



# Conscience pricked when call comes

ROBBIE stuck his head in the office door. “You guys blood donors? They’re a bit short this week,” he said, with his customary smile, then left, leaving me with conscience pricked.

I fished a New Zealand Blood Service blood-donor card out of my wallet, brushed off the layers of cobwebs, and picked up the telephone to book in.

Not sure if I’m a typical donor or not but I signed up years ago, in a rare burst of public-spirited enthusiasm, to give blood. Yet it’s the old story of good intentions and woeful organisational skills.

Yesterday, I walked through the doors of a busy Dunedin Donor Centre for my 10.40am appointment (they helpfully sent me a text reminder at the weekend), struggling to remember the last time I’d visited.

If the receptionist had greeted me with “hello stranger” instead of a cheery “good morning”, I wouldn’t have blamed her. She handed me a form to fill in. Right at the top the awful truth. Last donation, 15.7.2004. Seven years ago!

Not that anyone mentioned it;

not Helen, a fellow ex-Taieri High School pupil, who gave me a thorough vetting through a series of important questions, and not Julie, the nurse who handled the squeamish bit (for me) with a painless insertion of the needle.

Apparently, I pumped out 470ml of blood in about six minutes, during which time I learned a lot about how the blood service works, courtesy of Julie’s wealth of knowledge and also by reading much of the signage on the walls.

And, to cap off a most pleasant morning, volunteer Bev made me a great cuppa to help wash down a couple of chocolate bikkies as we sat and chatted during the recommended 10- to 15-minute rest period.

Later, I talked to Leita Mackay, the donor recruiter, who confirmed while the centre isn’t short of blood, there is nationally a decline in the number of blood donors, which could become a serious issue.

So, if you want to help boost that database, here’s a couple of key facts worth remembering: (1) One blood donation can save up to three lives and (2) 42,000 New Zealanders use blood or

blood products each year but less than 4% of the population are donors.

You can just drop in to the Dunedin centre if you want to become a donor, but Leita suggests first going to the website ([www.nzblood.co.nz](http://www.nzblood.co.nz)) or ringing to make an appointment.

If all of this sounds suspiciously like a free plug, well, I’m happy to plead guilty as charged. Might be something to do with being reacquainted with my blood type yesterday — B positive!

■ FURTHER to an earlier column about going to the Green Island landfill (17.10.11), I made a return journey on Sunday but left it until late in the afternoon, thinking it would be operating on the later daylight saving closing time of 7pm. Wrong. These days it closes at 5.30pm. I should have read the DCC weekly noticeboard in the *ODT* (1.10.11).

■ HARNESS racing fans will be glued to the TV at 5.15pm today for the New Zealand Cup at Addington Raceway. Can’t see the Aussie Smoken Up getting beaten, but Gomeo Romeo might be the “roughie”.