

CRITIC

THE
AROH



BELONGING MATTERS
**mental health
awareness week**

The Big EXhale

Take a break,
have a snack
& relax with us

*We know life is hectic,
and thats why it's important*

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Union Lawn *Main Common Room if wet*



Scan to see what's on during
Mental Health Awareness Week

**Clubs
& Socs
ousa**

EDITORIAL

The Crawl To The Finish Line

Last Wednesday, I was on the phone with my best friend, Grace.

For avid Critic nerds, Grace was the main creator of the For The Girls game included in the centrefold of the Party Issue. Nowadays, I'm sad to say that we don't find nearly enough time to talk with busy schedules and very different postcodes. But we do have pretty relatable lines of work that mean we interact with a lot of students, so when we do catch up, it's a very easy conversation.

I had been especially bad at talking to Grace lately because I've been pretty burnt out, and I told her that. She just nodded, and said she understood. In her line of work, she's been meeting student after student that are coming in at the moment with mental health, flatting and the costs of living. Chatting about how "everyone's crashing out" at uni made me realise that I could probably write something about this. Afterall, part of my more subtle duties as Critic Editor are to make sure that no student feels alone in their student experience. So here are some things I want to mention.

Your second semester will almost certainly be harder than your first. You will be tired, you'll spend a lot of it really cold, and you'll have no money. Everyone's talking about leaving for home, flights are expensive, and exams aren't far away. The library seems busier. There's war on the news, an election looming, and everyone's breaking up. There are grad roles, rejection letters, friends on LinkedIn, and a final draft due. There is a lot going on right now. But you're not alone in it.

Despite how uni is supposed to be the best years of our lives, it has an odd way of funneling us into these little silos. Often, we're stretched between three or four points: the lab, the flat, or tutoring. Work, gym and the library. The library, your partner's house and your parent's house. In my case, Dead By Daylight on Xbox, Critic office and my bed. It's easy to see the same few people everyday, and fall into a routine that doesn't brush with the things that make life genuinely enjoyable. But there is a whole world out there, and you're not as isolated as you might feel.

Sometimes the best thing you can do is just put your headphones in and go for a walk. I really mean that. Try to notice that it actually is getting a couple of degrees warmer, and that you can get home at 6pm and it won't be close to dark yet. The sun rises earlier, and you've started being awoken by the world instead of your alarm. Walking around in just a t-shirt is less risky. Your mum or dad might've started to mention the start of Christmas plans, and reuniting with siblings or cousins might be on the cards.

The night is darkest right before dawn, and the end of the year is on the horizon. You've got this.

XOXO, Dwight Fairfield enthusiast

✱ Hanna Varrs 



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THIS PUBLICATION
IS AI FREE.

Finest Greetings,

For the past two days there has been a volleyball stuck in the current of the Leith outside the clock tower. I have grown attached to it and so have written a haiku in its honour.

Ball stuck in current

Constant attempt of escape

Will you be free soon?

- Probably just the luteal phase

Send a letter to the editor at critic@critic.co.nz to be in to win an OUSA Clubs & Soc's Sauna Voucher!

It was disappointing to see a candidate turn a genuine question around accessibility to something unrelated and also to attack the current Welfare and Equity rep for "not showing up" when she has been doing the work on trying to get more equity roles.

Ngā mihi,
A disappointed student watching Exec candidate forums

Editor's response: The context for this letter was a question asked to the Welfare and Equity candidates during forum time regarding their potential vision for a Disability Rep. One of the candidates (Hamza) made a comment about accessibility across campus. Sarah, another of the welfare candidates, started talking about gender neutral bathrooms and started her statement with "The current Welfare and Equity representative hasn't shown up", referring to current Welfare and Equity representative Rihana.

Kia ora Critic,

It's good we all now know those EAG protests were just exercises in gaining popularity. All so the ISO-backed candidate can take credit for them, while pretending the other presidential candidates aren't all in the photos as well. The year is 2026, not 1986. The 20-odd students who read Trotsky and shouting "coward" at passing by students during a protest — they aren't fit to run a Gulag. I hope they realise OUSA is a real job, with real professional responsibilities.

Candidate getting cocky?

Troy gibbons is already claiming victory on his social media by claiming he is already the 2027 president? (see attached)

Is this a sign of the politics to come? Claiming victory without even the election taking place. I am a zoology student but I know for elections to have a result the actual election has to take place

Do right, vote liam white (iykyk)



Shoutout to Hanna to best editor ever having to deal with 28 exec candidates and their bullshit.

Editor's response: Thank yewwww! Also shout out to Awhi, Harry, Stella and Gryffin for helping cover forums #democracy



LETTERS POLICY

Letters should be 150 words or fewer. The deadline is Thursday at 12pm. Get them into Critic by emailing us at critic@critic.co.nz. Letters of a serious nature directly addressing a specific group or individual will not be published under a pseudonym, except in extraordinary circumstances as negotiated with the Editors. Critic Te Ārohi reserves the right to edit, abridge, or decline letters without explanation. Frequently published correspondents in particular may find their letters abridged or excluded. Defamatory or otherwise illegal material will not be printed. We don't fix the spelling or grammar in letters. If a letter writer looks stupid, it's because they are.

The News

ISSUE 24

KAWEPŪRONGO

28/09/2026

\$5 Lunch Hijacked by OUSA Executive Election Forums

Twenty-five candidates plead their case over three days

By Harry Almey, Stella Weston & Gryffin Blockley
news@critic.co.nz // deped@critic.co.nz

\$5 lunch was overrun last week with three days of lunchtime forums to give students a chance to dissect the policies and promises of the 25 candidates running for the ten OUSA Executive positions for 2027. To save you from over six hours of forums, here is our three-page summary of the 12,000 words of notes we took.

Day One

- President

Last year was the first time in three years students had two options for president. This year, we have four! What luck. International Socialist Organisation member Rosie Cruickshank, current Finance & Strategy Officer (FSO) Troy Gibbons, current Postgraduate Representative Fergus Parks and fresh-faced Lochlan Hanham are all gunning for the full-time role at the helm of OUSA.

Rosie has campaigned with her politics on her sleeve. Self-described as a "revolutionary" socialist, she doesn't believe voting for her will change everything. However, she believes it will help her go further in building a broad-based "fighting student movement," which will fight for Gaza, and against landlords, the ruling class, and capitalism. She would, "militantly and belligerently," use the president's 40 hours for activism, because the role has "very little power." She is currently involved in the Education Action Group (EAG) and Otago Students for Justice in Palestine (OSJP).

Current FSO Troy reckoned "OUSA needs bold, experienced, and progressive leadership." Drawing on his year of Exec experience, his priorities were "practical steps to meaningful change." He promises to have U-Bar open three days a week and make \$5 lunch free, which he has said will cost a 2% budget increase. Troy was careful to only promise to "advocate" for a Winter Energy Payment. He is looking forward to mobilising students more, having worked on Gig for Gaza, and the OUSA leaders debate.

Lochlan says "pure sheer dogged tenacity is the offer." They say they are not officially a part of any political grouping, but promise to fight for students against this "rotten" government. They were nominated by Sarah Al-Shanfari, who they tautoko with in saying big promises like student bars have become a "cliché" in OUSA exec campaigns.

Fergus said, "why would I be a good president? Don't know. I'm

not AI yet, I guess. The University makes money. Would be nice if we could have some of the money." He added that at least he knows how the system works, although he did not submit a bio or picture to Critic. When asked if he was a joke candidate, Fergus responded, "I'm the Joker, baby." Okay.

Although Rosie and Troy seemed to be making a real effort to highlight their positive relationship, verbal projectiles did fly elsewhere. Lochlan, to the question 'how do you rate this year's Exec?' said, "I have some feelings about Daniel Leamy that I'm not sure that I should talk about – negative ones." They threatened to tell us what happens in an EAG meeting, getting halfway through criticising President Leamy's stance on radical action. They were then rebuked by Kamesha Jones for answering the question with personal critique about Daniel, rather than the Exec's collective actions this year.

Fergus identified three key issues for OUSA: money, nuclear devastation, and candidates with overt political ties. Other students present seemed to share that third concern. Also pointing fingers, Fergus pointed out a code of conduct complaint from earlier this year, about Troy. Yeowch.

When the point was raised to Rosie that every other elected and potentially non-socialist Exec member would have a vote in meetings, she assured that she had a lot of experience as the "minority in the room." Troy admitted he had run into similar problems, having pursued an OUSA statement opposing move-on orders and asset sales, but lost the vote on Exec.

Critic asked Troy what he had to show for his year as FSO, since we have no student bar, no fees-free at all, and a cut named "the University bookshop" – all of which are contrary to his 2025 election promises Troy said the Bookshop thing was "unfortunate," and reminded us he was going for small, deliverable promises this time around. But his headline accomplishment as FSO? \$111,000 in extra spending, including \$30,000 in extra clubs and individual grants, \$56,000 for student support in satellite campuses and \$15,000 for a Student Voice Coordinator.

Student engagement is a big part of Lochlan's pitch, but Critic Te Ārohi then queried about students reportedly seeing Lochlan shout "coward" at passing-by students who did not join a recent Education Action Group protest. Lochlan did not deny this, and ummed and ahed about whether this was their preferred method of engaging students, before admitting

it was, “perhaps harsh,” but “perhaps the right thing in the moment.” Perhaps.

A few other highlights: Rosie wants to say “fuck you,” to Grant Robertson, which Fergus thought wouldn’t help OUSA’s relationship with the uni. Troy shilled for an Otago Daily Times article, where he spoke about AI, and betrayed Critic in doing so. Lochlan said they were aware the President role was basically just a bureaucratic “imperial fuck-ton of meetings.”

- **Administrative Vice-President**

Kamesha Jones was AVP for 2026, and is re-contesting the position for 2027. The only candidate working to frustrate those ambitions is Sarah Al-Shanfari. But there was not much frustration in this forum, which was far less tense than the Prez one.

You might know Sarah from Critic’s very own Survivor series. Sarah has been President of UniQ, the queer student’s club, for a year and a half. Sarah highlighted her ongoing attempts to transition UniQ into the Otago Rainbow Students’ Association (ORSA), which has involved constitutional work and getting together “siload” rainbow groups.

Kamesha believes this year has been "transformative" for OUSA in terms of engagement and political self-identity. “I’ve been learning how things work, putting down roots, and laying groundwork to build momentum. Whether I’m here or not, I hope next year’s exec can build off of that.” On top of her AVP work, Kamesha has written policy for the 1,000-large tramping club, including the alcohol policy.

Engagement was a more contentious issue. Kamesha was the first AVP to preside over an inquorate SGM since 2022. Reflecting on that, Kamesha said, “I think it’s about working better with the marketing department – we don’t have a super great amount of cohesion, and that’s something that I would like to change from the get-go.” Next year, she wants to see an Engagement VP and a Disability Rep role put in place – for real this time.

One of Sarah’s campaign reels criticised the current exec for failing to make quorum. She stood by it, adding “I know my comments may have seemed aggressive, but it’s fair criticism.” UniQ has also had low engagement, and Sarah admitted it had not been easy, that quorum was often barely met, and that the last three presidents had “come and gone and done nothing.” The ORSA rebrand was meeting Rainbow demand for activism, she said.

- **Finance & Strategy Officer**

There’s only one candidate for this: Ella Coudret. So if she can’t win here, then tough cheese. Fingers crossed she beats Mr No Confidence on the day.

Day Two
- **Academic Representative**

Ben de Ruyter, Dominic Seralius and Niko Fay are running for Academic Rep for 2027. Dominic has been an academic rep for POLSA, and has also been front-facing in the burgeoning History Students Society. Studying PPE and Law, Ben has consulted on two master’s proposals, and was involved with developing an AI ethics paper. He had a bit of a fan club going, with an enthusiastic response to all his answers. Once Ben finished his slot, about half the room packed up and left. Bummer. Niko’s big pitch is his experience – he is the Humanities Faculty Rep, working with staff on academic policy. Niko says, “Don’t vote for the status quo. Vote for Niko.”

Each of the candidates committed to doing something about the contentious lecture recording policy. Each of them

reckoned lecturers were playing fast and loose if designated as a lectorial (which can’t be recorded), and taking off their mics and all sorts of silly stuff. ‘We will end the silly stuff’, they all said, but acknowledged the importance of lecture attendance. Unfortunately, if you were after some concrete answers on how precisely the policy should change, you’re shit out of luck.

Ben advocated for the “complete and entire removal of Turnitin from our education system.” Wowza. Turnitin recently updated its policy, which would have allowed AI services to train off of student submissions. Turnitin has U-turned, but says they will revisit the policy next year. Ben says he “Kinda fucking hates AI.” Dominic feels AI has a place, and doesn’t want to ban it outright. Niko thinks the university’s “AI in everything” policy is shortsighted. Dominic overall seemed a little afraid of the overtime bell, keeping all of his answers to a tight twenty seconds.

- **Welfare & Equity Representative**

Sarah Al-Shanfari, Reuben Tait, Hamza Baalousha and Yuri Castañeda are this year’s candidates for Welfare & Equity Representative.

Sarah’s campaign page describes her as “an advocate for asylum seekers, refugees and the rainbow community.” Hamza is an executive member on the Otago Disabled Students’ Association, and wants to centre mental health, and thinks the role should be ‘Wellbeing’, not ‘Welfare’. Reuben admits they are new to advocacy, and without a lot of direct experience. But he credits his 1st-year struggle and burnout, and Zoe Eckhoff, with getting passionate to make a difference. Yuri is Philippines born, Qatar raised, and is running on a platform of connecting students and uplifting welfare for all.

One question of particular contention was about bathrooms on campus. One of Sarah’s key campaign themes is that there is only one gender-accessible bathroom in a Central Library of 2,000 study spots. Hamza disagreed, saying that it was “pretty stupid to push for two” – not that it isn’t an issue, but because other groups needed more, and the role was about “prioritising.” Yuri quickly disagreed with Hamza, and wanted to talk to Sarah afterwards about a map of pre-existing gender-accessible toilets.

- **Clubs & Societies Representative**

It was a crowded and experienced field for the Clubs & Socs Representative race. Ella Grayson, Leila Daniels, Cheol Shin and Dominic Sarelius all put their hands up for the role this year. All candidates talked about the experience they bring to the table: Ella has served on POLSA, SOULS and PILO execs; Dominic on POLSA, History and Classics Students’ Associations; Cheol has worked with Asian Law Students, Locals, and Debating Society execs, and Leila with Commerce Students Association and GEMS.

As far as the questions went, the candidates were pretty agreeable for most of the forum. All candidates agreed on the differing needs of small and large clubs, but visibility being the key issue. Cheol emphasised the importance of clubs continuing to do events past the first few weeks of the semester, while Leila hoped to see a more “streamlined” clubs system that works for everyone.

Day Three
- **Political Representative**

In the race for Political Rep is EAG activist and President of the (now-defunct) Otago University Tea Enjoyment & Appreciation Society, Lochlan Hanhlan; Thomas Brocherie, a 1st-year Law student, a former co-director of the campaign to reduce the voting age to 16, and who cut his teeth in youth parliament;

and Connor Knights, another EAG activist, and a current delegate for Unions Otago.

Thomas declared, “there are no nine words [more] useless than: I’m running for OUSA, and here are my promises. So here are my plans.” They have seven plans, and counting – such as grandfathering fees free. Thomas touted his ability to coordinate a Youth MP open letter in 2025 about lowering the voting age, which was also the subject of a bill he helped get into Parliament in 2023, before the coalition killed it in 2024.

Lochlan wants to “doggedly stand like a mule,” against the University and Government, achieve the EAG demands (all but one they recited easily), and regularly call MPs up, because that is more “achievable” than trying to get them to show up to campus. For Connor, he wants to achieve fees-free over all years of study, and reckons he can “make noise,” and also get non-progressive students involved, thanks to his union experience.

Asked about potential conflicts of interest, candidates were honest: none for Lochlan (but they are friends with nearly everyone in EAG and ISO). “Two ticks Green,” grins Connor (who can’t say this if he wins). Thomas is a Labour Party member (to which Lochlan went, “hmmmm”). They all bravely committed to not running in a DCC election. Then everyone did the decent thing, and stabbed each other in the front. After Thomas said he supported BDS, Connor forced him to admit he had not always been “compliant” with BDS. Thomas returned fire: another year of full-fees-free advocacy was “Colossal waste of time,” because both major parties had ruled out bringing it back. Grandfathering was good, anything more was blue sky thinking. Lochlan, otherwise jammed between these two candidates, and muttering “I am woefully underqualified,” perked up at that: “If you have no blue sky behind your grey clouds, you suffocate! Because there is no atmosphere.”

- **Postgrad Representative**

Current Postgrad Rep Fergus Parkes has two other taura coming for his role, Virology PhD student Kristina Hames and Botany MSc student Imogen Harris. Fergus said his tenure has been marked with “a lot of admin” and changes to the graduate research fund. In the absence of first hand experience, Kristina brings her experience founding the Microbiology Students’ Association, and the Dunedin Chiasma exec. Imogen just wrapped up her time as Tramping Club President, the largest club on campus. Despite being busy bees, all three candidates were confident to put in the hard yards for the ten hour role.

All three candidates agreed on the difficulty of engaging with postgrads, all shut up in write-up rooms scattered across campus. For Imogen, a big concern was ensuring greater disability support for postgrads, also acknowledging the difference in needs required between undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Kristina talked about the cycles of poor feedback and issues that can persist year after year in postgraduate environments, and the difficulty of working through supervisor issues when they only look after a small number of students at a time.

In terms of the social side of things, Fergus did admit he “killed” the Society for Postgraduate students, due to a lack of engagement – something that had been snowballing before he had taken up the role. Kristina and Imogen both pointed towards engaging within departments first to help bolster connection and community. In terms of the political sphere, topics like the cutting of the postgraduate students’ allowance was raised, with all three candidates showing an appetite for the political side of OUSA.

- **International Representative**

Tim Podornicov, Ilham Nadhirah Azman, and Allyson Tan are your International Rep candidates. All three candidates have moved to New Zealand: Tim from Moldova, and Allyson and Ilham from Malaysia. Allyson is currently the OISA rep for Media and Communications, and Ilham is the Social Impact Lead, International Ambassador for the University, and the Vice-President of the Asian Students’ Association.

Ilham believes that the biggest challenge international students face is making friends as they often flat immediately rather than going through halls, leaving them trying to integrate themselves into established groups. Allyson agreed that it can get pretty lonely, and emphasised the total culture shock that she experienced of moving somewhere completely new where inside jokes don’t translate and lolly names are all confusing. Tim agreed with his fellow candidates, and highlighted high international healthcare fees as a huge barrier to dealing with the challenges above.

In terms of tuition fees, Tim is aware that this role would have little power over the amount international students are charged, but instead could work to use these more effectively to create programs that help this group, and ensure they are treated equally despite getting charged more. Ilham and Allyson both agreed that while they can’t affect how much international students pay, how fees are allocated could be improved. Allyson suggested a more centralised support system as a possible use, and Ilham floated ideas of creating more opportunities, or even just more spaces for international students to hang out. All three candidates also emphasised the need for more events for international students, by offering support this way by being a visible shoulder for struggling students to lean on.

A question from the audience about dealing with racism faced by international students drew a powerful response from the candidates, and a beautiful display of solidarity. Tim emphasised that this issue goes beyond just international students, and that hate absolutely shouldn’t exist at all.

- **Residential Representative**

Incumbent Zoe Eckhoff and challenger Jacob Rush closed out the forums, after three days of the longest \$5 lunches in recorded history. Jacob, current student engagement rep for Locals, wants to advocate for a rental warrant of fitness, and be a voice for students in halls. Jacob wanted to meet students where they are, and work with other programs like UniFlats and Locals, to offer support, while advocating for bigger policies from local governments. Incumbent Zoe laughed that she was asking to keep her job, and had really enjoyed this year, listing off her biggest achievements as advocating and supporting students who reached out, and trying to de-mystify processes like the Tenancy Tribunal through her flattening pamphlets.

Jacob and Zoe both agreed that the Uni could be doing more in terms of advocacy work and potentially rental warrants of fitness. Zoe emphasised that financial problems and tenancy problems are often joined at the hip, so fees free is huge. Jacob wanted to address the harms driven by a prevalent drinking culture, adding that he supported Troy’s U-Bar policy because “everyone can run for a student bar, nothing ever happens.” Zoe agreed, pledging her full support.

Information overload yet? Voting is open for the 2027 OUSA Election until 4pm on Thursday. Check your student email for the link to vote. ★

ODA Opens The Gates To Willy Wonka's Factory

Oompa-Loompas, 100+ dancers, and a chance to rewrite the trauma Tim Burton gave us

By Molly Smith-Soppet
Culture Editor//culture@critic.co.nz



For two nights only, the College Auditorium is becoming Willy Wonka's factory – minus the workplace violations.

The Otago Dance Association (ODA) is bringing Charlie and The Chocolate Factory to life on October 2nd and 3rd, with over 100 dancers storming the stage to perform twenty six dances. The show is mainly based on the 2005 film adaptation by Tim Burton, otherwise known as the film that scared our entire generation (plus our parents) away from ever willingly entering a strange man's chocolate factory.

ODA President Inese and last year's Vice-President Maddison, who are Co-Directing this year's showcase, told Critic Te Ārohi that the show covers all of the important bits: the Winners finding their tickets, the Chocolate river, Mike Teavee and his TV, as well as Violet Beauregarde's transformation into a blueberry. You know, wholesome family stuff.

Each character gets their own dance style to match their personality. Veruca Salt, resident spoiled brat, gets heels. The chocolate river, meanwhile, will be made out of dancers, which is both resourceful and considerably cheaper than flooding the TCol stage with liquified Cadbury. Some dances will have 40–50 people on stage at once, meaning the choreographers have essentially spent the semester playing human Tetris. Inese said the huge numbers are “some of the best energy” in the show, particularly when the audience starts getting rowdy.

And yes, before you ask: there will be Oompa Loompas. Their number is apparently “weird and wacky” – as both God and Roald Dahl intended.

Saturday's audience also gets its own Golden Ticket moment, with five chocolate bars hidden around the venue. Sadly, ODA could not confirm whether finding one entitles you to inherit an ethically dubious confectionery empire. Critic is still speculating – hit us up with a news tip if your flatmate never returns from this viewing.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is on at College Auditorium at 7pm on October 2 and 4pm on October 3. Tickets are \$15 for students and children and \$25 for adults, and can be bought through the link on Instagram, @otagodanceassociation. Bring high energy, a willingness to boogie, and maybe avoid smacking your gum too loud during the performance – lest you be turned into a blueberry!★



From Pandas To Parliament

Opportunity candidate Kayla Kingdon-Bebb on political polarisation, protecting the planet and why students need to get

By Bella Bates
Senior New Reporter//news@critic.co.nz



Critic Te Ārohi recently sat down with Opportunity's Wellington Bays candidate, Kayla Kingdon-Bebb. Alongside contesting the Wellington Bays electorate, she serves as Opportunity's spokesperson for climate change, conservation, the environment, oceans and fisheries. This is your go to Opportunity candidate if you're curious about their environmental policies. Usually found at the helm of the World Wide Fund for Nature New Zealand (WWF), Kayla has stepped away from her role as CEO while campaigning, helping the organisation retain its independent and apolitical status. “I call it being ‘fun-employed,’” she laughed. For clarity, that is WWF as in “the pandas, not the wrestlers”, a distinction Kayla has apparently had to make more often than you might expect.

Kayla's decision to enter politics grew out of her experience working as an environmental policy advocate and witnessing what she described as the “quite egregious backsliding” of the current Government, or, put more bluntly, their “war on nature.”

She wondered how differently the term might have unfolded had National and the Greens been able to work together, arguing that there is real value in a centrist environmental party capable of partnering with either establishment party – National or Labour. She noted that, until recently, these two major parties voted together on around 75% of legislation before the House, suggesting that New Zealanders are generally more centrist than our increasingly “hyper-partisan” political discourse would have us believe.

Problems such as climate change, managed retreat, New Zealand's infrastructure deficit and child poverty are far too complex to be solved within a single three-year term. Instead, they require sustained action across successive governments, something Kayla believes our current political discourse is ill-equipped to deliver without “a steady centrist partner” keeping everyone on track.

Kayla's WWF experience is also reflected in the policies she hopes to advance. She singled out Opportunity's Healthy Oceans policy, which seeks to restore marine ecosystems and fish stocks, strengthen climate resilience and invest in a sustainable, high-productivity “blue economy”. More broadly, Kayla and Opportunity wants to rebuild cross-party consensus on climate policy and restore credibility to New Zealand's climate agenda through measurable emissions reductions and greater support for communities facing adaptation and managed retreat.

Kayla's clearest message to students, however, was simple: enrol, and do it quickly. She criticised recent electoral changes that she believes will disproportionately affect students, Māori and overseas voters who might otherwise cast special votes. She urged students to check their enrollment, use tools such as Vote Compass to compare party policies and attend local candidate debates. After all, “it is younger generations who will inherit the consequences of the decisions made over the next three years”. ★

Critic's Fat Chat With Flatchat

Review your flat for everyone to see

By Stella Weston
and MANT252's Pieta Campbell, Jackson
Larner, Ivy Turner and Jack Vivan
Deputy Editor//depd@critic.co.nz



Ōtepoti students have undoubtedly had their fair share of flattening horror stories. However, Otago graduate Ryan Cole is here to help lessen that with Flatchat. Boasting “honest flat reviews from real NZ tenants”, this platform is designed to increase visibility around the Aotearoa rental market, and “bring some of the power away from the landlords and back to the tenants”.

Ryan graduated from the University of Otago in 2022, with a degree in software engineering, but while he was here he had his fair share of flattening nightmares. From living in a shed with his only flatmates being mice and a “random in the shed next door”, Ryan explained that people end up in these flattening situations because the rental market naturally gives landlords a lot of power: “they're the ones with all the properties – but we're the ones looking for places to live.”

According to this year's Critic Census, average weekly rent in Ōtepoti was about \$200, with many students seeing more than solid increases to this going into next year. Despite this, a large number of flats still don't even meet Healthy Homes Standards, and are the root of all worry for parents when students don't manage to clean all the mould off the windowsill before the family visit.

It's actually the second time Critic Te Ārohi has interviewed Ryan this year, but with many tauria still looking to sign, his work is more important than ever. Flatchat gives the students a voice against less-than-average flats, and Ryan hopes the platform will make “landlords feel a bit more responsibility around their properties” and the living conditions that tenants deal with. By gathering firsthand reviews of flats and landlords from tenants themselves, students (and all renters) can make more informed decisions.

Each review is scored across four ratings – value, condition, warmth, and landlord – as well as a short written section of any additional information about the flat that you think should be shared with future tenants. These are the small details that can make a disproportionate effect on the flattening experience, such as the water pressure of showers, or how responsive the landlord is about fixing issues. This process is anonymous and can easily be done in just a few minutes, although you must have lived at the property to review it.

While most landlords have been really good about the platform, Ryan noted that the “hate and aggressiveness from some caught him off guard”. Despite some emails from landlords in all caps “like they're yelling at me... which I find quite funny”, Ryan firmly emphasised that Flatchat is not about blaming landlords, and that there are “always gonna be bad actors on both sides”. Instead, it really is about swinging that power dynamic a little more in favour of renters, and highlighting the good landlords as well as the bad ones.

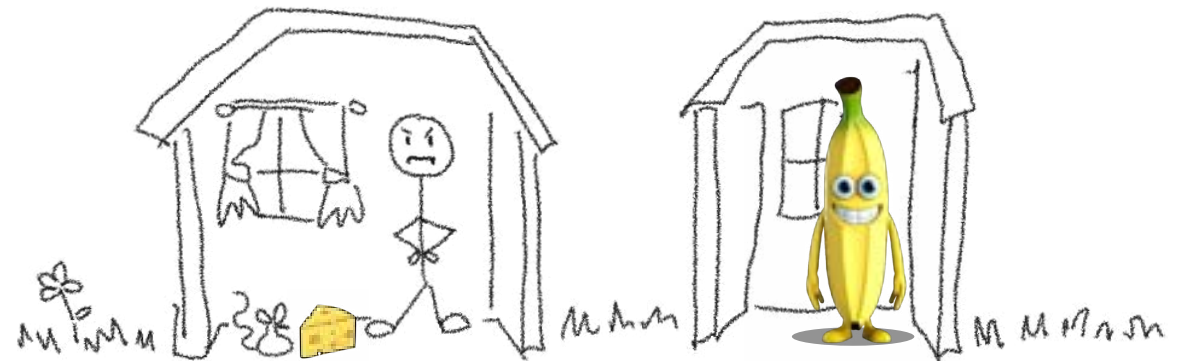
Starting out, Ryan knew there would be some controversy around this platform, and so he walks a fine legal line – “if there's a mistake made along the way it could cost the whole website.” There is a legal process outlined on the website for landlords to dispute reviews if they believe them to be false, misleading, or not firsthand experience. Ryan said he'd been through this process at least ten times, and though he believed some of the disputed reviews to be valid, he ensured that he followed the process and deleted them if there was no proof. Under no circumstances does Ryan or Flatchat share the identity of a reviewer.

As well as the main basis of reviews, Flatchat also offers a number of resources, including a simple breakdown of those ever elusive Healthy Homes Standards, and tenant guides to bonds, repairs, and ending a tenancy. Although it began in Ōtepoti, Flatchat is getting more and more attention, covering the six major cities (Auckland, Wellington, Dunedin, Christchurch, Palmerston North and Hamilton) and being available nationwide. There's also a brand-spanking-new Flatchat app.

As you sign your flats for next year, take a moment to flick through the site and see what past tenants think, and add your own experiences as well. Ryan hopes that with more reviews, a clearer picture will be painted of both landlords and properties, allowing renters, and students in particular, to make better informed decisions and therefore have better flattening experiences.

Flatchat Website: <https://flatchat.co.nz/>

Get in touch: support@flatchat.co.nz ★



PUZZLES

CROSSWORD

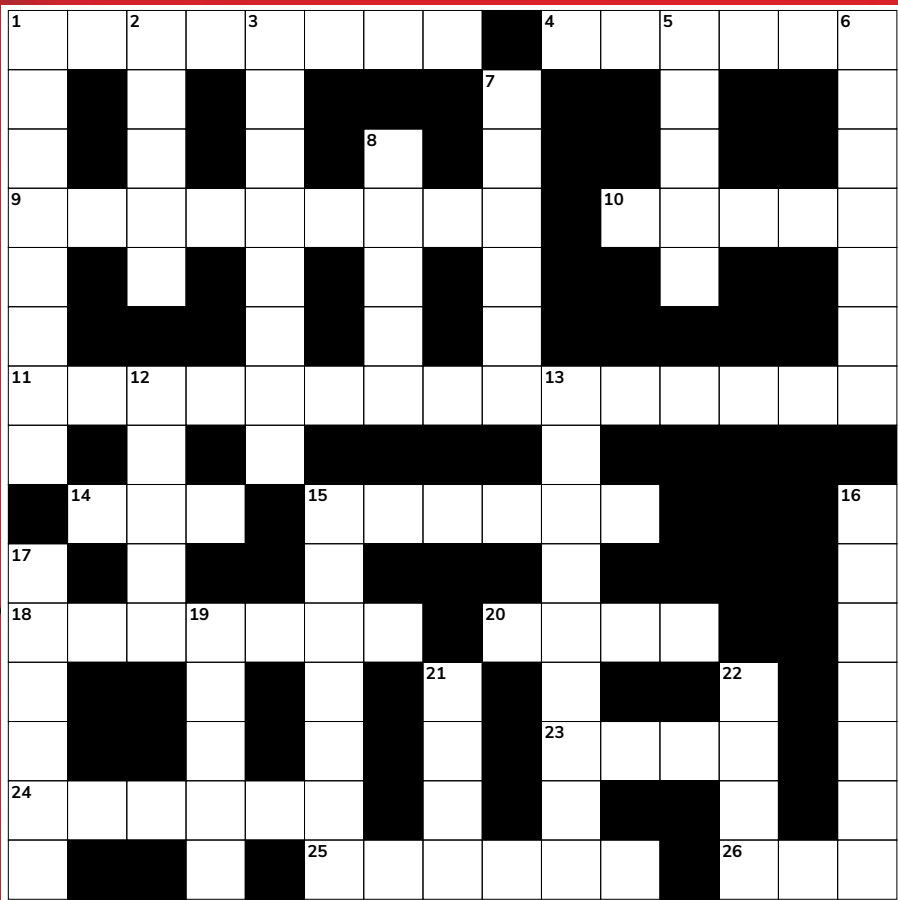
BROUGHT TO YOU BY *Mazagran* **ESPRESSO BAR**
36 MORAY PLACE, DUNEDIN

ACROSS

- 1 Opposite of unity
4 Kiss
9 Stationary clothing model at Rebel Sport
10 Baby possums
11 The man who killed Count Dooku (2)
14 A fictional sloth
15 They can contain golden scars in Fortnite
18 Private bathroom
20 Gen Z term for 'loser'
23 To exclude
24 Very unpleasant
25 Describes a rough-sounding voice
26 Expected

DOWN

- 1 The title of the upcoming Avengers movie
2 An attractive feature on a person's forearm
3 Delightful
5 The guards in Wreck-It Ralph
6 Contains your revolver
7 Nickelodeon character, and friend to Craig
8 Jesus' opp
12 False name
13 Ubisoft videogame franchise (2)
15 A big fish with whiskers
16 Classic mobile game, 'Jetpack _____'
17 Town where the center of New Zealand monument can be visited
19 To remove something from its packaging
21 Māori word for 'God'
22 Condition associated with combat veterans (acr.)



Find crossword answers on critic.co.nz

SUDOKU

www.sudokuoftheday.com

2	4		6	1		9	5
	7	6				8	
	9			8	4		1
	5	8	1				
			8		9		
					7	4	2
9	2		3	7			8
		7				2	5
8	4		9	2		6	

EASY

						3	9	4
			1	2		6		
	5						7	1
4	8		6		7			
		6		9		4		
			2		8		1	6
1	4						3	
		3		5	2			
8	9	2						

MEDIUM

	5		2	7				
				4				2
1	6			8		7		
2					5	8		
		5		2		4		
		9	3					7
		4		5			1	2
	9			3				
				9	7		6	

HARD

WORD FIND

VKCHICKPEASAHOBXBRNDFIYZU
ZMFADSM SHMOOKGZFGQNRZVXK
AKSUIKKNPKSLSYQHLBMFITCVT
SVSTJIJGUGNUOEC SUHDAZSCMR
JUEVQTRUYARUPMT PGFCXZVXTG
SWL FKTQCLGFTCEVKEVWRLCBGS
HSFDFLOIQVSGHLRHWJFFELUVF
OMQPGEKWEXVGJOEFTQHKPVT LH
BJONFSSYYEXBLGFALSCNRYTYN
WRKOJW TZZLLSGOGVRUSMOQSWW
UUBJESDMIQFMQABLSEOATSBLD
GIYBUTTERFLIESNAWPGUE LUGG
ODZWBG GJHP IXUBUELFWVSIMOQ
OHSNAJGNNBWIJVCNCPXJTDBWS
POVFNM SZFMAWEOJUADOLRELJU
FHWVAGMJNDHVFTZMMKOKROEFB
WCVMNBAGNTXROEFP HSWTNIBRR
YHBP ARCWUGKMRLFQEMHKENEZA
KEAOSA KSCBHEUKXDDAUOCSEAZ
GEKEUBLSEPWOMFVZEHCITGBBI
ZSHHRIEEFJIWMORBUSKEPJ BVL
FEEYRGMLIHCHIMPANZEEFTNNI
BWUNL SOEALWWKJGMHPJV KXZFA
CDHUTMRCANCGSNEENCYEHTDYN
JEKDBSEGUWCMCYZKUVIOAGABT

FIND THESE WORDS:

FRIZZLE
PROTEST
ORBUS
MEOW
SKITTLES
NUCLEAR
PEACE
BRAZILIAN
FORUM
CHICKPEAS
SLIDE
ANECDOTES
GLOBAL
VOTE
GOOP
BUMBLEBEE
CUMSHOT
SUPERFLUOUS
MACKLEMORE
BUTTERFLIES
BIG
BUTT
BANANAS
CHIMPANZEE
CHEESE

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

There are 10 differences between the two images

Illustrated by **Eleanor Walker**



What's YOUR Number?

By **Haritha Surendran Nair**

Hector* clocks in at 7, Tonya* at 10, Dominica* at 16 and Augusto*? A solid 41. Get your mind out of the gutter, folks – I'm not talking about *that* number.

I'm talking about a number that – through no fault of your own – can change your life, make or break your dream and dictate how much of the world you get to see and how easily. Drum roll, please: the global passport index.

Passports have a complex and surprisingly long history, with early versions appearing in ancient China and classical Rome. But the modern passport – in the shape and form we recognise today – was introduced as a “temporary” wartime security measure during World War I. Through the series of events that followed, a handful of rich and powerful nations, especially the erstwhile colonisers, ended up becoming the gatekeepers of global mobility. The imperialist and fascist politics of the era were also clearly reflected in the system.

After WWI ended, 42 nations, mostly the victorious Western Allied powers – convened at the Paris Conference on Passports in 1920, where the standardisation of modern passports took place. The British passport was treated as the “gold standard,” true to imperialist traditions. Fascist regimes of the 1920s and 1930s later perfected the passport as a tool of population surveillance, control and racial sorting. The irony? The Paris conference was convened partly to consider the total abolition of the passport system.

So, back to those numbers. The global passport index indicates the strength of a country's passport, based on how many countries its holder can enter visa-free or with a visa on arrival. There isn't a single passport index, but the most popular one is the Henley Passport Index

(HPI). According to HPI, Hector's Canadian passport ranks 7 globally, granting him visa-free access to 183 countries. Kiana's* Iranian passport, on the other hand, ranks 97, allowing her to travel to only 37 countries hassle-free. The lower your passport sits in this hierarchy, the more complex, expensive and uncertain international travel becomes. For some additional context, a New Zealand passport is ranked 7th.

TWO CLUBS, ONE GAMBLE

My number is 82, and my visa journey sucked! It gave me sleepless nights, probably a few extra frown lines and kept my therapist in business. With the stress of that, I wanted to know if I was alone in this – and I'm definitely not.

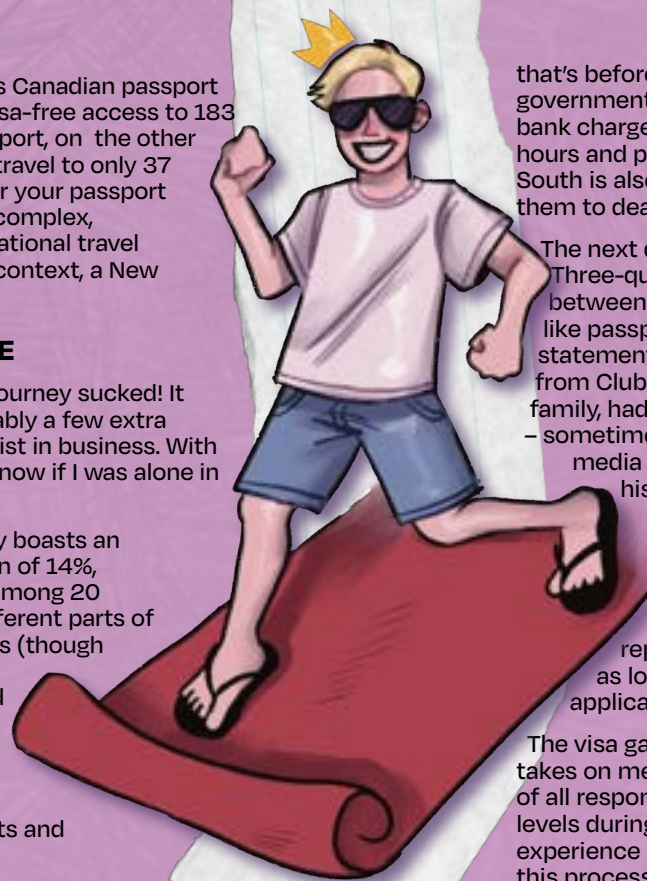
The University of Otago actually boasts an international student population of 14%, so I conducted a small survey among 20 international students from different parts of the world across five continents (though I didn't manage to track down any Europeans). The survey had 21 questions about different aspects of the visa process. The responses were grouped based on the HPI scores of the participants' passports and analysed.

The most telling signs of inequality appeared in three categories: visa processing times, overall visa expenses and the number of documents submitted. For the sake of keeping it simple, let's call the strong-HPI countries Club North and the weak-HPI countries Club South. That's a tribute to my exorbitantly expensive master's degree in international development here at Otago, referring to the concept of the Global North and South. The Global North are wealthier, industrialised countries with more economic and political power, and the South tend to be countries with lower income levels and histories of colonial exploitation.

Now, bear with me while I throw a few more numbers at you.

I found that participants from countries with lower HPI scores typically had longer visa processing windows, and more than 50% of them waited over four weeks. From my personal experience, those four weeks feel like four decades. Every email notification is terrifying because a visa rejection means more than a 'no' – it means starting from zero again. I would liken it to psychological warfare. One in four respondents from Club South reported previous visa rejections from different countries, whereas none from Club North had faced any.

The same pattern showed up in processing fees: most from Club North spent only between 100 and 1,000 dollars, while the pattern for Club South was far heavier – around 45% paid between 1,000 and 2,000 NZD, and about 12% were pushed beyond 2,000. And



that's before counting the hidden costs – travelling for government clearances, expensive medical exams, bank charges, exchange-rate fluctuations and the hours and pay lost due to taking leave from work. Club South is also shackled by weak currencies, leaving them to deal with a brutal double whammy.

The next disparity was documentation.

Three-quarters of Club North had to submit only between 1 and 15 documents – the basic essentials like passports, university offer letters and bank statements. In contrast, nearly half of respondents from Club South, especially those who travelled with family, had to produce around 30 to 50 documents – sometimes even more. These included social media records, personal photographs, family history, travel history, chats and call-logs, legal affidavits and property deeds, on top of the key documents. Many of these are difficult to access because of bureaucratic delays or unfavourable political scenarios and respondents reported that the paperwork hunt took just as long as – if not longer than – the actual application process.

The visa game is a high-stakes gamble, and the toll it takes on mental health is often overlooked. About half of all respondents reported moderate to high stress levels during the process. Another 15% described the experience as “painful,” and 10% said “I wouldn't wish this process on my worst enemies” – all of whom were from Club South.

Not all metrics were bleak, though. A vast majority of the international cohort reported being well travelled. In this context, I use “well travelled” to mean that they have visited at least two countries outside their home country and Aotearoa New Zealand.

But remember – these experiences still only capture those who ‘made the crossing’. For thousands more, the finish line keeps moving. According to official data from New Zealand Immigration, 6,487 student visas were rejected in the calendar year 2025 alone. About 98% of all rejected student visas were from Club South.

At the beginning of this year, the UK government announced a temporary “visa brake”, halting new study visa applications for four countries: Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan. Students who had secured prestigious scholarships like Chevening were left with just 19 days to find a way out – which they ultimately couldn't – resulting in their visas and scholarships being terminated. All because they were born on the wrong side of imaginary lines on a make-believe globe.

PUNISHING DIGITS

International students in Aotearoa (including myself) are not here just because we are smart. We are here because we have been bestowed with social and cultural capital – because we had the privilege of being in the right place at the right time.

For some, the stamps on their passports are souvenirs of adventure, freedom, and wanderlust. For others, they're what Dimitry Kochenov calls a “punishing legal

liability”, they're people who end up as “victims of their citizenships.” Put simply, Amila* (HPI 98) or Lionel* (HPI 88) can't just join their mate Hazel* (HPI 7) if she wakes up one morning and decides to backpack across Europe – simply because she can.

We are all born with some numbers predetermined for us. What's yours?

Some Visa Anecdotes

Pepper

The hardest part of the visa process for Pepper* from China was getting a letter of proof from her local government to confirm that her father was her father! She eventually sorted it out with the help of a kind police officer who took pity on her.

Anika

Anika*, who came here with her partner, had to prove their relationship was ‘stable and genuine’. That meant a never-ending list of documents: joint financial records, mail addressed to their shared residence, public photographs, affidavits from friends and family confirming their relationship and so on. In a frustration-induced moment of rebellion, they included an Amazon invoice for a pack of condoms they had ordered – because according to them, if that doesn't prove a genuine relationship, then honestly, what does?

Vanessa

Vanessa* is here on a prestigious scholarship and was required to arrive before a stipulated deadline. But the scholarship team at Otago advised her to arrive later, citing financial difficulties in supporting her earlier. She listened and upon arriving

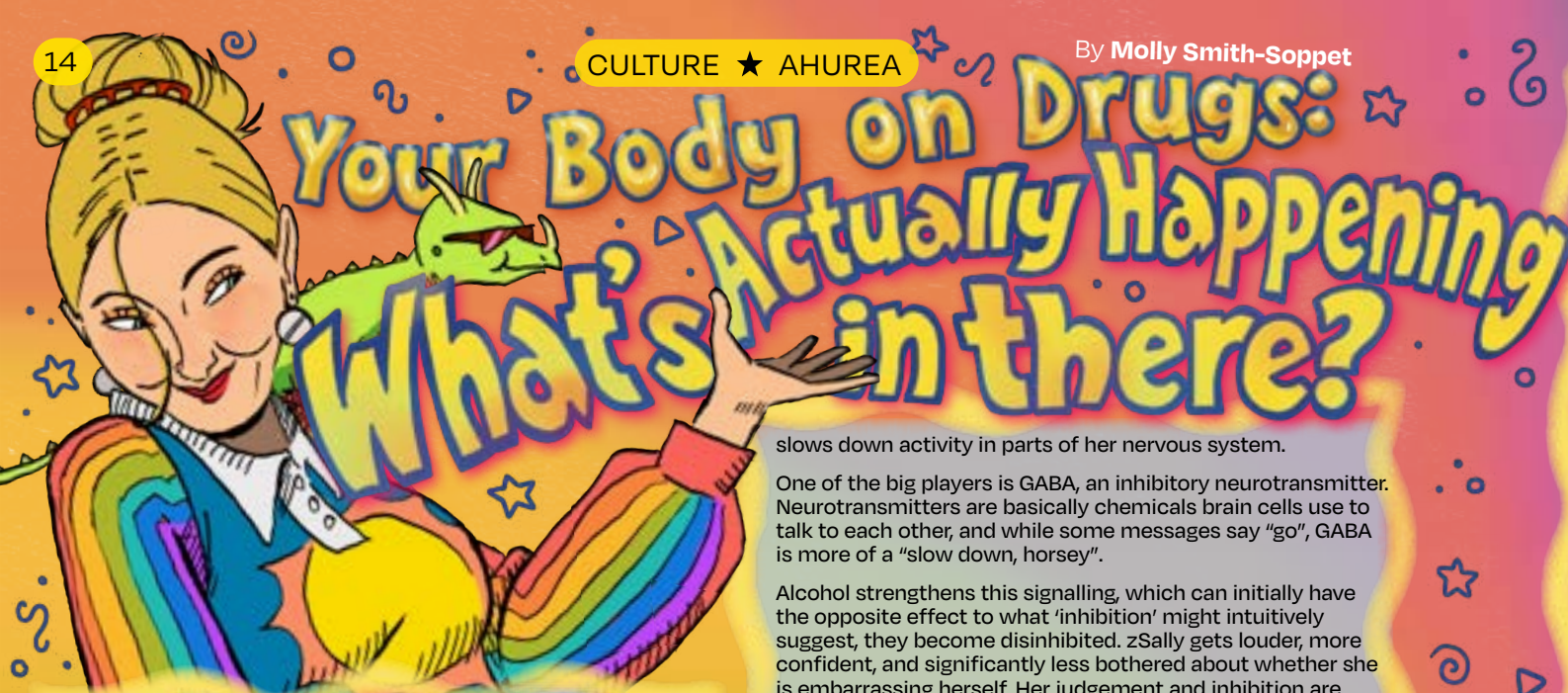
from Samoa was pulled aside by immigration officers for violating visa conditions. After explaining her situation, she was granted a one-month interim visa to sort things out. To quote her: “It was scary and it hasn't reached the time for it to be funny yet. Lol.”

**(names changed to protect privacy) ★*

Proof of Identity

Illustrated by
Eddie Fenton





Today is a very special day. Today, we are riding the Magic School Bus into our friend Sally.

Sally is having a very normal night for an Otago student. There's alcohol in her stomach, caffeine keeping her eyes open and nicotine being passed around. As the evening progresses, things are becoming increasingly pharmacologically complicated. From the outside, Sally is just standing in the kitchen pre-ing for a 21st, having a deep conversation with a girl she met 20 minutes ago. Inside, billions of neurons are firing, her heart is changing pace, her kidneys are fucking around with fluids, her liver is attempting to process the evening, and a whole lot of receptors are being fungled with.

Thankfully, we've brought an adult along our ride inside. Professor Bruce Russell is the Dean of the University of Otago's School of Pharmacy and Pharmacology and researches psychopharmacology. For today, he is essentially our Ms Frizzle, except instead of learning about the water cycle we are watching Sally's nervous system get progressively more scrambled.

Seatbelts on. We're going in.

First Stop: How Did All This Shit Get In Here?

How drugs get in your body actually makes a big difference to its onset. When you swallow something, it has to work through the digestive system before reaching your bloodstream. If you smoke or vape something, it can reach the brain within seconds – our lungs are very good at moving things into the bloodstream. Unfortunately, this system was designed with oxygen in mind – not a Rothman Red.

Before Sally will feel anything, whatever she's taken needs to reach the part of her body where it does something. That speed matters too; a faster arrival can create a sharper dopamine response, making the connection between "I did this" and "that felt good" much clearer. Your brain loves learning shortcuts, even shit ones. It's basically behavioural conditioning, except Pavlov's dog has a vape.

Alcohol: Someone Has Hit The Brakes

First proper stop: North Dunedin's favourite drug — and the one people usually forget even is a drug. Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant. That doesn't mean one vodka lemonade automatically makes Sally sad; it means alcohol

slows down activity in parts of her nervous system.

One of the big players is GABA, an inhibitory neurotransmitter. Neurotransmitters are basically chemicals brain cells use to talk to each other, and while some messages say "go", GABA is more of a "slow down, horsey".

Alcohol strengthens this signalling, which can initially have the opposite effect to what 'inhibition' might intuitively suggest, they become disinhibited. zSally gets louder, more confident, and significantly less bothered about whether she is embarrassing herself. Her judgement and inhibition are being affected, and so the little voice asking "Should I maybe not do that?" has lost some of its volume.

If Sally keeps drinking, her coordination gets worse, reactions slow, and memory formation can become patchy. At high enough levels, Sally can be awake and talking, but not properly storing parts of the night as memories. This is usually called being 'blackout drunk'.

Then there's that person who proudly tells you that they can "handle their drink". Professor Bruce says regular drinkers do not necessarily become much faster at metabolising alcohol – they can just get better at functioning while intoxicated. Your blood alcohol is still your blood alcohol. You've just got more experience driving the meat suit while the warning lights are flashing.

Stimulants: Wakey, Wakey!

Time for a complete U-turn! Stimulants include amphetamine-type drugs (like Adderall), methylphenidate (Ritalin), and caffeine. These all work differently, and while prescribed stimulant use is obviously not the same thing as recreational use, all stimulates tend to increase activity in systems linked to alertness and arousal.

Two names worth remembering are dopamine and noradrenaline. Dopamine gets called the "pleasure chemical", which is a bit like calling the Octagon "a roundabout with traffic lights". Not technically incorrect, but missing quite a lot. It is involved in reward, motivation, learning and reinforcement.

Noradrenaline is more directly involved in alertness and fight-or-flight. Turn that system up, and Sally's heart beats faster, blood pressure rises, pupils might dilate, and appetite may disappear. Meanwhile, Sally has suddenly remembered 14 stories that simply must be told right this second.

Caffeine mainly blocks adenosine receptors. Adenosine helps build up feelings of tiredness, so caffeine has not actually removed Sally's need for sleep. It has just stopped some of those messages getting through — a blockade that has carried generations of students through 8am lectures.

Nicotine: Can I Have A Hoon?

Before leaving stimulant land, we have a quick stop for nicotine – because there is no way Sally has made it this far without asking someone for a cheeky vape or puff of a dart.

Inhale nicotine and it can reach the brain very quickly, feeding into reward pathways involving dopamine. Sally takes a puff, and the brain gets a small reward. Then she can repeat the process almost immediately. Vape equals thing brain likes. Nice and simple.

Nicotine can also raise heart rate and blood pressure and constrict blood vessels. It might feel calming, particularly for someone who uses it regularly, even though it still acts as a stimulant in the body.

MDMA: Best Friends Forever

Now things are getting emotional.

Bruce describes MDMA as sitting somewhere between dopamine-heavy stimulants and drugs whose effects lean more strongly on serotonin. It affects both systems, helping explain the combination of stimulation, altered perception, and an overwhelming desire to tell everyone how much you love them.

Sally has known the girl next to her for 9 minutes and would now take a bullet for her.

Serotonin is also simply known as the "happiness chemical", but it is involved in heaps of other processes, including mood, perception, temperature regulation, and fluid balance.

MDMA can also cause the body to retain water. Someone dancing in a hot room still needs fluids, but if the body is holding onto water and someone absolutely hoses themselves, sodium in the blood can become dangerously diluted. At the extreme end, this can lead to brain swelling and seizures.

Then comes the post-MDMA slump. Changes in available serotonin and dopamine can contribute to feeling flat afterwards, but despite what someone's older brother told you in the smokers at a festival, Sally has not literally "used up all her serotonin". The factory has not shut down; it's just not that well stocked.

Acid: Why Are We Looking At The Wall?

LSD, or acid, is a classic hallucinogen whose major effects are tied much more strongly to serotonin systems than the dopamine-heavy effects associated with stimulants.

Rather than simply making Sally more alert, LSD changes the way her brain processes sensory information. Colours can look different, patterns can shift, sounds may feel strange, and time can stop being like a useful concept. The wall remains a wall – Sally's brain has just decided to see it in a new light.

Bruce notes that LSD does not appear to drive addiction in the same way as drugs producing strong, rapid dopamine rewards. That doesn't mean acid is harmless – the risks are just different.

Weed: Green In The Machine

Next stop is the endocannabinoid system, which existed long before anyone discovered you could even smoke weed.

Our bodies naturally produce chemical messengers that interact with cannabinoid receptors involved in things like pain, memory, movement, appetite and perception. THC can act on those same receptors, which helps explain why cannabis can fuck with such a random collection of bodily systems at once.

When she puffs and passes, Sally's short-term memory becomes less reliable. Time gets weird. Food becomes the only thing she can think about – after all, a packet of chips is definitely the best invention ever. THC is also particularly fond of fatty tissue, meaning it can stick around in the body for

longer than the basic feeling of being high lasts.

Synthetic cannabinoids are another thing entirely. Despite names like "synthetic weed", some can act much more strongly at cannabinoid receptors and be considerably more toxic.

Ketamine: Connection Lost

Our final stop is ketamine, a dissociative drug with anaesthetic properties. One of its major actions is interfering with glutamate signalling through NMDA receptors, disrupting communication between different parts of the brain. The result can be dissociation: feeling detached from your body, surroundings or usual sense of reality. The control room is still open, but no one is answering the phone.

This matters more when we remember Sally has already been drinking. Alcohol and ketamine can have synergistic depressant effects, meaning the combination can cause more impairment than simply adding Drug A to Drug B in your head. Sedation, memory problems and unconsciousness can become more likely.

Everybody Off: Sally Has Mixed Everything

Bruce's main advice for students is simple: don't mix drugs.

Once you start combining substances, things become harder to predict. One drug might amplify another, or change how intoxicated Sally feels without undoing what is happening inside her body. A stimulant making her feel awake does not mean the alcohol has magically left her bloodstream. Feeling fine is, unfortunately, not the same as being sober.

There is also the issue that illicit drugs are not always what someone thinks they are – something sold as one drug might contain another, or a mix that produces vaguely similar effects.

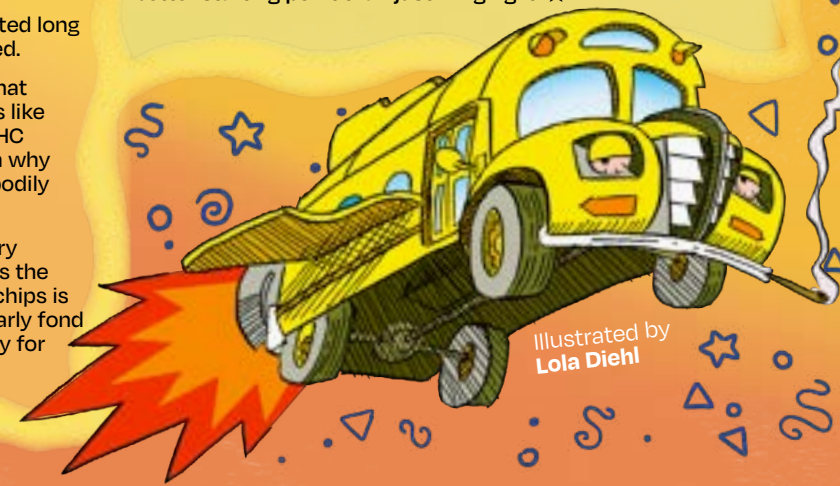
Which brings us back to the point of this deeply invasive field trip. From Sally's perspective, none of this feels like pharmacology. It feels like being drunk, wired, hungry, paranoid, sleepy, affectionate, nauseous or convinced you are having the greatest conversation anyone has ever had.

But inside Sally are receptors, neurotransmitters, organs, blood vessels and electrical signals responding to chemicals interfering with systems that were already there. Drugs do not create a new Sally. They just muck around with the machinery Sally already came with.

Our Magic School Bus is now leaving through whichever exit requires the least explanation.

Someone, anyone – please get Sally home.

If you're going to take something, get it checked first — **KnowYourStuffNZ** offers free, legal and confidential drug checking around Aotearoa. And before mixing anything (yes, alcohol counts), check a drug-interaction chart first. Charts aren't a guarantee that a combo is safe, but they're a much better starting point than just winging it. ★



Illustrated by
Lola Diehl



EMERGENCY EXIT!

By **Daniel Gray** Illustrated by **Jimmy Tannock**

A Degree in Disobedience

It's been almost one hundred years since students first got fucked off at the University of Otago and decided to protest. Over the decades, Otago students have occupied the Registry building, marched down George Street, and transformed lecture buildings into bases for fiery protests. Students have fought tertiary and governmental decisions – from tuition fees and educational policies, to foreign wars in Vietnam and Gaza. Students have been denied a voice time and again, even occasionally arrested. Despite the risk, they continue to march through the streets of campus.

Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka was founded in 1869, making it the oldest university in Aotearoa New Zealand. It opened in 1871 with a modest number of staff (three people). There was one professor to teach classics, English language, and literature, one to teach mathematics and natural philosophy, and the third in charge of mental and moral philosophy and political economy. 81 students were enrolled in the university's opening year, growing to around 3000 in 1961. As of 2025, there are 21,295 students enrolled.

Clearly, much has changed over the years, and protest at Otago has rarely been about just one issue. Instead, the objections and outrage reflect the problems of the day. The 1930s and 40s were characterised by religious and social issues, seeing The Great Depression and second World War sweep the globe. In the post-war era, Baby Boomers fought for a nuclear free New Zealand, and against the ban on mixed-gender flatting – in that order. The mid 1960s to 70s was a defining period for student protests. Incensed by New Zealand's continued involvement in the Vietnam War, students continued to rally for change until 1975 when the war finally ended.

Protests were no longer limited to issues that would directly affect students. Rather, they reflect the zeitgeist of the time – the 'spirit of the age'. Protesting became a way of inciting change in the way that students are best at: making lots of noise and pushing the boundaries of authority.

A 1992 government decision to introduce annual tertiary fees caused an explosion in the sheer size and scale of student protests, and this flood of outrage only grew the following year when these fees increased almost tenfold.

However, the mass occupations and confrontations that for a time became synonymous with the university, have seen a significant drop in their size and influence since the turn of the century. The Registry building still stands, the Clocktower still looms over campus. It could be that students are finally content, but a brief scroll on Castle2026 (RIP Castle26) proves that this is far from the case.

Throughout the University's history, students have had a lot to protest about. Some demonstrations were small and largely forgotten, while others drew hundreds onto the streets and left a lasting mark on our campus. Let's take a closer look.

20 September 1932: Closure of Dunedin Training College

Student protests had relatively humble beginnings at the University of Otago. A trawl through the archives provides one of the earliest examples of demonstration reported by the Otago Daily Times, instigated by Parliament's proposal to close down the Dunedin Training College in 1932.

The Dunedin Training College (eventually becoming the Dunedin College of Education, and then absorbed by the University to become TCol) opened in 1876 to train primary school teachers. It served the community well for several decades, facilitating the gradual shift away from 'on-the-job' training to professionally educated teachers. All was well until 1932, when the college was marked for closure during the Great Depression.

For the students, this closure was about more than just another institution being lost. The college had trained teachers for decades, and students saw the loss as a significant blow to the University's educational resources. The proposal also raised questions about accessibility to education and the future of teacher training in Dunedin. Students decided to do what they do best: make noise.

However, the word "protest" might be a little deceptive here. Rather than taking to the streets with megaphones and witty signs, a committee of student representatives used the most terrifying form of protest imaginable – a petition to Parliament. The petition gathered signatures in school districts around Otago and Southland, with strong levels of support.

However, no number of signatures could dissuade the University. The college was still closed later that year, alongside similar institutions in Christchurch and Wellington.

Despite this initial defeat, changing economic conditions after the Great Depression eventually saw the training colleges reinstated in 1936 (yay!), with an impressive uptake in enrolments over the coming decades (woo!). While the campaign might have lacked the spectacle of the protests that followed, it was an impressive early example of Otago students using their collective voice to challenge decisions being made even beyond the University's authority.





9 May 1947: Compulsory Chapel Attendance at Arana

In 1947, the then-warden of Arana, Reverend H. W. Turner, announced that compulsory chapel attendance would be introduced for all residents the following semester. It was perhaps one of the earliest recorded instances of Otago students discovering they weren't particularly fond of authority. Before long, the Arana Students' Association approached the university to challenge the decision.

A petition calling to scrap compulsory worship garnered the support of nearly all Arana residents, which at the time was a male-only hall. By today's standards, this protest might seem pretty mundane, but it was another powerful example of students pushing back against attempts to control their education and everyday lives.

The scheme was ultimately overturned. The protest was not necessarily a fight over morality or religion, but rather a challenge to the university's authority over what students did in their own time.

14 August 1958: Dunedin Anti-Nuclear Protest

By the end of the 1950s, Otago students were beginning to take their demands off campus and into the streets of Dunedin. In 1958, around 200 students were involved in Dunedin's first ever anti-nuclear protest that marched from the University campus all the way to the Octagon, joining a growing movement against the spread and testing of nuclear weapons. Despite this issue seeming far removed from the day-to-day concerns of university life, it showed that students were willing to use their collective voice to address issues beyond their direct self-interest.

A big portion of the anti-nuclear protestors came from the Otago branch of the Students' Christian Movement (SCM). Formed in 1896 and established at the University of Otago the next year, the SCM comprised 47% of all Otago students at its peak

in 1915. While they initially began as a support group, raising funds for charities and disaster relief, they gradually shifted toward political activism. Its influence would be felt across student protests for many decades to come.

1960s: The Vietnam War

When you think of the word “protest”, you might well think of the stereotypical scenes of the ‘60s: peace signs, raised fists, placards, and long-haired students chanting and singing their way to social justice. That actually wasn't too far from the truth at Otago. As students became increasingly aware of geopolitical affairs, few issues would define the decade quite like Vietnam.

The Wellington Committee on Vietnam (C.O.V.) organised a handful of public meetings at the Dunedin Town Hall between 1965 and 1975, working alongside the Labour Party, which also organised several protests. A number of notable speakers came to Dunedin during the war, like American general, General Hester, noted Pediatrician Dr. Benjamin Spock and a range of foreign academics.

Most of the visiting speakers chose to hold their meetings away from the University campus, both to make them accessible to the wider public, but also because some felt it wasn't their territory.

When the government refused to release overseas funds to pay for foreign guests attending the “Peace, Power and Politics in Asia” conference in Wellington and their subsequent speaking tours, a petition created by student protest leader Ian Frazer was circulated around campus, and an additional 29 university staff sent a telegram of protest to then-finance minister, Robert Muldoon.

The C.O.V. organised “teach-ins” – seminars to educate people on various issues surrounding the war. Often organised by university faculty, these sessions generally lasted several days, with guest speakers brought in to deliver lectures and lead discussions. The Otago University Student's Association (OUSA) was even called upon on one occasion to provide funding and a venue.

Students and staff alike continued to protest both New Zealand and American involvement in Vietnam until the war's end in 1975, taking part in protests, public meetings and campaigns through the media.

1967: Mixed Flatting

At around the same time, an issue was raised a little closer to home: should mixed gender flats be allowed?

Newly appointed Vice-Chancellor Robin Williams was only a few months into his tenure when he was approached by OUSA over whether or not

unmarried men and women should be allowed to share university accommodation. Williams made his position clear: no. Things escalated after a male student living in an all-female flat was ordered to leave, prompting an unofficial protest on campus. Hundreds of students packed into the Union Common Room for an all-night “live-in”, vocalising their opposition to the rule, and specifically to the Vice-Chancellor's actions.

This Robin Williams was certainly no comedian, as he had previously worked on the Manhattan Project. He seemed determined to stick with what he knew – hoping splitting uranium was a transferable skill when it came to splitting up students. Despite his background in nuclear science being far removed from the increasingly social nature of student politics at Otago, Williams found himself at the centre of one of the university's most memorable clashes over student freedom just a few months into his new role.

Williams’ son later offered a different perspective on his father's position. He described Williams as a forward-thinker who was personally unbothered by the idea of unisex flats, but said the “conservative” climate of the time had forced his hand. His son also viewed the live-in protest as OUSA's opportunity to “have its day in the sun” with vocal students, following the increasingly prominent student protests taking place at universities around the world.

Whether or not that was the motivation behind the protest, the live-in reflected a wider change to student activism. Williams’ son later suggested that the growing power of the student body was a factor in his father's decision to leave the vice-chancellorship just five years later in 1972, and move to the Australian National University in Canberra. Apparently, letting university students live with the opposite sex was a more dangerous experiment than splitting the atom, although the university quickly backed down from its misguided decision. Relatively soon after the protests, mixed-sex flatting became the norm.

1971: Registry Sit-In

The 1971 Registry sit-in marked a further shift towards occupying the university grounds, rather than relying on more traditional forms of protest. The issue in question was a proposal to introduce sweeping new rules that broadened the definition of “misconduct”, potentially allowing students who were seen as “unbecoming” to the university to face disciplinary action.



The term “unbecoming” was pretty broad, and it was unclear whether this proposal was designed to target the craze of marijuana and acid spreading its way through campus, or to discourage the wild O-Week rituals that were beginning to grow in popularity. But the student body wasn't willing to wait around and find out, and took swift steps to prevent anyone from becoming unbecoming.

OUSA president Ebarima Manneh led the protest, albeit with some initial hesitation from the association's executive. Around 2300 students – nearly 40% of all students enrolled at the time – took part in the protest in some form. By Otago standards, this was less of a protest and more of a population boom. The mass sit-in of the Registry building made their movement heard, and the university backed down on the changes, confining the term “misconduct” to purely on-campus activities. However, in 2008, it was finally expanded to include off-campus behaviour.

1992: Tuition Fees Protest

Student protests became increasingly more radical as the century drew to a close and peaked in the early 1990s, when Prime Minister David Lange's Labour government introduced tuition fees for all university students. While these average annual fees started at \$129 in 1989, just one year later (under the same government, now led by Geoffrey Palmer, and even more briefly by Mike Moore before their defeat at the 1990 general election), tuition fees skyrocketed by 969% to \$1250 annually. This was, to put it mildly, not the sort of growth students were hoping to see.

These fees were beginning to put university education out of reach for many young people, and the students of Otago were not having it. After National came back into power in 1990, they moved quickly to abolish the existing flat-rate fee system, allowing universities to have more control over their fees in 1991. By 1993, the average tuition fee reached \$1,500 (equivalent to around \$3,200 today), which may seem like pebbles compared to what we currently pay, but it caused a whole lot of shit. The introduction of a student loan scheme in 1992 didn't soothe any tensions. This early scheme wasn't interest free, and that didn't change until 2006.

OUSA retaliated against the bombardment of new fees, rallying around 5000 students in 1991 marching in protest alongside OUSA President Helen Jamieson. The demonstration was one of the largest in the University's history. Despite the scale of the protests, the issue was far from settled. Fee

increases continued, setting the stage for a more violent clash just two years later.

By 1993, with Grant Robertson now at the helm of OUSA, students were back outside the Registry. A protest was organised on September 28th, with Robertson describing it as boisterous, passionate, and ultimately peaceful. Some of the Students' Christian Movement members made a return, brandishing "God Hates Fees" signs and handing out snacks to keep everyone's spirits high. As the protest came to a close, the remaining demonstrators sat down and linked arms.

What came next was unexpected. Police armed with riot gear and batons charged down the Registry stairs, striking demonstrators in their path. The clash left 24 students injured, sparking a wave of backlash against the police. Critic Te Ārohi even released a special edition dedicated to the incident. Some students called for OUSA to ban police from campus altogether. Unfortunately for the students, this was something the association didn't have the constitutional power to do.

The relationship between the student body and the Police was already frosty by this point. After the September protest, officers made several arrests relating to the clash. Robertson himself was arrested, although was never charged. He appeared on national television the night after the confrontation to discuss what had happened, which gave him a rare opportunity to address the country directly on behalf of Otago students, putting the University's dispute over fees into the national spotlight.

In the lead-up to the 1996 election, students finally secured a victory of sorts. Another occupation of the Registry lasted over a week and helped limit the proposed fee increase to 17% rather than the 25% initially suggested. While it doesn't sound like much of a victory today, students were willing to take whatever they could get. Similar demonstrations took place on other campuses across the country – Otago was far from alone in its opposition to rising fees.

2000s: Revolution to Revision

After a chaotic decade, the culture of student protest began to dry up. On a good day, a few hundred might have turned up, a far cry from the thousands recorded at past demonstrations. Every now and again, a cause would emerge that drew an impressive turnout. For example, the Otago National Organisation for the Reform of Marijuana Laws ("NORML") club smoked

cannabis on Union Lawn in protest of drug law reforms, or the "die-in" for Tibet that drew in around a hundred students. But ultimately, nothing quite matched the scale of what was seen in the '90s.

The 2010s was possibly the quietest decade in the past half-century. This didn't go unnoticed, with several media outlets, Critic included, calling out the student body for their apparent lack of willingness to rock the boat.

Former OUSA president Logan Edgar suggested this apathy stemmed from a growing attitude of being "too cool to care", deciding to lead by example by locking himself in a cage on Union Lawn for 42 hours in protest of Voluntary Student Membership legislation in 2011. However, former executive member Mark Baxter, who took part in several occupations of the Clocktower, pointed to the lack of leadership from OUSA during this period. Baxter also argued that newer generations of students had never experienced a time before tuition fees were introduced, meaning they hadn't witnessed the kind of significant change those before them had fought for.

Grant Robertson was more critical of the Voluntary Student Membership legislation introduced in 2012, and its impact on student political activism. With student associations no longer receiving compulsory membership fees, Robertson argued that their financial dependence on universities likely made them even more hesitant to challenge university authorities and potentially put their own existence at stake.



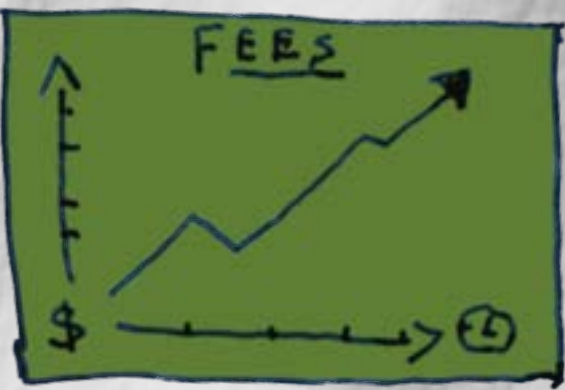
Robertson also suggested that tuition fees may have played a role – students who genuinely couldn't afford university were being increasingly excluded from higher education, and those were often the students most willing to cause a stir.

2026: The Renaissance?

Those views were shared over a decade ago now. Another former OUSA executive member, Kyle Matthews, said in 2015 that he thought there would be a backlash in the next 10-15 years. And in the 2020s, it's starting to look like he was right.

Channelling a similar angst to the Vietnam War protestors of the '60s, the Gaza War took centre stage at Otago from 2023 and remains a point of contention today. In 2024, a protest at the Clocktower saw a door smashed and a student injured during a scuffle with campus security. One person was arrested. Grant Robertson was by now the Vice-Chancellor himself, and no stranger to such protests. He did, however, condemn the incident as having "crossed a line", but he did not reject the underlying cause of the demonstration.

And now, as we reach the present, history appears to be repeating itself. Once again, students have taken to protest against tuition fees. This time, the student body is retaliating against the government for scrapping the final year fees-free scheme in May 2026, which will officially conclude at the end of this year. The decision has seemingly sparked a renewed frustration among the cohort, with the upcoming election adding another dimension to the debate. Education Action Group (EAG) chalk spanned across campus, and increasingly angry political postering covered nearly every bollard.



With an estimated 400 students taking part in the EAG strike, and another 250 occupying St Dave's, it seems we've finally discovered that sitting stubbornly in a university building is far more interesting than sitting in a lecture. The question now is: are we so back?

So, Did Any Of It Actually Work?

The legacies of Otago's countless protests probably impact today's student culture more than we'll ever realise. Looking back, it's striking just how many of the issues students once tackled have changed or disappeared completely.

We still have a teachers' college. There's no compulsory worship at residential halls. New Zealand became nuclear free in 1987, and mixed-flats are now the norm. Even tuition fee protests have at least evolved, with the concerns today differing from those raised during the '90s. In many ways, the success of past protests can be measured by how unfamiliar those grievances now seem.

And while countless injustices still remain, and not every demonstration has achieved its desired outcome, the motivation to get out and to stand up for your own beliefs in an era where most of us can't even make it to a lecture is commendable in itself.

The current generation will have to decide what they're willing to fight for. If Otago's history tells us anything, it's that student activism rarely disappears completely. It's inevitable that the government will do something stupid or that the university will introduce another policy that gets under our skin. When that happens, there will always be someone willing to pick up the placards, occupy the buildings and make themselves heard. The causes may change. The students may change. But the tradition of kicking up a fuss remains. ★

Dolly Possum (Dn)

Cow

1

MOKOMOKAI
& Troy Kingi (NZ)
Brasil

2

Becca Caffyn (Dn)
Julia Roberts

3

Harrison Marshall (Dn)
Cutting Stone

4

Ha the Unclear (NZ)
Cumberland Street
(Astigmatic)

5

the pink opaque (Dn)
glow

6

RIIKI REID (NZ)
Pāinaina

7

Dillon Jo (NZ)
Vertigo

8

PocketLipps (Dn)
What Did You Say
(Haszari Remix)

9

AW (NZ)
Rhubarb

10

Sivle Talk (Dn)
There's An
FBI Office In
Wellington

11

mazagran
hit picks
44kyn (NZ)
Reflections
Bunchy's Big Score (Dn)
MagnetSTREAM
RADIO ONE!

GIG GUIDE

TUESDAY 29TH

Behind The Music
Symposium - Gig 1Cuck, Hystera, Mōta, Francisca
Griffin & the Bus Shelter Boys.
The Crown - 7:30 pm

FRIDAY 2ND

Achtung!

w/ Emily Esplin Band & U-No Juno
Pearl Diver - 9 pm

SATURDAY 3RD

Rock The Vote!

Bunchy's Big Score, Coward, Deaf
Raccoon, Dolly Possum, Grace
Gemmell, Motheaten, Rheumy,
SEEK HELP!, Sivle Talk, Sogg,
Strap, Talking Furniture, the pink
opaque, U-No Juno, Vagina Dry,
special guest DJ Selectors, and
on-site voter enrolment.Southern Lights, 18 Devon St
12.15 pm - 8 pmWelcome To
Ravensbournew/ Bulletproof Convertible & Tiny
Pieces of Eight
Ravensbourne Hall - 7: 30 pm

Cindy - Album Release

w/ IVY, Fastplant, Shotgun Wed-
ding & Rotom Washing Machine
The Crown - 8 pm

Eigenface

w/ Michaela Tempers
Pearl Diver - 9 pm

SUNDAY 4TH

Neither Do I

The Crown - 8 pm

Find more
@ r1.co.nz/gig-guide/

ALBUM REVIEW

Julia Jacklin's
'The Gem'

Still wallowing in the late-winter seasonal depression prolonged by repeat listens of the new Phoebe Bridgers album? Lift up that head several degrees and celebrate the turn of spring with Julia Jacklin's new album *'The Gem'*. It's the Australian indie singer-songwriter's fourth studio album, which derives its name from a small Melbourne bar where Julia and her producer Robert Muinos converted an upstairs hotel room into a recording studio.

'The Gem' is Julia Jacklin's most polished and mature album yet, carried by cozy, acoustic instrumentation that makes you feel like you're front row at a tiny desk concert (Inch Bar gig when???). She abandons some of the more unfiltered alt-country qualities of her previous albums for a dreamier, folkier vibe driven by jangly guitars and sleek production. The harmonies on this album are a frequent treat to the ears, with songs like *Angel Vision* and *I Wish* sinking deep into your soul.

The strongest tracks on *'The Gem'* are easily the roadtrip-worthy singles *The Hardest Thing* and *Get Away From Me (I Think I'll Love You Soon)*, but after a few reruns of the album I found myself warming up to some of the more laid-back and somber songs Julia has to offer. It's almost as if there is a hidden gem for every listener (pun heavily intended).

Overall, *'The Gem'* is a shoebox of warm and fuzzy tunes that feel completely earnest and never like they're overstepping their ground. It's perhaps not an album that stands out too much from the sea of post-lockdown indie-folk artists (which I'm a huge sucker for), but it does a great job at satisfying the soul with its catchy melodies and contemplative, window-staring lyrics. If you're a fan of Big Thief, Faye Webster or Aldous Harding, then Julia Jacklin's new album will fit in perfectly to your shuffle rotation.

By Rowan Smith

Order *'The Gem'* vinyl from FlyingNun.co.nzALBUM OF THE WEEK
GIVEAWAYS:

Julia Jacklin's *'The Gem'*
5X VINYL LP
across Breakfast & Drive

Mon 28th: Drive @ 4.30pm
Tues 29th: Drive @ 4.30pm
Weds 30th: Drive @ 4.30pm
Thurs 1st: Breakfast @ 9.00am
Fri 2nd: Breakfast @ 9.00am
TUNE IN, TEXT IN, WIN!
(Sept 28 - Oct 2)



OUSA EXEC

VOTE

Kia ora

Every year students have plenty to say about OUSA, and don't get me wrong, that's exactly how it should be. But if you've got strong opinions about who should be leading and advocating for you in 2027, the best way to make sure you're heard is to vote!

The Executive isn't just a group of names on posters. We're the people making decisions and taking actions that shape your student experience. From clubs and events to advocacy and support. Who you choose directly affects what OUSA does next year.

Voting is quick, simple, and matters more than you think. It opens Monday the 28th at 9am and closes Thursday October 1st at 4pm. Just head online, find a voting booth, take a few minutes, and back the candidates who you believe represent you and your values.

Even if you didn't run this time, you still get a say in who's at the table. Don't leave it to chance, your vote is how you make sure the Exec reflects what students actually want.

This is your OUSA. Make sure your voice counts. Vote.

Voting is accessed via the OUSA website
(voting.ousa.org.nz) ★

The Art Lens

Make A Zine: From First
Draft to The Art Lens

Saturday 3rd Octber
10am - 12pm

Email

theartlensnz@gmail.com

Instagram

@theartlensnz

The Art Lens NZ

Aotearoa
Writers

I rongo i tō tohu –
Heard your message
Georgina May Young

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By Harry Almey

They said independence and flatting would be fun. What a load of hogwash. Before long, you've mastered the art of quick gruel for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Your parents are concerned: "you only eat what?" You explain that sometimes you simply need to shove something in your gob before rushing off to your class or getting back to that assignment.

But deep, deep, deep — no, keep going — DEEP down, you want to change.

So Critic Te Ārohi has pulled together a few cheap-ish, easy-ish meals for when you're bored of your usual rotation and can't face another bowl of pasta or rice. This is not haute cuisine. It is simply a few ways to feed yourself without losing the will to live.

Revolt against the system, students. Radicalise your dinner!

Tuna Stuffed Jacket Potato

Good for breakfast, lunch, dinner, second dinner - IDFK, anything!

Ingredients

- As many potatoes as you want to eat
- Butter
- Salt and pepper

For the tuna filling

1 small tin of tuna, preferably flavourless (well it will still taste like tuna, but you know).

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup of corn kernels, canned or bagged, frozen or fresh. #corniscorn

1 tbsp mayonnaise (Kewpie is best!)

Or just use whatever you have nearing expiration: baked beans and cheese, leftover chilli, cottage cheese, etc.

Instructions

Prick (heh) the potatoes a few times with a fork, or else it'll go boom. Airfry at 180°C for about 45-55 minutes depending on if it's from Kmart or Briscoes, or bake at 200°C for about an hour in the oven. Pretty much just go 'til the outside is crisp and you can stick a butter knife in it with little resistance.

Take your spud-tastic surprise out, and cut an "X-Marks the spot" shape into the top. Top tip: try not to go right through to the plate so that your potato vessel will be able to hold in all the juicy goodness from your toppings. Then, it goes a dollop of butter and a crack of S&P, give the insides a bit of a mash together and your base potato is ready!

For the far superior tuna option, mix the tuna, corn and mayo together and pile it on top. Otherwise, shove in whatever your heart desires - there's no exact science.

One warning: buying a super-large "economical" sack of potatoes is only economical if you actually eat them within a week or so. Your flatmates won't be impressed opening the cupboard to find a small potato sprout forest. Trust me.

Hungry for more? Scan the QR code for the rest of Critic's collection of cheap, easy meals that aren't just pasta in different shapes.



Illustrated by Lizzie Jackson

HAVE SOMETHING JUICY TO TELL US?
SEND YOUR SALACIOUS STORIES TO
MOANINGFUL@CRITIC.CO.NZ
SUBMISSIONS REMAIN ANONYMOUS.

COLUMNS ★ RANGITAKI



THE DAY I LOST TWO THINGS: MY FAVE G-STRING AND MY...

By Chappell Moan

Let me set the scene. It's a Saturday night in my home town, and the clubs are calling my name. Naturally, I put on my sluttiest outfit and hit town with the confidence of a white man. 'Come on Eileen' was playing as I locked eyes with the pookiest man I had ever seen. Thankfully lacking a breather-stache, he was a solid 7.5/10. Let's call him Pookie.

Pookie and I played eye tag for like 20 minutes before he made his way over. What happens next is blurry, but our dancing wasn't getting us anywhere. Thankfully, my best friend was on a wing-woman mission. Desperate for me to get my mans, she demonstrated that kissing in the club was acceptable, by making out with her own guy. It worked. Pookie remains the highest-rated kiss I've experienced: I dream about those luscious lips.

Alas, that night went no further than some good banter, and ended with a kebab, as any good night does. My sister picked us up and dropped him home. Luckily, this was not the end of our story.

I'd gotten his Snapchat, and at first I thought Pookie was ghosting me. Turns out he'd actually been in a bike accident. Whoops. Eventually he healed and wound up in my inbox again, and we made plans to go to town later that week. In preparation, I got absolutely mutilated by a full Brazilian.

My best friend was recruited for round two of wing-woman duties and sober drove us to town. The club queues were insane, so we had her take us on a sight-seeing tour, pointing out the local celebrities and the spots we'd frequented as kids.

We ended up outside my religious primary school. The playground was so gas and colourful that I made Pookie get out so I could show him around. Before we did, my wing-woman warned that the moment might sweep me away and I'd end up riding on more than just the fireman's pole. She offered to take us somewhere with a bed. In my naive, delulu state, I ignored all of her wisdom - genuinely believing nothing was going to happen.

Safe to say I was wrong, and she was right. I blame the slide. Romance bloomed at the bottom, and Pookie and I were on to some good old fashioned making out. And then

we weren't just making out. Clothes were off, including a sacrifice of my sexiest black lacy g-string that was never recovered, lost to the bark in the playground. Following a bout of very satisfying sex across multiple playground platforms, my virginity was a distant memory. Just like my childhood playing on this playground.

Hopping back in the car, I locked eyes with my best friend in the rear-view mirror, and without a word, a lot was communicated in those seconds. As we drove away all I could do was hope that the priest who lived on site didn't hear anything. I spent the rest of the evening very breezy on the dance floor commando in a skirt with no undies, and no complaints.

No complaints until the next morning, that is, when I had to look the very judgmental old male pharmacist in the eyes and ask for Plan B, and explain that it wasn't exactly a case of a defective condom... more like there'd just been none in play.

I can't blame my actions that night on the alcohol because I was pretty much sober, Pookie was just that pookie. Sometimes I get a little wistful when I drive past my old primary school, and still find myself scoping out his Bitmoji, sitting in America.

To anyone looking to say fuck it and have a scandalous hook-up, here's your sign. I have no regrets. ★



Horoscopes

Illustrated by Eleanor Walker



PISCES

An artist you love is going to announce a show soon – take this as your sign to buy tickets. The trip with friends, blaring music and memories will far outweigh the negative consequences on the bank account. Good luck in the ticket war!

Hangxiety-inducing moment in town: Throwing up in the Octagon



ARIES

You're gonna run into an op somewhere you don't want to be seen, let's make peace with that now. You have the right to exist in this wonderful city in your grunniest fits, and if the ops hate, that just means you're winning.

Hangxiety-inducing moment in town: The bouncer finding the drink you smuggled



VIRGO

Not everything is embarrassing, alright? Though living the student life may feel like a humiliation ritual, it shouldn't be like that for you. Take some agency over your life, and appreciate your good qualities as you strut your way to campus.

Hangxiety-inducing moment in town: Bank account-ending Trojan feed



GEMINI

Steve Lacy was right when he said "you can't surprise a Gemini". The amount of canon events one person can experience in a single semester is incredible – poor Gemini. Take it on the chin and know it was all just character building.

Hangxiety-inducing moment in town: Stumbling on the stairs at Caro



AQUARIUS

You're feeling a lot like the bring me caramel slice kid this week, and that's okay. Tuck yourself in bed, take care of yourself, and ask your flatmate to bring caramel slice.

Hangxiety-inducing moment in town: Trying to chat up the DJ



SCORPIO

Take the time today to ground yourself in nature. It's been a minute since you slowed down and appreciated Papatūānuku. Touch some grass and feel the breeze – those TikTok granola girls might've been onto something.

Hangxiety-inducing moment in town: Waving at your ex



TAURUS

The stars are seeing how hard you're locked in right now, and are doing everything in their power to secure you a grad role or internship. The cosmic forces liked how polished your LinkedIn profile was and how many connections you have.

Hangxiety-inducing moment in town: Falling off the step at Subs



CAPRICORN

You're more set for exams than you realise. Take this as your sign to relax and save the stress for a couple weeks time. You're doing a lot better than your peers at this point in the semester, and you should be proud of that!

Hangxiety-inducing moment in town: Forgetting your ID



LEO

For some reason, the stars are warning you *not* to go to Electric Ave. If you didn't get tickets, think of all the money you saved. If you did, it's time to think about what you could do with that money if you sold them instead...

Hangxiety-inducing moment in town: Dabbing on the dance floor



CANCER

It's time to start thinking about reducing the size of your wardrobe. I know you don't wear half of those clothes, and your bank account could always benefit from a few sales on Depop and Facebook Marketplace.

Hangxiety-inducing moment in town: Accidentally breaking a glass



LIBRA

Your love life has been on life support in 2026. It's time to start thinking about dipping your toes back in the water, before your flatmates start feeling bad for you. Ask someone on a date – the stars promise that it's time.

Hangxiety-inducing moment in town: Dropping your pie on the ground



SAGITTARIUS

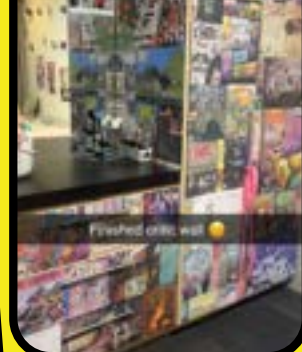
Spending the whole day watching TV in bed is calling your name, and honestly, you deserve self-care. Shut those curtains, put your phone on silent and enjoy the bed rot. Light a candle – nothing is depressing if you romanticise it enough.

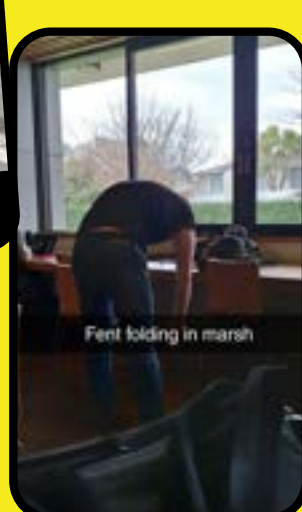
Hangxiety-inducing moment in town: Public make out on the dance floor

SNAP OF THE WEEK



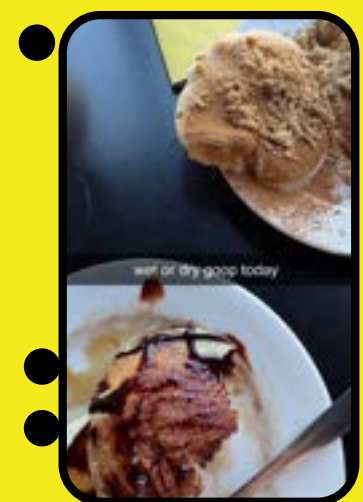
WINNER!











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CONTACT CRITIC ON INSTAGRAM TO CLAIM YOUR PRIZE

TLDOR!

Southern Sounds happened!
Yay DnB!

Thursday's in Black is having their AGM to elect their 2027 exec on the 1st of October 6pm in the Otago Room. Check out their instagram page for more info! @thursdaysinblackotago

The Pacific Islands' Law Students Association & Te Rōpū Whāi Pūtaka are hosting our annual Awards Night for 2026! Great food, Music, BYO and celebrating our law students!!! Tickets are \$15 for everyone (food and 1 free drink inc.) 6:30pm, 2nd October 2026 @ Alhambra Union Rugby Club. See you there!!!!

Voting is open for the OUSA Executive this week! Check your student email to vote for your student representatives for 2027.

Calling all swimmers! The Otago Uni Swim Club runs weekly training sessions on Mondays 7:30-8:30pm at Moana Pool. We recommend being able to swim 1 length of freestyle to join. Lifts from campus are available. Search Otago University Swim Club on Facebook and @otagouniswimclub on Insta for more.

Improsaurus's show Improv Busters is on Friday 2nd Oct, 8pm at the New Athenaeum Theatre! Student tickets \$15 at the door, bar & box office opens 7:30pm. Follow us on insta @

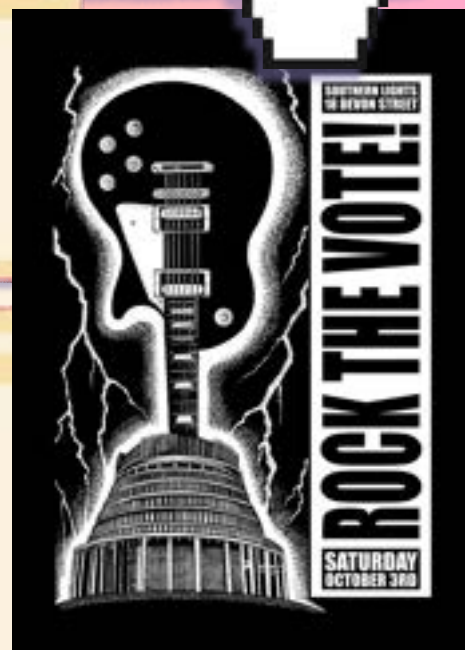
Dunedin and the Waitaki District have been named one of Lonely Planet's Top 25 places to visit in 2027!

Investigative journalist Nicky Hager has announced the title of his newest book, 'Dirty Work', about the New Zealand Taxpayer's Union.

The karure black robin takes out Bird of the Year 2026 for the first time!

Med Revue 2026 raised \$14,550.43 for the Mt Cargill Trust, which provides care and support to children, young people and adults with intellectual, learning disabilities and/or an autistic spectrum diagnosis.

Notice of OUSA Annual General Meeting: October 14th at 1pm in the Main Common Room (MCR), or outside if weather permits.



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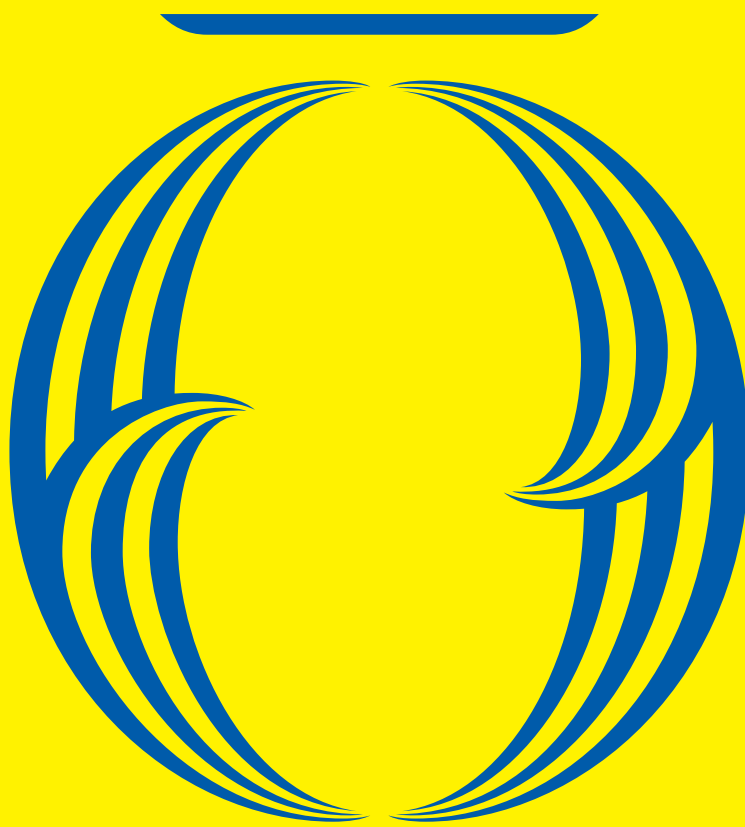


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