



Newtown News

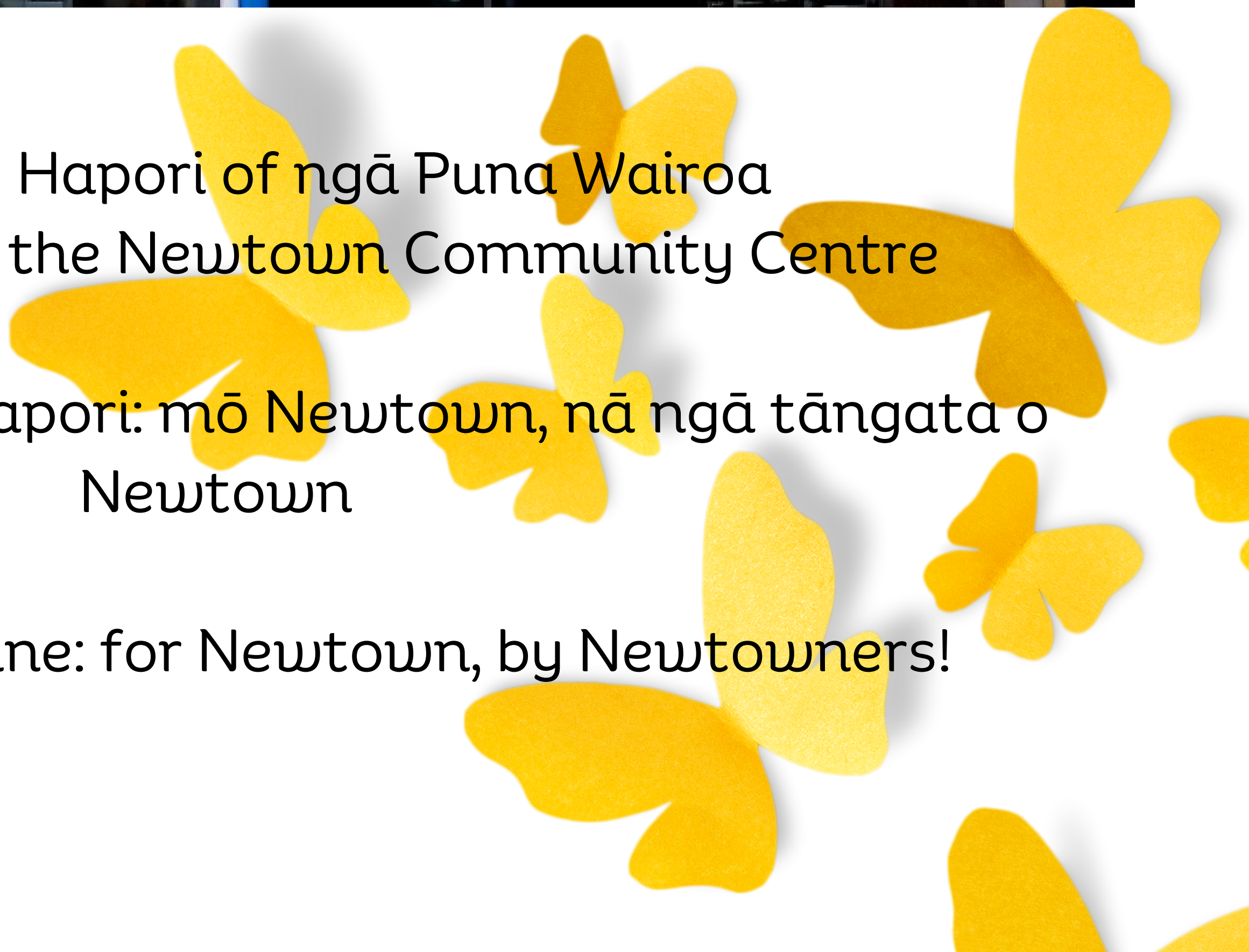
Hakihea/December 2023 – Kohitātea/January 2024



Nā Te Whare Hapori of ngā Puna Wairoa
Brought to you by the Newtown Community Centre

Tō koutou makahini hapori: mō Newtown, nā ngā tāngata o
Newtown

Your community zine: for Newtown, by Newtowners!



KIA ORA NEWTOWN

Kia ora tātou / hey everyone!

How did this happen? It's December already - that sure snuck up fast! I'm looking forward to hitting a festival and spending time with whānau and friends in the summer sun, hopefully some fresh awa swims too!

I'll also be waiting about in Pōneke for one of my besties to have a baby – I'll get to witness the miracle of birth (!) support my e hoa and welcome in a New Year with a new bub in it!

The Centre will be closed from 23rd December through 14th January. Don't come knocking, because no one will be home! We'll be reopening 15th January at 9am.

Reflecting on 2023, it feels like we've lived many years! It's been a big one! A few key highlights - We waved "see ya soon" to Manager Ellie in April as she took off for a year of travelling. In May, we moved back into the renovated community centre – but work was still ongoing. We reconnected with many people being back in our old (but new) digs! We kept programmes and events ticking along as we also extended so many of our offerings.

Our team at the Centre have achieved so much in their mahi of supporting the community – across our venues, sub-organisations and projects. This isn't a funding accountability report back and I'm stuck with a small wordcount, so I won't bombard this page with awesome stat's and stories (dang)! I'll just say - I'm so proud of the work that we've done this year and the wonderful people that I get to do it with – you can read about one of them, Maddy on pages 5-6 and another one of em' Anahid on the page opposite.

We welcome Megan to the team! She's been hired to help us out for a few months with bits and bobs like putting together the Newtown News (this thing that you're holding!) – if you haven't yet had the pleasure to meet her, then pop on down to say 'Kia ora' – we're thrilled to have her!

Ngā mihi, Eryn (she/her)

eryn@newtowncommunity.org.nz

Cover picture is a photo of Paul Forrest's Monarch Butterflies gracing the Newtown Shoes building. To find out more about Paul's project visit : www.thebutterflybowlingclub.co.nz

Thanks for the support of our amazing local businesses! Please support 'em back!



The views and opinions expressed in this publication are solely those of the original authors and other contributors. They do not necessarily reflect those of the Newtown Community Centre.

Notorious NEWTowner

Linda sits down with Anahid Connor who is a superstar Newtown Community Centre volunteer for a chat about her love of cooking, community and her two kūrī.

Special places like the Newtown Community Centre can only exist because of the special people that give their time, energy and love to making it so – and Anahid Connor is one of those people.

On virtually every single Thursday of the year, the first person to arrive at the Centre, always in a bright mood and ready to get to work, is Anahid, one of 4 volunteers who make up the Quick Kai crew. Since 2022, Anahid has been an essential part of providing Quick Kai to our community, which are ready-to-eat, frozen vegetarian meals, available to anyone for just \$2. From shopping, food prep, cooking, packaging up, labelling, and selling the meals – it's all done by this amazing group.

Even before Quick Kai, Anahid was an active volunteer at the Centre, doing everything from helping with Timebank (www.timebank.org.nz), watering plants and tallying up coins from donations. But when asked about her favourite part of working at the Centre, Anahid, without hesitation, says COOKING! Anahid LOVES cooking so much and is especially grateful to kaiako, Andy, for teaching her the chopping skills she now uses for Quick Kai as well as for cooking for herself and her family.



Anahid's attention to detail shouldn't come as a surprise as her both parents are math whizzes – her mum even taught maths – and her favourite subject when she attended Wadestown school was maths. Hints of her abilities are also apparent when Anahid talks passionately to her peers about the latest cricket, rugby or football matches and rattles off the latest scores and tournament tallies like it's her first language!

Something else that Anahid loves is trains! One of her favourite memories is an adventure she and her father went on that included a stop in Ireland, followed by a fantastic train trip from England to Switzerland!

When she's not helping the Quick Kai crew, or playing/watching sports, Anahid enjoys hanging out with her friends, talking, having picnics at the park or swimming at the beach – especially at Island Bay, where her two dogs, Milton and Alfie, can run free.

And Anahid loves the Newtown Community Centre and encourages everyone to come in, relax and have a cuppa!

When asked if Anahid could make any wish, what would it be, she simply responds, "Peace – and no stress – for everyone." And, she adds, she wants to wish everyone a great holiday season and a happy new year for 2024!

HISTORY FILES: WHAREPAKU 'ROUND THE CITY

By Chris Rabey

Ever wonder how all the public loo's around Pōneke came to be? The 'burbs and many parts of the city have had restrooms for people on the go for quite some time, and many of them well stocked! The Council looked after most of these and had a schedule of charges for the use of them as well as a hired staffer. Here's a throwback to the 1950's gear and coin for our toots around town.

REST ROOM CHARGES

Bath, towel supplied – 2s 0d.

Shower, towel supplied – 2s 0d

Use of washroom, towel supplied – 6 pence

Extra towel – 4 pence

Parcels - 6 pence per day

Use of iron for 15 minutes – 1 shilling



We have a regular who comes on in to sit on our comfy couches and drink a cup of tea - let's call him Pete.

Pete is a friendly face around the place, and knows heaps of the going on's here at the Centre. Pete would tell you that our Justice of the Peace service is a busy one - with people coming in to get documents sighted and signed, often requiring photocopies. We charge 20 cents per black and white copy. It seems most people don't carry coins on them - as many people want to use eftpos for 20cent transactions - this just isn't really worth our time! So we've started running an informal pay it forward model. Often people give us \$1 when they've only copied one item. We tell those without coins "don't stress, it all evens out"!

Pete must have overheard all of this, and every month pops into the office with cash for us "for the people that need the JP" - he won't take no for an answer.

Pete doesn't have the fancy car or own his own home, but he does have an open, warm and generous spirit - which we reckon is worth way more. Thanks Pete - you're a good one!

Chinese New Year

By Juping Zhou

Chinese New Year, the annual 15-day festival in China begins with the new moon on the first day of the lunar calendar. Festivities last until the following full moon. Each year in the repeating zodiac cycle is represented by a zodiac animal, each with its own reputed attributes. There are 12 zodiac signs in the order of Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig. Each animal has its own unique characteristics. 2024 is a year of the Dragon which starts from 10th February 2024 and ends on 29th January 2025.

The Chinese New Year is also known as the Spring Festival. It marks the end of winter and the beginning of spring. It is one of the most important holidays in Chinese culture and has strongly influenced New Year celebrations of its 56 ethnic groups. It has been celebrated in China for over 4 thousand years, with various forms of activities among the diverse regions of China. It is a major event in some other East Asian countries.

The Chinese New Year is associated with several myths and customs. The festival was traditionally a time to honour deities as well as ancestors. Often, the evening preceding Chinese New Year's Day is an occasion for Chinese families to gather for the annual reunion dinner. For those who live far away from their hometown, this holiday is the perfect opportunity to return home to reunite with their loved ones to spend quality time together. It is also a tradition for every family to thoroughly clean their house to sweep away any ill fortune and to make way for incoming good luck. Another custom is the decoration of windows and doors with red paper-cuts and couplets. Popular themes among these paper-cuts and couplets include good fortune or happiness, wealth, and longevity. Other activities include lighting firecrackers to drive away evil and giving money in red envelopes symbolizing good wishes and luck for the new year ahead. Lion dance is performed to bring good luck and scare away evil spirits. The dragon dance is also performed during Chinese New Year to bring good luck to people, therefore the longer the dragon is in the dance, the more luck it will bring to the community.

Today Chinese New Year is celebrated by Chinese communities around the world. Wellington's Chinese New Year Festival was launched in 2002. It has been a significant event in Wellington in the past two decades, with only one pause in 2023 due to Covid pandemic. It has been rebranded to Lunar New Year Festival and will be celebrated on 17th & 18th February 2024 for the wider community to experience and be enriched by the vibrant and diverse culture.



TRANS TIPS *with Maddy*

of smart•newtown

By Madelyn Brenycz

This month's column is gonna be a little different. It's not about tech tips. It is instead a story about the best decision of my life.

First off, this is not a joke. Second, this is a big and pretty much irreversible step forward, as public declarations often are, but it's one that I've been dying to take. So here it is, with full candour and terror: I'm transgender.

I've been certain of this since May of 2023. And ever since, I've been transitioning, or preparing to transition, in secret. If you've read my column before or visited Smart Newtown, you probably know me by a different name, but outside of work I go by Maddy (short for Madelyn), and my pronouns are she/her. I am a trans woman. Yep.

Some of you might wonder what that means, especially if you've never heard the words **trans** or **transgender** before. We've prepared some resources, linked at the end and available in print at Smart Newtown and the Newtown Community Centre.



You might also wonder why I hid it for so long. And I could give you a litany of reasons, starting with safety concerns, imposter syndrome, and just not feeling ready. My ongoing transition has been amazing, filled with lots of little wondrous things, moments of unexpected comfort, and the joy of (as best I can put it) relaxing into just existing. It's also really, really scary.

Although this article will be published in December, I am actually writing it the weekend after Halloween. I had a blast rocking my witch costume, which some of you saw, and thanks for all the kind and astounded comments if you did. You probably didn't know it was a calculated move to test the waters on wearing more feminine clothes to work, which I've been doing in the days since. That came after weeks of gradually phasing in makeup and jewellery. I've been trying to get more comfortable presenting how I want to and gauging reactions. So, if you've been wondering, that's what all that was about.

At this moment, I haven't yet come out to the other Smart Newtown or Community Centre staff, aside from our manager Eryn Gribble and Rowena Tun of Timebank, who've both been kind and supportive in their own ways. I plan to tell the others sometime near Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20th.

I hope they will accept me*. If you're reading this, I hope you will too. I've found that being trans means you're often running on hope, which is not the inclination of the cynical guy I used to think I was. While I knew far back in May that I wanted to transition, at first it seemed impossibly difficult. I honestly never thought I would get this far, at least not in anything close to a reasonable time. Sometimes I have to remind myself to stop and look back at the ground behind me to feel how far I've come.

I had a lot of help from some very dear people. I don't want to list everyone and risk leaving someone out, but to my smart and compassionate former psychologist, to Adam and Ben at Every Gender, to my skilled and patient makeup teacher, to the kind queer woman whose delicious baked goods went straight to my hips, and so many others, thank you all for being there for me.

To those reading, even if you understand the concept of trans, you might still wonder why I, *personally*, am doing this. I'll caveat this by saying that there isn't one trans experience, and my story is not anyone else's. For me, this is why:

When I was born, some bureaucrat took a look at me and declared "*male*". That story got legally embedded, stuck with me my whole life, and shaped my relationships and the expectations others placed on me, as well as the ones I placed on myself.

I didn't always know that I am trans, but I think I did always feel that something was wrong. To truly be a woman while the rest of the world thinks I'm a man, to not have a body that reflects the authentic me or be allowed to express myself in a way that feels natural . . . I'd liken it to working a crappy customer service job, only it's one you can never leave.

Your friends, flatmates, family, the people at the cafe . . . they think they're talking to you, but all you hear are summons for help on Aisle 9, and you jump into character with your most cheerful voice and forced smile, because you have to. It's expected of you. You try desperately to be the best employee, to master this or that aspect of the job, thinking if you could just accomplish enough you'd finally feel whole. You never do. I haven't even mentioned the hideous uniform which never comes off.

It sucks, it's a hollow life, but you've never known different. Doesn't everyone feel this aimless and alienated all the time? You may not even know that something is wrong, aside from things never ceasing to feel off, and that offness manifesting in myriad ways too numerous and idiosyncratic to list, and which only make sense once you realise the underlying theme.

My life since transitioning isn't always easy. In fact in many respects it's gotten harder, as well as vastly more dangerous. But I'm happy more often than not, and even when not I'm still glad to be alive. Between the spikes of fear and depths of sadness, I finally feel comfortable in my own skin. While the physical changes may be slow, they are there, and I can see myself growing into a body I love. My relationships click in a way they never have before. When people say my name, it feels like they're talking to me instead of shouting "*Waiter!*". I can imagine good things for myself, because my future belongs to me. And I sleep well, with dreams that are worthy to be called that.

Trans people sometimes call this mixture of pleasant emotions and subjective well-being **gender euphoria**. It's a joy I hope is contagious. I will still be there at Smart Newtown, helping to manage the less pleasant emotions that arise when you have computer issues. And whether you need my help or not, you're welcome to stop by and say hi to the new girl. My name is Maddy, and I'm the kaiwhakaako & kaimahi tari [trainer & administrator] at Smart Newtown.

* **Addendum 21/11/23:** They have. Thank you Linda, Andy, Phil, and especially Mohammed. Your support means so much to me. It's a privilege to know you all.

Resources

- **Trans Explained** - t.ly/WVCRj
- **Pronoun Do's and Don'ts** - t.ly/6Befo
- **Frequently Asked Questions about Transgender People** - t.ly/fW6Dc
- **Te Ara: Gender Diversity** - t.ly/V8IMk
- **Trans 101 Glossary: Transgender Terms and How to Use Them** - t.ly/w5Mpw
- **Takatāpui: Part of the Whānau** - t.ly/b99LW

I like long walks in the hills and getting blown away in the wind. But I do not like getting lost in the town belt...

BY AMBER CLAUSNER

There's a quiet that stretches from Roseneath to the roundabout on Constable street where traffic turns between Hāitaitai, Newtown, Kilbirne. This quiet sounds like rustling leaves, kākā, tuī, distant traffic, the moon rising behind the Tararua ranges and the sun setting behind Te Kopahou reserve. Paths connecting city to suburbs roam between barren pine forests, regenerating bush and empty patches of green.

These grassy clearings are often twisted into the local geography, making them impossible for sport, but they are still ripe for use as public space. However, the only people using these spaces seem to be those walking dogs, mountain biking or running.

This section of the town belt seems a mystery for many. It's not common to use it as a commuter route, or as a corridor from one suburb to the next. Unlike green spaces in other cities, it's not commonplace to

see hoards of people in the summer populate these parks playing frisbee, picnicking, playing bad music too loudly. The first barrier is physical; to get to any of these parks is a steep climb, and the surface and width of the tracks do not support wheelchair users or prams. Beyond physical limitations, the issues deterring access to this wealth of public space seems to be lack of knowledge and familiarity.

At the top of Owen street, I am welcomed by an orange 'Newtown to Mt Victoria' wayfinder, a map outlining the closest dog walking area, a sign forbidding motorbikes, and a friendly cat. None of these help a person new to the town belt, who would travel someway (possibly in the wrong direction) to find a map and work out which coloured wayfinders will take them where they intend to go.

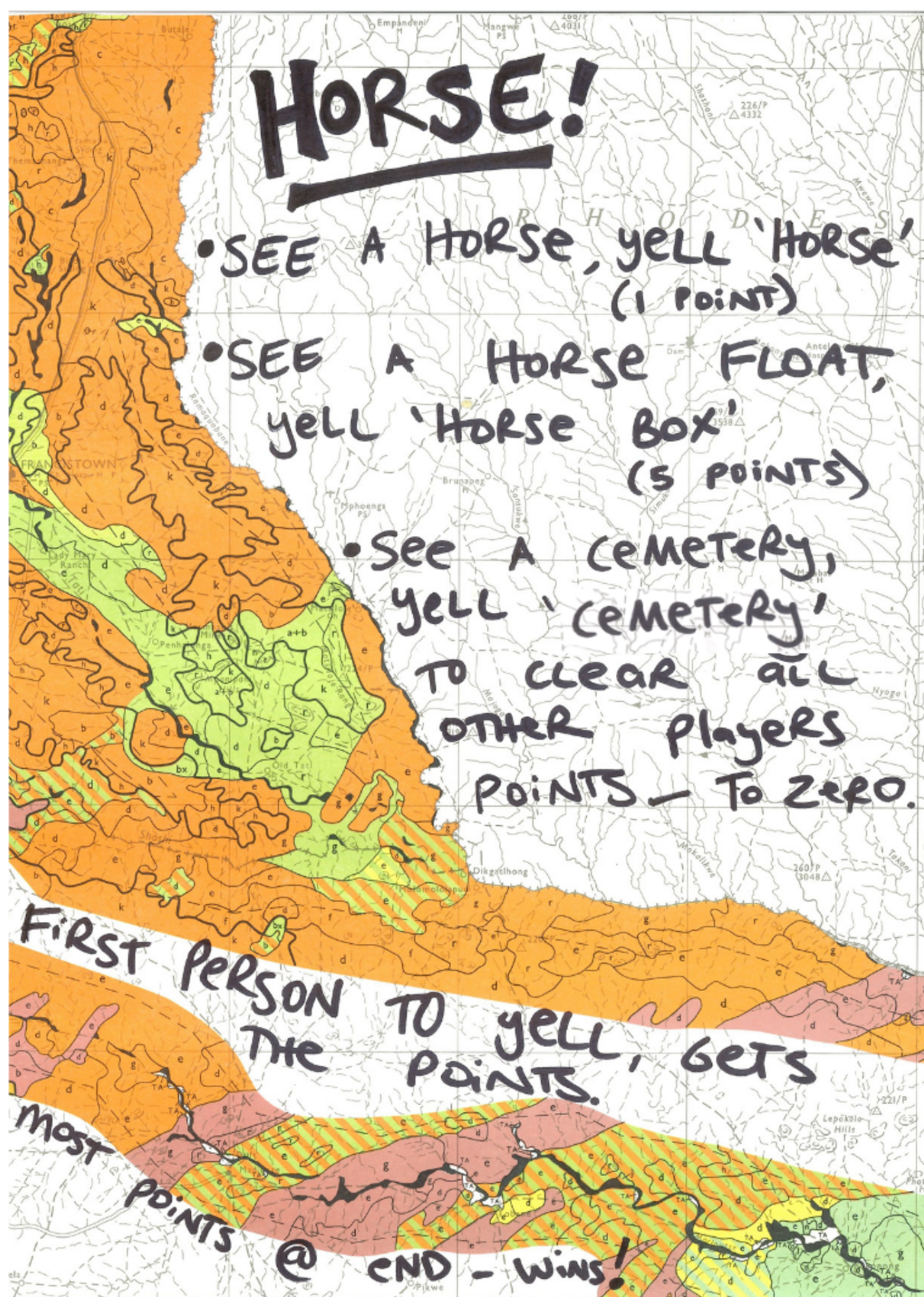
Even with wayfinders and maps, signage is inconsistent and sometimes disorientating. When your first hīkoi in public space involves walking back on yourself multiple times, twirling in sweaty circles trying to work out which way google maps thinks you're facing, you're not likely to relive that experience voluntarily.

So, who is the town belt for? Alongside dog owners and mountain bikers, it seems that Wellington City Council is prioritising the town belt's appeal to tourists; Mt Victoria lookout is often the default point of departure or destination. Further, there's a map on Maitairangi, where the Hobbit filming location makes the list of 'points of interest', but the Te Akatarewa Pā site does not.

With better signage designed to local need, the town belt could be a public place in summer; for sunsets and moon-rises, for commutes, for picnics or for playing frisbee, or bad music too loudly.

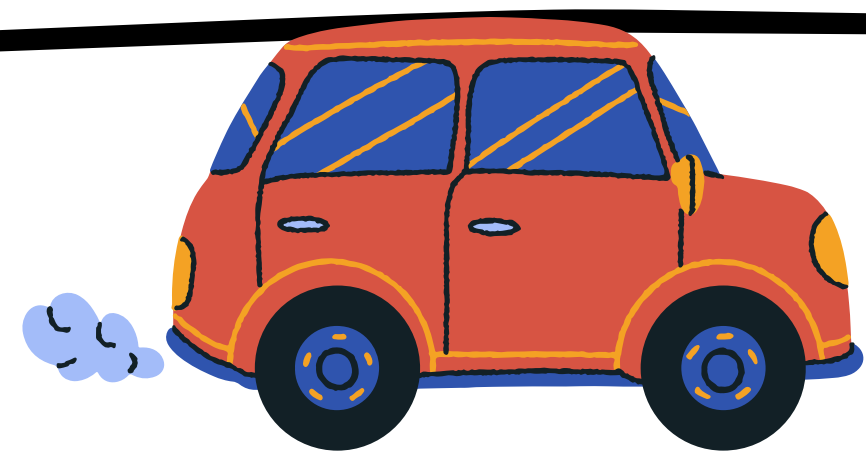


ROADIE GAMES FOR THE HOLIDAYS!



OLD SKOOL 21 ???'S

- Someone thinks of something
- Folks begin asking questions
- You can't repeat a question that has been asked!
- Whoever guesses it right gets to start the next round



BATTLE OF THE BANDS

- One person gives a theme, like "songs about cities" or "love songs"
- Two players have 60 seconds and takes a turn singing their song.
- The car judges and picks the best.
- Tally up scores at the end of the game for the WINNER!

B GRADE MOVIE

TAKE TURNS EXPLAINING THE PLOT OF A FILM....
.... BADLY!
OTHERS TRY TO GUESS.
...for example...

* STOCKHOLM SYNDROME WORKS (Beauty & the Beast)

* DUDE PUNCHES HIMSELF. ENCOURAGES OTHERS TO PUNCH HIM. QUILTS HIS JOB. (FIGHT CLUB)

* RICH GIRL LETS POOR MAN FREEZE TO DEATH (TITANIC)

Sweet As Summer Spots!

As we roll into summer here in Pōneke, we checked in with Centre staff about their favourite spots for a place to swim, moe kinikini in the shade, or patio for a cold drink....here's what they said!



"The Wellington Botanic Garden is my favorite spot. I like the sweet fragrances and the warm outdoor cafe spots. There's nothing better than coffee on a sunny hilltop."

- Maddy

"My favourite spot in Wellington is just off Alexander Road, just past the Wellington Table Tennis Stadium on a park bench overlooking Newtown (Woof Woof Ruf on Google Maps). It's a beautiful sunny spot and is often sheltered from the wind, a lovely place to sit and contemplate the universe!" - Andy



"In the Berhampore Island Bay Community Orchard with my kids running around while I am weeding or tending to the beautiful trees. Then having some baking and coffee in the shade."

- Rowena

"I regularly walk from Newtown over the hills to the South Coast and then over to Island Bay, which is home to the amazing Island Bay Marine Education Centre, where you can experience sea flora and fauna and snorkel in the Taputeranga Marine Reserve. There's also a fantastic playground, coffee/ice cream shop and fish and chips at Island Bay! Yay summer!!" - Linda



"I'll never miss a chance to promote Newtown - so my 'Sweet as Summer Spot' is Carrara Park! There's always a lush little corner to put down a picnic blanket and enjoy the sun and a yarn with friends."

- Eryn



"An early summer morning run along the parade at Scorching Bay always sets me right. And anywhere I can see dolphins, whales, etc!" - Megan



Kia ora from Kaicycle!

Your local not-for-profit composting enterprise and regenerative urban farm located at 5 Hospital Rd, Newtown. By Rose Dohig

We're headed for a hot, dry summer, so we wanted to share some of the techniques we use at Kaicycle to look after our soil and help it retain water that you could try too! The basis of healthy soil (and healthy plants) is a healthy soil ecosystem. This ecosystem includes bacteria, fungi, nematodes, worms - the list goes on. Our role as gardeners is to create a hospitable environment for as much soil biodiversity as we can. We look after the microbes, and they look after our plants.

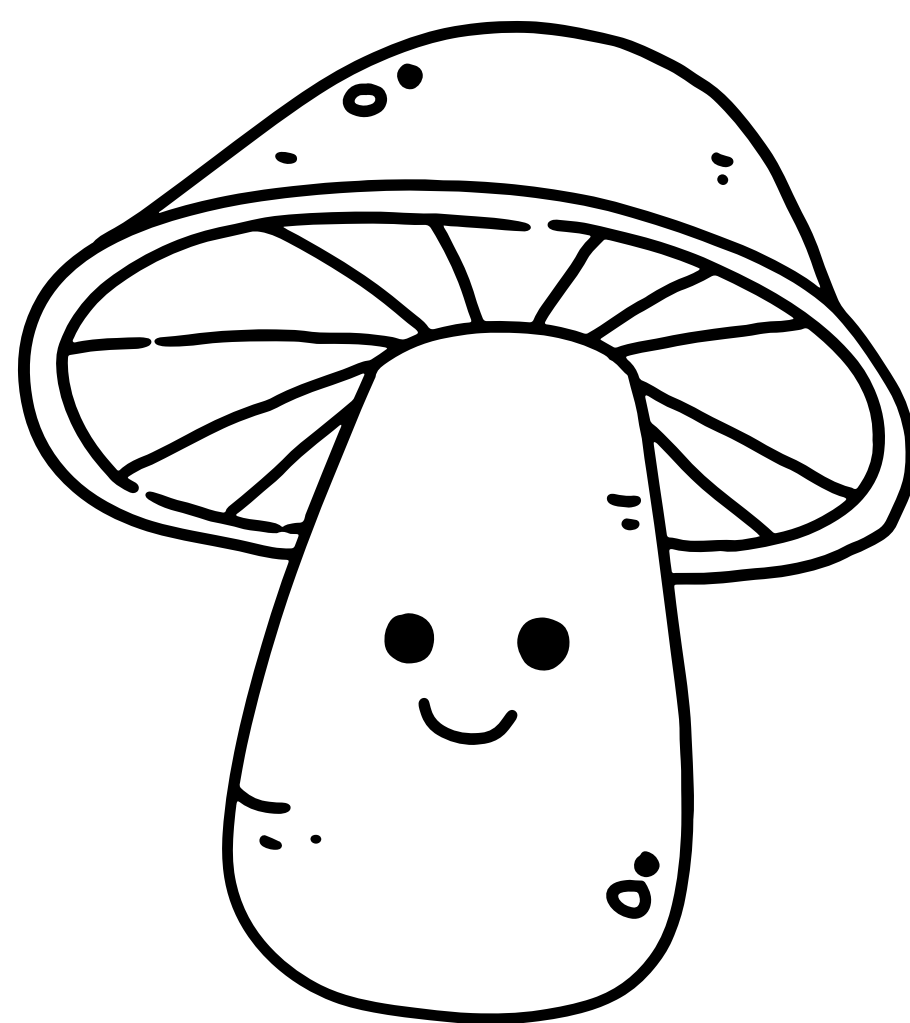
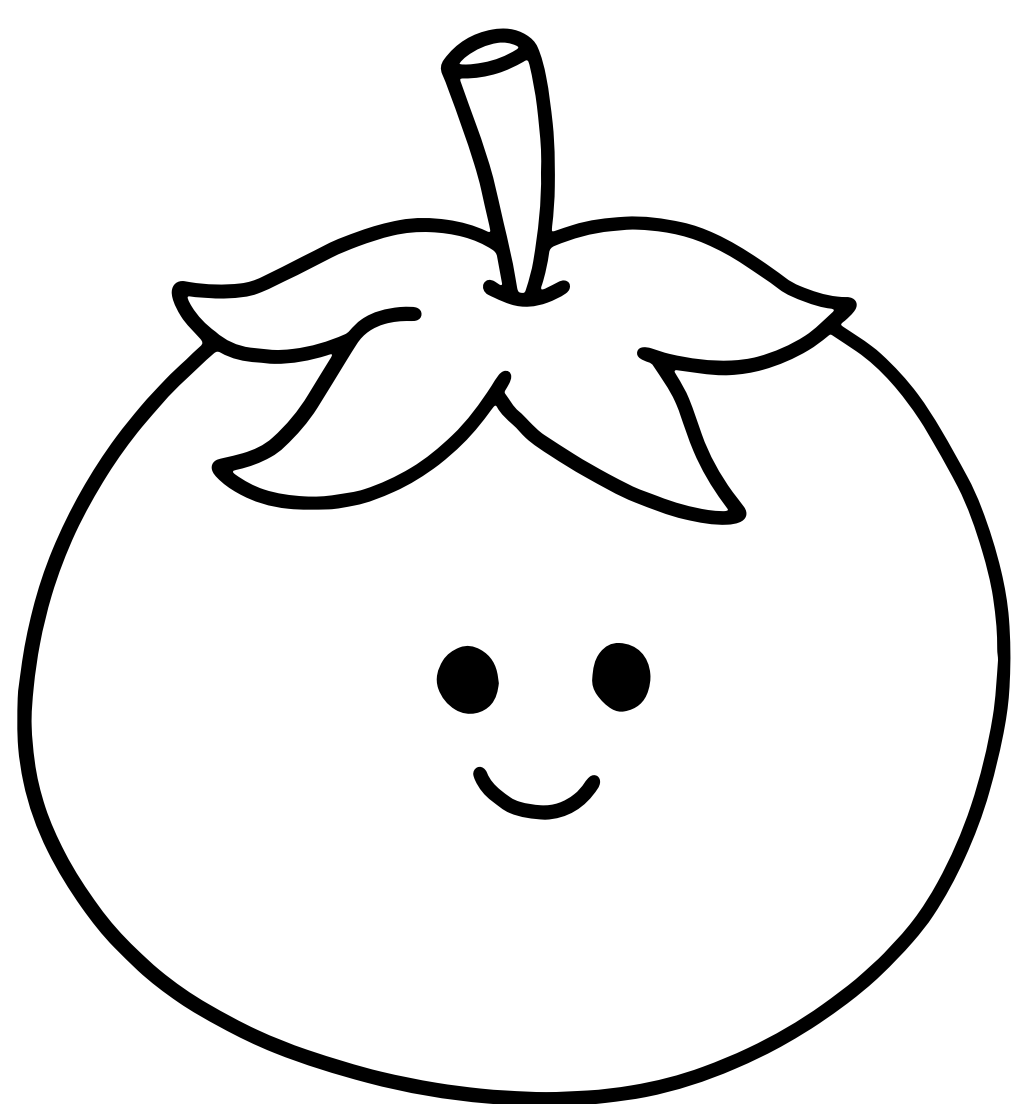
- Try no dig, or minimal dig. When we dig in soil we interfere with the soil structure, dry out our soil, and leave it vulnerable to erosion.
- Instead of weeding, try the 'chop and drop' method by using a sharp knife to chop the stem of your weeds at soil level leaving the roots in the ground. You can then use these cut weeds as mulch. Note there are some pesky plants like grasses and creeping buttercup that can grow back from their roots, so these ones we do pull out.
- Keep the soil surface covered with plants or mulch. In nature we don't see areas of bare soil and we want to replicate this in our gardens.
- Add a bit of 'living compost' to your soil to boost the microbial life. Home compost is great for this.
- Grow a variety of plants together in a bed. Biodiversity on top of the soil = biodiversity below the soil. It's great for keeping pests away and keeping the nutrients in your soil in balance. If you want to get nerdy about this you could read up on polycropping or planting in guilds - it's really cool stuff!

We love sharing our learnings and welcoming our community onto the farm. Join us at one of our upcoming events or volunteer sessions.

We hold regular volunteer sessions every week on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.

You can find out all about volunteering at kaicycle.org.nz/volunteer and all about our events at kaicycle.org.nz/events-calendar

Or email our Community Manager Rose at community@kaicycle.org.nz



What's the Happs?

Newtown Community Centre
(Corner of Rintoul/Colombo Sts)

Elsewhere in Newtown

Support the Wellington Timebank! BUY A RAFFLE TICKET!

Thanks to the generosity of our community of good people and businesses we have an amazing collection of prizes worth over \$1,000! \$5 gets you three tickets and three entries to WIN one of the two major prize packs plus spot prizes! Cut off for online ticket sales will be 1pm Thursday 14th December. You can purchase tickets in person at Newtown Community Centre up to 12pm on the day of the draw (Friday 15th December). More deets here bit.ly/3N5Xx5z

Join the Wellington Timebank! A community of people who share their skills, talents, knowledge, and time – for Time Credits, not money! Intrigued? Find out more here bit.ly/47bm1Sn

Free Soup Fridays – Final of the Year!

Friday, 15 December, 1 - 2pm

Have a bowl of hot soup & connect with community. We'll have some dessert at this end-of-year gathering as well!

Know Your Stuff - Saturday, 16 December, 1pm – 3pm

Know your Stuff are licensed drug checkers offering free, legal, confidential drug checking. Bring your stuff. No cops, no judgement, no names, just info to keep people safe. bit.ly/3rnHx7n

Newtown Community Centre / Te Whare Hapori o ngā Puna Waiora - Holiday Hours!

The Centre will be closed from the 23rd December through to the 14th January to give our staff a little rest. See ya in the new year, with doors re-opening Monday, 15 January at 9am!

Smart Newtown - Holiday Hours!

Join us when we reopen our doors on Thursday, 1 February 2024! Smart Newtown aims to support you to feel confident with computers & internet with a range of (FREE) workshops and help desk service. To find out more, visit: bit.ly/46D8Sku or call 04 380 0143.

Newtown Tool Library - Holiday Hours!

9 Constable St

Need tools? Got some DIY Projects to get done over the holidays but don't wanna fork out the dosh to buy or hire them? Then loan them! The Newtown Tool Library is open until the 20th December 2023. The crew will reopen on Saturday, 27th January. From then on things will be back to normal - Wednesday evenings 5pm - 7pm and Saturday mornings 11am until 1pm. Members are welcome to keep tools over the closure time. Check out how to join here : bit.ly/3RlfLCC

The Bubble Show - Thursday, 21 December, 2-3pm

Te Whaea: National Dance & Drama Centre, 11 Hutchison Rd

The Bubble Show is a unique blend of magic, storytelling, science and bubble art! Suitable for ages 3-12. For tickets & info visit : bit.ly/3Rks6H4

Scottish Country Dancing - Beginners Class:

Thursdays, 8-29 February, 7:30-9:30pm

Newtown School Hall, Mein St

Great music and aerobic exercise for body and mind - have fun and meet new people while getting fit! Suitable for all levels of fitness. No partner needed. \$5/class or \$18 for 4 classes. For more info: capitalcityscdc@gmail.com / 0210797771



Get in touch!

www.newtowncommunity.org.nz
Facebook.com/Newtown.Community.Centre
[Instagram @newtown_community_centre](https://Instagram/@newtown_community_centre)
04 389 4786 / info@newtowncommunity.org.nz