

KEEPING MINDS AND BODIES ACTIVE AT PLAYGROUNDS



Author/illustrator Donovan Bixley (left) with Kieran Smith at the Raupo Reserve playground.

THE TALENTS OF Taupō author and illustrator Donovan Bixley are bringing a fun new dimension to playgrounds around the district.

Donovan has created a series of images of colourful characters and activities in his trademark playful style along with their names in English, te reo Māori and NZ sign language for local playgrounds.

The idea came from Taupō District Council team lead of assets and cemeteries Kieran Smith, who wanted to make playgrounds an active place for not just young bodies but minds too.

Kieran gave Donovan a brief to create characters youngsters could search for while exploring play equipment, and Donovan created a range of 20 striking animals, birds and activities. As tamariki find the pictures, they also learn the te reo Māori and New Zealand sign language words and signs for each character.

The first interactive play areas were rolled out in Whakamaru and at Raupo Reserve in Ngā Roto Estate in Taupō this month. More are planned for other locations.

TEMPORARY ROUNDABOUT FOR TONGARIRO STREET

A TEMPORARY ROUNDABOUT will be installed at the Tongariro and te Heuheu streets intersection on Sunday night to help alleviate traffic flow through the CBD over the busy summer period.

It will replace the existing traffic lights which will be decommissioned, with new pedestrian refuges to be installed at the same time.

The temporary roundabout will be replaced with a permanent one early next year as part of the Taupō Town Centre Transformation project. While construction work is still taking place along Titiraupenga Street and because we are expecting this summer to be particularly busy, we are taking the opportunity to install the temporary roundabout next week.

The roundabout will help traffic to flow more smoothly, but given the number of visitors we are expecting we are asking drivers to please be patient as you get used to the new layout. If you are simply travelling past the CBD, then consider going via Spa Road into Titiraupenga Street.

The western side of Tongariro Street will be reduced to a single lane as it nears the intersection, down from the current two lanes, and the speed limit will be reduced to 30km/h. Contractors will be closing the intersection from 6pm on Sunday, with the new road layout open to traffic in the early morning on Monday 20 December.



NEW CLICK AND COLLECT SERVICE FROM TAUPŌ DISTRICT LIBRARIES

It's good news for book lovers, with a contactless click and collect service available from 15 December for library members.

Simply select one of four book packs - adults, teens, junior or pre-school - and we will create a pack based on your personal reading preferences.

You can request a pack of up to 20 books to collect at a date and library of your choosing. Let us know the genres and the subjects you would like to see included and we will endeavour to find books we know you will love.

To find out more and request a Click and Collect book pack, visit www.taupo.govt.nz/libraries



SUMMER'S HERE ON TONGARIRO STREET

THE FENCES AND road cones are gone, and with the first stage of the Taupō Town Centre Transformation work on Tongariro Street finished, local businesses are already embracing the new layout.

Victoria's Café, the Crafty Trout Brewery, and Lotus Thai restaurant are making the most of the new widened footpaths with a shared space - tentatively titled The Junction - that is ready now for some al fresco summer dining.

Council's landscape architect Fraser Scott says it's great to see businesses putting their stamp on the newly-constructed streetscapes.

"This is what the transformation project is all about, with the emphasis moving away from cars and back to people, and businesses bringing colour and life to our streets."

Victoria Taylor of Victoria's Café says her husband Grant Yates came up with The Junction name and all three

businesses would be working on the details in the coming weeks.

"We're keen to create a kind of mini version of Rotorua's Eat Street," Victoria said, "and between us we have a really nice mix on offer. We're all loving that we have some extra space on the street and in the sun and we'll be kicking it off with cocktails and tapas on New Year's Eve."

Crafty Trout Brewery owner Rebecca Draper-Kidd was also loving the widened footpaths.

"The extra space is great," she said, "it's going to be a lovely place to be in summer and we'll be opening up from midday and serving into the evening. But it also means we are a lot more visible and that will be great."

Noi Upathep of Lotus Thai Restaurant says it's good to have extra space outside and the new area looks more attractive too. He expects the new buildouts will bring extra vibrancy to the northern end of Tongariro Street.



From left: Noi and Pim Upathep of Lotus Thai Restaurant, Rebecca Draper-Kidd of Crafty Trout Brewery and Grant Yates and Victoria Taylor of Victoria's Café at the new Tongariro Street outdoor dining area 'The Junction'.

