big band jazz with the mana and beautiful lyricism of Te Ao Māori, fronted by Lisa Tomlins, creating a uniquely Aotearoa sound.

Summer Shakespeare returns with As You Like It at the Innermost Gardens, while Crows Feet Dance Collective and Iranian Solidarity Group New Zealand present WOMAN, LIFE, FREEDOM. Experience a free outdoor dance and music event at Odllins Plaza on the waterfront, standing in solidarity with Iranians resist-



A big Fringe Festival performance. Photo: Supplied.

ing authoritarianism and raising awareness about women's and human rights violations in Iran.

The NZ Fringe Takeover also hits Cuba Street on Sunday 15

February with free activities from 10am to 5pm.

People can see the myriad of shows on offer and can book tickets at tickets.fringe.co.nz.

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New milestone for Wellington Libraries

Wellington City Libraries programme of regular events has resumed across its branches.

Readers can find out what's on by checking the events calendar at <https://www.wcl.govt.nz/>.

Te Awe Library and Service Desk will be permanently closing at 5pm, Sunday 1 March.

Te Matapihi ki te Ao Nui central library will reopen on Saturday 14 March.

To prepare for this milestone, Te Awe Library is closing so its collections and staff can be moved to the new space.

Library and Council services provided by Te Awe Library will continue as usual until February when there will be reduced opening hours and library services.

Key dates are:

- from 2 February weekday opening hours will be 9am to 7pm Monday to Friday, weekend hours remain the same, 9.30am to 5pm.

- 9 February: Te Awe will be closed for the day to facilitate movement of some library collections, equipment and furniture.

- from 10 February the mezzanine floor will be closed to the public.

- 27 February: Te Awe Service Desk closes at 5pm.

- 1 March: Te Awe closes permanently at 5pm.

- 14 March: Te Matapihi ki te Ao Nui Central Library reopens.

- 16 March: the Service Desk opens.

Library services continue to be available at other library locations.

For more information about the closure of Te Awe Library and Service Desk, visit <https://www.wcl.govt.nz/news/te-awe-closure/>.

If you use the Te Awe Service Desk, plan to pay rates or buy parking coupons and stock up on rubbish or recycling bags by 27 February.

Otherwise, Council services can be accessed in person at the service desk at the Johnsonville Library at Waitohi Hub.

Find a full list of Council services that are available online at <https://wellington.govt.nz/do-it-online>.

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Local history – Anti-Chinese League

By Felicity Wong

In August 1890 the “Anti-Chinese League” announced it would “watch people patronising Chinese shops” in Wellington.

The League complained that “Chinese were selling goods at prices which prevent white men competing”.

The local Chinese responded by offering to form “a combination and raise prices which they were very glad to do.”

The newspaper dryly reported the response “was hardly expected”.

In 1895 the Trades Council Labour movement organised a meeting “for the purposes of raising an agitation against the Chinese”.

The “agitation” was aimed at “strengthening the hands of government and opening the eyes of the public.”

Mr Mercier of the New Zealand Workers’ Union proposed that an Anti-Chinese League be formed in Wellington, like that already established in Christchurch.

A committee was set up to arrange public meetings, and ask for donations for the costs.

Several “rousing” meetings were held focusing on competing with Chinese vegetable growers.

Farmers in the Hutt formed an association of their own to compete with fruit and vegetable sales in Wellington.

The Anti-Chinese League approached the

City Council urging the establishment of a city market from which Chinese were to be excluded.

They also wanted the Council to crack down on unlicensed Chinese hawkers.

The next year the League met with the Minister of Lands and asked the Government to give them land so they could compete with Chinese market gardeners.

One member of the League’s “deputation” suggested the Government use the unemployed to manage the garden on a co-operative basis.

Another thought the League should pay nominal rent and operate the garden itself.

The Minister, John McKenzie, supported the proposal and promised to recommend it to his colleagues.

In November 1896 “The Evening Post” reported the election speech of candidate Charles Wilson, a teacher and journalist.

He was, he said, a [Liberal] “Party man” who enthusiastically supported John McKenzie.

He also “complimented the selection of the Labour candidate – Mr John Hutcheson – a white man”.

Wilson failed to gain electoral success, and came fifth in the Wellington by election.

A few years later, in 1904, the New Zealand Liberal Premier Richard Seddon sent a statement to the Anti-Asiatic League of



An early photograph of Joe Kwong Lee and Co's shop. Photo: Supplied.

Capetown, expressing his “earnest hope that the movement to introduce Asiatic labour will not succeed” in South Africa.

Referring to New Zealand, he reported that “no Asiatic could enter this country without payment of one hundred pounds”, adding that “they would be no use for underground work, and would prove undesirable colonists, in every sense of the word”.

The Anti-Chinese League continued agitating to “regain control of the fruit industries and the laundries of Wellington”.

The League rejected a private offer of land in Johnsonville for its proposed market garden, on the basis it was unsuitable for vegetable growing.

In 1907 a very different sort of organisation was set up.

The “Anti-Opium League of New Zealand” led by Justice Charles Button noted “with shame and humiliation the awful crime of which our nation is still guilty in forcing the Chinese to accept vast quantities of opium grown and manufactured in India”.

The next year, however, in 1908 a new “Anti-Asiatic League” moved to Wellington and its chairman travelled around the country hoping to set up “committees in every borough”.

Its object was to promote legislation for “the total exclusion of Asiatics”.

The organisation aimed to “educate the people” along the lines of a “White New

Zealand” and ask them to “remove their patronage from the Chinese merchants”.

Prime Minister Seddon promised to introduce legislation “in the direction sought by the League”.

In the meantime, Chinese were required to pass a reading test before landing in New Zealand.

In 1909 the Anti-Chinese League complained to the Minister of Immigration and Customs, the Hon George Fowlds, about chemists selling opium to Chinese as a “tincture”.

The tincture was apparently easy to sell and a “simple process converted it into smoking opium.”

The Minister sympathised but said it would be difficult to avoid “harassing chemists” who used the tincture in cough medicine and pills.

Further complaints were made in 1910 about Chinese trade practices.

They were described as being unfair to Europeans because they did not pay wages at the nationally agreed arbitration rates.

Although the organisations faded, views lingered.

In my time just one Chinese student attended Johnsonville Main School and Raroa Intermediate School.

He worked incredibly hard in the family’s “Hollywood Fruit Supply” on Johnsonville Main Road, delivering quality fruit and vegetables to grateful local customers.

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Newlands Resilience Group seeking people to assist

The Newlands Resilience Group (NRG) is seeking residents who can invest around three hours per week from April 2026 for an 18-month pilot.

People can be involved in the following ways:

- **Governance & Operations** –residents with a passion for leadership, strategy, administration, and community development.
- **Community Connectors** (200 volunteers) –residents who love gathering people, building relationships, and supporting the formation of Neighbourhood Groups to strengthen social and cultural cohesion across Newlands.
- **Mentors** (60 volunteers) –residents who enjoy supporting and guiding others, providing encouragement, wisdom, and practical advice to our Community

The NRG is asking people to visit the Register page (at <https://newlandrg.weebly.com/register.html?>) to let them know which of the one-hour public meetings they would like to attend on 17, 21 or 24 March.

For those who are keen to know more the draft Manual is on the register page.

It explains the Model, the roles, the support volunteers will receive and how the NRG plans to implement the Model.

Volunteers will receive training, quarterly meet ups, monthly mentoring, group professional supervision, guidance in facilitating groups and an APP with the knowledge they will need.

“By participating, residents can directly contribute to shaping the future of Newlands, for everyone,” says Rodney Barber, founder of NRG and long-time advocate for

community-led resilience.

“Together, we can prepare Newlands for whatever the future holds.”

Here is a summary of the results in the 2025 Annual Community Survey:

- **Community Resilience**
Economic: Residents have strong basic life skills, but face insecurity through declining work hours, low confidence in job prospects, and dissatisfaction with income, indicating economic vulnerability despite personal capability.

- **Environmental Access** to the natural environment is highly valued, with moderate confidence in recreational water safety. Concern remains about whether land is being used well, pointing to long-term stewardship and planning issues.

- **Social:** Social connection, independence, and personal wellbeing are strong, with moderate strengths in safety, work-life balance, and crisis support. Participation in helping others and community initiatives is low, suggesting weaker collective engagement.

- **Cultural:** Strong first-language use and sense of belonging exist, but participation in cultural activities and knowledge-sharing is limited, indicating untapped cultural potential.

- **Disaster resilience:** Preparedness is low, with only half of households ready for a disaster and just 10% involved in neighbourhood support, raising concerns about community readiness during the first 3–7 days of an emergency.

- **Speaking with our voices:** Voter turnout is high, but trust in Parliament and local



At the Newlands Community Gardens (from left) Rodney Barber (NRG Leader), Fionna Sheppard (Community Gardens), Hamuera Orupe McLeod (NRG Tikanga Maori lead), Tim Turnidge (Community Gardens) and Sanaa Rafique (NRG Catalyst Lead). Photo: Howie.

councils is low, signalling a disconnect between residents and decision-makers and reinforcing the need for community-led public-value engagement.

“It stands to reason that improved connectedness socially and culturally enables more robust disaster resilience, and it is also critical for empowering the community to be able to speak up to influence decision-making by providing local intelligence to Government and Council, which is the key to driving overall public value long term,” Mr Barber says.

The first stage of the pilot seeks to build community connections.

“We need residents in Newlands, Paparangi, Woodridge and Bellevue who want to

be part of building community and disaster resilience from April 2026 to late 2027.

“We anticipate success will be demonstrated by our annual community survey results in October 2027 and potentially studied by a Massey University Research paper to be published mid-2028.

“Our modelling indicates forecast savings from reduced demand on publicly funded services of up to \$4 million per year for Newlands alone.

“We’re also documenting refinements to our model to create a scalable model for other communities, requiring less upfront investment from them to take a similar approach and further magnifying the overall public benefit,” Mr Barber says.

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Global climate action leader

Wellington has been recognised as a global climate action leader, earning a place on an international 'A' list of cities in 2025.

Wellington is one of only 120 cities worldwide and just two in New Zealand (alongside Auckland) to receive an A score.

This marks the fifth consecutive year the capital has received a top score for bold climate action and transparency.

In 2025, only 16 per cent of cities that disclosed their climate actions through CDP (formerly the Carbon Disclosure Project) achieved this score.

CDP, who publishes the global cities list each year, is an international non-profit that runs the world's only independent environmental disclosure system for companies, cities, states and regions.

It celebrates cities demonstrating urgent, impactful and science-aligned climate action, including ambitious emissions reduction targets, climate risk assessments, and plans to build resilience to climate hazards.

To earn an A, cities must demonstrate strong performance across areas such as public climate disclosures, city-wide emissions inventory, published climate action plan and climate adaptation goal.

Alison Howard, Wellington City Council's Manager Climate Change Response, says the

capital's strong climate performance is the result of a wide range of integrated mitigation and adaptation initiatives.

"We're pulling every possible lever we can to reduce Wellington's emissions, including enabling housing development around key transport routes and urban centres, progressing the city-wide bike network, improving waste collection and management systems, building the Moa Point sludge minimisation facility to reduce landfill emissions, and providing funding to support community-led climate action.

"At the same time, we're also investing in projects to reduce our own emissions, such as the electrification of Council-owned swimming pools and buildings."

On the adaptation front, the Council has developed a climate adaptation digital city model to support data-driven, community-informed adaptation planning, and is piloting a local adaptation planning process with the Houghton Bay and Island Bay water catchment communities.

A new inner-city water reservoir nearing completion will significantly boost emergency water supply, while an Adaptation Options Catalogue is guiding citywide conversations about managing future risks such as flooding and coastal hazards.

At a local level, community groups and organisations are also taking climate action around the city, Alison adds.

"At Wellington City Council, we're supporting this mahi by funding bold ideas and practical projects that help reduce emissions and build a more connected, sustainable city."

Leading scientist coming to Thorndon

World leading scientist Professor Carl Bergstrom will be a keynote speaker at a symposium at Thorndon's Tiakiwai Conference Centre next month.

Professor Bergstrom is internationally recognised for his work on how information flows in biology, science and society, and well-known as a public science communicator.

His visit comes at a pivotal moment for Aotearoa New Zealand, as the country navigates major reforms to its science and innovation landscape, including an increased emphasis on advanced technologies such as AI, quantum computing, biotechnology and space research, alongside significant funding cuts to fundamental research.

He will be keynote speaker at the Capital City Complex Systems Symposium on Tuesday 24 February.

Te Pūnaha Matatini is bringing the acclaimed evolutionary biologist and science system researcher to New Zealand for a series of public engagements, including a keynote address at the Capital City Complex Systems Symposium.

Professor Bergstrom will present new mathematical modelling on the impediments to high-risk, high-return science, and how this is relevant to the future of Aotearoa at the symposium.

Professor Markus Luczak-Roesch, co-director of Te Pūnaha Matatini, says Bergstrom's visit comes at an important national crossroads.

"Carl's work asks critical questions about how science functions, from peer review to incentives to the long-term sustainability of discovery research," Professor Luczak-Roesch says.

"With Aotearoa's science system undergoing profound change, there is no better moment to be having this conversation.

"What kind of science nation do we want to be?"

The Capital City Complex Systems Symposium, hosted by Te Pūnaha Matatini, will bring together researchers, policymakers and industry leaders to explore cutting-edge knowledge of complex systems, and how this knowledge is being used to better understand systems and drive system change.



Professor Carl Bergstrom. Photo: Kris Tsujikawa.

It features international and local experts in complex systems, alongside practitioners and policymakers, including Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment Simon Upton and former Prime Minister Sir Bill English.

Professor Bergstrom is Professor of Biology at the University of Washington.

His research spans biology, economics, epidemiology, the philosophy and sociology of science, network science, and the spread of misinformation.

He is co-author (with Jevin West) of the bestselling book "Calling Bullshit: The Art of Skepticism in a Data-Driven World" and co-author (with Lee Dugatkin) of the leading college text "Evolution".

For more information and to register visit www.tepunahamatatini.ac.nz/conferences/symposium-2026.

Te Pūnaha Matatini is the Aotearoa New Zealand Centre of Research Excellence (CoRE) for complex systems, hosted by the University of Auckland.

It is a nationwide network of researchers from universities, government institutes, private sector organisations and communities who use complex systems approaches to understand and drive change in the world.



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Join us for our OPEN DAY on Saturday 31st January from 10.00am-11am at Centennial Hall in Newlands.

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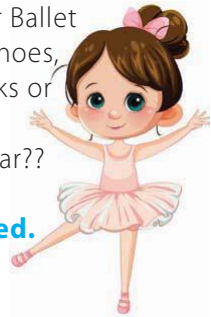
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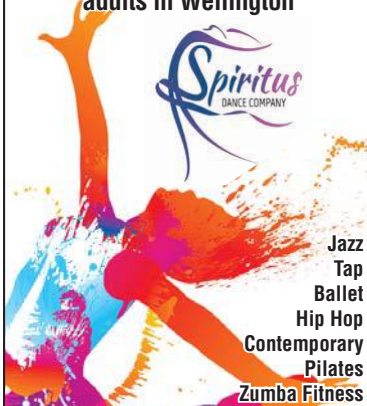
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Pay rises for Councillors

By Frank Neill

Wellington City Council increased the salaries it pays its councillors by less than the New Zealand average but higher than inflation between 2025 and 2026, figures released by the Taxpayers' Union show.

The Council increased Councillor remuneration by 4.38% from \$113,353 to \$118,323.

It increased the remuneration for the Mayor by 6.40% from \$189,799 to \$201,947.

Throughout New Zealand Councillors had their pay packets increased on average by 9.81% between 2025 and 2026, while Mayors saw an 8.53% boost to their pay, the Taxpayers' Union says.

That compared with inflation of 2.7% during the period.

Two councils – Thames-Coromandel District Council and Ōpōtiki District Council – decreased their Councillor remuneration.

At the other end of the scale, Queenstown-Lakes District Council saw a 33.13% rise in Councillor pay.

The figures listed, the Taxpayers' Union says, do not include the extra allowances Mayors and Councillors get as top-ups: phones, laptops, printers, mileage (literally they get reimbursed for driving to work), and even childcare allowances – which allows councillors and local board members to claim up to \$6,000 per year from

ratepayers for childcare.

“While local council decision makers sit pretty, local ratepayers are still being hammered,” the Taxpayers' Union says.

“Remember the average rates bill is up 34% over the last three years

“The real issue here isn't actually the councils, it's the fault of the Government for screwing the scum against ratepayers.

“Successive Governments have appointed professional bureaucrats and career politicians onto the ‘independent’ Remuneration Authority.

“The system is broken.

“The whole regime is designed to prevent pay being tied to performance or outcomes.

“Ratepayers (and taxpayers) aren't just denied representation, the Remuneration Authority is one of the few public agencies that is not even subject to freedom of information law – so they never have to show their working.”

The Taxpayers' Union is making two suggestions.

“First, councillor and mayoral remuneration should be set once a three year term, not hiked every year.

“Second, councils should be given the option to turn down these annual pay increases.

“That way ratepayers would know whether councils are serious about easing the pressure on households.”

Terrace tunnel needs a WoF



Terrace Tunnel maintenance work taking place. The tunnel will be closed at night from 8 to 12 February for its annual warrant of fitness check. Photo: Supplied.

Wellington's SH1 Terrace Tunnel is due for its annual warrant of fitness and will be closed for five nights early next month.

In the same way a car needs to pass regular inspection to ensure it is safe, the same applies to the State Highway 1 Tunnels in Wellington.

“They both must have annual Building Warrant of Fitness checks,” says Roxanne Hilliard, Wellington Alliance Manager.

“Because they are critical infrastructure on heavily used traffic routes, they must be inspected, assessed, and maintained regularly.”

Wellingtonians can expect to see a week of night closures of the Terrace Tunnel next month while the inspection takes place.

“This will take five nights to complete. The tunnel will have to be closed while this work is under way, so drivers will need to use alternative local road routes through the city.

“We appreciate this will affect traffic and cause some delays, but these inspections are essential and must be done to ensure the tunnel remains in good repair.

“We will make the most of the closure by carrying out resurfacing work on the approaches to the tunnel at the same time. In effect, we will be getting two jobs done

at once,” Ms Hilliard says.

The Terrace Tunnel will be closed Sunday to Thursday nights, 8 to 12 February, between 9pm and 5am.

Contractors will also use this closure for essential resurfacing work on SH1 on Vivian Street, between Willis Street and Cuba Street.

The resurfacing work will require lane closures on Willis Street and Victoria Street. On one night there will be a full closure of Victoria Street, between Abel Smith Street and Ghuznee Street.

There will also be a Stop/Hold in place one night at the Vivian Street and Cuba Street intersection. Drivers can expect delays travelling in this part of the city.

To get this essential work done quickly, contractors will be working at night and, though roadworks can be noisy, they will aim to keep noise to a minimum.

Southbound traffic will be directed off SH1 via The Terrace, Ghuznee Street, Taranaki Street and back onto SH1. Northbound traffic will be directed off SH1 via Willis Street, Ghuznee Street, The Terrace, and back onto SH1. Follow the sign posted detours when travelling.



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Karori Karnival

There was an error in the article about the Karori Karnival in last week's issue of the “Independent Herald”.

The carnival will take place on Sunday 22 February from 10am to 3pm, and will not finish at 2pm as incorrectly stated in the article.

The “Independent Herald” apologises

for this error. The Karori Karnival, which is run by the Karori Lions Club, will take place at Ben Burn Park.

An important fixture on the Karori calendar, the karnival raises funds that all go back into the community. Last year it raised more than \$10,000.

Gardening & HOME LIVING



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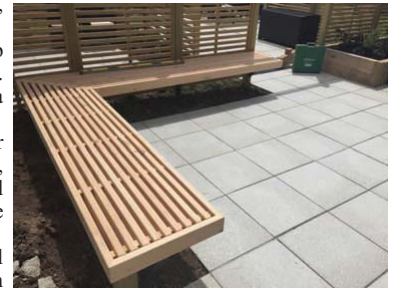
While the intense summer heat and lack of rain this time of year are ideal for BBQs and entertaining, our gardens suffer. Maintaining a daily check on your plants to ensure they have adequate water may be critical to their survival, especially those in pots.

A good compost and mulch will help keep the soil cool, moist and weed-free. And a well set up irrigation system is a good investment worth considering.

Midsummer is a good time of year for building structural features – courtyards, paving, decks, pergolas, retaining wall etc. Leave planting till there's more regular rainfall.

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Rainwater harvesting reduces demand on local water supplies, crucial in drought-prone regions. It also lessens the energy needed to treat and pump mains water to your property. Plants also prefer rainwater.

Cost Saving:

Using rainwater for tasks like garden watering, car washing, or toilet flushing can lower your water bills, particularly during drought periods when mains water costs may rise.

Emergency Water Supply:

With natural disasters, burst pipes, droughts, and other water outages having access to rainwater stored in a tank enables

you to keep flushing the toilet, washing and when installed with a First Flush unit you can even drink it if needed.

They also have an easy to set tank for bulk storage of drinking water – that is it's not connected to your downpipe.

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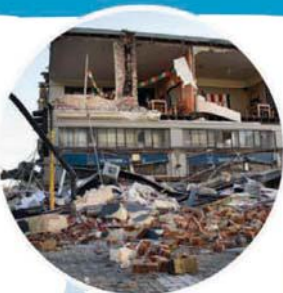


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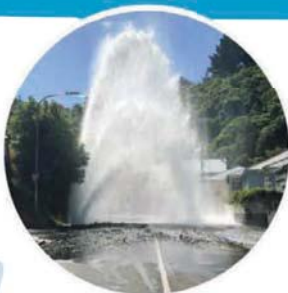
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Thorndon's Waitangi Day event

An interactive exhibition named "He Tohu", featuring Te Tiriti o Waitangi, comes to Thorndon's National Library on Waitangi Day, 6 February.

"He Tohu" will run from 9am to 4pm and will include nine original sheets of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, singing, bilingual tours, a quiz and a Waitangi Day film compilation from Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision.

There will be activities for tamariki (children), rangatahi (youth), and pākeke (adults) throughout the day.

There will be free tours every half hour in te reo Pākehā (English), reorua and/or reo rumaki (depending on the rōpū) suitable for all. On the tours people will hear stories about the rangatira who signed and see their tohu on the documents.

From 9am to 3pm "He Tohu" will have taonga relating to the history and life of Te Tiriti o Waitangi from the

collections of the Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library and Archives New Zealand on display in Te Kupenga on Level One.

The National Library's experienced research kaimahi will be on hand to discuss the significance of these unique documents.

There will also be a reading corner with books – in many languages and for people of all ages – a quiet space to relax in and enjoy reading or some quiet time throughout the day.

HOME Café will be open until 2pm, and City Gallery Wellington's new Cora-Allan exhibition and the National Library's shop Te Āmiki will be open until 4pm. Te Āmiki has Te Tiriti themed books for all ages.

The exhibition "Future Proof: Paintings in Perpetuity" features painted portraits of the renowned Māori leaders and travellers Tuai and Hoani Taipua Te Puna-i-rangiriri, and four banners of important



Te Tiriti o Waitangi – The Treaty of Waitangi in the "He Tohu" exhibition at the National Library. Photo: Supplied.

rangatira who signed Te Tiriti will also be on display in the foyer.

People will also be able to view a film compilation from Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision.

This year's Waitangi film compilation, "He Tiroiro Whakamuri, A Look

Back", has been curated to share the history of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, using audiovisual footage at the Waitangi Treaty Grounds from 1934 and 1990 – a compilation of taonga that features viewpoints and voices of Tāngata Whenua and T ngata Tiriti captured at

the Waitangi Treaty Grounds over the decades.

The full schedule of workshops and tours is on the National Library's website, <https://natlib.govt.nz/events/te-ra-o-waitangi-waitangi-day-february-06-2026>.

WORLD CANCER DAY
FEBRUARY 4

World Cancer Day coming up

World Cancer Day will take place on 4 February and the theme for this year is "United by Unique".

The theme aims to emphasise a people-centred approach to cancer care.

This acknowledges that every cancer journey is personal with unique medical, social and emotional needs.

The campaign encourages individuals and communities to come together to support those affected by cancer and to advocate for better care and resources.

World Cancer Day is observed on 4 February every year.

It is held to raise awareness about cancer and encourage its prevention, detection and treatment.

World Cancer Day is a global initiative led by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC).

The day aims to unite people worldwide in raising awareness about cancer's impact and the urgent need for prevention, early detection, and equitable access to life-saving treatments.

It serves as a platform to educate the public about cancer, reduce stigma, and promote collective action towards improving cancer care and outcomes for all.

World Cancer Day was established in 2000 during the first World Summit Against Cancer in Paris.

Individuals at the heart

People-centred cancer care is an opportunity to rethink how we approach cancer by delivering services at the right time, in the right place, and in the right way for each individual.

It recognises that every person is unique, values their autonomy, listens with compassion, and empowers them to take an active role in decisions about their health.

This approach embraces people's differences and ensures everyone is seen for who they are and has access to the care they need. It also acknowledges the importance of social

ties, involving families and communities to create more humane, holistic care that supports physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing.

People are more than patients. Long before they enter a clinic, they benefit from being informed and engaged.

A community-centred approach strengthens health literacy, supports self-care, and ensures health systems respond to the real needs of the people they serve.

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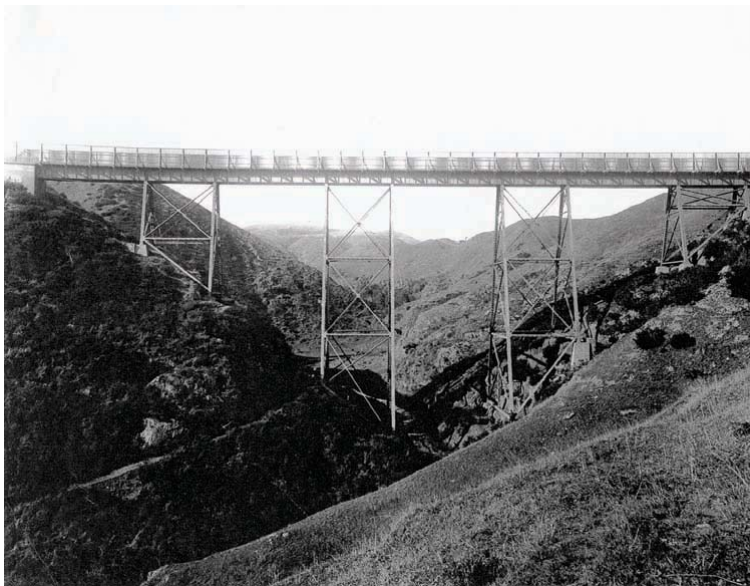
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The old Belmont railway viaduct. Photo: Supplied.

Climbing the railway viaduct

The latest issue of the "Glenside News" contains a fascinating glimpse into an early happening in the area.

It is the story of the day a 10-year-old climbed the Belmont railway viaduct.

David van Weede, born in 1929, a former resident in Glenside village, is now living in Flat Bush, Ormiston.

He contacted the Glenside Progressive Association to say how much he enjoyed reading his copy of the Glenside Reserve book and said it brought back great memories of his youth.

He recalled the day he climbed the old Belmont railway viaduct.

The original railway line, constructed in 1885, closed in 1937 when replaced by the tunnel.

The route of the old line has since been largely replaced by the motorway, however the viaduct remained in place until it was blown up, for safety reasons, in a controlled blast in 1951.

"At the age of 10 or 11, in about 1940, I climbed the railway viaduct," David says.

"I wish I hadn't but there you go.

"I had heard all the talk about climbing up the viaduct from the youngsters jumping

into the stream at Moxies pond up Stebbings Road.

"I thought I was missing out. I thought if they can do it then so can I.

"I don't know if I owned up to it.

"I took Donald Hughes with me; he would have been around seven years old.

"It was a fine afternoon.

"To get to the viaduct, you walked up the creek and climbed it from the creek bottom.

"It was quite easy to start with initially, but as you got higher up, sheets of rusted steel flaked off and I wondered what I was doing.

"There were girders that crossed and these made it easy to climb, but the steel flaking off as I climbed wasn't good.

"Well, I got to the top and then I walked to the north end of the viaduct and scaled down the hill to the track which took you to the bottom, and I met up with Donald and we walked home.

"Did I tell any of those youngsters at Moxies pond? Well I don't really know. There was a war on."

David says that when the rails had been removed, he and his friends would ride their bicycles along the route of the old railway line between Johnsonville and Takapu.

Counterfeit banknotes circulating

The Police are warning people that they have received reports that counterfeit \$50 and \$100 banknotes are circulating.

As a result, they are urging the public to be vigilant when handling cash.

Members of the public, especially those working in retail or hospitality, should increase their knowledge of how to spot a fake banknote to avoid getting duped at the till, Sergeant Nigel Hurley says.

The Reserve Bank of New Zealand recommends the look-feel-tilt test to distinguish the official security features of a legitimate banknote.

The test is as follows:

- When looking through the holographic window, the edges of the window should look smooth, and you should see the bird's silhouette, a map of New Zealand and a 3-D feature showing the value of the banknote.
- When you run a finger across the words

"Reserve Bank of New Zealand Te Pūtea Matua", you should be able to feel raised ink on the denomination and the letters at the top.

• When tilting the note, a bright shining bar should roll across the bird's silhouette on the front and the holographic window's colours should shift and change revealing fine details.

Anyone who finds a counterfeit note should report it to Police as soon as possible, Sergeant Hurley says.

Manufacturing counterfeit notes or knowingly passing them on is a serious offence. Possession of forged bank notes can be punishable by up to seven years in prison, or up to 10 for using one.

The Reserve Bank of New Zealand has information, including video, on its website at www.rbnz.govt.nz/money-and-cash/banknotes-and-coins/how-to-spot-a-fake-banknote-or-coin.

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Independent Herald

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Greater Wellington's strong credit rating

S&P Global Ratings has affirmed Greater Wellington Regional Council's AA long-term and A-1+ short-term credit ratings, noting the region's strong economic fundamentals and robust financial management.

The international credit rating agency has maintained a negative outlook, reflecting uncertainty around upcoming central government policy changes and their potential impact on local government finances.

Greater Wellington Chair Daran Ponter says that the strong rating during a time of major government reforms and uncertainty is a valuable indicator of Greater Wellington's fiscal responsibility.

"This rating makes it clear that while Greater Wellington is doing everything it can to deliver value for money services to our ratepayers, the proposed rate caps and other pressures from central government are putting a huge strain on our ability to do so," Cr Ponter says.

Chair of the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee, Yadana Saw, says reforms are likely to erode existing core services while also threatening the viability of longer-term strategic projects.

"Changes to the Resource Management Act, rate capping and a review of the role of regional councils could negatively affect our future financial landscape, which makes



it harder for us deliver on a cleaner environment, a more flood resilient region and critical public transport improvements."

Greater Wellington's Finance and Risk group manager Alison Trustrum-Rainey says that the report's acknowledgement of the Council's financial management track record is encouraging.

"Our previous performance and ratings have stood us in good stead and the report's prediction that Greater Wellington is positioned for a return to operating surpluses from 2027 takes into account a number of contributing factors," she says.

"These include the transfer of water services management to the new multi-council-controlled water organization, Tiaki Wai in July this year which is expected to reduce pressure on our infrastructure programme, contribute to a decline in debt, and allow us to focus more closely on our core activities."

People can read the full report summary at www.spglobal.com/ratings/en/regulatory/article/-/view/type/HTML/id/3503994.

No Cricket played on Saturday

By Frank Neill

The Onslow and Karori men's Cricket teams were due to meet in the first of the season's two-day matches on Saturday 24 January.

The two teams did not take to Karori Park, however, as the day's play was cancelled due to the rain and the conditions of the grounds.

The second day's play in this division one fixture is scheduled for next Saturday, 31 January.

The Johnsonville premier men's match against Wainuiomata, due to be played at Bryan Health Park in Wainuiomata was abandoned on

Saturday.

The final match of the division two round robin series is scheduled for next Saturday, 31 January.

Johnsonville are due to play Naenae Old Boys in a home game at Alex Moore Park, with the match starting at 10:30am.

The Johnsonville premier women's match was also abandoned on 24 January.

They were scheduled to play Collegians at Alex Moore Park in the women's division one match.

Their next match is against City Suburbs at Kilbirnie Park on 31 January, starting at 11am.



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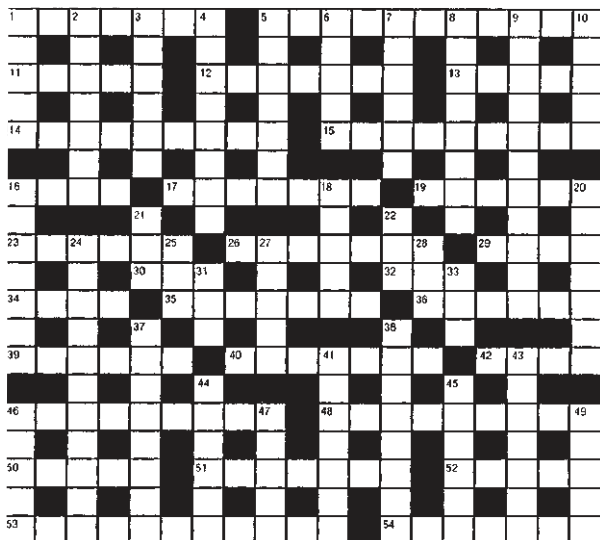
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THURSDAY FACT

What a turtle eats depends on the environment it lives in. Land-dwelling turtles will munch on beetles, fruit and grass, whereas sea dwellers will gobble everything from algae to squid and jellyfish.

CROSSWORD Puzzle



ACROSS

- Contract (7)
- Harsh questioning (5,6)
- Large Eskimo boat (5)
- Scrap (7)
- Drive (5)
- Of plants (9)
- High-spirited (9)
- Pointed remark (4)
- Flightless bird (7)
- Upper-arm muscles (6)
- Recieve (6)
- Month (7)
- Boundary (4)
- Spread hay(to air) (3)
- Pallid (3)
- Wrong (4)
- Sea god (7)
- Inprovoked (6)
- Fruit (6)
- Real name Frederick Austerlitz dancer; Fred ... (7)
- Fraud (4)
- Small portrait (9)
- Apathetic (9)
- Sandal (5)
- Bounty (7)
- NZ novelist, Janet ... (5)

- Insight (11)
- Svelte (7)

DOWN

- Nestling pigeon (5)
- Brag (7)
- Ancient Scandinavian raider (6)
- Song writer(words) (8)
- Acrobat (7)
- Silly (5)
- Bypass (6)
- Outbreak(disease) (8)
- Substitute (11)
- Splendour (5)
- Obvious (7)
- Shy (5)
- Breastbone (7)
- Suitable (3)
- Not many (3)
- Formal (11)
- ... gallon hat (3)
- Quotes (5)
- Uncooked (3)
- Moisture (3)
- Short sleep (3)
- Choke (8)
- Complaints (8)

- Illness (7)
- Gaunt (7)
- Fine cotton fabric (6)
- Bewilder (6)
- Muffled (5)
- Uncanny (5)
- Comfort (5)

Solution

Last Week: 22 January 2026

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Begonia House refurbishment has begun

The refurbishment of Wellington's much-loved Begonia House reached a major milestone on Monday, with the temporary closure of the facility so construction work can start next month.

The project, led by Wellington City Council in partnership with the Friends of Wellington Botanic Garden, is designed to complete important safety upgrades so the Begonia House can remain a treasured space for plants, people and events.

The closure allows for final preparations ahead of construction in February.

Staff will complete the task of relocating the remaining plant collections to the Botanic Garden nursery network, including the Berhampore nursery and areas near the Treehouse Visitor Centre.

The Picnic Café will remain open for business until having a temporary closure in May this year.

The Begonia House has been a major feature of the Wellington Botanic Garden ki Paekākā for more than 60 years, showcasing unique plant collections from warmer climates and providing a vibrant community space for events and activities.

"Wellingtonians have told us loud and clear about how loved the Begonia House is," Wellington's Mayor Andrew Little says.

"It houses some of the most stunning flora in the Capital and gives delight to so many locals and visitors.

"Council's facilities like the Begonia House are a big part of what makes Wellington a great place to live and visit."

Now many elements of the building require maintenance, and Team Manager Visitor Experience at Wellington Gardens, Raydeen Cuffe says this project will help restore the building back to good working order again.

"The Council has committed significant investment into the Begonia House to ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy it as much as others have in the past.

"Works include replacing glass panes, repairing parts of the structure, and refurbishing public amenities like the toilets, café, kitchen and function spaces.

"These improvements will allow the building to operate effectively all year-round, and both preserve its heritage character while enhancing future visitor experiences."

The aim is to ensure that the majority of the plant collections can be maintained and eventually reintroduced into the refurbished conservatory once work is complete in 2027.

The project is being delivered in partnership with the Friends of Wellington Botanic Garden, whose advocacy and fundraising efforts are helping the Council enhance the refurbishment beyond the essential works.

A community group, the Friends aim to raise more than \$1 million to support improvements, with donor recognition



Wellington's iconic begonia house. Photo: Mazz Scannell.

planned within the restored building.

There is also a plant sale on Tuesday 3 February, with all funds going towards the restoration of the site. More information can be found at Adopt a Plant: Begonia House Fundraiser (www.facebook.com/events/2225208698003946).

The 26 January milestone marks an important step toward securing the long-term future of this Wellington landmark.

When the Begonia House reopens in 2027, it will be a safer, more resilient and a more comfortable community space, where people and plants can thrive and Wellingtonians and visitors are welcome to gather and enjoy.

The refurbishment is scheduled to take place across several phases:

- From Monday 26 January – The remainder of the Begonia House display areas and foyer are closed so plants can be removed. The Picnic Café will remain open.
- May to August 2026 – The Picnic Cafe will be closed temporarily.
- November 2026 – Start moving plants back into the display end and foyer after testing of all building systems.
- March 2027 – Start moving plants back into the tropical end and fill the pond. Construction works complete.
- May 2027 – The newly refurbished Begonia House will reopen.



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