



Special give away!

Win tickets to the
Soweto Gospel
Choir. See page 6
for details.

CAR YARD EXPANSION

The planned demolition of Seafic House on Cambridge Terrace (formerly the Resene Paint shop) will see yet more car yards along the boulevard, in contradiction of Wellington's new District Plan which sets out a vision for high rise apartment buildings.

Car dealership Armstrongs has gained permission to replace the large three-storey building, named for the Seafood Industry Council, with a car yard extension.

The removal of one of the few multi-storey buildings along the stretch further cements the 'character' of the area as one of low-rise car yards rather than the high-rise residential development envisaged in the city's planning documents.

Armstrongs argue that car yards make sense in the area and that it will be at least 10 years before housing pressure and economic conditions results in any real change to the land use.

Read more on page 3. ➤

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and food at the
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thousands of kilometres
for her health

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delusion of setting
ridiculous resolutions

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the great fire of
Mount Victoria

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Car yard expansion

Yet another car yard is being created on Cambridge Terrace, despite the city's District Plan envisaging high rise apartment blocks.
Jane O'Loughlin reports.

The Cambridge and Kent Terrace area will continue to be the home of car yards for the foreseeable future, according to the car dealers Armstrongs.

Armstrong Motor Group Ltd has applied and gained resource consent to demolish the large three-storey commercial building Seafic House at 71-74 Cambridge Terrace and create a car yard, adding to their existing site. Seafic House gained its name from its origins as the home of the Seafood Industry Council and was most recently tenanted by paint shop Resene.

Concerns about the proposal were raised by one of the Wellington City Council's senior urban design advisors, Kate Blagrove, during the resource consent process. The proposal did not meet the requirements of the new District Plan's central city zone, she said. Reasons included that the lack of an actual building removed the potential for passive surveillance of the street, had a negative impact on pedestrian amenity, reduced the vitality of the area, and undermined the city centre goals.

Counter arguments from the applicant's urban design specialist, Graeme McIndoe, said that the proposal would fit in with the existing use of the area, and by preserving a cleared site, was part of a 'holding pattern' that would allow for future larger development.

In its application, Armstrong board chair Mark Darrow said Cambridge and Kent Terrace have been a 'key automotive precinct' for decades and will 'continue to be for the foreseeable future'.

Armstrongs had owned the Seafic House site since 2010, with the view to demolishing it and extending the car yard.

The car dealers needed more dedicated yard space to support the overall business and a dedicated space for an additional premium vehicle brand.

According to Darrow, Seafic House was no longer fit for purpose. There was no demand for the upper two office floors which had been vacant for over two years, and the building was in disrepair with refurbishment not economic or practical.

The application warned that the building would steadily deteriorate and would be left boarded up to prevent squatters, if it could not be demolished. "There are enough of these buildings already in Wellington."

The building would be replaced with a 'premium quality dealership with appropriate landscaping, streetscaping and high-quality materials, finishes and signage'.

Darrow said it would be "in the best interests of Wellington" for a car dealership to replace a deteriorating building, until the economic factors changed.

"In the longer term (e.g. 10 years or so) the economy of Wellington may make it attractive for Armstrongs to offer all its land holdings for comprehensive multi-storey building redevelopment."

Lambton/Pukehinau city councillor Geordie Rogers, a strong supporter of intensification, noted that no one had opposed the resource consent and that the only submitters were in support.

The site could still be developed to a higher density when economic conditions improved, he said.

He noted that other improvements were occurring in the area, including a new 16-unit apartment building consented for the Myrtle site (see story page 5).

"Broadly what we are seeing on Kent/Cambridge Terrace is a transition towards the direction provided in the District Plan." **TL**

Zone it and they will come (?)

This month's lead story is one example of how the blind faith in zoning to solve our urban design challenges only goes so far.

Two years ago, the Wellington City Council voted in a new, far more permissive District Plan that was supposed to support the growth of up to 80,000 more people in Wellington city over the next 30 years.


Part of the plan was to see more intensification, particularly along key transport routes like Kent and Cambridge Terrace.

But visions are one thing, and reality is another.

Instead of developers responding with plans for lovely high-rise apartments to line the pretty boulevards of Kent and Cambridge Terrace, car dealers have stubbornly clung on in there with their low-rise offices and sprawling car parks of vehicles. Indeed, many have expanded or consolidated their presence in recent years and to be fair, have invested in making their showrooms look attractive and presentable.

What is interesting is that the council is very willing to let go of the District Plan rules for the car dealers (admittedly there's no great alternative) but in the case of the Mayfair development they've steadfastly stuck to the mantra that high rise is the future for Mt Victoria and pushed for it to go ahead, against the wishes of highly impacted neighbours, despite the existing character, and despite the many construction and access problems it raises. It appears the council's default is to basically say yes to every proposal that comes along, whether or not it's backed by a District Plan or the nearby residents.

In other news, *The Local* is expanding, into the next suburb. A new edition for Te Aro will hit the streets in mid February. This version of *The Local* will have its own Te Aro flavour with a strong focus on hospitality and entertainment news alongside the issues that affect residents of a more built up area. This won't affect the Mt Victoria publication, but it will mean a greater variety of stories and features on the website.

Look out for it in cafes and stands in a few weeks, or check out the website. 



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

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Deliveries and Distribution

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

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Design: homestudio.nz

Home for retired priests

A home for retired priests is to be built on Kent Terrace. The current building at 23 Kent Terrace is to be demolished and replaced with a six-storey residential block.

The Society of Mary (known as the Marists) bought the building in early 2025, leading to the closure of the popular Myrtle Bakery, to the dismay of locals.

According to resource consent documents, the new residence is to centralise and accommodate retiring priests in a central city location.

The building will contain 16 one-bedroom apartments and one commercial unit. The top floor will be a communal space.

The property will provide for shared parking facilities on site with space for mobility scooters.

It is not yet known whether a bakery could be accommodated on the ground floor commercial space (but we live in hope). **TL**



Matairangi tracks investigation

Decisions around walking-only tracks on Mt Victoria will be made in coming months.

The Wellington City Council is organising a workshop for mountain bikers, pedestrian representatives and other users of the Matairangi town belt in early 2026 (delayed from its original schedule of December).

This follows initial investigations last year that included an independent audit of the tracks, a workshop in June about pain points, and on-site interviews with walkers.

Following the workshop, recommendations will go to councillors for decision-making. **TL**

Thousands give feedback on State Highway 1 project

Over 2,400 people and organisations responded to the survey on a proposed design for the State Highway 1 Wellington Improvements.

NZTA/Waka Kotahi held a four-week community engagement period on the proposed design at the end of 2025. The project includes a second tunnel through Mount Victoria.

According to a spokesperson, just over 2,400 responses were submitted to the survey, and around 840 people attended six community information (drop-in) days.

“This is a significant number, and we thank everyone who took the time to take part and share their feedback and insights on the proposed design.”

“We are now reviewing the feedback received and will publish an initial summary of key themes we heard from the community in February.”

NZTA is also engaging with mana whenua partners, councils, landowners, and other stakeholders. **TL**

Kerb renewal

A crumbling kerb on the corner of Brougham Street and Pirie Street has needed to be fixed.

Hundreds of buses hurtle around the corner every week, with many hitting the kerb in the process.

The renewal has required a lane to close, meaning temporary traffic lights in place and pedestrians forced to use the other side of the road. **TL**



The Soweto Gospel Choir returns to Wellington

The Soweto Gospel Choir returns to Aotearoa with a new concert, and *The Local* has a double pass to give away to its readers.

Formed in 2002, the 3-time Grammy award-winning Soweto Gospel Choir celebrates the unique and inspirational power of South African Gospel music.

The choir has received critical acclaim for their powerful renditions of African American spirituals, gospel and classics.

This concert celebrates songs and anthems of Nelson Mandela's Freedom Movement in South Africa and the Civil Rights Movement of Dr Martin Luther King's America.

Opening with a rousing programme of South African freedom songs, the repertoire moves down through time to the USA, with renditions of the pro-



test music of the Civil Rights Movement and more contemporary classics, including works by legendary artists Elvis Presley, Sam Cooke, Cynthia Erivo, Stevie Wonder and the one-and-only Aretha Franklin. **TL**

The choir is performing at the St James Theatre on Tuesday, March 31, in Wellington. Tickets and further information at livenation.co.nz. To go into the draw for a free double pass, email editor@the-local.co.nz with your name by 28 February 2026.

A promotional poster for the Paniyiri Greek Food Festival. The background is a solid blue color. On the left side, there is a white Greek key (meander) pattern that curves upwards, with a golden olive branch with leaves and olives draped over it. The text is in white and yellow. The main title 'PANIYIRI' is in large, bold, white capital letters, and 'GREEK FOOD FESTIVAL' is in slightly smaller, bold, yellow capital letters below it. Below the title, there are several lines of text in yellow: 'MOUTH-WATERING SOUVLAKI • FRESH CALAMARI', 'DELICIOUS BAKLAVA • LOUKOUMADES • GREEK FRAPPÉ', 'ALL YOUR FAVOURITE TASTES OF GREECE AND...', and 'LIVE MUSIC AND DANCING'. At the bottom, the date and time 'SATURDAY 7TH FEBRUARY' and 'HANIA STREET ~ 10AM TILL 3PM' are written in large, bold, white capital letters. At the very bottom, in smaller white capital letters, it says 'PLEASE FEEL FREE TO BRING YOUR OWN REUSABLE CONTAINERS & BAGS'.

PANIYIRI

GREEK FOOD FESTIVAL

MOUTH-WATERING SOUVLAKI • FRESH CALAMARI
DELICIOUS BAKLAVA • LOUKOUMADES • GREEK FRAPPÉ
ALL YOUR FAVOURITE TASTES OF GREECE AND...
LIVE MUSIC AND DANCING

SATURDAY 7TH FEBRUARY
HANIA STREET ~ 10AM TILL 3PM

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO BRING YOUR OWN REUSABLE CONTAINERS & BAGS



Approaching a Milestone

As Wellington's summer reaches its peak, the Greek Orthodox community prepares for another vibrant celebration of Hellenic culture, as the community's *Bill Giannakakis* explains.

On Saturday 7 February, Hania Street in Mt Victoria will come alive with the sights, sounds, and aromas of Greece during the annual Paniyiri (Greek Food Festival). This beloved event continues to draw thousands, offering a day of indulgence and community spirit from morning until afternoon.

The Paniyiri's story began in 1977 as a modest gathering organised by the Greek Orthodox Community of Wellington. Community members shared homemade Greek dishes as a way to introduce their traditions to the wider New Zealand public. Originally linked to Greek Independence Day on March 25, the festival was moved to February for more favourable weather. From those small beginnings featuring simple offerings, it has grown into a major cultural highlight. Paniyiri means festival in Greek, which perfectly captures the joyous, communal atmosphere that has defined the event for decades. Despite challenges over the years, including pauses during Covid restrictions, it has persevered as a symbol of Greek heritage and resilience in Wellington.

In 2026, the Paniyiri will mark its 49th edition, building excitement toward the golden jubilee in 2027. For nearly half a century, this festival has played a vital role in preserving Greek customs while fostering connections across Wellington's multicultural fabric.

The Greek community's presence in New Zealand traces back to early 20th-century immigrants, and events like Paniyiri help bridge generations, passing down recipes, dances, and stories to younger members while welcoming everyone to join in.

Leading the organisation are dedicated figures from the Greek Orthodox Community of Wellington. Demetri Christoforou, who has recently completed his term as President, continues to play a key role in the event's planning and success. His experience from previous years ensures smooth coordination and emphasis on tradition. Stepping into the presidency is John Kaldelis, bringing new ideas and enthusiasm to the leadership. Their combined efforts, supported by countless volunteers, highlight the Greek and Greek Cypriots community's strength and commitment to making each Paniyiri memorable.

Attendees can look forward to a feast for the senses. Stalls will sizzle with souvlaki, biftekia, dolmades, yemista and spanakopita, while sweet treats like baklava and melomakarona drizzled in honey, will tempt every passer-by. Live Greek music, including bouzouki melodies, will set the rhythm for traditional dances. Visitors are always encouraged to participate in the lively circles.

With free entry, the festival remains inclusive, embodying the Greek value of philoxenia – warm hospitality toward all.

Whether tracing Greek roots or simply craving delicious food and fun, save the date for 7 February from 10am to 3pm, in Hania St, Mt Victoria.

It's a celebration nearing 50 years of flavour, friendship, and tradition. **TL**

Driveway debate



Disputes over who controls Westbourne Grove are central to the fate of the Mayfair apartment project, as **Jane O'Loughlin** explains.

The narrow accessway to the proposed Mayfair apartment block development on Austin Street has become a battleground of experts and lawyers arguing about its use, with the ultimate decisions crucial to the outcome of the project.

A hearing to consider the resource consent application for the seven-storey apartment block took place on 15 December, where representatives of the four property owners along Westbourne Grove presented evidence to back up their opposition to the development, while the applicant and Wellington City Council planners argued in its favour. The hearing commissioner is yet to release his decision.

One of the points of dispute was the developers' assertion that they had the legal right to restrict traffic at times, which would be necessary during construction. A lawyer for the residents opposing the project said that legally all residents must have 24/7 access, a point supported by the council.

As it is a private road, all property owners along Westbourne Grove have an equal share of ownership.

Further debate centred around whether pedestrian safety was better served by the removal of the existing footpath and the creation of a 'shared space' or whether a footpath should be retained.

The applicant's traffic engineer, Mark Georgeson, said the proposed shared space 'purposely moves away from historic perspectives that mixing vehicles and pedestrians in inherently dangerous'.

However, a public health researcher, Dr Julie Chambers, who gave evidence for the submitters, was sceptical of this. She pointed to research she had jointly authored based on Auckland examples of driveway deaths and injuries, saying that long driveways were a strong factor in higher incidence of such events.

Other contributing factors that her research had identified were also present in the Westbourne Grove application, including driveways leading to a local road, driveways running close to property boundaries and fences, and multiple parking areas accessed off the driveway.

Dr Chambers said that a separate pedestrian pathway on a property reduced injury risk by around 60%.

As a result of the discussion, the applicants put forward a design for a 1.5 metre footpath as an alternative option for the hearing commissioner to consider.

Outside of the resource consent discussion, a further legal issue lies in wait, relating to the accessway.

The residents' property law expert, Bob Roche, said where owners were 'tenants-in-common' all owners must agree on anything to do with the land.

Any changes to the driveway, apart from maintenance and upkeep, would require the consent of all owners. This included any alterations to the driveway, and the installation or upgrading of services. This implies that even if the project is granted resource consent, residents will be able to stop it going ahead by vetoing any proposed driveway work. **TL**

Picking when to buy and sell in 2026

Anji Foster from Lowe & Co reviews the performance of the 2025 Mt Victoria property market and offers some timing advice for those thinking of buying or selling a house this year.

I hope good holidays were enjoyed by all. Be they short or long, having time away from devices, pressures and deadlines is good for the soul. Due to a string of weather-related disruptions, flight cancellations and tight flight availability, I was stranded in the South Island for a further three days than we had expected – a little bonus holiday on top of our planned holiday. Sometimes good things are wrapped badly.

Now that the year is underway, we are already getting very early signs of market mood and sentiment. The final suburb report from Real Estate Institute of NZ showed that the year had been as tough in Mt Vic as it had felt on the ground.

There were 73 sales over 2025 totaling \$83.15m with the median price at \$950,000. This is compared to Hataitai on \$1,003,550, Oriental Bay on \$1,075,000, Mount Cook on \$700,000 and Roseneath on \$1,080,000. The median days to sell in our neighbourhood was 49, compared to 32 days a year ago. I'm probably not alone in being ready to move on from those rather glum figures.

So, what is in store for 2026? General economic commentary would have us believe that interest rates have done their significant falling, and what we have right now is probably as good as it will get. Longer term rates have shifted up from a few months ago, and the lowest short-term rate as of writing is circa 4.45%.


Our new mayor is in place, many of the government job cuts have occurred and most banks are indicating that they see 2026 as the year that our economy starts to strengthen. But there is a dark cloud on Wellington's horizon that each and every time impacts on the mood of our local market – THE ELECTION.

We have a tendency in Wellington to want to “wait and see” what happens in the election before making any big buying or selling decisions. With the general election most often held in November, that means from around September onwards a cautiousness starts to creep in.

This will be the seventh election during my time in real estate and it's the same each time. Whilst most of the time I don't fully understand what people are “waiting to see”, this election there is a little more at play for property people. A change to the left will mean capital gains tax, and whilst that won't impact the family home, it will impact all other property types. This will be a concern for people looking to invest in property, and I believe they are likely to sit on their hands in the later part of this year.

The mixed messages and uncertainty around what CGT will mean and how it will impact the market is likely to also have many other groups of buyers hesitating.

So, if I was thinking of selling in 2026, I would be aiming to launch before the final third of the year to avoid this expected uncertainty in the market as the election draws closer. This might be a year where the positive news is front loaded – but only time will tell. I'll be keeping you updated!

Wishing you the very best for 2026 – reach out at any stage if you want to talk real estate. 

Source: REINZ Suburb Report
December 2025

So, what is in store for 2026?
General economic commentary would have us believe that interest rates have done their significant falling, and what we have right now is probably as good as it will get.



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Walking for her life



Jane O'Loughlin talks to a local with a passion for walking that has changed her life.

Jennifer Andrewes is walking for her life, in more ways than one.

Diagnosed with early onset Parkinson's disease, the Mt Victoria resident took up walking as a way of fending off the advancing condition.

She has walked more than 5000 kilometres across Europe over the past four years, completing four of the famous pilgrim paths that wend their way across the continent.

Her pilgrimages – which take one to two months at a time – include the 800km Le Puy Camino, the 900km Vézelay Way, the 2,400km Via Francigena from Canterbury to Rome, and the 1,100km Via de la Plata across Spain.

She intends to carry on completing a long walk each year for as long as she can, for her health and for enjoyment.

She has written a book about one of her walks, and another is about to be released in March. She volunteers for Walk Wellington, and organises walking excursions for groups of friends. It seems safe to say walking has become a defining feature of her life, and she describes the long distance European walks as “addictive”.

The long pilgrim routes can get you into what she calls “the pilgrimage zone”.

“Somewhere around week three or four, you just get into this zone of ‘this is just what I do’. Everything else has dropped away, your body is physically in rhythm, all of the minutiae of daily life has dropped away, nothing matters except getting up, eating, walking, sleeping, repeat.

“And then when all of that's dropped away, you have different thoughts. I found it specifically on the Canterbury to Rome walk which was so

long. You know, you really get deep into the sort of philosophical spiritual zone and your mind goes places that you had no idea.

“...You get perspective, I suppose, on what matters. And you're only carrying what you need to live on. It's just the liberation of that. It's quite intoxicating.”

For Andrewes – a fluent French speaker and Francophile – walking in Europe has obvious appeal. But the attraction is also the well-established routes that have been accommodating travellers for centuries. Pilgrims can stay in charming local accommodation, buy delicious pastries from bakeries along the way and enjoy cooked meals and wine each night alongside other pilgrims, making it a very social event.

“In the evening, you'd be staying somewhere and typically there might be 10 to 12 people staying and dinner would be provided by the host. And so you'd be around the table having conversations and then the next day you acquire a little community. That dimension is fantastic.”

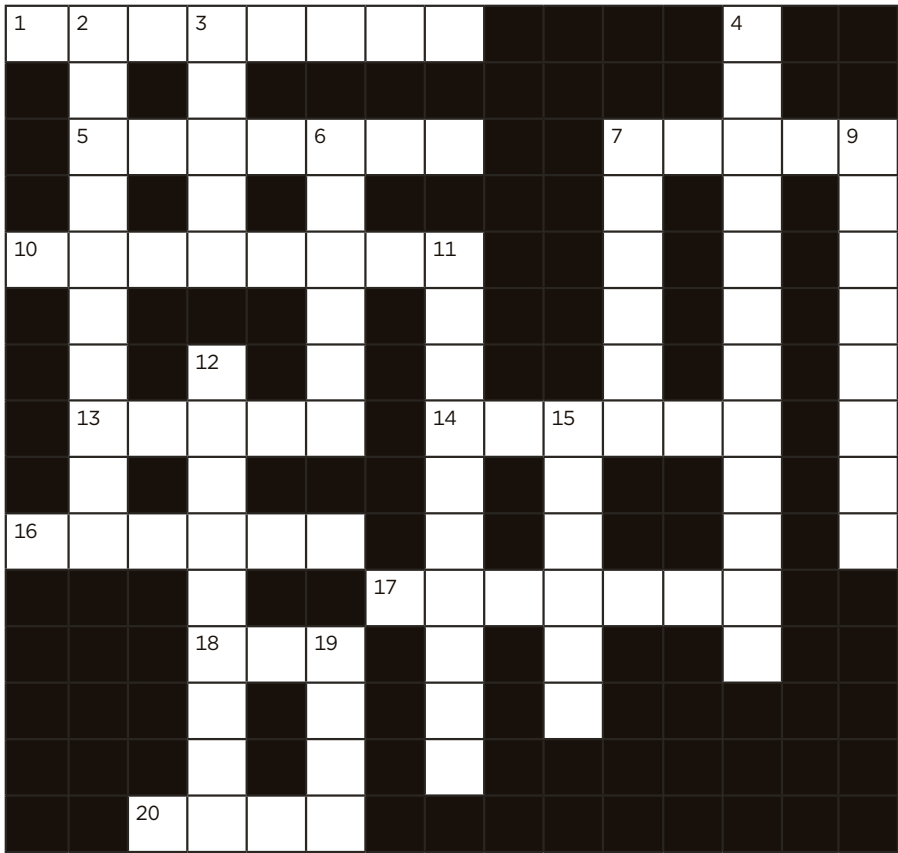
Walking, she says, has completely changed her life. She now has a plan to reduce the hours she spends working, and to refocus around walking. Part of that is downsizing – selling the family's Mt Victoria house and moving to Island Bay, freeing up money to allow both her and her husband Stephen more options.

Andrewes credits the steep slopes and rough trails of Mt Victoria for preparing her well for the idiosyncratic European pathways. Some of her fellow walkers, accustomed to easier groomed trails, struggled with the terrain. But for Andrewes the terrain was ‘totally familiar’ right from the start.

She has already booked her flights to Europe for another walk this year – route yet to be decided. Whichever it is, the plan is, basically, “to keep walking”.

Jennifer Andrewes' books are available on her website myparallellives.com, on Amazon (Kindle), at Unity and in libraries. **TL**

Beau's Crossword #4



- Across**
- Down**
1. Normal, regulation. (8)

5. A statement that originally seems impossible. (7)

7. Building material or a poor basketball shot. (5)

10. Wield vigorously. (8)

13. Amusing contrast to what's expected. (5)

14. A snail from the sea. (6)

16. Exclamation to tell someone to leave. (6)

17. 5 for the price of 1! What a "-----"! (7)

18. Ogre or troll-like creature. (3)

20. Shri! cry of surprise or pain. (4)
2. Range of what you can do. (10)

3. Water-based bird. (5)

4. Casually conversing. (12)

6. Delicate, small. (6)

7. Religious chess piece. (6)

9. Egg, fish and rice-based dish. (8)

11. Commotion. (10)

12. A large speech about oneself. (9)


15. Area between the words and edge of a book. (6)

19. Harvest, yield. (4)

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

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. If there's more than one correct answer the winner will be selected at random. Congratulations to Stella K, who identified the December ULO as the mural on the side of the bus stop on Brougham Street (opposite the dairy). 



COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD

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

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.

Pikopiko Clyde Quay Kindergarten

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

Crossways Community Creche

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

Table tennis for over 60s

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

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: **022 364 1145** or email wgtnquakers@gmail.com.



The Quakers

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

Innermost Gardens

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

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. Any Mt Victoria resident can become a member, including renters. See our website for details on how to join: mvra.org.nz.

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.

Probus Wellington Central in February



Probus usually meets on the third Friday of the month (Feb to Nov) at Prefab Hall, Jessie St, 10.00 am to noon. Due to a clash in bookings the first two meetings for 2026 have been put back a week to February 27 and March 27. Membership \$50 per annum. Stay for buffet lunch at Prefab \$25. More information: probussouthpacific.org/microsites/wellingtoncentral.

U3A in February 2026



Term 1 of the U3A lecture programme starts on Friday 13 February with Pike River film-maker Rob Sarkies. Other speakers include "Lala" Simpson, Rhonda Pritchard and Hugh Tennent, with Dame Gaylene Preston and Dame Robin White the first speakers in March. Details, along with updates on the events programme, at U3awellingtoncity.org.nz. Regular talks are Tuesdays and Fridays, 10.30am at the Embassy Theatre. \$5 for visitors; \$50 membership.

Rotary



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

Feldenkrais classes

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

Host Your Next Event at the Taranua Tramping Club Hall!



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

Delivery people needed!

We need some more volunteers to help deliver *The Local* each month.

Check out the many benefits!

- Explore some streets you might not have been before
- Challenge your brain to try and find letterboxes put in strange places
- See some great views and interesting houses
- Get fit
- Contribute to your community.

A usual delivery round takes less than an hour, and you can do it when it suits you. Let us know if you can help by emailing editor@the-local.co.nz.



High resolution

Hope springs eternal, especially with a new notebook, says **Jane O'Loughlin**.

Happy new year! Bear with me. I know you're already over it and you're back at work, because we have had Wellington Anniversary. Wellington Anniversary is the universally agreed time before which no real work happens in Wellington. After that date, the sun comes out, and we don our work clothes and trudge back into the office to face the new year.

A new year! What a wonderful time of delightful and deluded hope over tawdry and dusty experience. We set resolutions because January is sparkly new and apparently the only time of the year when it is possible to suddenly change our eating, exercise and productivity habits – no other time will possibly do.

Summer holidays! Anything and everything seem possible. We look forward to them as though we are counting down to a prison release, and as though they are months long. And if you're like me, your expectations of them will be comically delusional.

In my deranged mind it is a time when I will sort the cupboards and clean the windows, transform the garden and finally read the two years' worth of Listeners piled up in the corner. In between we will go tramping, travel to out of the way places and swim in the sea. It will be idyllic and we will emerge calm, exercised, bronzed and in a clean house.

It comes as a rude shock to realise that the summer holidays are just a couple of weeks long and you spent most of that watching cat videos on YouTube. In the panic before heading back to work I start emptying cupboards and drawers in a cleaning frenzy which only results in piles of things to be donated or disposed of, which will sit in a corner of the room for weeks before that actually happens.

Now I have something to add to my annual list of failed ventures, and that is journalling.

Last year I invested a silly amount of money on a large paper journal I stumbled upon online. I even



got my name embossed on its expensive cloth cover, under the solemn heading 'Two Thousand and Twenty Five'.

With one page a day I should have known the expectations on me were unrealistic. I managed about one entry before I got busy and abandoned it, and it sat on my desk for a year reminding me of my lack of discipline.

The fact that I've returned to the idea of journaling is therefore surprising. But I made the mistake of attending a 'stationery festival' in Greytown in the holidays.

My family joked that it would involve a lot of people standing still. 'Different spelling,' I responded coldly.

In fact, it involved a lot of people, mainly women, and mainly middle aged, politely shoving each other out of the way to get at fancy fountain pens, glittery inks in bottles, pages of stickers, rolls of washi tape, and beautiful notebooks with expensive thick paper.

People who had come from all around the country to spend a lot of money on pens and paper, and the passion was infectious. And so I was suckered once more into buying a journal and promising to write things about the year, proving that some of us will never learn our lesson, and that we are hopelessly romantically programmed to think the future will be better than the past and nothing embodies that as much, and lifts the heart and mind as much as the words 1 January and a blank page. **TL**

The Great Fire of Mount Victoria




Mt Victoria once suffered a truly devastating fire, as **Joanna Newman** of the Mt Victoria Historical Society vividly describes.

A hundred and twenty-five years ago, on May 30, 1901, a large fire broke out just after 2am in the morning on the west side of upper Hawker Street. The fire brigade was there promptly but in those days the elevation of the street meant there was no water pressure and their hoses were almost useless. The fire spread rapidly to the next house. As bad luck would have it the wind was up. "One of the strong north-westerly gales for which Wellington has earned a certain reputation was blowing with hurricane force," (according to local news reports) and fanned the flames. Another house caught alight. Soon, three were destroyed. Not long after, Bernard Freyberg's family's house, where others had already put what they managed to salvage, caught fire and burned down.

The fire quickly crossed the road. It travelled fast – and, from the city, was spectacular: "One could see a house standing clear of the flames. Suddenly huge red arms would clasp it, and in a few minutes nothing was to be seen of it but chimneys standing gaunt and bare against the sky."

As daylight arrived, the scene was one of utter desolation. The ruins of 22 houses stood starkly amongst burning embers and huge flaring gas jets. All along the roadside were piles of furniture and belongings which a few residents had managed to salvage.

Most of the homes now at the top of Hawker Street were built after this fire. Two of the few that survived it are No. 69 and 71 next to the Monastery – though the latter is being allowed to crumble despite its heroic past (and important owner/builder, John Paterson, builder of the Town Hall). 



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