

ŌTAKI TODAY

Ngā kōrero o Ōtaki

ĀPERIRA/APRIL 2026

otakitoday.com

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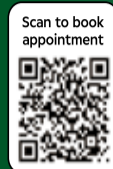
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Scholarship gets Rachael to US

Opportunity for research at American uni

By Ian Carson

Ōtaki College's Rachael Kneepkens has won a Fulbright Distinguished Award in Teaching that allows her to study in the United States.

She is one of only two New Zealand teachers who will head to the US in August for four months to share her expertise and undertake research at either the University of Rochester in New York or Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Rachael is the Special Education Needs Coordinator (Senco) for Arahunga Special School at Ōtaki College. She will be researching how disengaged students can be supported at secondary school.

"My research has come about from many years of working with students with additional needs, who then become disengaged at school," she says. "I'm really interested in how we motivate these students, and in particular how we can establish support within the wider community to keep them in school."

Rachael loves the idea of being able to connect with other educators to share ideas, experiences, and expertise. She says the Fulbright award is a once-in-a-career opportunity to learn, grow, and bring something meaningful back home.

"It's not just about personal



Rachael Kneepkens in one of the learning support rooms at Ōtaki College.

Photo Ōtaki Today

development, but also about contributing in a way that has a wider impact."

She says it can be daunting to put herself into an unfamiliar environment, but that's outweighed by the excitement of the opportunity for experience and personal growth. Although Ōtaki College already has pastoral care that she rates as "top-notch", when she returns from the US she hopes to develop a college-wide strategy to re-engage students who are physically in

school but emotionally and socially disconnected.

"This isn't just about attendance at school; it's about belonging, support, and purpose. I'm hoping to put together a programme that specifically supports these students."

Rachael went to Teachers' Training College straight after leaving school in Wainuiomata and has taught ever since. She arrived at Ōtaki from the Hutt Valley four years ago.

Ōtaki College principal Andy Fraser says Rachael is an outstanding

Senco. She leads a staff of teacher aides supporting students with learning or physical disabilities.

He says when he advertised for the Senco position, Rachael's CV and referees indicated she was a teacher with exceptional skills.

"I knew then we needed to employ her. As the saying goes, we have never looked back!"

Rachael has worked with the college and Arahunga Special School to develop a team that operates out of Te Puna Aroha (learning support).

The team encourages strong, honest, caring relationships with students and whānau, and shows innovation in the models of support they offer.

"Rachael leads by example, and it's no surprise that Te Puna Aroha is now a favourite place for many students to go to relax and spend time," Andy says. "I am not at all surprised that Rachael has been awarded a Fulbright scholarship."

"She has made an outstanding contribution to special education, and I'm excited that she will be researching how to motivate and support disengaged students at secondary school."

Andy says her work in this field will be utilised when she returns to the college.

The Fulbright teaching scholarship supports highly accomplished New Zealand teachers in primary and secondary schooling to participate in intensive professional development at an American university.

It includes academic coursework, leadership training, instructional technology seminars, and opportunities to observe, co-teach, and share their expertise in US elementary (primary) and secondary schools. Each participant will also complete an individual or group project relevant to their teaching.

The programme operates in 15 countries and brings together about 22 primary and secondary educators. It prepares participants to serve as educational leaders, equipping them to apply and share their learning with colleagues and students in their home communities.

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Report highlights grumpiness factor

AN UNDERLYING REASON for the “grumpiness” factor that has entered the political scene in New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom and seen incumbent leaders under cost-of-living public pressure shows out in a recent OECD report.

It demonstrates the impact of the Covid pandemic on societies around the globe through a study of house-price-to-income ratios.

Statistics in the report covering 2024 show New Zealand sits about the middle of the index with an allocated ratio of 109.6. This compares to Australia at 120.1 and the United Kingdom at 105.8. The highest ratios were those of Portugal at 147.4, Canada at 136.3 and the Netherlands at 130.4.

Figures are calculated on a per person after tax basis by dividing nominal house price by nominal disposable income per head, with 2015 set as a base year at a value of 100. An index value of 120 would mean, for example, that house price growth has outpaced income growth since 2015 by 20 percent, says the OECD.

Economists believe the longer these ratios stay at elevated levels the more likely political and social tensions will rise, worker mobility declines and rents reach levels that provoke angry landlord-tenant friction.

That the OECD notes house prices have in the past grown faster than rents and the decline in home affordability has sparked a growing demand for rental accommodation, and with it soaring rental prices, confirms the relevance of the study to New Zealand.

From an economic perspective it suggests two factors already identified within Treasury as major inhibitors of the country's economic performance. One is the traditional Kiwi treatment of housing as a financial asset, and the second is the comparatively low level of tangible assets available for short and long-term investment by major fund managers. Low productivity and an elevated level of regulation that inhibits construction are further constraints.

For Nicola Willis as the country's current financial guru-in-residence, the policy solutions are neither populist in tone nor substance. And worse, from an electioneering viewpoint, they are not instant remedies. Among them: Rapid growth of housing construction and infrastructure development; policies that encourage and remove constraints on employment growth and confirmation that the government wants housing seen as social infrastructure rather than a component of household asset accumulation.

Other inhibiting factors Willis faces are the increasingly high cost to the government of its offshore borrowing because of the volatile nature of the Kiwi dollar on world money markets; the financial precipice left her by the Ardern government with little room for further major borrowing to meet an instant crisis such as an earthquake; and an Opposition unconstrained in its ability to offer electors easy solutions.

Donald Trump may, however, have done her a massive favour politically by attacking Iran. The inevitable blocking of the Strait of Hormuz and consequent rise in global oil prices set a stage on which austerity of government can be expected,

along with an opportunity for leadership capability to be on show.

To date Willis has stepped up to the plate. A crisis atmosphere has been avoided. The measured response attracted favourable comment from industry. A stage has been set for implementation of an easily understandable plan of reaction should fuel shortages persist. Politically Willis has advanced her “likeability” factor that had been waning when measured against perceptions of cabinet colleagues Simeon Brown and Erica Stanford.

While Willis was assembling the “Iran” plan, Labour leader Chris Hipkins was under pressure to disclose what he might have to offer. His response: “The government needs to come up with a plan.” He was not, he said, going to produce a policy “on the fly”.

At the time of writing no alternative plan to that of Willis had emerged from either he or finance spokesperson Barbara Edmonds. With the election less than eight months away a good deal more pressure will be on the pair to “show us” their intentions.

Just how their policies might better improve the plight of households caught in the house-price-to-income squeeze will be instructive. Policies that offer long term growth, and more jobs that can soak up the current surge in unemployment rolls, should win the day over sugar-coated one-off measures to satisfy interest groups.

PS: The lowest nations in the house-price-income ratios were Romania at 53.8, Finland 81.1, Italy 86.9, and South Africa 89.3.

■ Bruce has been an economics and business editor, and a foreign correspondent in Washington, London and Hong Kong.

POLITICS



BRUCE KOHN

CARTOON OF THE MONTH

By Jared Carson



ŌTAKI TODAY *Ngā Kōrero o Ōtaki*

Ōtaki Today is published monthly by ID Media Ltd, 13 Te Manuao Rd, Ōtaki.

EDITOR: Ian Carson.

For editorial enquiries or news tips, please contact Ian at 027 2411 090, or email ian@idmedia.co.nz

GENERAL MANAGER: Debbi Carson.

For advertising enquiries, call Debbi on 027 285 4720, or email debbi@idmedia.co.nz

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CONTRIBUTORS:

Heniti Buick (He Tirohanga Hou) • Cam Butler (Cam's Corner) • Fraser Carson (Just a Thought) • Jared Carson (Cartoons) • Tim Costley (The Electorate) • Maria Fyvie (Good Advice) • Steve Humphries (Science) • Kath Irvine (Edible Backyards) • Bruce Kohn (Politics) • David Ledson/Nicky Treadwell (Historical) • Michael Moore (Te Horo Outlook) • Corinna Sippel (A Matter of Law)

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JOHN BARRETT TALKS Ōtaki's John Barrett is Kāpiti WEA's speaker on Saturday (April 18), from 10am-1pm. John, who is chair and founder of award-winning Kāpiti Island Nature Tours, will talk about events that have shaped the historical importance of Kāpiti Island; from the time of the New Zealand Company settlements and interaction with Ngatitōa chief Te Rauparaha. He will discuss the impact of whaling, trading, farming and eventually conservation activity on the island. Waikanae Presbyterian Church Hall, 43 Ngaio Road – casuals/guests \$30, members \$20, season ticket holders free. WEA events this month at the same venue also include: **Introduction to Chinese language and culture**, with Cheng Yunn Fen, 6-8pm consecutive Wednesdays from April 15. Members \$150, Non-members \$160. **Kāpiti Readers and Writers Autumn Series**, with writers who live on the Kāpiti Coast or have written about it. Five consecutive Wednesdays from April 22, 2-4.30pm. \$80 for all sessions or \$20/session. Series organised by Kāpiti WEA and Bookmark Kāpiti. See kapitiwea.org.nz/weekday-courses

KIDS MARKET The Ōtaki Kids Market is back this Sunday (April 19) from 10am-2pm opposite New World, Ōtaki. The market allows young people to design and sell their own products, manage stalls, and engage with customers while building valuable real-world skills such as confidence, communication, and financial literacy.

MULLED WINE CONCERT Carolyn Mills (harp) and Bridget Douglas (flute) play at a special Mulled Wine concert, 2.30pm Sunday, May 3, at St Peter's Community Hall, Paekakariki. Tickets \$35, students \$15, through marygow@gmail.com, or 021 101 9609. See mulledwineconcerts.com

TOTE MODERN April group exhibition *Holding Space* includes potters Kathryn Lim, Val Waugh, Raelene Lord, Geneva Pomana, and Clare Botha, with Marci Tackett as the exhibiting artist. The May exhibition, *Creative Mud and Quirky Strokes*, showcases the ceramic works of guest artist Jojo Hare, and the paintings of Holly Chapman (public opening 5.30pm Thursday, April 30, at the gallery). Tote Modern Gallery, Ōtaki Race Course, Te Roto Rd. Open 10am-3pm Friday-Sunday. otakipotteryclub.org

RUN GROUP A new 6km group, starting at 6.30pm every Thursday and leaving from the Ōtaki Surf Club, has begun. Organiser and run coach Eva Southan says the goal is to get the community moving together and create a fun and safe place for runners. Free, all welcome.

ŌTAKI MUSEUM 49 Main St. 06 364-6886.

Mai i te Kāinga Tāone Iti – Wāhanga 1: 1843-1920 (From Kāinga to Village – Part 1: 1843-1920). The third exhibition focusing on the township of Ōtaki, and its development over the past 200 years. Anne Thorpe Reading Room is open at the same times as the museum, 10am-2pm Thursday to Saturday, except public holidays.

TOI MATARAU GALLERY Māoriland Hub, Main St, Ōtaki. Open Monday to Saturday 11am-4pm. Toi Matarau is a summit for multidisciplinary arts where Māori and indigenous artists gather, collaborate, are inspired and supported. See toi.maorilandfilm.co.nz

OLD COURTHOUSE GALLERY 239 Main Highway, Ōtaki. Open Thurs-Sunday: 10am-4pm. Closed Public Holidays. 027 435 0408.

TOI MAHARA Mahara Place, Waikanae. The Kāpiti Coast's public art gallery. Current exhibitions: *Further revelation: Frances Hodgkins and British modernism 1920-1935.* Frances Hodgkins developed her mature style in the 1920s, leading her to becoming, in the 1940s, one of the most celebrated modern artists. Until April 26. *Fluid Bodies, Charlotte Crichton.* This immersive mixed-media installation using light, sculpture and sound represents the inter-connectivity between the ocean and atmosphere. Until June 14. *Lotus Rising, Te Ara Korowai.* Art made by attendees of Te Ara Korowai, a creative wellbeing centre at Raumatī Beach. Until May 24. *Beyond the sky and at hand, Shigemitsu Ohashi.* Shigemitsu Ohashi of Osaka, Japan, presents ceramic works made during his time as resident artist, The Kilns at Te Horo. Until July 26.

POETRY IN ŌTAKI Third Friday of each month, 10.30-11.30am, Library Supper Room, Aotaki St. All welcome. Call 021 050 1904 for details.

ŌTAKI GARAGE SALE: Third Saturday of the month, 9am-11.30am, Presbyterian Church, 249 Mill Rd. 06 364-6449. Rev Peter Jackson 021 207 9455, owpresb@xtra.co.nz

ŌTAKI STROKE SUPPORT GROUP & WELLNESS CENTRE: Meets for Sit and Be Fit classes, 10am Friday mornings at Senior Citizens' Hall, Rangitira Street. All welcome.

ŌTAKI LIBRARY – ALL SESSIONS FREE:

JP service every Monday 10.30am-12.30pm;

Age Concern every 2nd Thursday 10am-noon

Greypower 1st & 3rd Thursday 10.30am-1.30pm.

CHOIRS Let's Sing Ōtaki, Tuesdays 2-3pm, Hadfield Hall. Kāpiti Women's Choir, Mondays 1.30-3pm, Baptist Church, Te Moana Rd, Waikanae. New members welcome. Enquiries to Ann-Marie Stapp 021 492 127.

To list an event, contact debbi@idmedia.co.nz

Sponsors key to future of kite festival

By Ian Carson

The Ōtaki Kite Festival won't carry on much longer unless sponsors can be found.

That's the stark assessment from the Ōtaki Promotions Group (OPG), which organises the event. The group is concerned that the traditional funding streams will be reduced or disappear, just as costs increase.

Since the first festival in 2013, the OPG has relied on funding from Kāpiti Coast District Council and charitable trusts. That funding has been supplemented by kite sales and other merchandise, plus fees for food trucks and craft stalls.

At the same time, compliance costs have escalated. The three main ones – traffic management, portable toilet numbers and zero waste management – total nearly \$30,000 for every event.

And this year, KCDC has reduced the total amount available to groups through the Major Events Fund to \$180,000, down from \$200,000. It has been the main funding source for the kite festival.

"That fund has been very much appreciated," says festival director Kirsty Doyle. "But this year, the OPG will be competing with other Kāpiti – and Ōtaki – events for a reduced amount of money.

"While we believe we have a strong case for continued funding, there are no guarantees."

The strong case is that the kite festival draws a huge number of visitors annually not only to Ōtaki, but also into the Kāpiti Coast from other districts. It's also the Coast's biggest free community event, attracting an estimated 20,000 people during the festival weekend.

"We have no ability to charge visitors – it's not like we can sell tickets and put a turnstile on the beach," Kirsty says. "At the same time, the OPG has always been adamant that the kite festival continue as a free community event,



one where locals can come to the beach and enjoy the spectacle without having to pay for anything.

"If we want that to continue, it means we will need help from sponsors."

It costs about \$70,000 to stage the kite festival. Apart from compliance costs, the OPG pays for the festival director's wages; live entertainment; airfares, internal travel, accommodation and meals for overseas and New Zealand kite flyers.

More than 60 volunteers – plus the volunteer members of the OPG – help out with parking, site marshalling, and information/sales tent duties.

Ōtaki hosts New Zealand's largest kite festival, and it's internationally recognised as one of the best among overseas flyers.

"We know the Ōtaki community loves the kite festival and we'll do everything we can to keep it going," Kirsty says.

■ *Anyone wishing to help, or to discuss sponsorship, can email otakikitefestival@gmail.com*



The Ōtaki fire station, with protective covering on the western roof.

New roof for station

The western side of Ōtaki's fire station is getting a reroof to deal with a leak that's been happening for about five years.

The contractor is Focus Projects Ltd, the same company that recently completed renovation work at the Civic Theatre. Work is projected to be completed by the end of June.

The reroof project is being funded by Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

The station building was constructed in 1986, but there has been a station on the Mill Road site for 100 years. The original building was officially opened in 1926. Before it was built, the brigade operated from a shed on the police reserve section.

The brigade itself was created in 1918 after citizens became concerned at the lack of local firefighting capability. Several devastating fires had destroyed shops and houses, and badly damaged both the Railway and Telegraph hotels.

A meeting in 1926 was held at the Druids Hall to establish the brigade and call for local men to join up. The first fire chief was a Captain W Bassett.

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Works aimed at resilient Ōtaki

By Ian Carson

The roadworks that have frustrated Ōtaki locals over the past couple of years are the result of several big programmes happening at once – infrastructure upgrades, expressway revocation works and routine maintenance.

So what does Ōtaki get out of it, specifically the upgrades to infrastructure? Future-proofing services for the community is a big part of it. A \$50 million investment in the town's infrastructure is aimed at supporting new housing and improving resilience as the Kāpiti Coast prepares for significant growth. Back in 2022, the district was forecast to grow by 32,000 people over the next 30 years.

Kāpiti Coast District Council's Housing Strategy identified Ōtaki as one of the areas under the most pressure, with limited housing choice and affordability forcing some residents to leave the district to find suitable homes — often moving away from whānau and support networks.

In response, the council, Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki, landowners and developers successfully secured \$29.3 million from the Government's Infrastructure Acceleration Fund (IAF), spread over 10 years. The council is contributing a further \$20.7 million.

That brings the total investment in Ōtaki to \$50 million – and it's all being spent in the town, nowhere else in the Kāpiti district.

Mayor Janet Holborow says it's a major programme of work, particularly in three waters – drinking water, wastewater and stormwater – at a time when many communities throughout



the country are struggling with ageing infrastructure.

"However, we acknowledge such a significant programme of work has been disruptive for the community and local businesses, and we truly appreciate people's patience as we get this once-in-a-generation work done," she says. "We're confident the value of this investment will become increasingly clear, both now and into the future."

The council says the funding has allowed critical upgrades to happen sooner than planned, supporting both current residents and future housing developments — with a strong focus on affordable housing and housing for Māori.

The work also ties in with Plan Change 2 to the Kāpiti Coast District Plan, adopted in 2023, which requires the district to make room for more homes, businesses and services.

Work began in the 2022/23 financial year and will roll out over the next decade.

One of the biggest priorities has been strengthening Ōtaki's drinking water network.

Previously, much of the town relied directly on its treatment plants, leaving the system vulnerable if a bore failed, power was lost or backup generators stopped working. In a worst-case scenario, much of the town could have lost water supply almost immediately — and firefighting capacity was also limited.

As part of the upgrades, a new 5.5 million-litre reservoir at the top of Te Manuao Road was completed in June last year.

Another one million-litre reservoir is planned to support the existing Waitohu Reservoir, with construction expected to begin in the 2026/27 financial year.

Work is also under way to upgrade the supply line along Waitohu Valley Road, which is now about 50 percent complete.

Other completed work includes new fire main pipes along Riverbank Road, Old State Highway 1, Waerenga Road and Dunstan Street, finished in early 2025, and a new water main along Anzac Road.



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The County Road pump station upgrade near Rāhui Road is also close to finished, sitting at about 90 percent complete.

A large chunk of the investment – \$17.9 million – is going into wastewater improvements. Parts of Ōtaki’s network are nearing the end of their life and need upgrading to cope with future growth.

The first major stage, a 2.7-kilometre gravity main along Aotaki Street and Mill Road, has already been installed. Testing and final connections are expected to wrap up within the next two months.

More work is on the way.

New wastewater pipes will be installed along

Rāhui Road, Te Roto Road and the new section of County Road from 2026/27. At the same time, the pump station near Riverbank Road and Aotaki Street will be upgraded, along with a larger gravity pipe along Riverbank Road.

In 2027/28, work is due to begin on a new gravity main along part of Rangiuuru Road, along with further pump station upgrades and a new rising main connecting to the treatment plant.

Stormwater improvements are also part of the programme, but those projects are still being worked through.

The council is looking at options for the Mangapouri Stream catchment, including culvert upgrades and ecological improvements. Survey

work is under way to help guide the design.

While the IAF-funded work is focused on key growth areas, the council says other parts of Ōtaki may need upgrades in future.

Its Infrastructure Strategy 2024–54 outlines long-term plans to maintain and expand services across the district, with priorities reviewed each year through annual and long-term planning processes.

The next Long-term Plan, covering 2027–37, is now being developed, with public consultation expected around March next year.

Residents will have a chance to say what projects they want included, as the council continues balancing the need to replace ageing

infrastructure with supporting growth in places like Ōtaki.

Other improvement works (not part of the IAF programme)

- Old SH1 revocation work due for completion July 2026 (NZTA-led)
- Mill Road/Rāhui Road roundabout upgrade – minor finishing work to be completed week beginning April 20
- new drinking water supply bore in Tasman Road – tender process under way, work expected to begin in the next few months
- Civic Theatre seismic strengthening – almost completed.





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- Local Business and Community Project grants are open from mid-May.

Community board grants are also currently open for application.

► **Visit: kapiticoast.govt.nz/funding for more information.**



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► **Visit: kapiticoast.govt.nz/goodsorts for more information.**



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- Civic Building, Paraparaumu.
- Waikanae Service Centre, Waikanae Library.
- Ōtaki Service Centre, Ōtaki Library.



Dog reshapes Irene's block outings

By Ian Carson

The day a dog ripped her arm is one that has changed Irene Mackle's daily life.

The 87-year-old Matene Street resident relies on a mobility scooter to get around. Now, her regular outing around the block requires her to cross the road to avoid the dog, which lives in the same block.

"I have to cross the road now, which I find dangerous because a lot of drivers just don't see a scooter coming off the footpath," she says.

However, it's not just her changed routine that she has had to cope with. The incident left her with a painful wound to her arm, where she says the dog bit her. Irene required medical attention, and had her arm bandaged.

There have also been other recent reports of dogs injuring people.

In a social media post, a woman said her 80-year-old mother was sitting at the beach watching the sea when a large dog jumped on to her lap. The post showed bruising to the elderly woman's arm.

The daughter – who didn't want to be named – said it wasn't the dog's fault, but the owner just cycled away while calling the dog.

She said a friend also had a dog at the beach jump on her, knocking her to the ground.

"The owner called the dog, laughed from a distance and walked off," the woman said. "Didn't check to see if she was OK or apologise."

The incident with Irene Mackle happened on March 21, out of the blue as she passed a dog being held on a lead.

She said there was some slack in the lead, allowing the dog to lunge at her and seize her arm.



Irene Mackle in Matene Street, still with a bandaged arm after a dog leapt at her.

Photo Ōtaki Today

"I had no warning or defence against this attack," she says. "It was terrifying. The consequences could have been tragically worse if the victim had been a small child or baby in a pushchair."

The young walker pulled the dog away, but Irene says he would not provide his name or proper address. However, a week later, the youngster's father passed Irene in the street and apologised.

"But he told me I should treat the dog with more respect," she says.

She admits she has sworn under her breath at the dog when passing the property and the dog has run to the fence barking.

The same day she received the apology, she had to go past the property again, and the young dog appeared over the top of the gate, barking at her.

"It scared me, so I've decided not to ride around my own block again."

Irene rang local police to lodge a complaint. They told her – and confirmed to *Ōtaki Today* – that it was a council issue dealt with under animal control bylaws.

She then contacted Kāpiti Coast District Council, which said it would investigate the complaint. The council confirms that it has looked into the incident and taken enforcement action. This included an infringement being issued to the dog's owner.

In a statement, the council said the owner had since taken steps to address the matter and reduce the risk of a similar incident occurring again. The statement did not say what those steps were, but it's understood the dog will need to be muzzled when in public.

The dog's owners were approached by *Ōtaki Today* but would not comment.

Irene says other older people tell her they no longer take walks in town for fear of dogs.

"I should be free to use the footpaths where I live without fear of attack. Ōtaki has always been a very friendly place, with people of all ages greeting each other, whether friends or strangers. It is not the time to start living in fear.

"I would make a plea to all dog owners in Ōtaki to keep them under control and disciplined."

Contact me at my Kāpiti office

020 438 8462

kapiti@parliament.govt.nz

6 Te Roto Dr, Paraparaumu

Tim Costley
MP for Ōtaki

National



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Karen Kirkham, Craig Hawke and Julie Affleck pause to admire the view at the Waimanu footbridge, Chrystalls Bend. Photo Ōtaki Today

River group shows off conservation work

By Ian Carson

Friends of the Ōtaki River (Fotor) had an “open day” on March 21 that gave the public a panoramic view of the group’s continuing work.

For the past 25 years, Fotor has been planting on the northern riverbank, building tracks and constructing footbridges. Their efforts have resulted in a stunning trail from the highway bridge to Chrystalls Lagoon. It’s a part of Ōtaki that’s becoming more popular with locals – and visitors – as a walking and biking trail.

Fotor chair Max Lutz says the open day was to not only show people the remarkable regenerating bush,

but also to give them some background to Fotor’s work.

“With the help of local families and businesses – who have sponsored plantings – and the assistance of Greater Wellington and Kāpiti councils – Ōtaki now has a beautiful natural area that is flourishing,” he says. “It will only get better with more plantings and more regeneration.”

BRIEFS

Waikanae roundabout work due to end in June

The roundabout being constructed on Old SH1 just north of Waikanae is expected to be open in June. The developer of new housing is building the roundabout as part of a requirement to provide safe, appropriate access to the site, and improve traffic flow. Stop/go traffic management will be used until completion.

Air Chathams trims services

Air Chathams is reducing the number of its scheduled services as a result of rocketing fuel costs. From April 20 until June 30, it will be cutting two flights a week between Kāpiti and Auckland. There will also be 10 fewer flights a week between Auckland and Whakatāne, and eight fewer between Auckland and Whanganui. Passengers affected are urged to contact Air Chathams or their travel agent.

Foodbank gets help with rent

NZ Community Trust in its latest funding round has granted the Ōtaki Foodbank Trust \$12,785 to help pay rent at its Main Street premises.

More for Waikawa Beach project

The Waikawa Beach Environmental Group is continuing its riparian restoration project with a scheduled planting from 10am-noon on April 10, meeting at 554 Waikawa Beach Road. All are welcome to join in.

Twenty-one call-outs

Ōtaki Volunteer Fire Brigade attended 21 call-outs during March. Six were for private fire alarms, and four to attend rubbish, grass or scrub fires. There were three each for property fires and medical emergencies, two for vehicle crashes, and one each for “special services”, to assist the Levin brigade, and “good intent”.

Train to see Romeo & Juliet

A special excursion train from Palmerston North to Wellington on Sunday, May 17 will take passengers to see the hit musical *Romeo & Juliet* at the St James Theatre. Organised by the Feilding & District Steam Rail Society, the trip includes return rail travel, bus transfers, and theatre tickets, with fares from \$250. The train departs at 1pm and returns about 9.30pm, with optional pre-ordered meals on the journey home. Passengers can relax and enjoy the scenic trip instead of driving, with the outing suited to couples, friends, or groups. *Romeo & Juliet* reimagines Shakespeare’s story with a twist – what if Juliet lived? Featuring pop hits by Max Martin, the show blends humour, romance and high-energy performance. Proceeds support the steam rail society’s work restoring historic railway equipment. Bookings are available online at www.steamrail.nz or at the Feilding Information Centre.



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GUEST OPINION

A housing system that is failing Kāpiti whānau

Despite experiencing childhood trauma, Donna (not her real name) carved out a nursing career, home, and family for herself. Then she hit a roadblock – a relationship breakdown followed by a mental health crisis. After three years of recovery her residential care facility was disestablished, and she had to make her own way. Having developed a long-term physical disability, the biggest hurdle for Donna was finding accessible housing. At one stage she was homeless. It could not have come at a worse time, right in the middle of Covid. Being on the MSD housing register got her into emergency motel housing, which was neither safe nor accessible, but no secure public housing was available. Eventually, through a community housing provider, Donna found “home” in a private Ōtaki rental which she can barely afford.

By Tara D’Sousa
Ōtaki Public Housing Group

Imagine if every whānau in Kāpiti had a decent home, one that was warm, dry, accessible, affordable, and secure – a home that allowed people to stay healthy, keep children in school, contribute to their community, and plan for the future.

Decent homes are not a luxury or a market reward. They are essential infrastructure for care, connection, and contribution.

Donna’s housing experience motivated her to tell her story as part of the 2023 Kāpiti Hikoi for the Homeless, and Select Committee hearings. However, three years later the housing situation in Kāpiti is worse. Kāpiti is facing a severe and growing housing crisis, with Ōtaki experiencing the highest housing stress in the district.

Private rentals are unaffordable and unavailable for many in our community. Only 20 percent of Ōtaki renter households are able to afford the median market rent¹ and there are few houses available that are affordable. Public and community housing make up only a small percentage of our housing stock². People experiencing homelessness are increasingly invisible, living in cars, garages, overcrowded homes, boarding houses, or temporary accommodation.

About 130 Kāpiti households are on the Ministry of Social Development housing



register, but many more whānau are experiencing housing stress. A reduction in emergency housing numbers has not translated into permanent, secure homes. Instead we are seeing preventable harm from a lack of secure and genuinely affordable housing: poorer health, disrupted education, economic stress, and fractured communities.

Despite the housing crisis deepening in our community, the government has cancelled new Kāinga Ora homes in Ōtaki and continues to under-resource hapū, iwi and Māori-led housing solutions.

In light of this harsh reality for many whānau, it was striking to read in MP Tim Costley’s recent “Around the Electorate” column the case of a constituent who received urgent housing after the MP’s intervention. While this is presented as an example of effective representation, it raises more troubling questions about the fairness of the systems we rely on.

Are we comfortable with a system where outcomes can hinge on who knows to ask, who feels confident that they will be listened to, or whose case is deemed compelling or deserving enough? Why did this individual get help, and

not Donna or the hundred plus others in the same position?

These are not neutral questions in a country where race, class, education, and confidence still shape how people are treated by institutions.

The system to ensure decent housing for all is not working, and access to it is uneven. If MPs are intervening to secure outcomes that others cannot access through standard processes, then the problem is not individual cases – it is systemic failure.

It doesn’t have to be like this.

The government can choose to increase funding for more public housing, support hapū and iwi housing, and reshape our housing system to be for living, and not for profit.

When people have decent homes, communities thrive. It means people are healthier, children learn better, whānau are more connected and economically secure, and our collective pool of resources shift from crisis response to crisis prevention.

We already have the knowledge, skills, and partnerships to fix this. What is missing is political commitment at the scale required. We call on Tim Costley to represent all people

facing a severe housing crisis.

Ōtaki Public Housing Group has come together from a shared concern for the lack of public housing for people in our area. We believe this is a key election issue and want to raise public awareness and political commitment for more public housing. Our vision is: “All whānau have decent housing because housing is a right and housing changes lives.”

We call on all political parties to commit to this vision. We ask them to commit to build enough public housing in Kāpiti – starting with Ōtaki; support community and iwi-led housing solutions; treat decent homes as essential infrastructure; and commit to long-term, cross-party solutions.

We call on all Ōtaki/Kāpiti residents to join us, sign and support our petition for more public housing at: bit.ly/4c5azfq

¹ *Not just a house, a life – Understanding housing need specific to Ōtaki, The Urban Advisory, September 2022*

² *Kāpiti housing stock is about 220 Kāinga Ora homes (88 in Ōtaki), 50 from community housing providers, and 118 council units for older people (66 in Ōtaki). See bit.ly/3Qiv2G0.*



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Indigenous films open windows to new worlds

By Ian Carson
Editor, Ōtaki Today

The Māoriland Film Festival 2026 has come and gone, as always leaving behind a sense that there is so much more to know about Indigenous culture – if only we cared to look.

What the uniquely Ōtaki film festival does, is offer a glimpse into these cultures through the lens of filmmakers throughout the world. Their films show the spirit of native peoples with laughter, excitement, sadness and anger – but above all hope.

Even as minority cultures deal with a new wave of racism and political leaders who formulate legislation seeking to further diminish the status of “other” people, there is still hope. And it shines through in many films screened during the festival.

At the same time, Indigenous films can be confronting. They highlight institutionalised inequality and indifference, showing how native peoples have suffered at the hands of colonists, power-hungry leaders and indifferent populations.

There are, of course, many movies and documentaries made by Māori filmmakers. They can be equally confronting, but also illuminating.

One I particularly enjoyed this year was *Mana Moana Mana Tangata*. This feature documentary went inside the Māori fishing world, highlighting more than 150 years of dispossession, resistance and legal battles.

It showed how the determination of Māori leaders resulted in a global-first, pan-iwi Treaty settlement and led to a Māori fishing industry.

As an *Evening Post* journalist at the time many of the negotiations were being conducted, I was

aware of the key players and the milestones. But it came from the perspective of a media that in the 1980s and 1990s still largely dismissed Māori views and aspirations.

So in seeing *Mana Moana Mana Whenua*, I was offered a new perspective – one that went behind the “news” of the time and showed how inherently difficult it was for Māori to not only be heard, but also understood.

It proves that the Māoriland Film Festival is not just for Māori. It also offers plenty for white, middle-class males like me.

The films, documentaries, rangatahi films, addresses and discussions all make us at least ponder our differences, accept who we are and respect the differences.

They also prove that no matter what stage of life you might be in, there is always the capacity to learn, especially when confronted with someone you don’t fully understand because

they are “different” from yourself.

I was born and grew up in Ōtaki, went away to experience the world and returned to a different Ōtaki. I married into families with deep Ōtaki roots – one of them Māori.

However, I can’t assume that I know how every part of this community ticks, or for example, the spiritual drivers of Ōtaki’s first peoples.

However, through the Māoriland Film Festival, I can at least broaden my understanding of how communities with large Indigenous populations work. The festival opens up windows to new worlds.

If we can allow ourselves to breathe the fresh air of understanding, we can dare to hope that a better future awaits if not for us, then future generations who have rejected the notion that being “different” is something to be dismissed, not celebrated.

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HUATAU/Opinion

HE TIROHANGA HOU: HENITI BUICK

Lucky to be part of a community that shows up for each other

March felt like one of those months that reminded me just how much is always happening in Ōtaki, and how lucky we are to be part of a community that continues to show up for each other.

At Te Puna Oranga, we are back in full swing with our school lunches programme, delivering more than 40,000 lunches this term. What a privilege it is to be able to support our tamariki and whānau in a practical way, especially as many families continue to feel the pressure of rising costs, including fuel and other everyday expenses.

Sometimes it is the steady, consistent work that matters most.

I was also lucky enough to attend the 25th anniversary of Friends of the Ōtaki River at

Crystals Bend. It was a beautiful day walking among the historic planting sites, seeing new planting under way, and hearing the stories from those who have contributed over many years. The day finished with a lovely barbecue hosted by Greater Wellington Regional Council.

On that same day, Te Wānanga o Raukawa's Putaiāo class was down at the awa doing ecology work, measuring fish, and I got to hold a 4kg tuna measuring 1.1 metres long. Not a bad way to finish a river walk.

It was awesome to see different groups contributing in their own way to the wellbeing of our awa. If you haven't walked this track, I would



highly recommend it! (See also page 9.)

March also saw the first Youth Council hui for the year, with a full chamber of rangatahi representing our district with pride, and enthusiasm. It was cool to see, and a reminder that

we need to keep improving how we hear from and respond to all parts of our community.

Another special moment was the dawn opening of the Ōtaki Civic Theatre on March 20, with karakia led by Rawiri Rikihana and his son, Manupiri Rikihana. It was peaceful, grounding, and a fitting way to awaken and bless the building ahead of Māoriland and all future community events.

There were many other important moments too, including the Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki AGM and the beautiful dawn opening of Mukakai, the new wharekai at Te Pou o Tainui, with more than 200 there to mark the significant occasion for Ngāti Kapu.

At the council, we are nearly through the Annual Plan, and while there is no formal consultation this time, the Long-term Plan begins in just a couple of months. That will be the time for our community to speak up, share priorities, and help shape what the next 10 years of investment should look like. Keep an eye on this paper and the Kāpiti Coast District Council website for updates on when and how you can have your say.

■ Heniti is the Ōtaki Ward councillor

CAM'S CORNER: CAM BUTLER

Festivals, roadworks and comms

Tēnā koutou e te whanau,
Festival-ed out!

I hope everyone was able to get out and enjoy the Te Horo Garden Trail, the Festival of Pots and Garden Art, The Festival of Arts NZ (two shows at the Māoriland Hub), Waitangi Day celebration at Taumānuka

organised by Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki, Ōtaki Kite Festival and Māoriland Film Festival. Phew! And then it isn't too long to Mātāriki. . .

Roadworks

Yep, haven't gone particularly well over the last month with the BP roundabout being problematic with asphalt supplies causing issues. However the revocation work down Old SH1 is going really well, I am happy to say.

Why do we do this?

Being a community board member or a councillor is admittedly not for everyone as it can be a very public position where you put your head above the parapet for people to take shots at you. Some people work below the radar getting things done without a public profile, however it can be hard to get elected or re-elected without a well-known persona.

Public-facing interactions can be arduous and even soul destroying if one was to take social media comments to heart. Many would have seen my personal updates on the various roadworks around Ōtaki where I have attempted to get real-life comms out to the community to advise of progress, lack or progress, road closures and upcoming issues.

I really appreciate the positive feedback from many community members and have learnt that



there are some people you just can't please no matter how hard you try.

I appreciate also the people who gave me information to forward to the community sometimes at their own risk.

Like me they were doing their best for the community as they saw fit and it showed a need that KCDC was not meeting. I hope to work with the mayor and council managers to improve community communications in the future. Small improvements have been seen already with KCDC giving more timely updates for *Ōtaki Today* to put on Facebook.

The importance of TEAM

I was reminded of how good a team we have on the Ōtaki Community Board when we planned to speak at a recent OTHBA event about supporting the Ōtaki Community Patrol. I was unable to make it so Simon Black and Rhyna Taratoa planned to attend. When Rhyna fell sick and Simon was stuck at work, Jackie Elliott (assisted by Heniti Buick) happily went along to speak instead. PS: please support the Ōtaki Community Patrol, they need members! Jackie also stepped in to take my place at the SS Otaki commemoration at Ōtaki College when ferry crossing issues meant that I couldn't get there in time. Thank you again Jackie, it sounds like I missed a great service.

- Like Ōtaki Community Board on Facebook.
- Next Ōtaki Community Board meeting is 7pm on Tuesday, June 2.

■ Cam is chair of the Ōtaki Community Board

TE HORO OUTLOOK: MICHAEL MOORE

Why we choose to call this home

Living in Waikanae, Peka Peka, and Te Horo, we are constantly reminded of why we choose to call this place home.

Ours is a district shaped by coastline, rivers, the Taraua Range, and some beautiful open space. It's a lifestyle that blends natural beauty with a strong sense of community.

Whether it's a morning walk along the beach, time spent by the Waikanae River and estuary, or simply enjoying our rural areas, our connection to the environment is something we all share, love and work, in different ways.

As a member of the Waikanae Community Board, I've been reflecting on how deeply that shared connection influences what matters to us as a community.

Throughout the Kāpiti Coast, people care about preserving what makes this place special while also ensuring it remains a practical, affordable place to live.

That balance – between protection and progress – is at the heart of many of the conversations now taking place.

With our new council settling into its work programme, a range of priorities is emerging.

Newly elected members naturally bring fresh perspectives and issues to the table, and one area already drawing strong attention is how we spend our rates.

That conversation is both necessary and healthy – but it must be grounded in facts and a clear understanding of what the council actually



does, and the long-term responsibilities we carry on behalf of our communities.

Too often, the discussion is dominated by loud, ill-informed rhetoric on social media by a small vocal minority.

While those platforms have their place, they can oversimplify complex issues or amplify frustration without offering any solutions.

In contrast, face-to-face conversations – whether at community events, meetings, or simply chatting in town – are far more valuable. They allow us to listen, to understand concerns in context, and to work together on practical improvements.

Importantly, these conversations also highlight the diversity of experiences across our district.

What matters most in Waikanae might differ from the priorities in Peka Peka or Te Horo, particularly where distance and access to services come into play.

For some residents, even small changes in costs or service levels can have a significant impact on daily life.

This is why meaningful engagement matters. When we take the time to sit down, talk, and really hear one another, we move beyond headlines and assumptions.

We begin to understand not just what people are concerned about, but why – and that is where better decisions are made.

■ Michael is a member of the Waikanae Community Board and a Te Horo resident.

THE ELECTORATE: TIM COSTLEY

Backing the firefighters who run towards the danger

National is backing our firefighters, and I'm leading the charge.

That's why I wrote to Parliament's Governance and Administration Select Committee and moved a motion asking for an inquiry into Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ). I'm pleased that all members of the committee have agreed.

When a house is burning, or a car has crashed, our volunteer and paid firefighters are the kind of people who run towards the danger. They don't stop to ask who is inside first, they run towards that danger. I will always support people who serve our community.

My inquiry focuses on fleet issues, or issues about all types of fire engines. We've seen lots

of stories highlighting recent breakdowns and the NZPFU (firefighter union) tells me fleet issues are at the top of their list.

This inquiry follows the last two annual reviews of FENZ, and an extra select committee hearing with FENZ I

requested, all of which raised serious questions. I am increasingly concerned by the confusing and contradictory nature of their answers. Here's what I was told about the latest batch of trucks:

- Dec 2024: "the majority" of trucks are in use
- Feb 2025: "zero" trucks are in use
- Jan 2026: "14" are handed over for operations now



Feb 2026: "zero" trucks are in use

Feb 2026: "17" are in training almost ready to use

Mar 2026: "16" are in training almost ready to use

Mar 2026: FENZ "can't account for the answers" that were given.

While a range of issues have been raised around FENZ, the most consistent that has arisen on every occasion is that of 'fleet' (fire trucks).

It's important that we get timely and accurate answers about what is happening with their trucks, the delays and breakdowns, and how long it will be before all current trucks are on the road. Truck failures impact every

community in New Zealand, whether those areas have volunteer or paid staff, high-rise or low-rise, urban or rural.

Our firefighters do an amazing job risking their lives to help New Zealanders in need; I fully back them. It is important that they have the necessary support from their leadership to effectively carry out their duties.

This inquiry will provide the answers that every community and firefighter deserves. It will be held over the coming months, gathering evidence through public submissions, hearings, and stakeholder consultations. The final report will deliver recommendations to Parliament. Anyone can make a submission on the Parliament website.

■ Tim is the Ōtaki electorate MP

What's stopping us empowering communities?

ABOUT 20 PERCENT of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) usually passes through the Strait of Homuz.

Strangle that and it's enough to mutilate economies across the globe and prompt New Zealand to more seriously think about greater self-sufficiency and autonomy from bigger traditional powers.

JUST A THOUGHT



FRASER CARSON

That thinking should be filtering down to the village level as well, where communities must surely be taking actions to better empower themselves, not just for the inevitable crisis, such as local and marae responses

to recent Cyclone Vaianu, but for more resilient ways of doing things, full stop.

Does that seem like an obvious and highly beneficial thing to do?

Yes of course, but the reality is, we're structurally and fundamentally disabled from doing much about empowering communities.

Allow me to make some grand generalisations to make the point – there are always exceptions to any rule.

First of all, central and local government, especially in their management functions, administer significant public resources (money and assets). Officials answer to politicians who generally prefer to assert "power" over things, while passing much of the "responsibility" back to officials. Note, for example, the speed with



which politicians hang officials out to dry at the first whiff of a stuff-up, especially if the stuff-up happens at the top.

For officials, it means control of risk is likely more important than the actual impacts of spending. In some cases this leads to chronic inertia – the risks are minimal when nothing happens.

However, taxes and rates have to be spent somehow, and risk management means internal controls must be maintained.

Could this be a big reason why central and local government is so expensive?

Of course, some money is handed over to community groups, but often with onerous checks and balances, which again adds a burden for officials and community people – the latter are often just enthusiastic volunteers.

Furthermore, such scarce funds are usually contestable, which means there are always

winners and losers, decided by the bureaucracy, meaning community organisations are encouraged to compete with each other, rather than collaborate and share.

The deeper truth is, bureaucracies resist empowered communities not because communities are wrong, but because empowerment disrupts the very logic of bureaucratic governance.

Empowerment says: "People closest to the issue should shape the solutions for themselves."

Bureaucracy says: "People furthest from the issue should manage the solutions."

Those two worldviews can coexist, but only if the system is redesigned to value participation, not just blind compliance to bureaucratic rules.

All this begs a big question. If the system works against community empowerment, why don't communities simply take it into their own hands?

As always, money is usually the key. Taxes and rates come from communities, and central and local governments take their governance roles seriously.

But the fact remains, we would all be much better off if our communities were simply given the wherewithal to sort many issues out for themselves. Take out all that remote control and save megabucks.

That may be a forlorn hope given that many citizens are happy to pay taxes and rates in exchange for someone else calling the shots. Then there are a few community organisations playing the game to get their funding and, in the process, perpetuating a system that's costly and limiting for everyone.

■ Fraser is founder of the community-building websites flightdec.com, redoor.net and inhub.org.nz

ŌTAKI YESTERDAY

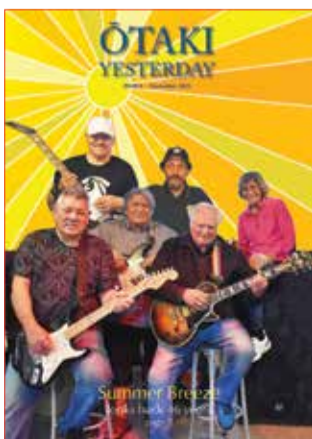
The 2025 edition of historical magazine *Ōtaki Yesterday* is now available. Its cover story features the irrepresible Anne Thorpe, who has managed to pack in an enormous amount of community work for Ōtaki. There's a story about Ōtaki's last drover, Jack Taylor, including memories from one of Jack's mates, Peter McBeth. Don Campbell tells his story of growing up at the Feltham Children's home, and Rosemary Jacobs recalls life with her family on Moana Street, Ōtaki Beach. There are plenty of other stories of old Ōtaki as well.

Ōtaki Yesterday is produced by ID Media Ltd, publishers of *Ōtaki Today*.

If you'd like a copy of the 2025 issue – or any previous issue, shown at right – for \$25 (free delivery in Ōtaki, p&p applies elsewhere), contact:

debby@idmedia.co.nz or text 027 285 4720.

Copies also available at RiverStone Cafe, Books & Co, Ōtaki PostShop, and Ōtaki Museum.



OUT NOW!

ŌTAKI YESTERDAY

ISSUE 6 • 2025

Anne Thorpe:
A life of service

p7

MAHI MĀRA/Gardening

Grow yourself a daily winter harvest

A DAILY SERVE of fresh picked, home grown vegies through the winter is easier than you think. Winter brassicas and leafy greens are far less troublesome than their summer cousins, and pests are few and far between in the cool.

Thing is, as nights and mornings cool off, so too growth slows right down, so get planting today!

The staples

The following humble crops are the staple of my winter kitchen, and winter wellness. They can all be grown in containers – no need to be fancy, a banana box will do. For quick growth choose big seedlings, plant into good compost (preferably homemade) and some vermicasts. Liquid feed weekly until soil temps drop to 10C.

Parsley: Is there a more nourishing, low maintenance, go-with-everything, herb? Grow lots! For long lived plants, pick a little from each rather than a lot from one.

Silverbeet, chard, perpetual beet, kale: Beneficent leafy greens! Nutritious, easy to grow and they fit into every wintery meal. Harvest the outside leaves regularly, to inspire fresh, new ones.

EDIBLE GARDEN



KATH IRVINE

Celery: Celery loves seaweed. Add it beneath the mulch, and liquid feed with it often. Pick the outside stalks regularly with a twist and pull to keep new growth coming on. I grow mine in the greenhouse to prevent rust.

Winter salads: Miners lettuce, corn salad, land cress, winter lettuce, rocket and coriander

Spring onions: So underrated! Plant in bunches. Cut the tops at soil level to harvest, and the bulb will resprout.

Fabulous brassicas: For a useful, steady supply, plant a mix of slow-to-mature with quick growers. A mixture is also a bonus to vary it up at dinnertime.

The slow: Most cabbage and broccoli take about 75 days from transplant to table. Cauliflower is longer again, about 90 days, and

gorgeous purple sprouting broccoli even longer still – it'll start shooting late winter or spring. So worth the wait though.

The quick: Chinese cabbage, gai lan and bok choy are ready in about six weeks from transplant. So too Italian rabe, which is a delicious, unusual green.

Here's a virtual bed for inspiration.

In a 1.2x4m bed, plant two cauliflower, three broccoli, two cabbages, one purple sprouting broccoli, a selection of leafy greens, parsley, and maybe celery, too. Plant the sunny outside "picking" edge with quick growers like bok choy, broccoli rabe, and a variety of winter friendly salad greens and spring onions.

The bok choy will be ready first. Once that's out, fill the space as you wish. Next you'll be

harvesting rabe, followed by main broccoli heads. Once the head is cut from the broccoli it'll continue to put out more shoots – as long as you keep picking them! Then comes cabbage, and broccoli shoots, followed by the cauliflower and still more broccoli shoots!

Any gaps in harvest will be filled by your handy dandy leafy greens, spring onions, and celery. A mixed bed planted once a month from now through June will provide wonderful continuity winter through spring.

■ *Kath has been growing food for her family for 21 years. Spray-free, natural, low-input food gardens are her thing. Kath offers organic gardening advice through her articles, books, workshops, and garden consultations.*



A abundance of winter veggies.

Photo ediblebackyard.co.nz

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WEA KAPITI

‘Bombshell’ research designed to mislead

This column is part 2 of the March column.

People can lose faith in the medical establishment for many reasons: chronic illness can leave patients feeling repeatedly let down, while others might have had a bad experience with a medication or medical procedure.

Even so, most people retain a sense of proportion and appreciate that, in general, medical science offers sound, beneficial guidance. However, the “do your own research” movement draws on a deeper, more ideological loss of trust in scientific institutions, health authorities, and the experts associated with mainstream science. And in the online spaces where this distrust gathers momentum – from Rumble, Odysee and X, to anti-vaccine sites – the language can become deeply conspiratorial.

There is the conviction that “the truth is being suppressed” with a presumption of corruption: “the scientists knew”, “the doctors will be held accountable”, “everyone will face justice”.

In this worldview, malevolence is assumed, with institutions cast as complicit – denounced as “bought media”, “fake science”, and “captured regulators”. The rhetoric goes as far as accusations of “crimes against humanity” and demands for “Nuremberg-style trials”.

People doing their own research are drawn

to self-described “whistleblowers” who present themselves as defiant rebels battling powerful institutions, claiming to expose hidden truths. This narrative is especially compelling for groups already primed to believe that governments and health authorities are concealing something. But these figures should not be confused with genuine whistleblowers: self-styled whistleblowers bypass proper channels of disclosure, and despite their impassioned rhetoric, their claims collapse under scientific scrutiny.

People doing their own research love the “bombshell” study with a “stunning revelation” or “explosive leak”. If one study can reveal everything, they can avoid the complexities of real science – no need to read and evaluate multiple studies, no need to check methodologies, no need to grapple with nuance. Yet a supposed bombshell often rests on a methodologically flawed study, a study misinterpreted beyond its evidence, or even one deliberately crafted to mislead.

For example, predatory journals routinely publish sensational claims about the Covid-19 so-called “gene-therapy jab”, including papers alleging mass deaths that have no scientific basis.

In contrast, the scientific consensus is clear: across clinical trials and large-scale epidemiological studies worldwide, serious adverse reactions are extremely rare. And when weighed against the risks of Covid-19 itself – including hospitalisation, long-term complications, and death – the benefits of vaccination overwhelmingly outweigh the small risks identified.

People doing their own research often appeal to anecdotal evidence. Personal stories feel compelling – we are wired to understand the world through narrative – but anecdotes are the weakest form of evidence: they draw on tiny,

non-representative samples, lack controls for confounding variables, and cannot distinguish coincidence from causation. Their seductive power is illustrated by the fact that virtually any alternative remedy, no matter how implausible, can accumulate glowing testimonials.

In 2021, more than 90 percent of New Zealand adults were vaccinated against Covid-19. With such high coverage, it’s a statistical certainty that most subsequent deaths – from strokes, cancers, heart attacks, and the many other conditions that claim nearly 4000 New Zealanders each month – would occur among vaccinated people. That pattern is exactly what you’d expect in a highly vaccinated population; it’s not evidence of vaccine harm, no matter how many anecdotes are collected.

Yet anti-vaccine groups and DIY researchers continue to collect anecdotal accounts of vaccine harm that provide no reliable evidence of causality, and cannot outweigh the extensive, well-controlled studies demonstrating vaccine safety. Nevertheless, for many people a vivid personal story feels more real than any statistic, no matter how robust.

People who distrust institutions and mainstream scientists still seek expert validation, which makes the credentialed dissenter – the “expert who agrees with me” – especially appealing. A scientist who aligns with the consensus is rarely newsworthy, but the contrarian who loudly breaks ranks gets the podcast invitation and the viral clip. Those are the spaces where DIY researchers often do their “research”.

Science thrives on debate and the testing of ideas, but people doing their own research struggle to distinguish a legitimate minority view from the contrarian scientist who rejects the weight of evidence without producing

rigorous, peer-validated work to support their claims. Rather than engaging with the normal mechanisms of scientific scrutiny, these figures typically bypass them altogether, taking their arguments straight to media outlets, podcasts, social platforms, or predatory journals.

They often offer simple explanations for complex problems with unwarranted certainty and, much like the self-styled whistleblower, cast themselves as brave, heroic truth-tellers standing up to powerful institutions – a moral narrative that diverts attention away from actually appraising the science.

Contrarian scientists lean on the authority of their credentials, but frequently on topics outside their domain of expertise, where they lack the relevant training or research background. For example, one prominent American cardiologist used VAERS adverse-event reports to claim that Covid-19 vaccines were killing people in huge numbers – an interpretation far outside his area of expertise and rejected outright by epidemiologists and vaccine-safety specialists. In a vast scientific literature, you can always cherry-pick a contrarian ‘expert,’ to support almost any view.

Unfortunately, we have groups in New Zealand – including New Zealand Doctors Speaking Out with Science (NZDSOS) and Voices for Freedom (VFF) – with an appalling track record of promoting contrarian scientists, misrepresenting evidence, and steering people into the DIY-research rabbit hole.

The loudest calls to “do your own research” tend to come from people who are really bad at it.

■ Dr Steve Humphries is a director at Hebe Botanicals in Ōtaki. He was a lecturer at Massey University and director of the Health Science Programme.



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FLU2026

Tree vs fence – a guide to neighbourly resolution

THE STORM has passed, and now your neighbour's tree is lying across your lawn, having flattened the boundary fence.

It's a mess of splintered timber and tangled branches – and it raises urgent questions: who cleans this up, and who pays for the fence?

While the legal answer hinges on foreseeability, navigating the aftermath requires a calm, practical approach. Here's your guide.

Step 1: Safety first, phone second

Before anything else, check for hazards such as downed power lines or unstable branches. Once it's safe, document everything.

Photos and videos are essential – capture the fallen tree, the fence damage, and any other impacts. Importantly, take close-up shots of where the tree broke. These can reveal pre-existing rot or disease, which may become crucial evidence.

Step 2: Talk to your neighbour and insurer

Approach your neighbour calmly – they're likely just as stressed. The aim is to open a conversation, not start a dispute. Next, contact your insurance company promptly. They can appoint an assessor, help determine liability, and liaise with your neighbour's insurer. This takes much of the pressure and negotiation off your shoulders.

Step 3: Understand who pays

Liability generally comes down to one key question: Was the tree a known risk?

If a healthy tree falls during an extreme, unforeseeable storm, with no prior indication it posed a hazard, this is likely to be considered an "act of God". In that case, the cost is typically shared. Under the Fencing Act 1978, where a fence is damaged by a sudden accident, adjoining occupiers may carry out the work and recover half the cost

MATTERS OF LAW



CORINNA SIPPEL

from the other.

However, if the tree was visibly diseased, rotten, or unstable – and the owner knew or ought to have known it posed a risk – this may amount to negligence. In those circumstances, the tree owner can be responsible for the full cost of repairing the damage. This overrides the usual 50/50 split.

A landowner must exercise the care of a reasonably prudent person, which includes addressing known hazards. For example, if other trees on the property have recently fallen, it may be reasonably foreseeable that remaining trees pose a risk. Failing to act in such circumstances may point to negligence.

Step 4: Prevention is the best cure

You don't need to wait for damage to occur. If you're concerned about a neighbour's tree, the Property Law Act 2007 provides a pathway. You can apply to the District Court for an order requiring a tree to be trimmed or removed if it poses an actual or potential risk to your property.

The court may make an order if it is fair and reasonable to do so.

By documenting the situation, communicating early, and understanding your rights, you can navigate the aftermath of a fallen tree – and restore both your fence and neighbourly relations.

■ Corinna is a solicitor at Wakefields Lawyers – 04 9780 3600 or info@wakefieldslaw.com

How to ask for flexible work

WITH the huge increase in fuel costs recently, you're probably trying to use your car less and you might be thinking about working from home.

So how do you bring it up with your employer and what are your rights? The best place to start is with your employment agreement – does it mention how you agree on flexible working arrangements? All employees have the right to request flexible employment arrangements, but that doesn't mean the automatic right to work from home.

Then think about what working from home would look like for you and also from your employer's perspective. What are the benefits for both of you and how will you manage any challenges working remotely might create. What do you think would be reasonable? You could also chat to colleagues or friends who already have flexible working arrangements to understand how they make it work.

Next up, talk to your boss. They know times are tough. While you do have to put your request in writing, it's a good idea to let them know beforehand. They may already be thinking about it and give their perspective. If they haven't had time to think about it, they'll appreciate you giving them a heads-up.

Now you need to put your request in writing. Make sure you include:

- your name, the date and that you are making your request under Part 6AA of the Employment Relations Act 2000
- what you want to change and how long you want these changes to last. If you're asking for a permanent change, suggest a trial period to sort out any problems. If it's temporary, set a date or an outcome at which the changes would revert to your current situation.
- explain how you see the arrangement working for both you and your employer

CITIZENS ADVICE



MARIA FYVIE

• try to identify changes your employer may need to make about how the business works – for example, how the team works together or the physical set-up of the workplace.

Make sure you keep a copy of your request, and note when you sent it to your employer.

Your employer must give your request fair consideration and reply in writing, as soon as possible, but no later than one

month from when you make the request.

If your employer declines your request, they need to provide a specific reason why, and in writing. They can't just decline; they must have reasonable grounds. You can ask if they have an alternative that might meet both your needs. There is no limit on how many requests you can make for flexible working arrangements, so you can take some time and make the request again. You can also contact Employment NZ if your employer doesn't follow the process for notifying you of their decision.

If your employer agrees to you working from home, they do not have to cover your costs, such as additional electricity or internet etc, unless it's in your employment agreement. They may choose to, but it's not legally required. You and your employer both still have health and safety obligations to meet.

If you'd like to find out more about your right to flexible working, pop in to see our Citizens Advice Bureau volunteers at 65a Main Street between 10am and 1pm Monday-Friday, call us on 364 8664 or go to our website at CAB.org.nz and search "working from home" in the Ask Us box.

■ Maria is secretary of Kāpiti CAB

When you're not the leader, you're the bottleneck

THERE'S A CONVERSATION that happens in almost every business I work with. It usually sounds something like this:

"Can you just check this before I send it?"

"Thought I'd run it past you first."

"Just wanted to get your view before we go ahead."

On the surface, it seems fine. Responsible, even. Your team is being diligent. They respect your judgement. What's the problem?

The problem is that it never stops.

Every meaningful decision – big and small – finds its way back to you. And over time, that creates a very real constraint on your business:

you become the bottleneck. The business can only move as fast as you can think, respond, and decide.

If you're a business owner in the Ōtaki region – running a trades business, a construction firm, a small manufacturing operation, or a technical services company – this pattern will likely sound familiar. It's one of the most common issues I see in owner-led businesses that have grown past the point where one person can (or should) be across everything.

The real problem isn't your team

Most owners, when they notice this pattern, assume the issue is with their people. "They lack confidence." "They need more training."

"They're just not stepping up."

Sometimes that's true. But more often, the issue sits elsewhere – with the system, not the people.

Here's what's actually happening: you haven't clearly defined who owns which decisions. So your team does what they've been – often unintentionally – trained to do. They escalate. Not because they're incapable. But because they're unclear.

In businesses where everything comes back to the owner, you'll usually find a few consistent patterns:

- decisions aren't clearly allocated to specific roles
- authority is implied rather than defined
- mistakes get quietly corrected by the owner
- "final sign-off" sits with you, on almost everything

Over time, your team learns that it's safer to check. And once that pattern is set, it compounds. Even your most capable people start to defer.

The hidden cost

At first, it feels manageable. You're involved, things get done properly, you maintain control. But the cost builds quickly – slower decisions, frustrated team members, reduced ownership, and increasing pressure on you. Eventually, you don't have a team making decisions. You have a team preparing decisions . . . for you.

And this matters beyond just day-to-day efficiency. It's a scalability issue.

A business that depends on one person for decisions struggles to grow. It becomes fragile under pressure. It limits the development of the people around you. And it keeps you stuck

YOUR BUSINESS



CHRIS WHELAN

in the centre of everything, even when you'd rather be focused on the bigger picture.

What needs to change

The fix isn't finding better people. It's building a clearer decision system.

That means defining who owns which types of decisions, being explicit about authority levels, and – importantly – allowing decisions to be made without automatic escalation back to you.

It also means accepting that some decisions won't be made exactly as you would have made them. That's not a failure. That's what development looks like.

This is where most owners hesitate. Because it requires letting go before the system feels perfect. And for people who've built something from nothing, letting go doesn't come naturally.

But when a clear decision system is in place, something important changes. Decisions start happening without you. Leaders step up because they have to. You shift from approving every call to guiding the people who make them. The business becomes less reactive, less dependent, and more stable.

A question worth sitting with

Right now, in your business: how many decisions still require your direct input? And more importantly, why? If the honest answer is "most of them", it's worth asking whether that's by design or by default. Because in most cases, it's not a people problem. It's a structure problem. And structure can be fixed.

■ Chris is a business and leadership coach based in the Wellington region. For more, visit chriswhelancoaching.com



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This series of profiles on local businesses is supported by Land Matters and Pritchard Civil

Black & Co, where craft still matters

In the Ōtaki retail precinct, away from the churn of fast fashion and mass production, something enduring is still being made by hand.

At Black & Co Quality Leather NZ Ltd, time slows down. Here, leather is cut, shaped, stitched and finished much the same way it has been for decades – guided not by trends, but by tradition, skill, and an unwavering belief that quality should last.

Founded more than half a century ago by craftsman Peter Black, the business has grown from its Suspender manufacturing roots into one of New Zealand's last remaining leather goods manufacturers. Today, it's being carried forward by Leon and Melissa Kingi, a local couple who have spent the past nine years not just running the business, but also protecting something far rarer: a legacy.

Melissa's connection to Black & Co runs deep. Having worked alongside the founder, she learned the trade from the ground up, absorbing not just the techniques, but also the philosophy behind them.

Now based on Ōtaki's historic Old State Highway 1 shopping strip, the workshop and retail space offer something increasingly uncommon: transparency. Through viewing windows at the rear of the store, customers can witness the process first-hand – belt-driven machinery humming steadily, treadle-operated cutters in motion, and skilled hands shaping each piece with care.

It's a world away from the anonymous offshore factories that dominate today's retail landscape.

"We're not trying to compete with cheap imports," Melissa says. "We're offering something completely different – something that's made to last."

That philosophy is stitched into every product. Black & Co specialises in handcrafted leather belts, widely regarded by loyal customers as items that don't just last years, but decades. It's not uncommon to hear stories of belts worn daily for 10 or 15 years – sometimes longer – before finally being replaced.

One such story, Melissa recalls, is of a local farmer who returned after more than a decade of



Belts, bags, boots and sheepskin – if it's anything leather, Black & Co's Melissa and Leon Kingi are likely to be making it.
Photo Ōtaki Today

daily use.

"Considering the wear and tear a farmer's belt goes through, that's the sort of lifespan people should expect," she says.

That durability begins with the materials. The business sources premium full-grain leather – from either Italian or New Zealand tanneries – chosen for its strength, resilience, and ability to age gracefully. Unlike synthetic or lower-grade alternatives, it doesn't crack or split under pressure. Instead, it develops character over time.

But materials are only part of the equation. What truly sets Black & Co apart is its commitment to doing things the right way – even when that way is slower.

That same philosophy has guided the Kingis as they've quietly expanded their footprint.

In 2022, they bought Sheepskin Sales NZ Ltd, another long-standing Ōtaki business, continuing its legacy through SheepskinNZ. Today, those products are both manufactured and retailed locally, ensuring that the craftsmanship and reputation built over decades remains alive and accessible.

That same year also marked the continuation of another story. When respected leather goods

maker Konev stopped operating, the Kingis recognised the value in what was being lost. From that, the "Ōtaki" range was born – a growing collection of New Zealand leather bags, wallets and accessories inspired by Konev's decades of craftsmanship, now reimagined and carried forward under Black & Co.

More recently, in September 2025, Leon and Melissa stepped in to revive another piece of Ōtaki's retail landscape. After the closure of a long-standing local favourite earlier that year, they bought and reopened it as Perfume & Cosmetics Outlet Ōtaki, a business that had served the community for 11 years. Now operating from a shop next door to Black & Co, it continues to offer locals and visitors a familiar and valued retail experience.

While diverse on the surface, each of these ventures shares a common thread: a commitment to continuity, quality, and community.

That commitment extends beyond the workshop doors. Leon is a committee member of the recently formed Ōtaki & Te Horo Business Association, where he is involved in efforts to strengthen and revitalise the local retail environment. Among those efforts is a

broader push to reinvigorate the Ōtaki retail precinct – encouraging foot traffic, supporting local businesses, and ensuring the area remains a vibrant destination.

Like many in the community, the Kingis have also weathered the disruption caused by years of roadworks. But there is a strong sense of optimism about what lies ahead.

With the anticipated completion of the PP20 revocation works, the long-term benefits are coming into view. The transformation promises not only a physical facelift for the retail precinct, but also a renewed sense of energy for the town. For business owners, locals, and visitors alike, the challenges of recent years are seen as an investment in a stronger future for Ōtaki.

Back in the workshop, however, the core of the business remains unchanged.

Beyond belts, Black & Co produces a wide range of leather goods, from guitar straps and dog collars to knife sheaths, suspenders, and even specialised equipment for our Army, Navy, and Police. Custom work remains a cornerstone of the business, as does repair – a service that speaks volumes about the company's ethos.

In a throwaway culture, Black & Co chooses restoration over replacement. Worn items are brought back to life, with belts shortened, slipper soles replaced, and handles repaired. It's a quiet but powerful rejection of disposability.

And while the business has built a loyal following in New Zealand and among international visitors, its heart remains firmly in the community.

Leon and Melissa aren't chasing scale for the sake of it. Instead, they are focused on maintaining the integrity of the craft, ensuring that each piece leaving their workshop reflects the same standard that has defined the brand for more than 50 years.

In doing so, they are not only preserving a legacy, they are helping shape the future of their town.

In Ōtaki, inside a workshop where the past and present meet, Black & Co is proving that craftsmanship hasn't disappeared – it's simply been entrusted to the right hands – and is now part of a wider story of renewal.



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HĪTŌRIA/History

A trail of extraordinary coincidences

I HAVE RECENTLY been working on two heritage related activities. One was in support of a March 9 wreath-laying ceremony at Ōtaki College.

This ceremony has been hosted annually since the college's SS Otaki Monument was installed to mark the centenary of the sinking of the New Zealand Shipping Company ship SS Otaki in



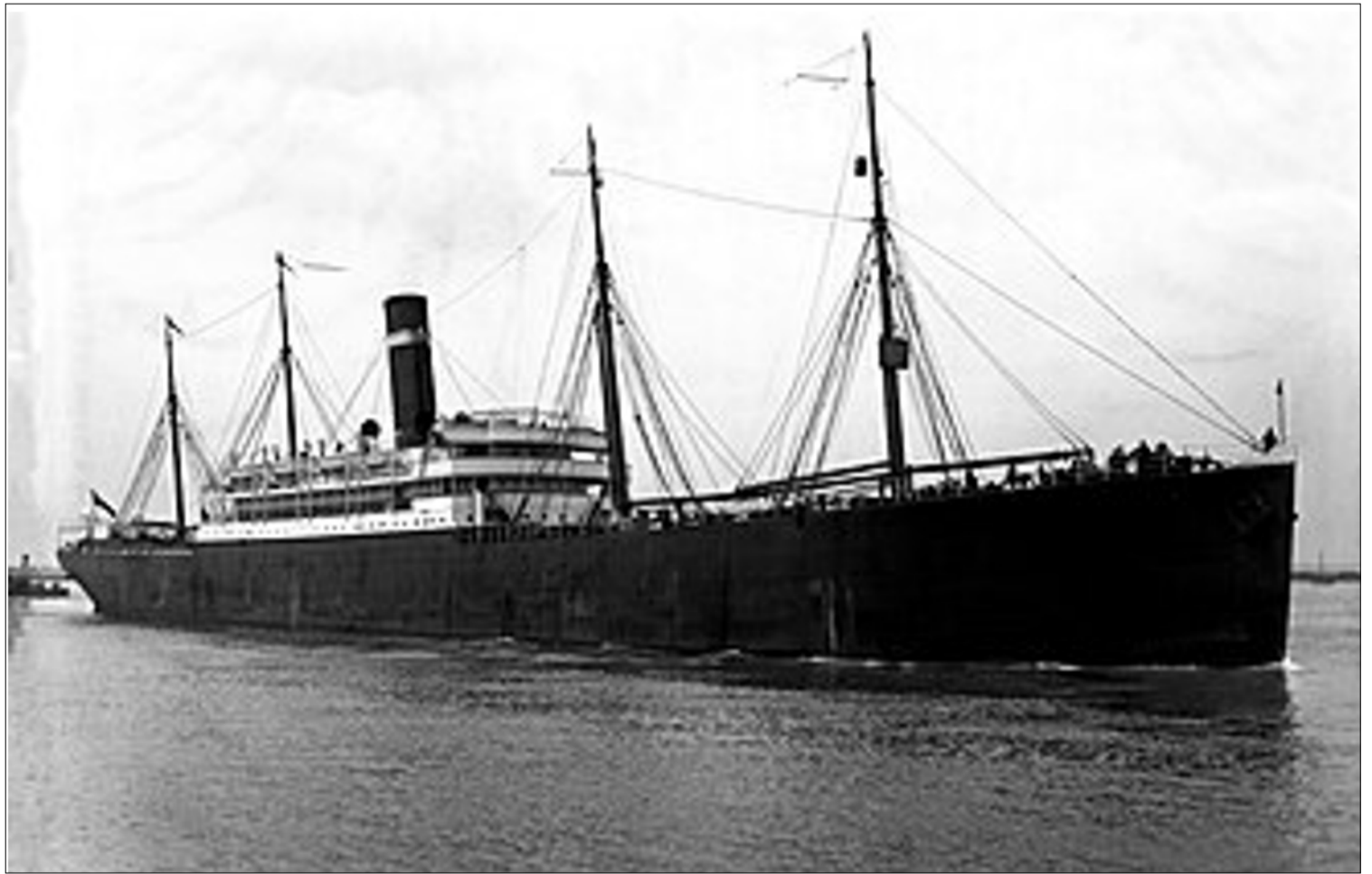
1917. The monument was unveiled by Governor-General Dame Patsy Reddy.

While the SS *Otaki* connection is central to these ceremonies, it shares that space with the opportunity to recalibrate the belated national recognition of the Merchant Navy's vital role in the First and Second World Wars,

and the magnitude of the sacrifice made by Merchant Navy seafarers.

Each year the ceremony has a theme, and this determines the content and form of the speeches that are made. This year the theme was "Women at Sea in War".

Two key stories were identified by students as the basis for speeches – one of which was about the *Marquette*. The ship was built as a cargo ship, but was converted to a transport ship at the beginning of the First World War.



The *Marquette*, which was sunk on October 23, 1915. Ten nurses and 22 medical orderlies from New Zealand lost their lives.

Travel & Show

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Sunday 17th May 2026

Board your train from Palmerston North, Levin, or Ōtaki and head to Wellington's St James Theatre for *Juliet* — a bold, feel-good reimagining of a classic story!

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At 7pm on October 19, 1915, the ship sailed from Alexandria, Egypt, bound for Salonika, Greece. The No 1 New Zealand Stationary Hospital, which included 36 nurses of the New Zealand Army Nursing Service and staff from the New Zealand Medical Corps, was embarked.

Also on board were about 500 British officers and troops with their equipment and mules. In total there were 741 people on the *Marquette*.

At 9am on October 23, the ship was hit by a torpedo from a German submarine, and quickly listed to port. The ship sank within 10 minutes. It was to be nine hours before survivors were rescued – after many of those who had got off the ship had died of exposure, exhaustion or their injuries.

Ten of the 36 New Zealand nurses died in the disaster, as did 157 others on board.

At the same time as I was doing some research on the *Marquette*, I was looking for material for the new exhibition at the Ōtaki Museum. The exhibition is about the town from 1920 to 1989, and I was looking at the types of businesses located here during the period.

One of those I came across was a construction business owned by John Pole. It was on the corner of Domain and Mill roads from 1893.

Before coming to Ōtaki to build the Central Hotel, John Pole had been involved in building Larnach Castle in Dunedin, and the Catholic Church in Westport. In Ōtaki he built Bright's Theatre in 1913, and in 1922 the residence of Charles Atmore, who was to be mayor of Ōtaki for about 19 years.

John Pole also made a substantial contribution to the community, as one of the first members of the Ōtaki Town Board, which preceded the borough council, and as one of the commissioners when Tasman and Anzac roads were laid out. He also did the contract work of kerbing and channelling the main streets.

During the First World War he was a member of the Patriotic Society and on the committee of a proposed Peace Memorial. In 1933, on the death of his wife, he sold his business and retired to Whanganui. He died there in 1939 at the age of 89.



Alfred Pole, who died when the *Marquette* was torpedoed.

The Poles had six children, the youngest being a son, Alfred.

In a twist of fate, Alfred joined the New Zealand Medical Corps and on October 23, 1915, he was on board the *Marquette*, attached as a private to the No 1 New Zealand Stationary Hospital.

He was one of the 22 New Zealand medical orderlies who died. He is buried in Salonika.

The survivors established a tent hospital at Salonika in which they treated cases of frostbite, typhoid and dysentery until March 1916, when they left for France.

Remarkably the connections in this story don't stop here.

When John Pole left England for New Zealand in 1876, the ship in which he made the voyage was none other than the recently built New Zealand Shipping Company (NZSCo) sailing vessel *Otaki!*

The ship was the first of NZSCo's four vessels to have the name – the second was the SS *Otaki* sunk by German gunfire in 1917 and commemorated at the college every March.

■ David is chair of Ōtaki Heritage.

WAITOHU SCHOOL ROOM 3



GOT OLD PHOTOS?
 If you have old school photos – or any photos of old Ōtaki – please get in touch. We're building our archive so we can keep publishing snapshots of life when the town and district were younger. Email us, including names and other information if you can. Contact debbi@idmedia.co.nz with additions or corrections to captions.

WAITOHU SCHOOL Room 3:
 Are you in this class? What year is it?

Some of the class have been identified via social media, as below.
Back row: Stephen Hunt, Marty Bertelsen, Alfred ?, Michael Thomsen, Andrew H?, Mark Hamlin, unknown, Robert Logan. unknown.

Row 3: all unknown, but teacher Miss Whitelaw.

Row 2: unknown, Kerryn Wylie, rest unknown

Front row: unknown.

Some names mentioned but not matched to the photo are: Linley Robinson, Catherine Bennett and Heather Crichton.

If you can fill in the gaps, please get in touch (contacts above).

Future of Ōtaki Hospital on the line

The future of Ōtaki Hospital – also known as Ōtaki Cottage Hospital and later the Ōtaki Maternity Hospital – was on the line in 1926, only 27 years after it was opened.

Patients were being transferred to Palmerston North, provoking fears of closure and skulduggery on the part of the Palmerston North Hospital Board. Ōtaki MP Bill Field took up the case to retain the hospital.

Ōtaki Mail, 23 July 1926
 ŌTAKI HOSPITAL.

PLEA BY MR FIELD. CASE FOR RETENTION.

In the House on Wednesday night Mr. Field [MP for Ōtaki William Hughes Field] spoke strongly against the idea of the Palmerston North Hospital Board taking away patients from the Ōtaki Hospital with a view to starving the Ōtaki Hospital. He said that patient after patient who could be treated at Ōtaki had been taken away to Palmerston North. Some had to travel 60 miles [95km]. There were also patients stricken down by disease or accident who had been conveyed long distances over rough roads to

Palmerston North. In one case, in which the patient had been ill indeed, the patient had fallen from the bed on to the floor of the ambulance. Life was seriously endangered by taking patients long distances. A gross wrong would be done if the Ōtaki Hospital was closed.

It should be made the centre of a new hospital district with increased accommodation and a maternity ward. In such a prosperous and growing district nothing should be done to affect the Ōtaki Hospital.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER, WELLINGTON, July 21, 1926.

Speaking in the House of Representatives early this morning, Hon J A [Alex] Young (Minister of Health) referred to the Ōtaki Hospital. He said that years ago Ōtaki was in the Wellington district, but decided to separate and come under the wing of Palmerston North.

The result was that, with the development of the latter district, a very efficient base hospital was established at Palmerston North, and this reduced the status of the Ōtaki Hospital, and the Board decided to close it. At present the Government was "carrying the baby", but

hoped that an agreement would be soon reached. The position, however, seemed hopeless, now the parties, in conference, had left it to the Minister to decide. He hoped to decide at an early date, but thought it wise not to give too early a decision because a good deal of agitation been working up in the Ōtaki district. He would confer very closely with the department and would give a decision which he hoped would be agreeable, not only to Ōtaki, but also to the Palmerston North Hospital Board. He had to be careful or he might put himself in the position of a man who interfered between another man and his wife while they were quarrelling.

At the last meeting of the Foxton Borough Council it was unanimously decided to support the Foxton Chamber of Commerce protest against any attempt to make the Ōtaki Hospital a charge on the Palmerston North Hospital District and to support the Department's policy of one base hospital with the appointment of trained nurses for outlying districts was endorsed. It was decided, however, that the point should be stressed that sufficient ambulance service should be supplied by the Palmerston North Hospital Board to meet requirements.



FROM NGĀ TAONGA
 SOUND & VISION
 ARCHIVES

A 'health camp for happiness'

New Zealand's first permanent children's health camp was opened near Ōtaki beach in 1932.

Local business entrepreneur Byron Brown gifted about 70 acres of his land to establish the Raukawa (later Ōtaki) Children's Health Camp.

The kaupapa of New Zealand health camps was established during the First World War. They were to be temporary places of refuge for children whose wellbeing required additional care and support beyond the home.

The intention was to offer a range of resources to build up a vulnerable child's health and immunity – six weeks of good

nutrition, regular medical check-ups and lots of restorative fresh air and sunshine.

In 1937, Government Film Studios produced Prime Minister Michael Joseph Savage's public address "Health Camps for Happiness". In his carefully scripted words, "the purpose of the health camps is not to cure disease in children but to prevent it by building their reserves of health and fitness".

The film *Health Camps for Happiness* can be seen in the Ngā Taonga online collection at ngataonga.org.nz, reference no. F6470.



Children in the Ōtaki Children's Health Camp dining room in the 1940s.
 Photo credit: Evening post (Newspaper. 1865-2002): Photographic negatives and prints of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: 1/2-162598-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, /records/23250158

Protecting native species from introduced predators in

Project Kaka (Taranua Range)

The Department of Conservation (DOC) is going to control rats, possums and stoats over approx. 31,333 ha. This is scheduled for the first clear weather window from late April 2026.

Native wildlife and forests need protection

Native species are fighting for survival due to predation from rats, stoats and possums. Without protection, we risk losing the unique natural heritage and biodiversity within the Project Kaka treatment area.

Predator control operations are done when monitoring shows predators have reached levels that threaten the populations of native species.

The Taranua range is home to the iconic kākā, korimako, kākārīki, titipounamu, bats/pekapeka and other native birds. The native tree fuchsia is also present.

DOC has controlled possums, rats, stoats and goats in the area to protect native fauna and flora against browsing and predation every three years since 2011 and prior to that at six-to-seven-year intervals.

Our plan to protect native species

Through sustained predator control using 1080, there is a big increase in breeding success for native birds, their food source is more abundant, and the forest canopy is healthier.

The safest and most effective method we have to control possums, rats and stoats over large areas is to use biodegradable cereal bait pellets containing 1080. This bait targets rodents and possums. Stoats are also controlled through secondary poisoning as they feed on the carcasses of the dead rodents.

Helicopters distribute bait pellets across the forest area along pre-determined and monitored flight paths using technology that enables accurate placement. This is the only viable method to control predators in Project Kaka, Taranua Range, due to the vast and rugged terrain.

This operation begins with the distribution of non-toxic pre-feed bait pellets (sandy coloured). This prepares possums and rodents to eat the toxic bait (dyed green) that is applied afterwards. Both baits are about 16 mm in diameter and cylindrical shaped.

Consultation and permissions

DOC has consulted with hapū, iwi and key stakeholders including landowners adjacent to the treatment area.

DOC is delegated authority by the Environmental Protection Agency to decide applications for permission to use 1080 on land administered or managed by DOC. Permission has been granted for this operation. DOC has also received the required permission from the Ministry of Health. DOC ensures that all legal and policy requirements are met, and that any potential risks of the operation are managed.

Managing risk

1080 is poisonous to humans, domestic and game animals. In areas where the toxin has been applied, dogs are highly at risk until poisoned carcasses have disintegrated. This takes four-to-eight months or longer.

There will be warning signs placed at entrances to the treatment area immediately prior to the operation.

Risks can be eliminated by following these rules:

DO NOT touch bait

WATCH children at all times

DO NOT EAT animals from this area or within the buffer zone outside the treatment boundary. The buffer zone is 2 km for deer and pigs, 200 m for rabbits, and 1 km for hares, tahr, wallabies and possums.

Poison baits or carcasses are DEADLY to DOGS

Observe these rules whenever you see warning signs about pesticides. These signs indicate pesticide residues may be still present in baits and poisoned carcasses. When signs are removed, normal activities can resume. If in doubt, check with your local DOC office. Please report suspected vandalism or unauthorised removal of signs.

If you suspect poisoning, please contact:

- Your local doctor or hospital OR The National Poisons Centre: 0800 764 766 (urgent calls) or 03 479 7248 OR dial 111
- Seek veterinary advice for suspected poisoning of domestic animals.

For more information

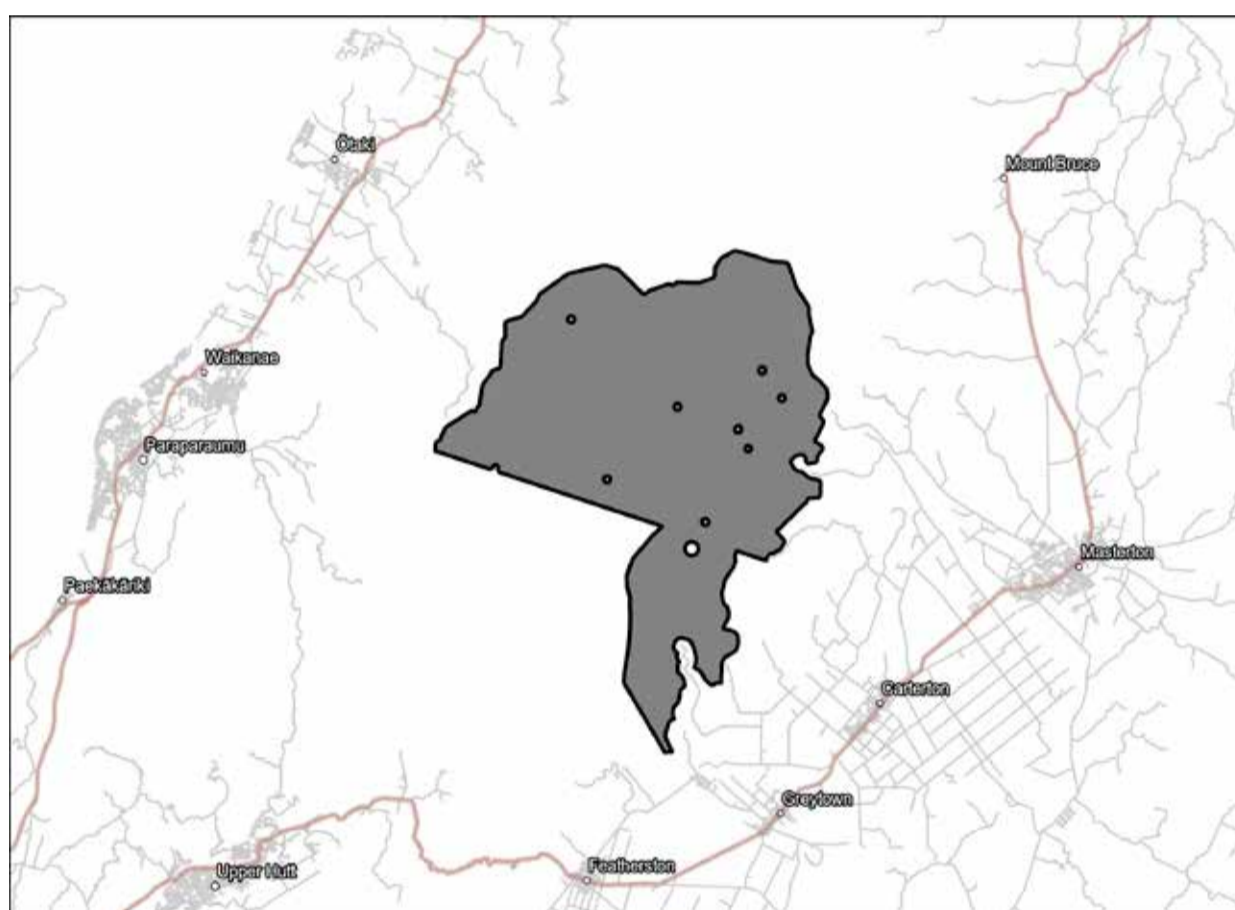
Please contact: Project Kaka Operational Planner, Palmerston North DOC office, 0800 275 362, info@doc.govt.nz

OR Aerial Operations Manager, EcoFX, 07 873 8130, ecofx-office-nz@rentokil-initial.com

Visit the DOC website: More information about DOC's National Predator Control Programme is available on our website www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/national-predator-control-programme

Map of predator control area within Project Kaka

This map shows the area we are controlling rats, possums and stoats to protect native species. You can also see operational updates and detailed maps of predator control on public conservation land on the DOC website. www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/pesticide-summaries





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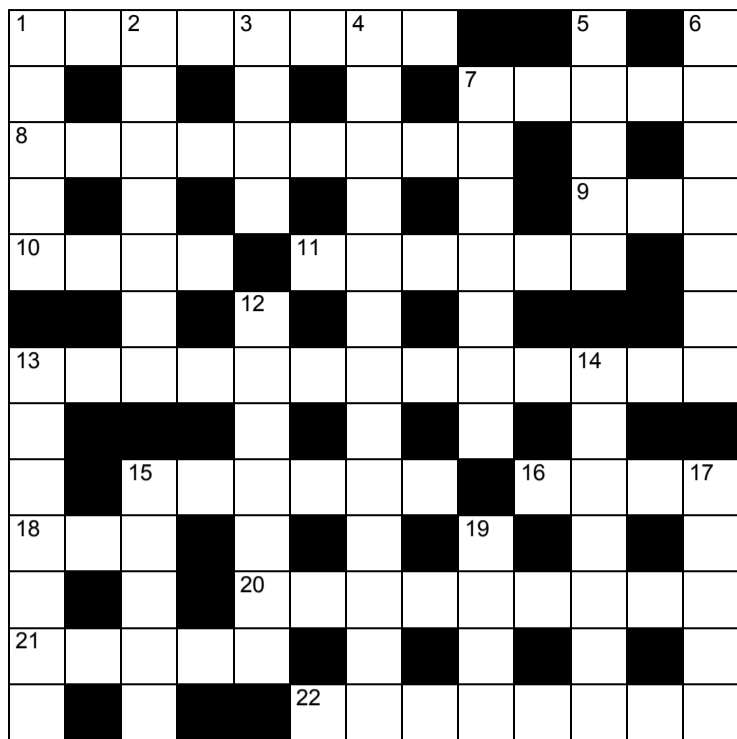
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THE CROSSWORD #NZ1958J (answers below)



ACROSS

1. Harangue (8)
7. Leader of the wolf pack in *The Jungle Book*; also a cubmaster in the Cub Scout movement (5)
8. Drinker's toast (7,2)
9. Māori word meaning 'peoples' or 'nations' (3)
10. Swimwear (4)
11. High jinks (6)
13. Embarrassing occasion, as depicted in a 1980s-2000s series of adverts (7,6)
15. Option (6)
16. Object (4)
18. Tasman is one (3)
20. See 5 Down
21. Singer who released her fourth album, *Virgin*, in 2025 (5)
22. Various (8)

DOWN

1. First appearance (5)
2. Substance that stimulates production of an antibody (7)
3. Mass violence (4)
4. Superior travel accommodation (8,5)
- 5/20. NZ swimmer who was world champion in the 400m individual medley in 2024 (5,9)
6. The government's senior ministers (7)
7. Fruit whose main production area is central Otago (7)
12. Dissolution of marriage (7)
13. Projectile (7)
14. Put into someone's care (7)
15. Tote (5)
17. Muffled (5)
19. A ban (4)



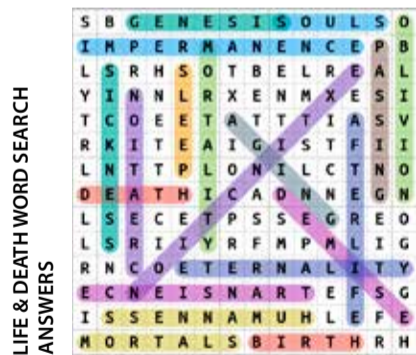
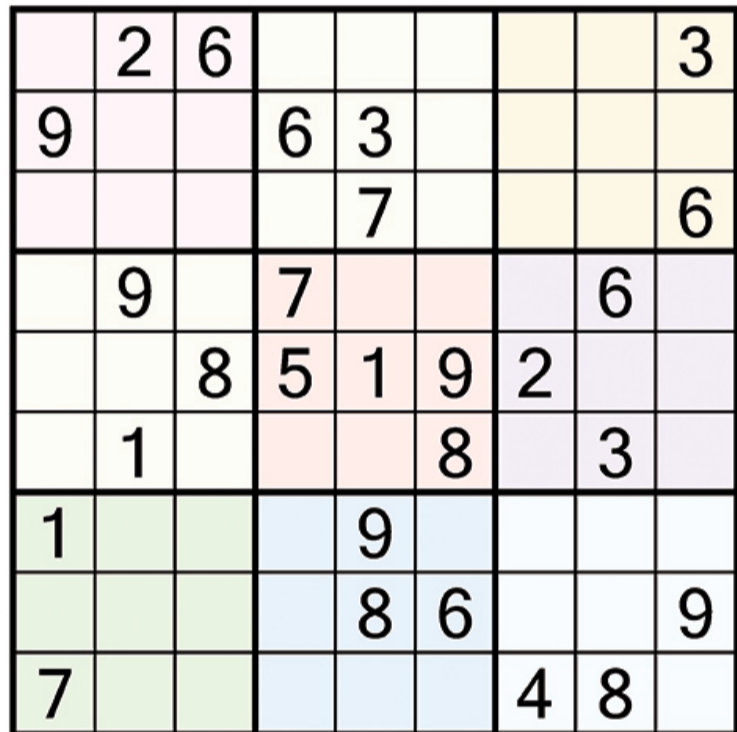
MOVIES QUIZ

Answers below.

1. What company was originally called Cadabra?
2. What year was the first iPhone released?
3. What is the highest-grossing film of all time?
4. What luxury brand is known for its iconic interlocking "C" logo?
5. Who has won the most Academy Awards?
6. What character have both Robert Downey Jr. and Benedict Cumberbatch played?
7. Which 2014 film stars Keanu Reeves as a retired hitman out for revenge?
8. Which film features the song *My Heart Will Go On*?
9. Which film was the first to win the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature?
10. Which 1982 sci-fi film was initially a box office disappointment but later became a cult classic and had a 2017 sequel?
11. Which Italian film won the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar and features a father and son in a concentration camp?
12. Which series about a chess prodigy stars Anya Taylor-Joy?
13. Which Danish-Swedish noir series features detectives Saga Norén and Martin Rohde?
14. Which show features the character Daenerys Targaryen?
15. Which 1990s series popularised the line "No soup for you!"

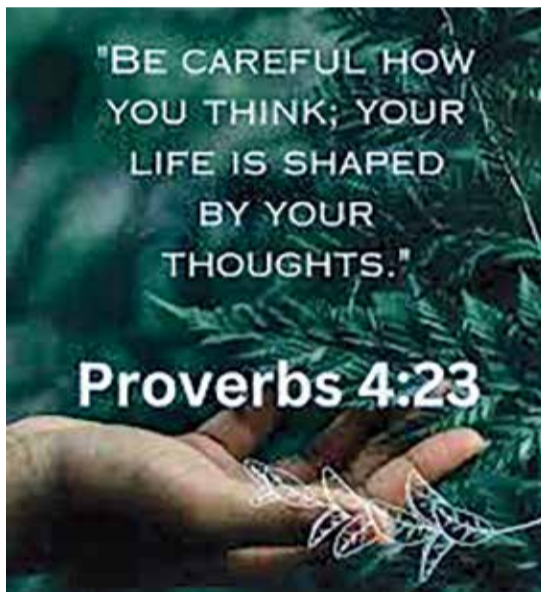
SUDOKU PUZZLES thepuzzlecompany.co.nz

HARD #100E Use logic and process of elimination to fill in the blank cells using the numbers 1 through 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and 3x3 block. Answers opposite page.



SUDOKU SOLUTION #100E

8	2	6	9	5	4	7	1	3
9	7	5	6	3	8	2	4	1
3	4	1	8	7	2	5	9	6
5	9	2	7	4	3	1	6	8
6	3	8	5	1	9	2	4	7
4	1	7	2	6	8	9	3	5
1	8	3	4	9	7	6	5	2
2	5	4	1	8	6	3	7	9
7	6	9	3	2	5	4	8	1



WORD SEARCH: LIFE AND DEATH

answers below

S	B	G	E	N	E	S	I	S	O	U	L	S	O
I	M	P	E	R	M	A	N	E	N	C	E	P	B
L	S	R	H	S	O	T	B	E	L	R	E	A	L
Y	I	N	N	L	R	X	E	N	M	X	E	S	I
T	C	O	E	E	T	A	T	T	I	A	S	V	
R	K	I	T	E	A	I	G	I	S	T	F	I	I
L	N	T	T	P	L	O	N	I	L	C	T	N	O
D	E	A	T	H	I	C	A	D	N	N	E	G	N
L	S	E	C	E	T	P	S	S	E	G	R	E	O
L	S	R	I	I	Y	R	F	M	P	M	L	I	G
R	N	C	O	E	T	E	R	N	A	L	I	T	Y
E	C	N	E	I	S	N	A	R	T	E	F	S	G
I	S	S	E	N	N	A	M	U	H	L	E	F	E
M	O	R	T	A	L	S	B	I	R	T	H	R	H

- | | | |
|------------|-------------|--------------|
| MORTALITY | HUMANNESS | CREATION |
| DEMISE | SLEEP | IMPERMANENCE |
| DEATH | PASSING | AFTERLIFE |
| EXTINCTION | AGING | SICKNESS |
| SOULS | OBLIVION | MORTALS |
| ETERNALITY | TRANSCIENCE | |
| GENESIS | BIRTH | |

CROSSWORD #1956H ANSWERS Across: 1. Diatribe 7. Akela 8. Bottoms up 9. Iwi 10. Togs 11. Antics 13. Minties Moment 15. Choice 16. Item 18. Sea 21. Lorde 22. Assorted. Down: 1. Debut 2. Antigen 3. Riot, 4. Business class 5/20. Lewis Clareburt 6. Cabinet 7. Apricot 12. Divorce 13. Missile 14. Entrust 15. Carry 17. Muted 19. Veto.

MOVIES QUIZ ANSWERS: 1. Amazon 2. 2007 3. Avatar 4. Chanel 5. Walt Disney 6. Sherlock Holmes 7. John Wick 8. Titanic 9. Shrek (2001) 10. Blade Runner 11. Life Is Beautiful 12. The Queen's Gambit 13. The Bridge (Bron/Broen) 14. Game of Thrones 15. Seinfeld.

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Special season for champions

By Frank Neill

Ōtaki Purutaitama, the town's first division football XI and reigning Horowhenua-Kāpiti champions, will kick off a special season on April 18.

The team is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Its first game of the 2026 season sees them play the Waikanae Jets at Jim Cooke Park.

Purutaitama had its beginnings when a group of Māori footballers got together leading up to the 2005 season and decided to put a team together.

"We are proud to identify ourselves as Māori," says Wakahuia Cook-Porter.

The team was founded based on four values, te whare tapa whā (the four pillars of holistic wellbeing): Hinengaro (mind), Tinana (physical), Wairua (spirit) and Whānau (family). Within these values sit Purutaitama's guiding principles: Whanaungatanga (brothers and family together), Kotahitanga (one on and off the field), Pukengatanga (apply all your skill and ability on the field), Manaakitanga (play fair and respect the opposition and referee), and Rangatiratanga (self determination to be the best you can be).

The team plans a series of celebrations, and a big end-of-season anniversary celebration.

Purutaitama will be looking to emulate last season's outstanding performances, when it was the champion Horowhenua-Kāpiti team, winning both the Horowhenua-Kāpiti Football League and the Horowhenua-Kāpiti Cup.

The team had a bye in the first round of the competition, which kicked off on April 11.

Manakau Hui Mai was scheduled to play the Raumati Cosmos in a round one match, but had to default the division one match, after not



Travis Robertson, who will be playing for Purutaitama again this year, in action last season.

Photo: Frank Neill

having enough players to field a team – the result of injuries and holiday commitments. They will play the Waikanae Hawks at Jim Cooke Park on April 18.

The local women's team, Ōtaki Kāeaea, will also kick off their Capital Football division 1 season next weekend. They will play the Seatoun Sea Shanties at Haruātai Park, starting at noon on Sunday (April 19).

The one match that was played on April 11 was a local derby between the two second XIs, Ōtaki Master Blasters and Manakau Tuakina Teina. The Master Blasters won the match 3-1, played at Manakau Domain, after leading 1-0 at half time. Atain Haley scored a goal for Manakau early in the second half to level the score, but two more goals by the Master Blasters took them to victory.



Ōtaki River entrance tides April 15 – May 15
<https://www.metservice.com/marine/regions/kapiti-wellington/tides/locations/otaki-river-entrance>

The actual timing of high and low tide might differ from below – times are extrapolated from the nearest primary port for this location, so please take care.

	HIGH	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
WED 15 APR -	01:59	08:09	14:21	20:36	
THU 16 APR -	02:41	08:50	15:03	21:18	
FRI 17 APR -	03:23	09:31	15:45	21:59	
SAT 18 APR -	04:06	10:13	16:28	22:41	
SUN 19 APR -	04:50	10:58	17:13	23:26	
MON 20 APR -	05:36	11:45	17:59		
TUE 21 APR	00:13	06:26	12:37	18:49	
WED 22 APR	01:04	07:22	13:34	19:43	
THU 23 APR	02:04	08:25	14:38	20:44	
FRI 24 APR	03:13	09:35	15:49	21:56	
SAT 25 APR	04:31	10:48	17:05	23:13	
SUN 26 APR	05:46	11:58	18:17		
MON 27 APR -	00:25	06:48	12:57	19:17	
TUE 28 APR -	01:23	07:39	13:47	20:06	
WED 29 APR -	02:11	08:22	14:30	20:47	
THU 30 APR -	02:52	09:01	15:10	21:24	
FRI 1 MAY -	03:30	09:36	15:46	21:58	
SAT 2 MAY -	04:05	10:11	16:21	22:31	
SUN 3 MAY -	04:39	10:45	16:56	23:03	
MON 4 MAY -	05:14	11:19	17:30	23:37	
TUE 5 MAY -	05:50	11:56	18:05		
WED 6 MAY	00:13	06:28	12:36	18:44	
THU 7 MAY	00:53	07:12	13:21	19:26	
FRI 8 MAY	01:40	08:02	14:13	20:16	
SAT 9 MAY	02:35	08:59	15:12	21:13	
SUN 10 MAY	03:38	10:00	16:14	22:17	
MON 11 MAY	04:42	11:00	17:16	23:22	
TUE 12 MAY	05:41	11:57	18:14		
WED 13 MAY -	00:21	06:34	12:50	19:08	
THU 14 MAY -	01:15	07:24	13:40	19:58	
FRI 15 MAY -	02:06	08:12	14:30	20:47	



Kingston Grey in action for Whiti Te Ra in last year's Appleton Shield semi final. Photo: Frank Neill

Whiti start with default win

By Frank Neill

Whiti Te Rā ki Ōtaki kicked off its 2026 season on April 11 with a default win over last year's Wellington Rugby League champions the Randwick Kingfishers.

The match was scheduled to be played at Ngāti Toa Doman, but Randwick defaulted.

This will see Whiti run onto the Ōtaki Domain next Saturday (April 18), to play for the first time in the competition. They will host the Petone Panthers.

Whiti Te Rā will be looking to go one better than last season when they finished second after losing the Appleton Shield final in a closely contested match with Randwick.

The team's pre-season has not gone smoothly, however.

"A lot of boys are injured and busy with mahi so its been tough to get combinations together

this pre-season," team coach Te Umu Miratana says.

However, he says a couple of new players have impressed at training. One of the new players is Joel Winterburn, who has moved to Whiti from Rāhui's premier rugby union team.

Te Umu says Joel has bought some experience and new energy to the group.

"It was unfortunate to have been defaulted to [on April 11] as it would have been nice to get some game time under our belt," he says.

"However, we look forward to getting our season started . . . at home against a solid Petone side."

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Patchy first three for Rāhui

A win, a draw, and a loss

By Frank Neill

Rāhui's premier rugby season has begun with a win, a draw and a loss in what were three closely contested matches.

Their first 2026 competition match, on March 21, saw them draw 14-14 with Levin College Old Boys at the Ōtaki Domain. Rāhui dominated the first 40 minutes and led 14-0 at half time.

The second half belonged to Levin Old Boys, however, and they levelled the scores with a try late in the match.

Frederick Moananu scored Rāhui's first try and Barclay Cribb, playing in his premier debut, added a second. Barclay is the grandson of Horowhenua-Kāpiti Rugby Football Union chair John Cribb and son of Rāhui stalwart Brad Cribb.

Manupiri Rikihana and Leon Ellison added a conversion each.

Victory came for Rāhui in their second match when they defeated Paraparumu 26-23 in a closely contested match at Paraparumu Domain on March 28.

The closeness of the encounter was highlighted when the scores were tied 23-23 close to full time.

A last-minute penalty by Manupiri, who had earlier kicked a conversion, gave his team the victory.

Following his try in the first match, Barclay

dotted down twice for Rāhui, and Morehu Connor-Phillips also scored a try.

Leon kicked two penalties.

Rāhui were leading their third game 24-23 over Waikanae late in the third match, played at Ōtaki Domain on Saturday (April 11).

However Waikanae scored a late try to win the match 30-24.

Waikanae opened the match strongly and established a good 18-5 lead late in the first half before a converted Rāhui try saw Waikanae with an 18-12 half time lead.

Frederick scored his third try of the season when he crossed the line twice.

Liam Tooman and Che Tohuri also dotted down.

Alizay Roach kicked two conversions.

Rāhui's next match is against Wanderers at the Levin Domain on April 18, with a 2.45pm kick-off.

Barclay Cribb making a strong run against Levin College Old Boys in his debut match for Rāhui on March 21 at Ōtaki Domain.

Photo: Frank Neill



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