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# Support for Bill banning seabed mining travelling the country

A large crowd who congregated around the Sir Peter Snell statue in Tasman Street, Opunake on Monday February 23 in a show of support of a Bill before Parliament against seabed mining, listened as Te Pati Maori MP co-leader Debbie Ngerewa-Packer who submitted the bill spoke passionately about why she is implacably opposed to the environmentally suspect practice. A similar meeting was held in Hawera earlier on in the day.

"I am really pleased at the turnout," Debbie said, "which shows the energy and passion in protecting our environment." She added, "I am really humbled by all the support." Other locations will be visited in the next few days, such as Saturday in Whanganui.

At the Opunake meeting, even the great Olympian (statue) was carrying a surfboard which read: *No seabed mining. Honour Te Tiriti.* There were also copies of a petition on hand to be signed in the nearby ex-TSB building, where a morning tea was also available.

Debbie's opposition to seabed mining is long standing, as she explains, "Protecting our moana and standing with coastal iwi and hapu is why I got into politics in the first place."

She comments that she has to get the support of 61



Debbie Ngerewa-Packer MP, who recently submitted a Members Bill proposing to ban seabed mining addressing a large crowd in Opunake.

MPs for the Bill to proceed and she is hopeful, despite the fact that the last time she submitted a member's Bill back in May 2023 when it was overwhelmingly rejected by 106 MPs to just 13. Significantly, the bulk of MPs from National, Labour and ACT were opposed,

although the Greens Aotearoa Party were supportive, as well as Te Pati Maori.

She is acutely aware that the rights of future New Zealanders must be supported. "This Bill is finishing what we started and we are making sure these protections are friendly and locked in for

future generations." It was pertinent that a number of children were present.

After an address inside the old TSB building she answered a number of questions. When asked if New Zealand First MP Shane Jones was likely to support the bill there was much laughter. Debbie answered that the "right wing"

were unlikely to do so.

## STOP PRESS

A petition to support banning seabed mining will be at Opunake's Everybodys Theatre on Saturday, February 28 for people who wish to sign it.



Supporters of the Bill in the company of Debbie, the Te Pati Maori co-leader.

Send your your views to: Letters to the Editor  
23 Napier Street, Opunake.  
email: editorial@opunakecoastalnews.co.nz  
You are welcome to use a pseudonym but must supply your name and address to us.

While we welcome free speech, the views expressed in the Letters to the Editor do not necessarily reflect those of the Opunake & Coastal News. Please limit letters to 350 words as we sometimes struggle for space to fit them all in.



### Letters to the Editor

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### Hawera Cinema

In regard to the no longer financially viable Hawera Cinema.  
I am on team lease it out to a viable business. Or maybe the people who wish to keep it running, when it has proven to be financially unviable would like to pay for it to keep operating, out

of their own pockets. I am being realistic. Yes, it is nice to have a cinema, but it is no longer financially viable, and people want to keep throwing more money, thousands of dollars at it.  
Stop wasting ratepayer money. Maybe the STDC should learn to live within their means, like we are all asked, made to do.

Especially in this cost of living crisis.

Concerned ratepayer  
Manaia.

### Animal care

I am concerned here in this area of New Plymouth regarding the numbers of dogs and puppies allowed in New Plymouth district

properties especially locked up behind boundary fences. They often have no mental stimulation and are left alone 24/7 and have no means of reaction to people or dogs outside of the family.  
Even SPCA and Animal Control refuse to enter their gates.  
Ian McAlpine  
New Plymouth

## Leon gets the royal runaround over speeding fine

Leon Moffitt is a law-abiding citizen who lives in Stratford.

However, in October 2025 he was in a bit of a hurry as he drove through Eltham in High Street. A patrol car stopped him and delivered an infringement ticket for \$80.

He immediately paid the fine on-line on 17 October, 2025. His bank statement is quite clear: Leon Moffitt speed ticket \$80. A glance at the end of the statement shows that the amount was definitely deducted – there wasn’t an accidental addition or any error like that.

In January 17 he got another notice (dated January 21) which alleged that the fine had not been paid. This notice was from the Hawera Court. This time

the fine had increased to \$135.00 – ‘Court Costs’ of \$55.00 had been added on (Even though there was no Court appearance).

This notice lists several unsettling consequences. These include the fact that the Court could:

- Suspend your driver’s licence
  - Seize and sell your property or take money from your income or bank account
  - Report your overdue fine as part of your credit reference check – meaning you may or may not be able to get a loan, credit card or hire purchase
  - Restrict your ability to sell your property
  - Stop you from travelling overseas.
- And here’s the big one”
- Issue a warrant for your arrest.



Leon Moffitt of Stratford.

Actually, the situation is more complex than this, because every time Leon tried to remedy the situation he was not believed and fobbed off to another agency. This happened about six times and we will spare most of the details. The simple fact was Leon was being harrassed over a fine that he had duly paid several

months ago. He emailed proof of payment to the Ministry of Justice to show that the fine had been paid. He wrote: “If you care to look at your records you will see that I haven’t had a speeding fine in years. I am 81 years old and don’t need this stupidity. Sort it out.”

By this stage he was getting so upset he seriously considered paying the fine again just to get the legal authorities off his back.  
Finally, just this month his situation was accepted and a mistake acknowledged. His fine was remitted; he got his \$80 back. However, he is still waiting for an apology!  
“I was very happy (to have the situation resolved), but I was pissed off to have to have gone through this process and all the bullshit,” said Leon.



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### ADELPHOS

C.S. Lewis once said that Jesus’ claims were so shockingly radical that he was either a liar, a lunatic, a legend or the Lord. Here are just some of Jesus’ claims:

He claimed to be both a king (John 18:37) and a servant (Mark 10:45).

He claimed that everyone who asks, seeks and knocks will find Him (Matthew 7:7-8).

He claimed to be the only way to be right with God,

His Father (John 14:6).

He claimed that following Him will require sacrifice and self-denial (Luke 9:23).

He claimed to be the anointed Messiah (John 4:25-26).

He claimed to exist as the “I am” God of the Old Testament (John 8:58).

He claimed to be God’s Son (Matthew 26:63-64) who pre-existed in heaven (John 6:38).

He claimed to have the

## The claims of Jesus

authority to forgive sins (Mark 2:10).

He claimed to be the light of the world (John 8:12).

He claimed that hell is a conscious place of sadness and weeping\*\* (Matthew 13:42).

He claimed that His believers will have eternal life and not perish (John 10:28).

He claimed that He would be resurrected (Luke 9:22).

He claimed authority over

demons (Mark 9:25).

He claimed to be the bread of life (John 6:35).

He claimed He will send the Holy Spirit to help believers (John 14:25-26).

He claimed to always be with his followers and never forsake them (Matthew 28:20).

He claimed He will return again in apocalyptic times (Matthew 24:29-30; Luke 21:25-27).

He claimed to be the final judge of all people (John 5:22-23).

He claimed to be heaven’s gate (John 10:7) but few choose to enter it (Matthew 7:14).

He claimed that people are either for him or against him. No neutrality (Luke 11:23).

He claimed that He will resurrect to life those who believe in Him (John 11:25-26).

He claimed that God loves us and wants us to choose life (John 3:16-19).

\*\*C.S. Lewis said of hell, “There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, especially, of our Lord’s own words” (The Problem of Pain, chapter 3).

Nga mihi nui,  
Adelphos

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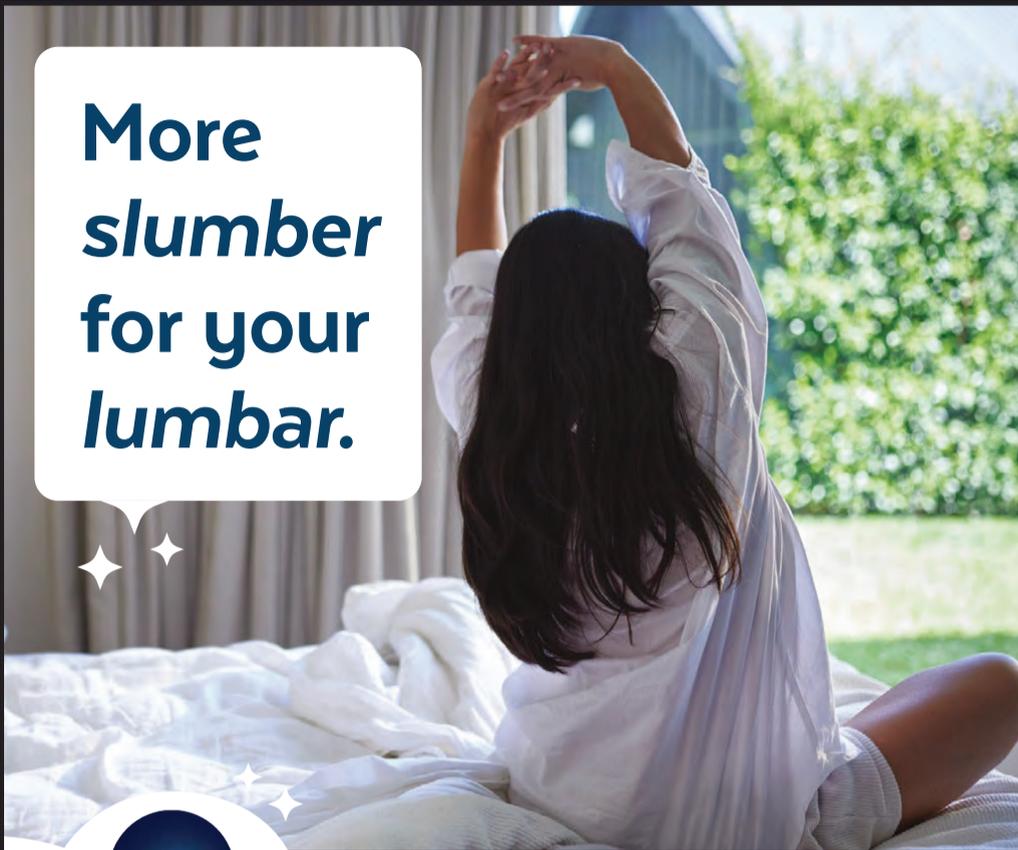
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The new town centre in Opunake. Artist's impression.

# Work on town centre project about to begin

Work is due to begin next month on the much-awaited Green Space in the Opunake CBD, now named Te Puna

Manawa Ora ("the Spring of the Heart, Spirit and life, a place of health and wellbeing").

The project will see part of Napier Street closed off to create a town square taking in Te Whare Kotahi (the

former TSB building), the town's Library Plus and the Peter Snell statue.

The square is part of the

South Taranaki District Council's small town revitalisation programme which saw the Council

work with co-design groups of local people to develop

*Continued page 5*

EDITORIAL

## Why are we waiting!

It is sad to see we still don't have an alternative to the popular Stratford Mountain House on our mountain to visit and to take people to. Yet.

I had a lovely meal at the Stratford Mountain House recently on a Saturday night and the place was packed. The mountain as always been the nicest place to take people to and to show off our iconic maunga which is so uniquely accessible to the public.

Dawson Falls Tourist Lodge with its restaurant, café and accommodation was also a popular place to eat and stay before the lodge was pulled down in 1922.

Indeed, years ago it was selected as one of the destinations in New Zealand where the winning couples would be sent to in the Blind Date dating show. I

remember the then owner of Dawson Falls once greatly amused me by telling me how the couples really got on – once the television crew had left. They often didn't! On one occasion one of the couples – the man from memory - got off with female chaperone.

Clearly Dawson Falls was considered as among the most beautiful destinations in New Zealand to send the lucky couples.

As well as the stunning scenery the building was both interesting and charming. The honeymoon suite with its ornate Swiss themed carving was among the various suites you could stay at. There were also some fascinating artifacts in the waiting room adjacent to the restaurant along with ancient visitor books which were worth perusing.

It was somehow always an experience going there.

The iwi bought the lodge in 2016. Initially the plan was to upgrade it, perhaps adding new bathrooms but otherwise leaving it largely as it was with an anticipated completion date of 2021.

However, Dawson Falls Tourist Lodge was pulled down some years ago. It was in a state of disrepair according to some and did not meet with building regulations when it was first built.

The plan is to replace it with a building that honours New Zealand's unique indigenous heritage – is a lovely idea and thus far the building looks pretty impressive from the outside. It's opening however is now well past.

The Lake Dive Hut which burnt down over 5 years



The new facility at Dawson Falls still to be completed.

ago in September 2020 is yet to be rebuilt and plans postponed.

As anyone who enjoys walking and tramping knows a hut can be a life saver particularly in an alpine region where the weather can be unpredictable and rapidly change. People have frozen to death on the Taranaki Maunga which has claimed a significant number of lives in its history – numbering in the 80s - and indeed holds the unenviable record in New Zealand for the highest single death toll which happened in 1953 when 6 people died. The highest prior to then had been five people who froze to death on the Tasman Glacier in January 1930, relatives of two of us who work in the Opunake & Coastal News.

The Lake Dive Hut was also nicely situated for the recently completed Taranaki Crossing, another inspired initiative rivalling the hugely popular Tongariro Crossing is proving a real boon to tourism for Taranaki.

So, we eagerly await both the completion of Dawson Falls with its 18

accommodation rooms and other facilities, and the new Lake Dive Hut.

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# New trustees for Hawera Cinema 2

“The outgoing trustees of the Hawera Cinema 2 Trust are pleased to confirm that three new Trustees have been appointed to take the Cinema forward.

The new trustees are: Hawera businessman and local Councillor Andy Beccard, executive and governor Allie Hemara Wahanui and Patea Area School Principal James Davidson.

Trust spokesperson, Aaron Foley says twelve expressions of

interest were received in total. The Hawera Cinema 2 Trust Deed provides for no fewer than three and not more than six

Trustees. It has been resolved in consultation with representatives of the South Taranaki District Council - to appoint three Trustees at this

time. This approach enables the incoming Trustees to consider and appoint up to three additional Trustees whom they believe possess the attributes and expertise required to support the Cinema’s future direction.

Aaron Foley says that despite the outgoing Trustees’ concern for the continued viability of the Cinema under its current operational model, they wish the incoming Trustees every success in finding

an approach that is both sustainable and maintains a reasonable level of service.

The new Trustees became effective as of Monday 16 February.”

Contact: Aaron Foley 021 611 741



Hawera’s cinema threatened with closure.

# Work on town centre project about to begin

Continued from page 5

projects for their towns. The South Taranaki District Council approved the project in 2024.

The ground-breaking and naming ceremony was held on December 13 last year.

“March has been provided as the anticipated start month,” says South Taranaki District Council community development advisor Fran Levings. “We have avoided setting a specific date, as this may change due to weather conditions or other

unforeseen factors.” At the ground breaking and naming ceremony in December she told the Opunake & Coastal News that they wanted to leave the space free in December-January as they didn’t want to disrupt the busy period.

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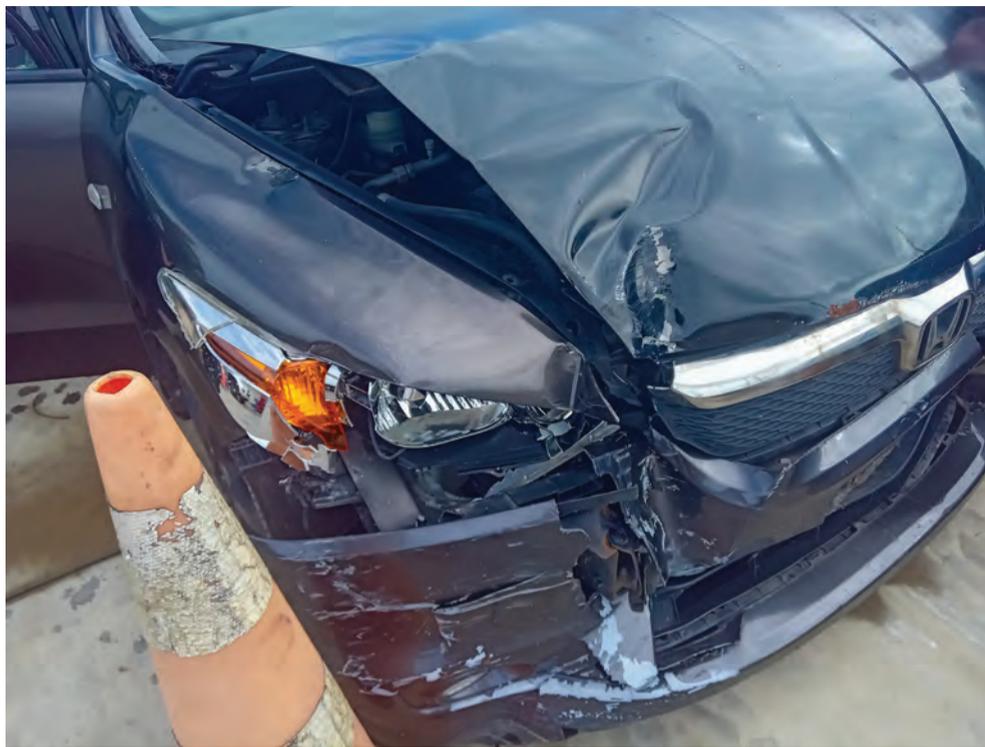
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# Steal smash burn then walk away scot free



This car was written off by car thieves.

There have been some recent incidents in Opunake which are cause for concern.

Two cars were stolen recently in the township by some young people (allegedly all female), but only one was of an age (18) to face court proceedings. The others are too young to face legal action.

One family is seriously out of pocket because their car (which was crashed by the thieves) by was not fully insured (third party cover) as a result of the considerable premiums vehicle owners have to pay these days. Their car was damaged so badly it is a write off. Another car was stolen around the same time and subsequently was set alight on Ihaia Road (See story last issue).

The owners of one (the first mentioned) of the stolen cars consider it is unfair that the parents of the under age car thieves are not legally

responsible for the action of their children. Surely a law change is needed to ensure compensation is due from the parents in such situations. If the law was changed in this way it would have the added benefit of parents being more likely to ensure that their children were under closer parental control, especially at night.

# Police confronted at car meet



Skid marks were highly visible at the scene of a car meet which drew police attention.

A lone police car was forced to make a strategic withdrawal after being confronted by a group of people attending a car meet at Oaonui early on Saturday morning.

A video placed on YouTube shows a group of people heading towards the vehicle and following it as it reversed away from the scene.

Taranaki police area commander Inspector

Mark Miller says police were notified about 1am on Saturday about a group of antisocial road users gathering at Kina Road, Oaonui. "Staff attended and spoke to some of those gathered. Due to the group surrounding the attending unit and limiting view, officers made the tactical decision to move back from the crowd so they could maintain observations and gather information. "A lot of Police work involved in antisocial road user gatherings is conducted in the investigation phase after the event has taken place, and information gathered on the night/s is crucial to that investigation."



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# A lament for a popular hut

Five and a half years after it burned down there is still no timeline for replacing the Lake Dive Hut.

The hut, situated at an altitude of 899 metres in a depression east of the lake had been a popular stopping point for trampers on Taranaki Maunga.

“We are in the early stages of investigating options to replace Lake Dive Hut,” Department of Conservation (DOC) Taranaki operations manager Gareth Hopkins told the Opunake and Coastal News. “This includes engaging with Iwi, then gathering site information to inform any future design works. We expect to get this underway in the second half of March.”

“No definite timeframe for construction has been developed. At this point, funding for a rebuild or replacement hut has not been confirmed.”

The 250 metre-long Lake Dive is South-east of the Dawson Falls Visitor Centre and can be reached by a three and half to five hour walk from the Dawson Falls Visitor Centre.

The original hut was opened in 1964 and replaced by a larger 16 bunk building in 1980.

In September 2020 the hut burned down and homeless man Daniel Banks who court documents said had been living on the mountain and staying in DOC huts like Lake Dive was arrested and charged with arson. It was not alleged that he had started the fire deliberately. Two years later Banks was still in prison and had not come to trial.

Judge Tony Greig dismissed the charges of arson, wilful trespass, disorderly behaviour and accosting a person. He said Banks had already served over half of what would have been the maximum sentence were he to be found guilty. He did not believe the prosecution had made a strong case against Banks and given the length of time he had been in custody it was less likely he would get a fair trial.

A press release on behalf of DOC dated 19 January 2022



**Lake Dive Hut. When will we see its like again?**  
*NZ Herald.*

said they were keen to get the hut replaced.

“We recognise it leaves a fairly big gap in the backcountry hut network on that side of the mountain,” said Senior Ranger Visitors and Heritage Dave Rogers. “Due to its stunning location and views of Taranaki Maunga, Lake Dive hut was a popular overnight destination.”

“But like any organisation, DOC has a limited amount of funding – so we’re exploring rebuild options with potential partners.”

He said putting a timeline on a possible rebuild would be difficult.

“Given the nature of the environment where the hut is situated, and the requirements for consultation, engineering and architecture, a hut rebuild will most certainly not occur for another couple of years.”

“We acknowledge people’s desire to see a new hut, and appreciate the public’s understanding a realistic approach is required given the massive amount of work involved with building a new hut, especially in an alpine environment.”

Meanwhile in the absence of a hut Lake Dive is now seen as a day trip destination.

Mountaineering identity Ian McAlpine says the burning down of the hut is “a tragedy

for both the Department of Conservation and park-users.”

“It’s a tragedy for us park users as it makes it very difficult for people wishing to do what was the popular ‘Round the Mountain Circuit,’ due to the long distances between places to stay overnight.”

“I find it difficult to understand that many say when we talk about replacing Lake Dive Hut, oh but the Department of Conservation has just spent a load of money building Pouakai Lodge (Hut) and all the boardwalks for the Taranaki Crossing Trek in the past six years, but I have to remind them the money came from the Provincial Growth Fund not out of Department of Conservation budget.”

“Over and over again the Department of Conservation have blamed things like Treaty of Waitangi settlements, Covid 19 etc, but while Lake Dive Hut has gone, the tracks on the west side of Taranaki Maunga in many cases have been left overgrown.”

Another Taranaki mountaineering identity Lindsay Maindonald has fond memories of times spent at Lake Dive Hut, which he says was the only hut on the mountain that came with a lake.

“You’d walk out about 10-

20 steps and then you would hit the lake, and work your way along for photos,” he says. “There’s hardly a time you wouldn’t get a good shot.”

“It’s one of the most beautiful spots on the mountain. You’ve got a beautiful long lake and a perfect silhouette of the mountain with Fantham’s Peak in front. You get some beautiful sunsets over it. You’ve got beautiful bird life and the bush around it and the untamed rainforest. You almost feel you’re on a different part of the mountain.”

“I love the Pouakai tarns, but if I had a choice I would have stayed at the lake with this real beautiful hut.”

He says for people accessing the mountain at the Dawson Falls Visitor Centre being able to get to Lake Dive complements the attractions of the Taranaki Crossing.

“It does need the bottom track done up, which won’t take a lot of doing.”

“I think what they’ve done with the other things on the mountain has been wonderful, but this is the next thing. It could have been ahead on the agenda, but it didn’t happen that way.”

The lake was named for Eltham farmer Bradshaw Dive who later became an MP and mayor of both Eltham and Tauranga. He came across the lake while descending from the summit in 1887.

In 2025 under the Collective Redress Act, Lake Dive was renamed Mangoraukawa / Lake Dive.

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# The rise and fall of solar energy in rural New Zealand

Solar energy is becoming an increasingly practical and valuable option for rural communities across Aotearoa New Zealand. With many farms and small settlements located far from urban centres, solar offers a way to reduce power bills, improve reliability, and support local resilience.

One of the biggest advantages is cost savings. Rural households and farms often face higher electricity prices, particularly



**BARBARA KURIGER MP**  
TARANAKI-KING COUNTRY

where long lines and low population density increase distribution costs. By installing rooftop or ground-mounted solar panels, landowners can generate a significant share of their own power. Over time, this can reduce monthly bills and protect against future price rises. For farms with high daytime electricity use—such as milking sheds, irrigation, refrigeration, and pumps—solar can be especially cost-effective.

Solar also strengthens energy security. Rural areas are more vulnerable to power outages caused by storms, fallen trees, or network faults. When solar is paired with batteries, homes and farms can keep essential systems running even when the grid goes down. This resilience is crucial for protecting livestock, crops, and food storage, as well as maintaining communication and safety during emergencies.

Environmental benefits are another key factor. New Zealand already has a relatively clean electricity mix, but adding more renewable generation close to where it is used reduces transmission losses and reliance on fossil fuels. Rural communities can



**Barbara Kuriger MP with Jim Saunders (Solargri Energy) on a solar farm in Canterbury.**

play a leading role in climate action by cutting their carbon footprint while showcasing practical, land-based solutions.

Finally, solar can support regional development. Local installation and maintenance

create jobs, while community solar projects can generate shared income and foster collaboration. For many rural New Zealanders, solar energy is not just a technology choice, but an investment

in greater independence, sustainability, and long-term prosperity.

*Barbara Kuriger, MP for Taranaki-King Country*

## Fire and emergency received calls for 11 incidents during recent strike

Fire and Emergency New Zealand received calls for 11 incidents between 12pm and 1pm Friday 13 February, the eleventh time the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union (NZPFU) has taken strike action. Of these, nine incidents were in areas impacted by the strike.

Four of them were alarm

activations, none of which were the result of a fire.

The remaining five incidents were a hazardous substance incident, a vegetation fire, a car crash, a report of flooding in a building due to pipe damage and reports of smoke showing from a building, which is still under investigation.

Assistant National

Commander Ken Cooper thanked New Zealanders for their extra care during the strike hour.

“I want to thank our 11,800 volunteers across the country, especially those who were called to attend events in areas impacted by the strike.

“I would also like to thank our Operational Commanders and Communication Centre Managers, who contributed to the response.”

Ken Cooper says continued strikes by the NZPFU including an escalation to twice weekly strikes, continues to unnecessarily put the public at risk.

“I once again ask the NZPFU to call off its planned strikes, especially as we remain

engaged in independent facilitated bargaining with the union in good faith through the Employment Relations Authority, and await the outcome of that process.

“We welcomed the decision by the NZPFU to exempt two Urban Search and Rescue teams from striking, who have been deployed to the Gisborne area ahead of forecast severe weather.

“We have previously sought to agree a process with NZPFU officials to respond to all emergency events during strike periods where there is a risk to life or danger of escalation but were turned down.

“That approach is hugely disappointing.”

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# Seabed decision removes windfarm obstacle

Giacomo (Giac) Caleffi of the Taranaki Offshore Partnership has welcomed the Fast Track Expert Panel's rejection of the bid by Trans-Tasman Resources (TTR) to mined ironsands off the South Taranaki coast.

Taranaki Offshore Partnership (TOP) is a joint venture between the New Zealand Super Fund and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners. Copenhagen has projects in several parts of the world and have plans to set up 12 nautical miles off the South Taranaki coast in an area that can be viewed from Hawera to Opunake. TOP had joined other



Giacomo Caleffi.

offshore wind developers in saying that seabed mining would be inconsistent with windfarm developments.

Giac, a structural engineer who has worked on offshore wind energy projects in The United Kingdom and Germany told the Opunake and Coastal News (August 14, 2025) that there was nowhere in the world where offshore wind energy and seabed mining projects co-exist.

"Offshore wind energy developments have co-existed with other developments, but it would be very difficult to see how it would have coexisted alongside seabed mining," he said.

The prospect of having to work alongside seabed mining operations had deterred other wind energy developers, but TOP had decided to go ahead with their application.

"We didn't know what to expect," says Giac. "We made our case to the government and the panel and felt there would be a clash between the two activities. Now we're happy to see progress." He says with the seabed mining obstacle removed, they are looking forward to the offshore energy regime being finalised and working towards getting their feasibility licence.

"We're now looking

forward to the full story and seeing what happens."

He is hoping an investment decision will be made in 2030 and have everything up and running in 2035.

"It would tie in nicely with our other wind far projects in Australia," he said.

He said this would make it easier to get vessels carrying large components. As most of their vessels are based in Europe it would be easier to get one of them to service both New Zealand and Australia, rather than having a vessel travel to New Zealand for one project.

Giacomo Caleffi.

## Government funding to boost Taranaki major events

Te Puna Umanga Venture Taranaki welcomes the announcement that 2 of the region's iconic events, the TSB Festival of Lights and TAFT's WinterFest, have secured funding through the Government's \$10million Events Boost Fund.

Administered by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), the Events Boost Fund is part of the Government's \$70 million Major Events and Tourism Package, supporting event organisers to promote to international markets to help attract new audiences and encourage visitors to extend their stay.

TSB Festival of Lights is organised and delivered by New Plymouth District Council (NPDC) while the Taranaki Arts Festival Trust (TAFT), run WinterFest and are among the first tranche of national events listed to receive funding.

New Plymouth District Mayor Max Brough welcomes the funding injection, which highlights the value of strong partnerships between central and local government and the region's event and destination organisations.

"These events play a vital role in showcasing Taranaki on both the national and international stage but the

challenge for organisers is how to continue to grow and develop them with limited budgets and resources.

"Both these events bring a lot of people to our district and contribute significantly to the local economy so this funding will help support continued growth, visitation and strengthen our local economy."

Janet Reynolds, GM Destination at Te Puna Umanga Venture Taranaki, said the funding reinforces the economic power of major events.

"Major events are proven economic drivers. They fill beds, fill tables, and generate spend across our visitor economy and beyond as eventgoers stay to explore everything Taranaki has to see, do, eat, and experience."

Suzanne Porter, CEO of Taranaki Arts Festival Trust, said, "Winter Fest will light up the quieter months and give people a compelling reason to visit Taranaki in winter. This support enables us to extend our promotional reach into new markets, elevate the visitor experience and deliver strong returns for the region's hospitality, retail and accommodation sectors."

Janet Reynolds says Venture Taranaki looks forward to working alongside NPDC and TAFT to ensure these

events reach out of region audiences and to showcase the creative and vibrant energy of the region.

"This investment will accelerate and strengthen the activity we're already delivering in market. Australia remains a key growth audience for us, and aligning event marketing with our broader destination activity will build brand awareness and regional positioning of Taranaki as a 'like no other' destination to high-value Australian audiences."

It also complements Venture Taranaki's wider regional promotion activity, including strategic media partnerships, targeted digital campaigns and offshore trade engagement, as well

as the new One Flight campaign, delivered in partnership with Hamilton & Waikato Tourism, Love Taupō, and Visit Ruapehu, which leverages improved air connectivity to drive Australian arrivals into the central North Island and encourage regional dispersal into destinations such as Taranaki.

The TSB Festival of Lights delivers significant economic impact across its multi-week summer season with an estimated 162,500 visitors this past summer, while Winter Fest is expected to provide a welcome boost to operators during a period when visitor numbers traditionally soften.



ABOVE: TSB Festival of Lights: Te Wheke-a-Muturangi by Lisa Reihana.

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# Dopamine: The coach in your head



RICHARD HALL

Over the last couple of issues, we have talked about how the body runs on electricity and chemicals, and how food is its fuel. Your brain is basically a busy chemistry lab running in the background that contains approximately 86 billion neurons (nerve cells). Between them are tiny gaps called synapses. When one neuron fires, it can release chemical messengers called neurotransmitters into that gap, and those chemicals help shape what happens next. In plain language: they influence how you think, feel, pay attention, and act. Dopamine is one of the big names in that system, and it gets talked about a lot - often negatively.

car is just to pop to the dairy. Dopamine is heavily involved in motivation, learning, attention, and movement. A better way to picture it is as part of the brain's coaching staff: the trainer that helps the brain notice what matters, remember what seemed worth doing, and push for another rep.

This is also why dopamine is linked strongly to wanting (urge, drive, anticipation) and not just liking (actual enjoyment). That is why

people can keep checking their phone, scrolling, gaming, snacking, or shopping even when the experience is not especially satisfying anymore. The brain has learned the drill, so the coach keeps blowing the whistle. You say you are going "to just check one thing" and then resurface half an hour later with a cold cup of tea and a headful of videos you did not ask for.

This is the part worth understanding in everyday life: if we feed the system mostly fast rewards, such as endless scrolling, notifications, autoplay, quick sugar hits, and constant 1 minute videos, the brain gets better at chasing fast rewards. It can then become much harder to focus at school or work on "boring" tasks, because the pull of quick, cue-driven dopamine rewards is much stronger. It is a bit like trying to eat a decent dinner shortly after you already filled up on dairy-counter snacks. Slower, effort-based things that are genuinely good for us, such as exercise, focused work, study, or practising a skill, can feel harder to get started on, especially at first.

Those activities still matter to the brain, but in a cue-heavy world they may feel less immediately compelling, particularly when the phone is sitting there offering instant entertainment like a tiny slot machine in your pocket. That does not mean you have "broken" your dopamine system, and it does not mean you need a dramatic internet-style "dopamine detox." Usually, what helps is much simpler and much less glamorous: changing what the brain practices. Dopamine is not a toxin to flush out. It is a learning and motivation system to train.

The most reliable ways to work with this system are not glamorous, but they do work. Regular movement helps - even a short walk, bike ride, stretch, or ten minutes outside. Small wins help, because the brain responds to progress. Learning and practicing a skill can help, especially when you can see yourself improving. Real social connection helps. So do humour, music, and activities that create a genuine sense of progress rather than just a quick spike. The brain often responds

well to simple routines done consistently, which is mildly annoying because most of us were hoping there was a shortcut.

If people want practical change, a good place to start is not "be more disciplined forever" - it is redesigning the first ten minutes. Put the phone on charge in another room when you are trying to work. Decide on one tiny repeatable action before you need motivation, such as a ten-minute walk after lunch, five minutes of tidying before sitting down, or starting the task before checking messages. Make the helpful option easier and the unhelpful option slightly more awkward. That sounds small, but small changes repeated often are exactly how the brain learns.

It also helps to pair slower rewards with something pleasant while the habit is still new: a favourite podcast only on a walk, a good coffee at morning work break, music while doing chores, a quick chat with someone after exercise. You are not bribing yourself in a silly way; you are teaching the coach which drills are worth running again.

It is also worth saying that dopamine is not only about habits and temptation. It plays an important role in movement, which is one reason Parkinson's disease is so central to dopamine science. So while dopamine gets discussed online as if it is just about social media and self-control, it is actually vital biological infrastructure.

So, the next time you catch yourself chasing a fast reward, there is no need for panic or a guilt spiral. A better move is to pause and ask, "What am I training my brain to chase right now?" and "What benefits me in life?" Those questions keep the science accurate and the advice practical. Dopamine is not just about pleasure. It is more like a coach in your head, helping you notice what matters, get moving, and repeat what the brain thinks is worth doing. The trick is to make sure the coach is running the right drills that will help you be the person you want to be.

Richard Hall  
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## Young people who use social media more likely to be lonely

Young people who use social media are more likely to be lonely, according to research from the US, but the researchers can't say for sure if its higher social media use, or if young people are

using social media because they are already lonely. The team analysed data from 64,988 18 to 24-year-olds from more than 120 colleges who took part in a national survey. They found that 54%

of the students were lonely, and those who used social media for 16 to 20 hours a week were 19% more likely to say they were lonely than those who didn't use it at all. The heaviest social media

users - at least 30 hours a week - were 38% more likely to report being lonely.

Journal of American College Health

## Teen cannabis use linked with psychiatric problems

US scientists say teens who use cannabis are more likely than those who don't

to develop psychiatric disorders, especially bipolar disorder and psychosis. The team studied 463,396 US adolescents aged between 13 and 17 who were screened for cannabis use. They found having used cannabis in the past year was linked with an

increased risk of psychosis, bipolar, depressive, and anxiety disorders by the age of 26. Teens who started using cannabis earlier in life were at the greatest risk, particularly of depression and anxiety disorders, they say. The findings highlight

the importance of early prevention programs, effective public health messaging, and policies that limit young people's exposure to cannabis, the authors conclude.

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# Win for Jailhouse Frocks at Little Theatre



**Best Production Jailhouse Frocks. From left, Andrew Beale, Emma Walker (Director), Bailey Thompson (Best Actor), Chere Stevenson (Best Actress), Jenny McKegey-Brown (Best Supporting Actress) and Briar Tucker.**

Winning the coveted Chris and Tony Brown Award for Best Production was Jailhouse Frocks, directed by Emma Walker. The unique comedy won from the New Plymouth's Little Theatre's other two productions Ache (Directed by John Lawson and 'Terry Darby') and Agatha Crusty and the Village Hall Murders (Directed by Mary Barron). The adjudicators were Krystal and Mark Leuthard.

Actually, Terry was there in spirit only as the late great director and actor, who chose the play (and was intended as a director), sadly passed away before the production got under way.

There was a good turnout at the New Plymouth's Little Theatre's special night the TOSCARS which were held on Friday 13 February in New Plymouth. The presenters Dr Chis Morrison and Tony Bennett kept the audience entertained with their witty repartee, between the awarding of the various awards. Very early on we were superbly entertained by Eli Hitchcock using her powerful voice to great effect.

Now for the nominations

and awards:

Stephanie McKellar was the sole nominee for the N. Blackman & B. James Award for the Most promising Actor/Actress. She played Eleanor in Agatha Crusty and Village Hall Murders. The Watterson Memorial Trophy for Best Actress was won by Chere Stevenson for her role as Cathy in Jailhouse Frocks. Also nominated were April Krijger as Agatha Crusty in Agatha Crusty and the Village Hall Murders and Cat Jordan as Woman in Ache.

Bailey Thompson won the Watterson Memorial Trophy as Best Actor his role as Officer Pope in Jailhouse Frocks. Jor-El as Detective Inspector Twigg in Agatha Crusty and the Village Hall Murders and Shawn Stanley as Man in Ache were also nominated.

The Best Supporting Actress Award, the Peter Young Memorial Trophy, was won by Jenny McKegey-Brown who played Elena in Jailhouse Frocks. Also nominated were five actresses from Agatha Crusty and the Village Hall Murders: they included (with their role in brackets) Gillian Gibbon (Maisie), Stella McCallum (Isabella), Chere Stevenson

(Alice), Stephanie McKellar (Eleanor), and Rhiannon McGrane (Mandy). Also nominated were Alex Sheehan who played Girl (various characters) in Ache and Briar Tucker as Gloria in Jailhouse Frocks.



**Stephanie McKellar (left) with the adjudicators Krystal and Mark Leuthard. Stephanie won the award as the Most Promising Actor/Actress.**

Joshua Mckee, who played various characters in Ache, won the Bill Tate Trophy as Best Supporting Actor. Three actors from Agatha Crusty and the Village Hall Murders were nominated – they were (with their roles in brackets) Andrew Beale (Harry Knott and PC Locket), Morris West (Oliver and Olivia) and Chris Morrison (Vicar Toby Bishop). Justin Lowcay was also nominated for his role as Tony Romano in Jailhouse Frocks.

The Best Set Design Award (Margaret & Brian Hanna Trophy) was won by John Lawson and Terry Darby for Ache.

Emma Walker won the Best Production Trophy (Chris & Tony Brown Award).

Other awards were as follows:

President's Cup (John Flowers Cup): Jessica Knight.

Technical Excellence (Karen Rasmussen Award): Jamie Fenton.

Distinguished Service to the theatre (Ted Normanton): Brian Smith.

Backstage excellence (Tina Fenwick Award): Jeanie

Oxley

Best Club Member (Vickie Hutton Trophy): Gillian Gibbon

FOH (Chris Hinton): Glenys Horsfall.

There were many eye-catching costumes from the 1960s; it was Bailey's night because he also won the award for the Best Costume.

Apart from the eagerly awaited award announcements we were thoroughly entertained by Morris West disguised as television's Mrs Brown, a humorous poem by

April Krijger and Bailey Thompson's Carmen Miranda song.

The well-organised event was lots of fun and the evening, and, at the interval, there was an amazing supper. Congratulations to the organisers and, of course those who were nominated for (or won) an award.

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## COASTAL CURIOSITIES

In the pastures outside of Fribourg, Switzerland, gently undulating fields of green rise up to meet pure blue sky at the horizon. Rugged mountains reach upward, craggy peaks white with snow. As far as the eye can see, huge dairy cows with their black-and-chestnut-

coloured markings dot the fields. Standing nearly five feet tall and weighing up to 2,000 pounds, these gentle giants lazily graze on lush grass and wildflowers. Their resulting milk—harvested twice a day—is transformed into some of the world’s greatest dairy: Dense and

## Bells a symbol of proud Swiss farming heritage



A Swiss cow bell made of leather and brass, as seen at Cecelia’s on Tasman.

nuty Gruyère AOP cheese comes from the canton of Fribourg, as does thick double cream and exquisite milky-sweet butter.

Hanging from each cow’s massive neck is one of the most recognizable symbols of Swiss farming culture:

the Treichel. The northern German-Swiss farmers call it a Kuhglocke. Others simply know it as a cowbell. Though they are frequently seen as decorations for animals in regional festivals such as Desalpe—the fall celebration during which Alpine animals are led from the mountains to the prairies for the winter—the bells have served an important role in livestock management for more than 900 years.

A bell’s size and timbre

convey information about the animal wearing it. Dominant alpha animals—the highest ranking male or female in the group—wear the largest bells. The deeper and louder tones are an audible beacon for the others in the herd to follow. Juveniles wear much smaller bells, the higher pitch making it easier to locate a stray. Bell size also might convey a farmer’s pride in a particular animal. A favourite cow will often sport a large bell attached to a thick strap ornately decorated with significant dates or depictions of the farmer’s family events.

Twenty-five miles north of the quiet pastures and idyllic landscapes is the small Fribourg suburb of Villars-sur-Glâne. In a small building, bell-maker Stéphane Brügger has long created many of the bells heard across the country. He has been a fabricant des cloches for more than 31 years—most of his adult life. He is second generation, having learned the trade from his father. “He taught me the basics, then practice took care of the rest,” he says.

Swiss people came to New Zealand primarily for economic opportunities, land and farming prospects, and the chance to recreate lifestyles similar to their alpine homelands, forming close-knit communities in regions like Taranaki.

The appeal of New Zealand’s landscape which

reminded many Swiss of their mountainous home.

### Farming and Economic Opportunities

Swiss immigrants were particularly drawn to dairy farming and other agricultural ventures. Hunger brought multiple groups of Swiss settlers to Taranaki in the 1870s and 1880s, establishing a thriving dairy farming community.

### Gold mining to dairy farming

Another Swiss who came looking for gold in the 1860s was Felix Hunger, who later worked as a blacksmith in Westport. Soon after being naturalized in 1870 he moved to Taranaki and acquired a farm near Normanby, becoming the first of many Swiss to settle in the province. In 1874 he went back to his birthplace in Switzerland and returned to New Zealand with 23 compatriots. In the 1880s Hunger persuaded two more groups of Swiss to emigrate to New Zealand.

The Swiss became an important group of dairy farmers in Taranaki. In 1916 nearly half of the 670 Swiss-born in New Zealand lived in that province. Later, the Auckland region became the most important centre of settlement. By the end of the 20th century there were far fewer Swiss in Taranaki than in Auckland.

*Cecelia’s on Tasman*

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## Muscles instrumental for optimal aging in women

New research on women aged 63 to 99 supports the health benefits of staying strong into older age. The US research team tested the strength of 5400 women using two common tests: the grip strength in their dominant hand, and how fast

they could repeatedly stand up from a chair without using their hands. Being stronger was significantly linked to a lower risk of mortality, even after controlling for other factors like their age, body weight,

and whether they smoked. Notably, muscular strength was associated with a lower risk of death even in women not meeting recommended levels of aerobic activity.

*JAMA Network Open*

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# Hawera hosts national flower show



The Leong sisters from left Milly, Lexi, Gracie and their prize-winning novice bloom (to left of Milly).

The dahlia has come a long way from its origins as a humble food plant to the varied fashionable garden plants they are today.

This was clearly obvious at the National Dahlia Show which was held at the Hawera Community Centre on February 14-15. A large number of visitors were treated to an onrush of colour as they came through the doors when the show opened at noon on Saturday. "It seems to be the turn of the dahlias. They're in fashion at the moment," said Paul Lander, president of the Hawera Horticultural Society which hosted the show.

"Originally it was not really a garden plant. It was

a food plant and people used to eat the tubers," said Paul. Dahlias began as a small plant that came in red, white and orange colours. "And these were all bred from them" said Paul pointing to the around 200 different classes on show. "It's amazing how in a few hundred years you have all sorts of shapes and sizes of dahlias. They can grow from the small size they used to be, to being taller than me, up to seven feet."

In its early years as a garden plant, dahlias would be grown in frames.

"As time went on they started showing them on stems, so you needed strong stems so they could look up at you or into you."

Growing conditions around the country had been good for dahlias said Paul with a wet summer, mild temperatures and "not really cold nights," although there had been some trouble with fungus diseases.

They grow well in Taranaki, said Paul.

"They are fairly resilient, except perhaps for wind. In a hard frost or late in autumn they are pretty tough. To kill one outright takes a bit of doing."

The Hawera Horticultural Society was hosting the show alongside its popular Summer Flower Show, which Paul says this year they were scaling back to make room for the dahlias.

In opening the show Paul

said he wanted to dedicate it to the Hawera Horticultural Society's patron Spud Brogden and his wife Joy. Spud who passed away late last year was an internationally recognised expert and hybridiser of daffodils. Joy had also served as Society patron.

The Hawera Horticultural Society last hosted the National Dahlia Show in 2022.

There are two national shows held every year, one in the North Island, the other in the South Island with the South Island show held in Gore a week after the Hawera show.

Growers from the North and South Islands could be at either show, and it was South Island growers Garfield and Bev Andrew from Timaru who took out the Champion of Champions at the Hawera Show with Kiwi Gloria, a small cactus-type dahlia. Garfield says he has been growing dahlias for the last 26 years and has been a judge for 10 years. He was looking forward to "taking a few" to the South Island show at Gore.

Coming from the other end of the country were the Leong sisters, Milly (15), Gracie-Mae (13) and Lexi (10) who took out the novice bloom award. They had made the eight-hour trip to Hawera from Northland with their mother Jennifer Ives.

The sisters have been growing dahlias for five years and had set up a dahlia

farm as a home school project and put together a book The Dahlia Kids with photos and text detailing what they had done.

Helping them along the way was leading dahlia grower Dennis Rodgers from Feilding who was also at the show. He was quick to point out that as well as the novice bloom award

the sisters had topped the show's photography section.

"If you have a passion for something you can achieve something," says Jennifer. "They are kids, but they have achieved quite a lot."

Next month they will be shifting to Oamaru and taking their dahlias with them.



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There were around 200 classes of dahlia at the National Dahlia Show in Hawera.

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10 YEAR RESIDENTIAL GUARANTEE





# Head students at Coastal Taranaki School

The head Students for CTS include Lara Smith (16), Rebecca Goodin (16), Hayley Sulzberger (16) and Lily Petch (15). Lara and Rebecca were also Head Students for 2025.

Educational Centre.

Her aims as regards her leadership role include being more involved with the primary school including supporting whanau time each day.

As regards interests, Lara's two dogs Sky and Kaz are an important focus and she also enjoys watching movies.

Her vocational aspirations include several options, namely law, early childhood teaching, nursing or social worker.

Rebecca Goodin shared that she was really relieved that her student leadership

Lara Smith said she was happy to be chosen again as a student leader. She added that she'd have been upset if she didn't make it again.

This year her subjects include her favourite english, science, history, geography and outdoor education (TOPEC). TOPEC stands for Taranaki Outdoor Pursuits



From left, Lara Smith, Rebecca Goodin, Hayley Sulzberger and Lily Petch, Head Students at Coastal Taranaki School for 2026.

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role is continuing.

Her subjects include art, English, mathematics, TOPEC and her favourite design (woodwork).

As a student leader she intends to work towards bringing the school together in a positive way.

Rebecca's interests include watching movies "chilling out" and visiting the beach.

When she leaves school Rebecca is keen to have a trade, probably as an agricultural contractor. She

is off to a good start because she already works for her father, owner of Goodin Contracting.

Hayley Sulzberger says she was glad to be appointed as a Head Student. "I was Deputy Head Student last year and have moved up a level."

Hayley is also a student representative on the Board of Trustees. In this context, she was also involved in the selection process of the new principal, "which was really interesting."

This year her subjects include english, mathematics, science, TOPEC and her favourite design (woodwork).

Soccer is Hayley's main interest and she plays as

either a wing or a goalie. Also, she enjoys helping her father, who is an engineer, working in Rahunu.

When she leaves school she is keen to work in a trade, maybe in plumbing or engineering. However, she is also interested in orthodontal dentistry, and spent some time over the Christmas break helping in a clinic.

Hayley's final comment, which she considers is true for all of them is, "As a team we are happy and excited to lead the school. We also want to ensure the community and school keep in touch."

Lily Petch said, "I was quite surprised, but very excited" to be selected as a

Head Student.

She will be kept busy with her subjects english, mathematics, science, and TOPEC. Her fifth subject art shouldn't worry her too much, as painting and sketching are important interests of hers.

As well as painting and sketching Lily enjoys spending time with the animals on the family's dairy farm.

As a student leader Lily intends to help connect closely with the community and show that we are a very good school.

After she leaves school Lily expects to train as a midwife.



LEFT: Another view of the student leaders, from left, Lara Smith, Rebecca Goodin, Hayley Sulzberger and Lily Petch.

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# Sonia Mau is the new Tumuaki/Principal of Coastal Taranaki School

The new Tumuaki/Principal of Coastal Taranaki School, Sonia Mau, brings a wealth of educational experience (30 years) to her new position, both here and overseas, and is highly qualified: amongst her qualifications is a Masters degree in Education with First Class Honours from Waikato University. She has most recently been the Tumuaki/Principal of Maketu School, in the Bay of Plenty for the past eight and a half years.

The Coastal Taranaki School Board must be commended for their exhaustive recruitment process, including outside expertise, to yield the optimal choice in Sonia who blends expertise with an engaging personality and definite communication skills.

"I am very humbled and privileged to have been selected," comments Sonia. She was captivated by her welcome: "There was a powerful powhiri, which was very special involving our local hapu, Nga Mahanga a Tairi."

In many ways Sonia is coming home as she was Head Girl in 1993 when CTS was known as Okato College. Her five siblings also attended the school.

Although she has definite Taranaki connections, originally she hails from the Far North (Hokianga). Her father is of Ngapuhi heritage and her mother (European) spent her formative years in Koru/Oakura.

Along with her extensive teaching experience elsewhere, she also has Taranaki experience such as teaching at Devon Intermediate, New Plymouth in 2000.



Sonia Mau the new Tumuaki/Principal of Coastal Taranaki School was presented with a titoki tree at the powhiri as a powerful symbol of new beginnings, leadership and commitment to the school community. In te ao Maori trees represent growth, strength, and deep roots in the whenua (land). By planting the titoki tree during the ceremony Sonia affirmed her intention to grow alongside the school, nurture its people and put down lasting roots within the community. The planting signifies partnership, stewardship and a shared future grounded in respect and connection.

Despite her busy life as principal Sonia hopes she can find time to enjoy the outdoors including road cycling. She explains that she enjoys living close to nature. Netball is another love she would like to return to as a player, which would ensure she keeps fit. "I'd be a golden oldie," she concedes with a smile.

Sonia is impressed with what she sees of the school "It has great staff, a great

School Board and an excellent community." She is pleased "that there is a lot of investment in the Okato community."

Her ideas for the school include endeavouring to "grow" the secondary part of the school as a priority. She looks forward to working with everyone to accelerate school-wide improvement in areas of priority with explicit targets to raise student achievement as well as to

improve learning outcomes at the forefront of decision-making.

Sonia is also keen to promote Rumaki Maori within the school which involves the option of total immersion in Maori language and culture where 80-100% of instruction and communication occurs in Te Reo Maori.



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Ōpunakē Town Hall Crop Swap.

## Ōpunakē Crop Swap a hit with locals

Around 30 locals gathered in the Ōpunakē Town Hall on Sunday 1st February to kick off what was a really vibrant, abundant and colourful Crop Swap. Four long, connected, wooden tables set the scene, with a sign out front and warm welcomes. People knew about the Crop Swap thanks to the local 'Ōpunake Gardeners and Kai Growers' facebook group. Currently with 248 members! This grew by more than 30 people, once and since word got around about the Crop Swap, and therefore also, the online group.

As people arrived, the tables quickly filled with fresh, locally grown kai (food), flowers, eggs, seedlings, seeds, homemade balms, seaweed tea for the garden, muffins and more! People got inspired with what else they could bring to contribute next time, and there was definitely a buzz, with people clearly looking forward to the next one, and hopefully many more Crop Swaps to come!

Some arrived empty handed, because they didn't know what to expect, then ended up getting inspired

with what they could bring next time, offering a donation for the hall, or even popping home to harvest some greens and inviting their neighbour to come along with them!

The atmosphere was relaxed and joyful, family friendly with plenty of smiles, laughter, and conversations. New connections were made, along with re-connections, and tamariki added to the energy of the event, as they enjoyed running about the other end of the hall.

The swap itself was calm, respectful, and unhurried. There was a really welcoming and positive vibe for everyone involved. Crop Swaps are usually kept within an hour, and start by allowing time for gathering and placing items on the tables provided, community connections, and then an intro with everyone circled around the offerings people have contributed. There's a chance for a few community notices, then it's into a fair sharing of what's on offer. People are encouraged to bring their own bags, baskets or boxes, and be respectful and considerate of others.

Money is not exchanged directly for items, though people can give a donation to help with ongoing costs of the venue. Items are not directly traded from one person to another. It's a community swap, and the first one went really smoothly, with plenty available for everyone to walk away with a nice little bundle.

Crop Swaps is not a new concept, though it was launched as an initiative that since 2014 has now spread far and wide by Taranaki local Franziska von Hunerbein of Bumblebee Bakery and Kombucha. Whilst Manaia and Okato have had Community Crop Swaps, this seems to be a new initiative for Ōpunakē. You can learn more about and find other crops swaps around Taranaki and further afar at [www.cropswap.co.nz](http://www.cropswap.co.nz)

Everyone is welcome to attend. If people don't have produce from their garden or farm, that's ok, not everyone has that abundance to offer. The crop swap is based on a spirit of contribution, generosity and fair sharing. People are encouraged to bring something to offer, if they can, in whatever form feels right for them in the theme of local kai and nourishing the land, gardens

and people.

This might include seeds, flowers, baking, preserves, seedlings, plants or cuttings, favourite recipes, gardening tips, tools no longer needed - that could be useful for someone else, sealed bottles of fish fertiliser, books or magazines about growing healthy soil and food, worm juice, compost tea, mulch, preserving jars, newspapers, homemade butter, or a greatly appreciated donation to help cover ongoing hall hire. The crop swap is as much about community connection as it is about food, and growing our local kai connections and resilience. It thrives when everyone participates in some way.

The rhythm of the Ōpunakē Crop Swap will be the first Sunday of the month, 2 to 3pm. There will potentially also be a fortnightly addition during this more abundance season. People can also donate extra surplus they may have in their gardens to the local Ōpunakē Food Bank located at the back of the Medical Center, or in the community food cupboard across from the service station.

The next Ōpunakē Crop Swap will be this Sunday, 1st March, 2 to 3pm at the Town Hall, 38 Domett Street.



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# A brilliant night

On Saturday 7th February Mr Moondog Blues played a gig in The Club Hotel Opunake.

It was a great night. As a steady crowd arrived over the evening we were entertained by Moondog's unique style of blues. A one man singer/songwriter he plays several guitars including one made of biscuit tins. He also opened a pouch with a dozen mouth harps inside which he proceeded to play. His set

was advertised to play from 8pm to 11pm, however the enthusiasm of the crowd was such he continued through to midnight.

If you were disappointed you could not get to this event, don't worry, he plans to return to Opunake sometime around January next year. Keep an eye on this paper for details as he will advertise here again.

*Peter Macadam  
Opunake*



The inimitable Moondog.

Our Next Issue 12 March  
Email [editorial@opunakecoastalnews.co.nz](mailto:editorial@opunakecoastalnews.co.nz)  
to send your sports story

# TTR gives up on the Fast Track process

Seabed mining company Trans-Tasman Resources (TTR) have issued their formal response to the Fast Track Expert Panel's draft decision on their plans to mine off the South Taranaki coast. They say they will not propose any changes to conditions. There is now nothing stopping the panel from making a final decision to decline consent, say Greenpeace.

TTR say they reject the "assumptions and conclusions" of the panel that the evidence TTR provided around potential environmental impacts were "uncertain, incomplete or inadequate".

Greenpeace Aotearoa seabed mining campaigner

Juressa Lee says:

"It's clear that TTR knows their project fails to meet even the pro-industry Fast Track Act process and are fast running out of options to get their doomed project across the line. TTR even suggests the panel misunderstands the application, an arrogant dismissal of the panel, the months they have dedicated to careful deliberation, and the wealth of expertise that has been provided to ensure the decision is well-informed." In its draft decision released earlier this month, the expert panel ruled that seabed mining in Taranaki would harm threatened species like pygmy blue whales and penguins, and could not be

safely managed.

"This is, in part, the result of a united position from all eight iwi of Taranaki, as well as expert witnesses who submitted on behalf of Greenpeace and Kiwis Against Seabed Mining (KASM)," says Lee.

"It's also what mana whenua, communities and environmental groups have been saying for decades: Seabed mining will cause irreversible harm to the moana and there is no place for this industry in Aotearoa.

"It's time political leaders took bold action and stopped seabed mining once and for all by banning it in Aotearoa," Lee continues.

The panel declined TTR's proposal in February,

finding seabed mining would harm threatened species like pygmy blue whales and penguins, and could not be safely managed. It will make its final decision before 18 March.

"It's clear TTR is out of ideas. They have been defeated time and time again all the way up to the Supreme Court. The evidence is clear. There is no place for seabed mining in Aotearoa.

"The resistance to seabed mining is strong and unyielding. Iwi, environmentalists, community groups, and ocean protectors have been fighting for decades and any attempt to start seabed mining in Aotearoa will be met with further resistance."

## Aside from pugs which dogs have the most trouble breathing?

We all know that pugs, French bulldogs and bulldogs have trouble breathing, but what about the other breeds?

International researchers compared 14 breeds with these usual suspects to understand what other dog breeds might be suffering from the wheezing, difficulty breathing and trouble exercising that comes with brachycephalic

obstructive airway syndrome (BOAS). The authors found the Pekingese had a rate of BOAS similar to Bulldogs, with only 11% breathing freely.

The Japanese Chin also fared poorly, with only 17.4% free of symptoms. Others, such as the King Charles Spaniel, Shih Tzu and Boston Terrier had between 25% and 50% of the dogs tested who were

graded "zero" with few or no breathing issues, and the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Pomeranian, Boxer, Chihuahua and more fared best, with between 50% and 75% of dogs at grade zero.

Within individual dogs, a very flat face, nostrils that collapsed when the dogs breathed in and a higher body condition (indicating a more overweight dog),

were associated with BOAS risk.



What a cutie.



## You're invited to our latest market update

### State of the Nation, New Plymouth

Join us for a market update with Investment Director, Mark Lister who will share his thoughts on the latest economic and market developments, and what this means for investors:

- Will the New Zealand economy recover in 2026
- Where interest rates might go from here
- How investors should think about the upcoming election
- The outlook for shares, fixed income and other assets
- Long-term investment strategies for the next 12 months and beyond

#### WHEN

19 March 2026  
5.30pm - 7pm

#### WHERE

The Devon Hotel  
390 Devon Street East  
New Plymouth

#### RSVP by email or scan the QR code

E [newplymouth@craigsip.com](mailto:newplymouth@craigsip.com)

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Can't attend or missed the event? Contact the New Plymouth branch for a free, no-obligation consultation.

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# Taranaki mayors call for support for North Island neighbours



Rangitikei, Taranaki and Waipā as they move in to clean-up and recovery mode following the deluge that caused severe flooding, slips, major infrastructure and property damage.

New Plymouth District's Mayor Max Brough said the situation facing many North Island communities is serious and will take time to recover.

"Our thoughts are with everyone affected in our neighbouring districts. We know how disruptive and stressful these events can be for families, businesses and communities, and how important it is to have support available during both the immediate response and recovery phases."

Stratford District Mayor Neil Volzke said the fund provides a practical way for people in Taranaki to help. "There will be many



Stratford District Mayor Neil Volzke.

people that have seen the devastating images in the news and will be wondering how they can help. The fund allows them to contribute in a coordinated way, ensuring support can be directed where

it is most needed. These communities are dealing with significant impacts, and collective support can make a meaningful difference."

South Taranaki Mayor Phil Nixon said regional solidarity is especially important during widespread emergencies.

"This could easily be us in this situation, so we stand alongside our neighbours who are facing very challenging conditions. Supporting recovery efforts is one way we can show care and connection across regions."



New Plymouth District's Mayor Max Brough.

Taranaki Mayors along with Taranaki Regional Council and Taranaki Foundation Chairperson.

People wishing to donate or find out more information can visit Taranaki Regional Disaster Relief Fund-Taranaki Foundation.

South Taranaki Mayor Phil Nixon.

Taranaki's mayors are inviting locals to help neighbouring districts still reeling from impacts of the severe weather that lashed much of the North Island by donating to the Taranaki

Regional Disaster Relief Fund.

New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki mayors recognise the big job ahead for local councils in Otorohanga, Manawatū,

The Regional Disaster Relief Fund works with established partners to ensure donations are distributed responsibly and in line with community needs. Decisions about who gets the donations to be made collectively by

## Heads-up, Ōpunake. Your bus service is changing

From 7 April we've altered the Ōpunake-New Plymouth service to better match demand. The midday service will now only run on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Morning and evening commuter services continue to run daily.



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# Tuia Taitonga Southlink



He karere tā te Kaunihera o Taranaki ki te Tonga News from the South Taranaki District Council

## Taranaki Anniversary Kerbside Collection

Kerbside collection will continue as normal over the public holiday, so please put your bins out on your usual day. Visit [www.southtaranaki.com/taranakianniversary](http://www.southtaranaki.com/taranakianniversary) for more information.

## Upcoming meetings

### Extraordinary Council

To hear submissions on the proposals to close part of Cambridge Street, Pātea  
Monday 2 March, 2pm  
Hunter Shaw Building, Egmont Street, Pātea

### Eltham Drainage Committee

Wednesday 4 March, 10am  
Taumata Recreation Centre  
Preston Street, Eltham

### Ordinary Council

Wednesday 4 March, 4pm

### Eltham-Kaponga Community Board

Tuesday 10 March, 10.30am  
Rotokare Scenic Reserve,  
365 Sangster Road, Eltham

### Te Hāwera Community Board

Tuesday 10 March, 4pm  
Ōkaiawa Hall, Ahipaipa Road, Ōkaiawa

### Taranaki Coastal Community Board

Wednesday 11 March, 10.30am  
Ōaonui Hall, 5142 South Road, Ōaonui

### Pātea Community Board

Wednesday 11 March, 4pm  
Waitōtara Community Hall,  
Kaipo Street, Waitōtara

### Extraordinary Council

To deliberate on the Parking Control and Traffic Flow Bylaw  
Monday 16 March, 1.30pm

### Workshop

Annual Plan  
Monday 16 March, 2.30pm

### Te Kāhui Matauraura

Wednesday 18 March, 10am

### Environment and Hearings Committee

Wednesday 18 March, 1pm

### Workshop

Long Term Plan Strategic Direction  
Monday 23 March, 10am

### Policy Strategy Committee

Monday 23 March, 1pm

### Water Services Committee

Monday 30 March, 1pm

### Workshop

Risk Management Framework  
Wednesday 1 April, 10am

### Risk and Assurance Committee

Wednesday 1 April, 1pm



Unless otherwise specified, meetings are held in the Council Chamber, Administration Building, Albion Street, Hāwera.

# Win Free Groceries for a Year in National Food Competition

As International Food Waste Action Week approaches (9–15 March), Council is encouraging residents to take part in a nationwide challenge aimed at cutting household food waste simply by doing one thing - eating their leftovers. The Leftover Legends Challenge, run by *Love Food Hate Waste New Zealand*, asks participants to eat their leftovers for lunch the next day throughout March—aiming to save 25,000 plates of food from landfill. Participants can log each leftover meal online and go in the draw to win groceries for a year. Council's Environment and Sustainability Manager Cindy Koen says Kiwi households send more than 12,000 tonnes of edible leftovers to landfill.

"Here in South Taranaki, we're proud of our practical and resourceful communities. This challenge is a simple and fun way for locals to make a real difference," says Cindy. "Today's leftovers are tomorrow's free lunch, we could save thousands

of tonnes of food and significantly reduce our climate footprint, while saving some money."

Food waste currently costs New Zealanders \$3 billion each year and contributes to both landfill volumes and methane emissions.

New Zealand residents can take part between 1 - 31 March 2026 by logging their meals and help New Zealand become a nation of Leftover Legends.

## How it works:

- 1 Head to [www.lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz/leftoverlegends](http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz/leftoverlegends) and record what you're saving.
- 2 Eat your leftovers - breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- 3 Climb the leaderboard - every saved meal is an entry.

## Creative Communities Scheme Funding Applications Open

Do you have an arts project that needs funding support? Applications for the South Taranaki Creative Communities Scheme are open until Friday 13 March. The Scheme provides funding assistance for community-based arts activities in the District, that take place between 10 April 2026 – 10 April 2027.

Visit [www.southtaranaki.com/funding](http://www.southtaranaki.com/funding) for more information.

## Kaponga LibraryPlus Refurbishment Underway

Refurbishment work has begun at Kaponga LibraryPlus, with early construction stages already completed. This includes internal preparation work, removal of a wall, construction of a new external deck and roof adjustments to improve the building's design. A building consent application has been lodged for the remaining work, and remains on track for completion in April, bringing improved facilities for the Kaponga community.

## Glover Road Watermain Upgrade Progressing Well

The Glover Road watermain project in Hāwera continues to progress. The first stage of installation was successfully completed in November. Construction has resumed in managed stages, supported by traffic management to maintain access for residents and local businesses. The project remains on schedule, with construction activities advancing as planned.



## 100 year celebration of Naumai Park

### MARCH EVENTS

#### Tai Chi

with Taranaki Tai Chi

SATURDAY 14 MARCH, 10AM  
MAGNOLIA DELL STAGE | NAUMAI PARK

#### The Great Puppet Hunt

with Cherol Filbee, celebrating World Puppet Day

SATURDAY 21 MARCH, 10AM  
HIGH ROAD ENTRANCE, NAUMAI PARK

#### Nature Artist Stone Painting

with Hāwera Art Club

SATURDAY 28 MARCH, 1PM  
THROUGHOUT NAUMAI PARK

#### Walk & Run Through the Park

with Hāwera Harriers Club

SUNDAY 29 MARCH, 1PM  
HIGH ROAD ENTRANCE, NAUMAI PARK



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# Hospital welcomes second intake of students

Three fifth-year medical students from Auckland University have arrived at Hāwera Hospital to begin their year-long placement with the Rural Medical Immersion Programme (RMIP).

As a partnership between Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora and Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland, the RMIP is designed to strengthen healthcare in rural New Zealand by placing senior medical students in regional hospitals for immersive, hands-on training, says Hāwera Hospital consultant, Dr Hannah Lawn.

“The programme allows students to develop clinical skills while becoming embedded in rural communities,” says Dr Lawn who was a former RMIP student herself.

“I encourage them to embrace the hands-on learning and the ‘get stuck in’ approach that rural

medicine requires. We are thrilled to have two returning RMIP students from the 2025 cohort who are now completing their final year of medical training at Taranaki Base. It’s wonderful to see this retention, and we look forward to the potential for future recruitment in our region.”

Hāwera Hospital is one of four North Island rural training sites selected for the RMIP which is now in its second year in the South Taranaki hospital.

The initiative is strongly supported by local doctors, the Hāwera community, as well as Taranaki Foundation, and its key funding partner Toi Foundation, who have provided the students with a fully furnished home as part of their placement.

Enabling the first cohort of medical students last year to move straight into a fully furnished home enables them to train at Hāwera Hospital while also living locally and



Medical students Lucy McKay, Samantha Watson, Emily Dennis.

immersing themselves in the South Taranaki community, says Taranaki Foundation CEO, Josh Hickford.

“The students are excited

for the year ahead and very grateful for the home that has been made possible through Taranaki

Foundation, in partnership with Toi Foundation and other generous donors and supporters,” says Hickford.

“Taranaki Foundation is proud to play a connector role in bringing people together to make initiatives like this happen. Without the support of Toi Foundation and our wider donor community, we would not be entering the second year of this programme.”

Medical students Emily Dennis, Samantha Watson, and Lucy McKay were welcomed to Hāwera Hospital with a powhiri on 2 February and say they are excited about serving the South Taranaki community and joining the mandatory pub quiz nights.

“I’m most excited about becoming part of the community,” says Emily Dennis.

“I can’t wait to get involved and meet the people,” says Samantha Watson.

“I’m excited to join the community and explore the opportunities the rural programme offers,” says Lucy McKay.

# On The House expands to meet growing demand

Food rescue charity seeks final funding push to complete infrastructure upgrade

On The House Free Stores are busier than ever. On any given evening, it’s a cross-

section of the community: families with kids in tow, young couples flatting, older people stretching pensions, tradies finishing shifts, students, people between jobs, and some with no fixed

address at all.

“People come for different reasons,” says General Manager Terry Hancock. “Some need the food, some hate the idea of edible food ending up in landfill, some really appreciate the

company, and sometimes life just throws a big, unexpected bill their way. Either way, everyone’s welcome. Rescuing and sharing food isn’t just about filling pantries — it’s about building a more sustainable and connected community.”

In 2025, On The House redistributed 244,770 kilograms of surplus food across Taranaki — the equivalent of more than 540,000 meals. That food flowed through four Free Stores, 12 regional foodbanks and more than 50 community organisations. The Stratford Free Store, opened last year, expanded the service into Central and South Taranaki, while partnerships with YMCA’s Te Whare ō Tapatahi night shelter provide regular meals to people experiencing homelessness.

Even with this growth, demand continues to rise. In February, the Stratford Free Store served 181 households in one evening — a record for any Free Store since On The House began in 2017. The Over 65’s Free Store welcomed 87 pensioners at a single session, and New

Plymouth stores regularly serve up to 160-165 households per evening.

Growing Pains: Moving to a Larger Venue

To meet rising demand, the Thursday Free Store is moving from Holy Trinity Church in Strandon to Northpoint Baptist Church in Bell Block. The last session at Strandon is Thursday 12 March, and the first at Bell Block will be Thursday 19 March.

“We’re incredibly grateful to Holy Trinity for hosting us as we’ve grown,” Hancock says. “Partnering with Northpoint Baptist Church allows us to serve even more whānau who need support.”

Clayton Riddle, pastor at Northpoint Baptist Church, says: “We are excited to welcome On The House as a partner in supporting our community. There is a wonderful alignment of values with On The House and Northpoint as we seek to care for our neighbours and support people in practical ways.”

## Infrastructure Under Pressure

As demand continues

to grow, so does the opportunity to rescue more food. Major suppliers are ready to provide additional surplus kai, but without expanded cold storage, improved sorting space, and a refrigerated truck, On The House cannot take it all in.

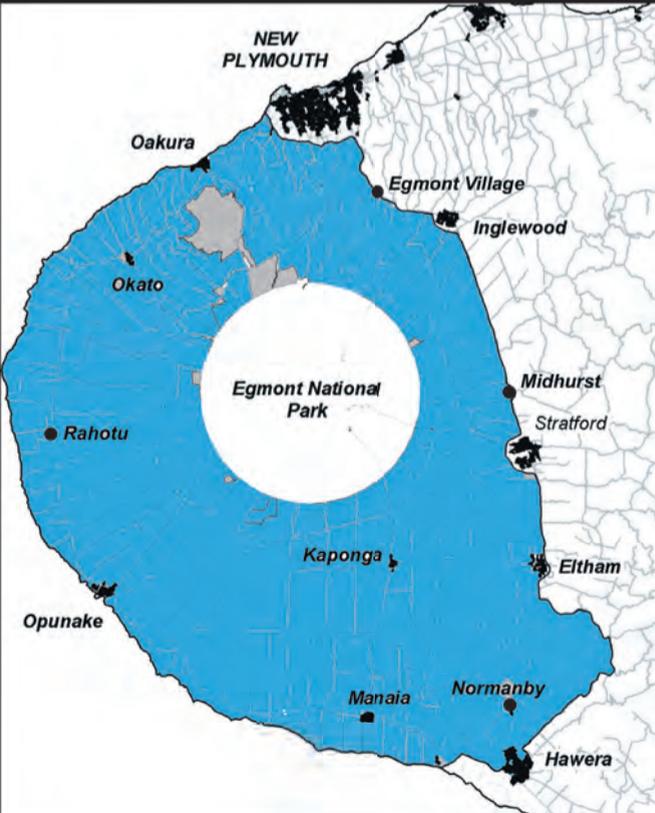
“Right now, there’s more good food available than we have the capacity to handle,” Hancock says. “We’ve been incredibly fortunate to secure major funding for infrastructure improvements — including a new electric refrigerated truck, expanded cold storage, and improved food sorting facilities. We’ve raised most of what we need, but we need community support to finish the job and make sure more food reaches families safely.”

With the right infrastructure, more perfectly good food can be shared with whānau across Taranaki instead of going to waste. Around one in five children in Aotearoa live in households where food runs out sometimes or often, while more than a million tonnes of food are wasted nationally each year. These upgrades will allow On The House to rescue and redistribute more of that food locally.

## Community Support Needed

“This has always been a community effort,” Hancock says. “We wouldn’t be here without our volunteers, donors and funding partners. But with demand growing and our infrastructure stretched, we need the community’s help now more than ever to keep more food reaching our community.”

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# The perils of lithium batteries

A Waikato landfill fire is the latest in a series of blazes suspected to have been caused by wrongly disposed lithium-ion batteries.

The fire has re-opened discussion on how we can best deal with the growing problem of dangerous battery waste.

The Science Media Centre (SMC) asked Professor Saeid Baroutian of the Faculty of Engineering & Design, University of Auckland how can we better dispose of used lithium batteries?

“The best disposal solution is always prevention: keep lithium-ion batteries out

of general rubbish and recycling. Use retailer take back, council collection, or specialist battery drop off points. For safe storage/transport, isolate terminals (e.g., tape or bag batteries), keep them separate in non metal packaging, and isolate damaged/swollen batteries.”

### Why are lithium battery fires so dangerous?

“A lithium ion battery fire at a landfill is not a normal rubbish fire. These fires can enter thermal runaway, they burn very hot, can re-ignite, and may keep releasing gas even after the flames are out. The smoke can

contain highly toxic gases, and contaminated runoff can threaten waterways. In our rubbish—truck fire trials with Auckland Council, we measured spikes of highly toxic gases, such as hydrogen fluoride, and found that the extinguishing firewater carried fluoride and metals, showing why batteries need a separate, controlled collection stream, not landfill.”

### What have we learned about lithium batteries since they were first made available in the 1990s?

“Compared with the 90s, lithium ion batteries are

now in everyday items such as vapes, electronic devices, phones, and hand tools, and larger, higher energy packs such as e bikes, scooters, and EVs. Since the 90s, we have learnt far more about how batteries fail especially when crushed, how long they can off-gas after suppression, and how hazardous the emissions and runoff can be, so it is just a small battery is a dangerous myth.

“We have also learned that today’s wide range of chemistries, sizes, and pack designs makes sorting and recycling far harder than people assume. Batteries are often embedded, glued, or

sealed inside products, so they are easy to miss and difficult to remove safely. Different chemistries and formats can require different recycling routes, and mixed/hidden designs increase contamination and costs, while also increasing the chance that a battery gets damaged during collection and processing.”

### What’s driving the increase in lithium battery fires?

“The increase is mainly in volume and behaviour. There are far more battery-powered products in everyday items such as vapes, electronic devices,

phones, and hand tools, and larger, higher energy packs such as e bikes, scooters, and EVs. There are more small batteries hidden in items, and too many are being thrown in household bins where they are crushed during collection or processing.

“Vapes matter because they are common, small, less protected, easily binned, and hard to spot on sorting lines.

“This is preventable, but it needs both public action and system change, clear labelling, convenient take-back everywhere, and stronger product stewardship rules.”

## Manaia WI hold annual meeting

President Phyllis Malcolm welcomed all to the February meeting of the Manaia Women’s institute.

The aspirations were recited. The motto for the

month is “the great essentials for happiness are something to do, something to love and something to hope for.”

Four members had helped Santa at the Manaia

Christmas parade.

The Annual meeting was held following the general meeting. President Phyllis read the annual report which showed that we have

had a very busy year. The financial report was presented

Competition winners for the year were: Shrub. 1. Phyllis Malcolm. Bloom 1. Bev Hawkes.

Home craft. 1. Ann Chisnall. Hand craft. 1. Raewyn Fredrickson. Overall competitions winner. Ann Chisnall.

President Phyllis

presented good service badges to Janice Walsh and Nicola Ashley. Long and loyal service certificates were presented to Maxine Haybittle and Ruth Binns.

Janice Walsh told us about a very interesting train trip she had done in the South Island.

Monthly competition results. Shrub. 1. Janice Walsh. 2. Jennie

McNaught. 3. Bev Hawkes. Bloom. 1. Patty Symes. 2. Raewyn Fredrickson. 3. Phyllis Malcolm. Home craft. 1. Bev Hawkes. 2. Ann Chisnall. 3. Jennie McNaught. Hand Craft. 1. Neda Howes. 2. Raewyn Fredrickson. 3. Bev Hawkes.

Meg Kelly.

## Kaponga WI hold AGM

On January 12 Kaponga WI members got together to play their Annual game of Mini Putt at the Inglewood venue. Lots of fun was had with a couple of the men folk joining in. Sharyn Hurley won the cup for the most points. We then ventured of to Simply Devine Cafe at Egmont Village for a delicious lunch.

On February 9 the Kaponga WI held their monthly meeting setting out activities for the year. This gathering was held at the home of Sharyn Hurley. Once the meeting was finished, we, once again had a delicious shared lunch supplied by the members. When lunch was finished and dishes done we started with the 94th AGM.

The top table for the coming years has the same officers as the previous year, thus being, President - Dene Lines, Secretary - Jo Ellis, Treasurer - Carolyn Nicholas and Vice President - Jo Jones. The Annual report was read by President Dene which was put together by Dene, Jo Ellis and Carolyn.

Competition winners for the previous year were announced and the cups and monetary donations were given. The Jubilee Cup for most points overall went to Diane West. The Morrisey cup for the runner-up went to Jo Ellis. The Thanksgiving Cup for gardening went to Diane West, with Nancy Stokes second and Dene Lines third. The Home craft cup went to Diane West, with Jo Ellis second and Dene Lines third. The Miscellaneous Cup went to Jo Ellis and Dorothy Hughes



The winners are Diane West, Dorothy Hughes, Jo Ellis with President Dene Lines.

first equal with Diane West second and Gillian Frandsen third.

President Dene thanked

everyone for the successful year we had.

Jo Ellis



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# DairyNZ research in action: mitigating heat stress

New DairyNZ research will help farmers mitigate the impacts of heat stress on herds in high-risk regions of the country.

DairyNZ scientists are in the final stages of an on-farm trial at DairyNZ's Scott Farm in the Waikato to test common mitigation measures and assess their return on investment.

According to DairyNZ senior science manager Kirsty Verhoek, heat stress is an increasing challenge for pasture-based dairy systems, particularly in regions experiencing more frequent hot, radiant, and still conditions.

"Through previous research and farmer engagement, we have heard clearly that farmers want

practical, evidence-based solutions to help protect cow welfare, maintain milk production, and support long-term farm resilience," she says.

"However, many heat stress mitigation measures require investment and farmers have told us they need confidence that tools will work under New Zealand's grazing conditions and deliver value on farm. This research programme has therefore been shaped alongside farmers, focusing on understanding where and when heat stress occurs, how cows respond, and which mitigation measures are both effective and practical within real farm systems."

It is the latest piece of animal care research in DairyNZ's 'Comfortable

Cows Outdoors' project. To date, the three-year programme has mapped regions that are at higher risk of high temperatures, solar radiation, and wind; analysed datasets linking weather and milk yield; assessed how cows use shade; and completed a comprehensive survey of 350+ farmers in Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Canterbury and North Otago understanding awareness, attitudes and practices related to heat stress in dairy cows (recently published in the New Zealand Journal of Agricultural Research).

Scott Farm is in the final stages of a heat stress trial where five mobs of cows have been fitted with rumen temperature boluses, pedometers, and wearable technology all providing real-time data, to test the impact of various mitigation measures.

"We have a mob that's gone once-a-day through the afternoon walk to the milking shed, a second mob spending their daytime in a shaded area, a third mob that goes under misters in the yard cooling the environment around the cows while waiting for milking, a fourth mob that while waiting in the milking yard goes under a sprinkler where droplets saturate the coat (evaporative cooling); and a fifth (control) mob with no mitigations at all," says DairyNZ scientist Charlotte Reed.

A group of Waikato farmers recently got to see the trial in action during a workshop at Scott Farm. Many of the farmers who attended have been actively involved in DairyNZ's heat stress research to date and were able to share valuable feedback on the practicality and fit of different mitigations on farm.



Cows in mist.

"The workshop also provided an opportunity for farmers to see how their input has directly helped shape the research questions, trial design, and future direction of the programme, while getting an update on current progress. Our goal with

testing this range of options is not to say, 'this is what you should put in place', but to provide information around a range of different strategies – a toolbox of options," says Charlotte.

"A goal of the project

is to better define how cows respond to heat load. With the volatile weather experienced this summer, we've ended up with a comprehensive dataset that spans from cooler, wet days all the way to hot sunny days, which is very valuable."



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# Fonterra farmers approve divestment capital return scheme

Following the Special Meeting, Fonterra can confirm that its farmer shareholders have approved the scheme of arrangement for the capital return that's expected from the sale of its global Consumer and associated businesses.

98.85% of the total shareholder votes cast were in support of the capital return proposal.

This means Fonterra can now seek final Court approval to undertake the capital return of \$2.00 per share to shareholders and unit holders, subject to the divestment of Mainland Group to Lactalis being completed.

Fonterra expects the transaction to be complete in the first quarter of the 2026 calendar year,

subject to separation of the businesses from Fonterra and provided the remaining regulatory approvals are received within the expected timeframes.

Once these steps have been completed, the Co-operative will confirm the record date for the capital return, which will be within the five business days prior to the capital return payment

being made to shareholders and unit holders.



# January was unseasonally wet

January was an extremely wet month for Taranaki with an average rainfall of nearly 200mm – that's 86% more than usual, according to Taranaki Regional Council (TRC) figures.

Their monitoring site at

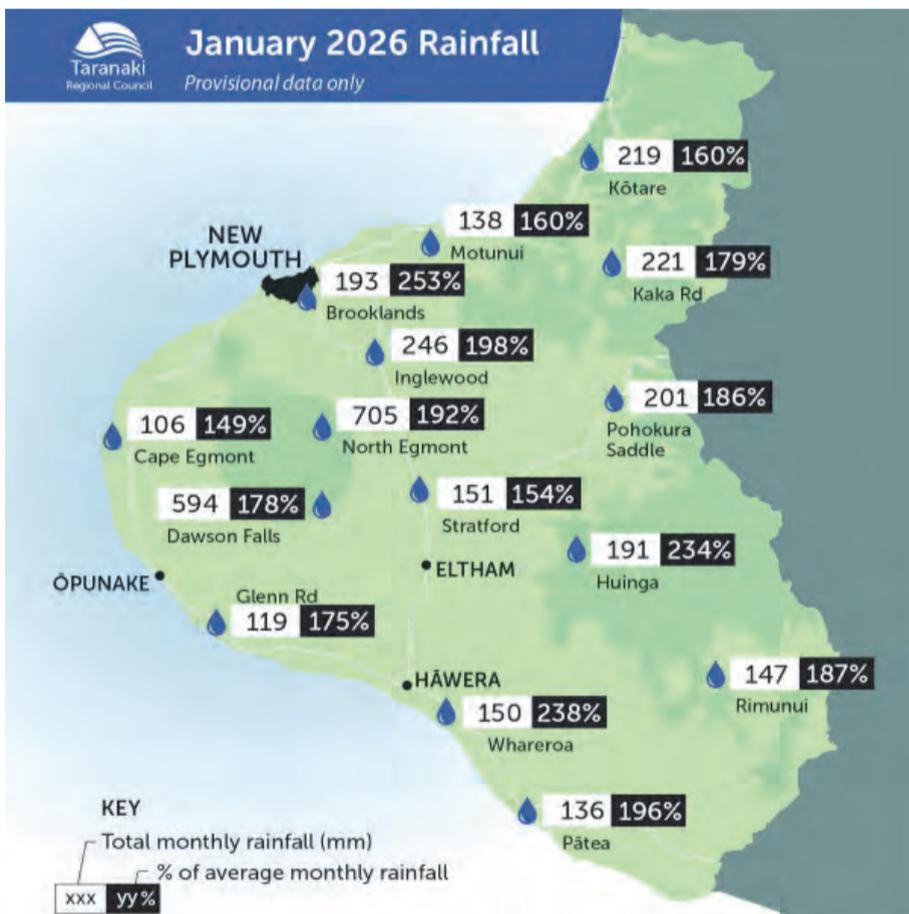
Brooklands Zoo had 153% more rainfall than normal as the region experienced a huge amount of rain in the middle of the month. The lowest amount of rainfall was at Taungatara at Eltham Rd near Coastal Taranaki.

While Brooklands Zoo endured above average rainfall, it also recorded the highest air temperature on 8 January at 26.9°C. The average air temperature for the region (excluding Te Maunga sites) was 17°C,

which is 0.7°C cooler than long-term January averages.

Mean river flows for January were 82.6% greater than typical values, low flows were 57.4% greater, and high flows 91.9% greater than typical values while mean river (non-mountain) water temperatures were 17.4°C, an average of 0.8°C cooler than normal.

January average wind speeds were 13.7km/hr, with average gust strength of 43.7km/hr, these were 1.2km/hr stronger, and 5.2km/hr gustier than the long-term average. The maximum wind gust recorded in January was 85.3km/hr at Waitōtara at Ngutuwera on 9 January.



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# Rates cap potential and pitfalls need scrutiny

At Federated Farmers, we're all in favour of greater local government spending restraint.

We're not in favour of so severely straight-jacketing council budget decisions that vital infrastructure upgrades and maintenance are delayed or cancelled.

That might sound like

Federated Farmers wants a bob each way on the Government's proposed 2-4% cap on council rates.

In reality, it reflects the tricky balance between calls for fiscal discipline and the unavoidable cost pressures councils face.

I think all of us, even councils, agree on one thing - that the trajectory of



**Sandra Faulkner.**  
Federated Farmers local government spokesperson

rates hikes is unaffordable for increasing numbers of families and businesses.

But the 2-4% rates cap the Government wants in place by 2029 is a blunt tool that could have unintended consequences.

Exempt from the proposed cap are charges for waste, drinking and stormwater services.

With an estimated network renewal backlog of as much as \$47.9 billion because of previous under-investment, the Government knows we have to catch up on this vital work.

Work on other infrastructure particularly vital to rural areas - roading, bridges, drainage, flood protection - is also plagued by significant council (and central government) under-investment in many districts. When councillors factor in paying interest on rising council debt, never mind soaring costs for contractors and raw materials, a rates cap will create temptation - even necessity - to delay or delete important capital works.

Federated Farmers believes there should be a rates cap exemption for targeted road and infrastructure rates, just as is proposed for three waters charges.

The Government's thinking is that a rates cap will force councils to prioritise 'must haves' and pare back on 'nice to haves.'

As a generalisation, smaller rural councils probably spend less on nice to haves.

A rates cap, including on district councils already grappling with costs of providing for high numbers of visitors and tourists, could end up cutting into budgets for 'must haves.'

Faced with a rates cap, councils might also look to offset revenue shortfalls by hiking other charges or selling assets.

Rates are the largest source of income for local authorities, making up

on average 57% of total operating revenue.

Other revenue comes from council-owned trading entities like ports and airports, but these tend to be owned by metropolitan councils rather than smaller district councils.

Councils also charge fees for everything from swimming pool entry to parking, building consents and liquor licences. These services are often subsidised by general rates.

To offset a rates cap, these fees could be raised.

Lots of people like the notion of 'user pays' - unless they're a user.

Perhaps farmers would welcome higher council fees for rubbish collection, swimming pools, sports playing surfaces, food outlet inspections and other services they don't get to use as much as town residents.

But they're less likely to be happy with fee hikes for compliance inspections, resource consents and dog registration.

There's a common misconception the rates cap will mean no property owner's rates bill can increase by more than 4% in any year. But the restriction is on a council's total revenue from rates.

Just as is the case now, a property owner's share of total rates is determined by capital (or land) value.

In three-yearly revaluations, if your property value has risen more than the average for the district, you'll pay more in rates - and vice-versa.

Two other ideas Feds will

raise in our submission on the rates cap proposal relate to referenda and benchmarking.

We think councils should need residents' consent for large spends on commercial facilities and ventures, like stadiums and conference centres.

A referendum would be required, for example, where the spend is greater than \$500 per resident.

This would allow councils to provide community well-being services and activities, while restrain them from destroying their balance sheets through risky investments beyond their core purpose.

If we're serious about driving council costs down, there's also a case for much improved nationwide benchmarking of council costs.

Armed with detailed information on average costs for road maintenance, playground installation, reserves mowing and so on, councillors could drill down into spending - and challenge officers' reports.

With council rates bills now one of the biggest household costs - and one of the most prominent lines in a farm's budget - the rates cap and related issues deserve solid debate in the run-up to the general election.

Federated Farmers will be vocal in the debate, just as we have been in talk of council restructuring and amalgamation, to make sure the rural voice and priorities are prominent.

Sandra Faulkner

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# Government must urgently rule out controversial water tax

Federated Farmers is calling on the Government to immediately and categorically rule out any form of 'water tax' in its proposed RMA replacement bill.

"There's absolutely no way we're going to support any laws that open the door to taxing water," Federated Farmers RMA reform spokesperson Mark Hooper says.

"A water tax would be a nightmare for farmers and growers, undermining confidence in our productive sectors and pulling a handbrake on economic growth.

"The Government needs to move quickly and strike out any wording that would allow water rights to be auctioned, tendered, levied or taxed."

In December, the Government released two major pieces of legislation, the Planning and the Natural Environment Bills, to replace the Resource Management Act (RMA).

Federated Farmers policy staff spent the summer break



Farmers RMA reform spokesperson Mark Hooper

trawling through 744 pages of complex legislation and have serious concerns about what they've uncovered.

"It's incredibly alarming to find clauses that give Ministers sweeping powers to tax water as a tool for managing demand," Hooper

says. "Based on every conversation we've had with the coalition Government, we don't believe it was ever their intent to impose a water tax on farmers. "Unfortunately, it seems bureaucrats have snuck this

one past Ministers, because that's exactly what these provisions enable - it's all there in black and white." Previous National Party Prime Ministers, including John Key and Bill English,

explicitly ruled out water taxes in their day. Federated Farmers is now calling on Prime Minister Christopher Luxon to urgently do the same - because rural New Zealand

needs to clearly understand his position.

"Federated Farmers strongly supports the objectives of the Government's RMA reforms: growing productivity and making it easier to get things done," Mark Hooper says.

"We are in total alignment that there needs to be a stronger focus on property rights, a tighter scope, fewer resource consents, and far less expensive litigation.

"The Government's messaging has been bang-on but, unfortunately, we don't think the legislation as currently drafted matches the political rhetoric."

Hooper says this may be a case of 'officials gone rogue', but serious questions remain about how such dangerous provisions have progressed this far.

"The Prime Minister needs to step in now, make a captain's call, and categorically rule out any possibility of water taxes to give farmers and growers certainty.

## Rural Women welcome pay equity report

Rural Women New Zealand (RWNZ) welcomes the release of the People's Select Committee on Pay Equity report, saying its findings confirm what rural women have long experienced and what RWNZ warned when the Equal Pay Amendment Act was passed under urgency last year.

The Committee's report reflects the 1,500 submissions, including RWNZ's, overwhelmingly opposing the bill and finding that pay equity directly affects the wellbeing, survival, and sustainability of workers, and the essential services their communities rely on.

"Pay equity is not just about an individual's pay packet, it's about whether families can afford to put down roots in rural communities," says Sandra Kirby, Chief

Executive of Rural Women New Zealand. "When women in health, education and community services are not paid enough to support their families, rural communities lose them, and everyone suffers."

RWNZ has raised concerns about the impact of the Equal Pay Amendment Act 2025, which scrapped 33 active pay equity claims and introduced tougher eligibility thresholds, on rural communities where workforce shortages were already acute.

"We know from our members that rural communities were already struggling to attract and retain staff before these reforms. Pay inequity was one of many factors driving that, and the Equal Pay Amendment Act only makes it harder."

A particular concern is the requirement that workforces be at least 70% female over ten consecutive years to be eligible to bring a claim.

"A small rural health clinic or ECE centre might meet the 70% threshold most years, but not every year, and that could rule them out entirely. That is not a fair or workable system."

RWNZ is asking the Government to reinstate the 33 discontinued claims, lower the female-dominance threshold, and ensure smaller rural employers are supported to participate in the pay equity process.

"This is not a new fight. Rural Women New Zealand has been advocating for rural women for over 100 years, and ensuring fair pay for the women who power our rural communities is as important today as it has ever been."

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**NEW HOLLAND**

# Cook moves up a spot, takes NZ title

Gisborne Saloon driver Ethan Cook, who was the number two ranked driver in New Zealand heading into the Mufflers NZ, New Zealand Saloon Championship at Five Star Liquor Stratford Speedway has moved one notch up the podium steps when he won the event over the weekend.

Cook started his championship bid well, topping his qualifying group on Friday against some tough competition that included Trent Amrein and Ryan Hancock. He was the fastest competitor of all the thirty-four entrants around the Stratford oval and broke the lap record that was previously held by Bradley

Korff.

The finals were held over three twenty lap heats on Saturday evening and Cook made the most of his grid three start in the first heat to take the chequered flag and win the race before coming home fifth in heat two from grid thirteen, and then producing a stellar driver in heat three to finish second from a near rear of the field grid sixteen.

He won the championship with a points haul of fifty five out of a possible sixty, three points clear of his nearest rivals - former New Zealand Champion Jarred Fletcher and local driver Bradley Korff who both finished the event with



Ethan Cook secures second New Zealand title.

fifty two points apiece, and settled the podium order with a four lap run-off which Fletcher won to take second spot after Korff suffered a flat tyre at the start.

Cook now has his name etched on the trophy twice as he previously won the event when it was held at Hawkes Bay in the 2018/2019 season, while Fletcher is also no stranger to the New Zealand Championship podium, having previously

won in 2022/2023 and 2023/2024. It is Bradley Korff's first trip to the New Zealand podium though. Korff has been in good form this season having won the North Island Championship in Palmerston North earlier in the season along with a host of local championships, setting himself as a front runner in the class.

The Field Torque Taranaki and Little Steps Stratford King of the Mountain Saloon Champs, which was the second tier event for non-qualifiers was won

by Hawkes Bay driver Grahame Strong ahead of Palmerston North's Jonathan Mason and Kihikihi's Reece Clements who beat local master racer Craig Korff in a runoff.

Support class events over the two nights of racing included Stockcar Memorials, Adult Ministock Best Pairs and a Superstock feature race with Codey Wilton winning the Michael Walker Stockcar Memorial ahead of Lukah Phillips and Ryan Nolly on Friday night, while the Allan Hancock

Memorial on Saturday was won by Brad Podjursky from Haydin Barker and Nolly who was again third. The Adult Ministock Best Pairs were won by Kurt Gardner and Luke Harris. Coltyn Bagrie and Jono Mouldy were second and the pairing of Stephen Mann and Jade Symes third.

The Fletcher Easy Steel Superstock Feature was won by Hamish Booker with Brad Podjursky claiming the \$500 prize money for the joker finishing position of fifth place.

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## Government Borrows Millions to Play Cheerleader for Aussie Rugby League

The Taxpayers' Union is slamming the Government for using borrowed money to help bankroll an Australian sporting event, after this morning's announcement that State of Origin will be coming to Auckland thanks to an A\$5 million Government bid.

Taxpayers' Union spokesperson Tory Relf says:

"Only days after preaching fiscal restraint at the NZ Economic Forum, the

Government has apparently decided that announcing the borrowing of millions to subsidise an Australian rugby league spectacle is a better priority than fixing the basics here at home."

"The real scandal here isn't State of Origin, it's the fact the Government is running a Major Events Fund fuelled by borrowed money while claiming it's serious about restraint. If the Government genuinely believes these events stack

up commercially, then the private sector can fund them"

"We thought this Government was serious about saving money, but clearly those principles have been thrown straight out the door in a desperate bid to look fun and flashy in an election year."

"Kiwi taxpayers shouldn't be footing the bill so Ministers can pose with rugby balls and high-five their mates at the stadium."

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# Battle of the sexes



Ron and Shirley Miller (left and right) retired dairy farmers picked up their 39th win with Ronaldo ridden by Craig Grylls and trained by Robbie Patterson from New Plymouth. Ronaldo was also bred by Ron and Shirley Miller. The sire was Ribchester from Haunui Stud in Auckland. The mare was Miss Daisy who was popular with punters years ago. Centre is Darcy Julian, a Life Member of the Taranaki Racing Club.

The Taranaki Races held on February 13 at New Plymouth attracted a big turnout.

The theme of the Races was the Battle of the Sexes with male and female jockeys pitted against each other in the day's racing.

The jockeys were awarded points for first, second and third places over the day.

The contest was a close call with the final eighth race for the day deciding the winner the end of the seventh race being a dead heat. The final race however was won by Ronzio owned by CJ and PJ Lynskey from New Plymouth ridden by Jim Chung and trained by Robbie Patterson from New Plymouth which put the

male jockeys slightly ahead on points.

Jim Chung was also the jockey on the winner of race 7, Bruno.

A six year-old gelding trained by Trudy and Vaughan Keegan from Stratford, Bruno is owned by a syndicate of several owners. The sire was Darci Brahma and mare Tiger Moss.

There was a \$25,000 stake

for each race.

"It was a fun day with plenty of good horses racing and I picked winning tickets as well as seeing lots of happy racegoers," said Kathy Stanley who has raced horses like Wahid a 2006 New Zealand Derby winner in Auckland. Shamus and Ladies Man are two of the other Stanley horses Kathy has had the pleasure of racing.



From left, The trainer of Bruno, Vaughan Keegan celebrating the win with Kathy Stanley, a keen member of Taranaki Thoroughbred Racing and Andre Neal, a Trackside personality.



CEO of Taranaki Racing Anna Duncan (centre) with Mary Brophy at left and Kath Julian. They donated money for the Pink Ribbon Appeal.

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# Steve McKean Memorial Basketball Tournament



Opunake Otahi women won the Coach McKean Memorial Tournament for the fourth time last weekend from left Lilly Bright, Olivia Bright, Arna Bright, Ella Bright, Molly Stevenson, Eva Langton and Jenna Kensington.

The team finished 3rd overall after a hard fought semi final loss to New Plymouth East 72-70.

In the Women's section the Opunake Waiau team finished 4th after a close game against Stratford. They fought hard and competed well over the weekend.

Opunake Otahi won the women's section, with wins over: New Plymouth 89 to 66, Stratford 102 to 40, Opunake Waiau 105 to 47 and New Plymouth 83 to 53 in the final.

This is the fourth consecutive year the women's Opunake team has won, with Eva Langton being named Most Valuable Player of the tournament.

The team consisted of the Bright sisters Olivia, Ella, Arna and Lilly, Jenna Kensington, Molly

Stevenson and Eva Langton. Thank you to Simone Cook for organising the teams and to Angelo Hill, Aaron Langton & Leroy Smith for coaching. Also, a shoutout to locals who made the trip up to support our players.

The Coach McKean tournament is a way to honour the late legend of our game by all Taranaki associations getting together and competing over the weekend. Steve Coach McKean was at the heart of Taranaki sport for decades, encouraging and inspiring young people across the region as a mentor, secondary school sports coordinator and regional sports director, as well as a high-profile basketball coach."

Would love it if people can get behind and help the foundation

### Congratulations again ladies.

Over the weekend the Opunake Basketball Association competed in the Annual Steve McKean Tournament. Opunake entered two women's teams and one men's team. The men's team had a loss to New Plymouth West and win against Hawera on Saturday, securing a spot in the top four.



The Opunake Waiau team finished 4th.

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## Park Croquet Club win Johnstone Shield

On Wednesday February 11 Croquet Taranaki (South) played for the Johnstone Shield for Association Croquet between Hawera and Park at the Hawera Greens.

Malcolm McDonald partnered with Nicola Budd/Clement and Bonnie Johnstone partnered with Lois Smith.

Morning and afternoon games were both 3 hours games with Park ending up winning with 56 Hoops to Hawera 53.



From left Malcolm McDonald, Nicola Budd/Clement, Lois Smith, Bonnie Johnstone.

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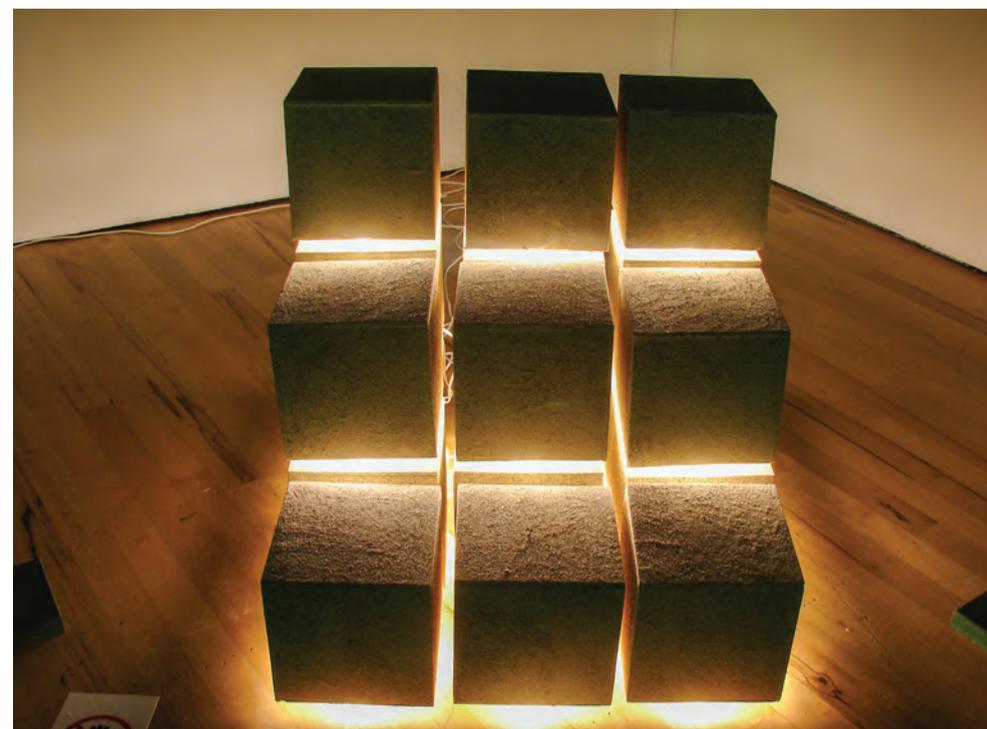
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# Remarkable exhibition at Percy Thomson Gallery



Roger Peters.

### Light and cube exhibit.

Entitled Art Artist Articles 1972 to 2024 a multi-faceted exhibition at the Percy Thomson Gallery and the nearby Stratford District Library by Roger Peters is an extraordinary spectacle. The exhibition will continue until March 15. This is one cultural event which must be experienced.

There was a huge turnout of people at the exhibition's official opening on Saturday February 14, where, after a welcome by curator Catherine Rhodes, Roger

gave a far-reaching address:

Because he did not complete the third year at Architectural School (Auckland) Roger was initially refused admission to the Elam School of Fine Arts. However, "Only when I insisted on showing the Dean of Elam Paul Beadle a small carving of a head, did he contact the registry to permit entry. So fortuitously a bust that swayed the Elam Dean gave me my first life-changing break."

By Roger's second year at

Elam, heat and light works were the focus and he was rewarded by winning a national award judged by the great Colin McCahon, which was, "presented somewhat ironically by Paul Beadle (See 1972 press clipping)."

In 1981 Roger and partner Maree Horner, with their daughters, moved to South Taranaki. "Only then did I return to making portrait busts and figures and exhibiting them in the early 1990s."

Featured in this exhibition are seven of the 28 heat and light works (1970s), which were initially exhibited at Pihama, as well as earlier installations and a Paul Wedelski video (2021).

In 1994 the Sarjeant Gallery, Whanganui held Rogers Dome Show entitled The Wrestlers Ball. It was here he met artist and poet Joanna Margaret Paul (1945-2003) whose home was the venue for monthly readings of Shakespeare's

plays. Joanna had the 154 sonnets read over a weekend by a group of Shakespeare enthusiasts. Stimulated by his reading of Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being by Ted Hughes, as well as Joanna's input, Roger realised the sonnets contained the most consistent and comprehensive nature-based philosophy ever devised, as the basis for Shakespeare's 36 plays and four poems.

However, Roger was not impressed with the literary critiques by supposed Shakespeare scholars (with "paper-thin international reputations") and this led, in 2000, to his creation of the Quaternary - for peace of mind.

Roger is incensed at how Shakespeare's reputation as a writer, and even as a person, has been attacked, by "grossly corrupting his works, denigrating his character, or crudely philandering his life-long

*Continued page 30*



Katie Bust 1990.



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# Remarkable exhibition at Percy Thomson Gallery

Continued from page 29.

love and respect for Anne Hathaway.” Books, plays and films have continued the unjustified attacks,

Roger explains. Near the end of his address Roger concludes as follows: “So after instituting the

Quaternary for peace of mind, I celebrate it here in Stratford-on-Patea afresh as a level of understanding and education that respects and explains fully every aspect of the original publications of all Shakespeare’s profound sonnets, plays and poems and explores their encompassing global vision.”

Very finally, Roger issued a challenge: “I offer \$10,000 to anyone who can prove Quaternary’s nine published volumes are wrong to assert that William Shakespeare’s Sonnet philosophy, which he published in 1609, is the intentional philosophy behind the 1623 Folio of his 36 plays and four longer poems.”

My first introduction, incidentally, to Roger Peter’s art is my

continued admiration of the characterful bust of Shakespeare, which adorns Prospero Place Stratford, and has always struck me as outstanding.

Roger has so many creative strings to his bow, including sculptor, which harkens back to his time at Elam School of Fine Arts in Auckland where he majored in sculpture.

Although he mostly identifies as an artist, it is as a writer Roger is perhaps best known for his written analysis of Shakespeare sonnets, with the emphasis on his nature-based philosophy. He has written several volumes in this context with the initial publication in 2005 (Quaternary Imprint). Maree Horner was the main instigator of the page setup



Shakespeare sonnett display.

for each volume. A complete set of Roger’s books are on display in the Stratford District Library. Other exhibits include a glass case with a huge book; it features pages 462-463. There is also a box labelled Songs of the Earth.

Make sure you find time to experience this remarkable exhibition with, in the words of one patron, “magnificent busts,” interesting written

underpinnings of his artistic and Shakespeare journey, as well as the heat and light works (and so much more). The last words go to Catherine Rhodes, Curator of the Percy Thomson Gallery, Stratford:

“Roger Peters is a most outstanding person. He is a fabulous artist and highly intelligent. It is a massive privilege to have his exhibition here.”

*Rolland McKellar*

*Lysaght Watt*  
Gallery

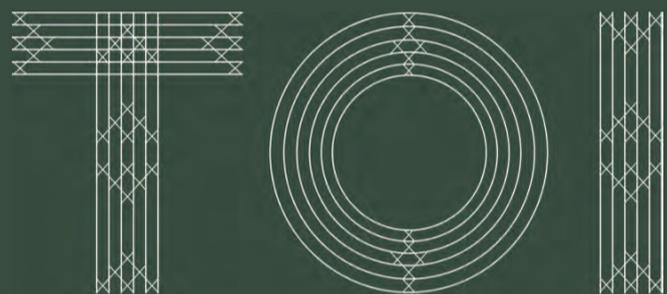
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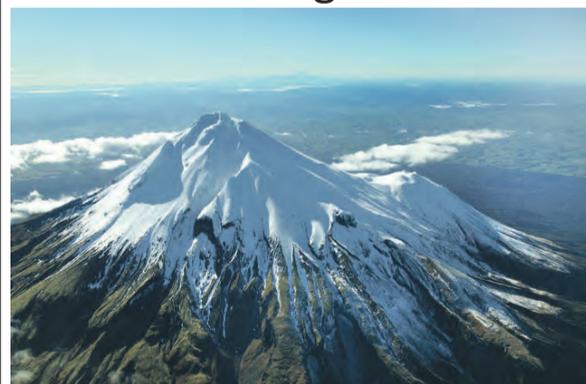
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**OPUNAKE & COASTAL NEWS**



# Ōpunakē Lions Club Mountain to Sea Bike Ride

Ōpunakē Lions Club are proud to be bringing their annual Mountain to Sea Bike Ride to you again on Sunday March 15. The ride starts at the top of Ihaia Road Ōpunakē and finishes at the Ōpunakē Beach. This ride started out as part of the Mayoral Bike Ride initiative. We think it has been going for about 15 years. It's one of our biggest fundraisers and utilises nearly all of our Club members. It is a huge undertaking with a substantial amount of organisation needed.

We started with about 30 participants over a much shorter course and has grown over the years with our biggest event attracting over 300 riders. Two years ago, we moved the start of the ride to the top of the



**Beach bike ride finish.**

Ihaia Road to drop a very rough paddock and early

river crossing. There are still two river crossings to keep it

interesting.

It is a fun ride that is approximately 40 km long, predominantly downhill to the Ōpunakē Beach. Although it is a downhill ride it not just coasting. A reasonable level of fitness is required. Our estimate is that it is a Grade 3 ride.

Approximately 80% of the ride is on farm tracks, 10% on road, and the balance on paddocks. The ride traverses privately owned farms that are not open for riders at any other time of the year.

Online registrations are now open.

Participants can register anytime up until the day

and even pay with cash or EFTPOS on ride day. Registration opens at 8am on the day and closes at 9:30am sharp for a 10:00 am start. There will a coffee cart on site at both the start and finish line.

Adults:\$55.

Children (under 15): \$20.

Please note - e-Bikes are allowed if they are pedal assist only.

There is a free BBQ at Ōpunakē Beach for competitors. There are also the popular jet plane lollies circulating for that extra boost.

FREE shuttle back to collect vehicles after the completed ride. There will be two shuttle departure times. The first one will

leave at 12:00 pm and the second one will leave at 1:00 pm.

All profits from the event this year will go towards future Ōpunakē Lions Club community projects.

For more info and to register, check out: [www.lionsmountainbikeride.com](http://www.lionsmountainbikeride.com) See you there!

You can also scan the QR code below to register.



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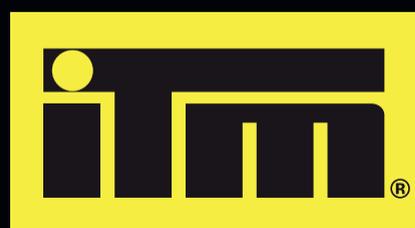
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# “Taranaki Paintings and Beyond” by Ian Littlewood



Mitre Peak on acrylic by Ian Littlewood. One of many of Ian's work on display at the Village Gallery, Eltham.

The current exhibition in the Village Gallery is “Taranaki Paintings and Beyond” by Ian Littlewood. It brings together a lifetime of landscapes, memories, and impressions drawn from three countries - New Zealand, Australia, and Papua New Guinea. Ian says his inspiration began with “crayons given to me as a child,” along with “positive reinforcement as a child and experimentation over the years.”

Influenced by Australian Impressionists such as Arthur Streeton, Tom

Roberts, and Hans Heysen, Ian developed a minimalist impressionist style. His work captures atmosphere through careful use of light, tone, and colour, often painted en plein air and shaped by the unique character of each landscape.

The exhibition features over 40 works, from sweeping seascapes and still lifes to country vistas. Ian

works in oils, oil pastels, acrylic, line and wash, and mixed media. “I usually choose the medium before I start painting,” he says. “It depends on the scene, the colours, what materials I have available, and how much time I have.”

More than technique, Ian sees painting as an automatic, internal process. “What happens when I start a new painting happens in my mind,” he reflects. His work is also deeply spiritual, shaped by a belief in the beauty and meaning

of the world around us. “We live in a special and beautiful world created for us by our Heavenly Father.”

Every painting in this show holds something personal - a memory, a moment, a story.

The exhibition runs until 6th March. The gallery opens 7 days a week from 10:00am to 3:00pm. Ian will be in the gallery every Monday and Sunday during the exhibition, pop in and say hello!

## Memphis-bound tribute act to perform at Hideaway Soundshell

Taurean is a 21-year-old entertainer who has just taken out the highly prestigious Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist title in

Parkes, NSW Australia. He competed against the top fellow Elvis tribute artists in Australasia and is now off to Memphis, Tennessee to compete against the top Elvis tribute acts from around the world. We are thrilled to have Taurean bring the magic and music of the ‘King of Rock ‘n’ Roll’ to the Hideaway Soundshell on February 28.

Supporting Taurean is Hoos Blues, a roots-blues duo from Taranaki, featuring Paul Coulton on harp and vocals, and Matt Sturgess on guitars and bass.

There will be food trucks and a licensed bar on the premises, with no BYO alcohol. This event is set to be a hit for all ages.

There will be overnight parking available for self-contained motorhomes



### TARANAKI PAINTINGS AND BEYOND

Ian Littlewood

February 10 to March 17

THE VILLAGE GALLERY 166 HIGH STREET, ELTHAM  
OPEN TUES -SAT 10AM-3PM

# TAUREAN KENNY MILL Sings ELVIS

WITH SUPPORTING ACT...

## Hoos Blues

2026 ULTIMATE ELVIS TRIBUTE ARTIST WINNER AUSTRALASIA



Saturday 28th February  
Sound Shell - 683 Egmont Rd  
6.00pm - 10pm \$30 Entry

Gates open at 5pm



NEW PLYMOUTH BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL  
TE KURA TAMATĀNE O NGĀMOTU

Join us for our

## Boarding Open Day

Friday 27 March 2026 | 10.30am-2.00pm

We warmly invite prospective families to visit our boarding school. To receive an invitation, please contact:  
enrolments@npbhs.school.nz

Or come and talk with us at the Egmont A & P Show in Hāwera | 21-22 February.

Scan to Register



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EVERYBODY'S THEATRE SCREENINGS REVIEWS

No Tears on the field coming to Everybody's



*No Tears on the Field* follows female rugby players from Southern and Clifton Rugby Clubs over a season in Taranaki. Born and raised in Taranaki herself, award-winning documentary producer and director Lisa Burd (*The Pinkies are Back, Monterey*) delves into the worlds of players Kate Thomson, Maddison Davison, Mereana Anderson and Phoenix Fraser as they juggle their passion for the game with their personal lives, and what it means to be a woman in rugby. With the stunning backdrop and iconic scenes of Taranaki, the film premiered at the 20th Anniversary Doc Edge Festival, with a release in New Zealand cinemas in March 2026.

Three things that you need to play; it's safety, it's technique, and it's grunt. And I've got all of them!

- Kate Thomson, Southern RC player at the start of this trailer.

Special Preview Screening - No Tears on the Field Q&A with key actors 1 hour 30 minutes | TBC Saturday 07 March 7PM

Kate Hudson and Hugh Jackman shine in Song Sung Blue



It's no secret that Hugh Jackman is a, forgive me, jack of all trades. The man can do it all, from super-hero to Broadway star. He's a man's man who's not afraid to learn the choreography, as his iconic roles in everything from Wolverine to The Greatest Showman prove. What's perhaps lesser known is that Kate Hudson, Jackman's counterpart in *Song Sung Blue*, the latest film from writer/director Craig Brewer, is a multi-hyphenate herself. Sure, she's had a few music-centric roles (see: the criminally underrated *Nine*) and she even put out an album in 2024, but I don't

think the world is ready for the career-best performance she delivers in this crowd-pleasing biopic about a real-life couple that made their mark in the midwest as a Neil Diamond tribute act.

Based on the 2008 documentary of the same name by Greg Kohs, *Song Sung Blue* is such a cinematic story one would be forgiven for thinking it was actually all fictional. Surely it can't be possible that all of this, the high highs and low lows, really happened to Mike and Claire Sardina in late '80s and early '90s Milwaukee? The film may take some liberties with the specifics of their lives, but overall, Brewer's adaptation honors a truly remarkable duo who faced great odds and managed to find not just a path forward but success greater than either could ever have imagined.

And oh, the music. Brewer has all but made a musical here, the film features so many numbers incorporated seamlessly into the script, from a couple versions of the title song, Diamond's most popular classic "Sweet Caroline" and plenty of deep cuts, too. Filmed by cinematographer Amy Vincent, the performance scenes are some of the film's most vibrant and rewarding. From a dingy dive bar where the band isn't even sure the resident biker group wants them to perform to a local Thai restaurant where Mike makes ends meet hosting karaoke nights to actual concert halls packed with fans, every number is bigger and bolder than it needs to be, immersing us in Mike and Claire's world as they live their best lives belting out the classics.

At the end of the day, *Song Sung Blue* won't be remembered for being a cinematic achievement, perse. But it's an exceptional

film nonetheless, something much more human and grounded.

Lisa Trifone  
Third Coast Review

Showing at Everybodys Theatre. Thursday 26 February 7PM | Thursday 05 March 7PM | Thursday 12 March 7PM

NPDC events and venues a hit with audiences despite damp summer

A wet end to January wasn't enough to dampen spirits of those who flocked to NPDC events and venues this summer.

The TSB Festival of Lights shone brighter than ever, drawing an estimated 162,500 visits to Pukekura Park over its five week season - a 4.8 per cent increase on last summer and a strong sign of its continuing appeal.

The sizzling hot start to the season also sent residents and visitors diving into NPDC pools, with more than 100,000 people cooling off at the Todd Energy Aquatic Centre between November and the end of January. Community pools were buzzing too, with Inglewood (4,676), Waitara (11,049) and Okāto (5,365) all enjoying strong attendance.

Entertainment was another big winner with British comedian Jimmy Carr playing to an almost sold-out TSB Stadium and at the Bowl of Brooklands, the Rock the Bowl and L.A.B concerts helped anchor a vibrant Summer at the Bowl

series.

"It's been a great summer so far," says NPDC Venue and Events manager Chade Julie.

The Govett-Brewster Art Gallery/Len Lye Centre welcomed 13,469 visitors over December/January to experience its two summer exhibitions and drop-in art sessions, and the Len Lye Centre Cinema was particularly popular during January's less than summery weather, attracting 1,531 cinemagoers.

Puke Ariki Museum is also celebrating the success of its Rescue exhibition, which gives children insight into

what it takes to be a hero by helping others and includes 17 interactive exhibits from smoke-filled rooms, rescue helicopters to emergency broadcasts.

On 3 January alone, 1,950 people walked through the doors of the museum, with Rescue the major drawcard.

Meanwhile the team at the i SITE New Plymouth information centre, based in Puke Ariki, were also kept busy with 7,176 visitors coming through the doors in December, offering local advice and helping visitors book everything from places to stay to activities, attractions and travel.



**EVERYBODY'S THEATRE**  
OPUNAKE

72 Tasman Street, Opunake | www.everybodystheatre.co.nz

<p><b>Song Sung Blue</b> 2hr 12mins   M Thu 26 Feb 7PM   Thu 05 Mar 7PM   Thu 12 Mar 7PM</p>	<p><b>Aotearoa Surf Film Festival 2026</b> 3hr Fri 27 Feb 7PM</p>
<p><b>GOAT</b> 1hr 40mins   PG Sat 28 Feb 1PM   Sat 07 Mar 1PM</p>	<p><b>EPiC: Elvis Presley in Concert</b> 1hr 36mins   PG Sat 28 Feb 7PM   Fri 06 Mar 7PM   Sun 08 Mar 1PM</p>
<p><b>Fackham Hall</b> 1hr 37mins   M Sun 01 Mar 1PM   Sun 08 Mar 7PM</p>	<p><b>Crime 101</b> 2hr 20mins   M Sun 01 Mar 7PM</p>
<p><b>Special Preview Screening - No Tears on the Field Q&amp;A with key actors</b> 1hr 30mins   TBC Sat 07 Mar 7PM</p>	

**Song Sung Blue**  
Offensive language & mental health themes | 2hr 12mins | Rated: M  
Thu 26 Feb 7PM

**Aotearoa Surf Film Festival 2026**  
3hr  
Fri 27 Feb 7PM

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**GREEN**  
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MOVEMENT IS MEDICINE

**WHAT: FREE 4-Week Green Prescription Workshop**  
A supportive workshop for current Green Prescription participants; to support you to move more, fuel you body well, and create lasting lifestyle changes in a way that works for you.

**WHEN: Thursday | 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM | 4 Weeks - starting 5<sup>th</sup> March 2026**  
Sessions: 5/3 12/3 19/3 26/3

**WHERE: CoastalCare - Coastal Medical Centre**  
26 Napier Street, Opunake

**WHAT YOU WILL GET:**

- ✓ Free resistance band
- ✓ Fun physical activity ideas and activations
- ✓ Basic nutrition guidance with Dietician
- ✓ Habit-building & action planning tools

**FREE for current Green Prescription participants**  
Access a referral now - Limited Spots available!

Or Call 06 7590930  
Or Ask your Health Professional for a Referral or check out our website to Self Refer :  
www.sporttaranaki.org.nz/get-active-kia-kore/green-prescription

SCAN ME TO REGISTER!

## What's On Listings

### ONGOING

#### Movies at Everybodys Theatre in Opunake:

Playing several days and nights each week. Refer

### CHURCH NOTICES



*Church Services - Manaia, Kaponga, Opunake, Pungarehu, Okata, Oakura*

#### Opunake Co-operating Parish

Havelock Street, Opunake - St Pauls - every Sunday

9am: Coffee prior to service

9.30am: Service

Rahotu - Wesley - 11am first Sunday of the month

#### Okato Co-operating Parish

St. James, Oakura - Sunday Service every Sunday,

10.00am

St. Paul's, Okato - 1st and 2nd Sundays - Worship Service;

3rd Sunday - Communion Service and 4th Sunday at

7.00pm

St. Paul's, Okato - Open church for silent reflection, Pew for

You, every 3rd Wednesday of each month,

4.30pm-5.30pm

#### Opunake Catholic Church

St Martins, Pungarehu: Temporarily closed - no Masses

Our Lady Star of the Sea, Opunake: 10am every Sunday

#### Other areas

Sacred Heart, Manaia - Temporarily closed - No Masses

St Joseph's, Hawera - Every Sat at 5pm; Every Sun at 9am

St Patrick's, Patea - 4th Sunday of month; 11.00am

St Francis de Sales, Waverley - 2nd Sunday of month;

11.00am

#### St Patricks Catholic Church, Kaponga

Sunday Mass 8.45am.

Thursday Mass 10.00am (subject to change).

#### St Patricks Catholic Church, Okato

Saturday Vigil 6.00pm - weekly

#### The Wave

Pentecostal Church 64 Domett St, Opunake

Sunday Services 10.30am

Women's Group 10am Tuesday

Men's Group 7pm Wednesday

Come along or contact

Belinda Philp

027 935 6191

#### St. Barnabas Anglican Church

141 Tasman St, Opunake

Sunday Services 9am

Communion 1st, 2nd, & 3rd Sunday

Prayer & Praise 4th Sunday

Every 5th Sunday all 4 churches gather for

a Combined Service

#### Okato Community Church

Meets 10.30am Sunday at Hempton Hall.

Everyone welcome

#### St John's Community Church. Kaponga

Cnr West and Egmont Streets.

Sunday Services 10.30am followed by morning tea

#### Manaia Union Fellowship

Terou St. Manaia.

Meet 10am every 3rd Sunday of the month with communion

#### Friend & Fellowship Group

Thursdays @ Manaia

Support our Faith and support each other with Prayer

and Bible study

Encouraging interactive discussion and Praise

All are welcome

We would love it if you could come

Rodney & Val 274 8550 or 0272384187

#### St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

90 Regan St., Stratford,

9:00am Sunday: Breakfast and Study

10:30am: Breakfast is followed by "Coming Together

Worship Service"

Thursday: Study Group at 2 pm at 96b Brecon Rd.,

Stratford.

Contact Rev. John Mattock 027 2039799

#### Methodist Church Hawera

Regent Street 10am, 2nd and 4th Sundays each month

#### Manaia Community Church part of the Global Anglicans

Robert Gibson Hall, Manaia

1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th Sundays at 10 am

3rd Sunday Family Service at 4pm with shared meal to

follow

Contact: Rev Phil Woodmass 027 424 8318

timetable in newspaper.

**MONDAYS: The Barnabas Centre Exercise and Social Morning:** St. Barnabas Church Hall, 141 Tasman

Street Opunake: Each Monday 10 am - 12:30 pm. Information call Jenny 027 379 6844 or Ian 027 622 4878.

**Beginners Social Dance Classes:** Central School Hall, New Plymouth, 7pm.

### TUESDAYS

**Opunake Walking Group:** Every Tuesday 10am. Meet outside Club Hotel on Havelock St. Phone Margaret 027 477 5600 for more info if needed, or just turn up.

**Pungarehu Golf Club Twilight:** Tee-off between 4.30 & 6.30pm.

**Brazilian Jiu Jitsu:** Adult classes, 7pm, Sinclair Events Centre, Opunake.

**Opunake District RSA:** Meet 1st Tuesday of every month at 5.30pm at the Opunake Fire Station. Financial Members are welcome to attend.

### WEDNESDAYS

**Coastal Young Farmers:** Meet 2nd Wednesday of every month at 7pm at Butlers Reef Bar & Cafe, Oakura.

**Lisa Keen Audiology at Coastal Care, Opunake:** Wednesdays 9am - 5pm, for an appointment call 027 591 4222 - 0800 555 676

**Okato & District Historical Society open every Wednesday:** At the Okato Community Trust Hall, 47 Cumming St, Okato. phone Meg on 06 752 4566.

**Opunake Embroiders Guild:** Meet 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month, 10.30am-3pm at the Opunake Business Centre, Napier St, Opunake. Just come along or phone Sheryl 06 761 8769.

**Toi Foundation drop-in sessions:** Opunake Library, 11am-3pm.

**Okato Community Market:** In Hempton Hall, Okato 4pm to 5.30pm.

**Free singing experience with Taranaki Harmony Chorus:** Meet every Wednesday at Inglewood Mamaku Centre, 7-9.30 pm Phone Helen 021 296 0700.

### THURSDAYS

**Egmont Euchre Club:** Every Thursday 1pm at the Opunake Bowling Club. Inquiries, 06 761 8337 or 06 761 8607.

**Brazilian Jiu Jitsu:** Adult classes, 7pm, Sinclair Events Centre, Opunake

**Taranaki Country Music Hall of Fame, Manaia:** Running every Thursday night from 7.30pm, 11

Surf Highway, South Road, Manaia.

### FRIDAYS

**Eltham Business Association Friday Markets:** 9:30am to 1pm, Carpark of Touch Point, High Street, Eltham.

**Beginners Social Dance Classes:** Oakura Hall, 6.15pm..

**Hawera Country & Variety Music Club:** Held every 2nd & 4th Friday monthly. Held at Hawera Pipe Band Hall, 89 Collins Street, Hawera @ 7pm All welcome. Supper provided. Ph 021 2622 166.

### FEBRUARY 10 TO MARCH 17

**Taranaki Paintings & Beyond:** An exhibition by Ian Littlewood. The Village Gallery, Eltham.

### FEBRUARY 13 TO MARCH 15

**Art, Artist, Articles:** An exhibition by Roger Peters, Percy Thomson Gallery

### FEBRUARY 26

**Americarna:** Waitara, 12.30pm - 3.30pm; Inglewood, 4pm-8pm.

### FEBRUARY 27

**Americarna:** Stratford, 10.30am-12.30pm; Hawera, 1.15-5.15pm; New Plymouth CBD Night Cruise 6pm.

### FEBRUARY 28

**Okato Community Market op Shop Garage Sale:** Hempton Hall, 10am-2pm

**Americarnival:** New Plymouth CBD, 10am-3pm.

**Taurean Kenny Mill sings Elvis:** The Hideaway Sound Shell, 683 Egmont Road. 6-10pm.

### MARCH 2 TO APRIL 4

**Whiti - An exhibition by national and international indigenous artists:** Lysaght Watt Gallery, Hawera. **MARCH 7**

**Full Metal Orchestra Rock festival:** The Hideaway Sound Shell, 683 Egmont Road. 6-10pm.

**A meeting with Simon Bale:** Stratford Baptist Hall, 7pm.

### MARCH 7 & 8

**Roadsafe Taranaki Free Driver Training:** Stratford A&P Showgrounds. 8.40am-3pm. See ad in the Feb 26 issue for booking details.

### MARCH 15

**Mountain to Sea Crosscountry Bike Ride:** From Ihaia Rd, Opunake. See article and ad in the Feb 26 issue for details.

### MARCH 21 TO APRIL 8

**Opunake Boat & Underwater Club Annual Fishing Tournament:** Opunake. See ad in the Feb 26 issue for details.

### MARCH 22-23

**First Fires:** An overnight adventure for boys 12-14yrs and their men. Koru Farm, Taranaki. See ad in this issue for details.

### MARCH 27

**New Plymouth Boys High School Boarding Open Day:** At the school. 10.30am-2pm.

### APRIL 11

**Community Garden Workshop:** Manaia Maara Kai. 10am-2pm.

### JUNE 13

**Community Garden Workshop:** St Marys Community Garden, Hawera. 10am-2pm.

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**WHEN & WHERE:**

Stratford A & P Showgrounds, Flint Road, Stratford  
 Saturday 7 March or Sunday 8 March – 8:40am to 3:00pm  
 Choose your **preferred 2 hour time slot** (sessions every 20 minutes).

**ELIGIBILITY:**

- Must live in South Taranaki or Stratford districts (students that board away from home are eligible)
- Must have completed a minimum of 20 hours driving experience
- Must hold a current valid driver licence

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**OKATO COMMUNITY MARKET OP SHOP**

Garage Sale

Saturday 28 Feb, 10-2pm

Hempton Hall

Bric-a-brac, kitchen ware, clothes, shoes, toys, etc  
 BBQ and cake stall as well.

Proceeds going to Okato Playcentre.



Next Meeting is on  
 Monday March 9, 2026  
 at 5.30pm

Hughsons & Associates Boardroom at the  
 Opunake Business Centre, 23 Napier St, Opunake  
 (opposite the Coastal Care Medical Centre)

**OKATO COMMUNITY MARKET**

Every Wednesday  
 4 - 5.30pm

Hempton Hall  
 Veges, Baking, Op Shop, Chocolate,  
 Crafts, Books, and more

**DEATH NOTICES**

**STANLEY, RONALD THOMAS (RON)**

8 November 1955-11 October 2025

Kathy and the Stanley Family wish to thank all who supported them through the loss of Ron. We really appreciated all the baking, cards and flowers that were sent to the Family.

Thanks to everyone who travelled from far and wide.

A huge thanks to Millie Carr of Cherish Respite Care and also to Millie's staff. We were so grateful for the professional care they gave Ron.

Thanks to the medical professionals in New Plymouth, Wellington, Palmerston North and Auckland. All of Ron's nurses were amazing as you put so much dedication when dealing with Ron's issues.

Thanks to Barbara Hooper, Chaplain at Taranaki Base Hospital. We were really pleased with the way Barbara conducted Ron's farewell service at St Paul's Co-op Church, in Opunake.



**LOST**

**EYE GLASSES** lost in the vicinity of Four Square Supermarkets in Opunake. The frames have a dark blue tint, are titanium and very light. Please phone Jim in the US +1 425 287 4848. A text to the same number also works. I will accept a collect call, or email [jimbailie789@gmail.com](mailto:jimbailie789@gmail.com).



**LIVING AWAY FROM OPUNAKE BUT WANT TO KEEP UP WITH WHAT'S GOING ON?**

Subscribe to the Opunake & Coastal News and we'll post you a paper as soon as it's out!

06 761 7016



The next issue of the Opunake & Coastal News is due out on March 12.

Contact us on 06 761 7016 to be part of it.

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**TRAILERS** x2 for sale in New Plymouth. Both recently built. Not yet registered. Painted 6 x 4 x 2, \$1200. Fully galvabised 6 x 4 x 2, \$1400. Ph 021 0868 4070. Wanted various Mini/Elf parts.

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[clare.moss@hughson.co.nz](mailto:clare.moss@hughson.co.nz)

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