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Mining controversy

By ALICE PARMINTER, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

Protest action saw a government announcement delayed in Waihi on January 31, as members of Coromandel Watchdog and Forest & Bird formed a human roadblock outside Oceana Gold's Baxter Rd entrance.

However, Resources Minister Shane Jones still managed to debut the government's new national mining strategy in a lengthy speech filled with inflammatory rhetoric.

The Minister was in Waihi to unveil the strategy, which aims to double New Zealand's mining export profit to \$3 billion by 2035. He also released a list of 37 critical minerals deemed essential to New Zealand's economy and technological needs.

The announcement, which was scheduled for 10am, was delayed due to the protestors. They blocked the Baxter Rd entrance to the property - brandishing signs, chanting slogans, and calling for the Minister to front up publicly.

Two buses carrying invited dignitaries and media were forced to turn away from the mine's entrance, and further delays were caused as some protestors were forcibly removed from behind the reversing vehicles.

Coromandel Watchdog chair Catherine Delahunty said she was pleased with the protest, saying it gave her hope for the future.

"It was a wonderful turnout, very much from all over the peninsula, and there were some Waihi people which is always quite brave on their part," she said.

"We succeeded in what we want-

ed to do, which was to delay things and to show our presence and our strength. And everybody was here because they care about this place, and they're willing to give up a day and stand in the heat. They're willing to be called names and willing to be disparaged. But they actually have the bigger picture."

The buses eventually detoured through the streets of Waihi and entered the mining property through another entrance. Minister Jones addressed mining staff and the invited guests a short while later at a warehouse within the premises.

Minister Jones' speech introduced the new national mineral strategy, containing a roadmap outlining the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's plan for the country's mining industry as far ahead as 2040.

Key takeaways of the strategy included: doubling New Zealand's mining export profit; creating up to 2000 additional regional jobs across the country; a vision of a productive, innovative and responsible mining industry which reduces the country's reliance on imported minerals; better public awareness of the mining industry; and more foreign investment.

"The minerals sector can occupy a far more prominent position in the narrative of our nation," Minister Jones said.

"It's about time we had a debate as to where the pendulum should sit between green ideology and the need to grow our economy."

The Minister's call for a calm national discussion about mining was

CONTINUED ON P2



Police step in as protestors attempt to halt a government announcement on mining strategy in Waihi.

Photo: ALICE PARMINTER

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Minister outlines mining strategy

CONTINUED FROM P1

somewhat at odds with his delivery, however, as he used phrases like “climate groupthink”, “woke-collar sponges” and “bureaucratic camouflage” to describe various environmental groups, and policies like the Resource Management Act.

Minister Jones also used his speech as an opportunity to expand on the government’s already well-publicised intention to remove red tape and other barriers in favour of economic advancement. He announced NZ First’s intention to rein in banks with a member’s bill, calling them “woke-riddled, corporate undertakers” and suggesting they should not be using environment- or climate-related policies to constrain economic development. “If we want economic growth in New Zealand, we have got to have a profound discussion as to what percentage of the green tape, what percentage of the climate regulation can we actually afford.”

There were nods and murmurs of approval throughout the warehouse as the Minister spoke, with one mining staff member muttering “what a legend” at the conclusion of his speech. Not everyone in the audience was happy, how-



Minister Shane Jones and Catherine Delahunty. Photos: ALICE PARMINTER

ever, and Oceana Gold’s senior vice-president of legal and public affairs Alison Paul was interrupted partway through her speech by a mana whenua woman.

“You all sit amongst the rocks of our tūpuna and say we should allow this... 1.6 million ounces of gold has been taken out of the mountain - it is not in the coffers of Hauraki iwi. It is not on the streets of the community. It has gone offshore,” she said.

The Minister was quick to shut down her protests. He later told reporters his party was working on a policy ensuring more mining royalties remained in communities. The Minister also spoke about the environment, and said the mining strategy outlines the Government’s intentions to continue to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi and protect the environment within mining operations. He called it a “considered, enduring approach to

minerals development”, saying it would still enable responsible, sustainable practices within the industry. “The Crown will uphold its obligations in Treaty settlements... We will engage with the community and ensure that the guardrails are such that regions will not be blighted by the growth of the industry. But we are not going to be guilt-tripped,” the Minister said.

Catherine Delahunty, who was disappointed the Minister would not speak publicly, said the strategy represented the anti-mining agency’s worst fears about the government’s approach to mining, and called it a “failure of leadership”. She said the strategy would lead to greater environmental risks and less public scrutiny. “The Minerals Strategy exists in the context of several really bad pieces of law. One is the Fast Track and the other is the Treaty Principles Bill... Both of

them limit and attack the rights of Māori and the rights of citizens to be heard and to put forward our questions on these issues. And people are outraged about that,” she said.

“Now [Oceana Gold has] opted for the Fast Track, no one gets a voice except a panel of government-appointed experts and the ministers. The minerals strategy cannot say we are going to be credible and responsible regulators when in fact they are actually stripping us of our rights through other legislation.”

The strategy’s mention of the environment was “tokenistic” at best, and increasing mineral production was not worth the risk, she said. “There is a tone there that minerals are going to be our economic saviour... It’s not a huge part of the economy.”

Minister Jones, however, said the nation needed to focus on “turn[ing] the fortunes of our country around”.

“It’s too easy for it to generate into a predictable, polarised debate: save the lizard, hate the pollution. We cannot afford such a binary, simplistic polarisation,” he said. “We have to seize every opportunity, within guardrails, to use nature’s bounty.”

GO TO P4 FOR MORE

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Thames Tides

Wed Feb 5	Thu Feb 6	Fri Feb 7	Sat Feb 8	Sun Feb 9	Mon Feb 10	Tue Feb 11
Morning: 12:53am 3.4, 6:59am 0.6 Afternoon: 1:24pm 3.5, 7:31pm 0.5 Sun: 6:37am 8:26pm Best At: 6:36am 7:03pm First Quarter: Rise 1:53pm	Morning: 1:46am 3.3, 7:56am 0.7 Afternoon: 2:17pm 3.4, 8:26pm 0.6 Sun: 6:38am 8:25pm Best At: 7:30am 7:58pm Set: 12:05am Rise 3:07pm	Morning: 2:44am 3.2, 8:59am 0.9 Afternoon: 3:14pm 3.2, 9:26pm 0.7 Sun: 6:40am 8:24pm Best At: 8:27am 8:57pm Set: 12:44am Rise 4:19pm	Morning: 3:51am 3.1, 10:07am 0.9 Afternoon: 4:16pm 3.1, 10:33pm 0.8 Sun: 6:41am 8:23pm Best At: 9:27am 9:57pm Set: 1:32am Rise 5:25pm	Morning: 5:02am 3.1, 11:15am 0.9 Afternoon: 5:22pm 3.1, 11:42pm 0.8 Sun: 6:42am 8:22pm Best At: 10:27am 10:56pm Set: 2:30am Rise 6:22pm	Morning: 6:09am 3.2, 6:30pm 3.1 Afternoon: 12:18pm 0.9, 11:53pm Sun: 6:43am 8:21pm Best At: 11:25am 11:53pm Set: 3:34am Rise 7:10pm	Morning: 12:44am 0.7, 7:07am 3.2 Afternoon: 1:14pm 0.8, 7:31pm 3.1 Sun: 6:44am 8:20pm Best At: 12:20pm Set: 4:42am Rise 7:48pm

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Good Fishing (G), Fair Fishing (F), Not So Good (B)

TIME DIFFERENCES FOR OTHER PLACES
To determine tide times at the following places, add (+) or subtract (-) the given time difference from the Thames times listed in the calendar.

PLACE	Hr	Min	Low	High
Coromandel	-0	04	-0	04
Whititanga	-0	01	-0	06
Tairua	+0	10	+0	21
Whangamata	-0	03	-0	05
Waihi Beach	-0	12	-0	12

Collecting kilometres for bowel cancer

By KELLEY TANTAU, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

In memory of her poppa Trev, Paeroa woman Tayla Smith is hitting the pavement, accumulating kilometres all for a good cause.

Tayla, 20, is taking part in the national Move Your Butt campaign throughout the month of February.

The initiative sees participants walking 100kms over 28 days in honour of the 100 Kiwis who die from bowel cancer every month.

Tayla's poppa, Trevor Smith, who also resided in Paeroa, was a bowel cancer survivor.

"[He was diagnosed] before I was born, so I don't know much about it, but I know he had the surgeries to remove the bowel," Tayla told *The Profile*.

"He kind of lived his life, you know, dealing with the consequences that came after that, and there wasn't much support in place for him, or he didn't know there was."

Poppa Trev died last year - his death was unrelated to bowel cancer - and after coming across the Move Your Butt campaign, Tayla was inspired to raise funds for the cause.

"Poppa talked about it now and again, but I never asked about it, so I didn't know anything about bowel cancer," she said. "It wasn't until I saw the



Paeroa local Tayla Smith is walking 100kms this month to support Bowel Cancer NZ.

Photo: KELLEY TANTAU

Move Your Butt fundraiser that I actually did my research, and found out more about him.

"It's been interesting to learn what he had been through, and

what he'd survived, knowing that there's such a high death rate."

According to the campaign's website, on average, eight New

Zealanders are diagnosed with bowel cancer and three die from the disease every day.

It is the second highest cause of cancer death in the country,

yet Bowel Cancer NZ is 100 per cent community funded and receives no government assistance.

"Move Your Butt is just a really great cause," Tayla said.

"There are a lot of consequences of the treatment that you go through that affect you for the rest of your life.

"And that's why this fundraiser is so important, because I'm imagining how better poppa's quality of life could have been with that support."


Tayla is aiming to walk at least 4km a day to reach her goal of 100kms before the end of this month, and while she admitted she's never particularly motivated to accumulate her kilometres, the support from the public has been a big push.

"I've learned that if I put my mind to something, I can achieve it, because so far I've done a lot of kilometres I didn't think I'd do," she said.





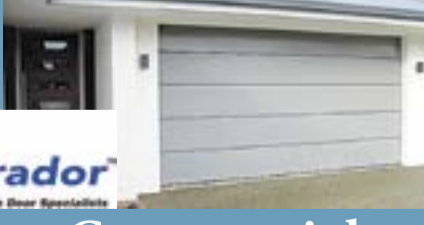
"And also, the community's actually really lovely. I've had a lot of donations from people I don't know, which is really heartwarming."

DETAILS: To donate to Tayla's fundraising efforts, visit moveyourbutt.org.nz/donate and search for 'Tayla Smith'.




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Minister's field trip

Resources Minister Shane Jones was invited to tour the above-ground facilities at Oceana Gold on January 31, after his announcement introducing the new minerals strategy and critical minerals list. The tour took in the processing plant, ore stockpile, and water treatment plant. The minister also spoke with several mine workers, who explained the various processes at the mine. Reporter ALICE PARMINTER joined the tour.



The underground mine portal, heading into the underground mine.



The Minister speaks with a worker outside the processing plant.

Photos: ALICE PARMINTER



Oceana Gold's above-ground operations.



Mill operator Mark Anderson shows the Minister veins of quartz.



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Unfolding Waihi's history one decade at a time

By ALICE PARMINTER, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

She's only 16 years old, but Bella Paulsen has her mind firmly in the last century.

The Waihi College student has opened her debut exhibition at the Waihi Arts Centre and Museum, with a deep dive into the mining town's photographic history.

Waihi Unfolded had a gala opening on January 24, with exhibition curator Bella presenting her display to the gathered crowd of around 60 people.

It had been hours and weeks of hard work, she said; sifting through the museum's archived collection to put together a timeline of Waihi's history.

The exhibition will be open for up to a month, Bella said, depending on public interest. It features photographs, signs, newspapers and documents showcasing the people of Waihi.

Each display focuses on a different decade; beginning in 1880 with the "Martha" gold claim on Pukewa Hill in 1878, and continuing up to the 21st century.

Along the way attendees can view aerial pictures of the town; photos of the main street; school, club and business photos; letters; and written histories of prominent locals like the Pye family.

"Originally it was just supposed to be from 1880 around to 2000, but then this area here [the 2000s] just expanded. It is much bigger than what I expected," Bella said.

"The cool thing about this timeline is it kind of expands away



Sixteen-year-old Bella Paulsen with the museum display she curated.

Photo: ALICE PARMINTER

from mining, because I know Waihi's all about mining, but this [is] about the people. You'll see a lot of faces."

Bella began volunteering at the museum a year ago, after she returned from a student exchange to Italy. Initially she was greeting visitors, but she quickly became involved with the archives.

Bella said her exhibition idea

was sparked as she dug through the organisation's stored artefacts.

"I was looking through and putting photos into the systems, and I was like, this is such amazing stuff that should be seen. But our museum doesn't have the space to accommodate everything," she said.

"So this is a little one-off for the community to see and experience."

Bella said she wanted to encour-

age people to get involved with the museum, and also hoped her show would pave the way for similar exhibitions in the future.

"[I want to] inspire the museum to include more of this stuff. A lot of these photos were hidden away so bringing them out more or doing this a little more often, or something smaller," she said.

"I would like to partner with

Waihi College a bit more, and I would love to keep doing a timeline again, maybe something different, maybe focus on a specific area in history."

Judy Newth, who manages the museum's volunteers, said she was impressed with Bella's work.

"She suggested it, and we were impressed with the way that she had planned it, and her things like the posters that she did," Judy said. "It's not the usual sort of exhibition that we would have. There's a lot of photos, but they've also got a lot of captions added to them, which is very important, really, because a lot of people don't know about it. And I think she's been very happy with the results that she's had."

Meanwhile, Bella also has big plans for her own future.

"I'm working on doing a museum career, I want to work at Te Papa specifically," she said.

"There's also a lot of design aspects through here as well that I'm also kind of interested in."

And her first foray into curation has been an excellent start to her portfolio, Bella said. She spent more than two weeks working nearly full-time to put everything together, including sourcing the photos and information, and even aligning the ceiling spotlights.

"It's nice seeing it all being brought together," she said.

"I'm pretty proud of it."

DETAILS: *Waihi Unfolded* is on at the Waihi Arts Centre and Museum, 54 Kenny St.



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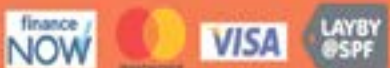
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Kerepēhi flax milling halted after large shed fire



As part of a Valley Profile series, **MEGHAN HAWKES** searches through old newspapers to bring you the stories Thames Valley locals once read about themselves.

1907

Flax milling operations at Kerepēhi stopped when a shed containing a large quantity of dressed flax and an oil engine was destroyed by fire.

It was mainly by the efforts of the employees that the damage was not more extensive. The fire appeared to have been caused by a spark from the funnel of a steamer lying in the creek near the mill. The flax was the property of Bourke and company who had extensive flax milling establishments in many parts of New Zealand. George Scotcher, manager of the company, immediately advised his associates of the loss, which though substantial, would make no difference to the operations at Kerepēhi. A new shed was to be constructed at once.

Meanwhile, somewhere at the back of Thames, a gum digger went on a wild and nerve-shaking jamboree. He had evidently become satiated with the taste of the frothing beer and sparkling whisky and soda, so began stockpiling an opiate laced painkiller.

He stored the stuff by the case,



Flax fibre on skids at Kerepēhi ready for the drying paddock.

Photo: SUPPLIED

and when he thought that he had a sufficiently large store of reserve ammunition, he proceeded to 'let her go.'

On the first day he exhausted himself with weird dances and joyful ditties; on the second he grew savage and tried to smite the fairies of the bush, fencing imaginary duels with his spear; on the third he made a torch of his hut, and woke up in the morning drenched to the skin; on the fourth, he wandered aimlessly round looking for his lost home and his beloved painkiller; the fifth brought wandering reason back; on the sixth day he understood the position, and proceeded to build himself another home, while on the seventh, he again started to dig for gum.

Over at Waihi the saying 'the mail must get through' was taken to heart by Mr Deverell, mail con-

tractor between there and Taurangi. While attempting to carry the mails through on horseback to Waihi after a flood he travelled for five miles in water up to the saddle flaps. Just beyond Aongatete he attempted to swim his horse along the road and had accomplished three parts of the journey when his horse was swept from under him, and washed downstream. Mr Deverell was pulled under water and caught in a barbed wire fence. With considerable difficulty he got his head above water, and, clinging to the top wire of the fence, made his way out of danger. His horse got safely to land, but the mail bags were lost altogether. Mr Deverell rode on and completed the journey to Waihi.

At Paeroa, a night watchman was needed and a meeting of local

business people held. Businesses would be asked to give a weekly subscription towards paying the man's wages. Property owners not resident in the town would also be asked to give a yearly subscription towards the fund. The County Council had been approached for a contribution but had deferred consideration of the matter. It was agreed that the man appointed must have the right to control the water supply at night in case of fire.

They should take care to get a good man, because if they got a 'waster' they might as well do without anybody at all. Mr H Spinks was duly appointed and during his first week, in all sorts of holes and corners, he discovered a number of undesirables, one of them even being unearthed from the pavilion in the domain.

Chris' Quiz

Weekly quiz compiled by Chris Parmenter

1. Numbers on the opposite sides of a modern die (dice) always add up to which number?
2. How many points is a free throw worth in basketball?
3. Which New Zealand company manufactures Fruju ice blocks?
4. In the TV show The Simpsons, in most episodes, where is the home town of the Simpsons?
5. Which existed first, grasshoppers or grass?
6. If the Burj Khalifa (tallest building in the world) was laid on its side, would it be longer than Vatican City (the smallest country in the world)?
7. What year did the first McDonald's store open in New Zealand?
8. Which American actor is Angelina Jolie's father?
9. What is the name, beginning with D, given to an equatorial region of the Atlantic Ocean where light/calm unpredictable winds become an annoyance to sailors, slowing their journey?
10. The flags of Vatican City, Malta and Northern Marianas are the only national flags containing which colour?



ANSWERS: 1. Seven; 2. One point; 3. Tip-Top; 4. Springfield; 5. Grasshoppers; around 250 million years ago; 6. No. The Vatican City is 850m wide at its narrowest point, versus the Burj Khalifa which is 830m high; 7. 1976, in Portua, near Wellington; 8. Jon Voight; 9. The doldrums; 10. Grey.



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Be nice to Echo: The magpie who holds a grudge

By **KELLEY TANTAU**, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

In the Karangahake lives a flightless magpie with a knack for tui impressions.

She steals puzzle pieces and plays with soft toys, sits on the cat, and gets caught on security cameras snooping out the neighbour's place.

She's an unorthodox pet, but Echo has become part of the furniture in the home of Anita and Craig Saunders.

As owners of The Aviator Experience in Thames, the Saunders' are familiar with goings-on in the sky, but Echo - who had her wing feathers clipped before they got her - was something new for the pair.

"We got Echo from a bird rescue when she was about three-months-old," Anita told *The Profile*.

"We went to the rescue to drop off a lonely duckling who swam up to us at the river. The lady mentioned she had a young magpie needing a home, and we'd always loved them, so we said yes."

Echo moved onto the family property in the gorge, alongside cats, dogs, and other animals.

Anita said she was a very interactive bird who loved to play - especially if soft toys were involved.

"She'll enjoy being chased, climb all over our very tolerant cat and pull his ears and whiskers, and play with the dog, steal her toys, and join in with fetch



Echo was adopted by Craig and Anita Saunders after visiting a bird rescue. RIGHT: Echo climbs over her very tolerant feline sibling.



Photos: SUPPLIED

games," she said.

"She's also content just to sit on our arm and chill out. In the early evening she always hangs out in the lounge with us, then puts herself to bed on top of a cabinet when it starts getting dark outside. At our bedtime we put her on her roost outside near the house, unless the weather is bad, then she gets to stay inside."

And despite being grounded,

Echo has gone missing three times.

Anita suspects she either follows people or gets frightened by them, then ends up in an unfamiliar area - making it difficult for her to make her way back home.

To help, Echo's family has now put big, colourful, spinning windmills on the back gate and she hasn't got lost since.

But despite Echo being loved

by the whole family, Anita said people should not seek out magpies - who can live up to 25 years - as pets.

"They really are much better off with their own kind, and they have very strong family bonds," she said. "They should only ever be rescued if there is no other option, and they would not be good around children with their sharp beak and claws."

Magpies also remember faces, she said, which can lead to an icy reception if anybody is ever unkind to one.

"So if you're mean to them, they'll recognise you and they'll hold a grudge," she said. "Echo has stayed mad with me for a while after I've had to handle her more than she likes!"



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Ngākau Symposium seeks artist sponsorship

By DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

A call for artist sponsorship has been put out by the Ngākau Symposium committee in the lead up to the 2025 Ngākau Carving Symposium from April 12 to April 26.

The Ngākau Symposium is a space where professional and emerging artists come together with a shared interest and passion for whakairo (carving), working with kōhatu (stone) and rākau (wood), and will be held at and hosted by Te Kura o Te Kauaeranga Thames South School.

The first Symposium in 2023 rallied 14 artists, followed by 18 artists in 2024.

For its third instalment in April this year, financial support is needed to host 22 artists set to descend upon Hauraki.

People are invited to sponsor a Ngākau Carving Symposium artist for \$1500 and in exchange the sponsor will receive one carved sculpture made by the artist.

Organiser Andre Barlow told *The Profile* many of the sculptures from previous Symposiums stayed in Hauraki, with some of the sculptures, which were sponsored by businesses, on display for the community to see.

The aim of the Symposium was to reclaim traditions of the past and “bring it back”



Sculptor Trevor Nathan at a previous Carving Symposium, which is calling for sponsorship for this year's event.

File Photo: THE VALLEY PROFILE

and “have that on our grounds for our young people to pick up and start doing”, she said.

Previously artists would create the sponsored pieces during the two-week symposium, but it meant those who viewed the work during the event couldn't purchase any of it because they

were already spoken for, Andre said. “So, we've changed that. All the sponsored pieces are done before they get to the school. They come with them [artists] to the symposium.”

Any works created by the artists during the symposium would either be commissioned

pieces, or would go into the auction on the final day, she said.

The event will also include workshops across the two weeks, led by different artists from across the motu, and some will include events for tamariki to enjoy.

“[The artists] put everything into their pieces. All these artists, they give 110 per cent.”

DETAILS: To sponsor an artist, commission a sculpture or sponsor any of the workshops or kai for the artists, contact Andre Barlow on Ph: 021 217 6876, or email ngakaucommittee@gmail.com.

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Surf's up at Waihi Beach

A wave of thrill-seekers made a splash at Waihi Beach for the annual Adaptive Surfing Day on January 18.

Waihi Beach Surf School instructor Aidan Comrie and his crew led a group of more than 17 people from Parafed Waikato, which is a non-profit sport organisation that provides opportunities in the sport and recreation world for people with physical and visual impairments.

Each Parafed member has a different disability and requires varying levels of support in the surf. And this is where the Waihi Beach community steps up.

Live Well Waihi Beach is a community-led organisation that helps groups and organisations collaborate and grow community services, assets and messaging, and when they put out the call out for volunteers for the Adaptive Surfing Day, more than 30 volun-

teers showed up.

Community co-ordinator Cindy Clare said the event was beneficial for the community.

"The inspiration we, as volunteers, get from meeting the Parafed members and seeing what is possible against all physical barriers is incredible. And it brings our volunteer community together with positivity."

Live Well Waihi Beach also managed the beach mats and wheelchairs for the event.

Parafed sport development officer Cathy Wooller said: "we love Waihi Beach for our surfing day".

"It's not just due to the mats and beach wheelchairs, but also the people and the community."

Cathy said the support they received from Waihi Beach Surf School and Live Well Waihi Beach was fantastic, and the number of volunteers who showed up full of energy was priceless.



Volunteers and Parafed members make the most of the surf and sun Waihi Beach.

Photos: BEN HAARMANN



Lucas Pedersen with instructor Aidan Comrie of Waihi Beach Surf School.



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Rural Life

Farm to host community BBQ

By KELLEY TANTAU, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

An upcoming event hosted by the Waikato-Hauraki-Coromandel Rural Support Trust will be a “super relaxed” barbecue to bring together the community.

Held at Fitzgerald’s Farm at 865 Monument Rd in Mangatangi, Rural Support co-ordinator Wanda Leadbeater said the special event was slightly different from their regular community get-togethers.

“The Fitzgerald family have opened up their property because they’ve got lots of really antique tractors and earth-moving equipment, farming equipment. So there’s quite a lot to see,” she told *The Profile*.

“This is the second [event] we’ve done with a similar sort of theme.”

Wanda said farmers across the country had been opening their private collections and sharing them with the public.

“Which has been amazing because it’s just a beautiful slice of history... It’s amazing what we have in rural New Zealand, literally on our doorstep.”

Wanda said the Rural Support Trust were also looking for people who could take on a “community ambassador” role - especially in Eastern Waikato.

“We’re looking for people who can



A Rural Support Trust BBQ is being held in Mangatangi next week. FILE PHOTO

go to events and wave our flag and say, hey, this is what we do; really just strengthening our community ambassador space,” she said.

The Waikato-Hauraki-Coromandel Rural Support Trust is a part of a nationwide charitable organisation set up to work with primary producers during challenging times. The region spans from South of the Auckland Harbour bridge to Lake Taupo, encompassing 11 territorial Council authorities and Waikato Regional Council.

DETAILS: Community BBQ at Fitzgerald’s Farm, 865 Monument Rd, is on February 13 from 11.30am-2pm. For more details or to help with the trust, contact Wanda at 021 180 2995.



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Coping alone: seniors tackle the kitchen

By ALICE PARMINTER, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

A course offering practical food shopping and cooking guidelines for elderly has been launched by Grey Power Thames.

Primarily targeted at elderly men who suddenly find themselves needing to make unfamiliar decisions due to the loss or illness of a partner, the project is also attracting interest from women.

Over six weeks, course attendees will learn to navigate a kitchen, cook basic recipes, put together a nutritious meal, and also practice supermarket shopping skills like comparing prices and choosing cuts of meat.

The cost of the course is \$25, which will also cover membership to Grey Power.

The project has been developed by Grey Power Thames vice president Carolyn Young, who volunteers as a cooking instructor at Moanataiari School.

"We discussed the project with the school and have been offered the use of their cooking class kitchen," Carolyn said.

"This enables us to instruct up to six people on how to prepare meals for themselves.

"Recipe and nutrition books will be supplied. Students will learn basic preparation and cooking skills. A meal will be



Grey Power Thames' Carolyn Young with Moanataiari School principal David Brock. Photo: SUPPLIED

prepared, cooked and eaten together."

Carolyn said she hoped the course would help make life more happy and fulfilling for

those who were not used to coping on their own.

"It's very much giving support. When they meet other people on their own at the

classes, they can forge friendships and it gives them an outing once a week," she said.

"We're a very elderly population in Thames.

"Some of them have never cooked and they've got no family. So it's helping them just around the house."

The first course will run sometime in February, and Carolyn said the pilot course would be funded with donations from its members.

"One of our members said, 'I would like to donate \$100'. And by the end of the meeting, we had three others putting in another \$150.

"I was just absolutely thrilled that we've got enough to do the first one."

The project also has support from Pak'nSave Thames, which will be contributing to the cost of the supermarket shop.

Carolyn is hopeful they will be able to also garner support and sponsorship from other local businesses.

"Clearly we would be delighted for some financial help. We don't need much but we will need something if the project grows legs," she said.

"We are hoping the whole thing develops into a team effort. If you, or someone you know would like to be part of this please get in touch."

DETAILS: For further information about the course, contact Carolyn Young, Ph 027 463 4948 or barry.carolyn@xtra.co.nz.



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Curve balls aside, work begins on courts

NETBALL

By **KELLEY TANTAU**, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

Tara Carter met with district council staff and started getting quotes to refurbish the Ngātea netball courts.

Three years and two children later, things have finally come to pass.

The Hauraki Plains Netball Centre has been dealing with a flood-prone playing surface, in which a moderate amount of rain can render half of the courts unusable.

They were constructed in 2008 by landowners Hauraki District Council, and Tara said their age, plus the subsidence that occurs underneath the surface, stopped rainwater from draining and caused the courts to flood.

But as the netball centre's fundraising and facilities officer, as well as its health and safety officer, she made it her mission to make the courts at the Hugh Hayward Domain playable, all year round.

"It's been quite a ride," she said. "We had a significant funding shortfall."

After Tara applied for three grants and had all approved, receiving \$30,000 from Trust Waikato, \$32,000 from Grassroots Trust, and \$209,000 from Lottery Community Facilities - plus the centre's own funds of around \$100,000 - she had successfully accumulated \$370,000 for the project.



Work to resurface four of Ngātea's netball courts is underway. INSET: Fundraising officer Tara Carter. Photo: SUPPLIED

However, after bringing in surveyors and engineers to kick-start the resealing, they told her it would cost a lot more than originally thought.

So, in February last year, Tara presented in front of Hauraki district councillors, who then appointed Garth Doherty as project manager.

"At this point I had three funders who had been waiting close to 12 months from when they had approved our funds, and they were wanting accountability reports for us having achieved

what we said we would," Tara said.

"Thankfully, they were all very understanding and agreed to extend until October as we worked with renewed hope."

Tara said the first option presented to the centre was to resurface the six courts in a turf-type product which would have come in around \$130k over budget, with council covering the difference. But turf was not a suitable surface to play senior netball on, she said.

"It was then determined it was

a possibility to re-level and asphalt the back four courts which are our problem courts, without needing to dig up the front two courts," Tara said.

This option came within budget.

After a lot of "toing and froing", last minute pleading with funders, and a delay to works in the New Year, Tara said she had faced a number of curve balls but was now seeing the end in sight.

"So many times it's felt like we've got a solution only for it to cave or fall at the final hurdle, so

I've said I'll only be celebrating when they're finished, with all the lines painted and goal posts reinstated," she said.

Council group manager service delivery Adrian de Laborde said he was pleased a resolution had been achieved, with the remedial works underway.

"This process has involved a considerable amount of technical engineering input in order to be compliant with the New Zealand Netball Association court design guideline," he said. "The design will now allow for the courts to be used safely year-round."

Meanwhile, Mayor Toby Adams said Tara and her team should be commended for their ongoing efforts.

"The professionalism brought to this project by Tara and her team has achieved a positive outcome for all stakeholders involved," he said.

"This has allowed the association to implement their contract for the construction of the courts and aided in council's ability to provide technical assistance.

"Council has been impressed by the resourcefulness, drive and dedication shown by the association to make this project happen. It'll lead to a great outcome for netball in the Ngātea region."

There will also be tennis and pickleball lines added to the courts, with completion set for late February-early March.





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Increasing rates of diabetes expected: study

Immediate and bold action is required to tackle obesity, which is the likely key driver behind a projected dramatic rise in the prevalence of diabetes shown in a new study.

The study, published in the New Zealand Medical Journal, projected the prevalence of diabetes in Aotearoa New Zealand will increase by nearly 90 per cent to over half a million people by 2044.

While population growth and an aging population contribute to these findings, changing obesity profiles underpin the increase in the prevalence of diabetes, with the social determinants of obesity, including food environments, playing a key role.

The study's findings were alarming, New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine President Sir Collin Tukuitonga said.

"The massive increase in the future burden of diabetes threatens to swamp our health services which are already stretched to breaking point." Tukuitonga says decision makers grappling with how to ensure our health system is sustainable and effective must take serious note of this study." Tukuitonga said the college strongly supported the study authors' call for immediate and bold action to "plug the dam" and stem the tide of diabetes and other obesity-related illnesses.

"We must improve our food environments by policies such as taxing sugary drinks, restricting marketing of unhealthy food to children, and improving access to nutritious, locally produced food, coupled with other population-level interventions to more effectively manage and control diabetes".



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SUDOKU

186

Fill the grid so every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9

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

EASY

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

186

HARD

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

MEDIUM

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

EASY

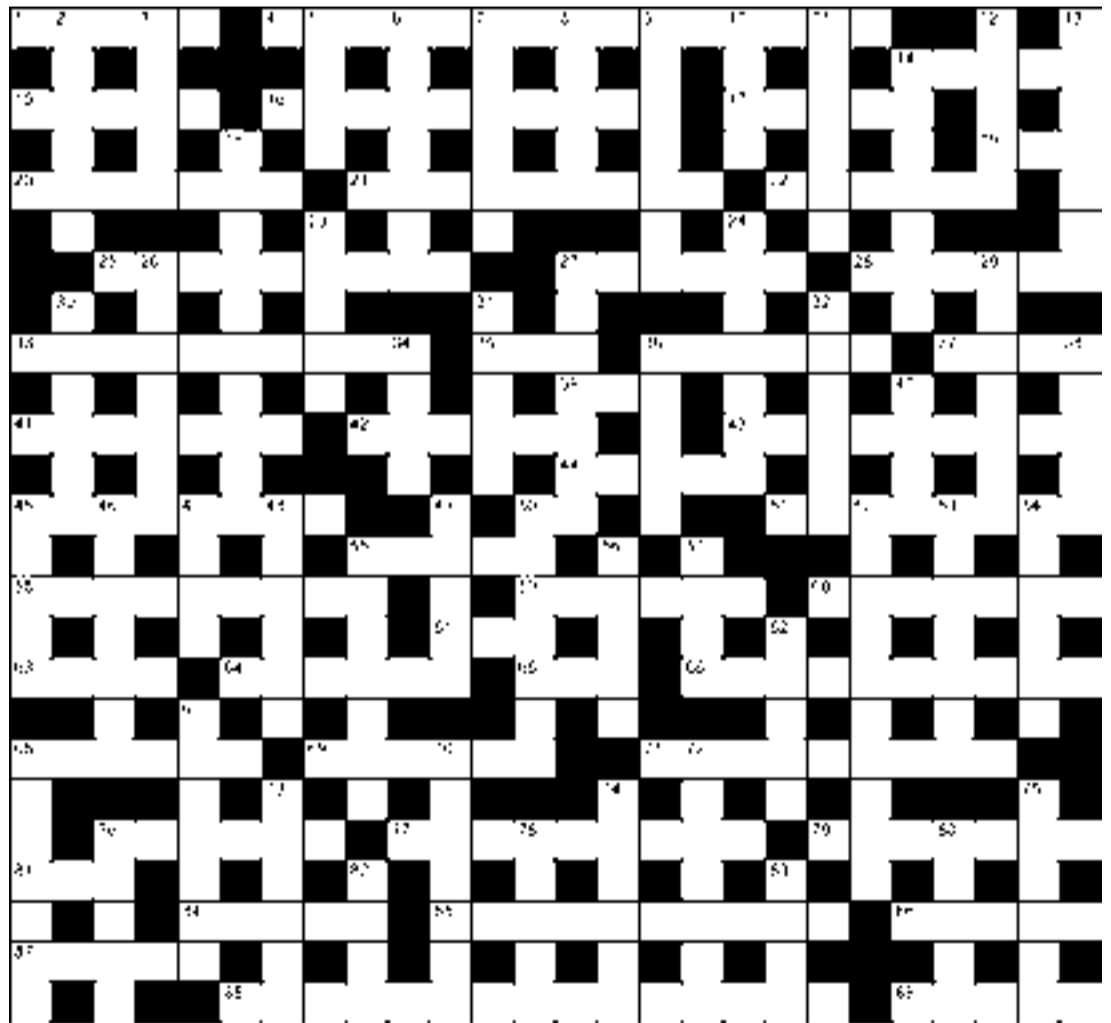
1	3	5	2	8	9	6	4	7
2	9	6	7	1	4	8	3	5
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4	5	9	8	6	2	1	7	3
6	1	2	3	7	5	9	8	4
7	8	3	9	4	1	5	2	6
5	7	1	4	9	8	3	6	2
9	2	4	5	3	6	7	1	8
3	6	8	1	2	7	4	5	9

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JUMBO CROSSWORD

206

- ACROSS**
- 1 Stale-smelling (5)
 - 4 Complete very quickly (4,5,4,2)
 - 14 Hold firmly, tightly (5)
 - 15 Local language (5)
 - 16 Lewd (10)
 - 17 Earlier (5)
 - 19 Total (3)
 - 20 Protected (7)
 - 21 Polished by rubbing (9)
 - 22 Interment (6)
 - 25 I lengthen (anag)(9)
 - 27 Rent payer (6)
 - 28 Serious crime (6)
 - 33 Election official (10)
 - 35 Spoil (3)
 - 36 Evasive, deceitful (6)
 - 37 Celebrity (4)
 - 39 Place (3)
 - 41 Getting closer to (7)
 - 42 Advertising tune (6)
 - 43 Alert (2,3,4)
 - 44 Postpone (5)
 - 45 Worker (8)
 - 50 Not any (2)
 - 51 Blissfully happy (8)
 - 55 Paddled boat (5)
 - 58 Orderly and neat (9)
 - 59 Aromatic bulb (6)
 - 60 Ambles (7)
 - 61 Night bird (3)
 - 63 Financial obligation (4)
 - 64 Elegant and fashionable (6)
 - 65 Female sheep (3)
 - 66 Early in the morning (5,5)
 - 68 Zoo worker (6)
 - 69 Ledger entry (6)
 - 71 Pegboard game for one (9)
 - 76 Violent pull (6)
 - 77 Warned (9)
 - 79 Set fire to (7)
 - 81 Prompt (3)
 - 84 Raincoat (5)
 - 85 In the first place (10)
 - 86 Indistinct (5)
 - 87 Rowing team (5)
 - 88 Out of public view (6,3,6)
 - 89 Horse (5)
- DOWN**
- 2 One-and-only (6)
 - 3 Big cat (5)
 - 5 Absent (4)
 - 6 Shut out (7)
 - 7 Cuban capital (6)
 - 8 Tree's anchors (5)
 - 9 Cowboy film (7)
 - 10 Strong thick cord (4)
 - 11 Repugnant (6)
 - 12 Deadly (5)
 - 13 Expression of regret (7)
 - 14 Warship (7)
 - 18 Lack, shortage (10)
 - 23 Robber (5)
 - 24 Cutting tooth (7)
 - 26 Impartial (7)
 - 27 Underwater missile (7)
 - 29 Pariah (7)
 - 30 Shriek (6)
 - 31 Reflection (5)
 - 32 Not active or moving (6)
 - 34 Surprise attack (4)
 - 36 Engorge (5)
 - 38 Ancient object (5)
 - 40 Notable achievement (4)
 - 45 Alleviated (5)
 - 46 Easily bent (7)
 - 47 Expel (4)
 - 48 Make possible (6)
 - 49 Relish (5)
 - 50 Lack of proper care (7)
 - 52 Release from captivity (3,2,5)
 - 53 One more (7)
 - 54 Water-surrounded land (6)
 - 55 Rebuke (7)
 - 56 Welcome (5)
 - 57 Petty quarrel (4)
 - 62 Delicate (5)
 - 67 Sale document (7)
 - 68 Galley (7)
 - 70 Gemstone (7)
 - 72 Perform surgery (7)
 - 73 Build up (6)
 - 74 Duplicates (6)
 - 75 Safe (6)
 - 76 Chock (5)
 - 78 Upper leg (5)
 - 80 Not appropriate (5)
 - 82 Cab (4)
 - 83 Smokestack (4)



PREVIOUS SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1 Crucial, 4 Continuous, 9 Quibble, 13 Raid, 14 Future, 15 Came to, 16 Defunct, 19 Elasticity, 20 Inserted, 21 Abyss, 24 Sombre, 25 Svelte, 27 Efficient, 32 Accurate, 33 Peaked, 34 Acquire, 38 Luckiest, 39 Medium, 40 Skit, 41 Quota, 42 Canon, 45 Ill-gotten gains, 52 Spare, 55 Fauna, 56 Skin, 57 Negate, 58 Purchase, 61 Whippet, 62 Cheese, 63 Extolled, 66 Programme, 68 Crèche, 69 Assist, 73 Pulse, 74 Shrapnel, 76 Conclusion, 81 Twofold, 82 Superb, 83 Hebrew, 84 Heal, 85 Stalled, 86 Settlement, 87 Shorten.

DOWN: 1 Curve, 2 Up in arms, 3 Launch, 4 Count, 5 Need, 6 Incline, 7 Utmost, 8 Utter, 10 Used, 11 Bourbon, 12 Locust, 17 Attraction, 18 Peril, 22 Alter ego, 23 Bitch, 24 Shellac, 26 Veal, 28 Freesia, 29 Muesli, 30 Salmon, 31 Writer, 33 Point, 35 Usurp, 36 Icon, 37 Sign, 43 Apathy, 44 Own up, 46 Lake, 47 Gingham, 48 Tender, 49 Eagle, 50 Gathered, 51 Squall, 52 Successful, 53 Away, 54 Elegant, 59 Hedge, 60 Etch, 64 Lathe, 65 Liniment, 67 Restful, 68 Calibre, 70 Outwit, 71 Intent, 72 Access, 75 Acute, 77 Orbit, 78 Nylon, 79 Glue, 80 Shoe.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Paul Woolright always finds the groove

By DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

It's a fine art to sit in the groove and not be "in the way of it" according to musician Paul Woolright.

Something Paul needs, as a bass player, to click in with the groove is a really good drummer.

Paul describes it as someone who "just sits in with you" and lays down the groove as the rhythm section, he said.

He called it a pulse.

"I love that, making that groove dynamically in its place."

The Paeroa man and wife Frances moved to the area from Titirangi in 2017. The couple have travelled everywhere, and even lived in London for 14 years.

And while Paul said it would still be nice to travel, they were happy in their little corner of the world.

"It's nice to come home to Paeroa. I love it here. I love the people. I love the quietness."

Paul even joined the golf club, which gave him a whole new social aspect of friendship, exercise and fun, he said.

But his biggest passion was music. Paul has been part of the music world since his youth, when he and a neighbour were "just young guys just mucking around" and playing the guitar, he said.

"But I was never comfortable on the six strings."

He was around 15 years old when he shifted in with someone who had a bass guitar, he said.

"So I just picked that up... [I] felt comfortable with the bass," he



Music enthusiast, bass player, and groove-finder Paul Woolright.

Photo: DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

said, and the rest was history.

But music wasn't just something he played within the four walls of his home.

Paul went on to make and play music, touring the world in bands such as Ticket, Pink Flamingos, The Legionnaires - and can still be seen and heard grooving on the bass in the iconic Hello Sailor.

Paul said Hello Sailor was a bunch of brothers who had been together for a long time.

They recently wrapped up their Hello Sailor Whirled Tour in December and will celebrate the band's 50th anniversary later this year.

One thing Paul was blown away by was hearing people sing their songs back to them, and people coming up to talk to them between sets and after shows.

And there were many memorable times while touring, such as Tom Jones calling out to Paul and

the band as they headed on stage for a performance, or sharing a drink backstage with Dire Straits, he said.

But it's clear rubbing shoulders with international superstars and playing to big crowds hasn't changed who Paul is.

Sometimes after performing a big show, Paul would head home and the next morning he'd be outside mowing his lawn, and then off to the supermarket for groceries,

he said.

According to Paul, music was like anything in life - "it just happens".

"Some days are good, some days are tough," he said.

But the best thing about playing music was that even the worst days were beautiful, he said.

"You're trying to share that thing, that moment because it's so good playing [music]," he said.

"If you get that thing, oh, it's fantastic. You can't beat it."

It was important to Paul to create spaces where the music "builds up and comes back down", he said.

As a bass player, he loved working with drummers to "make that groove bigger" when there was intensity in another musician's solo, and then dropping it back down while still maintaining the groove, he said.

He's played music with his friend and Hello Sailor drummer, Ricky Ball, for 30 years.

"We know each other. We know every breath really when we're playing. I know what he's going to do and he knows what I'm going to do, or how I'm going to do it dynamically," Paul said.

Paul called the pair "the engine room".

His advice for other musicians was to "practice, practice, practice".

"Play with your heart. Get a metronome, and practice."

It's like developing a musical ear, and technical ability, he said.

"Just play, keep it simple... and everything will come from that."

Free look at School of Mines on offer for Waitangi Day

The Thames School of Mines will be one of 18 Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga sites opening to the public for free this Waitangi Day.

Located at 705 Queen St, the Thames School of Mines houses one of the largest mineral collections in the Southern Hemisphere, with more than 3000 specimens including fossils from New Zealand and abroad. It's also among the largest and best preserved historic school of mines in Aotearoa.

According to Heritage New Zealand, the family-friendly day on February 6 will feature activities for all ages, including guided tours and interactive experiences designed to bring history to life.

Visitors will receive a complimentary educational booklet, *Walking the Pathway to Nationhood* - while stocks last - which delves into the stories behind three of the country's most foundational documents: *He Whakaputanga (the Declaration of Independence)*, *Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi)*, and the *Women's Suffrage Petition*.

It includes timelines, profiles of key figures, and insights into the importance of preserving Māori heritage and honouring Te Tiriti.

DETAILS: The Thames School of Mines, on the corner of Brown and Cochrane Sts, will be open for free on February 6 between 10am-4pm. For more information about the site, visit www.visitheritage.co.nz.



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A Complete Unknown (141 mins) M. At the Newport Folk Festival in 1965, a young Bob Dylan shakes up his act on the folk music scene by going electric and singing rock as the voice of a generation.

Maria (123 mins) M. Follows the life story of the world's greatest opera singer, Maria Callas, during her final days in 1970s Paris. Captivating performance by Angelina Jolie. International co-production.

The Haka Party Incident (90 mins) E. True story about a group of young activists who sought to stop university students performing a parody of haka each capping week. A largely forgotten event in our history.

Mufasa: The Lion King (118 mins) PG. Mufasa: The Lion King enlists Rafiki to relay the legend of the unlikely rise of the beloved king of the Pride Lands, introducing an orphaned cub called Mufasa.

Paddington in Peru (106 mins) PG. Follow Paddington and the Brown family as they visit Aunt Lucy in Peru, but a mystery sends them to the Amazon rainforest and up Peruvian mountains.

We Live In Time (108 mins) M. An up-and-coming chef and a recent divorcée find their lives forever changed when a chance encounter brings them together, in a decade-spanning, deeply moving romance.

Conclave (120 mins) M. Follows Cardinal Lomeli as he oversees the group of Cardinals responsible for selecting a new Church leader while trying to uncover a secret from the late Pontiff.

Moana 2 (100 mins) PG. After receiving an unexpected call from her wayfinding ancestors, Moana must journey to the far seas of Oceania and into dangerous, long-lost waters for an adventure.

Lee (117 mins) M. The story of photographer Elizabeth 'Lee' Miller, a fashion model who became an acclaimed war correspondent for Vogue magazine during World War II.

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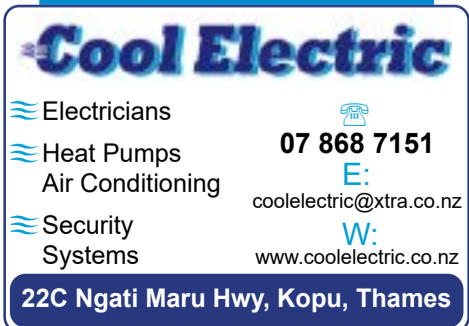
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LETTERS

Send your letters to the editor: editor@valleyprofile.co.nz or 2 Queen St, Paeroa, 3600. Letters must include your full name and address, be 250 words or less and may be edited, abridged or rejected at the editor's discretion.

CONCERN OVER BRIDGE CLOSURE

I am sure many people in our Thames Valley district will echo my sentiments when I express my genuine concern for those businesses affected by the Onetai bridge closure for one month.

Waka Kotahi (NZTA) seems insensitive to peoples need to provide for family and provide a much appreciated service to our community.

Is it too hard to have a temporary bailey bridge up or down stream to keep traffic flow straight through to Thames?

Yes I understand it would have to go through a farmer's property in the short term, but could easily be remedied when the bridge is complete; compensating the farmer.

I among many other locals would hope that common sense will prevail in this instance.

Yours faithfully,

- Margaret Rowling,
Paeroa

RESPONSE

NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) appreciates the concerns for businesses affected by the Onetai Bridge closure. We will continue to share the message that businesses are open and accessible.

A lot of careful planning has gone into the project, which must be done safely, efficiently and within available funding. With the narrowness of the road, the only alternative route would be across private land which would've involved resource consent, taken considerable time – and pushed the costs for the project beyond what was acceptably affordable for a bridge replacement of this size. We are using a prefabricated bridge deck and other key components to speed construction and are grateful to the community for their patience and support while we work to improve the resilience of this route.

- Darryl Coalter,
NZTA Regional Manager of Infrastructure Delivery (Acting)



The Onetai Stream Bridge along SH26, north of Paeroa, is getting replaced.

Photo: SUPPLIED/NZTA

In Brief

GAS STATION ROBBERY

Z Energy confirmed to *The Profile* last week that a robbery occurred at Z Ngatea in the early hours of the morning on Tuesday, January 28. The site member present during the incident was able to get to safety and activate the fog cannon. A spokesperson for the gas station said its focus remained on supporting the site member and that it was now a matter for the police.

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES SCHEME

The latest funding round for Thames-Coromandel District Council's Creative Communities Scheme is now open, running until February 28. The scheme, backed by Creative New Zealand, aims to increase participation in the arts, broaden the range and diversity of the arts available to communities and enhance and strengthen the local arts sector. For more info and to apply, visit the TCDC website.

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Last month's winner of the lotto ticket was Mike Anderson, who found Pete in the January 14th edition in the Peter & Son advert.
Go to page 2 for details on how to enter.

Top three ranking for Battery Burners

By DAVIDDA HIKATANGATA

Never giving up was the most valuable lesson three friends learned from a recent vehicle building project.

Hauraki Plains College students and brothers Billy Grimmer, 16, Daniel Grimmer, 14, and their friend Josh Hansen, 14, told The Profile they spent months and months working on their project, which “paid off” in the end.

The young minds put their heads together to do something they’d never done before: build a kart powered by an electric motor.

But it didn’t stop there.

The trio, known as the Battery Burners, raced their electric kart in the Waikato/ Bay Of Plenty Regional Final for the EVelocity Challenge in Rotorua on October 22, and snapped up third place in the competition, third place for the engineering design award, and third overall for vehicle performance, as well as a certificate of achievement.

EVelocity is an organisation which seeks to break down barriers and inspire rangatahi or young people into sustainable engineering through mentorship and being part of their EV programme.

The young engineers heard about another school taking

part in the EVelocity Challenge, so decided to get involved, they said.

Racer Daniel said he and Josh took turns driving the kart in the slalom, drag and endurance races.

Their high ranking and recognition meant a lot to them.

“We thought it was amazing because we’ve never done it before,” they said.

But putting the kart together took a lot of teamwork and trialing to get things right.

Daniel said they planned out a 3D model using a computer-aided design (CAD) software system called Onshape, and built from that as their draft.

The materials they used to build the kart were: 3D printed plastics, recycled aluminium sheets, recycled plywood, grill, handlebars, wheels, gears, some of the frame, seat, and the new motor, which was sent by EVelocity, they said.

“[The] brake cable was new and our only expense.”

After its initial testing, the most significant adjustment the group made to the kart was to the steering wheel and brakes, they said.

“Our welding was not the best as the steel was so thin, which made it really hard. So we put a bigger weld on.”



Josh Hansen, left, and Daniel Grimmer of the Battery Burners.

Photos: SUPPLIED/BEN NAUGHTON

Moulding the sheet around the back of the car and measuring the angles was the biggest challenge, Daniel said.

But the most exciting part of the process was once it was all together and they could drive it, Billy said.

Their advice for other students, who are thinking about starting a similar project was simple: “measure twice and cut once”.

RIGHT: Daniel Grimmer is ready to race.



Pain, purpose, and the power of perspective

OPINION

By MICHAEL WILKES



Failure often shapes how we approach the future, and trauma can dictate how we react to the present. My own journey with these truths has been deeply personal.

Growing up, my dad battled bipolar disorder. He spent time in mental wards and respite care and lost his job when I was 11.

At 13, a severe bike accident led to a drastic personality shift and a temper that could flare unexpectedly. I blamed him for everything:

my family’s struggles, my rebellious choices, and the chaos in my teenage years.

But when I was 19, an experience transformed my perspective. I forgave my dad.

And as I look back now, I see that he didn’t need forgiveness—he was doing the best he could with the hand he was dealt.

That shift in perspective changed everything.

As a teenager, I resented him. As an adult, I revisited those painful memories with fresh eyes. I began to see the good: his love for the outdoors, his creativity with DIY projects, his adventurous spirit, and his natural way with people.

What I once viewed with bitterness, I now celebrate with gratitude.

Recently, I came across the quote, ‘pain has purpose’. It struck a deep chord. The way we perceive our pain matters. In my victim mindset, I blamed my dad for my shortcomings and our family’s challenges.

But as I journeyed through healing and started learning to own my responses, I discovered purpose—and even beauty—in the pain.

Pain can be one of life’s greatest teachers if we pause to ask: What can I learn from this?

How can I grow?

In our culture, diagnoses and

trauma dominate conversations. These concepts hold immense value when they help us move forward, develop coping strategies, and foster self-awareness.

But they can also become excuses—reasons to remain stuck, avoid responsibility, or resist change.

I’ve fallen into that trap, too—using struggles as crutches instead of stepping stones. But labels and pain only serve us if they push us to grow. They provide clarity but shouldn’t become barriers to our potential.

Growth requires hard choices, stepping into discomfort, and rewriting the stories we tell ourselves. It’s rarely easy or fair, but

it’s always worth it.

So, let’s embrace the value of understanding trauma and diagnoses, but let’s also be wary of their pitfalls.

Let’s use them to propel us forward, not hold us back. Because in the end, growth is a choice, and no label or pain can take that away.

Michael Wilkes is a Living Well Trust Youth Worker. He and his team provide mentoring and resilience programmes across Thames and Paeroa to more than 300 students a year. They are passionate about supporting our young people to thrive. Much of this work is funded outside of schools and it becoming increasingly challenging in the current climate. Email michael@livingwell.org.nz to sign up to their quarterly newsletter or to become a supporter.

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Karl Davis 027 496 4633 karl.davis@bayleys.co.nz

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6.1_{ha}

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SPORTS

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Club a family affair for rugby-mad couple

RUGBY

By ALICE PARMINTER, Public Interest Journalism funded by NZ On Air

For Lisa and Steve Wild, the Waihi Athletic Rugby Club is like a second home.

The rugby-mad couple were finalists in the 2024 ASB Rugby Awards for the Charles Monro Rugby Volunteer of the Year, and for good reason.

But they don't do it for the recognition, they said - they do it for the people.

"The club is not just about us boys. It's about the wives, the kids, it's about the families," Steve said.

"It is a neat vibe walking in here, and just knowing that you don't have to know anybody or anything, but everybody's welcome. We've been welcomed in with open arms since we came five, six years ago, and so we just try to do that with everybody else that walks in these doors," Lisa added.

Rippa Rugby was what initially drew the couple to the club, as they looked for a team for their sons Austin and Carter. Now their boys have moved up to the juniors, Lisa and Steve are still heavily involved with coaching and managing the younger teams.

"We took over the Rippa Rugby programme. When we started there were only 14 or 16 kids," they said.

"But we still run it on a Friday night. It's grown huge;



Waihi Athletic Rugby Club is more than a sports club, it's a second family, Lisa and Steve Wild say. Photo: ALICE PARMINTER

we've got kids right from two and a half, three years old up to about six. And then we encourage them to get into the junior rugby tackle teams."

The 2025 rugby season is on the horizon now, with the senior teams already well into their pre-season training. Steve, who played for the Senior A team a few years ago, said the players

were keen to continue their unbeaten streak from last year.

The juniors will be kicking off a little later, towards the end of term one.

And for the Wilds, that's when their work will ramp up again, too.

"We do joke that we should probably have a bedroom here during our rugby season," Lisa

said.

"We're both on the junior committee... We do all the merchandise. You can find me in the kitchen, cooking meals for the seniors, behind the bar, we come in and clean.

"We do everything pretty much, just fully immersed ourselves in the club."

It's this dedication that mo-

tivated one of the committee members to nominate them for the awards. But Lisa and Steve said they were just one small part of an awesome team.

"We couldn't do it without everybody else in our committee, in this club, nothing," they said.

"We don't feel like we do enough. Obviously, they think we do, but we just do what we do because we love it."

The couple said their main motivation was ensuring their kids - and everyone else's - felt like they had a place to belong.

"I was pretty much raised in a small rural rugby club," Lisa said.

"So that's definitely what I want for my kids. And it doesn't necessarily have to be rugby, but that club involvement and community involvement is awesome for the kids.

"It just opens doors for young kids these days, you know? Having a place where they seem to belong. Our kids, they will come in here on any day of the week, and all the older guys and the senior players will be in here. And it's always, 'hey, mate', or they're fist pumping or handshaking. And the junior kids watch the senior guys, and the senior guys are watching the junior guys.

"It's just all about creating those relationships."



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