



Caring for Our People

Manaakitia ā tātou tāngata

February 2019

Malo e lelei! Talofa lava! Bula! Greetings! Goeie dag! Anyoung haseyo!

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa!

When did you last have the big trees' health-checked?

Last year mum and dad had their pohutakawa pruned. It casually towers about 5 storeys high over their garage, over a 20 metre bank and generally wherever it wants. Its old enough that it has a beard and big enough that a single falling branch would make significant damage.

They got in an arborist who trimmed the tree not just for the safety of people and property but also for the tree's health. I am grateful because I'm too young to be an orphan and because there is the best contemplation bench under the shade of that tree!

I am also extremely grateful that my father has finally grown up enough at 78 to decide he will no longer clamber through a 30m tree hanging over a 20m bank and give it a trim. I don't want 'that' phone call from my mother "Don't worry, but your father's in hospital...".



Mum and Dad's trimmed pohutakawa – Dec 2018

And then five people were injured in Queenstown in January this year when a big-old tree fell on them. And I couldn't help thinking... that's a terrible thing to happen to a family...why don't more big-old trees get health checks? Why do they only get a trim when they threaten power lines, gutters and our sense of aesthetics?

The Queenstown results (at the time I write this) is that mum and son are critical, daughter is seriously injured, dad and one other were moderately and minor(ly?) injured, and authorities are unsure who's responsible for the tree. Police are making inquiries.

- Was the Queenstown incident avoidable?
- Do any of our churches and properties have big-old trees that need a health and safety trim?

Here's a simple checklist:

The tree...	Yes (call an arborist)	No
Is big and old and grown a lot since its last trim		
Is stressed (unhealthy foliage or root system damage)		
Has broken, dead or straining branches, or signs of decay		
Poses a risk to anyone or anything in its fall radius		

Don't just rely on a checklist, if you are doubtful about the state of your tree/s – call an arborist. Keep our trees healthy and upright. And please spare a kind prayer for the victims of the Queenstown tree.

Kotahi te aho ka whati; ki te kāpuia e kore e whati. *A single strand will break, a gathered bunch won't.*

Nā Trudy Downes

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