

## Crackdown on drunk driving

Island police are bringing over a traffic alcohol group from Auckland City this summer to ensure drink drivers are caught. A number of roadblocks and drink drive stations will operate over the high season, and speed limits will also be more strictly enforced after data obtained from Auckland Transport has highlighted specific areas of concern.

Early this week, the glass panels on a bus stop in Ostend were smashed. Police say they will be following up on the issue and have been in contact with the council.

In other emergency news, there were 17 medical and four accident-related callouts to the island for the week ending 9 December.

A total of four people were transported to the on-call doctor, and ambulance personnel attended two at the scene of different incidents. The remainder were transported off the island by police launch, ferry or Westpac rescue helicopter.

Friday 7 December was a busy day for the Westpac crew who attended three incidents. At around 6am crew were

despatched to Onetangi to assist a female patient in her 50s suffering a medical complaint. She was flown to Auckland City Hospital in a serious condition.

The chopper returned at 1.50pm to help a female patient in her 60s suffering a medical complaint. She was also flown to Auckland City Hospital in a moderate condition.

Then at 5.15pm the crew were sent back to Onetangi to assist a female patient in her 80s suffering a medical complaint. She was flown to Auckland City Hospital in a moderate condition. •

## Forum aims to improve island travel

The first meeting of the Waiheke Transport Forum took place last Thursday 6 December at the local board offices. A group of 10 people got together to discuss ideas and strategies to improve the island's roads, cycleways, car parks, marine transport and footpaths.

The first item members consulted on was the implementation of an eastbound cycle lane on Belgium Street as recommended by Auckland Transport.

The street's median strip will likely be reduced to create a large 1.8-metre wide cycle lane, to improve cycle access through the Belgium Street shopping centre. Belgium Street isn't considered wide enough for a cycle lane on each side of the road, and an eastbound cycleway was thought to be the best option.

Chaired by Cath Handley, the transport forum includes six community members, as well as Melanie Dale from Auckland Transport, Police Sergeant Martin Felton and board member Shirin Brown. The recently appointed community representatives are each involved in different aspects and sectors of transportation and infrastructure.

Chris Howard brought to the table a background in civil engineering, with international experience in both the design and management of major infrastructure projects including Auckland bridge designs and structural development for city rail.

Mr Howard says he hopes to see more transparency around who is using Waiheke's roads and heightening inclusivity when it comes to the availability and ease of public transport.

Linda Simpson, a trustee for the Waiheke Walking Trust, said she's excited about the opportunity to develop



Community members on the transport forum from left: Linda Simpson, Andrew Ison, Tony King-Turner, Grant Crawford, Chris Howard and Michael Cox.

and enhance the safety of the island's walking trails and to look into marine transport issues.

Another community member also in attendance was Grant Crawford, director of Hauraki Gulf excursion and charter company By Sea Limited, as well as a managing partner of Tourism Waiheke. Mr Crawford said he's also interested in the marine side of transport including ferries and tourism.

Tony King-Turner has been involved with Cycle Action Waiheke for 11 years and said he hopes to make island roads safer for everybody. He also congratulated the board on "getting the forum up and running", to address the island's lack of safe cycle options. Andrew Ison, operations

manager at Waiheke Bus Company, says he aims to provide input on the challenges of running large vehicles on the island and developing ways to improve services.

Police Sergeant Martin Felton said, "police are concerned about the increase of traffic on the island and the ability of the current infrastructure to deal with it".

To increase accessibility to public transport and for a more well-rounded group, members of the forum agreed it would benefit from the appointment of an accessibility representative. The local board will likely seek applications to fill the position after the minutes of the forum are confirmed at the January business meeting. • *Sophie Boladeras*