

CRACCCUM

AUCKLAND UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT MAGAZINE SINCE 1927

LOCAL POLITICS



GOODBYE WTR,
WE HARDLY KNEW YOU

Irene Parsaei

INTERVIEW WITH
FANIA KAPAO

Jamie "Dat Boi"
Matheson

HUNTER GATHERERS
AND SCROLLING

Victor Nors

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— sorted on campus.



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Mon-Fri 9am-3pm)



Uni Sushi



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70%

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A MESSAGE FROM CHLÖE SWARBRICK

(MP FOR AUCKLAND CENTRAL)

It's local body elections time! As a student reading this, you're unfortunately currently part of a cohort most likely to give up your power and let other people make decisions which historically have disproportionately negatively impacted the cost of living and your quality of life! Let's not keep doing that, aye?

If you've ever been in a not-so-great relationship, you've probably heard the old adage that we get the love that we think we deserve. Politics, believe it or not, is kinda the same. We get the politics we think we deserve —and boy, has the bar been far too low for far too long.

I get it. At a national level, politicians seem to spend most of their time bickering between each other instead of talking directly with or to you about the things that really matter - let alone actually doing those things. At a local level, you're lucky to hear anything at all about the Council and Local Board responsible for the cost, quality and accessibility of your housing, transport, parks, libraries, drinking and swimming water, events, public toilets, nightlife, arts and culture.

In the exhaustion of day-to-day life, many people then end up tuning out entirely, denying themselves - and our city, collectively - the ability to choose to live happier, healthier, better lives. Just like in any unfulfilling relationship, we totally can meander on through and try not to think about it... Until we wake up one day and ask ourselves how the hell we've yet the years slip by as things have deteriorated around us. We can do better.

If you don't like your politicians, find someone in your community who you do like and you do trust and support them.

Nominations are already closed this time around, meaning there's no more time for new candidates to put themselves forward, so yes, you do have to choose from those in your little booklet.

It's unlikely that you'll ever find a candidate who you 100% align with if you did, that person would probably literally be you - so maybe think of running next time if you reckon you could do better?).

It may help to think of choosing your representatives like catching the bus. No one is going to get you to your ex-

act intended address, but you can and should choose the people who'll get you the closest to where you want to go.

The extra cool thing about democracy? It doesn't just happen every three years with an election. It happens every single day with decisions that are made which shape the city and country around us. If you choose candidates who walk the talk on being accountable, they should do a good job of keeping you informed about these kinds of decisions and processes as they happen - meaning you're not only on the metaphorical bus, but actively helping shape the route that bus is taking!

At a time when young people are leaving Aotearoa New Zealand in record numbers, this local election is an opportunity for intervention. Tamaki Makaurau can be as exciting, fulfilling, and worthy a place to live as anywhere else that people flock to. We can have functional and affordable public transport, great gigs, thriving hospo and

healthy homes. But it's not just going to happen by mistake. No one is coming to save us.

By casting a vote in these local body elections - let alone coordinating your flat, student hall, workmates, family and friends to do it too - you are actively contributing to what our actual, tangible, daily life looks like.

You're allowed to complain about how things suck, just like you're allowed to complain about the relationship your friends have been telling you you should leave. Wouldn't it be even better to do something about it? To take charge of our lives and make decisions that might feel a little bit annoying and admin-heavy right now, but can only pay off in the long run?

If you haven't got your voting papers yet (classic problem, and a discussion we should all have another time, head to voteauckland.co.nz. Scroll down and click 'What to do if you do not receive your voting papers.'

We get the politics we think we deserve, and boy, does Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland deserve some love.

Please, vote. If it helps, just remember that your landlord and boss are. Do you really want to hand over your political power - noting you already hand over your rent and literal labour - to them?



GOODBYE WTR, WE HARDLY KNEW YOU

IT'S NOT ACTUALLY GONE, IT'S JUST BECOMING AN OPTIONAL GEN-ED.



IRENE PARSAEI

In March of 2025, the University of Auckland launched a new paper for all undergraduate students beginning their first year of study. The Waipapa Taumata Rau (WTR) course, consisting of information about New Zealand history, Māori culture, and the Treaty of Waitangi, was created to be a compulsory requirement for any new undergraduate students.

In order to best fit the needs of different students, WTR was essentially split into five separate courses that could be chosen depending on each student's degree. Specialized course content was created for students doing business, engineering, medicine/health science, and science. For everyone else, there was a general paper.

From the beginning, the course was scrutinised, most loudly by members of the ACT party such as Parmjeet Parmar, who earlier in the year also proposed a bill targeting "university services based on race". Parmar also made calls for the WTR course to be scrapped, leading to multiple articles being written by outlets such as RNZ and the NZ Herald.

Amongst students, the views on the paper are a bit more complicated. Many say that it's important to learn about Aotearoa's history and delve more into Māori culture and practices. However, some students have also expressed that the fee for this course will be added to their student loan, and they would prefer to have a choice on whether to select it.

On September 12th at 1:05pm, the Vice Chancellor's update, emailed to all students, detailed that the feedback received from students and staff regarding the course would be discussed at a Senate meeting on September 15th, and that they would deliberate on whether the course should become an optional General Education paper, rather than a requirement. The email also stated that the final decision would be revealed in October.

Well, as I'm writing this it's September 24th, and I already have the results. With 99% certainty, WTR will become an optional general education paper starting from next year.

Matthew Lee, the Undergraduate Education Vice-President very kindly offered to meet with me just two days after the senate meeting had occurred to explain what had taken place, and to give a bit more background as to how the decision came about.

What is the Senate?

To start off, we must first understand what the Senate is. As Matthew explained to me, the Senate is the highest academic board and is composed of all the professors at the University, along with the Vice Chancellor, and five members of the AUSA executive team as student representatives. The full list of members is quite long as I later found out in my research, and I've put the list below. Do with that information what you will.

- Vice-Chancellor – Chair
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Strategic Engagement
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Operations and Registrar
- Pro Vice-Chancellor Education
- Pro Vice-Chancellor Equity
- Pro Vice-Chancellor Māori
- Pro Vice-Chancellor Pacific
- All distinguished professors, professors and emeritus professors employed on 0.1 full-time equivalent (FTE) or more
- Academic heads
- Deans
- One deputy dean from each faculty and School of Graduate Studies
- One associate dean academic, associate dean teaching and learning, associate dean research and associate dean postgraduate research from each faculty
- One associate director academic, associate director research, associate director postgraduate research from each Large-Scale Research Institute (LSRI)
- One deputy director from each LSRI
- Directors of LSRI's
- Director of Learning and Teaching
- Director of Student and Scholarly Services
- The two elected permanent members of academic and professional staff on Council, if not already members
- Elected members of the sub-professorial staff:
 - Two faculty members of each faculty
 - 11 sub-professorial staff at large
- President Auckland University Students Association or alternate
- Five student members nominated by Auckland University Students' Association
 - Four undergraduate
 - One postgraduate

The Senate meets once every one-and-a-half months regarding academic matters such as the law and business merger which was paused indefinitely earlier this year. Matthew stated that the Senate is only *advisory* to the council, and their decisions on issues are not binding, however, the shadow of their influence is not to be underestimated.

Okay, so... what is the Council?

In contrast to the senate, the Council is not made up entirely of university staff. As well as the Vice Chancellor and several staff members from the University, two people are also appointed from Auckland Council, while one member must be Māori in order to advise the Council regarding issues relevant to them. Additionally, there are also four members that are appointed by the Ministry.

The Council, interestingly enough, is chaired by the Chancellor, who holds a position even higher than the Vice

Chancellor. If you're thinking, hold on, I didn't even know there was a position higher than VC, don't worry, I didn't know either.

Again, while the Council aren't exactly obligated to listen and agree with the advice given by the Senate, it has been observed that they rarely disagree, and conclusions arrived at by both bodies are usually alike.

How was this decision made?

The WTR course, while apparently having been in the works for multiple years, was only introduced and taught for the first time in semester one of this year (2025). Launching new courses and papers is most definitely not an easy task, and Matthew noted that it's common to see new papers struggle at first, and that there is an adjustment period. However, the SET evaluations and feedback received regarding WTR was low even with that factor being taken into consideration.

The feedback received from the SET evaluations reported only a 35% satisfaction rate amongst students, which was immediately red-flagged for immediate attention and discussion, which gives more insight into why this discussion reappeared so suddenly and out of the blue. Following this concerning update, the Senate voted to create an evaluation panel comprised of academics from universities such as Otago and Victoria, and also from various Australian institutions. This panel would review and evaluate the course and give their thoughts on how best to proceed.

The result of this evaluation panel was a report which in summary suggested that the course continue but with major reviews and changes. This report was sent to the VC, and the deputy VC, however they apparently didn't feel the need to share it with anyone else. Matthew noted that he'd raised concerns over not being able to see the report in full.

Student's Thoughts

In addition to the report created by the evaluation panel, AUSA also ran their own survey asking students their thoughts on WTR. Matthew shared that many of the students who participated in the survey did see the value in the course, and that many even wanted it to remain compulsory as they saw it as a way to honor Aotearoa's history and Māori culture. Some students also held the view that as academia has the reputation of being very Western-focussed and Eurocentric, WTR could help to create a balance and a new perspective.

The concerns that students had, however, were also taken into consideration. Many students reported that the content of the course overlapped with other core papers they were required to take such as LAW121, or was repeating content that they had already learnt in high school. Degree planning was also mentioned as an issue, with some students finding it

difficult to fit in a compulsory paper. One student apparently reported to Matthew that they would have to extend their time at university by a year, solely due to WTR.

Lastly, course costs were arguably one of the most talked about issues regarding this course, even in articles published by legacy media. The paper, like most others, costs the regular approximate \$1000 which ultimately would be added to a student loan should a person have one. This issue has been debated, with some pointing out that students would have to take another paper which would cost the same anyway, however the issue is still seemingly important to many.

What Proposal did the Senate vote for?

Due to the concerns regarding flexibility and content overlap, the proposal put before the Senate recommended that WTR becomes an

option general education paper for first year students. This will mean that the majority of students will have a choice on whether to take it or not, and the University is of the opinion that ultimately, most students will decide to.

Some programmes such as medicine and architecture will still have the paper as a core requirement for their students, potentially due to not having any other papers that provide the same content. Ultimately, it will be up to each faculty to make the decision.

The concerns about this move are not non-existent. WTR was a course created in conjunction and collaboration with the local iwi, and to many students, this move by the University feels almost like a slap in the face to that relationship. Many people, including myself, were also suspicious as to whether the University is just buckling under political pressure from parties such as ACT.

When asked about this, Matthew expressed that it had been a concern of his as well, but that after the discussions at the Senate, he truly believed that the decision was made due to feedback and clear rationale. Despite this, he did question the speed at which all of these evaluations and decisions were made, and most importantly, who had created the proposal which had been put before the Senate.

According to the University's website, the next Council meeting will be held at 4pm on October 15th. Only then can we get an official decision.

But I think we can all guess what it'll be.



RIP Whakarongo Mai

Congrats everyone, you killed this segment. Literally!

IRENE PARSAEI

If you've been following along with the Craccum print issues throughout this year, or if you happen to follow us on Instagram, you'll know that we have a segment called Whakarongo Mai. Before each print issue, an on-theme question is decided on and then published onto our Instagram story in order to give students a chance to answer with their thoughts on the matter. Throughout the year it tackled student's opinions on topics such as AI being used in universities, controversial bills proposed in parliament, and ideas regarding the AUSA election.

When I first took over the running of Whakarongo Mai, I thought it was a wonderful opportunity for students to have their voices and opinions heard. I've now come to the conclusion that students don't want that.

The lack of engagement with Whakarongo Mai questions is so abysmal that sometimes it's honestly been laughable. I sometimes wonder whether the issue is that students don't want to share their thoughts or is it that they just have no thoughts at all? I hope it's the first option, but honestly, I'm not too optimistic.

For a student body that is constantly complaining about how this university has no student life and doesn't listen to student voices, UoA students usually make absolutely no effort to actively participate in literally anything. What is easier than typing out a few words onto an Instagram story, an app that many students use on a daily, if not hourly basis. Are y'all for real?

In her editorial at the start of this issue, Chlöe Swarbrick wrote that while students are absolutely allowed to complain about the state of the world, it would be even better if we actively did something about it.

So, if you don't want to answer my Whakarongo Mai question, that's fine. At least go and fucking vote.

WAITING FOR DAYLIGHT

THE RIVER BURIED UNDER QUEEN STREET



JUDY ZHANG

An inevitable part of my bus commute to and from the university involves wiggling through the eyesore of construction barricades and patchworked asphalt on Wellesley Street West. We stall at the red lights and my window view is crisscrossed over by a temporary fence (how lovely). There's a blue, cubic structure towering just on the other side. Just below its awning hangs the name of the soon-to-be train station in midtown Tāmaki Makaurau, still zip tied in a plastic sheet: Te Waihorotiu.



For over a year that blue cube incubated there, becoming something of a familiar sight while the real dynamism happens away from the fleeting attention of commuters, all the excitement contained underground. A grand opening is gently promised for 2026, and the station's blue poutama-inspired façade — the City Rail Link brochure tells me — abstractly illustrates Ranginui's (Sky Father) separation from Papatūānuku (Earth Mother) which ended primordial darkness in the Māori creation story. The brochure goes on to highlight the art installation suspended from the ceiling as you enter, designed to resemble the station's namesake: the body of water under Queen Street. Yes, a stream once flowed down from the Myers Park gully into the Waitematā Harbour. Waihorotiu continues to run beneath our foot traffic today, trapped in the sewers for the last 150 years.

Waihorotiu in the pre-colonial landscape was nestled among native wetland vegetation and sprinklings of Māori pā (villages or fortified settlements), and home to the taniwha (guardian spirit) Horotiu.

It was a treasured source of fresh water for drinking, also supporting ecosystems of eels, shellfish, wild and planted flora. However, European settlement in the early 1840s saw Waihorotiu forcibly transformed into a receptacle for industry waste. By 1843 it was undrinkable, had been converted into an artificial channel, and was redubbed the Ligar Canal. Effectively an open sewer, it garnered complaints from residents and visitors alike for its stench and threat to public health, and was ravaged constantly by major floods. Waihorotiu was bricked over entirely in the 1870s, vanishing from the city and the landscape in our memories.

So if you happened to be one of the poor souls stuck in the city centre during the Auckland Anniversary Weekend floods of January 2023, that swift river you were surprised to find swallowing the length of Queen Street was by no means an unparalleled event. Between buried life and lost histories, though, art and imagination surfaces as a form of remembrance and resistance.

I think of Friedensreich Hundertwasser, an Austrian artist and architect who, after falling in love with New Zealand during his first visit in 1973, lived in Northland for the final three decades of his life. Besides being the designer behind the colourful public toilets in Kawakawa (a worthy stop on your next roadie, by the way), he is remembered in New Zealand for his strongly environmentalist artworks and life ethic. In his manifesto on green roofs, or "afforested roofs", he wrote: "We must give territories back to nature which we have taken from her illegally. The nature we put on the roof is this piece of earth that we murdered by putting the house there." When I read this at the Hundertwasser Art Centre in Whangārei, my



PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN AT THE HUNDERTWASSER ART CENTRE IN 2022

mind flew immediately to my cosy bedroom waiting back at home. Before my wall posters and ambient lighting, which species of native shrub filled the space?

In a poem by New Zealand artist Elliot Collins, Waihorotiu is described as "river / that is covered and filled and forgotten." That is, forgotten by humans, but not by the ancient ecosystems we are often too short-sighted to realise we belong to.

A similar sentiment lies in Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki's Academy Award-winning film *Spirited Away* (2001), where one of the protagonists, a river spirit, struggles to recall his true name because his river has been filled and built over with apartments. Miyazaki's critique of humanity's damaged relationship with nature becomes visceral when a 'stink spirit' shows up later in the film, oozing sludge and everyday refuse. The creature is eventually revealed to be the spirit of a heavily polluted river — this scene was inspired by Miyazaki's own experience of a neighbourhood river cleanup.



THE DAMAGED LIGAR CANAL ON QUEEN STREET, AFTER SEVERE FLOODING IN 1860. AUCKLAND LIBRARIES HERITAGE COLLECTIONS 1043-032

In 2021, Auckland-based oil painter Christopher Dews created a series of paintings which reimagine our familiar concrete-flavoured city centre into glimpses of what it could look like in the year 2050. Inside the visionary city of his artworks, Queen Street teems with green arbours and native birdsong, Aotea Square is the flourishing wetland it used to be, and Waihorotiu is restored as a shared taonga (sacred treasure) for all to live alongside. These paintings were presented to Auckland Council during a Planning Committee meeting. Today, four years on, there are still no plans to daylight the stream at the heart of our city.

Urban river daylighting has been on the rise globally, with the most successful example being the 2005 renewal of Cheonggyecheon River in Seoul. Like most urban rivers, the polluted Cheonggyecheon was concreted over and topped by an elevated motorway in the mid-20th century, creating new problems of traffic congestion and compromised air quality. The daylighting project transformed the area into a lush outdoor community space of rich biodiversity; a space to relax and breathe in. River and wetland restorations are not simply superficially attractive. They also support the infrastructural health of cities by mitigating flooding, urban heat island effects, and relieving pressure on sewage systems — a real pain point for us in Tāmaki Makaurau.

"Where the original water source at Waihorotiu provided a service to local people for cooking, cleaning, bathing and growing food... Te Waihorotiu station will soon provide the service of transport," the City Rail Link brochure concludes proudly. For a second I want to recoil. If the entire history of our relationship with the natural world was documented on paper, would it largely be indiscernible from the transactions on a receipt? We are, perhaps, rather young and ungraceful when it comes to coexisting with our living kin: our trees, rivers, soils, the plump black eels in the Western Springs lake... I once observed them squabbling innocently over mouldy bread crusts, tossed into the water by a family in their misguided attempt to 'connect with nature'. We are not as separated from it as we believe.

The light turns green, the bus heaves on. Suddenly comes to mind the final line in Collins' poem.

"Water runs deep underground, / as I skim the surface".

HARRY'S SPORTS RECAP!

FROM CRACCUM'S EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Ummm, well, my predictions for the All Blacks may have been slightly off.... Let's get into it

THE BLACK FERNS FALL SHORT IN THE RUGBY WORLD CUP SEMI-FINAL AND WELL, THE ALL BLACKS....

Going into this game, the Black Ferns certainly had a mountain of work to do for the game to go their way. They had picked up injuries to various players, including a budding superstar, Jorja Miller, while Canada had all their star players roaring and ready to go for this game. To make matters worse, Canada had beaten the Black Ferns multiple times leading up to this semi-final. Canada really was the team to beat, and our woman in black had all the confidence in the world to do it. But sadly, their luck ran out.

For the first time since 1991, the Black Ferns lost in a knockout game in a World Cup, losing 34-19 after Canada simply flexed all their muscle against us, and the Black Ferns didn't have a response.

Thanks to a slow start and the ongoing tournament discipline issues, Canada was able to pounce on our mistakes, and once they took the lead, they never looked back. The Black Ferns now have one final game left to play in their bronze medal match and will look to finish this tournament off strong.

Now our other national rugby team.... Well, there isn't much to say after the previous game's result, losing to South Africa by 33 points and going 50 minutes without even scoring a single point. The All Blacks simply looked lost and were playing like we had given up already. The only really good story was the debut of Leroy Carter, who even managed to score a try on debut. But honestly, that was about it, now all eyes are on our next game when Aussie comes to Eden Park...

HOW DID OUR ATHLETES DO AT THE 2025 WORLD ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS?

After just eight days of athletes from all over the globe giving their heart and soul to their respective events, the 2025 World Athletics Championship is now over, and in total, New Zealand managed to snag three medals, including two gold medals. One of these golds came from the leading man in the world stage of high jump, Hamish Kerr, after jumping a whopping 2.36 metres and claiming his first ever World Athletics title in this event.

However, our other gold medal probably came from an event you wouldn't even think of, the steeplechase! Geordie Beamish, after getting stamped on his head in his earlier qualifying heat for the final, managed to beat out back-to-back-to-back-to-back steeplechase champion Soufiane El Bakkali by seven hundredths of a second. Denying the Moroccan a fifth straight title. Nobody in New Zealand thought we would win a medal in the steeplechase, let alone a gold medal!

What an amazing race and what a win for New Zealand.

THE SILVER FERNS START OFF THEIR YEAR STRONG, BEATING SOUTH AFRICA 77-51.

In the Silver Ferns' first game without head coach Dame Noeline Taurua, the Black Ferns did not miss a beat, smashing the South Africans in their first game in the Taini Jamison Trophy test. Grace Nweke, in her return to New Zealand, scored 59 goals from 67 attempts, a very solid outing from her. New Zealand started well, immediately grabbing a 12-point lead after just the first quarter and never looked back. Although the South Africans tried to mitigate the damage done in the first half, it was too much of a mountain to climb.

The Silver Ferns will look to grab the series win on Wednesday night in Napier, and South Africa will look to keep this test series alive.

That's all for this issue; thank you and goodbye!



INTERVIEW WITH FANIA KAPAO

WHAU LOCAL BOARD CANDIDATE



JAMIE “DAT BOI”
MATHESON

Fania Kapao is a young rising star in the world of Labour politics and a postgraduate student here at UOA, who is also serving as this year’s AUSA Postgraduate Education Vice-President and is a regular *Craccum* contributor. You may have seen some of her work in Organising the AUSA Fair Pay protest earlier this year. At the moment, she is also running for the Whau Ward Local Board. Fania sat down with *Craccum* and opened up about her political journey, what keeps her motivated and explained how students can get more involved in New Zealand politics. Fania is very humble and shy by nature, so Jamie had to spend weeks to build up her self-esteem for this interview.

What songs or artists have been on repeat for you lately? What do they say about your mindset right now?

[Opens app]. Lots of Troy Kingi (just exposed myself [laughs]). Like, almost every second song is Troy Kingi. Lots of Troy Kingi and Che Fu. This is like... wow.

A lot of these songs I’ve had on repeat—*Misty Frequencies*, *All Your Ships Have Sailed*—really speak to my childhood and journey. They’re deep songs for me; they mean a lot.

Misty Frequencies, for example, speaks to how everyone has their thing, their niche. Sometimes your background isn’t the best—like your origin story isn’t super flash or whatever—but people still have dreams and things they’re naturally drawn to. And sometimes, you’re the only person who believes in that. I’m pretty weird being into politics since I was six.

With *All Your Ships Have Sailed*, Troy Kingi talks about having to be his own father, and now he’s got his own kids. He’s chasing the idea of what it means to be a good parent and role model, and how hard that is when you don’t have that blueprint yourself. I really resonate with that. My life hasn’t been the easiest—lots of my peers

take for granted things I never had. Trying to give those things to myself as an adult is hard when you don’t know what is and isn’t normal.

With politics, I’ve had to accept that there are aspects of me that aren’t polished or perfect—and sometimes, that’s the best part of who you are in this space.

Long ramble, but I gravitate toward songs that speak to me and help me get through the stuff I’ve been through.

What’s your go-to restaurant and what’s your order?

Mmmm, Ramen Station in New Lynn. I usually get the Station Soba with pork, but the other day I tried the Miso Tonkotsu Ramen and it was pretty good, not gonna lie.

I know this isn’t part of the question, but the other day we went to Nanny’s Eatery—exactly a year after interviewing JessB for *Craccum*—and it’s really good. It’s my second favourite. The vibes are

on, and the flavour is immaculate.

Both of these restaurants just transport you. You’re not in Auckland anymore.

What role do you think student media, like *Craccum*, plays in political awareness and accountability?

I think it plays the biggest role in student politics, especially. I don’t know why this is even a question—it should be common sense. People need good journalism and independent media that discuss all kinds of topics. Obviously, there are some we need to be careful around, but that doesn’t mean you should silence entities like *Craccum* or treat them like a mouthpiece for an organisation.

Like, if you’re feeding someone lines to say—like a student magazine—and claiming “this” is the student voice, you can’t say you represent the university if it’s just a couple of people who graduated eons ago. Entities like *Craccum* play

a huge role in disseminating information on a wide scale.

We’re seeing this shift where people are moving offline (I’m one of them), and gravitating back toward physical media. Like, Sabrina Carpenter puts out vinyl, cassettes, and CDs—not just digital. In time, that’ll spread to the media too, which is why it’s fundamental to continue and preserve print magazines in the student space.

Plus, it’s really cool to see your work in print—or your friends’ work. Hear the goss from the halls. Understand what’s happening at the university on a wider level.

I wish *Craccum* could keep the accountability of AUSA and other university figures. As Post Grad Education VP, I’d like to know where I could improve, or how students perceive me—because that’s the only way you get better: through criticism. As long as you’re not a dick about it, I see no harm in *Craccum* being that source of accountability. Why is that not the case at the moment? I have no idea.

Local politics often fly under the radar for students. Why should they care, and what real impact does it have on their daily lives?

If you asked me this question a year ago, I’d probably say “dunno” [laughs]. It’s totally understandable—it flies under the radar. Mostly older people have the time of day to care. Young people have so much going on, and life develops for them by the second. Local politics, which we haven’t been taught to understand, feels like an inconvenience—not like a civic duty.

But you should care, because local boards control a lot of what you use in your everyday life. I know people mostly think of central government when it comes to how the country is run, but local boards and local government are way more connected to the utilities you use every day—green spaces, water quality, construction permissions, public transport, rubbish, pollution. All these things that people don’t really think about in their day-to-day life.



I do believe local boards should reflect the diverse demographics of their areas. Sadly, that's not the case. Young people—under 30—are usually not represented, so a lot of decisions that go through local boards can be dismissive of young people. That's disheartening, and it feeds into why local politics flies under the radar. Why would you care if they don't care about you?

For example, in the Whau area, about 30% of registered voters are under 30, but currently there's no one on that board who fits that demographic. If you expanded that to include children, it'd be even more disproportionate. And that shows in the infrastructure. A few weeks ago, I was doing door-knocking—there's a playground for kids, and just 100 metres away, the pavement was cracked, with electrical wires hanging overhead that should be underground. To me, that speaks to why it's necessary to have a board that's conscious of young people—and why young people need to take more interest in it.

Many of the older people on the board have been there for years, and for them it becomes personal—it's their identity. Like, they are the local board. But that's not the point. The point is to ensure the communities we live in are actually livable.

Where do you stand on the Make It 16 campaign? Do you think lowering the voting age would solve low voter turnout?

That's a hard one. Because I do believe in *Make It 16*, and I think young people have so much wisdom and understanding of what they want their futures to be. But at the same time, there's a lot of work that needs to be done around Civics education in New Zealand.

Studies show that the more you teach kids about Civics, the more likely they are to vote and participate. Especially if you're working at 16—it's kinda rats that you don't get a voice. But in the same vein, the onus falls on the government of the day to make sure rangatahi are properly educated—what their rights are and how they can shape the future.

There's no point lowering the voting age and doing no follow-up work. It's like planting seeds in a garden without tending to it.

For *Make It 16* to be fruitful, there should be more focus on social sciences and helping students understand the voting system. I was never taught about it at school. I only learnt about it at uni—when they explained the different branches of government, how justice works, and how Parliament functions.

We shouldn't have to wait until law school to find out the secrets of our government. Everyone has a right to know how it works. The government needs to back it.

The local election candidate booklets can be overwhelming. What are some practical ways students can cut through the noise and make an informed choice?

First of all, if candidates aren't speaking your language—like social media—if they're not connecting in a way you're used to, don't vote for them. Cross them out immediately. A good candidate learns to connect with different people.

I never used Facebook before three weeks ago, but I understand a large section of the voter base is on Facebook. So I feel like the world is in the palm of your hands—look them up on Instagram. Social media is a really powerful tool.

The blessing and curse of social media is that everything's condensed. If you find them online, they'll probably have a post with five slides you can scroll through that summarises their platform, or videos showing who they are and what they've done. You don't have to strictly go by the booklet—I know I don't. I need to understand the person as a whole.

Also, talk to people. Like your peers. I'm a bit weird—my circle is very political—and I get that's not the case for everyone. So speak to your friends about the values you have and what you want to see in your community. What's working for you, and what's not? Maybe you want more artistic events, or you want to start a fitness group. Then look at which candidate shares those values.

It's hard at local elections. It's not as public as central government—there's not a lot to go off. Social media and word of mouth are your best friends.

Beyond the ballot box, what are some other ways students can shape politics in New Zealand?

Increasingly, in this day and age, it's more about who you know—not what you know. I'm not a huge fan of that, but if students can start forming good working relationships with MPs, local figures, and actually workshop changes with them, that's a huge tool. It's fundamental. Students can use that to shape politics.

With this current government, facts and figures aren't the priority. So yeah—it's not what you know, it's who you know.

Which sucks, really bad. But you don't have to sell yourself out. Find people and leaders who share your values, who want to see you grow, and who are genuinely dedicated to improving the society we live in. In my opinion, that's the greatest tool you have.

Social media is another powerful tool. You can spread information quickly—share, comment, screenshot. It exists to help us connect with each other, and through that, connect over our ideals and values. Young people aren't doing what they used to—turning up in the town square and yapping. So sharing opinions online is really important, as long as they're not harmful or rude.

A good way to shape politics is by getting involved with your youth wing, if you're aligned with a party. Princes St Labour has a long history of producing Local Board Members, MPs, even Helen Clark. So get involved with your youth wing—it's cool getting together with other young people, building friendships. I know it can be toxic sometimes, but in those cases, it's about trusting your gut.

Staying up to date with the news and understanding what's happened historically is really important. What's worked, what hasn't, what you could modify, what you need to avoid. Educate to liberate.

A lot of what you need as a young person to shape politics is the ability to acquire knowledge—and then leverage that across the connections you've made, to get your message into rooms you can't be in yet.

You're clearly passionate about Labour. Where did that fire start for you, and how has it evolved?

How much time do you have? [laughs] I have this really distinct memory from when I was about six. My Nana and I were in the kitchen making dinner. Earlier that day, she'd received a letter. While she was at the oven, she asked me to read it to her—it was from Housing New Zealand.

I got stuck on one word. It took me about two hours to figure out how to mouth it. We lived in a multigenerational house—my mum, aunt, uncle, and grandad had all come back from work and school. And with all the conviction in the world, I said, "You are been evacuation." The room went silent. Everyone looked at me confused. My aunt took the letter and read it properly—the word wasn't "evacuation," it was "evicted."

I didn't know what that meant at the time, but I felt this deafening silence fall over the room. And for my Nana,

that was the first time I'd ever seen her scared. I didn't understand any of it. My grandad and I went to watch the news. Helen Clark was on TV, walking across the tiles, and my grandad was nodding along. It had something to do with the letter I'd read. I realised that the people on TV and the decisions they made were connected to our two-bedroom state house that had housed nine people at one point.

That's kind of where it started for me.

Later, I found a dictionary and looked up what "eviction" meant. I still didn't understand how a government department—whose sole purpose is to look after people and house them—could be so heartless and issue eviction notices. I remember in the lead-up to that letter, my Nana and Mum were looking for help and being turned away by everyone. Spoiler: we didn't get evicted but had to move out a few years ago.

That moment is where I pinpoint it all starting for me. Then came experiences with the healthcare system—queues of people waiting for dialysis, long waitlists. It was tough to take in as a kid. You feel so helpless. It radicalises you in a way that's really niche, I think. For me, it exposed how terrible and selfish the world can be—and I didn't want to be anything like that.

My love for the Labour Party stems from my grandparents. Everyone in my family has been a union delegate. My grandparents were staunch Labour supporters, so I grew up with the mindset of protecting workers' rights. Workers drive the economy. I'm very much a socialist, and I align with the old Labour—the one that sticks up for workers, everyday people, indigenous rights, and puts people over profit. That's become a huge phrase for me, a huge belief. It's something the party fought for.

These days, the party gets a lot of criticism. But I genuinely believe it's the one party that truly represents everyone—because our membership is diverse, from all walks of life. I'm passionate about the party because it's made up of awesome people. Volunteers, support people—kind, generous, with so many different experiences. It can be your family away from your family. And that's something I've really needed over the past while being on the campaign trail.

Who is Uncle Phil?

Phillip Stoner Twyford, MP for Te Atatū. There's a lot I could say about Phil, but I credit so much of where I am now to him. I don't think I would've found myself on this path if I hadn't met him—somehow, if I hadn't crossed paths with him.

I went to a college that wasn't reflective of my background. The kids there were

children of MPs, diplomats, business owners. I never fit in. I felt like I had this huge secret—that I was sleeping on a couch in a state house my family had lived in for 30 years, with asbestos everywhere, looking after my three younger cousins. I felt deficient, like I'd never amount to anything. I'd go with my mum to the WINZ office and see my future in the people sitting there. I wasn't ashamed of them; I wanted more for them. I felt like the system had let them down—and would let me down too.

Youth Parliament was happening at the time. Phil sent out the application. There was one girl in our class who kind of got everything (she did work hard), and I felt like all the odds were against me. No one would care about a poor Island girl from Avondale. But I poured my heart and soul into that application. It felt like the only shot I'd get at saving myself and my family.

I was selected to go to a speech competition, which was surprising. I still felt like I was destined to lose—because the other students were just like the ones I went to school with, from well-off backgrounds. My speech was about the drug epidemic that swept through my life, harmed family members and friends I grew up with. I talked about how the system let people like me fall through the cracks without caring, and how we didn't choose the lives we have—so we shouldn't be punished for it. It resonated with the selection board. I won, to my own surprise.

Phil became a mentor to me. I went to a bunch of events with him. He introduced me to MPs I was terrified to meet at the time—who I now work closely with. He told me about his work at Oxfam and international activism, which sparked my own love for activism. I owe a lot of who I am and where I am to Phil—for taking a chance on me.

I remember asking him a few years ago why he chose me—because I struggle with imposter syndrome. He said, out of everyone who applied, I had the most hunger, the most to gain, but the least resources. He said it was like finding a diamond in the rough—but the diamond doesn't know it's a diamond. That quote made me cringe for a long time [laughs] because I'm not great at taking praise or compliments. But looking back, I'm grateful someone saw something in me and believed in it enough to give me a chance at something so prestigious.

I don't know where I'd be if that hadn't happened—and honestly, I don't think I want to know [laughs]. Uncle Phil is like family to me. He means a lot. And I hope everyone finds their own “Uncle Phil”—someone who believes in them so deeply, even when they don't believe

in themselves.

What's the biggest misconception people have about young politicians, and how do you push back against that?

[Sighs] They were all pretentious, stuck-up bastards [laughs]. Or that they're all privileged kids of Pakeha background or whatever...I'll say—in some spaces, that's true. So it's not a full-on misconception. But I don't particularly see myself that way, I don't even see myself as any sort of politician. I don't know—is that arrogant? [laughs] To me, I'm just a nerdy Kuki/Hamo girl from the 828 with a really bad tendency to overthink everything lol.

Personally, I come from very humble beginnings, and I feel like the story of my life—the hardships, the shit I've been through—helps me push back against that narrative. I love what I do because of the connections. I used to mentor rangatahi who were deemed “at risk” by the system. But when you talk to them, they're not really at risk—they're acting out because they need someone to understand them. Seeing people face to face and accepting them for who they are in that moment—not many young politicians do that.

In youth politics, for a lot of people, it's about attention. It's about climbing. But for me, it's the opposite. I think youth politics can feel really individualistic—like, “There's an opportunity, it's mine, and I'm going to kick anyone off who tries to take it.” But I try to uplift those around me and bring them with me on my journey. I'm a socialist, and we need to create change together.

Who I am is a contradiction and push-back to what the system was built for, as well as its misconceptions. The system wasn't built for women—it took us fucking ages to get the vote. And the system wasn't made for people of Pasifika descent. But I feel like my whole existence is a contradiction to that. I don't know if that makes sense.

Honestly, I think contradiction is a superpower for POC. It's like the ultimate Karen killshot—exceeding their expectations. That you can be an Islander, political, and educated. It's too much of an overload. And I run into those stereotypes in other youth wings—not naming names, but you can guess who. It's disheartening. But I can't change the colour of my skin—and I don't want to. Can't change that I have mad curly hair—and I don't want to.

I'm good with existing as a contradiction to the norm. I'd love to see more of that. I'd love to see governance spaces that reflect the diversity of this country. Will

that happen? I don't know. But I hope so.

Being a young woman of Cook Island and Sāmoan descent in politics, how do you stay resilient against prejudice and hate?

Going to be so for real. A lot of the time, the prejudice and hate comes from your own people [laughs]—and that's super disheartening. But that's just the tall poppy syndrome New Zealand suffers from.

I don't know how I stay resilient, to be honest. But I am very stubborn. A lot of the criticism gets me down. Because I've chosen this path of politics, I've had people in the community say I've betrayed my race, that I think I'm above others. If you know me personally, there's no way I could ever think of myself like that. #LowSelfEsteem.

There are many days I say I'm going to give up and do something else. And then David Lange randomly pops up and haunts me back into politics. The context of the David Lange thing is—every time I say or think I'm going to give up, he pops up in the most random places. I take that as my sign to keep going, even when I don't want to in the moment.

The hate can be quite debilitating. I've been diagnosed with severe depression and anxiety, and although I'm going through the steps of recovery, it doesn't mean the hate doesn't reach me. Social media makes it easy for people to find me, and the easiest target for Karens and online trolls is my race. They assume I exist in this space to fill a diversity quota—that my worth is nothing more than that. And when they find out I have a degree, they double down on my race and get volatile.

It's been hard with David Seymour and ACT's rhetoric targeting race, not giving a fuck about equity, and using “equality” to veil racism. They're not the same thing—and it's fucked up. People who receive scholarships for equity reasons have to put in twice the effort just to perform at a level others find normal.

I've been spat on. I've been called all the slurs (even some mistakenly, lol). During my campaign, I had slurs written on my posters—like “get rid of the Bunga.” It's been isolating. It's been hard. But I think of my family and little Fania, who just wanted to be warm at night. I want to make sure as many kids as possible are warm and loved. That's what fuels my resilience.

Why stand for the Whau Ward? And why now? What made you decide to step up and represent this

community?

Avondale has been my home my whole life. I've never lived anywhere else.

Hot take—because I know a lot of young people are about to stand in central politics—but I don't believe you should stand unless you fully understand the culture, history, and vibe of the place you're standing in. It's all about authenticity. I knew I wanted to stand for the Whau Local Board, but I didn't know it would happen so soon. I was encouraged by my cousin, Nerissa Henry, who's a Maungakiekie Local Board member. She'd been trying to talk me into it for ages, and I wasn't sure. I was very aware that local body politics is super hard—the demographic is super old—and I didn't know if I'd have the support.

For the Labour Party, if you want to run as a candidate, you have to go through a whole process. It's like applying for a job—background checks, CV, cover letter. Then there's a selection day with debating, panels, and a speech. The ticket gets selected. It was one of the scariest things I've ever done—walking into a room full of older people and telling them that local politics isn't working. That a 35% voter turnout isn't a success. That the local board needs to be more accessible to young people. And I got selected, which was a surprise.

The whole journey has been super hard—all the layers, emotionally, physically, mentally. I guess for me, I've always been motivated by factors outside myself. My drive to step up and represent my community goes beyond me.

My siblings use the parks, playgrounds, and green spaces. They run around and ask me where the water fountain is—and there isn't one. Something as simple as that would make our ward so much more livable. It would get kids outside and off the iPad or whatever. For me, the whole motivation is the potential of how good things could be.

So that's why I stood. I've lived here my whole life, and I want to improve the quality of life.

A mix of peer pressure and urgency to sort out our problems.

What does it actually take to stand in a Local Election?

Money, lol. [laughs] I am not rich by any means. [laughs] But the sad reality is—to run a good campaign, you need money. And I fucking hate that.

I can't tell you if my campaign is a good one because I don't know the results yet. But I've found that to get my message across, to get my vibe out there,

I need my own materials. When you're door-knocking and no one's home, you leave a flyer. Flyers cost money to print.

Running with a political party ticket helps share some of the cost, and you get access to a wider network. Not saying you *have* to run with a ticket or party—you can run independent. But it takes a lot of mental and emotional energy, which I didn't factor in. I'm used to running other people's campaigns—for MPs and such—but running your own is *markedly* different. You have to market yourself.

You need a good sense of self. Before I started all of this, I didn't have that. I couldn't even tell you what I was passionate about. But when you start a campaign, you realise very quickly—people don't know you. So in order to tell someone who you are in 30 seconds, you have to know yourself really well. I found that out the hard way when someone asked me, "Why should I vote for you?" It's been super hard sitting down to take this interview to talk about myself [cringes]. I probably couldn't have finished it like two months ago lol. Even if I lose, I will say I have a better understanding of who I am.

You need a solid support system, because it's not going to be smooth sailing. Everyone who advised me said it would be easy, or like a hobby. That it would only take up the weekends. But it's taken over my whole life. I've got pamphlets all over my table and house, a billion tabs open on my laptop—it's just taken over everything, really.

How's the campaign trail treating you so far? What's been unexpectedly smooth and what's been surprisingly tough?

It's been interesting. I don't think anything has been unexpectedly smooth—but maybe that's because, for me, everything is a learning curve right now.

Talking to people has been surprisingly tough. When I go door-knocking, people think I'm trying to sell them a new broadband plan [laughs]. They're either not home or not interested. And that makes my job hard—because if I don't know what matters to people, then I don't know what I'm doing.

It's been hard to find my voice in all of this as a young person. Especially as Pasifika—when we grow up, we're taught to respect our elders, not talk back, worship the ground they walk on. So it's been disillusioning to enter a space where I'm arguing with elders, debating, and tearing apart whatever selfish notions they project or protect. It goes against my cultural way of be-



ing and everything I was taught about respecting elders. That's probably been the hardest part—ruminating over whether they hate me, or if I've disappointed my grandparents.

The campaign trail has taken a lot out of me. I've been sick for most of it—yeah, pneumonia—but that's my own fault. I've been pushing myself to do stuff when my body's not feeling it. I always feel like what I do isn't enough, and I can do more. Which, honestly, is more a manifestation of me wanting to help others more than I help myself.

If elected, what's the first thing you want to tackle on the Whau Local Board?

Two things in tandem, actually.

The first would be figuring out what the fuck is happening with the Avondale Racecourse. It'd be good to have a solid understanding of the plan—because no one seems to know what's going on. There's a lot of confusion, and it's frustrating not having clear answers.

The second is setting up a Whau Youth Advisory Committee that's dedicated specifically to policy for young people. I know the Whau Youth Board already exists, but the advisory committee would be different—it would focus solely on policy, while the Youth Board would continue doing all the fun, community-facing stuff they already do.

I think that distinction is super important. Young people make up around 30% of the population in this area—that's a huge chunk. We need structures that actually reflect that and give young

people a say in the decisions that affect them.

With 16 candidates in the running for the Whau Local Board, what sets you apart? Why should readers vote for you?

'Cause I'm not old, lol. I've lived here my whole life. I was that kid running away from security guards at Avondale College because my aunt and uncle wanted to cut through to play basketball at the courts. My mates and I would walk home after school, dreaming about the lives we'd lead one day. The Whau is literally scarred on my body from tripping over the fucked-up pavements that no one ever fixes.

I've never been a finance broker. I don't have a business, I don't have kids, I don't have a full-time job. My professional life spans a third of the youngest candidate after me [laughs]. I'm inherently different from these other candidates who have a million dollars in their savings accounts and grandkids. I don't have a lot to gain—I'm putting myself up to receive criticism for three years [laughs].

I'm not going to come in here and propaganda you with "Vote for me." That's up to you—to see if I vibe with you. Every candidate will tell you their CV, and for me, most of them have been working longer than I've been alive. The system is stacked against young people. They hold us to the same expectations as 60-year-olds.

If you live in Blockhouse Bay, Green Bay, New Windsor, New Lynn, Avondale and Kelston, and you don't want the same old, same old—vote for me. If you want

a local board that's contactable and approachable, then that's me.

Can you break down the difference between Princes Street Labour and Young Labour NZ? How are youth wings connected to their party?

First of all, Princes Street is much older than Young Labour. Princes Street has been around for about 60 years, whereas Young Labour is only about 20-something years old.

Princes Street is a special branch, which means it has "special powers" within the party. Most branches are tied to an electorate, but we're based at the University of Auckland. Our membership doesn't have an age limit, unlike Young Labour, which caps at 30. Princes Street can include anyone across Auckland, so it's largely made up of AUT and UoA students.

Young Labour as a whole is made up of youth branches from our six different regions across the country. Young Labour functions as the "conscience" of the Labour Party. It's there to make sure the voices of young people are actually reflected in the party's policy.

There's been some debate about national politics influencing local elections. What's your view on where that line should be drawn?

I think people need to understand that, naturally, there's going to be some overlap—and pretending the two are totally separate is just dreaming.

National and local body politics each have their own distinct characteristics, and those should be respected. Like, I don't need the government to fix my pavement—I need them to fix the economy. I need central government to focus on the big-picture stuff, and local government to handle the everyday things that affect my life directly.

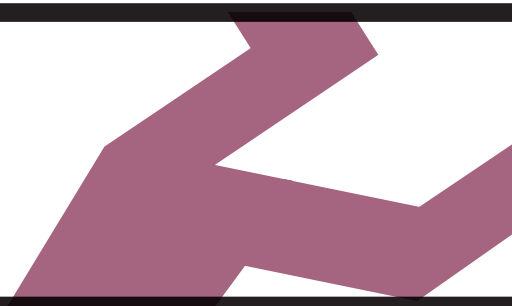
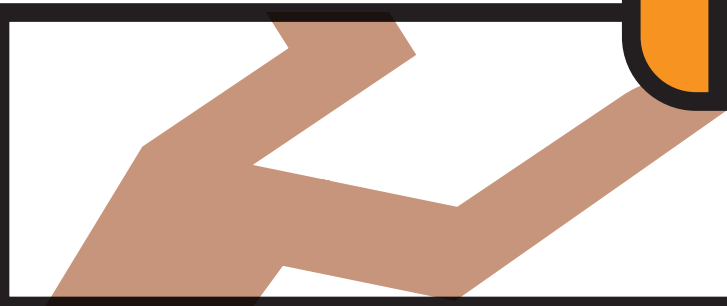
Ideally, the two should work together in a way that's harmonious and effective. If they stop talking to each other, there are going to be major fuck-ups.

If you had a megaphone to speak to every student in Auckland for 30 seconds, what would you say?

Free Palestine. Land Back. Sanction Israel. Free Indigenous people and decolonise academia. GAF the coalition. Vote.

VOTE

VO



TE

VOTE



Content Warning: Contains language that may offend.

1000 CUPS OF TEA

A BRUTAL EVENT. A BRUTAL NEIGHBORHOOD. A TENDER RESPONSE.



MICHAEL BOTUR

First cup of tea happens at House Number 3. It's Jan eleventh. You're beginning a thousand apologies to every state house in the hood. Some painful PR exercise. Under the goddamn New Year's heat, too, as if there's a spotlight roasting you on stage.

The sun is watching. Hood rats on BMXs watching. Dog with ten nipples looking at you like What the heck's a cop doin' in *his* hood?

You walk to the door on jelly legs, wishing Sarge would've let you wear shorts. Sweating inside long pants is painful. Almost as painful as saying sorry. Your old man was a cop, and *he* never said that bloody word. Makes a man weak.

You're only going door-to-door doing apologies to each resident because Sarge worked out you were the lowest-ranked, freshest graduate, damn it. Can't wait to complain to the boys at the bar.

Just say sorry for what happened, choke down a cup of tea from the poor folks and move on, boy.

No point delaying. You wham your knuckles into the door, wondering how the ABs are getting on.

A dozen more strong knocks, more sing-song, doin' that netball/Milo advert tune.

It's the Milo knocks that get the result. Not that you plan to stick around for Milo, or any drink.

Bony woman. Purple under her eyes. Blue bandana. Possibly gang colours; probably just a sick woman in a sick hood.

'Hey,' you begin. 'Ah — sorry, miss. I'm Constable Nate Coombs, Wongarei Police? Just, um, going door to door as part of our Te Kanoi Kanoi policy.'

Gulp.

'We just wanted to express our um, regrets to the community. Over what happened last week.'

Sun burns your back.

'Kanohi ki te kanohi,' she tells you.

'Pardon?'

'It means face to face. Your

Māori's stink.'

You hear mutterings. Two males leaning against a blue Holden metres behind you, spitting on the sidewalk.

Cricket bat, hockey stick. Doubtful they're off to play sport.

'Hell you even sayin sorry for?'

'For the unfortunate, um... Just, on behalf of Police, we sincerely regret the outcome so what we'll be doing is reviewing and learning.'

Can't help scanning her kitchen. Cannabis on the table, vials, oil, jars, balm. Eye droppers.

The woman adjusts her lean.

'But *you*s got shot up too. Shouldn't *you*s declare war? What, *you*s're tryina stay on good terms?'

You fiddle with your hat.

'Well? You comin in for a cuppa or not?'

Damn it. You don't do hot drinks, they make a man soft, but...

'Boss told me I'm supposed to say Yes,' you tell her, taking off your roasting boots, stepping into the cool.

Mugs clink. Water flows.

When they sent you up from Porirua, they never warned you Northland summer would feel like the fires of hell.

Tea, for once, sounds tolerable.

*

The next dozen houses give reasonable results. People hear you out. Don't hang you from a tree or nothin'. The trees here, actually, are pretty nice. Like when the government planned this ghetto, they had a pretty vision. Some decent willows, natives. Whole little forest of kauri outside the, whadya call it. The Maori school.

You've got that Duolingo app on your phone. Keeps recommending you learn the language. Maybe. Depends if you're on shift.

These people, they enjoy visitors. Kisses on the cheek, even. They give you their best cup, sugar, nice cool milk. Decent bikkies. There's a lot of gumboot tea, though. Cause it's cheaper, you suppose. You make a mental note to stop off and buy some decent stuff. Twinings, maybe.

Every conversation begins with the Warriors, then then Covid, then 'Did you hear about so-and-so passing away,' then how it's a bummer people die without a chance to say Bye, then the awkwardness descends. Down to business.

The Incident.

How it happened.

What Police resolve to do better next time.

You do 15-20 cuppas a day. Use a hundred different toilets in a week.

*

Learn that having a cuppa isn't about *drinking* the tea. It's about face-to-face.

Word gets round. A lot of these people stay home all day, and every-one soon expects your knock. Gaggles of people lean on their fences as they watch Mister Commiseration Cop crawl like a wounded Jesus.

Cops hassling Maoris is normal-as, it's routine, but cops not being arseholes?

That's better than watchin the Warriors.

At number 203, you step on a landmine. Had to happen eventually.

Barbed wire, security cameras, black flag flapping.

Gang pad. Black Power.

Barely even worth knocking, but Sarge'll find out if you don't.

'Hell you doin, ao?'

A leathery male is parking his weed whacker, striding up. You ID him. Vintage Winfield Cup Warriors singlet; waist-long dreadlocks; black patch; nostrils wide and angry.

Get the apology out then move, Nick. You can benchpress 250, dude. Take a little pain then forget all this.

'Hi, um, just here cause I've been, uh, *selected* to apologise. For the incident. Of January fourth.'

Squinty eyes. Mean stare.

'When the Police Gang shot a little kid?'

He was 15, you want to correct the guy. Nah. Dumb.

'At the Mob's place. And you expect me to give a shit cause you got shot back.' He spits. 'Officer Down Syndrome, tur-hur-hur.' Teeth creep over Weedwhacker's lips. 'D'yous have a wee cry when your bro got shot?'

We all cried. I'd still be crying right now if I could.

You hand him a leaflet. *Keeping Communities Safer - Revised.*

Weedwhacker turns the leaflet upside down as if a booby trap might come out.

'Aren't you meant to come in for a cuppa?'

'Sorry? Why?'



‘Cause we ain’t savages, G.’

Dim inside. Windows covered with bedsheets. Beer crates and baseball bats. Posters of Snoop, Biggie, Scarface, Adesanya, Bob Marley. Men hunched over laptops, men in wheelchairs, crutches. Men punching bags. Men wrapping tinfoil round their ankles while they watch Disney.

Everyone in blue.

You can identify most males here. One has eight outstanding warrants. Could arrest him if you wanted, ‘cept there must be twenty males in the compound, and if you show these people Police are making an effort, things could improve.

Now’s not the time for arrests.

Gotta deal with the Mobsters soon enough, too, up the far end of the street. This whole feud-with-the-Mongrels thing’s half the reason Central are making you do this. Since Jan 4th, there’ve been molotovs, drive-bys, pipe bombs, BP smashing Mongrels smashing BPs. A fire has got to be put out.

You finger your pepper spray. Watch out the back of your skull.

12-year-old doing dishes, holding a dripping steak knife. *FTP* etched on his cheek.

‘Chuck the jug on,’ Weedwhacker tells the boy. ‘We’ll be on the deck.’

Out back, Weedwhacker invites you to sit at a barrel.

The young prospect sets down a mug. Smells pepperminty.

Weedwhacker takes a sip. *Ahhh-hh.*

‘Kawakawa tea. Try it. First time for everything, G.’

Soon, throats are warm. You discuss Weedwhacker’s beef with the Mob Dogs. Explain you’ll be stopping in at the Mob’s dwelling soon enough, number 1003. Last house on this side of the street. Turn-around point.

One by one, the gangstas settle at Weedwhacker’s side, eyeing you icily. Brothers in blue.

Weedwhacker goes over what happened - the way he sees it.

How the earth burned on that January Sunday, as if time had overheated, broken down. Melting tarmac. Houses wobbling. Barbecues and booze and itchy sweat making people crazy, agitated.

Making people wanna lash out.

A growl from round front. Boys arriving on dirtbikes.

‘In summary, the nigga you wanted only had a cap gun, and our club’s still down twelve hundy? And Poh-leece got shot?’

You nod.

‘And *you*s is the ones saying sorry – what, so you won’t be more unwelcome in the hood?’

Weedwhacker chews for ages.

‘How come you don’t just, y’know, write the whole hood off as like a no-go zone? Give up on us ‘n shit?’

‘That’s not something I do.’ You clear your throat. ‘Something we do.’

He finally produces a folded scrap of paper.

‘Message for them Mongrels. Need you to pass it on.’

This is it. The gangstas could jump you while you’re distracted, reading.

Finger your Taser. Grip the part of your stab-proof chest where you keep your secret weapon.

Weedwhacker takes a big breath. You can hear the dude’s lungs scrape.

Mental note: try suss out why so many people are sick, here.

‘Tell the Mob somethin big’s about to go down’

You go down first, though. So worried you pop a Lorazepam and take a rest in your air-conditioned Skoda. Flip the lights on on top so people won’t attack the car. Flip it over and torch it.

Lean the seat back. Boots up on the dashboard.

Sleep knocks you out like a king-hit.

*

You’re in the last car of the convoy. You take up the flank, positioned on a yellow-dry rugby field beside the creek that runs out the back of the Mob compound. There’s a 38 percent chance Conrad Tanekaha Kotze will scamper out this way.

They’re rabbits, these people. Flighty. If they smell danger, they bolt. And they retreat from a world that always feels unfair. Keep their heads down. Don’t show up to healthcare appointments; or healthcare doesn’t reach out and pick them up. Nothing ever changes in the hood, it’s all distrust, deferment, delay, all broken promises to get shit fixed. God, what would it take for people to change? You’d practically have to go door to door. Listen to ‘em, one by one.

Sudden loudhailer from the squad cars.

Loud enough for the whole hood to hear.

Then the Light Armoured Vehicle, the snipers. Police confident they can apprehend Kotze, kid with drug-induced psychosis, rabbit-scared, probably regrets the war that he started when he robbed the BPs’ tinnie house.

Kotze is holed up in the three-storey Mob tower at #1003.

Everybody walks to their letterboxes to watch.

Loudhailer, from the LAV.

MISTER KOTZE, PUT THE WEAPON DOWN AND COME OUT WITH YOUR HANDS—

Puh-pop.

Pop-pop-pop-BLAT.

Then silence wide as the sky.

Then a woman wails.

Radio bursts into life.

SHOOTER DOWN.

OFFICER DOWN.

DISPATCH AMBULANCE, URGENT, URGENT.

*

You jerk awake.

Get out of the car and just walk.

Deliver the hardest knock of your life.

Number 1003.

Gangsta comes to the door. Face blackish-green, covered in writing. Doesn’t matter what the words say. They mean FUCK YOU. They mean I’M NOT ENGAGING.

Long blade half-hidden in his sleeve. You even know the brand of machete. \$9.95 at Bunnings.

‘Hi, I’m,’ you begin.

Cut to the chase. Cause you know who you’re looking at, under the mask.

‘I’m sorry your son died. Seriously.’

Sorry your colleague died, you imagine him replying.

The man cracks his right knuckles in his left palm. Says nothing.

Coulda sworn a moment ago the windows of this compound were empty. Now in each window you see a Mobster with a blade or a bat or a gunbarrel.

‘The sergeant-at-arms, on behalf of Black Power O.T. chapter, he, um, wanted me to tell you a few words, ah. Thirteen words. To be exact.’

You take the paper from your breast pocket.

Recite the note from Mangu to Mongrel.

“‘This cuppa tea thing bro. We ought 2 try it sometime. Text me.’”

‘That some kind of code? Fuck

they playin at?’

‘They just want one cuppa tea, I reckon. And to hear, y’know. One little word.’

He’s this close to asking what’s the one word. But this guy ain’t dumb.

What was that thing you saw on the History Channel? How there used to be a red phone to Moscow to stop people pressing a button and blowing up the world?

You hand the note over. It’s got Weedwhacker’s personal phone number on it. The red phone. To stop the killing.

Time for the secret weapon now. You reach into your chest.

Under the stab-proof vest.

Over your heart.

Pull out the good Twinings tea-bags.

REHAB RETURNS

A DARK COMEDY BREAKING THE STIGMA AROUND ADDICTION



LEE LI

A mix of chaos, honesty, and raw vulnerability, **REHAB** storms back for its seventh season in Auckland, running 22–25 October at The PumpHouse Theatre.

Since its 2021 debut, **REHAB** has become one of Auckland's most transformative shows — praised for breaking the stigma around addiction through laughter, unfiltered honesty, and dynamic performances.

Craccum sat down with creator and producer **Elizabeth Cracroft**, a criminal defence lawyer who has been sober for 16 years since the age of 24, and performer **Dorsa Nassiry**, at just 20, a returning cast member playing *Yasmin* and representing younger voices in the world of recovery, to talk about the upcoming season and the kaupapa behind this improvised dark comedy.

Finding REHAB

Dorsa first met Elizabeth in an acting class where she approached her about the show. Much like Rehab, Dorsa was the youngest person in the class and was ecstatic to have been asked to be a part of anything. It wasn't until a little later, during a phone call, where Dorsa heard Elizabeth speak about the roots of the show and how it's all based on her own experience with addiction and recovery. "That was definitely the moment that truly drew me in," Dorsa says.

For Elizabeth, creating the show was a way to confront the shame and isolation she experienced in active addiction and attending residential rehab as a young student studying communications. "When I got sober, there was a lot of stigma around dealing with substance addiction and going to rehab, especially for young people," she recalls.

Dorsa adds that the opportunity to join the cast offered her a space to contribute her perspective as a young performer, and to help make conversations about addiction and recovery relatable.

Normalising Recovery

When asked to describe **REHAB** to someone who hasn't seen it, both Elizabeth and Dorsa highlight its mission to normalise recovery. "Addiction doesn't discriminate — it can affect anyone," Elizabeth shares. This belief shapes the show's diverse cast, which spans ages, ethnicities, and life experiences, including Māori, Samoan,

Pākehā, Indian, Persian, and South African heritage.

"In my experience, dealing with addiction as a young person can be tough. When I finally came into a recovery at 24, I sort of felt like bit of an outsider compared to others my age. Active addiction separates you initially and then going off to rehab, living clean and sober, attending heaps of recovery meetings was a little foreign to my peers," Elizabeth continues, "the drinking culture in New Zealand also tends to perpetuate that. Although, in saying that, I've always respected the fact that all because I needed to get sober, didn't mean other people needed to as most folk don't have a substance addiction"

For Dorsa, an important part of her role is bringing a younger voice into the conversation around recovery. "I think just showing that recovery journeys can start young too," she says, noting that you don't have to be 40 and in the midst of a divorce to be an alcoholic — it's a story that looks different for everyone. In preparing for the show, she and the team sat in on recovery meetings and saw people from all walks of life, including many her age. For her, it's really important to show that perspective and help audiences understand that addiction can affect anyone, regardless of age. At the same time, she's mindful of protecting the integrity of her character: Yasmin isn't just "the young one," but someone with her own "personality and quirks", and Dorsa makes a point of letting those shine through rather than letting her fall into stereotypes.

For Elizabeth, the show is also inspired by her new career as a criminal defence lawyer. "Anecdotally, clients often appear to be dealing with some form of substance abuse," she says. "Sometimes their interaction with the justice system can allow a cross-road that may lead to recovery or at least plant a seed for future change."

Elizabeth is also a Trustee and secretary of Te Hapori Charitable Trust, which serves as the community advisory group for Te Whare Whakapiki Wairua, The Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Court, (AODTC.) "The AODTC is a strong example of the justice system providing meaningful intervention for addiction driven offending. It is a long process for whaiora, requiring hard mahi, but allows for consistent wrap around support and a pro-social, connected recovery community. From my observation, the transformations through the court are always quite remarkable."

On Stage

Improvisation is central to **REHAB**, but it also demands vulnerability from the performers. Dorsa points out that the characters are anchored with us in real lived experience, which she and the cast share with the audience, giving every moment of improv emotional truth. Elizabeth observes, "Improv allows us to react to reality in real time," which makes that vulnerability authentic for audiences

Joining a "stacked", experienced cast was initially intimidating and the most challenging moment for Dorsa. "I walked into a room of super skilled, super talented, just really wicked improvisers", she recalls, "It was intimidating for sure but more than anything I feel so lucky to get to learn from them. I'm always completely captivated watching them bring their craft to life with such ease."

Audiences, meanwhile, often respond viscerally to the moment of raw honesty and vulnerability. Dorsa remembers one audience member saying, "I was laughing, but I don't know why I started crying." Both Dorsa and Elizabeth light up when speaking about these reactions. For them, it's about audiences leaving the theatre feeling changed, or "transformed", as Elizabeth puts it.

Perhaps, this sense of 'transformation' echoes the heart of their kaupapa: building connection between the audience and the characters, and opening a new understanding of recovery.

When asked how she supports the cast, especially younger performers like Dorsa, Elizabeth stresses the importance of both authenticity and care. "We work with the cast to create devised characters that are authentic to addiction and early recovery," often inspired by stories she and her recovery friends have shared with the cast.

But the actors also bring parts of their own diverse life experiences into their respective characters," she explains. Aspects of the show are also guided by alcohol and drug clinicians, many close friends of Elizabeth.

Elizabeth believes that it's always at the actors' discretion how much of themselves they want to reveal. "They have full license — some make it more fictional, others bring more of their own experiences. Characters can evolve from season to season, and that's completely up to them." She adds, "However the thing that is consistent is the character's authenticity to addiction and recovery."

Support goes beyond the stage, too. Elizabeth regularly checks in with her cast, making herself available during rehearsals and after shows. "Especially with younger performers, I think it's important they know the lines of communication are always open. They can talk to me about anything, and I will always support them. And if they need extra help, I can connect them with the right resources."

Looking Ahead

Both Elizabeth and Dorsa are excited to continue spreading the kaupapa of **REHAB** and normalising conversations around recovery. "Recovery doesn't have to be big and scary and full of shame, it's possible, and you're not alone," Dorsa shares.

Elizabeth adds that accessibility is also key: "The tickets are pay-what-you-like from \$12. We just want as many people as possible to come, hear the message, and engage with our kaupapa."

Craccum would like to thank Dorsa and Elizabeth for taking the time to chat with us and share the story behind **REHAB**.

REHAB runs at The PumpHouse Theatre in Auckland from Wednesday 22 to Saturday 25 October, with performances at 7 pm. Tickets are available now.



IRENE EATS

IRENE PARSAEI

B2 SOCIAL EATERY

In case you haven't caught up on the latest Craccum series yet, this is Irene Eats, where I try food from different retailers on the city campus, specifically trying all their 'Budgie Eats' meals that they offer. If you live under a rock and don't know the happenings on campus, Budgie Eats is the latest initiative adopted by many of the food retailers where they offer a meal for **under \$10**.



For my first ever food review (*throwback!*) I travelled to the flashy new B201 Arts building to visit B2 Social Eatery, a cute little spot tucked in the left-hand corner of the building as you enter through the doors.

Along with their range of cabinet food, I also spotted their sign offering vegetarian congee, a warming porridge which I appreciated, as I was just complaining to my friend about the lack of soup-like hearty meals on campus.

The Budgie Eats meal that B2 Social offers is a plate of Korean fried chicken. At first when I saw this, I was a bit scared as I'm unfortunately not very good with spicy food (*like genuinely, it's embarrassing how terrible my spice tolerance is*) and Korean food frequently features ingredients such as gochugaru (chili powder).

The plate arrived very nicely decorated (*as you can see in the picture below*), with the chicken pieces placed on a bed of salad. The outside of the chicken was perfectly crispy, while the inside remained juicy, a hard balance to maintain. The sweet and spicy coating on the chicken was well balanced, and to my surprise, wasn't too spicy for me. So, if you're also someone who doesn't do well with spice, take it from me as the resident spice hater, this meal won't cause you any pain.

The sesame seeds sprinkled on the chicken added a nice crunch and extra flavour profile, and the salad underneath provided a good palate cleanser between bites, and also some extra nutrition.

The meal was satiating, and as a bonus for all the lip-plumper girlyies, the spicy coating on the chicken gives your lips the same effect for free.



In my food review for the previous issue, I visited Needo with two \$15 retail vouchers in order to see exactly what, and how much food I could get with \$30. For this edition, the lucky retailer I picked was Hello Food!

Hello Food is located in the quad, tucked away in the corner with Nick's Kitchen and Conscious Eats, and they're my go-to place, especially if I'm craving some warm, juicy dumplings. In addition to being a participating retailer in the Budgie Eats initiative, Hello Food boasts a wide selection of food on their menu, from fried rice to steamed pork buns (with vegetarian options available.)

To make the most of my combined \$30 voucher, I ordered the 10-piece chicken dumplings for \$12, and their \$17 combo option which provided me the choice of two different meats or proteins, and the decision of having that either over fried rice or noodles. For anyone who's (*extremely*) bad at math, that total comes out to \$29.

Something that struck me while looking over the menu was how interactive the staff were as they spoke with students and asking if they needed help and if they were ready to order. Once I ordered, the food was in my hands in a matter of seconds.

The chicken dumplings that I chose instantly solved my craving. They were both soft from being steamed but also had a bit of crunch on the parts

that were pan fried, creating a fun contrast in textures. The chicken filling inside was juicy and had a hint of sweetness which was balanced out well by the pieces of ginger in the filling.

While watching the lovely worker at Hello Food fill up the container for my combo meal, I

questioned whether the container had enough structural integrity to hold that much food. The portion I was given was extremely generous and packed with different components. Out of the myriad of choices, I decided on chicken and vegetables over noodles, with a spring roll on the side.

The chicken was soft and light, and along with the vegetables was coated with a glossy sauce that you find commonly with stir fries. The vegetables consisted of broccoli, cauliflower, carrots and green beans, and when paired with the corn and cabbage found in the spring roll and the noodles, made up a large portion of the overall meal.

Each of the three components of the meal mingled together, creating a textural variety, and a burst of savouriness.



The first four people to show this article to the Campus Store in the student quad will receive a \$15 Voucher !!!

SO YOU WANT TO BE A RULER?

A GUIDE TO SELECTORATE THEORY, PITCHED IN *THE DICTATOR'S HANDBOOK*.



EVA LIN

We've all heard the news. Wars cropping up, rights being removed left and right, no one seems to care about climate change anymore. Living is becoming more and more expensive, and quality of life is becoming less and less great. The world's going to shit, and no one is doing shit about it. Do you think you could do better? Do you see something every world leader doesn't?

Now, let's wave a magic wand and let you rule a country. An entire country. Lucky you. But before we begin, allow me to set the rules:

RULE ONE: NO ONE RULES ALONE.

Your power, as a ruler, fundamentally relies on your ability to command the people of your nation, because ultimately, you cannot rule this country alone. You cannot build roads alone, you cannot police your country alone, you cannot defend your country alone. And this is in no way a fault of you as a person. Adolf Hitler did not kill six million people alone. Winston Churchill did not stop the Nazi advance alone. Volodymyr Zelenskyy is not defending Ukraine alone. They needed an army, and someone to command it; roads, and someone to build them; law, and someone to enforce it.

You are no exception. These people needed to rule over your country are your keys to power, your essentials. Without them, the grand dreams you have for your country are little more than that: dreams. Sway enough of them to your side, and you need not earn the throne: you can seize it, and its power, with them by your side. But remember: displease them, and you lose your crown, your throne, and quite possibly your head as well, for there are many who crave the throne you sit upon now. The Egyptians learned this the hard way, in 2011 and 2013, when the military sided against the government and facilitated revolutions.

RULE TWO: CONTROL THE TREASURE.

Essentials do not come cheap. Their support requires a constant stream of

treasure, whether that be in the form of money, perks or tax breaks. While the loyal and the dim will stay with you through thick and thin, smart essentials will just as happily back a rival if they offer better rewards than you do. Because they have the same problem you do - just one step down. Their own rewards must be spent on maintaining their own position, thwarting off rivals and maintaining their support base.

But while you may want to help your citizens, there is only so much treasure in the vault, so much wealth your nation produces. Thus, every dollar you spend on the average citizen is a dollar you do not spend on an essential - and a dollar a rival can promise them, if only they unseat you from power. So most of the wealth your country produces will instead go toward your essentials, buying their loyalty, and keeping the supporter bases of rivals small and yours large. Because remember, no one rules alone. You need your essentials to maintain your power just as much as your rivals need their essentials to seize it.

RULE THREE: MINIMISE ESSENTIALS.

Your essentials are always hungry for more wealth, and your country only generates so much. And in this grand quotient, there are two ways to increase the amount you can pay your supporters: increase your revenue, which is difficult (and in some cases dangerous, as people have revolted over tax rises), or minimise the number of people you have to pay, which is comparatively easier. Thus, you should never keep an essential who has outlived their use, as paying them takes up money you could be paying other, more important essentials. Additionally, you should never keep an essential you do not trust, as their power and lack of loyalty may pose a risk in the future.

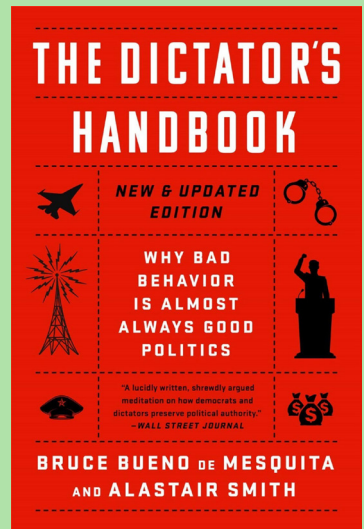
Therefore, it is not surprising that purges of ruling parties have happened time and time again, and that revolutionary parties cull off large numbers of important people after the revolutions have succeeded. Josef Stalin conducted the Great Purge, Adolf Hitler the Night of the Long Knives, and Mao Zedong the Socialist Education Movement, all not long after seizing power. Samuel Doe staged a revolution that

took over Liberia in 1980, and then proceeded to have no fewer than 50 of his supporters executed. This is neither an accident nor a coincidence, rather a shared solution to a shared problem: that the essentials you need to seize power are not the same essentials you need to keep it, and having more essentials than you need is akin to spending money on the common citizenry: money that could go toward essentials and money that a rival can promise to an essential if only they unseat you (watch CGP Grey's video for more on this).

RULE FOUR: DEMOCRACY IS NO EXCEPTION.

It is a common pitfall to think that a democracy is exempt from these rules. But many of these rules, if applied in the context of a democracy, can explain many of the seemingly illogical decisions made by democratic politicians. For instance, we can see that in New Zealand, National is supported mainly by farmers and business owners and Labour by young people, civil servants and minorities. These are the parties' essentials, and this is what separates them from the minor parties which can only form governments with their backing. Like this, our government satisfies Rule 1.

The parties require the support - in this case, votes - of their essentials to re-enter Parliament, and because there are too many essentials to award private goods to individually (there are LOADS of young people in New Zealand, and paying them all individually would bankrupt the government!), the main rewards for support come in the form of policy that disproportionately favours their essentials. For example, Labour policies tend to focus on public welfare and the environment, which are proposed not because of the goodness of anyone's heart, but because Labour is trying to appeal to its essentials to maintain power in the next election cycle. National proposes tax



cuts and widespread slashing for the same reason —appeasing its essentials, which want lower tax rates. Like this, our government satisfies Rule 2.

Rule 3 sounds a bit weird for a democratic state - indeed, murdering people indiscriminately is a quick road to political (and personal) oblivion. But we can still see many of its principles applied to democratic governments, for in a democracy, every vote needed to win a majority is an essential, and every party needed to form a coalition government is an essential. Thus reducing the number of votes needed to enter government or to pass a bill, and being able to form a coalition with fewer parties, lead to a government with more power and flexibility. This is (understandably) favourable to our politicians. For example, the ACT and National push to abolish Māori seats has absolutely nothing to do with fairness or having enough Māori in Parliament already. Instead, they are aimed at weakening Te Pāti Māori and Labour, who are (usually) the only two parties competing for those seats. In this way, they reduce the voting power of their traditional opposition, and thus do not need as many votes to hold power in Parliament. Like this, our government satisfies Rule 3.

Welcome to the ruthless world of politics. A world you enter for the greater good, but a world you stay in by doing good to your essentials. Do you still want the throne? Do you still want to rule?



ADHD HEALTH REFORM

A NEW DIRECTION FOR NEURODIVERGENCY IN NEW ZEALAND



**BAILEY LARKIN
(SHE/THEY)**

Back in my day... an ADHD diagnosis looked quite different.

I had mine in late 2021—I was concerned about my persistent inability to finish (or, admittedly, start) books, and I wanted to see if there was something up with my focus.

It turned out that I needed glasses — my vision was pretty bad, and words had a tendency of blurring together. However.

From one singular, albeit misguided, appointment — I found out that I also had ADHD; or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, as it is less sexily known.

And given that misidentifying problems after avoiding them for years is, well, kind of a symptom, I took it all as a pretty great joke.

But, anyways, I'm digressing — again, something I should be medicated for.

So here's how it worked.

My parents spent way too much money for me to sit down in a fancy looking room in front of a slightly less fancy computer. That computer, and the psychiatrist accompanying it, encouraged me to press a button every time I... saw something? Or heard something?

I don't know, I can't remember.

But the point of that exercise was to test my reflexes, my ability to sit still, and the likelihood that I would just dip into maladaptive daydreaming and flunk the whole thing entirely.

And while I did not flunk it, I certainly did not pass.

Or actually, I did.

I aced it, with flying colours, and walked out with a prescription for Ritalin.

And I'd love to say that this story ended in me turning into Einstein and winning a Nobel Prize, but, alas, that's not the point of this tale — my own experiences beyond this point are, largely, irrelevant, because I got what I went in for.

However, there are plenty who can't currently say the same.

Because I went through the private system.

And I'll admit, I don't even know how much that appointment cost —but I know, based on my experiences talking to other neurodivergents, that on average they're usually between six hundred to one thousand dollars.

And often, you'll need follow ups — quite rapidly at first, while you're adjusting to whatever medication they put you on, and (at least when I was diagnosed,) semi-regular check ins.

And that... can be fucking expensive.

However.

Medsafe and Pharmac have recently unveiled new policies, which allow for general and nurse practitioners to diagnose and treat ADHD, starting February of next year — which Mental Health Minister, Matt Doocey, refers to as a 'common sense change.'

This will decrease patient expenditure, wait times, and streamline the process for all seeking diagnosis — and the delay to February, in of itself, is a fairly smart move.

Currently, we're experiencing (as is most of the world,) immense shortages of methylphenidate, the keystone component of drugs such as Ritalin, so health agencies will be spending the next eight months preparing for the incoming wave of could-be-neurodivergents who want to be able to experience mental quiet.

And there's another thing, too — old news, but worth knowing.

Last year, Pharmac redacted their policy that suggested funding for ADHD medications needs to be renewed every two years; the ol' 'we know this is a

lifelong disorder, but we want to check you still have it so we can make more money.'

So it's even less expensive to be medicated now!

And therefore, if you experience any (or most) of the following symptoms; lack of focus, restlessness, daydreaming, emotional dysregulation, memory issues, impulsivity, yappaholism, or a penchant for losing track of time...

Then it could soon be your time to get checked out, without breaking the bank.

And, actually, fuck it — a couple quick bits of street knowledge.

Don't go in and straight up ask for Ritalin. This medication resembles meth, and you will potentially sound like a drug addict — so actually, just don't ask for any specific medication, at least, not prior to diagnosis.

Bring a friend or a family member to your appointments — especially if you're a woman. Neurodivergent healthcare can be quite sexist, as ADHD often manifests (socially, not biologically) differently in women — more internalized, and less 'hyperactive,' so, in some people's eyes, 'not really there.'

And if you don't like a drug they put you on... say so!

Advocate for yourself, and make sure that whatever you're experiencing is positive. Medication shouldn't make you feel worse in the long run — it should be the kind of thing that improves your life, not disturbs it.

So be safe, and look after yourselves — and best wishes for your funky brains.

(Note: This article utilises information supplied by Radio New Zealand. Their article is more generally informative, but less tangential, so thus, clearly less interesting. Still, you should probably check it out, and do your own research. I am not a doctor.)



HUNTER GATHERERS AND SCROLLING

HOW YOUR CAVEMAN BRAIN HAS BEEN HIJACKED BY TECH



VICTOR NORS

Somewhere on a small open plain near what we now call the Rhine - a vast European river starting in the Swiss alps ending its expansive traverse in the northern sea - dawn is rising over a small early Neolithic tribe. Around fifty-eight people stir from their hides, yawning, stretching, and cuddling, some wishing they could spend just a little more time inside the warm folds of deer and bear skins with their loved ones. But such moments are luxuries one cannot afford for long. Hunger waits for no one, and survival demands work. To live, they must gather roots, hunt prey, and build protection against the weather - only then can they return to the comfort of morning embraces.

Among them, a young woman prepares to leave. Her baby is strapped tightly to her chest, lulled by the rhythmic beat of her heart. Across her back are two nets woven from grass fibers; at her hip hangs a leather pouch filled with sun-dried meat, nuts, and a waterskin leaking, slowly dripping silently onto the ground below her. Today she will venture into the dense oak and aspen forests to dig for roots - secure in her skills as a navigator and unbothered by the weight of carrying her child. Like most of the tribe, she departs into the forest, while only the children too small to help but too big to carry, and the elderly, remain behind.

She makes her way deeper into the woods, past the border of what she knows, trusting her strength, unknowing of the slow leak of her waterskin. But as the hours pass, thirst gnaws at her. Reaching into her pouch, she feels the dampness of the sack and knows instantly what is wrong. The water is nearly gone, and the path back is many miles. Though these forests are mostly safe from wolves and bears, she does not know where to find water here. She turns to retrace her steps, but fear for her baby's life unsettles her, making her clumsy. Her navigation falters, her pace slows. Dizziness creeps in from exertion and dehydration. Her mouth dries, her teeth film with foul-smelling residue, and her baby cries in distress, sensing her fear. The sun drops lower into the deep blue sky, and the shadows of the forest thicken around her.

She listens, smells, searches - trying to catch a hint of humidity in the air,

following deer tracks, straining for the sound of water. And then, at the slope of a hill, she hears it: a trickle, faint but unmistakable. Hope surges. She stumbles forward, heart racing, until she finds it - a steady stream cutting through the forest like a great living snake. Relief overwhelms her. She drinks with desperate pleasure, breathes deeply, and steadies herself. Life returns...

Her brain, by now, is rewarding her hugely to ensure she remembers *how* she found the water source, *where* and *when* - it is highly adaptive, and her survival depends on her learning the behavior that led to her finding water. That very same adaptive system that will ensure her survival in looking for water in the future, and is cause for great emotional relief and joy, has not changed since homo-sapiens first originated on the east-African coasts. It is the very same system you have inherited from your forbearers all the way back to hunter-gatherers and it is the very same system that is exploited in social media today.

Really shortly, because this essay is about our experiences of scrolling more than the science behind it. The system mentioned above operates on the neuromodulator Dopamine, by regulating the prospect of "wanting" in our brain and is always present at an individual "base-line" amount. Although produced in different places of the brain it is part of a pathway leading up to the frontal cortex where decision-making and decision-inhibition happens. Not to confuse with pleasure, dopamine drives us to DO things (1). In contrast to this a study was done on rats inducing in them a dopamine deficient state. They would not eat, nor drink even on the brink of starvation or thirst. Only when injected temporarily with dopamine they'd feed for a short while, they'd start "wanting" again, while previously they didn't "want" anything (2). Dopamine is what keeps you reading this sentence right now! And it is inevitable also what will make you leave this Craccum article and move on with your day sooner or later. It is this system (simplified immensely) I refer implicitly to forward on.

Dopamine is thus responsible for both motivation and learning. That is also why on her way back, she passes another stream, this one in the part of the forest she knows well. She does not pause in ecstasy here - it is expected, ordinary. But the hidden stream further out she will remember for the rest of her life.

Twelve thousand years later, Mark Zuckerberg would hire a fucking armada of behavioral psychologists to exploit that very same ancient mechanism of the brain - the joy of stumbling upon the unexpected - to keep us scrolling, preferably indefinitely for profit. And endless joy of chance encounter with a stream of water.

A good business

I am a master thesis exchange student here at UoA, but I also work as a counseling therapist for gambling and gaming addiction in Denmark, under the Danish Ministry of Gambling Regulation, and unfortunately, social media along with scrolling feeds are not fair game. Just as gambling is made for you to keep putting in money, so is social media made to keep you putting in your time and attention.

To understand why we scroll we need to start by briefly considering the term *attention economy*. This concept was first introduced by Herbert A. Simon, who described it as a kind of "internal" economy of the mind: basically, that we can *spend* our attention just like currency. Might seem trivial now, but our attention has just recently become subject to quantification. Later, Michael Goldhaber expanded the idea, arguing that the "external" economy of the world was shifting globally from capitalization of *products* and *services* to also including our *attention*, offering "free" services, e.g. Instagram, in exchange for the consumer's attention.

Our attention thus becomes an object of profit in two ways:

- Through advertising revenue and promotional content, which monetize every moment of our gaze.
- Through the data we leave behind, which is sold to commercial agents, AI trainers, and population surveillance systems.

If we agree that profit optimization drives the market (this is non-controversial I think), and profit can be derived from consumers' attention itself, something fundamentally unethical happens. Any capitalist endeavor is



always invested in maximizing returns - and in this context, we are the object of this process. Our attention is the product and the source of income - profit therefore depends on holding it for as long as possible. Indefinitely preferably.

Social media isn't here to "entertain" us. Entertainment is just the bait, it's a single component of a larger economic strategy. And honestly, it would be terrible business if entertainment exclusively were the goal. Being entertained by itself often entails a point of satisfaction at which the source of entertainment is no longer as endearing as it was at first. A point at which we stop, e.g. after a great conversation or a thirst quenched - we become 'satisfied'. That doesn't happen when entertainment is built around super stimulative inducing processes - that is why we can scroll hours into the night postponing the signals of our sleep deprived brain to rest. No, what these platforms really want, is for us to be *addicted*, and indeed social media is designed by psychological gambling experts to be *addictive*. That's where the real money is, babyyyyy! And let's be honest... Would you really trust Mark Zuckerberg, Youtube or Tiktok to have a moral compass in your interest over monetary profits? :))

You might be thinking, "Alright, sure, I know, I know. But I'm still entertained, so it's a win-win!" But is it really?

Keep it goiiiiingggg

Let's talk shortly about the primary mechanism, among many others, of behavioural addiction. First things first: there's nothing wrong with gambling a little money, gaming for a while, or scrolling through our feed. None at all - not morally, not psychologically, not physically. It's fun. And I'm not religious about it either - I've watched my fair share of brainrot compilations, with *crocodillo bombardino* burned into my vocabulary and long-term memory. There is often nothing wrong about the content either. Important activism and great satire is often a part of the content inherent in the mechanisms of scrolling.

The problem is *when entertainment turns into compulsion* against our will. Scrolling operates on the exact same psychological mechanisms as slot machines and other gambling systems. Suddenly, we find our phone in our hand, already scrolling, without even realizing when we picked it up. We try to stop, but five minutes later we're right back at it. Sounds familiar? It operates on unpredictable rewards - such as finding water when we really need it - and dopes our brain to increase the chances of that reward occurring again, a great evolutionary adaptive tool as previously explained!

You might have heard about Skinner's box as well? Skinner's experiment concerns rats pressing a button for food. If food came reliably, at predictable intervals, they'd press until they felt full and then stop. Great, this is how entertain-

ment should work, like a good conversation or quenching your thirst we become 'satisfied'. But when food arrived randomly - unpredictably - they would *not* stop pressing it regardless of whether they were hungry. But why? *Variable rewards increase anticipation, and anticipation fuels compulsive repetition*. It is our brains wanting to learn or figure out the system that leads to reward that fuels our drive to continue. Scrolling does the same thing. Every swipe is like pulling a slot machine lever: maybe you'll see something amazing, maybe not - but *maybe* is enough to keep you hooked. Other components such as colour, social interaction, status, admiration, community, fear, horror, moral decline and danger play a role as well, but we can't cover the nuances now.

Basically, scrolling itself isn't bad inherently. But because it's *designed* to be addictive, moderation is a near-impossible task. It's like telling a person with gambling addictive compulsions: "Well, if you can just throw in 50 bucks a month, you'll be fineeeee." But what happens? It escalates. Every. Single. Time. And that's not that person's fault - they're up against an armada of behavioral psychologists, app engineers, and operational algorithms designed to keep them gambling. The exact same forces are at work every time we pick up our phone to scroll. The mechanisms here operate on the dopaminergic systems mentioned before - every time we are presented with these variable rewards, our brain increases our base-line dopamine levels to motivate us to repeat that behavior leaving us "craving" more. While social media and scrolling operate on the same mechanism that emphasize behavioral addiction, it is important to note that it exists on a spectrum from occurrence to habit to compulsion, and that there can be other socio-psychological reasons for scrolling as well.

Why this is important

So...A *potential* explanation for us scrolling can be summarized as follows 1. It induce further craving for more 2. It is associated with pleasure and absence of pain. Both are inflated because: 3. Our attention is converted to profit and has thus been systematically exposed and manipulated by market interest 4. We live in a culture where scrolling and social media is emphasized as essential.

I have an important point about all this - scrolling for many is filled to the brim with guilt, self-punishment and self-hate, often for not being "productive" enough. I often hear people say they want to stop scrolling so they can "be more productive" or "work harder." But that very mindset is often the reason they scrolled in the first place. The endless chase for productivity and perfection is a straight path to burnout and anxiety. And this neo-liberal conception of a "correct" way of spending our time capitalizing on something ei-

ther around us or in ourselves, is feeding into the guilt written cycle of doom scrolling. The idea that there are "better" ways to "spend" time is implying that if you do not profit on your time either monetary, culturally or socially you've "wasted" it - which is not true. We might feel guilty about not being productive enough, wanting to escape our guilt we scroll for example. But the conception of "spending" our time like it is money, in an normatively "correct" way, is not an inherent human moral, virtue or truth - it's a *culture* that developed as western societies sought out how to optimize profit by individualizing "work" into our self-perceptions and moral ideals. Guilt is the mechanism by which we discipline ourselves to strive for what we've been told is a better life, money, status, fame and more money - thus we work more and, in the process, accept the same extreme standards of work as self-evident.

So, hey, let's not be too hard on ourselves. We're up against teams of genius-level psychologists, developers, and tech experts, working in alignment with contemporary neo-liberal culture of individual exceptionalism. **We are bound to lose!** Not very western and optimistic of me to say and it might grind some people's gears. But it is true, we are all bound to lose in the battle of our attention. And to many of my bros' disappointment: cold showers and pop-Stoicism quotes will in most cases not make the human will stronger than our evolutionary wiring. Please believe me when I say: *It is not your/our fault* that you/we scroll, and those who don't scroll are by no means "better" human beings. We exist in a society where scrolling is *encouraged*. Where we condense our social lives into specific digital communities connected to scrolling systems. Where our source of social affirmation, community and social interaction is intertwined with addictive mechanisms. Social affirmation is the bait in social media, and it's laced with "meth" in the shape of unending unpredictable scrolling content. I scroll, you scroll, the person next to you scroll! We're all basic bitches, and you're completely normal <3

Furthermore, NOT having a smart phone has become a significant disadvantage in modern capitalism as well. Social networking, LinkedIn, access to welfare rights or our campus library goes through our phone. It is an unfair game and a systematic issue. And while scrolling *can* be problematic, my main argument is not that we *must* stop scrolling - it is in fact that we aren't weird, stupid or dumb for doing so, we're all perfectly normal human beings! We can also (Maybe should?) consider scrolling more nuanced as part of something bigger and more complex with many elements *outside of our control*, and, if it is the case, we could allow ourselves to let go of the guilt we might project on to ourselves for scrolling.

If scrolling is affecting your well-being, what I've just argued is very different from saying we should give up on cutting down on scrolling. We could start by changing the *game* instead of the *players*. But that might take time - meanwhile there are many things one can do to limit scrolling, and while I scroll as well, I've done so consistently less than 10 minutes a day on average for many years now. I'm not trying to position myself as better, I have my own faults like every other human being as well - I'm trying to convey that living without scrolling, social media and a phone on us at all times is very possible! However, my experience, values and how to quit is the subject for another time - I am already wayyy over the designated word limit! So, email Craccum if you want an essay on what tools for reducing scrolling time there are and how to use them - I'd be happy to comply if there is an interest I can satisfy based on my work experience and knowledge. But let's turn back now, to the beginning.

Thanks for reading

Back at the clearing, the sun has set and she has not yet returned- the tribe is buzzing with nervous energy as the rumour of her disappearance starts to spread among the huts and tents. Many has started talking about the hypothetical reasons for her lacking return, and near the emerging fires (a recent and very trendy invention at the time), the smell of roasted meat, organs and roots mixed with the nervous sweat of her partner looking sporadically in the direction of the forest, combine. Not much later, she emerges in the dark from a well-known trail and is met by a collective sigh of relief and joy. Years from then, by the fire, she will tell the story again and again, each time smiling, each time cautioning others to check their waterskins before setting out.

This story exemplifies a long strenuous and exceptional day. Most hunter gatherers are estimated to "work" for 4-6 hours a day to survive including food, shelter and other necessities, afterwards they would, mostly likely, spend their time doing what they were developed and most inclined to do - relaxing, loving and spending time with their loved ones. We have yet a lot to learn, I think!

1. Lerner, T. N., Holloway, A. L., & Seiler, J. L. (2021). Dopamine, Updated: Reward Prediction Error and Beyond. *Current Opinion in Neurobiology* vol. 67, s. 123-130.

2. Zhou, Q.-Y., & Palmiter, R. D. (1995). Dopamine-Deficient Mice Are Severely Hypoactive, Adipsic, and Aphagic. *Cell*. Vol 83, s. 1197-1209.

A lot of the information in this essay has its origin in my work in DK and the seminars I've taken there. The societal critique is derived from 4 accumulative years of studying Sociology, along with courses in anthropology, history and psychology.

DOWN

1. Council services complaint body
4. Number of regional councils in NZ
5. Palmerston North's regional council
7. Local elections held every — years

CROSSWORD

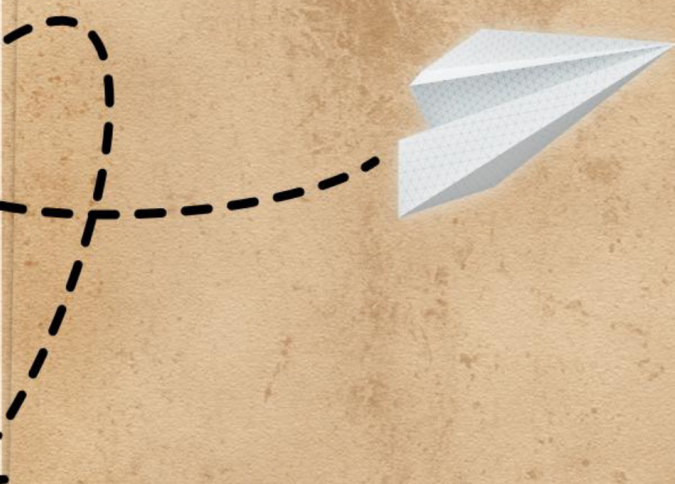


ACROSS

2. New Zealand's largest council by population
3. What encompasses the formal attire and insignia worn by a mayor on civic occasions.
6. Council parking fine
8. NZ District health board successor

**Art & Puzzles
by
Angelina Prem**

Solutions available at
www.craccum.co.nz/puzzles



FIND THE 8 WORDS



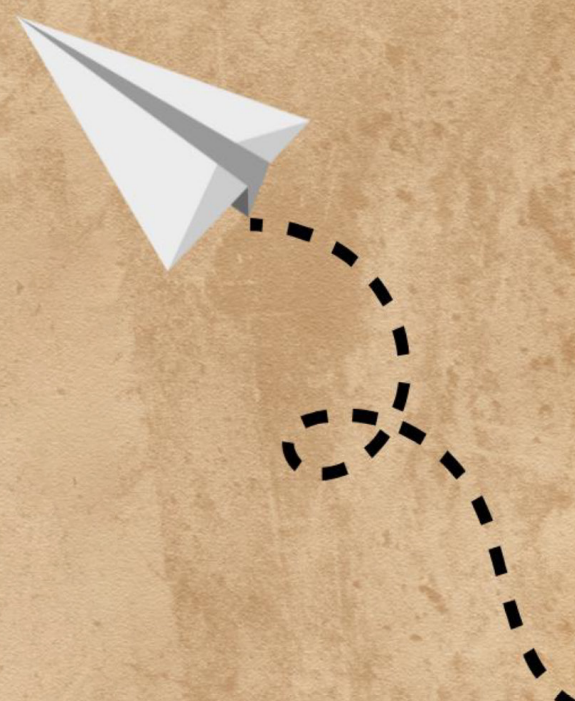
**Chess Puzzle provided by
Auckland University Chess
Association.**

Hint:

Checkmate in 6:

Medium: White to Move.

Hard: Black to Move.



CAPRICORN

DEC 22 – JAN 19

Jilly inspects your tower of assignments and books. Meow politely for extra treats—delays feel like a billion naps in cat years. Step by step, climb your mountain of tasks. Jilly says, “Climb with patience, then purr atop the peak!”



AQUARIUS

JAN 20 – FEB 18

Jilly leaps onto a globe and flops off—ow! World conquest can wait; look inward first. Jilly boosts her smarts by watching documentaries and burrowing into books. Tiny daily treats—like skinks—are coming your way, so share a nibble with silly brother Jamie. Jilly says, “Learn today, share tomorrow!”

AQUARIUS



PISCES

FEB 19 – MAR 20

Jilly crouches in the shadows and whispers, “I AM INVISIBLE!” She owes no one anything and purrs only the truth. When doubts creep in, Jilly readies her paws to pounce. Jilly says, “Dive into hearts, then snag their treasures!” Morgana would be proud.



ARIES

MAR 21 – APR 19

Jilly sees shiny coins and thinks they’re fancy snack tokens. Humans chat smooth like jelly meat, so meow and negotiate for extra treats. Jilly suggests stashing biscuits for rainy days. Nudge your humans to tweak their breakfast bowl schedule. Jilly says: “Pounce at a chance and land your paws!”

TAURUS

APR 20 – MAY 20

Jilly taps your medication—how can humans care for Jilly if they skip self-care? Meow for extra chin rubs. When your human is out too much, Jilly says “too many play-dates!” Learn to say, “no thank you” and stay home for cuddles. Warm snuggles and more pets—please! Jilly says, “Teamwork makes dream work.”



GEMINI

MAY 21 – JUN 20

Jilly splashes muddy paw prints on Mum’s tiles—her art invites humans to join in creativity. Meows are extra powerful now, so boss your humans around. Slow down your zoomies; Jilly curls into midday naps to recharge. Humans are savvy with tiny savings—stash extra treats today.



CANCER

JUN 21 – JUL 22

Jilly kneads the softest cushion—home feels extra cozy. Don’t be like Jamie, the grumpy hiss-boy; be the diplomat instead. Bathe in the sun on warm concrete and soothe your diplomatic heart. Jilly says it’s time for snuggles all month long.



LEO

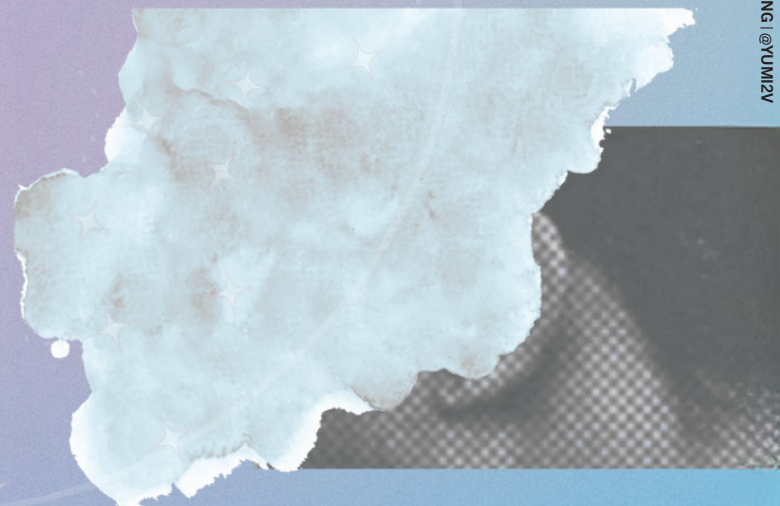
JUL 23 – AUG 22

Jilly pounces on your planner and taps important spots—“meow!” She helps with group projects, sharpening your ideas and polishing your daily routine. Fluffy pillows call for royal naps all month long. Jilly says: “Roar soft, land on velvet paws!”

VIRGO

AUG 23 – SEP 22

Jilly stretches in a warm sunbeam and whispers: “fresh-start time!” New kitty pals are popping up—go meow and network. But don’t forget power naps—Jilly yawns and curls into cozy catnaps in the afternoon glow. Jilly says: “Catch the rays, then dream away!”



LIBRA

SEP 23 – OCT 22

Jilly struts along the fence with zero doubts—tail high, pelt puffed. Puff up your fur and meow boldly; share your caterwauling with the whole hood. When tail-twitches hit, swat your worries away like Jilly. Jilly says: “Balance the beam, then leap with flair!”

SCORPIO

OCT 23 – NOV 21

Jilly digs under the couch cushion to uncover hidden treats (or sneaky skinks!). Now’s the month for group grooming—rally your clan to keep each other clean. Jilly hisses at any drama rats. Jilly says: “Stay mysterious, then pounce with confidence!”



HOROSCOPES



JILLY TELLS YOU HER SECRETS. 🐱

SAGITTARIUS

NOV 22 – DEC 21

Jilly rips up papers to remind you: big adventures await! Rally your friends and sketch a playful road-map in the litter. Make those summer plans—and don’t forget your blankie for cozy travels.

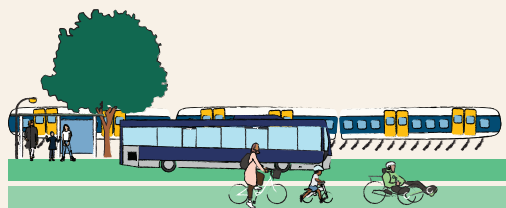




WHAT DOES THE FUTURE OF AUCKLAND LOOK LIKE TO YOU?



☐ **Affordable housing**



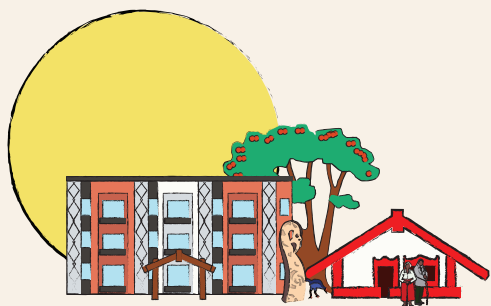
☐ **Greater transport choice**
(Trains, bus lanes, bike lanes)



☐ **A thriving arts and culture scene**



☐ **Climate action**



☐ **Support te ao Māori**



☐ **Beautiful, cared for natural environment**

☐ **A thriving safe, walkable city**



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