

SECURITY staff numbers at the Work and Income office in Whakatane were doubled this week and increased measures are likely to continue following the shooting in Ashburton that claimed two people's lives.

And from next week, security guards will control entry and may ask for identification from people visiting department offices. Anyone thought to present a risk may be refused entry.

Peggy Turuhira Noble and Susan Leigh Cleveland were killed when Russell John Tully entered the office they were working at in Ashburton and started shooting.

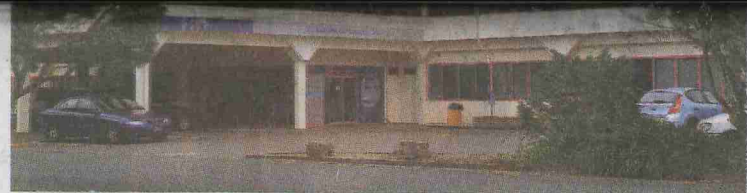
Tully has since been arrested and charged with murder but the incident is having an impact in Work and Income offices across the country.

Before the shooting in Ashburton, only one security guard at a time was stationed at the Whakatane office on Pyne Street, however an extra person had been placed on duty when the BEACON visited yesterday.

In addition, the Whakatane office will be among those included in the first part of a review announced yesterday.

The review will be in two parts. The first, to be completed in two weeks, will look at public-facing service centres including those where the ministry is co-located with other agencies, such as the Whakatane office.

The second part, which will have a longer timeframe, will look at the department's



DOUBLE UP: Security will be beefed up the Whakatane office of Work and Income from this week.

D1039-08

remaining workplaces.

Figures released by the Ministry of Social Development earlier this year show there were 288 threats or assaults at Work and Income offices with nine recorded by branches in the Bay of Plenty in 2013. That was up on the previous year when 247 assaults and threats were recorded across the country, with 12 recorded in the Bay of Plenty.

The focus of the review would be establishing whether the Ministry of Social Development had taken all practicable steps to ensure the safety of employees in relation to the shooting, and what changes were recommended to ensure the physical safety of staff and members of the public from threats and assaults in the future.

Ministry of Social Development chief executive Brendan Boyle announced the independent review into the department's physical security environment.

"Following Ashburton, we owe it to our staff to take another good look at their safety.

"They are naturally very shaken after Monday's attack, and the stream of subsequent

threats to various sites has understandably compounded their unease.

"The police investigation is on-going and will provide additional useful input as we proceed with both phases of the review."

Mr Boyle said former New Zealand Police Commissioner Rob Robinson and Deloitte New Zealand chairman Murray Jack would conduct the review.

The reviewers would be supported by an advisory group to test thinking and emerging recommendations that included Glenn Barclay from the Public Service Association, ANZ chief executive Craig Sims and Australian Graham Maloney.

Mr Boyle said there would be a change to the way Work and Income controlled access to service centres.

"From next week security guards will control entry and may ask for identification. If anyone is assessed as presenting a risk they may be refused entry," he said.

"While this may cause some slight inconvenience to clients we believe that in the interests of safety for staff and clients, this is a step worth taking."

WHAKATANE'S community garden is now officially open.

During the past two months, Hannah Irakau Pehi and a team of dedicated volunteers have transformed a vacant corner site in Kopeopeo into a garden they hope will feed the community as well as serve a social purpose.

The over-grown site on the corner of Victoria Avenue and King Street, once

home to a garden centre, has been tidied up and is now full of brightly painted and planted boxes.

The aim is to load the place with as much fruit, vegetables and herbs as possible and establish a place where people can get together, work together, drop off food and pick up food, and generally have fun.

On Sunday the grounds were blessed and the community garden officially

opened amid an afternoon that was just that - fun.

As it continues to develop, the community garden committee is looking for community or charitable groups such as schools or service organisations that want to become involved by taking responsibility for a garden box.

Photo Doug Hickman. D1025-18

Iti pushes the pedals for party politics

IN a show of solidarity for his fellow candidates and to promote well-being, Maori Party list MP Tame Iti is leading a cycle relay from Ruatoki to Auckland.

The Tame Tu! Tame Ora! cycle tour started yesterday at Mr Iti's home near Te Rewarewa Marae and continued as far as Rotorua.

"Some parties do the talking while others do the walking. This is going to be three days to sweat it out, breathe in, breathe out and pump up the magic for the Maori Party," Mr Iti said.

The Tuhoe health worker, artist and IronMaori contender said the 280-kilometre bike ride would take him and his team through three Maori electorates that he also had connection to.

On his mother's side Mr Iti affiliates to the Tainui iwi and on his maternal grandmother's side he has a connection to Te Arawa.

He said he met up with Te Ururoa Flavell in Rotorua and was happy with the support he



AUCKLAND-BOUND: Tame Iti, front, and his entourage arrive in Rotorua.

Photo supplied

had received while he was there.

Mr Iti will be leaving Rotorua this morning and is planning on catching up with Hauraki Waikato candidate Susan Cullen in Tirau.

He expects to reach the end of his journey in South Auckland by Saturday afternoon and catch up with his close Tuhoe relation, Rangi McLean, at the Manurewa

Marae.

An avid cyclist, Mr Iti said people were welcome to join the cycle relay as long as they were fit enough and capable of riding on the open road. Bikes would be safety-checked and an escort would accompany the riders through Hamilton.

"My body is fine because I have been riding for years, except for the nine months when I was in prison but they had the stationary bike in there, in Waikeria.

"Whenever you do something like this, something endurance, it is always important that your body and mind have been in training.

"The issue in cycling is about well-being and about keeping fit and keeping healthy - having a good wairua (spirit) and that is who we are as the Maori Party.

"I hope the cycle relay motivates people to think about policies, get on the roll and vote for the Maori Party."

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