

THE LOCAL



Mt Victoria

NGĀ KARERE HAPORI O MATAIRANGI



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on page 9

MAKING WAY FOR BENDY BUSES

One bus stop is proposed to be removed, and changes will be made to some Brougham and Pirie Street bus stops in order to accommodate longer ‘bendy’ buses on the number 2 bus route through Mt Victoria.

The public will soon be asked for feedback on series of changes to bus stops and bus shelters along the eastern part of the number 2 bus route, as part of work to introduce articulated buses next year.

A key change will be alterations to the Pirie St – Brougham Street intersection, which already causes confusion for motorists and pedestrians.

A new pedestrian crossing is proposed for the western wing of Pirie Street to provide a safer alternative to navigating the busy intersection.

Consultation will start in May and close in June, with construction expected to take up to a year.

Read more on page 3. ➔

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Gazley **G**



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Making way for bendy buses

Wellington's councils are about to start consulting on changes to infrastructure along the number 2 bus route.

Jane O'Loughlin reports.

Mt Victoria will lose one bus stop and see alterations to bus stops and intersections as part of a programme to accommodate longer buses on the number 2 bus route.

The Eastern Bus Corridor improvements project will propose changes aimed at improving efficiency of buses between Courtenay Place and Miramar on the popular route 2 bus service, which goes through Mt Victoria.

In Mt Victoria, the proposal would see the city-bound stop at the top of Pirie St removed, and changes to the kerbs and traffic island at the Pirie/Brougham intersection, along with the installation of a pedestrian crossing on the western leg of Pirie Street.

According to the Wellington City Council, the proposed corridor improvements will include "making some stops longer, removing or consolidating some stops to improve bus stop spacing and reduce journey times, and some bus shelter changes."

The councils want to accommodate the longer articulated (or 'bendy' buses) for the route because double decker buses can't go through the Karori tunnel.

Greater Wellington announced last year that bus operator Kinetic had agreed to procure five Electric articulated vehicles for route 2, which would arrive in early 2027.

Wellington City Councillor Nicola Young was one of a group of councillors that recently took a trip

along the route on an articulated bus borrowed from Auckland.

Nicola said she was impressed with the articulated bus: "It was comfortable, even when going around some of the very bendy corners."

She said local concerns had been taken into account in the proposal for infrastructure changes.

"It's highly likely that the Brougham Street bus stops (near Elizabeth Street) will remain, although will probably be slightly altered to accommodate the longer buses. The city-bound stop at the top of Pirie Street will be removed, largely for safety reasons as it's too close to the Mt Victoria Tunnel and abuts a concrete embankment.

"The pedestrian safety island on the Brougham/Pirie streets intersection will remain – a big relief for pedestrians, as it's a tricky crossing."

While the changes are being put in place to help manage increased demand, a recent briefing to the Wellington Regional Council found bus usage had only increased slightly, and peak hour usage had decreased over recent years.

A report to the public transport committee in March found that bus patronage is now above 2019 levels, but plateaued in 2024 and 2025, and had recently declined.

Across the Wellington region, bus travel demand has shifted from peak to off-peak, reflecting more flexible and non-work-related public transport travel (including after-school travel from 3pm to 4pm). Population growth was also less than previously estimated and expected to grow even more slowly over the next five years.

Public consultation on the corridor changes will take place from 19 May to 14 June 2026. The feedback will go to the Wellington City Council Regulatory Processes Committee for a decision. Construction is anticipated to take up to 12 months. **TL**

Greater Wellington announced last year that bus operator Kinetic had agreed to procure five Electric articulated vehicles for route 2, which would arrive in early 2027.

Uh oh, bus 'improvements'

This month, our councils will launch a consultation on the eastern section of the number 2 bus route, aimed at improving the bus service.

This should be positive but in fact the news strikes fear into my heart, remembering past disastrous moves by the council to 'improve' bus services.

There was the so called bustastrophe, triggered by attempts to put in a hub and spoke model that forced people to change buses more than before, exacerbated by a shortage of drivers.

Other 'improvements', such as the proposed Golden Mile upgrades would see bus stops removed so buses could move faster. If that's our goal, why not remove all bus stops in order to see the bus move very fast indeed, unencumbered by passengers?

Previous discussions around changes in Mt Victoria have proposed the removal of bus stops and the removal of the pedestrian island in the middle of the Brougham- Pirie Street intersection. This was opposed by the community, as it is a necessary safety measure.

Officials appear to be keen to engage with community concerns. But the devil is usually in the detail, so I urge readers to pay attention. For example, it appears that a pedestrian crossing is going to be put at the brow of the Pirie St hill by the intersection, where a stop sign is now. It's not clear to me how both of those things can co-exist.

Long term we will see bendy buses on this route. Officials have done the tests and believe it will work, even though normal buses seem to struggle with the Brougham-Pirie corner, and frequently swipe signs, the kerb, and occasionally parked cars.

These expansion plans are not new, and in fact were cooked up in the days when Wellington's population looked like it was growing – now it's not.

Hardened cynics might wonder if we need the changes at all, and if the buses might be fine as they are, but I suppose if we have ordered the bendy buses, we now have to go ahead with all the expensive work to make room for them.

Let's hope by the time they arrive, the investment will make sense. **TL**



Jane O'Loughlin
Editor

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Cottage to go

The caretaker's cottage at Victoria Bowling Club will soon be removed.

A condition of the club's lease with Council, approved in 2022 was that the club-owned building should be removed at the club's cost.

The Wellington City Council said that once removed, the area will be reinstated as green open space within the club's leased area on the Town Belt.

The Mt Victoria Residents' Association had asked the council whether the building could be reused for public toilets.

However, the council said after looking into it, that due to the building's location, the cost to retrofit it, and safety considerations, it was not considered a suitable option. **TL**

No thump from the bumpless hump

Alterations were made to a pedestrian crossing outside Clyde Quay School after noise concerns were raised by nearby residents.

The raised crossing had been installed last year to encourage drivers to slow down, but in recent months further work was carried out to make the hump less pronounced, by lengthening the approach to the raised section on both sides.

A parent of a student at Clyde Quay School who did not want to be named said he thought the original design was better in terms of safety: "If it's not as steep cars will continue to go fast."

A spokesperson for Wellington City Council said the work was "in response to an enquiry from a local building corp concerned with some noise associated with the gradient of the ramp."

"Footpath and road maintenance in the area coincided with this work to ensure efficient use of traffic management while limiting impact on corridor users." **TL**

Walk this way

Three sections of track on Matairangi-Mt Victoria may be designated 'walking only' following a review of safety on the maunga.

The Wellington City Council set up a process to look at establishing walking only tracks in 2022 following concerns about clashes between walkers and cyclists, and safety issues with downhill mountain bikers cutting across tracks.

As a result of discussions and analysis council staff identified 15 'hotspots' and made recommendations for each, ranging from closing the track, to changing the designation or making other safety improvements such as better signage.

The 15 safety improvements put forward include three changes to make sections of tracks 'walk only', one to designate a section 'uphill biking only' and one to close an unnamed track.

Council staff have shared the recommendations with their working groups and are now aiming to deliver a Council Committee paper in June 2026, which will have an opportunity for oral submissions. **TL**



An example of a 'hotspot' where cyclists and walkers can collide.



Collision on Austin Street

Wet weather led to a collision on Austin Street in April.

According to a police officer at the scene, a car heading up Queen Street hit a car on Austin St. The car that was hit ended up swerving into a tree on Austin Street. No one was hurt. **TL**

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Kia ora Mt. Vic!

Let's talk about our community.

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Tamatha Paul
MP for Wellington Central

E: wellington.central@parliament.govt.nz
P: (04) 3891290

Auth by Tamatha Paul, Green Party MP.
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Organisers are hopeful for a good olive harvest this year, despite setbacks in previous years. **Abbi Maidment** reports.

Mt Victoria's annual olive harvest could be underway soon, thanks to olive trees in Mt Victoria ripening early this year.

That's despite the event being cancelled in previous years due to members of the public over-picking the fruit before ripe.

Mt Victoria community hub coordinator and harvest organiser Joel Cosgrove said the harvest usually happened between May and June and took 10 to 20 volunteers an afternoon to strip 100 to 200 kg of fresh olives from the trees.

"People can come from all different paths of life, and then just for this afternoon, you're all unified by your desire to try these olives.

"I think people love working with their hands, you know, like doing something practical where you can see the fruits of your labour."

The olives are commercially crushed in the Wairarapa, yielding around 10–20 litres of oil.

All volunteers received a small bottle of oil to take home, and the rest was used for the community dinners held every few months, which host about 70 people.

The harvest usually happens between May and June and it takes 10 to 20 volunteers an afternoon to strip 100 to 200 kg of fresh olives.

"Each batch is different because the earlier you pick them or the later you pick them, that has a massive influence on the taste of them, so the one we got last year came through really nice and smooth. Tasted really good with bread."

Colin Kelly, a former executive of the Wairarapa Olive Association, who helped set up and now coordinates the harvest, said there had been some years when they could not harvest because locals got to them first.

"There have been a couple of years when the crops looked quite good, but we think a small number of individuals have gone round and fairly systematically stripped the olives, so there have been a couple of years we haven't harvested."

He suspected that these individuals used the olives for pickling rather than oil, as younger olives were used for brining.

Wellington City Council first planted the trees in the 1980s, along the pavements of Austin Street and Queen Street in Mount Victoria, and Wakefield Street in Te Aro.

Colin said the olive trees chosen by the council at the time were Tuscan and Greek varieties, which were very good for oil production.

According to the Wellington Council website, the olives were first pressed into oil in 2002, when Graeme Harris of Kapiti Olives Ltd and council staff harvested and pressed them, naming the oil 'Suprema a Situ' after Wellington's coat of arms motto.

'Suprema a Situ' was entered in the Los Angeles County Fair in the United States, where it won a gold medal, and was gifted by WCC to visiting dignitaries.

After the council stopped harvesting the olives, the Mount Victoria community took on the job.

Joel said that the trees were a great example of good community building and planning.

"These trees were planted in the 80s, that you know, in the 2020s we're still engaging with.

"The community can keep collecting the olive oil for the shared joy of collecting the olives and making it into oil and are less worried about the time taken to do it." **TL**

An unconventional life



Photo: Supplied

Sharon Greally talks to a Mount Victoria local whose unconventional life has included being a showgirl, a celebrity chaser, and a feather boa aficionado.

“Isn’t it fun?” This favourite catch phrase sums up Margaret Austin’s life, which has been one full of drama, intrigue and fun.

From the not so glitzy Palmerston North, where she performed as the pantomime boy at the local repertory theatre to the outrageous stage of the Folies Bergère, this once Sunday school teacher has lived an unconventional life on her own terms.

University helped her find her thespian bug and tribe. “Once it bites you, that’s it for life. And you can get away with things you can’t get away with other people!”

When her initial marriage ended (deciding its confines were not for her) at 29 she decided to set out to explore the world. In the 70s she jumped on a passage liner set for Europe and her ‘Grand Tour.’

But after finding London dark and dismal she hightailed it for Amsterdam where she found her vibe.

“I had no one to help me – or the hinder me! There was something special in the air”, she remembers. “It wasn’t dope, there was something promising about this place”. She spent four years there, working as a waitress. One day, she remembers, “in swanned a

black American”. With his swagger, poncho, jeans and earrings, she was intrigued. Her life was about to change. They became great friends. He was there to teach and choreograph jazz dance at a sex theatre, using loads of shoulders and hips. “I didn’t know I had shoulders and hips!” she quips. Margaret decided she needed to join – as a dancer. “It was theatre darling! Little flat breasted me garnered a huge laugh” but her long legs were a great asset. “It was all very safe. All the drug dealings and prostitution around us – I had a great group of friends. It was mind blowing.”

Tired of being cold in Amsterdam, the group decided to hit Athens.

But after liberal Amsterdam, Athens was too narrow minded for Margaret who hightailed it to Paris. “It was cold, haughty, and said ‘prove yourself.’”

At a local bar, asking about dance work, she got a tip off about the Folies Bergère. “The next night I gatecrashed the world’s most famous Music Hall”. She spent a year there as a chorus girl, wearing nothing but a G string, huge feather boas, false eye lashes, and high heels. She says she had never felt “more fully dressed in my life!”

But it was time for a new adventure, and Margaret decided to become a journalist. Her new beau was a well-known investigative journalist and he taught her the basics. Hanging out as a bar fly at the types of places celebrities like to hang out, she managed

...after finding London dark and dismal she hightailed it for Amsterdam where she found her vibe.

to get a few interviews, and sell them to English magazines. “One was an Irish woman, Miss Bluebell who was famous and in charge of the Bluebell Girls at the Lido, a fellow music hall to the Folies Bergère, and Alexander of Paris who was hairdresser to Princess Anne.”


As a freelance writer chasing celebrities, she ended up in Cannes looking for stars. A chance opportunity got her the chance to interview none other than Anthony Hopkins, who indeed dazzled her like the star he is.

Then it was time to write a book, published in 1988 by Hodder and Stoughton, ‘Amsterdam Affair’, but it meant returning to New Zealand to edit.

“I was interviewed by Paul Holmes about my book. For my next book ‘Dancing Naked’ published by Random House, [Radio New Zealand’s] Kim Hill gave me a backhanded compliment and refused to interview me! They weren’t sure how to take me. Some people don’t like me for what I’ve done.

“Sadly my heel got caught, and I ended up staying. I was bored and frustrated. So I did the most conservative thing available, and joined a Toastmasters Club!” There she unexpectedly met her future partner, Anthony Catford, the self-styled ‘Duke of Wellington’. After a beautiful courtship (they were partners in light heartedness, she says) and she became a ‘Duchess’.

Margaret loves living in Mt Vic. “The warmth that hits your back as you approach the ‘mount’. The couple of cats on Austin St who like me so much they roll over. And of course, the short walk to the action on Courtenay Place.”

These days, Margaret still writes, mostly poetry, about her extraordinary life. “It’s an appropriate medium for philosophical thought, and I like the idea of taking an unconventional path through life.” 

Julia giveaway

Win tickets to see the story behind one of the most watched political moments of the 21st century.

In 2012, a speech delivered in the Australian Parliament quickly became a global talking point. Within hours, it was being replayed around the world. Within days, it had entered political history. Now, the woman behind that moment comes to the stage in *Julia* — a gripping one-woman play by acclaimed playwright Joanna Murray-Smith, at Wellington’s Circa Theatre from 30 May to 27 June.

From idealistic young advocate to leader under relentless scrutiny, *Julia* giveaway takes audiences behind the microphone of Julia Gillard’s landmark “misogyny speech.” Blending verbatim excerpts with scenes inspired by real events, the play explores the life and career that led to her defining parliamentary address.

The Local has a double pass to give away to the show, for Wednesday 24 June. To go into the draw for this prize, email admin@the-local.co.nz by 30 May.



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Nervous buyers take their time

Uncertainty and less competition is slowing buyers down, says Anji Foster from Lowe & Co.

There's an interesting dynamic playing out in the Wellington property market at the moment, and I'm certainly noticing plenty of it in our local neighbourhood.

On the surface, things still feel active. Open homes are well attended, buyers are reaching out, and there's no shortage of people keeping a close eye on what's coming to market. But beneath that, there's been a noticeable shift in behaviour. It's not that people aren't looking, it's that they're taking longer to decide.

We're seeing a gap between interest and action. A gap that sellers can find frustrating and, at times, quite stress-inducing, particularly when early feedback is positive but doesn't immediately translate into offers.

In previous markets, momentum tended to carry decisions. Buyers would view a home, feel the pressure of competition, and move quickly. Right now, that urgency has softened. Conversations are more measured, due diligence is more thorough, and there can be a sense that people are waiting for a unicorn property to appear, something that perfectly matches their "ideal home wish list," which is often totally inflexible.

Just in case people weren't feeling hesitant enough, we are also in an election year, and this inevitably plays a part. Whether it's potential policy changes, interest rate uncertainty, or simply the broader mood of the motu, it creates a layer of hesitation. Inner-city suburbs like Mount Victoria, where buyers are often particularly informed and considered, can feel this more than most. "We'll just wait and see" is the line most heard from property buyers so far in 2026.

What makes this moment especially interesting is that it's not just average homes being affected.

We're seeing high-quality, well-presented properties take longer to sell – the very homes buyers had been asking for just last year. When good homes don't sell quickly, it's rarely about the homes themselves.

There's a subtle standoff at play: sellers are naturally anchored to where they believe the market sits, while buyers feel they should have a little more leverage. This is particularly true in an environment where fear of job losses, interest rate movements, and the risk of paying too much are all understandably at play.

That said, hesitation doesn't mean inactivity.

When the right home appears that feels aligned in terms of price, presentation and overall feel, we're still seeing buyers move decisively. The difference now is that buyers are less willing to compromise. They'll wait longer and be choosier, but when something truly resonates, they act. It also means that we are often working with one serious buyer per property, rather than multiple.

In a suburb like Mount Victoria, people aren't just buying a house here, they're buying a lifestyle, a sense of place, and a connection to the neighbourhood. Those decisions have always been part financial, part emotional – and often guided by a feeling that's hard to quantify but easy to recognise when it's there.

So while it may feel like a "wait and see" market, it's perhaps more accurate to describe it as a considered one. **TL**

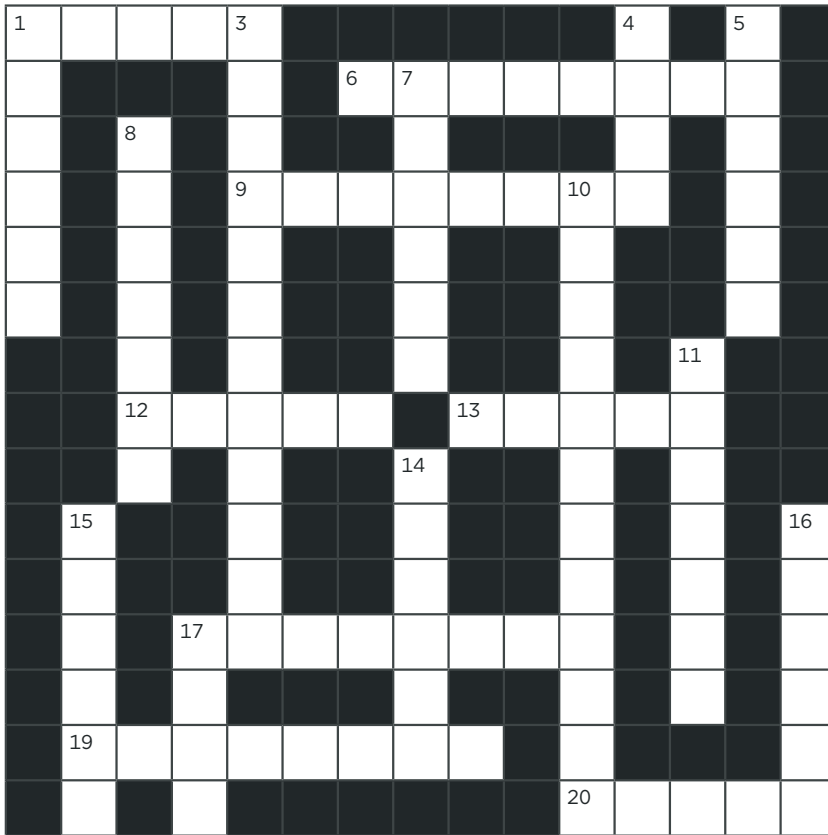
“We'll just wait and see” is the line most heard from property buyers so far in 2026.



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Beau's Crossword #7



Across:

1. Understand. (5)
6. A guess that you claim is educated. (8)
9. Aotearoa Christmas delicacies. (8)
12. Bleak, ----- contrast. (5)
13. Ancient manual. (5)
17. Cram seer. (Anag.)
19. Stadium horn. (8)
20. Capital of Bulgaria. (5)


Down:

1. The time-telling shadow of a sundial. (6)
3. Intended to prevent disease. (12)
4. The quantity of matter. (4)
5. Invent, design. (6)
7. A ----- of colour. (6)
8. Lacks belief in a greater power. (7)
10. Both hands are equally capable. (12)
11. Severe, ----- sports. (7)
14. Lounge, stretch out. (6)
15. Develop. (6)
16. The eleventh Greek letter. (6)
17. Liberate, ---- the whales! (4)

For the solution see the-local.co.nz/crosswords

ULO Unidentified Local Object

Identify the mystery object – something in the Mount Vic area – to win a \$20 voucher to Tomboy cafe on Majoribanks Street.

Email your answers to us at admin@the-local.co.nz. If there's more than one correct answer, the winner will be selected at random. Congratulations to Theo Levine who identified the April ULO as the spiny thing in the playground in the Pirie Street playground (yes it was a tough one). 



Community notices are free for local groups and not-for-profits. Get in touch if you would like to include your listing in *The Local*.

Historical walk: Elizabeth Street

Sunday May 10, 2:30pm. Join the Mount Victoria Historical Society for a guided walk of Elizabeth Street. Hear about the history of a few particular houses, individual characters who have lived in the street and some shocking stories that have only recently “come out of the woodwork.” To register for the walk and find out more details, phone or text Alan Olliver 021 122 9875.

Mt Vic Residents Association

How do we like to travel around Mt Victoria? Could it be better? Join us at our next Mt Victoria Residents Association meeting on 7 May to discuss what improvements we would like to see in our travel around our suburb and city. Members from the Architecture Centre and councillors will help us think big and practical. It's time we in Mt Vic say what we want to see here, what our priorities are and what's important. We will add this information to our Annual Plan submission. Meet at 6pm at Clyde Quay School Hall with your ideas.

Pikopiko Clyde Quay Kindergarten

SPACES AVAILABLE! Pikopiko is open for 2–5-year-olds, Monday to Friday, except public holidays. We are operating as a full year kindergarten from 2026. 20 hours free from 2 years old. Phone 04 385 0441 or email: pikopikoclydequay@wmkindergartens.org.nz. Please see wmkindergartens.org.nz for more information.

Crossways Community Creche

We are a not-for-profit early learning centre welcoming children aged 1 to 5. We are passionate about delivering quality early childhood education, with a curriculum shaped by play, partnership, and respect every day. Open Monday to Friday, including school holidays, we are located at 61 Majoribanks Street. Contact us on 022 153 4604 or enrolments@crosswayscreche.org.nz. For more information, visit crossways.org.nz

Tararua Tramping Club.

Talks coming up in May: 5 May: Jonty's journey in Ladakh, 12 May: Walking and cycling in Portugal, 19 May: Taking a hike in Japan, 26 May: The Great Wall of China.

Table tennis for over 60s

Table tennis is a fantastic sport for older people as it helps with movement, brain stimulation, and muscle/bone strength. We have 8 tables and play 3 times a week at the stadium on Alexandra Road. We want to encourage new people to join our fun social event. Only \$5 each time – no subscription. For more information contact Diana Winn, email winnich@xtra.co.nz or phone 04 801 9556.

Innermost Gardens

Gardening Sundays: 10am–12pm on the first and third Sunday of the month. Also Tuesday morning gardening every week during school term 10am – 12 pm. Everyone is welcome. Contact innermostgardens@gmail.com or check out our website innermostgardens.org.nz to find out more about how the gardens are run and allotment and composting opportunities.

One Mindful Breath

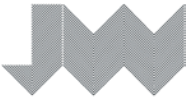
One Mindful Breath explores the role of meditation and mindfulness in embracing the wonders and difficulties of our modern lives. Our practice is secular, framed by Buddhist values. We meet every Wednesday at 7:30pm at the Friends' Centre, Moncrieff St, Mount Victoria. Each session has a meditation, discussion, and a cup of tea. The first Wednesday of the month is “Beginners' Mind”, great if you're new to meditation. Find out more at onemindfulbreath.org.nz

The Quakers

Each Sunday at 10:30am Wellington Quakers gather for Worship as part of unprogrammed Friends Meetings. Each Wednesday there is a mid-week Meeting for Worship from 12:15 to 12:45pm. Our address is 7 Moncrieff St. We welcome all. For more information email wgtnquakers@gmail.com

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Probus Wellington Central May 2026 Update



The next meeting of Probus Wellington Central is on May 15 at 10:00 am for coffee/tea and biscuits, and a 10:30 am start. The speaker will be Superintendent Penny Gifford, the new District Commander of the Wellington Police, who will discuss the positive changes and the challenges facing the police force in Wellington. Probus meets on the third Friday of the month (Feb to Nov) at Prefab Hall, Jessie St, 10:00 am to noon. Membership \$50 per annum. Stay for buffet lunch at Prefab \$25. More information: probussouthpacific.org/microsites/wellingtoncentral/

Host Your Next Event at the Tararua Tramping Club Hall!



Looking for a unique, affordable venue with charm and space? The hall – a beautifully restored former church – is perfect for workshops, classes, and community events. Seats up to 145, two smaller breakout rooms available. Weekday and weekend slots open now! Book today and bring your event to life in a space with soul. Check us out at ttc.org.nz/TTC/HallHire or make a booking via the clubrooms booking inquiry form.

Feldenkrais classes

Awareness through Movement classes are held Tuesdays 6–7pm, from 11 February, at the Quaker room in Moncrieff St. Relieve pain and stress, improve posture, balance and breathing, in a friendly, relaxing environment. Sue 0274667123, massagewellington.nz

Rotary



The Mt Victoria Rotary Club is part of Rotary International, a global network of 1.2 million volunteers committed to "Service Above Self." We meet for dinner on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of every month (5:30pm for 6pm) at The Oaks, 89 Courtenay Place, Te Aro. Each gathering features engaging speakers and lively conversation. Rotary offers a chance to give back, connect, and make a real difference – locally and globally. Whether you're curious or ready to jump in, we'd love to hear from you, send us an email: mtvictoriarotaryclub@gmail.com

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It's a wild world

Jane O'Loughlin reflects on lessons from recent weather events.

I usually look forward to autumn. In recent years Wellington has been lucky enough to have warm, still autumns that seem to go on for ages and largely make up for the fact that spring and summer are such regular disappointments. The trees are gorgeous colours, the light is dappled, the wind is still. The olives are ripening, and the air is scented with the faint fragrance of crushed feijoas, left to rot because they are weird fruit that no one likes. What a wonderful time.

But I must revise my view, considering the recent very cold temperatures and of course the big storm that hit the city, surprising us with a massive down-pour in a very short space of time, turning roads to rivers, and washing people out of their homes.

Wellingtonians are fairly used to robust weather, but flash flooding is another thing entirely.

I hope I am correct in saying that most of us in Mt Victoria were not too badly affected. Some of the shops on Kent Terrace did suffer some water ingress but were able to clear it quickly.

What must it have been like for those in other parts of the city who were one moment tucked up in their warm beds, and the next minute having to scale walls and wade in the dark through cold, rushing – and rising – water to get to safety.

And now the clean up – a miserable time for those affected, dealing with insurers, assessors and other authorities at the same time as trying to get back to normal.

There's usually a reaction to disasters like this – for a while we will be hyper aware of flood plains, and those looking for a new place to live will check council maps to make sure they are away from water catchments.

The same thing happens after earthquakes, tsunami warnings, and fires – we suddenly see the risk staring us in the face, and take what steps we can to protect ourselves: storing water, planning escape routes, checking fire alarms.

But our memories are short, and soon we get on with life and the precautions slip away.

Perhaps that is the only way to live, otherwise you would be perpetually anxious and go and live in Hamilton and Palmerston North, which I understand are the pretty much only places in New Zealand that are away from hazards, but which may kill you all the same with boredom.

The thing is, there are so many things to worry about. The idea of a worldwide pandemic seemed fanciful until it happened. Perhaps we should also gear up for a plague of locusts, an invasion of frogs and other biblical threats.

Part of me wants to say there's no point worrying about any specific dangers because sod's law is that you'll be tripped up by something else entirely, but that's not exactly going to brighten your day.

What can cheer us up amongst the misery of the flooding event is the sight of neighbours looking out for each other, and people helping in times of need. If we have strong communities of people that care, we are prepared as we can be for whatever nature chucks at us. **TL**

Wellingtonians are fairly used to robust weather, but flash flooding is another thing entirely.

The greening of the maunga



A largely bare Matairangi Mount Victoria from Courtenay Place. Circa 1912. Photo by Sydney Charles Smith (colourised), ATL1/1-019576-G

The Mt Victoria Historical Society's **Alan Olliver** looks into the history of Mt Victoria's trees.

By the time Colonel William Wakefield arrived in Te Whanganui-a-Tara in 1839, much of Wellington's eastern suburbs and Matairangi/Mt Victoria was open grass or scrubland country. This open country continued within the town belt areas with pastoral leases for grazing horses and dairy cows.

Self-seeding broom and gorse hedges spread rapidly and added some colour to the landscape, but it wasn't until 1870s that deliberate changes to the landscape were made. In 1872–1873, 642 pine and cypress trees were planted around the Mt View Asylum (the present-day Government House site). Botanist and Wellington College Board member, William Travers, arranged for 600 conifers to be planted behind Wellington College in 1874. The trees were initially planted as shelter belts. These plantings were followed by scientist James Hector's planting of Monterey pines, *Pinus insignis* and *Macrocarpa* in the Pirie Street Plantation between Pirie and Ellice Street in 1880.

From as early as 1926 and continuing into the 1930s, unemployed labour planted one million Pines, *Macrocarpa* and *Eucalyptus* trees along the Te Ranga a Hiwi ridge, from Matairangi to Mt Alfred. By 1952 the City Council decided to discontinue the planting of the "drab pines," instead focus on planting *Eucalyptus*, *Wattles*, *Pohutukawa* and *Kowhai*.

In more recent times, local resident, David Lee, has spent over 20 years planting 11,500 native plants, involving 86 species, mostly through a memorandum of understanding with the City Council. Other voluntary groups such as Wellington Rotary and Mt Victoria Regeneration have focused their efforts on clearing out exotic plants and weeds, and planting species native to the Wellington region. Much to the delight of many who live nearby or walk in the town belt, native birds have returned and thrived in this regenerated native environment. **TL**



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