

NORTH WEST CITY NEWS

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▲ After years of community pressure, the Victorian Government has agreed to merge the two North Melbourne primary schools.

Community triumphs: North Melbourne schools merge

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
PHOTOGRAPHY BY *John Tadigiri*
EDUCATION

In a massive win for the community, the Victorian Government has agreed to make the proposed North Melbourne Hill Primary School (NMHPS) a second campus of the existing primary school.

The decision comes after years of campaigning by parents and residents in North Melbourne, who argued the government’s original decision to create a standalone school would divide the community as well as deprive students of outdoor space and shared facilities.

Parent of current and former NMPS students and community supporter, Megan Cusack, said she was “lost for words”.

“We are overjoyed and grateful for the recent decision to make the new school a second campus of North Melbourne Primary School – in fact, we were lost for words

when we were first informed,” she said.

“It is truly the best outcome for the community – it will ensure the inclusive, diverse and vibrant community spirit we love in North Melbourne will continue to grow, rather than be divided.”

In a statement, a Department of Education and Training (DET) spokesperson confirmed the new campus, formerly NMHPS, would become part of NMPS and said the new zoning would be released in 2022 ahead of opening in 2023.

“During consultation, the community shared with the department that they are keen to make the most of the unique opportunity offered by the proximity of the two school sites – including equitable access to the contemporary facilities the new building will provide,” the spokesperson said.

“By expanding the capacity of North Melbourne Primary School, the school will be able to cater for significant enrolment growth over the coming years.”

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Residents leading vaccine conversation

For the past six months, Baeda Abdikadir has played a key role easing community concerns about COVID-19.

WORDS BY *David Schout*
HEALTH

For the past six months, Baeda Abdikadir has played a key role easing community concerns about COVID-19.

The tri-lingual North Melbourne local has filled in information gaps, dispelled myths and provided practical advice to fellow public housing residents about the pandemic.

Ahead of the vaccine rollout, Ms Abdikadir will become even more crucial to ensure a widespread take-up in Melbourne’s north and west housing towers.

As one of almost 100 health concierges – trained residents employed to better communicate key health messaging – she will be tasked with answering questions from neighbours and easing any general fears.

“It is really helpful for them, especially when they don’t understand something. It’s like ‘I’m here for you’, and I can explain in a way they will understand,” she told *North West City News*.

Originally from Ethiopia, Ms Abdikadir moved to Australia in 2009 and can speak Oromo, Amharic and English.

The skillset has made her a valuable asset to the health concierge program, which is funded by the state government and administered by community health organisation Cohealth.

“I really enjoy it,” she said. “It’s something right to do for my community, to support others ... for me it’s not just people from Ethiopia or Somalia, it’s those with a different cultural background. We share information. My culture might be different from my co-worker, so we share information and our cultures. We meet different people every day,

which is really amazing.”

A recent Cohealth survey found that a third of residents in public, shared or community housing said they needed more clear information in order to decide on getting the vaccine.

Nearly a quarter said they required information in a language other than English.

Ms Abdikadir said that generally there was little scepticism about the vaccine, however residents simply wanted more information.

“From what I’ve found, they are confident, and they know what the vaccine is. It’s like a polio [vaccine] for them, I believe they understand but they want to get more information. We help them with the booking as well, and where to go to get more information. Some of them ask what the side-effects are. I believe they trust us, our community.”

Cohealth CEO Nicole Bartholomeusz said the model put community members “at the centre of the COVID recovery” and better ensured each resident was properly informed.

“We can’t simply rely on government websites, or translated fliers, to convey vaccine information. People want to talk about the vaccine with someone they trust who has shared experiences and speaks their language,” Ms Bartholomeusz said.

“The role of our health concierges is to turn government speak into community speak, to dispel myths, and guide people to reliable and accurate information.”

Cohealth said that the lockdown of residents of high-rise towers had also created a feeling of mistrust in authority, and that the health concierges were key to overcoming those barriers.

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▲ Baeda Abdikadir, a North Melbourne public housing resident and local "health concierge".

Residents lead the vaccine conversation

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For Ms Abdikadir, the role has also been an empowering one, and tapped into her passion for community work.

"This is really what I like to do, showing my community and telling people just like me that they have support, and we're here to support you," she said.

"I'm really happy. I'm so proud of myself. Thanks to the government and Cohealth as well, it's not easy to support the community with what they need. This is an amazing thing." ●

Grass not looking Greener on the other side for Kensington

WORDS BY Jack Alfonso
ELECTIONS

Kensington is set to be rezoned from the Melbourne federal electoral division to the Labor-held Maribyrnong electorate.

Announced on March 19, the proposals put forth by the Redistribution Committee of Victoria – a branch of the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) – are due to be enforced as of June 26, 2021.

The adjustments, commissioned in line with the 1918 Electoral Act, came as a result of Victoria gaining an additional seat in the House of Representatives due to ongoing population growth.

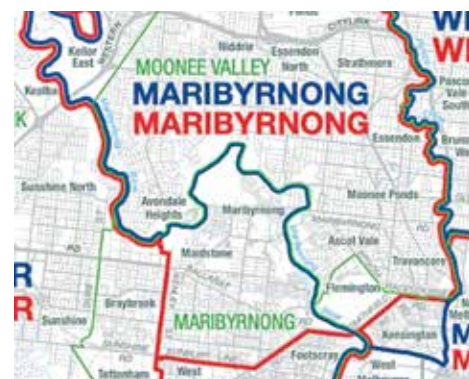
On page four of its proposal, the Redistribution Committee states the adjustments are designed to rearrange "boundaries in the low-growth eastern suburbs of Melbourne to more equitably balance high-growth areas in the south-east and north-west".

The proposals hold severe ramifications for the majority of Kensington voters, with the increasingly Green-voting suburb being moved into an area dominated by Labor since 2007.

Data from the AEC shows that 58.72 per cent of Kensington's Melbourne population voted for the Greens as their first preference, while 53.87 per cent of Kensington Central's voting population opted for the Greens as well, resulting in 14 and 9.93 percentage point swings, respectively, from the last election.

Comparably, Federal MP for Maribyrnong and ex-Labor leader Bill Shorten won reelection with a share of 47 per cent of the vote, resulting in a five-percentage point swing. Greens candidate James Williams received 14.81 per cent of the first-preference vote, signifying a -2.42 per cent swing.

Furthermore, data obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) 2016



Census indicates a number of key differentials in the demographics of Kensington and the Maribyrnong electoral division.

ABS data shows that Kensington possesses a median age four years younger than Maribyrnong, has a larger female population, contains less children, vehicles per home and is distinctly less Catholic and is more expensive to live in for both renters and home-owners, with a higher weekly income.

The Redistribution Committee's proposal also states that the redrawing of divisions will "keep together or improve existing communities of interest".

Bill Shorten's office declined to comment, instead opting to wait until the proposals became concrete in the middle of this year.

The AEC's proposal accounts for 29 of the existing 38 boundaries being redrawn in order to account for the creation of a new division called "Hawke", which factors population growth in Melbourne's outer northwestern suburbs. The AEC is also proposing to rename the division of Corangamite to "Tucker" in honour of Margaret Elizabeth Tucker.

Objections can be sent through to the AEC at FedRedistribution-VIC@aec.gov.au, and must be submitted before 6pm on Friday, April 16 ●

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HAILEYBURY

Community triumphs: North Melbourne schools merge

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“How the campuses will be managed is still under discussion.”

Community pressure for one school

In 2016, the government announced a new school for North Melbourne.

Since then, a group of North Melbourne parents and residents have been gunning for a merger with the exiting primary school.

As recently as late March, after extensive talks with DET, community members said the government had refused to budge from its position that NMHPS would operate as an entirely independent school to NMPS.

Curzon Street was earmarked to become the boundary between the two schools, with the new school taking in students from west of the divide, including the new Arden precinct and part of Flemington, the community group was told.

In addition, the department informed the group only those in Parkville and part of North Melbourne would be zoned to NMPS.

At a meeting in March, parent and community member Kirsty Harvison said the previous decision to keep NMHPS separate had bypassed the normal planning process of going through the City of Melbourne and community consultation.

“We’re concerned the current division of school boundaries will divide our community into the haves and have nots,” Ms Harvison said at the time.

“In terms of engagement, there’s been no true engagement with the school community, the council, the North and West Melbourne Association, and the Project Abbotsford Street group.

“There’s been no engagement with the public housing towers either.”

Ms Harvison said the Department had indicated that a combined school would be too large for one person to manage the associated finances.



The new six-level campus, which includes a kindergarten, was planned to cater for 525 students initially, growing to 800 students in five years.

However, further details about the new campus have not yet been released.

Located between Molesworth St and Haines Streets, the new campus will be situated 225 metres away from NMPS according to the plans, with construction starting in May this year and finishing in 2023.

Benefits of a combined school

Combining the new school with NMPS as a second campus maintains the unique community spirit and unlocks leadership and growth opportunities for students and staff, the community group said.

The merger also allows shared facilities for both schools from day one and eases pressure on open spaces such as Pleasance Gardens, which would have been used by the new school.

It also increases efficiency by piggybacking on existing leadership structures, the group said.

Speaking about the formerly independent NMHPS, West Melbourne resident Melinda Green, who has a daughter in Grade 3 at NMPS, said it would be difficult to “unbuild a poor decision”.

“I think better decisions could have been made in the first place, and I think this quick decision is a poor one for the community and we feel our children will be let down by the government by not having enough outdoor space,” Ms Green said.

Ms Harvison said although unclear communication from the Department about the school had been a hallmark of the previous five years, she said the recent decision was “fantastic”.

Is there enough space at the second campus?

Parent and architect, Paul von Chrismar, told the meeting in March that by his calculations with 575 students, NMHPS would only have 6.5 square metres per child, compared to Burnside Primary School (BPS), which will have 40 square metres per child.

Although the capacity for the new campus may change, State Government regulations on outdoor space for childcare age kids requires seven sqm for each child.

“You can’t discount the affect that has on students,” he said prior to the government’s decision to merge the schools.

“The big picture is that it affects the children who will be going there.”

Mr von Chrismar selected BPS as a comparison to NMHPS because it had a similar number of students under the current government program for construction of new schools.

“It could be argued that Burnside is all on one level due to the availability of land out in the west, however it is harder to argue that kids out in Burnside need 10 times as much outdoor space per child than our kids in North Melbourne,” he said.

“The point, as we know, is this site in NM is just not suitable for more than 250 kids, or half a school.” ●



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Find healthy and affordable food in your neighbourhood by using the City of Melbourne's Community Food Guide.

Data from our Health and Wellbeing Profile 2020 revealed that the number of residents experiencing food insecurity increased last year and 33 per cent of respondents were experiencing some type of food stress.

The Community Food Guide lists markets that sell affordable fresh produce, like Queen Victoria Market and Flemington Farmers' Market, as well as agencies that provide meals for people in need.

One of the many agencies featured is the Flemington Mission at 26 Norwood Street in Flemington, which offers free food relief parcels on the first and third Tuesdays of the month from 10am to 1pm. Call 9376 3777 to request a parcel.

If you are not in need of food relief, but would like to help people who are, we encourage you to connect with your local food relief organisation to see what donations or support they need.

For more information, visit melbourne.vic.gov.au/communityfoodguide



Our Community Food Guide can help you find fresh, affordable food

ENJOY SEASONAL PRODUCE

Just seven per cent of Melburnians consume the recommended two serves of fruit and three serves of vegetables each day, according to the City of Melbourne's Health and Wellbeing Profile 2020.

However, this was an increase on the previous year, and the proportion of local residents who produce or conserve their own food is also rising.

This autumn, enjoy the health benefits of eating a 'rainbow' of seasonal produce like apples, beetroot and broccoli, and have a go at growing vegetables and herbs in your garden or pots.

Visit Queen Victoria Market to shop for fresh seasonal produce and groceries including fruit and vegetables, bread, eggs, meat, fish, deli goods, ready-to-eat meals, tea, coffee and pantry staples.

The market is open on Tuesday and Thursday to Sunday. Find out more at qvm.com.au

IN-BRIEF

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SOUTHBANK BOULEVARD

Look out for the new civic space in front of the ABC Centre - the heart of the Transforming Southbank Boulevard project. The space is now open for the community to enjoy and construction has commenced on a series of neighbourhood parks further down the boulevard. Visit melbourne.vic.gov.au/cityprojects

CITY CLEANING BLITZ

A six-month cleaning blitz by the City of Melbourne to remove unwanted graffiti and litter is well underway, with additional cleaning crews and footpath sweepers deployed as people return to the city. Inner-city areas are being cleaned multiple times a day to create a welcoming environment.

SHOP LOCAL

Discover local shops and services to support in our city with the help of our Business Directory, an online resource that lists more than 1800 businesses. There's never been a more important time to support small businesses, so check out the guide at directory.melbourne.vic.gov.au

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▲ Cohealth security guard Kulbir Singh receiving his COVID-19 vaccine from Cohealth clinical head nurse, Amelia Tauoqooqo.

West Melbourne opens new vaccine clinic

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
HEALTH

Community health service provider Cohealth has joined the national COVID-19 vaccine rollout by opening a clinic in West Melbourne in March as part of an effort to vaccinate vulnerable community members. The not-for-profit organisation is working to help people in public housing, those from culturally diverse backgrounds, people with mental health issues and those experiencing homelessness to access to the vaccine. From late March, Cohealth will administer 1000 vaccines each week from four of its clinics in West Melbourne, Collingwood, Laverton and Footscray, focusing on engaging their clients who need the vaccine, but may struggle to access it due to language, literacy or other health barriers.

Cohealth medical officer in West Melbourne Kieran Kennedy said cohealth was helping vulnerable people in West Melbourne and surrounds including the elderly, those with disabilities and those with complex medical disabilities overcome cultural and language barriers in order to access the vaccine.

Although Dr Kennedy said the clinic had been a success so far, he said there were still a number of myths circulating in the community about the vaccine which needed to be dispelled.

“We’ve had lots of myths around

including that if you have certain medical conditions, then you’re at greater risk of harm,” he said.

“That’s not the case – it’s really safe. “We’ve had queries around blood clotting, and at the moment, the evidence is that people shouldn’t be concerned about the risk of blood clots.”

Ayan, a Cohealth health concierge and resident of the Collingwood public housing estate who speaks English and Somali, said many people she had spoken to had expressed their desire to get the vaccine.

“I think I’m relatable because I live and work there,” she said.

“It’s easier to talk to people you see regularly, whereas if they saw someone else, they didn’t know, they wouldn’t really want to speak to them. It’s more comfortable.”

Having just received the vaccine herself, Ayan told *North West City News* she was surprised by the “tiny” needle, as she had been expecting a painful, blood-test type experience.

Dr Kennedy said the clinic had four operating rooms administering 250 vaccines per day, with the capacity to increase that number to 500.

Cohealth is located at 98 Abbotsford St, West Melbourne. Bookings can be made by calling 03 9448 5557 •

For more information:
cohealth.org.au

Horse dies in carriage incident

WORDS BY *Katie Johnson*
ANIMAL WELFARE

A horse pulling a carriage in North Melbourne has died in unknown circumstances while travelling on a usual route from the stable on Stubbs St in Kensington.

The RSPCA was alerted after a local resident, Courtney, posted a photo of the horse covered with a blanket on Arden St at 11.20am on March 21.

“We saw a horse laying on the ground with a blanket over its body and head, with a truck pulled up at the intersection, waiting to put it in,” Courtney told *North West City News*.

“The horse had passed away and the partner horse was still attached to it, along with a second cart with two horses attached to it.”

Courtney, who did not want her last name published due to fear of intimidation from the carriage workers, said she was “shaken up” by the incident.

“It was so sad because all of the other horses were there and saw what was happening and nothing was being done for them, they were just left standing in the rain,” she said.

“It was awful and unnecessary.”

Campaign director of Melbourne Against Horse-drawn Carriages Kristin Leigh said the industry had come straight back to life after lockdown despite street trading being unlawful.

“The City of Melbourne removed their street trading permits in July 2017, but they have no jurisdiction to ban them from the roads as they’re considered a vehicle under the *Road Safety Act 1986*,” Ms Leigh said.

“It’s absolutely ridiculous as they’re clearly living beings and not vehicles.”

Ms Leigh said the carriages had been operating illegally for years as they dodge the street trading permit through online bookings.

“They’re allowed to accept pre-bookings so whenever council goes to bust them, they’ll say it’s a pre-booking,” Ms Leigh said.

Although authority rests with state government to ban the practice, Ms Leigh said the council needed to stop “wiping their hands of the responsibility” and do more to lobby the government.

“The City of Melbourne and Sally

Capp could put more pressure on the state government to get them banned, even if it’s just from the council zones,” Ms Leigh said.

“We’ve documented the carriages endangering city commuters with cyclists being forced onto the road because they park in the bike lanes, just last week a cyclist was almost wiped out by a bus because of it.”

“For tourists and locals to see a dead horse lying on the road is also awful, so this industry is negative for everyone including the horses.”

Ms Leigh also claimed that one of the men in the photo was a Unique Carriage Hire employee who was condemned by the media in early 2020 for allegedly kicking a horse named Tuesday in the head after she slipped and fell.

“The company made very clear statements to the media that he would be let go but he’s still working there and they’re trying to cover it up,” Ms Leigh said.

PETA spokesperson Emily Rice said that placing large animals who scare easily into congested city traffic is an invitation for injury and death.

“This tragic incident is yet another testament to the cruelty inherent in the horse-drawn carriage industry, which has been banned in cities around the world,” Ms Rice said.

“Horse-drawn carriages are cruel and dangerous – not only for the horses who are forced to work long hours in extreme weather conditions while walking on hard pavement and inhaling exhaust fumes all day but also for motorists and pedestrians.”

“The state government needs to bring Melbourne in line with progressive cities like Amsterdam, Chicago, Montréal, and Rome and end the use of horses as vehicles for entertainment.”

Another PETA spokesperson Aleesha Naxakis said that it was seeking action about the incident and had contacted Victoria Police and the City of Melbourne.

“People are starting to wake up to the cruelty involved and aren’t seeking them out and paying for them, but the frequency hasn’t been reduced,” Ms Naxakis said.

“The Lord Mayor Sally Capp has been quite verbal about wanting a ban and she’s asked the state government who have the power, so we want to use incidents like this to urge



▲ A horse lies under a blanket on Arden St.



▲ A truck waits to collect the horse.

the government to take action.”

A City of Melbourne spokesperson said the council was aware the RSPCA was looking into the incident.

“In 2017, the City of Melbourne determined to no longer issue on-street trading permits for horse-drawn vehicles,” the spokesperson said.

“Horse-drawn vehicles sit under the legislative responsibility of the Department of Transport and Victoria Police.”

North Melbourne police said its officers attended the scene to assist with traffic direction, but did not have any further information about the horse’s death.

Unique Carriage Hire said the horse did not belong to them and they were unaware of the situation surrounding the horse’s death, however one of their drivers was on site to assist.

The company did not respond to further questions about street trading or the continued employment of the worker alleged to have abused horses •

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Lord Mayor Sally Capp with
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Is the Arden renewal precinct a lost opportunity?

WORDS BY *Spencer Folwer Steen*
PLANNING

Innovative transport, mixed purpose buildings for living and work, plenty of affordable housing with limited high-rises seamlessly blending in with green space. These are some of the things Melbourne planning experts say the proposed Arden Renewal precinct will miss out on.

Instead of drawing inspiration from forward-thinking places such as California - which have a requirement to construct 25 per cent affordable housing with developers still able to make a buck – some experts warn the current Arden plan is a “disgrace”.

RMIT planning expert Michael Buxton said it was a “disappointing” lost opportunity.

“The most disappointing thing about it – like the other ones they’ve done and botched like Southbank, Docklands and Fishermans Bend – is that they’ve had a wonderful

opportunity to build a new city, and these opportunities to build major parts of the city from scratch are great to set a direction for the future of the city that will work on a human scale people can identify with and enjoy,” he said.

“But instead, they go for the high-rise model with the bottom line of getting as much money for developers.”

“The government shouldn’t be allowed to get away with it.”

Last month’s edition of *North West City News* reported plans for the urban renewal of 140 hectares in North Melbourne are now being revised under the Arden and Macaulay structure plans.

The aspiration for Arden is to create a major employment precinct – with 34,000 jobs alongside 15,000 residents – by 2051.

High-rise is proposed for more than two-thirds of the precinct, in some places up to 40 storeys.



▲ Planning experts are concerned the Arden renewal precinct will have too many high-rises.



▲ An artist's impression of the Arden urban renewal precinct.

What’s wrong with Arden?

Associate Professor Andrew Butt from RMIT’s Centre for Urban Research said the lack of government commitment to affordable housing for Arden was “deplorable”.

“I think a clear sense of targets and mechanisms to achieve affordable housing needs to be there from the beginning,” he said.

“By all means invite the private sector to engage but set rules.”

With public housing recently demolished at the Abbotsford St Estate, and only six per cent affordable housing proposed for Arden, Associate Professor Butt warned there could be a deficit.

“They need to look at mechanisms and I think there needs to be a clear statement made about what mechanisms are going to drive social

housing,” he said.

On its current trajectory, Association Professor Butt warned Arden would create a situation seen in Docklands where developers constructed a series of expensive, high-rise towers based on the expectation of “huge yields” at the expense of the public realm.

Professor Buxton agreed.

“It’s not rocket science, we know from international experience four- to six-storey town houses work,” he said.

“[For example, look at] the dense European-style cities or on the west coast of the US, where the smaller cities within California and Los Angeles are building really high quality five- to six-storey apartments and three-story town houses with mixed use.”

Is there enough green space?

As an area that has been historically stripped of its natural habitat by industry, Associate Professor Butt said the government needed to consider how the Arden precinct could build it back in.

The Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) is currently reviewing the plan for Arden with further public consultation expected mid-2021.

As part of the plan, the VPA is considering how to incorporate opportunities with the Moonee Ponds Creek, the subject (or focus) of a detailed redevelopment plan created by the City of Melbourne.

The council’s plan for the creek proposes a linear green corridor along the creek identifying spots to be revegetated.

However, it remains unclear whether the government will prioritise funding for the creek. Peter Sagar, executive director of Melbourne renewal projects at the VPA, said the creek was much more than the western boundary of Arden.

“It is an important Melbourne waterway and our plan for Arden will see a range of measures to address flooding, provide high-quality open space along the banks of the creek and improved environmental outcomes for the whole waterway,” he said.

It is understood the VPA may provide more information about the Moonee Ponds Creek development during the public consultation on Arden.

The VPA did not respond to questions about the Arden renewal precinct ●

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UPDATE ON THE WEST GATE TUNNEL PROJECT

Update on West Gate Freeway widening works

A major step in widening the West Gate Freeway has been achieved, after six weeks of round-the-clock works and carefully planned closures during summer months.

The newly aligned and surfaced Princes Freeway exit and entry ramps from Geelong Road, and the M80 inbound exit ramp onto West Gate Freeway are now opened to motorists.

Work is also complete at Grieve Parade, where a brand-new bridge has been built over the West Gate Freeway. This work is an important part of widening the West Gate Freeway from 8 to 12 through lanes that will provide quicker and safer travel to and from the city and western suburbs.

Federation Trail upgrade

The Federation Trail is a 23-kilometre cycling and walking path between Werribee and Brooklyn that is being extended and improved by the West Gate Tunnel Project.

We have now started work that will complete the missing link with a new off-road path between Fogarty Avenue and Hyde Street, Yarraville and an upgrade to the trail from Kororoit Creek to Millers Road, Brooklyn.

Take a virtual ride on the Federation Trail



This elevated pathway will link users to a brand-new dedicated cycle path above Footscray Road, completing the journey to Melbourne's CBD for cyclists.

The 2.5km veloway from Footscray to Docklands will provide an off-road route that removes six intersections for cyclists, making trips safer and quicker.



Artist's impression of the elevated walking and cycling path over Stony Creek, Yarraville.

West Gate Neighbourhood Fund

We recently announced the first 19 projects carried out by local community groups, sporting groups, and local councils, that will make the inner west an even better place to live.

These 19 projects are funded by the \$10 million West Gate Neighbourhood Fund, which will see the inner west benefit from the West Gate Tunnel Project sooner rather than later.

Read more about the West Gate Neighbourhood Fund at: westgatetunnelproject.vic.gov.au/community/grants



For disruptions information visit: bigbuild.vic.gov.au and for regular updates, follow: facebook.com/westgatetunnelproject



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Authorised by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne

New park, path proposed along Hawke St

WORDS BY *David Schout*
PLANNING

Traffic could be cut to one lane in each direction to accommodate a new “linear” park along Hawke Street in West Melbourne.

Under a transformative design for the street’s entire length, the City of Melbourne would also remove around 50 “under-utilised” car parks in a bid to create more room for open space and a shared pedestrian/cyclist path.

The long, skinny park would be landscaped with grass, garden beds and an increased tree canopy as part of wider “traffic calming” measures.

The key aspects of the plans, unveiled in late March, could be split into two sections:

Between Adderley Street and Spencer Street: traffic reduced from four lanes to two, a shared

user path replacing the current median strip, and a new 8.5m-wide park.

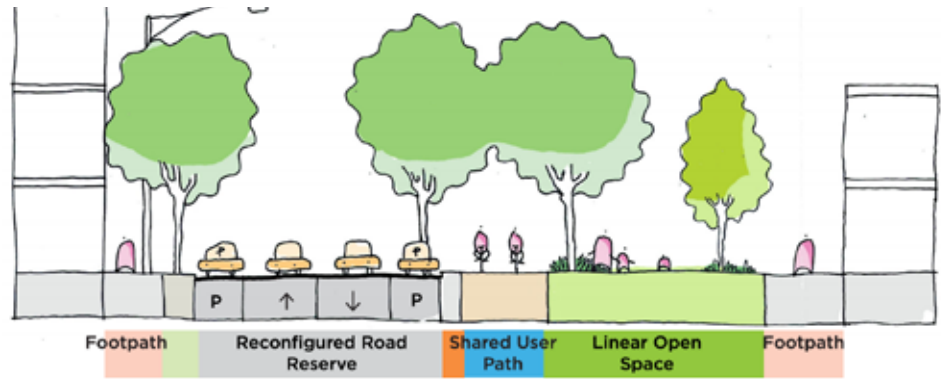
Between Spencer Street and King Street: traffic reduced from four lanes to two, a shared user path replacing the current median strip, and a 10m-wide expansion of the existing green space.

A 2020 car parking survey found that over 35 per cent of publicly available parking spaces in the area were not used at peak periods.

“It is therefore anticipated that the repurposing of approximately 49 out of 157 existing car park spaces will not result in a noticeable loss of amenity,” the council said.

The 108 remaining spaces would be retained and prioritised for local residents and businesses.

According to council plans, the new park would not only allow for community uses, but a reduced “urban heat island” effect, with



▲ An artist impression of the expanded park area between Adderley and Spencer Streets. Picture: City of Melbourne.

“*I’ve been quietly waiting for this one for a while now. Very excited to see it moving along.*”

additional tree canopy shade and permeable surfaces for rain water absorption.

The council has publicly released the plans and is asking for public feedback until Sunday April 25.

Initial responses on social media were positive.

“I’ve been quietly waiting for this one for a while now. Very excited to see it moving along,” one user said.

“It gets so hot on Hawke St compared to other streets - too much road, not enough trees. This is terrific!” another added.

Independent City of Sydney councillor Professor Philip Thalys also Tweeted his support of the design.

“This is exactly the sort of transformational urban project we need across Aust cities

— winning back space thoughtlessly appropriated for the car — planting, pedestrianising & our streets, our cities,” he said.

One user on councillor Rohan Leppert’s Facebook page questioned why more parking was not removed for the green space and shared path.

But Cr Leppert said [the council or the plan] would not move too fast, too quick.

“We want to shift modes sustainably; sudden drops that create acute financial crises for some households are a step too far ... so the net loss figure is designed to be proportionate,” he said.

To have a say on the proposed linear park along Hawke Street, visit participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au ●

▼ An overhead shot outlining the Hawke St works. Picture: City of Melbourne.



Wood you believe it? Tree removal gets green tick of approval

WORDS BY *Jack Alfonso*
COUNCIL AFFAIRS

The City of Melbourne (CoM) is to remove 13 trees across three different streets in West Melbourne to facilitate a development in Abbotsford St.

A permit for the development was issued nearly four years ago but it is understood the developer wanted the trees removed from Ireland, Abbotsford and Dryburgh streets before starting the mixed-use project.

According to the council, multiple options to retain the trees were investigated by arborists but were found to be unsuitable because of “constraints of the site, the need to maintain access and retaining the historic warehouse facade”.

“The applicant has agreed to pay for the costs of 14 replacement trees as required under our Tree Retention and Removal Policy,” a CoM spokesperson said in a statement. “The trees will be replanted once the development is complete.”

The developer will pay \$101,427 into a fund to be used for general greening of the city.

But the decision has upset local resident Bill Cook who, in a letter to the editor appearing in last month’s edition of *North West City News*, said: “The oaks may well be relatively young but the time required to resuscitate even this amount of growth in oaks is significant.”

“We feel that, as local residents, it is totally unreasonable that we should have to wait until the completion of this development for new trees to be planted and for them to grow out again.”

In a planning report to the Future Melbourne Committee in 2017 (FMC) officers said the council aimed to “protect sites with significant heritage, architectural, aesthetic, scientific and cultural value”.

The report further stated the council aimed to “create an environmentally sustainable environment with reduced greenhouse gas emissions ... and promoting innovative, environmentally sustainable development”.

Mr Cook said, “we endorse the council policy of promoting greening in the municipality but find their behaviour in allowing this degree of removal totally inconsistent.”

“We feel that, as local residents, it is totally unreasonable that we should have to wait until the completion of this development for new trees to be planted and for them to grow out again.”



“Our rates should not be supporting such an unnecessary destruction of our scarce natural green environment.”

The permit, granted by the FMC on June 20 in 2017, received 102 objections about issues such as heritage impacts, traffic impacts and the proposed height of the development when it was initially advertised in March of the same year.

The applicant then submitted a “comprehensive response” to the objections on March 27, allowing the current permit to be approved.

The CoM spokesperson said, “fees collected for tree removal are used for replacement greening within the City of Melbourne.”

“The City of Melbourne plants more than 3000 trees a year, with our planting program getting underway next month.”

The trees earmarked for removal comprise nine *Tristanopsis laurina*, two *Quercus acutissima* and two *Melia azedarach*.

The multi-storey mixed-use development includes retail, 199 residential dwellings and 248 car parking spaces ●

New community garden for Kensington

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
COMMUNITY

Friends, family and local residents gathered to celebrate Kensington’s new community garden in the Younghusband Triangle on Eastwood St, complete with fruit trees, herbs and a bee-attracting garden bed.

The project, completed mid-March, is a collaboration between Kensington Neighbourhood House, Impact Investment Group (IIG) and the City of Melbourne in response to increasing community desire for green space and food resilience.

Permaculture designer Jacqueline van Heerden said inspiration for the new railway-side garden came during the COVID-19 pandemic, when she noticed food supply systems were being disrupted and fresh food was not getting to vulnerable families.

“I’m excited,” she said. “We’ve had lots of people who have come past and gone: ‘what’s going on here?’”

“We can’t all leave the city and go to the country and have big farms. It’s about what we can do to bring our food sources closer to us and build resilience.”

In a bid to boost biodiversity, eight different deciduous and non-deciduous fruit trees have been planted, including cherry and almond trees, as well as a range of herbs.

A shade tree and feature plants will provide cooling during summer and a grassy area will



▲ Permaculture designer Jacqueline van Heerden and IIG development manager Callum Evans.

support local gatherings.

Ms van Heerden said she had even planted a special type of plant which stops erosion and cleans up contaminants in order to protect the garden from any potential toxic run off from the adjoining train line.

She said soil testing had been carried out with only a small trace of lead found, but reiterated that the fruit from the trees would not absorb any contaminants.

While part of the \$9000 project was funded by council grants, IIG paid for the irrigation system and the water supply, which consists of a drip-line system designed to minimise evaporation and maximise water penetration into the soil.

IIG development manager Callum Evans said the community garden was a result of consultation facilitated by Younghusband.

“As you can see, the community [is] already doing pop-up planter beds, so I think it’s screaming out that this is an amazing place to be able to deliver something that was a continuation of the nature strip they were already doing,” Mr Evans said.

“I think 2020 was a challenging year, and there’s some sparks that came out of it and the community can get around each other. I think it’s going to be amazing.”

A group of local community members will look after the garden, Ms van Heerden said ●



▲ Kensington community members creating the garden.

Council weighs in on North Melbourne’s disappearing seats

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
PHOTOGRAPHY BY *John Tadigiri*
COUNCIL AFFAIRS

The City of Melbourne will replace two public seats at tram stops in Errol St after they went missing without explanation. But the North Melbourne community is still concerned about the lack of consultation and the influence of businesses in the area regarding public seating.

North West City News understands one of the seats – which mysteriously disappeared from the Maribyrnong-bound tram stop at the corner of Errol and Queensberry streets in 2011 after local businesses complained about homeless people – will be replaced by the council.

Another seat, which went missing from the city-bound tram stop at the corner of Errol and Victoria streets in February, will also be replaced after the council received complaints from a nearby business.

A third seat in the area remains missing without explanation.

But North Melbourne resident Jan Lacey, who has been demanding answers from the council about the missing seats since they first disappeared in 2011 – an experience which ended up at the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) – said replacements were not enough.

“To me the key point is that seats should never be removed without



▲ North Melbourne resident Jan Lacey.

consultation with the community that uses them” Ms Lacey said.

“And commercial premises who don’t actually sit on them should not have undue influence – as they certainly did in 2011.”

As an older person with an injured shoulder, Ms Lacey used to use both public seats to sit and put her shopping down while waiting for the tram.

When the seat at the corner of Errol and Victoria streets disappeared earlier this year, Ms Lacey was again forced to carry her shopping with nowhere to rest while she waited for the tram.

Back in 2011, when Ms Lacey said she initially raised her concerns regarding the removal of the seat at the corner of Errol and Queensberry streets, the council organised

meetings between her and the nearby businesses.

Ms Lacey said the meetings were unsuccessful, leaving her with no other option but to accept that the seats were gone, or to lodge a claim with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. Ms Lacey launched a complaint with the VEOHRC on the basis of disability discrimination, but was

unsuccessful in getting the seat reinstated.

On March 5 this year, Ms Lacey contacted Lord Mayor Sally Capp raising North Melbourne’s problem with vanishing seats again.

A council representative quickly responded to her message in an email seen by *North West City News*, explaining the seat on the corner of Errol and Victoria streets had been removed because a nearby store complained.

According to the representative, the council has now placed an order to replace the seat at the corner of Errol and Queensberry streets with a public bench outside the old ANZ bank, and the missing city-bound seat will be replaced with a bench in front of Aesop at 504 Victoria St.

The representative said in the email that the seats would be replaced in early to mid-May this year.

A City of Melbourne spokesperson told *North West City News* “several” public benches along Errol St were removed to allow for extended outdoor dining at local restaurants and cafes.

“Our outdoor dining program has helped many hospitality businesses to safely welcome back patrons, and bring the buzz back to the city,” the spokesperson said.

“New seats will be installed shortly in this area to accommodate local shoppers and tram passengers.”●

Residents demand better public transport for Parkville Gardens

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
TRANSPORT

A political push for better public transport in Parkville Gardens is underway as residents grow tired of long waits and poor connections to railway stations and shopping areas.

In the Victorian Parliament in March, Member for Brunswick, Dr Tim Read, said despite a boom in apartments being built and people moving into the former Commonwealth Games Athletes’ Village, nothing was being done to address inadequate public transport services.

“The only route out is through narrow Manningham St towards the city and the 505 Parkville Gardens bus runs once per hour with one additional service at each peak hour,” he said.

“That bus, after leaving Parkville Gardens runs past CSL, the second

biggest flu vaccine manufacturer in the world with over 1500 employees.”

“So, my question to the Minister for Public Transport is, when will this area get decent public transport, and specifically, when can we expect to see more buses running on that route?”

Parkville Gardens resident Joshua Parke said many locals living there, including students and elderly people, were frustrated by the inadequate linkages between buses and trains.

“For this same reason it would be good if one of the bus routes also went past Union Square and Barkley Square Shopping Centres at differing times,” he said.

“Parkville Gardens is the perfect combination of city and suburban living. However, the limitation is that we are at least two to three kilometres away from amenities.”

“This distance is difficult to navigate in inclement weather and

impossible for those with a disability, the elderly and infirm.”

North West City News asked the Department of Transport whether one bus each hour was adequate and whether it would consider changing bus services to help improve bus train links and the overall route for the elderly and disabled at Parkville Gardens.

In response, a department spokesperson said it was continuously reviewing the bus network to make sure it met passengers’ needs and was improving connections to trains and trams.

“We welcome the communities (sic) input in shaping their public transport, and we’re working to make their journeys safer, more accessible and better connected,” the spokesperson said.

Route 505 is a bus service which currently services an area between Moonee Ponds, a major activity centre with a wide range of retail and



▲ Member for Brunswick Dr Tim Read is pushing for better bus services to Parkville Gardens.

medical services, and other tram and bus routes as well as the University of Melbourne. Other destinations can be reached from the university, the Moonee Ponds tram and bus interchange and Royal Park Station●

For more information:
[timread.org.au/
betterbusesforpg](http://timread.org.au/betterbusesforpg)

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Hi, I'm Fiona and I'm your member for Northern Metro in the Victorian Parliament. I'm always keen for a chat to hear your ideas or concerns.

Refugees, racism and football on the curriculum at school visit

WORDS BY *Peter Quattrocelli*
EDUCATION

Invited to ask questions of their famous guest, the students of Debney Meadows Primary School (DMPS) approached the moment with a sense of innocence but also understanding.

“How did it feel when you were in prison?” one of the Grade Six students asked.

Standing in the crowded school library in the shadow of the public housing towers where many of the students call home – and where many were locked in with their families at the height of the pandemic a year ago – soccer star, Bahraini dissident, refugee and Australian citizen Hakeem al-Araibi responded thoughtfully and quietly.

“I was thinking about my wife all the time because I love her so much,” Mr al-Araibi said, who spent 75 days in a Bangkok prison in 2018 after he was caught by a politically motivated Interpol arrest warrant as he landed in Thailand for his honeymoon.

“I was scared the Bahrain government would kill me if I was to be sent back there from Thailand,” he said.

“Were the guards nice to you?”

“What did you eat?”

“Were you allowed to play sports?”

Mr al-Araibi was a surprise guest at a special school assembly last month focusing on racism and self-belief, organised by Victoria’s Department of Education and led by former Soccerroo captain, Craig Foster.

It’s a special event for the almost

40 students present, especially the aspiring Soccerroos among them.

Mr Foster spearheaded the #FreeHakeem campaign that helped secure Mr al-Araibi’s release from Thailand and subsequent return to Australia, where he was granted citizenship in March 2019.

“I’m enjoying the opportunity to speak with kids at this age about racism, to try and provide the tools for them to be able to safely push back on discrimination – which is on the rise,” Mr Foster told *North West City News*.

It’s one of eight schools Mr Foster has visited this week, but the only one at which Mr al-Araibi has also presented.

Within the walls of the Debney Park Library, diversity is plainly celebrated.

Students standing in front of the group reel off interesting facts about the places they’ve come from – Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt.

“Did you know that Egyptians invented toothpaste?” Grade Six student Nour asked.

“When I look around the room here and I see all the beautiful different colours, cultures, religions and nationalities, it reminds me of how beautiful a place Australia is,” Mr Foster replied.

Many of the children asking the questions were refugees themselves and were intrigued by Mr al-Araibi’s story – how he sought asylum in Australia in 2014, fleeing from the persecution of his home nation’s government.

Having heard the harrowing story



▲ Students at Debney Meadows Primary School participate in the Victory for Schools program, encouraging participation and skill development for young people. Photo: Peter Quattrocelli

first-hand, even the teachers couldn’t help but ask their own questions.

“Have there been any improvements in the way people from Bahrain are being treated?”

The Pascoe Vale soccer player said that even now there’s fear within his family.

“When my mum came to visit me here, she was scared to get a photo with me because she was scared the Bahraini government would arrest her when she went back,” Mr al-Araibi told the children.

“That’s horrible!” a student shouted from the library floor.

According to the school’s community liaison officer Fardowsa Omar, more than 85 per cent of the students at DMPS came from African families.

The majority of students live in the nearby high-rise apartments in North Melbourne, Kensington and Flemington, which became big news in July when the Victorian Government implemented a harsh snap lockdown in response to a cluster of COVID-19 cases in the densely packed towers.

Overnight, temporary fences were erected and hundreds of police officers guarded the perimeter.

“Parents still talk about how traumatising that situation was for them. Just the fact that they couldn’t get out,” Ms Omar said.

“Even today, when asked what’s their worst fear about the pandemic, they say, ‘that kind of lockdown



▲ Former Soccerroos’ captain Craig Foster and Hakeem al-Araibi visited Debney Meadows Primary School. Photo: Peter Quattrocelli.

happening again.”

Ms Omar said the students and their families face a range of issues as they settle into their new home in Melbourne’s inner west.

“Trauma, lots of PTSD, there’s sometimes drugs, mental health and also unemployment,” she said.

The school visit was also about getting kids active and families engaged – courtesy of a picnic feast of traditional Somali dishes, with support from Rice Community and Refugee Services and a football program run by Melbourne Victory Football Club.

“By supporting children and young people, we are taking a proactive approach to increasing the levels of physical, social, mental and

emotional well-being in our communities,” Melbourne Victory’s community football and diversity manager Harley Hamdani said.

“The program we have running at Debney Meadows Primary School is a fantastic example of partnership working to support children’s participation in positive activity outside of school curriculum time.”

Reflecting on the day’s event, Grade Four student Saharla said, “It made me feel that I should become a stronger person.”

“Hakeem’s story was sad, but it made me feel nice because I learnt about his life. Now I want to help people in my life,” Saharla said ●

Urban forests bring residents pleasure

WORDS BY *Jess Carrascalao Heard*
SUSTAINABILITY

The City of Melbourne has unveiled six green spaces which are thriving after receiving matched funding via the Habitat Grants under the Urban Forest Fund 2020 program.

The grants scheme saw up to \$5000 of matched funding for residential owners’ corporations (OCs) to create green spaces on privately-owned, residential properties.

The six gardens are located across the municipality, including at a unit complex at 78 The Avenue in Parkville where a new sustainable garden was created just before lockdown last year.

Rosemary Livingstone, chair of the OC at 78 The Avenue, said the new sustainable garden was “gorgeous”, and had improved the

liveability of the complex.

“The pleasure that it’s bringing to the people – both the residents and passers-by – is really important,” she said.

The Habitat Grants were a part of the council’s Urban Forest Fund 2020, which saw the council supporting greening projects in a bid to accelerate the creation or enhancement of green space in the municipality.

The Habitat Grant saw the council partner with residential OCs for greening projects in common property areas.

The grant could be used for soil improvement works, plants and trees and irrigation, as well as project planning and labour as long as the cost of this was not more than 25 per cent of the project’s total cost.

Eligibility criteria for the grant included the requirement for applicants to show that their project would deliver more overall green cover

than had existed previously, as well as using only “in-ground planting”, have a maintenance plan and include some plant species which were indigenous to the local area.

The council’s environment portfolio lead Cr Rohan Leppert said, “These projects maximise green space for people and wildlife on residential properties, and I look forward to seeing these green spaces thrive.”

Cr Leppert said that although the council was committed to 3000 plantings a year on public land, a significant portion of land in the municipality was privately owned.

For the greening projects which received the funding, there were several different points of focus.

One project at Altona St in Kensington focused on helping create a wildlife corridor between JJ Holland Park and Warun Biik Linear Reserve. The historic fire station complex at



▲ The new-look garden at 78 The Avenue, Parkville.

100-110 Curzon St, North Melbourne had funding awarded for Phase one of their greening project to help see the replacement of contaminated soil and the existing lawn and shrubbery ●

Errol St to welcome Vinnies soup van service

WORDS BY *Jess Carrascalao Heard*
PHOTOGRAPHY BY *John Tadigiri*
COMMUNITY

St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria is set to move in to 54 Erroll St, with the City of Melbourne providing the premises to assist with packing food hampers for those in need.

The council is providing the “Vinnies Soup Van” service a one-year licence at a peppercorn rent, so the service can continue to pack food hampers, after COVID-19 health directives put a temporary halt on the traditional van on the street.

Vinnies Soup Van operations manager Sarah Cromie said the organisation was still handing out hampers to those in need.

“While we haven’t yet resumed our street stops at Queen Victoria Market and Federation Square, we are still driving around the city looking for people sleeping rough and handing out hampers,” she said.

The council’s health, wellbeing and



belonging portfolio lead Cr Olivia Ball anticipates that demand for the service could soon be higher than before.

“We anticipate that demand for their hamper service may increase now as economic support measures

from other levels of government have been reduced or removed,” she said.

The local soup van service has traditionally been based at the Jean McKendry Neighbourhood Centre on Melrose St, with food being cooked in the kitchens and then delivered via



soup vans to those in need.

But with social contact restrictions coming into play during the pandemic, the Vinnies Soup Van service started packing food hampers in the main hall and delivering them to people experiencing food insecurity.

The service packs and delivers more than 1000 hampers each week, with hampers including fresh fruit and vegetables, along with non-perishable food.

Deliveries are made to those experiencing food insecurity, including to people in hotels and rooming houses as well as in the North Melbourne public housing.

With community groups now moving back into the hall, Vinnie’s Soup Van needed a new home to continue the delivery service.

Lord Mayor Sally Capp said that job losses, business closures and reduced working hours had placed many people under financial strain.

“It’s vital that we work with Vinnies to provide this essential food relief,” she said ●

Finding the right words to describe North Melbourne

WORDS BY *Rhonda Dredge*
ARTS & CULTURE

North Melbourne is lucky to have among its residents a novelist and poet who has set three novels in the suburb.

Philip Salom lives in a flat near Flemington Rd and shops locally.

He visits the Queen Victoria Market three times a week and if his latest novel is anything to go by, he’s a keen cook.

Novelists don’t necessarily refer directly to their surrounds. The impact can be more subtle.

Philip’s first North Melbourne novel was set in a rooming house, the second in a bookshop and the current one is about a bicycle thief.

But the one released during lockdown has quite a lot about cooking in it, even though it is set by the sea, including a recipe for crispy duck in the form of a poem.

If you ask him what he likes about North Melbourne, it is the quiet and the space and the traditional things such as the cobblestone lanes.

“In WA they don’t exist,” he said, of his home state. “This is very much for me a European feel.”

Philip walks everywhere. “I feel an openness more than consciousness. If I go to other areas, I feel closed in.”

He orders all of his books through North Melbourne Books rather than the internet and thinks deeply about relationships.

His latest published novel *The Fifth Season* explores the difference between monologist and dialogic fiction, the latter relational and

character-led rather than driven by story.

He’s unafraid to make his characters similar to him. He calls this literary closeness.

The protagonist in *The Fifth Season* is a writer in his ‘60s by the name of Jack who visits a seaside village only to discover that another writer has been there before him.

“Jack is annoyed about the other guy writing about himself and doing that offends people in the book. My writing is about acknowledging that,” he said.

He is interested in the ethics of writing and the way writers immerse themselves in places to gather details.

“A lot of writers are parasitical. There are a lot of principles within the practice of writing to do with style. You have to be mindful about how you write about the world.”

Some writers fictionalise more than others and you get the feeling that he likes to stay close to the inner lives of his characters.

Philip’s current protagonist Sweeney lives in Parkville, but he haunts North Melbourne and wanders around a lot.

“He has a brain injury from a stint in prison. He has an unusual social and psychological profile.”

Philip has become more interested in psychological profiles in his past three novels. He uses free indirect discourse in which the narrator speaks within the person being followed.

He said that commercial writers were more about clarity of story whereas literary writing is about strategies and manners i.e., the kind of diction used ●



▲ Philip Salom stops for a literary chat at Small Batch.



▲ Judy Collings at Wayward Books.

Getting back to business after COVID

WORDS BY *Rhonda Dredge*
LOCAL NEWS

There have been some pluses and minuses for the small community of local businesses in Kensington as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the two bed and breakfast places in picturesque McConnell St has closed.

But Wayward Books, the bookshop in Bellair St, has expanded its range of titles.

The bed and breakfast at 112 McConnell St sold in December for \$1.33 million with few people travelling to the suburb.

One cottage, at number 97, is still available for short stays, and for adventurers who want to cross town it is a handy place for discovering new places within the city.

“It’s been a quiet 12 months,” B&B owner Robena Binks said. “We’ve just seen some of the regulars from interstate.”

Their guests are families of locals, mostly grandparents. “Their houses are too small or they have a child so their families stay when they visit,” she said.

But since the restrictions on travel during the COVID-19 crisis there have been few enquiries.

She said they used to get more custom when there were events at the saleyards and racecourse but they don’t get many Victorians now.

Kensington has one of the most intact communities in Melbourne in terms of helping each other out and historic streetscapes.

“It’s a pretty little neck of the woods,” Robena said. “We love it. Most of the businesses are

locally owned.”

Jo Wearing is a resident of Bellair St, and she said that most people walking in the street lived in Kensington. “I usually nod,” she said.

“Kensington is more down-to-earth than other suburbs because there’s such a mix of people. It keeps it real. There’s high-rise across the road and houses worth \$4 million.”

When the pandemic hit, residents supported local business. Wayward Books in Bellair St stocked mostly second-hand books but proprietor Judy Collings noticed that if she put new titles in the window people would order them through the shop.

“I’m getting more new stuff in now,” she told *North West City News* but she still displays her famous pithy quotes in the window, including encouraging postcards about famous authors and their more menial day jobs.

She’s currently running a competition with a free book for the person who can name where the following passage comes from.

“It is difficult not to be bedazzled by a cast that includes ulcerated Christian holy men, Zoroastrian priests obsessed with dental hygiene, demonic emperors, barbarians with self-inflicted cranial deformities and Arab ambassadors stinking of camel.”

She said Kensington was a creative suburb with artist studios, a ukulele group that met in the park and its own writers, particularly in poetry, history and politics.

You can go along, and they’ll teach you how to play, Judy said. “Fie, the ukulele man, does it for free.” ●

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Your City of Melbourne community update



Longrain welcomes outdoor diners to Little Bourke Street

DISCOVER WHAT'S NEW IN MELBOURNE

Melbourne businesses, creatives and event managers are rallying in the wake of COVID-19, alongside swift and strategic investment from the City of Melbourne and the Victorian Government.

A multitude of projects are underway to reactivate Melbourne, and the city has begun to change before our eyes.

Many of the initiatives are being delivered through the \$100 million Melbourne City Recovery Fund, a partnership between the City of Melbourne and the Victorian Government.

Next time you visit the city, look out for key physical changes, including 40 km of new bike lanes and 'little streets' that have been made more pedestrian friendly.

Here are four more exciting things that have popped up around Melbourne.

1 Public art in vacant shopfronts

Creative artworks by local artists are bringing colour and vibrancy to vacant shopfronts as the city rebalances from the effects of COVID-19.

Delivered as part of the Melbourne City Recovery Fund, this program supports the creative sector and creates a welcoming environment on our streets. Find out more at melbourne.vic.gov.au/publicart

2 COVID-safe versions of beloved events

Melburnians are grinning, chuckling and guffawing through more than three weeks of COVID-safe laughs thanks to the return of the world-renowned Melbourne International Comedy Festival.

Join the fun in venues and online until 18 April. Find out more at comedyfestival.com.au or discover more upcoming events at whatson.melbourne.vic.gov.au

3 More than 1500 new outdoor dining areas

Dine with friends in an iconic Melbourne laneway or pop-up parklet to support local businesses as they continue to adapt amid ongoing COVID-19 restrictions.

The City of Melbourne has extended its outdoor dining program to help venues reopen and continue operating. Find out more about this program at melbourne.vic.gov.au/outdoordining

4 150,000 new trees, shrubs and grasses

Look out for new native vegetation around Royal Park, Parkville and the Dynon Road wildlife reserve that will help support biodiversity, cool the city and create jobs.

Funded by the Victorian Government, Greening the City is the largest revegetation project that the City of Melbourne has ever undertaken. Learn more at melbourne.vic.gov.au/urbanforest

Looking to the future, business support will continue to be front and centre, and an advisory committee comprised of retail, hospitality and creative industry leaders will focus on rebuilding the night-time economy.

Iconic places will also be revitalised, with plans underway for upgrades to the Lonsdale Street Greek Precinct and Princess Theatre forecourt.

Our city's brightest minds will also come together for events like the Open Innovation Competition and Emerging Technology Testbed Challenge to collaborate and innovate.

While the city might not look quite like you remember, Melbourne's restaurants, shops, bars, art institutions and events are open for business. And people are hungry to return to the city they love.

We encourage you to rediscover your city and feel the buzz of what is to come.

For more information, visit melbourne.vic.gov.au/melbourneisopen



SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES

Local businesses, services and organisations are the lifeblood of Melbourne, and our support for them is multi-layered and ongoing.

Visit melbourne.vic.gov.au/business to subscribe to the Business in Melbourne newsletter and explore the help on offer.

For one-on-one advice, call our dedicated Business Concierge Service on 9658 9658 (press 1 for business), or enquire online at the above website.

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Your City of Melbourne community update

REIMAGINE THE FUTURE AT MELBOURNE KNOWLEDGE WEEK

Join Melbourne's brightest minds to solve historical crimes in augmented reality, learn about 'doughnut economics' and much more at Melbourne Knowledge Week from 26 April to 2 May.

The festival will feature more than 100 in-person and online events devised in collaboration with local and international experts, including artists, academics, economists and biomedical scientists.

Four hubs at locations across the city will host a wide range of unique, COVID-safe events – the vast majority of which are free to attend.

Immersive installations and city tours will encourage audiences to playfully explore, share and learn, and a digital hub will expand the festival's reach across the globe.

Whether you are interested in technology, digital ethics, human-centred design, entrepreneurship, creativity, wellbeing or something completely different, there is something for you at Melbourne Knowledge Week.

Here's how you can get involved in the festival program.

1 Learn from experts

Hear from the pros about sustainable economies, the rise of cryptocurrencies and how to pandemic-proof the future. Be inspired by big thinkers from around the world, in person and online.

2 Share your ideas

Deep-dive into tough topics like climate change, ethics and the afterlife through board games, book clubs and hands-on workshops. Working together, we can help shape a bright future for our city.

3 Build your network

Discover ideas for city activation as local innovators pitch their ideas, explore a showcase of local startups, and attend networking sessions for Aboriginal entrepreneurs and international students.

4 Enjoy a mindful meal

Book a zero-waste lunch at Cumulus Inc hosted by OzHarvest and Rotary

Melbourne or delve into the story of Gelam the dugong at a dinner event by Mabu Mabu.

5 Inspire your family

Build new toys from old favourites, co-create a 'wild city', get your hands dirty to create your own biodiverse garden and play Dungeons & Dragons with a biometric mirror.

6 Blow your mind

Receive a voice message from another version of you from a parallel universe, talk to a person from history using artificial intelligence and explore future Melbourne through Prototype City.

Melbourne Knowledge Week is proudly presented by the City of Melbourne.

The festival program will launch on Monday 22 March at mkw.melbourne.vic.gov.au

Information and events in this publication are current at the time of printing. Subsequent changes may occur.

EVENT SPOTLIGHTS

KEYNOTE SPEAKER KATE RAWORTH

Digital Hub (online), Wednesday 28 April, 7pm to 8pm

Learn about Kate's provocative 'doughnut economics' paradigm that shows how economies can comfortably function while looking after all people and the environment.

This live event will feature a digital keynote presentation, live Q&A and facilitated small-group conversations about how we can incorporate these ideas into our work and lives.



A CIRCULAR FUTURE

Wesley Place Hub, 130 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne
Saturday 1 May, 2pm to 5pm

Join an interactive workshop to explore how can we move from resource-draining 'take, make, waste' linear systems to a progressive circular economy.

Hosted by UnSchool, this event invites you to understand the complex systems you participate in every day, and recognise your agency to affect change.

WILD CITY

Meat Market Hub, 3 Blackwood Street, North Melbourne
Visit any time while the hub is open

Explore a thriving green metropolis shared equally by humans and animals and co-create new, welcoming urban habitats.

Created by Kathy Holowko in collaboration with scores of local children, the Wild City exhibition invites kids to consider how we can improve the quality of living in our urban ecosystems by being more considerate to animals.



Engaging conversations



Zero-waste dining



Immersive experiences

KEEP IN TOUCH

To stay connected with all the latest news from the City of Melbourne, follow us on social media and subscribe to *Melbourne* magazine online at magazine.melbourne.vic.gov.au

You can also join conversations to influence plans for your neighbourhood through Participate Melbourne at participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au

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Opera with determination comes to the Lithuanian Club

WORDS BY *Jess Carrascalao Heard*
ARTS & CULTURE

Not many people at the age of 25 can boast that they’ve been a director, a costume designer and an on-stage lead in a company made up of some of Australia’s finest young singers.

But in less than a month, Jane Magao will be able to say she has worn all of these hats. And not only that, she has worn them all at once.

The soprano is the youngest member of iOpera, a small company which will be putting on Mozart’s *Così fan tutte* at the Lithuanian Club on Erroll St later this month.

All but a handful of those involved in the show are singers under the age of 30.

Their goal? To create an opportunity for themselves which might not otherwise come their way.

Making your own luck is something Ms Magao is passionate about.

Although she has been a recipient of scholarships, competition prizes and young artist programmes – including the tightly auditioned Richard Divall Emerging Artists Programme offered by Melbourne Opera – she’s well aware that the pool of potential performance opportunities for young musicians is small.

“There’s only so many roles, there’s only so many operas [that opera companies] can do which suit everybody,” she told *North West City News*.

“I want to make things happen for myself, because if we wait around, we’ll be waiting until the cows come home.”

Performing on stage will be an all-star cast of young up-and-coming opera singers, including the 2021 German-Australian Opera Grant winner, bass-baritone Darcy Carroll.

But there are singers putting in hours behind the scenes as well. Though Ms Magao will be on stage performing the role of the funny and fiery Despina, she is also the creative driver of the show as its director. She’s also a self-taught seamstress, and as such, she has been putting the costumes together as well.

Mezzo-soprano Shakira Dugan is another rising star involved in the show. Though opera-goers in Melbourne would recognise her from her work with Victorian Opera and Melbourne Opera, for this production her job is entirely off-stage as the set and lighting designer.

Ms Dugan has always been a hands-on person. She built her first theatre set in Year 8, has worked in maintenance, and during lockdown



▲ Soprano Jane Magao is making her own luck, playing the role of Despina, as well as directing and creating the costumes for iOpera’s *Così fan tutte*. Photo: Vivian Wheatley.

last year she returned to her hometown near Maffra in Gippsland and rebuilt a caravan.

When the opportunity to help her friends put on a show came up, she offered up her practical know-how.

She said she was surprised at how many hidden, non-musical skills have come out of the woodwork during the production process.

“It’s not just, ‘Oh, this is a singer’ ... Jane, for example, is a seamstress, and a fantastic director. Like, her comedic timing is so on point... we’ve got a lot of people who can do backstage admin as well,” she said.

iOpera’s co-founder Peter Tregear, a bass-baritone who will perform as Don Alfonso as well as being co-producing the show, said the group had taken on the character of a collective.

A seasoned performer, and one of the few people involved in the show who is older than 30, he thinks it’s a good job training for young singers to have a practical taste of all facets of theatre-making.

“I think increasingly the way, if you want stuff to happen, is you’re going to have to do it yourself. So, to develop a sort of, self-motivated,

empowered company culture I think couldn’t be better,” he said.

It might be a strange juxtaposition for some: a group of fierce, determined young artists keen to perform an opera written over two centuries ago.

With the music composed by Mozart, and the libretto – the text of the opera – written by Lorenzo da Ponte, *Così fan tutte* burst onto the scene in Vienna in 1790.

The plot is convoluted, as is custom in comic opera. Two young officers, Ferrando and Guglielmo, are in love with two sisters, Dorabella and Fiordiligi, respectively. The two men are certain of their lovers’ eternal fidelity, but a sceptical Don Alfonso, who believes all women are fickle, wagers with the two officers that in a short amount of time he can prove that their lovers are no different.

What ensues is a comedy of deceit, with Ferrando and Guglielmo farewelling Dorabella and Fiordiligi, and saying they have been called to war. They soon return, disguised, and try to prove Dorabella and Fiordiligi’s fidelity by attempting to win the hearts of each other’s

lovers. Don Alfonso, helped by the sisters’ maid Despina, tries his best to make sure he wins the bet.

Mr Tregear sees the opera as “a piece that is playing with the tensions that happen when Western Enlightenment reason hits patriarchy”.

“Are we actually going to say, ‘Oh, there wasn’t patriarchal culture in 18th century Europe, or today?’ Of course, there was, and there is. So, let’s actually look at it,” he said.

He said the beauty of the piece was that both in its beauty and its drama, no-one was straightforward.

“The moment you think the women are universally victims, you see the times they have agency and they have agency all the time in this piece. The moment you think the guys are universally horrendous, then they show moments of forgiveness or self-awareness,” he said.

With only six roles, and a small musical ensemble playing the orchestral parts, this *Così* is a much smaller affair than the operatic stereotype of grandiosity.

It has found its perfect home at the Lithuanian Club, with the space not only providing good acoustics – an important consideration, as opera is unamplified – but the stylings of the theatre fit with the 18th century theme, as well as the scale of the show.

“It’s got an antique feel to it. It seats the right amount of people. It has lighting. There’s a projector for surtitles, it just accommodates everything we needed,” Ms Magao said.

With the clock ticking down to opening night, she’s excited to see the show come together, both for herself and for her friends.

Singing the role of Despina is a big dream come true for her, but seeing her friends flourish is also satisfying.

She lights up with pride when talking about her fellow collaborators.

“Working with this level, with this calibre of singers ... I mean, man. There’s not one singer in there that’s sort of like, the weakest link,” she said.

“We don’t need the big, fancy, huge stage that goes back, and back, and back, and big scene changes. We’ve got the calibre of singing.” ●



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Kensington Neighbourhood House welcomes the community

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
COMMUNITY

English language students at Kensington Neighbourhood House (KNH) fashioned welcome signs in 17 different languages to display in the foyer as part of Cultural Diversity week in March.

KNH community development specialist, Esther Sadek, said the idea for the project originated with Hamida Abi, one of the students who is actively involved with the Kensington community.

“It’s a really lovely, personal way

to represent the fact we welcome people from a range of backgrounds,” she said.

KNH has a student advisory body made up of diverse range of people who attend KNH programs, including seniors, childcare parents and English students.

Ms Sadek said the team was busy chatting about how to make the house a more welcoming place, when Ms Abi suggested creating welcome sign which quickly evolved into the idea of creating stickers showcasing a welcome message in different languages.

“So then in 2019 as part of our celebration for social inclusion week, we asked people to hand-write welcome signs in their own languages,” Ms Sadek said.

“The COVID-19 pandemic stalled our plans to continue to expand on this but in late 2020 during lockdown we invited KNH program participants, mostly from our adult English language classes, to hand-write welcome messages in their first languages on paper.”

The messages, now stuck on the walls of the foyer, coincided with Cultural Diversity Week in Victoria,

which ran from March 21 to 28.

Ms Sadek said Cultural Diversity Week started with Harmony Day, which was chosen because it is the international day for the elimination of racial discrimination – an initiative launched by the United Nations to mark the Sharpeville massacre.

It was on this day, March 21, 1960, that police in South Africa shot and killed 69 people at a peaceful protest against apartheid.

Ms Sadek said the welcome messages were written in many different languages, including Somali, Mandarin, Sinhalese, Vietnamese,

Amharic, Portuguese, Thai, German, Indonesian, Persian, Tamil, Japanese, Cantonese, Kurdish, Hindi and Romanian.

KNH welcomes people from about 70 different countries through its doors each year.

“At Kensington Neighbourhood House we are proud of our cultural diversity and it is a huge strength of the house that we have people coming from so many different countries,” Ms Sadek said ●

Calls to decriminalise begging rejected by police

WORDS BY *David Schout*
PHOTOGRAPHY BY *John Tadigiri*
HOMELESSNESS

Calls from legal groups to decriminalise begging have been opposed by Victoria Police, who warned it could not regulate “professional beggars” in the CBD without the law.

As part of a recently-released parliamentary inquiry into Victoria’s homelessness, legal groups argued that begging offences caused vulnerable people to be unnecessarily caught within the justice system.

In submissions to the wide-ranging inquiry, legal services group Justice Connect argued the criminalisation of begging “punishes vulnerable people experiencing extreme hardship”.

“Studies continue to show how begging, homelessness, ill-health and substance dependence regularly intersect,” the submission read.

“The strong conclusion is that begging is about social and financial poverty, not about crime.”

Fellow group Inner Melbourne Community Legal said prosecuting begging, which is only an offence in Victoria and not other states, was both “ineffective and fails to achieve any public interest objectives”.

But in response, Victoria Police Assistant Commissioner Timothy Hansen said organised or “professional begging”, which arose as a media story in 2019, could not be sufficiently regulated if the offence was repealed.

“[Professional begging] really does cloud the discussions that might be had at a point in time about the decriminalisation of elements of the *Summary Offences Act 1966*,” he said.

“This is of significant concern for police. It requires significant hours and resources to investigate, and it does have a negative impact on the amenity of the CBD area and absolutely has our attention.”

In July 2019, Victoria Police arrested seven people as part of an alleged professional betting syndicate in the CBD.

At the time, police said members of the syndicate had been flown in on tourist visas and had posed as rough sleepers in busy city areas.

Assistant Commissioner Hansen, who spoke at a September 9 hearing as part of the Inquiry into homelessness in Victoria, said the problem arose “quite regularly”, and was difficult to police.

He said Victoria Police was aware of the calls to decriminalise begging, but on balance it would make enforcement too difficult.

“There has certainly been a paper that has previously been shared with us about the decriminalisation of begging or decriminalising passive begging,” he said.

“For us to try and differentiate between (professional and passive begging) would become really, really difficult, and I think you would end up with an unintended consequence, where we would probably be unable to enforce either element of that.”

Further, when asked if police would prefer the law remain, Assistant Commissioner Hansen said that while officers were pushed towards “diversionary and caution outcomes”, it was a “a tool in our kit belt”.

“If done well and if done with the support of legislation, [it] starts to give us a real opportunity to divert people back into the health centre but with a carrot-and-stick approach.”

The parliamentary committee concluded it was “regrettable” that people experiencing homelessness were charged for begging, and said reform should be considered.

“In the committee’s view, the government should consider whether to amend the *Summary Offences Act 1966* to remove begging as an offence.”

In 2015, the Salvation Army released a report that small numbers of professional beggars were earning up to \$400 a day within the CBD.

A survey for the report found the majority of 135 people begging were in genuine need, while nine were not homeless and saw the activity as a way to make a living.

CBD remains homelessness centre

The Inquiry into Homelessness held 18 public hearings and received more than 450 formal submissions.

A 504-page report included a number of key



▲ Calls from legal groups to decriminalise begging have been opposed by Victoria Police.

findings, and tabled 51 recommendations.

Chief among the findings were that the state government needed to pay “immediate and ongoing attention” to what had become an “urgent homelessness crisis”.

It also found that overwhelmingly, those experiencing homelessness still gravitated towards the CBD.

In 2019, stats revealed that 3116 people in the CBD searched for housing services via online homelessness search tool Ask Izzy, which was almost 15 times more people than the number of those those searching in the second-highest

“*Many gravitate towards the CBD and surrounds when they first experience homelessness so if we know that – we should concentrate services towards them.*”

postcode (212 in Dandenong).

“Research suggests that people sleeping rough and unable to resolve their homelessness gravitate to central Melbourne over time from suburban and non-metropolitan locations,” the City of Melbourne’s submission noted.

Reason Party leader and inquiry chair Fiona Patten told *North West City News* that it was vital those within the CBD received support services “as early as we can”.

“Early intervention means identifying those at risk of homelessness and stepping in to provide support before they reach a crisis point,” she said.

“Many gravitate towards the CBD and surrounds when they first experience homelessness so if we know that – we should concentrate services towards them.”

Rough sleepers a “key priority”

The City of Melbourne noted a rise in rough sleepers in recent years via census and biennial StreetCount data.

The submission noted that reducing rough sleepers within the municipality remained a “key priority”.

Rough sleepers are those who live on the streets, sleep in parks, or squat in derelict buildings or other improvised shelters.

“Rough sleeping is the most visible expression of homelessness,” the submission read.

“The scale of rough sleeping in our city has been steadily increasing and is symptomatic of issues in the broader system.”

As part of its COVID-19 response, the state government provided \$6 million of additional funding for temporary housing for those experiencing homelessness.

Around 4500 Victorians without homes were placed in motels and hotels, and “nearly all rough sleepers in Melbourne’s CBD” were placed in accommodation.

This program, however, is due to expire in April.

Key recommendations

Ms Patten said the homelessness issue was incredibly complex and the committee had done its best to summarise the key aspects of the issue.

“As much as I would like to say that we did an inquiry and ‘fixed it’ – we didn’t. What we have done, however, is look behind the curtain of the myriad of services and complex issues that are behind homelessness, and assess some of the key issues at the core of what is a continuing problem.”

The committee called for an immediate and permanent increased rate of JobSeeker, as well as other relevant income support payments such as Youth Allowance.

“Insufficient Commonwealth income support is clearly one of the leading issues preventing individuals from sustaining long-term housing,” Ms Patten said.

The committee also found that an increased provision of “affordable, stable, long-term housing” was vital going forward.

In November, the state government announced a historic \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build which included 9300 new social housing homes, which will increase Victoria’s social housing stock by 10 per cent.

However, the increase still does not ensure



the state meets the national average of social housing as a percentage of total dwellings (4.5 per cent).

As a potential solution, the committee suggested mandatory inclusionary zoning, whereby all new major developments would be compelled to include a certain percentage of affordable housing.

“Homelessness is a solvable problem, we know what needs to be done, we just need the will to carry it out,” Ms Patten said ●



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A big problem requires even bigger solutions

“Welcome to the eighth of our 12-part 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, rich or poor.”

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 MP Fiona Patten, Leader of the Reason Party, Member for Northern Metropolitan, chair of the Legal and Social Issues Committee and chair of the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness, to share her thoughts around why the objective around housing all Australians, and in particular some of the key recommendations of the Parliamentary Inquiry, and why solving homelessness should be considered an economic imperative for Australia ...

In the first week of March, I had the great privilege of tabling the report of the Inquiry into Homelessness by the Victorian Parliaments Legal and Social Issues Committee, on which I also serve as chair.

Unsurprisingly the final document is a weighty one, given the groaning weight of the issue on our community. Homelessness is seen as the deepest expression of social exclusion in our society, a growing and seemingly intractable problem. But we cannot, and we must not, ever give up on our attempts at ending it.

We began the inquiry before the devastating 2019/2020 bushfires in Victoria and prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Homelessness was already a challenge for so many in Victoria, and these events exacerbated these difficulties for both those experiencing homelessness and those providing homelessness support. Measures put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the CBD of Melbourne, saw many people previously sleeping rough placed in emergency accommodation, with plans for this to transition into long-term housing.

Those who live within the city area, like me, were heartened to see that something slightly good had come from the pandemic lockdowns. It showed that with sufficient will on the part of the Victorian Government, it is possible to end homelessness for many people experiencing it. Whether that will remain the case is yet to be seen, but surely through this experience, we can see that there is a light at the end of the tunnel for so many and we can help get them there.

The Victorian Government's landmark Big Housing Build, which will see 9300 new social housing dwellings built, about a 10 per cent increase in Victoria's social housing stock, was announced towards the end of our Inquiry. Welcomed yes, but despite the unprecedented size of the program, this will actually still not

ensure that Victoria will meet the national average of social housing as a percentage of total dwellings, at 4.5 per cent. In order to increase long-term housing options, the Government needs to look at, among other measures, implementing mandatory inclusionary zoning in all new major housing developments across the state.

Another crucial part of our approach to homelessness should be to intervene early in order to prevent homelessness before it occurs. Whenever I have looked in depth at disadvantage in our society it has been evident that this can get to the very cause of disadvantage and turn people's lives around. As well as being a social issue, this is also an economic issue as the long-term cost and implications to society of not preventing homelessness will be larger than the investment to migrate that cost.

This means identifying those at risk of homelessness and stepping in to provide support before they reach a crisis point. It also means a focus on education. There are many skilled and passionate people in the homelessness sector who have the capacity to do this crucial work and who should be supported to do so. Government should prioritise implementing diverse, forward-thinking early intervention strategies.

Often there is a tragic transition from institutional settings into homelessness including health, mental health, care and custodial settings. Too often, people at risk of homelessness are discharged or released into the community without sufficient planning or support to find and keep accommodation. Without a home, these individuals may soon end up back in hospital or in the justice system. For those leaving incarceration, being released into homelessness inhibits their chances at successful re-integration into the community.

Currently in Victoria, we have a homelessness sector that is overwhelmed with the need to respond to people in crisis.

I have urged the Government to implement the recommendations made in the Homelessness Inquiry report. We can develop a more adaptable and flexible system of support so that the sector can focus more on early intervention rather than crisis responses.

I hope you found the above perspective by Fiona 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.

As I said in my first article, 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 Pradolín

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

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COUNCILLOR PROFILE

Driven by diversity

First-term City of Melbourne councillor Jason Chang said he was driven onto the council by a desperate need to give a greater voice to the city's Asian community.

The 35-year-old, who owns the prominent Calia Emporium on Lonsdale St, said that while the pandemic had been challenging for all of Melbourne, it had too often been compounded by vitriol and racism towards the Asian community. As a proud born and bred Melburnian, Cr Chang told *North West City News* that the treatment he had often personally received just by walking the streets at times had been particularly difficult to endure given his love for his city.

His family's journey in Melbourne is yet another success story for multiculturalism. Having migrated to Australia via Fiji in the 1960s, his father, who passed away when Jason was just 12 years old, made his living as a fruit and veg trader at the Queen Victoria Market, while his mother has worked at the Ear and Eye Hospital in East Melbourne for 35 years. His family also originally ran grocery stores in Chinatown, as well as a Chinese restaurant on Acland St in St Kilda where Jason was first exposed to small business in the city.

Now a new father himself and the owner of five Calia "restaurant-to-retail" businesses located at Emporium, Chadstone, Kuala Lumpur and soon Jakarta, the addition of City of Melbourne councillor is sure to set a new standard in juggling!

But as a passionate Melburnian and member of the Asian community, he said he wasn't motivated by politics but only a desire to represent

the community and restore values of multiculturalism and equality back in the city after COVID.

"My dad and my mum taught me to give back to the community," he said. "The pandemic has shaped us all in what we can do to give back and that's the focus of what I want to do for four years on council."

"I see the suffering that the Asian community is going through right now. A lot come to me and tell me that there are so many issues, some business owners tell me their staff have been pushed to the ground just for being Asian and they come to work upset and crying."

"Unfortunately, some people are blaming us for the virus right now but it's not right. The City of Melbourne is more than 30 per cent Asian. It's a great thing to celebrate multiculturalism here in the city and that's what we're made of. People forget that sometimes."

"The pandemic pushed me to run for election because small business owners, a lot of them are immigrants who have invested their life savings and spent all their money to open a business to give their kids a better life and for these four years. I want to do my best to represent them. I want to show the community that all immigrants, not just Asians, have contributed greatly. I want to give them some hope."

Having been elected via former Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood's ticket at last year's local government elections, Cr Chang is one of six new faces on the council alongside Crs Jamal Hakim, Elizabeth Doidge, Davydd Griffiths, Roshena Campbell and Olivia Ball.

He said that while he was still very much "learning the ropes", the new council was a "young" and "refreshing" team of individuals. Echoing the words of Cr Hakim in February's *Councillor Profile*, "soft on people, hard on issues" is the approach Cr Chang said was shared among his colleagues.



And another issue he was personally passionate about in addition to helping the city's small businesses and night-time economy was the gaping hole left in the city by international students.

During the height of last year's second wave of coronavirus in Victoria, his business at Emporium, which employed more than 100 staff, had supported many students through employment, as well as outreach with groceries, masks and sanitiser.

But underpinning all of it, he said it was time for equal representation of migrant communities and businesses in the city and he would be "giving a voice" to the new generation of residents, students and start-ups.


"The Asian community is known as the 'model minority'," he said.

"The issue that I found as an Asian business is that we don't get the publicity of a lot of Caucasian businesses. The election sort of helped me get more profile for the community

and for Asian business owners as well and I think that was the most important thing for me was to provide that hope and confidence."

"Speaking to a lot of small business owners last year they just didn't know what to do and a lot were closing. A lot were depressed, even contemplating suicide. You think 'how can I help them?' because they couldn't make ends meet."

"I've got four years and I'm happy to do one term and represent the community to the best of my ability. I've got four years to do what I can." ●



Sean Car

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METRO TUNNEL



Metro Tunnel’s west side story takes shape

The Metro Tunnel Project’s western entrance at Kensington is complete, with the team now preparing the site for the next stage of construction.

Work will start soon to connect the structure to the project’s twin tunnels by breaking through a wall in the shaft built for retrieving two tunnel boring machines (TBMs).
The tunnel between the Arden Station site and the Kensington entrance was the first section dug by TBMs Joan and Meg, between September 2019 and March 2020.
More than 85 per cent of tunnelling on the

project is now complete, with the project’s four TBMs expected to finish digging at Town Hall Station, 30 metres under Swanston Street, by mid-2021.
Crews are now building cross passages between the twin tunnels every 230 metres to allow emergency access between tunnels.
In Kensington, work is underway on an exit building in Childers St, which will allow people

to safely leave the tunnel in an emergency. Crews are also working on a signalling equipment room and communications equipment room.
Earlier this year workers installed a new section of track that will lead into the western entrance of the Metro Tunnel when trains start running in 2025.
Once complete, the Metro Tunnel will consist of twin nine-kilometre tunnels from Kensington to South Yarra, with five new underground stations – Arden, Parkville, State Library, Town Hall and Anzac.
The tunnel will link the Sunbury Line in the north-west with the Cranbourne and Pakenham lines in the south-east and connect to the planned Melbourne Airport Rail link at Sunshine.

Don’t miss holiday fun at the museum
There are still a few days left to see the Metro Tunnel Project’s school holiday attraction at Melbourne Museum.

Children can see the inner workings of a model tunnel boring machine, create and colour-in their own cardboard Metro Tunnel segment, and fold up their own model TBM.
A “Mega Machines” video display features the enormous machines hard at work underneath Melbourne’s CBD to build the Metro Tunnel. The display runs until Sunday, April 18, at Melbourne Museum on Nicholson St, Carlton, between 11am and 3pm daily ●

For more information:
metrotunnel.vic.gov.au

STATE MP

Safer streets for cyclists and pedestrians

Like many Melburnians, I love riding my bike

Life as a local MP and a mum of two young kids can be pretty busy sometimes, so the chance to get some exercise and fresh air while travelling to work means I can kill two birds with one stone, and I also find it clears my mind ahead of a big day.
As you might have noticed, cycling has boomed during the COVID-19 lockdowns. And while it’s great to see more people enjoying healthy low-emissions transport, it’s also shone further light on some particularly unsafe bike routes on state-managed roads in our suburbs.

More separated bike lanes for cyclists
Credit should go to the City of Melbourne for taking leadership and creating more than 40km of separated and pop-up bike lanes across our inner city. The newly-completed Rathdowne St separated path is just one of them.

But despite this good work, there are still several state government-managed arterial roads that are currently very dangerous for cyclists, and crying out for bike lanes.
Royal Parade alongside the University of Melbourne, for example, often carries more cyclists than drivers during peak hour. Flemington Rd is another busy but unsafe route; which people often use to travel from the inner north or west into the CBD. Both of these routes are especially dangerous hotspots for “car dooring”.
To help fix these issues, I’ve been working with our local councillors to advocate to the Victorian Treasurer and Transport Minister for separated lanes on these roads. I’ve put in a Budget bid and hope to see some funding in the upcoming Budget.

Safer streets for pedestrians
In the past 12 months, my office has also engaged locals in a Pedestrian Safety Survey, which asked people to highlight concerns they had about their safety on inner city streets.
I’ve heard from Carlton residents about many near misses on busy roads in Carlton including along Cemetery Rd where four lanes of traffic funnel from Alexandra Parade into high density residential streets near the University of Melbourne, public housing and Melbourne’s hospital precinct.
In Parkville in the middle of Royal Park there’s also no pedestrian crossing from one half of the park into the other which means residents, commuters and visitors either have to walk up to Royal Parade or into the refuge island near the Melbourne Zoo where it’s dangerous to wait, especially with dogs or small children.
We have the opportunity to bring life back to our city streets with more people already riding their bikes and enjoying long walks on our footpaths after COVID-19, but we also have the responsibility to keep everyone safe.
If you have any concerns about road safety or ideas on how to improve active transport options and infrastructure in Melbourne’s inner city, I’d love to hear from you. Don’t hesitate to get in touch at 146 Peel St, North Melbourne by emailing office@ellensandell.com or calling us on 9328 4637 ●



Ellen Sandell

STATE MP FOR MELBOURNE

OFFICE@ELLENSANDELL.COM

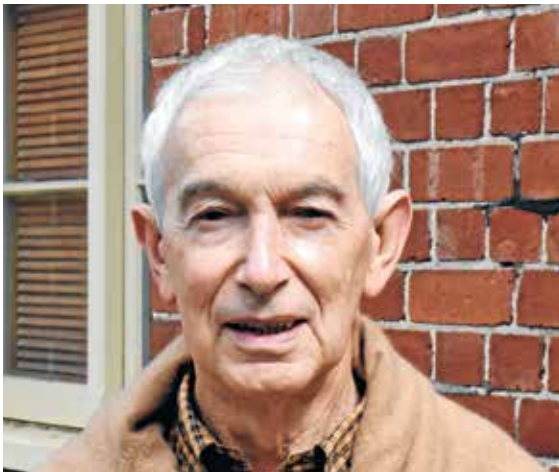


▲ Ellen Sandell MP on her way to the opening of new safe and active paths outside Carlton Gardens Primary School last month.



Faces of North West City

Question: What are you most looking forward to returning in a post-vaccine world?



VINCE
An approximation of what it was before.



MATT
Travel.



ESTEBAN
No COVID, so my wife and I can go back to Chile.



DIONYSIUS
Dancing. I'm a DJ, and I miss holding proper parties!

THE KENSINGTON ASSOCIATION

Where e'er we walk

I want to give a plug to pedestrians, and advocate for the “Shank’s pony” surface – our “pavements”. Pavements can help create feelings of wellbeing in our community. Kensington is a very walkable suburb, and our pavements are a vital part of what makes it a liveable (and even a vibrant) place.

WORDS BY *Therese Fitzgerald*
ON BEHALF OF KENSINGTON ASSOCIATION

On our nearby pavements we see lots of the same people passing each day, and if we are fortunate, we regularly see friends and neighbours. Whether we are walking the kids to school, stopping for a chat, or making a trip to the local shops for bread, milk etc., generous-sized pavements are so much safer and more pleasant.

During recent lockdowns just seeing people on the streets became essential to our wellbeing. As we become a more densely-populated suburb we need to fight as a community to maintain wide walkable pavements. The demands that will be made on these spaces is going to increase significantly into the future. Pedestrian traffic, as in prams, pushers, motorised scooters for older residents, dogs on leads, families walking in groups and kids playing on the pavements, will all become a bigger part of urban activity. Some people will be moving faster, while others will be stopping for a chat when they meet. Conflicting demands will be made for these spaces. Pavements need to be designed to make a more “friendly” (safer, greener, more aesthetic) connection between new apartment buildings.

Apartments are often sold as having the ability to create communities within their design, by having green roof spaces and shared kitchens; but ultimately this is not enough. On ground level these buildings need thoughtfully designed connections to the pavements that link them together.

Shops and cafes are part of the solution; we have seen the success of outdoor dining in certain streets such as Bellair St. While more needs to be done for these spaces to be fully functional, they are making a valuable contribution to pedestrian life, and are a step in the right direction.

The Kensington Association would very much like to see more developers take on the challenge of forecourts, usable street furniture, bike racks and kiosks on the ground floor levels of new buildings. In other words, a more European feel, so that our streets are not just about shopping or dining; they are also places to rest, meet and participate in community.

Being able to step out of the flow of pedestrian traffic and take a breather, have a chat or moment of peace, is helpful to us all.

Human beings need to feel happy to walk down a street, and we need to work at encouraging that to happen. To this end, attention to pavements and our ground-level streetscapes are very important. While greening our cities is vitally important, we need to balance the green with having as wide as possible pavement space.

Looking for benchmarks of success with respect to urban pavements, the top end of Collins St in the CBD comes to mind – such a great place for a stroll!

So, with a little bit of visioning, how would Kensington’s main thoroughfare of Macaulay Rd look and feel if our planners tried to take a leaf out of that Collins St precinct? ●

For more information:
kensingtonassociation.org



ABORIGINAL MELBOURNE



Road trains and paintings: Indigenous artist Cameron Benson launches first exhibition

For indigenous artist Cameron Benson, driving trucks and painting are two things he does well. Instead of mindlessly scrolling through his Facebook feed on breaks between Geelong and Melbourne, Mr Benson uses his time to paint.

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*

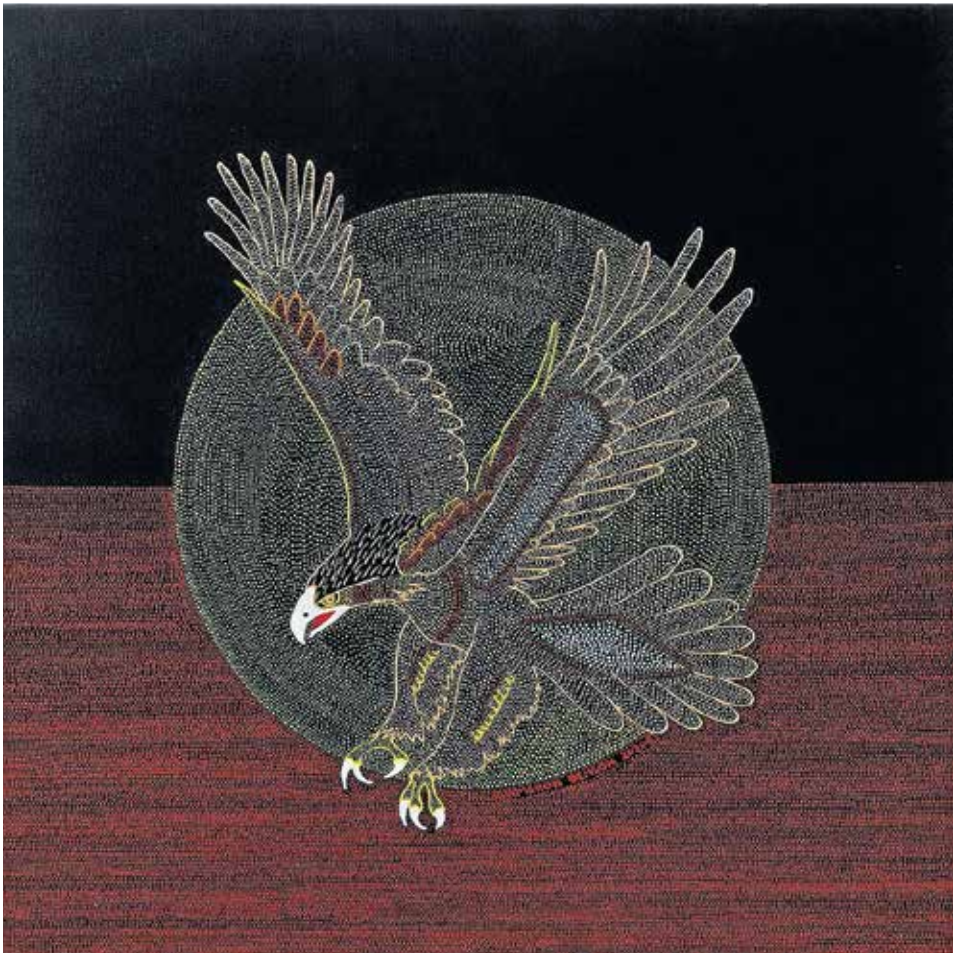
And now, after years of roadside painting, Mr Benson has launched his first ever exhibition titled *Let The Light Shine* showcasing 17 contemporary indigenous Australian animals at the Koori Heritage Trust at Federation Square.

Mr Benson said he was incredibly excited. “There’s 17 paintings, all different Australian animals; a kookaburra, a wombat, fighting kangaroos, a couple of turtles and a few other ones including some yabbies,” he said.

“It’s a contemporary style, it probably looks Aboriginal. But mine don’t have stories or cultural significance.”

Mr Benson used to live in Horsham where he painted T-shirts and other nick-knacks.

But four years ago, after finding painting T-shirts was no longer viable, he packed up and left to Geelong to seek a better market for his artwork.



Mr Benson began refining his style using different tools to paint on canvas while driving trucks between Geelong and Melbourne, where he would often stop en route at service stations for a break and a scroll through his social media feed.

But something about it didn’t gel with his desire for efficiency.

“I thought I better get something done,” Mr Benson said.

“Now, I do most of my work in my truck when I’m on a break. I’ve got a tray, I’ve got liquid paints, and when I get a chance, I get them out.”

“I have a stretched canvas in the back – it’s better than sitting on Facebook all day.”

When it comes to his artistic process, Mr Benson often draws inspiration for his outlines from photographs.

On a recent trip to Tasmania with his wife, Mr Benson snapped a few photos of a Tasmanian

devil, which he used to sketch out the outline for one of the paintings in his exhibition.

But Mr Benson’s true inspiration comes from above.

“I believe I get inspiration from God – he gave me creative ability and I’d go give him the glory for the artwork I do,” Mr Benson said.

“That’s why I called it [the exhibition] *Let The Light Shine*.”

Mr Benson said the title came from scripture, Matthew 5:16.

Let The Light Shine will be showing from March 13 to May 23 at the Koorie Heritage Trust in the Yarra Building at Federation Square. Tickets are free ●

For more information:
korieheritagetrust.com.au

CRITIC

A recipe for humour

WORDS BY *Rhonda Dredge*

One of the many arguments presented in Philip Salom’s latest novel *The Fifth Season* is against a writer’s gratuitous use of material from life.

The main character Jack arrives in a small seaside town, ostensibly on a quest.

But he’s the kind of guy who wants to know everything.

Locals are curious about his motives. He says he’s researching the Gippsland Man, a man who died on the streets in the ‘60s without any identifying documents.

That search becomes a leitmotif for the book as Jack discovers there are missing people all over the place, including from his own past.

The concept of the missing person drives the narrative which leaves no stone unturned in its thorough exploration of those affected by the missing.

The novel is not about absence but very much about presence and the way characters conjure up their missing loved ones.

The Fifth Season is not an easy read.

“On this sojourn he has sketched the small and the fraying (like Fred’s nerves) and listened to voices in the streets and cafes, in the supermarkets and the pub. He is a loose end in a small pocket, a piece of string or, digitally, a tweet.”

The writer Jack (described in this quote) is heavily into interpretation and commentaries and is not one to let a story tell itself.

Conversations, particularly with the young attractive owner of the Airbnb cottage, fill most of the novel as Jack delves deeply into the hurt left by Sarah’s missing sister.



Is he on a healing mission?

Another writer has already been in town following up clues and Jack’s version is both a discovery and a critique of his rival’s self-published novel.

You could say, that for a small town, Blue Bay is blessed with an abundance of writers.



▲ *The Fifth Season*, Philip Salom, Transit Lounge, 2020.

On page 197 the novel reaches its peak of writerly collegiality when Jack roasts a duck for Sarah using a recipe in a poem written by this other wordsmith.

*... If you want to roast a chicken the way you do a duck
scald it: with maltose and soya or strong black tea
(even vodka) hang it out to dry (lascivious grin at Sarah)
Try scalding it with vinegar and water Two hangings
Then place it on a rack above a tray of water and look it’s
A soft teapot it’s a kinky old snail crossed with a brick
Alarmingly a 3D sort of sex toy but half an hour
At full heat then basted (chicken) or not (duck) until*

The description of Jack’s culinary efforts was so good that it was tempting to emulate him.

Ducks in their plastic wrapping need quite a lot of work before they gain their lovely red and glistening hue.

Thank you, Philip, for being so charming and giving us this recipe gratis with such humour ●

Pet's Corner

Office heroes chew the fat at Flagstaff

“

It's not often you get a two-for-one dog deal at Flagstaff gardens!

”



WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*

North West City News was lucky enough to meet a boisterous bulldog hell-bent on making studying almost impossible for his owner, and a Jack Russell who loves fraternising with city barristers.

Svenson Barristers director Anna Svenson brings her Jack Russell, Hank, to work once a week to spend a day in the office where he does his best to ensure no one gets anything done.

“People in the office love him, they love having a little canine visitor,” Ms Svenson said.

“He brings a bit of joy and happiness to everyone’s week, so he’s a lot of fun to have in there.”

Although he can be a little cheeky at times, Ms Svenson described Hank as bubbly, loyal and inquisitive with the “waggiest tale in the world”.

“I get a little bit of a reprieve because sometimes my staff or barristers like to take him for a walk,” she said.

Hank was busy socialising with another six-month old British bulldog, Winnie, while her owner Chris Webb was having a chat with *North West City News*.

He said it was one of Winnie’s first adventures out to the park because she had recently been sick with aspirational pneumonia, a common condition for bulldogs.

“She’s just the biggest attention seeker,” Mr Webb said.

“Whenever we walk anywhere, she shoots over to people and lies down with her belly up. She’s super lovely, just really slobbery and friendly.”

Mr Webb said Winnie enjoyed basking in the sun most of the day on the balcony of his city apartment, where he spent a lot of time studying psychology remotely.

But during his Zoom tutorials and lectures, Winnie sometimes likes to make things difficult.

“Studying from home with a puppy is horrendous, it’s almost impossible,” Mr Webb said.

“Anytime you do any sort of lecture online, she can hear me talking on Zoom at Melbourne Uni, she’s like ‘oh they’re talking to me and we’re doing things, perfect!’”

“However, everyone loves her and I get away with doing so little work because I just hold her up to the camera and say ‘look at this!’ I don’t know what we’re doing, but hey!”

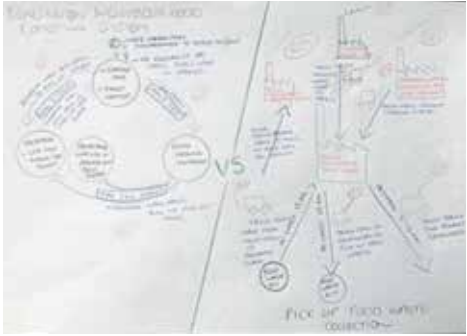
Visit Hank’s Instagram page [@hank.the.jack](#) ●

ENVIRONMENT

Composting in the inner city



▲ *The Kensington Town Hall Compost Hub – three-bay system.*



▲ *Carbon emissions of local processing of organic waste versus proposed bin collection.*

City of Melbourne residents generated more than 40,000 tonnes of waste in 2017-18.

In our household waste, food makes up 35 per cent of what goes into landfill. An easy solution to manage this food waste is household composting.

For detailed information about how to compost and solutions for your particular inner city living go to sustainability.vic.gov.au/recycling-and-reducing-waste/at-home/dispose-of-household-waste/food-and-organic-waste/compost-food-waste

I understand that for those inner-city residents who don’t have a balcony or outside space to compost, it is more challenging if they want to take responsibility for their waste.

Some of you may be aware of the proposed 700 additional plastic bin pilot with a weekly/biweekly pickup for food scraps that the City of Melbourne is proposing to roll out soon.

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.” – *Albert Einstein.*

We (Transition Town Kensington) would like to present a different solution that is operating, one that is local, has a low carbon footprint, delivers benefits back to community and for these reasons should be invested in equally and measured alongside the proposed 700 plastic bin pilot.

We propose the only figure/benchmark we should be measuring all our efforts against is the CO₂ emission figure. Everything we do needs to be measured against how much fossil fuels (carbon emission) does this product/service/activity/initiative use against how much carbon does it sink.

While the intention of the project is beneficial, the proposed trial of 700 bins, gives the wrong message (someone else will take your rubbish and remove it so you don’t have to think about it).

We all have to take responsibility for our way of life, including our waste; this responsibility must be understood by individuals and acted upon based on this understanding. We believe that the best way to deal with food waste is to support local communities and households to deal with their organic waste in a local, direct and conscious way. People need to be encouraged and supported to establish their own composting systems or access local composting services by foot, bike and other low impact ways.

Outlined below is one example of a local closed waste system, with a minimum carbon footprint.

Since 2016 the Kensington Town Hall Compost Hub has educated more than 350 local residents to change their behaviour around their food waste. It is a three-bay system, managed by a volunteer committee. So far, the community has utilised around five cubic metres of compost created by this system. A

system which takes around 4m x 1.2m in space and can handle up to 400 households’ organic waste based on current usage.

These households walk their organic waste down to the Kensington Town Hall Compost Hub regularly. When people manage their own waste, they have a different relationship and understanding of it – this entire system is happening within a five-kilometre radius with minimal CO₂ emissions.

This neighbourhood waste system does not work in isolation; it is an integral part of our food security, food-growing initiatives. They are interconnected.

Since 2011 Kensington has increased food-growing initiatives to alleviate food insecurity. The food scraps from the food grown in their community gardens and at home then go back into the local composting and food growing initiatives.

Through recovering this valuable resource (biomass) reduces the need for compost to be bought, processed elsewhere, packaged and transported into the community.

Compare the carbon footprint of this local system with the proposed one of a weekly/biweekly pick up taking this valuable resource out of our community.

A bin that will be picked up by truck and transported away. This food waste, through accumulation of volumes with other organic waste, will have a higher methane and carbon emission figure.

The costs of the facility (embodied energy)

and transport will be high with machinery using fossil fuels, electricity and other resources to process the food waste. Collecting and hauling compostable materials, and processing them at a facility, requires fuel and energy.

The finished product will then be packaged (with additional materials costs, and the harmful effects of the plastic and other non-recycled materials being used) and transported to a place to retail or transported to where it will be used – with further carbon emissions.

According to the Environment Protection Authority’s (EPA’s) green vehicle guide), the average passenger vehicle emits about 404 grams of CO₂ per mile.

Commercial methods of composting require the use of oil-reliant machinery and a sped-up method of oxidising organic matter at a high heat to get it to break down quickly. No fungal decomposition is involved in this process. Through the slower and more traditional method of composting at home, there is more assurance that everything has been broken down by fungi and bacteria.

Please refer to my (unsophisticated) visual where I try to visually represent my understanding of the general carbon emissions of local processing of organic waste versus proposed food bin collection.

Based on figures the Kensington Town Hall Compost Hub committee estimate that 50 local composting bays will be able to process all of Kensington local vegie scraps. Council and state funding has been received to establish three more compost hubs – at the Kensington Housing Estate, The Venny Inc. and at the Kensington’s Community Childcare Co-operative. Plus, the Southbank Sustainability Group is establishing a community composting hub in Australia’s most densely-populated suburb of Southbank and there are other locally driven composting initiatives.

Waste requires new thinking. Local, small efforts and systems should not be ignored ●



Jacqui van Heerden

CO-CONVENER OF TRANSITION TOWN KENSINGTON

[JACQUIVANHEERDEN@GMAIL.COM](mailto:jacquivanheerden@gmail.com)

In response to the Ombudsman ...

Hello readers, thanks for all the feedback from my last column. In this issue I want to talk about the Victorian Ombudsman's report into the "hard lockdown" of the public housing residents for two weeks at 33 Alfred St, North Melbourne.

The Ombudsman's report can be found at ombudsman.vic.gov.au

As the spokesperson for the Public Housing Residents' Network (PHRN) and the Save Public Housing Collective (SPHC), we have welcomed Ombudsman Deborah Glass's report that found the state government had breached public housing residents' human rights with the imposition of their detention. The following is our joint submission to the Ombudsman's Investigation ...

For the government through Minister Richard Wynne and backed by Premier Daniel Andrews to reject this finding is alarming, showing a complete disregard for human rights not only for the housing residents, but also for others in the community in the future.

To say they would do it again to "save lives" as Minister Wynne has stated is totally unacceptable, emotive language to seek to continue the stigmatisation of public housing residents. It makes a complete mockery of the campaign "we are all in this together".

Public housing residents will always want lives saved but as the Ombudsman has found, the lockdowns were not meant to engage residents in COVID-19 outbreak management. The government made a political decision to use police to treat us all as criminals, unable to self-manage and work with the public health COVID-19 response team.

It is still not too late for the Premier to offer the apology Ms Glass has called for so that we can move on from what happened. An apology should be supported with appropriate compensation payments to resident households for the disruption and trauma created through the lockdowns in all nine towers, which I noted did not happen in private high-rise buildings when COVID-19 was detected.

Ms Glass has recommended the establishment of fully functional committees on all public housing estates so that residents can have a structural way of facilitating dialogue with Homes Victoria (formerly part of DHHS) and addressing issues that need attention, such as timely maintenance of facilities and repairs in flats. The government must provide the resources for this to happen.

Ms Glass has also called for COVID-19 healthcare plans to be put in place for each estate, and I call on the government to extend the current contract with Cohealth to be made permanent and be widened to have a service presence on all estates.

The government also needs to begin an immediate program of ending overcrowding in public housing towers by building new public housing (not social housing) in locations of reasonable proximity to where residents now live. This was promised by Premier Andrews in one of his weekly COVID-19 briefings a few months ago.



For the government through Minister Richard Wynne and backed by Premier Daniel Andrews to reject this finding is alarming, showing a complete disregard for human rights not only for the housing residents, but also for others in the community in the future.



As we are now getting back to some sort of normality, we think it is time to start implementing the above mentioned immediately.

The PHRN and SPHC strongly believe the public housing residents in Victoria need a Public Housing Ombudsman to deal with all issues they cannot satisfactorily resolve with Homes Victoria. Ms Glass has carried out her duties impeccably with this investigation but in the past many requests for assistance to the Ombudsman's Office did not get a response.

Details on the campaign for a Public Housing Ombudsman can be found at:

facebook.com/savepublichousingcollective/
facebook.com/VictorianPublicHousingOmbudsman2020
 Please feel free to contact me about any issues you may have ●



Cory Memery

CORYMEMERY@YAHOO.COM

News from Parkville Gardens



The Easter school holidays are in full swing and the nearby Zoo is in big demand.



Parkville Gardens will have its own holiday event – a children's Easter egg hunt on the morning of Sunday, April 18 – just before school goes back. We're sure this will be just as popular as the pony rides were at the community picnic last month. We're looking forward to it.

Other things are happening in the neighbourhood. Our local member, Tim Read MP, has been advocating on our behalf for a better bus service and is seeking signatures for an online petition in support of the cause.

It can be found at:

timread.org.au/betterbusesforpg

The current service basically runs only once an hour with a minor peak hour supplement. Peak times especially need to be better catered for, but a more frequent service all round would reduce residents' reliance on cars and contribute to a cleaner environment. Tim's aim is to get two extra services in the morning peak and three in the afternoon, plus two bus shelters. His initiative has our full support.

On a less cheerful note, we have lost our sole coffee shop. Noughts and Crosses operated from premises adjacent to the display suite for Frasers' apartment buildings at the southern end of the area. The café has closed to make way for a new residential tower on the site. This will be a 16-storey building with 151 one- and two-bedroom apartments. It will all be social housing, owned and managed by Housing First. We hope to have more information about this development in a few weeks' time.

Courtesy of our City of Melbourne community liaison person, Fiona Darling, and her colleagues in the office, we have some more detailed demographic data about our local population. The statistics are derived from the 2016 Census so may no longer be entirely accurate, especially given the impact of the COVID pandemic, but they are still interesting and informative. Here are just a few examples.

Of the 1800 or so residents just over half (54 per cent) were born overseas. As a result, about half speak a language other than English at home, the biggest contender being Mandarin. One quarter are students, mostly tertiary,

though that has surely changed in the past 12 months. And nearly two-thirds live in flats or apartments. A closer analysis of the information will help the Residents' Association be of service to the whole community ●

Residents can find us:
PGRA Facebook page (facebook.com/groups/pggrass) or email secretary@pgra.org.au.



Tom Knowles

TOM KNOWLES IS THE PRESIDENT OF PARKVILLE GARDENS ASSOCIATION.
PRESIDENT@PGRA.ORG.AU

BUSINESS



Kensington coffee roasters making a rumble

After decades of running award-winning cafes and espresso bars, Rumble Coffee Roasters directors Joe Molloy and Matt Hampton have opened a new espresso bar in their Kensington factory.

WORDS BY Jack Hayes

Nestled at 8 Thompson St, on the fringe of suburban and industrial Kensington, Rumble Coffee Roasters was established in 2014 with a vision to “source consciously, trade wholeheartedly, do business honestly, roast with passion, and support others to do the same.”

“This espresso bar is our chance to showcase all of our coffees and allow people try them in different ways, not just to our wholesalers, but now to the public,” Mr Molloy said.

“We want to encourage consumers to be aware of where their coffee comes from, how much it costs the producer and roastery and to always buy coffee from small or independent local businesses who believe in ethical sourcing.”

“The coffee chain stretches all over the world, but often people at origin are a bit removed from the fancy espresso bar action that we know so well. It’s about getting to know them and sharing their story to our customers.”

Since 2014, Rumble has achieved major successes, including the launch of “The

Transparency Project” in 2018, an initiative which reflects Rumble’s commitment to improve the sustainability and longevity of the specialty coffee industry.

A key aspect of the project is publishing real pricing data. By sharing this information with the supply chain, consumers have an increased awareness of the cost of coffee production, helping even the smallest of operations fetch fairer prices for their products.

In launching the project, Rumble Coffee Roasters became the first roaster in Australia to publish data for all of their coffees.

According to Mr Molloy, if growers continue earning less than the cost of production, they’ll be forced to grow different crops.

In fact, this is already happening in places like Colombia where, on average, farmers need to be paid around USD\$1.76 per pound (AUD\$5.45 per kilo), around 50 per cent more than they receive now, in order for coffee production to offer the same income as they would for growing coca for cocaine production.

“For people who are drinking \$1 7-11 coffee,

I would just ask them to think about how many hands went into making that coffee,” Mr Molloy said.

“From the barista through to the roaster, then importing it, growing it, packing it and processing it. It is human beings who are handling that coffee every step of the way, and if you’re paying \$1 for a cup, do you think those people are being paid equitably?”

“It’s about placing real value on the labour of those producing the coffees we all love and making sustainable and ethical business decisions wherever we can.”

The team at Rumble works with a myriad of producers from across the globe, sourcing the highest quality, ethically produced “green” beans from heavyweight coffee producing countries such as Brazil, Columbia, Rwanda and beyond.

To counteract the onerous carbon footprint associated with international importing, Rumble use recyclable and reusable packaging, undertake responsible waste management and encourage community awareness and

involvement.

“With the arrival of our new Loring roaster, Rumble is also proud to be able to produce 83 per cent less CO2 than a traditional roaster and afterburner setup, while increasing roasting capacity,” he said.

With the introduction of their espresso bar, locals will be able experience a seasonal selection of single origin coffees, a “filter coffee of the week” served in whichever style desired and various roast styles and brew methods.

The espresso bar will also be used for training, masterclasses, cupping sessions, and as a space for Rumble’s message of transparency and sustainability in specialty coffee to be communicated directly to consumers ●

For more information, visit rumblecoffee.com.au.



Houston, we have dinner sorted

The Queen Victoria Market (QVM) is taking its newest night market to interstellar heights with the introduction of Spaced Out: a dining experience that is out of this world.

Running every Wednesday until April 28, Spaced Out will showcase the best of Melbourne’s food trucks and street stalls, with favourites like smokey American BBQ, jerk chicken, traditional paella, lobster rolls, popcorn prawns, truffled fries, fresh cannoli and much more.

QVM’s open-air sheds will be transformed into a galactic wonderland with an Infinity & Beyond Bar serving space-themed cocktails featuring Antagonist Spirits’ Hard Cut Gin and beers by Brick Lane Brewing.

Each week, visitors can journey across the cosmos with a celestial line-up of entertainment and activities.

Local musicians The Thin White Ukes will play tribute to the space-shifting prince of art-pop, David Bowie, with some of his biggest hits – *Space Oddity*, *Starman*, *Ziggy Stardust* and *Hallo Spaceboy* – played on ukuleles.

The Guru Dudu silent disco will make its triumphant return to the Market with a special space soundtrack to dance and float the night away to, while street entertainer Chris Morant will bring a roving light and mirrors show with spatial movement and magic.

The Spaced Out night market runs from 5pm to 10pm each Wednesday ●

For more information, visit qvm.com.au/whatson/spaced-out.



What's On: April 2021

Community Calendar

Rythm tap classes
Kids (ages 6-11) and adults
Kensington YMCA
Altona St, Kensington

Commences 26 April: Kids at 5.30pm
adults 7pm.

6 lessons for \$120

Booking via Trybooking.com 'Kensington Tap'



Food for Good Festival

Saturday, May 1
12pm
92 Errol St, North Melbourne
Free

Celebrating food.

Younghusband Triangle
8 Elizabeth Street, Kensington
Tuesday, April 23: 3pm to 4pm
Free

Explore Kensington's impressive
19th-century industrial Younghusband
woolstore precinct.

Contact Kensington Neighbourhood
Nouse: esther.s@kenhouse.org.au

Sustainable computers

Monday, April 26 to Sunday, May 2.
54 Courtney St, North Melbourne
9329 9966

Learn how we can make computers
more energy efficient and jump into
some hands-on science activities with
researchers.

Strength and Conditioning Workshop

Saturday, April 17, 10am - 11.30am
Kensington Neighbourhood House
89 McCracken St, Kensington 3031

Aimed at individuals aged 55 years and
above.

Adult / general \$30

Student / concession \$23

Arts House - Convergence (game)

Harry Lee Shang Lun/ PlayReactive
Launches online Wed 21 April
Play anytime with 2 to 6 people.
You will need a computer, paper, pens and
a coin.
Free
Duration: 90 - 120 minutes
Suitable for 16 years old +



The Playground

Thursday, April 15 to Sunday, April 18
10am - 5pm

Free event: bookings not required
New Quay Promenade & New Quay
Central Park
The District Docklands

Take the kids to play at this magical



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 queer-
identified people between the ages of 13
to 25 to connect and get writing. Free

youngadults@melbourne.vic.gov.au



VIDA - Melbourne Latin Festival

Tom's Block (King's Domain)
Linlithgow Ave, Melbourne 3004

Free, bookings not required
Taste exotic cuisine from more than 20
Latin vendors offering a wide range of
street foods. Or relax in the Latin beer
gardens and watch the world go by.



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

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w: northwestmelbourne.com.au
e: northwestmelbourneprecinct@gmail.com

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2 April – 22 August

The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia, Fed Square

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Tom Roberts *She-oak and sunlight* 1889 (detail), National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Jean Margaret Williams Bequest, K. M. Christensen and A. E. Bond Bequest, Eleanor M. Borrow Bequest, The Thomas Rubie Purcell and Olive Esma Purcell Trust and Warren Clark Bequest, 2019