

# TE WAHA NUI

FREE

"The Big Mouth" — an AUT journalism publication

No 12, June 2006



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PHOTO: JACQUELINE SMITH



**RISING STARS:** Young Aucklanders with disabilities now have the chance to take part in performing arts workshops that celebrate their gifts and talents.

CoolJam workshops aim to foster skills and help people

get jobs in the performing arts industry. Four CoolJam workshops have been piloted so far — in guitar, drama, hip-hop and song-writing.

See page 11 for the full story.

## Surfies find treasure just lying in the sand

By Qiane Corfield

A possible find of ambergris could be worth \$66,000 to a pair of surfing buddies.

Dylan Paulman and Rupert Murphy found 6kg of what they believe is ambergris at a Whangarei beach last week.

Ambergris, which is formed in the intestines of sperm whales, is used in the manufacture of perfumes. Depending on its colour and dryness, it can be worth up to \$11 a gram.

The pair found the substance while taking Paulman's dog for a mid-morning run.

"Dylan just came to where I was sitting on the beach and asked me to check out this thing



**BIG FIND:** Two surfies hope their treasure is ambergris.

he had found," says Murphy.

"It was sitting in the high tide mark in a clump of seaweed and I thought it was ambergris straight away.

"We looked around a bit and found some more further up the beach near the sand dunes."

If it is ambergris it will be worth up to \$66,000.

The pair have sent their find to be tested, but not before performing a few tests of their own.

"When we got home we did the needle test. We heated up a needle and poked it. It melted and smoked," says Murphy.

This reaction is a good sign that it may be the real thing, says Ambergris.co.nz owner Adrienne Beuse.

According to Beuse, this reaction and a musty smell help identify whether a substance is ambergris or just a lump of dirt.

"Many people don't find the real thing. It's always best to send a photo or sample to a professional to determine what you have really found," she says.

"Some people get lucky and stumble across ambergris worth

thousands of dollars, but that is quite rare."

Ambergris is a dense matter that forms when materials like squid beaks stick together inside a sperm whale's stomach and intestines.

It is used as a fixative for expensive types of perfume and in many countries it is used as an aphrodisiac and for medicinal purposes.

Earlier this year a 10-year-old boy found more than 860g of ambergris near Purakaunui, Dunedin. His find was worth an estimated \$10,000.

Beuse's advice to anyone who thinks they have found ambergris is to get it tested.

"Testing can be done quickly, painlessly and free of charge."

## 'I'm no loan shark'

by Amanda Snow

Money lender Johnson Funaki makes no apology for his newspaper ads that shame people into paying back loans.

His name-and-shame pages featured in the *Taimi 'o Tonga* (*The Tongan Times*) show photos of people who have defaulted on loan repayments to his finance company, Funaki Enterprises.

They also outline the amount borrowed, what the money was borrowed for, and the church each debtor attends.

Operating from the back of his dairy in Otahuhu, Funaki says he is no "loan shark" and defends his unconventional methods.

"We've gone to debt collecting agencies like Baycorp, that I have to pay for, and they charge me for every letter they send."

He says the ads in the paper, distributed in New Zealand and in Tonga, are a more effective way of recovering debt.

"It works. It really gets to them. If it doesn't get to the actual people, it gets to the families or if not, then to the community — it's very effective."

He says he is often the last resort for people desperate for money after being turned away by their banks or other money lending organisations.

"I just service their wants and try to make a profit on top of that."

But Otara dairy owner Sajjad Alam says the name-and-shame pages are appalling.

As he points to several people pictured in the Funaki Enterprises' full-page advertisement, he says: "I know her, I know her and I know her. They are good people. None of them deserve to be humiliated like this when they are already struggling financially."

Maori Party MP Hone Harawira has called for government restrictions on money lenders who charge interest of up to 30 per cent.

He says the ads are "bloody shameful" and is critical of the way loan sharks target poor communities.

He advises people to seek

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