



Defining images capture spirit of resistance

The theme of resistance is especially poignant this year at the Auckland Festival of Photography, where *Herald* photographers are showcasing their work at Silo 6.

Our photographers covered floods and cyclones around the country, witnessing the incredible courage of New Zealanders resisting the elements, and communities banding together to clean up after the devastation.

Among those brave Kiwis was 76-year-old Margaret Smiley (top right), who huddled with her husband Richard in the rafters of their

Puketapu shed as the waters kept rising during Cyclone Gabrielle in February.

Smiley, whose swimming ability is limited to dog-paddling, decided to swim through the strong current across a flooded orchard to seek help for her and her husband, who was later rescued.

Mark Mitchell spoke with Smiley in Hawke's Bay, capturing her story — and her determination to survive.

"I had to [swim for help] for Richard. If I hadn't done it, Richard would have drowned."

Protest was also a major theme,

with Dean Purcell's photo of Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull's rally in March becoming a defining image of the event.

Thousands of trans supporters showed up to Auckland's Albert Park to drown out the speech from Keen-Minshull, also known as Posie Peen.

Purcell managed to get to the front of the crowd and climbed up the railing of the band rotunda to get his shot (top left).

"I literally just hung off the side of the rotunda. . . I was just looking blind, looking down directly on top of her, hoping for the best."



Jason Oxenham's playful image of a little bit of warmth between the member of the public and the police."

Work from Alex Burton, Michael Craig, George Heard, Mike Scott, Sylvie Whinray and Hayden Woodward also feature in the free exhibition at Silo 6, which runs until June 15.

For more information on the Auckland-wide festival, go to photographyfestival.org.nz

Auckland Festival of Photography: Images you cannot resist, Canvas

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In brief

Ex-sports star avoids conviction
A former top sports star who represented New Zealand internationally has avoided conviction for assaulting a woman and damaging her property over a three-day period. The man yesterday appeared in New Plymouth District Court for sentencing on admitted charges of assault on a person in a family relationship and three of wilful damage. However he applied for a discharge without conviction. Judge Gregory Hikaka granted the application as well as a request for permanent name suppression. The court heard the man had met with the victim on February 17. He grabbed the woman from behind in a "bear hug", then grabbed her phone and threw it away. The following day, he went to a property, where, due to his police bail conditions, he was not allowed to enter. There he removed a security camera before using a permanent marker to write derogatory comments about the woman on a photo frame that had significant sentimental value to her. The next day, he took the woman's wallet and cut up her bank cards before throwing the wallet in a rubbish bin. Judge Gregory Hikaka found the offending was of a low level, though it still met the criteria to be charged. The victim supported the man's application to be discharged without conviction as well as his bid for permanent name suppression. After granting the applications, Judge Hikaka ordered the man to pay \$1000 in emotional harm reparation to the victim.

Bilingual signs called 'confusing'
Introducing te reo Māori to road signs will make them "more confusing" and they "should all be English", says National's transport's spokesman. Simeon Brown told a Bay of Plenty meeting on transport infrastructure that "we all speak English, they should all be English" when asked was asked his opinion on Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency's proposal to introduce bilingual signs. "My view is it will make signs more confusing," he said, telling the transport agency to just "do your job". Last week the transport agency announced its He Tohu Huarahi Māori Bilingual Traffic Signs programme was going out for public consultation. If successful, it would result in destination signs, public and active transport signs, walking and cycling signs, general advisory and warning signs, plus motorway and expressway signs being replaced with bilingual versions.

Thousands at climate protests
Thousands of students took to the streets in climate strikes around the country yesterday. Hundreds gathered in Wellington's Civic Square before marching to Parliament. They were demanding New Zealand reduce its emissions, transition to regenerative agriculture, lower the voting age to 16 and respond to the climate crisis with tangata whenua at the centre of decision-making. Organiser Sophie Handford said the climate crisis was an urgent issue and people of all ages were marching. "We're very much encouraging and calling on those across generations to join us on the street."

Fire victim remembered
Wellingtonians turned out in force to pay their respects and farewell Mike Wharlich — or Mike the Juggler — a Wellington character killed in the Loffers Lodge fire last week. Around 80 people gathered for the 67-year-old's service yesterday, with every pew in the hall occupied. Notable faces in the crowd included Wellington Mayor Tory Whanau and councillor Nureddin Abdurahman. Wharlich's sister Margaret described her brother as a "cool dude and a cute man" and remembered how he started juggling as a child with lemons and oranges. "Michael would be proud and honoured to see you all here."

Low staff leads to maternity care delays

Documents show 133 events recorded for the women's health service in Auckland in four months.

Nicholas Jones

Short staffing has likely fuelled an unusually high number of incidents recorded by workers in Auckland Hospital's women's health services.

Hospital managers say most of the incidents were minor "or were identified early and mitigated", and "staffing pressures may have contributed to many". An example of a common incident includes a delay to care, or poor communication.

Some of the increase happened in a period when nearly half of midwifery positions were vacant.

The situation is revealed in an internal briefing from January, obtained by the *Weekend Herald* under the Official Information Act.

"Service resilience (ie the reliability of the safety and quality) is negatively impacted by the level of staff vacancy, as is evidenced by patient complaints and adverse events due to recruitment and retention challenges in midwifery and the medical subspecialties," the document says.

"We're not meeting our targets for waiting times except in abortion services; disruptions in planned care related to Covid, holiday service re-

duction, staffing shortages and inefficiencies continue to drive waitlist growth."

In response to *Herald* questions, Te Toka Tumai Auckland (formerly Auckland DHB) confirmed there were 133 incidents recorded into its Incident Management System for the women's health service between January and April 30.

"This number is more than we would typically expect over a four-month period," interim lead for hospital and specialist services Dr Mark Edwards said.

"Most of these were minor incidents that did not result in patient harm or were identified early and mitigated. We know from analysing these incidents that staffing pressures may have contributed to many of them."

Of the 133, five were categorised as category 1 or 2 "adverse events", meaning an unexpected outcome could have affected the patient. Examples in these cases included an unexpected need for specialist neonatal treatment for a baby and unexpected blood loss requiring a patient to return to theatre.

"Initial findings suggest staffing levels were not a factor in [these] adverse events. However, we will continue with our process to review all of the cases," Edwards said.

Overall vacancy rates in the January briefing included 65 per cent in midwifery. Edwards said that "took into account broader midwifery roles

Equity strategy plan ditched

An ambitious plan to eliminate decades-old inequities in maternity services at the country's largest hospital has been scrapped.

In January 2021 the Auckland DHB board signed off an "engagement plan" to overhaul services "and achieve equity in women's health maternity services".

Data "suggests that Māori and Pacific women, along with some Asian and Indian women and their babies, experience inequitable outcomes and poor experiences at varying stages of their maternity journey", the DHB said at the time.

Work on the plan was paused during the Covid pandemic, and then abandoned during the further disruption from the health reforms that disestablished DHBs.

Reducing inequities remained a

strong focus during the Covid response and recovery, Dr Mark Edwards told the *Weekend Herald*, and "became part of day-to-day discussions and activities. . . right across our hospital and specialist services".

This had continued after the health reforms, he said, with services working closely together across the northern region (greater Auckland and Northland).

Initiatives include growing the community Māori midwifery team, appointing a new Māori lead for women's health, increasing Māori representation in the workforce, improving triage and how patients move through services, and planning a primary birthing unit.

The women's health briefing from January makes clear there's still plenty to do.

In answer to the question, "Where are we now?", it lists observations including "inequities in access and outcomes for Māori, Pasifika and Indian hapū māmā".

Maternity services came under scrutiny after four women — none of whom were Pākehā — died during or soon after giving birth at Auckland Hospital in March and April 2020. In three of those cases, babies also died.

An independent review concluded that in all cases "the quality of care provided by ADHB was of an appropriate standard", but warned of wider problems, including concerns about institutional racism and midwife shortages meaning there was insufficient time to deliver quality midwifery care, such as support for breastfeeding.

across the country, we are still seeing the effects from Covid-19, when we had to reduce planned care volumes to prioritise maintaining essential hospital services," Edwards said.

"We're also impacted by staffing pressures and the global shortage of healthcare workers, and our hospitals continue to be busy with people who are very unwell and require longer stays." Separate from recording incidents, hospital employees can file formal reports warning of unsafe staffing levels. Reports by staff in Auckland Hospital's maternity service leapt from 14 to 355 in three years. Nationwide hospital backlogs are near record lengths, with more than 66,000 people overdue for treatment or a specialist appointment. Dramatic reductions in nationwide wait list times aren't expected until at least 2025.

The pressure on women's health services at Auckland Hospital is a major factor in continuing tension between hospital leaders and private obstetricians.

Strict rules have been put on new private obstetricians, after concerns from management about higher caesarean rates, and the fact that many women using private obstetricians live outside the hospital's central Auckland catchment.

The Auckland Association of Private Obstetricians says there are valid reasons why women under the care of private specialists are more likely to have a caesarean.

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