COROMIND

Issue 34

Haheitians on the Move

Finding Stillness Between the Swells

WHAKAPAPA IN CLAY

Te Whenua, Te Whānau, Te Toi

A Lifelong Note in the Coromandel Songbook

How Dylan Wade has Kept our Community in Tune

Lights, Camera, Chaos!

Thames High Hits the 48 Hours Film Challenge

On Air

Watch & Listen

Guest Editorial

ABOUT CONNECTION

Kia Ora Koutou, Jessica and Joshua here from Garden Music in Thames.

As artists ourselves, as well as working professionally within the arts, we know first-hand the complexities, joys and exhaustion of it all. One of the best things that keeps us going and keeps us inspired is getting that fresh issue of Coromind.

In a unique region like the Coromandel, it's easy for creativity to go unnoticed, and for communities to feel isolated from each other. That's why Coromind is such an important part of our local media landscape. It connects us, celebrates us, and reminds us of the depth of talent we have right here at home.

One of Coromind's greatest strengths is how it encourages us to celebrate and support local arts. By showcasing the diversity and calibre of the artists who live and work here, it reminds us how spoiled we are for creativity in the Coromandel rohe (region). From visual arts to theatre, from writing to pottery, Coromind shines a light on the richness of what's happening around us.

For us, music is a big part of this story ... the chance to celebrate music that is written, recorded, performed and produced, right here. For many in the community who had no idea that original music was being made in their own backyard, Coromind offers a rare and intimate glimpse into that creative life, and an opportunity to experience the magic being created just down the road.

Beyond the arts, Coromind also helps to connect community groups. For those of us who run small businesses, such as the local music shop, we can feel the change Coromind has brought to the region. It's helped us feel part of something bigger, fostering a stronger sense of belonging and connection across the Coromandel.

That connection matters. Places like Thames often feel quite separate from the rest of the region, but Coromind bridges those divides. It helps us see ourselves not just as isolated towns, but as part of a larger, thriving, creative community.

What makes Coromind unique is its variety. It doesn't just highlight what's palatable or mainstream but embraces diversity in all its forms. It gives a platform for artists to express themselves publicly, to take risks, and to create for a community that is listening, watching and learning.

At its heart, Coromind is about connection: between artists and audiences, between different parts of the Coromandel, and between people who might otherwise never cross paths. It's more than media to us here in Thames, it's a celebration of who we are, and a reminder of the incredible talent that surrounds us every day.

This bunch of silly dorks here at the music shop cannot express our gratitude enough for the work the Coromind team puts in, and how much of a gift it is to us and our community.

We love y'all so much, Arohanui!

Words by
Jessica Paton & Joshua Armstrong

Lights, Camera, Chaos!

Thames High Hits the 48 Hours Film Challenge

Recently Thames High School students were given the opportunity to participate in the 48 Hours Film Challenge, and what a fun opportunity it was! The challenge was to create a short film within just one weekend to the highest quality possible. The time leading up to the weekend was spent planning our roles and responsibilities and excitedly waiting. We called our group Golden Ratio, a name to inspire perfect balance in our piece and to reference our rich gold mining history here in Thames.

Finally, at 7pm Friday 15th August, the theme for our short film was announced on a livestream. Teams were given different genres, and our assigned genre was 'Man vs Nature'. Every team also had to include four elements: something precious, a miniature, an accident, and slow-motion. The adrenaline was intense – as soon the instructions were given, our scriptwriting team went straight to brainstorming! We came up with so many different ideas that we didn't end up using, but by 9pm that night we had a script we could be proud of. Unfortunately, we were not able to stay at school overnight to continue working, but that didn't stop us from jumping on online calls to finalise ideas and offer new ones. There was just too much passion and creativity to call an early night!

From 8am to 9pm on Saturday, it was non-stop working for a lot of our crew. Something we didn't expect was how a few roles got adjusted during the process. Some roles got dropped and some got promoted, like how I became a co-director during the Saturday to even out some of the heavy workload of the director. With so much to get done in such a short amount of time, we needed all hands on deck. We managed to finish filming around 6pm that night. Exhausted, we sorted through our footage and gave our final takes to the post-production team.

On Sunday we sent off our final version of our short film Thirst and finally stopped to breathe. Our film was shown in The Village Cinema in Tauranga on 7th September, among other film submissions. Regional finalists get announced between 13th September and 3rd October. The winners of the competition get announced on 25th October.

No matter whether we win anything with our final product, Golden Ratio gained a lot of valuable things from the experience. It was amazing to work with such a cool group of unique and creative minded people. Even our year 13s are planning to come back next year to help out! I know I am not alone in saying that before the 48 hours had even started, it felt exciting to just be a part of a project like this. We were all here for the same purpose – to create.

A lot of us had never considered making films to be a hobby before, but that weekend got some of us hooked. Taking part in the 48 hour film competition even inspired us to start our own film club outside of school and enter more short film competitions. The moment our weekend was over, we started planning what our next film could be. We're excited to see what we can do with fewer time restrictions, so we can possibly include things we wanted to insert into our final film but didn't have enough time for, like original music and Tayo's incredible stop-motion animations!

Golden Ratio would like to give a VERY big thanks to Coromind for sponsoring our short film and allowing us to enter this competition. We are so grateful for this opportunity and it was great getting to see some of you – even if it was briefly during a very hectic and busy day! We would also like to give a huge thank you to Dr Carla Grosman, our team leader, who played such a huge part in all the organising that had to take place before the 48 hours began and also provided us with delicious food, along with the Thames High School kapa haka group and Burton's on Pollen Lunch Bar and Catering. Thank you for keeping us well fed and energised to achieve all of this. We wouldn't have been able to do this without your support, so once again, thank you!

Win or lose, Golden Ratio calls this challenge a success and we cannot wait to take part again next year.

Words by
Naomi Hinton

Watch the short film

Scan Here

This Project Was Proudly Supported By COROMIND *www.coromind.nz/lights-camera-chaos*

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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:

hello@coromind.nz

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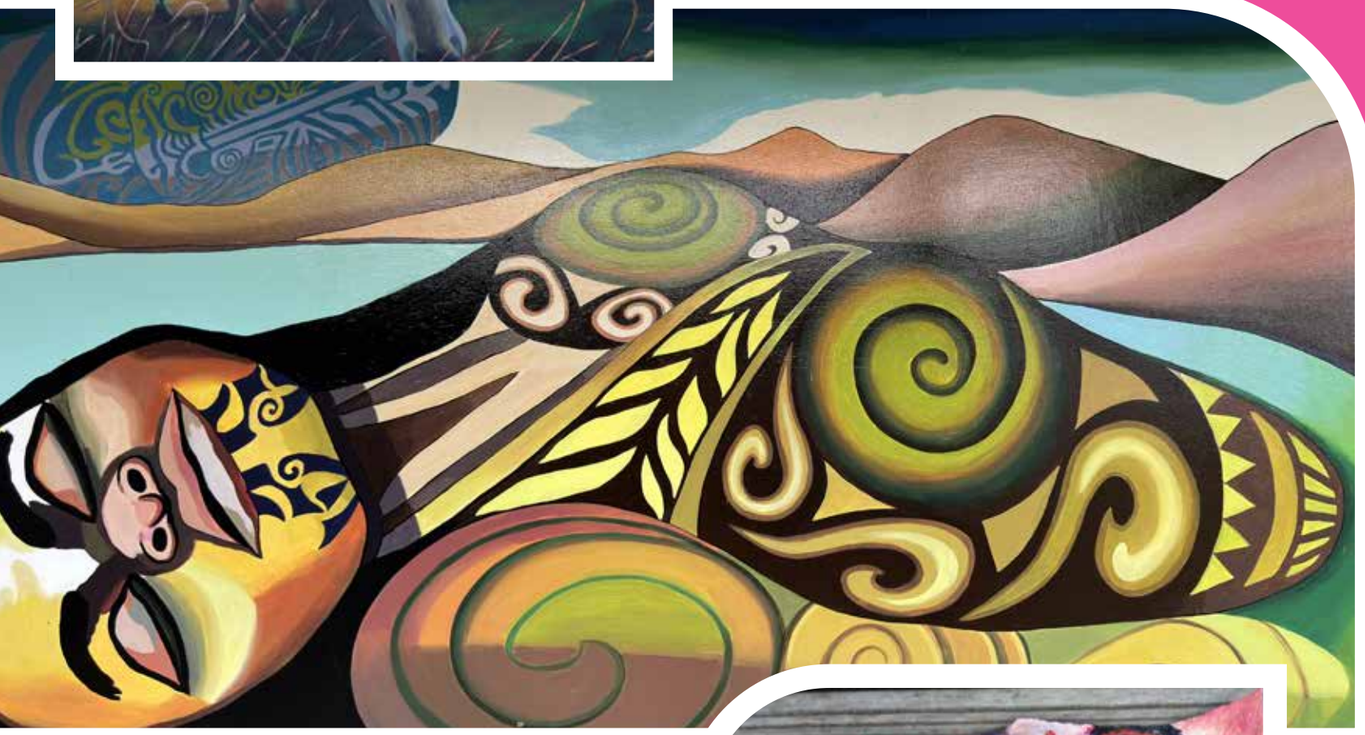
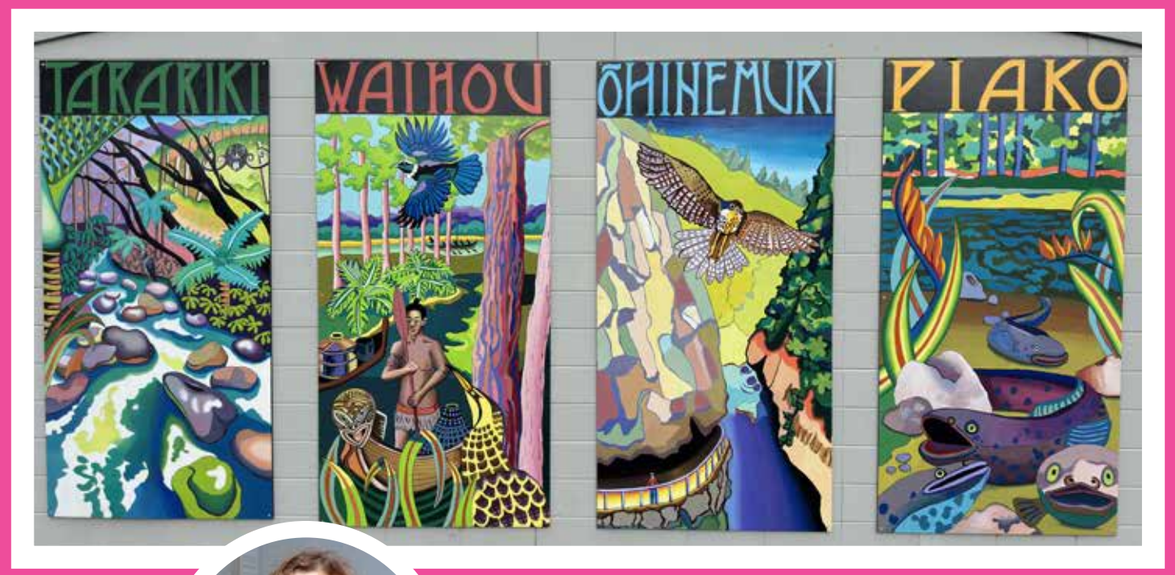
CLAIRE DUBOSKY





After completing a Fine Arts degree from Oxford University, I then spent 40 years teaching art – firstly as a secondary school art teacher in the UK and then as Teacher in Charge of art in NZ. More recently, I have taught art workshops at Toi Ako Community Centre and done relief teaching in primary schools.

I am a figurative painter: landscapes, nature and portraiture are my areas of interest. I also enjoy painting imagery on natural found objects such as kauri bark, nīkau fronds and mussel shells.

Since 2018, I have designed and painted 16 murals both in the community and for schools. These have included David Street Primary in Morrinsville, Thames South School, Tainui Full Primary School in Tokoroa, Kerepehi Primary School, and The Community House in Te Kauwhata. I am currently working on a large mural for Genesis at Huntly Power Station.

The projects I have completed have gained me seven placings, including two firsts in the Resene Murals Masterpiece Annual Competition – for Paeroa Central school and for Te Kauwhata Squash Club.

Working on murals is a collaborative experience between the organisation which commissioned the work, whether that be a school, sports or community club, or industry, and the artist. It is a great opportunity to share ideas and develop the design to fit their expectations. With the students' involvement both in creating ideas and painting the murals, it is lovely for them to have a tangible legacy displayed in their community.

From my perspective, forming all these ideas into an artform is what inspires me most ... oh, and driving past them years later and still seeing them being enjoyed!

Words by **Claire DuBosky**

Ngā mihi nui to Paeroa Central School for welcoming our crew so warmly and for allowing us to showcase their beautiful murals in Coromind!

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Ahuahu & Andy Series

GENERATIONS OF CARE & CURIOSITY ON GREAT MERCURY ISLAND

The Island That Keeps Teaching

Ahuahu (named Great Mercury Island by Captain Cook) is unique in that it represents a snapshot of time, a snapshot of human interaction isolated from the influences of the mainland but a good representation of the human model. It represents the moment of human arrival, the many hundreds of years of communities gardening and fishing from the island, years of peace, years of war and raiding, years of early farming practice and mixed ownership. This includes homestead farming in the years of the Mizzen family, who deserve great respect for the long time they owned and cared for this island. Farming it would have been a very difficult undertaking – mustering on horseback, the mainland unreachable, needing to ship supplies, cattle and sheep from the mainland, breaking in land, and protecting the beaches from fire risks created by boat owners even back then.

It was a real frontier thing to do in itself, but Pat Mizzen also made time for studying Ahuahu's rich history. His is a well-respected name; an amateur archaeologist, he wrote notes that are still referred to today and there are two of his books in the Whitianga Library you can read if you are interested. I am sure many memories and stories of the island are still deeply embedded in the hearts of the Mizzen family.

Huruhi Harbour itself, better known generally as 'The Cove', features in almanacs and tide charts historically because it is a deep sheltered cove, which was important for the old sailing scows which traded goods up and down the coast (into Kūaotunu and Whitianga from Auckland and elsewhere) as a much-needed point of refuge in unworkable sailing weather.

Nowadays, many PhD study cases benefit from the opportunity to access Ahuahu resources; the island is also closely linked to Auckland Museum and the University of Auckland. Archaeology and the study of Polynesian migration (when and from where they came) are closely linked to gardening techniques studied on Ahuahu – also focusing on things such as insect population surveys (entomology) and how different plots on the island have been affected by weather, temperature, humidity, foliage, human impact, dwellings, pasture, and so on. The study of insects includes native and exotic species, including pests like the Argentine Ant (they say getting rid of Argentine Ants is like trying to remove every grain of sand in Egypt, yet still Kiwi initiative says we can do it, and we try to find a way). Great Mercury Island is one of the largest landscapes in the world to try to eradicate this impressive ant; they now have a cutting-edge study case and are successfully winning the battle.

Another focus is the study of honeybees and wasps which are not native to New Zealand, in a natural New Zealand environment. Wasps are great pollinators of their native forested environments but like most non-native species here, wasps in New Zealand outcompete dozy native New Zealand species. Why? Because New Zealand natives didn't evolve with much competition; they evolved in an easier environment. In New Zealand forests, it was birdlife that did a lot of the pollinating, not bees; though New Zealand does have native bees, they don't produce honey or behave much like the bees we are used to. They are not furry and cute like honeybees, more like a small black hovering fly which doesn't pollinate the crops of human ambition. The New Zealand native bee lives a solitary life in small holes in the ground; they are placid, you can walk among them, and you will not get stung.

Words by **Andy Hopping**

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When people visit our wood-cabin workshop in the heart of Thames, they often arrive carrying something precious – a memory, a milestone, a piece of family history, or a work of art that deserves to be seen and preserved. Our job is to honour that story through custom framing that's not only beautiful, but built to last.

We're a husband and wife team – I'm Linny, and my husband Bradley is the expert hands behind every frame we make. Bradley is a trained conservation picture framer, having learned the craft directly from the previous owner of the business. He's been doing this work for almost five years now and has completed over a thousand custom picture frames in that time. He approaches each project with care and precision, using archival techniques and materials that help preserve and protect artworks and sentimental items for the long term.

Bradley is autistic, and his attention to detail, love of structure, and focused craftsmanship are a perfect match for the kind of intricate, hands-on work that custom framing demands. He's always been drawn to creative processes that require patience and precision (like building model kits at home), and those same qualities come through in every frame he builds.

I (Linny) joined the business in May this year, shortly after Bradley and I were married in December 2024. With a background in hospitality, social work, and youth work, and doing art in my spare time, I've always loved connecting with people — and custom framing has turned out to be a surprisingly perfect fit. I really enjoy hearing the stories behind the pieces people bring to us, and then helping them to creatively choose frames and mat boards that honour those stories and enhance the character of the item.

Recently we've had the honour of framing some amazing pieces: a delicate cross-stitch of Jemima Puddle-Duck made by a grandmother for her brand-new granddaughter; a puzzle completed by a customer who wanted to remember her mother who loved puzzles and had passed; and a beautiful pair of antique paintings from 1895, which we're currently framing with ornate mouldings made in Italy to match their timeless character.

We also frame the artwork of Bradley's mum, Kylie Gunn – a well-known local artist recognised for her murals and commissions throughout Thames and beyond. She's one of our most creative customers when it comes to framing. Kylie often chooses bold or unexpected frame styles, and even combines two mouldings into one to achieve a truly unique effect that lifts the character of her pieces. It's always exciting working with someone who sees framing as part of the artistic process. Much of her beloved artwork is on display and for sale at Bite Café in Thames – and lots of our frames are on display there too!

We offer a fully custom, made-to-order framing service, which means no two projects are the same. Whether it's a painting, photo, certificate, textile, or something entirely unexpected, we help guide customers toward the best aesthetic and protective options. We work with three excellent suppliers who provide us with high-quality mouldings, glass, and archival materials — and because everything is ordered specifically for each job, our turnaround time is usually 2 to 4 weeks, depending on how quickly materials arrive.

One of the key things we want to share is the importance of using the conservation method when framing anything valuable or sentimental. Whether it's an artwork, a certificate, or a child's drawing, proper framing ensures your item is protected from damage and deterioration over time. We use acid-free mat boards, UV-protective glass, and reversible mounting methods to keep your piece safe and intact. We're not a repair shop — our focus is on preserving and presenting pieces before they become fragile or damaged.

Framing isn't just about display — it's about preserving moments, celebrating stories, and creating something meaningful for the long term. Whether it's a family heirloom or something quirky and fun, we'd love to help you bring it to life with a frame made just for it.

If you're curious about how custom framing works, or wondering what's possible with your item, pop in for a chat. We're always happy to guide you through the options.

Words by
Linny & Bradley Gunn

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From Abiogenesis to Absoluddle

Words That Delight

I've just found a scrap of paper squashed at the back of my socks drawer. Must have been there a while. It's a list of my favourite words. There are words to impress, some that sound silly, words of comfort and words that make me giggle. And giggle is on that list – ask children to giggle when taking their photo and I guarantee you'll get cheeky grins.

Sometimes I come across a word that needs concentration, like abiogenesis or ignominious. Try saying these when you've had a few wines! Bryce Courtenay invented a delightful word in his bestseller, The Power of One, when Doc said "Absoluddle".

After emigrating to New Zealand, I dropped a few dialect words from my vocabulary. I grew up in the UK's Derbyshire, where the word 'duck' is the equivalent of 'mate' or 'friend'. So the first time I visited a butcher in Waipukurau, in my stylish English coat, two toddlers by my side wearing leather laced-up shoes, I said, "I'll have a some sausages, mi duck". "We don't sell duck sausages," said he, smirking as he recognised my Pommie accent. Lovie is another word I ditched that week. In the UK I would happily call the burly dustman lovie, but it might be misunderstood in Godzone. Mithered (feeling bothered) is another word I've abandoned.

My mum used to tell me Phoebe had gone to bed, meaning the sun was behind the clouds. She mashed, not brewed, a pot of tea at a time when tea bags weren't invented. She scrummaged (searched) for the shilling that rolled under the table and I can see the link with rugby.

Swilly is a dip in the road and cock-bod means excellent, though I am shy of saying that! One useful word at the pub is gerrumin, which means "it's your round, mi duck", but I can't guarantee your drink will be paid for at a swanky Auckland bar.

One of the most powerful words must be 'sorry', though sometimes it's hard to say.

Here are some of my favourites: wondrous, squishy, slurp, tittered, exquisite, bigwig, skulduggery, rascal, rigmarole, dinky, nincompoop, ninny, kerfuffle, gobsmacked, frumpy, dawdle, slosh, astonished, swanky, glee, piddling, giggling, wriggling, skedaddle, snort, aroha and compassion.

The words we use can heal, make folk laugh and give hope. They can even change lives. Why don't you start a list? And use them. Absoluddle!

Words by **Pamela Ferla**

Coromind Backs Up Pam: Words are Powerful and Fun!

This magazine would not exist without the magic of words. Do you have a cool story to share about words or expressions that marked an important or funny moment in your life? What about your favourite words?

We would love to hear from you!

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Haheitians on the Move

Finding Stillness Between the Swells

In November last year, a few of your local Haheitians managed to finally make a trip happen that had been on the 'Missions' list for years – from the end of the road, Fletcher Bay, back home to Hahei Beach, via sea kayaks. We would carry everything we needed for five days and camp along the way.

There is a string of idyllic beachfront campgrounds along the east coast of the Coromandel Peninsula, and plenty of coastline inaccessible by road that we were about to explore.

The crew consisted of Ash, Ana and Lucrecia. Ash is an experienced sea kayak guide, Ana has dabbled, and Lu will get involved in any adventure that comes her way. We had a few weeks before the busy summer season kicked off where none of us were too committed with work, and hoped a weather window would fall within that time. Maps, advice and gear were sourced from various local sources, SwellMap and Windy were monitored, and it all fell into place. The stars had aligned for the last week of November, and we had a perfect five-day window.

Planning to leave Monday afternoon, we laid out all our gear in Ash's lounge, organised food into separate meals, and made a rough plan of our route. By that time, it was late and dark, and we were in danger of getting frustrated with each other before we had even left Hahei.

> "Phones in flight mode for five days, we entered our own little world of salt water, cups of tea and sleeping under the stars...

Departure was delayed until 6.30am the next morning; gear in the boot, kayaks on the roof, a few last-minute calls to borrow essential items we'd forgotten, and on the road north. We were a little nervous about what we could fit, and didn't want to be too heavy in our kayaks, losing stability. Loaded up, we dragged our kayaks down to the water at Fletcher Bay. Ash pushed Lu and I out in our double kayak and we didn't wobble around too much, and he launched himself without putting a hole in his lightweight kayak on the rocks. A good start! Phones in flight mode for five days, we entered our own little world of salt water, cups of tea and sleeping under the stars.

We only paddled a couple of hours the first day, knowing that the DOC campsite at Stony Bay wasn't too far around the corner. We were all on the same page about the type of trip this should be – not an athletic feat, but a chance to spend time outside and see our backyard in a more intimate way. We hoped to get back to Hahei in the time we had, but if we didn't feel like rushing, we wouldn't.

Sheltered bays, only half a metre of swell, blue sky, and the wind behind us. The first few days are a blur of coffee and oats in the morning, weaving through rock gardens, snack and swim breaks, rays of light through blue water, salami wraps, wet bums, and pretty sophisticated camp dinners. We had a couple of days when we decided not to paddle in the afternoon, and just set up camp where we'd landed for lunch. Sunbathing, reading, and naked bodysurfs in paradise were far too tempting.

On our fourth day, we were all up for more of a challenge and made a big push. We didn't really know how far we were capable of going in a day, so we just had to give it a crack and have a couple of backup options along the route. Rain and strong winds were arriving mid-morning Saturday, and we wanted to get home before the weather packed in.

We pulled into camp happy with our eight-hour paddle, while also feeling a little weathered. Old shoulder injuries were protesting and skin was permanently damp from only washing in salt water for a few days. Everything was just a little bit wet and salty.

Our last morning brought grey skies and glassy seas to cross the bay. The rain started and the wind picked up about half way across, and after a couple of hours we pulled our kayaks up the Wigmore Stream, cold and wet and satisfied. We'd deal with the unpacking later; long, hot showers were calling our names! Arriving almost to our doorsteps, it was at the front of our minds how lucky we are to have adventures like this, right here.

Words by **Ana Keelty**

Ross' Ramblings

Telling Porkies

The Lies We Tell, and Live With

> "Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters, can't be trusted with important matters.

My own life began in a situation of dishonesty which I outlined in a previous Coromind article. My parents suddenly married and hightailed it to London so my mum could give birth to me free from prying eyes and wagging tongues and avoid the social stigma of falling pregnant before marriage. Unfortunately, the dates of their wedding and my emergence into the world were only separated by six months, so my birth was reported back to NZ by my parents as being in August instead of June, which of course led to a few documentation complications later in my life.

My parents weren't serial liars, so they didn't have to remember all their past lies to maintain their credibility. They only had to remember the two relevant dates concerning my birth. At age 21 however, when I needed a passport, I found out my true birth date. Mum and Dad asked me not to tell my two grandmothers when they gave me my birthday presents two months late. I agreed, but was left wondering if I was being dishonest, and I had a sneaky feeling they may have already known the truth.

There seems to be many levels of dishonesty and it's up to each one of us to decide how far up the lie ladder we want to climb, with the different levels and situations determining the outcomes of our decisions. For example, the outcomes of the American wars in Vietnam and Iraq, which were started using dishonest so-called intelligence, were extremely dire for the thousands of people maimed or killed. Whereas the outcome of my mother's dishonest assertion that she didn't know where my favourite jeans, with holes in the knees, were when I asked her, was less extreme. No life was lost, and I was able to return my jeans safely to my clothes drawer after I found them in the rubbish bin. An unfortunate outcome of course was that I could no longer trust my mum to always tell me the truth. Just one lie uncovered is all it takes.

A few of her genes must have rubbed off on me though. I remember when I was a young boy, perhaps around 10 years old, I was holidaying on my uncle and aunt's farm in the King Country. One morning I was sitting alone in front of their fireplace and for some reason I thought it would be a good idea to carve my initials RL into the painted concrete fire surround. Well, you can imagine how I felt when Uncle Sam asked in an angry voice, "Why did you do that?" I quickly replied that it wasn't me and heard the grunt of disgust he emitted before saying "Not many other RLs here as far as I can see." Well, I certainly learned a lesson about fessing up that day. Despite its relatively minor nature, it has remained a life-long memory, and it definitely played a part in determining which rung of the lie ladder I would climb to in the future. Sometimes telling the whole truth can be very difficult.

Unfortunately, if we are not careful, telling one lie makes it easier for another and another to slip between our lips and before you know it you're a bullshitter. I had a friend at university (I will call him Rupert) who was, in my opinion, nearing the middle rung, as he lied constantly, even though his lies were pretty mundane, and most of his friends knew when he was lying. For whatever reason, Rupert would boldly say he had done something or met someone that he hadn't, and I always wondered what he gained from it. He still had friends of course, as somehow, we accepted him as he was. When challenged about one of his falsehoods, he would just say, "Oh yes, maybe you're right." So there was seldom any confrontation, mainly because his lies seemed relatively harmless.

Problems arise when the lies climb higher up the ladder. These untruths not only harm the perpetrators but also those who are lied to. If we accept one of them without question, it is easier to accept another and another, a situation we see at present in the US with MAGA supporters seemingly accepting thousands of false or misleading statements their leader espouses. When challenged about them, a MAGA supporter will fob it off with, "Oh, he's just being Donald," and when Donald is challenged, he lies again saying something like "I didn't say that. It's fake news." So now, apart from his MAGA faithful, not many of us believe anything that comes out of his mouth.

Unfortunately, Donald's lies, like his downplaying the seriousness of the Corona virus, or the Sharpiegate debacle on national television concerning a serious hurricane, the track of which he changed with a sharpie pen on a hurricane map, which was contrary to weather experts' predictions, have dire effects on many people. An American author and expert on lying (not an expert liar) once said "Lying is a cooperative act. A lie has no power by its mere utterance; its power emerges when someone else agrees to believe it." So, when, I wonder, will America wake up and evolve from MAGA into MATA (Make America Truthful Again}?

Another quote of interest was made by Albert Einstein, who said, "Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters, can't be trusted with important matters." This makes me remember my Mum's harmless lies about my birth and my holey jeans, which eventually led to more consequential lies and deceptions concerning her substance abuse. And a friend's lies to his wife about the affairs he claimed he wasn't having. He even told me the truth about his lovers. I can only imagine the hurt that must have caused. But was I being dishonest by not telling his wife, even though she never asked me? Sometimes a lie can be uttered in silence.

I will finish with the event which made me think about writing about this subject. While it isn't about lying, it concerns honesty's playmate, integrity. My partner's 11-year-old Japanese nephew Hiroto and his three friends found a 1-yen coin while walking along the street. The Japanese are taught at an early age to be honest, so this situation caused a dilemma. Should the boys keep the coin (worth about 2 cents), or should they take it to the police station? After having a vote, they chose the latter and off they went to hand it in. The police officer told Hiroto he would need to call a parent before deciding what to do. Hiroto rang his father and said he was at the police station. Of course, his father freaked out at hearing that, until the policeman explained the situation and outlined the alternative courses of action. The police could keep the coin in case someone reported losing it, a very unlikely situation I would imagine, in which case Hiroto could return and claim the coin. Or the coin could be deposited into the 'kokko' which is the fund that taxes are paid into. Hiroto chose this one and was proud of the fact that at 11 years old he had started to pay tax. However, you can imagine the paperwork required to do this. Let's hope the police saw it as a pleasant diversion from their other, likely stressful, daily duties. This incident outlines what I would call integrity, and confirms its relationship to honesty; as American psychologist Spencer Johnson wrote, "Integrity is telling myself the truth, and honesty is telling the truth to other people." Well done, Hiroto.

Whereas the biblical quote "You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free" no doubt refers to spiritual freedom, I would suggest that it is also useful advice for everyday life. After all, remembering lies and who you have told them to together with the accompanying guilt must surely be hard work.

Words by **Ross Liggins**

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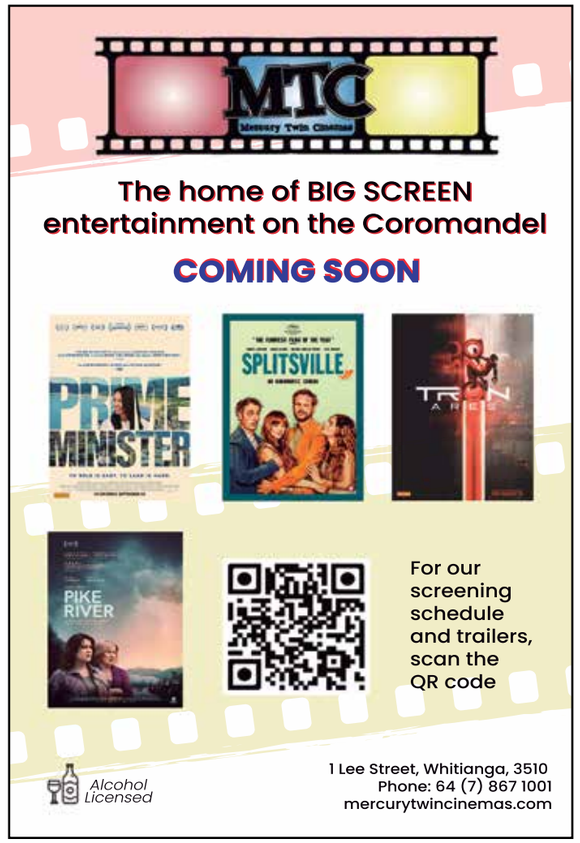
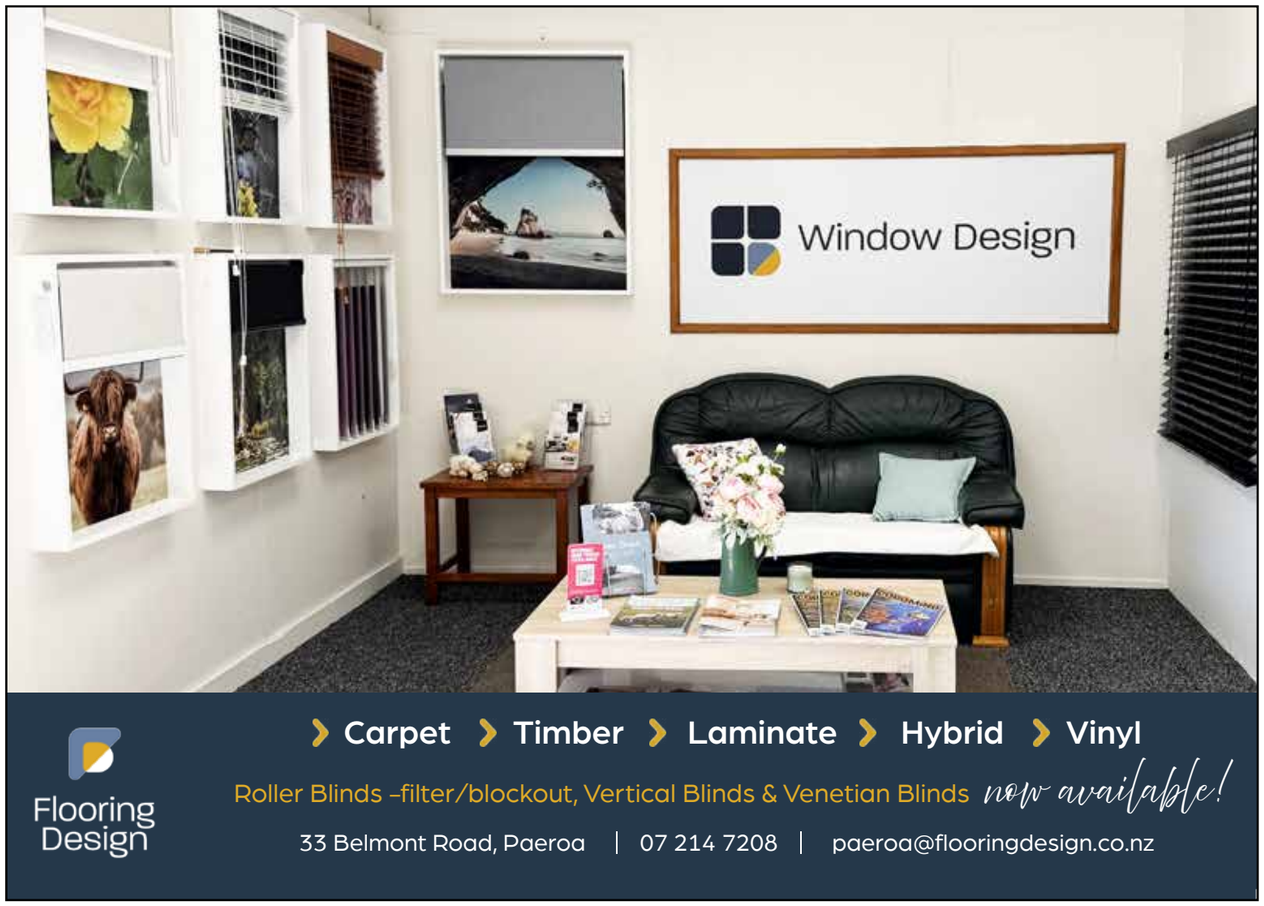
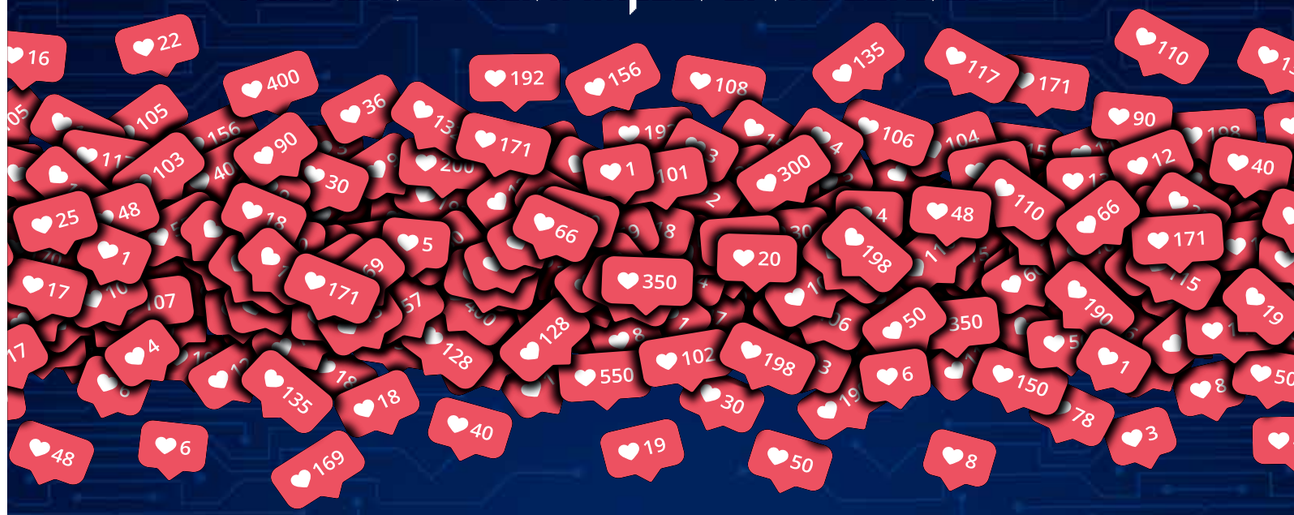




BEYOND THE CLICK SERIES

LIVING FOR LIKES

The mental health impact of the curated self



When you scroll through your social media feeds – whether it's Facebook, Instagram, or even LinkedIn – what do you see? Probably a lot of carefully chosen selfies, success stories, and perfectly edited moments. These aren't just snapshots of everyday life; they're examples of what experts call the 'curated self'. But what does that mean, and why should we care?

The concept of the curated self is all about how we present ourselves online. Just like a museum curator selects the best pieces to put on display, we do the same thing with our social media profiles. We pick the coolest photos, the funniest memes, and the most exciting life updates to show the world. The result is a polished, perfect version of ourselves – one that doesn't match up with who we are offline.

For example, on Facebook, you might post pictures from your beach trip, share a funny meme, or lol about your friend's bawdy hen's night. It's casual, laid-back, and usually shows off your personal life. On LinkedIn, though, it's a whole different story. Here, people craft professional profiles, listing their achievements, career milestones, and skills. This platform is more like a virtual CV than a social hangout. Instead of sharing what you did over the weekend, you're more likely to highlight that certificate you earned or the promotion you got at work.

You might have many sides to your personality, but social media forces you to package yourself differently for each audience. Problems arise when the two versions of you 'bleed' outside the platform. LinkedIn users experience anxieties based on concerns around the personal and social risks associated with personal data that may be algorithmically linked to other digital spaces with little or no regulation or boundaries. You definitely don't want a potential employer to be confronted with images of that bawdy hen's night back in 2018!

This need to curate your online persona can create a lot of pressure, especially for young people. The more you edit and polish your posts, the more you start comparing yourself to others who are doing the same. It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking everyone else has a perfect life – one that's more successful, more exciting, or more glamorous than yours.

This cycle can lead to feelings of inadequacy or anxiety. Studies show that scrolling through picture-perfect feeds can make people feel like they don't measure up, causing stress and contributing to mental health issues like depression and eating disorders.

The curated self doesn't just affect how others see you – it can also change how you see yourself. When you start living for the likes, comments and shares, it's easy to lose touch with who you really are. Over time, this blurs the line between what's real and what's staged. This can lead to burnout and feelings of inauthenticity.

So, what can you do to break free from this cycle of curation and self-comparison? First, it helps to be aware of what's happening. Know that what you see online is only a tiny, carefully selected part of someone's life. It's not the whole picture. Second, try to use social media in a way that feels authentic to you. Share what genuinely matters, rather than what you think will get the most attention.

Lastly, take breaks. It's easy to get sucked into the never-ending scroll, but stepping back can help you reconnect with your true self – outside the digital world.

The curated self might be the reality of social media, but it doesn't have to control you. By being mindful of how you present yourself and how you react to others, you can take charge of your online identity and make social media a space for genuine connection, not just performance. After all, the real you is more interesting and complex than any profile could ever capture.

Words by **Stella Pennell**

Fiona Gates:
WHAKAPAPA IN CLAY
Te Whenua, Te Whānau, Te Toi

Meet Fiona Gates.

Ko Rākautapu tōku maunga
Ko Tapawae tōku awa.
Ko Hokianga tōku moana
Ko Ngātokimatawhaorua tōku waka
Ko Rahiri tōku tupuna
Ko Te Rarawa tōku iwi
Ko Ngāi Tūpoto tōku hapū
E noho ana ahau ki Coroglen
Ko Fiona Gates tōku ingoa.
Kia ora koutou katoa.

Fiona Gates describes her journey to clay as both a homecoming and a rediscovery. Growing up in Tāmaki Makaurau before settling in Coroglen, she found in the Coromandel not just the beauty of beach and bush, but a stable foundation for her whānau and creative life.

A self-taught ringa uku (clay artist), Fiona shares pūrākau (stories) through her work with uku. "I describe my mahi toi as cathartic, visceral and metaphoric," she says. "People are often drawn into a relationship with my work." This connection to clay runs deep – "The origins of life came from micaceous clay and that might be why so many connect to clay work. It's the whakapapa of everything. Ko au te whenua, ko te whenua ko au – I am the land and the land is me."

Though her first creative passion was mahi raranga (weaving harakeke/flax), Fiona found her true medium in clay about four years ago. "The first bowl I made was at a Richard Naylor workshop and I was pretty chuffed with the outcome," she recalls. While she initially tried wheel throwing at Driving Creek Pottery, she found herself returning to handbuilding.

For Fiona, being Māori fundamentally shapes her artistic practice. "My work is often deeply personal and therapeutic," she explains. As a Māori adoptee during the era of closed interracial adoptions, her relationship with identity has been both a birthright and a hard-won reclamation. "I always knew in my bones that I whakapapa Māori, but I was in my forties when it became 'official'", she shares. This lived experience fuels her passion for activism. Her art became another pathway to reconnect with her whakapapa. "Closed interracial adoption was intentional assimilation," she notes. "This is partly why I am so passionate about social and environmental justice, especially indigenous rights."

Her creative process draws on this journey of reconnection. "I draw on my struggle to find ways to reconnect with Te Ao Māori, the disorientation of disconnection, and processing trauma while living with PTSD." Her creative process draws on pūrākau (stories) and Atua (gods), particularly Atua wāhine (goddesses), finding parallels between these narratives and her own life. Texture, sometimes imprinted with handmade stamps, plays a vital role in her work. "I use Raranga whakairo patterns and kōwhaiwhai. I'm excited to deepen my understanding of our traditional pattern making in the future."

Fiona's approach to working with clay is intuitive and sensory. "Because uku is so hands on, I work intuitively. Yes, there are skills and techniques but I tend to just start with an idea and I'm guided by my senses rather than a step-by-step plan." She describes the creative process as almost transcendent: "When in my creative zone, it's like channelling. I don't always feel in control of the outcome, something takes over my being and speaks through my hands to the clay."

Woodfiring holds special significance in her practice. "My favourite process is to woodfire," she says, describing the intensive communal process. "This is using a fire heated kiln to vitrify your work. It takes a whole day to load the kiln so we light the fire early the following morning." The process becomes a gathering. "It is a group effort, everyone takes turns stoking the fire, restocking the woodpile, making kai." The dramatic transformation occurs at extreme heat. "The temperature reaches 1305°C; it's hot but exciting." The results are unpredictable and beautiful. "Sodium carbonate or salt can be added to ignite an alchemical union between it and the clay, the ash and the neighbouring pieces, creating the most beautiful effect on the finished piece."

In 2024, Fiona's artistic journey reached new heights when she was accepted into the artist residency programme at Driving Creek Pottery. "DCP is one of the hubs of NZ pottery, founded by Barry Brickell in 1974," she explains. "The residency programme is a part of his legacy, leaving the Potteries and Trains in trust for future generations." The residency offered precious time and space to create. "I love being able to create all day and late into the night, precious hours I don't have available at home with the kids." The environment fostered both creativity and connection: "I love the freedom to explore ideas, the company of other residents and the unique environment, Barry's spirit still very present."

Fiona's work gained wider recognition last summer when it was included in the two exhibitions: The Art Is Identity exhibition at Hauraki House Kapanga, supported by Creative Coromandel – He Mana Toi Moehau; and Coromind's own summer exhibition space in Whitianga – Coromind ArtWorks. These exhibitions showcased her work alongside other accomplished artists, marking an important milestone in her artistic journey.

Community remains central to Fiona's practice. She's part of a local group of Māori and Pasifika wāhine brought together by Isabel Gilbert Palmer. "I've exhibited with this group both in Kūaotunu and Kapanga," she notes. The collective has provided vital support: "Being in this group has nurtured my confidence and given me the space to grow by practice. There's medicine in being with other indigenous women."

Despite her growing body of work and recognition, Fiona is humble about her practice. "To be honest, I still feel wobbly calling myself an artist, let alone a Māori artist," she admits. Well, sometimes it takes the outside eye to reflect back what the maker cannot yet see – the uku doesn't lie. It is clear to me Fiona Gates, Māori artist, is one to watch.

Follow Fiona's continuing journey with clay at: @toi_whakaora

Words by **Lana Garland**

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Active and POP

How Women Are Redefining Life with Pelvic Organ Prolapse

You might tell a friend over a cup of coffee that you've got a sore back. But, "Guess what happened, my bladder/uterus/rectum slipped ..."? Or, "I can't lift my child because ... I've got an issue down below ..."?

Not likely!

Pelvic organ prolapse (POP) affects approximately 50% of women and 30% of female athletes, some of whom haven't even given birth. Maybe your mother, sister, wife, partner, daughter. It affects our family, work and social life, it restricts our sporting activities. POP is common, yet most of us get caught by surprise when it happens because we have never heard of it before. Due to its location in the body, an intimate area, it is a subject not often talked about.

I love the outdoors. I'm a keen tramper. I enjoy SUPing and kiteboarding. I feel fit and active. And yet my pelvis went POP. Why me? That was the question I asked myself when, in July 2019, my uterus unexpectedly slipped lower than it should be.

So what actually is a pelvic organ prolapse?

As explained by Michelle Kenway (Pelvic Floor Physiotherapist), "A prolapse is another word for a hernia. Hernias occur in different parts of the body when our elastic tissues overstretch (just like overstretching a piece of elastic which no longer recoils back into position having been stretched)." In a pelvic organ prolapse, the bladder, uterus or rectum move out of their usual position and drop down into the vagina.

Why me? Turns out having given birth, age, genetics and simply being a woman was enough to have made me a POP candidate. I was told active life would 'never be the same again'. It was all about management. Pelvic floor exercises. No heavy lifting. Not overdoing things. Welcome to a life with POP!

I felt lost, alone, disappointed in my body for letting me down, desperate for answers. It wasn't a good place to be in and one where I definitely didn't want to stay!

So, my POP experience started me on a new journey. I had so many questions. If POP was such a common condition, why was it not talked about? Why was there such a stigma associated with pelvic organ prolapse? Think of a man with a hernia – they drop their pants to show you the scar whether you want to see it or not!

I started talking about POP. I told my female friends and found out that two of them had had a prolapse as well. I thought if POP affects so many of us, there must be lots of other active women out there in the same situation. Surfers, trampers, cyclists, joggers, yogis ... How did they deal with the restrictions that POP had on their daily lives and their sporting activities? The physical, but especially the mental impacts?!

To find answers to my questions, I started the 'POP goes my pelvis' project (https://adventuremagazine.co.nz/pop-goes-my-pelvis/). The aim was to create a resource where women could share their experiences, find support, encouragement and reassurance that they weren't alone with this.

Trying to get information about the project out there was a reality check – it showed some of the reasons why POP was not talked about. Of 30 New Zealand newspaper editors I contacted, only one replied. She commented that most editors were male and that POP 'was not exactly a sexy topic!' So we've got a vicious circle: lack of public information, little confidence to talk about it, and thus a continuing silence.

A year of collecting stories from active women around New Zealand who have experienced a prolapse, and gaining feedback from a range of pelvic health physiotherapists, resulted in the Active and POP website. Women in their 30s to 70s share their experiences and offer advice on something they thought would never happen to them.

Together, we talk about POP to raise awareness and remove the stigma. We provide links to helpful resources. Most importantly, we want women to know that they are not alone and that they can live an active life again!

If you have experienced a prolapse and would like to share your story to support other women (totally anonymously!), feel free to contact us via the website.

For information, stories, articles and advice please see the Active and POP website:

www.activeandpop.org.nz

Words by **Anja Morris**

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Healing Papatūānuku

The Importance of Creating a Community Fruit Forest

Living in Whitianga for over 50 years, I have witnessed the rapid decline of our native trees/shrubs/grasses/food sources and habitat for our native birds, insects, bees and butterflies. Hilton Park to use one example once was bustling with dragonflies, frogs, wax eyes, tūī and kererū. Muehlenbeckia and other native plant species grew along a beautiful stream (swale), which ran through the middle of the park with edible watercress growing in the drain which was sprayed regularly with glyphosate (Roundup); the stream has since been buried so birds no longer have access to water during summer months.

Our street, Moewai Park Road, is full of young families from newborn to youth (our future leaders); we are also close to the Moewai Sport Complex and access to fruit trees after a game would give youth FREE organic (spray free) fruit. To create a fruit forest, the first thing you need is patience and knowledge that you are starting a long-term project. The second is a piece of land (the bigger the better), so check out the green spaces near you.

To create a sustainable system, you need to imitate patterns you see in nature. Soil is important; it is the first thing you need to pay attention to, given the rapid rate of development seen here in our community with no concern for the wide variety of insects such as our native wētā, bees, native butterflies (especially our field butterflies), birds, trillions of microbial insects, skinks and geckos.

Before Covid, Thames Coromandel District Council cut down a well-established chestnut tree and then removed our playground here in our park. Also, the largest and oldest stand of macrocarpa and gum trees were cut down by developers while the grey heron were nesting and feeding their young – displacing the heron chicks and stressing the parents' nest and security; so action needed to be taken – not only for our future native insects but for our children and their children, and this sparked the creation of a fruit forest for future generations. Given the 'Cost of Living' narrative we were constantly hearing, our community decided to provide fresh fruit and berries for lower socio-economic whānau (families) and to organisations such as Bellyful (mums get ready-made meals when they bring their babies home) and the combined churches' Monday meals needing additional kai (food).

Trees are the heart of permaculture – fruiting and non-fruiting trees help provide resilience in the ecosystem. Swales can be important for rain catchment and sequestration of rainwater for dry months. We need help with anyone who can build a water catchment system similar to barrels stacked on top of each other with a small sheet of iron feeding the rain into the barrels with a tap we can use to hose our trees during summer months.

Fruit forests offer a multitude of benefits, such as:

- Increased biodiversity – habitats for plants and animals
- A degree of offset for climate change – trees and plants absorb carbon dioxide
- Strengthened communities – by providing healthy food and improving air quality
- Improved soil health – by stabilising soil, reducing erosion, improving soil structure and fertility
- A natural haven for pollinators – flowers send out an electrical signal to attract bees; a fruit forest provides food and shelter for pollinators essential for plant reproduction
- Fewer shopping expenses – families with access to free fresh produce can save a significant amount of money each month.

There has been too much emphasis on our financial future; however, we need to create an ecological future for our children, and their children – just like other species we are supposed to live here in unity. The most inspiring documentaries to learn from are on YouTube, such as: Back to Eden Gardening Documentary, Permaculture Ponds, Down to Earth Org India, Sustainable Permaculture Ananda, Permaculture Farming India.

Reach out to TCDC and ask for some fruit trees and native shrubs. Then get together to plant them out and watch them grow each year until you can share the produce with your local pre-school, schools, care providers and youth as they will be able to share it with their children in the future and the insects, bees, birds will be grateful for a habitat and food source. Remember Mother Earth, our beautiful Papatūānuku, gives to us for free.

Let us cloak her with trees so she can allow us to breathe again.

Words by **Nira Giri**

A Lifelong Note in the Coromandel Songbook

How Dylan Wade has kept our Community in Tune

If we're talking pillars of the Coromandel music scene, Dylan Wade Lajunen deserves a mention. Living on the peninsula for 38 years, Dylan has had a long and rewarding career as a singer-songwriter/guitarist, performing/recording artist and music teacher. He has toured and travelled extensively and helped to encourage Coromandel musicians in multiple ways.

Music was ubiquitous for Dylan growing up in the 1970s. His parents were musicians and music lovers who had a band together.

"There's a picture of me as a baby, maybe six months old. My father, Kai, laid his favourite records in a circle on the floor and put me in the middle. When I was about seven years old, there were times when we had a five-piece band rig set up in our lounge and loud practices happening a lot. Dad and his bandmates built the PA (sound system) because good PAs were rare back then. There was this huge red 1970s style drum kit living there at one stage, and I used to love playing it. And there were always guitars around, as Kai was a guitarist with wide ranging musical tastes."

Born in Tokoroa and frequently moving around New Zealand and Australia as a child, Dylan moved to Whitianga in 1987 aged sixteen. He arrived to find a vibrant music scene which inspired him. Over the years he's lived on the peninsula, he's seen it grow.

"A lot of the events now are more mainstream than what I was experiencing when I first came. What was happening back then was pretty loose, like big parties, and things were less commercialised, but that didn't make them less attended or amazing as far as the music went. There's still not really events based around the musicians and bands on the peninsula. I think it would be great to have an annual event based around real Coromandel music."

In his 20s, Dylan formed the band Castle Rock, which performed regularly on the peninsula and around New Zealand. He recalls concerts at the Tapuaetahi community in Whenuakite, where the band's bassist Bruce Peachy lived.

"He built a stage, and we'd do all-night music sessions with multiple bands. They were small, but they were really cool events. We were also playing at festivals, pubs, parties and halls."

Castle Rock, which played a diverse repertoire of psychedelic rock, funk, blues and reggae influenced originals and covers, toured the South Island four times. They were the only Coromandel act doing this at the time.

"That first trip was epic for us. My sister Tanja did the big job of travelling around Te Waipounamu promoting, organising and booking the tour in advance. We hired this incredible house truck that was our home for two thirds of the trip. It wasn't just a tour. It was an expedition and an exploration of that amazing island. There was a lot less happening, particularly in the more remote areas, so audiences were so happy to have us, and they had us back multiple times. We recorded our first album upon our return at the legendary Aerial Railway recording studio in Sandy Bay (north of Coromandel town)."

Dylan started the Whitianga Music Club around this time. The first event of its kind, it was held at PJs, a former venue on Albert street.

"I started the music club to create a regular event in Whitianga that would foster other bands and artists. My friend Sean Fahey printed up some membership cards, which some people still have, I think!"

In 1994, Dylan left the country for an extended overseas venture which he says was eye-opening, both musically and in terms of his worldview. He visited 15 countries, notable among them being America, India and Finland, where he has ancestry. Some key memories include attending the historic Woodstock Two in New York and North Sea Jazz festival in Den Haag near Amsterdam.

"I had my backpack and guitar, and spent a year and a half exploring the world and playing music in all those countries. I learnt so much. I saw so much music and worked my way around the world writing, performing, jamming and busking. Many doors opened for me through music."

After returning to Whitianga, Dylan toured the South Island again and recorded his first solo album with Whitanga's own Dave Rhodes. Then he moved south to study at Nelson School of Music. While studying, he formed two bands and recorded two albums. He then embarked on another overseas trip to Australia, America and Japan, this time more focused on gigging.

Dylan began teaching music in the early 2000s. Now, he's taught at nine schools around the peninsula and plays a key part in fostering the talent of Coromandel youth.

"It's very rewarding, and it's a great way of giving back and learning. I saw a sign when I was just starting in Whitianga: 'The best way to learn is to teach.' It gave me a lot of confidence. I was not just learning how to teach, but learning how to play better, and learning from my students. Every student is different, and every student brings a lesson to the lesson."

Currently residing on the Thames coast, Dylan is preparing to release his seventh album. Locals may be familiar with his last album, 2012's Life, a musically diverse project with a positive, uplifting message. The new collection was recorded at Auckland's illustrious Roundhead Studios for Dylan's Masters degree in Music.

"I had to produce a new body of work as part of the degree. It was a great learning experience, and a real treat to go into Roundhead for a few days. There was also some remote recording at Kirehe (near Whitianga), Kūaotunu and around the Thames coast."

Listen to Dylan's music here:
https://linktr.ee/dylanwademusic

Words by
Nur Peach

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Images (in order of appearance): Jude Calder, Vegan Food Fair, Peter James Quinn, and Stella Michaels.

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MOMENTS...

Where Sultry Jazz Meets Blues and Swing

You may have seen her waving her arms about for the children of Mercury Bay's Performing Arts production of Aladdin in May this year, or seen her teaching music at a rehearsal.

However, what many may not realise is that Raewyn Watkins, who moved permanently to Whitianga in December last year, is in fact a seasoned and experienced performer in her own right, with more than 40 years on stage to her name.

Treading the boards of Hamilton's Founders Theatre from age 14, performing in many shows, and gaining an impressive CV, including lead roles in Die Fledermaus alongside Dame Malvina Major, plus the role of Ellen in Miss Saigon, and more.

Raised in the Waikato, Raewyn has never forgotten the tutelage gained from older performers and teachers. Now, as an adult, with not only experience but also formal training to her name, she feels passionately about giving back and supporting those keen on taking to the stage.

This led her to accept the role of tutor of the Musical Theatre classes at Riverlea Theatre in Hamilton. "It was such a thrill to watch students develop throughout the year, to see them shine. That is why I got involved with Mercury Bay's production of Aladdin, after living here for only seven weeks. I'm passionate about supporting the next generation of performers," she says.

Raewyn embarked on a new musical journey, auditioning for and being accepted into the prestigious Stanford University Jazz Vocal Program in California, where she was tutored by some of the world's foremost jazz specialists, including Dena DeRose (multiple Grammy-nominated artist).

It was around this time that Raewyn reconnected with school friend Stephen Small.

Studying classical piano and composition at Guildhall School of Music, London, he holds a Master of Arts in Popular Musicology and a Doctorate of Musical Arts.

Stephen has gone on to become one of New Zealand's busiest producers, arrangers, and piano players. He has played keyboards for bands like Autozamm and Opshop, and on the NZSO recording for Peter Jackson's King Kong, as well as arranging music for the likes of Shihad, The Exponents, Shona Laing, and The Lady Killers.

Overseas, Stephen has played piano for Belinda Carlisle, Missy Higgins, Michael Bolton, and Mel C (Spice Girls), alongside David Foster (Josh Groban/Whitney Houston) and many more.

One highlight for Stephen was orchestrating music for the London Symphony Orchestra, which was recorded at Abbey Road Studios. A full-circle moment, given his thesis on The Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's album for his doctorate.

After returning from Stanford University, Raewyn's own concerts, Moments of Time in Hamilton, sold out almost a month before opening, with Stephen at the musical helm, also taking charge of the Steinway grand. The Meteor was turned into an intimate jazz club where, in the words of Sam Edwards of the Waikato Times review, "Real jazz returns." Edwards noted, "Raewyn Watkins sang classics, putting her own version on things. Drawing together voices from the past and the present to create her own identifiable sound."

After a short break, her brainchild Orchestral Moments concerts came to fruition. Popular music by the likes of The Beatles, Elton John, The Eagles, and more was set to beautiful original string arrangements by Stephen Small, backed by members of Opus Orchestra.

Since moving to Whitianga, Raewyn has started taking on private students who are looking to develop their vocal performance skills, interpretation, technique, and connection with their audience.

Raewyn is thrilled to be able to secure Stephen Small once again, for one night only at Monkey House on 8 November.

This will be a relaxed, one-night-only event of moody jazz, blues, and swing.

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PROUD TO BE LOCAL

Chelsey Bennett

This month the spotlight is on Chelsey Bennett, a proud local musician, songwriter and music teacher from the Hauraki district. Raised in Waihi from the age of five and now living with her family on a dairy farm in Ngatea, the wider Hauraki district is where she calls home, having lived, attended school in and worked in the area for most of her life. Her main role these days is imparting musical wisdom to the next generation of mini musos through lessons in singing, guitar, ukulele and piano that she offers at several local schools.

From the age of eight she knew that her future vocation would involve music in some way. Having had a chance encounter with a music therapist, she was intrigued and aspired to one day follow that path. Although she hasn't disregarded it for her future, for now she is satisfied teaching music and has found that teaching has meant that music becomes more accessible to kids that benefit from having it in their lives.

Singing and music has always been a huge part of her life. From a tiny child she would sing almost constantly. Her most vivid memories are of singing and playing guitar at home with her mum Meryl, who is also a music teacher based in Waikino, learning to harmonise to old school country and western hits like Delta Dawn and Let Me Be There. For a long time, she distanced herself from country music, opting to learn more classical style singing. However, despite having a rather diverse repertoire, she has now come full circle and has found herself singing with more of a country flare these days.

You can find her with her guitar in hand, playing and singing at markets, pubs and various events throughout the Coromandel, Waikato and Auckland areas, bringing a relaxed acoustic ambiance to any occasion. Chelsey will tell you that she is not the most active person on social media, but you can catch up with where she is performing over the upcoming summer season and contact her to book her for gigs by searching on Instagram @chelseybennettmusic or looking up her profile on Facebook. She's looking forward to seeing you out and about, singing along and exploring the Coromandel this summer.

chelseybennettmusic@gmail.com

Facebook: Chelsey Bennett

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Words by **Fabian Roberts**

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A Shifting Landscape for Workers

Navigating Employment Laws in Aotearoa NZ

Love them or dislike them, the coalition government's implemented and proposed changes will significantly impact workers across New Zealand's employment landscape. The National-led coalition, alongside ACT and New Zealand First, has introduced reforms to enhance employer flexibility while adjusting employee protections. These changes, some already enacted and others under consideration, are reshaping workplace dynamics, grievance processes, and contractor classifications. This article examines the key amendments to New Zealand's employment laws and their implications for workers and employers.

Expanded 90-Day Trial Periods

In December 2023, the Employment Relations (Trial Periods) Amendment Bill extended 90-day trial periods to all businesses, removing the previous restriction to employers with fewer than 20 employees. Employers can now terminate new employees within 90 days without facing unjustified dismissal claims, provided the trial period is specified in the employment agreement. Employees retain the right to pursue other claims, such as discrimination or unjustified disadvantage. Employers must strictly comply with legal requirements to avoid challenges. This reform reduces hiring risks for businesses but may increase uncertainty for new employees.

Repeal of Fair Pay Agreements

By late 2023, the coalition repealed the Fair Pay Agreement regime, which aimed to improve wages and conditions through industry-wide bargaining. This halted negotiations in sectors like hospitality, cleaning, early childhood education, and supermarkets. The government favors individual and enterprise-level agreements, potentially weakening collective bargaining power. Critics argue this undermines wage equity, while supporters highlight increased business flexibility.

Minimum Wage Adjustment

Effective April 1, 2025, the adult minimum wage rose from $23.15 to $23.50 per hour, approximately $48,880 annually for a 40-hour workweek. This modest increase aims to help workers manage inflation while considering business costs in a tough economic climate. The government plans moderate annual adjustments to align with economic conditions.

Income Threshold for Unjustified Dismissal Claims

A proposed amendment to the Employment Relations Act 2000, expected in 2025, would prevent employees earning over $180,000 annually (base salary, excluding incentives) from raising unjustified dismissal claims, affecting about 3.4% of the workforce. The threshold will be reviewed annually to reflect average earnings. The policy applies to new agreements immediately and existing ones after a 12-month transition with mutual consent. High earners can still pursue other grievances, like discrimination, and negotiate contractual protections. The proposal has sparked debate over reduced protections for senior staff versus lower employer risks in critical roles.

Personal Grievance Process Reforms

Proposed changes to the personal grievance process aim to account for employee behavior in remedy awards:

No Remedies for Serious Misconduct: Employees guilty of serious misconduct, such as violence, bullying, or theft, would be ineligible for compensation or reinstatement.

Reduced Remedies for Contributory Behavior: Actions like repeated lateness or poor performance could lead to remedy reductions of up to 100%.

Employee Obstruction Consideration: Courts and the Employment Relations Authority would assess whether employee actions hindered employer obligations.

These reforms seek fairer dispute resolutions but may disproportionately impact less senior employees and raise concerns about alignment with international labour standards.

Contractor Classification Gateway Test

To clarify contractor status, a proposed "gateway test" would classify a worker as a contractor if four criteria are met:

1. A written agreement designates them as a contractor.
2. The business allows work for others, including competitors.
3. No specific hours or minimum time is required, or subcontracting is permitted.
4. The contract cannot be terminated for refusing additional tasks.

If unmet, existing tests determine status. This aims to reduce misclassification disputes but may limit contractors' ability to challenge their status, potentially reducing access to employee protections.

Termination by Agreement Bill

The Employment Relations (Termination of Employment by Agreement) Amendment Bill would allow mutual employment termination agreements without future unjustified dismissal claims. Pre-termination discussions would be inadmissible in disputes, subject to conditions. While intended to facilitate amicable separations, concerns exist about potential coercion, especially for vulnerable workers.

Removal of Pay Secrecy Clauses

The Employee Remuneration Disclosure Bill would prohibit adverse actions against employees discussing their pay. This reform aims to enhance pay transparency, potentially reducing wage disparities, particularly for women and marginalised groups, by eliminating "pay secrecy" clauses.

As our employment landscape shifts, staying informed is essential for navigating these changes with confidence.

The Coromandel Workers Council is here to support you. Whether you're an employer updating workplace policies or an employee seeking clarity on your rights, our team offers expert guidance tailored to your needs. Have questions about how these reforms affect you? Contact the Coromandel Workers Council today for personalised assistance.

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THE STORY OF FRED SAWYER

An Aviation Leader with a Farmer's Heart

Most towns have their 'good sorts', local men and women who quietly and unassumingly contribute to their community, their dedication and involvement leaving a lasting and much-valued legacy. One such person was Frederick Sawyer, affectionately known as Fred. Fred made a significant contribution to both the local and national economy for 38 years.

Frederick William Sawyer was born on 14th January 1923 in Auckland. His parents were Richard Danzic (Dan) Sawyer, born in Port Lincoln, South Australia on 16th May 1886, and Daisy Prudence Sawyer née Allan, born 1887. Dan and Daisy married in 1915. Fred was the only boy in their family, with five sisters. Dan and Daisy dedicated their lives to the Salvation Army. Dan served as a Padre in World War One, and was a much-loved and respected figure around Thames. At the age of 12 years, Fred left school to help his father on their Kaihere farm.

In 1942, Fred left New Zealand to do his military training at the Royal Canadian Air Force, No. 3 Service Flying Training School, Calgary, where he received his wings – having overcome his curtailed education, and a nose reconstruction to pass the medical, and be accepted into the Air Force. On 5th May 1944, Fred graduated as a flying instructor, and was granted the rank of Pilot Officer. (Reference: The New Zealand Gazette, http:/library.victoria.ac.nz.)

On Saturday 23rd October 1943, whilst Fred was on leave, LAC Frederick Sawyer and Miss Betty Rae Harris were married at the Kaihere Hall. Fred and Betty Rae were blessed with four children: John, Linda, Prudence, and Andrew Frederick.

In 1945, Fred was posted to Burma (now Myanmar) to join a Mosquito Hornet Squadron; however, on 6th and 9th August,1945, the United States detonated two atomic bombs over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Fred returned to New Zealand.

On his retirement, Fred took over the family dairy farm; however, by 1950 due to his ongoing back problems, he was forced to consider what his future working life might be. As he had obtained his commercial instructor's licence in October 1947, the Hauraki Aero Club considered itself very fortunate to have secured his services. An opportunity to form a topdressing company was offered to Fred. This would provide him with a job post-farming, and retain his services as a flying instructor at the Hauraki Aero Club.

By May 1950, arrangements were being finalised for the incorporation of a company to be called the Thames Aerial Topdressing Company. Provisional directors of the company were Frederick William Sawyer, Kaihere, Colvin Robertson, Thames, and Basil Oliver, Thames. The Company commenced operations on 6 October 1950, when Fred spread 20 tons of fertiliser on the property of Mr Percy Hanson at Wharehoe. As the Company's first pilot, Fred had to develop his own technique for sowing fertiliser from the air, and to advise farmers on the construction of airstrips. He was also involved in the development of aircraft hoppers and loading vehicles. Aerial topdressing was a hazardous industry, but Fred's record was exemplary. TATCO operated for 22 years without a fatality.

By 1972, the company had amalgamated with Fieldair Limited, Palmerston North. Fred was Managing Director for the next ten years. Prior to his retirement in January 1983, the company, with the approval of Federated Farmers, was converted to a cooperative, and operates today under the name Fieldair Holdings Limited. Fred was held in high esteem by his customers and competitors, and all those who worked with him. He earned the nickname 'Errol Flynn of the Coromandel'. (Source: Roots 'n' Wings: A Summary, 'Dedicated to Betty Rae,' by Lynnette Hanson Munn.)

Fred's wife Betty Rae died 22nd December, 1952 aged 29 years. Fred died in Thames on the 20th February, 2009, aged 86 years. His contribution to the aviation industry, and to the growth of topdressing in New Zealand is legendary, although Fred only ever considered himself to be 'a country boy' at heart.

Frederick William Sawyer, 14th January 1923 - 20th February 2009

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Words by
Robyn Pearce
Volunteer, Thames Museum
Te Whare Taonga o te Kauaeranga

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Next Stop: Beauty and the Beast Jr.!

What a journey it has been!

What began as an idea, to give young people on the Coromandel a chance to step into the spotlight, quickly grew into something far greater. From gathering a small party of creative 'doers' to staging one of the peninsula's finest inaugural productions in years, Mercury Bay Performing Arts (MBPA) has already shown what passion, teamwork and belief can achieve.

The road wasn't easy. There were hundreds of hours of phone calls, juggling logistics, last-minute fixes, pickups, drop-offs and headaches, along with eureka moments. But every ounce of effort was rewarded when audiences poured in, filling every seat for the debut production of Disney's Aladdin Jr. earlier this year. (More than 1,000 audience members across eight sold-out performances!)

The show was nothing short of spectacular. Fifty-six young performers, all under the age of 18, lit up the stage with energy, colour, and music. For some, it was their first time under the lights; for others, it was the moment they discovered what will be a lifelong love of performance. Parents, grandparents and friends cheered until the rafters shook, and glowing reviews rolled in from every corner of the community.

Aladdin became a celebration of what's possible when creativity meets opportunity. One parent summed it up beautifully: "She has struggled with confidence over the years and this really gave her a boost and helped her believe in herself. She gained so many skills from this experience and is very excited to audition for next year's show."

And this was the magic: what began as a stage production became a whānau. Children not only sang, danced and acted, but learned teamwork, resilience and leadership. Senior students mentored juniors, friendships blossomed, and every performer found their place in the shared story.

The support from the wider community was nothing short of overwhelming. Local businesses, schools and volunteers stepped up, ensuring that every costume was sewn, every prop was painted, and every child had their chance to shine. What unfolded wasn't just a production – it was proof that Mercury Bay was ready, and hungry, for performing arts.

Now, the spotlight shifts to the next chapter: Disney's Beauty and the Beast Jr.

Once again, Mercury Bay Performing Arts will bring together young talent from across the peninsula to create a magical production that promises to be bigger, brighter and even more breathtaking than the last. Auditions are just around the corner, and the excitement is already building.

We can't wait to bring this magical show to life with our young performers – and we know the community will once again rally to cheer them on.

For more information about our auditions, please visit: www.mbpa.nz

If you or your business would like to become a sponsor, please contact us at: mercurybaypa@gmail.com

Disney BEAUTY AND THE BEAST JR.

MBPA MERCURY BAY PERFORMING ARTS

COROMIND

Auditions

Thursday 20 Nov: 4.00pm - 6:30pm
Friday 21 Nov: 4.00pm - 6:30pm
Sunday 23 Nov: 10.30am - 2:30pm

Monkey House, 18 Coghill St, Whitianga

Show Week

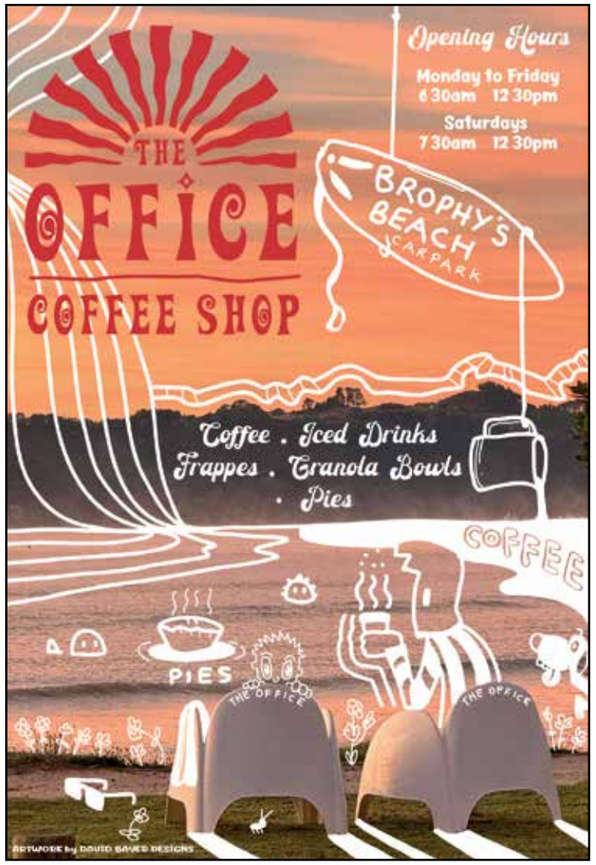
May 6 (Sponsors Night)
May 7 - 9
May 14 - 16

Coro Club Main Hangar

Scan here for more Information

Or visit: www.coromind.nz/mbpa-beauty-beast/

Words by **Fabian Roberts**



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