

The year of living dangerously - part three

Waiheke in 2017 experienced a roller coaster ride that tested the island's physical resilience - though miraculously, most people rode out the various storms. In our final look-back at the past year, we revisit news, cultural, sporting and community events from September to December.

September

Green Party list MP Denise Roche, right, a Waiheke resident, became a victim of the party's pre-election implosion, losing her seat in the general election. Seven weeks out from the election, the Greens were up to 15 percent in the polls but after co-leader Metiria Turei admitted to benefit fraud in her youth, support began to nose-dive. Things were not helped when two Green MPs (including another Waiheke resident Kennedy Graham) resigned over Turei's determination to ride out the storm. She did, finally, resign.

National's sitting MP Nikki Kaye, whose Auckland Central electorate includes Waiheke, found herself moving to the opposition benches after the election, when Labour, New Zealand First and the Greens agreed terms to form a government.

Excessive amounts of fat put down the plughole by Oneroa Village cafes and bars were threatening the capacity of the Owhanake sewage treatment



plant, Watercare warned. The council agency's trade waste team later visited cafes as part of a "general health check" which included putting smoke up pipes to detect illegal stormwater connections. Watercare plans a \$2 million upgrade of the plant in 2018.

Police reminded motorists to share the roads with care after a horse rider was injured after losing control and falling in Onetangi. Police also rounded up two horses found roaming on The Causeway.

Ahead of Maori Language Week, the success of a Waiheke Adult Learning te reo course was celebrated. More than 100 locals, aged from their mid-20s to their 70s, enrolled when the course was revived in March and the majority stuck at it. On weekend camps at Piritahi Marae each term, they learnt waiata, karakia and mihi.

Meanwhile, a parent's survey to test demand for te reo, immersion classes and a bilingual unit at Waiheke High School drew widespread support, with 60 parents responding to Elisha Scott's 'survey monkey'. Board of trustees chairman Andrew Walters said the board was open to catering to the school community's wishes.

The Waiheke Community Housing Trust came up with a novel way to raise funds for affordable housing on the island - building a 10 square metre sleepout to be sold at auction. The trust also planned a 'Housathon' sleepover in the Artworks courtyard.

A survey of demand for rest home level care facilities on the island drew a strong response, with nearly 300 people participating.

Piritahi Hau Ora came up with a creative way to highlight the P problem on the island - inviting school children and youth filmmakers to make short films on the theme "Meth-free Waiheke" with \$1000 prizes for category winners.

Ferry operator Fullers Group pledged to



Tutor Ani Morris (far left) leads students (l to r) Ceri Horwill, Kristin Busher, Tui Gordon, Maggie Kucinski, Erin Johnson and Diana Toulmin through a waiata they were learning for Maori Language Week.

Photo Tessa Ryan

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provide a more reliable service over summer after struggling to cope with record visitor numbers in the 2016/17 visitor season. It expressed hope that changes such as the year-round 30-minute timetable, the availability of four vessels and a priority lane for island residents would allow "significant operational improvements". New CEO Mike Horne said: "Last summer was definitely a learning curve".



Watercare's wastewater regional manager Jonathan Piggot skims a cup of fat from the Owhanake treatment plant which is struggling to stay within discharge limits. Grease from Oneroa restaurants is thought to be contributing.

Waiheke's St John Ambulance service began recruiting for more more staff after increased Government funding brought an end to the risky practice of single crewed ambulances.

Twenty-eight high school students represented Waiheke in the annual AIMS Games in Tauranga, a week-long event drawing over 10,000 competitors.



Station manager Lloyd Barnett (left) and area manager Simon Barnett look forward to double-crewing.



Photo Marian Draghi

Waiheke United AFC celebrated 30 years existence with a football festival.

Waiheke pupils took part in cross-country, sailing, football and rugby sevens events.

Waiheke United Football Club celebrated 30 years with a 'Festival of Football' that drew top national premiership team Auckland City to Onetangi Sports Park. The players also held a coaching clinic for the island's youth players.

October

Despite raising more than enough for a deposit, Waiheke's community-led response to the housing crisis struck a stumbling block - the banks. The Waiheke Community Housing Trust found the main banks reluctant to release cash to allow construction to begin on its first housing project at Onetangi. It appeared the banks were uneasy about what security the trust could bring to the equation and its plan to rent homes out to families at 80 percent of the market rate. The banks seemed unable to recognise perennial realities on Waiheke - unquenchable demand for

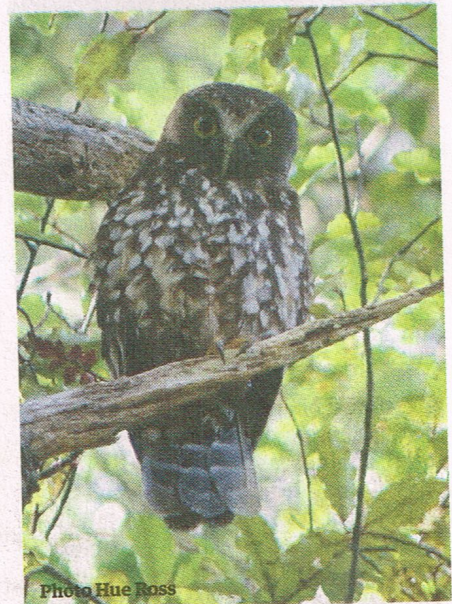


Photo Hue Ross

Conservation groups joined forces to pursue a Predator Free Waiheke.

long-term rentals and soaring land values, the latter later reflected in an astronomical Auckland Council revaluation for rating purposes.

Island conservation groups put aside past differences to pursue the lofty goal of a Predator Free Waiheke. The coalition lodged an application to government agency PredatorFree2050 for a broad-scale project that could begin in 2018 if the

application succeeds.

Predator Free 2050 has around \$6 million a year to allocate nationwide, subsidising large-scale eradication projects with \$1 of Crown money for every \$2 sourced by applicants.

"There's a lot of opportunity for Waiheke where the challenges of dealing with pest eradication in a residential community can be tested," local board chairman Paul Walden said.

However, a local board decision granting dispensation for the use of herbicides to combat pest weeds in some council reserves raised the ire of some. Board members and contractors Treescape believed controlled use of three herbicides including glyphosate was necessary to deal with rampant climbing asparagus, moth plant, rhamnus and woolly nightshade - invasive weeds that can smother

and destroy native bush habitat. But anti-chemical campaigners argued that alternative methods to toxic chemicals would succeed. The board arranged a public meeting to explain the strategy.

An invasive marine pest, *Eudistoma elongatum*, was discovered at Oakura Bay on the eastern edge of Putiki Bay. "It can smother beaches, rocks and tidal pools - it could change our beautiful foreshores as we know them," Auckland Council marine biosecurity advisor Samantha Happy warned. Boaties were encouraged to clean their hulls on hardstands and report any findings, and the council installed warning signs.



Eudistoma has a free-swimming larval stage. Photos Samantha Happy

The local board finalised its three-year plan, strengthening efforts to support small businesses, youth and the arts sector and undertaking to develop a sustainable tourism strategy. It would look to increase on-island capacity for waste, improve public transport links to the wharves and advocate for competitive passenger ferry services.

In a nod to the island's increasingly multi-national mix, Waiheke Community Cinema hosted the island's first Latin American and Spanish film festival - a fortnight of typically quirky and poignant movies all free of charge. Coordinated by embassies in New Zealand and Australia, the festival's lavish launch was attended by Argentinian ambassador Fausto Lopez Crozet.

Citizens Advice Bureau manager Lomond Brown blew the whistle on employers breaking the law by denying workers a written employment agreement. Thirteen people had approached the CAB in the past month about unfair work practices. "You have to have a contract in place, even if it's just one day a week," she said.

She suspected island workers were more vulnerable to problems due to seasonal, hospitality-focused work and the high number of foreign workers on temporary visas.



Huhanna Davis and Kathryn Ngapo lead the anti-marina hikoi from Piritahi Marae.

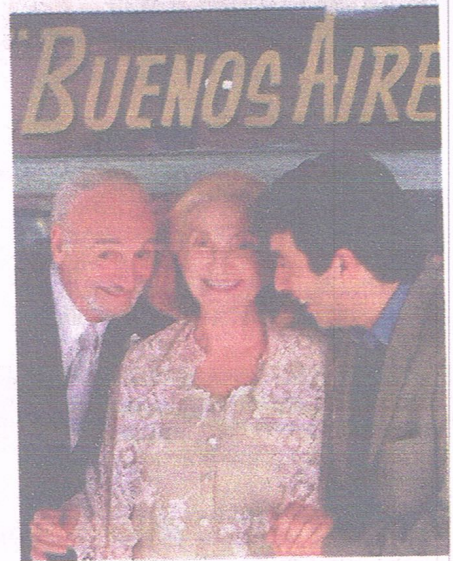
On a blustery, drizzly Sunday, about 50 people joined a hikoi organised by marina opponents SKP Inc from Piritahi Marae to Kennedy Point. Co-organiser Kathryn Ngapo said the marina raised concerns for Maori people "to do with the history of the bay. It's home to the great pa, Te Putiki o Kahu, but there are also a number of archaeological sites around the whole bay".

Only Water owner Jesse Ball, whose bore had been closed since flooding in March, warned of a summer water shortage. Mr Ball blamed wrangles with his insurance company which had seen builders walk off the job because of the delays. He hoped to re-open early in the new year but predicted a serious water shortage in the meantime.

Jimi, an injured kaka found on the island which needed surgery on a broken wing, returned to Waiheke for rehabilitation when a brand new aviary was ready. Native Bird Rescue's Karen Saunders raised \$12,000 to build the kaka-proof aviary



Citizens Advice Bureau manager Lomond Brown..



The Latin America & Spain Film Festival kicked off with the Oscar-nominated comedy *Son of the Bride*, from Argentina.

using a shipping container. Jimi spent 10 weeks at Auckland Zoo following surgery. He was later successfully released.

Local olive oil producer No.29 scooped the supreme champion award at the Royal Easter Show Olive Oil awards. Other island producers awarded golds in a difficult year were Rangihoua Estate, Cowes Bay Olive Grove and Man O' War.

Onetangi institution Charlie Farley's changed hands, with owners Brent and Lauren Ivory selling the beachfront bar-restaurant to Nourish Group.

Obsidian winemaker Mike Wood was judged New Zealand winemaker of the year in the New Zealand Aromatic Wine Competition, giving the vineyard a notable double after winegrower Tim Adams won the Bayer Young Viticulturist of the



Optimus Gryme has remixed everyone from Shapeshifter to Ladi6 but credits Tiki Taane as having the biggest influence on his career.

Year competition.

Island drum and bass legend Charlie Brown farewelled his Optimus Gryme persona with a final show on the island, following a national tour. Charlie was relocating to Nelson with wife Penelope Brown and their two children but promised to continue other musical projects.

November

Health authorities sought community help after a whooping cough outbreak on the island dramatically worsened. Twenty-eight cases had been notified to the regional public health service since September, including 18 in 10 days. The infectious disease was highly dangerous for babies and older adults. The outbreak was linked to resistance by some parents on the island to the early childhood immunisation programme. Among two-year-olds, the immunisation rate on the island had slumped to 76 percent, well below the 95 percent target to avoid epidemics.

It followed an Auckland-wide mumps outbreak which had hit Waiheke school-children and health clinics hard.

Waiheke Health Trust lost its contract to provide home support nursing services on the island, with the Royal District Nursing Service opting to take back the reins. Up to 30 of the 38 home care staff employed by the trust were offered jobs with RDNS.

"We certainly didn't seek and we were disappointed to hear it was going to happen," said the health trust's general

manager Julie Cairns.

The trust provided home support services to about 250 people on the island.

A survey of potential demand for rest home-level care on the island found facilities were needed right now. The 290 respondents expressed a clear preference to remain on the island until they die with many anticipating needing semi-independent accommodation for 10 years or more and rest home care for a similar period.

Researcher Sue Watson believed a mixed-use facility of around 60 beds could be viable. One option was for a non-profit trust to buy land and build premises that could be leased to a rest home operator.

Local board funding appeared to pave the way for changes to ease congestion at the 'keyhole' at Matiatia. Under a plan brokered by tour operators, Auckland Transport and the board, large tour vehicles would move out of the keyhole to a new pick-up and drop-off area within the unsealed carpark, alongside the old Harbourmaster's building. Only public 'Metro' buses and taxis would use the keyhole, Auckland Transport officials told the local board.

The board then allocated \$50,000 for associated works including developing the gravel carpark for heavy vehicles, signage, and a walkway from the ferry terminal.

However, Fullers Group then expressed opposition to moving its 'Hop On, Hop Off' Explorer buses from the keyhole to the new location - causing other large tour operators to see red.

An ecological survey provided scientific backing for marine reserves along Waiheke's populated northern coastline. Auckland University marine ecologist Tim Haggitt reported that the two proposed locations offered a diverse range of habitats and supported a range of marine plants



Lead nurse Jayme Kitiona administers a booster vaccine against whooping cough at Piritahi Hau Ora. Photo Safia Archer



Researcher Sue Watson says the numbers are starting to stack up for a 'mixed use' elderly care facility on the island.

and animals. But they showed signs of degradation and could benefit from a rest from fishing pressure. Local board chairman Paul Walden said the report would add weight to any community-led push for marine reserves on the island.



The planned changes in the 'keyhole' aimed to reduce congestion and improve safety over the summer visitor peak.

Auckland Council confirmed it was looking at ways to extend a targeted rate for the accommodation sector to homeowners letting out their houses 'informally' through online agencies such as Airbnb and Bookabach.

The local board allocated up to \$10,000 to help Ministry of Education-appointed architects investigate whether rebuilding at Te Huruhi School and the adjoining Waiheke High School could leave room for a future community swimming pool.

Plans to create a five metre wide



Phillipa Karn Photography

A Christmas Carol. The Fezziwigs featuring Pipi Garrity as Miss Fezziwig, Bruce Davis Goff as Mr Fezziwig, Jemima Davis Goff as Miss Fezziwig, and Emma Yates as Mrs Fezziwig.

channel to prevent flooding at the Tah Road industrial estate were put on hold, in part because the channel would be dug through contaminated land. Businesses reported that their insurance premiums had doubled because their yards had been labelled flood-prone.

Waiheke Theatre Company launched its biggest production, a three-week season of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* to highly enthusiastic reviews.

After a wet opening weekend, hundreds of locals and visitors taking part in the annual Waiheke Walking Festival encountered magnificent weather. Many of the more than 50 walks were booked-out and local businesses including vineyards and fitness-related operators were more to the fore in the free festival.

The funeral for musician and sports car enthusiast Allan Wade (Wadey) drew a huge crowd to Blackpool beach, with a few 'burnouts' in his honour. Wadey was a former bass player and musical director for Billy T. James and was said to have written many of the jokes used in the first television series.

December

The Local Government Commission's rejection of the 'Our Waiheke' proposal for a standalone island council provoked a stormy, foot-stomping reaction and mass-walkout after the announcement

at MORRA Hall. About 100 locals showed their disapproval, commenting "absolute disgrace", "what a farce" and "greedie townies" as they left the hall.

The commission found a Waiheke unitary council would not have the resources to effectively carry out its duties. "While smaller councils are likely to have lower unit costs for some functions, there are some areas where they could face significant diseconomies of scale, such as on many of the environmental regulation and management responsibilities of a unitary authority," the commission said.

Our Waiheke chairman John Meeuwsew promised the breakaway group would take stock and gauge islanders' appetite for separate governance again in the new year.

"The Local Government Commission is now a closed door - the next thing is broader politics," Mr Meeuwsew said.

Waiheke's St John Ambulance service was fully stretched as the visitor influx began, dealing with 23 callouts in the first week of the month.

Two Waiheke Primary School pupils, Dylan Forsyth (13) and Eli Ball (12) organised a public planting day on the banks of Little Oneroa Stream, giving fresh impetus to Waiheke Resources Trust's clean-up of the polluted stream. The pair obtained plants from Gulf Trees and addressed a local board meeting to outline their plans. "We wanted to do this project because we went down to visit the stream and we were disgusted by the state of it," Dylan said.

Islanders running low on water faced waits of up to a month to have their tanks filled. Despite a wet winter, October and November had been unusually dry, with temperatures soaring from early-November.

With one of the main suppliers, Waiheke Aquifers still not back in business after the March floods, many locals were eking out supplies. Auckland Council



Residents walked out as soon as the Local Government Commission announced its rejection of the separate council proposal. Photo Geoff Cumming



Dylan Forsyth (13) and Eli Ball (12), Year 8 pupils from Kauri classroom at Waiheke Primary School, water testing at Little Oneroa. Photo Safia Archer

agreed to ease limits on bore water takes to help other suppliers meet demand.

However, Niwa scientists predicted a summer of two halves, warning that the strong La Nina weather system could bring tropical downpours. Bathers however were happy with the unusually warm sea temperatures.

Conservation Minister Eugenie Sage stepped into the long-running saga surrounding Waiheke Golf Club's lease of part of the Rangihoua-Onetangi Sports Park reserve. She withdrew consent for Auckland Council to make leasing decisions for the land, effectively forcing the council to prepare a reserve management plan. This will include a period of public submissions. The golf club has long-sought to expand its nine-hole course to 18. While the dispute has simmered, the council has failed to maintain the additional land sought, allowing invasive weeds and other problems to flourish.

The annual Christmas Festival and Santa Parade was a huge success, with more floats taking part followed by carol-singing, youth band performances and a night market in Artworks courtyard. But the island's talented young musicians were still hunting for suitable premises to practise.

Waiheke writer Kayla Mackenzie-Kopp won first prize in the annual William Taylor Memorial Heartland national short-story competition with her entry *Business*, drawing on younger days spent in Samoa.

SKP Inc launched a late fundraising push ahead of next February's hearing of its Environment Court appeal against a marina at Kennedy Point. The group has raised about \$140,000 but needs another \$100,000 to pay expert witnesses and other legal costs. •