

# COROMIND



Issue 31

## THE ART OF BEING AN ARTIST

Coromind's New Series of Free Workshops

## WHAT'S WITH ALL THE NOISE?

Here comes Corrosive Moses!

## CoroCine Festival Returns

A Celebration of Local Stories  
by Local Talent

## Silly Seal Season

NZ Fur Seals Return to the  
Coromandel this Winter

Audio   
Version





## Share Your Mind

The faulty fluorescent light of the laundromat in the town of Waihi buzzed like an angry fly, casting a flickering glow on the worn-out linoleum. I loaded a dryer of mix-matched wet laundry and then hunched on a hard plastic chair designed for discomfort, arms wrapped tightly around me and wondered what to do. Routinely, I'd go for a walk and check out the charity stores looking for a bargain or visit a local bakery for an unhealthy snack. Discouraged by the cold rainy weather however, I instinctively sought solace in my phone.

A thirty-minute drying cycle. I was confident the time would pass while I lost myself online, keeping up with (dis)information on my gadget. I reached into my left pocket but all I found was an old receipt and a lighter. No gadget. Initial panic ensued, until I recalled that I had left it at home to charge and actually forgot about it. Phone-less, I considered meditating, stretching or snoozing. I contemplated hypnotising myself by watching the revolutions of dryer number 3 with a solitary sock stuck in the door, but that didn't happen. I felt a little bored. It was then that I noticed a magazine on another chair nearby. What caught my eye was how artistic and colourful the cover was, so I grabbed it, in need of distraction. Its cover was a piece of art with a unique title – COROMIND? My interest piqued, I turned the pages.

The free magazine was filled with an eclectic collection of articles about local art, health, culture, activities, travels, and personal stories, punctuated by the occasional section dedicated to advertising as expected. Besides the content, it offered creative graphics, supplementing the whole experience, making it a much more pleasurable read, rather than just page after page of continuous corporate or commercial language. I was interrupted by a 'beep'. The dryer cycle had terminated. I gathered my laundry and left the building. While starting my car, for some reason the magazine lingered in my mind, so I went back to retrieve it and then headed home.

The magazine sat on my studio desk for days, hiding a pile of paper procrastination. Still curious, I revisited it, reading it as I sat on my deck sipping a cold beer. I was curious. Why would someone spend so much time and effort providing such an interesting, artful publication for free? I read some fine print, as you do, and there was an 'invitation' from the editor for anyone to submit and contribute ideas, artwork or anything creative. There was a disclaimer – there was no guarantee of being published or remunerated. I liked that. It was honest. In the past, I had dabbled in writing short stories and had some saved on my computer for nostalgia. I sent some of them to the editor with nothing to lose and thought nothing more of it.

Days passed, until I received a positive reply from the magazine indicating that they actually liked my stories and would like permission to publish them. I must admit, I was pleasantly surprised and flattered. That was more than a year ago, and since then I continue creating for them and enjoy seeing my ramblings supported and appreciated, along with so many other contributors. Coromind is an ambitious and adventurous publication no doubt, but it truly proves its support for local artist(s) of any kind. Its creative professionalism and dedication to quality deserves its perseverance. Pick up a copy next time you see it in the stands or even just lying around in a laundromat. You won't regret it.

Words by  
**Amir Yussuf**

## THE ART OF BEING AN ARTIST

### FREE WORKSHOPS WITH COROMIND

**Practical tools and shared wisdom for a sustainable creative life.**

The Coromandel is full of artists doing amazing things with their craft — and we believe that when creatives connect, everyone thrives.

Coromind is launching a new series of free workshops designed to support artists in our region. Whether you're just getting started or have been creating for years, these sessions offer hands-on knowledge, kōrero, and community — all aimed at helping you grow a sustainable, confident creative practice.

This isn't about following a formula. It's about sharing experiences, swapping ideas, and building collective strength.

#### WORKSHOP 1 - BE SEEN

**Friday 1 August, 4:00 PM**

How do you get your art out there? This first session focuses on visibility and online presence: social media, website basics, photography tips, digital tools, and engagement. We'll cover what platforms work best for different artists, and how to keep it real while promoting your mahi.

#### WORKSHOP 3 - THE BUSINESS END

**Friday 19 September, 4:00 PM**

Let's talk money. We'll unpack commission structures, gallery agreements, pricing your work, and the admin side of being an artist — including whether to register for GST, and how to track your income as a creative.

#### WORKSHOP 2 - HANDS ON

**Friday 8 August, 4:00 PM**

A practical session for artists ready to prepare their work for the world. We'll discuss framing options (DIY and store-bought), the ins and outs of turning originals into prints, cards or merch, and how to decide on quantities, materials and pricing for reproductions.

#### WORKSHOP 4 - ART & WELL-BEING

**Friday 26 September, 4:00 PM**

To wrap it all up, this final session is an open kōrero focused on the well-being of artists. How do we stay inspired while navigating the pressure to earn, promote, and keep producing? We'll bring together reflections and questions from earlier sessions to explore how we can care for ourselves — and each other — while doing what we love.

**WHERE:** Community Social Services Whitianga – 2 Cook Drive

**TRANSPORT:** Free trips from the Ferry Landing at 3:10 and 3:45 PM

**COST:** Free (koha jar on the day to support the venue)

**BOOKING:** Email [hello@coromind.nz](mailto:hello@coromind.nz) to guarantee your spot – **SLOTS ARE LIMITED!**



# THE ULTIMATE COROMANDEL GIG GUIDE

Coromind now brings gigs and events from across the region into one place – powered by Eventfinda. From live music and exhibitions to festivals and community gatherings, our guide at Coromind.nz helps you stay in the loop.

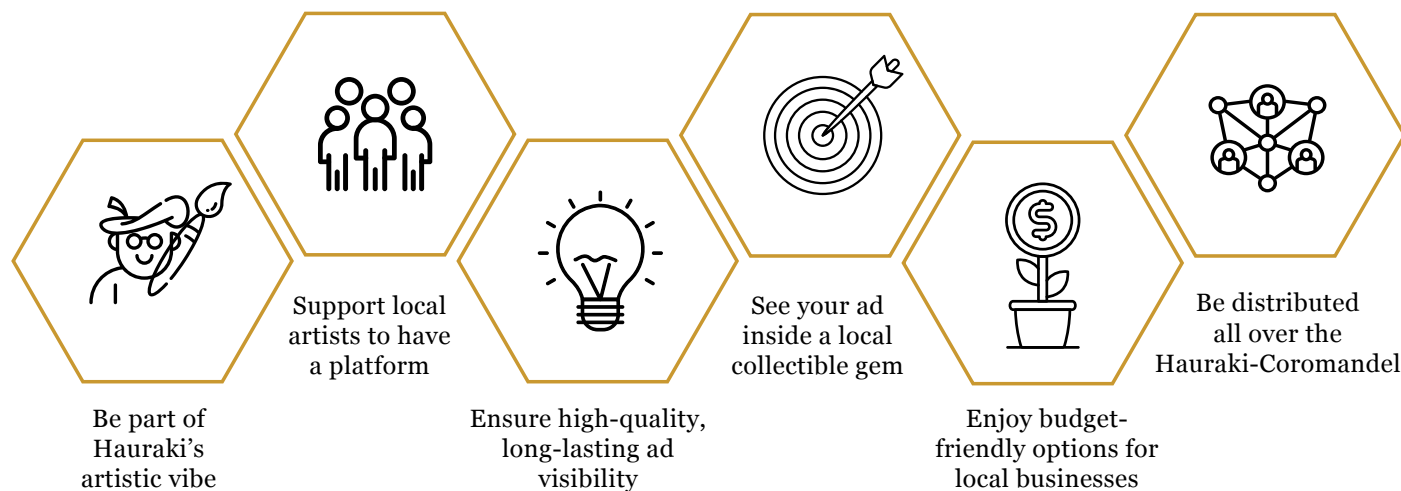
IF YOU'RE RUNNING AN EVENT AND WANT TO BE FEATURED, EMAIL US AT:

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## Contents

## Reasons for your business to advertise on Coromind



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Get in touch: ✉ [hello@coromind.nz](mailto:hello@coromind.nz)

- 5 Shirley Cresswell
- 8 Rock  
The Weight of Memory
- 10 The Digital Dystopia  
Understanding Power and Influence in the age of Social Media
- 11 Wāhi Tukurua  
Plastic Free July
- 12 Real Interior NZ  
Bringing Custom Interiors to the Hauraki-Coromandel
- 13 Coromind Games
- 15 What's with all the Noise?  
Here Comes Corrosive Moses!
- 18 Prescriptive vs. Descriptive  
Two Linguistic Perspectives that can Change How You See the World
- 20 A Community Approach  
What NZ can Learn from Japan's Waste & Community Systems
- 22 Silly Seal Season  
NZ Fur Seals Return to the Coromandel this Winter
- 24 Proud to be Local  
Lisl Wollheim Jones
- 25 Ross' Ramblings Part 2  
Wars and Women in Southeast Asia
- 28 A Forest of Giants  
The Kauri Gum Diggers of the Kauaeranga Valley
- 29 CoroCine Festival Returns  
A Celebration of Local Stories by Local Talent

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Disclaimer: No responsibility is accepted for loss or damage suffered by anyone relying on the information within. No endorsement of any service or product advertised or featured is implied or assumed.



# SHIRLEY CRESSWELL

*Falling in love with the Coromandel!*



After nursing for almost 30 years, I felt the desire to try painting. From playing with paint and painting from photos my husband and I had taken, I developed my own style of painting with acrylics by applying paint in many layers to achieve a realistic scene. Very soon, after winning awards and exhibiting in shows and galleries, it became clear that I had a new pathway in life and I went full-time as an artist in 2012.

In 2020, we were lucky enough to purchase our own little slice of Coromandel in Matarangi. Living there for a short time while we built back in the Waikato, we fell in love with Matarangi. Being so close to both Coromandel and Whitanga and all they have to offer, we really felt like we had won Lotto. The long beautiful beach, the white sand, the everchanging harbour and spit, the waves, the changing moods of the sea and sky and the friendliness of the community.

Now we spend our time between our home in Taupiri and Matarangi. Many of my paintings feature Coromandel beaches. I love the sea, so water plays a big part in my work. Beautiful boats and beaches that evoke memories. As part of the Mercury Bay Art Escape each year, and also The Gordonton Art & Design Trail in the Waikato, we open up our homes for people to visit and view my art.

For many years, my work has been shown in galleries and exhibitions throughout New Zealand. As I have become more well known, I have enjoyed the open studios and meeting people who enjoy my work instead of the pressure that comes from supplying galleries and building a body of work for solo exhibitions. I exhibit in a few select galleries but also our home in Taupiri has a purpose-built gallery space.

My work has been published in international art magazines and I am fortunate to have paintings in collections all over the world. I never dreamed when I started painting that it would become my life, business and career. Limited edition prints, both canvas and paper, have been very popular. Exhibited in select stores and galleries and also through my website, these have proved to be an affordable way for my art to be enjoyed.

Our beautiful beaches inspire many of my paintings. To feel like you can walk into a painting, feel the sand, the light breeze and see the waves crashing in ... I like to think that the painting is like looking out the window at somewhere you would love to be.

[www.shirleycresswell.com](http://www.shirleycresswell.com)

Facebook: ShirleyCresswellArtist

Words by  
**Shirley Cresswell**



Get to know  
more about  
Shirley

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# ROCK THE WEIGHT OF MEMORY

The rock lay at the top of the bush, at the eastern end of the farm. Nick and I found it one day, though we had not been searching for it.

We had crossed the road from my father's house, into an area of bush that clung to the side of the hill like limpets to the hull of an upturned ship. There was a ridge there, where the trees grew close, and the ground was always covered in soft branches and leaves – a sacred place for a pair of ten-year-olds, where the light filtered through the leaves, and the earth smelled of damp and bark.

For a while, we held our playful communion here, sword-fighting with sticks, and throwing dirt, climbing trees, and looking out across the valley – but I think it was Nick who suggested we venture further up the ridge.

"But we'll have to go through the wires," I said.

"So?" Nick shrugged, before dashing off.

I followed Nick as he ducked through the fence, feeling like I was breaking the rules. The bush thickened, narrowing in on us, tugging at our wool sweaters. Skinny branches and scratchy fern leaves flung into my eyes as I followed Nick up the slope. He went fast, and I thought I might lose him, so I hurried along, nearly turning my ankle on a patch of wet leaves.

Ahead, Nick stopped, and in my haste I almost walked right into the back of him.

"Whoa," he said.

"What is it?"

Nick gave me no answer, but as I stepped up beside him I realised he didn't have to. Before us stood the rock. It was a boulder, tall as a house, though only as big around as a truck, perhaps. It sat in a small clearing, as if it had carved a space for itself out of the growth around it. The rock itself was dark, surprisingly round, and largely covered in vibrant lichen that grew thicker the further up the rock it grew.

"It's amazing," Nick said, walking around the rock, his hand sliding around its edge. "How long do you think it's been here?"

"My dad will know. Probably ages though," I said.

Nick stopped, put both his hands against the rock and pushed. He might as well have tried to move the whole hill. "It probably weighs a tonne."

"At least."

"Look at this." A mischievous sparkle had entered Nick's eyes.

I stepped around the rock to where he stood. The ground sloped away from the boulder, leaving a ledge of dirt about the size of a double mattress. There was perhaps a half-metre of clearance between it and the rock above.

"I dare you to get under it," Nick said.

"No way," I said. "What if it moves?"

"It's not gonna move. Look." Nick shoved the rock again, as if that somehow proved his point.

"You get under it then, if you're so sure."

Nick looked at the dirt-ledge for a moment, but he stayed where he was. "I'll do it if you do it."

I swallowed hard, considering the small space. "Alright," I nodded. "We'll do it together."

Somehow that felt different, safer.

We got down to the ground, and Nick slithered under the rock first. He looked up at me and I could see in his eyes that he was worried I wasn't going to follow, so I slid myself across the ground close to him, the rock nearly pressing against our faces.

We giggled then, aware in some way that we were doing something dangerous, but too excited to understand. I think Nick got scared then, because all of a sudden he reached out and grabbed my hand. I squeezed it, not knowing what to say.

We lay there for what felt like an hour, our hearts pounding. Our laughs covered our fear.

Though I hadn't seen Nick in over twenty years, the last time I visited that ridge I decided to search for the rock again. Nothing looked as it did in my memory, and I quickly lost my sense of direction. It wasn't long before I gave up, thinking perhaps I would try again some other time.

Words by  
**Isaac Smith**







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## BEYOND THE CLICK SERIES

# THE DIGITAL DYSTOPIA

## Understanding power and influence in the age of social media

When you open your favourite social media app, whether it's Instagram, TikTok, or Snapchat, it can feel like you're in control. You decide what to post, who to follow, and what to comment on. But actually, what you see, hear, and believe is decided for you by invisible algorithms that determine which content pops up in your feed. Even though we can 'like' and 'share' content, we're not really the ones making decisions about what shows up.

Digital platforms – like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube – are not just fun apps to pass time; they're powerful gatekeepers that control the flow of information. Algorithms are the secret sauce behind every social media feed, and they trap us in 'echo chambers', bubbles where we keep seeing the same types of opinions, making it easy to reinforce what we already believe and harder to understand different points of view – where everyone agrees with you or, worse, they push you towards more extreme content. We're exposed to a narrow slice of reality that doesn't include the diversity of opinions and experiences that exist in the world, and it can scale up with horrific consequences, such as the white supremacist hate group messaging that motivated the Christchurch massacre in 2019.

Beyond the algorithms, the real power lies in the hands of a few massive tech companies. Companies like Meta (formerly Facebook), Google, 'X' (formerly Twitter) and ByteDance (which owns TikTok) control the world's most popular platforms. They have huge amounts of money, and these mega-platforms also have the power to form and execute powerful political agendas that have global overreach.

For instance, in 2020, Facebook faced accusations of political bias and censorship when it temporarily banned news content in Australia in response to the country's proposed law requiring tech companies to pay news organisations for content. This highlighted Facebook's willingness to pressure governments

when regulations don't align with its business interests.

Even beyond political influence, the power of these companies extends to how societies function. When Google withdrew its search engine services from China in 2010 due to censorship and hacking concerns, it impacted how information flowed in the country, showing the role that a single tech company can play in shaping access to information for an entire nation. And with platforms like TikTok facing potential bans in the U.S. due to security concerns over its ties to the Chinese government, it's clear that social media is no longer just about sharing dance videos or memes – it's a battleground for political and economic power.

This might sound overwhelming, but there are ways we can fight back. In New Zealand, for example, there are ongoing discussions about regulating social media to make sure these platforms can't just do whatever they want. We can take part in these conversations and push for rules that protect our rights online.

We also need to think about our own role in this system. Trying to follow different people and perspectives can help break the echo chamber effect and give us a more balanced view of the world.

The future of social media can go in two directions. One possibility is that these platforms will keep growing in power and influence, shaping our lives in ways we can't predict. The other possibility is that we'll find ways to reclaim our digital sovereignty – taking back control of what we see and share online.

To get there, we need to have honest conversations about how much power these companies have, how they use our data, and what kind of impact they have on our society. If we all take action, we can ensure that social media becomes a force for good rather than a tool for manipulation.

The choice is ours. Will we let algorithms and tech giants control us, or will we stand up and reshape the digital world to be a place where everyone's voice truly matters?

Words by  
Stella Pennell



# PLASTIC FREE JULY

## -the power of small changes



The idea is simple: choose to refuse single-use plastics for the month of July (and beyond).

### Time to rethink

From swapping out plastic bags, bottles, and coffee cups to rethinking packaging and buying habits, Plastic Free July is about becoming more aware of the plastic we use and taking practical steps to reduce it.

### Solution to plastic pollution

Plastic Free July is a global movement that encourages people to be part of the solution to plastic pollution, creating cleaner streets, oceans, and communities. What started in 2011 as a local initiative in Western Australia has grown into a worldwide campaign with millions taking part each year.

### Time for a new habit?

Plastic Free July is a great time to start a new habit, try a swap, or encourage your whānau, school, or workplace to take on the challenge. Remember, it's not about being perfect, it's about doing what you can, where you are. How about saying no to prepacked fruit and vegetables this month, taking your own containers when you visit the butcher or sushi shop or even ditching cling film? Will you join the challenge this July?

At Wāhi Tukurua, Mercury Bay's own resource recovery trust, we're proud to support and promote initiatives like Plastic Free July. Every action, no matter how small, adds up. Whether it's using a reusable cup, saying no to plastic packaging, or supporting local businesses that reward waste-free choices, you're contributing to a wider movement toward sustainability.

Follow Wāhi Tukurua on Facebook or visit our website to learn more and find resources to help you take the next step.



Words by  
**Tracey Bell**  
Chair Wāhi Tukurua



## Real Interior NZ

### Bringing Custom Interiors to the Hauraki-Coromandel

There's something special about the way homes flow in Pāuanui and throughout the Hauraki-Coromandel. Real Interior NZ, a locally based interior design and renovation team, knows how to make the most of that character. From beachside baches to full family homes, their custom approach brings style and functionality into every corner of a space.

Based in Pāuanui, Real Interior NZ offers a showroom by appointment and works across the region – from Whangamatā and Tairua to Thames and Whitianga. Their reach also includes Franklin, Taupō and even Auckland, supporting clients who own homes in the Coromandel but live further afield. Having this regional flexibility makes them an ideal partner for holiday homeowners and locals alike.

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- **BLINDS & SPLASHBACKS:** Offering stylish window treatments and custom glass splashbacks that bring polish to any room.

One of Real Interior NZ's strengths is their fully tailored, no-restrictions design process. Unlike modular setups that rely on pre-cut components, their custom approach means they can shape a solution around each unique space. The team works closely with every client, offering visual planning tools and practical advice to make the design journey smooth and rewarding.

Their recent Pāuanui projects showcase just how versatile and reliable their work is. From modern beach houses to long-time family properties, the team's ability to adapt to different styles is a hallmark of their work. One local client put it simply: "Great group to deal with! Quick and nothing has been too much trouble."

### READY TO START YOUR OWN TRANSFORMATION?

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# WHAT'S WITH ALL THE NOISE?

Punk rock is loud. Punk rock is rude. Punk rock is in your face. It makes no apologies. There's not a chance it will invite you in for a cup of tea and a cucumber sandwich. Not a chance. And that's the point. It's not polite; it's been upsetting people for years. And punk rock music's in a neighbourhood near you.

I'm Stewart Pedley and I'm the singer and guitarist for Whitianga punk rock band Corrosive Moses.

Listen: punk rock agitates, but it always has something to say. Ever since it cursed and spat its way into the beige and regimented mindset of the mid-70s, it's been loud in calling out the bullshit and challenging the rules. Bands like Sex Pistols,

Buzzcocks, and The Clash in the UK, and Ramones, Television, and Richard Hell and the Voidoids in the US, were, respectively, fearless in their rejection of establishment, corporate mainstream, and authority. They became an indignant reaction to dire social conditions. Not everyone had a slice of the pie, so backs were turned and flags were raised. Things were done their way.

And punk rock's not gone away since. As the adage goes, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Fugazi, Rancid, Bad Religion, and a fistful of others kept the torches burning through the 90s. And now, in this time of widening divide, as Governments, news outlets, and social media pump dissonance, confusion, and divisiveness – as the rich get richer

## HERE COMES CORROSIVE MOSES!

CORROSIVE  
MOSES



and the poor – well, the poor get ignored – and the disadvantaged are not seen or heard – it's no surprise that punk rock is there, making a racket and raising a voice. You can cover the cracks with concrete but the weeds keep coming through.

There is a groundswell of punk subculture nationally and internationally. British band IDLES and Aussie punkers Amyl and the Sniffers both performed sold out NZ shows this year. Punk doesn't necessarily look like the mohawks and safety-pins of the 70s – that got ruined by cliché. But the attitude is the same: do it yourself, on your own terms; make some noise; do it with meaning!

Corrosive Moses – Gabe Johnston on bass, Leo Magri on drums, and I – came together just before lockdown 2020. Immediately we found our sound: high energy songs; songs that made you feel; songs that made you think. And the songs came quickly. With tunes in hand, we set out organising gigs in bars and basements, back-alleys and barns. We would play places that suited our attitude and approach. We leapt at the chance to be a part of the Whitianga Skatepark opening – punk rock goes hand-in-hand with skate culture (several years later, the plight of the much-delayed Tairua Skatepark build, following 30 years of opposition from a vocal, personally invested and, notably, well-off minority, inspired Corrosive Moses crowd favourite, 'Let The Kids Skate'). We had something to say. And it was unifying to see people excited by our music as we said it. Word spreads. Since then, we've opened the main stage at Wellington's seminal Newtown Festival and, at the end of last year, for international headliners Sublime with Rome at their sold-out Coroglen show. But we have our sights set on bigger things; we're taking this on the road.

Coinciding with that is the release of our full-length album, produced, recorded and mixed by local legend and award-winning producer Dave Rhodes. It's an energised album, packed with tight, concise songs that get to the point: the intentional dividing of societies by governments ('One Fine Day' and 'The Ignorant Will Talk The Most'); people's seemingly increasing inability to tolerate those with differing viewpoints ('Ship Out At Sea'); intergenerational violence ('Big, Big Man': 'You're just like your father now, / A big fish in a little pond. / Who are your sons gonna learn it from?'); and economic disparity ('Limboland': 'Frustration kicks in a town like this; / The poor stay poor and the rich get rich. / The factory fence is tagged with 'Fuck The Man!'). The subjects may be weighty, and the music may be fast, with a ton of attitude, but the songs are exhilarating. We defy you not to be moving and singing to them in the end.

To celebrate the release of our first single and video, "Buttercup", filmed by friend and director Fauze Hassen, we are throwing an all-ages event at the Whitianga Town Hall on July 19th. Our band will be supported by DJ SunRay, with live music from Smokefree Rockquest semi-finalists TheBand.com and Hauraki's finest 'shed punk band', Commodore 65. Food and bar will be available. Tickets can be purchased from Hula cafe, iSite (in person or by phone - 07 866 5555), and (subject to availability) at the door on the night. Adults \$20; under 16s, \$10. Get in quick!

What's with all the noise? Find out for yourself. Here comes Corrosive Moses!



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# Prescriptive vs. Descriptive

*TWO LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES THAT  
CAN CHANGE HOW YOU SEE THE WORLD*

During my linguistics and language studies, there turned out to be several surprising crossovers between how you approach language and how you can approach life and the people around you.

Linguists specialise in a whole range of work from teaching and translating to speech therapy, ancient language reconstruction, training actors to use accents, and anything else to do with language. No matter what they specialise in though, they will use either a prescriptive approach or a descriptive approach to their work, two approaches that are also vital in life.

A prescriptive approach is where you see something that's not right, and you 'prescribe' a set of actions to fix it. This requires understanding a situation by judging it as acceptable or unacceptable, and trying to fix it if it's the latter. This judgement is based on our subconscious beliefs of how the world should be. It's what many call 'logic', but it is quite often cultural, and belief based. For a linguist, a prescriptivist approach would look like correcting a student's bad grammar so they learn the correct form. In real life, it could be teaching someone to drive and correcting road violations or correcting the way they dress or behave if it conflicts with the situation.

The descriptive approach, on the other hand, wants to describe what is happening, start to finish, without making any judgements about correct/incorrect and without trying to change or 'fix' something. With this approach, linguists can look at how a language is used across dialects and cultures to gain a better understanding of its speakers. When looking at different dialects, like in English, you would treat all the dialects and accents equally, rather than grading them based on beliefs of proper/improper speech. All forms of the language become equal in the descriptive approach because when you

don't pass judgement, they can all be considered valid forms of language.

In real life, the descriptive approach is useful for connecting with and understanding people without judgement, especially when someone is in distress. Rather than prescribing a 10-step plan to fix someone, for example, the descriptive approach forces you to learn about and understand their situation without trying to fix them. And like with languages, everyone becomes equal and valid when we don't assign any judgement. The descriptive approach is useful when we need to practice empathy, active listening, and sit with someone when they are having a tough time.

Each approach has its pros and cons. If someone is in emotional distress then handing them a prescribed list of fixes would be inappropriate to say the least, and only describing a learner driver's bad driving without judgement or trying to improve it would also be inappropriate.

But as with most things, there is never a one-size-fits-all rule for how we lead life. That is why it's important to know which approach to use when.

Prescriptivism is great for achieving goals. You identify a problem or a deficiency, and you plan how to rectify the situation. Easy peasy. Descriptivism is important for understanding a person, regardless of what they have done in the past or what their current situation is.

Descriptivism validates people, and while it is easy to pass judgement in most situations, truly empathising with someone is something we could all do a little better.



Words by  
**Matt  
Bowden**







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# A COMMUNITY APPROACH

## WHAT NZ CAN LEARN FROM JAPAN'S WASTE & COMMUNITY SYSTEMS



A while ago I was very fortunate to be selected to travel to Japan, representing New Zealand, at the Local Government Exchange and Cooperation Seminar, in Kōhoku, a town in Saga Prefecture, Kyushu, Japan.

Whilst there is much to write about ... it was the collective responsibility felt by the citizens, working together for the betterment of all, which had the most profound effect on me.

Japan faces similar challenges to New Zealand: an ageing population, the threat of natural disasters and an increase in social security costs. Couple these issues with their love for packaging and a high level of presentation of products and there ensues a perfect storm of waste created. A rising awareness is leading to some great innovation in that space, but it will take some time to have an impact.

This is where the willingness and compliance of the greater population kicks in. In Kōhoku there is no kerb-side collection; however, there are large wire-mesh containers every so often on a street corner. There are 16 different bags to recycle your waste and drop off at the collection site. The elderly are helped by neighbours or drive to the recycling centre in town. When you dispose of your individual bags in the appropriate container, you are asked to scan a QR code. These codes contribute to a points system and residents receive rewards of cash or goods or vouchers at the required points. The trust required is enormous and there is very little reported 'ripping off' of the system ... but a lot of motivation to recycle. Local schoolchildren have their artwork emblazoned on the trucks, to their great excitement.

I followed the pathway the non-recyclable waste takes. A visit to the Saga Seibu Clean Centre was an eye-opener. I've never been a fan of burning waste as it provides no incentive to reduce, reuse or eliminate from the source ... but I admit I was rather impressed by their model. Yes, they have the population to support such a waste plant, but I ponder the scalability of a project here.

First impressions: shoes were taken off (you could literally eat your lunch off the floor) and our white-coated guides showed us through the process.

It's a shaft-type gasification and melting furnace which generates electricity to power its own processes, with the excess being sold wholesale. Steel and slag are recovered and made into new products such as paving and construction material.

Emissions and wastewater are processed on site at above the national guidelines.

They run regular tours and it's a bit of a local attraction. In my opinion, there needs to be a 'sinking lid' policy to make these plants smaller in future and eventually, redundant.

Whilst it isn't unsightly, and doesn't smell, residents are compensated for living nearby. Emissions are low, however 20 to 30 years later, the plant is disassembled and moved to another location.

Japan is subject to heavy weather events and the risk of tsunami, as are we, and to that end districts often have cooperative flooding mitigation systems. The Narie Machine Drainage Plant aims to keep water outside the extensive levy bank during the increasing number of extreme rainfall events. Channels across private farmland have a series of valves to contain and release water which is coordinated centrally, each landowner contributing to the choreographed management of an event threatening the town.

Going further inland, there are many run-down farm villages. As you can imagine, the urban pressure on financially viable agricultural land presents problems. One innovative solution involved local government purchasing unviable or abandoned blocks, amalgamating them and installing farmers from the area to grow produce in an environmentally and financially sustainable manner. Jobs and prosperity are created in a depressed rural area. Note that local government in Japan is funded by a substantial tax, spent in the area of collection, and covering way more than our rating system does, including schools and retirement villages. A smaller tax is paid to central government.

My takeaway? Japan has always been at the forefront of innovation and whilst we don't have the population pressures we could do better at cooperation and collaboration to find solutions to pressing environmental and social issues. The little guy matters!

Food for thought.

Words by  
**Deli Connell**







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# Silly Seal Season

**As the water temperature cools down over winter, you may notice New Zealand fur seals, or kekeno, returning to the rocky shores around the Coromandel Peninsula.**

Between May and September, juvenile and male seals leave their breeding colonies to explore and rest. Department of Conservation (DOC) Marine Ranger James Blackmore says during this time, seals spend more time out of the water.

“They bask on rocky coastlines and beaches,” James says. “When they’re ready, they’ll head out to sea again in search of food.”

Fur seal breeding colonies are mainly on the South Island’s west coast, Stewart Island / Rakiura, and the subantarctic islands, but they also range as far north as the Coromandel Peninsula. However, these curious creatures don’t just stick to the coast — they often end up exploring and resting in some rather unusual places.

“We’ve been called to a seal napping outside a takeaway shop in Whitianga, probably waiting for its fish and chips! They often nap on the wharf in Ferry Landing. We’ve also had reports of seals turning up in people’s boats in the marina, and even in their backyards,” says James.

It’s not uncommon to see seals traveling up rivers, sometimes venturing far from the coast.

Last September, Hauraki DOC rangers were called to relocate a seal which made itself comfortable at Paeroa College, having swum up the Firth of Thames and the Ohinemuri River to the school’s campus — about 20 km inland.

In 2021, a seal pup reached State Highway 25a near Prescott’s Garage in Hikuai, 11 km inland via the Tairua River. That same year, a young male seal took an unexpected journey to Middle Earth — travelling 90 km inland up the Waitoa River to a lake at the Hobbiton movie set.

DOC receives numerous calls during winter about seals that appear sick or in need of help. People often worry because seal pups can look distressed, scrawny, or display behaviours like coughing, sneezing, or crying. Pups spend time alone while their mothers forage at sea, which can be mistaken for abandonment.

However, these are all typical behaviours for seals and usually don’t indicate a need for human intervention.

“Seals are resilient marine mammals and given time and space, usually find their way home,” James says.

Although it’s exciting to see seal pups in Hauraki-Coromandel, it’s important to remember they are wild animals and should be respected.

“They may look helpless, but seals will defend themselves if threatened. They can give a serious bite, so it’s best to give them plenty of space,” warns James.



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NZ Fur seals / kekeno resting on the Ferry Landing Wharf in Mercury Bay.

## If you come across NZ fur seals/kekeno, remember:

- Stay at least 20 m away from seals.
- Keep dogs and children away.
- Do not feed or disturb seals.
- Their behaviours like regurgitating, sneezing, coughing, or crying are normal.

- DOC follows a ‘hands off’ approach, and rangers will only intervene if a seal is in obvious danger. If you see a seal seriously injured, entangled in debris, on a public road, or being harassed, please call the 24/7 DOC Hotline 0800 DOC HOT (0800 362 468).

- Under the Marine Mammals Protection Act 1978, it is an offence to disturb, harass, harm, injure, or kill a seal. Dog owners whose dog/s attack seals could face prosecution.

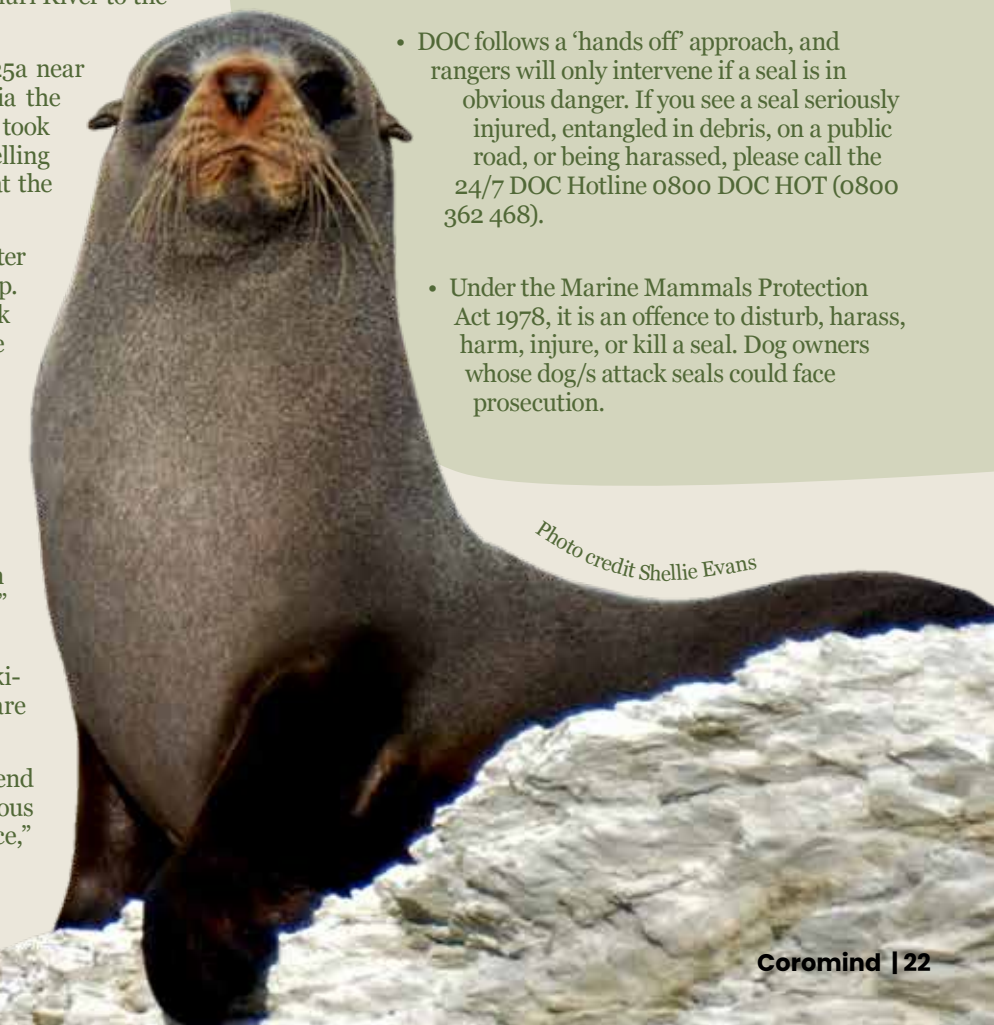


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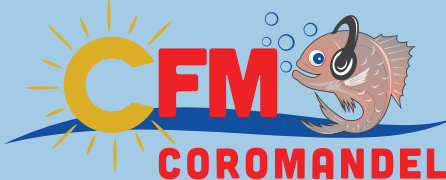
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**WHAT IS YOUR CONNECTION WITH THE COROMANDEL?**

*My husband, Andy, and I sailed to NZ from the Caribbean with our six-week old son, Stormi, in our 33-foot monohull, Imshi. We arrived in Auckland in November 1999, and at that time the America's Cup yacht race was taking place. It was great timing for us, as Andy is a boatbuilder and the industry was booming. We spent a year and a half in Auckland living on our yacht there, before moving to Whangamatā where our second son, Tane, was born. After six months, Andy was offered a job in Whitianga building two motor catamarans, and we ended up living there for over 20 years. We eventually sold our yacht, bought a house and settled in Whitianga. Our sons were both 'lifers' at Mercury Bay Area School.*

**WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING SINCE YOU DEPARTED WHITIANGA?**

*When our sons grew up and left home, we bought a 36-foot monohull called An Cala in New Plymouth, and Andy and Stormi sailed her around the top of New Zealand back to Whitianga. An Cala had been sorely neglected, and she needed a huge amount of work done before we could leave. We sold all the furniture in our house, rented the house out long term, moved aboard, and Andy worked on her every weekend. We sailed to Mercury Island and Great Barrier Island during this time, so by the time we left, we were comfortable with her seaworthiness. Finally, we journeyed north to explore the Bay of Islands area, and in May 2022, we sailed from Opua to Fiji. Over the next six months, we had a wonderful time cruising around the islands of Fiji, Vanuatu and New Caledonia. We loved meeting the local people and exploring both the land and sea of these countries. Eventually, when our cruising kitty was running out, we sailed to Australia and worked on the Gold Coast for two years.*

**WHAT IS A HIGHLIGHT OF THIS TIME?**

*Swimming with manta rays in Fiji. They are such magnificent creatures! Another great memory was hiking the GR1 trail over five days in New Caledonia. We left our yacht in Noumea, packed our backpacks and were dropped off by a shuttle in the south of New Caledonia.*

**WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF LIVING ON A YACHT?**

*Over the next five days, we hiked through a magnificent forest with large kauri trees, saw amazing waterfalls and countless rivers. We mostly had the track and the huts to ourselves!*

**WHERE ARE YOU NOW, AND WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?**

*We plan to sail around the world, back to NZ. We are currently island hopping up the beautiful Queensland coast, and are going to sail to Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand next. After that, we have to decide which route to take; through the Suez canal and into the Mediterranean or via the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa.*

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## Ross' Ramblings – Part 2

# Wars and Women in Southeast Asia

Continuing on from Part 1 in which I discussed non-judgement of Thai working girls, I did judge another girl around the hotel pool one day, but she wasn't Thai. Being a horny male in my early 20s, I took a second look when I saw a drop dead gorgeous young woman lying by the pool. I summoned up the courage to approach her and introduced myself. Her reply shocked me. In a loud screeching voice with the most extreme Aussie accent I had ever heard, she replied "Giddy clobber, nice to meet ya. Martha's my handle." It turned out she was from a small town in the middle of the lucky country. She was very outgoing and seemed nice, but that voice. "Oh god," I remember thinking. "Why did you combine such an attractive body and personality with such an atrocious voice and way with words?" God answered, "For Christ's sake boyo, you should know that everything in life is a test for you. Get over it." Well, I couldn't get over it and managed to find an excuse to slip away leaving god and Martha by the pool.

Another person I met beside the pool was John who was in the third month of a planned year-long OE, but who was due to fly back home to NZ the next day having spent all the rest of his trip money on a month of partying hard in Bangkok, a fate that befell a lot of young travellers in the 1970s. I hope the drugs, alcohol and women were worth the tail-between-the-legs return to family and friends.

At Pattaya, which in the 70s was just a sleepy seaside town which American GIs had also frequented during the war, an ex-soldier also called John befriended us and asked for some money as he didn't have anywhere to stay and was sleeping under a water tower. He had fallen victim to the lure of swallowing opium-soaked coconut fibre which was a cheap drug of choice for some travellers. Unfortunately, the opium, which gave an extremely euphoric experience, was highly addictive and a very difficult habit to kick. I was in two minds about giving him money to continue his habit, so I bought him food instead. However, I witnessed his pretty horrible withdrawal symptoms when he had no money for his daily fixes – shaking, severe back ache, nausea and diarrhoea being just a few. Eventually we left Pattaya with John still sleeping under the water tower. I hope he gathered the courage and the will to enter a rehab program.



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Sometime later, I visited northern Thailand. My friend and I hired a guide to take us on a three-day trek into the hills surrounding Chiang Mai. We walked through mountainous jungle until we reached a village of the Karen tribe, many of whose members escaped to Thailand after persecution in their homeland of Myanmar. The Padaung or long neck women of the tribe wear rings around their necks as a sign of beauty and tradition. The rings are made longer when extra ones are added as a girl becomes older. The rings are heavy and can add an extra 5 kilos to be borne by the collarbone and rib cage, often weakening them, but this does not deter the women from wearing them. These mountain tribes survive through slash and burn agriculture and tourism, hosting trekking travellers and selling beautiful souvenirs of their very colourful traditional clothing and jewellery. Unfortunately, in 2008 the UN published an article which equated going to these villages to visiting 'human zoos'. This of course caused a boycott by some travellers, who thought that their actions might force the Thai government to give the tribespeople more rights, especially citizenship which would give them more access to child education and healthcare. However, it now seems that many of them would prefer the tourists to return for economic reasons and because they enjoy meeting foreigners from all over the world.

Instead of having the traditional thatched roofs, some of the village houses sported corrugated iron ones which were financed by Korean missionaries as a reward for converting to Christianity. These roofs were a valuable luxury, especially when the monsoon rains came. However, some locals I spoke to said they were actually Buddhist but went to church now and then in return for their new roof. The lord works in mysterious ways, but perhaps she could persuade some of her missionaries to rectify some of the dire poverty of the region even if the inhabitants didn't convert, given the fact that, while the hill tribe villages appeared relatively economically okay, there were some places in the hills where the people lived in extreme poverty and the children were in very poor health.

I mean, if I was offered a new roof for my house, of course I would 'convert' for a while, but I would much rather the money were spent on someone who really needs it. I am sure Jesus would agree with me if he was here. Amen.

Before leaving Southeast Asia in December 1973, I visited Vientiane, the capital city of Laos on the banks of the Mekong River. It was the closest I have ever been to a war zone. The US military involvement in Laos had ended during that year but the Laotian Civil War continued until 1975. There was a ceasefire at the time of my visit but there was also a feeling of unease with sporadic gunfire and explosions which could be heard coming from the jungle especially at night. My hotel was also occupied by government soldiers who informed me that communist soldiers were housed in the hotel across the road. I prayed that the ceasefire would hold at least until the day of my departure. It did.

I count myself very fortunate to have dodged the draft when I was 18 years old, when 50% of birth dates were drawn from a hat and the unlucky ones had to have their often long hair cut off and undergo military training, with the possibility of being called up and forced to fight in Vietnam, as happened in Australia. People used to say, "You can't have a war if everyone refuses to go." Now however, with drones, AI, and possible robot soldiers, things are different and who knows how future wars will be fought. And then of course there are the hawkish world leaders who hold their countries' nuclear codes and have their fingers on the red button. Bugger it, I think I'll just go fishing, while I still can and while there are still fish in the sea, despite Shane Jones and his industrial fishing policies.



Words by  
**Ross Liggins**

Photos by  
**Wilford Peloquin**

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# A FOREST OF GIANTS

## The Kauri Gum Diggers of the Kauaeranga Valley



Kauri are among the largest and longest living trees in the world with two ancient giants, Tanenui and Tairua, recorded on the Coromandel Peninsula in 1986. (Ref: Te Ara, [teara.govt.nz](http://teara.govt.nz).) The Kauaeranga Valley was once filled with magnificent kauri trees, but with the arrival of the European settlers thousands of massive trees were felled, and by 1928 most of the kauri had been logged. The bushlands were also developed into farms, causing a dramatic change to the landscape. During the late 1700s, British vessels were sent to New Zealand to obtain spars for sailing ships, and from the 1870s the area was logged extensively. (Much of the timber used in the reconstruction of San Francisco, after the 1905 earthquake and fire, was kauri imported from New Zealand.)

The kauri was much valued by Māori, and was used for making waka canoes, and was also valued for its fossil resin. Māori were the first gum diggers on the swamps and river flats of Hauraki. They called the much-valued taonga kapia, and used it for fire starting, torches, and for medicinal purposes, and when burnt and mixed with animal fat it made a dark pigment for tattooing. The colours of the gum range from chalky white through to red-brown and black; the most sought after being the golden colours. Kauri gum is translucent, making it ideal for jewellery and keep-sakes.

With the arrival of the Europeans, gum digging became a popular occupation for the unskilled and semi-skilled settlers. It was extremely hard work and not well paid, but it attracted men, women and children along with Māori, who toiled in the harsh environment. The gum they collected supplied the market with much-needed resin that was used in the manufacture of varnish, marine glue, paint and linoleum. By the 1890s, 70% of all oil varnishes made in England used kauri resin.

From the 1930s, the market for gum dropped due to synthetic alternatives; however, it remained a niche industry for jewellery, and the production of high-grade varnish for violins.

The Dalmations had the greatest presence on the gum fields. They came from the states of Dalmatia, Macedonia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro. One such pioneer was Simun Devcich, a first-generation migrant from Dalmatia, who came to New Zealand in 1902 at the age of 17 and commenced work on the gum fields of the Coromandel Peninsula. In 1912, Simun married Matija Merčep, who had arrived in New Zealand from her home country of Croatia.

In 1920, Simun, along with his brothers Marion Anton and Nicola, bought a rough bush farm at the head of the Kauaeranga Valley and in time produced one of the most fertile and productive farms in the valley. During the depression years of 1929 - 1935, Mr and Mrs Devcich ran a country store, a kauri gum business and a pack-horse team of thirteen horses, the latter to supply the bush camps in the upper Kauaeranga Valley. One such gum diggers' bush camp was Dancing Camp which was situated in the Kauaeranga Valley near the Pinnacles. It was thought to be occupied between about 1900 and 1931. It acquired the name Dancing Camp, due to the folk dancing that was performed by the diggers as a form of recreation and social interaction.

Subsequent mass planting efforts by the late Barry Brickell and friends on the Driving Creek land, and also by Kauri 2000 volunteers, have helped restore kauri to the Coromandel Peninsula.

The kauri industry is part of the fabric and social history of the Kauaeranga Valley. The history of its demise provides us with an opportunity to learn from others, consciously take care of our natural resources, and ensure the sustainable use of ecosystems.

Words by  
**Robyn Pearce**

Volunteer of Thames Museum  
Te Whare Taonga o te Kauaeranga

References: Hauraki Coromandel Region, Te Ara, [www.teara.govt.nz](http://www.teara.govt.nz); Northland's Buried Treasure, New Zealand Geographic, [www.nzgeo.com](http://www.nzgeo.com) (by Joanne McNeill); The Treasury, [www.thetreasury.org.nz](http://www.thetreasury.org.nz) (by David Wilton); Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai, [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz); Devcich Historic Farmstead, [www.devcichhistoricfarmstead.com](http://www.devcichhistoricfarmstead.com); Historic Kauri Driving Dams, Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai, [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)





## A Celebration of Local Stories by Local Talent

The CoroCine Film Festival is back for 2025, shining a spotlight on Coromandel's growing community of filmmakers. From 22-24 August, the festival will light up MTC-Mercury Twin Cinemas, Whitianga with a curated three-day programme showcasing films made by, about, and for the Coromandel.

"The local arts scene has long been a reason to travel the Coromandel loop," says Anne-Maree McDougall, co-owner of MTC-Mercury Twin Cinemas. "We've got storytellers, visual artists, and a growing wave of filmmakers who deserve a place on the big screen."

CoroCine 2025 will launch with heart, grit, and purpose on Friday 22 August, with a special opening night screening of *The Justice of Bunny King*. The powerful Kiwi drama will not only open the festival in style – it will also serve a deeper cause, raising funds for the Manawa Kai Heartfood Kitchen (the Monday community meals programme), which provides warm

meals to locals who need them. Directed By Thames-based Gaysorn Thavat, *The Justice of Bunny King* stars Essie Davis as Bunny, a fiercely determined mother battling the system to reunite with her children.

"We wanted to open CoroCine 2025 with a film that reflects the courage and creativity we see in our own community," says Anne-Maree. "This film is a tribute to determination in the face of hardship – and what better way to honour that than by helping feed local families." CoroCine isn't just a celebration – it's a call to action. The festival aims to inspire first-time filmmakers, hobbyists, and hidden talents to pick up a camera, tell their stories, and know that there's a home-grown festival ready to screen their work.

So whether you're a film lover, a creative, or just curious – make a date with CoroCine this August. Come for the beaches, stay for the stories.

## Coromind is Stoked to be Partnering with Mercury Twin Cinemas for the CoroCine Festival!

We're committed to supporting and promoting arts events created by locals, and to backing initiatives that bring opportunities and meaningful experiences to our community. We love the big screen and have a deep appreciation for the Mercury Twin Cinemas whānau!

Scan the QR code or visit [coromind.nz](http://coromind.nz) for the full line-up, tickets, and more info about the festival!

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