



VALLEY VOICE

TE REO HAPORI O WAIMAPIHI

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM AROUND THE ARO VALLEY - NOVEMBER 2013

The pedestrian meeting place at the corners of Abel Smith Street, Karo Drive and Willis Street as re-imagined by traffic engineers...



Residents shocked at road revisions - already underway!

The effects of the flyover have come closer to home with the surprise commencement of "improvements" to State Highway 1 at the intersection of Karo Drive and Willis Street.

Both roads are being widened to include a fourth lane each in the stretch leading up to the intersection, cutting into the existing sidings and making it even further for pedestrians to cross these roads. Karo Drive will increase in width by 1.8m at the crossing and Willis Street will increase by 2.5m, forcing south-bound traffic exiting from Palmer Street to cross three lanes in order to turn at the Vivian Street intersection.

The work is to accommodate an anticipated increase in traffic caused by freeing up the congestion point at Memorial Park and the Basin Reserve.

Residents were shocked at the lack of notification or available information about the developments when work on the revised road plan and re-landscaped pedestrian areas began in early October.

NZ Transport Agency claims that 5000 information leaflets about the intersection changes were distributed in the area during September, but there is no evidence of any of these reaching houses in adjacent Aro, Palmer or Abel Smith Streets until after concerned locals began enquiring about NZTA's plans.

Project Manager Brent McGuire says that the "minor work" was finalised in 2012 as part of the Northern Corridor Plan and approved under the City Council's District Plan as a permitted activity, meaning that no further public consultation is required.

The work is being undertaken by the Memorial Park Alliance, an NZTA-led consortium, comprising Downer, a NZ company with interests in road-building, mining and Australian rail freight, URS, a US-based company with 18 offices in the Asia-Pacific, and HEB and Tonkin & Taylor, both NZ civil engineering and construction companies.

At time of print, Te Aro School was being consulted about the development separately from the rest of the community, and no contact had yet been made with Aro Pre-School.

The AVCC initiated a face-to-face

meeting with the project's managers, and a public meeting is anticipated with no confirmed date at time of print, while work on the project progresses apace (see timetable below).

Some unused NZTA land in the area is also being sold off, although many properties still stand idle and uncared for after many years of NZTA ownership and neglect. Numbers 2-6 and 8 Buller St are currently on the open market, as are 130 Abel Smith Street (the vacant lot next to the radical community house at 128) and the small restored cottage at 130a Abel Smith Street. 278 Willis Street (the old Bodega building) recently sold.

The future remains uncertain for the large house on the corner at 290 Willis Street, a treasured community landmark, which is still in the process of being offered back by NZTA to the original owners under section 40 of the Public Works Act, six years after the bypass went through in 2007.

Work programme timetable

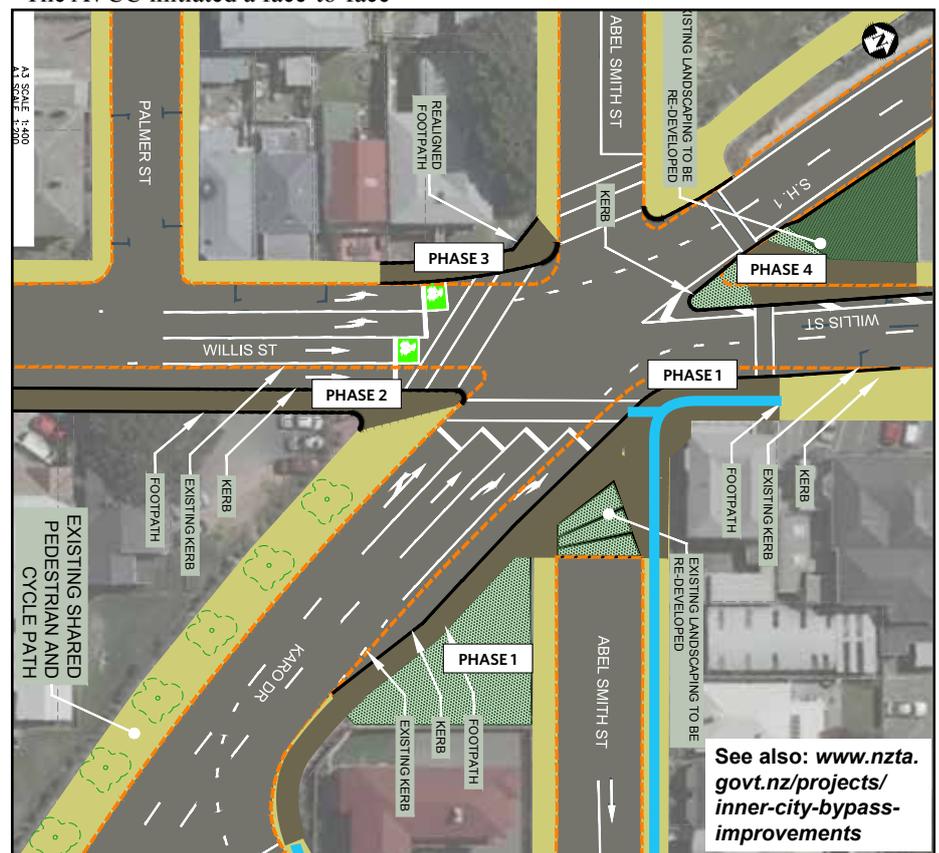
(See map below. These are rough estimates only.)

PHASE 1: October - November 2013

PHASE 2: November - December 2013

PHASE 3: January - February 2014

PHASE 4: February - March 2014



See also: www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/inner-city-bypass-improvements



In the balance

Iona Pannett, Lambton Ward councillor

By the time you read this, you will know who your ward councillors will be for the next three years. I would like to thank you all for the support you have shown me and how much I have appreciated working with you over the last three years. It is now sadly also time to say good bye to my colleague, councillor Stephanie Cook, as she starts her new life up the Coast with her girls.

Transport will continue to be a big issue in 2014, with consultation now closed on light rail and bus rapid transit. There

has been a good response from the public and I look forward to seeing submissions. The city and regional councils will look at what system to go forward with in the New Year.

I'm in the process, along with many others, of preparing to go before the Board of Inquiry to speak against the Flyover at the Basin Reserve. Submissions will be heard in January and I only hope that the Board will give us a fair hearing.

The Regional Council will also be looking at whether to continue with trolley buses. It is no secret that some want to get rid of these Wellington icons. I know that there will be fierce resistance to such a move – keep an eye out for developments.

Iona (ph: 384-3382 or 021-227-8509)

From the Co-chairs

Spring is here, Aro Valley is coming to life, and the Community Council, now with a full committee of fourteen, is brimming with ideas. So what's happening?

Much of the last month was spent assessing where we're at and what we need to do for the coming year. Planning for the Xmas Tree fundraiser and the Aro Valley Fair has begun. We're also working towards better IT support systems and procedural guidelines, which will assist our community co-ordinator Kelvin.

As always, we are keeping a close eye on developments around the community (including the widening of the Karo Drive 'Bypass'). The general meetings for the year kicked off last month with the highly successful 'Meet the candidates' evening.

Meetings on the horizon include a general interest talk by local resident Jaqui Tutt on her recent pilgrimage across Europe on Sunday 3 November at 7.30pm, and a history night where we will explain how (or why) the AVCC committee was formed – here, think rows of apartment blocks running the length of Aro Street. This latter event will also provide an opportunity for the community to discuss our constitution and what the government's recent changes to the Incorporated Societies Act will mean.

Kelvin is also initiating a number of community activities, which is great to see. Keep an eye out for those events and for ways in which you can help. Finally, a huge thank you to the many people already volunteering for Aro Valley – you are doing an awesome job.

Bridget Stocker and Roland Sapsford

Aro Craft Night set for launch



By Arawhetu

It's as simple as this: creating makes me feel like a full person. I enjoy the personal connection to making, and giving away these makings as gifts, just as much as I love receiving handmade things.

It's the effort that's gone into the handmade thing that attracts me to the object; for instance I love to collect 'ugly' porcelain creatures and abandoned cross-stitch works ... It can't just be any type of 'ugly' object or forgotten picture, though; for me it really is the maker's full attempt to create something wondrous and delightful, something they truly thought was beautiful, that makes the object attractive.

I also like to make with other people, because then you can push aside the busy things in your life to give value to sitting down with another human, to making something shared and feeling human together.

A few years ago, when I lived in a large warehouse space apartment for three months, I held regular open craft nights

once a week. And early this year I got married, so in preparation I reinstated craft night a couple of months leading up to the 'big day'. Now, feeling buzzy from recent travel, I want to bring craft night to the Aro Valley Community Centre.

It will be interesting to see what opening up craft night to the community (of which I am a proud member) will be like. I'll probably give the sessions a little structure, with the suggestion of a particular idea and materials to bring; but of course I'll warmly encourage people to bring projects they are already working on as well.

The first couple of sessions will help to shape what Aro Craft Night will be like, depending on what people want. I've already had skilled people offer to lead a craft session (book binding is on the horizon). If you want time to make, create and craft with others, come on down – I'd love to see you there. Equally, if you have materials you want to offload for a good cause, please contact me too. The only cost for attendance will be a \$3 contribution to the hall hire. Baking is an acceptable payment option too.

Aro Craft Night is every Tuesday between 6 - 8pm at Aro Valley Hall





(photo and story: Jaqui Tutti)

Another tree falls

Lillian (pictured) was sitting at her desk in her flat on the Terrace during the mid-October storm when she heard a loud "crack". She looked up and saw one of two elm trees that stood above the path to Te Aro School fall across the street, narrowly missing a man with his child in a stroller. School had just got out and Lillian rushed out to stop children climbing onto the tree which still had live wires tangled in it. The Fire brigade arrived and the tree was quickly removed.

New council app allows for instant FIXiTs

By Peter Plowman

If there's a trait that I admire about Aro Valley, it's that there's rarely a shortage of people willing to speak up about a problem. We are vocal, involved and spirited.

Graffiti, rubbish, excessive noise, public drinking, nuisance and vandalism are problems we've all heard about and have to deal with this close to the CBD. It's something that many of us would like to limit in our 'People's Republic' and the Wellington City Council (WCC) has a role in helping us with this.

Some time ago, the WCC released an 'app' to help with lodging problems they deal with (in addition to their friendly 499-4444 number). It's called 'FIXiT' (available on Android and iPhone stores) and it's dead easy to use to report issues. My household has used it with great results.

So, this is a call to all smartphone users in Aro Valley to further use our community activism to improve our little Valley by...

- 1.) Downloading FIXiT to your choice of device;
- 2.) When you see an issue, taking a minute to report the issue there and then; and
- 3.) Basking in your civic mindedness ... especially when you see the results.

I'm in no way affiliated with the WCC, I just love the Valley and nifty solutions to common problems.

Park plaque mystery solved

Dear editors,

I read with interest your request as to the whereabouts of the plaque which used to be at the foot of the large eucalyptus tree in Aro Park. In fact it is still there but over the years the tree has grown so big that the roots have engulfed the plaque. I know this because I was involved in the events which led to its installation and I then observed over the years as the plaque disappeared under the trunk roots of the tree.

The story behind the plaque is this. After a long battle in the early eighties the local community stopped the Council flogging off the site of what is now Aro Park to the Salvation Army to build some sort of church facility. Although it had always appeared on the town plan as a public park, it had for many years been used as the site of a Catholic Parochial primary school and then subsequently by the Maturanga Learning Group school, before the building on site was abandoned and was lost to arson. After the Council had tried and failed to flog it off to the Sallies, the then mayor Jim Belich (who to his credit had not been involved in the attempt to sell the site – that was down to Michael Fowler when he was mayor) proposed a plaque commemorating the 'gift' by the Council of the site to the local community as a park.

Those of us who had spent years battling the Council to get the site retained as a park were deeply affronted by this suggestion, which appeared to whitewash the Council and its dirty deals with the Sallies as if it had been their idea all along to create Aro Park. We therefore made it clear that any official plaque would be removed and any ceremony to install one disrupted by demonstrations. When the Belich Council wisely decided not to proceed, we installed our own plaque at the foot on the tree, which has now swallowed it up.

The tree, by the way, is one of two survivors of a number planted by local community initiative to assert our ownership of the park area. There's film footage extant of me wielding a pick as part of a group who dug up the asphalt former playground to plant the trees. Most were removed by the Council or vandalised by local yobbos who didn't care if the area was a park or not. But one or two remain and have grown to vast size from quite tiny saplings.

Tony Simpson



Lola, with friend and AVCC co-chair Bridget Stocker

Local celebrity turns six

Local celebrity Lola the Aro Park cat celebrates her sixth birthday on November 10th. A resident of Aro Street, Lola spends most of her free time in Aro Park, where she socialises with anybody willing to give her a pat. She particularly enjoys meeting people who are eating fish and chips.

Unashamedly cute, Lola became a celebrity overnight with the establishment of her own Facebook page when she was just a kitten; shortly thereafter she received a feature slot on Wikipedia as a notable attraction in the Aro Valley. Recognising her star qualities, the Garage Project named a beer after her in 2012.

Lola claims that becoming an icon has not changed her, although as she's always been an icon, this is difficult to verify. She sees no royalties from any of these media activities, and remains an active community participant by chasing leaves (purely to entertain the public) and stalking mice from the compost bins, a duty she takes very seriously.

Like many celebrities, Lola has not found life to be all plain sailing. She has been questioned about her political aspirations when noticed trying to distract Falun Gong practitioners during their meditations in the park; and some have suggested that her attention-seeking behaviour is malevolent and that she enjoys making people late for appointments. But when questioned, Lola shrugged and said that this was just Aro Valley gossip.

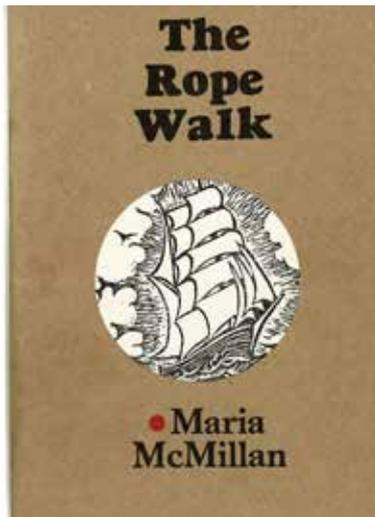
When asked what she thought of Gareth Morgan, Lola walked away with her tail in the air.

Disclaimer: all opinions herein are those of Lola

The Rope Walk

Maria McMillan (Seraph Press)

Reviewed by Max Rashbrooke



Maria McMillan's first collection of poems, *The Rope Walk*, recently launched in Aro Hall, coheres loosely around ideas and images of voyages, difficult arrivals, uncertain explorations, grief and loss.

The titular image is that of an enclosed room – set, or so it seems, in nineteenth century Scotland, at the time of mass emigration – where material is twisted into ropes, by people walking backwards. This image sets the tone for poems that draw sparingly, but powerfully, on Scots dialect, and which privilege women's stories across several generations.

The most effective poems are perhaps the ones from the past, the ones which impart something of the difficulty and sadness of being uprooted, while emphasising the immigrant's link, through language, with the departed shore. One such poem, 'Broken', opens thus: "Moorish broken ground they called hag, and ill-tempered women. And hag also/to wield clumsily a knife. When we came/there were not houses or lush plains."

These poems restore our sense of the rough, jagged edges of New Zealand, the uncertainty of existence – what is my role here? – and the dearth of solid answers. Another poem begins, "I will/ find a way to loop the rope/around me so when I sleep/I will not fall", but concludes, "I think of the rope./The rope disappears." This exploration of the self then carries forward into the modern day, in poems about belly-button piercings, brothels, parties and boys.

Many of the poems have a spare beauty, sometimes employed more joyously than

in the examples above; in one poem, women collect rainwater, and one says, "Together, we caught the gorgeous stuff. "Some of the best poems are very short, and dialect-heavy, like 'Sab' – "A sob, a gust, a gale of wind./A land storm. The noise of the sea" – or 'The "Adamant"' : "The sea is a bilious field,/the wind a horse./We lurch on." Their beauty finds a match in the book's production, which sports a plain brown cover with a hole cut away to reveal a striking linocut of a sailing ship.

If there's a flaw in the collection, it's that it goes most of the way towards being a coherent series, but not all the way, leaving some of the poems feeling a touch unanchored. And just occasionally the dialect becomes overpowering. But those are small criticisms of what remains an unsettling, haunting work – one in which the water gives you back not a solid reflection of yourself, but an image that is "Moving and lacking curves./That is luminous and all broken up."

What's more fun than the library?

By Anantha Narayanan

More Fun than the Library is a small jazz band made up of students at the New Zealand School of Music, some of us based in the Aro Valley. We grew up around the busking spots of Cuba Mall and have quickly gained notoriety and a reputation for gradually reclaiming the streets.

A lot of our music is inspired by the street musicians of New Orleans, which is quite unusual because not many bands can say their biggest inspiration came from amateur musicians playing for fun on the streets.

Watching videos of those guys made us realise that the fun factor of performing music should always be the number one priority. But that fun factor must always be backed up by a high proficiency on our instruments. It's just showing for the people wanting to listen to good music. Who wants to listen to out-of-tune saxophones? We are sure people will tell us to go back to the practice room and hone our skill before performing in public if they think we're not up to the levels.

Playing on the streets in the Wellington CBD is quite an experience. There are so many groups of people, from skateboarding youths to elderly couples,

Inequality: A New Zealand Crisis

Edited by Max Rashbrooke (Bridget Williams Books)

Reviewed by Russell Campbell

There is mounting awareness of growing inequality in New Zealand society, but many of us enjoying life in our tranquil, leafy inner-city suburb may be only dimly aware of how far the process has gone. For those of us lucky to escape the deprivation that plagues the lives of so many of our fellow citizens, *Valley Voice* editor Max Rashbrooke's outstanding new volume offers a salutary shock and a call to action.

Inequality is an anthology weaving together contributions from the likes of economists and social policy advisors, welfare activists and health researchers, educationalists and restorative justice advocates. The editing is expert: not one

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that walk past and compliment what we are doing. It's a great feeling when we can brighten up people's days with our music.

Musicians are humans too and make mistakes at times, but we just laugh it off and continue on – and the crowd also appreciates that (thankfully!). People ask us why we busk so often ... We think part of it is to do with a 'musician's high': the time lapse when you see the crowd gather one by one and stop by to listen, and next thing you know, there are a tonne of people circled around pointing their cameras at you.

We no longer have set busking dates, but you can always see us every two weeks at mysterious locations around Wellington. If you see a band of musicians marching around playing 'When The Saints Go Marching In', then you know that it's More Fun Than The Library!

Visiting our Facebook page would be much appreciated! <https://www.facebook.com/morefunthantheLibrary>

(Continued from page 4)

of the essays is a dud, and they complement one another superbly, without overlap. The research is substantial, the academic credentials impeccable, and the major texts are interspersed with “view-points” of individuals whose personal stories illustrate the human dimension of the crisis.

The facts are bleak. Depending how you define it, something between 170,000 and 270,000 NZ children live in poverty (and they are disproportionately Maori and Pacific). Half the population earn less than \$24,000 a year. Meanwhile 10% of the population account for more than 50% of the nation’s wealth. The book graphically demonstrates that the gap between rich and poor has widened dramatically in recent decades.

Apart from limited opportunities and general hardship, the impacts of inequality are to be found in low educational achievement, high incarceration rates, poor housing (and a fall in home ownership), and appalling rates of Third World diseases. But inequality is not simply a problem for those at the bottom, it is a crisis for society as a whole. Economies in which there is extreme inequality perform worse than those in which income and wealth are more equally shared.

The book is chockful of suggested remedies. Enhanced redistributive policies, more government house building, a redirection of resources in the criminal justice system, enlarged school enrolment zones, targeted philanthropy, education initiatives to reduce the mismatch of skills and jobs, workplace democracy and union-friendly legislation, indexing benefits to average earnings, and an unconditional basic income for all, are just some of the ideas.

So maybe in New Zealand the outlook need not be pessimistic. Here, we are told, the principle of equality is taken seriously; here there is a deep commitment to fairness, underpinned by the traditional Maori worldview whereby, as one contributor puts it, “the health of the planet and its ecosystems comes before the rights of people to benefit individually from the commons” (162). Rashbrooke and his collaborators have offered a lucid analysis of the crisis of inequality and an imaginative set of suggestions for the urgent action that needs to be taken. The book fully deserves the excited attention that it is getting.



Left: Philosophy House, 33 Aro St, with the blue Atlas cedar on the lowest terrace (photo: Julia Stace)

movement in the 1970s secured the site for the park we have here today.

Not much remains of the original landscaping at Philosophy House, just the terracing, a huge old pohutukawa which was topped in the 1970s, and the fine columnar cypresses, three pairs, lining the steps like sentries. Lavender grows between

the cypresses to make an informal hedge. In the 1990s a member donated the blue Atlas cedar, which was planted on the lowest terrace below this fine building. About the same time two silver birches were planted on the western boundary. The blue Atlas cedar is about 20 years old and eight metres tall.

In this June’s storm, when the mature Lawsonia in Aro Park blew down, an elegant row of juniper myrtles (*Agonis juniperina*) in Victoria St, opposite The Mill, were badly damaged and subsequently removed, leaving yet another gap in the local treescape. However, the city council has plans to replace them with Northern rata, of which there is a mature specimen nearby, at the back of 108 Abel Smith Street.

We continue to lose mature city trees through urban development and storms. Let’s appreciate those trees that have survived so far and encourage the planting of more trees in public spaces.

Tree of the Month:

Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* cv ‘*Glauca*’)

By Julia Stace

In the grounds of Philosophy House is a magnificent bluey grey cedar *Cedrus atlantica* cv ‘*Glauca*’. Atlantica in this instance refers not to the ocean but to the Atlas Mountains of Morocco and Algeria, where this tree is endemic. There, above 1000m, growing in cool conditions and full sun, it reaches 15m at maturity.

It is also a popular ornamental tree for European landscaping, thanks to its form, texture and colouring, and because it is long lived and vigorous. (There are two other forms: *Cedrus atlantica* is a greener tree, and the other, *Glauca Pendula*, a dramatic, hanging form.) Although it can be grown from seed, it is definitely not suitable for inner-city gardens.

During their first visit to New Zealand in the summer of 1953-54, Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh each planted a tree of this species on the edge of the north lawn of Government House. Over the past 60 years the two adjacent trees have grown into fine, prominent specimens. Today no one knows just why this species was chosen in the 1950s, but since Sir Michael Hardie Boys was Governor General (1996-2001), preference in those fine gardens is generally given to New Zealand trees.

In 1914 the Salvation Army opened a purpose-built training school at 33 Aro St for its ‘soldiers’. They sold the building in the 1960s, when it became known as Philosophy House. The Salvation Army had planned to build a new facility, with citadel and offices, on what is now Aro Park, but a people’s



Above: Blue Atlas cedar has bluey grey 2cm spindly leaves and cones that take around two years to mature. (Photo: Julia Stace)





Kia ora Aro Valley,

It was so nice to have the sun on our backs at the KotA garden day this past weekend as we got stuck into one of our latest developments ...

Allotments at the Orchard!

As mentioned in the last *Valley Voice*, we have decided to develop the Orchard site into our first allotment garden, in which plots will be made available to individual gardeners and groups rather than being a completely co-managed space. This is quite a different approach for us, but is part of our decision to diversify the ways in which we use the different gardens in the hope that it will help us engage a wider range of people.

This project will take a little while to implement, as we first need to construct and fill the raised beds we will be using

However, this lead-up time is good for us, as we want to make sure we use the limited space we have in the best way possible and that the allotments will go to those people who will most benefit from them.

The plan at this stage is to explore whether there are other organisations around the area who are interested in having allotments to support their projects. The Boys and Girls Institute have already shown interest in taking some on with their Challenge for Change mentoring project, and we will also be approaching Refugee Services to see if any of the families they work with in the Valley are interested.

We also hope to develop some accessible plots for the less physically able. There will likely also be some plots available for individuals in the Valley,

and we are now taking registrations of interest. So if you would be interested in having a space there to grow your own kai, please let us know.

We are currently building the beds from pallets donated by Commonsense Organics and lining them with coreflute. The next stage will be to fill them with compost and other beautiful soil building goodies. If you have any spare soil, compost or other suitable raised bed filling materials, we would love to hear from you, as we will need quite a lot!

Community Pantry at 'The Steps' 'The Steps' garden site above 203 Aro Street, where the frame for the second greenhouse was constructed, is planned to be the site for a community pantry project, in which we will grow crops of

(Continued next page)



Another kind of kai o Te Aro...



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Zoë Smith

Another University building planned

Victoria University is planning a new building for Kelburn Parade, to the north of the recent Te Puni Village complex.

The large science building will run alongside Kelburn Parade adjacent to the intersection with Glasgow Street, significantly altering the tree-lined streetscape, with an overhead walkway spanning the top of the driveway that goes down to the car parks above Boyd Wilson Field.

The University invited the public to an information evening to discuss the project in late September, attended by about a dozen affected residents. Feedback was requested by 18 October, when the University intended to submit their proposal to the City Council for resource consent.

For more information contact:
campus-development@vuw.ac.nz



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