

THE LOCAL Te Aro

NGĀ KARERE HAPORI O TE ARO

THE CHANGING FACE OF ALLEN & BLAIR



Is change underway for the Courtenay precinct?

The Allen and Blair strips, famous (or notorious) for their collection of bars and late-night entertainment, have been quietly undergoing a rejuvenation in recent months.

As economic conditions have forced some drinking holes to close, different proprietors have seen the opportunity and have introduced a new vibe to the zone.

Venues with a stronger food focus have popped up, and the precinct has seen the arrival of more shops and services that attract people at other times of the day – such as gyms, spas and retail.

The result is a busier, more diverse space, that is creating fresh optimism in the Courtenay precinct.

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Gazley **G**



Wellington Marathon

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Kia ora Te Aro!

Let's talk about our community.

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

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The changing face of Allen and Blair

The economic downturn that has closed some bars has created new opportunities for the bold businesses opening perpendicular to Courtenay place. **Felix Clarke** went to see what's new.

When asked what pushed them to expand in 2026, Naj – the owner of Filipino restaurant Fiesta – says the answer is simple.

“Customers asked for more demanding dishes – traditional Filipino food like adobo and bone marrow soup. Our tiny kitchen on Chew’s Lane couldn’t keep up!”

Food at the Allen Street restaurant is an experience. The traditional “boodle fight” style of dining builds camaraderie and togetherness: A feast is laid out on banana leaves, and you simply take what you like, with hands or gloves.

“We feel like a bridge between the Filipino and non-Filipino community. People come as part of a group, and it’s their first time with traditional Filipino food!” Naj says. “Usually they later come back for the “street food basket,” she adds, grinning.

Lucky8 has a similar story. Mr Hao, a small kitchen in an Auckland Chinatown, went viral for its chili-chicken bowl. Restaurateur Paul Wong took that attention and ran, developing a signature dining experience that’s everything Kiwis love – colourful, affordable, and reliably delicious. Paul’s approach is to charge less for food, and make up for tight profit margins through sheer popularity. Due to low costs and vibrant restaurant design, Lucky8 draws a much younger crowd than most. “We saw that Courtenay is becoming more of a food and drinks area rather than strictly nightclubs, and once that beautiful old building went up for sale, we had to go for it.” Paul said. Within a month of opening, you can find Lucky8 packed to the balcony, even on a weeknight, so don’t forget to call ahead!

If the closure of nightclubs created a temporary vacuum, a suite of canny businesses have leapt at the opportunity, creating a more diverse precinct that



Lucky8 and Patagonia store. Photos: Felix Clarke.

attracts people during the day as well as at night time.

O-Studio is a wellness centre that’s the complete package for physical and mental recovery. Its membership already includes both Phoenix and the Hurricanes. Healthfit, a new gym on Allen, has been noticing increased membership as the vibe becomes brighter, healthier. Even legendary US brand Patagonia opened their first New Zealand outlet store on the same block, betting that Wellingtonians will connect with their mission “to inspire people to protect our wild places” now more than ever.

The bar scene is not dead, though, just evolving. Seven Sisters Brewery, known for fruit smoothie sours that are probably the most unique thing happening in beer, opened on Blair, and Panhead Brewery is around the corner on Tory. Glou Glou in the Exchange building has been operating as a café but is now extending hours on Wednesday to Saturday, announcing they will “bring a little slice of European wine bar culture to the Courtenay Precinct.”

Together with Thunder Road’s transformation into Lynott’s Irish Pub, brand new Courtenay-adjacent bars are enjoying crowds of exhausted locals who want more than just a \$14 lager and Ed Sheeran’s “Shape of You” every weekend.

If you’ve previously written off the quarter, now is a great time to explore the inner city again, as things truly haven’t been as positive, fresh, and plain fun since before Covid. **TL**

Commerce & creativity in Courtenay

Is the Courtenay precinct's reputation about to change?

The AI summary tells me that Courtenay Place is a vibrant, central street in Wellington, New Zealand, recognized as a major hub for nightlife, dining, and entertainment, particularly in the Te Aro district. It is famous for its bars, clubs, late-night food, and the historic Embassy Theatre.

After reading that, you might think there is not much point being there during the day, if all the action happens at night.

For a long time, that has certainly been the case. The area seemed tired and run down during the day, and you would often struggle to find a good coffee or anything decent to eat before 4pm.


But thankfully the Courtenay, Blair, Allen area is undergoing a transformation.

With cafes, restaurants and even retail moving in to take the place of some failed bars, the area holds the promise of becoming a place you might visit and enjoy during the day as well as at night time.

The opening of the Exchange has made a significant contribution to this. The building that started life as the Wellington Produce Exchange is now home to a host of creative studios, design studios, a co-working space, spa and a café/wine bar.

With the former Reading Cinema complex due to re-open next year as The Court, there will be even more to do in Courtenay than just late night drinking. Developers Primeproperty group promise The Court will blend premium cinemas with curated retail, hospitality and dining, and the reconfigured design will create a stronger connection through to Tākina, Te Papa and the waterfront. In some ways, this transformation will see the area may be returning to its roots.

Allen and Blair Street as they appear today were developed between 1898 and 1904 as a market district, a place where people would come to buy fresh produce.

With fantastic transport connections, the home of theatre and performance, and the city's great bars and restaurants on your doorstep, it makes perfect sense for the area to become an area known for commerce and creativity, rather than just a kebab at 1am. 



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Editor

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Annual plan consultation

The Wellington City Council is seeking the community's views on its proposed 2026/27 annual plan.

The draft budget would result in an average 7.4% rates increase (including 2% for the sludge levy) for the 2026/27 financial year, down from the originally planned 12.7% increase.

Specific issues the council has highlighted for feedback include introducing a new rate for short term accommodation providers (such as Airbnb), possible changes to the Paneke Pōneke Bike network plan, increases to contaminated waste (asbestos) disposal fees, increases to cremation fees, introducing new venue hire fees for Te Matapihi ki te Ao Nui (Central library) and Toi Pōneke arts facility, and increasing fees and charges for berths and marinas, swimming pools, recreation centres, and dog ownership transfers. Submissions close on 10 May 2026. [TL](#)



Charity hospital for Cuba Street

A charity hospital for Wellington is a step closer to reality after locating a suitable site.

The Wellington Regional Charity Hospital Trust announced in early April that it had secured premises at 275 Cuba Street in Te Aro, a major milestone, after more than five years of work.

“This step confirms the hospital’s physical home and allows progress into the next phase of delivery. The hospital will operate as a day surgery facility, providing free specialist procedures to people who cannot access public services or afford private care, helping reduce barriers to healthcare across the community.”

The charity is set up to operate without government funding and seeks private donations to sustain it. [TL](#)

Juvenile karearea in Mt Victoria. Photo: Jeff Mein Smith.



More funding for Predator Free Wgtn

The Department of Conservation has promised \$5.5m over five years for Predator Free Wellington.

The investment was a significant vote of confidence in the Predator Free Wellington model, Chair Tim Pankhurst said.

“This funding provides the long-term certainty Predator Free Wellington needs to scale the project across the whole city.”

The funding will accelerate Phase 2, currently underway across 14 suburbs from Island Bay to CBD. This phase includes making Te Nukuaio Wellington Zoo rat-free. [TL](#)

Waste minimisation fund seeks ideas

Community groups whose mahi helps reduce waste should check to see if they are eligible for Wellington City Council funding.

The Waste Minimisation Fund supports practical projects that reduce waste going to landfill, encourages reuse or repair, and creates lasting behaviour change in Wellington communities.

The council says the fund is intentionally broad and “applying is easier than many people expect.”

Applications for funding under \$5,000 close 30 April 2026. More information: [wellington.govt.nz/community-support-and-resources/community-support/funding/council-funds/waste-minimisation-fund](https://www.wellington.govt.nz/community-support-and-resources/community-support/funding/council-funds/waste-minimisation-fund) [TL](#)

New bar owner slams council over licensing application delays



A would-be bar owner has slammed Wellington City Council for delays on a decision about whether his new business can open. **Alex Brocklehurst** reports.

After two years of waiting, and with construction work at the site nearing completion, a new Aro Street venue is close to getting the green light.

Subject to final inspections, the bar is due to open April 17.

Ben James, the man behind the new venture, has said the process shouldn't be this hard.

It comes at a time when businesses in Wellington have struggled to stay afloat.

Ben previously ran record shops Evil Genius and Death Ray in Christchurch and Wellington. He's currently the owner of Herb's Mobile Record Store, the truck often found selling vinyl and other curios in locations across Wellington.

The new Aro Valley site, called Octo, will be a listening bar.

"It's pretty much just a place where you can go to and listen to records that suit sitting down and

enjoying whilst having a drink and still being able to talk."

But the venue has been plagued by delays, and after two years, Ben has only just received a decision confirming his license. He said council bureaucracy was to blame.

"I don't know if it's specific to Wellington, I think all councils are a bit like this ... you'll cross all the t's and dot all the i's but when it comes to them they don't seem to have any responsibility for a timeframe, there's no one you can talk to, to say could you just make this hurry up a little bit. We've been two years in this process.

"It's just been an ordeal, it should be a lot easier."

Ben acknowledged there had been pushback from some in the community, and he had changed the original application to address the specific objections, including cancelling plans for an outside space, and removing the option to stay open till 2am – an option he said he only asked for to cover rare occasions, not the default closing time.

Ben was pleased to finally have an opening date to work towards. But he said it felt "bittersweet" after waiting so long.

A Wellington Council spokesperson said there were several reasons the application had taken a long time.

These included ongoing construction work before a building certificate could be issued, opposition from police, council and some members of the public on the impact a new bar would have on the area, and issues relating to fire safety. **TL**

"I don't know if it's specific to Wellington, I think all councils are a bit like this... you'll cross all the t's and dot all the i's but when it comes to them they don't seem to have any responsibility for a timeframe..."



Photo: Felix Clarke

Tackling homelessness in Te Aro

What's really going on with the homeless in Wellington? Felix Clarke went to find out.

The rising homeless population, and their relationship with police and the public, has been a subject of national conversation lately, with the Government proposing to issue 'move on' powers to police.

The Local talked to Downtown Community Ministry staff to help clarify the complex, and often over-politicized issue. DCM, an organization with 64 staff, has been acting as a lifeline for Wellington's most marginalised and vulnerable people since its establishment in 1969.

DCM's CEO Natalia Cleland says there are some very significant dangers associated with housing insecurity.

"First of all, there's a problematic belief that people create homelessness for themselves.

"The limited empathy caused by this perception creates a whole host of issues, besides the obvious immediate dangers of lacking shelter."

Rachel Dohig, one of DCM's social workers, illustrates this with police data: crime committed *against* the unhoused has increased by 81% since 2017. Worse, hospitalisation of people experiencing homelessness has increased by 130%. In comparison, crimes committed *by* people experiencing homelessness increased by only 7%.

Crime committed *against* the unhoused has increased by 81% since 2017 ... crimes committed *by* people experiencing homelessness increased by only 7%.

When asked about the Government's proposed 'move along' orders (police would be empowered to issue \$2,000 dollar fines for non-compliance, repayment enforced by 3 months jail time) Natalia was less worried about it than you might expect.

"If you actually look at how police encounters go down, it doesn't change much. If people are violent and antisocial the police *should* arrest them, housed or unhoused. If they aren't violent, they simply need to be moved into housing."

This is where organisations like DCM come in, Natalia explains. "The police are a very blunt instrument. They aren't trained, or equipped, to deal with homelessness. We are.

"All the new policy will do is create more animosity," she adds. "But we're not here to criticise, we just want to use our voice to focus on what works. We [DCM] partner with other agencies to create wrap-around support, and actually use the right tools to get people housed."

"Research shows housing is always the first priority in terms of people's long-term recovery," Rachel adds. "When it comes to supporting vulnerable people, they're much more likely to have positive outcomes in areas like health, employment and addiction recovery once they're actually housed."

How can concerned people help? Natalia gives a three-pronged answer.

"First, know that there is a collective of agencies working collaboratively to protect vulnerable people. We work smart: The right tools and the right people. Rest assured, there is nobody on the street who is unknown.

"Second, get familiar with our services. If you see someone you're worried about, or know someone who needs help, call the council. They'll send you straight to us.

"And third, if people own houses, and they'd like to be socially minded landlords, don't be scared to reach out!"

Learn more, or support DCM, at dcm.org.nz 

A reluctant divorce: Who should control club life at Vic?



A growing dispute at Te Herenga Waka, Victoria University of Wellington, is raising a fundamental question: who should control student club life? Akasha Sergeant reports.

Apetition to “Save Our Clubs” is gaining traction among students, opposing a proposal to shift responsibility for non-sporting clubs from University Recreation (UniRec) to the Victoria University of Wellington Students’ Association (VUWSA).

Non-sporting clubs include cultural groups, academic societies, political organisations, and hobby-based communities that make up a large part of campus life.

The petition, led by student Arie, calls for clubs to remain under University management, arguing that the current system provides greater stability and accountability. It has circulated widely through social media platforms, club mailing lists, and executive group chats, collecting signatures and prompting debate across the student body.

“I think the biggest threat would be a lack of transparency and accountability,” Arie said, pointing to the fact that VUWSA is not subject to the Official Information Act (OIA).

“A lot could go wrong, and no one would know.”

At the centre of the issue is a proposal, still under consideration, to return club management to VUWSA, which oversaw clubs before 2012. That responsibility

shifted to the University following funding cuts linked to the introduction of Voluntary Student Membership (VSM). A student-led model, proponents argue, could better reflect student needs, strengthen engagement, and support underrepresented groups. VUWSA declined to comment on what has prompted the renewed push for the proposal.

Views among clubs remain divided. Some smaller cultural and community-based groups have expressed cautious optimism about a student-run system and the potential for more tailored support, though no clubs contacted for this article agreed to be named in support of the proposal.

Other groups remain sceptical, particularly professionally focused and non-partisan clubs that rely on institutional credibility when engaging with external organisations, sponsors, and future employers. Club executives requested anonymity citing fears of repercussions from VUWSA. A vice president of one club and president of another said VUWSA’s structure as an elected body creates uncertainty, with leadership and political priorities shifting annually.

“There’s a concern that if this goes ahead, clubs that are intentionally non-political could be seen as aligned with whoever is in office at the time,” one said.

There are also concerns about capacity, given that VUWSA previously stepped back from club management due to limited resources, with little public explanation of what has changed to make the transition viable now.

University figures indicate that club numbers have grown under UniRec in recent years, suggesting the current system is, in many respects, functioning effectively. However, questions around student representation and control remain unresolved. **TL**

“There’s a concern that if this goes ahead, clubs that are intentionally non-political could be seen as aligned with whoever is in office at the time”

What noise annoys in Te Aro?

Inner-City Wellington's **Jill Wilson** talks about what we're hearing out there

If you live in Te Aro, you'll know the moment. Wide awake in the middle of the night – wondering why. Maybe it's this:

It's 2:45am, and there's loud laughter on the street. It's 3am, and the thump-thump-thump of a bass beat cuts through the air. It's 3:30am, and crash! – a mountain of glass bottles hits a wheelie bin. It's 4am, and a mechanical hum moves slowly down the street. It's 5am, and a heavy rumble of a delivery truck joins the dawn chorus. It's 6am, and engines and motors blend into a restless morning backdrop. It's 8am, and a jackhammer cracks the road nearby.

All this noise! – don't they know people live here? But ...

The laughter is from people enjoying a night out. The bass beat is the entertainment precinct fuelling Wellington's night-time economy. The crashing bottles are a bar tidying up after a busy night. The mechanical hum is a street cleaner clearing the gutters. The rumbling truck is delivering warm pastries to cafés ahead of the morning rush. The engines are buses beginning their day's journeys. And the jackhammer is a repair crew fixing a broken pipe beneath the street.

None of these sounds are random. They are the background noise of a city at work – the many facets of inner-city "buzz".

Living in Te Aro means being close to everything – cafés, theatres, workplaces, markets, the waterfront, festivals and nightlife. Something is always happening, and that's part of the attraction.

But the flip side of that buzz is the soundtrack that comes with it.



Inner-city living means sharing space with the things that make a city function: hospitality venues, transport, rubbish collection, deliveries, street cleaning and construction. Many happen early in the morning – exactly when residents may want to sleep.

So – as more people choose apartment living in central Wellington – an important question emerges: *how do we balance a lively city with a liveable one?*

Rethinking Noise in the Inner City


The Wellington City Council District Plan describes the inner city as the City Centre Zone, setting expectations about activity, nightlife and residential amenity.

A recent Council engagement – **Review of Noise in the District Plan** – began reconsidering some of the rules relating to noise.

Inner City Wellington (ICW) has suggested that it may be time to think about the inner city in a slightly different way. Within the City Centre Zone there are already very different kinds of places: some streets are largely residential, while others are dominated by bars, restaurants and late-night activity.

ICW believes the Zone could be broken into smaller, more flexible areas – perhaps by street or block – so expectations around noise better reflect what is happening in each location.

Cities grow and change. Wellington's inner city now has thousands more residents than it did a decade ago, while the night-time economy continues to shape the city's character.

Finding the right balance between buzz and quiet won't be simple – so it matters that inner-city residents share their experiences and help shape the conversation. 

Do you have a regular or one-off event, class or service you would like to promote? Community notices are free for local groups and not-for-profits. Get in touch if you would like to include your listing in *The Local*.

Climate Festival Pōneke

A three-week community-led programme of events, activations, and creative climate solutions designed to bring together organisations, communities, and individuals to accelerate climate action across Wellington. Interweaving emissions reduction and caring for te taiao, the Festival provides opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and connection, while highlighting local initiatives and success stories that inspire and enable further action toward a resilient future. 18 April–9 May. letstalk.wellington.govt.nz/climate-action-info-hub/climate-festival-poneke-2026-events

Climate change workshop

The Work That Reconnects is a popular international education programme that helps participants to feel strong and respond effectively in this time of environmental crises. It is coming to Wellington on Saturday 18th April, repeated on 2nd May, as the one-day workshop Turn Your Climate Concern into Confident Action for a Better World. Held at Innermost Gardens in Mount Victoria. Supported by WCC, cost only \$20. Details at events.humanitix.com/twtr

DCM Wellington

We work at the sharp end of things and are the leading social service working with people who are experiencing homelessness in Wellington. Our services range from free dentistry through to Housing First. If you know of someone rough sleeping who may need support, contact **04 499 4444**. To learn more: dcm.org.nz

Creepy Cute Market by Foxtail Community Markets

Indulge your love for the weird, whimsical, and wonderfully wicked at a market where spooky meets sweet. After a hauntingly successful run last time, we're thrilled to return with even more delightfully dark treasures for all you macabre-loving misfits. 18 April, 9:30am–2:30pm. Thistle Hall Upstairs Hall. thistlehall.org.nz

Probus Wellington Central



The next meeting of Probus Wellington Central is on April 17 at 10:00 am for a 10:30 am start. The speaker will be Dr Paul Duignan, a strategy expert and tech entrepreneur, who will speak on AI (artificial intelligence) and social media. Probus meets on the third Friday of the month (Feb to Nov) at Prefab Hall, Jessie St, 10:00 am to noon. Membership \$50 per annum. Stay for buffet lunch at Prefab \$25. More information: probussouthpacific.org/microsites/wellingtoncentral/

Free yoga with Lauren

Free vinyasa yoga for all levels. BYO yoga mat. Tuesday & Thursday, 7–8am. Upstairs Hall at Thistle Hall. Everyone is welcome. laurenstrpko.com for more information and online bookings.

Unseen, an exhibition by Nong Shao Hua

Unseen brings together recent paintings by Nong Shao Hua that explore the quiet spaces between memory, perception, and imagination. 13–19 April 2026, opening night event Friday 17 April, 6pm. Thistle Hall Gallery. thistlehall.org.nz

SIKA Sound Journey – 'Between the Worlds'

An evening Sound Journey shaped by over thirty years of deep ceremonial and immersive sound practice. Bring a yoga mat, pillow and blanket. Bookings recommended. Friday, April 17, 2026, 7:30pm. Thistle Hall Upstairs Hall. thistlehall.org.nz

Punks For Palestine Fundraiser Pōneke

Enjoy an evening of 4 amazing locals artists to raise funds for the people in Palestine, proceeds will go to Emily Writes Palestine cause. \$20, doors open 6:30pm, 25 April 2026, Thistle Hall Upstairs Hall. thistlehall.org.nz

Wellington workshop tackles climate anxiety

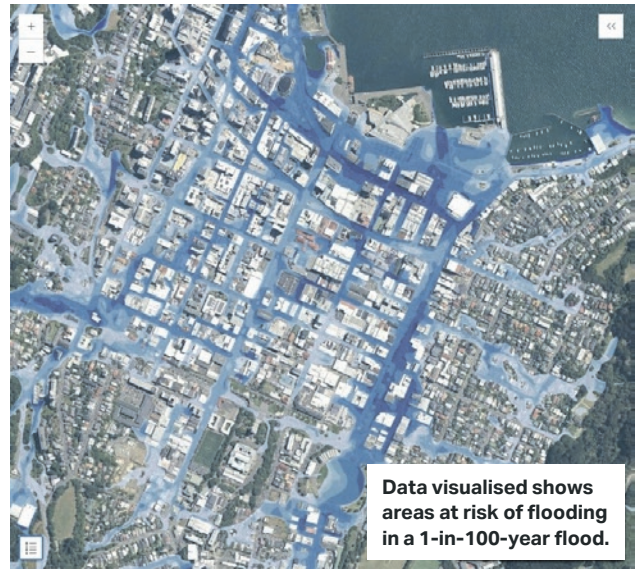
Kerry Meadows-Bonner looks at a Wellington workshop helping people move from climate anxiety to meaningful change.

The Work That Reconnects, an international education programme, is coming to Wellington on April 18 and May 2. The one-day workshop, *Turn Your Climate Concern into Confident Action for a Better World*, is supported by Wellington City Council and aims to help people respond more effectively to environmental challenges.

The workshops come at a time when concern about climate change is already high – but many people are unsure what to do next.


“We don’t want to tell people how climate change works. It’s not secular, there’s no religion, and there’s no politics. We focus on simple ways of understanding, ways of thinking, and mindsets for making sense of the world,” facilitator Bryan Royds says.

“In terms of people’s concerns right now, it’s things like cost of living – which is climate-linked




“..We focus on simple ways of understanding, ways of thinking, and mindsets for making sense of the world.”

and war-linked. There is food security, land use issues, floods, slips, and pressure on infrastructure like wastewater systems – all of which are affected by climate change.”

More information is available at events.humanitix.com/twtr 

ULO ? Unidentified Local Object

Identify the mystery object – something in Te Aro – to win a \$20 book voucher.

Email your answers to us at editor@the-local.co.nz. If there’s more than one correct answer, the winner will be selected at random. Congratulations to Raquel Roncero who identified the March ULO as the clock outside L’Affare cafe in College Street. 



EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Kerry Meadows-Bonner looks at the must-sees in Wellington's arts and entertainment scene through April and into early May.

LIVE THEATRE, MUSIC & VISUAL ARTS

King of Pop Show – Michael Jackson Live Concert Experience

The Opera House, Wellington | April 25 | From \$79
Fronted by TJ Cappola, this high tech Michael Jackson tribute experience arrives in Wellington for the first time, after selling out shows across Australia and Asia. Featuring iconic hits like *Billie Jean*, *Thriller*, *Beat It* and *Smooth Criminal*, the show captures the signature moves, vocals and presence that defined the King of Pop's career.



Fat Freddy's Drop – Based On A True Story 21st Anniversary Tour

Michael Fowler Centre, Wellington | May 1–3 | From \$100
Fat Freddy's Drop take over the Michael Fowler Centre for three nights, performing their iconic debut album *Based On A True Story* in full. These shows are the band's first major performances since the loss of founding member Chris 'MU' Faiumu, bringing added poignancy to a tour all about legacy and connection.

VISUAL ARTS

The Pink Floyd Experience – The Wall

TSB Arena, Wellington | May 9 | From \$79
The Pink Floyd Experience returns to Wellington with a live reimagining of *The Wall*, performing the legendary concept album alongside classic tracks like *Another Brick in the Wall* and *In the Flesh*. The show combines live music with large-scale lighting, visuals and stage effects recreating the atmosphere and spectacle that defined Pink Floyd's original performances.

THEATRE

New Zealand International Comedy Festival

Various venues, Wellington | May 1–24 | Various prices
The New Zealand International Comedy Festival brings more than 150 local and international comedians to stages across Wellington, delivering hundreds of performances over three weeks. From stand-up and improv to sketch and experimental comedy, the festival offers something for every kind of comedy fan.

& Juliet

St James Theatre, Wellington | May 9–24 | From \$79
& Juliet reimagines Shakespeare's classic by asking what would happen if Juliet chose her own ending. The smash-hit jukebox musical blends storytelling with chart-topping pop anthems – including *Since U Been Gone*, *Roar* and *...Baby One More Time* – to create a high-energy, feel-good production.

LIVE MUSIC

Tom Scott – self untitled tour

Meow Nui, Wellington | May 8 | From \$59
Known for his work across Home Brew, Avantdale Bowling Club and @Peace, Scott's live shows blend sharp lyricism with jazz, soul and hip-hop influences. Expect a stripped-back, emotionally charged performance from one of New Zealand's most compelling storytellers.



Split Enz – Forever Enz Tour

TSB Arena, Wellington | May 6–7 | From \$99
A legendary Kiwi band returns to the stage for a rare reunion of original members Tim Finn, Neil Finn, Eddie Rayner and Noel Crombie. Expect a set packed with iconic tracks like *I Got You*, *Six Months in a Leaky Boat* and *Message to My Girl*, delivered with the theatrical flair and energy that defined the band's legacy.

Felix Clarke and Kitty Muir-Woodley encountered some amazing street fashion at Cuba Dupa weekend...



@_cultclassic_ describes her style as a mix of kinderwhore, romantic goth, and 90s goth. Freya shouts out Bizarre Bazaar for sourcing her amazing red and black skirt. "The brand is GLP, Goth Lolita Punk, from 90's Japan."



Joel's thoughtful fit relies on black leather and uniquely cut pants. "I'm into European designer streetwear at the moment, but often vintage or second hand. New clothes have no life, they're too boring."



Angela combines different styles to create a uniquely 2026 fit – faux fur with a bright Ed Hardy tee, distressed and riveted denim with pointed Italian leather shoes. She found everything at local vintage stores.



Mahon is experimenting with layering shapes and clothing types usually associated with gender roles. Oxford-type leather shoes and a loose fitting white shirt go with jeans and a black skirt to create an effortless, stylish, and genderless fit.

My night out is a monthly series where we feature contributions from readers. Do you have a story to tell? The best accounts will be published and win a \$50 prize. See the-local.co.nz for more information.



Valentin Bura goes out for dinner.

It was early Thursday evening and I wasn't planning on dressing formally. Formal attire was something meant for those bow-tie evenings; you know what I'm saying here – the guys with the weird secret handshakes, they were the ones that did dig formal attire. I wasn't into formal attire though, and my bow-tie days were just about completely finished. It's not at all that I didn't dig secret handshakes, I just didn't like them that much. I always thought one should shake hands like a man, and not imply in any way that there exists something like a mischievous secret happening between the parties engaged in the handshake.

In any case. Let us make this semi-formal attire, I thought. Long denim trousers, brown, and a red polo shirt. I always liked red. Red is always a handy colour, just in case there's mischievous witchcraft going on around the part of town you're about to visit. I know, I'm bent towards esoteric thinking, yet those things must be spoken about. Not all witchcraft

is good and that is a thing that must be said. Some uncomfortable things must be evoked, whether we like those things or not.

Brown shoes on, black socks – I never understood the custom of patterned and coloured socks, I guess I'm conservative. Now, I'm getting the good MacPac coat on, the navy blue one, and I'm stepping out of the house. I know my way around well, so I find the mobile phone superfluous on this occasion.

I'm just by Southern Cross Restaurant, but I do not stop there. Maybe another evening. I walk down Cuba Street, all the way, and turn right on Courtney Place. Just the place I was after this cold Thursday evening – Great India.


I walk right in. I wait to be seated, and I say hello briefly to the owner, an old good friend of mine. The flavour of the place is Anglo-Indian and it's possibly the best place in town for that sort of thing. I did have Anglo-Indian at Bletchley Park when I visited the United Kingdom and I did verify that the look-and-feel and the taste were actually identical.

This one's a Cobra restaurant. Indian Restaurants come in two flavours: Cobra and King Fisher. I do not drink but I do dig their mango lassi so I was planning to have one for dessert together with their world-famous Kulfi ice-cream.

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I check the menu – bingo! Samba Masala. Venison, though I'm not sure what type, possibly deer, assorted with pulao rice. The dish would've gone better with sweet coconut rice yet I'm not the sort of person to assort sweet and sour that easily.

After dessert, the impeccable signature of the restaurant: the hot towel. I settle the bill, say thank you very much and walk away in the cold night.

So this Thursday evening was still good, just like fifteen years ago when I was a graduate student in Wellington. All I wish is for people to eat out, for Heaven's sake. 

The man who faces the wind

Kerry Meadows-Bonner explains the background to an iconic Wellington sculpture.

On Wellington's waterfront, where the wind is rarely still and the harbour water shifts between twinkling blue and restless grey, a lone bronze figure leans quietly towards the sea. His head lifted, his feet planted against an invisible force.

He is *Solace in the Wind*, or simply 'Naked Man' to locals.

Created by British sculptor Max Patte, *Solace* was never meant to become one of Wellington's most recognisable figures. During Christmas 2006, the Weta Workshop studio sat empty, Max sculpted a small-scale model – a maquette, originally intended as a personal memento of his year in New Zealand and the waterfront where he spent quiet hours.



Before leaving the country in April 2007, he submitted a proposal to the Wellington Sculpture Trust to fund a full-scale version. It was declined – not for lack of merit, but for failing to follow formal protocol. Undeterred, Max approached Wellington City Council with a different idea: he would fund, build, install, and maintain the sculpture himself for one year. Permission arrived months later.

By October 2007, Max had returned, sculpting the full-size figure beneath Weta's roof. The process was relentless: clay over steel, moulding, casting, grinding – days blurring into nights. Before the unveiling in February, hot iron fragments from angle grinding burned into his eyes – twenty-four metal particles removed in hospital with more drilled out the following morning. Half-blind and exhausted, Max finished the sculpture.

It was installed on a Monday but days later, was vandalized and *Solace* was temporarily removed and repaired before returning to face the harbour. Public affection only grew. Months later, Wellington Waterfront purchased the work. Awards followed and the statue survived.

But *Solace* is more than cast iron. The city has claimed him. He is dressed and adorned – a silent participant in Wellington life. Scarves appear in winter, wrapped carefully around his neck. Santa hats at Christmas. Sunglasses, beads, and protest symbols find their way onto his frame. He has been a pirate, a graduate, and a quiet joke shared among strangers. Each costume temporary, each gesture human.

In 2019, he wore a meaningful addition – a raincoat covered in handwritten messages of solidarity for the Hong Kong protests. Against the wind, he became more than a sculpture. He became a voice.

And still he stands.

People arrive from everywhere to see him – some curious, some reflective, others simply drawn in. Photos are taken; people pose with him while children imitate his stance. In a strong southerly, he almost shifts from statue to human – braced against the invisible.

Perhaps that is why *Solace* endures. He does not fight the wind, and he is not a hero. He simply stands with it – steady, unguarded, unchanged. In a city shaped by motion, weather, and constant change he is Wellington's reminder that sometimes endurance is found not in resistance, but in simply holding your ground. **TL**

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