

The sharing shed: Why we must save it

OPINION: Community halls are the beating heart of rural districts, **Glenn Dwight** argues.



I'm not talking about those red corrugated iron Kiwi icons, no, I'm talking about the community town hall. A place where stories are shared, laughter is shared, ideas are shared, maybe a sneaky pash behind the hall is shared at Megan Johnson's 21st ... let's just say there is a lot of sharing.

And this is why it's important to protect these community icons from decay, or worse, rich townies gee'd up by Kevin McCloud and his grand design DVD box set who want to convert them into elaborate Airbnbs complete with outdoor bathtubs, designed not for practical bathing purposes, but for Onsen Hot Pools Instagram likes and butt pics.

And given we have just had an election, let's not forget the importance of the community hall has in the power of change. It's where ideas can be debated, and every three years we can vote for change.

So here is the issue with losing our local community halls. If they go or are forgotten, we risk losing more than just a building. We risk losing a connection with each other. A hub. A home. A place where the community can get together to bitch about the community. And if I am completely honest, if we lose our community halls, there is a risk that we lose the recorder recital from the under-7s. And no one wants to go cochlea deep with that group and their devil instruments outside the safety of a hall and its natural reverb.



But what makes these New Zealand community buildings so great? Worth protecting like the kiwi and that old '69 Holden you are protecting from the wreckers by offering it sanctuary in your shed.

Let's start with some town hall essentials ... and nothing is more essential to the community hall than the Arcoroc cup collection. These amazingly versatile vessels can hold

everything from a white tea with two to a sneaky gin. Throw into the vessel mix a couple of old New Zealand Railway Cups (if they haven't been stolen and placed on Trade Me at an exorbitant price) and you have the complete and perfect cup collection.

A natural and harmonious extension of the Arcoroc cup is the Zip. When you see this LPG cylinder-inspired shape on the wall you know the hot drinks will flow at the end of any event and the dishes will be done to Karen's exacting standards. You can also be assured that the water will be close to magma temperatures.

This is a nice segue to committee Karen. Yes, in recent times Karens have come under attack for their standards and attention to those standards. But without Karen from the committee, would the lawns get mowed, the tables stacked correctly (no more than five high) and would Bob know that his hall deposit is due on the 15th? No!

This one might be more for the

men, but the purple urinal lolly is also a community hall must. While the naming of this fragrant delight might miss the mark, these little targets ensure the men using this stainless-steel gather point are kept on the straight and narrow, all while battling the evils of stale urile odour.

No clever segue here, but next on this list, is the holder of lists, the protector of information, the noticeboard. And because the noticeboard is Karen's jurisdiction (an issue that was brought up at the last committee meeting agenda item 56), the noticeboard is more a time capsule of the great events that have been, than an up-to-date information provider.... So, it still proudly displays the posters for the Eagles Covers Band that played in 2003.

So, while a lot must change for progress, I say the one foundation of the community should be its hall. Except maybe the urinal lollies, they might be due a change and a heavy crop dusting of Glen 20. ■

The interior of a typical rural community hall, set up just the way committee Karen wants it.

Inset, Arcoroc mugs are an integral part of such halls.



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Farm planning essential for El Nino

Brace for a variety of challenges and remember, contractors can play a part, writes **Kem Ormond**



I usually enjoy the change in seasons. I especially enjoy spring, when all that fresh limey-green foliage appears.

But then comes the wind and, once I have finished cleaning up the branches and staking up the broad beans, summer usually starts to show its strength.

After Cyclone Gabrielle, I guess the thought of an unexpected El Nino weather pattern making its appearance is not what we wanted to hear.

Potentially bringing a variety of challenges, such a wether system will require on-farm planning by farmers

to get through the months ahead.

You could call El Nino a temperature rollercoaster which has already led to Hawke's Bay having a 29.6C day in September (the third-warmest temperature for September nationally on record) while at the same time down south there was snow!

Farmers need to focus on what they know best and that is growing and utilising as much pasture as possible because this has to be the cheapest form of feed possible.

Planning for adequate feed in what will be a dry season is what farmers do, but they need to be thinking about next season as well. Getting cows or ewes back in calf or lamb will certainly determine financial outcomes for next season.

Looking for the most cost-effective ways to meet feed shortfalls requires careful planning and it certainly becomes a balancing act as the days grow longer and the heat more intense.

Buying in supplementary feed will be more of a necessity rather than an option, especially if silage pits are looking depleted and the grass start to vanish before your eyes.

Already I see contractors hard at work, preparing soil for summer crops which will be vital for farmers to keep their stock in good health.

So long as paddocks are locked up well before the soil starts to get parched, there is hay and silage to be made. It won't take long before tractors and huge balers are being trundled up and down the rural roads.

Dams are another consideration: Do you need a new one to get you through this El Nino summer or maybe you can employ a local contractor to clean existing dams out?

Come summer, you will notice how more determined stock seem to get when feed starts to get short, a gap in the fence is always found, so keeping fences tight and battens in place will help prevent having strangers in the flower garden – the last thing you want to do is get offside with the gardener in your family.



A real El Nino comes only every couple of decades, the last true one being 2015/16. This October will see higher temperatures, less rainfall and wind. Mind you other areas could endure hail or snow – El Nino is a real teaser when it comes to playing with the weather.

To help with managing El Nino, NIWA and the Ministry for Primary Industries have produced a tool to assist with future planning to ensure you are ready to take El Nino head on.

Check it out: shiny.niwa.co.nz/drought-forecast/

El Nino is coming. Depending on where you live, that could mean drought or, as some witnessed this month, hail and snow.

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