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‘End of an era’ as last dolphin dies

Locals to have say on Marineland’s future

Napier’s Marineland is closed today after the death of star attraction Kelly the dolphin.

Kelly was the last remaining dolphin at the marine centre after her companion Shona died of old age in 2006.

The pair arrived at Marineland in 1974.

The cause of 38-year-old Kelly’s death was unknown at this stage.

In the wild, Common dolphins usually only live for between 15 and 20 years.

The future of Marineland was now in doubt after Napier Mayor Barbara Arnott said in July that nobody would visit Marineland if there were no dolphins, making it impossible for the centre to stay afloat.

Marineland has New Zealand fur seals, Californian sea lions, little blue penguins, gannets and some other animals. It is also an animal hospital for sick or injured marine mammals and birds.

Marineland Manager Gary Macdonald said the staff would continue to care for the remaining

animals for as they still resided at Marineland.

“The staff are obviously very upset, but glad that Kelly passed away peacefully and quickly.”

Mr Macdonald said the last few days had been “a worrying time for Marineland staff” as Kelly’s symptoms appeared to be similar to those of Shona.

Mrs Arnott said that it was the “end of an era” for the people of Napier.

“It is a grief within their Marineland family and I know that everyone will be feeling for them,” she said.

She said Napier City Council, which owned the park, would hold a special consultation process with the community to decide whether it would continue without its trademark dolphins.

She said Marineland was going to be closed after Shona’s death two and a half years ago, “but because Kelly was happy to carry on it remained open.”

“(We were) thinking Kelly would be really lonely without Shona but she soldiered on.”



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