

# THE LOCAL Te Aro

NGĀ KARERE HAPORI O TE ARO



## HOW SAFE IS TE ARO?

**T**e Aro has had a bad rap in the past, with concerns about safety and sexual violence. Has anything changed? The Wellington City Council is keen to know if initiatives implemented over the past year have made a difference to public perceptions of safety – and it is

surveying residents to see what they think. Among the initiatives has been a trial of three yellow Safety Points in the entertainment district – giving people an easy way to call for help if need be.

[Read more on page 3.](#) ➔

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# How safe is Te Aro?

Credit: Wellington City Council

When asked what scares her more, drunk or drug-affected behaviour, she doesn't hesitate: drunk.

The Wellington City Council is surveying residents about CBD safety. **Felix Clarke** had a chat to some people in Te Aro about how they feel about safety in the inner city.

**A**sk people in central Wellington about safety, and it often depends who they're with. "If I'm with people, I always feel safe," says Joshua, near Te Aro Park. He says he's never felt in danger here. What worries him isn't rough sleepers but drug-affected behaviour; he often stops to talk with people sleeping rough, but is wary of the antisocial behaviour that can come with altered states.

Kate, nearby, agrees. As someone who lives in Te Aro, she feels secure at night. What she has noticed over the past year is more rough sleepers, and she worries about them, not the other way. When asked what scares her more, drunk or drug-affected behaviour, she doesn't hesitate: drunk.

Anne, an older visitor from Waiheke Island, had a rougher morning. Near the bucket fountain around 8am, loose clusters of people, some talking to themselves, one blasting a speaker, came up close behind her. It wasn't fear of violence, she says, but unpredictability: "If people are talking to themselves like that, you have to think of mental health issues. You don't know what someone with mental health issues is going to do." By lunchtime, with more people around, the feeling lifted.

One of the measures the council has been trialing to help with city safety is yellow Safety Points. Three safety points have been in place in Cuba Mall, Te Aro Park and Courtenay/Allen Street since the middle of last year. They allow users to quickly call for help, and are also intended to provide reassurance:

"a visible, accessible point of assistance" for the public, according to the council.

A report published in March on the city's Safety and Wellbeing Plan said the safety points had been used 377 times.

Only 24 (6.4%) were genuine, but those led to five ambulance callouts and nine Police responses, including arrests. Twenty-three of the 24 weren't already visible to Police, ambulance, or CCTV. The safety points helped raise concerns that may otherwise have gone unanswered.

With the trial soon to end, the council will need to make a decision about what to do next: keep the existing Safety Points, get more, or get rid of them.

Of the people *The Local* spoke to, few have considered using them — most hadn't even noticed them. But upon discovering their existence, people are usually happy to know the "help button" is there, just in case.

A survey is underway now asking Wellingtonians for their views on the Safety Points, and on safety generally in the CBD. The council's Safety and Wellbeing Plan has seen a range of initiatives implemented over the past year, including CCTV improvements, greater coordination to tackle homelessness, training for hospitality staff to prevent sexual violence, and improved lighting.

The council is keen to understand if the changes have affected public perceptions and experiences of safety. **TL**

Give your views before 16 September:

<https://www.letstalk.wellington.govt.nz/wellington-cbd-safety-survey>

# Don't move the goalposts

While we need to welcome more people into our inner city, we also need to look after the ones who already live here.

**M**any years ago, I went to an open home for an apartment in Tennyson Street, that had great harbour views. "The good thing about this location," the real estate agent assured me, "is that your view won't change, because District Plan says everything in front of you must stay low rise."

I didn't buy the apartment, but if I had I would have paid a premium for the view, only to find in a few years' time that the changes to the District Plan and to the Courtenay Place Heritage Area would mean that assurance no longer held true.

Now I do think that a high-rise development in a downtown area makes sense – more people living in the CBD supports businesses and brings vibrancy – the problem is that when you mess with the

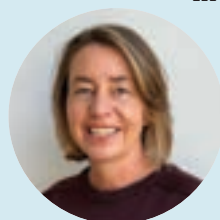
rules, it's bad for people wanting to invest money. What investors like is certainty. If I had bought the apartment knowing that my view could disappear in the future, then that possibility would have been factored into the price I was willing to pay.

I mention this in relation to a story in this edition about the Lido apartment development proposed for Wakefield Street. In their third proposal change, the developers are now asking to build 16 metres in excess of what the District Plan permits, taking the apartment block to 37.6 metres. Unsurprisingly, this is getting on the nerves of some local residents whose views and sunlight are threatened.

Supporters say we need more people living in the central city so it's okay to break the rules. But although the height increase would add another 16 apartments, the development was already going to provide more than 100 apartments.

What is the point of setting a District Plan if we are going to ignore it? Yes, we want more people to live in our inner city, but we also want to keep the residents we already have – by respecting their investment in our city. **TL**

**Jane O'Loughlin**  
Editor



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## Enrol to vote

To vote in the 2026 General Election, you need to be enrolled by midnight, Sunday 25 October.

Enrolment packs were mailed out between 17 and 22 August. If you haven't received one in the mail, it means your address is out of date, or you're not enrolled, according to the Electoral Commission.

You can enrol or update your address online at [vote.nz](https://vote.nz) using your New Zealand driver licence, New Zealand passport or RealMe verified identity.

The Electoral Commission estimates around 440,000 eligible New Zealanders are currently not enrolled, including approximately 200,000 people aged between 18 and 24.

Voting begins on October 26, and anyone who has not enrolled by the deadline will not be able to enrol during the voting period. **TL**

## Arlington apartments plan

Wellington may yet get more social housing if a plan is approved to move forward on construction at the beleaguered Arlington Apartments site in Mt Cook.

Housing Minister Chris Bishop has announced a plan to "reset" the Kainga Ora Arlington development, to deliver 104 new social homes on the site owned by the Wellington City Council.

The previous plan for 301 apartment-style homes at Arlington was paused in July 2023, due to cost blowouts. The new plans will include 55 one-bedroom apartments, 37 two-bedroom apartments, and 12 four-bedroom terrace homes.

Wellington Mayor Andrew Little said the remainder of the site not leased to Kainga Ora would be returned to Wellington City Council to be used for more homes for Wellingtonians.

"That creates the potential for additional housing, including from private developers and community housing providers."

The Government would also provide a grant of \$6 million to Wellington City Council for distribution through its community grants programme to support housing services.

The plan depends on Wellington City Council approving a variation to Kainga Ora's existing lease of the site, with a decision expected in late September.

Construction is expected to begin in 2027 and finish in 2029. **TL**

## Compassion Soup Kitchen appeal

The Compassion Soup Kitchen is asking for donations as part of its annual fundraising appeal, to provide meals, clothing, blankets, and toiletries to those who need them most.

Compassion Soup Kitchen Manager Sam Johnson said it was the generosity of partners, donors and funders that enabled the service to provide meals, clothing, and other help, as well as a sense of whanaungatanga.

"Please help us continue to support those who need it most."

The Compassion Soup Kitchen, currently located on Tory Street, was founded in 1901 by Sister Suzanne Aubert.

More information: <https://www.compassion.org.nz/mission/soup-kitchen/donate-soup-kitchen> **TL**



## High trust in Wellington locals

Wellington city scores highly when it comes to trusting people in its local area and city.

68% of Wellingtonians gave a positive response when asked if they trusted people in their city or local area, compared to an average of 57% across seven New Zealand cities surveyed.

The results were part of a quality-of-life survey undertaken across Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Hutt City, Porirua, Wellington and Dunedin.

Wellington recorded one of the highest overall quality-of-life ratings among participating cities (80%).

Wellington residents remained relatively positive about their personal circumstances but less positive about the city itself.

Wellington had the lowest rating of all participating cities for satisfaction with the city's look and feel (39%). **TL**



# 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**

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# Opposition to further height increase

The developer of the Lido apartment block has asked for another height increase. **Jane O'Loughlin** reports.

A group of residents living opposite a proposed high rise apartment building on Wakefield Street have objected to the third change to the plans, which asks for further height rises to the large complex located in the Courtenay Place Heritage area.

Objectors and supporters turned up to a hearing held on 25 August where the applicant, Three Sheds Limited, asked to increase the maximum building height of the proposed Lido development from its existing allowance of 32 metres to 37.6 metres. The Wellington City Council has opposed the application.

The additional 5.6 metres would accommodate 16 further residential apartments, increasing the total number of dwellings within the development to 123.

This marks the third time the developer has changed the plans, on a proposal that was initially lodged for a building with a height of 24 metres and 80 apartments, on the long narrow site where Commonsense Organics was formerly located, at 260 Wakefield Street. The District Plan allows for a height of just 21 metres.

Ten submissions in opposition to the change were lodged, with residents living in apartments nearby saying they were concerned about loss of sunlight, loss of privacy, visual dominance, increased wind effects, the impact on parking and the impact on the character of the area.

Local resident Jill Wilson said she had not opposed the original application, however "the additional height now proposed represents a substantial departure from the building scale that was originally presented, and it materially changes the relationship between the development and my and neighbouring residential properties."

Andrew Wotton, who lives opposite, said the fact the building would have no parking spaces whatsoever was unrealistic. "Residents and visitors will inevitably over-occupy the already limited neighbourhood street parking."

Felicity Wong, submitting on behalf of Historic

Places Wellington said neighbouring buildings within the heritage area were considerably lower. The extra two floors "would be overbearing to those nearby heritage buildings and out of step with the medium density nature of the heritage area itself."

The Wellington City Council's planning expert also recommended the application be declined, with a primary concern being the building's dominance within the Courtenay Place Heritage area.

However, the application change was supported by three local business owners, Chris and Kathy Parkin, and Mike Hood from Courtenay Place bar MishMosh.

Mike Hood said the additional height would not be highly visible "when you consider the existing and consented buildings in the area."

"What the extra height does deliver is more apartments, and from a business perspective, that matters. More people living in the area means more economic activity, more foot traffic, and a stronger customer base for local business."

Chris Parkin, the owner of the Museum Hotel, said he supported the development "even though it will affect part of my view" because it would be good for the city.

"The new District Plan has clear objectives around growth and intensification in the city centre, and this proposal aligns with those objectives. We've agreed as a city that we need to grow and that central areas are the right place to do it. Presently the population density in Te Aro is ridiculously low and makes poor use of existing infrastructure."

The hearings commissioner is considering a decision. 





# New café tackles food waste

**From toasties to tea – Henriette Busch reports on a new destination that turns rescued food into delicious treats**

It's Monday morning and countless boxes of rescued food are brought into the shared space at Hopper Street that not only hosts the headquarters of food-rescue Kaibosh, but since July also the rescue-café Hopper.

Every year, 1.22 million tonnes of food are wasted in Aotearoa, according to a 2025 Ministry of Environment report. Hopper café is trying to change this by serving exclusively rescued food. The café is part of Everybody Eats, which started as a pop-up restaurant in Auckland in 2017 and now operates three restaurants and two cafés between Auckland and Wellington.

Jack Rainey has been working with the initiative

since the first day the pay-what-you-can restaurant at Dixon Street opened in 2020, and went from volunteer to operations manager of both sites.

He had toyed with the idea of a day-time operation for a while and first started looking for a café-space two years ago. Jack runs the café together with Sam Ashton, who started off as a food rescue driver for the restaurant. The rest of the work – preparing food, doing service and dishes – is provided by a varying group of volunteers. Hopper's goods have fixed prices that vary between \$5 and \$8 for food and \$3 for beverages.

"All of the food is made at the restaurant and then bought here every morning", says Sam. "Whatever we don't use goes straight back to the restaurant to get reused in the menu."

The café's menu is mainly focusing on toasties, because the most wasted food in Aotearoa is bread, explains Jack.

"It's a crazy amount of food. It's the whole reason why this café started, because we were just getting so much bread." adds Sam.

Hopper is currently open on Monday and Tuesday, five hours a day. But

Jack is already thinking of expanding.

"After a four-month trial, we will assess. We'll take a really hard look at the numbers."

Currently they are sharing the small café-space with a bakery operating from Wednesday to Friday. Since its opening Hopper has had an average of 30 customers a day, depending on the weather. According to Jack, they need approximately 20 to cover the daily operational costs. The ultimate goal is to have a café that not only covers its own costs, but supports the restaurant. So far Hopper has been more of a destination spot, admits Jack; there are not a lot of people walking by due it being located at a quiet street. According to Sam, however, they still attract a wide variety of customers. "We're hoping to get a little few more students come in. You know, the coffee is bottomless. The toasties are warm and really cheap for a student." 

Ayesha Verrall has been an MP and a Minister but now she's having a go at winning an electorate. **Jane O'Loughlin** reports.

**A**yesha Verrall – who has been a list MP since joining Parliament in 2020 – is enjoying her first experience of campaigning for an electorate seat.

“The experience of doing politics differently with more local focus and door knocking and individual engagement. I’m just loving that.”

The job of representing Wellington North comes as the city faces a challenging time of job losses and business closures.

“Right now, the city needs a strong local MP who can get things done. As a senior MP with Cabinet experience, I believe I’m that person.”

She thinks it would make a massive difference to Wellington to have a supportive MP that was also a Minister.

“It’s clear that that’s not happening right now. Not only is the city neglected in terms of infrastructure funding from the government, but Government Ministers take pride in kicking public servants and parts of Wellington City. So, ending that, and making sure that the city has a strong voice who can get things done is an important priority.”

She kicked off the hard work of engaging with the electorate early, with door knocking starting about April this year. Public healthcare is unsurprisingly a topic many are keen to raise with her, but she says a common theme in the conversations with the public is the economy, and more specifically for Wellington, planned public service job cuts which she describes as “destructive and reckless”.

She says the impact on the city already from the prospect of public sector job cuts has been huge.

“Someone said to me, it’s not that the Government has fired 6000 people. They’ve made 60,000 people insecure about their jobs.”

She says she is getting a warm reception for Labour’s campaign promises aimed at bringing the costs of living down – such as three free GP visits, a public transport fare cap, and financing to put in place solar energy.

“When the economic climate is so bad, people just want help with the basics. They don’t want grand promises.”

She is confident she will do well in the newly



formed Wellington North electorate, and garner votes from across the spectrum.

“There’s a number of people who are giving their party vote to National, who recognise [the electorate] as a two horse race and are likely to give their support to me.

“And then, there’s a lot of Left voters who are recognising the economy as the dominant issue and want a party with credibility on those issues.

“And I get a lot of positive feedback about my work in healthcare, particularly from older parts of the community.”

Verrall lives in Brooklyn currently, and has previously lived in Newtown and Hataitai.

In her spare time she likes running, ideally in the green belt.

“If I can get a run in before Parliament, that just makes me feel so happy for the rest of the day’s circus!” she laughs.

A lot of time is spent around her daughter’s sport. She and her partner Alice like to go to shows in Wellington, when they get a chance.

“Being both busy working mums mean we don’t always get to as many things as we want to now.” **TL**

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



# Join the Club

“I like the way that he can take lyrics that are about the grueling parts of life and just make it sound like it’s not that at all.”

Wellington six-piece sings big songs for hard times. **Dan Keane** took a listen.

**W**ellington’s had a hard run, as everyone keeps reminding us. So why do the city’s newest rock heroes sound so darn happy?

Debt Club have just released their debut album *Foothold* and will close their first national tour with a homecoming show 18 September at San Fran on Cuba Street. I’ll be there, grinning ear to ear the whole time. Think the noise, sweat and joy of early Springsteen. Think the theme song for an 80s family sitcom, in the best possible way. They’ve even got a saxophone!

Listen to the lyrics, though, and the grim headlines reappear:

*How could you look at me straight and say that  
You know I work two jobs and I still can’t afford  
rubbish bags  
Who is in my life that cares?  
Everyone’s mad, dead or abroad*

That’s from *I Couldn’t Care (In The Slightest)*, a smashing manifesto that anchors the new album. It’s a song about a late-night fight with no easy answers. It’ll also make you spill your beer out of pure rock-and-roll joy.

Frontman River Hann-Ellen says that contradiction is are inspired in part by The Boss himself.

“I like the way that he can take lyrics that are about the grueling parts of life and just make it sound like it’s not that at all,” he said. “There’s something about that really attracts me.”

Debt Club’s own take on the formula feels fresh two reasons. The first is River’s voice. The music may swagger big and loud, but the 23-year-old sings with a boyish wonder he doesn’t try to hide. Even at his darkest he sounds more hurt than angry, with a stubborn gentleness underneath.

The second is Debt Club’s unabashed sense of abundance. They’re a cheerful mixed-gender band that’s bigger and louder and even physically closer than most families. On stage River sings nearly elbow to elbow with sax man Alex Vujanic, guitarist Flinn Bellam, Elina Chester on keyboards, Darcy Monteath on bass and Maxime Zephyr on drums. Darcy and Maxime also sing: the more the merrier! In a time of canceled nice-to-haves, a raucous, crowded Debt Club show brims with something very much like hope.

“I get a lot of hope from wallowing in the sadness of things,” River sad. “You do feel a sense of relief after awhile. No one feels sad all the time. No one feels amazing all the time. We’re constantly changing and learning, and we wanted all the songs on this record to show that.”

Or as he sings in *I Do Mine*, *Foothold*’s opening track: “I can’t help but think I’m doing fine / Go on, you do your thing, I do mine.” **TL**

Debt Club plays San Fran on 18 September, with tickets online at Moshtix. You can buy *Foothold* at Slow Boat Records and Flying Nun or online at Bandcamp, and stream it in all the usual places.



# Award for bookselling niche

**Henriette Busch reports on one Wellington woman whose love of special edition books gained her the Titlepage Bookselling Trailblazer of the year award.**

**A**nastasia George once read 412 books in a single year. A personal record, but overshadowed by her suffering from antenatal and postpartum depression.

“It was escapism. It was trying to get out of my own head. I was not enjoying my time as myself. So, I read about women who were going on amazing journeys, having amazing relationships and getting to do all these wonderful things.”

When Anastasia, who has always been a reader, got better and had to decide what she wanted to do after her maternity leave, her husband suggested her opening a bookshop. “His push for me to open The Grimoire was: You always complain to me that you can’t find the books that you want. So, clearly you can’t be the only person having this problem. And which we have since learned, I’m not the only person who has this problem.”

**“His push for me to open The Grimoire was: You always complain to me that you can’t find the books that you want.”**

The books Anastasia was so eager to collect are special editions: signed, with special covers, featuring character art or maps.

“We want the art on the inside of the book to be represented on the outside of the book,” she explains. Special editions have gained market share in the last five years, but were rarely sold in New Zealand, or if at all, only months after publication, Anastasia tells.

“New Zealand publishers didn’t know that there was demand for them.” With ‘The Grimoire’

– a term for a book of magic – Anastasia provides fellow booklovers with the opportunity to buy from New Zealand, not overseas. Launched in November 2024, the online shop sells special editions of various genres, with a focus on fantasy and romantasy: stories mostly written and read by women, yet often overlooked. At first, Anastasia stocked the books in a spare room at her home—not knowing she would earn what she, a former accountant, had projected as a full year’s profit in just a few months. Today, the shop is run by a team of three and operates out of a 185-square-metre warehouse in Lower Hutt. Anastasia is excited that the space will eventually become an event venue, giving her the opportunity to connect face-to-face contact with the customers she currently only interacts with via email or social media. Beyond her business success and the positive response from customers—some of whom even shared their own healing journeys through reading with her — Anastasia never expected to be recognized at the Book Industry Awards in July.

“I completely talked myself out of anything happening. I was preparing my parents: Guys, just so you know, we’re just going to have a good time. Nothing’s going to happen. So it came for the award, and we were sitting there having a drink, and then my name got announced, and I kind of froze.”

She had assumed her business was too niche, especially given that some publishers initially failed to understand her vision.

“People don’t always understand what we do. But that’s okay, you don’t have to get it, because I do, And I love it.” 



# Talking about tomorrow

Community project Creative Signals aims to change the future of Wellington through discussions. **Solomon Lee** headed along.

A space for the community to hear from visionaries, researchers, and artists seeking to promote creative resilience and autonomous futures: this is the endeavour of Critical Signals, a programme that found its home in Wellington back in 2024 and has since become an annual presence, starting its run in August this year.

Combining arts, tech, politics, and culture, the team behind Critical Signals promotes open and honest conversations about the hopes and fears of a community, trying to work together to create a better future for Wellington, New Zealand, and the wider world.

Areas of focus for Critical Signals this year include: the future of energy and land, disaster preparedness, community infrastructure, social thriving, housing cooperatives, and more.

A recent event focused on ethical tech, and featured Rebel Tech Alliance (RTA), a non-profit organization from the United Kingdom that educates people on the dangers of Big Tech and ethical alternatives.

Patrick Leavy, the co-founder of RTA, joined the audience at Critical Signals' Taranaki Street location virtually to share how he discovered the issues of Big Tech and why he disconnected from it a decade ago.

Big Tech (Amazon, Apple, Google, Meta, and

Microsoft) spy on and monetize users, Patrick says, with the five major issues with these companies being: they are monopolistic, colonialist, additive, unaccountable, and surveillant.

Patrick refers to Big Tech as "nefarious entities" who record and profile everything about users to sell to advertisers based on "not real consent".

This encroachment of privacy allows Big Tech to influence users, commercially and even politically.

"We are sleepwalking into a surveillance state," Patrick says, and it is a "threat to democracy".

With the lack of government enforcement on Big Tech regulations across the globe, Patrick says it is up to individuals to make a change.

Patrick presented at Creative Signals in hopes of inspiring change in the Wellington community and wider New Zealand to find ethical technology alternatives he says.

Sophie Jerram, a local curator, researcher and social entrepreneur, is one of the people who helped put Critical Signals together and found Patrick in a Signal group chat that focuses on ethical tech.

Last year Critical Signals had an event that spoke the same message, Sophie says, but RTA is a step ahead, having made a public, readily available programme based on their knowledge.

"We can get inspired by others," Sophie says. "We need to share experiences across the world. It's important for us to learn from other countries." TL

**Critical Signals is running speaker events, workshops, and more through to November. Find out more at <https://criticalsignals.nz/programme/>**

**For more about RTA, see its website: <https://rebeltechalliance.org/index.html>**



**Felix Clarke and Kitty Muir-Woodley** went to RnJ's opening and ran into a new generation of 2000s revival in Left Bank.

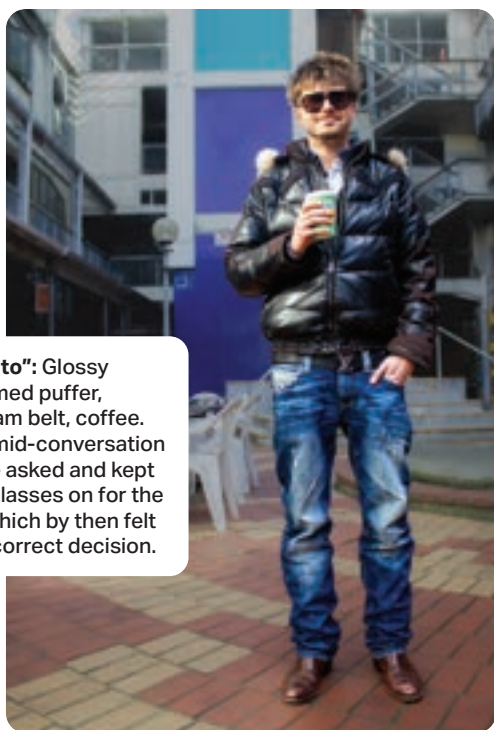
**"Fur baby":** The rhinestone skull tee is the real thing, and it is worn absolutely straight under a fur-hooded puffer. Kitty spotted it from across the shop. When we asked where it came from she shrugged and said she'd had it for years.



**"Letterman":** Head to toe in lettering. Graffiti script down the leg of the denim, a logo tee, and both arms tattooed to the wrist, so the whole fit reads as one continuous surface. He'd stepped outside Cuba St Social for a cigarette and gave us thirty seconds.



**"Incognito":** Glossy fur-trimmed puffer, monogram belt, coffee. He was mid-conversation when we asked and kept the sunglasses on for the photo, which by then felt like the correct decision.



**"Prepped":** Gold-flocked floral tee and contrast-stitch bootcut denim, with patent shoes that have taken a beating. Sash-front Polo rugby, spiked belt chain, rings on every second finger. Prep clothes worn like a threat.



## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

**Kerry Meadows-Bonner** looks at some of the highlights coming up in September and October.

### LIVE THEATRE, MUSIC & VISUAL ARTS



#### **Abracadabra**

*The Opera House | 6 October 2026 | [ticketmaster.co.nz](https://ticketmaster.co.nz)*

Sixty minutes of grand illusion for everyone. Anthony Street, one of the world's best magicians and illusionists, brings his mind-bending show to The Opera House. Expect balls of fire, and a giant bouncy ball launched into the crowd. Volunteers get plucked from the audience and find themselves part of the act. Gasps, laughs, and plenty of "how did he do that?" All ages welcome, from first-time magic fans to grown-ups who still can't figure it out.

#### **Matilda The Musical**

*St James Theatre | 23 September – 11 October 2026 | [ticketmaster.co.nz](https://ticketmaster.co.nz)*

Roald Dahl's most famous children's story comes to life on stage for a limited Wellington season.

The stage show has won more than 100 international awards and been seen by over 11 million people worldwide, with original songs by Australian comedian, Tim Minchin. Matilda is a little girl with a vivid imagination, a sharp mind, and surprising psychokinetic powers. With kind teacher Miss Honey and a motley



crew of "revolting children" behind her, she takes a stand against the terrifying Miss Trunchbull. Expect dance numbers, chocolate-cake, and acrobatics.

### LIVE MUSIC

#### **Che Fu & The Kratez**

*Michael Fowler Centre | 11 October 2026 | [ticketmaster.co.nz](https://ticketmaster.co.nz)*

A Kiwi hip-hop icon marking twenty-five years of his second solo album.

Che Fu brings his national tour celebrating 2001's second solo album *Navigator* to the Michael Fowler Centre. Combining soul, reggae, hip hop, rock, and Pacific influences, he's joined by his band The Kratez, plus soul artist Aaradhna, vocalist Betty-Anne, and hip-hop artist King Kapisi. The Niuean/Māori musician first fronted Supergroove while still at high school before going solo, and *Navigator* delivered singles like *Fade Away* and *Misty Frequencies*. He was recently inducted into the NZ Music Hall of Fame, holds a Pacific Music Awards Lifetime Achievement Award, and is a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit.



#### **Macy Gray Live**

*St James Theatre | 15 October 2026 | [ticketmaster.co.nz](https://ticketmaster.co.nz)*

One of the great R&B and soul artists returns to Wellington.

That recognisable rasp comes to St James Theatre in a set built around huge singles, *I Try*, *Still*, *Do Something*, *Sexual Revolution*, and *Sweet Baby*. The Ohio-born singer broke through in 1999 with triple-platinum debut *On How Life Is*, and she'll also air new single *I'm Too Sexy* from forthcoming album *The Trouble with Truth*. She's sold more than 25 million albums worldwide, won a GRAMMY and two BRIT Awards, and collaborated with everyone from Ariana Grande to Galactic.



# Verb Readers & Writers Festival 2026 springs back



**Gloria Mathias** checks out an upcoming literary festival.

**V**erb Readers & Writers Festival returns to the capital this month, running 23–27 Sept 2026 in collaboration with its longstanding supporters Unity Books as ‘Official Bookseller.’

Featuring a lineup of literary powerhouses and exciting new voices from New Zealand, Australia and Ireland, this year’s festival presents 26 events from over 50 artists.

This year’s programme embraces some fresh voices, with debut writers Hana Buchanan, Terri Te Tau, Joseph Trinidad and Shariff Burke stepping onto the festival stage.

There’s also room for debate. Don’t Worry, Tech Will Save Us sees team captains Chlöe Swarbrick and Toby Manhire lead a fierce clash of ideas on technology and the future.

The fun doesn’t end after the festival; the Verb 2026 team will be returning on November 14 with a one-night-only live literature takeover of some of Wellington’s cosiest venues. VerbCrawl will encompass 20 events showcasing local writers in a range of eclectic venues in Wellington’s CBD. The VerbCrawl programme and tickets will be available in October.

For tamariki and their whānau, Verb 2026 brings The Wild Ones, a series of free events for children presented in partnership with the Wellington Botanic Garden’s Spring Festival. All events are free and take place in the Discovery Garden at Wellington Botanic Garden. 

## MULTISPORT & DUATHLON

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**DEC 13<sup>th</sup>**

# Building community through craft

**Alex Brocklehurst** went to see how unwanted bike parts are helping Wellington's homeless to connect.

**"W**hatever you do, don't park your bike near us," jokes Harvey Livschitz, the man behind Roadworn Upcyclers.

Roadworn is a community initiative that takes unwanted bike parts and transforms them into one-off items, such as jewellery, accessories and candle holders.

The people who make them are Wellington's marginalised – those experiencing hardship or homelessness.

The idea came to Harvey after the first lockdown in 2020. A keen cyclist, and someone who definitely knows his way round a workshop, he saw the potential for turning waste into useful and stylish creations.

At the same time it could help people in hardship to reconnect with the community, while also earning a bit of cash.

The model is simple. Local bike shops donate parts that would otherwise go in the bin. These become, say, earrings made from chain links, or made-to-measure belts using old tyres.

The maker gets paid when their upcycled item is sold. And for items that are known to sell well, they'll get paid a partial commission upfront. So there can be instant reward for the work.

But community, rather than cash, is the main motivation.

While other local groups distribute food or help with housing, Harvey explains that Roadworn is, more than anything, a way of bringing people back into society.

"There's a shortage of people recognising this is actually a fellow human being sitting on the side there – stop and have a conversation for a few minutes."

Each Roadworn creation is unique and signed by the person who made it.

The vision is to create a direct connection between

the person who makes the item and the person who ends up buying or wearing it. Roadworn's website has profiles of some of the whānau who make items, allowing buyers to find out more about the person behind the product.



Rosina Radford got involved after she lost her job in 2021. Rosina now "runs the show", hosting jewellery-making workshops several times a week.

With little experience of making jewellery, Rosina says, it started out just as an outlet for something to do. But she quickly realised she got a lot out of it.

"It's very easy for people to go, oh I'm not very good at this, and you make something and then it sells, and you go ok, I can make that again. And figuring out what works and what doesn't, and what people like and what they don't."

Rosina agrees that for many makers, the money is less important than the feeling of worth you get when you realise someone likes your product enough to buy it.

Harvey chips in: "I've seen guys make two, three, four belts, get paid for it, and hand the money over to one of their mates, because their mates need it."

Roadworn workshops take place at several Te Aro venues, including the undercroft of St Peter's on Willis Street, and the Salvation Army's Te Whare Tira on Taranaki Street – also known as Pastor Joe's. And some of those backing the initiative are active members of Wellington's Jewish and Sikh communities.

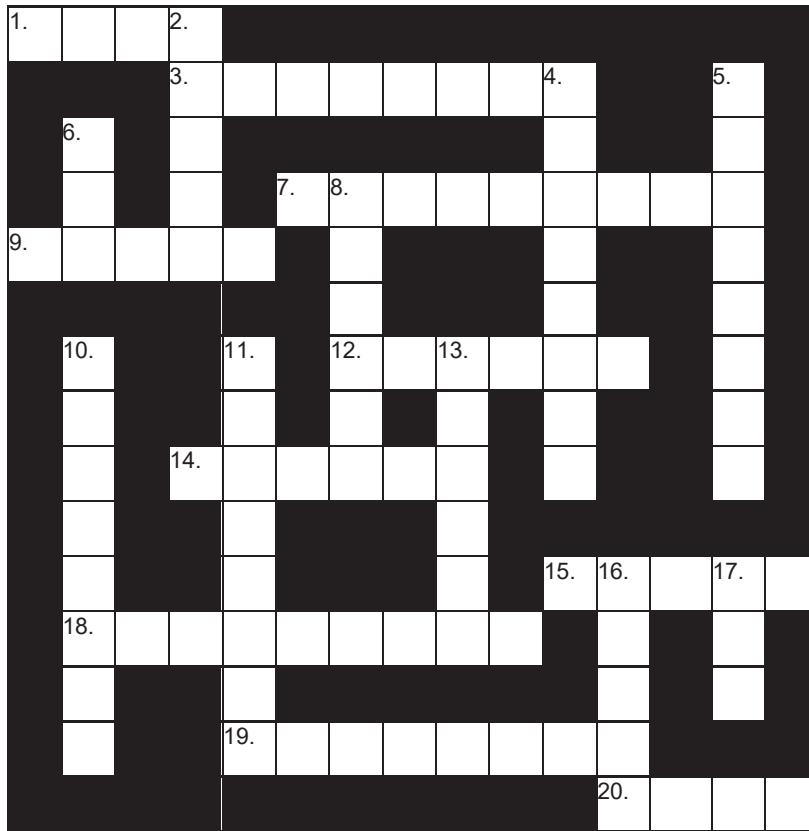
But Harvey is adamant that faith isn't part of Roadworn's philosophy, joking that "we keep God out of this".

Harvey says they'd welcome donations, for example to buy display stands to help market the products. But the main way people can help?

"The best thing people can do is buy some stuff." 

Items are available for sale via the website:  
<https://www.roadworn.co.nz/shop>

# Beau's Crossword #11



## Across:

1. Tea from the east. (4)
3. Poise, dignity. (8)
7. Beam of brightness. (9)
9. Startle, frighten. (5)
12. Perfect world. (6)
14. Feel remorse. (6)
15. A quick look. (5)
18. Trusted person. (9)
19. Succulent. (8)
20. There's one in this clue. (4)

## Down:

2. Icy hut. (5)
4. Small conflict. (8)
5. Acknowledgement in a written work. (8)
6. Seed, --- at the post. (3)
8. Browse. (6)
10. Guidelines, etiquette. (8)
11. Happy. (8)
13. Gain possession of. (6)
16. An epic mission. (5)
17. Abbreviation often found at the end of a company's name. (3)

For the solution see  
[the-local.co.nz/crosswords](http://the-local.co.nz/crosswords)

## 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](mailto:editor@the-local.co.nz). If there's more than one correct answer, the winner will be selected at random.

Congratulations to Taylor Haig who identified the August ULO as the arrow sign on Ugly Bagels on Swan Lane. 



# Please accept my application

By guest writer **Buddy**, on behalf of **Jill Wilson**, Inner City Wellington.

**M**y human has said we might go and live in something called an inner-city apartment building. I love the idea – parks, the beach, lots of other dogs to meet – four paws up! But I’ve dug up some information that I think my human needs to know! First, there is Wellington City Council.

The Council has rules about where I can walk, where I can run, and where I must remain attached to my human by a lead. Wellington’s Dog Policy 2024 and Animal Bylaw 2024 set out where dogs are prohibited, where we must be on-leash and where we can exercise off leash.

They also require owners to keep us under control and minimise nuisance. Fair enough. Not everyone is thrilled to see me hurtling towards them at full speed. For renters, there is another layer. On 1 December 2025, the Residential Tenancies Act 1986 laid out the process for gaining a landlord’s consent. I thought getting that approval would be the final hurdle – big tail wag – but no. There’s a whole committee still to impress.

The body corporate committee!

If you live in a unit-title apartment building, the body corporate can have its own operational rules, including rules about whether owners or occupiers can keep pets. Which means my human needs to check the building rules before I get my paws anywhere near the front door.

So I have prepared my application to the Committee:

**Name: Buddy.**

**Position sought: Resident.**

**Experience: Excellent.**

**Weaknesses: Cats.**

Then comes the important question: “Are you likely to bark?”

I object to the wording. All dogs bark. Humans talk loudly in hallways, too! But apartment living means sharing walls, lifts and common spaces. A chatty dog that disturbs neighbours can become a problem for everyone.

Then there’s lift behaviour. Humans seem to like to ignore each other. I look at everybody. I am simply being friendly.

In fact, I think I may be rather good for apartment life. My human might stand silently in the lift, staring at the floor numbers, but I will look at everyone. Someone will ask, “What’s his name?” and suddenly two neighbours are talking. I call this community building.

And I’ve read about ‘common areas’. Apparently I cannot treat the entrance hall as my personal sniffing laboratory. I am expected to be under control,

considerate of residents and, most importantly, not leave surprises for the cleaner. So having an inner-city life involves rather more paperwork than I expected, to make the council, landlord, body corporate and neighbours all happy.

I hope my application is accepted. I just want to move in, sniff out the great places in the neighbourhood, meet everyone in the lift, and be a very good boy. And I’d like to point out that any allegations of excessive barking have never been proven! 



# The Man Who Calls Me Sis

Along Cuba Street there are faces that become familiar over time, even if you never learn each other's full stories.

In the third instalment of this series of tales of living in inner city Wellington, **Pulotu Tupe Solomon-Tanoa'i** reflects on some of her street neighbours.

**T**he homeless are always with us in Te Aro. Like so many people drawn to the city, they are here because it offers the best chance of meeting their basic needs. From my encounters, they have mostly kept to themselves or tried to be helpful.

One afternoon, at the laundromat, all the unsuspecting customers found themselves in the middle of a lovers' quarrel taking place outside. Shortly after, the woman was repeatedly beeping her car horn trying to get her boyfriend's attention inside, while he stubbornly ignored her.

Eventually, one of the rough sleepers wandered in and said politely: "Excuse me bro, I think your Missus wants you." The man replied grumpily: "She's not my Missus," before returning to his washing.

Along Cuba Street there are faces that become familiar over time, even if you never learn each other's full stories. One man I pass regularly calls me "Sis". We usually exchange pleasantries in Samoan: Ia manuia le aso! Have a good day! Fa'apena fo'i! You too!

He almost always asks me for spare change. I almost never have cash – unless it's Sunday, I'm on my way to church, and I've actually remembered to withdraw notes for the collection.

Recently, after passing him with my new partner, I expected him to ask for some coins. Instead, he asked him for a hundred bucks! I was lowkey offended. He'd never asked me for that much money. We all roared with laughter.

There's another man I regularly see. He usually stands on the corner by the dairy. He's a bit more strategic. He doesn't ask people for money. Instead, he asks for a pie and Coke. It's pretty hard to say no to that. One time, I watched a passer-by come out of McDonald's carrying a combo for him, bringing new meaning to the phrase "Happy Meal".

But there is a much more serious story behind these encounters. Downtown Community Ministry says rough sleeping in Wellington has increased by 40 percent since 2024. With a shortage of suitable long-term housing, DCM is now asking the public for donations to provide crisis accommodation for people sleeping rough while they work towards finding a permanent home.

I know Wellington is hurting right now. You can feel it in the number of people sleeping rough, but also in conversations, in empty shops, and in the anxiety people carry about work and their mortgages.

I also think cities reveal themselves most honestly during difficult periods. And what Te Aro has revealed to me, over and over again, is that even in difficult times, people continue finding small ways to acknowledge one another's humanity. **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*.

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### Te Matapihi ki te Ao Nui Central Library

**Bee in the City Art Sculpture Trail.** Mon 14 Sep–Sat 7 Nov. Explore Wellington as an outdoor art gallery with this free public sculpture trail, featuring giant bee artworks across the city.

**Free Songwriting Workshop with Aro.** Wed 16 & Fri 18 Sep, 3.30–5pm. Write a waiata in te reo Māori with award-winning duo Aro (Charles and Emily Looker). Free and open to all.

**Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori Waiata Performance with Aro.** Sat 19 Sep, 1–2pm. Enjoy an afternoon of bilingual waiata, storytelling and connection with award-winning Te Tiriti-based duo Aro.

**Stories of Te Reo.** Sun 20 Sep, 11am–3pm. During Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori, drop in to Te Matapihi ki te Ao Nui Central Library to record and share your own story of te reo Māori. No bookings required.

**Jugendkino – German Movie Night for Teens.** Fri 25 Sep, 4.30–7pm. A fun evening of German films, snacks and good company for young people aged 12–18 who speak or are learning German.

**Fungal Action: Earth to Sky – Spring Festival Talk.** Fri 25 Sep, 5.30–6.30pm. Explore the fascinating world of fungi, from mycelium communication and fungal computers to forests, carbon movement and climate change.

**Author Event: Witi Ihimaera Smiler.** Sat 3 Oct, 1–2pm. Join acclaimed Aotearoa author Witi Ihimaera Smiler to celebrate the launch of *The Star Path*, his sequel to *The Whale Rider*.

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### Ekta Community Kai Service

Ekta has been serving free community meals every Saturday for several years, helping bring people together over food and conversation. Join them at **St Peter's Church at 10am** or on **Manners Street at 4.30pm**. The weekly kai service welcomes everyone and aims to foster connection, inclusion and greater social equity across Wellington's communities, including the CBD, Aro Valley, Mt Victoria and Mt Cook.

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### THISTLE HALL

**Mischief Makers Market.** Sun 13 Sep, 12.30–5.30pm. Step into a medieval-inspired afternoon at Thistle Hall, with local artists and makers selling jewellery, ceramics, stained glass, art, trinkets and more. Costumes encouraged! Free.

**MEANWHILE Fundraiser Quiz Night.** Tue 29 Sep, 7pm. Put your trivia skills to the test at this fundraiser for MEANWHILE Gallery, with performances, new merch and dinner included. Proceeds support the gallery's 10-year retrospective publication and future programmes.

**Non Disclosed Artist.** 22–27 Sep. Featuring work from 28 Wellington artists and creatives across film, games and the wider creative community. Inspired by the theme of an odyssey and spanning a range of mediums. Free costumed life drawing: Sat 26 Sep, 2–4pm.

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### Zeal: Stories Espresso Café

Stories Espresso Café 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.

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### 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](https://dcm.org.nz)

## LISTINGS

Advertise your business or service with *The Local*. Check out our affordable rates at [the-local.co.nz/advertise](https://the-local.co.nz/advertise). Contact us at [sales@the-local.co.nz](mailto:sales@the-local.co.nz)

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### Yoga in Daily Life

YOGA IN DAILY LIFE (23 Jessie Street, opposite Prefab offers a variety of traditional yoga classes for beginners and for experienced yogis. Unpretentious and authentic. Early morning, lunchtime and evening classes.

[www.yogaindailylife.org.nz/locations/wellington](http://www.yogaindailylife.org.nz/locations/wellington)

### 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 support-

ive 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 [www.squashbucklers.org](http://www.squashbucklers.org)

### Probus Wellington Central Sept 2026 Update



The next meeting of Probus Wellington Central is on Friday, September 18 at 10.00 am for morning tea and a 10.30 am start.

The speaker on Sept 18 will be John McBeth, sports broadcaster and anecdotal commentator on all things sport.

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: <https://www.probusouthpacific.org/microsites/wellingtoncentral>

### Revelation Valley

Lisa Maule brings her collection of original poetry to the stage in this playful and thought-provoking performance celebrating creativity, curiosity and the everyday. With live music by Michelle Scullion, these humorous and heartfelt poems wander from a "capitalist stapler" and the need to pee, to the winding hills of Karori and the traces of ancient trees. Unexpected laughs, moments of reflection, and a fresh perspective on the world around you.

17-19 September 2026 - 6:30 pm, The Hannah, 1 Kent Terrace.



### Smokefreerockquest finals Wellington

The Smokefreerockquest 2026 National Final brings together Aotearoa's most talented young musicians for an unforgettable night of original music. After months of regional heats and finals, this premier youth music competition showcases the top bands and solo/duo acts from across the country, competing live for national honours in Wellington. **Friday 18 September, 7pm, the Great Hall, 15 Buckle Street, Mount Cook, Wellington.**



# Pals

I turn around and there he is: smile white as pearls, eyes sparkling like stars, skin perfect as the shells of the boiled eggs I've been taking to work.



It's not what you're drinking, it's who you're drinking with, in this story by **Sean McDonald**.

I thought Pals were alcohol free. Ang tells me that some of them are, but not the one I drank. I feel fine, but I can tell I'm not, because Seth is giving me that look every time I speak. Settle down. He's saying it with just his eyes. Now he's also saying it with his mouth: "Why are you speaking so loud?"

"I can't be drunk tonight," I say. "I invited Carlos."

Ang knows how important this is to me, and looks sympathetic. Seth knows, too, and rolls his eyes.

"Your first mistake was inviting him to Valhalla. That's not a place to invite a crush."

"Maybe it is if you're a goth?" Ang shrugs.

"I should have invited him to Regent. Then he could have seen me sober, I'm better when I'm sober,"

"I think that depends on who you're asking," Seth says with a grin. Ang tells him to shut up.

The soil under the grass at Glover Park is either wet or just really cold, I can't tell which. It's the same as everything this time of year. I imagine all my problems would be solved if my t-shirts took less than two days to dry, and it took more than two glasses of wine to get myself into such a state.

"Couldn't you reschedule? Why don't you ask to

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](http://tearo.the-local.co.nz/lifestyle)

meet up next Friday instead?"

"No, no." I wave my hands in the air like I'm conducting an orchestra. "We're not doing that. We're not doing the flakey Wellingtonian thing. You know how I hate that. Besides, I can't afford for him to lose interest. He's the only attractive

single man in the whole city."

"Yo, I'm right here," Seth laughs.

"You're straight, you don't count."

"Plus, you keep threatening to move to Brisbane," Ang adds.

"Coolangatta, not Brisbane!"

"Whatever."

Ang pulls her water bottle out of her tote bag, and offers it to me. It's a glass one, Antipodes – Ang is classy like that. A wobbling lilac reflection of the moon winks at me from the surface of the water.

"You're an angel, but no thank you. Let's just head to Valhalla. Maybe the walk will calm me down."

We run into one of Seth's DIA colleagues on Vivian Street. He talks at us about something to do with policy. I'm glad I have the alcoholic Pals as an excuse for my total lack of comprehension, and disengage. Ang applies some ChapStick, then drops it in the gutter, where it rolls into a storm drain. I'm still laughing when someone behind me says "Sean?"

I turn around and there he is: smile white as pearls, eyes sparkling like stars, skin perfect as the shells of the boiled eggs I've been taking to work; one in each pocket to keep my hands warm on the bus.

"Carlos!" I say. There's a pause. "I'm tipsy."

"Already? Actually, I brought you this." He hands me a can. I grimace. It's a Pals. **TL**

# The Chinese Mission Hall

The Chinese Mission Hall is adjacent to a new park opening on Taranaki St. **Mick Calder** describes its history.

**T**he Chinese Mission Hall is one of the few remaining buildings associated with the early Chinese settlement in Wellington, which was concentrated in the Frederick Street and Haining Street area. This local ‘Chinatown’ was considered an area of dubious reputation, with its many small cottages separated by narrow alleyways. The houses of Frederick Street, however, were of a better quality than those of Haining Street. Along with Chinese grocery stores, the street was also home to “Pakapoo” gambling dens.

The Chinese Mission Hall is a tangible reminder of the work that the Anglican Church undertook in the Chinese community in Wellington. In the 1880s, with the goldfields no longer offering substantial finds, many Chinese who had originally settled in New Zealand as miners began to move to the cities.

The foundation stone of the Chinese Mission Hall was laid in 1905. The inscription reads:

“To the glory of God and the spread of His kingdom among the Chinese in this diocese, this stone was laid by Frederick, Bishop of Wellington, December 6th 1905.”

The architect of the building was Frederick de

Jersey Clere, a noted designer of ecclesiastical buildings whose motto was: *Designed in beauty, built in truth*. In 1883, he was appointed Diocesan Architect of the Anglican Church. Recognising the danger posed by earthquakes and fire, Clere attempted to minimise these risks by designing the church as a wooden skeleton surrounded by brick.

After fifty years of occupancy, the Anglican Chinese Mission eventually moved from Frederick Street. The hall was then purchased in 1956 by Ross Murdoch, who owned the next-door factory which produced Murdoch’s Anglo-Indian chutney.

From 2009 to 2012, the building, known as Fred’s, served as a venue for gigs and exhibitions hosted by the Frederick Street Sound and Light Exploration Society. It is presently vacant, but refurbishment is proposed as part of the current hotel development next door.

The Frederick Street Park is currently under construction.

According to the Wellington City Council, the park design concept seeks to provide a “small green oasis” as a reminder of the former use of the area as part of the Te Aro Pā and then, as Chinatown.

It “aims to be a space that continues to uphold its role in the coming together of communities, and a place of belonging, with acknowledgement of the layered histories tied to this whenua.” 

SOURCES: HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND, WELLINGTON HERITAGE.



Photo: Heritage New Zealand

# Support our rough sleeping neighbours

Help provide **Crisis Accommodation** for people experiencing homelessness this winter.

*dcm*.org.nz

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