

# THE NEWS

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## Water woes worry businesses

by Lee Scanlon

Westport businesses faced with three weeks of boiling all water for drinking and food preparation are wondering how they'll cope.

At least one may have to close and some say the Buller District Council should be compensating them.

The council will start a \$143,000 upgrade of filters at the water treatment plant next Monday. Work is expected to take three weeks.

The water will be dosed with chlorine to kill bacteria. However, consumers are still being advised to boil it to kill protozoa – single celled organisms which cause diseases such as giardiasis.

Black and White Hotel owner Shane Forsyth said he was considering closing his Dirty Mary's Café and Bar for three weeks.

"It's a health thing, especially if you are doing food handling and food preparation..."

"You are going to have to boil your water at the start of the day, and buy in bulk. You can't even wash your hands (in untreated water)."

He believed council should be compensating businesses.

"Our rates are high enough, you would think we would be getting some sort of rebate on the water."

Cosmopolitan Hotel owner Glenn Pratt said he was tired of replacing showerheads and spending about \$70 a time replacing water filters because they were clogged up with the rubbish in the water.

Three weeks of unfiltered town supply would make things worse. "I don't know how we are going to cope, to be honest."

The hotel could not close, or turn people away. "We have guys that come here every week. We are going to have to make do somehow."

Westport people were probably entitled to compensation from the council, Mr Pratt said.

However, he welcomed the water treatment station work. "If they can fix it (the treatment station), and we only have to put up with it once, fine, I'm all for it. But if something else happens, and something else happens..."

At least the work wasn't happening during the busy summer season, he said.

The current supply, which tastes like swamp because of an algae bloom at its source, was "disgusting", Mr Pratt said.

Westport Motor Hotel owner Margaret Grant said the hotel would have difficulties coping, but had no

choice. "We want the (water supply) problem fixed so we have to put up with the inconvenience between times."

The hotel would probably not run its coffee machine, she said.

Denniston Dog Restaurant and Bar owner Heather O'Toole said it would have to boil water, as it had done in the past. She believed businesses were entitled to be compensated for the cost and inconvenience.

Her business also wanted compensation from council for its coffee machine which "blew up" the last time Westport's water was laden with sediment, and cost about \$500 to fix.

Criterion Hotel owner Glen Elley said coping for three weeks would not be easy.

"It's Third World, isn't it?"

His filters were continually "gunked up" by Westport's water and he expected he would have to replace them again after the latest work.

However, if the water supply improved as a result of the work he was all for it.

He said the water tasted so bad now, that when customers asked for a glass of water he suggested "a drop of lime or something like that" to disguise the taste.

McManus Hotel spokeswoman Nicolette Menzies also said coping would be tough. "It's going to be a pain with the kitchen more than anything... We have about 30 house guests every night to cater for and deal with."

None of the businesses had received any advice from council on how to cope.

### Council responds

Council's operations manager Steve Griffin said consumers would not need to boil water if their filters were effective down to one micron.

He said council's funding of the water supply came from supply consumers, so any compensation would also be paid by the people receiving the compensation. "Therefore it is clearly better that people manage the situation as best they can."

Hand washing relied on soap as well as water and would not be an issue as long as people used good hand washing practices.

Council would be visiting all food preparation businesses or providing guidelines prepared by its environmental health officer, Mr Griffin said.

While the repair work was scheduled to last three weeks, it was always possible something unforeseen could lengthen or shorten the time.



Rugby VIPs: Wyatt Crockett, left, and Andy Ellis, right, work up a sweat during yesterday's coal shovelling competition in Reefton. (Photo – supplied).

## AB's visit to Reefton a success

by Amelia Langford

A chance to meet an All Black attracted more than 1000 people to Reefton yesterday, says the president of the Reefton Rugby Club.

Former All Black Buck Shelford and current All Blacks Adam Thomson, Andy Ellis and Wyatt Crockett competed in a coal-shovelling contest and other challenges, as part of a road show.

Shelford led the way and earned the title of coal-

shovelling champion.

"It was a bit of work leading up, getting them here, then once they arrived they just took over and everything went like clockwork," said Murray Lee.

Reefton residents had waited with "bated breath" to find out which All Blacks would attend.

"Maybe the public would have liked to have seen Richie McCaw or Dan Carter or something here but it just wasn't to be," he said.

However, Shelford was a VIP in his own right.

"Buck Shelford is a bit of a legend... He did well, he got into the coal shovelling."

The three current All Blacks had also been great and interacted with the crowd, making time to sign autographs at the end.

Mr Lee gave the event a 10 out of 10 and said getting some All Blacks to the Coast was quite a coup.

The road show is visiting six towns famous for unique activities such as the caber toss, gumbboot throwing, coal shovelling, waiter racing and curling.



Playtime: A group of children playing at the Westport Early Learning Centre today. (Photo – Chloe Vaughan)

## Centre wins award

by Chloe Vaughan

The Westport Early Learning Centre has been named Westland's top commercial property in the Westland Registered Master Builders (RMB) 2010.

The centre won the supreme award in the RMB Commercial Project Awards.

The centre's builder, Chris Yeats Builders Ltd, had nominated the project and was awarded the RMB Commercial Project of the Year as well as winning the Education Project.

The early learning centre's board chairwoman Mary Wilson said it was fabulous to get recognition for the building.

"We put a lot of effort, time and financial investment into the building we have got and we worked quite closely with the architects and the builders."

The appearance of the building was a little unusual, Ms Wilson said.

"We tried to have a building which reflected the landscaping around it."

"We think we have achieved what we set out to do, it's a great looking building and it's extremely functional."

The centre required the development of a com-

pletely new building and pleased the judges with its curved roof, ceiling and careful detailing.

The judges said the most outstanding feature of the building was its roofline.

It was constructed using huge steel beams, which were bent and curved to match the mountains behind it.

"The building is very well laid out, and the choice of materials, as well as the colour scheme, is quite exciting. Westport now has a great new space for the next generation," the judges said.

Meanwhile, a Greymouth home was named Westland's RMB House of the Year.

Orange Homes West Coast Ltd won the New Homes \$350,000 - \$450,000 category and took out the PlaceMakers' Supreme Award for House of the Year.

The house's Coloursteel iron, Linea weatherboards and natural grey stone impressed the judges.

As gold medal award winners, the early learning centre and the Greymouth home will compete against award winners in 19 other regions for places in the national final, to be decided in November.

## Pulse's Westport custom increases

by Amelia Langford and Lee Scanlon

Westport's newest power retailer, Pulse Energy, has gained 90 Westport customers in the last month and the apparent dirty tricks campaign against it seems to have collapsed.

Pulse now had 576 customers in Westport, excluding people in the process of switching, said its spokesman Ashley Church.

At the end of June, Pulse had 486 customers in Westport.

Pulse was the fastest growing energy retailer in the country in June, according to the Energy Commission's switch figures for June. It had gained 1208 new customers and had a total customer base of 7304.

Buller Electricity Limited (BEL) has invested \$1.2m in Pulse, giving it a 10 percent stake in the company.

The News revealed three weeks ago that someone calling themselves 'John Wishart', who claimed to live at Snodgrass, had been emailing locals criticising Pulse and Buller Electricity Ltd's \$1.2 million investment in the company.

A trace on the emails indicated they had come from Hokitika firm, Excavator World, whose chief executive Bruce Smith is a Development West Coast

trustee. Mr Smith told The News it employed no 'John Wishart' and had no email address that looked anything like it. "I suggest you have been misinformed," he said, at the time.

'John Wishart's' main email target, former Buller Electric Power Trust trustee Westport man Barry Jones, has not received an email since. In the previous month 'John Wishart' had sent Mr Jones about a dozen emails.

Mr Jones handed them to The News after he became increasingly suspicious about who his correspondent really was.

"I believe he does not actually exist," he said at the time.

He was "bloody appalled" the emails had included correspondence between Pulse Energy's main Buller rival, TrustPower, and The News, including details about the chief reporter's personal power arrangements.

TrustPower communications manager Graeme Purches subsequently apologised for breaching privacy.

Mr Purches confirmed today that he had received no further contact from 'Mr Wishart' either.

Neither has another target, Buller District Council chief executive Gary Murphy, nor The News.