



\$1.20 (Home Delivery 90c)

Allo Allo's Rene dies P5



Pony club extravaganza P7



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TOMORROW

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Rain, possibly heavy, easing later

Quick Read

Rail crossing crash

A Chinese tourist escaped injury when his rental vehicle struck a train control light at Totara Flat last night. Sergeant Michel Bloom, of Greymouth police, said the crash happened about 11pm. The driver was summonsed to appear in court.

Otira blooming

Rata forest in the lowlands below Otira is putting on a good show and there are hopes of a great display in time for the now annual rata festival early next month. Otira Stagecoach Hotel owner Lester Rowntree said the second rata festival was set for Sunday, February 5. The lowland rata was properly out and the trees closer to the hotel were covered in blossom. "I think it's going to be a good rata blossom this year. In another week or so it will be looking fantastic," Mr Rowntree said. The Clydesdale horses will be out on the day to challenge humans in a tug o war. Other activities will include blackpowder shooting, music and fast and slow pennyfarthing races. Games will include horseshoe throwing and loudest yodel.

Whatever!



The world's biggest explosion — a blast in Russia the size of 185 Hiroshima bombs that was felt as far away as Britain and the US — remains a mystery after experts debunked 'proof' it was a meteorite. A large fireball was seen crossing the Siberian sky on June 20, 1908 before an eruption 9km above ground flattened 80 million trees and left charred reindeer carcasses. Italian scientists spent 21 years researching the so-called Tunguska event, claiming the blue-water Lake Cheko filled a 'missing' impact crater — giving rise to the theory that the phenomenon was caused by a meteorite. But a new study by Russian geologists suggests the idea is flawed, meaning the huge blast — which lit up the night sky in Europe and even America — is still a mystery. While they have not put forward an alternative explanation for the explosion, outlandish theories in the past have included a massive volcanic eruption, a comet mainly composed of ice not solid space rock, a black hole colliding with Earth and even aliens shooting down a meteor from a UFO in order to save Earth. — Daily Mail

Kindy moves back home



Kidsfirst Greymouth head teacher Tracy Jennings with Ilah Howie, left, Indiana Wildbore and Bethany Moynihan on their second day back in the remodelled 55-year-old centre today, after six months at the Baptist Church premises while the upgrade was completed.

Fraudster granted name suppression

A West Coast woman was granted final name suppression after she was convicted yesterday on two counts of forging a document for financial gain, defrauding others of \$30,000. Judge David Saunders made the order in the Greymouth District Court, saying there were good reasons for suppressing her name,

including the circumstances at the time when the woman had been in hospital care, which was when she disclosed her fraudulent applications to two finance companies for \$30,000 in total, using the names of a family member and her own partner. "The people that need to know already know about the matter,"

Judge Saunders said. The woman was sentenced to nine months' supervision for both charges, with special conditions including counselling and a course for gambling addiction and other programmes as directed by Community Corrections. She was also sentenced to 150

hours of community work and ordered to pay reparation to the finance companies involved at a rate to be determined by the court upon confirmation of employment. Judge Saunders gave the woman leave to convert some of her community work sentence hours to training.

63 speedsters nabbed in four hours

Cheryl Riley
of the Hokitika Guardian

Sixty-three vehicles were caught speeding through Ross township in just four hours last Thursday. Sergeant Russell Glue, of Hokitika police, was surprised at the excessive number. "Clearly the people of Ross have a

right to come to us and say they have a problem," Mr Glue said. Ross Community Society chairman Charlie McBeath said the State highway speeding was getting worse. "We have been looking at the issue for the past nine months. "The police do monitor traffic on a reasonably regular basis," Mr McBeath said.

The community was looking at buying an electronic speed indicator device that was on trial and moving it from one end of town to the other. "The best deterrent was when we had a constable based here and he parked the police car outside his house on the main road." The police house is opposite the school, which is also in the middle of

town on the main road, Moorhouse Street. However, Mr McBeath said it was also a worry that a lot of traffic was turning off the main road into Stewart Street and taking the short-cut through town. "The street is very narrow. There are a lot of campervans using it and the numbers are increasing."

1638 still receive home help — DHB

The West Coast District Health Board says 17 people have had their home help care reduced or stopped, but hundreds more have been referred or had their care extended. Interim general manager Grey-Westland Philip Wheble said there was no intention of reducing the service. Home-based services provider 'Coasters' — one of two providers — has 1638 active clients. Mr Wheble said the number of

hours of care provided by them had increased from 8224 in November 2015 to 8582 in November 2016. Since June 2016, the provider 'Coasters' had received 98 new referrals and a further 131 clients had their 'packages of care' extended, increased or moved from short-term to long-term. The total spend for home services on the West Coast had increased from an average \$213,800 a month in 2015 to \$233,500 a month last year.

In the same period, 17 people had been informed their care would cease or reduce due to an individual needs assessment because their assessment showed they were capable of managing more for themselves, or had access to support from family or other services. "We can understand for some, particularly those who have had the service for some time, this can cause concern," Mr Wheble said. "For this reason we have worked

hard to provide our clients and their families with as much information as possible and ensured the service is reduced over time, rather than immediately." Clients could contact the manager of the service and ask that the decision be reviewed. If circumstances changed they could also talk to their GP to have the assessment reviewed. Four extra registered nurses had been recruited and more home-based support workers were being sought.

Home help cuts shock elderly

Laura Mills

The West Coast District Health Board and Minister of Health have sent 'please explain' letters after more elderly West Coasters revealed their home help had been cut — including one woman in her 90s.

The Greymouth Star first reported the cuts last month after Eleanor Adamson, 84, was stripped of her only hour of help after four years.

West Coast DHB interim general manager Grey-Westland Phil Wheble said at the time there had been no cutbacks, but changes were being made as staff were "transitioned" from casual to permanent contracts.

However, numerous others have since come forward, all complaining of having their help cut or severely altered. Lyla Dunn, 91, was not impressed with a DHB brochure that describes making the bed as an activity that can be done sitting down.

After 11 years, her home help is being cut from 1½ hours a week to one hour at the end of this week, then once a fortnight.

Mrs Adamson was interviewed over the phone but Mrs Dunn had an assessor come to her home. "He asked all the questions, then I got a letter saying funding would be stopped."

Mrs Dunn, who constantly uses a walker, said the letter had come as a "bombshell".

"I've tried to get in touch with the (DHB) manager three times last Tuesday and once again. I've not heard."

Despite having had two falls recently she still cooks for herself and feels as though she is being penalised "because I can do so much".

"If you're independent they think you're all right." Noel Price, 87, is due to have his home help of 10 years cut from one hour, to none from next month.

He said his balance was "completely shot" and he used a walker to get around, or a wall-mounted rail. His help was for vacuuming and making the bed.

Mr Price said he would now pay for his help, but he was "disappointed for those who can't afford it". Blaketown man Harry Cox said he personally knew of half a dozen others having their hours cut. His was going from 3½ hours a week



Harry Cox reads his reassessment report. His home help is being cut.

to 2½ hours. After a heart attack four years ago he is not even meant to hang out the washing.

His home helps not only cleans, but fills the coal buckets and brings his wood inside.

"It's (cuts to home help) been going on around New Zealand for a while," Mr Cox said.

West Coast-Tasman MP Damien O'Connor's office has been contacted by three or four elderly unhappy with the cutbacks.

Mr O'Connor has written to the DHB and Health Minister Jonathan Coleman for an explanation.

"This beggar's belief that an organisation can run a structure for support and cut it back so much."

At \$15 an hour to help, the administration costs would surpass the cost of the help, he said.

"These are people who've worked and paid taxes all their lives. The system now encourages care at home. Now it wants to cut that care from under them."

It was not even at the level of a kennel, Mr O'Connor said. He believed the DHB was exploiting the goodwill and trust of elderly who, when told the system could not afford the home help, would accept the decision.

Grey District Mayor Tony Kokshoorn was also contacted to help. "The DHB has got to understand by keeping people in their houses with home help, that stops them going into retirement villages and rest homes, where it costs the government \$1000 a week," Mr Kokshoorn said.

"It's a false economy. They may save money at the DHB, but it costs the Government."

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