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# Devastating news

By Frank Neill

New Zealand Post will be closing five of its outlets in the northern and western suburbs in May.

"We are just really gutted by this," says Briony Hogg, the owner of Marsden Books, where one of the post shops that will be closing is currently located.

*Continued on page 2.*

Briony Hogg at Marsden Books in Karori. Photo: Supplied.



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Sanctuary Under A Sleepless Night  
 by Juan Miguel Beltran



At What Cost Forever  
 by Judi Lapsley Miller

Contemporary New Zealand art

How to reach us

Independent Herald

Phone (04) 587 1660

www.independentherald.co.nz



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



**NATIONAL SALES**  
**Les Whiteside**  
les@wsn.co.nz  
021 360 008



**SALES**  
**Steve Maggs**  
steve@wsn.co.nz  
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# A real disservice to Karori people

Continued from page 1.

"We are genuinely devastated, especially for our customers.

"I think New Zealand Post are doing a real disservice to the people of Karori.

"They have decided to keep open the shop at the Mobil service station instead of us.

"I think to have the post shop at a petrol station is not good for customers."

One reason she gives is that people will have to walk across a forecourt to go to the post shop. Another reason was that there were safety issues.

"I completely understand their decision," she says, given the significant drop in people using New Zealand Post services.

"But I think having the only post shop in Karori at a petrol station is the wrong move."

"We worked hard to retain it [the post shop] and are so disappointed that we were not successful.

"While this chapter closes, our doors remain very much open.

"We're still here for all your books, puzzles, cards, stationery and gift needs, and we remain deeply committed to serving this community we love.

"If you're able, please pop in and show us some love Karori.

"Your support truly means everything to us right now," Briony says.

The five post shops in the Independent Herald's area that will be

closed from 28 May are:

- NZ Post Ngaio, at Crofton Road Dairy, 2 Crofton Road;
- NZ Post Northland, at Cresswick FoodMarket, 59 Northland Road;
- NZ Post Victoria University, at Unichem University Pharmacy, 21 Kelburn Parade;
- NZ Post Newlands, at Newlands Pharmacy, 8/33 McMillan Court; and
- NZ Post Karori North, at Marsden Books, 159 Karori Road.

NZ Post is closing stores, it says because "Our current network is significantly larger than what's needed for today's mail volumes.

"Instead of sending letters, we're seeing more and more customers sending parcels, picking up online orders and returning items.

"With this growing customer need for more parcel-focused services, we're adapting what we do to give Kiwis the right offerings in the right locations.

"A well-designed network supports our ability to keep improving what we do, all while becoming more efficient and sustainable," NZ Post says.

When asked his reaction to the closures, the Takapū-Northern Ward Councillor Tony Randle said that "I understand that business continues to drop with them.

"However I do hope they can keep as many post shops open as possible so that the services they provide to people who don't have



good IT can be supported.

"Especially I'm thinking of people paying a telecom bill and

power bill, which you can do at the post shop, if they are not very au fait with doing it online."

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The victorious Johnsonville Bowling club's women's team (back row from left) Gill Oliver, Lil George, Cynthia Evans (manager), Robyn Rintoul and Janet Nehemia (manager); (front row from left) Lynette Campbell (reserve), Paula Meredith, Lui Hare, June Wairau and Kaaren Guilford. Photo: Supplied.

# Johnsonville women bowlers are champions

By Frank Neill

Johnsonville are the 2025-26 Wellington inter-club bowls champions.

The team from the Johnsonville Bowling Club convincingly won the Dynasty Sport Wellington inter-club playoffs against Naenae, Plimmerton and Stokes Valley on 31 January.

The inter-club victory saw Johnsonville become the champions for the third year in a row.

Johnsonville won eight of its nine matches in the play-off and drew the other match.

This saw it finish well ahead of Naenae, who recorded five wins and one draw.

Johnsonville amassed 63 points in the play-offs, well ahead of Naenae's 41 points. Plimmerton were third with 22 points while Stokes Valley scored 11 points.

Johnsonville's Paula Meredith won all three

of her singles matches.

Lui Hare (skip) and Kaaren Guilford also won all three of their pairs matches.

In the fours, June Wairau (skip), Lil George, Gill Oliver and Robyn Rintoul won two matches and recorded a draw against Naenae.

Cynthia Evans and Janet Nehemia are the team managers.

As well as winning the cup for the inter-club championship, Johnsonville also won the Minor Premier trophy after they finished top following the round robin series, which ran from 18 October to 20 December.

The Johnsonville men also secured a podium placing at the inter-club playoffs when they finished third.

Johnsonville scored 18 points, just one fewer than second placed Tawa, while Stokes Valley won the title with 44 points.

## Wadestown Fair returning soon

By Frank Neill

The popular Wadestown Fair will return for 2026 next month.

The fair will be held on Saturday 21 March between 11am and 2pm at Philip Myers Park (by the Wadestown Library).

A much loved community event, this year's fair is being organised by local residents in partnership with the Wadestown School PTA.

Up until this year the fair was organised by the Wadestown Residents' Association (WRA).

Last year's fair was a big success.

Fair organiser Greg Hyland of the WRA told the "Independent Herald" that he was thrilled with the success of the event and he loved seeing the many Wadestown Community families come together to share a special day out.

"The Wadestown Scout group selling candy floss and BBQ sausages were busy and a popular choice.

"Fair stalls had something for everyone with lots of second hand toys and books for sale, yummy home-made food treats, Ella's hair scrunchies, Frankies knitted flowers, Wadestown Toastmasters, Rodent Free Wadestown to name a few and even a mini toy car slide that was clearly a hit with young kids," Greg said.

The fair organisers are currently working out the number of stalls and the location of stalls. It is likely that it will follow the previous format as other years.

Further details will be provided to all confirmed stall holders closer to the time.

This year there will be a small fee for all stall-holders. People who would like to have a stall at this year's fair are asked to let the organisers know by emailing [wadestownfairnz@gmail.com](mailto:wadestownfairnz@gmail.com) by 13 February.



A scene from the very busy 2025 Wadestown Fair. Photo: Greg Hyland.



## Greg O'Connor MP for Ōhāriu

Spokesperson for Courts and Veterans' Affairs  
Assistant Speaker

### Get in touch

My office is open 9am - 4pm  
Monday to Friday

04 478 3332

[greg.oconnor@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:greg.oconnor@parliament.govt.nz)

2/18 Moorefield Road, Johnsonville, Wellington

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

# Government now consulting on regional councils

By Frank Neill

The Government is currently consulting on proposals to significantly reshape local government.

Getting rid of regional councils (including Greater Wellington Regional Council) is one of the proposals.

Under the government's plan "the mayors you already vote for will collectively lead regional issues and govern the regional council," the government says.

The plan, which is available on the Department of Internal Affairs website, is out for public consultation and this closes on 20 February.

Instead of regional councils, regional governance will be provided by Combined Territories Boards (CTBs) under the plan.

"We also want to know what you think about the appointment of Crown Commissioners (appointed by the Government) to lead or join the board," the government says in its paper "Simplifying Local Government - A draft proposal".

"While a CTB made up of mayors is our preferred approach, we are considering alternative options for structuring regional decision-making in the short term," the

government's paper says.

"To ensure the system works in practice, we are seeking your views on alternative options that include a stronger role for the Crown.

There are three options for a Crown Commissioner on the CTB:

- Observer only: Crown Commissioner has no vote;
- Veto power: Crown Commissioner can override CTB decisions; and
- Majority vote: Crown Commissioner has more than half the votes on the CTB, with the remaining votes are distributed among the mayors.

"Another alternative option is to have no CTB at all and to appoint Crown Commissioners (Government appointees rather than elected representatives) to lead regional councils through the regional reorganisation plan."

Local democracy is important, the paper says, "but many people don't vote in local elections or understand the difference between regional councils and city or district councils.

"CTBs simplify governance by consolidating decision making with mayors.

"This reduces duplication (only one set of councillors) and ensures regional decision making is more aligned across councils.

"There would be clear accountability to the public by the CTB for delivery of regional services.

"If Crown Commissioners are appointed, they would have the same responsibilities as regional councillors currently have."

# Presentation on Halfway House history



Glenside's historic Halfway House. Photo: Supplied.

Claire Bibby, the President of the Glenside Progressive Association, will make a presentation that includes the historic Halfway House, at the 22 February meeting of the Onslow Historical Society.

Her presentation is entitled "Enriching the history of Section 23, Glenside Reserve and the historic Halfway House."

Her talk will be a colourful account of selected incidents and occasions associated with Halfway House and land over the past 160 years.

At the event Onslow Historical Society

member Viv Chapple will put together an afternoon tea themed on the Halfway House, including "lily cakes".

The talk will be held at KATE, 86 Khandallah Road, starting at 2pm.

The Onslow Historical Society will be screening films with historically interesting footage going back almost 100 years on Sunday 5 April.

This event will also take place at KATE, starting at 2pm.

The society will be holding its annual general meeting at KATE on 27 May at 7:30pm for a 7:45pm start.

# Burning hot comedy at Fringe Festival

By Frank Neill

Scientist turned stand-up comedian Ben Miller's new comedy hour 'Volcano' will feature at this year's Fringe Festival.

It will explore the question "what happens when a comedian walks into a volcano?"

His comedy hour had its genesis when Ben was selected in February 2023 as the artist in residence at Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, the first stand-up comedian ever selected.

The programme typically selects painters, poets, Grammy-nominated musicians. Somehow a "silly joke boy" managed to secure this coveted spot.

He spent the entire month on Hawai'i, exploring the national park, learning from volcanologists, entomologists, archeologists, and local Hawaiians about the science, culture and history of Hawai'i.

Almost every night he gazed into the fires of Kilauea, the burning lava lake in Halema'uma'u

crater and also wrote some jokes.

Incredibly grateful for the opportunity provided to him by the National Parks Arts Foundation, Ben decided to take this comedic residency very seriously and turn it into an hour of stand-up comedy.

What he delivers is a show that combines humour with scientific knowledge, making it a must-see for fans of both genres.

Building off his experience with his previous science comedy hour that had a 50 city tour across the United States and Europe as well as a completely sold-out 23 show run at the 2022 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, 'Stand-Up Science Presents: Volcano' continues to develop Ben's nerdy yet approachable style.

This multimedia science comedy hour drills deep to the core, delivering explosive laughs with fire-tested jokes. 'Volcano' will be presented at The Gods, 29 Courtenay Place on 4, 6 and 7 March at 7pm. Tickets are available at <https://tickets.fringe.co.nz/events/446:8340/>.

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Ben Miller performing 'Volcano'. Photo: Supplied.

# Johnsonville's great new pie shop

By Frank Neill

The hugely successful Wellington food business, Puku Pies and Kai, opened its new Johnsonville branch on 29 January.

Located at 22 Broderick Road, the Johnsonville shop is the third the business has opened and a fourth will open soon in the Wellington central business district.

And this is all happening in less than one year.

Jamie Williams and his family opened the first Puku Pies and Kai in Lyall Bay in February last year.

They then opened their second shop in Petone.

Johnsonville came next and the CBD store will open before the business even reaches its first birthday.

"We have had a surprisingly massive response," says Maia Williams, who looks after marketing for the business and also works in the store in the weekend.

"It has been really awesome. Everyone has been excited.

"It's started to become a big business."

Puku Pies and Kai, as its name suggests, specialises in pies.

Their pies are big too, at around

350 grams. This compares with most pies which are in the 220 to 250 gram range.

A range of different fillings are available, including the more traditional pies such as beef brisket, and meat and cheese.

They also sell paua pies, which is their second most popular pie and sees people travelling some distance to make a purchase.

Along with the pies, Puku Pies and Kai stocks a variety of eats, including sweets, croissants, doughnuts and sandwiches.

Councillor Diane Calvert, the Wharangi/Onslow-West Ward Councillor, represented Wellington City Council at the store's opening.

"Puku Pies has been one of Wellington's great local success story stories, and it was great to be representing Wellington City Council at the opening of its new store in Johnsonville," Councillor Calvert says.

The opening included "an intimate dawn blessing with Taranaki Whanui and the family run business of Puku Pies.

"Jamie Williams, the owner and a local, knows the value of serving good kai and leaving a smile on people's faces," Councillor Calvert says.



Puku Pies and Kai's new Johnsonville shop. Photo: Frank Neill.

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Twenty mini goals like this one were stolen from North Wellington Football Club last week. Photo: Supplied.

# Local football club burgled

North Wellington Football Club's garage by the Alex Moore Park turf was burgled and a series of items stolen last week.

The Wellington City Council owned garage was broken into between 5pm on Wednesday 28 January and 4pm on Thursday 29 January.

Twenty mini goals used by the club's junior players were stolen, along with the club's Veo camera used for filming matches and an electric ball pump.

These items are "vital" for their players and have very little use to

the general public, the club says.

"Because they are specifically designed for football, we are hopeful that someone in the community might have noticed something or hear of these items being moved.

"If you were around the turf during these times and saw anything unusual, or if you have any information that could help North Wellington recover this equipment for their club members, please reach out to Club President Fraser Kirby, phone 021 450 016, email [president@northwellingtonfootball.com](mailto:president@northwellingtonfootball.com).

# What's hot in the Wairarapa



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NEWEST PRIVATE WALK IN THE WAIRARAPA!

## Private trail and accommodation at Tora

2025 saw the opening of a new private trail – The Last Resort Walk to the Wairarapa’s rugged east coast, between Tora and White Rock and back.

Ben and Georgie Lutyens, owners of Riversdale Station (a working cattle station where The Last Resort Walk is based) have a long history in the Wairarapa, with Ben’s family connection stretching back six generations. The walk also has a bike and horse trekking

this quite special” says Ben.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of The Last Resort is that bookings are exclusive, meaning visitors have the trail and accommodation all to themselves, ideal for family get togethers or groups of friends. The Last Resort is self-catered. Ben and Georgie find visitors enjoy cooking together in the fully equipped kitchen “it’s a homely way to finish the day” says Ben.

“We like to make visitors feel at home, so when we take their luggage and food up in our Can-Am vehicles, we pop beverages in the fridge, light the fire if it’s chilly and turn on the hot tub under the stars - everything is ready for when they arrive” says Georgie.

You can see more about The Last Resort at [www.lastresortwalk.co.nz](http://www.lastresortwalk.co.nz)



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option, an addition to their existing [heavenlyhorestreks.co.nz](http://heavenlyhorestreks.co.nz) providing opportunities for groups to tailor their visit.

The trail is 11km to The Last Resort accommodation, comprising “The Roost” and “The Old Place”, returning the following day via a loop track. Visitors can add a 7-10km track heading down to the beach and back, and stay for a second night.

Ben and Georgie wanted to create a different kind of experience, “our land is rustic and charming, and we wanted to share that. The Walk is mostly through bush. The 360-degree view from the top, or the sunrise from your bedroom makes

## Greytown International Cocktail Festival

This autumn, Greytown invites visitors to travel the world — one cocktail at a time.

From 20 March to 19 April, the Festival will shake and stir the village with a celebration of flavour, creativity and classic hospitality.

Over the course of a month, the Wairarapa town will come alive with themed drink menus, intimate tastings, cocktail workshops, special dinners, lively parties and relaxed afternoons on the Green.

Festival highlights include The Notorious Wairarapa Bootleggers’ Run, Cricket on the Green, Lawn Bowls & Highballs and High Tea, the Molewood Orchard Apple Harvest Festival, The Gin Supper, and signature menus across Greytown’s bars, cafés and restaurants.

While gin-based events have become ubiquitous in recent years, the Greytown International Cocktail Festival broadens the focus to celebrate everyone’s favourite classics, from espresso martinis through to thoughtfully crafted non-alcoholic cocktails. Visitors can even sharpen their skills at hands-on workshops, including a session dedicated to mastering the perfect espresso martini at home.

The full programme has been launched, and event info and tickets can be found at <https://www.greytownvillage.com/>



## Finding out about the life and times in the early Wairarapa

Find out about William Hastwell, the man who got Wairarapa moving, in our new exhibition. What must it have been like to make sure the mail got through the hazardous ranges through rivers and howling winds?

Our recently installed exhibition tells the story of how he built the biggest transport business in the lower North Island in the late 1800s.

You can see the original stables and the cobbles that were the foundation of his business and get your photo taken in the Glass Coach or the replica stagecoach.

The history really does come alive at Cobblestones but why not also bring a picnic to enjoy in our extensive gardens.

Explore the old one classroom school, the original church, built and shared by all the different denominations, the tiny cottage that was home to a family with ten children.

Find out about shearing and the first flocks of sheep in the 170 year old woolshed. You can even ride the 1955 Fire Engine on open days. Enjoy experiencing our New Zealand Heritage.

Cobblestones is part of the famous Festival of Christmas in Greytown, an ideal place for a cosy winter weekend.

To find out about special events, open days, and winter opening hours check Cobblestones Facebook page or our website [www.cobblestonesmuseum.org.nz](http://www.cobblestonesmuseum.org.nz).

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## Greytown Butchery knows how to win awards – sausages are their specialty

Established in 1873, Greytown Butchery is still operating in the same historic building and keeping old butchering traditions alive.

It’s no wonder they consistently win awards with their multi-award winning sausages, having so far clocked up 25 awards in the last 18 years.

Greytown Butchery has recently won their 25th award at the annual Great New Zealand Sausage Competition. Ironically it was the Sausage Competition’s 25th year running.

Greytown Butchery have also mark-

ed the Butchery Building’s 150th year, with its establishment when Greytown Butchery first opened, by original owner, Sam Haigh.

Artisan butcher Gavin Green and Julie Fairbrother, have transformed this iconic and popular business into a gourmet, European-styled butchery.

It prides itself on top quality cuts with exceptional service to match.

Remember to bring your chilly bin with you next time for your goods – there’s always plenty to choose from!

# Zampelles Johnsonville has new owner

By Frank Neill

Zampelles Johnsonville, located in the Johnsonville Mall, has a new owner – Noah Pronk, who is the son of the owners of Zampelles Queensgate.

This is the latest development in Noah's long history of involvement with Zampelles.

It began when he was five years old, soon after his parents – Ian and Tolu Pronk – bought Zampelles Queensgate from Liz and Graham Salisbury in 2007.

"I was five years old when I had my very first shift there," Noah says.

"I could barely see over the counter, but being short and cute I managed to get a decent amount of tips, even if my service wasn't quite onto it.

"I spent up until I was 18 working at my parents' shop.

"Then I decided I wanted to study" and Noah spent five years in Dunedin where he gained both business and arts degrees.

He then returned to Wellington and managed Zampelles Queensgate for two years.

Noah's purchase of Zampelles Johnsonville had its genesis when Graham Salisbury, who owned the shop with his wife Liz, passed away in December last year.

"Liz went looking for someone to take over the shop and she was really happy and we were really happy to keep it in the Zampelles family ... and keep it in the Pronk family too," Noah says.

He bought the store in December and took it over around two and a half weeks ago.

In fact Noah celebrated the two week anniversary of taking it over on 31 January.

During the time since he began, Noah has been talking to customers.

"Since they have had such long standing in the community, I have been trying to get their opinions on things that need improving and things they would want to see stay the same.

"Please, if you're a regular or first time visitor, I'd love to meet you and hear feedback you have about any part of the store.

"This cafe is a long standing community, making your opinions all the more important to me," Noah says.

"The main thing I want to let existing customers know is that you might notice some small tweaks to what we offer and how it is presented, but we are firm on Zampelles being a place where you can get all those Kiwi classics, some of the vintage meals, items that you don't see often, good variety and nice freshness."

Zampelles Johnsonville will be undergoing a "light reno" toward the end of February and early March "to bring the cafe into the current decade," Noah says.

The cafe will be closed for a maximum of two weeks while they fix up the floor, fix up the roof, fix up the lighting and put on a fresh coat of paint.

This will see Zampelles keep "its classic charm, but giving it some much needed love," Noah says.



Zampelles Johnsonville's new owner Noah Pronk preparing a cup of coffee for a customer. Photo: Frank Neill.

## ZAMPELLES



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# Whitby pilot creates a first

Whitby helicopter pilot Lieutenant Commander Stephen Knowles has become the first Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN) pilot to join the Royal New Zealand Air Force's (RNZAF) Black Falcons.

"When I began my career with the Navy in 2012 as a warfare officer, I didn't think for one minute I would end up a pilot, flying aerobatics with the Black Falcons," he says.

"However, here I am 14 years later, a helicopter pilot, a qualified flying instructor and aerobatics display team member."

This summer is Lieutenant Commander Knowles's first season with the Black Falcons.

The five-strong team, flying the T-6C Texan II aircraft, is made up of qualified flying instructors from the Central Flying School and No 14 Squadron at RNZAF Base Ohakea.

When not displaying, they are responsible for training flying instructors and new RNZAF and RNZN pilots.

Lieutenant Commander Knowles says that his career focus shifted from being a warfare officer after watching naval aviators land Seasprite helicopters on board HMNZS Te Kaha in moving seas.

"I saw the precision and skill required to be a helicopter pilot and I thought, that's something I'd really like to do."

After discussing this career change with a supportive command team, he was accepted into the 18-month pilot training course at RNZAF Base Ohakea in 2017 learning to fly the Texan.

He then moved to No 3 Squadron and began learning to fly the A-109 helicopter and in 2019 he was flying Seasprites from his former ships.

After four years of flying Seasprites, he switched to flying instructing and became Flight Commander at No 14 Squadron.



Lieutenant Commander Stephen Knowles is the first Royal New Zealand Navy pilot to fly with the Royal New Zealand Air Force's Black Falcons aerobatic team. Photo: Supplied.

Now he has been selected for the Black Falcons.

Many pilots aspired to be a part of the team and it was "a huge amount of fun", he says.

The Black Falcons train individually, then in the 1-2-3 formation known as Pelican and

4-5 known as Synchro, before they all come together as a five-ship formation.

The individual aircraft can be just five metres apart when in formation.

Formation aerobatic flying can be disorientating at first, "but pilots got used to it pretty quickly and trusted the timing and precision of their teammates," he says.

"Formation aerobatic flying is exhilarating, and if I'm honest, I still get a bit nervous before each display, but that keeps you on your toes."

Lieutenant Commander Knowles says that the purpose of the displays is twofold.

"Firstly, we want to inspire and educate – hopefully reaching the new generation of pilots and aviators – and secondly, we want to show the flying skills of the Air Force and Navy."

"It's wonderful hearing from the public how much they enjoyed the display."

"It makes all the hard work worthwhile."

The Black Falcons' next scheduled performances are on 14 February when they will perform a flypast over the Marlborough Wine & Food Festival and an aerobatic display above Christchurch's New Brighton for the Coast to Coast race.

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## Free Hepatitis C screening

Free Hepatitis C screening will be available at the Newlands Community Centre from noon to 2pm on Tuesday 10 February.

Many people have Hepatitis C and do not know it. Those who are more at risk include people who have:

- had a tattoo or piercing;
- injected drugs (even if only once);
- had jaundice or abnormal liver tests;
- lived in or had health care in Asia, the

Middle East or Eastern Europe; or

- had a blood transfusion before 1992.

A quick finger prick test will show if you have ever been exposed to the Hepatitis C virus.

It takes just five minutes and the results are 100% confidential. Free blood pressure checks are also being offered at the Newlands Community Centre. They will be available between 10:30am and 12:30pm on Friday 20 February. No booking is required.

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# An extraordinary school requires an extraordinary principal

There's something about Christian Pera that puts you on your best behaviour, though his manner is warm and at ease. He speaks about his new role, as founding principal of Altum Classical Academy, with intelligence and enthusiasm. It's not hard to see why the new charter school snapped him up.

Curious, Pera got in touch and Johnston didn't miss a trick.

Fresh from a close to six-year stint as Deputy Principal of Hastings Girls' High School, Pera has hit the ground running. He's already met with families across Wellington in their homes who are eager to have their children attend the school.

His first week on the job, however, has been a "comedy of errors". The moment he arrived, his car clapped out and he's been Ubering around Wellington ever since; but it seems nothing can slow him. Pera's whirlwind appointment to Altum happened so quickly that his wife and two children are still in the Hawkes Bay. The plan is to travel home on the weekends to see them and help get the house ready for rental.

Pera is taking on his role as principal very seriously. He hopes to build trust with the families and students; to be someone who is welcoming and makes them feel safe. He says, "safe also in terms of upholding high standards and routines, because that level of security makes people feel at ease."

Having taught in a number of countries across several curricula, Pera believes the biggest difficulty schools face, especially state schools, is that they have to try and be all things to all people. He says, "the government has given us this tremendous opportunity, but it's on us to make it work



Altum charter school principal Christian Pera

behaviour standards. We eliminated mobile phones without any sort of gradual process; we just said 'nope'. After a lot of pushback and standdowns the school's approach worked." Speaking of devices, a parent once commented, "Christian, we're going to look back on this like smoking in the 60s."

Right now it's all systems go and the pressure is on. Altum Academy needs to get its name out quickly and they're busy recruiting staff (from over 400 applicants). "They're not really obstacles," says Pera. "They're just challenges. But we have a beautiful little school that we will be able to give a nice polish up very shortly. And that is a huge blessing to not have to worry about it. A site that's fit for purpose is great."

Christian Pera is nothing if not dedicated. He says, "if people have questions, they should just contact me directly (he's not joking, his mobile's the contact number on the school website). I'm moving all over Wellington this week (albeit without a car) seeing different families and answering questions."

When you arrange to meet Pera, as his Uber draws up at your door, take a moment to appreciate that he and his team are setting up something extraordinary with Altum Academy. A classical education open to everyone.



Altum  
CLASSICAL ACADEMY

It wasn't that many weeks ago that Pera was following the progress of the proposed charter schools in the news along with the rest of us. He was particularly interested to hear of a school in Wellington with a classical curriculum. Looking into it, Pera discovered that an old lecturer of his, Dr Michael Johnston, was Chair of the board.



## Opening up new worlds and opportunities.

Altum Classical Academy invites you to visit their new charter school, located at 66 Albemarle Road, Wilton, Wellington. Open now for years 7, 8 and 9, Altum aims to graduate young men and women who think deeply, act justly and love what is good. Come and take a look around.

Book a tour: [admin@altum.school.nz](mailto:admin@altum.school.nz)



Altum  
CLASSICAL ACADEMY

# Magical adventures coming to Khandallah Park

KAT Theatre is back next month with its annual Play in the Park for young people called "I Think I Can" by Kathryn Schultz Miller and Barry Miller, with music by Bruce Bowdon.

In this charming play, young Becky is suffering from "an acute case of I-don't-knowsies, with a touch of Don't-ask-me-seys, complicated by I-don't-think-I-can-do-it-itis".

With laughs, songs, nonsense and encouragement from the audience, The Professor (a cat) and two other madly peculiar creatures, Buggy and Schmuggles, put her through a series of magical adventures by the end of which she's been cured of all three ailments.

Featuring a cast of four talented teenagers, "I Think I Can" plays twice each afternoon on 14, 15, 21 and 22 February in Khandallah Park on the grassy area near the swimming pool.

Starring as Becky is Lyla Mouldley who, looking for her next theatre fix after her last show finished, auditioned, and secured the lead role in this charming play.

"I really like getting into character and role-playing," Lyla says.

"I'm like Becky but I know what I want to be. I don't have the self-doubt that she does."

The other three members of the cast already knew each other and had worked together before.

Brooke Harris plays Schmuggles and was in last year's Play in the Park. She encouraged her friend Caitlyn Velloen to audition for The Professor.

"I told her it would be a really awesome opportunity and an experience like no other,"



The four crazy characters in KAT Theatre's production of "I Think I Can" (from left) Brooke Harris, Caitlyn Velloen, Clay-Aether Parekura and Lyla Mouldley. Photo: Supplied.

Brooke says.

"It's a really cool thing to be a part of.

"I liked everything about last year's production, and it was such a unique and interesting experience.

"I loved the people and you make great relationships and connections."

Like Lyla, Caitlyn was chasing her next theatrical opportunity.

"I needed to do something artistic and filled with drama and I needed the same vibe that I got from when we did 'Thumbelina,'" she says.

"You feel so happy and joyful when you've done a show and proud of yourself.

"So, when Brooke told me about this show, I thought that the worse that's going to happen is that I won't get a callback, so I asked for the details and signed myself up.

"I'm enjoying how close we've all gotten over the course of rehearsals.

"I'm a big people person and it's interesting how you can get people to open up very quickly.

"Small cast, big cast, I love the relationships that get built through a show.

"Things can go from being very awkward to very funny because someone shows up half an hour late to the first rehearsal because they misread the timetable. Yes, that was me!"

Buggy is played by Clay-Aether Parekura, who also knew Brooke from a production last year and was keen for another stage role.

"I was looking around and found the auditions for this production and decided I didn't have anything to lose and wanted something to do, so I auditioned and here I am," Clay-Aether says.

Director Archana Sahani chose the play for its appeal to 3 to 8-year-olds, lovely songs and music, and audience interaction.

"It helped me get creative in a way that I wanted to be," she says.

"It's an excellent summer activity for families. There's a lot of room for your imagination to go wild with deep-sea creatures, lions and a hippopotamus. And it's really fun with a lot of earworms."

"The songs in the play are fun and easy to sing along to," Musical director Megan Davis adds.

"The music was fully written but only had melody and chords, so I had to arrange the instrumental parts for keyboard, guitar, violin and drums without recordings to work from.

"That was a good creative challenge. It's a play with a great message and there are lots of bits where the audience can get involved."

With all the elements for a glorious hour of fun in the sun, "I Think I Can" is the perfect summer entertainment.

Entrance is by koha on the day, so bring a blanket, a picnic and the whole whānau for this delightful tale of finding confidence through adventure.

More details are on [kat-theatre.org.nz](http://kat-theatre.org.nz) and for where the performances will be in bad weather, go to KAT's Facebook page after 11am on the day.

## Warm Weather Footcare

As the temperatures climb, our feet have to adapt to summer shoes and activities. Sandals offer a chance for the feet to breathe and stay cool.

The best sandals are ones that have a strap or closed heel to help provide support to the foot. It is important to clean sandals occasionally to prevent problems such as tinea or athlete's foot. Self-care in summer should also include using heel balm to keep the heels from drying out and

cracking. Podiatrists help in maintaining summer feet by trimming off the buildup and helping to prevent these heel cracks forming, known as fissures. At Active Feet Podiatry we are here to assist and advise you to have pain free and attractive feet. Call for an appointment and start the new year with a spring in your step. Active Feet Podiatry can be reached on (04) 473 8696. ActiveFeetPodiatry.com

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The cast and directors of KAT Theatre's "I Think I Can" (back row from left) Clay-Aether Parekura, Brooke Harris and Lyla Mouldley (front row from left), Archana Sahani, the director, and Megan Davies, the musical director. Photo: Supplied.



# Health & Wellbeing

## New ADHD rules

Changes to New Zealand's prescribing rules for Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) stimulant medicines have just come into effect, expanding who can assess, diagnose and start people on treatment. These updates are designed to meet the needs of people living with ADHD by improving access and timeliness of care.

GPs and nurse practitioners could only prescribe ADHD medicines to patients with a written recommendation from a paediatrician or psychiatrist, or after someone had already been diagnosed and had their first prescription.

Registered specialist GPs and nurse practitioners working within their area of practice are able to start stimulant medicines for adults aged 18 and over.

## Making Sense of today's advanced prostate cancer treatments



Developments in advanced prostate cancer care are changing the outlook for Kiwi men — improving both survival and quality of life. New treatments and approaches continue to emerge, but understanding what's available, how they work, and what they might mean for an individual can feel overwhelming, particularly when navigating an advanced diagnosis.

This upcoming webinar brings together leading clinical expertise to explore the evolving landscape of advanced prostate cancer care, and what it means in real terms for men, their families, whānau and carers.

Our expert speakers will discuss key areas including systemic therapies, radiotherapy,

theranostics and advanced imaging, as well as survivorship. The session will look at how these approaches connect and complement one another, and how they may form part of a treatment pathway at different stages of advanced disease.

Importantly, the webinar goes beyond treatment alone. It will also consider quality of life, symptom management, and the practical realities of living with advanced prostate cancer — recognising the impact not just on the individual, but on those supporting them.

This online event is open to men living with advanced prostate cancer, their families, whānau and carers, as well as health professionals. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions and gain

trusted, evidence-based insights directly from experienced clinicians.

Hosted by Prostate Cancer Foundation NZ, with special guests Dr Alvin Tan, Consultant Medical Oncologist at Waikato Hospital, and Stephanie Sanden, Senior Oncology Nurse at the Kathleen Kilgour Centre in Tauranga.

Living With Advanced Prostate Cancer  
FREE Webinar  
7-9PM Tuesday 10 February  
Register at [www.prostate.nz/webinar26](http://www.prostate.nz/webinar26)  
or scan the QR code

## Kapiti Women's Triathlon this month

Rally your crew. Race together. Celebrate with coffee and connection at the Kapiti Women's Triathlon on 22 February.

New Group entries are now available across all events in the Kāpiti Women's Triathlon. Enter with a group of 6 or more and every member will score a free coffee voucher from our friends at Coffee Cruisers - because races are

better when they finish with caffeine and good company! Round up your running buddies, workmates, or whānau, and join us on 22 February.

To promote health and wellbeing in the workplace, Kapiti Women's Triathlon has teamed up with the legends at Coffee Cruisers to launch the KWT Workplace Challenge.

## Acorn Stairlifts provide safe and easy access in your home

As an example of Acorn's commitment to excellence and safety, they are proud that their products have earned the prestigious Ease of Use Commendation from the Arthritis Foundation. This commendation is only awarded to companies whose products have passed rigorous testing proving they are easy to use for people with arthritis.

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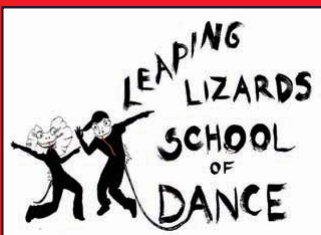
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# Local history – tea gardens

By Felicity Wong

Natalie Marshall recently talked about early Wellington tea gardens, one of the few places women could respectfully visit alone.

David Wilkinson from Ayrshire, Scotland opened the earliest in 1842 on The Terrace.

In March 1843 diarist Mary Petre mentioned them “on top of the hill by Wellington Terrace ... The gardens are very nice”. And a week later she “had a good walk through the bush to Wilkinson’s gardens” with three women friends.

The Teetotalists Association had held a party there on Wellington Anniversary Day.

Wilkinson sold *Minulis wilkinsonii*, a showy Monkey flower and later roses, strawberry, cabbage plants and bee hives.

In 1850 Wilkinson’s Tea Gardens relocated to the corner of Oriental Parade and Grass Street.

He laid them out in arbours with seats and half dozen hot houses “to catch all the sun there is going”.

Wilkinson’s tea gardens were a fashionable place to visit.

“Half the town went there” on Sunday afternoons.

Visitors would walk along the waterfront to enjoy tea and music, wander around the garden and take away a posy of flowers and grapes.

Wilkinson grew grape varieties like Black Haniboro, Gros Colman and Muscat commercially.

He had his own method of planting trees in windy places by pegging each down with a crook of tea tree, which rotted away as the tree righted itself.

Wilkinson died in 1902 and his son (also David Wilkinson) grew grapes in hot houses at Oriental Bay till 1913.

After Wilkinson junior died in 1919 the garden property was divided up for housing in 1923.

The Wilkinson family built two sets of stylish holiday flats (5-7 and 9-11 Grass Street), one of which later became the “birthplace” of children’s book icon Hairy McLairy, the home of publisher Ann Mallinson.

The Wilkinsons also built an early mid rise apartment block called “Olympus”, recently given heritage status, having been designed by notable architect Edward Anson.

In 1890 the last of Wellington’s tea gardens was opened by Joseph Alfred Heginbotham.

Along with gardens and refreshments were 40 of New Zealand’s first caged monkeys.

Wellington Zoo, the first in New Zealand,

did not open until 1906.

Heginbotham’s Tea Gardens advertised its “shady nook” summer house, an ocean view of Lyall Bay, and “endless amusement in the antics of ... monkeys in a cage.”

Amusing excursions from Wellington involved hiring a horse cab, travelling around Oriental Bay and Queens Drive to Kilbirnie for tea and monkey watching.

Colourful parrots, procured from barques that called at Queens Wharf, were an added attraction.

They were mostly rosellas and cockatoos and provided great interest when such things were a rarity.

Heginbotham was also a photographer who provided studio photos of garden visitors.

Dances and socials were held in a dance hall.

Premier Sir Joseph Ward organised a big party of more than a thousand cyclists and gave them a lecture in the hall on “the advantages of bicycling.”

Interviewed in 1937, Heginbotham’s memories “were not so much of the rush entailed in catering for the crowd or the crush it must have been, as of the trampled state his poor garden was in when at last they had gone.”

He recalled large numbers of cyclists on Sundays.

“It was not so much the outing that attracted them,” he said, “but the hotel next door.

“It was open all day Sunday and bicycles lined the roads around.

“Two men were stationed at each of the two vulnerable points of approach, to signal in the likelihood of approaching police.

“One day the police did come.

“But before they were within half a mile all the people were over the fence and joining in a picnic in the tea gardens.

“The police found the hotel empty.”

Heginbotham recalled climbing over great sandhills to reach Lyall Bay beach and when Miramar was “a great raupo swamp”.

He recalled “the old Maori pa at Seatoun, and one of the last Maori residents called Pio”.

The Heginbothams old house remains in Henry Street but little remains of the gardens which were sold for housing, with the monkeys sold to a circus.

In the Hutt Valley were the lovely Bellevue Gardens.

By the mid 1900s such privately owned Tea Gardens had disappeared in favour of Council operated attractions such as the Newtown Zoo, and the Begonia House in the Lady Norwood Rose Garden.



Looking south at Kilbirnie Hotel on the corner of what is now Wellington Road and Kilbirnie Crescent. Tea Gardens behind and to right. Photo: Supplied.

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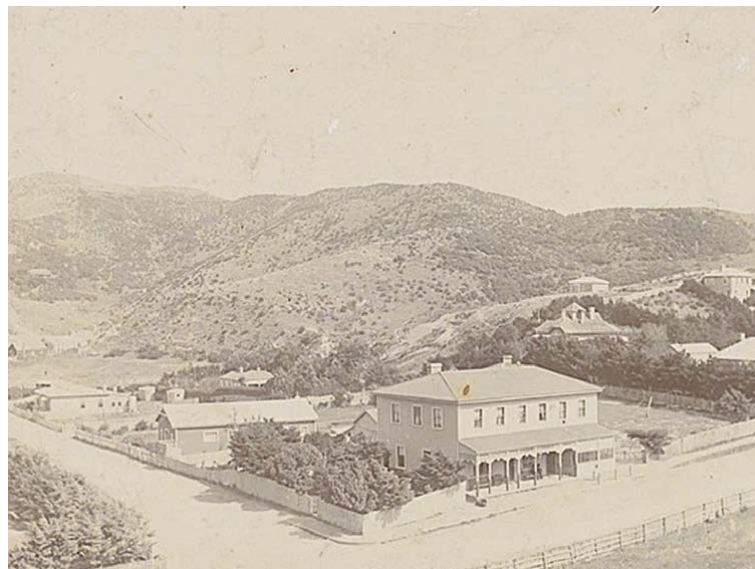
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Kilbirnie hotel with Heginbotham house on right in Henry Street and Kilbirnie Crescent to the left of the hotel. Photo: Supplied.

## Connect with our readers every week

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**WHAT'S ON...**

The Community Noticeboard is for non-profit organisations. For \$15.00 you can publish up to 25 words.

No AGMS, sporting notices or special meetings. Community Notices must be pre-paid.

phone (04) 587 1660 or

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**Onslow Historical Society**

Our historical centre at 86 Khandallah Road is open every Sunday afternoon from 1-4pm. Come along to learn about local history.

**Hymn Singing**

Chants and psalms, Khandallah Presbyterian, 9.30am -10.00am, Wednesdays from 7 Feb. Accompanied on pipe organ. Friendly group, range of experience, All Welcome. Covid vaccinated please.

**"I Think I Can"**

Khandallah Park February 14, 15, 21, 22. Laughs, songs and audience interactions in this play for children. kat-theatre.org.nz



The Scholarship class of 2026. Front row centre Club President, Roy Ferguson flanked by the scholarship assessors Stephen Spence (left) and Morris Robertson (right). Photo: Supplied.

**Growing Rotary in the western suburbs**

By Morris Robertson

The Rotary Club of Wellington North began the new year on 28 January with a barbeque evening to celebrate the winners of its annual tertiary scholarships.

It was also an occasion to celebrate the new Club.

On 1 January, the Rotary Clubs of Wellington North and Karori merged to become the new Wellington North Club, branded with a sub title of 'From Karori to Khandallah', which recognised its extended area of community support.

Between them these two clubs have more than a hundred years of service to the western suburbs and much further afield in greater Wellington, the Pacific Islands and beyond.

All active projects from the founding clubs have been inte-

grated into the new entity.

This includes the scholarships, the Birdwood Reserve and the annual Khandallah Village Fair. In recent years scholarship winners have assisted in the running of the fair.

Guests who were able to attend the barbeque were 11 of the 16 tertiary scholars, some of whom were accompanied by parents and friends.

The scholarships are funded by a trust, which was established in 1990 at the 25th anniversary of Wellington North Club. Funds were later enhanced by the bequest of a late club member, Ian Crabtree.

The process of awarding scholarships begins with applications called by Universities New Zealand, which screens them for eligibility before passing a short list to the club.

In the case of selecting awardees for this year, the recommended short list received was 55.

The club's two assessors, Stephen Spence and Morris Robertson, then had the individual task of independently whittling them down to 16 recipients.

The principal criteria applied for selection was a mix of academic achievement, extramural activities, community service and financial need.

Recommendations, when revealed, were almost identical and the winners easily resolved.

For the first time in the history of the scholarships, those selected were all young women, with a preference for degrees in the health sector.

Several of the recipients were from refugee or immigrant families with tales to tell. One of these was Kibra Tesfay, whose family were refugees who fled from the genocide of the Tigray populated region on the border of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Kibra arrived in New Zealand six years ago, with herself, parents and siblings knowing no English. Despite attending to the needs of her family, Kibra also supports the local Ethiopian community.

The assessors were unable to separate Chinese twin sisters who had been Dux and runner up at Hutt Valley High School.

Recent changes in Government support for first year tertiary students has been a major factor in the increased number of parents, especially refugees, unable to finance their sibling students through tertiary education.

The club also provides two scholarships to students from the Downtown Community Ministry (DCM), the organization that works with those affected by homelessness.

These are known as the Tatai Ako Scholarships and are provided to two students studying social work and chosen by DCM annually. Natalia Cleland, newly appointed CEO of DCM was present at the function.

Due to demographic changes and time constraints, many Rotary Clubs have declining memberships.

The Wellington North club has recognised an opportunity for growth by offering a form of membership for limited participation, especially related to specific projects.

The \$30 per annum local member subscription also provides for newsletters and invitations to meetings with guest speakers.

In concluding the evening Club President Roy Ferguson gave a parting thought, with a quote from Nelson Mandela: "Learn today, lead tomorrow. Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

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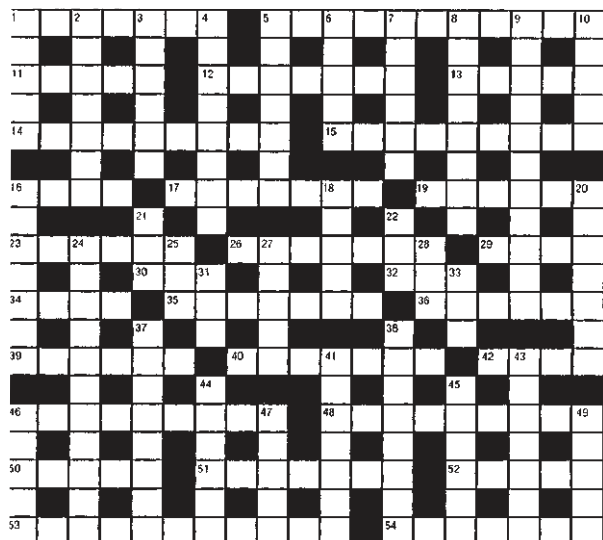
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**CROSSWORD Puzzle**



**ACROSS**

- Quoted (7)
- Play down (4,5,2)
- Fall heavily (5)
- Breastbone (7)
- Strain (5)
- Most trivial (9)
- Proclaims (9)
- Long river (4)
- Amaze (7)
- Erase (6)
- Capital of Massachusetts (6)
- Able to be maintained (7)
- Stylish(Inf) (4)
- Write (3)
- America(Abbr) (3)
- Heather (4)
- Stain (7)
- The medical profession (6)
- Motionless (6)
- Called on (7)
- SEE 3 DOWN.
- Unmarried women (9)
- Beach (9)
- Mould(pl) (5)
- Place apart (7)
- Church laypeople (5)
- Shop assistants (11)

54. Storm (7)

**DOWN**

- Clefts (5)
- Vital (7)
- & 42 ACROSS. Headline (3,3,4)
- Deal out (8)
- Great musician (7)
- African country (5)
- Regret (6)
- Motioned (8)
- Disloyal (11)
- Worries (5)
- Disables racehorse (with drugs)(7)
- Gets closer (5)
- Of morals (7)
- Skip (3)
- Contagious virus(abbr) (3)
- Astounding (11)
- Mesh (3)
- Boredom (5)
- Extrasensory perception(abbr) (3)
- Catch (3)
- Exclamation of surprise (3)
- Dirigibles (8)

- Most tired (8)
- Enrage (7)
- Glorify (7)
- Purify (6)
- Refuge (6)
- Upholstered seats (5)
- Degrade oneself (5)
- The pyramids are here (5)

**Solution**

Last Week: 29 January 2026



# Onslow and Karori draw their match

By Frank Neill

Onslow and Karori battled to a draw in their first two-day division one Cricket match of the season on 31 January.

After the first day of play was abandoned because of the wet weather, the match was reduced to a one innings encounter.

Batting first on Karori Park, the home team scored 329 for the loss of six wickets in the 65 overs they faced.

Their vice captain, Oscar Wilson, top scored for Karori with 81 and the captain, Kevin Weerasundara, also batted outstandingly to finish on 66 not out.

A third Karori batsman, Max Parun, also passed the half century mark when he scored 55.

Elliot Seddon took three Karori wickets at a cost of 99 runs.

Micah Conroy took two wickets for 54 and Beck Cattermole took one wicket for 55.

Despite scoring at a very rapid rate – more than seven runs an over – Onslow was not able to pass the Karori total in the 35 overs they had available, finishing on 259 for seven wickets.

Yash Vagadia starred with the bat for Onslow, scoring 92 in just 50 deliveries, giving him the highly

impressive strike rate of 184.

Micah Conroy followed up his good bowling by scoring 86 not out from the 80 deliveries he faced.

Oscar Wilson followed up his great batting performance by taking four Onslow wickets at a cost of 64 runs.

Puvin Anthony, Yashraj Kalsi and Anirudh TP took one wicket each for Karori.

Onslow's next match is against Victoria University at Nairnville Park on 7 and 14 February, with both days starting at 10:30am.

Karori will play Petone Riverside at the Petone Recreation Ground on 7 and 14 February, with both days starting at 10:30am.

Johnsonville's premier cricketers did not fare well in their final division 2 50-over match on 31 January.

They were comfortably beaten by Naenae Old Boys on Alex Moore Park.

Batting first, Naenae scored 238 runs for the loss of nine wickets in their 50 overs.

Johnsonville reached 129 runs for the loss of nine wickets when the match finished.

Will Martin was easily the best of the Johnsonville batsmen, reaching his half century and going on the score 53.

The team's captain, Zack Scott-Howman scored 21 and Con-

nor Lusty finished on 11 not out after he had taken three Naenae wickets at a cost of 43 runs.

Lewis Jeffreys took 2 wickets for 46, Ben Stephen one wicket for 34 and Matthew Nel one wicket for 28.

Division two starts its two day programme next Saturday and Johnsonville will play Wellington Collegians Cricket Express at Anderson Park on 7 and 14 February. Both matches start at 10:30am.

The Johnsonville women's premier team did not have a good day on Saturday either.

They were beaten by City Suburbs at Kilbirnie Park.

Batting first, Johnsonville reached 135 for nine wickets, and City Suburbs passed that total for the loss of seven wickets.

Mira Patel batted outstandingly for Johnsonville, reaching a half century and going on to make 67 not out.

Anvi Verma was the next best of the Johnsonville batters, scoring 15 runs.

The Johnsonville bowlers shared the wickets evenly, with seven players taking one wicket each. Anvi Verma, Aesha Sukhu, Mira Patel and Annissa Greenlees were among the wicket takers.

Johnsonville's next match is against Petone Riverside at Alex Moore Park on 7 February, beginning at 11am.



Yash Vagadia, Onslow's overseas import from Yorkshire, England, who top scored for the team on 31 January. Photo: Supplied.

## New free dental service

The Wellington City Mission, in partnership with Ora Toa Pōneke, is launching a new free dental service at Whakamaru, its community hub in Wellington.

"Oral health is a key component of overall wellbeing, yet for many people it is often overlooked or out of reach," Wellington City Mission says.

"The Whakamaru Dental Service has been created to meet this need, providing accessible, free, trauma-informed dental care for people who face significant barriers to accessing traditional dental services.

The service will open on Tuesday 10 February 2026 and will operate on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from Whakamaru on Oxford Terrace.

Designed with people at its centre, the Whakamaru Dental Service offers free dental care in a safe and familiar environment.

By embedding dental care within the holistic suite of services already offered at Whakamaru, the service supports trust, choice and dignity, recognising that past experiences can make traditional healthcare settings difficult to access.

There are significant unmet oral health needs across Aotearoa New Zealand, with people on low incomes and those experiencing hardship often facing the greatest

barriers to care.

The Whakamaru Dental Service seeks to address gaps left by existing systems by prioritising those most at risk and bringing essential, freely accessible dental care into a place where people already feel connected and supported.

The service will be delivered by qualified Ora Toa dentists, with appointments available by referral only.

Referrals will be made through external social agencies across the Greater Wellington region, alongside internal referrals from within Wellington City Mission services.

Pip Rea, Community Services Director at Wellington City Mission, says the need for the service is substantial:

"Dental pain and poor oral health can have a profound impact on someone's physical and mental wellbeing, yet access remains a major barrier for many," Pip says. "This Whakamaru dental service removes those barriers, offering compassionate, trauma-informed care to people who would otherwise go without." The freely accessible service will sit alongside other support services at Whakamaru, including the Social Supermarket, Peer Support and Community Support Workers, helping to address the wider social, emotional and practical factors that impact health and wellbeing.

## Two local NZCT grants

By Frank Neill

Two organisations that operate in the "Independent Herald" circulation area were recipients of grants in the latest round of the New Zealand Community Trust's disbursements.

The Wadestown Tennis Club was granted \$1,012.99 for court hire and tennis balls.

The Victoria University Netball Club was provided \$8,990.59 for playing uniforms and equipment.

The trust disbursed \$445,090.95 in the latest round of funding,

announced on 3 February.

One gaming venue in the "Independent Herald"'s circulation area contributed to these grants – The Pickle Jar in Karori.

It was one of 17 gaming venues in the greater Wellington region that contributed.

## Special programmes for tamariki

All Wellington City Libraries are closed for the Waitangi Day public holiday on Friday 6 February.

People who have picked up and played through one of Wellington City Libraries' Summer Reading Bingo sheets this summer could be in the draw to win a fantastic prize pack.

To enter the draw for this Grand Prize, return your completed bingo sheet to any library branch by 8 February 2026.

Wellington City Library's regular programmes for tamariki are back on schedule after the Christmas break.

Baby Rock and Rhyme will be held on Monday 9 February from 10:30am to 11am at Waitohi Johnsonville Library, on Tuesday 10 February from 10:30am to 11am Korimako at Ngaio-Cummings Park (Ngaio) Library, on Tuesday 10 February from 10:30am to 11am at Te Takapū o Patukawenga Tawa Library, on Wednesday 11

February from 10:30am to 11am at Waitohi Johnsonville Library and on Thursday 12 February from 10:30am to 11am Te Māhanga Karori Library.

These fun and free sessions are for parents and carers to interact with their babies through songs and stories.

Rhyme, rhythm, repetition and music are the building blocks of language for babies.

Preschool storytime will be held on Tuesday 10 February from 10:30am to 11am Te Māhanga Karori Library and on Thursday 12 February from 10:30am to 11am Waitohi Johnsonville Library.

Preschool storytime includes fun and interactive stories, songs and rhymes to inspire preschoolers and grow a love of literacy.

Through stories and play, children learn how to express themselves and understand the world around them.

These sessions are recommended for children aged from 2 to 4 years with their caregivers.

Nohinohi Reorua will take place on Tuesday 10 February from 10:30am to 11am at Te Māhanga Karori Library.

Nohinohi Reorua: whāngaia tō Tama Toa ki te pānui pukapuka! E toru tekau meneti pakīwaitara, rotarota, waiata hoki i roto i te reo Māori me te reo Ingarihi, nō ngā kōhūhangunga me ō rātou mātua kaitiaki.

Get your superhero hooked on books with these special bilingual storytimes. Featuring stories, rhymes, and songs in te reo Māori and English, these 30-minute sessions are open to anyone, whether fluent in te reo Māori or just starting out.

Nohinohi Reorua is recommended for tamariki aged from 2 to 6 years with their caregivers.

Nau mai rā tātou katoa. Everybody is welcome.

# Double Waitangi weekend celebration

Pōneke's Waitangi Park will host two major events this week, celebrating the city's diversity with Te Rā o Waitangi and Wellington Pasifika Festival providing entertainment and activities for all to enjoy.

On Friday 6 February, Te Rā o Waitangi | Waitangi Day is a free, whānau-friendly event to commemorate the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Aotearoa New Zealand's national day.

The event will feature live performances from tangata whenua and tangata tiriti talent, arts and crafts, a Kids' Zone, kite making, a Treaty education space and kai stalls, including a hangi from midday.

The free Te Tiriti and Me Theatre Roadshow 'He Māori?' by Ihaka Martyn and Taki Rua Productions will also be touring three locations on Waitangi Day.

More information and full programme are at [wellington.govt.nz/waitangi](http://wellington.govt.nz/waitangi).

"It's great to have a day to reflect on and celebrate the aspiration in our founding document, and even better when we can come together with others in our community," Mayor Andrew Little says.

"And following our national day celebrations with a celebration of our Pacific peoples highlights a very important part of Wellington's diverse communities and our special links with our Pacific neighbourhood."

On Saturday 7 February people will be able to experience the sights, sounds and flavours of the Pacific with the annual Wellington Pasifika Festival.

This year's theme of 'Arrival' celebrates and



The Waitangi band on stage with the crowd in the background. Photo: Wellington City Council.

welcomes Pasifika communities who have made Aotearoa their home.

The festival experience is based on the card game 'Lalaga', designed by Torisse Lalau,

and those attending will be able to see the final stone carving by artist Leo Semau that has been taking shape since the 2024 festival.

Following on from a successful pilot programme in 2025, Council's Étū rere pā'ata - The Shooting Star Programme is back

as part of the Wellington Pasifika Festival, and proudly presents an original theatre production, Taula (Anchor). The show is performed by emerging and aspiring rangatahi actors, and features themes of identity and belonging.

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## Second error found in rates bills

Wellington City Council (WCC) has discovered a second mistake in the rates bills it has sent people.

The second error meant that the Council was asking for more money to pay the Greater Wellington Regional Council rates portion of the bill, meaning ratepayers will have to pay less than previously thought.

WCC apologised to ratepayers on 28 January for the second mistake in the calculation of their 2025-26 rates bills.

Late last year, WCC discovered an error that caused it to undercharge the household and commercial sludge levy in the quarterly rates invoices sent in August and November 2025.

At the time, the Council said it would review its billing system to discover how the error happened.

A review of the rates' billing system discovered that the Council invoiced its own rates correctly, but Greater Wellington rates had been overcharged by an average of \$10 per residential rate account.

Although the Greater Wellington rates error has a small impact on the total due over the year, it is still a mistake that should not have happened, the Council says.

Andrea Reeves, the City Council's Chief Strategy and Finance Officer, says: "We want to sincerely apologise for these errors.

"We are fixing the sludge levy error and Greater Wellington rates error in the rates invoices people will receive in the week beginning 3 February 2026.

"Ratepayers will see a credit to reverse the overcharge, and an amount for the sludge levy undercharge – so ratepayers will have a lower catch up than we initially expected," Andrea says.

"These fixes mean ratepayers will only pay what they are legally required to pay for the year. We will not charge any penalties or interest as part of either error."

WCC has been proactively informing ratepayers of the errors via social media, website updates and including a detailed apology and explanation letter with the rate invoices being sent this week.

"We are confident that all rates assessments are now correct, but if a ratepayer would like an updated Greater Wellington rates assessment, please contact the Council at [rates@wcc.govt.nz](mailto:rates@wcc.govt.nz)," the Council says.

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