AUGUST 2025

Valley Voice

Te Reo Hapori o Waimapihi – the Aro Valley Community Newsletter

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Office hours: Wednesday closed;
Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 10am – 2pm; Friday 12 – 4pm

Aro Valley Community Centre – managed by the Aro Valley Community Council

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See us in colour online, on time: go to the web page arovalley.org.nz/valley-voice or use this QR code.

Midwinter events ...

Community Centre use increasing

See page 7!

From considering hundreds of years of Aro Valley history to the existential question of whether nuclear weapons allow us any future at all ... from the energy of 1920s dance music to the quieter fun of screen-free board games ... as midwinter bites, events at the Aro Valley Community Centre offer something local for just about everyone!

Hiroshima Day 1961 *– when the nuclear threat to human survival was only 16 years old.*
This guy started anti-nuke activity in 1945; eighty years later the threat has multiplied – come and learn and discuss on ***Nagasaki Day 2025****.*
See page 7.

STOP PRESS!!

Aro Valley Preschool fundraiser – T-shirts, tea towels and tote bags.

Email info@aroval-leypreschool.nz to order, or see https://www.arovalleypreschool.nz/

Published by the Aro Valley Community Council Inc

Slow to Appear

Mapping the Aro Valley

AVCC Co-chair Clare Freeman introduces Dr Robin Skinner

Robin Skinner, senior lecturer at the Victoria University School of Architecture, gave a fascinating talk at this year's AGM on what we can learn from the early maps of Wellington, focussing on the Aro Street area.

Robin started with his simple pencil sketch of an early view looking from the harbour near Ōmarukaikuru (Point Jerningham) across towards Aro Valley. He noted that the first hill in the picture, Pukeahu, had been flattened very early on by the colonists but the gully that is Aro Valley is clearly visible to this day.

During his talk Robin showed us a number of early Pākehā maps of Wellington that include Aro Street and its surrounds. He referenced these while considering three questions; how was the valley first understood by Pākehā, how was Māori occupation acknowledged on the maps and how has place-naming shifted over the years?

Mr Smith's map

The well-known 1840 William Mein Smith map of Wellington's town acre sections was made in a hurry when the proposed site of Britannia (near Petone) was found to be unsuitable for the New Zealand Company settlement. Settlers, who had brought land in Britain in 1839, expected to occupy their land when they arrived the following year.

Comparing the Mein Smith map with T.B. Collinson's 1848 Wellington map (from Derek Leask's recent *Atlas of the New Zealand Wars)* shows how long it took for the upper part of Aro Valley to be understood by the early Pākehā.

The area was heavily forested and surveying it would have been difficult, so the town acre layout of upper Aro Street proposed in 1840 didn't conform with the actual topography (being about 20° out). The Semeloff Terrace walkway leading off Adams Street follows the original planned alignment of Aro Street, although it is much less grand than Smith had proposed.

The acre blocks in Aro Valley were mainly allocated as Native Reserves, and were part of the tenths agreement between the New Zealand Company and Māori. Most of the valley that had been assigned as Native Reserves in the 1840s was sold to private ownership in the decades following the Native Lands Act of 1865.

Moe-i-te-Ra gardens

Robin discussed the Moe-i-te-Rā kainga and gardens that were in the vicinity of today's Maarama Crescent. Christopher Aubrey's well-known 1888 painting shows a view to Wellington harbour from the site of the Moe-i-te-Rā gardens and includes the houses on lower Aro Street. This view shows that within forty years the Māori gardens had become a European pastoral scene. The following year it was subdivided for Maarama Crescent.

Robin explained that Honiara Love and others have shown the sites of Māori cultivation throughout Wellington in the 1840s, when potatoes were probably the main crop in the valley. He talked about how the north-facing terrain in particular would have suited cultivation.

One map showed Māori gardens across Palmer Street between Aro and Abel Smith Streets. Another map by T.H. Fitzgerald showed gardens in the upper valley near Aro Street and lower Norway Street. This map identified Baker Polhill's house near today's 49-51 Holloway Road and Māori whare near today's 19-21 Holloway Road.

Place naming shifts

Robin then discussed how place-naming shifted over the years. He understands that Pākehā didn't know about Mapihi and her stream until James Cowan wrote about it in the 1910s. It was private iwi knowledge until then. Honiana Te Puni's daughter-in-law, Rangi te Puni, provided him this information. Initially, Pākehā called the stream "Te Aro Stream" but it is now widely known as Waimapihi Stream. The legend of Waimapihi is commemorated in several murals around the city, including on the Aro Valley Preschool mural.

Mein Smith named only four streets in the valley:

- Wordsworth Street which was renamed as the lower part of Aro Street in 1910
- Aro Street
- St John Street which has only ever existed as a walkway beside the current Garage Project buildings
- E'Puni or Epuni Street which was renamed as Honiana Te Puni Street in 2023.

For a time all the valley was known as "Polhill's Gully", after Baker Polhill who had cutting rights over the dense forest covering most of the Waimapihi catchment. As the area continued to develop it was increasingly referred to as "Aro Street".

The 'Aro Street Action Group' in 1973-74 successfully opposed the city council's planned multi-lane motorway from Aro Street to Karori. It was about this time the term "Aro Valley" emerged as the common collective, which continues to this day.

Robin Skinner is an architectural historian specializing in nineteenth and early-twentieth century architecture of New Zealand and the British world, with a special interest in post-coloniality and decolonization in architecture.

The old Committee's last meeting

The **last meeting of the old Committee** before the Annual General Meeting was held on 15 July. The main points covered were:

- The main business was preparing for the **AGM on 22 July**.
- The **2024/25 Financial Accounts** were accepted as ready to be sent to the Auditor and presented at the AGM.
- It was agreed the AGM would be asked to approve **Draft 3 of the amended AVCC constitution** as prepared by Lisa and Roland to meet the requirements of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022.
- **Jess and Judy advised they were not standing** for the committee at the AGM and were thanked for their contributions as Treasurer and Secretary. All the other current members indicated they will continue.
- The Co chairs had a very productive meeting with the Principal of **Te Aro School** that generated lots of ideas for possible collaboration. More meetings are planned.
- The **need to generate more income** is critical to AVCC's ongoing existence, and making it easy for people to donate by having a QR code for this will be explored.

Kia ora koutou

Let's talk about our community.

Get in touch about any local issues or if you need support. I'm here to help and would love to hear from you!

Tamatha Paul Green MP for Wgtn Central
wellington.central@parliament.govt.nz | (04) 3891290

Auth by Tamatha Paul, Green MP for WLG Central, Parliament Buildings, Wellington. **Funded by Parliamentary Services.**

Valley poetry

A poem woke up this morning
not feeling all that flash
lots of his words didn't feel quite right
even after having a slash
His syllables suffered from strain and stress
stanzas not quite quatrained
and
his theme
unascertained.
The night before, he'd gone to bed
in a lovely rosé glow
no mountain peak he couldn't scale
no secret he couldn't know
But the poem woke up this morning
unable to face the dawn
rolled over and lay there silent
as a dog turd on the lawn

Don Franks

Teal Mau - 2025

I came to New Zealand with my family as a 10 year old refugee from Vietnam in 1975. Growing up in Wellington with fond memories of the little red cable car, that climbs halfway to the stars. As a result of my humble upbringing, I have developed a strong work ethic early on which has continued throughout my working life. Spending more than two decades as a business owner running my hairdressing salon in Central Wellington, with my wife Sophia, and our 13 year old daughter, who goes to Wellington High School. I am well connected with my community and have great empathy for people of all ages and love for the city which I've always called Home. I have decided to stand on Council in the Pukehinau Lambton Ward because I am very passionate about our Beautiful City and believe I can make a difference as a voice for both residents and business owners big and small. I believe strongly that Pukehinau is the engine of our Wellington City, and like any great engine, it has many moving and working parts, and those parts are our people. Working and living in Te Aro over the years has provided my family many opportunities and now I feel its time for me to give something back, to serve the city in return and hope that the future looks bright for our children and future Whakatipuranga (generations) to come. For that to come true, there's many things I'd like to achieve, such as, contributing to more vibrancy and transparency with decision-making and allow all Wellingtonian's to have a voice.

I'm bringing a practical, community-focused voice to the table - committed to:

*Smart accountable spending
*A vibrant, welcoming city centre
*Stronger engagement with residents and local business.

And last but not least, Mother Nature is a true artist, and we the caretakers of this Whenua (land) so its our responsibility to leave a better footprint for future generations.
Just as Tony Bennett left his heart in San Francisco, my heart will always be with Wellington City.

Authorised by Teal Mau 027 325 3245.

2025 AVCC AGM Report Back

It was wonderful to see so many of you at the 2025 AGM on Tuesday 22 July. The buzz of conversation filled the hall as people caught up with each other and enjoyed the delicious curry Morgan cooked and the bread donated by the lovely people at Aro Bake.

Special thanks to **Robin Skinner,** senior lecturer at the Victoria University School of Architecture, for a very informative look at Aro Valley's history as revealed in several maps from different sources.

Claire Freeman, Co chair, presented the Annual Report on AVCC's activities, noting the AVCC is in good heart but facing challenges. The highlights included the Fair and an amazing turnout for the premier showing of the film 'Good Night Epuni Street'. This film showed the community connection the residents established through music during COVID. Claire thanked Ahmen Mahal, Community Coordinator, for all his work managing the myriad activities held at the Community Centre, Brent Efford for producing Valley Voice and all the Committee members for their contributions. The Wellington City Council was thanked for again providing a grant towards the cost of running the community centre. However, AVCC has to generate income to cover the full costs and this has been increasingly difficult.

Jaqui Tutt, Co chair, then led us through the business of the AGM: the 2024 AGM Minutes were approved, the annual accounts were approved subject to an unqualified audit report being received – and, if not unqualified, being reconsidered at an AVCC General Meeting – and the new committee was formed.

- **Co chairs :** Claire Freeman and Jaqui Tutt
- **Treasurer :** Sue Tait
- **Secretary :** Jane Little
- **Members :** Angus Woodhams, Brent Efford, Jacqueline Nordon, Janette Wong, Karen MacIntyre, Kate Wakefield, Morgan Clark, Pascal Buda, and Phaedra Brice-Chen

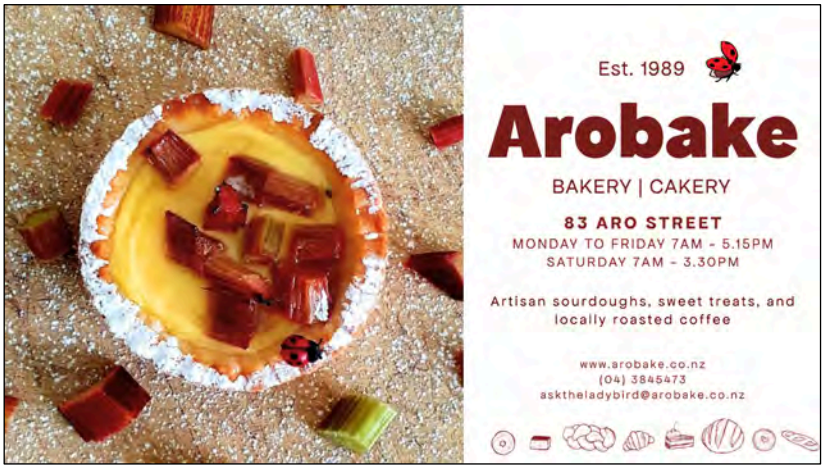
New Constitution approved

Jaqui then explained that AVCC has to amend its constitution to meet the mandatory requirements of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 and reregister it. Two former Co chairs, Lisa Thompson and Roland Sapsford, donated their considerable expertise and developed a constitution that kept the key aspects of the current AVCC constitution and incorporated the rather lengthy requirements of the Act. This constitution was presented to the meeting.

After some discussion, it was agreed that the Amended AVCC Constitution Draft three should be registered with Charities Services, on the understanding that further General Meetings would be held to update it to include aspects that AVCC members or the Committee request.

The new constitution will be available on the AVCC website

Judy Buchanan
Outgoing Secretary



Shalimar Mini Mart

Feedback ...

Readers respond

Predating the wrong pigeon

Kia ora Brent.

I sent these to Denis Asher yesterday after AJ and myself had this encounter with this Kārearea at 3 Hōniana Te Puni. It was at approx 10am. We think the Kārearea had partially injured the Kererū which is in one of the pictures.

The Kererū was hiding out in the corner of a doorway area behind some bins and was injured and seemed in shock. The Kārearea looked to be lording over the Kererū and waiting for an opportunity to strike again.

AJ and I put a towel over the Kererū and took it to the vet. I heard later that day that the Kererū was in a stable condition and would be taken home with one of the vets who care for birds and would probably be released today. Denis asked me to let you know in case it was a worthy story for the Valley Voice.

Dan Brown

[Well done, Dan and AJ. It is a pity that the kārearea doesn't know to stick to the numerous introduced pigeons which have become a pest around the Valley – veritable rats of the sky, the foolish feeding of which by kind-hearted but misinformed residents also feeds the rats of the ground!]

102 Aro St bar licence

Hi Brent

Please add my voice to the objections regarding the proposed opening hours of the Octopus Bar. The Garage Project works well, partly because the hours it operates are generally acceptable to most citizens.

The near-by Octopus Bar by contrast wishes to remain open to a possible 2.00 am closing time. This is beyond reasonable and would be deleterious to the atmosphere of the Aro Valley and the enjoyment of most residents.

Cheers

Carol Brown

[Fortunately, Carol, the problem has gone away. I also lodged an objection, based solely on the proposed opening hours, which differed from the hours of the long-established Garage Project bar at 91 Aro.
Since then, the applicant has wisely 'read the room' and has amended the opening hours in the application to be the same as the Garage Project Taproom.

Accordingly my objection now lapses, and I look forward to the opening of the new facility.]

The injured kereru which got veterinary attention.

Aotearoa's native apex predator waits for the mail ...

... and in a nearby tree. Note the kereru feathers still clinging to its talons!
Photos by Dan Brown.

Brent rant ...

The editor sounds off

Come to the (real) party: *The disgrace of the oxymoronically-named fake political party 'Independents Together' just highlights the absurdity of the persistent meme that 'independents' are somehow superior to those who chose to stand in local elections identifying with proper, registered and organised political parties like Labour and the Greens – or even ACT if it comes to that!*

Far from being brave and wise advocates for their community free of the unreasoning dictates of a party 'machine', many 'Independent' councillors have turned out to be complete flakes.

Other democracies, and the US, accept the involvement of political parties at all levels of government as ensuring stability and predictability – and even ensuring that you know who NOT to vote for!

Without any policy guidance or need to prove to even a party selection committee (let alone the wider membership, as the Green Party does) their judgement and ability to work in a team, the 'independent' is self-selected, free to be a loose cannon pursuing whatever whims and fantasies might pop into their head. 'Name recognition' is often all it takes to ensure repeated re-election of even the poorest-performing councillors.

Ray Chung and those sticking with his fake party seem to see performative nastiness, a la Donald Trump or Shane Jones, as paving the road to political success.

But politically sophisticated Wellington isn't 'gunz'n'god' Middle America, or even change-denying NZ First heartland, and, despite a belated apology to the current Mayor, the fallout from such "really pretty vile" (the PM's words!) tactics should mean that Ray Chung won't wear the mayoral chains anytime soon – and may even have chucked it in by the time you read this.

Beyond Modernism: *The campaign to keep the empty and crumbling 1950s high-rise apartment block known as the Gordon Wilson Flats on The Terrace, in the name of commemorating an architectural style and its practitioners, is a slap in the face to the Aro Valley community.*

Ranting continues on page 6 >>>

Aro Valley Mini Mart
For your daily needs –
Groceries,Wine and Beer.
Open to 9.45 pm
(liquor closes 9 pm)

>>> Brent rant continues

Modernist architecture, as advocated in 1950s Wellington by the Architectural Centre, went well beyond the style of individual buildings and became an ideology. It promoted the replacement of established inner-city communities with high-rise apartments in the name of 'slum clearance' – and the promotion of the motor car rather than public transport and walking for everyday access. The Architectural Centre even held an exhibition to promote this vision for Te Aro. The Gordon Wilson Flats was one of the outcomes.

When this vision was planned to be applied to the Aro Valley in the 1970s – regarded by the City Council as a slum requiring their urgent intervention – the residents rose up. "It may be a slum but it is **our** slum!" *was our tongue-in-cheek response.*

The outcome was a backdown by the City Council, and scrapping of the plan for a Northwest Connector motorway demolishing the entire northern side of Aro Street.

By then modernism had ceased to be the dominant architectural fashion, and the values of community and character became supported and the Aro Valley Community Council as we know it today was formed in 1978.
We have no need to commemorate the architectural ideology that nearly saw our destruction!

Forgiveness: *all that said, I acknowledge that the Architectural Centre is no longer a threat to the Aro Valley.*

The Centre is no longer pushing the concept of 'slum clearance', high-rise social housing and car-dependency as the ideal for urban living. From the early 1970s it has become increasingly concerned with community values and heritage preservation.

But whether the Gordon Wilson Flats edifice is a heritage building that deserves very expensive preservation, or whether it is an unwanted reminder of a passing fad that nearly destroyed our distinctive inner-city neighbourhood is still up for debate!

The history **Vertical Living – the Architectural Centre and the remaking of Wellington** *covers many of these issues, though not the Aro Valley specifically, and is hereby recommended.*

Brent Efford

Historical snippets about our urban struggle ...

Clippings from 40+ years ago

In the July Valley Voice we honoured the late Mark Webley, whose leadership and determination was vital in securing Aro Park as the centre of our community, after the City Council failed to action its obligation to purchase and develop the site. There wasn't room for these clippings in that Valley Voice.

Left: *the struggle really started when the Wellington City Council planned to demolish most of the housing in the Valley in the name of 'slum clearance', build high-rise apartments (Aston Towers is the prototype) and construct a motorway called the Northwest Connector on the north side of Aro Street leading to Karori via a tunnel.*
Here a City Council planner in August 1973 shows two sceptical residents what the Council has planned for them! (Evening Post 2/8/1973)
Community outrage and resistance lead to these plans being scrapped and a City Council promise to buy the Matauranga School site and develop 'community open space' there.
Below: *However, the City Council's failure to buy the property when promised led to a fresh fight in 1982. A key action was digging up parts of the Matauranga playground and planting trees as a symbolic protest. Here Mark Webley examines one of the trees.*
(Evening Post, 1982)

Victory! *The Salvation Army had its plans for a megachurch on the site rejected, and the City Council finally moved to buy the site and develop the park – at a cost no doubt much greater than it would have been had the officers done the right thing at the beginning!*
However, it still took several more years for the landscaping to be completed.
(Dominion 1/10/1983)

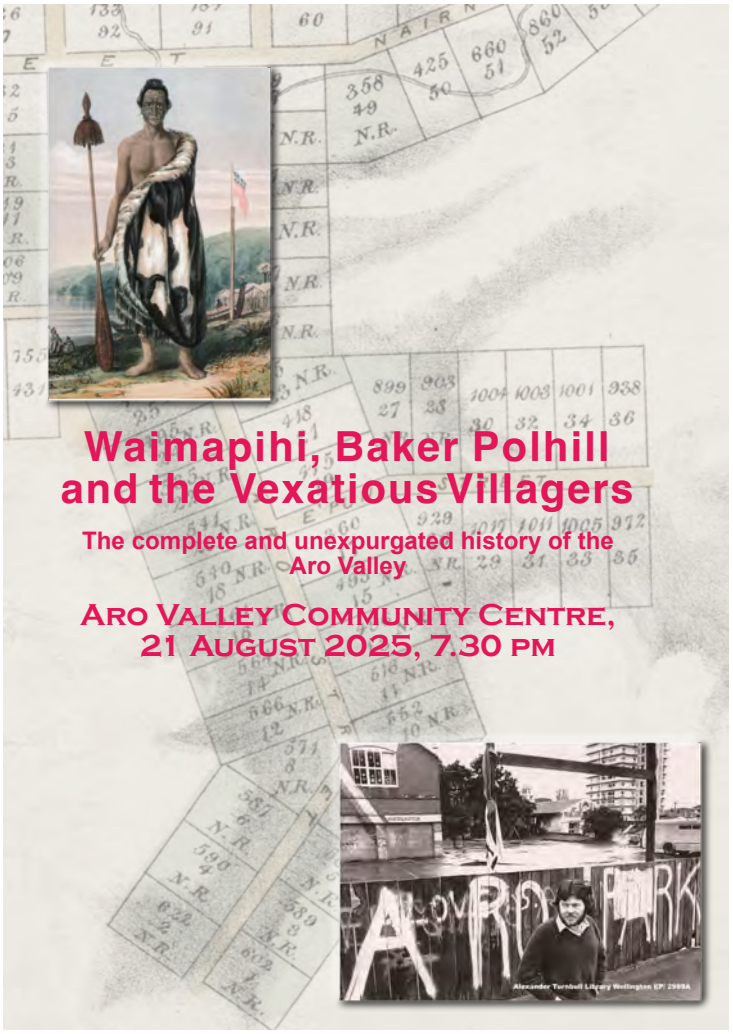
Residents win Aro St battle

By PAUL MORAN

N2VE WELLINGTON, Streets Aro DOM 1.10.83

A

NAGASAKI DAY
SATURDAY
9th AUGUST 2025
COME COMMEMORATE
80 YEARS OF NUCLEAR
MILITARISM
Nuclear Free Pacific
AUKUS
ARO VALLEY PEACE TALKS
the Five Eyes
Rocket Lab
FREE!
FREE!
1-DAY ONLY - ALL DAY
ARO HALL, 48 ARO St, WGTN.
exhibitions - speakers - films - music


Waimapihi, Baker Polhill and the Vexatious Villagers
The complete and unexpurgated history of the Aro Valley
ARO VALLEY COMMUNITY CENTRE,
21 AUGUST 2025, 7.30 PM

AUG
14
BOARDGAME NIGHT @ AVCC
Eurogames and Scrabble
Tea and Biscuits Koha
7:30-9:30pm14 Aug Thurs
Aro Valley Community Centre 48 Aro St.
Come and Play/ Check us out/ Drop in
7:15 set-up
KIP.VERA@PROTON.ME

KOHA ENTRY
ARO VALLEY
JAM BAND
PRESENTS
BYO
FOOD + DRINK
1920's DANCE
WITH SPECIAL GUEST
EUGENE WOLFIN
SINGING THE HITS OF THE ERA!
PERIOD DRESS ENCOURAGED
SATURDAY 8 PM 'til mid-night
2 AUGUST
ARO HALL
ARO VALLEY JAM BAND
VISIT US ON FACEBOOK FOR MORE

Mark your calendar ...

Exciting events planned

The number of public special events, in addition to the regular classes and activities listed in www.arovalley.org.nz/timetable-updated.html, continues to increase. Planned or notified for the rest of 2025 are:

2 August	**1920s Dance!** Channel your inner flapper – see page 7
9 August	***Nagasaki Day –*** *an all-day festival for peace and human survival – see page 7.*
14 August	***Board game night –*** *screen-free fun – see page 7*
21 August	***Waimapihi, Baker Polhill and the Vexatious Villagers*** A history of the Aro Valley *By the AVCC History Group – see page 7*
30 August	**Community working bee** – redecorate the old CAB to be extra useable space, sort out stored material
11 September	The famous Aro Valley **Meet the Candidates Meeting** for the council elections.
3 October	**Block Party**
4 October	**Plant Fun-d raiser** (plant your seedlings now!)
November	***The future of Aro Valley, Part 2***
14 December 12 – 1 pm	**Christmas in Aro Park** with the Wellington Carnival Street Band

Note that some of the later of the above dates are a bit tentative until key players are confirmed. Details of each event will be in the Valley Voice for the month, and on www.arovalley.org.nz.

There are plenty of other ideas, which, with enough enthusiasm and practical help, could carry us well into 2026.

If you are interested in running an event or if you have an idea for one contact Ahmen on community@arovalley.org.nz

For details of regular classes and other events currently available at the Aro Valley Community Centre go to:

www.arovalley.org.nz/timetable-updated.html

Support your community – hire our hall and help raise funds for running the Community Centre

Hire a Community Centre space for your next meeting, function, event or party.

Very reasonable fees and some activities by locals may qualify for a discount, contact community@arovalley.org.nz to discuss rates.

Small meeting room - seats 6 comfortably – $15 per hour

Hall - up to 100 people, stage, kitchen, tables and chairs available to use. A refundable bond ($250/$50) is charged.

- $20 per hr, Monday-Friday, daytime to 5pm
- $30 per hr, Monday-Friday after 5pm
- $300 Friday 4.30-11pm
- $30 per hr, short term during weekend daytime
- $360 Saturday 5pm - midnight
- $280 Sunday 4-10pm

Cleaning fee for functions /events - $60

PA system hire - $150

Bond

Per event - $250 (refundable if all conditions met)

For shorter times and regulars - $50

Yes, we want your ads!

*We welcome advertisments sent in by email to **brent.efford@me.com** You will be invoiced by email after publication.*

- ***Minimum size:** a small classified style ad, 2 column cm for $15.*
- ***Normal:** business card size (90 x 55 mm) $40.00*
- ***Sponsor:** half a page for $400.*
- ***Artwork provided by the advertiser is preferred, if possible,** in PDF, JPEG, TIFF or PNG formats.*
- *However, we can make up small ads using text as provided by the advertiser in an email or a .docx file; minimum size 9 pt; fonts to be defined by the advertiser or, if required, by the Editor (should not be the same as Valley Voice body text).*
- *We also support our local businesses with editorial material in association with advertisements.*

Valley Voice is published on behalf of the Aro Valley Community Council Inc, 48 Aro St, Wellington; this issue on 31/7/25.

All opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the writers and not of the AVCC unless adopted at a General Meeting.

Photographs and text are by the credited authors or the Editor, Brent Efford.

Contributions wanted

Contributions – councillors' comments, poems, articles, letters, photos, historical snippets, news of events, business news, etc – relevant to the Aro Valley community are very welcome. Please email to:
brent.efford@me.com

The deadline for Valley Voice articles and photos is set to enable distribution of paper copies early in the month.

*Our next issue is **September 2025**, the deadline for receiving contributions is **Wednesday 20 August***