AUGUST 2024

Valley Voice

Te Reo Hapori o Waimapihi – the Aro Valley Community Newsletter

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Firstly, an apology: this issue of Valley Voice is over a week late in publication, due to the editor having a family bereavement requiring time in Christchurch.

See us in colour online: You can see Valley Voice online as a PDF by going to the web page arovalley.org.nz/valley-voice or using the QR code above.

Valley Voice is published on behalf of the Aro Valley Community Council Inc, 48 Aro St, Wellington.

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 welcome

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 – i.e. for the September 2024 Valley Voice it is ...
Thursday 29 August.

Co-chairs chat ...

Bike lane issues unresolved

Constitutional review: *the Aro Valley Community Council constitution is up for review as a result of new legislation covering incorporated societies. The consultative process will extend into 2025. Detail in future Valley Voices, with General Meetings as required, for community endorsement, to follow.*

The latest round of feedback conducted by the Wellington City Council has led to some changes but some of the bigger challenges remain and require resolution.

The introduction of speed humps on Aro Street has slowed most traffic in that section of the road. Following feedback, the Council Design Team will be investigating options to slow traffic at the intersection of Aro Street and Ohiro Road.

Residents on Raroa Road have noticed increased speed by cars and other vehicles, especially in stretches where there are no longer any car parks. The latest Council update doesn't specifically mention speed as a concern on Raroa Road but does advise that rumble strips or cat eyes will be installed on the corners of Raroa Road to motivate drivers to stay in their lanes.

The kerb at the bus stop on Aro Street, near the corner of Hōniara Te Puni Street, is likely to be adapted so that it will be easier for wheelchair users to access buses.

Road markings along Aro Street are to be tidied up and it will great to have some of the old markings removed.

No-one will have been able to miss the bright orange bike rack outside Te Aro Fish Supplies.

Concluded – p2 >>>

>>> Co-chair's chat – from p1

Unintended consequences

The ongoing issues of access for Aro Street and Raroa Road residents will be far more difficult to resolve. The removal of large tracts of parking has provided plenty of unintended consequences. Some of our most vulnerable community members are those most affected. Carers and nurses visiting people requiring assistance or care in their homes have been forced to park considerable distances away. Tradespeople are becoming reluctant to service properties where they cannot get easy access and deliveries. Elderly visitors, and those with young children, are often deterred by a lack of parking near friends' and relatives' homes.

This is particularly an issue for upper Aro Street which has no parking on both sides of the road. The City Design Team recently proposed that one coupon park at the bottom of Adams Terrace be converted to a 30-minute car park to enable drop-offs and deliveries. It is good news that recent feedback has led to this first step in addressing some of the practical difficulties that have arisen for residents. May it be the first of many more!

Lisa Thompson

Co-chair, Aro Valley Community Council

Claire Freeman

Planning students working on concepts for Aro Valley development.

Students from the new Master of Urban and Regional Planning Programme at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University will be exploring Aro Valley over the next few months, taking photos, sketching ideas, and engaging with the community for their Urban Design Studio paper.

Our cohort of 8 students will be working on individual proposals for a hypothetical development in Aro Valley. These proposals are purely theoretical and are not real. As the final project of our Urban Design Studio, these will be presented to the community in October in the Community Centre.

Please feel free to approach us if you see us out and about. We would love to hear your thoughts and ideas on the place you call home. We are also really interested in what you would like to see improved or changed.

Ngā mihi nui,

Master of Urban and Regional Planning students
smillisand@myvuw.ac.nz

Student Presentations to the Aro Valley Community will be made on 10 Oct, 4.30 – 6.00pm at the Aro Valley Community Centre

Feedback ...

Bike lane reduces mobility

We have recently retired back to our house in Aro St which we purchased in 2012. We notice that a LOT of parking has been removed from the street and a lot of provision has been made for able bodied cyclists, buses, EV vehicles, shared vehicles etc. However not a single mobility park is available from the corner of Aro and Willis St, past the park and up to the Aro St shopping centre.

Surely this is an oversight of WCC to ignore the needs of disabled people and their caregivers such as ourselves?

Disabled folk need to be included in the community and able to enjoy the cafes and shops in Aro street. To do so fairly, disabled folk at least need a short term mobility park on the flat where caregivers can at least load and unload their disabled partner and get them settled before their able bodied caregivers partners go off to find a residents or coupon park that is likely to be too far away or too steep for disabled folk to navigate.

Since the parking changes last year yellow lines are everywhere from the shops to Willis St except for parks for cyclists, buses, EV vehicles and the like. Surely disabled folk are just as important as able bodied cyclists and EV owners? I get the emphasis of WCC on green transport but I am hugely disappointed that this has been at the expense of disabled folk and their caregivers such as my partner and myself.

I propose that a section of the yellow lines just down from the Aro street park and changed to a 30 minute mobility park for disabled folk. It could even be on the cycle lane side of the street near the bus where able bodied cyclists already easily manage to manoeuvre around the buses, EV vehicles etc.

Sue Tait

Brent rant ...

Thanks, Sue – as your next-door neighbour who also has a mobility-impaired partner, I sympathise entirely!

For us, without either off-street parking or a car, the loss of the Aro/Boston bus stop as part of the cycleway project was a blow, which also affects the Community Centre, and Philosophy House.

I have even found Uber drivers reluctant to pick us up because they are wary of penalties for blocking the cycleway (when I use a borrowed car on rare occasions I have no such qualms!).

As someone who has been an active campaigner for sustainable transport, and against car-dependency, for decades (I even represented public transport users, pedestrians and cyclists on the Wellington Regional Land Transport Committee in the early 2000s – and did a 2 month Winston Churchill Fellowship study tour of light rail in the US in 2003, with regional council assistance), it is somewhat galling to find that street design to facilitate one form of sustainable transport used by only a few – i.e. cycling – makes using other forms – i.e. walking and public transport – which are available to everyone, a bit harder.

Requests for other facilities for pedestrian safety enhancement – like the automatic 30 km/h speed warning signs seen in many places, and pedestrian protection at the Aro/Ohiro Rd corner – have gone unanswered.

A real example of 'ableist' discrimination!

Brent Efford

“Long live poetry”

*One of the delights of publishing a local newsletter is the opportunity to promote neighbourhood talent. We have an emerging panel of poets – in this issue the panel doubles in size, because this time Lewis Scott, the ‘Bard of Hōniana Te Puni St’, is joined by a school writers group – Eliza Avery wrote: “**The girls in my daughter's Writers' Club produced these cinquain poems about local (or approximately local) animals. We wonder if you would be willing to include the poems (and in some cases accompanying illustrations) in the next edition? All the girls are local and / or attend Te Aro School.**”*

FEELING CLEAN

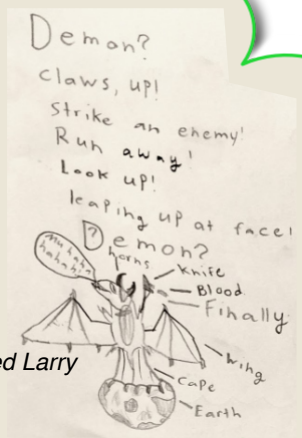
Gathering in the bathtub of your mind
Rain pouring down outside
Steam sweating your body
If you turn the bathroom light off
Closed the window
The only thing you will hear
Is a child playing in a tin tub of water
Remembering the womb

Lewis Scott

Sylvia, aged 10 - "Rosie"

My cat!
Rolling over,
And lapping up water.
Hiding inside cardboard boxes.
Eating.

Ruby (10) - "Demon?"



Claws, up!
Strike an enemy!
Run away!
Look up!
Leaping at face!
Demon?
Inspired by a dachshund called Larry

Zoë (10) - "Something, maybe"

Ouch!
She streaks past
Caramel patches brush the wall
Something maybe, maybe something
There, here, everywhere
Kitty cat!
Inspired by her cat Caramel Sundae

Kala (11) - "Cute"

Puppy
Walking the dog
Its short and stubby legs
Larry's ferocious eyes glaring!
Dachshund
Also inspired by Larry the dachshund

Esther (10) - "Castle frog"

Hidden
Beside mud and grass
Emerald green creature
Brown blisters all over little
Bell Frog!
Inspired by a Southern Bell Frog found at Castlepoint

Denser cities, the housing crisis and the Valley

There is a housing crisis in New Zealand, houses are often old and unhealthy, they are unaffordable, there's not enough of them and they are often the wrong sort; too big, too small, wrong place, too expensive, too inaccessible or any one of many reasons.

The pressure for more affordable housing in New Zealand is growing and is matched internationally. The most unaffordable places are Hong Kong, Sydney, Vancouver and Auckland 7th with house prices in New Zealand being approximately 11 x annual income. This makes New Zealand as a whole the world's second least affordable country to buy a house.

The recent decline in average house prices now has Wellington at about 7x annual income down from 8.2 in 2022. Housing affordability is a massive issue. Different proposals have been put forward to address affordability. In 2022 the Ministry for the Environment's released its Medium Density Housing Design Guide and made it easier to build higher, generally 6 storeys.

Just this month on July 4th the coalition government proposed new rules allowing easier expansion on the city fringe, abolition of minimum floor size for new builds and more flexibility on medium density residential standards.

The regional council just released a report that looks at how higher density building closer to city centres can reduce infrastructure costs.

What it means for us

What does and could all this mean for Aro Valley? Aro Valley is in the enviable position of being close to the city, it's walkable and cyclable for most and on a good bus route. If cities are to be more sustainable, they need to promote more walking, cycling and less commuting. This puts pressure on Aro Valley as an obvious target for more focused and likely higher density housing development. But Aro Valley by most standards is already quite dense, house plot sizes are not large, the valley has very limited flat land and nearly all is already developed. Road access is already a challenge, indeed many Aro residents have no road access to their homes. Further it has its own vibrant and much-loved character that comes from its older often colourful wooden housing, vibrant and somewhat quirky main street that needs protecting.

Thinking about the future of Aro Valley is not new for the Aro Valley community and in 2021 the Aro Valley Community Council made a detailed submission on the District Plan addressing issues of housing and development. However, making a similar reasoned response now is more difficult when the proposals for the city's housing seem to be in a state of constant flux.

CoHaus Auckland is a shared housing developments at higher densities (street view above and internal courtyard view below)

Building on a steep hillside in Brisbane

We are part of the solution

Aro Valley, like many inner-city neighbourhoods in Wellington, will need to make a contribution to providing a solution to New Zealand's housing crisis.

Concluded on page 5 >>>

>>> Denser cities ... from page 4

The issue is how can this be done without compromising its character or reducing its biodiversity? The answer is not to just build out further into the rural areas to protect the inner city.

The principle that housing needs to be denser, and logically some of this housing is best located in inner city neighbourhoods must be accepted. However, denser housing needs to be done with care to minimise the loss of character and space in neighbourhoods such as Aro Valley.

I have visited cities around the world to see how really good medium density residential design has been done in cities such as Stockholm, Amsterdam, Singapore and occasionally in Australian city neighbourhoods.

The critical factor is to do density well, not just build as we've always done squeezing the same sort of houses into smaller plots, into subdivided plots in the city or on the periphery.

The Aro Valley will face development pressures – not all of which can be resisted, but not all of which will be bad if done well and can provide more people with homes in this very special place.

Houses built from recycled materials in Trondheim, Norway

Claire Freeman

Too much gum?

Above: *the big gum, August 2024.*
Below: *the same scene, mid 1950s. The playground for the Catholic school, now Aro Park and the 'last town acre', is behind the fence at the left. The house behind the trams, 48 Aro St, was demolished to provide the driveway to our Community Centre.*
Photo: Graham Stewart.

Hello Brent
That gum tree in Aro Park is now so big that it is blocking light and sunshine. As a result the park is darker and damper than it needs to be.
I understand the tree was planted as a celebration of the establishment of the park. It has gotten out of hand. I can't imagine what its roots are doing to any piping around it.
I know one person involved in the original planting and she tells me she is now embarrassed by the size it has become.
The wood makes excellent firewood and the stump would be great for kids to play on.
Cheers

John Whitty

Holloway Rd

[Good points, John. I believe that the AVCC Committee, before my current time on it, asked the City Council to arrange the trimming of all the trees around the Park but there has not been any action. To be followed up!

I am particularly concerned about a branch of the huge gum tree extending over the footpath and the parking zone. It looks like a branch called a 'widow maker' in Australia – because of the danger of it suddenly breaking off and killing any forestry worker beneath!

I remember the action taken in the battle against the Salvation Army – temporarily the owner of this 'last town acre' – in the 1980s, where we planted trees in what was then an old asphalt school playground, in order to protest the City Council's default on its promise to build community open space there.

We won the battle, but never thought that any of those trees would attain such a size! A brass plaque installed at the base of the tree to celebrate our victory has been completely swallowed up by its continued growth.]

From Papers Past – 1928

"... one of the oldest settled districts in Wellington and one of the most neglected ..."

*Discontent about aspects of the development of the Aro Valley's infrastructure, particularly roads and footpaths, has existed for a very long time. I discovered this clipping via Papers Past (https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/) while researching something else – from The Dominion, **14 June 1928**.*

Although the rate of car ownership, and the city's population, was a fraction of that nowadays, traffic and car parking was already becoming a problem. Note how the Aro St/Ohiro Rd corner was a particular issue – we are still waiting!

Of interest is the class consciousness of the era in this working class area, and the involvement of the Labour MP in leading a Central Ratepayers and Residents Association (formed in 1926), replicating what the Aro Valley Community Council tries to do nowadays. My archival researches have shown the local Labour Party involved in everything from roading to protesting about the psychological effect of hangings at the Terrace Jail on the Te Aro School infants next door!

Wellington Central Labour MP Peter Fraser, of course, became New Zealand's wartime Prime Minister and went from an anti-conscription radical in the first World War, for which he was imprisoned in the same Terrace Jail, to an intolerant authoritarian in the second (though perhaps those attributes were necessary in wartime!). His last act before electoral defeat in 1949 was introducing peacetime conscription – which my pacifist father, whose biography I am slowly writing, actively opposed, including by making the only anti-conscription nationwide broadcast permitted by state-run radio.

Brent Efford

ROADS AND PATHS

"A NEGLECTED DISTRICT"

IMPROVEMENTS SOUGHT

For some years past depuations from Mortimer Terrace, Holloway Road, Durham Street, and all that part of Wellington to the extreme south of Kelburn (and above Aro Street) have waited at intervals on the Works Committee of the City Council, and urged that something should be done to the roads and footpaths to make them safe.

Another deputation, from the Wellington Central Ratepayers' Association, headed by Mr. P. Fraser, M.P., called on the Works Committee yesterday with a long list of works for which they requested the urgent attention of the council. A speaker said that the question of doing something to improve Devon Street was not only an urgent one in the district, but one of the most urgent in the whole of Wellington.

The chairman of the committee (Councillor H. D. Bennett): There is £100 down in the estimates for Devon Street.

Mr. Fraser said they would like to know what progress, if any, was being made with the short cut across the Macarthy property from Durham Street to Mortimer Terrace. At present, he understood, it was a morass. Reference was also made to a bad filling between Mortimer Terrace and Laura Avenue, where recently a lorry had become bogged and then had collided with a lamp-post. That job Mr. Fraser described as "one of the most dangerous and worst works ever done in the city." Another danger-point requiring attention, he said, was the junction of Aro Street with Ohiro Road. On the western side there was an acute angle, and in the bowling season, the parked cars of members and visitors to the Wellington Bowling Club in Aro Street made the roadway very narrow. Representations had been made to the club, which had requested members to park on one side of Aro Street only. It was a question whether they had any right to park there at all, but that was for the traffic department to say. At all events, the corner in question wanted ramping badly, as it was very dangerous. Improvements were badly needed, too, in Brosnahan Street, Holloway Road, and Norway Street. The latter street was likely to be a very important thoroughfare (if the Access Commission's ideas were given expression to), yet to-day there were no footpaths.

"There is quite a feeling in the district," said Mr. Fraser, "that this portion of the city is being neglected. Amounts are placed on the estimates and never spent, simply because the residents are working people."

Voices: No, no.

"Oh, well," said Mr. Fraser, "that is the feeling, as such conditions are not seen in other parts. This is one of the oldest settled districts in Wellington and one of the most neglected."

Mr. J. Tregonning said he had approached the bowling club, and it had made every effort to get its members to park their cars on one side of the road only. If they would do that it would be quite safe, but it became unsafe when cars were parked on both sides of Aro Street. The amount on the estimates for Devon Street was a "hardy annual," as nothing had been done there for about forty years, and they were very humble appellants that there should be something done. Not long ago there appeared in the Press a summary showing where the rates were being spent. This had shown that from 20 to 30 per cent. of the rates were spent in some districts; in this district the expenditure was under 1 per cent. Yet they had a just claim on traffic alone. Every day from Kelburn some 500 to 600 people passed along Devon Street on their way to the city's centre, yet there were no safety zones, and so narrow and tortuous was the way that there were narrow escapes from head-on collisions almost every day. The widening of this road would be ideal work for the unemployed, as there was about 15ft. of bank to cut away on the one side, and the owners of land on the other would be only too glad to receive the soil. This meant that 90 per cent. of the money expended would go for labour.

Mr. A. L. Hennesy said that Holloway Road was paved with old promises. Every time rain fell the road was torn up, and then men shovelled the material back again. The footpaths were so bad that people had offered serious injuries from falls. His own wife was crippled for a couple of years from that cause. The road at the Aro Street terminus was once more in a very bad way.

Mr. Tregonning suggested a method of providing a turning place or "haven of safety" for cars, at a point where there is at present no room to pass.

The chairman said it was all a question of finance. The apparent difficulty was the decision of the council not to increase the general rates, and to push through the year with as little expenditure as possible. Officers of the council who were present would probably attend to the smaller points the deputation had raised. Despite what had been said, in a very small list of special works they had included Devon Street, Brosnahan Terrace, and Norway Street, to be done out of ordinary revenue. Unemployed relief works were selected usually as special jobs that would connect up works on the estimates. That was a wise step on the part of the council, as by so doing they were able to pick up jobs which had been before the council for a long time. There was a fairly substantial sum for Brooklyn, and also for Ohiro Road, for the widening of Laura Avenue, Durham Street, and Murton Terrace. Some of the work mentioned might be carried on out of the unemployment relief money.

Councillor H. D. Bennett: All the committee can say is that these works are on the estimates, and the provision for them is there. I cannot give you any further assurance.

Mr. Fraser: What about the road through the Macarthy property?

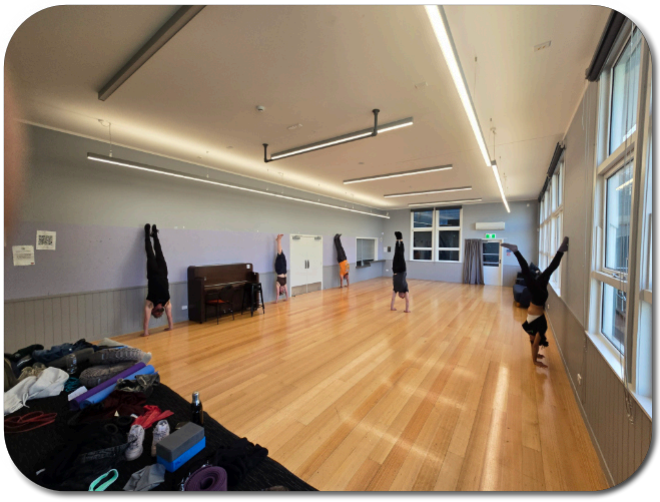
The chairman: Yes: that's on!

The chairman also said that Fitchett's corner (in Aro Street) was to be attended to. There was no provision on the estimates for Holloway Road, which would have to do with ordinary maintenance this year.

Spotlight on Regular Hall activities

‘High on the handstands’ workshop

With Nicolas Boisset



What: Handstand Workshop
Where: Aro Valley Hall
Why: Good workout, something people might not have had the chance or courage to learn previously, safe and fun.
Who: Nicolas Boisset
When: Every Friday

Each Friday at the Aro Valley hall, we have the unique handstand workshop lead by Nicolas Boisset from Oni. Nicolas became interested in handstands 15 years ago when he saw people doing them in a park.

“I started doing backyard handstands or practicing kickups by myself. You start with very poor form and everything. Over the years, my research starts. You know, going to classes to start learning the proper form.”

Now he shares his passion for being upside down with others.

“It’s cool, That’s what I’m saying, sometimes in my class it’s a bit like some sort of drug. I feel like, you know, being high on the handstands. I really feel like this after a session. I feel all opened up, super energised. It’s a good shot.”

To his teaching philosophy he says,“There’s different sorts of handstands. There are no bad or good handstands, but slightly different. The ones I’m teaching in the Friday workshop the more conventional handstands, where everything is locked, where we’re looking for the line, but for instance, if you want to take capoeria, you would have bent arms to be able to move out of it, you would also play with head position to look at your opponents.

We start the workshop by staring at the ground, but as you become comfortable with that position, you start playing with your head position and come from staring at the ground.”

It’s a great distance from his original job as a chef!

“I’ve been a chef for 25 years – I started when I was 16. Two years ago I wanted to make a change and I was getting bored of working in a kitchen. I saw it as a challenge, and I’m also part of Wellington Calisthenics, and I saw that this is where I’m happy and this is what I like, so I decided to do the course to become a personal trainer.”

There is a core group of clients that have showed up for every class and their progression is visible. Through commitment and dedication, they have become more and more comfortable upside down.

When asked about taking on new students, “I’m looking for more clients and trying to expand!”

Ahmen Mahal

Regular classes & activities

~ August 2024 ~

Day	Time	Class	Price	CONTACT
Mondays	8:30 - 9:30am	**Tai Chi with Yi Ching**	Koha	community@arovalley.org.nz
Mondays	6:30 - 7:30pm	**Foreign Language Class**	Contact for price	info@foreignlanguages.co.nz
Tuesdays	12am - 12:45pm	**Chair yoga with Kristin**	$8/$10 or koha	022 694 1197 kristingiorgi@gmail.com
Tuesdays	6 - 7pm	**Community free yoga**	Free	mark@hotmetal.nz
Tuesdays	6:30 - 7:30pm	**Foreign Language Class**	Contact for price	info@foreignlanguages.co.nz
Tuesdays	7:30 - 9:30pm	**Estudio de Samba Wellington**	$13.30 $80 term	estudiosamba@gmail.com estudiosambawellington.com
Wednesdays	8:30 - 9:30am	**Tai Chi with Yi Ching**	Koha	community@arovalley.org.nz
Wednesdays	1 - 2pm	**Dance 4 Us With Dance Therapy NZ**	Gold coin (If possible)	(09) 636 3029 admin@dancetherapy.co.nz
Wednesdays	6 - 7:30pm	**Afro Brazilian Dance**	$132 term or koha	afrobraziliandances.ba@gmail.com
Wednesdays	7:45 - 9:45pm	**Argentine Tango**	$10	021 542 7136 irinatango.nz@gmail.com
Thursday	4:30 - 6:30pm	**Trash Planet Beat Clinic**	Koha	contact@olmecha.com
Fridays	8:30 - 9:30am	**Tai Chi with Yi Ching**	Koha	community@arovalley.org.nz
Fridays	10:30 - 12pm	**Community Singing With Jo Shrigley**	$10/$70 for The term	jshrigley@gmail.com
Fridays	12:30 - 1:30pm	**Handstand Workshop**	$20	021 996 782 nicolas@oni.co.nz
1st Saturday Monthly	10 - 3pm	**Arts & Crafts Market with Art Collective**		hello@twotwenty.co.nz
Sundays	4:30 - 5:30pm	**Community free yoga**	Free	mark@hotmetal.nz
Sunday Fortnightly	2 - 4pm	**Aro Valley Jazz Jam with Aro Valley Jam Band**	Drop in & play or listen	community@arovalley.org.nz

Community Co-ordinator: *Ahmen Mahal 384 8499,*
48 Aro St, community@arovalley.org.nz
Office Hours: *Mon closed; Tue to Thur 10am - 2pm, Friday 12 - 4pm*
Aro Valley Community Centre – managed by the Aro Valley Community Council Inc