NORTH WEST CITY NEWS

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Faces of Macaulay Rd *Photo by John Tadigiri*

Traders, customers and residents gathered outside New Bakehouse on Macaulay Rd on Friday, February 12 ahead of Victoria's snap lockdown to celebrate the Year of the Ox as part of Chinese New Year.

Kensington Recreation Centre's mega-upgrade

WORDS BY Jess Carrascalao Heard PLANNING

The Kensington Community Recreation Centre (KCRC) is one step closer to redevelopment, with the plans for the centre endorsed by the City of Melbourne's Future Melbourne Committee (FMC) last December.

The KCRC plans, which had been updated since the committee's previous meeting in August last year, included changes that helped enhance the centre's interface with JJ Holland Park.

This included the relocation of the centre's reception and café to the park side of the facility, with an outdoor seating area included in the café design.

Cr Rohan Leppert moved that the council endorse the plans with the recommendation that on top of the new changes, the tender process should also consider options for an expanded café area, as well as a children's outdoor play pool.

"I want the tender process to see what's possible, what's affordable, what's efficient," Cr Leppert said.

The council's acting general manager for infrastructure

and design Joanne Wandel said at the meeting that the cafe "could equally be designed with an expanded footprint, as a stand-alone, full-service cafe."

Consideration for a bigger, full-service cafe and a children's outdoor play pool came after several submissions were made to the council by the community concerned about their omission.

One submission from Kensington local Heidi Edwards said, "I feel like it is a disappointing missed opportunity that it does not include an outdoor kids' water play area or picnic area."

According to Ms Wandel, there were several reasons why the omission was made, including that the design already included an indoor water play area, and that within three kilometres there was an outdoor children's water play area already available at the North Melbourne Recreation Centre.

But according to Ms Edwards, though her family used the facilities in North Melbourne because of the outdoor kids' area, the pool "appears way over capacity", and was extremely busy on warm days.

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"We want them here": pain over public housing loss lingers

WORDS BY Meg Hill HOUSING

Late last year the Victorian Government announced it would invest more than \$36 million to build a new vertical primary school on land being redeveloped as part of its Public Housing Renewal Program in North Melbourne.

It was a development from the previously proposed "education facility" on the site that would function as an expansion of the existing North Melbourne Primary School.

But for a number of residents living around the site, the inclusion of a school or education facility was felt as adding insult to injury: it made it harder to oppose the redevelopment of Abbotsford St estate, which they said was not a "renewal" of public housing but a "sell-off".

North West City News spoke to four local residents all living in the immediate vicinity of the site – Jan Lacey, Meredith Kidby and two who asked to be kept anonymous – who have been part of "Protect Abbotsford Street Estate" alongside public housing residents.

Their opposition to the renewal program revolves around a few key points:

- The difference between social housing and public housing
 The "selling-off" of the
- The "selling-off" of the previously publicly owned land
 A net loss of rooms on site
- The treatment of public housing residents and the "breaking up of a community"

All of them agreed that the effect of including a school "took the edge out of the opposition".

"We're quite aware that the North

Melbourne Primary is very under pressure, people don't want to disagree with stuff just for the sake of it," Meredith Kidby said.

"It did definitely take quite a bit of edge off the opposition – who is going to oppose a new school?"

One of the residents who wished not to be named said the idea of the school was thrown in after the community expressed strong opposition to the renewal.

"The community was really up in arms," the resident said.

"I think it pacified parents with kids at school. The concern for parents was the kids were studying in portable buildings because there is not enough space, and you're building this development with 500 apartments, so it got to a crunch point."

"Yes, there is a need for a new school in North Melbourne, no doubt about it. But you're building this school a block away from a totally separate school and getting rid of public housing to do it."

In response, a government spokesperson told *North West City News*: "The site of the school has been known for many years and we make no apologies for building it near social housing – so every kid, regardless of their background, has a great local school, close to home."

Why social housing?

The public housing renewal program was launched in 2017 throughout 10 public housing estates. The Abbotsford St Estate in North Melbourne was one that was chosen to be entirely demolished and rebuilt, alongside estates in Northcote and

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Welcome to the first edition of North West City News

It's a privilege for us to be able to introduce ourselves and your new local newspaper to you – our new local communities of North and West Melbourne, Kensington and Parkville Gardens.

For more than 15 years, Hyperlocal News has brought news and events to the emerging community of Docklands under the masthead *Docklands News*.

Since then, we've been fortunate enough to represent neighbouring communities living in Southbank and Melbourne's CBD under the titles *Southbank News* and *CBD News*.

As our company name suggests, we specialise in providing free hyperlocal information on issues of interest and impact for local residents and businesses in our communities, and in turn, help to connect and build a sense of community.

While the impacts of COVID-19 have proven incredibly challenging to so many industries, the devastating toll of the pandemic proved too

much for hundreds of independent local and regional mastheads around the country in 2020.

And while Hyperlocal News wasn't immune to these impacts, that notion around connection and community building which underpins everything we do, proved incredibly valuable to so many of our locals during what were very isolating lockdowns.

That message only helped reinforce our purpose as an organisation, which strives to give locals a voice whenever they most need it. The power and importance of community is perhaps as important now, as it has ever been.

And so, without further ado, it gives us great pleasure to expand our remit into new communities within the City of Melbourne under the title of *North West City News*, where we will work hard to inform, engage and connect.

The communities of North and West Melbourne, Kensington and Parkville Gardens are etched in so much history and are undergoing rapid change. The newspaper's inaugural editor Meg Hill and the team are so excited to learn more, understand what matters to you every month and keep you across as much of that change as we can.

If you're a local and want to connect or have an issue you'd like covered, please never hesitate to reach out to us as we're always keen to hear



from locals and soak up as much knowledge as we can.

We hope you enjoy the first edition of *North West City News* and look forward to engaging with our new local communities for many more to come

Sean Car (Publisher) & Meg Hill (Editor) •

A message from the Lord Mayor ...

If it's one thing that 2020 taught all Melburnians, it's the power of community.
As a community we overcame COVID-19 through determination, resilience and a spirit of cooperation and selflessness.

We made sure to look after each other and – for the most part – put aside our own wants to do what was required to prevent transmission of the virus.

Lockdowns were incredibly tough and they tested the resolve of all Melburnians. Small businesses were hit devastatingly hard and many were forced to stop trading all together.

Melburnians rallied together when it was needed most and need to continue doing that. We are now focused on supporting our city's economic and cultural recovery.

Life is returning to something more normal for most of us but we know that a consistent

and coordinated effort is required to bring back the buzz to Melbourne.

Our strong bonds as a community will continue to drive positive outcomes for our city. Arguably Melbourne's greatest asset is our people.

That's why I am pleased to introduce a new community newspaper – *North West City News*.

North West City News will cover local news for North and West Melbourne, Kensington and Parkville Gardens – a collection of some of our city's most historic and rapidly changing suburbs.

Community news outlets play such an important role for discussing, debating, helping to solve important local issues and advocating for positive change. They help to share our stories, campaign for solutions and create connections as we learn more about each other.

More than ever we need to continue to nurture what brings us together as a community as we recover and rebuild from a once-in-a-century pandemic. It will take our combined efforts and support to ensure we get the best outcomes and continue to live up to the Marvellous Melbourne moniker.

North West City News will play an important role in reflecting the struggles and successes of



the local community and advocating for action to address issues that are impacting residents and businesses.

Congratulations to the new team at *North West City News* on its first edition – and we hope there to be many more to come over the coming years



association

Kensington Recreation Centre's mega-upgrade

Continued from page 1.

A zero-depth, outdoor water play area at KCRC is estimated to cost \$1.3 million.

Cr Davydd Griffiths, who seconded the motion for the endorsement of the plans, said that the motion was trying to "maximise the bang that we get for the bucks that we do have".

Councillors voted unanimously in favour of the motion and the plans will now go out to

The redevelopment was first announced last May as part of a broader infrastructure delivery used to help kick-start the economy.

"An injection of funds would create jobs and allow us to fast-track shovel-ready projects such as the \$42 million redevelopment of the Kensington Recreation Centre," then Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood said.

"The existing recreation centre has served the Kensington community since 1976 and needs to be replaced." ●

> "The existing recreation centre has served the Kensington community since 1976 and needs to be repaced."





▲ An artist's impression of the redevelopment.







Jess Carrascalao Heard JESS@HYPERLOCALNEWS.COM.AU

▲ David Rowe, manager of the Kensington Recreation Centre.

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Melbourne is open for business, shopping, dining, exploration and, of course, coffee.

We've missed you, and while you've been staying safe at home, we've been supporting local businesses and creating a captivating Melbourne for residents to enjoy and visitors to return to.

Whether it's picnicking in our heritage parks, criss-crossing the bluestones to find the ultimate laneway restaurant, or hunting for the quintessential Melbourne-designed must-have, it's time to rediscover your city.

Here are just a few things to look forward to in summer and beyond.

1 Ride your bike in style

We're installing more than 40 kilometres of new protected bike lanes to help you get into the city quickly, safely and sustainably.

2 Explore little streets

Our iconic 'little streets' - like Little Collins and Little Bourke - are being transformed into safe and vibrant shared zones for all. Look out for bespoke stencils and colourful paint showing that pedestrians have right of way and speed limits are reduced.

3 Dine outdoors

Melbourne's beloved restaurants, cafes and bars have thrown open their doors, creating open-air dining experiences in laneways, parking spaces, footpaths and parks.

Wander through creative laneways

Forty of Melbourne's historic laneways are being transformed through lighting and creative installations, thanks to a team of production and graphic designers, music producers, lighting specialists, technicians and maintenance workers.

Attend innovative events

From Melbourne Music Week– Extended to Moomba, our artists and producers are working to deliver a calendar of events that will celebrate our city's resilience, curiosity and creativity. Find out more at whatson.melbourne.vic.gov.au

6 Discover talented buskers

Our beloved Melbourne buskers are back and ready to entertain you from Bourke Street to Southbank and everywhere in between. Sing along and tip generously.

Watch your step

Our revamped laneways, bike lanes, shared zones and outdoor dining areas mean the landscape of the city has changed. We'll be updating our lane closure information and mobility maps, but please be mindful that traffic conditions on roads and footpaths may be different to the last time you visited the city.

To find out more, visit melbourne. vic.gov.au/melbourneisopen





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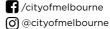
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To find out more, visit melbourne. vic.gov.au/heatwaves

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Subsequent changes may occur.

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"We want them here": pain over public housing loss lingers

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But residents said the name of the renewal program is misleading. The new housing will not be "public" that is, owned and run by the state - but a mix of affordable housing dwellings run by the community housing sector, and private dwellings for middle- and high-income earners.

The state government uses the term "social housing", which is an umbrella term that includes community housing, public housing and state owned and managed Indigenous housing.

The social dwellings that will be built on the North Melbourne estate will be run by the community housing sector.

Dr David Kelly, a research fellow at RMIT University, has written extensively on the renewal program. He said the differences mattered.

"The rent is higher, it's 30 per cent of income. In public housing it's 25 per cent. You can also be charged additional charges and if you're eligible for rent assistance, community housing providers will take 100 per cent of that before it goes into your account," Dr Kelly said.

He also said community housing providers could "cherry-pick" tenants.

"The idea of public housing is that it's unconditional. If you qualify, you get a place. Within community housing there are more conditions you need to meet and there's also less oversight and regulation."

There is a federal body to regulate social housing, but Dr Kelly said it was not as robust as regulation for state housing, and they are less accountable.

"With the government you can issue 'freedom of information' requests, for example, but you can't do that with private community housing organisations," he said.

The state government has argued that the existence of "concentrated disadvantage" in large public housing estates supports the idea of a "social mix" of both affordable and private, higher income dwellings. But Dr Kelly said the idea of concentrated disadvantage was not supported by academic research.

Rather, the mix of affordable and private dwellings was based on the economic rationale for developers taking over the land for private tenancies.

Dr Kelly said the idea of "social housing" had been increasingly used by governments in Australia as they had moved away from providing public housing.

"We've had community housing managers for more than 50 years in Australia, but they've been small and niche and not-for-profit. But that sector has got bigger over the years partly because of government disinvestment in public housing," he said.

"Government has seen an economy of scale that means they can offset risk and recurrent expenditure, place that on the community housing sector and get out of the business of doing public housing."

According to Dr Kelly, as that process unfolded a term was needed that would capture a number of different tenure types. Social housing was a term long used in Europe and could fit the purpose of the "umbrella"

The renewal

The Abbotsford St Estate is being totally redeveloped through a public-private partnership with MAB Corporation and housing association

The land is currently sitting empty.



▲ Neighbouring residents in the middle of the now-demolished Abbotsford Street estate.



▲ A render of the redevelopment.

demolished last year but work is currently delayed by the presence of asbestos in the soil.

There were 112 public housing dwellings on the estate, which will be replaced by a minimum of 133 "social" dwellings and 170 private dwellings, according to the state government. The private housing component is meant to help fund the project.

But part of Mr Kelly and the locals' criticisms of the program is a net loss of rooms, despite the government's assurance that there will be more social units than there were public units on the old estate.

"The old public housing dwellings that were on the site were predominantly two-, three- and four-bedroom dwellings. They're replacing them with mostly one- and two-bedroom dwellings," Mr Kelly said.

"The demographic make-up of the waiting list is, the archetypal person,

The public housing buildings were is a white single male. The people being displaced are predominantly family households of colour. So, what you see is demographic shifts on the estates from mixed ethnicities and families to a more white, single demographic."

The lack of family-suitable homes also poses problems for tenants' right of return to the estates. Residents who were moved out of the estate have been told they will have the option of returning once the new units have been built.

The government spokesperson told North West City News that every resident would be given the opportunity to move back to the site once the project is complete, despite the development predominantly comprising one- and two-bedroom units.

The government has said that some of those dwellings would be "adaptable": able to be combined to create three- and four-bedroom homes.

Jan Lacey, who has lived across the road from the estate for 40 years, said the removal of the tenants "broke up a community".

"My daughter was 10 when we moved to North Melbourne and through her I met the families and they became play mates," she said.

"There was a lovely old lady we met while door knocking on the estate setting up the Protect Abbotsford Street group who had some kind of dementia"

"We learned later that because she was there and supported by her neighbours, she could happily live in the flats, but once she was moved out, she ended up in a nursing home."

"People had informal childcare arrangements and all those things. It really broke up a community."

One of the residents who asked not to be named said they knew of public housing residents being relocated across Melbourne and even further.



▲ Asbestos has delayed construction work.



"The idea of public housing is that it's unconditional. If you qualify, you get a place. Within community housing there are more conditions you need to meet and there's also less oversight and regulation."



"They've been scattered all over," they said.

All the local residents spoken to by North West City News wanted to communicate that public housing is wanted by the local community, who didn't see it as a burden.

"Maybe in some areas, people don't want public housing. This is absolutely not the case here," Meredith Kidby

"We want them here."



Meg Hill JOURNALIST MEG@ HYPERLOCALNEWS. COM.AU

Public housing residents take up health work

WORDS BY Meg Hill HEALTH

Public housing residents who were placed under a much-criticised hard lockdown in July last year are working as health concierges to help keep their communities safe.

Eighty-four residents are working as health concierges at the base of high-rise towers in Kensington, North Melbourne, Flemington, Carlton, Fitzroy, Collingwood and Footscray.

Thirty-three Alfred St – the biggest public housing building in North Melbourne - was locked down the longest during the hard lockdown.

Twenty-four-year-olds Abdiwasa (Abdi) Ismael and Ayoub Sudi have lived in the tower most of their lives. Abdi has lived there since he was seven, and Ayoub since he was nine.

They both now work as health concierges and said they have felt empowered by working with and for their community.

"I feel like my favourite part of the day would be if I help a resident who I didn't know, but I get to know them and they get to know me," Ayoub said.

"They might come down with an unhappy face but leave with a happy face - that makes me happy, to get to know my community more.'

"And feeling like I can help fix people's problems, before I didn't feel that way."

Ayoub said he already wanted to work in health. He had recently finished a course in laboratory technology when he took the role as a concierge and wished to get into vaccine-related work in the future.

But he also said one of the main reasons why he took the job was because of the experience of the hard

"Once we were locked down, we felt helpless, powerless, you know?"

"Our words weren't loud enough to reach the media and the government, so now at least we could help prevent something like that from happening if we support our community in the

Cohealth and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) established the program in an aim to incorporate cultural approaches to

Abdi and Ayoub both speak multiple languages. Abdi can speak



▲ Health concierges Abdiwasa Ismael and Ayoub Sudi outside their home at 33 Alfred Street.

Eighty-four residents are working as health concierges at the base of high-rise towers in Kensington, North Melbourne, Flemington, Carlton, Fitzroy, Collingwood and Footscray.



Somali and English, and Ayoub Ahmaric (Ethiopian), Arabic, Oromo and English. They can communicate properly with many residents for which English is not their first language.

The health concierge's role is to monitor the health and wellbeing of residents moving in and out of the building, take temperatures, provide the latest health information and updates to restrictions in their own language, link people who have symptoms to local testing sites and support services and provide masks.

Abdi and Ayoub said they provide general support work - including taking forms to the housing office and making phone calls to other services - that many residents needed a long time ago and hope could continue to be provided after the pandemic.

"It's similar to being a support worker but with health," Abdi said.

"The residents want us to be here for even longer, not just for COVID. We help them a lot – before they had to call services and spent too much time waiting for help, they have English difficulties and all that."

"Now, they have two community members stationed downstairs who are there to help them."

In December, the Victorian Ombudsman Deborah Glass found the state government's hard lock down on the nine public housing towers had breached human rights

It was not the establishment of a lockdown as such that was found to be the problem, but its immediacy, lack of information and communication with residents and a heavy police presence.

"Many residents knew nothing of the lockdown or the reason for it when large numbers of police appeared on their estate that afternoon," Ms Glass said.

"Some people were without food and medicines."

"At the tower at 33 Alfred St ... residents waited more than a week to be allowed outside under supervision to get fresh air."

In a statement released after the Ombudsman's findings were made public, Cohealth chief executive Nicole Batholomeusz said, "The Ombudsman's report underscores what community health organisations have long known; that services and health responses must incorporate shared community expertise and knowledge." ●

West Melbourne planning delay "very frustrating"

WORDS BY David Schout

A new planning framework for West Melbourne remained awaiting state government approval in what one City of Melbourne councillor described as "unnecessary" and "very frustrating".

The West Melbourne Structure Plan was referred to Minister for Planning Richard Wynne in May last year, but is still yet to be signed off.

The council's deputy planning chair Cr Rohan Leppert said the delay had created excessive red tape and was at odds with the government's commitment to economic recovery from COVID-19.

"The mantra from the state government and property industry at the moment is that government needs to streamline planning provisions and remove redundancies, to facilitate economic recovery," Cr Leppert said.

"Here's an opportunity to do just that. It's very frustrating that it is taking so long for the Minister to make the final decision to amend the planning scheme."

The amendment, titled C309: West Melbourne Structure Plan, has proposed to modernise planning controls in the local area.

It had sought to protect mixed-use areas and apply more stringent tests on larger developments that could impact the local community.

Cr Leppert said the plan had received acrossthe-board backing and was awaiting one final

"We worked hard to design a strong planning framework that the West Melbourne community and the property industry alike supported. It was endorsed by the Minister for Planning's own planning panel of experts, and the final version was approved by the council's delegated committee back in May 2020."

He said that for the past nine months, developers had been forced to operate within a framework that the government itself had wanted to avoid.

"Since May, developers have had to apply for planning permission by complying with the scheme as it currently exists, and also to give regard to the amendment that's been approved by council but is still sitting on the minister's desk. This duplication is very inefficient, and it's unnecessary: the sooner the minister approves the amendment, the sooner developers and all parties can work to one set of planning



▲ Buildings in West Melbourne

provisions rather than two."

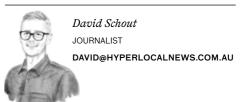
There is no time limit on how long the minister can take to make a decision on a planning amendment.

A state government spokesperson confirmed with North West City News that while there was currently no timeframe for a decision, it could be expected "soon".

The West Melbourne Structure Plan is not the only inner-city amendment awaiting approval from the planning minister.

Amendment C308, which would introduce ew urban design guidelines for the CBD and Southbank, was sent to the minister back in November 2019.

Similarly, Amendment C307 (now C366) which would ensure electronic gaming machines were suitably located and operated to minimise gaming-related harm, was submitted for approval in August 2019



Macaulay's planning rules need urgent work

Macaulay, one of Melbourne's urban renewal precincts, was planned to be developed into a mid-rise, walkable neighbourhood. Are loose planning controls putting that at risk?

WORDS BY *Meg Hill* PLANNING

Interim built form controls in Macaulay were drawn up in 2012, but much of it is managed through discretionary height and setback rules. That, combined with a lack of density controls, has caused problems.

Maximum heights are determined through a discretionary height control. Nine storeys is the "preferred" maximum height and 12 storeys is the "absolute" maximum.

For a development to exceed the preferred maximum height, it is asked to prove "demonstrable benefit to the broader community", that includes:

- Exceptional design quality
- A positive contribution to the public realm
- High quality pedestrian links where needed
- Good solar access to the public realm

The controls also include a mandatory street wall: developments must not exceed a height of six storeys at the street frontage, above which discretionary controls manage setbacks.

The City of Melbourne and state government have both found that the interim controls need updating. A council review released in June 2020 identified problems stemming from the interim controls and proposed new controls – but the latter are yet to be finalised.

"Interim built form controls in Macaulay are resulting in developments with high densities. If this trend continues the cumulative effect would lead to a future population that is significantly higher than current population forecasts. This would place additional pressure on existing and proposed infrastructure," the council report read.

It also found that some of the existing building height and setback controls "fail to respond" to the diversity and character of the area and result in reduced amenity, including lack of daylight, sunlight, outlook and increased overshadowing.

While discussing council endorsement of a new development proposal in December, Cr Rohan Leppert said the controls were threatening to change the nature of the future precinct.

The Future Melbourne Committee (FMC) meeting on December 1 endorsed plans for a development at 139-149 Boundary St, North Melbourne, which included waiving the discretionary setback control and the preferred maximum height.

"The Arden-Macaulay structure plan did



lacktriangle Designs for 139-149 Boundary Rd, endorsed by the council on December 1.



▲ Designs for an application at 68-102 Alfred St and 87-105 Racecourse Rd.

originally intend to give this entire precinct the perception of a mid-rise, particularly a six-sto-rey, feel and character," Cr Leppert said.

"It's why we put controls into the design and development overlay which required setbacks above a mandatory street wall height, so that everything did continue to appear like a six-storey neighbourhood."

"Once again here, just like every other site in Macaulay, we immediately find every possible reason under the sun why that discretionary setback control shouldn't apply even on a large site like this."

The development under consideration was a 12-storey mixed-use proposal by Blue Earth Group, which the council voted unanimously to endorse. The \$62 million development will include 273 apartments.

The building's "u-shape" design provides for a courtyard and two through streets that are considered contributions to the public realm. Affordable housing provisions were included to allow for the preferred height control to be waived.

"I agree the courtyard is nice, I agree that there are many, many good aspects to this application and certainly the community benefit that's being provided to get from the preferred height to the maximum height through the affordable housing mechanisms is good and I welcome it," Cr Leppert said.

"But this does once again show that the development envelope in Macaulay is choose-your-own adventure."

"Where we envisaged something that appeared like a six- to eight-storey precinct will very much end up like a 12-storey precinct everywhere unless we help do something about that."

The site considered by council on December 1 is surrounded by a number of other live permits and development applications. There are at least two permits for 12 storey buildings in the immediate vicinity, and five applications at or above 12 storeys.

One of those applications, which will soon go to VCAT, was objected to by the council on February 2. It highlighted some of the issues with the interim controls.

The application was for four buildings – three at 12 storeys and one at nine – at 68-102 and 103 Alfred St and 87-105 Racecourse Rd.

The developer argued in its application that "demonstrable benefit to the broader community" required to allow developments to max out the height limit was provided by allowing "the



▲ Another view of the application before VCAT.

development potential of this site to be suitably achieved".

In other words, community benefit required to waive the preferred height could be achieved simply by waiving the preferred height.

The Minister for Planning has authority over the application, and the applicant has taken the Minister to VCAT over delays in a decision. The City of Melbourne will present ground for objection to the development at VCAT ●





▲ Community placement manager at Unison Deb Wilson and Transition Town co-convenor Vincent Ryan at the Kensington Community Food Forest.

Transition Town Kensington: Sustainability from the ground up

WORDS BY Jess Carrascalao Heard

In the shadow of the public housing tower at 56 Derby St, Kensington, a hot, summer northerly was ruffling the leaves of the Kensington Community Food Forest, nestled next to a kids' playground at the back of the building.

The garden, a point of pride and a source of fresh vegetables for locals in public and private housing alike, is lush and verdant despite the

"It's probably the first major project where public and private housing residents are working together ... there's a group that helps maintain the forest. And they're from all walks of life," Vincent Ryan, co-convenor of Transition Town Kensington, said.

Supporting grassroots initiatives such as the Kensington Community Food Forest is at the heart of what Transition Town Kensington does.

Established in 2017 and co-convened by Mr Ryan and permaculturalist Jacqueline Van Heerden, the not-for-profit organisation is a part of a growing international movement called "Transition", founded in the UK in 2006.

The group's aim is simple: to help the community transition to a more sustainable way of living by supporting local initiatives to reduce waste and reliance on fossil fuels, while also lobbying local government.

Ms Van Heerden said she approached Mr Ryan to form the group.

"I went to Vincent, and I said, 'Do you want to start this with me?' Because we're both quite passionate about the environment," she said.

After a couple of monthly meetings, the group's direction began to take shape.

"What we started to do was, we started to educate and encourage, and jump on and support things that were happening, and activate things," she said.

Their support for the Kensington Community Food Forest is one example of this.

Designed by Ms Van Heerden, the garden had been in the works for more than a year before Transition Town Kensington was formed.

Since the garden was established, it has been supported by the group.

Mr Ryan said that when the Food Forest started out, there was scepticism that the garden wouldn't survive.

"If anything, it's flourished, because people end up having such a strong connection to the land around them, rather than just a garden that's maintained by someone else," Mr Ryan said

Deb Wilson, Community Engagement Manager at Unison which manages public housing in Kensington, said locals loved to walk through the garden, with neighbours keeping an eye on it, along with the volunteers who tended to the garden.

"They just respect it ... if you build up something beautiful and usable, people take pride in it and they actually don't want to destroy it. They want to see it flourish and grow," she said.

During its three-year existence, the garden has



They just respect it ... if you build up something beautiful and usable, people take pride in it and they actually don't want to destroy it. They want to see it flourish and grow.



become an important source of locally-grown, fresh food with a low carbon footprint.

This was particularly important during the pandemic last year, when there was a disruption of supply channels to SecondBite and Foodbank Australia.

Ms Van Heerden said the Kensington

Community Food Forest, in conjunction with other local community gardens, harvested their surplus food for those who needed it.

"Four hundred kilograms of food came out of the gardens," she said.

As well as the Food Forest, Transition Town Kensington has supported many other grassroots initiatives, including a street composting initiative which led to the establishment of the Kensington Town Hall Compost Hub.

The group has also run pop-up repair hubs at the Kensington Market, and are currently working on getting a permanent venue for a repair workshop.

They also lobby local government, in order to create an environment for change and to influence policy.

Mr Ryan said one thing Transition Town Kensington was strong on was the City of Melbourne's 2019 declaration of a climate emergency.

"Transition Towns was at the forefront of lobbying councillors and helping lead a sense of general change, and the sense that there is an emergency," he said.

Ms Van Heerden describes Transition Town Kensington as "the voice for the environment", among the suburb's many lobby groups.

Mr Ryan added that it was the grassroots, practical things that mattered, like composting, growing your own food and giving opportunities during crises like the pandemic for people to have access to locally-grown, fresh food.

"It's about those practical, local initiatives that bring people together," he said ullet

The Rotary Club of North Melbourne

SERVING OUR LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SINCE 1968



Next meeting: A special meeting at the Mercure Hotel, North Melbourne Wednesday 10th March 2021 at 7.00pm celebrating International Women's Day

With special guest speakers including

New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern and Lord Mayor Sally Capp

Please contact President Neville Page on 0414673 611 or page@ghp.biz for further details on this or any other enquiries about the club

A platform for abstraction

WORDS BY *Rhonda Dredge* ARTS & CULTURE

On the corner of Adderley and Dudley streets is a large commercial development that is so new, businesses have yet to move in.

The pandemic delayed the opening of the West End Precinct even though spaces were already leased out.

The complex was meant to open in November and you still can't get a serve of sushi, a bowl of pasta, a haircut or a hotel bed for the night.

But you can visit a very compelling exhibition of abstract art, the Biennial of Women Abstract Artists at West End Art Space. It is their inaugural exhibition.

Good art has a habit of invading empty spaces and making itself visible without too much of a fuss.

The gallery moved in early to keep up with their exhibition schedule because they didn't want to disappoint artists.

There is a good deal of altruism about abstraction because of its historical connection with freedom of thought. Liberating ideas often run through the art world ahead of everywhere

Lorri Whiting's collaged paper on canvas *Untitled 1970*, for example, demonstrates the freeing effect for artists of escaping the tyranny of a horizon or vanishing point in their paintings.

Wilma Tabacco's *Madder Lake 2019*, a cool abstraction with sections of linen attached to board, is very much about the surface.

There's a great twirl of material in Maddy Gunn's *The Unconscious Oxford Dictionary* 2019, and an amusingly regal pose in Caroline Phillip's *Totem*.

Abstraction is a secret, poetic movement amongst all the business and opinions of every-day life with artists taking care to avoid obvious meanings.



▲ Director Anna Prifti with St Matthew's Passion by Irene Barbaris.

Kate Hendry's *Window Series* 2021 creates context for her colour pencil shapes out of lines ruled in graphite. This work is beautifully clean and graphic, simulating texture and context for a provocation.

Gallery director Anna Priffti did a call-out for the exhibition and received 130 applications.

"Some are pioneers of abstract art," she said, citing names such as Dumbrill, Tabacco and Whiting. "Irene Barbaris worked in the studio of Sol de Witt when she was making *St Matthew's Passion.*"

Genealogies are significant in art with influences traced and connections made.

"I just love abstract art," Priffti said. "It's such an important movement. It shouldn't get lost."

She persevered with the show and put it on even though other businesses are not moving into the complex until April.

"When COVID hit, it stopped everything. I knew I wanted to persist. We'll present this show every two years. The idea is to have a platform for abstraction."

Biennial of Women Abstract Artists, West End Art Space, 112 Adderley St, West Melbourne, until February 28 ●

For more information: westendartspace.com.au



Rhonda Dredge

JOURNALIST

RHONDA@CBDNEWS.COM.AU



Outdoor dining gets big tick

WORDS BY David Schout
BUSINESS

Four in five hospitality traders within the City of Melbourne said the emergence of outdoor dining has helped them reopen post-lockdown.

And the positive feedback is likely to see the initiative extended.

In a survey of 150 cafe, restaurant and bar owners in December and January, 81 per cent gave outdoor dining "parklets" the thumbs-up since reopening in late October.

Temporary extended outdoor dining permits have allowed hospitality venues to expand operations onto footpaths, on-street parking, laneways and street space to comply with COVID-19 restrictions.

Of those surveyed, 72 per cent were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their outdoor dining arrangements.

"Delivering the extended outdoor dining

program has helped to support hospitality businesses and create jobs after Melbourne emerged from lockdown," Lord Mayor Sally Capp said.

"In just a few months, we received 10 years' worth of applications for outdoor dining permits compared to pre-COVID-19 levels. Our team assessed applications quickly and issued nearly 1500 permits for outdoor dining across the municipality."

Due to the success of the initiative, the council will consider extending the program until the end of May at a February 23 council meeting.

"The extended outdoor dining program has helped to bring back the buzz to Melbourne and we are doing a review to determine how we can support hospitality businesses into the future," Cr Capp said.

The program is part of the \$100 million Melbourne City Recovery Fund, a joint initiative between the council and state government ●

New pocket park for North Melbourne

CAPITAL WORKS

A "pocket" park in North Melbourne was among 13 new mini-parks announced by the state government in January.

A small piece of land on Bedford St was chosen for the \$1.3 million park.

The funding boost came from round two of a \$154 million Suburban Parks Program, which the government said would create 6500 hectares of public open space including parkland and trails.

Minister for Environment Lily D'Ambosio said the pandemic had "brought into sharp focus" the



"These parks will create local jobs while they're being built, boost surrounding local businesses and provide social, health and wellbeing benefits for families and their pets for years to come."



importance of open green space close to home.

"These new parks will deliver just

that – building on our reputation as one of the world's most liveable cities," she said.

"These parks will create local jobs while they're being built, boost surrounding local businesses and provide social, health and wellbeing benefits for families and their pets for years to come."

The January announcement included 13 "pocket" parks and five off leash dog parks around Melbourne.

Local councils were invited to nominate sites for the new parks,

which were assessed by an independent panel based on their accessibility by road, public transport or well-linked bike and walking tracks.

When complete, the pocket parks will include community event areas, landscaping and greenery, improved pedestrian connections, seating, shade, play areas and drinking fountains •

For more information: environment.vic.gov.au

Moonee Ponds litter-tracked

ENVIRONMENT

GPS-tracked bottles were thrown into the Moonee Ponds Creek next to Macaulay Rd in February in an effort to gain information about the movement of rubbish along the creek.

Each bottle was fitted with a waterproof and shockproof GPS device and will be tracked remotely as they float along the waterway for up to a month before removal. Journey highlights will be shared via the Litter Trackers Facebook page.

RMIT University and City West Water deployed the five "litter trackers" on February 9 with Cr Rohan Leppert and Kaye Oddie of Friends of Moonee Creek as part of the Chain of Ponds Collaboration.

The collaboration is an agreement between 15 organisations to progressively transform the Moonee Ponds Creek into an iconic waterway and includes local and state government representatives, community groups, not-for-profits, water authorities and research organisations.

Rachel Lopes, City West Water 2018. They include: Chain of Ponds Collaboration lead, said the rubbish on our streets made its way into the waterways and ultimately the beach.

"Ninety-five per cent of the litter on our beaches comes from urban streets through the stormwater system," she said.

"From cigarette butts to plastic bottles, most of what we drop on our streets is washed into the stormwater system by rainfall, travels via our waterways to our bays and washes onto our beaches.'

"Tracking the movement of litter will help the collaboration identify litter hot-spots and inform how we best prevent litter entering the system in the first place."

"With millions of dollars spent each year removing litter from Melbourne's waterways, this project is an important reminder for everyone to bin their litter."

Organisations involved in the Chain of Ponds Collaboration signed a memorandum of understanding in

- City West Water
- Melbourne Water City of Moonee Valley
- Hume City Council Moreland City Council
- City of Melbourne
- Yarra Valley Water
- Victorian Planning Authority
- Conservation Volunteers Australia
- Parks Victoria
- Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek
- Kensington Association
- Moonee Valley Bicycle User Group
- Living Colour Studio

There are also 17 supporting organisations who have showed an interest in the work of the collaboration, including four universities

For more information: citywestwater.com.au

▼ Kaye Oddie (Friends of Moonee Creek), Richard Smith (City West Water), Cr Rohan Leppert and the Eastern Barred Bandicoot (Carolyn Hanna).





Leadership roles assigned as council revamps meetings

WORDS BY David Schout COUNCIL AFFAIRS

Key portfolios for the next four years have been assigned to recently-elected City of Melbourne councillors, who have endorsed a new way to conduct meetings in 2021 and beyond.

Lord Mayor Sally Capp will take over transport chair duties, an important portfolio in the next four years as the council looks to implement its Transport Strategy 2030.

Since entering Town Hall in 2018, Cr Capp has been a strong proponent of redistributing CBD space to both pedestrians and cyclists, who make up the vast majority of trips within the Hoddle Grid.

The Lord Mayor will also become the Aboriginal Melbourne chair.

Deputy Lord Mayor Nicholas Reece has retained the planning portfolio, a role he held in the previous council term (2016-2020).

Rohan Leppert will remain as his deputy, while also taking on the role of environment chair after fellow Greens councillor Cathy Oke stood down last year after 12 years in the chambers.

Cr Leppert holds his role as heritage chair but relinquishes the arts portfolio after eight years.

Town Hall's current longest-serving councillor, Kevin Louey, has been assigned the Business and Global Opportunities portfolio.

Once the chief of staff to former Lord Mayor

John So, Cr Louey has entered his 13th year in the council chambers in 2021.

Second term councillor Philip Le Liu has been assigned as finance chair, taking over from former Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood, who in October ran unsuccessfully against Cr Capp in the 2020 City of Melbourne election.

Cr Leppert said given its scope of responsibilities, councillors decided a portfolio structure was again the most efficient way to conduct business

He added that the process was a harmonious

"At this point in the electoral cycle some councils are tearing themselves apart deciding who gets which position. We don't do that," he

Remaining portfolios were largely assigned to recently-elected councillors.

Dr Olivia Ball, the second Greens councillor alongside Cr Leppert, will chair the Health, Wellbeing and Belonging portfolio.

Roshena Campbell, who in her short time on council has been a strong advocate of a voucher program to kick-start the local economy in 2021, will lead City Activation.

Jason Chang will take the lead on Small Business, Elizabeth Doidge has been handed responsibility for Sustainable Building, Jamal Hakim will become Creative Melbourne chair, and Davydd Griffiths will lead the Education and Innovation portfolio.

At the December 15 council meeting,

Lord Mayor Sally Capp will take over transport chair duties, an important portfolio in the next four years as the council looks to implement its Transport Strategy 2030.



councillors also announced a shakeup to its decision-making framework for the next four

From now, Future Melbourne Committee meetings — which represent around two-thirds of all council meetings and where key decisions impacting the city are typically made - will no longer be structured in portfolio segments as featured during the previous term. Instead, the Lord Mayor will take on the role

of committee chair of all but one portfolio.

That remaining portfolio, planning, will continue to be chaired by the Deputy Lord Mayor.

Cr Leppert said the new system eliminated an overly centralised decision-making process. "I am actually quite glad that we've done away with what I thought was becoming a little bit of a problematic conflict, where the portfolio holder was also the chair of the committee, the proponent of the motion before the committee, the media spokesperson and becoming a bit of a policy lead," he said.

"We have to be conscious that all councillors have equal decision-making authority and responsibility. I think this model brings us back to that in two key ways; it doesn't make the portfolio lead the chair — the Lord Mayor will be the chair."

"Secondly, we're seeking to a brief a whole lot of portfolios together in a way that's going to make life as efficient as possible for the administration."

In what was the final meeting of 2020, councillors also endorsed its latest code of conduct.

"This code of conduct represents our commitment to respectful behaviour, to setting an appropriate tone and example for the rest of the organisation, and certainly reflecting our culture," Cr Capp said ●

The Metro Tunnel western portal's clashes with residents

WORDS BY *Meg Hill* PLANNING

Plans for the Metro Tunnel's western portal in South Kensington in 2015 required the demolition of 10 houses and 14 businesses. But pressure from locals changed those plans. The tunnel entrance was moved, and only one house was demolished.

Mattthew Hammond has lived in Kensington for 25 years. His house was one of the 10 originally earmarked for compulsory acquisition and demolition.

Mr Hammond said he was immediately sceptical of the necessity of demolition when he was notified.

"An engineer appeared at our door and told us the news," he said.

"This was the second iteration of the Metro project – it was floated previously by the Brumby Government and at that time they said they wouldn't need to knock any houses," he said.

"So, I had prior knowledge that they could do this without knocking houses."

"The view was, if you have to knock houses to build the infrastructure than okay – but you've got to demonstrate that you have to, not just that it's convenient."

Mr Hammond said he and his wife Bron door knocked neighbours in the immediate vicinity – the sides of Ormond and Childers streets closest to the planned tunnel entrance – and found others felt similarly.

He was active in the local residents' association, the Kensington Association, with others who were concerned by the plans.

They included Therese Fitzgerald, a Kensington local since 1975, and Dennis Kennedy, who moved to Kensington in 2014.

"Basically, because of our community works,



▲ Dennis Kennedy, Therese Fitxgerald and Matthew Hammond in front of the western portal site.

we saved 14 businesses and nine houses," Ms Fitzgerald said.

"The community is absolutely amazing – we know each other's skill base and if we need to use it, we do."

Dennis Kennedy's involvement in the campaign was an example. Mr Kennedy lives on Altona St, close to the triangle-shaped area of Childers and Ormond streets that work would have demolished.

As a civil engineer, Mr Kennedy was able to make a detailed case for alternative plans.

"When I looked at it, I thought about how the traffic would flow, how the entrance to the industrial park on upper Childers St would work," he said

The plan that included the demolitions had not yet been officially approved. Other plans had been drawn up for consideration, and Mr Kennedy wrote a cost summary of the differences between the proposals to help the locals' case.

The pressure eventually worked.

But Mr Hammond, Ms Fitzgerald and Mr Kennedy all have grievances with how the work has proceeded since.

They've struggled with long construction hours, noise, dust and vibrations since 2017. Although the residents support the infrastructure investment, they have taken issue with the lack of benefit for Kensington.

"The reality is that Kensington and South Kensington doesn't benefit at all from this project, we're just the entrance to the tunnel. We don't get a station or anything like that, but we got a lot of disruption," Ms Fitzgerald said.

The bitter feeling is exacerbated by tensions over the state of South Kensington Station, which locals have long complained about.

The Age reported in 2017 that Minister for Planning Richard Wynne had been advised by experts that an upgrade to the station should be considered as part of the Metro Tunnel project to bring it "up to current standards".

Mr Hammond said that residents had been treated unfairly.

"There has never been any proper noise mitigation – if you look at RMIT they've got acoustic sheds, they put roofs over the works around Melbourne University and the hospitals," he said.

"In the last financial year, the project did 46 weeks of out-of-hours work."

"While it's a good project and we all support the Metro Tunnel, it's a seriously important piece of infrastructure, there's no balance between getting the project built and the ability for residents to have some normal life."

North West City News understands that part of that disruption is due to major construction of what is known as a "decline structure" at the tunnel entrance that has required extended hours of work due to challenging ground conditions.

Residents are sometimes offered voluntary purchase of their homes, or long-term relocation, when they complain if they're eligible – although it is not entirely clear what constitutes eligibility

A Rail Projects Victoria (RPV) spokesperson told *North West City News* that it had worked closely with the Kensington community.

"The Metro Tunnel is a project our city and state needs. It's how we'll deliver more trains, more often to and from our suburbs and free up vital space in the city loop," the spokesperson said.

"From the early stages of planning the Metro Tunnel, we have worked closely with the Kensington community on many project elements including the design and location of the western tunnel entrance to minimise acquisition of homes and businesses."

"Our workers on the ground do their best to keep noise to a minimum but we've been clear from the beginning of construction that a project of this size will cause some disruption." •

North Melbourne street soccer

SPORT

Every Wednesday and Thursday at the North Melbourne Community Centre, the Big Issue runs community street soccer.

The program uses soccer to help people experiencing homelessness, marginalisation and disadvantage reconnect with the community.

The weekly training sessions give participants an opportunity to get active and make new friends in a fun and safe environment.

The Big Issue provides equipment, dedicated coaches and support staff. During the two-hour sessions, players take part in skill work and a match

Support staff also work closely with participants, linking them with services that address their individual issues and needs.

Gemma Pidutti, the Big Issue Victoria operations manager, said the program aimed to use the power of sport to make a positive impact and promote social inclusion.

"Street soccer has been running since 2007 and is held in many locations across Australia, including here in North Melbourne. Sessions are held every week and consist of stretching, skill work and a friendly soccer match." she said.

"Many people who take part in street soccer have experienced marginalisation in some way, such as long-term unemployment, homelessness, disability or family breakdown." "Coming to street soccer provides a great opportunity for people to get active, connect with others and have fun in a safe environment. Our staff can also work with participants to link them to services that address their individual needs."

"Everyone over 16 years is welcome to come along. Sessions are completely free and open to all levels of fitness and skill. We have a lot of fun and there's a great sense of team spirit, inclusiveness and camaraderie."

A 2016 survey of Street Soccer players found the program was achieving many health outcomes for participants, such as:

- 96 per cent reported improved physical fitness
- 94 per cent were motivated to improve or maintain their physical and mental health
- 94 per cent said Street Soccer had given them a more positive outlook on life

The program has also proven effective at decreasing rates of smoking and substance abuse; with 65 per cent of players reporting reduced alcohol use and 59 per cent stopping or cutting back on smoking ●

For more information: thebigissue.org.au





Historic property earmarked for hotel development

PLANNING

Plans to incorporate what is possibly North Melbourne's oldest surviving house into a \$10 million hotel development were given the tick of approval by the City of Melbourne last year.

The timber house at 48-50 Villiers St was built in 1854. According to the Hotham History Project (HHP), North Melbourne's first two houses – neither of which are still standing – were built in 1852.

The City North Heritage Review noted that the house is considered a rare example of an early timber residence with original multi-paned windows and has potential to provide information about the early history of Melbourne. It is protected by a heritage overlay.

The status of the heritage listed house was raised in an objection to the plans submitted online, which read: "48-50 Villiers St North Melbourne is more than likely the oldest surviving building in North Melbourne. It was built during the 1850s – that's the Goldrush era. There is still evidence of its past use as a dairy in the backyard area – Melbourne red clay brick paving. Interestingly, there is also the original bluestone paving in the backyard further supporting the property's past as a cottage industry."

North West City News is aware of one house in North Melbourne that was built the same year as the Villiers St house, but none that were erected earlier.

In 2016, a planning permit was issued by the

City of Melbourne for a \$4 million nine-storey building to be constructed on the property behind the timber house.

The developer applied to amend the permit, adding eight metres in height and an estimated \$6 million in costs. A new permit was issued by the council in June 2020.

The development will involve refurbishment and conservation works on the old timber house, which will then be used as restaurant, bar and lobby space for the hotel.

"It is our view the proposed entranceway achieves an appropriate balance between providing a defined access point for the building and providing a respectful and visually recessive outcome to the existing heritage building," Urbis's planning application read.

"The expression of the building has been thoroughly considered by the design team to provide a simple yet sophisticated backdrop to the existing heritage building on site."

"The material utilised comprises a metal facade and frame with glazed windows and solid concrete behind. The metal frame is operable to allow guests to adjust the frame to suit their requirements and provide shade and privacy throughout the day. This is not only an important factor given the site's western orientation, but this will also result in an interactive façade that varies in appearance depending on how many of the operable blades are open or closed at any time."

A number of outbuildings on the property, of similar age as the house, will be demolished to make space for the 81-room hotel ●



The City of Melbourne has welcomed its newly-elected Council.

Here is a brief introduction to the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and councillors at the City of Melbourne. To find extended biographies and contact details for councillors, visit melbourne.vic.gov.au/aboutcouncil



Lord Mayor Sally Capp

Re-elected in November 2020 after having previously been elected in May 2018

Sally began her career as a solicitor and was the first woman to hold the post of Agent-General for Victoria in the UK, Europe and Israel. She has also served as the CEO for the Committee for Melbourne and COO of the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Sally has held senior roles at both KPMG and ANZ, and she took the small business she co-founded to the ASX. Most recently she was Victorian Executive Director of the Property Council of Australia. A passionate Magpies supporter, in 2004 Sally made history as the first female board member of Collingwood FC. She is involved in a number of charities.

Sally is the first woman to be directly elected as Lord Mayor.

'The people of Melbourne are great collaborators and we've seen the benefits of this during COVID-19. As restrictions ease, we are rediscovering what we love about the city, and what we have taken for granted. I am excited about what we have planned for Melbourne's future to drive positive change.'

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Deputy Lord Mayor Nicholas Reece

Elected Deputy Lord Mayor in November 2020, after having previously been elected Councillor in

Nick is an executive in Chancellery at the University of Melbourne and holds an academic position of principal fellow and teaches at the Melbourne School of Government. Nick is the chairman of global men's health charity Movember and, for more than 10 years, he was a director for the street newspaper *The Big Issue*.

Nick has considerable experience in government and policy making, having worked as a senior adviser to Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Victorian premiers Steve Bracks and John Brumby. He is a commentator for SKY News and a regular columnist for The Age.

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'Melbourne has been hit hard by COVID-19, but we are going to come roaring back. During this time, we've seen what the city can do, from taking action on homelessness to pivoting to outdoor dining. I am so excited about the four years we have in front of us.'

•••••



Councillor Philip Le Liu

Re-elected in November 2020 after having previously been elected in 2016

Philip is a local resident and a long-time worker within the City of Melbourne. With more than 10 years of experience across a variety of sectors, including government, utility, telecommunication, and financial services, Philip is a trusted adviser to many in the community, business, and government sectors.

Philip is a regular speaker at conferences and on panels across Australia and Asia, and he speaks on key issues in the media. In 2019, he was recognised as one of 40 Under 40 Most Influential Asian-Australians and winner of the Public Sector/Government category. Outside of council, Philip is an entrepreneur and heavily involved in helping local communities.

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'I love that Melbourne is so diverse and multicultural. During my first four years on Council I learnt a lot and enjoyed helping people, especially the business owners, residents and students, that call Melbourne home. The best of Melbourne is yet to come and we all have a role to play in her success. Vires Acquirit Eundo.'

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Councillor Rohan Leppert

Re-elected in November 2020 after having previously been elected in 2016 and 2012

Rohan is a member of the Victorian Greens. He has lived in the City of Melbourne his entire adult life and currently lives and works in Kensington. He has worked as a musician and teacher for more than 15 years, and more recently as an urban planner.

Rohan is a board member of the Municipal Association of Victoria and is an associate of the Planning Institute of Australia and a member of the National Trust (Victoria).

Rohan's priority and passion as councillor is planning Melbourne in the public interest, for a more economically just, environmentally sustainable, accessible and creative city for future generations.

'As a returning councillor, I know how hard economic recovery is going to be, but I also feel that we've got a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make the city more affordable, environmentally sustainable, and to bring creative practitioners back into the middle of the city to work and live.'

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Your City of Melbourne community update



Councillor Jason Chang

Jason is co-founder and CEO of Calia, a restaurant-to-retail brand created in Melbourne specialising in quality products and ingredients. His hospitality and retail group employs hundreds of people across his stores in Melbourne and Asia, and for his online store operations.

Born and raised in Melbourne, Jason knows all too well the devastating impact that COVID-19 is having on Melbourne's beloved hospitality, retail, international student and tourism industries.

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'I love going to restaurants and cafes around Melbourne. As a small business owner and trader, I understand the pain and suffering businesses are feeling right now. I really want to give them a voice and show them that we're here to help to revive the city.'

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Councillor Elizabeth Mary Doidge

Elizabeth was born, raised, and has lived her entire life in Melbourne. She has a proud career in the trade union movement, playing a key role in communication and stakeholder engagement. Elizabeth currently works in the construction sector engaging with a diverse range of industry and community stakeholders.

Elizabeth recognises the important role Council will play in the recovery of our city and the opportunity presented to Council to contribute to the design of a more productive, inclusive and enriched city for all.

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'The pandemic has had a devastating impact on everybody, but this period of change also presents opportunities to restructure some things that didn't work so well before and help make Melbourne a better, more enriched place – a more inclusive place for everybody.'

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Councillor Olivia Ball

Olivia has lived, worked and studied in the City of Melbourne for most of her life. With a Masters and PhD in human rights, and experience working in women's, children's, refugees', workers' and older people's rights, she brings human rights expertise to the diverse activities of Council, from the affordability of housing to the accessibility of our city and democracy.

A published author, Olivia also has a science degree, giving her skills in assessing evidence and applying research. Most recently, she has been studying urban planning.

'What I want to do on Council is to take this current crisis, which is consuming us so much, and give birth to a new world - a better Melbourne, with better outcomes for human rights and the environment. A fairer, more affordable, more sustainable Melbourne.'

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Councillor Kevin Louey

Re-elected in November 2020 after having previously been elected in 2016, 2012 and 2008

Kevin has extensive experience across the business, government and community sectors and spent seven years at the City of Melbourne as Chief of Staff to the former Lord Mayor John So, before being elected as a councillor in 2008.

Kevin has been the City of Melbourne's appointment to the advisory committees including Enterprise Melbourne Pty Ltd and Business Partner City Network.

Kevin is passionate about working with small business and activating the city to increase visitation.

'Over 20 years on Council, I have enjoyed seeing the city change. We will continue to focus on business support and reactivation as we meet the challenges of COVID-19 and embrace opportunities for recovery. I look forward to working together for another four years.'

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Councillor Jamal Hakim

Jamal is Managing Director of a national health non-profit that has safely and successfully navigated COVID-19. Having worked in complex, challenging global organisations his entire career, he is both an entrepreneur and business person at heart. Jamal is a GAICD and holds a number of board roles, including with Democracy in Colour, Marie Stopes PNG and previously with Midsumma Festival.

A resident of Docklands for 12 years, Jamal is passionate about ensuring a thriving community that is physically, emotionally, culturally and environmentally safe for everyone. Jamal is also an advocate for representative and evidence-based decision making.

'What I really love about our great city is the diversity and intersectionality of people that live, work and visit here. We have this amazing community that is so fun, adventurous and inclusive. We need change that is driven by the people.'



Councillor Roshena Campbell

Roshena is a barrister with expertise in commercial law and corporate governance. Prior to that she was a solicitor with a leading national law firm for nearly a decade. She has represented some of Australia's largest companies as well as state and local government bodies.

Roshena has put down deep roots since moving to Melbourne as a 20-year-old and has lived, worked and studied in the City of Melbourne. She has three young children. She is passionate about contributing to Melbourne's re-emergence as a vibrant, thriving city. Her priority is ensuring that Melbourne is Australia's greatest city to do business in and the destination of choice for families to live and visit.

'I love Melbourne's vibrancy and rich culture. I am delighted to see the return of workers and visitors and the reopening of beloved restaurants and attractions. I believe there is so much we can do to positively shape the city over the coming four years.'

•••••



Councillor Davydd Griffiths

Davydd moved to Melbourne to study in 1993 and since that time has lived or worked in the City of Melbourne. Davydd worked as a school teacher for many years and remains passionate about the power of education to transform lives and connect communities.

After leaving teaching he worked as a policy advisor in both education and health with a particular focus on community health provision, men's health and mental health. Addressing the impact of loneliness, particularly in rapidly transforming urban communities, is another of Davydd's key interests. In recent years, Davydd has owned and operated hospitality venues in Kensington and West Melbourne and has experienced first-hand the impacts of COVID-19 on business.

'I have a pub in West Melbourne and I do my banking at the other end of town just so I can walk through the city and see it change. I'm excited to help bring people back into Melbourne after the disconnection and isolation of the COVID experience.'

•••••



KEEP IN TOUCH

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Local history grants open

HISTOR'

One of Victoria's biggest opportunities for local history buffs has opened for another year running out of the Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV) based in North Melbourne.

Local historians and community groups can apply for a share in \$350,000 to preserve, record and share parts of Victoria's history.

Minister for Government Services Danny Pearson announced the opening of applications on January 11. Each project can apply for up to \$15,000.

"The Local History Grants Program is all about supporting our local historians and community groups to showcase and share Victoria's rich history," Mr Pearson said.

"We can't wait to see this year's history projects and I encourage community groups and budding historians across Victoria to go online and apply for a grant."

In the last round of local history grants, 53 community groups across Victoria won a share of funding for their projects.

They included the Chinese Australian Family Historians of Victoria for its online database to

make Chinese Australian travel records publicly available, and Deaf Children Australia for its work to catalogue its 157-year history.

Other projects funded in recent years include the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) for case studies of Aboriginal incarceration at Old Melbourne Gaol, and Victorian Netball Association to document a century of netball in Victoria.

PROV director and keeper of public records Justine Heazlewood said community groups should consider launching projects and applying for funding.

"We encourage community groups considering an upcoming history or anniversary project – from sports clubs to schools and historical societies – to apply for a grant of up \$15,000 as part of the Local History Grants Program," she said.

Applications close on March 9 •

For more information:

prov.vic.gov.au

Boost for Royal Park

SPORT

Community sports facilities in Royal Park will soon be given a multi-million-dollar upgrade.

City of Melbourne Councillors are due to consider final concept plans for the redevelopment of Brens and Ryder Pavilions on the evening of February 16.

The pavilions will be significantly redeveloped to provide universally accessible gender-neutral change facilities and more room for the growing demand in community sport, particularly the growth in female participation in sport

Lord Mayor Sally Capp said the pavilions would better cater for local clubs and community groups, whose feedback has been incorporated into the concept plans.

"We plan to invest funds to revitalise Brens Pavilion and Ryder Pavilion to create local jobs and provide a boost to community sport as they welcome back members after a difficult interruption to their seasons in 2020," the Lord Mayor said.

"We've talked to local clubs, and they've told us that they need better change rooms, better storage and more inclusive and accessible facilities."

"Everyone should feel included in community sport so we're planning to deliver eight gender-neutral change rooms at Brens Pavilion and six at Ryder Pavilion."

"Prior to COVID-19 our sporting facilities

were in high demand, with 375 community teams using them each week, including 90 teams made up of women and girls."

The pavilions cater to AFL, gridiron, rugby and cricket teams using the adjacent ovals. The designs nestle the pavilions into the Victorian Heritage Register-listed Royal Park.

Health, wellbeing and belonging portfolio lead Cr Olivia Ball said sustainable features would be included in the upgrades, including passive climate control through natural ventilation, double glazing on all windows, and wide eaves to shade the façade.

"The pavilions will be larger than the existing buildings to give our clubs more space but will be nestled into the park and well-integrated with the surrounding environment," Cr Ball said.

"Solar panels will be used to power the pavilions and rainwater will be captured for on-site reuse. At Brens Pavilion excess asphalt will be removed to make way for more trees and shrubs."

Councillors will decide between two concept plans for Ryder Pavilion, one of which is elevated further off the ground.

If endorsed, design plans for the pavilions will progress to landowner and heritage approvals, funding support will be explored, and the project will go out for tender later this year.

The tender process for the neighbouring Western Pavilion is currently underway, with construction due to start in coming months ●

lacktriangledown A render of the Brens Pavlion redesign.



Docklands "sleeper agent" switches attention to Arden

WORDS BY Sean Car

After 10 years helping shape neighbouring Docklands, Development Victoria's (DV) development director Ronan Mellan is moving on to help build the vision for renewal in both the Arden and Fishermans Bend precincts.

The self-described "sleeper agent" of Docklands said part of the impetus for his decision to switch roles was actually use his knowledge to benefit the entire "western belt" of the city, including Docklands and Arden-Macauley.

"I agonised over it [changing roles] because I have such an emotional connection to Docklands, but I partly felt 10 years in the same sandpit was probably enough. I'm so passionate about Docklands," he said.

"We joked about me being a bit of a sleeper agent for Docklands and I think that it's kind of useful for a whole bunch of reasons, like knowing what worked well and what we would have done differently with Docklands."

"We can apply that knowledge and that experience to these emerging regeneration projects in Fishermans Bend and Arden. But equally, having an intimate knowledge of Docklands helps by then understanding the strategic context in this corridor which is like the western belt of Melbourne. So, as much as we can apply the lessons from other projects, we can create and curate other projects."

The Scottish-born urban planner had long aspired to help shape Docklands before he'd even set foot in Australia for the first time 12 years ago.

As a student in the late '90s studying town planning and economic development, Mr Mellan said the Docklands project led by what was then VicUrban (now DV) was, and still remains, as an internationally-renowned model for urban renewal.

While that is a fact some Melburnians may find difficult to believe, Ronan said critics of Docklands were often heavily misinformed.

"Most cultures have the tall poppy syndrome but as an immigrant I recognise Australia really does have a chip on its shoulder at times. Any other regeneration that has had the success of Docklands would be crowing about it until the cows come home," he said.

"We're sitting here and that [Marvel] stadium was coming out of the ground in late 1999; it's unbelievable."

"Sometimes it [Docklands] can be a dirty word and I love nothing more than confronting that and saying let's deconstruct that for a second – usually the person using Docklands as a punchline is only equipped with around 15 or 20 per cent of the information and you just start providing them that background and information and they recognise that it's more than just about how windy it is."

"So those are the superficial arguments but then you have conversations within the public sector, the huge financial benefits and how much money was directed into community outcomes like Ron Barassi Park, the library and so forth."

But while he might be a staunch defender of Docklands, he's certainly under no illusions as to how things could have been done better and he's looking forward to taking some of those lessons and principles into Arden and Fishermans Bend.

Complementing Parkville, the Arden precinct, shaped largely around the new underground Metro Tunnel station in North Melbourne, will form a new community shaped around an employment cluster built on life sciences and medical innovation.

Fishermans Bend – Australia's largest ever urban renewal project – is two-and-a-half times the size of Melbourne's CBD and will incorporate four new residential precincts, as well as a new employment precinct, which is where much of Ronan's efforts will be centred.

The former General Motors Holden (GMH) site, which is located within the City of Melbourne, was purchased by the state government in 2016 and will be focused on driving innovation largely around advanced manufacturing and logistics. The University of Melbourne has already bought into the government's vision by purchasing land in the precinct for a new engineering and design campus and RMIT University is expected to follow suit.

With both precincts bearing many similarities to Docklands, Mr Mellan said the focus was now focusing on learning lessons of the past around what could have been done better – namely, "fine grain" details around heritage and activation.

He added that while Docklands had been largely driven by the private sector, the government was looking to take a more "curatorial role" in Arden and Fishermans Bend by retaining a greater controlling interest.

"The creation of the other precincts both metaphorically and physically repositions Docklands on the map. So, it becomes more of a connecting hub rather than a terminus," he said.

"The benefits of that are greater visitation, greater economic activity and given its more centralised location in that context it becomes a more desirable place to live and meet."

"Something that we could have done better is celebrate Docklands' maritime heritage. That's one thing that we're really taking with us to Arden is to celebrate the indigenous heritage of the area much more materially and much more genuinely."

"If you look at some of the old pictures of Docklands through the late 1800s to the [19]60s it's just such a lost opportunity to have retained a bit more of that fabric. That's what we're looking to bring in Fishermans Bend at GMH as well by looking at the automotive and industrial heritage down there."

And while he was happy to see Docklands Primary School finally open last month, he said such catalyst projects had taken "way too long" and those mistakes were already being rectified in the new precincts through the likes of new schools and the Metro Tunnel •



▲ Development director at Development Victoria Ronan Mellan is switching renewal projects from Docklands to Arden.

NORTH WEST CITY LOCAL











Losing yourself in history

WORDS BY Rhonda Dredge

The streets of North and West Melbourne are a treasure trove of history if you go looking in the right places and keep an open mind.

Elio Sarpi, an IT professional, was locked up like everyone else when he began noticing houses on his lunchtime walks.

He needed a distraction from a demanding work and family life and he found it by seeing where his curiosity would lead him.

One day he stopped by an old warehouse at 10 Purcell Street, which had red out the front, and asked why?

At first he couldn't find much about the place then he discovered on Trove, the online register of newspapers, that a pastry chef had 300 pounds stolen from a safe in the building.

The victim's name led him to Wikipedia where he found that he was a high-class pastry chef with two shops nearby and a staff of 40.

"All these facts are out there," Elio says. "I decided to write little blurbs about the owners or about the street. I love finding the stories."

That's how an Instagram project housesofnorthandwestmelbourne evolved. The site now includes 200 buildings, most of them historic houses but some architecturally interesting blocks of flats.

Elio has 1,400 followers and he enjoys conversations with ex-residents, artists, architects, historians and others with an interest in the

Architects are now reposting his photographs, evidence that he has a good eye, and residents are requesting that he walk past their houses

The project has been important for maintaining his mental health during the lockdown in that it gets him out of the house and his domestic situation.

One of his kids is autistic and a great conversationalist, but all parents need a bit of space to themselves.

"We can't go out much," he said. "What people had in lockdown has been our life."

Elio takes the photographs with his phone

but is very strict about the aesthetics. He prefers symmetry and no cars parked in front.

Sometimes the most modest buildings attract attention. Other times he's been seduced by a streetscape and doesn't realise the significance of the old stables he is standing outside.



▲ Elio Sarpi lining up a North Melbourne building for his Instragram site.

"I looked at the suburb in a different way," he said. "I didn't appreciate what we have here."

He does not want to trade in his IT job for that of historian. His posts give followers a taste

of a building's past not a complete history. He confines himself to just one hour's research a night.

"What's good is not knowing," he said •

COUNCILLOR PROFILE

.....

A true community councillor

When North West City News's sister publication Docklands News ran Jamal Hakim's image on the front page of its September 2020 edition ahead of last year's City of Melbourne council elections, he really would have liked his chances!

And sure enough, the long-term Docklands resident, multicultural campaigner and managing director of a national health not-for-profit defied the odds and snuck into one of the nine coveted councillor positions ... not that we're suggesting our help had anything to do with his success!

Off the back of some clever preferences with other like-minded resident candidates and an "open and honest" dialogue with the rest of the field, Mr Hakim said he had always remained optimistic about his chances.

"I take things in my stride, I guess," he said.
"I'm the kind of person that leaves myself open to all possibilities. So, part of me did feel optimistic. But at the same time, I was realistic that it's the first time I'm running and I'm an unknown character."

"I went into the preference discussions the same way I would any other negotiation, which is to align from a values perspective. Have those conversations, be really honest and look at the policies of the other candidates."

"My goal was to work with the other resident candidates to say, let's get an independent resident on council. It doesn't matter who it is."

Mr Hakim is one of six new faces on the council and his election to the City of Melbourne should come as welcome news to local residents throughout the municipality, given his pledge to carry his own lived experience into the role.

Not only has he lived in Docklands for more than 10 years, his professional experience working with Democracy in Colour, Marie Stopes and previously with Midsumma Festival means community will be central to



▲ Newly-elected councillor and long-time Docklands resident Jamal Hakim.

his approach as a councillor.

Having been assigned the Creative Melbourne portfolio and deputy lead on the Health, Wellbeing and Belonging portfolio, he told *North West City News* that he was passionate about promoting multiculturalism, safety and deliberative government in our city.

"I think safety in the city is a really big issue because it underpins everything," he said.

"People feel less safe in the City of Melbourne year on year and that's probably because we're not understanding what safety encompasses – it's emotional, psychological, cultural, accessibility, environmental and all sorts of things."

"Deliberative government is also something that I'm really interested in. We really need to create a way of collaboration that takes into account our community in all of its forms."

"About 70 per cent of the recommendations from deliberative processes in Scotland are enacted. I think when you have that you have a more engaged community. You have to represent community realistically and be able to show representation within council."

While Jamal's life is about to get a whole lot busier as a councillor, he is no stranger to a full workload having only recently completed his Juris Doctor (JD) at RMIT University so expect him to take the juggle in his stride!

He said that the combined fresh talent of fellow new councillors Jason Chang, Olivia Ball, Elizabeth Doidge, Davydd Griffiths and Roshena Campbell, with the experience of Lord Mayor Sally Capp, Deputy Lord Mayor Nicholas Reece and councillors Kevin Louey, Rohan Leppert and Phil Le Liu placed the group in good stead for a productive and pragmatic council term.

"What's really terrific about this council, and I can say this confidently, after meeting and sitting down with everyone individually is that we really got to know each other and we all set some ground rules around our behaviours and how we want to engage together," he said.

"What came from that was that we have a bunch of councillors who don't necessarily agree on everything, but they agree on the way we want to interact. Everyone wants to go into this in a way that is positive and be soft on people and hard on issues."

"All eyes will be on council post-pandemic and I think everyone is conscious of that fact in that whatever we do in this term will have implications for years and years to come – similar to what happened with Postcode 3000 and some of the other major changes in Melbourne."

"What we do with a city that is really changing in terms of how communities and businesses interact and how people's livelihoods are going to be impacted is going to be a challenge, but an opportunity to do things better."



Investing in social housing, in the era of working from home



Welcome to the sixth of our 12part series which will attempt to explore the role that housing can and should play within Australian society and why it is important to our economy that we house all Australians.



This series intends to draw on a range of perspectives centred around housing and homelessness. We will hear a range of views from business, the not-for-profit sector and hopefully government, as to why they believe housing is an important social and economic building block for Australia's future prosperity.

This month we have asked Peter Colacino, Chief of Policy & Research, at Infrastructure Australia to share his thoughts around why the objective around housing all Australians, and in particular investing in social housing in the era of working from home, should be considered an economic imperative for Australia...

As Australians continue to feel the impacts of COVID-19 and the rolling series of lockdowns, adequate housing for many members of the community is a barrier to maintaining productivity and avoiding social isolation.

With one in three workers still based at home as a result of the pandemic, and 10 per cent of the total workforce intending to continue working remotely into the future, the measure of adequacy for housing has shifted. So too, the importance of suitable and affordable broadband has grown.

This shift has created, for many workers, a new hurdle for accessing work. The home internet connection becomes the link to economic and social opportunity, the living room the office as well as the place for family and the costs of utilities have shifted from employer to employee.

As we spend more time working from home, the pressure on those in an unstable or unsatisfactory housing situation has intensified. This risks further detaching those who are already vulnerable from economic and social opportunities, and risks pronouncing isolation.

Infrastructure Australia's recent report Infrastructure beyond COVID-19 anticipates the value of face-to-face contact and agglomeration in CBDs is such that two-thirds of those working remotely will return to the office and CBDs.

However, for those remaining at home, and those with reduced frequency in the office, optimising their productivity while working remotely is critical both to the economic performance of the nation and to avoid entrenching of financial disadvantage for individuals.

The pandemic, and the new needs of our workforce, should serve as a catalyst for the owners of housing for those on the fringe, including public, community and affordable housing, to rethink the economic value fit-for-purpose housing offers through enabling participation.

It is already widely understood that social housing is an economic enabler. As noted by KPMG in its evaluation of post-GFC investment in housing, social housing provides on average multiplier boost to the economy of \$1.30 for every \$1 spent.

However, just as the Commonwealth Treasury has noted, economic infrastructure provides an estimated four dollar return for every one dollar spent, although the impact of each project varies and the benefits of good projects can be many times higher.

Defining housing quality and pinpointing its incremental benefits remains a key challenge. To secure appropriate prioritisation of housing it will be necessary to turn the focus from considerations of the macro impacts of housing, to gaining a deeper understanding of the specific benefits of tangible housing projects and interventions. It is now paramount to consider the role that investment in fit-for-purpose housing plays in connecting its residents to the workforce.

While it's clear that many frontline roles cannot be undertaken remotely, research from the University of Sydney in September 2020 found the diversity of people working remotely is relatively high, both during and before the pandemic. While the transition to working from home has been most substantive in white collar roles, it extends beyond that. Clerical and administration roles shifted from 20 per cent to more than 56 per cent remote, while sales staff working remotely shifted from 22 per cent to 30 per cent of the workforce and more than 10 per cent of the labourer and machine operator/driver workforce is also remote.

Analysis from McKinsey across nine

countries has shown that many activities such as information gathering and processing, communicating with others, teaching and counselling, and coding data can theoretically be done remotely.

With much of the workforce operating at least intermittently from home, the challenge of meeting people's housing needs has been complicated by the suitability of a person's housing to allow them to work from home. Housing now has a resounding impact on the kind of employment people can access as a result of its location, physical and digital connectivity and configuration.

The challenge of housing inequity, with social housing failing to meet the modern needs of the community, was highlighted in the 2019 Australian Infrastructure Audit. In particular, social housing faces the dual challenges of ageing, inappropriate assets and long waiting lists. This is exemplified by many multi-bedroom dwellings remaining under-occupied, while there is overcrowding elsewhere.

While this inequity in access is not new, the pandemic has thrust it into the spotlight. The acceleration of the move of the workplace online has also accelerated the move of social housing from social policy to a paramount economic issue that could directly impact our economic recovery. If we are to hasten the economic recovery, address workforce constraints and boost workforce productivity, it is critical that every individual has the opportunity to participate. With as many as one in 10 Australians now living in social housing, and two-thirds of that group employed, it is critical this substantial cohort is provided the opportunity to engage in the workforce.

Social housing tenants in the workforce are both more likely to exit social housing, and more likely to have access to higher incomes. The opportunity to achieve these two outcomes is now more closely tied to the nature of the property.

To encourage investment, we need more data and robust analysis of how public, community or affordable housing infrastructure interventions have improved outcomes for individuals. It is well known that investing in social housing has benefits for residents and our national economy, but we understand less about how these benefits are impacted by the type of housing we invest in. We need to better define fit-for-purpose housing and the economic case for enabling interventions.

The other side of the coin from Australia's property boom has been pronounced challenges in the delivery of affordable housing. While

existing community housing appreciates in financial value, locking up the balance sheets of owners, these assets age, deteriorate and their service value erodes as they no longer meet the needs of residents. The costs of minor maintenance, the costs to heat, cool and digitally connect, all grow.

While there is an established and growing need to refresh existing social housing assets, the opportunity to use the sale of existing houses to fund new, higher-quality dwellings strengthens.

Despite the opportunity, well-intentioned community attitudes to maintain the level of publicly-supported housing can compound the challenges associated with inadequate housing stock. Perceived friction associated with recycling or transitioning of housing stock to private ownership to create a stream of revenue for investment in new housing assets is a major hindrance. It is incumbent on the owners of existing public housing to educate the community on the shortcomings of existing assets.

If we are to address the challenges of economic and social isolation that impact those in publicly supported housing, it is critical that we can support an informed public discussion about the contribution of housing and digital connectivity to our communities. COVID-19 provides a catalyst for this discussion, and a burning platform to build the data and knowledge to support modern, right-sized assets to meet the needs of the post-pandemic homebased workforce.

I hope you found the above perspective by Peter interesting and insightful. While what was said may not align with our view of the world, we all need to listen and digest what is said by others in order to find common ground. This is why we are focusing on the fact that the provision of shelter is a fundamental human need (not human right) and without that need being met, we have unintended social and economic consequences that will span generations.

Doing nothing is NOT AN OPTION! We need to act, and we need to act now. All of us need to be part of the solution so please feel free to write to me with your thoughts: info@housingallaustralians.com.au



Rob Pradolin

FORMER GENERAL MANAGER AT FRASERS PROPERTY AUSTRALIA AND FOUNDER OF HOUSING ALL AUSTRALIANS (HAA)

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ABORIGINAL MELBOURNE



Landfill tops Koorie Art Show

"I've always used art in a political way," artist Clinton Naina told North West City News. In December, Clinton was awarded the Koorie Art Show's top prize for his work Landfill.

Words by Meg Hill

The work is on exhibition at the Koorie Heritage Trust until February 21.

"It's a way of telling a story or exposing things that need to be thought about. Art can tell a political story as well as being political in and of itself," Clinton continued.

Clinton made *Landfill* out of domestic bleach and cotton. The artwork, a depiction of and commentary on societal waste, was made during Melbourne's lockdown. Surgical masks are depicted alongside a plastic bag.

"It's commenting on the waste that society uses that is filling our land. There's better ways of using or reusing these materials and we should be looking at ways to recycle and making sure we're not polluting the land because it's all we have." he said.

Reflecting on societal waste during the pandemic, Clinton said he saw the two phenomena as connected: there is sickness and illness all around the world, and we're chopping down the

forests that protect us from germs and disease.

"I think every time we chop down a tree or a forest or another creature dies, we're getting closer to destroying ourselves," he said.

He's has been exhibiting his art since he was a teenager, but he's been politically active even longer.

"My mother was Eleanor Harding, a political activist and community service worker. She was from the Torres Strait Islands, her lineage descends from Meriam Mer people of the Eastern Torres Strait and the Ku-Ku people of northwest Cape York," he said.

"I was taken as a newborn to my first Aboriginal land rights protest when I was one month old – to the first Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra on Australia Day 1972."

"That was the start of my political awareness

of my people's ongoing struggle to survive."
He said art was a way of exposing things that needed to be thought about.

"I've particularly always looked at the politics of the environment, animal welfare, the Torres Strait Islander people, land, mining – land is entwined with everything else in Torres Strait Island culture, it's not separate like in Western culture," he said.

In a way, Clinton said he felt responsibility to depict those things in his art: "We're not the only ones here anymore, so we have to teach the people living on the land how to look after it," he said

"So, it was my responsibility in a way not just to be an artist but to do work that can shed light on those things and help the situations that we're in."

The 8th Koorie Art Show is open to the public Sunday, February 21 at the Koorie Heritage Trust, Yarra Building, Federation Square. Entry is free

For more information: koorieheritagetrust.com.au

KENSINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

A space of our own



Forty-five years ago, a group of intrepid Kensington women met in the lounge room of a house in Bellair Str to discuss ways they could support one another.





▲ The founding mothers of Kensington Neighbourhood

At the time, Kensington had a relatively small population of 7000 residents – one third living in public housing. A high proportion of families were single-parent and low-income.

Bringing up children in small flats without backyards or play areas was hard. Trying to keep children quiet and contained so as not to annoy neighbours was stressful. Many women didn't have any family nearby and felt isolated. They were looking for breathing space away from children and a bit of time to sort out their lives. Their vision was a "home away from home" – a drop-in house for women of all backgrounds and a childcare space for their kids.

In 1976 this vision became reality and the "Kensington Women's Group Child Care Cooperative" was born. Home was a heritage house on Kensington Hill, opposite Kensington Primary School. In the mid '80s, the group became the Kensington Neighbourhood House, offering activities for men, women and children.

Times have changed and Kensington has grown and gentrified. House prices are through the roof and many residents are relatively wealthy. Yet a lot of things stay the same. It is still difficult bringing up young children in apartments and townhouses. Parents still need a break from time to time and all people – young and old – need the opportunity to meet neighbours and make friends.

Luckily, Kensington Neighbourhood House is still going strong! The little house on the hill continues to open its doors to more than 1000 participants every year and offers Morning Childcare every week day.

Both of Bianca Muscat's daughters have been enrolled in KNH Morning Childcare in recent years and she plans to enrol her soon-to-beborn third baby in the future.

"The staff are so friendly and warm," Bianca said. "I like the fact that it is occasional care – it suits my lifestyle and it suits the needs of my children."

"My niece and nephew attended here about 10 years ago and loved it and now my kids love it too."

With two large play rooms and a backyard shaded by an enormous Elm tree, KNH



▲ KNH Morning Childcare

Morning Childcare is a haven for children. Highly qualified and experienced educators work hard to get to know each child and the small group size (maximum 14 children) means no-one gets lost in the crowd. When asked what they liked best about attending Kensington Neighbourhood House, this is what some of the children had to say ...

- "The dinosaurs! I like the dinosaurs best"
 Luka
- "I like playing with friends and making stuff, like lanterns." Margo
- "I like snack time. And playing outside."
 Easton
- "I like dressing up!" Elly

Unlike long day care, Kensington Neighbourhood House hosts different age groups together – offering opportunities for learning and friendship between older and younger children. Sessions from Monday to Thursday are designed for children aged 18 months to five years. On Fridays, a longer kindergarten-style session caters for children aged three and over.

The special place created by those intrepid Kensington mothers four decades ago continues to give children and parents a space to play, create and connect.

If your small person would like to join in the fun at Kensington Neighbourhood House, we have Morning Childcare vacancies on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays ●

For more information: kensingtonneighbourhoodhouse. com.au or call 9376 6366



Rebecca Smith

ACTING MANAGER KENSINGTON
NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE
INFO@KENHOUSE.ORG.AU

STATE MP

Let's fix Kensington Primary!

Hello residents of inner Melbourne! It's great to be writing to you in the very first edition of our new local newspaper.

Local news is so important. We've lost so many local papers over the years, it's wonderful to see a new one pop up.

As your state MP and a local mum, I want to share some news with you about my work to push the government to build new primary schools in our area, and fix up our existing ones.

I was so pleased in 2014 and 2015 to be heavily involved in the campaign to get a new school built in the Docklands, which finally opened this year! We also received funding in the last State Budget for a new North Melbourne Hill Primary school to take some pressure off North Melbourne Primary. These are really welcome developments, and I'm working with the government and community to make sure this new school is designed to actually meet the needs of our kids.

But last budget, unfortunately one school really missed out, and that is Kensington Primary School (KPS).

KPS is a wonderful school, but unfortunately the school buildings are facing a growing list of serious maintenance issues: from leaking roofs to broken floors.

Since 2014, I have worked with dedicated parents to secure some critical emergency funding for urgent issues at the school. We've achieved a lot, like improving wheelchair accessibility, fixing mould, fixing up toilets and more, but this 140-year-old building needs a lot more love!

The school buildings need the roof fixed to stop the source of mould, the building needs to be restumped to address the collapsing floor, playgrounds and bathrooms need replacing, and more. I've just put in a Budget bid to the state government to fund these urgent safety needs and will be campaigning between now and the Budget to secure this funding.

2020 was a challenging year for many teachers, parents and students. It's shown us how central schools are to connecting our communities. In 2021, as things go back to COVID normal and students are back in school, I want to see Kensington Primary given the major fix ups it needs to be ready for the next 140 years of educating our kids.

If you're interested in staying up to date on this local community campaign you can sign up at ellensandell.com/fixkensingtonprimary

Building another primary school for North Melbourne

As everyone will know, North and West Melbourne is growing fast, and this brings a lot of challenges, not least of which is that local enrolments at North Melbourne Primary School have doubled in recent years, meaning overcrowding for our kids and pressures on teachers and parents.

We love our local primary school, but there simply isn't enough space for such a fast-growing population. For several years, local residents have been lobbying for a new school to take some of the pressure off.

The vertical school will be on the public housing redevelopment site at Abbotsford and Haines Streets and is due to be completed by



 $\blacktriangle \textit{ Ellen Sandell MP with local parents, campaigning to fix the Kensington Primary School at \textit{Victorian Parliament}. }$

2023.

Now, let's be clear. I do not, and did not, support the selling off of public housing land by this Labor Government, and have been working with residents to oppose privatisation of this important asset. Although we didn't win everything we wanted, throughout this campaign did achieve some important improvements including the commitment to a school on the site.

I know this will come as a relief to parents and young families in North Melbourne and surrounding suburbs, who have been left behind for so many years by the government's lack of planning for schools in the inner city.

But I also know there are still a lot of unknowns about the new school. Parents are asking me questions like whether the new school will be a campus of North Melbourne Primary or its own school, which will have implications for school zoning, what the new school will look like, whether it'll be well integrated into the local community and more.

We've been reassured that anyone with kids at North Melbourne Primary (or siblings

of future students) will not need to change schools, but there are still a lot of other unanswered questions.

I hear your questions and will be working hard to make sure the voices of locals and parents are heard loud and clear by the government, and you are consulted every step of the way.

I'd also love to hear from parents in Kensington, North Melbourne and the Docklands about your views on the local education and in particular what you want for our new schools. Please get in touch with my office by emailing office@ellensandell.com or calling us on 9328 4637. My office is here for you, so please get in touch anytime. ●

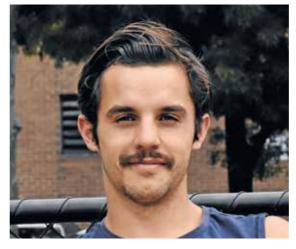


Ellen Sandell
STATE MP FOR MELBOURNE
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Faces of North West City

Question: What is your go-to therapeutic activity when you feel the need to calm down?



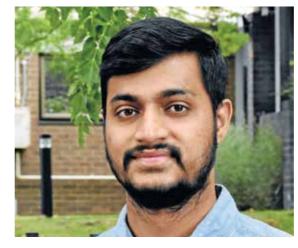
LUKE

Researching, exercising and training has kept me the sanest if I'm honest. Over the pandemic I learned a lot about cars and fitness, which helps considering I work in the fitness field!



TULLY

I've been doing online dance classes via Zoom, and a bit of meditation through an app. Initially I was a little bit hesitant, but after a while in the pandemic I was like I need my dance classes.



NAVEE

Being a student is quite tough at the moment, especially with not being able to go to uni. I like doing some yoga and listening to music to help keep me calm.



BEVERLEY

Just going for walks with my dog up to Arden St and doing a few laps of the oval there. It's always quite interesting but is very dependent on the weather.

METRO TUNNEL

Metro Tunnel focus on Arden Station as design takes shape

Work on the Metro Tunnel reached several milestones during 2020 and progress is already forging ahead this year.

The tunnel boring machines (TBMs) that first set out from the Arden Station site in late 2019 are now digging the tunnel deep below Melbourne's city streets.

After creating the tunnel to the western entrance at Kensington, TBMs Meg and Joan completed the 1.4km from Arden to Parkville.

Joan has since reached State Library Station in the CBD (the TBMs follow an adjacent route, but with staggered timing) and these TBMs will complete their work when they carve out the 66om stretch between State Library and Town Hall stations (TBMs Millie and Alice will arrive at Town Hall from the south-east).

There is still a lot of work to be done at Arden to ensure the station is ready for day one operations in 2025.

The Arden Station site is providing tunnelling support for the duration of tunnelling to the CBD, and major construction is continuing at and around the site.

Laurens St will be realigned to support service investigations and relocations, and construction of the Arden Station entrance. This involves the narrowing of traffic and bicycle lanes and closure of sections of footpath and on street parking.

A pedestrian crossing will be installed on Laurens St, south of Queensberry St, to enable pedestrians to safely cross Laurens St while part of the footpath is closed.

The Laurens St changes will remain in place from late February 2021 until late-2023.

Before construction of the Arden station entrance starts, support piles will be installed in late February to reinforce the station building foundation. Piling will continue for three weeks



▲ The Metro Tunnel's TBMs are making great progress to create the project's twin nine-kilometre-long tunnels. Credit: The Metro Tunnel Project.

during daytime hours and is expected to generate up to high levels of noise.

Construction of the Arden Station entrance structure is expected to start in April 2021.

Cross passage construction is continuing below ground, within the completed sections of tunnels. These passages are an important safety feature that allow people (including emergency services) to move from one tunnel to the other in the event of an emergency. The Metro Tunnel will have 26 cross passages located around 230 metres apart along its tunnel alignment.

As always, we greatly appreciate the public's understanding and patience as we build this city-defining project •

For more information: metrotunnel.vic.gov.au/ disruptions

NORTH AND WEST MELBOURNE ASSOCIATION

Welcome to our new community asset



When the media, the allimportant Fourth Estate, does its job the community is the better. Transparency is really the life blood of democracy and has been sadly missing at all three levels of government in recent times.

Who does the independent reporting, the investigative journalism, provides information to the wider community?

In our community we have been fortunate to still have the *North & West Melbourne News*. A community run quarterly newspaper that has provided forty years of continuous publication. A great effort.

But where has the mainstream media been? It was not all that long ago that our council, the City of Melbourne, was the focus of substantial media scrutiny on a daily and weekly basis. The Melbourne Times, Melbourne Leader, The Age and Herald Sun all had "town hall" reporters essentially concentrating on the inner Melbourne local government scene. The

Australian and The Financial Review regularly reported as well. The ABC even had a broadcasting point in the Melbourne Town Hall. The television stations were regulars as well. The community was well informed

But, unfortunately, this healthy scrutiny has been lacking in recent years. Much information is now provided by in house media units and spin consultants, hardly objective and independent.

Let's hope things are about to change with the publishing of a new local monthly newspaper North West City News, both in print and online. The editorial team is experienced and already publishes three newspaper, the CBD News, Docklands News and Southbank News. These publications have been a tremendous source of information and transparency for the community, but North and West Melbourne missed out

Now things are changing, this new publication must be embraced by the community to restore the scrutiny our government processes so urgently need.

With our community undergoing such significant change, this very process of change desperately needs transparency and meaningful consultation.

Too often much of this consultation has not been, what I believe, genuine and just an attempt to tick the consultation box. You often have the feeling the decision is made and, in some cases, even publicised before the process even begins. With the scrutiny these changes require, a vital and effective local media is essential.

Let's make this publication work for us ullet



Kevin Chamberlin
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Arts House prepares to reopen



The threat of a pandemic was not on many people's minds—despite warnings from epidemiologists—before 2020. But way back in 2018 North Melbourne's Arts House was asking what would happen if a pandemic came to Melbourne...

Refuge 2018: Pandemic was presented over four days of public forums, games, conversations and artistic works: "Join us at Refuge 2018: Pandemic at the North Melbourne Town Hall for real information and real science, as we get real creative in our readiness for what the future may hold," the Arts House website read.

Now, after experiencing a year of a real pandemic, Arts House is preparing to reopen to the public. Artistic director Emily Sexton said it would attempt to address questions that the past year had raised.

"A lot of questions have been brought up by the inequality we all say manifest last year and that's a responsibility I think artists take very seriously and so do we," she said.

"That will be a focus of a lot of our work. We've shifted a number of our programs after 2020 and one of the most important ones is a big research program called Makeshift Publics which will support artists to think through

what the new configurations of artists, community and place are."

"What is it like to come back together? What do people feel safe doing? What are our responsibilities in relation to climate change while there's a pandemic unfolding? They're really going to tackle some big questions and then we'll share that research at the end of the year."

Arts House reopens on April 8 with a big free program soon to be announced. The team is back working in the Town Hall with artist rehearsals already happening around them.

"It's so, so great to be back in North Melbourne and really feeling creativity surround you," Emily said. "It's a huge relief."

Emily was appointed artistic director at Arts House in 2018, but the institution has featured in her career for much longer.

"I feel like in many ways, and I'm not unusual, Arts House has been a home for me throughout my career," she said.



"One of my early jobs was at the Melbourne Fringe Festival and at that point it had a hub at Arts House, so I spent a lot of time dancing and sneaking into weird corners to see strange shows in this building."

"Then I worked at the Wheeler Centre and we did some cool collaborations with Arts House in my time there and then when my predecessor in this role moved on, I thought 'it's my dream job in my hometown'."

Since 2018 there has been many highlights for Emily at the Arts House, but she said the only show they managed to put on in 2020 was "one of the most special things" she had ever seen.

"That's one of my best memories. It was the only live show that we did in the building in 2020 and it was one of the proudest shows I've ever worked on," she said.

"It was called $Are\ You\ Ready\ to\ Take\ the\ Law$ into Your Own Hands and it was a collaboration

between a Filipino company, an Australian playwright and a lot of local queer dancers who are part of the vogueing collective the House of Dévine."

Among Emily's other highlights were *Trilogy*- "which saw over a hundred staunch feminists
get up on stage in the nude" – and a Melbourne
Festival show by American choreographer Faye
Driscoll.

"There's a lot of memories here," she said.

"I guess it's like a lot of theatres: if the walls could talk, they'd tell some really good stories."

For more information: artshouse.com.au

THE KENSINGTON ASSOCIATION

A brief history of the Kensington Association

The Kensington Association (KA) was formed by a group of residents in 1997. Our mission is to help "protect and enhance the existing amenity of Kensington as well as to monitor development proposals in our community".

We follow in a tradition of Kensington action groups seeking to influence the evolution of our suburb. David Ettershank was one of that initial group of residents who was chairperson for many years and is still an active member and he describes that 24-year history as follows ...

"After a period of dormancy, the Kensington Association was resurrected in 1997/98 by a group of local residents aware of the increasing popularity of the suburb, a number of unsympathetic 'in-fill' development applications and the lack of any organised local oversight."

The first significant association public action was an incursion into the CityLink construction site following the announcement that the acoustic tunnel over the elevated roadway would no longer extend along the Kensington boundary.

After good media coverage and the construction unions shut down works for the day, Transurban and the Minister agreed to negotiate some key issues. It was a good start. Since then the association has taken on a diverse range of issues and campaigns:

- Refurbishment of the community centre and redevelopment of the Kensington Pool which had sat broken and empty for more than a decade.
- 2. This morphed into development the of JJ Holland Park Master Plan which included removal of the large carpark in the centre of the park, construction of the third oval with a synthetic playing surface, new playground areas, the skateboard park, refurbishment of the pavilion and extensive upgrades to enhance amenity.
- 3. Campaigns with schools' communities to save Kensington Primary and the Holy Rosary Primary after demolition of two housing towers saw a major (but temporary) drop in enrolments. (The Kennett government was also keen to sell the Kensington Primary site!).
- 4. Traffic calming initiatives designed to reduce rat-running and cut the number of heavy vehicles.
- 5. A decade-long engagement with the state government and Becton over the Kensington Housing Estate redevelopment, the first housing Public Private Partnership.
- 6. A successful campaign to "reunite Kensington" shifting the boundary between Melbourne and Moonee Valley councils from Macaulay Rd to Racecourse
- 7. Successful campaigns against the East West Tunnel: the initial proposals were that JJ Holland Park would be subsumed as the western tunnel entrance.

- 8. Multiple campaigns relating to our waterways: the Maribyrnong River and the Moonee Ponds Creek.
- 9. Engagement with a huge number of development applications ranging from major commercial buildings such as the Younghusbands Woolstore redevelopment through to nasty smaller proposals from developers who just want to make money and get out.

Currently KA members are working on multiple projects including the Metro Tunnel (which goes underground at South Kensington station) the Westgate Tunnel, the next round of Structure Plans that will determine future development in the area and a plethora of development applications.

The usefulness and relevance of community organisations is directly proportional to how effectively they reach out in a collaborative manner into the community. We at the Kensington Association like to work closely with other groups, perhaps in particular Kensington Neighbourhood House, but also with Unison Housing, Flem/Ken Rotary and others. We also like to reach across Racecourse Rd to our comrades at the Flemington Association and other Moonee Valley groups; however, that's not always easy to do – the juggling of municipal boundaries (stemming from the Kennett years) has not helped (to say the least).

When communities face a crisis, good collaboration is critically important. In Kensington we have the Kensington Community Network (which reaches across Racecourse Road into Flemington), comprising an extensive variety of community groups – social, educational, religious, artistic, commercial and government.

This network has done (and continues to do) some sterling cooperative work during the COVID-19 pandemic, being particularly vigilant about who has been left out of the information or support loops.

Perhaps we in the Kensington/Flemington area take for granted how unique we are in terms of our political representation. How many inner suburban communities have such strong, progressive, resident representatives at both federal, state, and local government level? There is nothing like having political representatives who live in the community and have intimate knowledge of local issues. We at the Kensington Association hope this will stand us in good stead as we grapple with what David Ettershank calls "a plethora of development applications" ... yes, Kensingtonians, for better or worse our suburb - being an inner suburb of our wonderful City of Melbourne, with significant industrial history – is facing a transformation. We need to be vigilant that Kensington does not morph into a soulless dormitory suburb: it is only through some special collaboration and determination that we can hope to retain the vibrancy, soulfulness, and close-knit community character that we know and love •

For more information: kensingtonassociation.org



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Pet's Corner

Babs is full of beans



For Staffordshire bull-terrier Barbara, life is one big walk in the park – but preferably in North Melbourne's own fully fenced off leash dog park, Clayton Reserve.







WORDS BY Jack Alfonso

For owner Donovan, parks like these ones are "amazing", especially for those living in the city.

"She's a live-wire," he said. "She bounces off the walls about 90 per cent of the day, so I guess the dog park is a must. Being able to run around with her makes an absolute difference."

Working in customer service, Barbara ("Babs" for short) would have made a great assistant to Donovan and his wife during the pandemic as everyone worked from home.

"She just loves everyone and everything," he said. "She really bucks the trend of Staffies being the 'scary dog' per se."

But Babs' energy isn't the only aspect to her personality. Being just one year old, she experienced the full lockdown with her human family but according to Donovan, she has the tendency to make everyone around her smile – whether they be part of the family, close friend, or passers-by.

"She is part of the family," he said. "When days are hard, she'll always bring a smile to your face – especially when things were really tough in the pandemic." ●

PARKVILLE GARDENS RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Welcome to Parkville Gardens



Parkville Gardens is a unique eco-friendly neighbourhood in the very north-west corner of Parkville. It has a history and character of its own.



Today it's home to a diverse population of about 2000 people. It houses the Reggio Calabria Club, the L'Unica reception centre and a retirement and aged care facility (Mercy Place). The Avondale Football Club trains and plays in the grounds of the Reggio Calabria Club. Dementia Australia has an office here, and there's a childcare centre as well as a couple of small businesses. That's quite a lot for an area of just 20 hectares bounded by Park St, Oak St and City Link!

A grand history

Parkville Gardens is a tiny remnant of the ancestral lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. In 1845, soon after European settlement, a large area north of Melbourne town was set aside for public use. Royal Park survives but over the years much of this land has been used for other purposes. There's been a farm (1858), a zoo (1862), a home for neglected and orphaned children (1866), a residence for homeless people (1882), and hospitals for the aged, infirm and mentally ill. A central feature of Parkville Gardens is the heritage-listed building opened in 1907 that became the Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital.

More recent times

Parkville Gardens was developed by the state government as the athletes' village for the 2006 Commonwealth Games. After the Games ...

- The athletes' accommodation was modified and sold to private owners;
- More homes, townhouses and social housing units were built;
- The heritage building became apartments;
 A major retirement and aged-care facility
- (Mercy Place) was built; and
 A row of high-rise apartment blocks continues to be constructed by a partnership between the state government and developers.

Its appeal

A major factor in the area's appeal is its garden-like character. The streets are tree-lined and several small parks plus a larger reserve add to its attractiveness.

Major facilities are located nearby. The most engaging of these is Royal Park itself, one of Melbourne's greatest treasures. This in turn

contains the Zoo, many playing fields, and the State Netball and Hockey Centre. Close by are other significant complexes: a large-scale CSL production facility, youth justice and mental health institutions, and Royal Melbourne Hospital's geriatric campus. A little further afield lies the University of Melbourne, University High School and a cluster of hospitals and medical research centres. Car travel to the airport is made quick and convenient by CityLink.

.....

The houses themselves have special appeal. They are spacious (three-, four-, and five-bedroom) and designed to be environmentally-friendly, with a 6-star energy rating, rooftop solar for hot water, rainwater tanks and double glazing.

Some unusual features

This section of Parkville has a few interesting administrative quirks. Most of it falls within the boundaries of the City of Melbourne, but one sliver of land lies in the City of Moreland. Municipal services are provided by the City of Melbourne while the open spaces are cared for by Parks Victoria. Parkville Gardens is part of the federal seat of Melbourne but is a geographical appendix to the state seat of Brunswick. Taken over by the state government for the 2006 Commonwealth Games, it remains for planning purposes under the control of the Minister for Planning, not the City of Melbourne.

The community

The residential population has a rich variety of components – families with young children, international students, retired people, singles and couples, the frail aged, the socially disadvantaged – and features a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and cultural traditions.

As a community it is very young, still in its infancy, in fact. It only began to exist after the Commonwealth Games in 2006 and is still evolving. One of the challenges it faces is the lack of a community centre where residents can meet one another and identify issues of common interest. There are no shops apart from one café, and public transport is largely limited to an hourly bus service, with trams and trains about 20 minutes' walk away.

The Parkville Gardens Residents' Association (PGRA) was formed in 2008 to address these sorts of issues. The biggest threat it had to grapple with was the East-West Link and this remains a major concern. The PGRA is committed to strengthening the sense of community among residents and to continual improvement of the amenity of the neighbourhood. One recent sign of success has been the installation of bus shelters, as well as support for a lower speed limit in the area. Ongoing bread-and-butter issues include bus services, traffic and parking, safe footpaths, school zoning and community connection •

Residents can find us:

PGRA Facebook page (facebook. com/groups/pgrass) or email secretary@pgra.org.au.



Tom Knowles

TOM KNOWLES IS THE PRESIDENT OF
PARKVILLE GARDENS ASSOCIATION.

PRESIDENT@PGRA.ORG.AU

The value of green space

As an urban city dweller, I asked myself why is having access to green space important, how does it impact my life and what is its overall significance? Particularly after experiencing the recent shutdown of our city and the five kilometre restrictions on where I could venture.

Thank you to friends of Royal Park and friends of Newells Paddock who have maintained and fought for the preservation and restoration of the urban green spaces I frequented during this time.

This question led me to explore various articles and reports on the matter from local organisations, to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and a UK trust which is championing the protection and growing of green spaces.

There is no universally accepted definition of urban green space, it can encompass public and private places with "natural surfaces", specific types of urban greenery, such as street trees, public parks, roadside verges, riverside footpaths, children's play areas; it can even include "blue space" which represents water elements. The definition in the Oxford Dictionary is an area of grass, trees, or other vegetation set apart for recreational or aesthetic purposes in an otherwise urban environment.

There are many benefits of green spaces and these are well documented and researched including:

- Improved physical and mental health;
- Reduction in obesity, diabetes, reduced cardiovascular morbidity and diseases;
- Increased biodiversity; and
- Improved immunity.

Green spaces have shown to lower the incidence of domestic violence, stress and depression and increase social interaction.

These spaces also reduce noise levels, lower pollution, lower heat related morbidity, reduce flooding and cool the heat island effect of cities.

So, with all these benefits why is there a constant struggle to protect and create more urban green spaces?

The challenges are increasing competition for our limited space from all sorts of interests, even where to bury our dead. Zoning and development regulations of local authorities have seen green spaces making way for higher density development – based on projected population and the debate whether density is better



▲ Before green space at Kensington Housing Estate – grass classified as an impervious surface



▲ Private land in Arden St repurposed for community food growing.

than urban sprawl.

There is limited availability of spare land, and how much of it is in private hands? Which means the local council may need to buy back land to create green space. Do private landowners have a responsibility to contribute to green spaces?

Contaminated land in urban spaces may seem too costly to clean up so councils rather build over it.

Changing councillors and priorities is another challenge in the way of long-term planning for green spaces and maintaining of appropriate ratios. The City of Melbourne has set a recommended ratio of green space per person of 22 sqm yet in some parts of their municipality green space is only at three sqm per person. Proximity, quantity and quality of this green space is also important – the WHO recommend within 300 metres per urban resident.



▲ After – improved value and quality of green space with increased biodiversity of more than 100 species – food producing plants.

How should the use of space be prioritised?

The City of Melbourne's Open Space strategy states that 15 per cent of the total area of City of Melbourne is open space – this would be lower for green space. I could not find a current global criteria and ratings, that helps determine and compare the best long-term use of urban land considering equitable accessibility for all demographics, the environmental challenges we are facing and economic factors.

I found a number of methodologies, each with their own shortfalls, from a hedonic pricing model (HPM) which estimates the value of houses next to green spaces versus others, the Travel Cost Method (TCM) which aims to value green spaces by inferring the demand and economic surplus for these assets through visitor travel costs and how much people will pay to have access to green spaces.

How do we value the economic importance of green spaces?

In the UK, according to research by Fields in Trust, parks and green spaces are estimated to save the National Health Service around £111 million (around AUD\$20 million) per year based solely on a reduction in GP visits. In other words, they did not account for additional savings to the NHS associated with reductions in prescribing or referrals, plus they estimated the wellbeing value of these green spaces worth £34.2 billion (AUD\$76 billion) per year to the entire UK adult population.

Will the continuing rise of costs of mental health, wellbeing and illness of residents plus mitigating impending climate crisis effects cost governments more in the long term than establishing more urban green spaces?

The WHO concludes in its report that a city of well-connected, attractive green spaces that offer safe opportunities for urban residents for active mobility and sports as well as for stress recovery, recreation and social contact, is likely to be more resilient to extreme environmental events, such as heat waves (due to the mitigation of urban heat island effect) and extreme rainfall (due to reduced surface run-off). Such a city is also likely to have healthier citizens, reducing demands on health services and contributing to a stronger economy.

We all have a responsibility to the wellbeing of each of us and other species we share the space with.

Ways to protect and create more urban green space

- Visit and value existing green space
- Create more green space (not just grass) in your garden, your nature strip, the verge, activate underutilised spaces in your neighbourhood ●

For more information visit Transition Streets Australia:

transitionaustralia.net



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AHF RD

Nature Therapy

A brush with nature

There's a great little park in West Melbourne that rises towards the city.

It's here that a local beauty therapist walks her dog of an evening.

Several times of late she's seen bats flying towards her.

They fly over the park on their way to forage for fruit.
"I don't mind going out after dark," Wisuittasee

said about the park. She feels safe here.

The bats get her to look up at the night sky in wonder.

"Their wing spans are huge," she said.

The park is on Eades Place. It's a very pretty triangular park with the city skyline in the distance.

People come here to exercise, meditate, hang out of trees and walk dogs.

One regular is Cian. He slings an exercise rope from the trees three to four times a week to work on an injured shoulder.

Sometimes he hangs upside down like a bat.

"I saw one yesterday," he said. "It came out from

head height. It was making such a racket. It was a little startling."

The park is just over a rise from the Flagstaff Gardens where possums are in residence.

"I come here because it's a bit quieter," Cian said. "I

fit here on a little patch of green."

Once while he was sitting on a bench at the Flagstaff Gardens a possum came up and bit him on

"It was nice to have a brush with nature," he said philosophically. "It didn't break the skin."

He said that bats got a bad rap. "People think of them as pests." But he said animals held a mirror up to humans to show how ridiculous we were.

"They haven't learned their good manners yet. I hope they never do. We are the intruders." ullet



Rhonda Dredge

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Seeing out summer at the market

While the days and nights are still warm and the yearn for adventure remains, the Queen Victoria Market (QVM) has something up its sleeve for locals.

WORDS BY Jack Hayes

Wednesday, February 24 will see (COVID restrictions permitting) the last occasion for locals to venture to the market's mobile smorgasbord, with the summer return of Melbourne's newest food truck collective, the Food Truck Stop.

Under the market's iconic sheds, you'll find a culinary haven with 10 of the city's best food trucks, offering up dishes from bao buns, burgers and tacos, to lobster rolls, smashed samosas and smoked barbeque meats.

Food trucks include:

- Twisted Fisherman Lobster rolls, salt and pepper calamari and tempura battered fish and chips.
- The Greek Trojan Yiros Traditional Greek yiros with succulent lamb and chicken:
- Dingo Ate My Taco Tex-Mex style street tacos including brisket, pork and more;
- The Real Jerk Jamaican jerk chicken with rice, jerk fried chicken and jerk chicken burger:
- Nem N' Nem Vietnamese favourites including bao buns, banh mi, noodle bowls and loaded fries;
- Pasta Face Tuscan beef ragu with potato gnocchi, mac and cheese croquettes and parmesan truffled chips;
- Two Fat Indians Butter chicken, goat curry, vegan chickpea curry, smashed samosas, naan and mango lassi;
- Bigger Than Texas BBQ Pulled pork sliders, low n' slow chicken wings and succulent beef short ribs;
- Gorialla Grill American-Asian inspired eats like chicken and waffle burgers and prawn tacos; and



 The Beer Garden – Sit back and relax in the Beer Garden and enjoy the summer vibes with Brick Lane Brewing beers, Coldstream Brewery ciders, a range of Mitchelton Wines and cocktails from Melbourne Gin Company.

With your mid-week jaunt organised, the market will also play host to the beloved Melbourne Book Market.

Running every weekend until the end of March, the Melbourne Book Market is a curated collection of more than 5000 new and pre-loved titles selected and presented by some of Melbourne's most experienced booksellers as well as authors, illustrators and book creators.

Titles and subjects include literature, history, gardening, travel, art and kids' books, plus an array of quality second-hand vinyl records and CDs.

The founding members, along with a changing mix of casual traders, will have pop up stalls at the Melbourne Book Market every Saturday and Sunday.

The Food Truck Stop will run from 5pm to 10pm and the Book Market from 10am to 4pm •

For more information:

visit qvm.com.au

TRADER PROFILE

The new gold standard for Italian hospitality

WORDS BY Katie Johnson

Walking into Café Gilli, customers are instantly greeted by a sun-flooded space, the smell of homecooked Italian food and a warm welcome from owners Carla Russo and Joe Vitale.

As business and life partners of more than 30 years, the pair is well versed in making sure customers leave with a full belly and a warm heart.

"All the feedback from customers we've received so far is that there's nothing like it in Melbourne," Ms Russo said.

"It's a really nice, unusual place where you can go sit down, have breakfast, read the paper and watch the world passing by you."

Café Gilli opened up on Therry St two days before Christmas among a flurry of activity at the market.

Ms Russo said that although the beginning was tough, it had allowed them to flourish in the new year.

"Even though it was the worst time to open and I went home crying a few times, it allowed us to see the holes, reflect, and fix them before we opened again in the new year," Ms Russo said.

"Now everything has been running smoothly." Carla and Joe have been at Queen Victoria Market for decades and already have three businesses: Café Verona, Q75 and Geloso Gelateria. But Café Gili is a chance for them to move



It's all about the hospitality and, as Italians, we live for that.



outside of the hustle of the main market and enjoy the slower-paced environment.

"I love being back in the restaurant business because you get to know the people who come in and sit down, learn their names and look after them," Ms Russo said.

"It's all about the hospitality and, as Italians, we live for that."

Gilli serves a menu of mainly Italian food, including fresh lasagne, pasta and paninis, including their famous Porchetta panini.

Ms Russo said the space and the menu are both inspired by her travels to Florence where



she came across a café that she fell in love with.

"When I was there, we came across a café called Gilli that we went to everyday. It had an incredible atmosphere and delicious food so I said to Joe that if we were ever to open up another café it would be like this," Ms Russo said.

"I wanted to do the Porchetta panini which we have been doing for the past 30 years at the night market and make that the hero."

Based on customer feedback so far, the pair has succeeded in bringing a slice of Florence to the Queen Victoria Market and has already had a host of regulars coming in. "It's a great atmosphere where you can sit alone and never feel lonely because you can watch the world going on around you over a panini," Ms Russo said.

Café Gilli is open on market days from 7am-3pm \bullet

Follow them on Instagram: instagram.com/gilli.qvm

What's On: February 2021

Community Calendar

Women's history beyond stereotypes

Friday, March 5, 1 pm

Public Record Office Victoria and Her Place Women's Museum Australia present the online panel talk "Women's history beyond stereotypes" as part of International Women's Day 2021. Free Online Event, Register: us02web.



KINGS Commissions - Exhibition

23 Dec 2020-19 Mar 2021

Daniel R Marks, Ezz Monem Katayoun Javan, Mohamed Chamas Kings Commissions, a series of one-off, mobile projects. The commissions signal a new stage in KINGS history and continues our ongoing engagement with, and support of emerging artists.

The New North Melbourne Museum of Modern Art

Meat Market Stables, February 17 - 23 12pm - 8pm

This group exhibition features works ranging from modern art, Indigenous dot paintings, ceramics, landscapes, to photography and films. Free

Do Brumbies Dream in Red? Meat Market Stables. February 5 - 14

This collaborative project utilises largescale projection and soundscape to place the audience within the Snowy Mountains and Victorian Alpine regions during the period of 2019 - 2020 referred to as the Black Summer. Free



Helping Hoops

Kensington Community Recreation Centre, Cnr Kensington Rd & Altona St Kensington VIC 3031

We offer programs designed to introduce young children to the fundamental skills and rules of sport in a fun and safe environment.

PlayGym is a great introduction to gymnastics in a fun and safe environment.

Children aged 9 months to 5 years

PlayGym runs at North Melbourne Community Centre Fridays: 10 - 10:45am, 11:15 am - 12:00am Cost: \$6.90 per child (supervising adults are not charged).



Turkish Pazar

Saturday 21 March from 9am-4pm, Queen Victoria Market

Enjoy beautiful Turkish culture with a range of modern and traditional music with folklore and drumming groups, and the colourful Australian Mehter Band performing. Free children's activities.

North Melbourne Book Club

Mondays, 6pm to 7pm

This is usually an in-person book club but it will meet online for the first few months of 2021.

To join read@melbourne.vic.gov.au

Trans and gender diverse writing group

Fortnightly on Tuesdays 5-6pm

Online writing group via Zoom for trans and gender diverse young people. The workshop will also be for any other queeridentified people between the ages of 13 to 25 to connect and get writing. Free

youngadults@melbourne.vic.gov.au



French Club

North Melbourne Library 66 Errol St, North Melbourne Fridays 11.30 - 12.30pm

Run fortnightly at North Melbourne Library, the French Club is an opportunity to explore French culture, improve your French language skills and make new



Osteo Joint Run Club

JJ Holland Park, Childers St, Kensington Saturdays, 7.30-8.30am

Osteopath and run coach Jamey Pemmelaar takes a free run club in Kensington's JJ Holland Park on Saturday mornings.

Business Directory

Association



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Campaign launched to rethink separated bike lanes

WORDS BY Sean Car TRANSPORT

A group of North Melbourne residents and business owners have come together to oppose the way in which the City of Melbourne's new separated bike lanes are being implemented in the central city.

The "Save Peel Street" campaign was launched late last year by Peel St resident and business owner Sam White and his neighbour David Kerr, after they and other locals discovered council plans to replace car parking with two-metre-wide bike lanes.

While the council is understood to have issued a letter to locals in the area in September last year, many residents and business owners claimed they never received the notice of the council's plan to implement the bike lanes 28 days from the letter's issue.

Gathering the support of some 100 residents and business owners in Peel St, the group wrote to Lord Mayor Sally Capp on numerous occasions requesting a meeting to address issues around a loss of car parking, congestion, safety and the bike lane designs.

And in a letter addressed to the group on December 17 last year, the council's acting general manager of capital works and infrastructure Joanne Wandel said that following consultation with the group, the council had agreed to retain 36 off-peak car parks.

A council spokesperson told *North West City News* that while 43 existing on-street car parking spaces would be removed, there would only be a net loss of 20 car parking spaces in the vicinity of Peel St and an overall net increase of full-time resident priority spaces.

"Following consultation, many modifications have been made to the designs so that an additional 47 parking spaces could be retained or added in the vicinity of Peel St compared to the original designs," a council spokesperson said. "The car parking spaces outlined in the final designs allow for as many resident parking

spaces to be retained as possible, balancing the need to provide a variety of parking options such as loading zones and short-term parking spaces for local businesses, mobility impaired residents and for drop-offs." "The width of the bike lanes will reduce during off-peak periods to accommodate part-time parking spaces being retained on Peel St. The final designs include the minimum width required for the bike lanes."

While the changes along Peel St were due to be implemented late last year, the council said works between Haymarket Roundabout and Victoria St would now begin next month, followed by works opposite Victoria St.

But while the changes represent a small win for the local community from what was originally proposed by the council, residents and businesses say the new off-peak parking restrictions will still impact deliveries and residents with mobility issues.

With priority now given to cyclists during peak times before 10am and between 3pm and 6pm, the council's new widened bike lanes have been designed to encourage more cyclists to the city and allow for riders to overtake.

A retail business owner on Peel St told the council that the 3pm to 6pm no stopping restrictions represented a "huge blow" to what was a peak trading time for customers and deliveries.

While Peel St is identified in the Melbourne bicycle network as a "critical route" by the City of Melbourne and the Victorian Government, Mr White and Mr Kerr argue wider bike lanes at the expense of vehicle access is not an equitable solution.

"Nowhere can you say that is this is an equitable outcome for a street that has had parking for 60-plus years and that actually has a working and existing bike lane already," Mr Kerr said.

"What they're trying to do in a way is create an entirely separate road network to our roads. It's like saying a motorcycle can go on the road but a motorcycle can't go on this designated road, yet cyclists pay nothing for registration."



▲ The current lane configuration along Peel St, which will see new separated bike lanes installed in March.

1800 63 8888

The City of Melbourne is installing protected bike lanes across the central city and surrounds as part of a program to deliver 40 kilometres of new bike lanes in partnership with the Victorian Government.

While the Save Peel Street campaign was launched off the back of immediate issues along Peel St, Sam White said the group would soon be turning its attention to safety and congestion issues caused by the new bike lanes across the city.

With his business providing services to buildings throughout the CBD, Mr White said there were numerous instances where the implementation of the bike lanes had not been properly thought out.

One example is the intersection at William and Latrobe streets, where he argued new designated bike lanes had made it difficult for vehicles to move at all, with new wide bike lanes inhibiting vehicles travelling in all directions and making hook turns.

"Squeezing cars out is not the issue, it's about the functionality of commuters causing congestion and disorientation," he said.

The group will soon launch an online campaign calling on the council to review its bike lane program ●



parkhillmelb.com

*Until sold, as at 15/02/21 ^Conditions apply, for more info please refer to: www.sro.vic.gov.au