

# ***-Omarama Gazette -***

## **August 2019**

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## **This is the time to have your say**

Omarama and Otematata community leaders are urging as many as possible to attend this month's public workshops to discuss proposals for a concept 'masterplan' for each town centre.

Last year, the two communities and the Ahuriri Community Board made submissions to the Waitaki District Council's Long Term Plan and asked it to make it a priority to work with the communities to come up with an overall plan for each town to actively manage development and avoid ad hoc expansion.

The submissions were in support of the outcomes of the well-supported town 'visioning' sessions run by the board in March last year.

The council has allocated \$20,000 to the development of each masterplan.

This month's workshops will be run by independent facilitator Sandra McIntyre, of Schema Consultants, who also ran last year's sessions.

Three options have been drawn up for each town from ideas generated there, from feedback from the council's District Plan drop-in sessions held in January and February this year, and after a closed-door workshop with councillors and Ahuriri Community Board members.

Omarama School pupils also contributed ideas to the Omarama plans.

Omarama Residents Association chairperson Ann Patterson said she urged all residents to attend if at all possible, and have their say.

# **This issue is brought to you by ...**

## **T & J Golder Ltd**

You may not think outback Australia and the North Otago/South Canterbury high country have much in common. But working on the outskirts of Narembreen with its population just a little more than Omarama's does present some similar issues. If you have to travel any distance to a servicing centre it forces you to be self-reliant, resourceful and versatile, contractor Travis Golder says.

Travis and wife Joanne are T & J Golder Ltd - specialists in agricultural chemical application operating throughout the season right here in Omarama.

That's not to say they spend the off-season with their feet up. They're not long back from their annual stint working at Crichton Vale Farm, a family-run merino stud and cropping station near Narembreen, Western Australia, and they've hit the ground running.

This past year Crichton Vale cropped 12,000ha of wheat, barley, oats and canola. Travis works there as a 'seeding' operator – here we call it direct drilling. The farm's CaseIH 600 Steiger is fitted with a Seed Hawk precision air drill seeder 84ft (25.6m) wide, runs 24-hours and covers an average of 25ha an hour.

That's a wee bit bigger than the new piece of machinery Travis and Jo have just invested in. The new addition to the business is a 2½ tonne Yanmar digger – a mini excavator - perfect for managing all those light earthworks and property maintenance jobs. The Golders see the digger as the perfect complement to their already successful agricultural chemical applications (weed and fertiliser) spraying business. Travis has 18 years contracting experience both here and overseas, but for the past three years the couple have operated here on their own account.

As many who have been there will know, starting out in a new venture comes with its own set of challenges and Travis and Jo say they are truly appreciative of the support they have received from all quarters.

T & J Golder Ltd services from the Lindis Pass to Twizel and Otematata.

It's all with the aim of offering clients convenient and cost-effective service. They are right here on the spot. Travis says he's happy to consider any job.

Farmers or property owners can just pick up the phone and give him a call if they need a hand.



## **T & J Golder Ltd**

**Travis: 021 710 305  
or Jo: 027 458 4828**

**Email:  
[travis.joanne@xtra.co.nz](mailto:travis.joanne@xtra.co.nz)**

## *Continued from page one*

"It should be our decision on any future developments, after all, we are the people who call Omarama home.

"The effects of the tourist industry are a priority that need the utmost attention to protect our way of life and the environment that we value and enjoy."

It would be fair to say the council were "blown away" by the numbers that attended the town visioning workshops last March and so coming along in person does make a difference, she said.

Otematata Residents' Association chairperson Steve Dalley said this kind of opportunity to contribute came along "only once every 10 years".

"It's important for people to know there are good ideas in all the options and to come to the meetings and give their feedback so the council can come up with a final option which uses the best ideas."

Ahuriri Community board chairperson Graham Sullivan said this was the "big chance" for all residents – holiday home owners and permanent residents - of both towns to "influence what is going to happen".

"Whatever they want – this is the time to push it.

"As the board chair I want to see people get behind these meetings."

Omarama business owner Tony Chapman, who is also on the community board, also stressed the importance of attending the meetings.

"If people care about their community they need to turn up and have their say... listen to the proposals - they're not set in concrete yet."

Property developer Steve Darling, new to Omarama but not the district, who has bought the land between Boots and Jandals Hotel Omarama and Merino Country Café, said he was hoping to travel to attend the Omarama workshop. He has not seen the options put forward for Omarama's 'masterplan'.

However, option two for the town centre development features a proposal to develop a "retail enclave" - a shopping and café area - in that space, and to move the i-Site alongside the shops.

Mr Darling said he would be making his plans public shortly but was waiting to finalise some details before he made a final decision about what would be built on the site.

Omarama Airfield Ltd chairman Clive Geddes said, in the company's latest update, the board had reviewed the Omarama masterplan and had "identified a number of matters which are of interest to the airfield".

The board would be making a submission and "will ensure" that the airfield was represented at the meetings.

Copies of the masterplan discussion documents and the three options for each town centre, are on the Waitaki District Council website. [www.waitaki.govt.nz](http://www.waitaki.govt.nz)

Consultation on the documents opened on Monday and people have until Friday, September 6 to have their say.

The community workshops will be in Otematata from 10am to 12 noon, Saturday, August 24, and Omarama from 10am to 12pm, Sunday, August 25. (See below)

The feedback from these workshops will be used to develop one single preferred option for each town which will then be put to the Ahuriri Community Board ahead of the final plans going to the new council for approval at its meeting in February.

The final masterplans will then feed into the council's District Plan process.

# Pennant win first for Omarama club

Celebrations were most definitely the order of the day, although those involved would neither confirm nor deny revelries of any kind took place.

The Omarama Golf Club men's team - Adrian Tuffley, Johnny Anderson, Peter Trusler and Tom Moore - has won the North Otago Golf Sub-Association Pennant Series 2019, Intermediate competition.

"It is the first time, ever, ever, ever Omarama has won any sort of pennant flag," Adrian said.

The final in the North Otago series between Omarama and the Waikouaiti Golf Club team was played at the Lower Waitaki Golf Club at the end of July.

Until that point Waikouaiti had not lost a game, Adrian, who is club captain and also team captain, said.

"It came down to the last putt on the last green.

"Pete and Johnny were the winning or losing of the match."

It was the first time in about six years that the Omarama Club had fielded a team, he said.

Matches between golf clubs are called 'pennants'.

The Omarama team played all four clubs in the zone to reach the finals.

This same men's team will now play in the Otago Golf Club Association finals in Balclutha on October 13.

*Photos: supplied*

*Below: Omarama Golf Club captain Adrian Tuffley gets set to pin the first ever pennant to the club honours' board.*

*Right: The team celebrates their win with a cup of tea and a wee lie down.*



# Top 10 'gets a bit flash' for summer

Guests arriving for the new season at Omarama's Top 10 Holiday Park will certainly notice some changes.

"It's going to be a bit flash...I hope people will like it," owner Tony Chapman said. Work began at the end of last month on the first improvements to be made to the holiday park's entrance way in decades.

The improvements comprise a new layout to the driveway, and a new and separate reception building.

At present, the reception area is part of the owner/manager's residence which was not ideal in terms of privacy for staff, Tony said.

The new driveway layout will make it far easier to access the park, especially for larger vehicles and for any emergency vehicles.

Plus, it will improve traffic flow, overall, he said.

In 2016, the Chapman's first year running the camping ground, the park recorded 27,668 guest nights and, last year, 2018, that number reached 31,469.

It is on reserve land leased from the Waitaki District Council who must approve all improvements.

However, all improvements are paid for by the business.

Tony said he hoped the work, which is being carried out by Breen Construction, would be finished by the beginning of October.

*Photo: Omarama Top 10 Holiday Park owner Tony Chapman chats to Breen Construction workers Logan Dunlop (left) and Inoke Fisilau, both of Oamaru, who work on the framework of the new reception building.*





# New bid for funds for summer season

The Mackenzie District Council and the Department of Conservation are waiting to hear the outcome of their latest bid for funding to help manage budget campers in the Waitaki-Mackenzie region before committing to any plans for how it will be spent in the upcoming tourist season.

The two agencies have, together, put in a new bid for Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) funding to pay for monitoring and enforcement at camping sites, including at Ahuriri Bridge, this summer, Mackenzie District Council chief executive Suzette van Aswegen said.

The two were members of the Mackenzie and Waitaki Basins Responsible Camping Strategy Working Group set up last year to apply for, distribute and manage \$548,000 of MBIE funding for visitor education, monitoring and compliance, toilets, signage, vehicle counters and fencing at various sites along SH 8.

The Waitaki District Council, Land Information New Zealand and the New Zealand Transport Agency were also members of this group.

Ms van Aswegen and DOC operations manager Brent Swanson told the Omarama Gazette the management of the Ahuriri River Bridge campsite over the past season was reviewed and, while happy with the overall result, they acknowledged some things could have been done better.

Ms van Aswegen said, in an email, the working group, of which she was chairperson, was wound up after Easter as funds were spent and its projects - the installation of the seven toilets across the two districts, and employment of wardens to monitor and enforce and keeping the facilities clean – had been completed.

“It is definitely acknowledged that the working group could’ve been more proactive in the way we consulted with the local communities from the start.

“It is a lesson to learn for future projects and we hope to get better at this.

“All government agencies involved in the Mackenzie and Waitaki Basins are working closer together and we wish to continue this collaborative approach by also working more closely with our respective communities of interest.”

Ms van Aswegen said reports from wardens to the line manager had been verbal, not written.

“We (MDC and DOC) have again applied for funding from MBIE for this coming summer season to allow responsible camping, monitoring and enforcement, and we will do it differently, i.e. making sure we collect and record information and managing the entire project differently.”

This new bid does not cover any Waitaki District Council land, she said.

Ms van Aswegen also said the Omarama Residents’ Association had been added to the Mackenzie Council’s Destination Mackenzie Project stakeholder reference group and would be consulted throughout its project.

“This again includes the Upper Waitaki Basin and land belonging to DOC, including the Ahuriri River bridge site.

“Having a better handle on the numbers going through there and travel patterns is part of our goals.”

Mr Swanson, who was interim acting operations manager of DOC’s Twizel /Te Manahuna Office at the time, said he had been part of the review of the past season and in general terms DOC was happy with how things worked.

"Last year worked, it was a success ...improvements can be made," he said. He was also part of discussions with the Mackenzie Council about the latest funding application. The plan was to run a similar programme this season to what had been run last season, he said. "But I can't confirm any plans coming up until funding has been secured." It would be an interim measure until the longer-term measures were put in place, he said. Omarama Residents' Association chairperson Ann Patterson said it wanted to acknowledge that the fact the association would be included in future decisions was "a step in the right direction". "We would have liked to see more of the \$548,000 spent in this area. "The problem of overcrowding, lack of toilets and rubbish facilities still exists but we acknowledge that improvements have been made." She said she was surprised that wardens were not asked for written reports given how important that feedback was for future decisions. The Ahuriri Campsite is monitored from October to March with limited monitoring outside of the season. In late October and early November, a new accessible toilet was installed at the campsite and fencing built to contain campers, funded from the MBIE bid. However, throughout the season numbers camping at the site regularly exceeded the 30 non-powered/tent sites stipulated on DOC's website. The Omarama Gazette has asked the Mackenzie District Council how much they have asked for from MBIE for the coming season and when they expect to hear whether they have been successful. However, Ms van Aswegen is on leave and could not be reached for further comment.

In other developments, Tourism Waitaki has asked for two members from the Omarama community to be part of a committee it has formed which will advise the council-controlled organisation on tourism matters specific to communities in the Waitaki Valley. Each of the valley towns will contribute to this. According to its recent recreation update to the Ahuriri Community Board, the Waitaki District Council has also applied to MBIE's Responsible camping fund for the 2019/20 Freedom camping season for a grant to pay for a part-time ambassador/enforcement officer, improved educational signage and brochures, and costs associated with servicing toilets and dump stations.

*Above: More than 50 campers (some are out of view of the shot ) settle in for the night inside the fenced area at the Ahuriri River Bridge Campsite on February 26, 2019*



# Let's get political - an elections update

It's still early days in the countdown to the October local body elections.

However, things are hotting up in some quarters as people put their names in the hat before nominations close at noon, Friday, August 16.

In Waitaki, elections are held for council, community boards, district health boards and the Oamaru Licensing Trust.

Ratepayers in the Ahuriri Ward (which has been extended to include Duntroon) vote for the election of mayor, one Ahuriri Ward councilor and five members of its community board.

At the time of going to print three have indicated they will stand for the mayoralty, incumbent Gary Kircher, Katrina Hazelhurst and Paul Mutch.

Board members Brent Cowles and Vicky Munro are the only two Ahuriri community board members to indicate they would stand again.

Ahuriri Ward councillor Craig Dawson is standing down and sitting Queenstown Lakes District councillor, Ross McRobie has said he will stand for the ward.

This year's local body elections include the Canterbury regional council and residents in the Ahuriri Ward must chose two councillors for the ECan South Canterbury-Otuhituhi Constituency So far former Waimate deputy mayor Peter McIlraith, and incumbents Peter Scott and Tom Lambie have indicated they will stand for the positions.

Next month the Omarama Gazette will publish a brief profile of those standing for election in the Ahuriri Ward and outline some of the issues.



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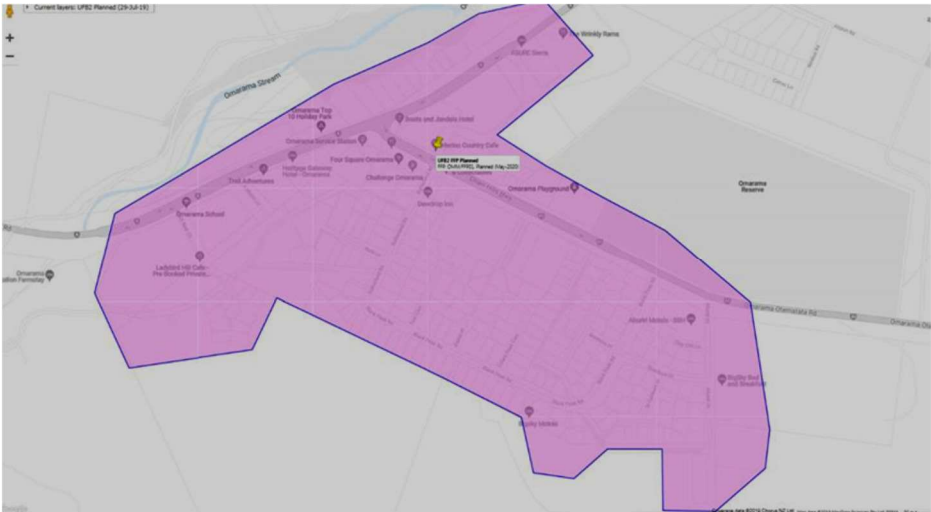
# UFB rolls out to (not quite) all Omarama

The Government initiative to roll out ultra-fast broadband to small towns has reached Omarama. However, questions have been raised as to whether it will include every property within the town.

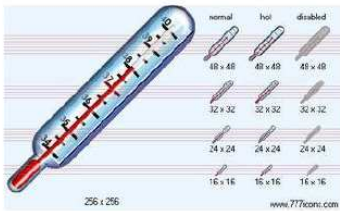
Last month, some residents received notification from the Government's partner fibre company – Chorus – charged with the UFB roll-out for this area that work would begin shortly to lay cables and ducts to form the fibre network. The flyer said Chorus aimed to use existing underground pipes or telephone poles where possible. Once the installation is complete householders will be able to contact their phone and internet service provider – for example, Vodafone, Spark , Slingshot, Stuff, MyRepublic, Orcon - and ask to be connected to the broadband network. Chorus communications staff would not return phone calls but in an email conversation spokeswoman Holly Cushen said under the Crown agreement Chorus had “determined which premises will be included in the UFB roll-out”. “They consulted with councils prior to determining the extent of the boundaries around these settlements,” she said.

The Omarama Gazette asked about details for Omarama, Otematata and Kurow. “Without specifics, every property within the [Omarama] boundary is included and if anyone has been told otherwise, we would be happy to talk to them,” Ms Cushen said. However, the Omarama Gazette understands not every property in each street within the boundary shown on the map supplied by Chorus will be offered a connection. As well, the map appears to exclude Airport Rd, Cirrus Lane and properties from Hardacre Plc to Prohibition Rd. For those who will be able to connect to UFB, Chorus expects it to be available in May 2020. Ms Cushen said Chorus would be holding information sessions in both Otematata and Omarama in late August and expected a flyer about this would be sent out to residents in the coming weeks. To see when UFB will become available for your property go to this link and put in your street address.

<https://www.chorus.co.nz/tools-support/broadband-tools/broadband-checker>  
To check if your property is inside or outside the boundary click here, zoom in on your town and check 2019 and 2020 in the bar above.  
<https://www.chorus.co.nz/tools-support/broadband-tools/broadband-map>



# The Truth about Fevers



© Can Stock Photo - img/980335

- A fever is the body's response to fight infection
- A fever increases heat within the body that stops bacteria and viruses surviving
- A fever increases the amount of antibodies within the blood stream, to kill the infection
  - Studies have shown that a child's risk of permanent damage from a fever is NOT reduced by using anti-fever drugs (NICE, 2013)
  - Studies have shown reducing a fever with medicine can increase the severity and duration of an illness (NICE, 2013)
- To support a fever it is important to drink plenty of milk, juice, water or replacement solutions i.e. Dioralyte. Eat light snacks, get adequate rest and wear light, cool clothing.



# Kurow Medical Centre

8 Wynyard St, Kurow  
P: 03 4360760 F: 03 4360780

E: [info@kurowmedicalcentre.org.nz](mailto:info@kurowmedicalcentre.org.nz)  
W: [www.kurowmedicalcentre.org.nz](http://www.kurowmedicalcentre.org.nz)  
[www.facebook.com/kurowmedicalcentre](http://www.facebook.com/kurowmedicalcentre)

**Providing 24/7 health care and support to  
the people of the Upper Waitaki and Mackenzie**

**Kurow Medical Centre and its satellite clinics  
in Twizel (Mackenzie Health Centre Private Clinic)  
and Omarama (Community Hall)**

**are proud to offer our registered and casual patients the following services**

- \* Ultrasound performed by a qualified clinician (great for minor fractures, gall stones, kidney stones, heart and lung problems, foreign bodies, blood clots, detecting early pregnancy and much more!)
- \* Minor surgery
- \* Vasectomies
- \* Mole checking and removal
- \* Steroid injections
- \* Venesection
- \* Aviation, workplace and driving medicals
- \* Botox for Wrinkle reduction
- \* Workplace health screening
- \* Counselling
- \* Spirometry to diagnose asthma and COPD
- \* Hearing and sight tests for adults and children
- \* Ear syringing
- \* Liquid nitrogen for warts, verruca's and skin lesions
- \* Cardiovascular risk assessment and diabetic checks (funded for eligible patients)
- \* Travel advice and vaccination
- \* Cervical smears (funded for eligible patients)
- \* Seasonal flu shots and shingles vaccine (funded for eligible patients)
- \* Childhood immunisation
- \* Before school checks
- \* Postnatal and six-week baby health check

**And much more!**

**GP consult fees: Under 14yrs Free; Adult \$40.00  
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We also offer the following services from external Health Care Providers:

- \*Podiatry and Ear Health (Kurow only)
- \*Physiotherapy, Acupuncture and Massage (Kurow and Twizel)
- \*Reiki and Reflexology (Twizel only)

## **Opening hours**

Kurow: Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm; Omarama: Tuesday 8.30am to 5pm

Twizel: Monday and Friday 8.30 to 5pm; Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 9am to 3pm  
and Saturday 10am to 1pm

Please note: We provide 24/7 on call after hours cover by our doctors and PRIME nurses for all our registered and casual patients!

**If you require further information or an appointment, please contact us on:  
For Kurow 03 436 0760 or for Twizel 03 976 0503**

# The Noticeboard



To have your community notice included here email: [omaramagazette@gmail.com](mailto:omaramagazette@gmail.com)

**Congratulations and warmest wishes to Jessie Grant and Joshua Tully who were married in Omarama last weekend. Jessie, who lives in Brisbane, Australia is the daughter of Julie Grant and granddaughter of Carolynne and Kevin Grant.**

**Jessie said she would like to thank all those who helped make the occasion so special.**

**The Omarama Community Library** is open 9am to 10am Wednesdays and Saturdays, Library hours can change. Contact Yvonne: 027 476 7473.

**The Omarama Golf Club** Saturdays tee-off 12.30pm. Club Captain Adrian Tuffley, 027 347 8276. [www.omaramagolfclub.co.nz](http://www.omaramagolfclub.co.nz)

**The Upper Waitaki Young Farmers Club** meets at 7.30pm on the first Monday of each month at the 'Top Pub' - the Blue and Gold pub, in Kurow. All welcome. Join the Facebook group. [www.facebook.com/groups/300929013444437](http://www.facebook.com/groups/300929013444437)

**Omarama Playgroup** meets at 9.30am each Wednesday during the primary school term at the Omarama Community Centre. For more information phone president Andrea Aubrey, 03 438 9863; vice president Ruby Milestone, 03 438 9401, secretary Carla Hunter, 03 976 0504

**Bridge Club** - The Omarama Bridge Club meets on a regular basis and would welcome new members. If you are interested please phone Sylvia Anderson 438 9784 or Ann Patterson 438 9493.

**The Kurow Medical Centre** holds a clinic 8.30am to 1pm, and 2pm to 5pm, on Tuesdays at the Omarama Community Centre. Please phone Kurow Medical Centre, 03 436 0760, for appointments. On Fridays phone 0274 347 464 because the Kurow Centre is closed.

**The Omarama Model Aircraft Club** meets on Saturdays from 9.00 am to 12.00 noon at its flying ground at the Omarama airfield. All welcome - Contact Don Selbie on 027 435 5516.

**FENZ Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade** meets 7pm each Wednesday and has its meeting at 7:30pm on the third Wednesday of the month. New members welcome.

**Plunket Line:** 0800 933 922

**Omarama Plunket Committee:** Petrina Paton 027 345 6192

**Car Seat Rentals:** Christine, phone: 03 435 0557 or 027 208 0362

**Breastfeeding Works:** Claire Hargest-Slade 03 684 3625, 021 493 863  
[clairhs@me.com](mailto:clairhs@me.com)

**In case of emergency:** to prevent any confusion about the location of Lake Ohau Alpine Village in an emergency, the following points should be noted:  
When phoning 111, advise that Lake Ohau is in South Island and the nearest cross road is State Highway 8 and Lake Ohau Road. Also mention that Lake Ohau Alpine Village is on the shore of Lake Ohau, and is 20 mins (40 km) from both Twizel and Omarama. This will assist the operator to find the required information to enter location in the system and allowing the call to progress to the next screen in the system.

**To read more, enjoy more photos and watch our place 'come to life' check out our Facebook page and website. [www.facebook.com/omaramagazette/](https://www.facebook.com/omaramagazette/) [omaramagazette.nz](http://omaramagazette.nz)**

**To receive email alerts between monthly editions of the Omarama Gazette sign up to our 'Local List'. Email [omaramagazette@gmail.com](mailto:omaramagazette@gmail.com)**

## **Advertising pays for production and distribution.**

To find out about publication and close-off dates,  
and how much it costs to place your advertisement,  
please phone 021 294 8002, 03 438 9766 or  
email [omaramagazette@gmail.com](mailto:omaramagazette@gmail.com)

**The September issue of the  
Omarama Gazette  
is Wednesday, September 4, 2019.**

**Please submit copy  
by Friday, August 30.**

## **OMARAMA COMMUNITY CENTRE HALL HIRE**

To make a booking for an upcoming event or for more  
information about hall hire and availability  
please contact Charlotte Newfield, 027 940 1648,  
or email [charlotte.omarama@gmail.com](mailto:charlotte.omarama@gmail.com)  
Keys and fobs are collected from Charlotte





# The Community Reports

## Upper Waitaki Police News



Hi all,  
I actually don't have much to report, apart from the odd minor car crash, the last few months have been fairly good, in all honesty. (Probably just jinxed myself now).  
So with lack of news I thought I'd challenge you all to complete the NZ Police security checklist for rural properties, see what your score is and what you can do better to ensure you and your property are safe.  
If you have a question not applicable to you (i.e farm questions but you live in town) score

it as 'Yes'. Have an add up and review your score on the table below to see what extra precautions you could take.

**Property Identification:** Is your property number or Rural Address Property Identification displayed at the front of your premises. For further information on RAPID number contact your Local Authority. **Yes/No**

**Fences and Gates:** Are your boundary fences and gates in good condition and secure? **Yes/No**

**Vegetation:** Are trees and bushes cut back to reduce opportunity for offenders to be unseen where possible? **Yes/No**

**Lighting:** Is there sufficient exterior lighting around your farm buildings and outbuildings **Yes/No**

**Alarms:** Is there an alarm fitted to any appropriate buildings or sheds? **Yes/No**

**Doors:** Are your external doors to buildings maintained and fitted with locks? **Yes/No**

**Windows:** Are your external windows maintained and secure? **Yes/No**

**Keys:** Are keys for building and agricultural equipment secured out of view? **Yes No**

**Firearms:** Are firearms secured and practice complies with the requirements of the Arms Act? **Yes/No**

**Property Identification:** Is your property identifiable and recorded (includes household effects to farm machinery) eg. Serial numbers/ Marked/engraved? For more information on serial number identification see: <https://www.snap.org.nz> **Yes/No**

**Outbuildings:** Are your sheds, storage areas and outbuilding regularly secured? **Yes/No**

**Farming Equipment:** Is your machinery, tools and equipment placed in a secure area following use? **Yes/No**

**Shearing Sheds:** Is your shearing equipment machinery secured away following use? **Yes/No**

**Grain, Hay and Seed:** Are your bins or sheds locked away when not in use? **Yes/No**

**Stock:** Can you lock stockyard gates and loading ramps? **Yes/No**

**Chemicals, Fertiliser, Explosives & Dangerous Substances:** Are chemicals, fertilisers & other dangerous goods stored in locked areas? **Yes/No**

**Livestock:** Do you maintain records of your livestock including sales, purchases, ear-

marks and ear tags? **Yes/No**

Fuel: Are fuel tanks dipped, secured & locked to restrict tampering and theft? **Yes/No**

Community: Have you exchanged phone numbers with your neighbours and discussed how you can alert and assist each other? **Yes/No**

Have a count up and see (below) how you score.

If anyone needs advice, feel free to give me a shout, happy to help.

- *That's it from me, stay safe! Bean*

Senior Constable Nayland Smith, Omarama Police.

021 191 4808 or email [Nayland.smith@police.govt.nz](mailto:Nayland.smith@police.govt.nz)

### Results

0-10 : your security needs improving, consider the steps you can take to improving your security. Speak to staff at your police station or go to the police website for crime prevention tips.

11-15 consider the no answers you gave and what improvements you can make.

16-20 Great work! Remember to continue reviewing your security to prevent crime.

## Justices of the Peace

### JPs are available by appointment to:

- \* Witness documents such as applications for citizenship
- \* Certify copies
- \* Take declarations, affidavits and affirmations

**The service is free of charge**

### To make your visit quick and easy:

- \* Do not sign anything beforehand
- \* Do take photo identification
- \* Remember to take the original as well as the copy to be certified
- \* Check that a New Zealand Justice of the Peace can complete your documentation



**Georgie Robertson**  
Omarama

03 438 9554 027 4861525



**Vicky Munro**  
Otematata

03 438 7855 021 438745



**Malcolm McMillan**  
Lake Ohau Village

03 438 9798 027 4389798

# FENZ Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade



A few safety tips for you in the cool winter months. For the rural people with fire heaps to burn it is open fire season at the moment but please make sure the weather conditions are right before you light. A good fire break and water on hand just in case. Remember the open season can change to permit only any time so contact the council or FENZ for any changes before you light. [www.checkitsalright.nz](http://www.checkitsalright.nz)

For us all, particularly those with families, do you have an escape plan and a safe

meeting place i.e. the front gate or maybe the other side of the street, or for those in the country it could be a shed or somewhere you have some lighting for the night time emergency.

Make sure you have working smoke alarms. If you don't have any give us a call we can advise you on what and how many you should put in and where to position them. Remember smoke alarms save lives.

Next month is daylight saving. The ads will be on to check your smoke alarms. If you have the 10-year ones they still need checked.

*- Chief Fire Officer Greg Harper*

**FENZ Omarama Volunteer Fire Brigade meets 7pm each Wednesday and has its meeting at 7:30pm on the third Wednesday of the month.**

FENZ Omarama recently had a show and tell session about electric cars (EVs) and how they may differ from an internal combustion engine when at an incident. Meridian Energy very kindly loaned out their electric Hyundai Kona, on the assurance that no cutting gear would be used, so that brigade members could familiarise themselves with what to look for when approaching an EV. With electric car numbers increasing every day and a New Zealand target of 64,000 on the road by 2021, the chances of encountering an EV at an accident are getting more likely. The main challenges first responders will face are how to identify that they are dealing with an electric car and then acting accordingly to isolate and make the high voltage battery safe.

Lately, there has been some coverage in the news about battery fires in relation to EVs and the extra challenge this presents. The likelihood of a battery fire is minimal but, in the rare case of one happening, Fire and Emergency New Zealand keeps all brigades up to date with the latest firefighting techniques and FENZ Omarama is well equipped to deal with anything that arises.

If you want to learn more about EVs and their future in New Zealand, head to <https://www.electricvehicles.govt.nz/> and have a read. - *By Jack Zorab*

# Omarama Wajax 2020

- By Jack Zorab

It's a little more than seven months to go before Omarama hosts the 50th anniversary Wajax competition and preparations are well underway.

The event, which originated in Omarama, will be held at the Countrytime Hotel on 14th March 2020 and will attract teams from all over Otago and Southland.

While the entries are capped at 25 teams, there have already been registrations from new-comers in Mossburn, Oamaru and the Waitaki Rural Fire Force so there will be plenty of new blood to challenge the old guard.

## Want to get involved?

Being the 50th anniversary, FENZ Omarama are keen to put on a good day for all the visiting teams and spectators.

Anyone wanting to help out in any way is welcome to attend the next **Wajax meeting, to be held at the Omarama Fire Station on Tuesday 20th August at 7.30pm.**

**For more information about the competition, head to [www.facebook.com/wajax2020](https://www.facebook.com/wajax2020).**



When circumstances beyond your control lead to a rural business crisis be it financial, climatic or personal the Rural Support Trust is ready to assist.

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Kia Ora Whanau,

How lucky we were to see the Ranfurly shield on our return to school.

It was interesting to hear some of the history surrounding it and see it up close.

Thank you to the North Otago Rugby Club for bringing it to visit us.

We are all looking forward to skiing this term which will be held for six weeks on a Thursday, and to exploring a new food each week through "food of the week" alongside our recycling, reducing and reusing program.

We have just purchased a rotating compost bin to help us reduce or food waste and to enhance the use of our tunnel house.

The cross country competition will be held at the golf course on Tuesday, August 13, or Wednesday, August 14 if postponed.

Don't forget to keep August 23 free for the 'Art for education' dinner and auction.

It's sure to be a great night and we look forward to seeing you all !

Keep warm

Nga mihi, *Kim McKenzie. Omarama School principal. Photo: supplied*





# Omarama School Art for Education

Art Auction & Dinner

---

at Heritage Gateway Hotel, Omarama

Friday, August 23, 2019

5.30pm onwards

**Live art auction starts at 8pm**

**Meal and complimentary drink**

(Organise a table of 8-10, receive two complimentary bottles of wine)

Live music until late

**Frank the Music Man**

**Excellent selection of art at all prices**

Plus, enjoy a display of Omarama School pupils' artwork

**\$50 per ticket. Every ticket wins a prize**

**Tickets from Omarama School or GlenCraigs**

**Proceeds will help fund a third teacher at Omarama School**

Contact Pene for more info 03 438 9709

To view the artworks for auction go to:



Omarama School Art for Education

# Boots and Jandals Hotel Omarama Social Club

A BYO pot luck tea with a 70s and 80s night theme was enjoyed by Boots and Jandals Hotel Social Club members last month. Photos below: Julie Dyson



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## Omarama Community Library

### An urgent request

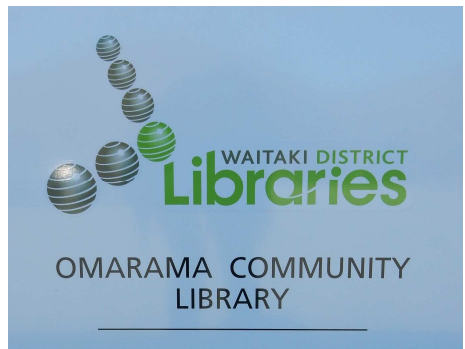
To all volunteers, current and new. Names are needed urgently for the roster. Helpers need to step up now to keep the doors of this community facility open.

The library could be shut at short notice if there are no volunteers available.

'More hands make library work'

Contact: Yvonne Jones 027 476 7473.

**The Omarama Community Library  
is open 9am to 10am,  
Wednesdays and Saturdays,  
at the  
Omarama Community Centre.**



# Omarama Rodeo Club

A total of 21 teams competed in the event with many families involved. This year, we threw a couple of curve balls in with two new sections - duck calling and the best game pie which were a lot of fun for our judges! The weather challenged our teams but we still had great bags turn up on Sunday for the weigh-in, and very happy teams.

An impressive bag was received from Payton Raj's team resulting in them being the overall winner of the 2019 Hillbilly Hunt.

Otago Airspread provided a great spot prize of a .22 package from our main sponsor Hunting and Fishing. This was won by Mazie Payton - watch out bunnies!

As always, we can not run this event without our community's support. We are always so humbled at the generosity provided by our sponsors and supporters. A massive thank you to all those who gave up their time or provided products from their businesses. You're jolly awesome!

Thank you to all those who competed in the hunt as well as the quiz.

We hope you enjoyed your weekend with your families and friends.

See you next year.

- Marcia Green, Secretary, Omarama Rodeo Club

*Photos: supplied*



**‘The Community Reports’ is  
dedicated to news  
from clubs, groups and sports teams.  
Contributions are welcome.  
omaramagazette@gmail.com**





# ŌMARAMA MASTERPLAN

*shape your place*

## COMMUNITY MASTERPLAN WORKSHOP

SUNDAY 25 AUGUST 2019  
10AM - 12PM

ŌMĀRAMA COMMUNITY HALL

Help us plan the future of Ōmārama  
Masterplan options can be viewed on  
the Waitaki District Council website  
and copies are available at the library,  
community centre and some local  
businesses

<http://bit.ly/omarama-masterplan>

*Have YOUR say!*

Fill out our online survey on the [Omarama Masterplan page](#) under 'Consultation' on our website or pick up a feedback form from Council offices and libraries.

All feedback needs to be returned to us by 6 September 2019

[www.waitaki.govt.nz](http://www.waitaki.govt.nz)



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Power Up Waitaki provides grants for projects in Twizel, Omarama, Otematata, Kurow, Hakataramea, Duntroon, Ikawai, Papakaio and Glenavy.

## How to apply

Applications for the next funding round are open until 30th September 2019.

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- visit [meridian.co.nz/powerup](https://meridian.co.nz/powerup)
- email [community.fund@meridianenergy.co.nz](mailto:community.fund@meridianenergy.co.nz)
- call 03 357 9732



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# **Waitaki District Council - news in brief**

**The Waitaki District Council 2019-2020 Annual Plan** has been finalised and is available on the council website here, or read a printed copy at Waitaki district libraries and council offices. The plan outlines the projects for 2019/20, the breakdown of rates funding and the financial information. In February, the council decided not to consult on the Annual Plan because it was not significantly different to year two of the Long Term Plan 2018-28. It decided to use feedback from the District Plan Review and Oamaru Harbour Space campaigns, which included a public meeting, drop-in sessions, and a Council website 'have your say page'. The Council considered that feedback and any subsequent impact on rates on May 14 and its 2019/20 Annual Plan was adopted on 25 June 2019.

**The Waimate and Waitaki District councils** have set up a group to help make it easier for those running the programme to eradicate *Mycoplasma bovis* to make regional decisions to benefit farmers.

The Waimate/Waitaki Mycoplasma Bovis Advisory Group monthly meetings will be co-chaired by Waimate mayor Craig Rowley and Waitaki mayor Gary Kircher, and is modelled on a similar arrangement in Ashburton. The first meeting was held at Waimate District Council on Wednesday, July 3.

## **Geopark**

Waitaki mayor Gary Kircher has told the Otago Daily Times the council "was now starting to step back" from working on the Waitaki's bid to become a Unesco Global Geopark, as more of the work would be taken on by the Waitaki Whitestone Geopark Trust. He is also reviewing his role as chairperson. [Read more here](#)

## **Community group grants**

The Omarama Golf Club is one of 25 community groups to receive a grant from this latest Waitaki District Council's funding round. It's application for \$659.20 for golf course yardage markers was approved. Community Group Grants have been set up by the council to help not-for-profit organisations and groups in the district with projects. Funding of \$50,000 annually is available over two funding rounds

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# The Ahuriri Community Board meeting

Monday, July 8, in Kurow

Present: Waitaki District councillors Jim Hopkins and Craig Dawson, acting Heritage, Environment and Regulatory Group manager Roger Cook, Ahuriri Community Board chairperson Graham Sullivan, board members Vicky Munro, Brent Cowles, Cal Reid.

**The Ahuriri Community Board 10-year plan** has been given final approval by the board.

The plan was drawn up by council officers after board discussion and used feedback gathered from the ‘town visioning’ sessions held last year.

It sets out priorities and guidelines for the board and will be a means by which it can contribute to the council’s planning process – the Annual, Long Term, District and 30-year Infrastructure plan.

Mr Sullivan said it would be an important “guideline” for board members, a “working document” which would be “reviewed annually”.

It is to be presented to the new board in October.

Board member Cal Reid said the plan would need to be reviewed and adjusted to include Duntroon and the portion of the Corriedale Ward that had been included in the Ahuriri Ward following the representation review.

The plan highlighted the “usefulness” of community boards, he said.

“When you’ve got boards this sort of thing can happen. You get input from the community.”

The Ahuriri Ward was “a big piece of real-estate for a small piece of people,” Cr Jim Hopkins said.

The cost of essential infrastructure was spread across fewer people also, Mr Reid said.

“A large portion of the Oamaru population come up here and use our facilities,” Cr Craig Dawson said.

## **The Otematata Wetlands Walkway track upgrade.**

The board has approved up to \$9,000 to help upgrade the Wetlands Walkway tracks. However, it has also asked for updated quotes before it authorises final payment.

The Otematata Residents’ Association applied for \$10,200 to be put towards the upgrade to make the tracks more accessible.

The group, which was quoted \$32,228.75 to complete the work has received \$2,000 from Trust Aoraki and \$20,000 from Meridian Energy’s Power Up fund.

Board member Vicki Munro said she was aware the group was searching for a cheaper source of gravel and that the initial quote might be outdated.

She said, while she fully supported the group’s request, she believed the board needed to have “refreshed information” about the final costs.

Board member Brent Cowles agreed.

## **Sailors Cutting**

Whitestone Contracting is to start work to connect the Sailors Cutting campsite toilet block to the previously installed settlement/storage tanks, the board was told.

It is the second stage of improvements to the waste water system.

Council staff would monitor the situation in the upcoming season to determine if taking the waste away would be a more cost-effective long-term option than installing a new treatment/discharge field.

Delta, working with Land Information New Zealand, are to clear willow trees from under the lines where the Alps to Ocean trail emerges into the Sailors' Cutting car park. Council officers have asked the two agencies to advise the community about their plans.

### **Omarama Community Den**

Because no legal evidence of ownership of the Omarama's Community Den appears to exist council staff are to take the next steps in a process to transfer ownership to interested parties, a report to the Community Board says.

Recreation manager Erik van der Spek said in his report, council staff had not been able to find any "legal entities" that could prove the Omarama Scout group inherited ownership of the building.

This had been "mentioned at an Omarama Residents' Association meeting".

As a next step, it plans to advertise that it has received a request to use the building and land, and wants to hear from anyone who can prove ownership or wants to use the building for recreational purposes which is requirement of the Reserves Act.

The Community Den is on Department of Conservation reserve land administered by the council.

The report says the interested parties are the present lessee and the Aorangi Hang Gliding Club.

Cr Dawson said the council would advertise for an "expression of interest".

If none was forthcoming "they're going to lease it to the Aorangi Hang Gliding club."

He said he had "no sympathy for anyone that's moaning about it".

This was a scenario similar to that which played out about the future of St Thomas' Church - community members were "concerned" about the den's future but no-one was prepared to do anything about the building, he said.

"It's not serviceable, they've let go to rack and ruin."

"It's effectively been abandoned, basically.

"It's going to be advertised, Erik's moving to get the Aorangi Hang Gliding club involved," he said.

Board member Cal Reid asked if, when members of the former Community Den Group raised the issue at the public forum of a board meeting earlier in the year, their intention was to "just to let this [hang gliding] group take it over and start using it".

Cr Dawson agreed that was where the matter was raised.

"There were people that were originally involved in it, but really that has no relevance at the moment because if they did care about it, it wouldn't be in the state it is now."

Councillor Jim Hopkins said the topic had also been raised at a council meeting and asked if the council archives had been searched for records.

According to the Community Den Group there was "no information", Cr Dawson said.

Mrs Munro said she was an employee of Electricorp at the time the gift of the building was made.

"They gifted that building to the scouts.

"It was all about sponsorship and donations, it's not like today where it's all been written down."

She said in her experience as a real estate agent if a building was on a piece of land "normally, it's owned by the people that own the land".

## **Kurow Island**

The board has requested a report of the meeting held on July 10 between Waitaki and Waimate district councils, and volunteers to develop a memorandum of understanding be presented to its meeting in September.

**Annual grant to the Waitaki Valley** Heritage Society from Board's Community Fund  
In response to the financial update to the board chairman Graham Sullivan asked the chief executive's representative – Roger Cook – to look into the rollover of monies granted to the Waitaki Valley Heritage Society.

"There was supposed to have been a report back, an answer to the question one way or another.

"It's in limbo, it's a question we want answered."

It is third such request Mr Sullivan has made to council officers at successive board meetings.

The financial update says, of the boards community grants fund, \$5,000 is "tagged" for the society.

It a previous meeting Mr Sullivan said he was aware the society was given the grant for one year "because they were in difficulties" to tide them over until Tourism Waitaki finalised its contract with the society.

However, the arrangement appeared to have been "rolled over" and he was unsure why.

He said, then, it was important the matter be clarified and formalised before the election of a new board.

## **Lake Ohau Village water supply.**

A report recommending the best option for the water supply upgrade for Lake Ohau Village will be put to the council's asset committee meeting on August 27, the board was told.

Council staff and the Ohau Community Task Force have come up with four options to be put to the committee.

Cr Hopkins said he had heard opposition to some options "might be loud but not necessarily plentiful".

Cr Dawson said the supply was "illegal" at present and there was "liability" as councillors, because they had to ensure drinking water met the standards set.

**The next meeting of the Ahuriri Community Board  
is 3.15pm to 5.15pm  
Monday, September 9, 2019  
at the Otematata Lakes Centre**

Minutes and agendas can be found here  
[http://www.waitaki.govt.nz/our-council/council-meetings/agendas-and-minutes/  
Pages/default.aspx](http://www.waitaki.govt.nz/our-council/council-meetings/agendas-and-minutes/Pages/default.aspx)

# Environment Canterbury - news in brief

ECan is investigating the cause of a decline in water quality at the Ahuriri arm of Lake Benmore. In a statement, it said this year's water quality monitoring showed increased nutrient levels in the lake - the trophic level index for Lake Benmore's Ahuriri arm increased to an "unacceptable" 2.9.

The matter has been discussed at Upper Waitaki Water Zone Committee, and a two-person scientist panel of one expert nominated by the regional council and one nominated by the consent-holders would be formed to review the relevant consents.

ECan's Upper Waitaki Water Zone Committee has approved \$73,000 – over three years – of Immediate Steps funding towards pest weed control in the Dobson and lower Hopkins valleys.

Ecan has refuted Forest & Bird's recent claim that it has been ignoring calls from health and environmental NGOs to address nitrate concentrations, saying it has long acknowledged the risk to ecological health – and potentially also to human health – that excessive nitrate in waterways can pose. Four Biosecurity Advisory groups (North, Central, South, and Christchurch & Banks Peninsula) are being set up to provide feedback on the approach and delivery of pest management, and champion good biosecurity practices within their communities.

ECan advice on burning in rural areas.

In rural areas outside of ECan's clean air zones, provided there are no Fire and Emergency NZ restrictions in place, you can burn dry vegetation at any time of year, as long as conditions under the Canterbury Air Regional Plan are met. For example, the discharge must not cause an offensive, objectionable or an adverse effect beyond the boundary of the property of origin. Any outdoor burns must also comply with Fire and Emergency NZ rules – see [checkitsalright.nz](http://checkitsalright.nz) to find out if any restrictions are in place in your area, or if you require a permit.

To report a burning related incident, call Environment Canterbury's incident response line on 0800 765 588 (24 hours), or use Snap Send Solve. If you believe a fire is threatening property or is out of control, call 111.

See full details on ECan's outdoor burning rules on its website.

**The next meeting of Environment Canterbury's  
Upper Waitaki Water Zone Committee is  
Friday, August 16, 2019  
at the Mackenzie Country Inn, Twizel  
All are welcome**

**Minutes and agendas are posted at:**

**<https://ecan.govt.nz/your-region/your-environment/water/whats-happening-in-my-water-zone/upper-waitaki-water-zone/>**

**[www.ecan.govt.nz](http://www.ecan.govt.nz)**



# Omarama Airfield Ltd

An update from the Directors following their Board meeting of July 2019

## **Airfield Operations**

Youth Glide have advised that they have confirmed the order for their winch and the unit will be delivered to the airfield in November. The company has agreed a winch launch strip location and will now undertake works to establish that and will extend the irrigation system so that the strip can be maintained. The addition of a winch to the airfield will provide a cost-effective launch option for pilots. The company will review its Health and Safety Policy and the Safe Operating Procedures to ensure they accommodate this new activity.

## **The Terminal Building**

The board is to engage a professional designer to assist with the terminal renovation project and will progress this project with input from users over the next few months.

## **District Plan Review**

The board has reviewed the Waitaki District Council's Omarama Masterplan and has identified a number of matters which are of interest to the airfield. A submission on the Masterplan will now be made and the board will ensure that the airfield is represented at the meetings which are scheduled in the next few months.

## **Spring Clean.**

The airfield has become the resting place for a number of unused vehicles and other pieces of equipment. The company is determined to maintain a 'presentable' facility and will notify airfield users that unused vehicles and equipment will be removed on November 1 if they are not removed by the owners prior to that date.

## **Directors**

The board received an informal report on the matter of directors' liability and following a lengthy discussion will now review the current directors' liability insurance and review company and directors' liability arising from non-compliance with airfield by-laws and policies. The board will then put in place whatever measures are required to ensure that the airfield is operated and managed in full compliance with its policies and regulations.

## **Briefly**

The board is progressing:

- the Waitaki District Council's waste water disposal project.
- discussions with adjoining landowners re the airfield entrance
- the search for and appointment of an Airfield Manager
- maintenance and capital expenditure for the year to come

**Clive Geddes:** [clivegeddes@xtra.co.nz](mailto:clivegeddes@xtra.co.nz) **Terry Jones:** [morganjones@xtra.co.nz](mailto:morganjones@xtra.co.nz)

**Richard Subtil:** [subtil@omaramastation.co.nz](mailto:subtil@omaramastation.co.nz) **Glen Claridge:** [glenclaridge@yahoo.com](mailto:glenclaridge@yahoo.com)



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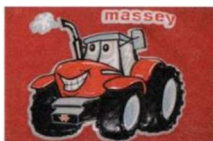
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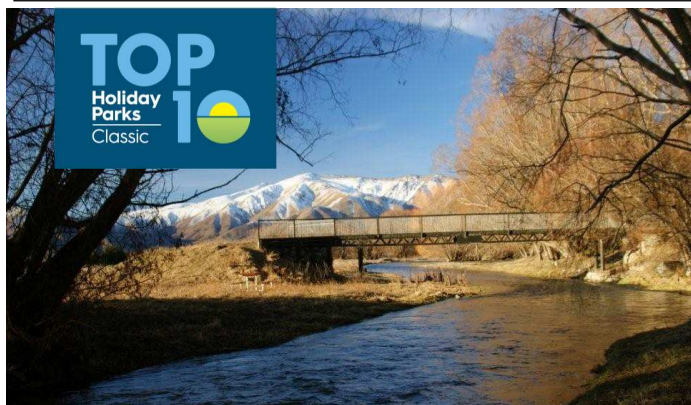
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# Situations Vacant

**Omarama Visitor Information Centre**  
*Casual Customer Service Consultant*



Tourism Waitaki Limited (TWL) is looking for a Customer Service Consultant to join the Visitor Information Centre team on a casual basis. If you enjoy working as part of a team or independently and would like a job where you can proudly represent the Waitaki District and assist visitors with their travel arrangements, we want to hear from you.

To succeed in this role, you must have:

- Proven customer service and interpersonal skills
- Well-developed sales skills and experience
- Good knowledge of Microsoft office applications and booking systems is preferred
- A passion for Omarama and the Waitaki district
- An outgoing, friendly personality with a "can do" attitude
- A self-starter, able to work independently and committed to deliver quality results
- Tourism qualification and foreign language skills would be an advantage

Must be available holidays and weekends. You must be a New Zealand resident to apply for this role. To apply please send a covering letter together with your CV to Melanie Jones – [mel@waitakinz.com](mailto:mel@waitakinz.com). Applications close 5pm 21st August 2019.

Full job description available on our website [www.waitakinz.com/contact/careers](http://www.waitakinz.com/contact/careers)

## Wanted

We are looking for someone  
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Friday, Saturday and Sunday

*Competitive rate paid.*

**Please give Prue a call 027 442 0275**

## Reliable cleaner wanted

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Hours will vary depending on season  
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rate paid.*



# Omarama Airfield Maintenance Manager

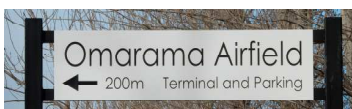
Omarama Airfield Limited have a vacancy for an airfield maintenance manager.

The position is seasonal with up to 120 hours work per month between late October 2019 and the end of April 2020.

Daily working hours are generally split between morning and late afternoon. There is a possibility that the workload will expand to full-time five days a week and there is the potential for job sharing over seven days a week.

Responsibilities are for the maintenance of the airfield and its infrastructure so experience with tractors, mowers and irrigation equipment is an advantage but not essential because the company will have a full induction process for the successful candidate.

The position is ideal for any glider pilots who want a season of South Island soaring combined with a job.



**A full description and sample contract is available.  
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# The View from the Chook House



*Due to this morning's lack-of-warm-mash situation, you should know we are interviewing others for your position!*

---

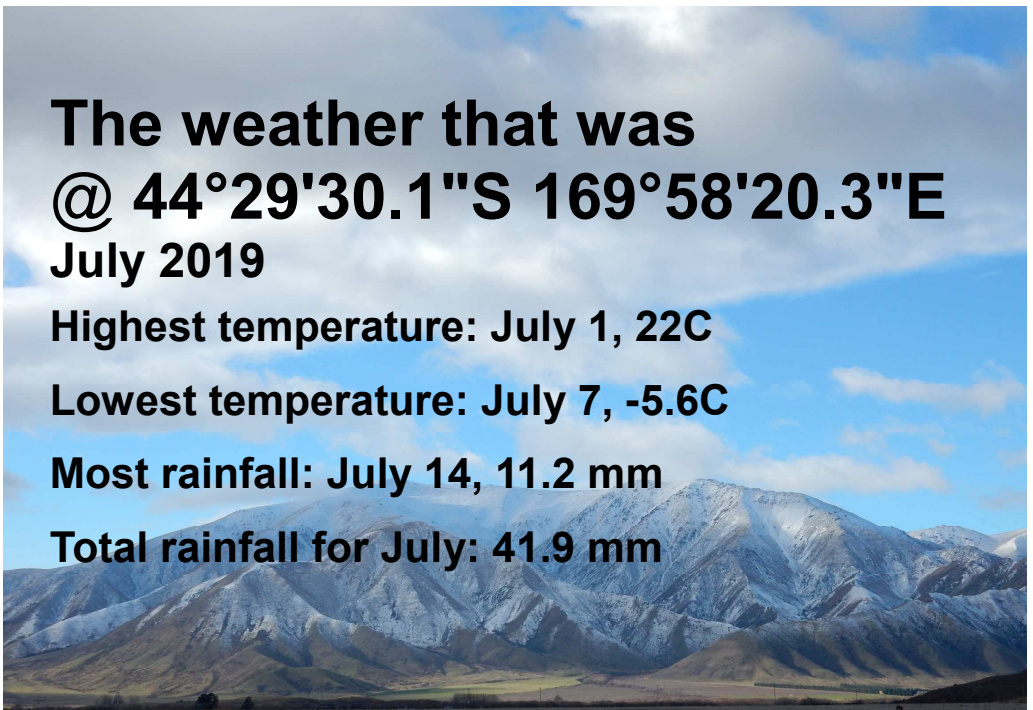
**The weather that was  
@ 44°29'30.1"S 169°58'20.3"E  
July 2019**

**Highest temperature: July 1, 22C**

**Lowest temperature: July 7, -5.6C**

**Most rainfall: July 14, 11.2 mm**

**Total rainfall for July: 41.9 mm**



# The Ghan and Kakadu (Gagudju)

Someone asked if it was on my bucket list.

No, it wasn't. Not even close.

I love train journeys. I'd say you have to love trains to do this.

But it was doubtless the stories that clinched it.

From the Indian Ocean to the Southern Ocean (almost).

North to south across that Great Southern Land.

From the ancient past through to the present.

There is layer upon layer of stories.

We scarcely scraped the surface.

It was superficial but not insincere.

My childhood was spent with Aussie friends who told their own stories of the outback, of strange and faraway places where people lived underground to escape the heat and dug deep for sparkling stones. In Australia everything wants to kill you. And then, of course, there was Crocodile Dundee.

**In the beginning there was the Dream Time.** The Rainbow Serpent pushed her way up through barren earth forming red and ochre ridges, mountains, gorges and valleys as she writhed her way to the surface before coiling up to sleep in a cool deep waterhole, appearing again when the sun touches her body after a rainstorm. Do not rouse her lest she churn up the land again.

For 20,000 years they have drawn the stories of ancestors and spirits at Ubirr, in [Kakadu](#), on overhanging bluffs and caves of the Arnhem Escarpment which mere millions of years before were cliffs on the edge of an ocean.

Those artist-historians, sheltering from the great Wet drew to record, to educate and inform, and sometimes warn all hunters, gatherers and travellers as they paused in their journeys from escarpment to floodplain.

They painted it like they saw it – a thylacine and a sailing ship.

It is the longest historical record of any group of people in the world.

The time that has passed - sunrise to sunset, wet season to dry - since this land emerged is incomprehensible.

Tour leader Jeff carefully coaxes our raggley-taggley bunch of clumsy outback 'explorers' – sunhats, sunglasses, white legs and ill-fitting closed-in shoes – in the path of thousands before us to the highest point of these time-smoothed flat-stacked bluffs to gaze out over the vast Nadab flood-plain, all sapphire and emerald green with life.

"I'll let you have some time to feel the serenity," he says.

An Aussie dad joke, I think, but then no one else laughs. Eeek.

The sense of place dominates and, no instruction needed, we find our own space to stand and stare. No words.

**"We tell you stories that have been told to us by our old people."**

We clamber single file onto the canopied flat-bottomed boat, sit row-by-row and listen to the obligatory safety message. No leaning over the rails please – the crocs can jump. Okay, that learned me – maybe I won't bend over, just even a little bit, to get that better shot. We're just a boat full of crocodile bait.

Our indigenous guide, with wicked humour, tells his story as he expertly weaves up the East Alligator River and to other side to set us down in Arnhem Land, his backyard. There is no other sign of human life.

With sing-song rhythm he recounts.

"They left again as soon as they arrived, the Dutch, those first Hollanders, the Hollanders, the Balanda.

"They thought no-one was here."

But the Balanda had been silently observed by shadows.

A painting of a fully-rigged two-masted sailing ship with anchor chain was added to the cave gallery.

He weaves in the stories of totems – names of legend, with power, that link people, places, animals and plants to each other and the land - as we pass other residents of this estuarine river taking their siesta on or under the peeling paperbarks and strappy pandanus. The white belly sea eagle, the squawking, squabbling flying fox, the jabiru and egret, and never forget, the almost invisible, ever-present, silently watching ginga – just how many salt-water crocodile can you spot before they spot you. Arms in the boat. Smile.

### **They told the world this story.**

"Oh, the power and the passion, sometimes you've got to take the hardest line."

The Rainbow Serpent did not gouge out this landscape.

The Balanda were warned of poisoned land. Something in those soils made people fall ill, the old stories said.

But the Balanda had plans in mind for the uranium deposits at Jabiluka and Kakadu. It took concerted effort - Yvonne Margarula of the Mirarr and Peter Garrett of Midnight Oil among many – to put a halt to the expansionist dreams of uranium miners and to extract a promise from Rio Tinto the present works at its Ranger Mine would be fully restored in keeping with the surrounding National Park by 2020.

Jeff drives us smartly past the security gates and workings. He's not permitted to stop.

From the coach we see the immense deep cut, straight-sided excavations step down to murky waters where a tethered orange serpent-boom writhes on the surface of this waterhole. Can they really turn back time? Will they?

### **Here's a story, old and new.**

We dance under a dark milky-way canopy in this red centre, to heartbeat rhythms of the didgeridoo and the Heartbeat band.

I look down at the desert beneath our feet – footprints in the sand.

Each has a story of how they came to dance here under the stars at the Telegraph Station, at Alice Springs – named for springs that didn't exist, and for a woman who never did set foot there.

Here is a story of colonial conquest, of exploration, tragedy and triumph.

Of surveyors who died in the desert surrounded by food, medicine and water...if only they'd thought to ask.

Of pioneers, who raced against the clock and the Rainbow Serpent – the bringer of the monsoon - to plant poles and lay cable through desert and rain forest and, finally, under the Java Sea to link Southern Australia with Mother England.

Before 1872, your message could take four months by ship to reach folks back home. After the telegraph line was built, morse code messages travelling through

Alice Springs could reach London in as little as five hours.

I text the children. It takes seconds. It's only to New Zealand, mind.

The band stops playing.

We look up through the dark and "Starman" Dan Falzon tells us good night stories of the stars.

Those anchors in the hemispheres that guide all who have sought to navigate the globe.

The Southern Cross marks our - Aussie and Kiwi - place in the world.

Today, I saw the Flower of Blood blooming in the desert. Renamed Sturt's Desert Pea by those who knew no different, for the man who 'discovered' it.

It tells the story for those who cannot speak – of blood spilt, of invasion, conflict and domination, of pain and endings.

I first saw this black-eyed beauty on a 7c postage stamp. A stamp which paid the passage of a message over land and sea.

### **Lest we forget these stories**

The war to end all wars did not. We learn nothing. Wars begin and war goes on.

On the morning of February 19, 1942, in the first and deadliest of two raids on the same day, 242 aircraft hit Darwin, more bombs were dropped on Darwin than at Pearl Harbour 10 weeks earlier, more ships sank, and more civilians were killed in Darwin than Pearl Harbour.

The story was not told then. The world did not hear the silent and awkward truth, the new historians say. Lest we forget.

They say, in all, Darwin has been almost wiped off the map five times – three times by cyclones, including Tracy, and twice in acts of war. That's not counting the other 62 raids.

It's been 45 years since Tracy arrived on Christmas Day. In recent years authorities have relaxed stringent cyclone building codes and Darwin heads upwards to a multi-story skyline.

### **Once upon a dream time**

The Rainbow Serpent was here at the [Breakaways](#). I see the signs.

It's as if she chose this dried up inland sea for her dust bath.

We stand on a piece of tableland, chill desert wind on our face, and gaze into interminable vastness under an immense blue dome of sky.

White and ochre and paprika and charcoal sands, like the spilled coloured sands of an hourglass, spread out to the far horizon. Heaped in mounds, piled up at the sides. The mine tailings at Coober Pedy, burrowed out and heaped high in opal fever, also stretch out as far as the eye can see, but in a poor imitation of the Rainbow Serpent's work.

Young Willy Hutchison found an opal at Kupa Peti – the white man's hole in the ground - in 1915.

The race to riches began. By 1999, there were more than 250,000 mine shaft entrances in the area.

All dream of great riches. Most also live underground.

And at the end of a hard day there's always golf.

To avoid the heat, they play at night, using glowing balls and their own piece of turf for tee-ing off.

There are no grassy 'greens'.

One day some Aussie 'cheek' and Scottish cunning aligned, and the Coober Pedy Opal Fields Golf Club became the only club in the world with reciprocal rights at The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews.

### **Let me tell you a story**

The Ghan, named for the 'Afghan' cameleers who once drove their camel 'trains' laden with cargo into the red centre, is 90-years-old.

But not until 2004 was the line was extended to Darwin - 2979km from beginning to end.

In its history it's transported adventurers, settlers, construction materials, provisions, and four hens and a rooster.

Now we come as guests, quasi outback explorers, just along for the ride.

And what a ride.

This 912 metre, 1654 tonnes of silver serpent hauled by its distinctive red diesel electric locomotives is but a tiny silver sliver weaving across that expansive outback red - dwarfed by the landscape, dwarfed by its history.

Our journey – four days and three nights – average speed 85kph - draws to an end at Adelaide Parklands Terminal.

(Get that? Sorry!)

Not quite satisfied, we catch a tram to Glenelg, step off at the end of the line and onto the beach to touch the waves for the second time on our trip – from Mindil Beach to Glenelg Beach, north to south across the Great Southern Land.

Hah! It's much colder.

We walk to the end of the jetty – I swear you can see the Southern Ocean from here.

The wind blasts the salt spray - an Antarctic chill on its back.

A Boeing 737-800 passes overhead and to the east.

### **One last story**

"And where are you from?" we all ask each other.

"Omarama, you'll never know it," we answer.

"Yes, I know Omarama," he says.

"I once saw them land a plane on the main street, there, right outside the pub."

We've come full circle, take me back to the start. Home.

I think of another piece of ancient wisdom.

"You never step in the same river twice because neither you nor the river remain unchanged."

### **The last word**

"Our land has a big story. Sometimes we tell a little at a time. Come and hear our stories, see our land ...a little might stay in your heart. If you want more, you can come back." - Jacob Nayinggul, Manilakarr clan.

N.B. We paid our own way there and back :)





## **The Last Page is Classifieds**

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