



## NEW COMMUNITY FACILITY ON THE WAY

**C**lyde Quay School is hoping the community will chip in to help it complete the kitchen in its refurbished school hall – with the carrot being that the upgraded hall will be able to be used by the community after hours.

The ambitious school upgrade, which has seen the hall relocated, has been largely funded so far from raffles and funding from charitable trusts. But more is needed and the school hopes the community can help.

Read more inside. ➔

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*Mt Victoria*

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# New community facility on the way



Mt Victoria will soon have access to a new community facility, once Clyde Quay School has completed its refurbishment – and the school is hoping neighbours will chip in to help. **Jane O’Loughlin** reports.

**A**nother milestone has passed in the primary school’s ambitious makeover, with the school hall now moved to a new location on the Elizabeth Street site, upgraded and open for use.

One of the classes has now moved into the hall for a term, while their block is also refurbished.

Toilets have been installed in the hall, along with services for a kitchen, but not the kitchen itself.

Now the school is appealing to the community to ‘kit the kitchen’ – to help it complete its new hall kitchen so it can be used by both the school and the community.

The school is hoping for a helping hand via a Givealittle page.

“We need around \$20,000 to \$30,000 for the cabinetry, appliances and kitchen sink,” says Phernne Tancock, the chair of fundraising group Whānau and Friends.

“Once the kitchen is in it can be used by the students. The older ones are hoping to be able to run a café.”

However, “it’s not just a school hall, it’s a resource for the community.”

Having the kitchen means the hall can be rented – something that currently can’t easily be done due to the lack of adjacent toilets and kitchen access.

“The intention is that it will be available for community use after hours.”

The benefit to the community will be a neutral space for people to use that is wheelchair accessible.

Clyde Quay School principal Cameron Ross said he hoped the hall would be complete and ready for community use by the end of the year.

“We are excited to use the hall for a range of activities that benefit our children, and our Mt Victoria community. As well as opportunities for arts or sports groups, community classes and hopefully a table tennis tournament or two, we are working closely with Joel and the Mt Vic Hub about community dinners and other events for us to connect with each other.”

The fundraising team hopes both parents and the wider community will contribute to the cause. To date, much of the funding for the work has come from charities, with generous grants from NZCT, TG McCarthy Trust and the Lotteries Community Facilities fund along with two highly successful Taylor Swift concert ticket raffles that captured nationwide attention and brought in money from outside the community.

Tancock says the school is also very grateful to environmental firm Tonkin+Taylor for providing pro bono planning and geotechnical engineering, and Studio Pacific Architecture and Stephenson and Turner who both donated services. **TL**

**Clyde Quay School principal Cameron Ross said he hoped the hall would be complete and ready for community use by the end of the year.**

Donations will be accepted through the Givealittle page [givealittle.co.nz/cause/clyde-quay-school-kit-the-kitchen](https://givealittle.co.nz/cause/clyde-quay-school-kit-the-kitchen).

# Grunge vibes

I was writing this editorial about the terrible state of the economy and the poor mood in Wellington coupled with the bleakness of winter when I had a terrible sense of déjà vu.

**S**ure enough, when I checked back to see what I wrote a year ago I found that my editorial was about the terrible state of the economy, the poor mood in Wellington and the bleakness of winter.

Doubly depressing then to realise that nothing much seems to have changed in a year (except the seasons). But of course it would be surprising if they had; depressions don't disappear overnight. We may as well accept we are mired in grimness for the foreseeable future.

It was against this backdrop that I found myself at the hairdressers flipping through magazines. Within these high fashion tomes there were several references to the grunge look – invented in the 90s but now back on trend.

Usually grunge style means people wearing roughed up jeans and old plaid shirts but one article wanted to show 'grunge hair and makeup'.

I had to laugh as this seemed to mean styling the

models so that they looked angry, exhausted and poor. Not exactly an aspirational look.

Well at least they were going for authenticity. Many people were angry, exhausted and poor in the 90s – trying to get by in an era of high unemployment and bewildering economic change. I remember trying to earn money during my university degree and in those days it was so bad you were lucky if you got paid to pack bags at a supermarket – there was a long list of people wanting one of those coveted jobs.

Like many young people I left the country soon after my degree and returned later when my prospect of getting a job improved.

History tells us that things will eventually improve – while that's not a cast iron guarantee, it's a message that does give us some hope, and the strength to hopefully hang on in there.

Meanwhile, it's probably a good idea to look the part, so rummage in your wardrobe for an old plaid shirt, stick some Nirvana or Pearl Jam on the stereo, and wallow in nostalgia, and go for a hair do that looks angry. At least you'll be on trend.

Here's hoping there will be a better story to tell next July. **TL**



**Jane O'Loughlin**  
Editor

## THE LOCAL Mt Victoria

The Local is published monthly by The Local News Limited. Find out more at [the-local.co.nz](http://the-local.co.nz)

Design: [homestudio.nz](http://homestudio.nz)

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The Local is distributed to Mt Victoria letterboxes and local cafes on the first weekend of every month (except January).

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## Tunnel update due

**M**t Victoria residents will wait till at least August to hear about next steps for the proposed second Mt Victoria tunnel.

A spokesperson for NZTA/Waka Kotahi said an investment case for the State Highway work was on track to be complete by its mid-year target, but it will not be released until it has gone to the Board for consideration, expected to be in August.

The investment case supports the decision to go ahead, confirms the project scope, and includes a preliminary design in order to establish the 'investment envelope'. "Until these steps are complete, we cannot confirm specifics on the project's footprint, timeframes, design, estimated cost, and property acquisitions."

The agency has set aside \$53 million for property acquisitions for the SH1 Wellington Improvements project for the 2024–2027 period.

"More details about property purchases will be released after the investment case has been considered by the NZTA/Waka Kotahi Board and further decisions are made. After this occurs, NZTA/Waka Kotahi will engage with affected landowners and ensure they are aware of how the project may affect them." **TL**

## MVRA constitution

**T**he Mt Victoria Residents' Association is updating its constitution. The introduction of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 has meant most incorporated societies around New Zealand have to update their rules.

A draft constitution will be shared with all Residents' Association members for feedback in coming months.

"We want to make sure that our constitution is fit for purpose so we can continue to serve and represent the community of Matairangi–Mt Victoria," Association President Ellen Blake said.

"One of the requirements is to update our membership lists, so this would be a great time to join up or renew membership.

"MVRA works to improve our community, including the current projects to get a toilet at the Pirie St kids playground and representing concerns about changes to the Embassy pedestrian crossing. Let us know what you want to see."

More information on [mvra.org.nz](https://mvra.org.nz). **TL**

## Kent terrace changes on track

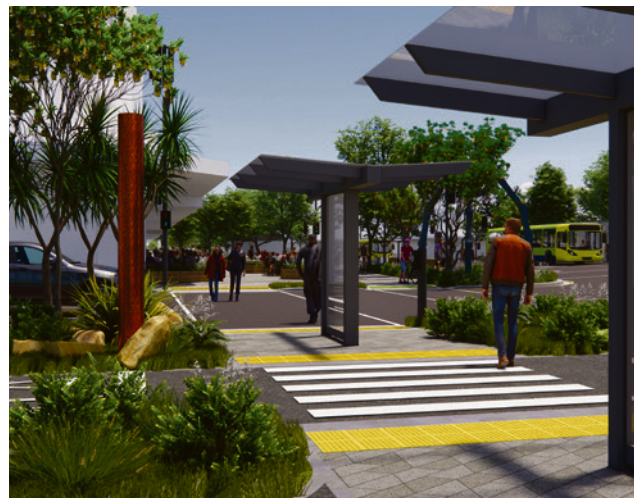
**W**ork on the changes to the intersection near the Embassy is on track, according to the Wellington City Council.

The intersection changes are a precursor to the Golden Mile improvements, which do not yet have a confirmed contract in place.

"Though the weather has caused some challenges, construction is on schedule" according to a council update.

"The cycleway diversion is in place, the right-hand turn into Majoribanks Street is temporarily closed so new kerbing can be installed and healthy kōwhai are being relocated while work is underway."

The image at the bottom shows how the intersection will look once complete. **TL**







# The 9th gayest suburb in the country

Mt Victoria is one of the top 10 LGBTIQ+ suburbs in Aotearoa, according to the most recent census. **Jane O'Loughlin** looked at the numbers.

**T**he character Dafyd Thomas used to proclaim on Little Britain that he was 'the only gay in the village' but he would certainly have no grounds for that if he lived in Mt Victoria, which turns out to be one of the gayest villages in the land.

Stats NZ has released demographic profiles of the nation's suburbs, and one of the numbers that stands out for Mt Victoria is the high proportion of people identifying as LGBTIQ+/rainbow.

According to the 2023 census, 621 out of the 3,840 adults in Mt Victoria identified as LGBTIQ+/ rainbow or 16.20% of the population. This compares to 4.9% of the population overall who identified as LGBTIQ+.

*The Local* asked Stats NZ to provide a ranking of the more than 800 locations known as 'statistical area 3' in the census, by percentage of those ticking the rainbow box. (This question is limited in the census to those over the age of 15.)

The result? Mt Victoria ranks 9th overall, and downtown Wellington can proudly lay claim to being the most gay-friendly area in the country, as most of the spots in the top 10 were occupied by other Wellington inner city suburbs.

**Stats NZ has released demographic profiles of the nation's suburbs, and one of the numbers that stands out for Mt Victoria is the high proportion of people identifying as LGBTIQ+/rainbow.**

Taking out the top spot for gayest suburb in New Zealand is Aro Valley with 21.6% closely followed by Mt Cook with 21.4%.

Next are Te Aro (20.2%), Kelburn (19.7%), Newtown (19.1%), and Wellington Central (19%).

The only Auckland entry in the top ten is Eden Terrace (16.8%), the area around upper Queen Street, not far from Karangahape Road, famous for its queer nightlife.

Interestingly, a Nelson suburb takes out 8th place, but with only 36 residents overall it could be regarded as a statistical quirk. Following Mt Victoria at 9th place is Dunedin Centre (15.7%) rounding out the top 10.

For interest's sake the area that ranked lowest in the country is Weston in the Waitaki district of Canterbury, with just 1% of its population identifying as LGBTIQ+. **TL**

# Former refugees stand for Lambton ward

More candidates are announcing their run in the upcoming local body elections.

**Jane O'Loughlin** reports.

**T**wo more candidates have committed to running for the Wellington City Council in the Lambton/Pukehinau ward and both are former refugees: Hairdresser and television game show personality Teal Mau, and Labour's Afnan al-Rubaye.

They will run in the central Wellington ward alongside incumbents Geordie Rogers and Nicola Young, plus former regional and city councillor David Lee.

Hairdresser and business owner Mau was born in Cambodia and came to New Zealand with his family from Vietnam in 1975.

A business owner for nearly 30 years, these days he owns and operates Mau hairdressing on Wakefield Street with partner Sophia Mau.

Unlike al-Rubaye, he is not politically aligned, and believes political parties should not be involved in local body politics.

He is worried about the direction the city is taking, and the quality of the decision-making.

Mau believes the council could do better at consulting with the community and business owners before implementing changes that affect them, and making sure 'more thought' is put into decisions.

He also wants to see a council that is prepared to listen to each other.

"My thought is that the council need to work together, not against each other. We've been to a few council meetings, and we were disappointed by the way they behaved."

However he doesn't believe in finger-pointing and blame.

"It doesn't go anywhere. It doesn't solve anything, and it only creates tension."

One issue that does concern him is council spending.

"You know, it doesn't make any sense, some of the spending... we spend money that we don't have."

However the main message he wants to get across is that although Wellington is going through a difficult



Teal Mau



Afnan al-Rubaye

patch, there is 'still time' to save the city and restore it to the vibrant place it once was. Mau, turning 60 soon, wants to contribute to this turnaround.

He is hoping that his campaign will benefit from the profile he and Sophia gained from a stint on *My Kitchen Rules* in 2017 where they came third – an experience that resulted in *Woman's Day* coverage of their wedding and ongoing media interest in the quirky couple.

Meanwhile, it's the second time al-Rubaye has run for council. She was unsuccessful last election but came a close fourth behind incumbent Iona Pannett (who is yet to decide if she will run again).

The Labour candidate describes herself as a public servant with a background in NGOs and grassroots community organising.

"I came to Wellington as a refugee, grew up in public housing, and now rent in the heart of the city. Because of those experiences I stand for inclusive, community-led change.

"We need a city built for people, with communities shaping decisions, not just responding to them."

She was committed to "creating a city where young people can build their futures – with good jobs, affordable housing, and opportunities to thrive". **TL**

Nominations for local body elections open on Friday 4 July 2025 and must be received by 12 noon on Friday 1 August 2025.



# Great time to be a buyer

It's a great time in the property cycle for buying a house, says **Anji Foster** from **Lowe & Co.**

**B**uying your first home is pretty memorable. Mine was a tired early 1900s two-bedroom cottage on a 451-square-metre section in Westmere, Auckland. We purchased our Californian bungalow for \$267,000 in 1998 and sold for \$290,000 when we departed Auckland 18 months later. The RV on that property is now \$2,725,000! The current owners have done extensive work and extended the original home, so capital has gone into create today's value, but holy heck, that's some return!

Whilst there are the odd sales currently that resemble a seller's market, they are the exception rather than the norm and most of the activity confirms that we are largely in a market that favours buyers and there is some good buying to be had!

If you are in the buyer category, then this is your time! So much of the property cycle is rough on buyers, as prices escalate and competition between purchasers heats up. If you remember the crazy year for the property industry that was 2021, then you know that they call them cycles for a reason, and at some stage we will see something similar occur again.

2021 is an exceptionally crazy example, but through the history books the cycle is always present. Sometimes the cycle is 7 years, sometimes it's 10, sometimes it involves slow, steady growth, and sometime sharp and significant gains, but always in a cycle.

If you are looking to get into your first home, buy an investment property, or up/downsize in the same market, then the supply of opportunities and chances to buy at a level possibly not to be seen again, puts you in a fantastic position for price rises when they come.

By the time most of the public become aware that capital growth is occurring and the tide has turned, it is often well past that change happening. By the time a property sells, settles and the information becomes

public, three plus months will have passed. By the time the media pick up on these changes and start reporting on them is often a further three months later. So, half a year passes before people realise the market is shifting.

Depending on what kind of a growth cycle we go in to, the price increases can be rapid, and suddenly all those homes that were selling for \$900,000 are selling for \$1,000,000. The homes you could pick up for \$1,500,000 are tipping in to the \$1.7m range.

For first home buyers in particular, the conditions are fantastic! They have so much more choice and will potentially be able to consider suburbs that in other markets might have felt out of reach. To even have been able to purchase in Westmere when we were first home buyers is a clear sign that it was a buyers' market at the time.

The time to put down roots in your first home or secure your next home hasn't been better than this for some years and is highly likely to never be better. If you can, make the most of it! **TL**

**If you are looking to get into your first home, buy an investment property, or up/downsize in the same market, then the supply of opportunities and chances to buy at a level possibly not to be seen again, puts you in a fantastic position for price rises when they come.**



**Lowe & Co**  
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# Our local cobbler

A Mt Victoria cobbler has been providing a service for three decades. **Sharon Greally** spoke to him.

**B**link and you might miss him, but our own local cobbler, Anil Chauhan, has been based in a hole in the wall in Majoribanks St for 31 years. Located at 10b, near the Embassy Theatre, Chauhan says it is the perfect location for him – “not too far from downtown but also amongst the local residents”.

Called ‘Modern Shoe and Bag Repair’, he says the business had already been established for 42 years before he moved in in February 1994. He enjoys interacting with the Mt Vic locals, saying they are friendly and supportive.

“We also support local businesses around us. There are always new faces to see and meet. It has become a very diverse location with lots of businesses coming and going.”

Chauhan knows the cobbling business well. “My father was the cobbler in our local community. He would measure shoes and make them from scratch. Shoe repairing runs in my blood.”

He also repairs suitcases that have been well travelled, handbags, clothing, those pesky umbrellas that don’t know which way is what in our wild Wellington winds, and even dyes leather goods to give them a good refurbishing zhuzh. You can also get your keys cut there. For such a small place, he packs a lot in. There is a wee nook up the ladder above for extra storage and long forgotten items.

**“We also support local businesses around us. There are always new faces to see and meet. It has become a very diverse location with lots of businesses coming and going.”**

Chauhan arrived in Wellington from India in 1987 from the Indian state of Gujurat (about 250 km from Bombay). Prior to purchasing this business he worked in a shoe repair shop in Ghuznee Street.

His favourite local hangout? “Capitol Restaurant has been my neighbour for more than 20 years now and Tom makes the most delicious coffee for me on a daily basis.”

His favourite spot in Mt Vic is the lookout point. “I also like to share my favourite location with guests that visit us.”

In his downtime, Chauhan says he likes to play badminton and volleyball. “For fun I like to travel to different locations, domestic and worldwide, with my friends and family.”

Chauhan says he is grateful for the opportunity that he has received while settling in New Zealand. “I am a people person. My business has allowed me to meet so many people from all over the world and also serve the local community. There is never a day that I don’t like coming into work.” **TL**

Read more from Sharon Greally at [sharongreally.substack.com](http://sharongreally.substack.com).

# Commuting through the town belt

The local community is collaborating with the council to expand Wellington's bike network with nature tracks built for everyone to enjoy. Environment correspondent **Kasey McDonnell** reports.

**M**ount Victoria residents will soon have a safer way to bike to the eastern suburbs. Community group Trails Wellington and Wellington City Council are building a new shared walking and cycling path through the Town Belt from Crawford Road to Majoribanks Street.

The new commuter trail addresses a gap in Wellington's growing cycling network. Currently, riders travelling between Mount Victoria and suburbs like Hataitai must navigate the restrictive Mount Victoria tunnel or detour through Newtown mixed with car traffic.

A mix of upgraded and new track, the commuter pathway will allow walkers and riders to travel safely between suburbs through the protected Town Belt. Commuters will be able to avoid traffic while enjoying the natural landscape.

Matt Farrar, a trustee of Trails Wellington, explained that this new path is designed to 'complement' Paneke Pōneke (Wellington's bike network) with a nature-based track that expands access across the city.

The team's vision was to extend the road bike network with nature tracks for tourists, school kids, families and walkers to use to get around, Farrar explained.

Trails Wellington has collaborated closely with expert trail designer Hamish Seaton to design the community proposal. It would be 'Otago Rail Trail' levels of experience, Farrar said.

Trails Wellington secured approximately \$800,000 in funding from the Bloomberg Initiative for Cycling Infrastructure to fund these innovative bike paths like the new track.

Vicky Robertson and Julian Morton are residents of Hataitai and Mount Victoria who volunteer with Matairangi Trail Builders, a Wellington group who maintain local bike tracks. They believe the new



commuter track will complement existing mountain bike and walking tracks across Matairangi.

"It'll make it easier for walkers, of all types, including older people who may struggle with the current terrain," Morton explained. "We'll see a lot more people go through it, I think."

They expect to see similar benefits to a shared trail to Wellington East Girls College that they built with students. "It's great to see [students] using it as a way to get to and from home," Robertson said.

Tracks across the Town Belt are attracting a diverse range of users, according to Morton and Robertson who have been seeing more kids, women, and families using bike trails on Matairangi.

"This is what the Town Belt was reserved for: making it accessible for all types of recreation to enjoy the native bush so close to the city," Morton said.

Farrar has found broad community support for this project. "Everyone is positive about this... [people commonly say] let's hurry up and get everything done."

Two sections of the Crawford Road to Majoribanks Street trail are already complete. The full upgraded trail is expected to be completed by summer 2026.

Interested residents can get involved by following Trails Wellington and Matairangi Trail Builders for volunteer opportunities and community events. **TL**


Kasey McDonnell writes a Wellington-based climate change newsletter. Read it and subscribe for free at [threesixtysix.news](https://threesixtysix.news).



# ULO ? Unidentified Local Object



Identify the mystery object – something in the Mount Victoria area – to win a \$20 voucher for your favourite local cafe.

Email your answers to [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 Jeanne Cantin, who identified the June photo as a detail from the Peking House restaurant on Kent Terrace. 



**S<sub>1</sub> O<sub>1</sub> C<sub>3</sub> I<sub>7</sub> A<sub>1</sub> L<sub>1</sub>**  
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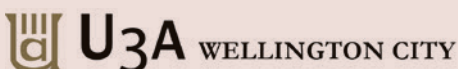
The advertisement features a vibrant orange background. At the top, the word 'SOCIAL' is spelled out using white dice with black numbers. Below it, 'SUNDAYS' is written in large, bold, white letters. To the left, a black and white illustration of a horse holding a beer mug is shown. In the center, a small illustration of a person in a suit holding a mallet is visible. To the right, there are illustrations of board games, including a chess set and a Go board. A red banner at the bottom left says '\$25 SUNDAY ROAST', and another red banner at the bottom right says 'BOARD GAMES'. The bottom of the ad contains contact information: '28 Cambridge terrace, Te Aro', the website 'www.cambridgehotel.co.nz', and the phone number '04 801 1950'.

## LISTINGS

**Do you offer guitar lessons? Are you a dog-walker looking for customers? The Listings section is an affordable way to let people know about your service. Advertise in *The Local* for as little as \$40.**

### U3A in June

Talks coming up for U3A Wellington City include Rosy Moar on forensic toxicology, Mike Hannah on mass extinctions, Nicole Miller on seaweed and military historian Chris Pugsley on breaking ranks with the Empire. Lectures are Tuesdays and Fridays from 10.30 am at the Embassy Theatre. \$5 for visitors; \$50 membership. See the full list of activities at [u3awellingtoncity.org.nz](http://u3awellingtoncity.org.nz).



### Feldenkrais classes

Awareness through Movement classes are held Tuesdays 6–7pm, from 11 February, at the Quaker room in Moncrieff St. Relieve pain and stress, improve posture, balance and breathing, in a friendly, relaxing environment. Sue 027 466 7123, [massagewellington.nz](http://massagewellington.nz).

### Good Vibrations sound therapy



Feel like you're out of tune, mind, body or spirit? Sounds like you need some Good Vibes to bring you back into harmony. Sound healing is an ancient practice that harnesses the power of sound vibrations that affect us on a neurological, physiological, and biochemical level to promote healing and relaxation. Harness the healing power of sound to benefit your life. Contact Sharon Greally at Good Vibrations Sound Therapy, The Paddington, 140b 11 Jessie Street, Te Aro, Wellington 6011, phone 021 264 8544 or email [info@goodvibrationsoundtherapy.co.nz](mailto:info@goodvibrationsoundtherapy.co.nz).



**8-12 July 2025**  
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**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*.**

### One Mindful Breath

One Mindful Breath explores the role of meditation and mindfulness in embracing the wonders and difficulties of our modern lives. Our practice is secular, framed by Buddhist values. We meet every Wednesday at 7.30pm at the Friends' Centre, Moncrieff St, Mount Victoria. Each session has a meditation, discussion, and a cup of tea. The first Wednesday of the month is "Beginners' Mind", great if you're new to meditation. Find out more at [onemindfulbreath.org.nz](http://onemindfulbreath.org.nz).

### Pikopiko Clyde Quay Kindergarten

Spaces Available! Pikopiko is open for 2-5 year olds, Monday to Friday, 9am-3pm during school terms. 20 hours free from 2 years old. Phone **04 385 0441** or email [pikopikoclydequay@wmkindergartens.org.nz](mailto:pikopikoclydequay@wmkindergartens.org.nz). Please see [wmkindergartens.org.nz](http://wmkindergartens.org.nz) for more information.

### Crossways Community Creche

61 Majoribanks Street, is a parent-run early learning centre for children aged 1-5. It is open Monday to Friday and offers 20 hours of state-funded ECE for over 3s. Contact us at **04 384 8201** or email [info@crosswayscreche.org.nz](mailto:info@crosswayscreche.org.nz).

### Table tennis for over 60s

Table tennis is a fantastic sport for older people as it helps with movement, brain stimulation, and muscle/bone strength. We have eight tables and play three times a week at the stadium on Alexandra Road. We want to encourage new people to join our fun social event. Only \$4 each time - no subscription. For more information contact Diana Winn, email [winnich@xtra.co.nz](mailto:winnich@xtra.co.nz) or phone **04 801 9556**.

### Innermost Gardens

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

### Quaker meeting rooms

7 Moncrieff Street has meeting rooms for regular or one-off meetings for non-profit and government agencies. Wifi and projector available. Call **04 385 4897** or email [wgtnquakers@gmail.com](mailto:wgtnquakers@gmail.com).

### The Quakers

Each Sunday at 10:30am Wellington Quakers gather for worship as part of unprogrammed Friends Meetings. Our address is 7 Moncrieff St. We welcome all. For more information email [wgtnquakers@gmail.com](mailto:wgtnquakers@gmail.com).

### Hall for hire: Tararua Tramping Club

The Tararua Tramping Club offers a hall and a room for hire for meeting, theatre productions and more. Located at 4 Moncrieff Street, Mt Victoria. For details please contact [ttc.clubrooms@ttc.org.nz](mailto:ttc.clubrooms@ttc.org.nz).

### Mt Victoria Residents Association

MVRA holds regular monthly meetings at the Mt Vic Hub on the first Thursday of the month at 5.30pm. All members welcome.



# The unsafe sound of silence

The most annoying thing about people wearing headphones is they can't hear the abuse being hurled at them, according to **Jane O'Loughlin**.

**H**ave you ever been walking just behind someone on the street that you want to pass, but every time you go to overtake them they veer across the pavement, just enough to get in your way?

I walk to work, as many Mt Victorians do, and it's a phenomenon I encounter regularly. It used to baffle me. Were these people stupid, drunk, or was this an elaborate prank the world was playing on me?

I eventually discovered the truth is much more mundane: these wanderers are wearing ear buds.

They've cancelled the world's noises out and the interesting side effect of this seems to be that their peripheral vision is gone as well. They are in their own tunnel of existence and oblivious to others in their orbit.

I now play a game where I predict whether a person has ear buds in, by the degree of annoying weaving about the pavement that they do. I am correct 95% of the time.

People with headphones are fascinating for many reasons. For example, they also seem to think that not being able to hear dangers is some form of protection. Many is the time I see people head down and headphones in, heading out into traffic. Then when a car screeches to a halt in front of them they appear indignant that the car exists, given they have specifically taken measures not to hear the car.

While I may roll my eyes at the earphoned walker, at least they are not really a danger to anyone but themselves.

We can't say the same for the earphoned scooter rider.

You would think if you were going to take to the streets on a powerful vehicle with no walls to bounce off, you might want to have your wits about you, and a helmet.

But the only thing most scooter riders stick on their noggin is headphones. The thinking seems to



be the audio equivalent of the ostrich with its head in the sand: If I have my headphones on, I won't be able to hear the cars therefore I will be safe.

Of course the other precaution that most scooter riders take is to ride on the footpath, where they can become the apex predator, rather than on the road, where they are at risk from scarier beasts like cars, trucks and electric vehicles.

On the footpath, they can reign supreme, hooning noiselessly up to hapless pedestrians like a stalking lion on the African savannah, running down the nervous little walking gazelles.

They seem to take particular joy in zooming by closely, so close that one step in the wrong direction would create a nasty accident.

It's a particular risk at street corners – for example Taranaki and Wakefield Street. You need to peer around the corner cautiously before stepping out, in case there is a scooter rider in full flight coming at you.

I have to admit the real reason the headphones on scooter riders bug me is that I am often shouting at them as they buzz past me, and it bothers me that they can't hear the colourful language I am using to describe them.

All in all, the commute to work can be a case of survival of the fittest, and by that I don't mean those with best fitness level.

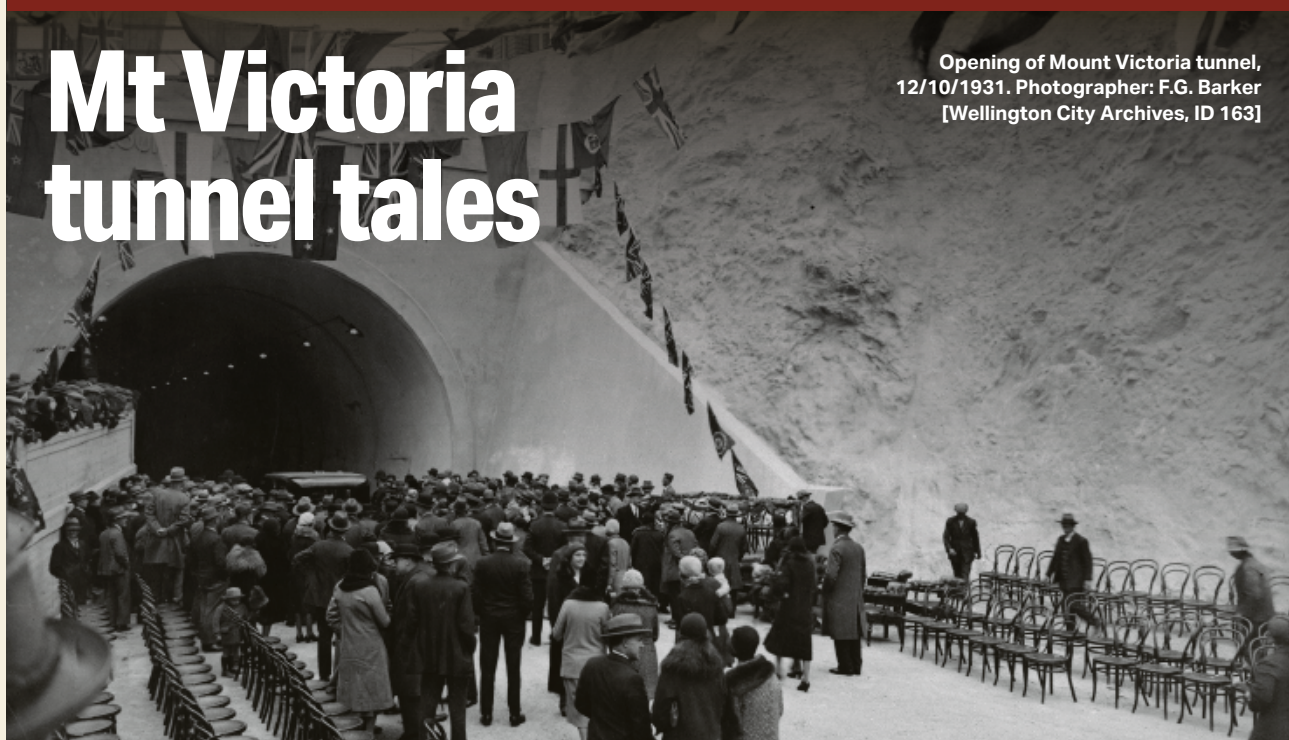
There is a complex hierarchy of commuters, all battling for supremacy, their patch of road and their right to exist.

I can't help feeling we might all enhance our chances of survival if we made more of an effort to engage – politely! – with each other in the process. **TL**



# Mt Victoria tunnel tales

Opening of Mount Victoria tunnel,  
12/10/1931. Photographer: F.G. Barker  
[Wellington City Archives, ID 163]



As plans get underway for another Mt Victoria tunnel near the Basin Reserve, **Joanna Newman** from the Mt Victoria Historical Society describes the construction of the original.

**M**t Vic is unique in Wellington in having two tunnels through the suburb so close to each other. Less than a kilometre from the tram tunnel, which featured in the last issue of *The Local*, is 'The Mt Vic Tunnel'.


Work started in 1929 and the tunnel was officially opened in October 1931. As a result of the Depression and the Relief Works Scheme, Wellington City Council was able to raise a loan to build it earlier than would have otherwise happened. It was largely built by relief labour; one worker recalled that he worked alongside doctors and lawyers as they hacked away at the rock. Some men would come to work in their suits and only then change into overalls, so that their neighbours wouldn't know they were doing relief work.

**Work started in 1929 and the tunnel was officially opened in October 1931.**

A month or so after breaking through the hill, work on the tunnel came to an abrupt halt when a massive search began for Phyllis Symons, a pregnant 17-year-old who had disappeared. Her lover, George Coats, a widower with six children being raised in an orphanage, was arrested after he was seen digging at the Hataitai site where spoil from the tunnel excavation was dumped. He had been one of the relief workers, until he lost his job. (Coats was found guilty of murder and hanged in December 1931.)

Hundreds of people turned out for the tunnel opening on October 12, 1931. During the ceremony, the Mayor of Wellington, Thomas C. A. Hislop, noted that his father, former Mayor Thomas W. Hislop, had opened the tram tunnel nearby in 1907. The Mayor's car was first through the tunnel, followed by hundreds of other cars and pedestrians during the afternoon.

Tooting in the tunnel has long been a popular activity of motorists. Whatever mythology some try to create to justify it, it's probably simply as journalist, Jane Bowron, once wrote: "Me, I've just tooted all these years because it was such an asinine act of sheer joy and how friendly to get a reply back from another Mr Toad in his cart hitting the horn for the sheer hell of it."

Today, we still await news of what the Government plans for a 'second' (i.e. third) Mt Vic tunnel. 



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