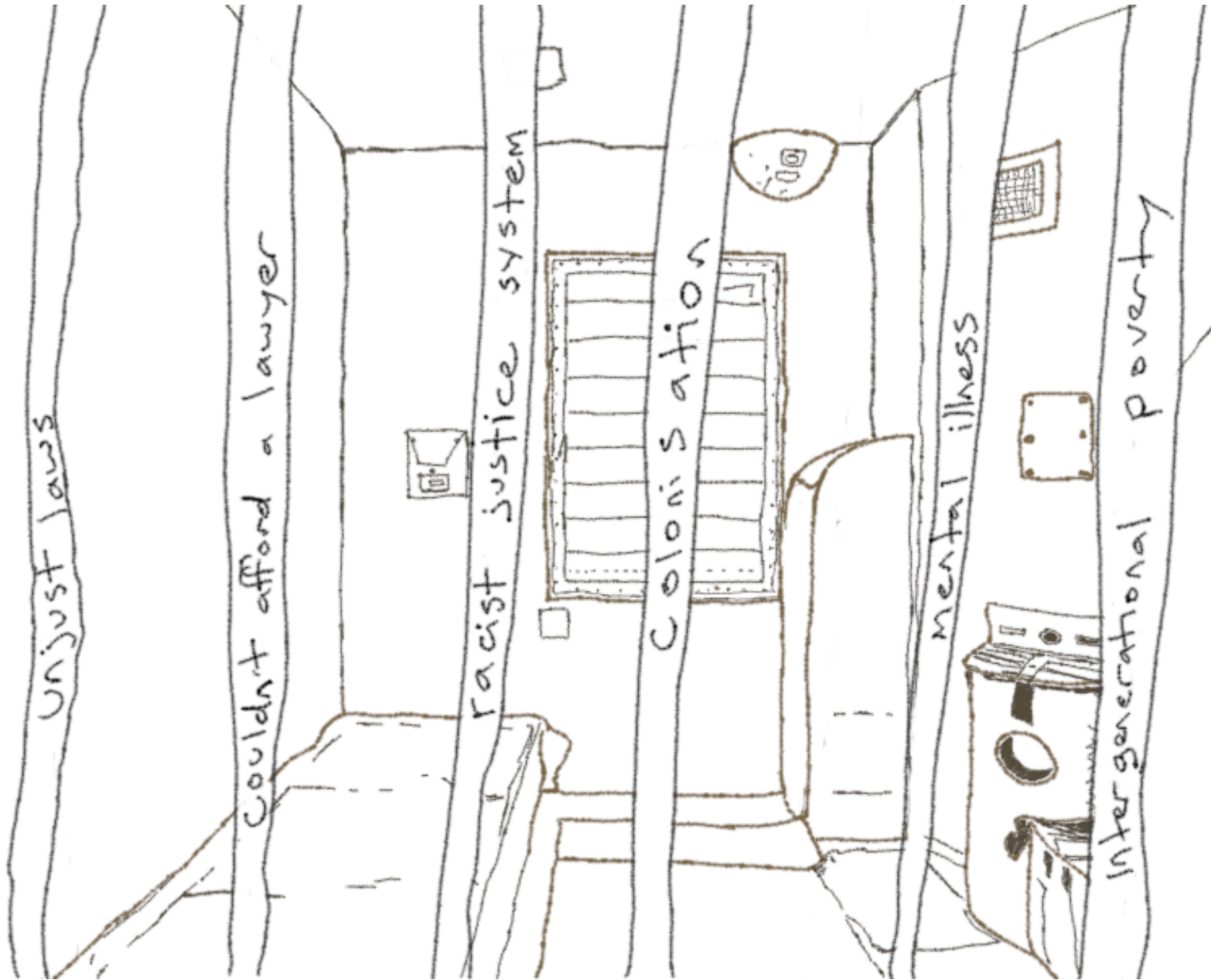


# NEWTOWN NEWS

HERETURIKŌKĀ / AUGUST 2019



BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE  
NEWTOWN COMMUNITY &  
CULTURAL CENTRE

# KIA ORA NEWTOWN!

Kia ora e te whānau!

This month's Newtown News is on the kaupapa of 'International Day for Prisoner Justice' - which is on the 10th of Hereturikōkā (August).

A couple of months ago I went along to a 'Justice Is Served' dinner put on by JustSpeak - the idea was to eat delicious kai (food) and kōrero (talk) about justice...with strangers! I was a bit nervous to talk about these tricky issues.

But JustSpeak gave us some great questions as prompts for our kōrero. One in particular got me thinking. It was: 'if a close friend or family member of yours committed a crime, how would you want them to be treated?' - on our table, we decided that we would want them to be treated like a human throughout the process - fairly and with respect - and if, after a fair process, it was clear that they had caused harm, we'd want them to be given the chance to change. Over the kai and kōrero, our table concluded that our current justice system just can't and doesn't tick these boxes.

**The system is unfair:** From research, it's clear that people are treated drastically differently according to their race - pākehā are stopped, searched and arrested less often than people of any other ethnicity, despite - for example - statistics indicating that drug usage levels are similar across the board. On the (rarer) occasions that pākehā ARE arrested, we get much more lenient sentences than Māori and others. So you end up with heaps of Māori and other non-white people in prison for non-violent, not harmful crimes, who just wouldn't be if they were pākehā.

**There's no chance to change:** As far as I can tell, being in prison means overcrowding, boredom, removal of choice and autonomy, separation from friends, whānau and support, not being allowed to vote, experiencing violence and much more. And then when you get out, there can be little or no support or services to help you get back into life. I know I would need support and help if I wanted or needed to change.

We're privileged to have been given a koha of personal stories from the prison system in this issue, which back up my feeling of anger at our current system. So does the information in this edition from organisations working to improve the justice system. For me, justice for prisoners looks like getting rid of prisons and imagining something better, where our communities grow together and solve our problems - rather than just saying 'out of sight, out of mind' and shoving people in locked boxes. Our current justice system just isn't working for any of us.

Ngā mihi - Ellie - [ellie@newtowncommunity.org.nz](mailto:ellie@newtowncommunity.org.nz) (Newtowners, we want you! to write, draw or design for the Newtown News - get in touch!)

P.S. make sure to check out the new designs for the Tool Library later in the edition - exciting!

Cover art (inspired by Paremoremo prsion) by Jess Stuart, design by haroofiroo

Thanks also for the ongoing support of our amazing local businesses! Please support them back!



THE  
RAMEN  
SHOP



Baobab Cafe

Peoples

# Notorious Newtowner

*'Sojourn' anonymously shares the story of her sentencing and first day in prison in this edition of 'Notorious Newtowner'.*

We never expected to go to prison. When the judge said 'remanded in custody', my friend screamed and fought. Several cops had to carry her, struggling down the stairs into the cells under the court. Me, I skipped. Wanting to keep up with her, not wanting the cops to man-handle her. Stupid, huh? Skipping to prison.

It was over 30 years ago but I still remember – the cops spitting on us as they pushed us into the paddy wagon, our arrival at prison where I asked if we could make phone calls. I was laughed at and told the only rights I had in prison were my right arm and right leg. Then we were separated for processing and I had to wait in a cell alone. Guards came and peered at me through the bars, calling me homophobic names.

I remember being so cold sitting there, cold and scared and angry. But finally it was my turn and I was led away for processing. I was stripped and ordered to rotate and bend and shake out my short hair. Lifting my feet so they could check my soles. Then the doctor... he checked my breasts, saying no one was ever too young for breast cancer. Next, having to bathe in front of the guards, listening all the time to them talk about my body, discussing my scars. Hearing them say they would never let the doctor touch them like that, that he only ever did that to the young girls. I swore and was slapped and reminded again about my rights in prison. Still only my right arm and my right leg.

Then I was allowed to dress. I was given an old-fashioned flannelette nightie and a cord string bag, my kit. It contained a toothbrush and a change of knickers. Finally I was taken through to the prison proper. My friend was already there, also wearing a nightie. The other women wore their day clothes – blue jeans and blue jerseys. We were welcomed, they'd heard on the radio we were coming. We shared rolies and talked (in those days you could smoke inside). I remember sitting on a sofa clutching my kit. Trying not to shake, and laughing, saying it was just like another health camp really. But it wasn't.

We ended up doing 6 months that time, and all it did was confirm that prison is a brutalising, dehumanising and bureaucratic place. It is about power, it's one of the most overtly violent and oppressive forms of state control. Prisons replicate the inequalities in society, you just need to see who gets locked-up: the people shunted through the (in)justice system are predominantly poor, low-class and Māori. Although it has been over 30 years since I spent time in prison in this country, I still vehemently believe that we need to abolish prisons and the systems that feed into it.

There will be no peace in this country until there is justice.



Image credit: [bit.ly/2XYp5NG](https://bit.ly/2XYp5NG)



# STILL A HUMAN BEING

BY AWATEA MITA

*Awatea is nearing the end of her Criminology, Psychology and Te Reo Māori degree studies. She has lived experience of the prison system and now fights for justice for other incarcerated people. Her day job is in Restorative Justice – a process which aims to reach justice for people involved in crimes without sending anyone to prison. Here she shares her story of life after leaving prison and moving to Wellington.*

I was nervous walking up the stairs. The building looked empty. I'd never been here before. I didn't know anyone. Was I going to be judged on my past, or acknowledged for the actions I was taking today? After being released in December I was finally granted permission in June to move to Wellington. I heard it had a good recovery community and there were plenty of 12-step meetings. Here I was now, in Newtown, standing outside an early childhood centre, preparing to go inside and join a women's support meeting. For me, this was the continuation of laying down foundations for a good life. I didn't know it at the time but Newtown, and the community that resides there, was going to play a significant role in putting the pieces of my life back together. I was looking for somewhere to belong and I was embraced.

I had first been paroled to Whakatane. I wore a 'bracelet' and, initially, I was on 24hr curfew. There were no meetings, no recovery community, no support to transition back into community. I had anxiety leaving the house anyway. Like the strictness of my curfew, this soon subsided. Then, when I could go to the shops, help my brother with shopping and transporting his children, I had anxiety being in crowds. I didn't have this kind of anxiety before I went to prison and I didn't connect my feelings of isolation to being in prison for the last 2 years. I had resigned myself to the fact I would never get a job and there would always be the stigma of being an offender.

When I got to Wellington I stayed at the Wellington Women's Boarding House until I found accommodation. It was an absolute blessing to not have the added burden of homelessness to contend with. Some of the women I knew were going back to unsafe living conditions because there was nowhere else for them to go. I enrolled at Vic. The crowds were so big and my anxiety returned. I was ready to give up on studying. But one friend reached out on Tuesday and another on Thursday and I made it through that first week. Having good numeracy and literacy skills meant I could make a good effort of studying.



My thoughts turned to the women who didn't have these skills - I wondered what they would do.

In the four years I've been here, I have a safe place to live, a car, a great job I'm leaving for an even better job, and after this semester, one more paper to complete a double degree in Psychology and Criminology. I want people know, in spite of what I've done wrong, I am still a human being.



# RIGHT TO VOTE

BY ZOE HIGGINS

*Zoe Higgins is a volunteer for JustSpeak, a youth-led movement for fairness in the Aotearoa justice system.*

One of the things I love about living in Newtown is the sense of community, generosity, and fairness among people living and working here. From the koha classes at the community centre, to the anti-racist signs in people's gardens - people in Newtown seem to share some values. So I'm glad to be writing in this month's issue about a question to do with community and fairness: voting rights for people in prison.



In 2010, MP Paul Quinn introduced a Members' Bill in parliament to remove voting rights from everyone in prison. He claimed that the Bill had "widespread support" - but, when pressed for details, had to admit that he had only talked to a meeting of 50 Grey Power members. That doesn't really sound like "widespread support" to me. It sounds like the opinion of an increasingly small number of people, that MPs should be "tough on crime" - despite 30 years of evidence that "tough" approaches do absolutely nothing to reduce reoffending or improve social outcomes. Anyway, the Bill was passed and, since 2010, going to prison gets you taken off the NZ electoral roll - no matter how long you go for, or for what offence.

Why is denying prisoners the right to vote so harmful? Well, first up, the right to vote is a right. It's not a privilege that the government gets to take away from some people. The right to have a voice, to be fully part of a democracy, to have a say in how Aotearoa New Zealand is governed - all of these are a part of living in a democratic country. Denying people in prison the right to vote is saying that they are not fully part of society; it contributes to alienating and excluding them. In 2018 the Supreme Court upheld a decision that the prisoner voting ban was inconsistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights.

Taking away prisoners' right to vote is not an isolated act. It's part of a bigger pattern of not listening to the voices of incarcerated people - of not treating people in prison as fully human. We know that most people in prison needed access to services and support that they didn't get. Nine out of ten people in New Zealand's prisons have mental health or addictions issues that largely go untreated. Many of them have histories of trauma, abuse, or social alienation. The over-representation of Māori in the prison system speaks to the ongoing historical effects of colonisation, raupatu (land confiscation), forced relocation, and repression of culture and language.

People leaving prison face significant challenges in re-integrating into society - including finding employment, finding housing, reconnecting with family/whānau and developing support networks. Denying prisoners the vote only adds to this burden by taking away more of their rights and dignity while they are incarcerated. If we want to make the New Zealand "justice system" really work for **justice**, we have to start listening to incarcerated people and their families. We have to think together about our values of fairness and community. And we have to push the government to restore prisoners' right to vote.

Join the campaign by signing JustSpeak's petition here: [bit.ly/32KBUio](https://bit.ly/32KBUio)



## PRISONER CORRESPONDENCE NETWORK

BY KATE MCINTYRE

The Prisoner Correspondence Network (PCN) is a volunteer-run pen-pal network connecting incarcerated people with the outside world. It was set up in 2016 and has fostered friendships between hundreds of people.

Being incarcerated, and separated from your family and community, can be such a lonely and isolating experience. Having the means to build new and lasting friendships does a lot to raise the spirits of incarcerated people while they're being held in such a bleak environment. Receiving a letter brightens their day. It doesn't just benefit incarcerated people though. Life can get stressful or isolating for those of us outside as well, and having a pen pal can bring joy to our lives as well.

The PCN has also helped to develop empathy and understanding among people outside whose lives have not been touched by the criminal justice system. Incarcerated people are just people, who feel the same hopes and dreams as all of us, share the same interests, hobbies, and love of particular TV shows. Most just want to live normal lives once they're released, find a job, find a house, raise a family, study, travel.

The vast majority of people in prison will be released one day. The PCN wants them to come out to a supportive community of people which cares about them and wants them to do well. Having regular contact with the outside world makes such a difference. Whether you're sending thoughtful, long-form letters, or just a few sentences, every letter makes a difference.

## PRISONS AND POLITICS: COMMUNITY LAW

This International Prisoner Justice Day we're talking to Digby Livingston, a rōia hapori - community lawyer at *Community Law Wellington and Hutt Valley*. Digby has been running the **free legal advice sessions in Newtown on the first Wednesday of every month from 11 am -12 pm at the Community Centre**. (Please bring your legal questions to us!) Digby also advises people incarcerated at Remutaka Prison in Upper Hutt. We spoke with him about prisons and politics.

### What are the barriers that people in prison face?

Even just postage can be a massive barrier. I bring envelopes with me when I go and visit the prison because otherwise people can't get in touch. When people get out of prison they often have debts that they need to deal with but they might be unemployed and homeless.

### What are the common misconceptions you encounter about prisons?

Individual responsibility. The idea that other people are in prison because they made bad choices. The reality is that most people are in prison because they never had good options, and if you had lived their life, you wouldn't be able to change that. The issues that people face are systemic issues like discrimination, homelessness, poverty, criminalisation, abuse and over-policing.

Community Law publishes Lag Law, a legal resource that is \$10 or free for people in prison and their whānau. Order a copy online or by writing to Community Law at PO Box 24-005, Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington 6142.



# JOBS NOT JAILS: FROM PEOPLES TO PRISONS

BY ELLIE CLAYTON IN CONVERSATION WITH MATT LAMASON

Matt Lamason, founder of Newtown institution Peoples Coffee, wants to “change the world with hot drinks.” Matt and I had a coffee (obviously) at Peoples (obviously) and had a chat about Matt’s post-Peoples project. The idea is to provide barista training to women currently incarcerated in Arohata - the women’s prison over in Tawa - and then to support those women into employment after their release. “NZ has a huge incarceration problem - we wanted to think of ways that we could right this social ill through business” says Matt.

The project actually started at Peoples a few years back, but Matt and the team have now set up a new cafe, Trade School Kitchen, which plans to “connect the inside with the outside” by directly employing some of the trained up women. Sadly for us Newtowners, the new cafe is in Naenae, rather than Newtown, but the kaupapa makes it definitely worth a roadtrip! Here’s what they’re up to:

- Building the women’s skills and self esteem - “learning how to make coffee is a practical way to find dignity, build self-esteem and learn skills.”
- Breaking down stereotypes of formerly incarcerated people - “we need to bridge the gap between the inside and the outside...it’s not black and white - ‘goodies’ out here and ‘baddies’ in there”
- Building relationships and understanding “the volunteer barista teachers become great advocates for people who are incarcerated - the relationships are long-lasting.”
- Supporting people into work & ending the cycle of incarceration - “it’s been shown that about 80% of how people stay out of prison when you’re released is having a good job!”
- Making excellent coffee and getting it to the people who need it - “you can get the drug you want and it just happens to be made by someone with this background of incarceration”

Things are unpredictable working with people who’ve been stuck in this system “we don’t know where and when people are going to be released - but they can contact our Trust when they get out and we’ll try and hook them up with something” - if there isn’t space at Trade School Kitchen, or the person lives somewhere else, Matt and the team have built links with other well-known cafes to broker jobs at other places, to expand the support.

In the future, they’re hoping to get Trade School Kitchen run entirely by people who have spent time in prison. They’re also hoping to set up a ‘train-the-trainers’ barista school, which could mean getting more volunteers into prisons and giving more people the chance to learn these skills. “The whole of NZ needs this kind of thing if we’re going to solve our problem of incarceration.”

Kia kaha Trade School Kitchen!

Find out more at:  
[tradeschoolindustries.org](http://tradeschoolindustries.org)

Or if you'd like to support this important work, contact Matt directly:

[Matt@tradeschoolindustries.org](mailto:Matt@tradeschoolindustries.org)



Barista trainer and two trainee baristas at Arohata Prison - Credit: Trade School Industries



# THE COST OF CONFINEMENT

BY REV RICHARD NOBLE, ASSISTANT PRIEST AT ST THOMAS' ANGLICAN CHURCH, NEWTOWN

A friend told me recently that he had to appear in court for some 'dumb sh\*t' that he'd done. Although it was for 'dishonesty' offenses, he knew he was likely facing a custodial sentence due to his criminal history. Another friend is completing a sentence of over 2 years in prison for low-level property offending against non-residential premises, in which mental health issues were a contributing factor. Twice in as many years I have accompanied people through the criminal justice system, with prison used seemingly as a punitive measure, even when the offender arguably poses no threat to anyone.

I cannot see the point of 'confinement' in response to criminal offending which is non-violent or does not otherwise pose a risk to the others' safety. For starters, it is expensive: Department of Corrections figures from 2011 give the cost of keeping someone in prison for a year as \$91,000! ([bit.ly/2xPXofp](http://bit.ly/2xPXofp)) In addition to the shame of a criminal record, there is an added stigma to being an ex-'jailbird'. Imprisonment is destructive of family life, with children of prisoners being punished for the crimes of their parents. Imprisonment places an added burden on social service agencies, with all the resources required to support prisoners, and help them rebuild their lives, upon release. Above all, imprisonment has been shown time and again to be unsuccessful in rehabilitating offenders, with quite the opposite being the case: folks more-than-often come out of prison more criminally-minded than when they went in!



Rimutaka Prison - credit Stuff

Earlier this year Stuff reported the case of a young man in a car who chased down and knocked over a random cyclist, causing permanent damage to his leg and significant loss of employment. Despite the violent nature of the offending, and its long-term impact on him and his family, the victim graciously said of the offender: 'He has got anger issues. He needs to deal with it and prison is not the place for that.' Thankfully this was reflected by a non-custodial sentence. ([bit.ly/2Lpni2D](http://bit.ly/2Lpni2D))

As a Christian, I'm given to leniency in these matters. I'm taught to pray, 'Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us', and also to live this out. A 'restorative' approach to criminal justice is not about letting people off or going easy on them. It takes holding people accountable for their offending seriously, but puts restoration and rehabilitation as the goal of the justice process.

I believe this is the direction that we as a society should be moving in. I therefore question why, if a non-custodial sentence can be imposed in the above case of the vindictive driver, why others like the people I'm supporting are being locked away for many months - and at great public expense - despite the much-lesser and non-violent nature of their offending? This question I hope to put before the judge when my friend comes up for sentencing later this year...



*The Newtown Tool Library is getting*  
**A NEW SPACE**

The Newtown Tool Library is moving to a new space! The Wellington City Council is upgrading the public toilets on Constable Street next to the library, there will be more loos and they'll have better accessibility too. The storage space attached to them will be repurposed for use by the Newtown Tool Library. The architects for the Our Town Newtown project - WSP Opus - have been working with the Wellington City Council to create a sweet new spot for the Tool Library that will have work benches, storage space, wash sinks, internet access, heating and more! We are excited to move the Tool Library to this more central spot, and we think it makes sense to have it next to the library for books too. All the libraries in one spot! Check out the floor plan and a concept image overleaf.

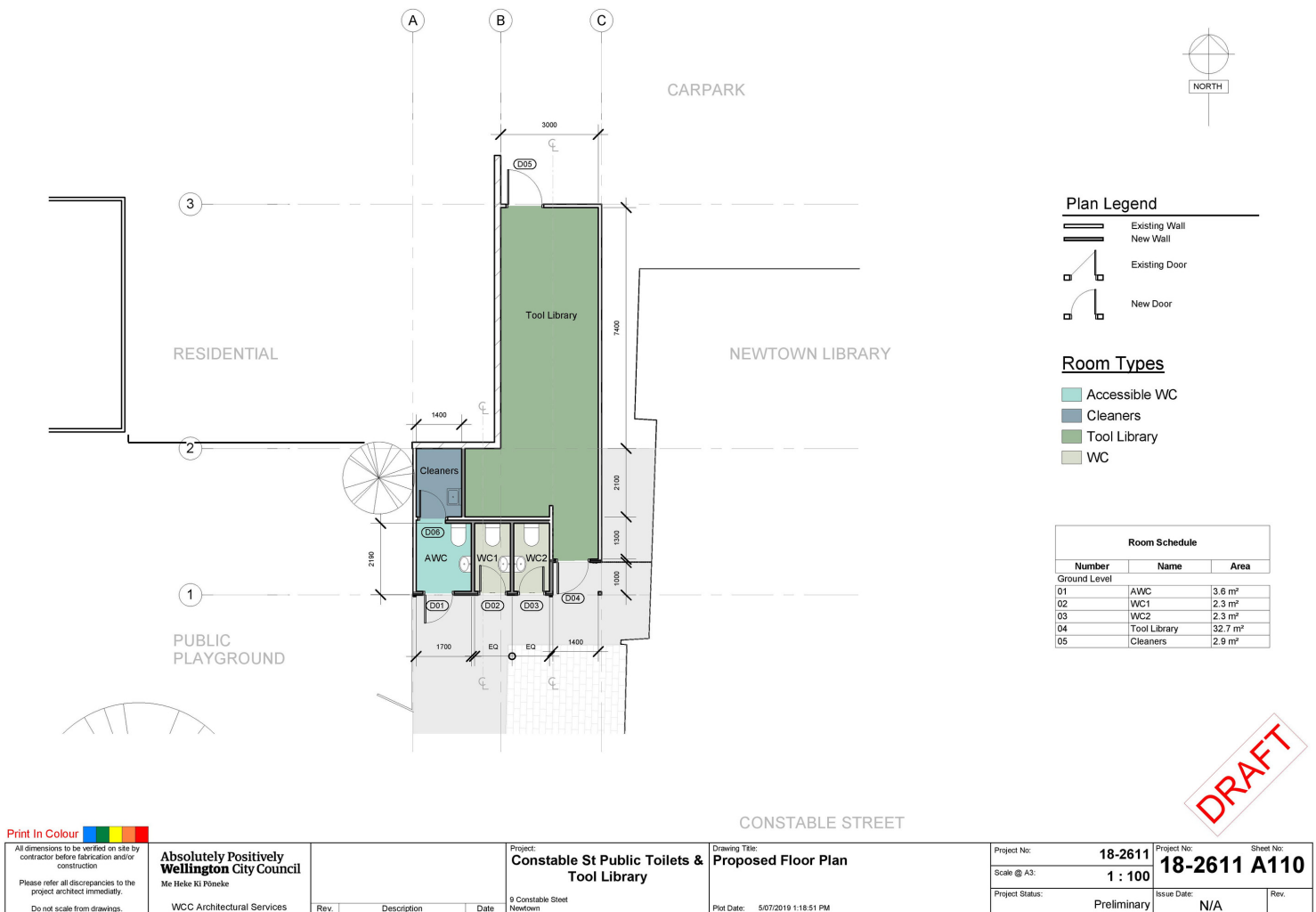
If you're just joining the conversation about the upgrades to the Newtown Community Facilities, you can check out the process so far on our website: [bit.ly/OurTownNewtown](http://bit.ly/OurTownNewtown)



Constable Street



# TOOL LIBRARY PLAN & CONCEPT IMAGE

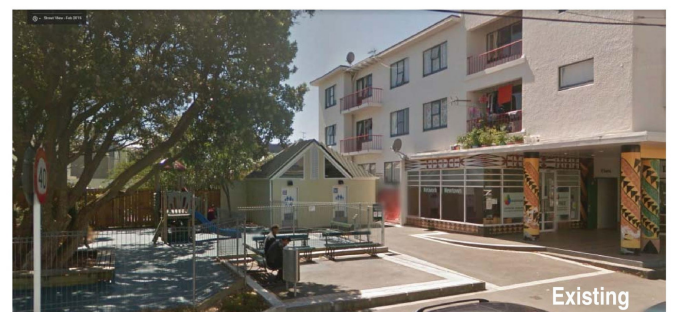


Constable Street Public Toilets  
Concept Image 2

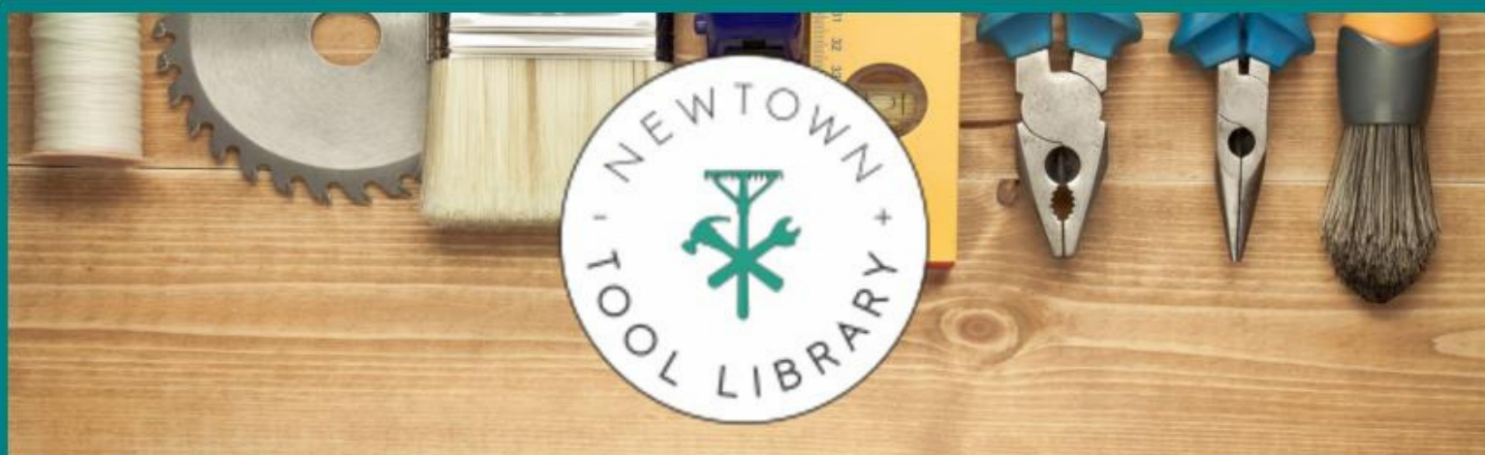


Ooooh,  
exciting!

Check out  
[bit.ly/OurTownNewtown](https://bit.ly/OurTownNewtown)  
for more info







*Newtown Community Centre has a*

# TOOL LIBRARY

Join the Tool Library and get access to  
Newtown's lending library for tools.

For more info or to sign up, visit the website:

[www.newtown-tool-library.com](http://www.newtown-tool-library.com)

Open Wednesdays 5-7pm and Saturdays 11am-1pm

At Newtown Community Centre,  
Corner Rintoul & Colombo Streets

# WHAT'S THE HAPP'S?

## AT THE NEWTOWN COMMUNITY CENTRE - CORNER RINTOUL/COLOMBO STREETS

**Pōneke Grief Support - August sessions**  
**Monday 5th and 19th from 7pm-8.30pm**

A new fortnightly grief support group for sharing experiences of grief & death — find the 'Pōneke Grief Support' group on Facebook or give the community centre a call (04-3894786).

**Animal Antics - Saturday 17th August, 5pm**

Manawa Ora Children Community choir presents a selection of animal songs from around the world.

Guest performers Kubatana and the Moringa dancers. \$15/adults, \$5/children, \$30/family email [lala.danceandsing@gmail.com](mailto:lala.danceandsing@gmail.com) for tickets or just turn up!

**Community Music Healing Sessions - Sunday evenings 7-8.30pm (starts Aug 11th)**

A timeless space of respite from our busy lives, a journey of sound & music promoting healing & well-being. Koha entry. Registrations essential - [facebook.com/carlosriegelmusic](https://facebook.com/carlosriegelmusic) or [carlosriegel@musician.org](mailto:carlosriegel@musician.org)

**Self-Care Fair - August 3rd, 1-5pm**

Wellington Timebank invites you to a Self-Care Fair, to celebrate looking after ourselves! There will be lots of activities including meditation, positive thinking and yoga classes, tea, coffee, tasty snacks, massage, mindful colouring & other things to make you feel good! Bring ya friends for a day of self-care and chill! More details here: [bit.ly/2Z04fif](https://bit.ly/2Z04fif)

**MaleVocale present: NZ Road-trip - Saturday 31st August, 7.30-8.30pm**

A concert of new and pre-loved songs charting lesser-known parts of New Zealand. Hit the road, accompanied by men's voices with percussion by Andreas Lepper. Devised and directed by Julian Raphael. Tickets \$20 or \$10 concession from Eventfinda, or on the door.

## AT NEWTOWN HALL, 71 DANIELL STREET

**Taiko Drumming - Sunday 4th August**  
**1.30 - 2.30pm**

Try Japanese ensemble drumming with the Narukami Taiko team. No drumming experience or musicianship needed - it will be a fun hour where you can try it out, learn some simple rhythms, and play alongside the team members. Suitable for anyone who can hold a drumstick. Koha entry. Check out [facebook.com/narukamitaiko](https://facebook.com/narukamitaiko) for more info.

## AT NETWORK NEWTOWN, 9-11 CONSTABLE STREET, NEWTOWN

**Addictive Eaters Anonymous (AEA) -**  
**Thursdays 7.30-8.30pm**

A Twelve Step fellowship based on Alcoholics Anonymous. AEA members have found recovery from binge eating, anorexia, bulimia, other forms of addictive eating and compulsive exercise. For more info visit: [addictiveeatersanonymous.org](https://addictiveeatersanonymous.org)

## ELSEWHERE IN NEWTOWN

**Carrara park upgrade engagement**

Carrara Park is accessed via Regent and Daniell Streets in Newtown. What does this park need to serve the community better? BBQs? Toilets? Waterfountain? Accessible play stuff? Tell Wellington City Council [bit.ly/2Gj7pqe](https://bit.ly/2Gj7pqe) / call in to Kia Ora Newtown at 6 Constable street to submit in person or for support with an online submission.

**Everybody's Choir – Mondays 1.30pm**

This choir is for you! And you! For everybody in fact! With a particular focus on improving mental health, this fun choir sings modern songs with great musicians. Join them every Mondays at St Thomas Church, Newtown (next to McDonalds). Email [geoff@therockacademy.co.nz](mailto:geoff@therockacademy.co.nz) or call 021 565 750 for more info