

# YOUREX



## MEET SUGAR

Remembering Jools Topp

Fighting NZ First's Gender Bill

Is It Time You Moved To Christchurch?

The Kiwi Non-Binary Sex Worker Story That Will Have You Shook

Get Ready For The Rainbow Games

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## FROM THE EDITOR



### A Pop of Colour to Warm Your Winter

As we approach the shortest day of the year, we wanted to warm you up with a bright, colourful cover, provided by the iconic Auckland Live Cabaret Festival.

Winter can feel like a dark time, particularly in this political climate in the run-up to this year's election. However, we are thrilled to have Judy O'Brien return to the pages of *YOUR EX* to highlight, in the most human way, why NZ First's Legislation (Definitions of Man and Woman) Amendment Bill is politics at its very worst. (Our Mortal Kombat-themed editorial pic is apt, because we intend to 'FIGHT' it.)

Judy is not the only writer who returns to *YOUR EX* this issue. Welcome back to Wellington stalwart Gareth Watkins, who brings us more fascinating slices of Aotearoa's queer history.

Also not to be missed is Jessie Lewthwaite's witty and insightful guide to sapphic dating, or our seriously sexy hook-up app-inspired photoshoot. Something for everyone. Enjoy!

*Olly & Matt xx*



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# YOUR EX

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## YOUR EX'S TALENTS



#### JUDY O'BRIEN

is a proud trans woman and the Chief Executive for InsideOUT Kōaro, a national youth organisation that exists to ensure takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi are free to thrive.



#### ARANI CUTHBERT

is an award-winning independent producer based in Auckland. In 1992, she began managing well-loved entertainers Dames Lynda and Jools Topp, the Topp Twins, who became Kiwi national treasures.



#### DR MATARORIA LYNDON

is the Co-Founder and Director of Population Health & Equity at Tend. He's also a public health doctor and senior lecturer, championing inclusive healthcare for our rainbow whānau.



#### GARETH WATKINS

runs PrideNZ, a community website exploring the voices and opinions of Aotearoa's rainbow communities through over 700 audio recordings of interviews and local LGBTQ+ events.



#### JESSIE LEWTHWAITE

works in rainbow inclusion and awareness and likes to joke that she is gay for pay. She splits her spare time between co-chairing the Rainbow NZ Charitable Trust, being an exec for Rainbow Auckland and playing video games.



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Scenes of joy at QTopia's Youth Ball in 2021.

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# GENDER BILL RISKS HARMING ALL NEW ZEALANDERS

*If NZ First's bill passes into law, InsideOUT Kōaro's CEO, Judy O'Brien, believes it is not only rainbow New Zealanders who will be hurt by it, but all of us*

**V**ibrant, resilient rainbow rangatahi packed into the iconic queer youth balls hosted across Aotearoa this summer.

The Wellington event, a collaboration between Wellington Pride, Massey University, and InsideOUT Kōaro, saw just under 200 young people of all shapes, sizes, and identities dancing, shrieking, and gleefully spinning circles in a momentary world of their own design.

For a cohort more likely than their peers to experience depression, anxiety, and self-harm due to stigma and discrimination, these moments of joy and connection save lives. These spaces emerge in response to the social, cultural, and political choices we make about whose lives are valued and whose rights are defended.

From women's suffrage to marriage equality, Aotearoa has long taken pride in its egalitarian tradition, in expanding rights and protections rather than restricting them. This is why the recent string of political actions designed to punch down is landing heavily for many people.

The recent first reading of the Legislation (Definitions of Man and Woman) Amendment Bill dressed prejudice as piety and bore down further on communities already carrying the weight of increasing public scrutiny and

political debate about their right to exist safely and openly.

The Attorney-General's analysis of the bill raised serious concerns, finding it inconsistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act, particularly the right to be free from discrimination. The report highlights that imposing fixed biological definitions of "man" and "woman" across all legislation could disadvantage transgender, non-binary, and intersex people while also creating practical uncertainty for women under the age of 20, risking unintended consequences across healthcare, legal rights, and public services. Ultimately, the advice suggests there is no clear evidence that such sweeping changes are needed, and that they will do more damage to women, intersex, and gender minorities than do any good for anyone.

The bill fails to address the actual issues facing women, particularly when those issues are not experienced equally. Māori, Pacific, disabled, and migrant women continue to face inequitable pay, access to healthcare, safety from violence, and fair treatment under the law. By contrast, narrowly defining what a woman is does not improve safety or wellbeing. It creates environments where women are scrutinised, questioned, and judged. That is not inclusion. That is control. **Cisgender women are already being harassed in changing rooms and public spaces for not looking "feminine enough."**

No piece of legislation can erase the facts of our diversity. What legislation can do, however, is shape the conditions of society. It can either strengthen social cohesion, dignity, and respect, or entrench stigma, exclusion, and harm.

At InsideOUT Kōaro, we work alongside young people every day. We see extraordinary resilience, leadership, and a healthy dose of silliness. We also see the impact of hostile public discourse. This sends a message, intentionally or not, that some people's identities are up for debate or subject to limitation. Our rangatahi face mental health challenges not because of who they are, but because of how they are treated.

To every takatāpui, MVPFAFF+, transgender, non-binary, and intersex person reading this: you do not need legislation to validate your existence. Your identity is not up for debate. And, to paraphrase the late, great Georgina Beyer: "You're not wrong! You belong here!"

I encourage all New Zealanders who care about fairness, inclusion, and human dignity to make a submission on this bill. Public submissions matter, and every single voice counts. This conversation is about more than definitions. It is about the kind of country we want to be, a country that protects people rather than politicises them. Aotearoa has always been strongest when it chooses inclusion over exclusion and, in doing so, preserves the wellbeing, dignity, and joy of its rangatahi.

Submissions are being accepted until Thursday 2 July and can be made at [parliament.nz](https://parliament.nz) or use this QR code



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# VISIBILITY, COURAGE AND COMMUNITY: JUNE'S QUEER HISTORY

*Gareth Watkins highlights June dates that helped shape Aotearoa's Rainbow rights journey*

## 30 June 1962

Under the headline “Banning of Book”, *The Press* newspaper reported that James Courage’s novel *A Way of Love* had effectively been banned by the Customs Department due to its homosexual themes. The novel, first published in London in 1959, had been freely available in New Zealand for over three years. *The Press* reviewer noted that Courage’s approach to the subject was “sober, serious and dignified”. However, after receiving advice from the Customs Department, public libraries and booksellers withdrew the book. At the time, the department had no official power to ban the book, but advised that action could be taken if it was imported or displayed. In 2020, author Christopher Burke reflected, “The censoring of the novel had a hugely detrimental impact on him as an individual. Despite the support of friends and well-wishers, he really never truly regained his literary voice.” *A Way of Love* is now widely credited as the first gay novel by a New Zealander.

## 30 June 1978

Gay rights activists marked Blue Jeans Day, a national visibility campaign built around something deliberately ordinary: denim. A leaflet from the time asked, “Why blue jeans?” and answered that everyone wore them: the bus driver, shop assistant, factory worker, teacher and lawyer. “Blue jeans are everywhere,” it declared. “Gay people are everywhere.” The campaign invited people to wear blue jeans on 30 June to support gay rights. One of those taking part was Kevin Hague, then a young activist at Auckland University. In a 2016 interview, Hague recalled that most students wore jeans anyway, giving the action a “built-in defensive mechanism.” If challenged, someone could simply say they were just an ordinary

student wearing jeans. But the gesture still mattered. Hague remembered deliberately taking part and “feeling extraordinarily brave.”

## 18 June 1985

Television news reported from Auckland on the first public meeting of H.U.G., Heterosexuals Unafraid of Gays. More than 200 people had gathered to counter the increasing vitriol aimed at Rainbow communities as the Homosexual Law Reform Bill continued to be debated in Parliament. One mother interviewed said, “I have joined H.U.G. because I am the mother of a gay son. I would like to be able to mix with people who have an understanding of homosexuality and be able to do something positive to enlighten society at large.” H.U.G. branches soon appeared in other centres, including Christchurch and Wellington. Hugh Young was a member in Wellington and recalled writing and distributing press releases to media outlets. While many were not picked up, one success came when the group mocked a proposed exemption to the Bill for groups such

as the police, fire brigade and armed forces, calling it the “Shiny Buttons Amendment.”

## Heritage Spotlight:

The Charlotte Museum Trust was established in 2007 with the aim of collecting, preserving and exhibiting Lesbian Sapphic Herstory and cultural experiences, including the things people wore, carried, made, read, danced beside, marched with and kept. As founding trustee Miriam Saphira recalled in a 2012 interview, the idea emerged from a practical concern: “Well, maybe we need a museum of lesbian objects. There’s all these things, what’s gonna happen to them?” The name also honours two women connected with the KG Club, Auckland’s first lesbian club: Charlotte Prime and Charlotte Smith, both of whom passed away around the time the museum was being established. Almost 20 years later, the organisation continues as a museum, gallery, research library and archive. It prides itself on being a safe, inclusive space for all Rainbow communities and allies. To discover its collections, visit [charlottemuseum.co.nz](http://charlottemuseum.co.nz)



# FORTY YEARS SINCE HOMOSEXUAL LAW REFORM:

## HONOURING THE PAST, PROTECTING THE FUTURE

*Rainbow Labour's Georgie Dansey MP honours the activists, leaders and communities who helped advance LGBTQ+ equality.*

In 2026, Aotearoa New Zealand marks a big milestone: 40 years since the passage of the Homosexual Law Reform Act 1986. This landmark legislation decriminalised consensual sexual activity between men aged 16 and over, bringing an end to decades of legal persecution and stigma. The 40th anniversary is a moment of celebration, as well as a time for reflection on the courage of those who fought for change, the political leadership that made it possible, and the ongoing journey towards full equality in Aotearoa.

The Homosexual Law Reform Bill was brought to Parliament by Labour MP Fran Wilde in the mid-1980s, a time when public opinion was sharply divided and the push for change faced intense opposition, including large-scale protests and deeply personal attacks on advocates. Wilde's leadership, with the support of Labour colleagues, helped guide the legislation through a bruising parliamentary process. When the bill passed in July 1986, it marked one of the most significant human rights victories in New Zealand's modern history.

As a rainbow person, I joined the Labour Party because I saw it as a party that has consistently played a pivotal role in advancing rights for the rainbow community. In 1993, Labour supported sexual orientation being included as a prohibited ground of discrimination in the Human Rights Act. This was an important step in shifting from decriminalisation to protection. This change helped ensure that LGBTQ+ New Zealanders could challenge discrimination in employment, housing, and public life.

The early 2000s saw further progress. The Civil Union Act 2004, passed under a Labour government, provided legal recognition for same-sex couples at a time when marriage equality remained politically contentious. While not a complete solution, civil unions represented a meaningful acknowledgement of LGBTQ+ relationships and rights. This legislation ensured that dignity and inclusion were affirmed for rainbow people.



One of the most notable pieces of legislation was the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Act 2013, which legalised same-sex marriage in New Zealand. This reform was introduced as a member's bill by Labour MP Louisa Wall. The passage of marriage equality positioned New Zealand as a global leader in LGBTQ+ rights and reflected decades of groundwork laid by activists and allies.

I'm really proud of the work Labour has done to ensure increased representation of openly LGBTQ+ MPs within Labour ranks, which has helped normalise diverse identities in public life and ensured that policymaking reflects lived experience. This visibility affirms that LGBTQ+ people belong in every space where decisions are made.

Today, Labour continues to support the rainbow community through policies focused on inclusion, health, and wellbeing. This includes backing bans on conversion practices, strengthening anti-discrimination protections, and supporting inclusive education initiatives. Labour continues to work to address the specific challenges faced by transgender, non-binary,

takatāpui, and other marginalised groups within the broader LGBTQ+ community.

At a time when some political parties are using discrimination against rainbow people as a populist football to win votes, standing together is more important than ever. Commemorating the 40-year anniversary of homosexual law reform means honouring the past while renewing a commitment to the future. For me, it's about standing up and being proud of being rainbow, and proud of our rainbow whānau.

There are events happening across the country to celebrate this important event. Check in with your local rainbow community group to find out what's happening in your area.

*Authorised by Georgie Dansey MP, Parliament Buildings, Wellington, funded by Parliamentary Service.*



Topp Twins.

# “PURE JOY AND LOVE”

- ARANI CUTHBERT REMEMBERS DAME JOOLS TOPP

*Oliver Hall speaks to Arani Cuthbert, the Topp Twins’ long-time manager, about Dame Jools Topp’s generosity, courage, politics, and the quiet life behind one of Aotearoa’s most beloved public figures.*

For more than four decades, Dame Jools Topp helped Aotearoa see itself differently: funnier, kinder, more rural, more political and more proudly queer. Alongside her twin sister, Dame Lynda Topp, Jools turned country music, character comedy and unapologetic lesbian visibility into something deeply and unmistakably Kiwi. Following Jools’ death from breast cancer at 68, Arani Cuthbert sat down with YOUR EX to pay tribute to Jools.

## WHAT ARE YOUR FONDEST MEMORIES OF MANAGING THE TOPP TWINS?

They were, in a way, the antithesis of the celebrity personality. They certainly didn’t want the lifestyle that you see on social media today. They had all this talent. They could connect with audiences anywhere. They went across just as well overseas, even in places like the Old Time Country Music Festival in Iowa.

That was an incredible experience because it was heartland Midwest, and a lot of the older audience members actually thought they were

boys. It was a competition festival, and they won first prize for yodelling and for country comedy! We managed to escape without people realising they were actually women. It was bizarre.

## WHAT DID YOU MOST ADMIRE ABOUT JOOLS?

Her honesty, generosity and kindness.

She was a huge animal lover. She always had a house full of animals, and that has been heartbreaking, seeing her animals mourn her.

And her courage. She was obviously proud to be a lesbian, and they helped me come out. My earliest memory of the Topp Twins was, like many people in Auckland, seeing them busking in Queen Street. Their song ‘Paradise’ certainly helped many women of my generation to ‘cross the road’ and accept who they were in terms of their sexuality.

It was such a celebration of women’s music that the twins were part of. There were other amazing female artists and bands too, so it was a very exciting time to be a young lesbian in Auckland.





Seattle International Film Festival with Arani.

**MOST OF OUR READERS WILL HAVE SEEN JOOLS' STAGE AND SCREEN PERSONAS, BUT WAS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT JOOLS BEHIND THE SCENES THAT MIGHT SURPRISE THEM?**

She was a real homebody. She loved being at home on her farm with her animals. That was her happy place.

Much to my frustration at times, she turned down exciting international opportunities to remain in New Zealand. That was hard as their manager because I could see how far they could go.

**WERE THOSE OPPORTUNITIES THAT WOULD HAVE INVOLVED LIVING OVERSEAS?**

Yes.

Jools, more than Lynda, always wanted to come home. I look back on it, and I remember thinking, "This is what keeps her going." It probably contributed to how enduring their career was, that they did have time to replenish.

Jools was true to herself. People often say, "I need to find out who I am and what makes me happy," and that is often quite a big challenge for people. It wasn't for Jools. She knew who she was. She knew what made her happy, and when she did those things, she was completely in the moment, especially when performing.

And what they were doing through their music and comedy was really changing people's hearts and minds, and that was quite something to witness back then.

**WE'RE IN AN ELECTION YEAR THAT IS ALSO THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF HOMOSEXUAL LAW REFORM. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU THINK JOOLS WOULD WANT PEOPLE TO HAVE FRONT OF MIND NOW?**

It's a real shame, because the world needs, and New Zealand in particular needs, the Topp Twins now just as much as we did back in the '80s and '90s. If her health had allowed, she would have been a lot more politically active recently.

The twins have always supported the Labour Party, way back through the Helen Clark years, and of course, Jacinda bought their caravan for her campaign. I know they felt that it was very sad and shocking how Jacinda has been treated, and what has happened to this country since Covid.

It feels like the response to Jacinda has unmasked an unfortunate deep schism of misogyny and selfishness. Under the very extreme form of capitalism we're all living under now, there are a lot of hurt, disenfranchised people all wanting to blame somebody.

That's why I still come back to what the twins did in their live performances as being so radical. They did not falter from putting their message across, but they did it in a way that was not bombastic at all. It was wrapped up with very clever comedy and music that mainstream audiences responded to.

**IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE RAINBOW NEW ZEALANDERS, IN PARTICULAR, TO REMEMBER ABOUT JOOLS?**

Our Rainbow community has become quite divisive too. I can't put words in Jools' mouth, but I know that didn't make her happy.

We are all different, and we just have to celebrate those differences. We're living through times where people seem to be dividing one another. Identity politics has become so loaded.

What really matters is that we're tolerant and kind. We should celebrate our humanity and not be so judgemental.

**IS THERE ANYTHING ABOUT HER RELATIONSHIP WITH LYNDA THAT YOU THINK WOULD SURPRISE OUR READERS?**

A twin relationship is like no other sibling relationship. They were just so bonded.

In the last 15 years or so, they lived separately for the first time in their lives. But in the last year and a half, they lived back together again, with Lynda being Jools' caregiver. Lynda was amazing. She really stepped up as a brilliant nurse and cared for Jools at home, right to the end.

**IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE OUR READERS TO REMEMBER?**

Their generosity.

There was a very big heart there. They always helped people who didn't have very much, in a way that they didn't get accolades for.

In the early days, when we were touring, they liked to befriend hitchhikers, who were usually broke travellers. They would always take them out for a meal or give them some cash along the way.

It was that very simple generosity that wasn't about trumpeting their own goodness. It was just low-key.

They weren't just incredible entertainers. They were really great people with great values. It's that value set, and the love they had for this country, that audiences responded to.

Sure, they were brilliant singer-songwriters and comedians, but behind that there was an energy like no other. For me, that energy was pure joy and love. That's why we're all mourning this loss, because those are pretty rare commodities, really.

# LOVE IN MOTION:

## KAPIERI & ANTONIO'S CREATIVE PARTNERSHIP



*Partners in life and choreography, Kapieri Samisoni and Antonio Matagi talk to Oliver Hall about coming out, creative differences, and bringing their first shared work, Kamata(a)ga, to the Pacific Dance Festival.*

**HOW AND WHEN DID THE TWO OF YOU FIRST MEET, AND WHAT WERE YOUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF EACH OTHER?**

**K:** We first met in 2018 during a dance collaboration workshop between Auē Dance Company and Rako Pasefika Dance Company. Nio was already a member of Auē, while I was dancing with Rako. Later, I auditioned for Auē Dance Company because I loved its Pacific contemporary fusion style, and since Rako is based in Fiji, it felt like the perfect opportunity... My first impression of Nio was that he was always late to rehearsals and that he

was the oldest member of the dance company.

**A:** I didn't really have a strong first impression of Kapi because we were still getting to know each other. I also never imagined I'd end up meeting or dating someone from the same dance company.

**WHEN DID YOU REALISE THIS RELATIONSHIP WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL?**

**K:** During the 2018 summer break, we started spending more time together and slowly fell for each other. We kept our relationship a secret because there was a rule in the dance company

that members weren't allowed to date. At first, we told ourselves it would just be a summer romance and that we'd leave it there once the break ended. As the summer came to an end, we realised we couldn't let each other go, and from that moment on, we've been together ever since.

**WHAT DO YOU ADMIRE MOST ABOUT EACH OTHER?**

**K:** I admire Nio's kindness and his heart full of love. I admire his creativity, his passion for the things he loves and how hardworking and dedicated he is in everything he does.

**A:** I admire Kapi's intelligence, youthful spirit and fun-loving nature.

**WHAT DID COMING OUT LOOK LIKE FOR EACH OF YOU?**

**A:** Simply being myself without having to say anything or openly announce that I was gay.

## DANCE

It was about growing into a place where I felt confident, comfortable within my family, and able to fully embrace who I am.

**K:** It was the complete opposite for me. Coming out was a disaster at first, a real rollercoaster of emotions and one of the lowest points in my life. I felt like I had disappointed my parents especially. Back then, my sisters were the only ones who truly supported me and stood by me through everything. Thankfully, times have changed. My parents now fully support me and love me for who I am, and that's all I ever wanted. Surprisingly, it didn't take long for my dad to come around, but my mum definitely took the longest. I like to think it's because I'm such a mama's boy.

### DID YOU HAVE EXAMPLES OF QUEER PACIFIC LOVE AROUND YOU GROWING UP?

**Both:** No, not that we can remember. Growing up, it was always quite a touchy subject, especially when it came to seeing queer relationships on TV or in movies. It just wasn't something we saw openly represented around us very often.

### WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO YOUNG QUEER PACIFIC PEOPLE WHO MAY BE SCARED TO COME OUT, OR UNSURE WHERE THEY FIT?

**A:** First and foremost, YOU FIT. You deserve to express yourself and be exactly who you are, just like everyone else. It's sad that "coming out" still has to be such a big thing, or even a question people feel they need to face, especially in this day and age. Always remember that you are worthy, you belong and there is a place for you exactly as you are.

Kamata(a)ga is your first creative collaboration as choreographers and dancers. How did the idea first come about?

**K:** We wanted to tell our own stories and share our narratives through our own lens. At the same time, we wanted to honour both of our parents and create something that was just as much

### "My first impression of Nio was that he was always late to rehearsals..."

for them as it was for ourselves. This feels like only the beginning of what we hope will be many good things to come.

### WHAT HAVE YOU DISCOVERED ABOUT EACH OTHER AS ARTISTS THROUGH THIS PROCESS?

**A:** What's interesting is how creatively different we are in both our choreography styles and thought processes, but that's also the beauty of it. Where I might lack, Kapi makes up for, and vice versa. It's always a learning process for both of us, and we're constantly finding ways to meet in the middle with all of our crazy ideas.

### HOW DID YOU NAVIGATE MOMENTS WHERE YOUR CREATIVE INSTINCTS WERE DIFFERENT?

**K:** We've definitely had our heated moments during rehearsals, nothing like trying to choreograph while arguing in 8-counts. Through it all, we learned to really listen to each other and trust one another's creative instincts... Sometimes it meant compromising, sometimes it meant trying both ideas out, but in the end, those differences usually made the work stronger and more meaningful.

How do you hope this work contributes to Pacific contemporary dance?

**A:** I hope it spreads light and brings connection into spaces that may not always have culture at the centre. I also hope it inspires a new generation to pass on our traditions, values and culture in a new, contemporary way that feels relevant to today while still staying true to who we are.

**At the Pacific Dance Festival, Kamata(a)ga will be performed as part of a triple bill on 11 June at Māngere Arts Centre. Book at [pacificdance.org.nz](http://pacificdance.org.nz)**

## GROWING FAMILIES - SURROGACY INFORMATION SESSION

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# CANDACE KINSER:

“AUCKLAND CENTRAL  
NEEDS AN MP WHO  
WILL FIX THE BASICS  
AND BUILD THE  
FUTURE”

*National's candidate for  
Auckland Central sets  
out her vision for the city*

**“For LGBTQ+ and all people, that means being able to hold someone’s hand without being intimidated, harassed or excluded because of who they are.”**

## NATIONAL × YOUR EX

Candace Kinser, National's newly selected candidate for Auckland Central, is a first-time parliamentary candidate, but not new to politics, governance or public institutions. She is a former CEO of biotech and tech organisations, and has held governance roles for community groups such as the Cancer Society, has been a governor for the University of Auckland, and served on boards of significant research institutions, Crown entities and companies across the country.

She is entering one of the most watched electorate contests in the country, as National won the party vote in Auckland Central in 2023.

Kinser says her decision to stand now comes from a belief that Parliament needs more people with "real-world experience", and Auckland Central deserves an MP who is active in advocating for them locally and in Wellington.

"Since 2005, I have supported seven campaigns, helped shape policy thinking, and worked closely with Ministers on issues that matter to New Zealand," she tells *YOUR EX*.

"That experience has taught me that good politics is about listening, understanding what people are dealing with, building trust, bringing people together, and doing the work needed to get things moving."

What she hears most often from the electorate, she says, is that people want the city to feel easier to live in.

"The common thread is clear: we all want a city that works better for daily life. A city where small businesses are backed to grow, hospitality and nightlife can thrive, and where residents, students, visitors and workers feel safe, welcome and cared for.

"We are seeing the country turning a corner: inflation has eased from 32-year highs, interest rates have started to come down, and there has been a stronger focus on safety, with crime down significantly and continuing to decrease."

"The work is far from done. My job is to be a relentless advocate for Auckland Central, to make it easier to do business in the electorate, bring energy and life back to Queen Street through better access, support safer streets, and continue the work National is doing to protect the Hauraki Gulf. This electorate has enormous potential, but it needs someone who will keep showing up, keep connecting the right people, and keep pushing for decisions that make a visible difference."

The electorate takes in some of the country's most diverse city neighbourhoods, including places known for nightlife, hospitality, creativity and Rainbow community life. Kinser says that mix is part of Auckland Central's strength. "The wonderful thing about Auckland Central is the eclectic nature of it," she says. "The diversity is

part of its beauty and strength, with more than half of our community born overseas, giving us an incredible mix of cultures, ideas, energy and ambition."

That focus on delivery is also how Kinser describes the way her career would shape her approach to the job as an MP.

"Sometimes progress comes from a phone call, an agreed deadline, and someone who keeps asking, 'Right, what happens next?' Then following up until the job is done. That is how I would shape the role."

Of course, she is standing against one of Parliament's most recognisable queer MPs. She acknowledges Swarbrick's profile and political following but argues Auckland Central needs more than that.

"Chlöe is a highly recognisable political figure, and I respect that she has built a strong following. But Auckland Central needs more than profile; it needs advocacy, follow-through and delivery... It is fair to ask what Auckland Central has actually gained from having a high-profile Green MP?"

Then there is the question of what safety looks like, particularly in a city where queer life often depends on being able to move freely through nightlife areas, transport hubs, and streets.

"For LGBTQ+ and all people, that means being able to hold someone's hand without being intimidated, harassed or excluded because of who they are," she says.

Kinser points to National's work to restore real consequences for crime, as well as existing protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in areas such as work, housing, education, public places and services.

"Those who commit violent crime against our Rainbow community need to be held responsible. While the Green Party wants to abolish prisons and advocate for the rights of criminals, my National colleagues and I will continue to stand on the side of victims.

"Her own priorities would be to work with local authorities on clearer ways to report harassment or threats, better information about what support is available, and stronger coordination around the places where people can feel unsafe, especially nightlife areas, transport hubs, car parks and walking routes."

Asked what she wants *YOUR EX* readers to know about her personal commitment to Rainbow communities, Kinser focuses on "the freedom to live your life, the dignity of being treated equally, and the fairness of knowing the law protects you like everyone else."

"Some of my closest and dearest friends are gay, so this is personal for me as well as political. In Auckland Central, LGBTQ+ communities are part of the fabric of the electorate."

As Chair of the Cancer Society for Auckland and Northland, and as one of the founding trustees of the Well Foundation of Waitemata DHB, she says she has seen how much support matters when people are already under pressure.

"Getting access to transport, clear information, emotional support, outreach, help navigating appointments, and people who are able to walk with you on the journey is incredibly important," she says.

Kinser remains aware that some LGBTQ+ voters are cautious about voting National, but she believes some parts of the party's history are overlooked.

"National's record of support is broader than people sometimes realise," she says, citing Venn Young's 1974 Crimes Amendment Bill, the Human Rights Act 1993 under Jim Bolger's National Government, marriage equality passing under a National Government, the expungement of historic homosexual convictions, and support for birth certificate self-identification legislation.

Kinser says the 40th anniversary of Homosexual Law Reform is a reminder that the freedoms many New Zealanders now live with were hard won. "For older gay, bisexual and queer men, it represents something very profound: the freedom to love without being treated as a criminal," she says. "Forty years can sound like a long time ago, but it is actually within living memory, and many people are still carrying the scars of that time."

For younger people, she says, the anniversary is a reminder that progress takes work.

"The freedoms they now have were not just handed over. They were fought for by people who took real risks. So, to me, the anniversary is both a celebration and a responsibility. It celebrates courage, love and progress, and it also reminds us not to take people's dignity for granted."

On human-rights issues, Kinser tells us MPs must listen, but not simply follow "the loudest voice in the room".

"MPs must listen carefully to the public, but they also have to use judgement," she says. "That is the job!"

For younger Rainbow voters, her message is to stay alert without becoming consumed by fear.

"Younger Rainbow voters have grown up with rights that earlier generations fought hard for," she says. "It is easy to assume those rights will always be there, but history shows that progress needs to be looked after."

**For more information on National and Candace Kinser, visit [national.org.nz](http://national.org.nz)**  
*Authorised by C Kinser, 188 Ponsonby Road, Auckland*



RAINBOW GAMES

WHY KICKBALL  
WILL BE THE  
**RAINBOW  
GAMES'**  
MOST JOYFUL NEW SPORT

*Kickball may still be unfamiliar to many New Zealanders, but for Emerald City Kickball's Marcus Gadd, that is part of the excitement. As Rainbow Games Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland 2026 approaches, the Australian team is preparing to make its mark on Kiwi players and spectators, bringing with it a mix of softball-style rules, beginner-friendly play and a strong sense of queer community.*

**E**merald City Kickball is Australia's national queer kickball association, with teams in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. For those who have never seen a game, Gadd describes kickball in the simplest possible terms: "If dodgeball, baseball and football had a baby together." The game follows the same basic

structure as baseball, but instead of hitting a ball with a bat, players kick a large dodgeball with their feet.

The rules are easy to understand, which is part of the sport's charm. If the ball you kicked is caught, you are out. If the ball hits you, you are out. If the ball reaches a base before you do, you

are out. Otherwise, as Gadd puts it, you "kick the ball and run".

For New Zealanders more familiar with football and rugby, kickball has the closest resemblance to softball, "but with a twist". The ball is bigger, the pitching is slower and the target is easier, making it an accessible sport for people who may not consider themselves especially athletic.

In fact, Gadd is quick to dismiss the idea that players need to be sporty or fit to enjoy it.

"It's the kind of sport where the biggest cheer normally goes to someone making their first catch of the season, eight games in," he tells us.

From the sidelines, a kickball game may look a little like softball, but Emerald City Kickball brings its own unmistakable flavour. Gadd

says spectators can expect “a lot more colour, costumes, dancing and music”, creating an atmosphere that feels as much about connection as competition.

That sense of welcome is central to the experience. For anyone signing up to play kickball at the Rainbow Games with no previous experience, Gadd says the focus is on community, confidence and fun.

“If they want to get involved in a community and meet people without feeling like they need to be Michael Phelps, it’s the sport for them,” he explains. “Yes, there is a Guardians division for those who want to push themselves competitively, but otherwise it is the kind of sport where you leave feeling better about yourself and more connected to the community.”

New players do not need specialist gear either. Gadd recommends runners and clothing they feel comfortable moving in. As for etiquette, the most important rule is simple: everyone is welcome. Within Emerald City Kickball, players are placed into random teams each season, whether they are new or returning, giving everyone the chance to meet a fresh group of people.

Gadd’s own introduction to kickball came through his partner, who was already playing. During that first season, he watched from the sidelines and spent time with the players. The friendliness of the community made an immediate impression.

“People were so welcoming that it made me want to join in,” he says.

What brought him back was not the sporting glory, but the people. Gadd says kickball attracts a wide variety of participants, many of whom are there to socialise first and play sport second. “The little bit of exercise is just a bonus.”

His first time playing was memorable precisely because there was no pressure to be perfect.

“It was liberating,” he says. “I got everything wrong, dropped catches, got out, and nobody cared. Not having that pressure was amazing.”



## RAINBOW GAMES



That low-stress, high-support environment has helped Emerald City Kickball become an important space for LGBTQIA+ people across Australia. Gadd says the league has put significant time and effort into diversity and inclusion, and continues to evolve. In Perth, for example, he says approximately half of players do not identify as gay cis men.

For Gadd, social sport has a powerful role to play in Rainbow wellbeing, particularly at a time when rainbow spaces can feel less visible and available.

“It’s a way for people to get out and meet one another outside of the club scene,” he says. “It promotes better mental health and community participation. With LGBTQ+ spaces feeling like they are declining, it is more important than ever to create spaces where people can find their people.”

Bringing Emerald City Kickball to New Zealand for the Rainbow Games is about more than adding another sport to the programme. Gadd hopes it helps spark a wider movement.

“We would love to see kickball in every city in Australia and New Zealand,” he says. “It’s great when you go on holiday somewhere, head down to watch a game, and say where you’re from. The family will continue to grow, and it will mean more safe, welcoming communities.”

For Kiwi players and spectators, Gadd hopes the Rainbow Games will show the value of kickball and the space it can fill within the LGBTQIA+ community. While he admits it can seem like “a childish sport” at first glance, the impact can be profound.

“We hear time and time again from people who did not know about kickball, then found it and finally discovered a place in the LGBTQ+ community where they felt they belonged,” he says.

For anyone keen to play but who does not have any teammates, the Rainbow Games organisers can help place individual participants into a

team, making it easy to sign up solo and still be part of the action.

After the Rainbow Games, Gadd’s dream is simple: for New Zealand to fall in love with kickball and create its own teams, families and communities. Looking further ahead, he hopes those future Kiwi teams will be ready to travel to Australia for the 2030 Gay Games.

His message to anyone unsure about registering or attending is direct: “Do it. You won’t regret it. You’ll make friends, you’ll compete in a ‘sport’, and you’ll even get to say you competed at an international sporting event.”

Above all, Gadd believes spaces like Emerald City Kickball thrive because people choose to support them.

“People make these safe, engaging and fun spaces,” he says. “It’s important to get involved and give things the energy they need to thrive and grow so they can keep giving back to our LGBTQ+ community. People took a chance on kickball in Australia, and it has flourished because of what it can provide to people.”

**Rainbow Games Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland 2026 takes place from 29 October to 1 November, with a wide range of inclusive sports on the programme. Registrations for the 2026 Games are now open. For more details or to register interest, visit [rainbowgames.co.nz](http://rainbowgames.co.nz).**

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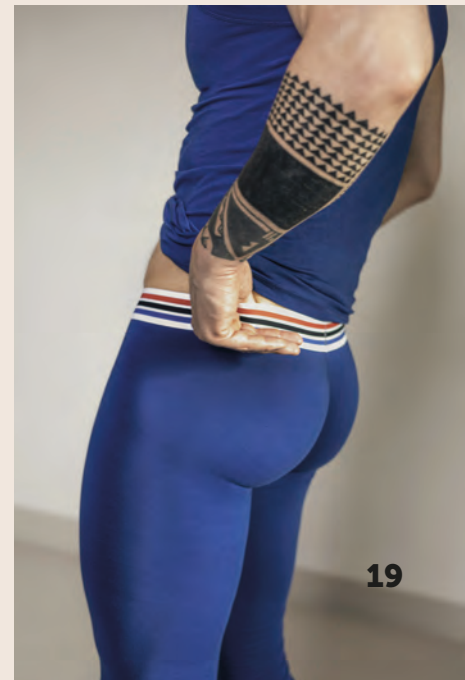
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OUT & ABOUT

# ONLY AT URGE!

*URGE GRUNT invited partygoers to unleash their inner fetishes. DJs Butter Chick, James Leuii and Ryan Borne brought the beats, while a performance from Syr Satyr added an extra fire.*



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# FINDING DESERT BLISS IN QUEER OASIS

# PALM SPRINGS

*Oliver Hall finds California's queer oasis still knows how to make gay travellers feel right at home.*

**P**alm Springs has a way of slowing your pulse before you have even unpacked. The mountains sit around the city like a painted backdrop. The street lighting is low, and the town feels warm and unhurried. After the relentless sprawl of Los Angeles and the high-gloss chaos of Vegas, arriving in Palm Springs feels like stepping into a retreat.

This is a city long associated with Hollywood escape, mid-century modern architecture and gay men seeking mental and physical rejuvenation. Movie stars once fled here to loosen their ties away from the studio system. Decades later, Palm Springs still carries that same promise of escape, only now that comes with men-only resorts, supper clubs, mineral spas and a queer nightlife strip where nobody seems interested in pretending to be younger than they are.

Our base is **Descanso Resort** ([@descansops](#)), a stylish men's resort with a relaxed Hollywood Moderne feel. Our room is spacious and comfortable, with a kind of desert-chalet ease that encourages immediate unpacking, then just as quickly abandoning all ambition. The staff are superb from the start, the sort who make every request feel like no trouble at all.

Descanso understands the art of staying put. Breakfast and lunch are included, with sandwiches and salads served poolside, and a 24-hour snack room keeps guests supplied with fruit, soft drinks, tea, coffee and home-baked cookies. The pool glints behind the palms. The hot tub sits dangerously close to our room. By evening, we find ourselves drawn to the fire pit, where the friendly residents gather and share stories.

Palm Springs rewards this kind of surrender. There are plenty of things to do, of course, but the city's real luxury is how little pressure it puts on you to do them quickly.

Dinner at **Eight4Nine** ([eight4nine.com](#)), in the Uptown Design District, offers our first taste of the city's see-and-be-seen dining scene. The dining room is stylish and slightly cavernous, somewhere between restaurant, gallery and high-end furniture showroom. Cocktails arrive in bright desert colours, followed by moreish dishes including asparagus bisque, smoked niçoise, miso-marinated sea bass and a s'mores-style chocolate fondue with homemade marshmallows. Between these polished plates and people-watching, dinner in Palm Springs feels like a feast for both the eyes and the taste buds.

Afterwards, we wander the Arenas District, the city's compact queer nightlife hub. On this midweek night, it is more mellow than manic, but the bars, patios and shopfronts still have plenty of men drifting between them with the calm confidence of people who know exactly where they are. Chill Bar, Hunters, Quadz, Streetbar and Blackbook are all within a minute's walk of each other, meaning a night out can be as ambitious or as lazy as your shoes allow.

Descanso Resort.

## TRAVEL



Eight4Nine.

The following day belongs to **The Spa at Séc-he** ([thespaatseche.com](http://thespaatseche.com)), and it becomes one of the trip's defining experiences. Built around the hot mineral spring waters of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, the spa is vast, immaculate and deeply calming. Before our massages, we each take a private mineral bath, then wander through the facilities in a euphoric daze.

There are dark relaxation rooms with vibration therapy, zero-gravity chairs, a selection of pristine hot pools and quiet lounges where you can sip, flick through magazines and slowly forget what day it is. The men's changing rooms are huge and loaded with amenities, and make you realise how often spas treat male guests as an afterthought. After experiencing The Spa's 'The Back of Body Massage', we leave convinced this is truly a temple dedicated to unwinding.

That evening, Palm Springs gives us glamour.

### The Purple Room Supper Club

([purpleroompalmsprings.com](http://purpleroompalmsprings.com)) sits tucked inside Club Trinidad Resort, and once inside, the room glows with Rat Pack nostalgia. Dinner, cocktails, low lighting and a stage close enough to see every raised eyebrow. Rose Mallett, a jazz singer who came to prominence during her association with Marvin Gaye, is taking to the stage, and she is extraordinary. In her 80s, sipping a raspberry lemon drop between songs, she sings standards including "Summertime" with the ease of someone who has long stopped needing to prove anything.

There is something moving about watching a performer still so alive in the work. No brittle reach for relevance, just command, humour and pleasure. Palm Springs is good at that: letting glamour age without dimming it.

Before leaving town, we make time for **Cheeky's** ([cheekysps.com](http://cheekysps.com)), the brunch institution famous for its bacon flight. It is lively, bright and full of people beginning the



The Spa at Séc-he.



Arenas District.

day with admirable commitment to indulgence. We get ours to go, a line-up of bacon variations including jalapeño, wood-smoked and maple, plus iced coffee for the road. It is exactly the kind of breakfast that makes leaving feel foolish.

Upon our exit, we visit the **Palm Springs Aerial Tramway** ([pstramway.com](http://pstramway.com)), one of the city's great spectacles and a stunning final farewell. The rotating climb takes you from desert floor to alpine chill, rising above Chino Canyon towards Mt San Jacinto State Park. In around ten minutes, the temperature drops, the valley opens beneath you and Palm Springs suddenly looks like a toy town arranged under an enormous sky. It remains one of the essential things to do here.

By the time we leave, the city has worked its quiet trick. We are softer, slower and already



Palm Springs Aerial Tramway.

negotiating how soon we can come back. Palm Springs may be famous for desert music festivals and poolside pleasures, but its real gift is permission: to pause, be spoiled and rediscover the bliss of giving in to the moment.

**The YOUR EX team were guests of Visit Greater Palm Springs. For more information, visit [visitgreaterpalmsprings.com](http://visitgreaterpalmsprings.com) and follow @VisitGreaterPS. Book your flights at [united.com](http://united.com).**

# DISCOVERING A CITY FILLED WITH OPPORTUNITIES

Sumner Beach.

*Oliver Hall got locked down in Christchurch at the height of the Covid pandemic, but once travel restrictions were lifted, he decided to make the move down south permanently. Here, he explains why he chose to settle in Ōtautahi.*

It was in the early 2000s that I got my New Zealand permanent residency and, apart from a five-year stint overseas, I had called Auckland home for most of my adult life.

Only weeks before we were plunged into lockdown, I met my now-husband across the sweaty dancefloor at the Wellington Pride Parade after-party in 2020. He invited me to come and stay with him over Chch Pride two weeks later and, on the Monday, my four-night stay was extended to more than six weeks when Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced we were going into 'Level Four' during the midday update.

It was such an odd time. We would later find out we were not allowed to print the magazine during lockdown, so we focused on running interviews with community members on our website about how they were spending their time and what the experience was teaching them.

My ability to explore Ōtautahi was limited to dog walks within a limited radius of the house with our Basset Hound-schnauzer, but it turned out the sheer quantity of green spaces on our doorstep was magnificent.

There is gorgeous Victoria Park, atop the Cashmere Hills, with a fantastic track that takes you down to Bowenvale Avenue, a picturesque

street filled with neighbourhood kids biking and playing basketball. Hagley Park, reminiscent of London's Hyde Park, is lined with the most stunning blooming cherry blossoms in spring. Halswell Quarry was quiet, with serene Japanese gardens and glorious views across the plains.

As restrictions eased, we could venture further afield to Sumner Beach, dotted with great cafés and ice cream shops; the coastal track at Taylors Mistake, which looks like a location out of *Game of Thrones*; walks above Governors Bay, where our selfies look like we're in the Bay of Islands; and Southshore, where the often-deserted beach stretches for miles, with the Southern Alps creating a picturesque horizon.

For our first proper date, he took me to Lyttelton, which looks like a little Alaskan mountain town, but with the sort of vibrant, arty community heart you might expect to find on Waiheke.

As our relationship became more serious and I moved down, we decided to buy a house together. I had been looking in Auckland before this, weighing up options on small two-bedroom houses and stressing about paying the mortgage if my flatmate moved out.

In the 03, as a couple, our prospects were very different. Suddenly, we were looking at properties with ocean views, beautiful gardens and space



from your neighbours, all selling for three times less than what you would pay in Auckland.

Die-hard Aucklanders had warned me I wouldn't like life in Chch before I moved. In my mixed-race relationship, they said, I would probably encounter racism and homophobia. It couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, I felt far more comfortable holding his hand walking through Sumner or Lyttelton than I ever did on K Road.

I thought I would miss Auckland's theatre scene, but I was surprised to find that Ōtautahi offered much of the same. Just off The Terrace sits Little Andromeda, a 100-seat theatre that draws many of the shows that play at the likes of Auckland's Basement and Wellington's BATS theatres. The Good Time Comedy Club gets a lot of the same touring shows as The Classic on Queen Street, while The Court Theatre's brand-new city-centre venue offers two separate stages.

On the smaller stage, we have seen queer plays like Victor Roger's *Black F\*ggot* and international hit *Wolf Play*, while on the main stage, we have checked out The Court's truly ambitious production of Swedish vampire

## CHRISTCHURCH NZ × YOUR EX



One NZ Stadium.

horror Let the Right One In, where we wore ponchos in the front row to avoid getting soaked in fake blood.

The Court sits alongside the pristine Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre. There, we have attended a swanky Pride Gala Dinner and watched comedy legend Catherine Tate give the equivalent of a TED Talk at the Armageddon Expo.

These are not even the newest live entertainment venues in town. That honour belongs to the brand-new One NZ Stadium. We attended the opening-night Crusaders game there and were immediately blown away by the stunning array of independent Canterbury-based food and beverage outlets offering quality, locally produced menus, far superior to the unbranded hot dogs you usually expect at a sports game.

Of course, sport isn't the only live event the stadium brings to Chch. The venue holds up to 37,500 people for concerts. We had the pleasure of attending Six60 and Synthony's opening extravaganza, and look forward to checking out Robbie Williams in November and the Foo Fighters in February.

If you prefer your concerts a little more intimate, Christchurch Town Hall is known for having the best acoustics of any music venue in the country. I can attest to this, having checked out the likes of Teddy Swims, Damien Rice, Belinda Davids and even Britain's 'National Treasure', Graham Norton, there.

A few blocks down, the ornate heritage building, the Isaac Theatre Royal, welcomes the sort of shows Auckland's Q Theatre and Aotea Centre often house, including the Royal New Zealand Ballet, RuPaul's Drag Race alumni and Eddie Izzard's recent tour.



The Court Theatre.



Te Pae.



Before a show, Ōtautahi's booming restaurant scene has much to offer, with Riverside Market and Little High serving affordable, quick, casual bites, while the ever-popular King of Snake and Earl up the ante with some of the best fine dining Aotearoa has to offer.

After the concert, the bar scene is just as plentiful. The Church is a spectacular venue that is always pumping with live music, quiz nights and merriment. Underground speakeasy Austin Club has rare whiskies and live comedy, while spectacular cocktails and dapper service have contributed to the longevity of OGB.

The city does not, however, have a gay bar. I know, it's a crime, but as the economy picks up, I can only imagine it is a matter of time before that changes.

In the meantime, the likes of Urge and Frisky regularly hold parties in the 03. Thanks to the efforts of pioneering former chairs Jill Stevens and Akira Le Fevre, Christchurch Pride now runs for a full calendar month in March, while local boys Craig Browning and Andrew Rusbatch respectively organise monthly Sunday Sessions and Bear Drinks events.

Life in Chch means having a full calendar, with



weekends taken over by the likes of Nostalgia Festival, Electric Avenue and the recently acquired Super 440 (Supercars), along with the ability to afford to attend those events because you're not financially crippled by an Auckland- or Wellington-sized mortgage.

I adore the communities I have met through the likes of co-working space Genius, my favourite New Zealand watering hole, Lyttelton's Wunderbar, and even the people I have met walking the dog at Sumner Beach.

I have met a number of queer couples who have moved down in the last five years to buy their first house and start getting ahead. While the winter cold might initially take a bit of getting used to, Chch is dry and they don't miss Auckland or Wellington's rain. They love the surfing and mountain biking Ōtautahi offers in warmer months, along with the road trips and easy access to the mountains' snow in winter.

Plus, those southern men are pretty hot, if you ask me.

I didn't regret moving down here, and I don't think you will either.

**For more information on this great southern city, visit [christchurchnz.com](http://christchurchnz.com)**

# INSIDE SUGAR:

THE NON-BINARY SEX WORKER STORY CHASING A FAIRY-TALE ENDING

*YOUR EX* meets the queer creative team behind **SUGAR**



PHOTO | MEAGAN HARDING

Sugar.

## CABARET FESTIVAL

When SUGAR played Brisbane, writer Ro Bright says the politics of the show shifted in real time.

“Every country we take SUGAR to, the politics around sex work, sugar culture, and the trans community is different,” Bright tells *YOUR EX*. “We encounter laws that take away our rights and safety, that increase discrimination, that change down to the day and hour that we are performing the show.”

Then came a night that brought that reality painfully close to the stage.

“During our Brisbane season, the courts were literally pausing rights to gender-affirming care for our young people as Tomáš was hitting the stage to perform,” Bright says. “This means our story has a different weight in every place we bring SUGAR, and we acknowledge that in the show.”

On the surface, SUGAR is a cheeky, sexy, pop-soaked cabaret solo show about a non-binary sex worker chasing a Pretty Woman-style happy ending. Beneath the glitter, it is about safety, fantasy, community and the right of queer and trans people to be more than cautionary tales.

Created by Bullet Heart Club, written by Bright, directed by Kitan Petkovski and performed by Tomáš Kantor, SUGAR arrives at the Auckland Live Cabaret Festival after seasons in Melbourne and Edinburgh, bringing with it queer pop anthems, wicked humour and a lead character determined to be adored on their own terms.

For Bright, that impulse to imagine another world began early.

“Most of my early memories are of living in the tropics, on a massive farm that my dad managed,” they say. “We were isolated, so I liked to create fairy tales in my head to entertain myself.”



Ro Bright.



Kitan Petkovski.

Those private fairy tales became something more powerful when Bright found theatre.

“As a kid, I got to play dudes, got to play fairies like Puck in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. I could, for a moment, show parts of myself that, growing up in a restrictive Christian high school, I was never allowed to express,” Bright says.

That history sits close to the heart of SUGAR, a show that refuses to make its non-binary lead a symbol of isolation or tragedy.

“I’m a late bloomer,” Bright says of coming out. “The ‘90s in media/culture were brutal around what ‘girls’ or ‘women’ were supposed to look and be like. There was no non-binary representation or conversation happening in Tauranga. I always knew I was non-binary. Always felt it, since my earliest memories. But I had no language for it and no way to describe it to others.”

Finding that language coincided with finding community in Melbourne.

“When I moved to Naarm, where there is a big trans community, I met so many non-binary folk who were further along in their journey than me, and they helped me find all the words and community I needed.”

Community is central to SUGAR. While the show is drenched in pop spectacle, Bright is clear that it is also about the networks that keep queer and trans people safe.

“In SUGAR, we speak about how the trans and gender-diverse community and sex worker community have always got along,” they say. “We build communities together. And looking at sugaring, where young people like our character Sugar can naively find themselves going solo, it is community that keeps you grounded and safe.”

For director Kitan Petkovski, who grew up in Auckland, creative spaces offered the freedom to be authentically himself. That freedom has shaped his long collaboration with Bright as *Bullet Heart Club*, a collaboration that began with the musical *Daffodils*, which first toured Aotearoa stages before it was ultimately adapted into a film. Petkovski says the relationship has endured because of honesty, loyalty and shared creative obsession.

“We stay in each other’s pockets,” he says. “We talk a lot. We send each other inspiration for new projects. We see shows together. We are brutally honest with each other. And we live by the rule of ‘showing up’, no matter what.”

That trust becomes especially important in SUGAR, where the tone swings between camp excess, emotional truth and pop-powered chaos.

Asked what a queer approach to directing looks like here, Petkovski does not hesitate.

“Queer dramaturgy is about the resistance of heteronormative rules, structures and storytelling conventions,” he says. “If Sugar’s approach to seduction is through a cello-humping routine to Chappell Roan, then we’re on the right track.”

At the centre of SUGAR is Tomáš Kantor, the Melbourne-born performer tasked with carrying this solo show.

Performing SUGAR is no small feat. For 70 minutes, Kantor sings, acts, dances, seduces and carries the audience through Sugar’s fantasy and fallout.

“I have one inbuilt sip of water at around the thirty-minute mark, so I need to be super hydrated before, and always have a big full-body and vocal warm-up and cool-down required,” Kantor says. “It’s a lot, but I wouldn’t have it any other way!”

Praise has followed, with critics calling Kantor a “superstar-in-the-making” and a “born entertainer”. Their response feels very Sugar.

“I try to ‘stay humble’, but in this case that’s kind of counterproductive,” they laugh. “I’m a star, baby! It’s the mantra you need with a character like Sugar: no apology for the hard work and sex appeal, but owning that and flaunting it instead.”

That confidence is part of what makes SUGAR feel so fresh. It refuses to flatten queer experience into pain, even while acknowledging the politics pressing against the people it represents.

Beneath the pop songs and punchlines is a story about fantasy, survival and the insistence that queer people deserve joy.

Or, as Sugar might put it, a happy ending is never too much to ask for.

**SUGAR plays The Civic’s Wintergarden as part of the Auckland Live Cabaret Festival on 25 and 26 June. Tickets from [aucklandlive.co.nz](http://aucklandlive.co.nz)**

# ARE WE THE DANGEROUS ONES?

*Lisa Fa'alafi and Leah Shelton, the co-creators of Dangerous Goods as part of Auckland Live Cabaret Festival, discuss the fire, fury and feminism at the heart of their work.*

**W**hen *Dangerous Goods* storms into The Civic this July, audiences can expect fire, aerials, burlesque, drag, powerhouse vocals and a very clear warning: this is not cabaret that politely asks to be included.

Created by Australian performance collective Polytoxic, the show has been described as “high-voltage cabaret for a brave new world”, an all-femme explosion of spectacle, satire and rebellion. It arrives in Tāmaki Makaurau as part of the Auckland Live Cabaret Festival, bringing with it political conversations already pulsing through Aotearoa around indigeneity, Pacific identity, gender, colonial power and who gets to take up space.

For Polytoxic’s Lisa Fa’alafi, the company’s origins were born from necessity.

“As a Samoan woman coming out of drama school in Magandjin, Brisbane, in the late 1990s, I couldn’t see any real pathways into the industry for myself,” she tells *YOUR EX*. “There were no visible Pacific artists around me, no clear entry points, no sense that the space was built for us. So starting our own company felt like a no-brainer.”

In those early days, she says, there was no master plan.

“We didn’t really know what we were doing, but we knew we wanted to collaborate and make bold, unapologetic work that sat outside traditional boundaries. Now, 25 years later, Leah and I continue this legacy and have evolved even more now that we are fierce perimenopausal women!”

Alongside Fa’alafi, co-creator Leah Shelton has helped shape Polytoxic into a company known for work that begins with entertainment and ends somewhere closer to an uprising, with *Dangerous Goods* distilling that approach into one hot, unruly package.

“It’s been mixed,” Shelton says of how welcoming Australian and international scenes have been for queer artists, women and people of colour. “There are incredible pockets of support and progress, but also long-standing structural barriers. Access, representation and decision-making power are still uneven.”

The spark for *Dangerous Goods* reportedly began with the stereotype of construction-worker catcalls. From there, the show began asking a

bigger question: what is dangerous?

“In a world where polarising views are becoming the norm, where even speaking out against crimes against humanity can be framed as a crime, we began to ask ourselves: are we the dangerous ones?” asks Fa’alafi.

“The worksite emerged as a central metaphor, a place loaded with gendered power, labour and visibility,” Fa’alafi explains. “We took the idea of the catcall and flipped it. What is usually directed at women’s bodies was met with force and resistance. Hi-vis became more than costume; it was a way of making invisible labour, particularly the labour of women and artists of colour, impossible to ignore.”

From there, the idea of “The Work” became the spine of the show.

“The work we do to survive. The work it takes to hold our ground. The work required to dismantle oppressive systems. And ultimately, the collective work needed to imagine and build something different.”

For all its political charge, *Dangerous Goods* is still built as a wildly entertaining night out. Auckland audiences can expect circus, aerials, burlesque, vocals, comedy and bodies pushed to extremes.

“We use spectacle and satire to open the door,” Shelton says. “Cabaret allows us to package inherently political ideas in a way that’s accessible and entertaining. Audiences come in for the spectacle, the skill, the humour, the energy, and once they’re with us, we can take them somewhere deeper.”

The aim is not to lecture. It is to seduce, unsettle and ignite.

“It’s about creating an experience that is thrilling, thought-provoking and boundary-pushing without ever losing the sense of fun.”

Shelton describes this as intersectional feminist cabaret. “It means acknowledging that people experience the world differently depending on race, gender, sexuality, culture and class, and making work that reflects that complexity,” she says. “And for me, as a white woman with a colonial and settler background, it’s about allyship, and turning allyship from words into action, which sometimes means having uncomfortable conversations, but it also means eating, laughing, making art, and being loose together.”

For Fa’alafi, *Dangerous Goods* continues a long artistic conversation around Pacific identity, cultural fetishisation and the colonial gaze.

“I’ve spent many years as a physical performer, but right now there’s an urgency to articulate things more directly, through text, through song, through a fierce perimenopausal, no-fucks-given, big bad Aunty voice.”

At its heart, she says, the work is about liberation.

“I’m interested in dismantling colonial shame, standing strong in my culture, and challenging the preconceived notions of what we are allowed to be. Making work that pushes towards liberation will always be my driving force as an artist.”

Fa’alafi tells us that bringing the show to Aotearoa feels like joining a conversation already in motion.



“There are deep, ongoing dialogues in Aotearoa around these themes, and we’re bringing our own perspectives into that space,” she says. “There are differences in experience, but also strong resonances across diasporas. It’s about connection, exchange and adding another layer to the conversation.”

And for those simply coming along expecting a wild night of cabaret?

“If people leave entertained and thinking differently about power, bodies and the world around them,” Fa’alafi says, “then we’ve done our job.”

**Dangerous Goods** plays **The Civic** as part of the **Auckland Live Cabaret Festival** from 1 to 5 July. Tickets from [aucklandlive.co.nz](http://aucklandlive.co.nz)



## GIVEAWAYS



### Double passes to **Mr Loverman** screening

Join **YOUR EX** and Sky's Rialto Channel for an exclusive screening of the first two episodes of **Carmen Curlers**. A twisty drama set in the restless 1960s, **Carmen Curlers** is an incredible story of success, love, and family life, and, most importantly, women's liberation as women entered the male-dominated labour market. This exclusive screening will be held on Sunday 19 July at 11am at The Capitol Cinema, Auckland.

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Photo credit: © Rob G. Green, National Geographic Society, Henry Luce Foundation

### Win a Double Pass to **Chris Parker: Take A Good Look At Me**



Chris Parker brings **Take A Good Look At Me** to Q Theatre on Saturday 12 September. From viral lockdown videos to sold-out tours, TV favourites and **Celebrity Treasure Island** glory, Parker remains one of Aotearoa's sharpest, most loved comedy voices.



Scan the QR Code to be in to win! 🍀

# LE GATEAU CHOCOLAT: “THE HEART OF ALL OF THIS IS LOVE AND HOPE”

*Le Gateau Chocolat returns to Tāmaki Makaurau this July for Auckland Live Cabaret Festival with Musicals Mayhem, but behind the glamour, Oliver Hall discovers an artist reshaping expectations around identity, visibility and hope in troubling times.*

**W**hen Le Gateau Chocolat walks onto a stage, audiences often think they know what they are getting. They see a performer armed with sequins and wit, and expect a drag show with live vocals and a few camp laughs.

Then he opens his mouth and something far broader and more profound begins to happen.

For more than 20 years, the British-Nigerian cabaret artist, opera singer and force of theatrical nature has been reshaping what audiences expect from cabaret and drag. This July, he returns to Tāmaki Makaurau for Auckland Live Cabaret Festival with *Musicals Mayhem*, a show described as a high-glamour collision of musical theatre, comedy and cabaret.

For the man behind the icon, George Ikediashi, performance has always been about more than entertainment. It is about being seen clearly in a world that keeps trying to reduce people to categories.

“When your identity is the majority in any country, you’re not ‘Black’, you’re just a human being,” he says, reflecting on moving from West London to Nigeria as a child, and then later returning to England.

That return came with a new and confronting awareness of how identity is read from the outside.

“Moving back to England, you are visualised as Black and Black comes with lots of

connotations and stereotypes,” he says. “Society has gone, ‘This is the box that you live in because this is what we know of you.’”

“It’s the privilege of being a human being versus a human doing,” he explains.

“You’re a human doing when you’re just considered as Black, or fat, or queer. It’s exhausting whether you are in England or Nigeria!”

He tells us even walking down the street can become a performance he did not consent to.

“I was having a conversation with a friend telling him about how people might snigger or murmur or take surreptitious photos of me in public,” he says. “And my friend was like, ‘Well, if you dress like that’. I was like, ‘Dress like what? This is literally my self-expression.’”

For Le Gateau Chocolat, that self-expression is not an invitation for ridicule. It is simply existence.

“I don’t understand how any of what I do or how I dress means that I should expect people to be embarrassingly puerile.”

That visibility, however, also comes with purpose.

“I 100% feel like there is a responsibility to use one’s platform wisely,” he says, noting the Black opera singers Jessye Norman, Kathleen Battle and Leontyne Price as artists who “seismically changed the classical and opera world by being who they were”.

“They had to be excellent,” he tells us. “They couldn’t be associated with



## CABARET FESTIVAL

mediocrity, whereas there is the privilege of actually failing up when you're not that good at something. And (that privilege is) mostly about looks."

After two decades on international stages, what still thrills him is the moment an audience realises its expectations are collapsing.

"I was in Perth about to go on and the stage manager, Evan, said to me, 'What's your favourite part about doing this?' And I was like, 'All of it'."

"From the moment that I walk on stage to hours, days, weeks, years after, there are people who will think, 'That was absolutely not what I was expecting'."

He loves the puzzle that creates for people.

"There is something thrilling about that because their perception of what they think I am or should be has changed," he says.

One email from an audience member after seeing his show *Raw Cacao* has stayed with him. The email acknowledged the audience had initially laughed when he arrived on stage to sing "Ol' Man River", expecting "their version of a drag show".

"But by song four, they realise this is not what it is," it read. "And by the end of the show, they're like, 'Why did I cry? What is this? Who are you?'"

It is feedback like this that keeps him moving from festival to festival, country to country, stage to stage.

"I have been doing this 20 years, my God!" he says. "International festivals still thrill me because I get to go to places that I never would have if I had stuck to just my law degree."

The work keeps calling him back because it offers what he describes as an "uncomfortable opportunity and privilege" to reshape stereotype and reframe understanding.

In a world where reactionary politics, demagoguery and fascism are again finding oxygen, he believes artists have work to do.

"This is when artists get to work, and this is when artists with marginalised identities have to be at the vanguard and use their platforms responsibly," he says.

That responsibility may sound heavy, but for Le Gateau Chocolat, the key to it is not anger.

"The heart of all of this is love and hope." That's how you change minds.

**Le Gateau Chocolat's *Musicals Mayhem* plays as part of the Auckland Live Cabaret Festival from 3 to 5 July at The Civic's Wintergarden. Tickets from [aucklandlive.co.nz](http://aucklandlive.co.nz)**



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# FROM GELATO TO FOCACCIA:

## GIAPO GRAZIOLI ON FOOD, FREEDOM AND GLUTEN-FREE CREATIVITY

*Matt Fistonich chats to Auckland chef Giapo Grazioli about the gelato artist's exploration of the savoury side of Italian cooking and why gluten-free recipes sit at the heart of everything he creates.*

### WHAT INSPIRED THE MOVE INTO A SAVOURY MENU?

GIAPO was never only about ice cream. It was always about freedom, wonder, self-expression and making people feel something.

Over the years, my family and I realised we were coeliac, so we had to eat gluten-free. That pushed us to make the first move: turning our cones gluten-free, and then making the whole ice cream store gluten-free.

As we continued, we realised that people like us — people who were gluten-free because of coeliac disease, bloating, or other reasons — did not want only an incredible ice cream experience. They wanted a full gluten-free food experience, including savoury food.

Moving into savoury felt like a natural, slow evolution. It gave us another medium to create through, another way to surprise people, and another way to bring people together around food.

### HOW DID YOU ENSURE YOUR RECIPES FOR PASTA, PIZZA AND FOCACCIA WERE AS DELICIOUS AS YOUR GELATO?

We never approached it as “good for gluten-free”. The question was always: could it be better than normal? Would anyone, regardless of dietary needs, crave this again tomorrow?

Gluten-free food comes with a bad bias — a stigma, so to speak. People think it tastes like cardboard. This is why it took us so long. We had to match the recipes for taste and, where possible, make them better than the regular version.

We applied the same rigour we use for gelato. Every recipe became a study of texture, stretch, crunch and softness — all the emotional parts of eating.

It was not about replacing gluten. It was about understanding the science of the ingredients and creating a texture that stands on its own.

We tested constantly, because at GIAPO quality is non-negotiable. If it does not feel delicious, comforting and exciting, it does not go on the menu, even if it is gluten-free. Our scones are part of this. They are better than regular scones.

### WHAT WERE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN CREATING GLUTEN-FREE FOCACCIA, BRIOCHE AND PIZZA?

The crusty top, the texture and the stretch.

We spent years researching how to find the perfect soft crumb in the brioche, the crisp

crust and soft centre in the focaccia, and the characteristic pull of a pizza base. It required meticulous calibration to the gram.

We had to prove that gluten-free does not mean less. It can also mean more taste. Some flours, like millet or sorghum, are genuinely more flavourful than regular wheat flour.

We made that our challenge. Innovation happens when you refuse to accept compromise.

### WHAT HAVE BEEN THE BIGGEST HIGHS OF RUNNING GIAPO?

Seeing people emotionally connect with what we create. Watching someone walk in curious and leave smiling, surprised and inspired never gets old.



Giapo Grazioli.

**GIAPO has always been built around creativity, self-expression, connection and joy. Freedom of expression is a cultural staple at GIAPO.**



**Matt Fistonich.**

The gluten-free savoury line is a huge part of that future, and we plan to keep expanding it.

**IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE THE QUEER COMMUNITY TO KNOW ABOUT GIAPO?**

Another huge high has been seeing GIAPO become part of people's memories — birthdays, first dates, family trips, tourists visiting Auckland, students discovering New Zealand for the first time. It is beautiful knowing GIAPO becomes part of those stories.

**AND WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE HARDEST LOWS OR LESSONS ALONG THE WAY?**

Learning that "almost right" is still a failure.

There have been moments when things felt uncertain, creatively and commercially. But persistence and consistency are a relentless pursuit.

Everything meaningful we have built at GIAPO has grown through people, connection and shared experiences. We are incredibly grateful for the community that has supported us and grown with us over the years.

**WHAT'S NEXT FOR GIAPO?**

We want to continue evolving GIAPO beyond what people expect from a dessert brand: more creativity, more experiences, more community and more unexpected moments.

[www.yourex.co.nz](http://www.yourex.co.nz)

GIAPO has always been built around creativity, self-expression, connection and joy. Freedom of expression is a cultural staple at GIAPO. It is part of the GIAPO ethos.

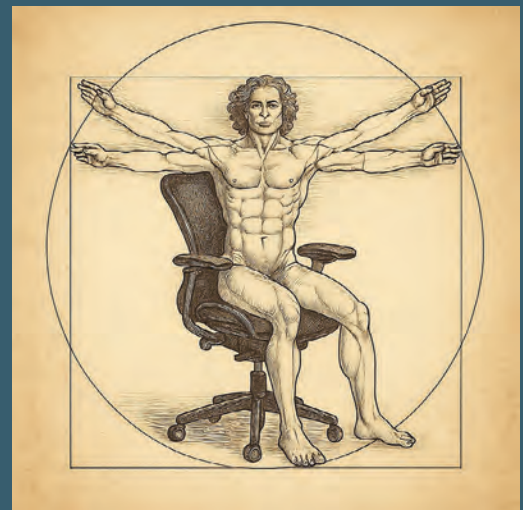
We see the queer community as an inspiration because it shows what it means to live with courage, to create your own language, to be free and to refuse the role of victim. We love that. GIAPO is about imagination, dignity and the freedom to become more yourself, without apology.

We are grateful to everyone who continues to support us, inspire us and grow with us. You are everything to us.

At the end of the day, we simply hope GIAPO feels like a place where people can come together, share experiences and memories, enjoy our food and leave feeling like they experienced something unforgettable.

**Visit Giapo at 12 Gore Street, Auckland CBD, and avoid queuing by downloading the Giapo app. Follow @giapokitchen / giapo.com**

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# A GUIDE TO SAPPHIC DATING

*Jessie Lewthwaite welcomes baby gays to the world of queer women's dating and offers some tips on behaviours to leave in the straight world*

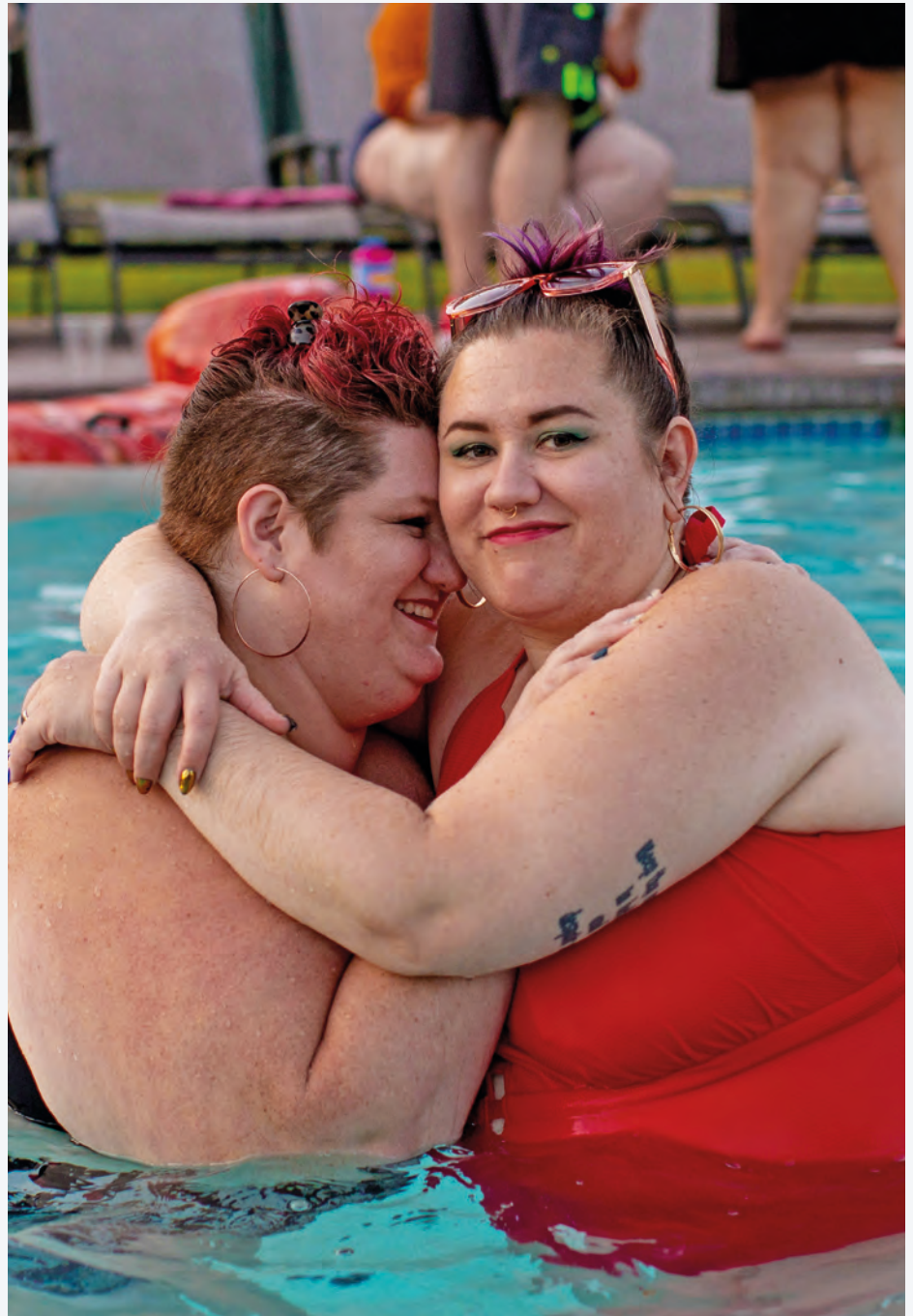
I've lost count of how many times I've been out in a queer space and run into a baby gay who is very new to this whole queer thing. Whether she is bisexual in a long-term relationship with a man and is trying poly, or a fresh-faced lesbian straight off the farm being herself for the first time. These interactions always seem to follow the same pattern: wide-eyed amazement that queer sapphic spaces exist, gay panic at how pretty everyone is, and a sudden overwhelming realisation that they have no idea how dating, flirting, casual sex and love work in this whole new world.

Having come out at age ten, I am one of those annoying lesbians who never didn't know I was gay. Meaning I don't know much about "straight dating", but I have seen documentaries (at least one season of *Sex and the City*) and have some case studies (dated mostly bi/pan girls), so I've noticed a few things you will want to leave behind in straight land.

The whole "playing hard to get" thing? Bin it. We've all spent enough time wondering if that woman is flirting with us or just being friendly that nobody has time for additional mixed signals. If you like her, tell her. If she asks you out, don't wait three days to respond like it's 1890 and you're protecting your dignity. We're all busy and anxious and would very much appreciate clear communication. Also, if you tell a woman "no", she will take that no as a no. Lesbian culture is built around the enthusiastic consent of all parties.

In straight dating, there were men everywhere. Granted, most of them are terrible, but they are abundant. Now you're in a much smaller dating pool, and that can make people panic. Don't. Yes, the pool is smaller, but the quality has improved significantly. You're not wading through men who think doing the dishes deserves a medal anymore.

That said, don't date someone just because she's queer and proximate. The bar should not be



"has a pulse and is attracted to women." You deserve someone who actually gets you, makes you laugh, and doesn't make you feel like you're performing all the time. She exists. Maybe not in your immediate friend group (please be careful there; the incest chart gets complicated fast), but she's out there. Making friends will make meeting other queer women much easier and more fun. And it's not all clubs and bars either! For my more introverted ladies, why not go along to a sapphic book club or knitting group? You don't have to be a night owl or appreciator of loud music to be "on the scene" in the lesbian world.

Feel free to collectively roll your eyes when I say this, but... be yourself. TikTok may tell you

that you need to be a "type" of lesbian. It may seem important at first to know if you are more chapstick futch or cottagecore, but I promise you it really isn't. You can just be yourself. Maybe yourself wears flannels. Maybe yourself wears vintage dresses and red lipstick. Maybe yourself exclusively wears clothing acquired from music festivals in 2019. All valid.

And please, for the love of Sappho, don't immediately get a terrible haircut. I know it's tempting. I know it feels like a rite of passage. But maybe just start with some cuffed jeans and see how you feel. Also, your gaydar will be terrible for at least six months. You'll think the straight girl with a nose ring is queer. She's not; she's just a barista.

TEND × YOUR EX



## WHY YOU DON'T NEED TO WAIT FOR A CRISIS TO SEEK MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

*Dr Mataroria Lyndon answers your health-related questions*

IN A WORLD WHERE ALL OF US ARE CARRYING STRESS FROM COST-OF-LIVING PRESSURE, BURNOUT, AND EXISTING IN A WORLD THAT CAN FEEL PRETTY HOSTILE, HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO REACH OUT FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT INSTEAD OF JUST PUSHING THROUGH?

A lot of us have been taught to just “push through”; to keep going, stay strong, and not make a fuss. But there comes a point where pushing through stops being resilience and starts doing harm.

If you're feeling constantly overwhelmed, exhausted, anxious, or low — or if things that usually bring you joy no longer do — that's a sign to check in. Other signals can include changes in sleep, appetite, relationships, or how you're coping day to day.

The key thing is: you don't have to wait until you're in crisis.

Reaching out early often means things are easier to work through, and you don't have to carry it alone. Whether it's a GP, nurse, or mental health clinician, the right support should feel safe, practical, and focused on what matters to you.

Tend offers free 30-minute video sessions with mental health clinicians through the app. It's available to anyone over 16 in Aotearoa, it's free, and you don't need to be enrolled. It's also completely confidential. If you're ready to kōrero, you can book a session easily in the app. We're here for you.

**Download the Tend app or visit [tend.nz](https://tend.nz)**

**Got a health-related question for Dr Mataroria Lyndon to answer?**

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# TE REO MĀORI TAKES CENTRE STAGE WITH AUCKLAND PHILHARMONIA THIS MATARIKI

**F**or one night only, the powerful sound of exceptional young vocal artists performing waiata reo Māori with Auckland's professional orchestra will fill the Auckland Town Hall for Matariki: *Waiata Anthems In Concert*. This landmark concert on Thursday 9 July brings the *Waiata Anthems'* kaupapa together with the Auckland Phil into one of the city's most iconic live music spaces.

This concert places te reo Māori centre stage this Matariki, transforming some of Aotearoa's best-loved contemporary songs into a sweeping orchestral celebration.

When the original *Waiata Anthems* album was released in 2019, it made history, debuting at number one on the New Zealand music charts as the first 100 percent reo Māori album to do so. What began as a bold idea, inviting some of Aotearoa's best-known artists to re-record their songs in te reo Māori, has grown into a movement spanning recordings, documentaries, live performances and new original waiata.

The concert will feature orchestral arrangements of waiata including 'Roimata | Cry Myself to Sleep', 'Tēnā Rā Koe | Thank You' and 'I Moeroa | Woke Up Late', alongside newly commissioned arrangements of songs by rising artists Jordyn with a Why, MOHI and Geneva AM, all performed live for the first time. The



**Timed for Matariki, the Māori New Year, the concert sees Auckland Philharmonia reimagine waiata reo Māori with strings, brass, woodwind and percussion, giving songs known through radio, streaming and festival stages a new sense of scale, drama and emotional depth.**

evening also features Te Kura Māori o Ngā Tapuwae Kapa Haka, adding another powerful layer of voice, movement and kaupapa.

In Auckland Philharmonia's hands, these songs are set to expand again. The orchestra's musicians will bring richness, tension and cinematic force to waiata that many New Zealanders already know by heart. The result promises to be an inspiring meeting of musical worlds: contemporary Aotearoa pop, te reo Māori, kapa haka and orchestral grandeur held together under the stars of Matariki.

Matariki is a time of remembrance, renewal, reflection and gathering.

It asks us to honour those who came before, look to those beside us, and imagine what we want to carry forward. For Rainbow communities, those ideas are deeply familiar. So much of queer life is shaped by chosen whānau, by intergenerational survival, by remembering those we have lost, and by creating spaces where we can be fully seen.

There is something quietly powerful about hearing te reo Māori at this scale. For generations, the language was marginalised, restricted and treated as something to be hidden away. *Waiata Anthems* helped place it at the heart of contemporary New Zealand music, not as a novelty, but as a living, evolving creative force. Auckland Philharmonia's Matariki concert continues that journey, giving these songs the sweep of an orchestra and the charge of live performance.

It is also a reminder of what a city orchestra can do at its best: not simply preserve tradition, but open it up, amplify it and create a shared civic moment. By bringing *Waiata Anthems* into the Auckland Town Hall, Auckland Philharmonia is helping turn Matariki into a night of music, memory and collective connection.

Go with friends. Go with whānau. Go ready to hear songs you know become something larger.

**Matariki: Waiata Anthems In Concert at Auckland Town Hall, Thursday 9 July. Tickets from [aucklandphil.nz](http://aucklandphil.nz)**



7.30pm, Thursday  
9 July



Auckland  
Town Hall

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OUT & ABOUT

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# DOVATO is designed differently

– a complete HIV regimen with two medicines in a single once daily tablet.<sup>1</sup>

**2** Unlike many HIV treatments that have 3 or 4 medicines, DOVATO has just 2 medicines in a single tablet.<sup>1-3,6</sup>

 DOVATO is as effective at helping you stay undetectable\* with fewer medicines in your body – today and tomorrow.<sup>1,3-6†</sup>

## THAT'S THE DOVATO DIFFERENCE



Not a real patient; for illustrative purposes only.



## Ask your doctor and learn more about DOVATO today!

For more information scan the QR code or visit [www.dovato.co.nz](http://www.dovato.co.nz)

**Please consult with your doctor or pharmacist before taking DOVATO. Patients on DOVATO may still develop other infections and illnesses linked to HIV infection. Side effects people may experience are headache, nausea, and diarrhoea.<sup>1</sup>**

\*Undetectable means reducing the HIV in your blood to very low levels (<200 copies/mL for >6 months) with ART, which helps prevent sexual transmission of HIV.<sup>3,6</sup>

†Based on data from the GEMINI 1 & 2 studies (patients new to treatment) and TANGO study (patients replacing their current HIV treatment). DTG + 3TC was compared with a regimen containing either 3 or 4 medicines, measuring either the percentage of patients with a viral load of <50 copies per mL or the percentage of patients with a viral load of ≥50 copies per mL.<sup>4,5</sup>

**Abbreviations:** HIV, human immunodeficiency virus; ART, antiretroviral therapy; DTG, dolutegravir; 3TC, lamivudine.

**References:** **1.** GlaxoSmithKline NZ, DOVATO Consumer Medicine Information, 2025. Available at: [www.medsafe.govt.nz/consumers/cmi/d/dovato.pdf](http://www.medsafe.govt.nz/consumers/cmi/d/dovato.pdf) (accessed Feb 2026). **2.** PHARMAC, Pharmaceutical Schedule, Antiretrovirals. April 2026;v33:1-352. **3.** Department of Health and Human Services. Guidelines for the use of antiretroviral agents in adults and adolescents with HIV (updated Sept 2025). **4.** Cahn P, et al. *AIDS* 2022;36(1):39-48. **5.** Osiyemi O, et al. *Clin Infect Dis* 2022;75(6):975-986. **6.** EACS (European AIDS Clinical Society) Guidelines, version 13.0. Available at <https://eacs.sanfordguide.com/en/eacs-hiv/paediatric-hiv-treatment/art-initiation-and-initial-regimen> (accessed March 2026).

**Dovato** is a film coated tablet containing 50 mg of dolutegravir (as dolutegravir sodium) and 300 mg of lamivudine, which is used for the treatment of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV-1) infection in adults and adolescents (from 12 years of age weighing at least 40 kg) who have no known or suspected resistance to either antiretroviral component. **Dovato is a Prescription Medicine. Dovato has risks and benefits and should be initiated by a doctor experienced in treating HIV. Dovato is a funded medicine; Special Authority criteria apply. Ask your doctor if Dovato is right for you.** Use strictly as directed. If you have concerns, or side effects, see your doctor, pharmacist or healthcare professional. Normal doctor's consultation fees apply. For more information, you can view the Dovato Consumer Medicine Information at [www.medsafe.govt.nz](http://www.medsafe.govt.nz). Trademarks are owned by or licensed to the GSK group of companies. ©2026 GSK group of companies or its licensor. Marketed on behalf of ViiV Healthcare by GlaxoSmithKline NZ Limited, Auckland. **Adverse events involving GlaxoSmithKline products should be reported to GSK Medical Information on 0800 808 500. Date of Approval: May 2026 | Date of Expiry: May 2028 | TAPS-NP24164 | PM-NZ-DLL-ADVR-240001**

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