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## From the Chairman

Hello members

We have nearly reached the end of the year. As usual, we will be taking a break over the holiday period. Your tutors have been having a busy time, with weekly drop-in sessions at the library and Age Concern, the Talking Tech on Tuesdays sessions twice a month at Parksyde and the monthly member forum. Although we have been busy, we enjoy what we are doing and feel very satisfied that we are providing a useful service to both members and the wider community.

The last Monday drop-in at the library will be on the 11th of December. We will start those up again on 5 February. The Thursday drop-in sessions at Age Concern are now finished for this year. We plan to start them up again in the New Year, possibly on a different day. We also plan to run another Talking Tech series, probably commencing in April or May.

On the afternoon of 11 December, we will replace our normal monthly member forum with a special Christmas afternoon tea at Parksyde, starting at 3pm. There will be no charge, and we look forward to seeing you there.

The first major event of the year will be our AGM at Parksyde at 2pm on 12 February. We look forward to seeing you there, also. Some of your committee and tutors are approaching their use-by date, and we will be looking for people to join us. I am sure that many of you have enough skills to help at our drop-in sessions. Many of the people that seek our help are just in need of very basic assistance to get started, and it can be very satisfying to feel you have enabled someone to communicate with their friends or family.

I look forward to seeing you at Parksyde on 11 December.

Regards  
Keith Garratt  
Chair



*Rotorua SeniorNet is just one of over 40 local groups in the New Zealand Federation. If you would like to know more about what goes on elsewhere, OR what discounts or services are available to members, go to the Federation website.*

[www.seniornet.nz](http://www.seniornet.nz)

Next members' forum  
**11 December 2023**  
Parksyde, 3 pm (no charge)



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**From Bert, Activities Co-ordinator**

During November we visited our son in Sydney. When we arrived, I quickly noticed how much people were using their mobile phones. Almost instantly I became aware that my phone was essential for practically every activity. I needed it to travel (make bookings), navigate (Google maps), make purchases (it is almost impossible to pay anyone with cash), communication (phone calls, messages, emails).

Three days after our arrival we had a demonstration of how this total reliance on phones had a downside. Optus Communications had a total breakdown. Several million Australians were unable to use their beloved phones. The following is what I wrote that day.

**Optus Outage Wednesday 8 November:**

The technology that enables our modern world to function is mostly invisible. It works in the background and most of us are blissfully unaware of the complexity and sheer size of the construct that is our communications network. That is until it breaks down. This morning at roughly 4:30 am, Optus Australia experienced a total outage of its cellphone network.

Optus is the smaller of the two main mobile service providers in Australia, but the ramifications and consequences of the outage were soon wreaking havoc nationwide.

Many people awoke and discovered to their dismay that when they switched on their phones their screens showed an "Internet unavailable" message. They turned on their TVs to find that the train services in the state of Victoria had been disrupted and they were unable to get to work.

It was chaos and it lasted for almost 24 hours. The ramifications are still playing out some ten days later. Many businesses lost a lot of money, and they were not impressed by the Optus offer of a small amount of free data as compensation.

A government enquiry was initiated and in the past couple of days the CEO of Optus has resigned.

**10 November Shopping today at Chatswood**

We mainly needed to buy Opal cards to enable us to pay for traveling on public transportation in Sydney. Chatsworth is the closest place that they are available, a 20-minute bus ride away. Google told us that they were available at Woolworths, but it was all lies. The staff at Woolworths directed us to a small newsagent about 80 metres away.

We sat down for a rest in the shade next to a street vendor selling deep fried potato spirals on a stick. His EFTPOS machine was not working, meaning he could only make cash transactions, so he was not very busy. It seems that most Sydney people use their phones to pay for almost everything.

It seems that almost every form of business transaction is done online. The Optus Outage was still a problem even though the media were saying that it had been resolved.

A great number of retailers now operate with automated check-out systems. For example, if you purchase a garment, no one is available to wrap the item for you. You merely scan the tag, scan your credit card, enter your pin number and off you go with your new unwrapped garment under your arm. No one but yourself has handled the item. There are very few staff in these very large stores. I wonder why?

Our Opal card was pressed into use immediately, as we used it to catch the bus home. Our next task was to make a booking on the train to Newcastle to visit friends who we have known for many years. I logged in to the appropriate website but I couldn't figure out how to make the booking. My son eventually helped me out and we were booked both ways on an express service which operates like an airline with allocated seating. We paid with a credit card, as required, but we later found out that on all of the other train services we could have paid with our Opal card. It was a bit confusing as we switched between the Metro underground to a suburban line, to a prepaid inter-city line. The Opal card seemed to handle it with aplomb. The journey took 140 minutes for 140km averaging 60 km per hour. We stopped at about three stations.

**Bert**

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**FYI/FYE** (For Your Information/From Your Editor)

Two things relating to modern technology have caught my attention recently, both vaguely related to computer use. The first was the issue of cell phones in schools (sorry if I've mentioned this before) and how there could be legislation coming along to ban their use in the classroom. I assume that includes the teachers' phones?

Anyway, my initial response was 'we need to legislate for this!'. Considering today's attitudes, maybe we do, but I always found it a very solvable problem: 'Turn it off and put it away, or it goes out the window/under the tap/I read all your messages.' I taught mostly in an upstairs classroom with concrete beneath, but also in other parts of the school. There was always the option, too, of the pupil joining the phone on its cordless bungee jump. And this was less than 10 years ago! Imagine a teacher's career surviving such a terrible deed now. Shall I predict student protest marches if such legislation is actually tabled in Parliament?

The second issue that raised its head is genealogy. There was a news item one evening concerning Senator McCarthy in the USA. Just momentarily, as he turned his head, I saw an updated version of an old photograph I have of my great-grandfather who was also a McCarthy. (That's him on the right.) And, to quote my father, 'a real nasty old b\*\*\*\*\*d'. It reminded me of the relatives I discovered simply by noticing that one of my students, walking across the quad with my daughter, had the same build, colouring and movement as said daughter. Then, when the student heard my maiden name, she mentioned her grandmother shared it. Off to the family tree and yes, her grandmother and my father were cousins. That's another hilarious school story!



More recent online research has brought up some interesting information. When the Land Wars started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, my family left Taranaki. Some went to Auckland and some to Hawke's Bay. Recently, I came across an updated photo of the Hawke's Bay homestead which has been restored and it looks really great! Even more recently, I found a photo online of a several times great-uncle, Richard. There are several Richards in the family tree, no dates provided, so all I can say is the features and location match.

A more distant 'relationship' showed itself one day when I was 'babysitting' a year 12 (sixth form) class for a colleague. Everyone had arrived and settled in for first period, but the class clown was absent. Phew! (And that was from his classmates!) Sadly, 15 minutes later, he arrived. The only seat left was at the front of the room, so there he sat and proceeded to live up to his label. (Note: there had been a TV programme the night before, about gorillas communicating and how they flash their eyebrows.)



After a few minutes, when said clown had begun to get on everyone's nerves by turning around, grinning, flashing eyebrows and tilting head back with jaw stuck out (South Auckland Style), I asked the class if anyone had watched the gorilla programme, and raised my eyebrows as I did. One of the girls tittered – she got it! Thirty seconds later, the class 'gorilla' was subdued and didn't even dare to complain about being humiliated. Interestingly, some of the students, who were mostly

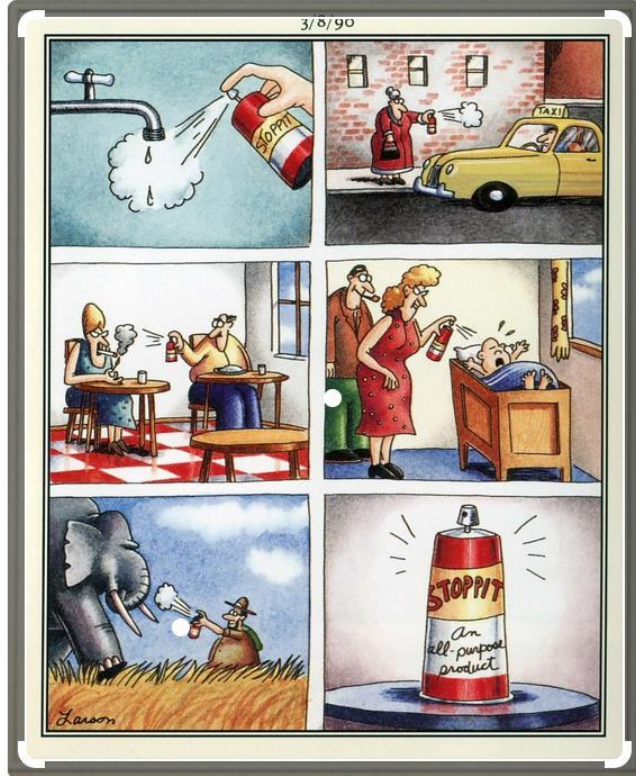
Polynesian, questioned the human/ape relationship because it's not what the Bible says. We've come a long way – but there's still a long way to go, I think.

I hope everyone has a lovely Christmas and some rewarding online browsing.

**Ngairé**







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