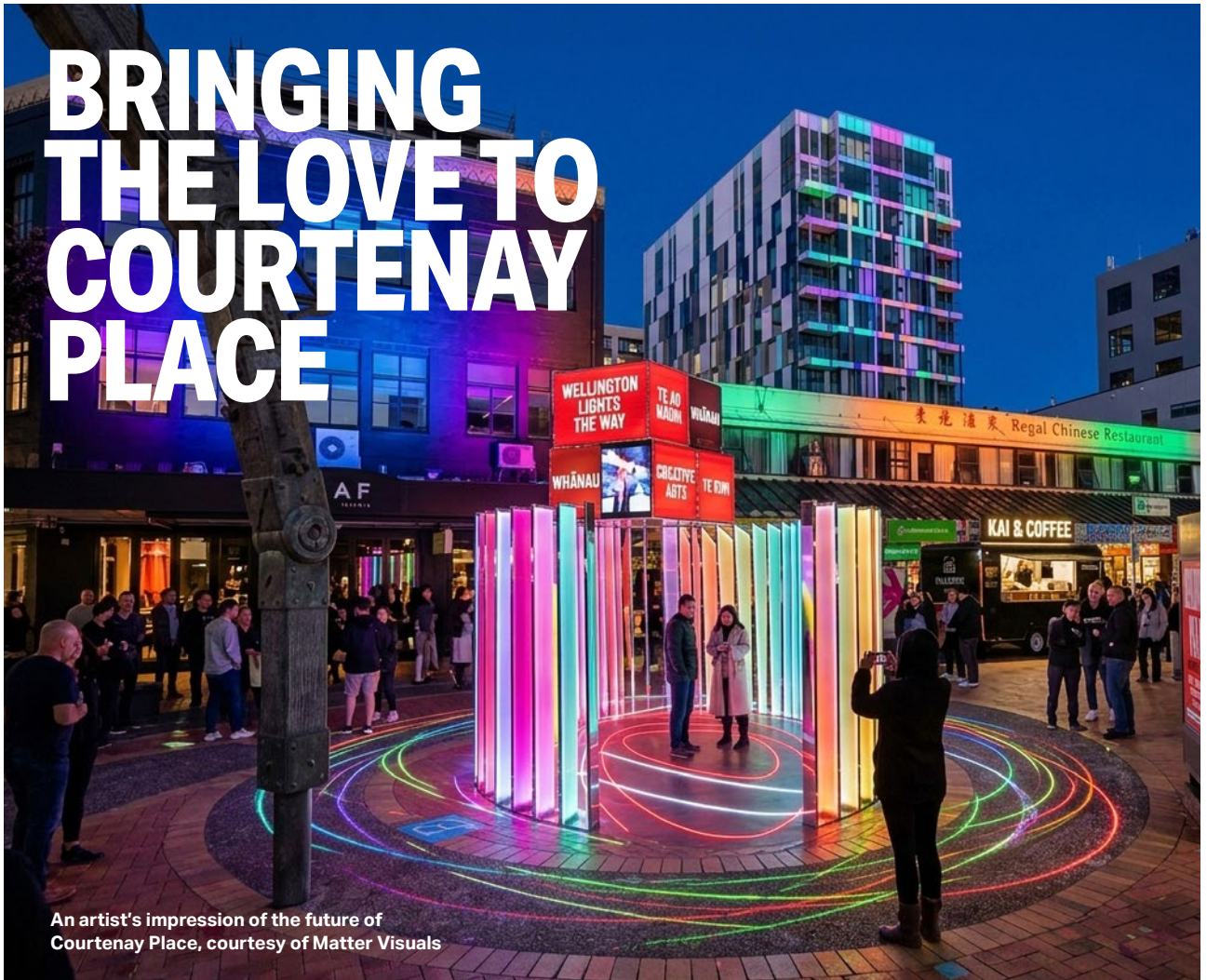


THE LOCAL Te Aro

NGĀ KARERE HAPORI O TE ARO

BRINGING THE LOVE TO COURTENAY PLACE



An artist's impression of the future of Courtenay Place, courtesy of Matter Visuals

A bold vision for Courtenay Place set out by a group of businesses and developers would see the area become a world-class creative district, fostering ideas, arts, and entertainment for everyone.

'Te Aro Hā' is the name of the group and the project that hopes to restore Te Aro to a 'place of abundance'

– taking inspiration for its use by pre-colonial Māori as an area used for cultivation and harvesting.

Street art, sculptures, improved lighting and façade painting are among the list of ideas the group has to spruce up the area – a mix of quick wins and bigger ideas that are part of a longer term vision.

Read more on page 3. ➤

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15 Cuban Salsa finds its footing in Cuba Street

23 Remembering the legendary Bar Bodega



Kia ora Te Aro!

Let's talk about our community.

Get in touch about any local issues or if you need support. I'm here to help and would love to hear from you!

Tamatha Paul
MP for Wellington Central

E: wellington.central@parliament.govt.nz

P: (04) 3891290

Auth by Tamatha Paul, Green Party MP.
Parliament Buildings, Wellington. Funded by Parliamentary Services.



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Marsden & Chelsea Clubs



Day Programme for those with dementia, cognitive or other conditions

The Marsden Club in Newcombe Crescent, Karori, (and the Chelsea Club in Lyall Bay) provide high quality, professional day programmes for people with dementia and other cognitive conditions. Funding from Health NZ is usually available.

For more information contact: Angela 027 349 9691 or visit: marsdenclub.org.nz

Bringing the love to Courtenay Place

A group of businesses are taking matters into their own hands when it comes to revitalising Courtenay Place.

Jane O'Loughlin went to find out more.

A collection of developers, engineering firms, architects and creatives has secured initial funding from the Wellington City Council for the first stage of an ambitious three-year vision to reinvigorate Wellington's Courtenay Place precinct as a buzzing centre of creativity.

In the same June meeting where the council scaled back its proposed investment in the Golden Mile project, it also allocated \$150,000 from the City Growth Fund to support the Te Aro Hā business partnership to make visible improvements in Courtenay Place in the next 12 months.

The group comprises Willis Bond, LT McGuinness, Dunning Thornton, Urban Dream Brokerage, Every-one, Studio Pacific Architecture, Athfield Architects, and McIndoe Urban.

Miranda Richardson from Willis Bond told *The Local* that some 'quick wins' would include painting some of the facades of buildings along Courtenay Place. Te Aro Hā was trialling a process to streamline the job for building owners.

"That's essentially being able to help them through the process of pricing it all up, getting all the paint specification, lining up all the contractors, figuring out what to do with lighting, sorting out all the traffic management plans that you need to be able to block the pavement for a period of time while you do work, things like that."

First cab off the ranks for façade painting will be 46 Courtenay Place, home to the Winner Winner restaurant, followed by the Victory Building.

Other short term improvements may include new lighting and the activation of empty shop fronts. The measures are part of a much bigger long term plan to see 'Te Aro Courtenay' become a defined precinct.

Miranda pointed to the past success of the Wellington Waterfront Framework in setting a vision for Wellington's transition from using the waterfront as a parking lot up until the 1990s to the much-valued recreation zone it is today.

Working closely with the Tenth Trust, the group was drawn to Te Aro's past status as an excellent

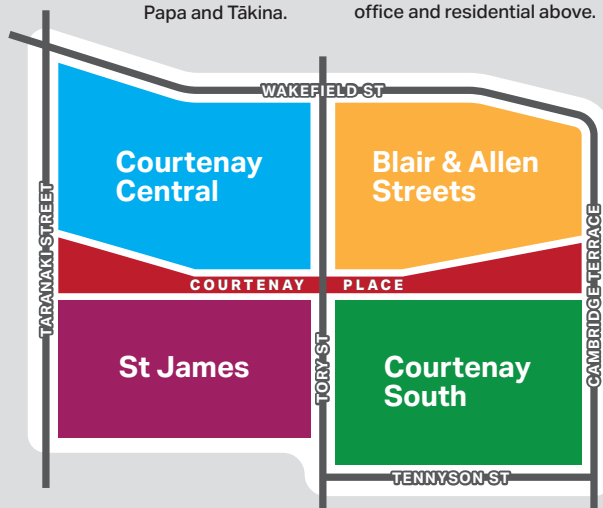
Te Aro Hā has defined four quarters connected to Courtenay Place, each with a distinct character.

● Courtenay Central:

A vibrant multi-generational 18-hour entertainment and retail quarter anchored by The Court and connected to the visitor flow from Te Papa and Tākina.

● Blair and Allen Streets:

Design and art-focused retail tenants complement food and beverage offerings with creative office and residential above.



● St James: Anchored by the St James Theatre this quarter also provides a variety of commercial tenancies for office, community, medical and service oriented retail, office and residential uses.

● Courtenay South:

A network of lanes, alleys and courtyards complement a wide variety of small format restaurants and bars fronting the South Quarter of the Courtenay Precinct.

food gathering ground for local iwi – “a place of abundance”.

“We really focussed on that concept of abundance, and the fact that, throughout time, people have remained here because it is this abundant place, and whether you grow your food here, or because you grow your ideas here, it's where people naturally congregate, want to be, and create new things together,” Miranda said

The theme of fostering creativity could evolve over time.

“For example, the focus now could be film, but then, in five years' time, it might be animation, or it could be gaming, or it could be live music, or it could be virtual reality, or it could be all of these things, which are essentially what Wellington is known for, that creative energy and force.”

Long term, and helped by the re-opening of the Reading Cinema complex, the group wants to see Te Aro Courtenay perceived as an '18 hour' district, rather than a nighttime destination only – that means cafes, service and retail offerings, and things for people of all ages to do. **TL**

Getting some action

The Golden Mile project is known for being controversial, but in my experience, most people agree on one thing: the Courtenay Place area needs a spruce up.

Whether it needs to be taken apart and put back together again with a re-aligned route, bike lanes and fewer bus stops, or just a bit of a paint job is disputed, but there is general agreement that the area is tired and needs help.

Faded shop fronts, run down buildings, boarded up shops, slippery paving stones, and outdated artworks all give a general impression of an area not well cared for.

But because we've been waiting for so long for the Golden Mile project, nothing much has been done in the meantime to improve the area. That's fair: if you're a business or property owner you might be wary of investing in your building in case you hit two years of disruptive road works outside it that kill off trade.

The previous mayor pretended the Golden Mile project was getting started by kicking off phase 1

– changes to the Kent and Cambridge Terrace intersection – before the rest of the contracts were secured.

Now that a more penny-pinching council has decided the major engineering works to connect the intersection to Courtenay Place will no longer occur, we are left with an expensive and non-functioning crossing to nowhere. Further cash will need to be spent to make the area safe and somehow useful.

The council is still intending to invest money in the area, but they are taking the time to carefully decide how that money should be spent, and their caution is understandable.

Meanwhile a set of businesses and developers has stepped in to set a vision for the area and get some runs on the board in terms of simple street frontage improvements.

They are – correctly – involving council in the governance of the trust they've set up but if it's a success it will be because they are experts who know how to run a project, are aiming for affordable solutions, and are bringing people on the journey.

Fingers crossed we're on the road to progress at last. **TL**



Jane O'Loughlin
Editor



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Highway improvements in doubt

An expensive package of State Highway 1 improvements through Wellington that includes a second Mt Victoria tunnel is now in doubt, following a recent update from NZTA.

The transport agency released its 'major transport projects pipeline' earlier in the month, revealing that SH1 Wellington Improvements sit in a 'future pipeline' section that has no timeline for construction. Confirmed work now only includes progressing route protection.

Consultation on the design of the SH1 improvements project, expected to cost between \$2.9 billion to \$3.8b, took place at the end of last year. It includes a second Terrace Tunnel, a second Mount Victoria Tunnel, a major roading upgrade at the Basin Reserve, and changes to the state highway corridor through central Wellington and through Hataitai and Kilbirnie.

Previously Minister Chris Bishop had promised construction would start within the Government's first term. **TL**

More scooters

The Wellington City Council has agreed to increase the number of commercially provided scooter and e-bikes numbers in the city to 2000, from the previous limit of 1300.

In recommending the increase, council officers told councillors safety issues with scooters were low. There were 66 incidents reported to Council in 2025, 61 involved an e-scooter and 5 an e-Bike. 97% (64) were classified as minor to moderate while 3% (2) were classified as significant requiring medical intervention. No major or severe accidents were reported. 1058 complaints were received in 2025, 94% related to parking and 6% to riding. **TL**



City to Sea Bridge closure and refurbishment

The City to Sea Bridge will be closed for about seven months from August in order to repair it and strengthen the building underneath. The bridge and access ways from Te Ngākau Civic Square to the waterfront and Harris Street will be closed.



The Wellington City Council says the work includes essential repairs and upgrades, strengthening the building underneath (the former Capital E building), and landscaping areas around the bridge. The artwork, architecture and design elements on the bridge will be preserved.

The bridge will reopen in February, alongside Te Whare Whakarauika Wellington Town Hall. **TL**

Amalgamation feedback deadline

A survey on council amalgamation closes this month. The Wellington City Council is asking residents if it should merge with other councils in the region, and if so which ones.

Wellington City Council is working with other councils to create a proposal after

the Government has announced it would remove regional councils and look at how other councils can be merged. If councils don't make a successful proposal for change, the Government will make the decision about how councils in that region will be structured. Give your feedback before the deadline of 19 July at letstalk.wellington.govt.nz/amalgamation **TL**

New Year carnival to return

The Courtenay Carnival will be back again this year, with a vibrant festival of music, food, drinks, and entertainment.

This will be the third year for the festival, organised by Vitalise Wellington. **TL**



Cleaning up Te Aro

Keep Wellington Beautiful held a successful community clean up of Glover Park in June.

This event is a part of a series of monthly community clean-up events.

Alison Pharaoh from CleanStreetsNZ said volunteers still filled multiple bags totalling just over 80kg.

“There were a lot of smaller items – mostly plastic and foil wrappers, cigarette butts and general litter. A good number of cans were also collected and donated to Cans for Kai.” 

Want to get involved?

Follow Keep Wellington Beautiful on:
Facebook: facebook.com/61584271078249
or Instagram: [@keepwellingtonbeautiful](https://instagram.com/keepwellingtonbeautiful)

Next event is Sunday 19 July from 10:30 – 12 meeting at the Newtown Community Centre.

Write your Welly life – writing workshop

Join columnist **Leah McFall** and journalist/Substacker **Dan Keane** for a workshop exploring the joys of writing both the city and the self, and learn some simple techniques to capture your own role in the capital's great drama.

Workshop includes one free drink, and nibbles.

This workshop is brought to you by *The Local*, Wellington's community newspaper and an enthusiastic supporter of emerging writers and journalists, and will be hosted by editor **Jane O'Loughlin**.

Book now – places are limited!



Sunday 9 August, 3:00pm – 4:30pm

Southern Cross Bar, 39 Abel Smith Street, Wellington
Tickets \$79 each. Visit: writeyourwellylife.nz

THE LOCAL
COMMUNITY NEWS





More than music

Music charity Arohanui Strings+ has run a programme at Mt Cook School for eight years now. With fifty young musicians coming after school each Monday it can get loud, but, as long-time supporter **Lee-Anne Duncan** writes, that's all part of creating social change through music.

"I have music for those who need it!" calls Margaret Guldborg, leafing through photocopies of music. Around her, 50 children open instrument cases and chatter at the start of their weekly after-school session at Mt Cook School.

Margaret is the programme director for Arohanui Strings+ (AS+). She oversees the charity's 16 groups in seven communities across Wellington and Lower Hutt, with 350 six to 16-year-olds joining each week, including this group at Mt Cook School, which meets for 1.5 hours each Monday. AS+ has been teaching children music for free for nearly 15 years – reaching an estimated 5000 children over that time – and cellist Margaret has been with the charity for 13 of those.

Until recently only strings were taught, but that's changed, necessitating the '+'.

"Now we teach trumpet, French horn, trombone, recorder and clarinet, as well as violin, viola and cello," says Margaret. "Also, Dr Lindsey Mason teaches musicianship to the younger children in the last half hour."

I've been involved with AS+ for the same number of years as Margaret, initially as a donor, as AS+ relies on grants and donations to cover expenses, primarily teachers' wages. For the past eleven years I've also sat on the charity's board of trustees, delighted to support a kaupapa that believes access to a musical education and its benefits should be a right, not a privilege.

It's so moving to see tamariki and rangatahi taking pride in their

playing, mastering a tricky piece, entertaining audiences, and understand that few of them would be learning music if not for Arohanui Strings+. This was most recently on display at Parliament on June 18, when 30 AS+ students performed for invited guests, including MPs across the political spectrum, city councillors, whānau and donors.

"It was fabulous," says Margaret. "The kids were psyched, and they went nuts when they saw Chris Hipkins. I had to calm them down because they hadn't played yet. Then they stood in line to have photos with him. It was really sweet."

So today's session is more low-key than the Mondays leading up to the Parliament event, Margaret tells me as she welcomes high school uniformed rangatahi in. It can be tricky to keep teenagers playing when other interests and responsibilities pull on their time, so having Mt Cook School's central location is crucial, she says.

"We have kids coming from colleges all over the city, and they can get here easily from school. Being right by the motorway is also an asset as we have a student who comes in from Porirua, and other students who go to school in town, then go home to Porirua. They drip feed in after school, with the incentive of home-baking from one of our lovely volunteers and snacks from Kaibosh. It's also social – we make it fun for them."

That's the aim of every Arohanui Strings+ session. It's about mastering new skills, learning to play in harmony with others, and always, always, finding the joy in music. **TL**



Library comedy makes the case for reading books we don't like

Jane O'Loughlin talks to Dave Armstrong ahead of the opening of his latest play.

When the Wellington Library re-opened this year, plenty of people were arguing about whether libraries should just be for books, or also listening to music, making movies and printing things out with 3D printers.

Now Wellington playwright and social commentator Dave Armstrong pushes us to consider another important use case for libraries – a place for challenging your ideas and prejudices.

Despite the serendipity of timing, his new play, *Local Library* is not about the newly re-opened Wellington central library – but instead is set in an unnamed suburban library – a type of facility he appreciates very much.

“Local libraries are more important than central libraries to be honest. I love the new Te Matapihi, but the real backbone of communities is local libraries.”

The protagonists of *Local Library* are two older people – Paul Homewood and Helen Nielsen – played by two of New Zealand's most respected performers, Peter Hambleton (Glóin in *The Hobbit* trilogy) and veteran stage and screen actor Jude Gibson (*The Brokenwood Mysteries*).

Both characters' lives have narrowed in different ways. Paul is a conservative retiree filling his days with odd jobs for neighbours after the loss of his wife. Helen is a librarian approaching retirement who feels increasingly disconnected from her workplace, family and community.

When a dispute over rental magazines results in Paul being banned, Helen offers him a deal: if he wants his library privileges restored, he must read a book she recommends. The battle of political beliefs, literary tastes and personal prejudices is the heart of the play.

Dave Armstrong based the play on an anecdote he heard and realised it was fertile ground for a comedy: “A feisty left wing feminist librarian and a very conservative merchant seaman who hates reading books by women or by LGBT authors and who is gently prodded into reading more, but of course at the same time she gets prodded into reading more because she thinks she's diverse and multicultural but she's not – like all of us we've got our prejudices.”

A key Dave Armstrong message is about the need for more tolerance – and how we all need to be open to new ideas and less judgy about other people. In the context of libraries, that's about not just reading authors who will tell us things we like to hear.

Dave says he personally finds it rewarding to deliberately push himself outside his comfort zone when it comes to reading matter.

“I use the libraries a lot and I try and not read what's fashionable, I try and put myself in positions of reading things that I don't really want to read. Rather than just asking all my woke friends, hey what are you reading that's really cool?”

It wouldn't be a Dave Armstrong play without some subtle political commentary – The play draws on current issues like connection, literacy, local government funding pressures, addiction and the role of public libraries as community hubs.

But it's also about friendship – and how it can be found in the most unlikely places. **TL**

Local Library is on Sat 25 July – Sat 22 August at Circa.



Could this be the breakthrough election for the Opportunity Party? **Jane O'Loughlin** talks to Wellington North candidate **Jessica Hammond**.

This is not Jessica Hammond's first rodeo. This year will be the fourth general election she has stood in representing Opportunity (formerly known as TOP or The Opportunities Party), but this one feels different.

"It feels really different," Hammond says. "I've always loved it and I believe in what I'm doing, but this time it feels a bit more like we're pushing on an open door. There are people coming to us wanting to talk to us. I had this strange experience of being lobbied, which I don't think people thought was worth bothering doing before. So now I'm getting a taste of what that feels like. It feels like we have momentum – the kind of momentum we've never had in the past. So it's really exciting."

Hammond puts the change down to a mix of leadership, experience and timing. A major factor, she says, is the arrival of Qiulae Wong as Opportunity's leader.

"We ran a really good process to select her and I think the proof is in the pudding that people are connecting with her," Hammond says. "And not just externally – the membership is behind her."

She also believes the party has matured. After several election cycles, Opportunity has learned more about politics, campaigning and the practical work of trying to win votes. It has also attracted people with political experience, including former Labour minister Iain Lees-Galloway.

On top of that, Hammond says, "it also feels like the time is right": people are prepared to look at new ways of doing things.

It was the Opportunity's big picture policies that first attracted Hammond to the party.

"I was very excited by their ideas and the... idea that you can actually fix things. rather than tinkering."

This election those policies include a land value tax, a universal basic income, and making retirement savings compulsory. Significantly, the party says it's prepared to work with either National or Labour. This means if it reaches the 5% threshold or wins an electorate seat, it could play a role as a 'kingmaker' when it comes to forming a Government.

If Opportunity makes it into Parliament this year, Hammond is likely to be among its MPs, which would mean an abrupt career change for the public servant.

Hammond is a born-and-bred Wellingtonian. She grew up in Wilton, now lives in Khandallah, and is familiar with the city's western and northern suburbs.

Like many Wellingtonians, she has spent time around Cuba Street and Courtenay Place, and she says one of the things she has always loved about Wellington is that it has "such a centre" and "such a heart". Her own teenagers, she says, share some of that affection for the city's alternative energy.

Hammond has stood in Ōhāriu three times, but this campaign places her in Wellington North.

"It's definitely a very different electorate from what I'm used to," she says, noting different demographics and a much busier campaign schedule.

Although she won't say no to electorate votes "this is a party vote campaign for everyone except for Qiulae."

For now she is looking forward to being on the campaign trail once more, and hoping this time it leads all the way to the steps of Parliament. **TL**

This is the first in a series of political profiles and articles *The Local* will be running in the lead up to the general election in November.



“I get what New Zealand customers want, but also what I like. I pick things from my point of view.”

Taiki Kondo opened Onzen on Christmas Eve, 2024, but his story in Wellington runs back two decades.

“I came here when I was 30. No English, washing dishes,” he says. “Wellington people are so nice, I learned English as I went. I appreciate everyone, and I just want to give something back.”

Onzen is how he gives back. Kondo imports clothing, music and Japanese pop-culture pieces, the things that are hard to find here.

“I get what New Zealand customers want, but also what I like. I pick things from my point of view,” he says. After twenty years bridging the two cultures, he’s a natural translator between them.

The shop has a way of starting things. One customer bought a T-shirt for its design, looked up the Japanese band behind it, and was hooked. “He told me, ‘I love

this band!’ Now he listens to it walking to work.” Kondo also stocks local artists he admires: Formula 7, the All Blue Seeker, Chivalry Road, and Upstairs Misanthrope, whose guitar work he points out with obvious affection.

Music, it turns out, is the real merchandise. Kondo collects and restores vintage guitars (he scrolls through a Facebook Marketplace catalogue of around twenty) and customers keep coming back, sometimes just to play the store guitar. “Even if it’s only for a jam. My customers feed me. I feel so much love.”

Much of his stock comes from family back in Japan. “My family house has turned part warehouse!” he laughs.

Twenty years on from the dishpit, Kondo has built exactly what he set out to: a place where people connect. **TL**

Connecting Japan and Aotearoa on Cuba Street

Felix Clarke goes behind the scenes at Cuba Street store Onzen.

Suiting up in a new spot

Dress for Success has moved – Jane O’Loughlin checked out the new shop.

A new larger premises in a convenient central city spot means Dress for Success is primed and ready to help more people into work.

As the name suggests, the charity offers quality business style second hand clothing to those preparing for job interviews and role. What people may not know is that its services also include career coaching, CV development, interview preparation, mentoring, work-readiness programmes, and employment support.

A new spot at 15 Willeston Street in the central city means more space for clothes, and crucially, suitably private and well-appointed rooms where clients can get advice on job preparation and appearance from professionals.

When *The Local* visited, the team of paid staff and volunteers were unpacking nearly a tonne and a half of clothes and accessories that had been moved from the previous premises on The Terrace.

Chief Executive Taslim Parsons is thrilled with the new location, as it is much more accessible for passersby and clients, and can accommodate more classes and clothing. It offers an alternative location for clients alongside the offices in Lower Hutt.

Supported by Ministry for Social Development funding, clients will come in for a session on advice about how to dress for an interview, what clothing styles look good on them, and will go away with suitable clothing and accessories.

“Every day we meet people who are taking courageous steps toward a new job, a new career, or a fresh start. Our role is to help them feel prepared, capable, and confident as they take those next steps.”

For some, it may be the first time or the first time in a long time they have been in the workforce, and the training helps overcome their trepidation.

“People come in with no confidence, and by the time we’re finished with them, they’re standing up tall,” Taslim says.



“Every day we meet people who are taking courageous steps toward a new job, a new career, or a fresh start. Our role is to help them feel prepared, capable, and confident...”

However, you don’t have to be in search of a job to use the styling services. Anyone can come in and pay to book a styling session, which helps to fund Dress for Success.

The store is staffed by volunteers working alongside a small number of paid staff.

Taslim says the work is satisfying. “It feels like we’re changing lives every day.”

The team are proud of their achievements – last calendar year Dress for Success supported 1,589 people through its services and programmes and helped 155 people move into employment.

It also produced good environmental outcomes, diverting over 4,000 kilograms of clothing from landfill through reuse and redistribution.

Supporters of Dress for Success can help by buying from the store, coming in for a paid styling session, volunteering to help (particularly those who can commit for the long term), or donating good quality work wear – once the shop has sorted all the clothing it has moved. **TL**

Check out Dress for Success at 15 Willeston Street.

Working with memory

Jane O'Loughlin visits an exhibition about light and shadow.

Mark Soltero's artworks are a mix of artistry, craft and chance.

The monochrome works entitled *Afterimage* on show at Nine Fathom Deep gallery explore the memory of a space – what's remembered and what's lost.

An image from a grand old San Francisco cinema – long since bowled over – has become a motif for Mark, a Christchurch based artist who grew up in San Francisco.

He explains that cinemas are about lighting – the focus on the stage, the lights going down.

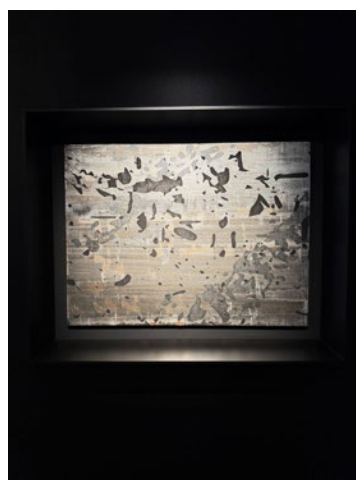
"It's an interesting thing to think about: that's a space in which images are shown, but you're looking at an image of that space.

"And of course it's lit, and there's this thing about the light and shadow."

The exercise then becomes one of translation; the stencilled image becomes different things on different materials – which include heavy hand made Italian paper and a vintage blanket.

In a public discussion with the artist, the visceral nature of the process is obvious. He explains how the precision of cutting the stencil comes up against

"I'm deliberately setting it up so there's an element of chance, and I'm working with it, and sometimes it actually works!"



the variability of the stencilling process – the thickness of the paint, the time the stencil sits on the fabric.

With so much that can go wrong he often can't wait to see the result. "I'm so impatient!"

"I'm deliberately setting it up so there's an element

of chance, and I'm working with it, and sometimes it actually works!" he laughs.

Part of the art is selection. Sometimes he puts work aside only to look at it later and find something in it. "For me it's about entering into a space and being able to imagine something."

Afterimage makes great use of Nine Fathom Deep gallery's high ceilings and discrete corners, ranging from very large to small stencil prints on a variety of fabrics and materials.

Stretching from the ceiling is a work on industrial hessian, the starting point for the artist's exploration of cinema and memories.

Gallery director Susanna Bauer says she was attracted to Mark's work as a metaphor for how memory works. "Every time you come back to it, it changes." **TL**

Afterimage is on at Nine Fathom Deep gallery on Cambridge Terrace until 30 July.

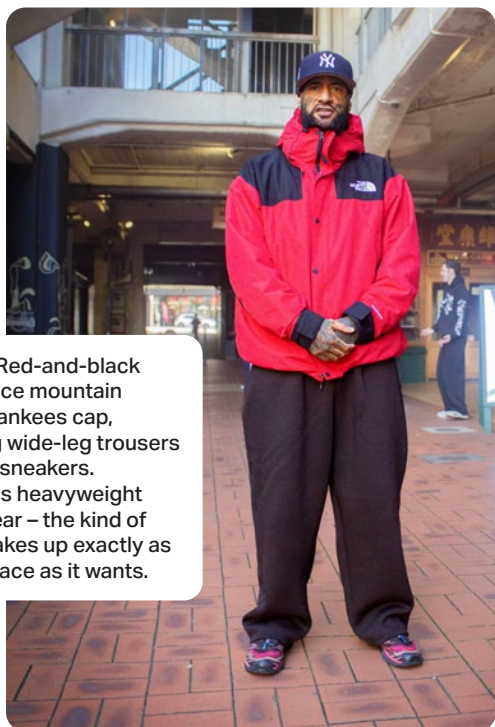
Felix Clarke was out and about on the streets of Te Aro checking out some outfits.



Jak: Faded workwear-blue chore jacket over a gingham collar, black Dickies and scuffed Docs, sunglasses parked on the pocket. A 90's look for sure, Jak credits it as a progression from 90's skater fashion.



Amelia: Fur-collared black bomber over a deep red corduroy fishtail skirt with fringe, platform lace-up boots anchoring it all. Romantic-gothic with a sharp edge, she makes a fenced-off car park look thoroughly cinematic.



Wayne: Red-and-black North Face mountain jacket, Yankees cap, billowing wide-leg trousers and trail sneakers. Effortless heavyweight streetwear – the kind of fit that takes up exactly as much space as it wants.



Kay and Jackson: A matched pair of rock'n'roll energy – her in a cropped leather jacket, fringed bag and knee-high boots, him in a striped knit, slim jeans and white Converse. Effortlessly cool 2010s nostalgia.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Kerry Meadows-Bonner lists the must-see events in Wellington's arts and entertainment scene in July and August.

LIVE THEATRE, MUSIC & VISUAL ARTS

NZSO 2026 Season

Michael Fowler Centre | March–Nov 2026 | nzso.co.nz

The New Zealand Symphony Orchestra has a solid programme for 2026, with acts from classical to contemporary Kiwi composers, international acts and new talent. The orchestra's reputation for artistic excellence attracts many of the world's musicians, conductors and soloists. In 2026, this includes violinists María Dueñas and James Ehnes, trombonist Jörgen van Rijen, pianist Isata Kanneh-Mason, and New Zealand piano prodigy Shan Liu.



Wellington Opera – Manon

St James Theatre | 1, 4, 7 & 9 August 2026 | ticketmaster.co.nz

For its 2026 season, Wellington Opera brings a popular and lasting French opera to the stage. Massenet's *Manon* will see Kiwi–Samoan tenor Pene Pati alongside Kiwi–Egyptian soprano Amina Edris, with fellow Kiwi Phillip Rhodes as Lescaut. Across five acts, the opera tells the tragic love story of Manon Lescaut and the Chevalier des Grieux, exploring love, desire and the cost of choices made in pursuit of pleasure.



Pene Pati

Alan Davies – Think Ahead Tour

Michael Fowler Centre | 8 August 2026 | ticketmaster.co.nz

On tour for the first time in a decade, British comedian, actor and TV host brings his new show, *Think Ahead*, to Wellington. Like his latest memoir, *White Male Stand-Up*, the set covers the highs and lows of his career, framed around the figure of a late middle-aged stand-up who fancies himself Marty McFly but is older than Doc Brown, spends more time at the pharmacy than the gym, and gets nothing but eye rolls from his kids.



Monkeyboard

BATS | 21–25 July 2026 | bats.co.nz

If you had an infinite number of monkeys typing on an infinite number of typewriters for an infinite amount of time, could one eventually write the complete works of Shakespeare...? Welcome to *Monkeyboard*, a commedia inspired comedy that delves into the nature of chance, the search for meaning, and the looming dangers that AI poses to the creative arts. Written and directed by Jamie Honey.

LIVE MUSIC



The Dire Straits Experience

Michael Fowler Centre | 20 August 2026 | ticketmaster.co.nz

From sold-out arenas across Europe, the Dire Straits Experience now heads to Wellington. The Long Highway World Tour lineup has been put together by Dire Straits veteran Chris White, who toured with the original band in the 90s, with singer–guitarist Terence Reis.



Cuban salsa finds a home in Cuba Street

Gloria Mathias checks out Cuban salsa lessons at The Salsa Lab: Pōneke.

Michael Horne's introduction to salsa was almost accidental. "I first witnessed salsa dancing about 10 years ago, right here in Wellington in the middle of Cuba Street," he says. "I wasn't naturally talented in either music or movement, but I was encouraged to go along and try a class."

Dancing wasn't his strong suit nor was it something he particularly enjoyed at the time. The first time he ever went clubbing, he found himself jogging on the spot, unsure of how to move or feel the rhythm around him.

Over time, that uncertainty began to shift. Horne now likens learning salsa to learning a language. The moves and turns become words, technique becomes pronunciation, and there are rules that guide how everything comes together. But like language, there is freedom too, an openness that allows you to express yourself and connect with someone you have never met before.

In New Zealand, he explains, two main salsa styles dominate: Linear (LA style) and Cuban. Linear salsa leans toward performance, while Cuban salsa centres on social dancing. It was the grounded, playful nature of Cuban salsa that drew Horne in.

Over time, he developed confidence, even stepping onto a stage. Eventually, salsa became a lifestyle, dancing three or four nights a week, travelling to festivals across New Zealand, and falling deeply in love

not just with dance, but with the process of learning itself.

Nearly a decade on, having trained across multiple dance schools, four in person and six online; and explored styles ranging from modern jive and rock and roll to kizomba, bachata, and zouk, Horne has gathered a wide range of influences. Along the way, he found himself drawn not just to dancing, but to teaching. That led him to notice a gap

in Wellington's social dance scene. While existing schools tend to focus on performance or rueda, a group-based format, there was little dedicated to the art of social dancing itself. From that observation, The Salsa Lab was born, a space designed for people with no prior experience, built around fresh approaches to teaching and learning. Classes take place at Footnote Studio on Cuba Street.

Horne wanted to create an environment that supports people from their very first steps to becoming confident social dancers. At its heart, Salsa Lab is about building a space that feels safe, supportive, and open.

"What I love most about salsa is the combination of movement, connection, and expression... Salsa connects you to yourself, to others, and to a wider community."

I'm incredibly grateful for the work other schools have done to build this community," he says, "and I hope to contribute to taking it to the next level."

And as it has for him, he hopes salsa will help others find a place of belonging.

"What I love most about salsa is the combination of movement, connection, and expression," Horne adds. "Salsa connects you to yourself, to others, and to a wider community." **TL**

Behind the scenes on a music career

Kerry Meadows-Bonner talks to the singer-songwriter swapping bar gigs for the stage at BATS.



Emma Rutherford has never played it safe. Her upcoming BATS Theatre show is no exception. The Wellington-based singer-songwriter brings *In Between The Verses* to BATS, July 16–18 – a show that blends original music, comedy and storytelling into a behind-the-scenes look at the chaos of chasing a music career in New Zealand.

The show follows her journey from rural North Canterbury to the Christchurch music scene, and eventually to Wellington.

“For some reason I have always been drawn to Wellington and the creativity and open-mindedness of the city. I also knew that if it didn’t work out, I could always go home.”

She hasn’t needed to. “Since moving here, I have written and recorded some of the best music I have ever made,” she says. “Living in Wellington has encouraged me to think outside of the creative box I was in and try something a little different, which is how my show *In Between The Verses* came about. I am forever grateful I was brave enough to take that leap of faith.”

Putting her career on stage, rather than just singing about it, has meant exposing parts of the journey she never expected to share publicly.

Although sharing some of these stories may slightly damage my ego, the intention is to leave nothing off limits and be honest about the not-so-great moments, to show what it’s really like trying to make it as an artist in Aotearoa,” she says. “I want to be real and inspire my audience to keep going, to keep aiming high, even though it is really hard sometimes. Especially in a world of AI, music venues

“I’ve had a lot of fun stepping into the characters of people who have offered me unsolicited career advice over the years.”

shutting down and a serious lack of creative funding.”

Most of Emma’s live experience has come from cover band gigs, the late nights, dance floors, rowdy crowds. This show runs from 7pm to 8pm, in a seated theatre, built around her piano-driven, ballad-heavy songwriting.

“I’ve had a lot of fun stepping into the characters of people who have offered me unsolicited career advice over the years,” she says. “Until I started writing this show, I don’t think I realised just how much unsolicited advice artists receive on a regular basis. Like many creative people, the societal pressures to ‘get a real job’ or pursue something more conventional have definitely left me thinking, gosh, did they really just say that, or had me wondering, maybe I should just get a real job.”

Her hope is that whoever is in the audience leaves with something.

“My ultimate goal is for my audience to walk away feeling inspired or to just keep going, whether they are trying to pursue a creative path themselves, they’re a parent, friend, work colleague of a creative person, or simply have something they have always wanted to do but haven’t had the confidence to do it,” she says. **TL**

In Between The Verses plays BATS Theatre, Wellington, July 16–18 2026

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Authorised by J Pitts, jonathan.pitts@national.org.nz



ULO ? Unidentified Local Object

Identify the mystery object – something in
Te Aro – to win a \$20 book voucher.

Email your answers to us at editor@the-local.co.nz. If there's more than one correct answer, the winner will be selected at random. Congratulations to Sasha Vlassoff who identified the June ULO as a mural on Garrett St. 



Waste not

Where does the recycling go,
asks ICW's Jill Wilson.

You've just moved in. The new TV is plugged in. The Wi-Fi has finally connected. The cat has found a cardboard box to sit in, and the jug is bubbling away in your small and cosy inner-city apartment. Time to collapse onto the couch and admire your new home.

Then you look around. Cardboard boxes. Plastic wrapping. Polystyrene chunks. Bags within bags. And a few items you've already realised will never fit into your delightfully compact apartment. Why did you bring three lamps? And that waffle maker!? Time to tidy up and do the responsible thing: recycle.

But: "Which bin?", "Where's the bin?", "...where's the bin room???" For many apartment residents, recycling can feel like a small urban mystery.

For many apartment residents, recycling can feel like a small urban mystery.

'Waste minimisation' is a term appearing more and more in Wellington conversations. At its heart, it's about reducing the amount of rubbish we create in the first place – repairing instead of replacing, shopping second-hand, taking your own containers to the supermarket, and re-using materials wherever possible. The idea is simple: if we create less waste to begin with, there is less to send to landfill later.

Recycling is a basic starting point – but in the inner city, a challenge awaits. In 2020, Wellington City Council passed the *Solid Waste Management and Minimisation Bylaw 2020*. From 2021, new apartment developments were required to include suitable on-site storage areas for rubbish and recycling.

The idea was straightforward: buildings would have space to separate their landfill, paper and cardboard, plastics and cans, and glass. Body Corporates could then contract private companies to supply and manage the bins. It was a smart and necessary step. But many inner-city apartment buildings were built

long before these expectations existed. Imagine an apartment building – let's call it HiRise. Built in 2015, it has 50 apartments, no car parking area, no shared indoor community space, and no outdoor land. Every square metre was designed to maximise apartment numbers. So – no room for the wheelie bins. And because the building has 10 or more apartments, residents generally cannot use Wellington's kerbside recycling service.

So what can the residents of HiRise do? There lies the rub – right now, there is no obvious solution, and the Council acknowledges this. While keen residents can drop things like batteries, soft plastics, and bottle caps into places around the city, there is nowhere to drop off the everyday recycling – the weekly pile of cans, milk bottles, cardboard, yoghurt containers, and glass jars.

Maybe the Body Corporate Committee makes friends with a nearby building that already has recycling facilities. Maybe one resident volunteers to take trips on behalf of their building to the Southern Landfill and Recycling Centre. Maybe apartment dwellers suddenly become very interested in visiting friends in the leafy suburbs on rubbish day.

This is not just a rubbish issue. It is an inner-city design issue. Perhaps the future solution will involve a mix of approaches: better waste minimisation, neighbourhood recycling hubs, container recycling schemes, smarter building retrofits, shared private contracts, and closer collaboration between residents, Body Corporates, waste operators, and Council.

Because if Wellington wants more people living sustainably in apartments, the city also needs to make sustainable apartment living practical. **TL**



ICW Survey: to help us learn more about recycling in the inner-city, please complete this survey: 'Recycling – do you have options in your building?' forms.gle/Y2J1QFGJNcxKjpMZ9

What Te Aro taught me about belonging



After three years of living here, **Pulotu Tupe Solomon-Tanoa'i** reflects on the people, places and experiences that make Te Aro feel like home.

As the mother of teenage daughters who are building lives of their own, I have come to better understand what it means to be alone. Not lonely. But alone in the quiet, practical sense of adulthood. Walking home to an empty apartment. Cooking for one. Finding ways to create meaning and connection within the rhythms of ordinary life.

Although I'm lucky enough to have a close group of friends, fantastic colleagues and a wonderful partner I can call throughout the day, I still think modern urban life can feel surprisingly solitary at times.

So much of adulthood now happens privately. We work long hours, communicate through screens, move frequently, and often live physically close to one another while remaining emotionally distant. It is possible to spend an entire day surrounded by people and still feel disconnected from the world around you.

I think that's part of why rituals and shared spaces are so important. And for me, that's why it has been such a comfort to live in a neighbourhood where community is always close at hand.

There is something deeply reassuring about standing among hundreds of Wellingtonians at the ANZAC

Day dawn service at Pukeahu National War Memorial Park in the cold pre-dawn darkness, or attending Sunday Mass and recognising familiar faces over a cup of tea afterwards, even when I arrive alone.

Belonging can also be found in quieter forms of civic life. It was strangely moving to stand among hundreds of Wellingtonians queuing for the re-opening of the city library. People were genuinely excited about books, public space, and the return of something that felt collectively ours.

During Matariki, the waterfront transforms into an immersive walk-through of fire, projections, music and remembrance. Families gather along the harbour, sharing kai while performances unfold across the city and ceremonies honour those who have passed away.

There is something powerful about standing among thousands of strangers and being reminded that remembering is not only a private act but a collective one. Matariki asks us to reflect on where we have come from, who we have lost, and what we hope for in the year ahead. Those are deeply personal questions, but they are made richer by asking them together.

In summer, Wellington comes alive with festivals and outdoor events. One of my favourites is the Wellington Pasifika Festival, where thousands of people gather to celebrate the richness of Pacific cultures through language, performance, food, art and music.

And then there's CubaDupa, when it feels as though people from all over the city, and often the country, descend on Cuba Street for a giant street party on our doorstep.

Even when you arrive alone, there is a feeling of participating in something shared. Those experiences have reminded me of the value of simply being among others. Participating in rituals, gatherings and shared spaces that quietly remind you that you are part of something larger than yourself.

True belonging is something not everyone is fortunate enough to experience. To be deeply known, understood and accepted is a beautiful and precious thing.

But perhaps belonging can also begin more simply, in the quiet comfort of returning regularly to places where your presence is welcomed – a church hall, a library, a festival, or a familiar street.

In a city full of strangers, that sense of community has meant a great deal to me. **TL**

COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

**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*.**

Zeal: Stories Espresso Cafe

Stories Espresso Cafe at 40A Cuba Street, Te Aro is operated by Zeal Wellington, combining quality coffee with opportunities for young people entering hospitality. Through a 15-week barista programme, participants gain hands-on café experience, workplace skills and confidence in a supportive environment. Every purchase helps support Zeal's training programme and future employment pathways for local youth.

DCM Wellington

We work at the sharp end of things and are the leading social service working with people who are experiencing homelessness in Wellington. Our services range from free dentistry through to Housing First. If you know of someone rough sleeping who may need support, contact **04 499 4444**. To learn more: dcm.org.nz

Te Matapihi ki te Ao Nui Central Library

Don't: How Using the Right Words Will Change Your Life. Thu 23 Jul, 5:30–6:30pm. Free author talk with bestselling author and management consultant Bob Seldon, sharing simple communication techniques to improve everyday conversations.

South Asian Language Storytime. Sat 25 Jul, 10–10:30am. A free multilingual storytime for young children and their families, featuring a different South Asian language each month.

South Asian Bookclub. Sat 25 Jul, 11am–12pm. Explore the library's South Asian language collection and connect with fellow readers in this free community book club.

Share Te Matapihi Memories. Mon 27 Jul, 4:15–6:30pm. Record your favourite library memories and hopes for the future of Te Matapihi ki te Ao Nui in the library's sound studio. Bookings required.

Between the Lines: The Devil's Bargain. Thu 30 Jul, 5:30–6:30pm. A free evening of chamber music and literary discussion exploring the theme of *The Devil's Bargain*, presented by Orchestra Wellington and partners.

Vincent's Art Workshop

Tues 7 July – Tues 28 July | Vincent's Gallery 5/148 Willis Street. Vincent's is celebrating Matariki, with a group exhibition.. There will be a variety of mixed media, ceramics, painting, harakeke flat packs, works on paper and canvas.

In Memoriam

TO PHIL – FROM ANDY

I want to throw something
Break something
Scream.

That feeling inside, furious, impotent rage.

No target, no-one to blame
My best friend gone
Yet I can do nothing.

Forlorn, bereft
And left with impotent, crying rage.

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For Wellington North

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LISTINGS

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Antiques wanted

GOLD, SILVER & COSTUME jewellery wanted & coins, scrap and alluvial. Small to large lots. Highest ever NZ prices paid. 0800 559922 for free no obligation appraisal.

WATCHES wanted, wrist and pocket style going or not, modern & old any considered 0800 559922

MASONIC LODGE items wanted badges, aprons, jewels and regalia all items considered 0800 559922

CAMERAS wanted, film type modern & old, Any considered Ph Ben 0800 559922

COINS & Banknotes wanted. Pennies, threepences NZ & foreign. All types. ph Ben 0800 559922

FOUNTAIN PENS Wanted. Conway Stewart & Parker Style. Any considered. Ph 0800 559922

MEDALS wanted. Military and sports medals. Any medals & badges considered. ph 0800 559922

MILITARY Items wanted. Books, badges, buttons & uniform. Ph 0800 559922

NZR New Zealand Railways items wanted. Badges, signs, uniforms. Ph 0800 559922

RUGBY Programs & badges wanted. Single items or whole collections. Ph 0800 559922

STAMPS First Day Covers, postcards & albums wanted. Any considered. Ph 0800 559922

RECORDS Wanted. 33s, 12s, 45s. Modern & old. Any considered. Ph 0800 559922

BOOKS Books Books Wanted. Fiction & Non-Fiction. Modern & old. Small – Estate Lots Ph 0800 559922

BOTTLES wanted, glass, marble, codd, stone & soda syphon types, NZ & Overseas Ph 0800 559922

BAYONETS swords and pocket knives wanted. Modern and old. Any considered ph 0800 559922

SCOUTS & Boys Brigade Memorabilia wanted Patches, blankets & uniform all items considered Ph 0800 559922

TYPEWRITERS wanted. Modern or old any considered. Ph Benjamin 0800 559922

TAXIDERMY wanted NZ – Exotic skins, heads, birds & mounted animals any considered ph 0800 559922

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT & Police Memorabilia wanted. Badges, uniform & equipment – any items considered. ph 0800 559922

FIRE SERVICE /Brigade items wanted. Badges, patches uniforms & equipment all items considered 0800 559922

SHEET MUSIC wanted modern & old small to estate lots Ph Ben 0800 559922

Squash Bucklers – Inclusive Squash in Wellington



Squash Bucklers is Wellington's new rainbow squash club, welcoming LGBTQIA+ players and allies of all ages and skill levels. We offer friendly social squash in a supportive and inclusive environment. Whether you're new to the sport or an experienced player, come along, meet new people, and enjoy a game. Learn more at squashbucklers.org

Probus Wellington Central July 2026 Update



The next meeting of Probus Wellington Central is the Mid-Winter lunch at the Wellington Club on The Terrace on Friday 17 July, starting at 12 noon. The usual meetings at Prefab will resume in August, with Helmut Modlik, Chief Executive of Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangatira, as the speaker on Friday 21 August. Probus usually 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/



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Have you got a story to tell? *My Night Out* is section where we feature contributions from readers about their interesting time out on the town. Published stories will get a \$50 book voucher. Find out more at tearo.the-local.co.nz/lifestyle



Orchestral Manoeuvres

Leah McFall struggles to keep it together.

You, Hamish and Jane are slap in the centre stalls, along with several hundred expectant concertgoers, waiting for the soloist and orchestra. It's been brought to your attention (too late! too late!) that the opening act is a Mongolian-adjacent throat singer, after which there will be a half-hour interval so everyone can come to terms with the encounter. The vocalist is apparently a New Zealander, and an Olympian of the pharynx.

It's hard to explain what happens next, except it involves a microphone, a drum the size of a pizza, a drum the size of a tractor wheel, a squeezebox, a clarinet and cattle bells. During this extraordinary performance you're invited into the human diaphragm, shown around a larynx and bounced about the soft palate.

The hall feels like a hot pan, getting hotter, steaming with a rolling boil of guttural noise. The experience is muscular. It's startling. It's beyond words, and very close to madness. It continues for a solid 30 minutes, during which a woman pushes along your row, muttering she needs the bar.

Jane slides down in her seat, and so to avoid looking at Hamish, who you just know will set you off, you focus on the audience. This is an edgy Gen X crowd,

open to out of body experiences. It appears they may have had many of these in the 1980s and are possibly still recovering. There are leather coats, chunky boots, every type of hairstyle. But most seem captivated; serious. Someone in front of you is weaving from side to side in appreciation, apparently ecstatic. The three of you manage to stay on the acceptable side of naked hysteria, but teeter at the edge.

When the lights come up for interval, applause thunders around the hall. You grope for the exit and queue for drinks.

Nobody else seems as plastered with sweat as you. It's probable they go to shit like this all the time; you hear someone near the bar say, "I'm still a Communist".

Second half and you're on safer ground. The soloist is an alt-rock legend, leaving the audience weak with gratitude for a lushly arranged, heavenly set. There are strings, woodwinds, gales of percussion, and the defiance of an electric guitar. His singing reminds everyone how it felt to be young, back when some of these songs were written, but also has a searching quality. This is music being thrown towards the future, in the direction of all the living yet to do. Many will get to their feet at the last note, utterly affirmed, and cheer for more.

Everyone tumbles outside and scatters along Cuba St, taking their street style with them to all the points of the city. You feel a bit high, honestly. On a night like this, Wellington is completely off its face. It's absurd. It's loveable. It will one day all make sense. **TL**

During this extraordinary performance you're invited into the human diaphragm, shown around a larynx and bounced about the soft palate.

Leah McFall is a published columnist who will be sharing her writing secrets at a workshop on Sunday 9 August. Scan the QR code for more details.



Bodega: The venue that was

Kerry Meadows-Bonner remembers a legendary venue.

On a narrow stretch of Willis Street, where neon lit up the pavement and basslines slipped through brick, a small doorway opened into something larger than itself. Beneath low light and poster-layered walls, Wellington found one of its defining music rooms. This was Bar Bodega, a venue small, yet huge in influence.

But Bodega didn't start out as the late-night rite of passage most Wellington gig-goers remember. It began life more modestly, as La Bodega – a café tucked into an Edwardian shop on the corner of Willis and Abel Smith Streets.

In 1991, Fraser McInnes and business partner Steve Jinks opened it as a live music. It was part bar and part refuge for a generation of musicians and punters searching for a place to be heard. The space was intimate, sometimes unforgiving, but always alive. Drums vibrated the floor and guitars rattled glassware.

Through the 1990s, Bodega became a rite of passage. Bands hauled gear through narrow entrances and stepped into heat and noise. Fur Patrol, The Chills, and The Mutton Birds all graced its stage at some point, as did international acts. The White Stripes in 2000 – their first NZ tour – and Mark Lanegan in 2010, within arm's reach of the crowd.

Bodega was never flash. The bar was sticky, the air thick, the bathrooms small. Yet none of it mattered. Students, artists, office workers, and musicians pressed shoulder to shoulder beneath low ceilings in light and volume.

In 2005, it relocated out of the path of the capital's impending motorway bypass development to 101 Ghuznee Street – its bar carried by hand by staff and regulars, marched ceremoniously by a New Orleans brass band.

The space was smaller, tighter, yet the same at heart. Posters returned to the walls, familiar faces filled the room, and the music rose again. The crowds were closer, the ceiling lower, but the spirit remained. Bands and artists kept coming, drawn by history as much as sound.

By 2016, mounting pressures on inner-city creative spaces – rising costs, shifting leases, and an uncertain future – caught up. Bar Bodega closed once more, marking the end of its Ghuznee Street chapter and one of Wellington's defining live music eras. The grand finale show – Fred and Toody Cole of Dead Moon – closed its final night filled with distortion, sweat, and joy.

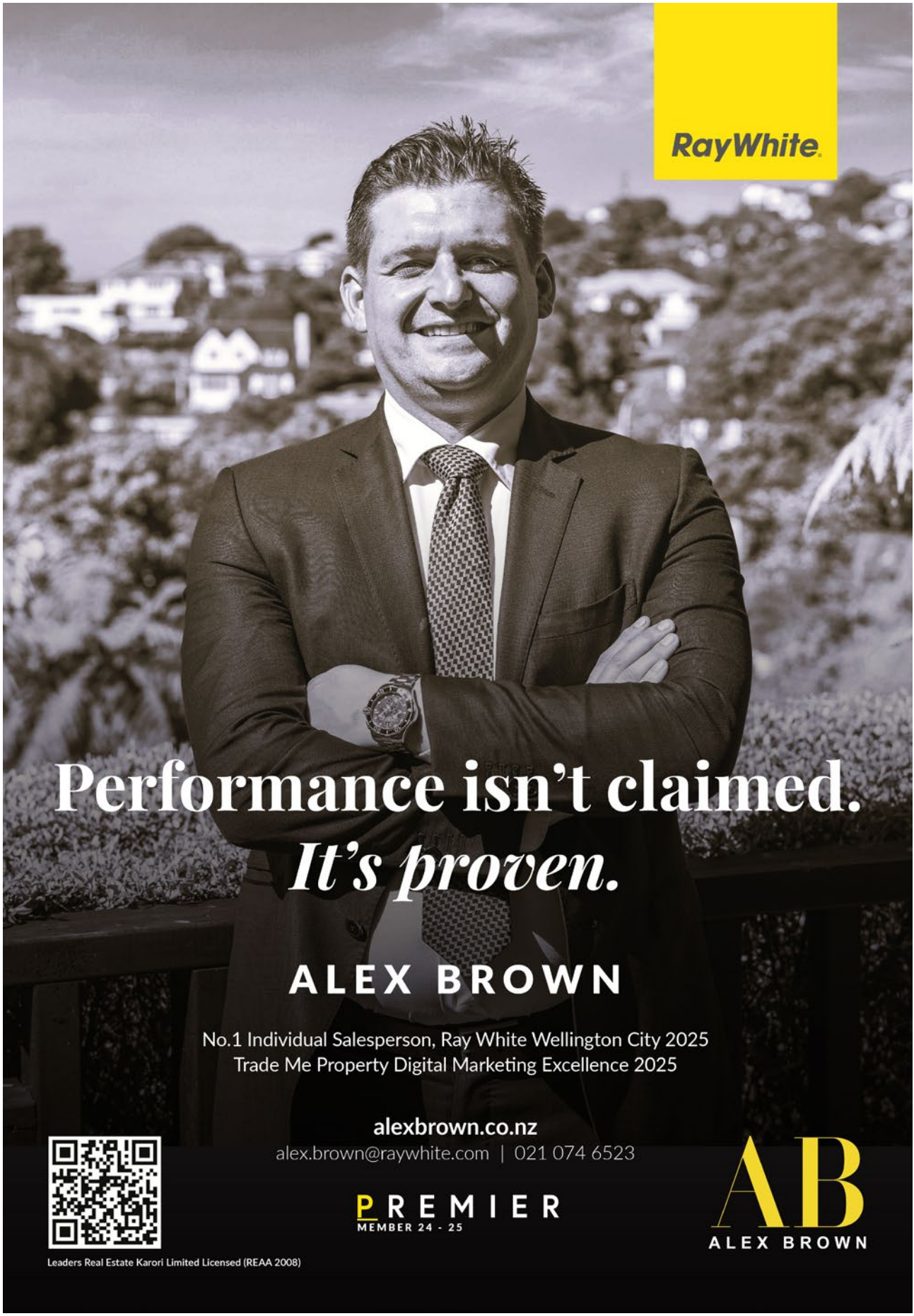
Yet Bodega was never just walls and a stage. It was community, noise, and belonging – something that echoes in any crowded show and every band stepping onto a small stage believing they might be heard.

The building would later take on a different, far quieter role as home to The Bresolin, an Italian restaurant but in 2020, COVID-19 arrived, and The Bresolin became another loss.

Since then, the doors of what was once Bodega have sat empty and silent. The people and the music are long gone, but the imprint it left on Wellington's music scene remains. **TL**



TOP: 286 Willis Street in 1969 – later to become the original Bar Bodega. Photo: Wellington City Libraries. **BOTTOM:** The Ghuznee Street Bar Bodega. Photo: Bradley Garner Creatives



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