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Muslim community gathers for Iftar
Photo by John Tadigiri

More than 100 residents from North Melbourne and Flemington public housing high-rise gathered for a Ramadan Iftar celebration in May, marking the first time the local Muslim community has seen each other since COVID-19 began. *Continued on page 8.*

Call to reopen public housing for community programs

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

Community organisations in Kensington and North Melbourne are calling on the government to reopen public housing so they can run vital programs for vulnerable residents.

Public housing towers across Melbourne, including those in North Melbourne and Kensington, have been shut to the public since March last year due to COVID-19 restrictions. Normally, Kensington Neighbourhood House (KNH) runs a Study Support program at the community hub on the ground floor of the Kensington public housing estate providing free essential support and educational assistance to children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The program employs 26 volunteers who provide 49 school-aged children and 18 families with homework as-

sistance twice a week and utilises a trilingual Somali community member to effectively communicate with families.

KNH community engagement specialist Rebecca Smith said because most of the children attending the program lived in overcrowded housing, the program provided a much-needed quiet space for schoolwork.

"Last year was a very difficult year for everybody, but extremely difficult for families living in public housing," she said.

"This year is for recovery, it's difficult when we won't have easy access to space for family support."

North West City News understands various other community groups in Kensington and North Melbourne have been affected by the decision to close the public housing towers.

These include North Melbourne Language and Learning which is seeking to teach English, Kensington Arabic School which usually runs Arabic classes, and residents

Continued on page 2.

Kensington Primary's \$1.5 million fix

A few years ago, a piece of concrete the size of someone's fist broke off Kensington Primary School (KPS) and plummeted to the ground.

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
EDUCATION

By sheer luck, no one was seriously injured or killed. But these sorts of hazards come as no surprise to the KPS community.

In the past, students have even been forced to sell their old toys just to raise enough for basic repairs.

For years, the school has been lobbying the Victorian Government to provide adequate funding to fix a growing list of problems which threaten the safety of students and staff on a daily basis. And now, after reaching deep into its own pockets, the KPS community is demanding the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA) allocate \$1.5 million in the upcoming state budget to fix KPS for good.

The push is being spearheaded by Greens State MP, Ellen Sandell, who has been campaigning to fix the 140-year-old, heritage-listed school since 2018.

In March, Minister for Education James Merlino visited KPS after Ms Sandell raised the long-running issue in Parliament, sparking hope for the school community who have been forced to resort to fundraisers just to scrape enough together to fund the school's ongoing repairs. KPS parents started one particular fundraiser to fix the school's hall which was never clad inside, leaving chunks of crudely taped insulation exposed.

Ms Sandell said students were selling their old toys to fund the project. "The parents and community have done an amazing job, but they shouldn't be fundraising to fix up the basic needs of the school," Ms Sandell said.

"We're really just lucky no one had been seriously injured at Kensington Primary."

"A few years ago, a piece of concrete moulding fell off the school – it was complete luck that it didn't hit staff or students." KPS Council president Jonathan Orr said the funding would go towards fixing a raft of major problems including an out-of-service toilet block and damaged foundations, as well as improving classrooms.

"The worst affected area in terms of stumping is in the administration area," he said.

"It's a bit of a minefield in areas – there's a few 'Xs' on the carpet because the floorboards are so rotten there that there's risk you'll step through them."

Mr Orr said KPS – which has 500 students – used to have two toilet blocks, but one was taken out of commission around 25 years ago.

"If you ask any kids what they think of the toilets, they say they're so disgusting that they'll hold on and not go," he said.

According to Ms Sandell's budget proposal, the school has received a total of \$250,000 from the VSBA, as well as several small grants since 2018. The funds have allowed the school to complete the bare minimum required for it to be WorkSafe-compliant such as installing wheelchair access, ensuring there are enough staff toilets and recarpeting some areas.

However, the school has paid to fix most of the urgent safety issues including non-compliant gutters, replacing an unsafe playground, treating a termite problem and installing air conditioning. Ms Sandell said in many instances, the school found that the funding had only been enough to fix surface

Continued on page 3.

PLANNING, PAGE 05
A Push for affordable housing revamp in Arden



SPORT, PAGE 07
B First LGBTIQ+ ice hockey club



COUNCIL AFFAIRS, PAGE 10
C Council pays resident for tree damage



HEALTH, PAGE 15
D Mouse plague hits Abbotsford St



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▲ Community organisations have been shut out of the public housing towers despite COVID-19 restrictions easing.

Call to reopen public housing for community programs

Continued from page 1.

at 9 Pampas St who are seeking to use a room there for functions.

The Chinese Friendship Association (CFA) in Kensington is another community group which has been unable to carry out its normal functions.

Ms Smith said CFA was a group of 40 to 60 Chinese seniors who lived in the Kensington estate and used a space there for regular gatherings, helping lessen social isolation and foster community ties.

Usually, KNH also runs its Healthy Living and Learning program at the Kensington public housing in partnership with Unison and Cohealth, providing weekly lunches for up to 60 people.

But since the housing towers have shut, the program has had to move to take away only.

Ms Smith said she was also “really frustrated” because another KNH-run craft program for seniors at 94 Ormond St, Threading Stories, had to stop.

“It’s really sad actually because it [normally] lessens social isolation,” she said.

Federal Member for Melbourne, Adam Bandt, and State Greens MP Ellen Sandell have both written to the Minister for Housing urging the government to reopen public housing to allow programs to run.

Mr Bandt said KNH had provided the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) with a COVID-19 safe plan, addressing all the criteria listed in the DFFH Access to Community Facilities Guidelines and Access to Cooler Places Guidelines, but to no avail.

“Given the importance of the program to the local community, and their willingness to ensure that the COVID-safe plan is implemented and adhered to, I urge you to allow the program to operate out of the Hub this term subject, of course, to any relevant COVID restrictions,” Mr Bandt wrote in February.

While the government has provided no


“
This year is for recovery, it’s difficult when we won’t have easy access to space for family support.”

”

specific timeline to reopening public housing in Melbourne, a government spokesperson said it was currently working with community organisations to look at reopening safely.

“The closure of community facilities during the pandemic has been a regrettable but essential measure to protect tenants and the broader community from coronavirus,” the spokesperson said.

“We’re pleased alternative arrangements have been found to allow many of these programs to continue and we’ll continue to work with local program providers to look at how these facilities can reopen in a COVIDSafe way.” ●



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Woman sexually assaulted on Railway Place

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
CRIME

Victoria Police have charged a man following a sexual assault in West Melbourne in late April.

The incident happened on Railway Place near the corner of Dudley Street when the victim, a 23-year-old woman who was on her way to work, was allegedly pulled off the street and into a building alcove just before 7.30am on Friday, April 23.

After taking a small amount of money from the victim, the man inappropriately grabbed her several times before forcibly moving her to a second alcove.

The victim screamed and an off-duty police officer intervened causing the man to run off.

A second off-duty officer chased

the man to a building on the corner of Adderley St and Railway Place where he was arrested.

The building was cordoned off and following a search the man was located hiding in a bathroom.

The 32-year-old man has been charged with abduction for a sexual purpose, sex assault, false imprisonment, unlawful assault and robbery.

He has been remanded in custody to appear at the Melbourne Magistrates' Court on July 16.

Asked whether CCTV cameras would be installed and what would be done to make the area safer, the City of Melbourne refused to comment due to it being a police matter.

Railway Place is a major thoroughfare for pedestrians walking to and from North Melbourne Station ●

▼ A woman was sexually assaulted at this location on Railway Place.



Kensington Primary's \$1.5 million fix

Continued from page 1.

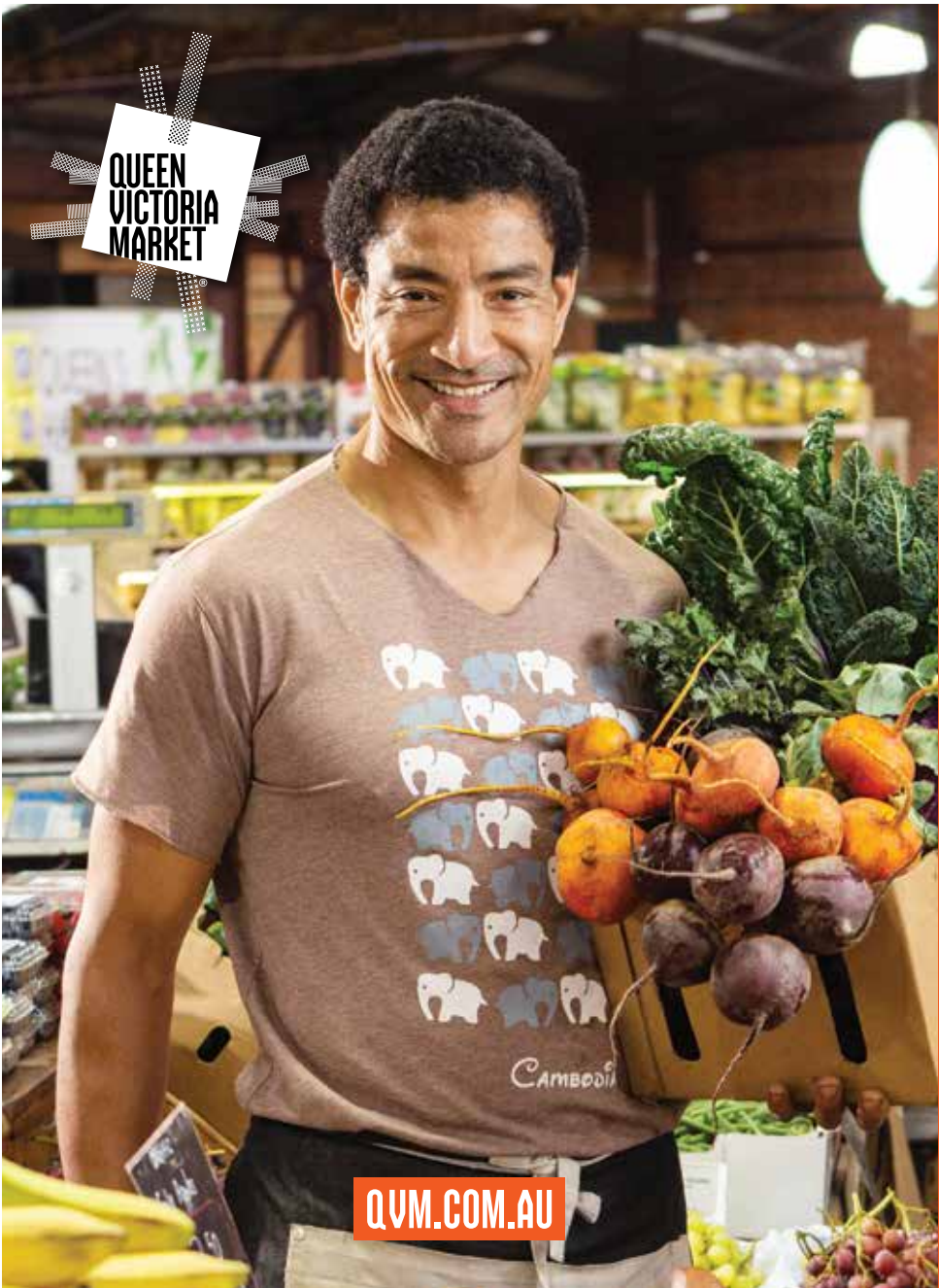
without resolving the underlying issues.

"Kids and parents have literally been paying for things that core funding should fix like leaky gutters and toilets," she said.

However, Ms Sandell said she felt "really hopeful" the school would attract the necessary funding in the upcoming state budget after further meetings with the Treasurer and the Minister for Education ●



▲ Greens State MP Ellen Sandell has been campaigning to fix KPS.



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Your City of Melbourne community update

HOW TO GET YOUR FLU VACCINE



Get your seasonal flu vaccine at your local immunisation session



Get a seasonal flu vaccine to help protect your wellbeing during the colder months by dropping into one of the City of Melbourne's community immunisation sessions.

Immunisation helps protect children and adults against harmful infections by using the body's natural defence mechanism – the immune response – to build resistance to specific infections.

While there is a lot of focus on the COVID-19 vaccine at the moment, it is still important to get immunised for the flu. The City of Melbourne holds regular flu immunisation clinics at five family service centres.

Flu vaccines are free for children aged between six months and five years, pregnant women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people

aged over 65, and those who suffer from chronic conditions.

The flu vaccine is available for adults, and children aged five years and older, at a cost of \$20.

In your local area, flu vaccines are available every Tuesday morning in May and June at the Multicultural Hub, opposite Queen Victoria Market at 506 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne.

They are also available on the mornings of Thursday 13 May and Thursday 10 June in the mornings and on Monday 24 May and Monday 21 June in the late afternoons at Carlton Learning Precinct on the corner of Palmerston and Rathdowne streets.

During COVID-19, we have introduced additional measures to protect our community and staff during community immunisation sessions, including

physical distancing and additional hygiene and screening processes.

Bookings are also essential. For more details, and to find out how to make a booking, visit melbourne.vic.gov.au/immunisation

ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINATIONS

The roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines is being managed by the Federal Department of Health. For the latest information, check health.gov.au/covid19vaccines

The COVID-19 vaccination does not protect against seasonal flu. You must wait at least 14 days between a dose of the flu vaccine and a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

IN-BRIEF

VOLUNTEER WITH US

Expand your skills, meet like-minded people and experience the city in a new light. Explore our latest volunteering opportunities to find something just right for you at melbourne.vic.gov.au/volunteer

DRAFT BUDGET, COUNCIL PLAN AND COMMUNITY VISION

What are your aspirations for Melbourne? We have created a draft Community Vision that outlines key priorities for the next 10 years, based on feedback from the community. The Community Vision forms part of our four-year Council Plan, the first year of which will be delivered through our Annual Plan and Budget. Have your say on all these plans from 26 May at participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au

MARKET SHEDS RESTORED

Visit Queen Victoria Market to shop for fresh produce, support local traders and see heritage sheds restored to their former glory. The market is open on Tuesday and Thursday to Sunday. Visit qvm.com.au

NEW PLAYGROUNDS

By July, the playgrounds at JJ Holland Park in Kensington and Lincoln Square in Carlton will get a makeover, with new monkey bars, rope bridges, BBQ areas and more. Visit melbourne.vic.gov.au/cityprojects

MELBOURNE AWARDS

We celebrate talented Melburnians who make extraordinary contributions to our city and help shape its future through the Melbourne Awards. Who inspires you? Nominate them for our city's highest accolade by Friday 4 June. Learn more at melbourne.vic.gov.au/melbourneawards

COUNCIL MEETINGS

Watch meetings live from wherever you are thanks to our live-streaming capability. Tune in live or catch up later. Find all the details about Council and committee meetings at melbourne.vic.gov.au/aboutcouncil

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GREEN SPACES TO EXPLORE

Picnic in serene surrounds, exercise among the trees or just delight in nature in our city's parks, gardens and new urban spaces that we've transformed from grey to green.

We have nearly 480 hectares of green space to explore in the City of Melbourne, including bushland, wetlands, suburban reserves and heritage gardens with majestic avenues of trees.

Stay a while and enjoy our sports grounds, barbecues, award-winning playgrounds and unique installations like the musical Federation Bells in Birrarung Marr.

Rediscover Royal Park

In your neighbourhood, you can immerse yourself in nature amid 188 hectares of green space at Royal Park, the largest park within the municipality of Melbourne.

Stroll through vast open spaces and areas of native and indigenous vegetation.

Amid the lightly timbered eucalypt forest, keep your eye out for possums and a huge variety of birdlife, including rosellas, wrens, robins and birds of prey.



Our rangers in action at Royal Park

Kids will love the award-winning nature playground. More than just slides and swings – this playground has a sandpit and water-play area, logs, rocks and ropes to climb all over, and a grassy hill for rolling down.

Royal Park is also home to a vast array of sporting facilities and the Trin Warren Tam-boore wetlands. Trin Warren Tam-boore means 'bellbird waterhole', and the place is home to many species of native fauna like ibis and kookaburras.

Read the signs along the trail to learn all about the creatures that call the wetland home.

Finally, with Royal Park boasting an array of sporting facilities for you to use, it's the perfect location to get active.

This is just a small glimpse into the many parks, gardens, playgrounds and greening projects that make Melbourne a great place to live, work and play.

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

Push for affordable housing revamp in Arden

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

Melbourne planning experts and the City of Melbourne are calling on the state government to deliver public housing to the Arden renewal precinct and to refurbish existing public housing in North Melbourne.

The recommendation forms part of the council's submission to the Victorian Government's 10-year strategy for social and affordable housing in Victoria, expected to be released later this year.

As it stands, the state has endorsed an affordable housing target of at least six per cent for the Arden area.

However, planning experts and the council say Arden has the capacity to achieve a much higher mix of affordable and public housing.

Cr Rohan Leppert said at a council meeting in April that with a new Metro train station opening in the centre of Arden in 2025, there was no better place for the construction of new public housing units.

"We need public housing, and if the government is serious about doing urban renewal properly, it can look at the hectares and hectares and hectares of state government-owned land that it has in Arden and put at least 10 per cent of it aside for public housing units," Cr Leppert said.

"I'd like to highlight the need to refurbish what we have – the North Melbourne housing estate will need a wholesale refurbishment in order to ensure that its operations are energy efficient, low cost, and high quality for the public housing tenants of today and the future."

There will be "significant" need for social and affordable housing in places like Arden, with the proposed relocation of the Royal Melbourne Hospital to the precinct creating demand for key-worker housing in the area, the council said.

Proximity to public housing towers in Macaulay also presents a prime opportunity to create housing options for existing public housing tenants without displacing community members while also freeing up public housing units, the council's submission said.

Experts demand better public housing for North Melbourne

RMIT University School of Property, Construction and Project Management senior lecturer Dr Trivess Moore said it was crucial to refurbish the existing North Melbourne housing estate in order to improve health and financial outcomes for the residents, as well as boost sustainability.

"Melbourne has quite a lot of older public housing stock," he said.

"Many were built at a time where they weren't necessarily designed to last as long as they have done, but also before minimum sustainably standards were in place so are likely to be quite poor in terms of energy consumption and thermal capability and liveability."

Dr Moore said if more public housing was not provided in Arden, it would push people out who could not afford to live in the area, exacerbating negative outcomes.

"The research shows that more the diversity you have in the community, the stronger and more resilient the communities are," he said.

"Public housing is absolutely critical, and in North Melbourne, it makes perfect sense to include a good percentage to be affordable housing – it's close to the city, close to infrastructure and it's an opportunity to allow those who wouldn't have the opportunity, to live in this location."

But for RMIT University Centre for Urban Research Professor Libby Porter, the term "affordable housing" is meaningless.

"Affordable housing in the Planning Scheme is at about 80 per cent of market rate," Prof Porter said.

"Those kinds of precincts like Arden, they represent an opportunity to address deep housing inequity and we're missing that opportunity by dressing it up in these meaningless terms like 'affordable housing'."

Prof Porter said the "most cost-effective" way to address the housing crisis, homelessness and



▲ Experts are calling for upgrades to existing public housing estates.

“There’s a lack of political will, lack of imagination and I think it’s also a lack of wider public understanding of what’s at stake.”

the amount of people on housing waiting lists was for the state to build more public housing.

"We've demonised public housing for so long in Australia that people who don't live in public housing often forget how important it is – it's the foundation of a proper housing system and we marginalise it and we think of it as a welfare net."

According to a Victorian Government spokesperson, \$185 million is being invested in the redevelopment of ageing public housing estates, including Abbotsford St, North Melbourne. The spokesperson said the push would create a minimum of 1100 new social housing dwellings across eight sites in metropolitan Melbourne, on top of the "Big Housing Build".

"The Abbotsford St, North Melbourne redevelopment site is anticipated to deliver 133 new social housing homes – an increase of about 20 per cent from the previous number of dwellings. There will also be about 170 private homes," the spokesperson said.

"The 133 social housing homes will remain under the ownership of Homes Victoria. All relocated social housing tenants at North Melbourne can choose to request a home at this site should they wish to return after the project is completed." But Professor Porter said the decision to demolish the Abbotsford St Estate had been a "terrible" decision in the first place. "The government used their lack of care as a landlord as a justification for knocking it down." "We could've maintained the dwellings or refurbished them in a piecemeal way, that's more expensive, but government needs to get on board. We need to be better landlords."

Build-to-rent developer Assemble, which is currently constructing innovative mixed housing apartments at 393 Macaulay Rd and 15 Thompson St, recently bought 7415 sqm of land at 402 Macaulay Rd, Kensington.

Of the 400 affordable rental dwellings planned for the site, 20 per cent would be dedicated to social housing, boosting the local economy and creating 2200 construction jobs across the three Kensington sites, managing director Kris Daff said.

"In these unprecedented times, housing security is top-of-mind for many Australians and that places even more importance on our model, which has been purpose-built to provide residents and homeowners affordable, accessible housing," Mr Daff said.

"Our focus on affordability allows people with household incomes of \$60,000 and above a foothold in the property market."

Calls for council recognition

In November 2020, the state government announced an historic \$5.3 billion "Big Housing Build" to construct more than 12,000 new social and affordable homes throughout metro and regional Victoria.

The commitment was the state (and nation's) biggest ever investment in the space and, according to homelessness groups, was well overdue.

At the time, the government announced that a new agency, Homes Victoria, would deliver the record housing growth and manage existing public housing.

The CEO of the new agency is former City of Melbourne CEO Ben Rimmer.

In its submission to Homes Victoria's 10-year strategy, the council made no secret its desire to be made a key part of the government's housing blitz.

Citing its central city location, access to jobs and existing support services and community infrastructure, the council's first recommendation was to be brought closely into the fold.

"We seek recognition as a priority delivery partner," it said.

The council proposed that a new entity, "Homes Melbourne", was set up to work in partnership with Homes Victoria.

Lord Mayor Sally Capp underlined the importance of collaboration in the coming years.

"This submission reflects our ability to create a game-changing, city-shaping, but most importantly life-transforming set of policies and actions in the city of Melbourne for Melburnians – that's actually why we're here," she said.

"We know housing and homelessness is absolutely a top priority for this council, for our city and for our people, and this is a moment in time. This submission really leverages the confluence of a long-suffered housing crisis. What we see now is a coalition of the willing, the able and now well-resourced group of organisations, led by the state government and its decision to properly fund a significant delivery of much-needed affordable and social housing."

Cr Rohan Leppert said the council's intervention into the policy space was "incredibly important" and would be "one of the most things we're going to do" in this term ●



Spencer Fowler Steen
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“Absolute disaster”: Residents flag concerns about Hawke St linear park

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
PLANNING

A group of West Melbourne residents is concerned about the initial plan for a new “linear” park along Hawke St, which will cut traffic down to one lane in each direction.

The City of Melbourne’s design for the street’s entire length removes around 50 “under-utilised” car parks to make way for open space and a shared pedestrian/cyclist footpath in a bid to reduce traffic, improve bike connectivity and increase greenery.

But for Dr David and Heather Evans, who have lived in Hawke St since 1995, the plan is “premature” and comes at a cost to the amenity currently enjoyed by existing and future residents.

“We find little to commend the preliminary concept plan and regard it as premature without consideration of the broader impact of the plan on the precinct and the future implantation of the West Melbourne Structure Plan,” they said in a submission to the council.

Traffic calming measures

As part of the council’s design, released in late March, traffic would be reduced from four lanes to two between Adderley and Spencer streets with a shared user path replacing the current median strip and a new 8.5-metre-wide park.

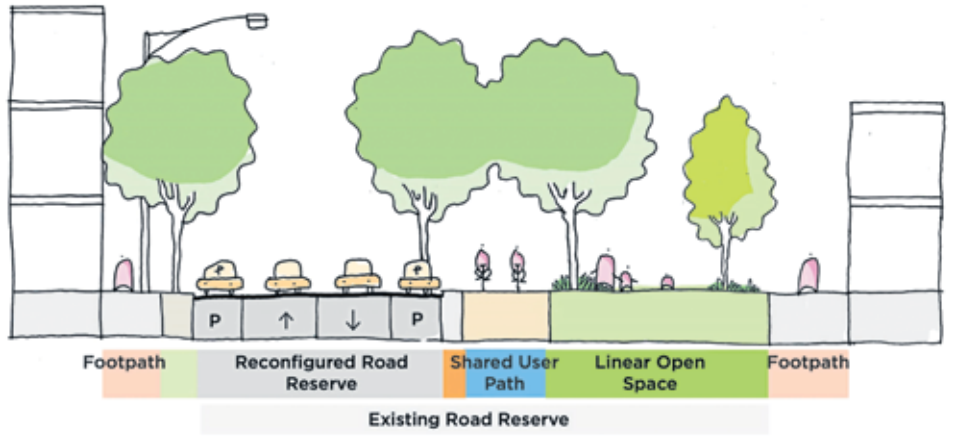
Between Spencer and King streets, traffic will be reduced from four lanes to two, with a shared user path replacing the current median strip, and a 10m-wide expansion of the exiting green space.

But Hawke St resident Sue Scarfe, who lives between Spencer and King streets on the north east side, is concerned about increased traffic causing damage to her house.

“In principle, traffic calming is a really good idea,” she said.



▲ West Melbourne residents believe the proposed Hawke St linear park plan needs work.



▲ An artist impression o the expanded park area between Adderly and Spencer streets. Picture: City of Melbourne.

“But we have historic houses we maintain, and the foundations are shallow, and if they move the traffic closer, the vibrations are going to cause damage.

“At the moment, we get one lane of traffic going past our house, and now they’re going to put both lanes right outside our house.”

According to residents, the section between Spencer and King streets is Hawke St’s busiest, with large volumes of traffic flowing north to Victoria St or south to Spencer St.

Hawke St resident Bill Cook, who lives in this

section, suggested chicanes to slow traffic down between Spencer and King streets.

The Evans are also worried that with only one lane of traffic each way in this section, there would be a “huge” build-up of traffic in Spencer St waiting to turn left into Hawke St, as well as traffic backed up in Victoria and King streets.

Part of the plan also proposes getting rid of the roundabout at the corner of Hawke and Adderley streets.

Railway Place resident Janet Graham said she and other residents fought “long and hard”

in the ‘90s to build the roundabout due to frequent accidents, and even fatalities at the spot. “We think the roundabout works – don’t touch the roundabout,” she said.

For the Evans, removing the roundabout would be an “absolute disaster”.

“This is a very busy intersection and serves as a traffic calming measure in its own right,” they said.

In an email seen by *North West City News*, a council representative said roundabouts like the one earmarked for removal did “little” to slow motorists down.

“From what I’ve gathered from our Transport Planners, roundabouts were the go-to neighbourhood traffic solution in the ‘90s,” the representative said.

“We now know that roundabouts in streets like Adderley do little to slow motorists down, and people don’t indicate properly anyway.”

“With the narrowing of Hawke St and associated stop signs, they are confident they could significantly slow down vehicles to improve safety.”

Increasing green space

As part of a bid to increase green space, the council will remove about 49 out of 157 existing car park spaces based on a parking survey which found that more than 35 per cent of publicly available car parks in the area were not used during peak periods.

The new linear park would not only allow for community use, but a reduced “urban heat island” effect, with additional tree canopy shade and permeable surfaces for rainwater absorption, according to the council.

But a number of residents say the traffic survey cannot be relied on because it was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and is not representative of pre-COVID traffic.

The Evans also said on-street car parking would be compromised in coming years when new apartment buildings were completed.

These include more than 200 apartments in the Don Kyatt building on the corner of Hawke, Adderley and Roden streets, 184 apartments in the Gadsden building at 268 Adderley St and seven townhouses at 11-17 Ireland St, they said.

“Unless the city proposes to make a significant number of the on-street cap spaces in Hawke St strictly ‘resident only’ the proposed reduction in parking spaces would be a serious loss of amenity for Hawke St residents.”

Hawke St resident Anthony McKee said the loss of carparking was concerning for a number of reasons.

“I think there’s a risk of businesses moving out of the neighbourhood because it’s unviable for them to keep working without car spaces, and they contribute to the local economy,” he said. The council is currently considering submissions on the initial design ●

Get your thinking caps on, North and West Melbourne

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
PLANNING

Melbournians are being invited to have their say on how to improve Bedford and Courtney Reserves, as well as the surrounding North and West Melbourne streetscape.

The City of Melbourne has secured funding to potentially expand the reserves into larger, more functional and attractive neighbourhood “pocket parks”, and has opened surveys and workshops for community feedback.

Enjoyed since the 1930s and ‘40s, Bedford St Reserve is an elevated grassy open space surrounded by mature Elm trees between Courtney, Capel and Bedford streets.

Courtney St Reserve is a smaller triangular green space with young trees across the road. The council is also looking at opportunities to transform nearby streets and laneways including Peel St, Princess St, O’Connell St, Capel St, Bedford St, Courtney St, adjacent parts of Queensberry and Victoria streets as well as connecting laneways in this precinct. The invitation comes after recent council changes to Peel St bike paths and car

parks, which prompted community concern during the consultation phase in late 2020 and early 2021, according to the council. While ideas for physical design interventions, such as lighting, pedestrian paths, rubbish bins seating are being welcomed, the council is also inviting the community to have its say on



▲ The area (in green) of focus for the council.

activities such as street parties for the area, street gardens, murals and a neighbourhood watch. According to a historical photograph dated from 1925 to 1940, a playground maypole or possibly an ornamental water feature once sat at the centre of Bedford Reserve. But it is not known exactly when and why it was removed, the council said. The City of Melbourne’s Open Space Strategy has identified North Melbourne is in need of more open space given the booming residential population, with Bedford and Courtney Reserves earmarked as opportunities. As part of the Victorian Government’s \$154 million Suburban Parks Program, which will deliver 6500 hectares of new parks and trails, \$50 million is being invested to create 29 “pocket parks” and up to 16 off-leash dog parks across metropolitan Melbourne. A workshop will be held on May 22 between 1pm and 3pm at Bedford St Reserve for the community to speak with council officers and go on a guided walk through the area. Alternatively, the community can fill out an on-line survey or email parkplanning@melbourne.vic.gov.au.

Consultation closes on May 24 ●



▲ A playground or a water feature was once at the centre of Bedford Street. Photo: Charles Daniel Pratt.

For more information:
participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au



North Melbourne residents join Australia’s first LGBTIQA+ ice hockey club

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
PHOTOGRAPHY BY *John Tadigri*
SPORT

For North Melbourne’s Brodie McGee, playing in Australia’s first ever LGBTIQA+ ice hockey club comes with a sense of relief.

It’s an opportunity for him to avoid the homophobic and sexist language which so often goes hand-in-hand with ice hockey, and other sports he has been a part of.

And as captain of the Rockhoppers – a social, all-inclusive ice hockey team in Melbourne – Mr McGee said it was an “insanely challenging” way to have a bit of fun.

“For me, it’s a really interesting sport,” he said.

“I wanted something social, physical and really challenging, and ice hockey is all of those.”

“It’s this insanely challenging sport – you’re not just trying to score goals, it’s ice skating, it’s commitment, it’s a whole family you’re getting involved with.”

But despite the perks, Mr McGee said ice hockey had a dark side.

“It’s a great way for me to avoid being called names like in other sports,” he said.

“It’s part and parcel – you’ll hear ‘faggot’ and ‘queer’ and those things, even though it’s not directed at me as a gay man, that part of language is usually part of sport.”

“For queer people and women, many spots have that toxic masculinity attributed to them – we don’t put up with that.”

Homophobic and sexist language is rife in Australia’s professional ice hockey community, with nearly three-quarters of players admitting to using derogatory slurs on the rink, new research by Monash University shows.

While findings revealed that 68 per cent of players heard teammates – and 60 per cent of players admitted to – using homophobic slurs such as “fag” and “dyke”, lead researcher Erik Denison said the language did not appear to be motivated by homophobia or sexism.

Rather, players were motivated by a desire for social inclusion and to conform to what’s viewed as culturally normal, according to the study which involved 146 players from 11 countries who play in the Australian Ice Hockey League.

“We found a very large disconnect between positive attitudes about gay people and the negative language being used,” Mr Denison said.

Southern Lights Ice Hockey Club was formed in 2019 as part of a push to create a welcoming sporting environment far away from the hyper-masculinised world of ice hockey, born out of a national advocacy group called Australia LGBT Ice Hockey.

President and co-founder of both organisations, Carl Jackson, said since starting the original team with 14 players, Southern

Lights has grown into a club with 90 to 100 players and six teams across Melbourne and Sydney, including the Rockhoppers. Five of those teams are based in Melbourne with 70 players.

“It’s a popular environment for trans and gender-diverse people – there’s no awkward questions,” Mr Jackson said.

“We have allies who have spoken to me voicing their support for what we do because they’re aware of these issues in straight hockey, and they want to work with us.”

Recently, Mr McGee posted in the North Melbourne Good Karma network Facebook page in a bid to recruit new players to the Rockhoppers.

But he wasn’t expecting the response he got.

“From that little recruitment in the North Melbourne Karma Group, we’ve got probably

“I love hockey, I really wanted to get back into a recreational activity, and my neighbour Reuben also wanted to do it, so we just decided to give it a go.”

As an assistant principal, Reuben Logan said he was instantly drawn to the Southern Lights community because it brought people together.

“In my work, that’s something we strive to do,” he said.

“Our community is really diverse I really like the idea of being part of a community that’s like that.”

“Trying new things, you have to force yourself to do it - that’s one of the biggest anxieties for me. Brodie was really open to asking him questions.”

Mr McGee said Southern Lights was looking at expanding nationally into the remaining three ice hockey divisions, having already



▲ North Melbourne neighbours, Kiril Shaginov and Reuben Logan have joined Australia’s first LGBTIQA+ ice hockey club.

30 new people interested,” Mr McGee said.

For North Melbourne resident Kiril Shaginov, playing ice hockey was something he did back his homeland of Russia before moving to Australia as a 12-year-old.

When he saw Mr McGee’s Facebook post, he was delighted.

“I saw it and got really excited,” he said.

“I used to play hockey when I was a lot younger, since then, I’ve moved to Melbourne and I have two kids – it’s been on a bit of a back burner.”

joined four.

“We’re focused on the 25- to 45-ish age group, but we’re hoping to talk with the juniors,” he said.

“Even if you’ve never played the sport before, we’ll get you to a point where you’re comfortable and part of the family.” ●

For more information:
southernlightsicehockey.com



Local Muslim community gathers for first Iftar since COVID-19

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
PHOTOGRAPHY BY *John Tadihiri*
COMMUNITY

More than 100 residents from North Melbourne and Flemington public housing high-rise gathered for a Ramadan Iftar celebration in May, marking the first time the local Muslim community has seen each other since COVID-19 began.

The event, co-ordinated by Cohealth, the Somali Community Inc. (SCI) and the Australian Somali

Football Team, is part of ongoing efforts to support the recovery of the North Melbourne and Flemington high-rise community after the COVID-19 lockdowns.

“This community weren’t able to come together for Iftar last year, so for the Muslim residents this community event is a real milestone,” Cohealth community engagement worker, and member of the Somali community, Abdi Moalin said.

“The daily breaking of the fast at sunset – Iftar – is a very important time for Muslim people to be with

their friends and family,” he said. Ramadan is being observed by Muslims from April 12 to May 12.

Iftar is held each evening during Ramadan with a meal ending their daily fast at sunset.

Muslims fast from dawn to sunset, abstaining totally from food, drink and other sensual pleasures to achieve greater piety, self-discipline, and compassion for those less fortunate.

SCI president Farah Warsame said the community gathering was “amazing”.

“It was our first time coming face

to face since COVID-19 – absolutely everyone was happy,” he said.

“Mothers, children, elders and all community members attended. We even had government officials and local Victoria Police members. It really went well.”

Mr Warsame said police officers from the nearby North Melbourne, Flemington and Brunswick Police stations attended, with a couple of Somali police officers from the Flemington Police Station texting him to say how good the food was. Almost 20 Somali volunteers helped

out on the day, ensuring COVID-19 regulations were followed.

“We’d like to appreciate what the government has done about COVID-19, and without the government, we wouldn’t be able to come together,” Mr Warsame said.

Wellbeing packs were provided for around 22 kids who attended with their mothers containing colouring pencils, book, USBs, anti-stress balls, anti-stress dice and water bottles, Mr Warsame said. “Every year we do these events, and hopefully we can continue,” he said ●



Arden Station on track

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
TRANSPORT

The Victorian Government’s focus is shifting to North Melbourne’s underground mega station as the Metro Tunnel’s twin nine-kilometre tunnels move closer to completion.

Arden Station will be the centrepiece of a massive new precinct that will be home to Victoria’s innovation economy, which is expected to include up to 34,000 jobs and house around 15,000 residents by 2050, according to government forecasts.

The first concrete pour to build the station’s platforms has taken place, with platform construction continuing with the installation of pre-cast platform units and further concrete pours.

The station’s internal walls are in place, construction on the roof slab is near completion and crews have begun to install mechanical, electrical and plumbing services in the station box. Earlier this year, workers installed 38 piles deep

Arden Station’s entrance will feature 15 soaring brick arches, which are being built off-site with more than 100,000 bricks laid by hand onto precast concrete, to be delivered on site during the next few months.



▼ *An artist’s impression of Arden Station.*



into the ground surrounding the eastern end of the station to reinforce the entrance building’s foundations.

The huge arches spanning the entrance are a nod to the rich industrial history and character of Melbourne’s inner north.

They will be made up of 52 concrete segments, each weighing 45 to 50 tonnes and lined with 104,000 bricks.

The bricks were manufactured in Victoria, then transported to a concrete manufacturer in South Australia where they are being laid by hand into the precast concrete segments.

Arden Station will have a direct link to Melbourne Airport in 2029 and be within walking distance of the North Melbourne Recreation Centre, Arden Street Oval and the route 57 tram, creating a transport hub.

The design prioritises pedestrian safety, with pedestrian crossings on Arden and Laurens streets, and includes new drop-off zones and taxi bays directly outside the station, and more than 120 bike parking spaces.

Work began last month on Laurens St to

realign traffic and bike lanes and add a new pedestrian crossing.

Planning work is currently underway to consider an additional Royal Melbourne Hospital campus and a new Royal Women’s Hospital within Arden, with Melbourne’s renowned medical and research precinct to be extended across two locations - Arden and Parkville - connected by the Metro Tunnel.

The Metro Tunnel Project is on track to be completed by 2025. It will create capacity for more than half-a-million extra passengers a week during peak times across Melbourne’s train network.

Minister for Transport Infrastructure Jacinta Allan said the Metro Tunnel would not just deliver more trains, more often – but a new precinct that would have a direct link to the airport, attract thousands of jobs and provide another place for Victorians to live.

“As tunnelling is about to wrap up – the team has a massive task ahead of them to finish the stations, lay the track and get the tunnel ready to deliver more trains, more often,” she said ●

▼ *The first concrete pours to build the station platform took place in early May.*



Kensington residents kick up a welcome stink

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

Giant capsicums, kiwi fruits and silverbeet are just some of the fresh produce items which will benefit from a new, nutritious community composting hub in Kensington.

The four-bay composting hub, situated next to the existing food forest in Derby St, will allow residents in the state housing and nearby residential area to manage all of their compostable waste on site.

Unison’s Dave Goodman, who was constructing the site earlier this month, said everything about the project was reusable and sustainable, including the recycled pallets used to create the composting bays.

“Residents can break down all their food scraps and garden waste into nutritious compost, which then goes back into the garden and grows more food from the food forest, and from the garden beds down the end,” he said.

“It basically reduces the carbon footprint. You don’t have to transport food scraps around, and then it doesn’t go to landfill and doesn’t create methane so it’s good for the environment.”

The project, completed in partnership with Unison and Living Learning, with support from the City of Melbourne and the Victorian



▲ *Unison’s Dave Goodman helped construct Kensington’s newest composting bays.*

Government, started in early 2020 and was scheduled for completion in April 2020.

But thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, Mr Goodman said it took more than a year to do a month’s worth of work.

“It brings people together – I’ve worked at a couple of different compost hubs and different people from different parts of the community all come together and meet and interact, so it’s a really positive thing - I really like being involved in this,” he said.

The new composters are the latest in a suite of food-growing initiatives to alleviate food insecurity in Kensington.

Since 2016, the Kensington Town Hall Compost Hub has educated more than 350 local residents to change their behaviour around their food waste, Transition Town Kensington co-convenor Jacqui van Heerden said.

“So far, the community has utilised around five sqm 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,” she said.

“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.” ●

Is this Melbourne’s worst dog park?

WORDS BY *Sean Car*
COUNCIL AFFAIRS

Seldom is a dog, or a human, seen in what the City of Melbourne classifies as an “off-leash dog park” at Stawell St, near the busy intersection of Dynon Rd and Dryburgh St in West Melbourne.

That’s according to local dog owners, many of whom say they have never set foot in the space. Some say they only pass by to access the free dog poo bags, before continuing their journey on to grassed spaces between Anderson and Miller streets.

And who could blame them?

Enter from Stawell St and dogs are met with nothing but dirt and gravel, a few rocks and logs and the noisy, polluted backdrop of cars and trucks roaring past on Dynon Rd.

While dogs won’t find a patch of grass to roll in, they could try their luck on the concreted utility hatches that sit in the middle of the space. This is surrounded by some sort of rock wall – a confused attempt at landscape gardening it would seem.

For an off-leash area, the park isn’t even fenced off so dogs can safely stretch their legs. The three-metre-wide opening at Stawell St doesn’t provide owners with the comfort of knowing their dogs can’t abscond towards on-coming Dynon Rd traffic.

The park’s only redeeming feature is the few trees which occupy the space – a couple of natives and a Japanese Oak Tree at the entrance ... a few ingredients for the makings of a decent park!

But for a community in need of an off-leash dog park, surely West Melbourne, which has been identified as one of the City of Melbourne’s suburbs most in need of more public open space, deserves better.

Local resident Anthony McKee described the park as a “total flop”.

“Most people don’t bother using it, in part because it is bare and boring for dogs, and it is not fully enclosed,” he said.

“Owners that can trust their dogs off-lead can use it, but many people cannot let their dogs off

in this park because it is not fully fenced.”

Another resident Georgina Macdougall said she had never seen anyone use the park.

“My dog will not even venture in there,” she said.

“It is noisy, dirty and windy and totally off-putting for anyone with a dog to spend time there. Since it was completed, I have yet to see anyone using it.”

“How the council has the gall to call it a dog park is beyond me and it was presented to us with such magnanimity. I really wonder whether anyone from the council has ever visited.”

“It’s only saving grace is that there are always dog poo bags due to the fact nobody uses it.”

The City of Melbourne established the off-leash area in 2018 following “extensive consultation” with the community on the design of the space, a council spokesperson told *North West City News*.

It followed an earlier push from local residents to establish an off-leash area at the park at the corner of Hawke and Adderley streets between 5pm and 9am. However, the council ultimately decided against the idea, removing the existing fencing that had been in place.

Instead, local dog owners were given the Stawell St site, which one resident described as one of the most under-utilised parks in the City of Melbourne due largely to the council’s decision not to fully fence the space.

While suggestions to expand the site into the largely unused Stawell St cul-de-sac would provide a greater proposition for dog owners, a council spokesperson said the street space was needed for garbage truck access.

“A proposal to extend the open space to a section of Stawell St was considered, however the area was needed to enable rubbish trucks to service local residences,” a council spokesperson said.

The council added that the spacing between the fencing was deliberate and that the design of the park had been informed by expert advice.

“The materials, layout and location chosen for this space were informed by advice from animal management, traffic and planning experts.”

“The gravel surface is considered the most



▲ Local residents agree the Stawell St dog park is Melbourne’s worst.



▲ Although classified an off-leash area, dogs can run freely onto the busy Dynon Rd.



▲ Residents say this largely unused space could be part of the site.

suitable material for this space. Grass would not be able to cope with the high foot traffic and significant shade in this location.”

“The gap in the fence is intentional, to minimise the potential for dogs to exercise without supervision and allow an exit route in case there are incidents between dogs.”

But local resident Meredith Goss said it was

“a shame” that the area had been landscaped and that unless options to revitalise the space were considered, dogs in need of exercise would continue looking elsewhere.

“If your dog likes to run there are better options with Royal Park, Clayton Reserve and Kensington close by,” she said ●

Council pays West Melbourne resident more than \$400,000 for tree damage

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
COUNCIL AFFAIRS

The City of Melbourne will cough up more than \$400,000 to demolish and rebuild a West Melbourne home which was damaged by roots from a council-owned tree.

West Melbourne resident Dr Angela Livingston has successfully sued the City of Melbourne for negligence and nuisance after a white cedar tree it planted outside her home at 50 Dryburgh St caused extensive cracking and damage to her property.

According to the judgement handed down in the County Court of Victoria in November last year, Dr Livingston was awarded \$435,510 in damages for a raft of expenses including the cost of the rebuild, as well as the cost of her accommodation while the work occurs.

Dr Livingstone bought 50 Dryburgh St in 1997 and built a two-storey extension at the rear of the property in 2007, the judgement said.

In 2009, the council planted white cedar trees outside Dr Livingston’s home and outside other houses in Dryburgh St.

At the time, the tree was Dr Livingstone’s shoulder height but quickly grew larger than all the other trees in the street, reaching nine metres in 2020, the judgement said.

Cracks in the rear walls of the old, single-storey Victorian part of her home widened during 2011 and 2012, and the footpath adjacent to the tree began to heave.

Dr Livingston complained to the council on four or five occasions in 2012 and 2013 about the damage it was causing her property and claimed a council representative informed her a demolition order could be necessary.

Around 2015, Dr Livingstone could no longer open or close her front door due to the



▲ The council will pay a North Melbourne resident over \$400,000 to rebuild her home after tree damage.

movement in her house’s foundations.

In his reasons, Judge Peter Lauritsen noted Dr Livingstone was “horrified” by a crack above the front door.

“The crack was so wide it allowed sunlight between 3pm and 4pm in the afternoon,” Judge Lauritsen said.

“It horrified her.”

According to the judgement, Dr Livingstone made a request for repairs due to root damage to the council in 2015, but it rejected her claim.

Following further discussions with the

council in 2015, 2016 and 2018, Dr Livingstone engaged solicitors in 2018 because she felt like she had “done everything” she reasonably could but was “knocked back every time”, Dr Livingstone told the court.

Shortly before contacting lawyers, Dr Livingstone also submitted an engineering report to the council, which it also rejected, the judgment said.

The council installed a root barrier in 2015 on the footpath outside her house in an attempt to sever the tree roots, as well as a plastic

“The application to demolish the front section of this single-story home will be carefully considered by the council’s planning officers.”



“vapour barrier” designed to dry the soil out. However, since the installation, suckers from the tree have reappeared, the judgement said.

Dr Livingstone engaged three construction companies to do underpinning work at a cost of \$39,965.08, and paid more than \$8000 for the removal and storage of household items which were at risk of being damaged from rubble falling from the roof.

The total cost of the demolition and rebuild is \$346,830, and the City of Melbourne submitted a planning application in early April.

Speaking about the new design, which includes a bluestone-clad façade and the addition of a new attic space above the front bedroom, senior media advisor for the council Jem Wilson said the council was “carefully” considering the planning application ●

Council approves 13-storey office block in King St

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
PLANNING

The City of Melbourne has approved the partial demolition and construction of a \$20 million multi-storey office building and a reduction in parking at 363 King St, West Melbourne.

The development, which received 22 objections, involves the demolition of the rear portion of the existing heritage building and the construction of a 13-storey office building overlooking Flagstaff Gardens.

Applicant and architect, Gray Puksand, will retain the front portion of the brick heritage building as the building podium, with the office building set back seven metres from the facade.

While the previous building was graded as “C” under the old heritage grading scheme, Cr Nicholas Reece said it would be considered as “significant” under the new grading system.

“This application was lodged under the previous scheme, so it is considered against that,” Cr Reece said at a Future of Melbourne Committee (FMC) meeting in May.



▲ An artist's impression of 363 King St.

“Nowadays, if it was graded as a significant building, it’s fair to say there would be significantly tougher considerations that would need to be taken into account.”

Despite his concern, Cr Reece said it was an “appropriate” proposal, which was not a “look at me” type of building, but an attractive Art Deco design which sat “beautifully” beside Flagstaff Gardens.

Cr Rohan Leppert seconded the motion, saying the permit should be approved despite a change in the heritage framework.

Cr Leppert said it was appropriate that there was a note in the permit

acknowledging the West Melbourne Heritage Review, which sets out the “significance” of 363 King St in a study in case the applicant makes any future changes to the building.

According to a report to the FMC, the office block at 363 King St will only provide 14 car spaces within the single basement level.

Planning controls require the development to provide a total of 165 car spaces, leaving a shortfall of 151 car spaces.

However, the council stated that the provision of 14 car spaces was “appropriate” given the site was located within 220 metres of Flagstaff

Station, 45 metres of the tram route along La Trobe Street and 60 metres from the central city – meaning the development is not required to provide any car spaces.

Robert Puksand from Gray Puksand Architects told the FMC

meeting that the surrounding buildings are higher than 363 King St, which will stand at 49.5 metres.

“We reduced the height of the building, increased setbacks and changed the identity of the building to horizontal to suit the heritage building,” he said.

Originally set back three metres from the footpath, Cr Reece said the building had been set back seven metres following community submissions and sat “comfortably” within the Melbourne Planning Scheme C309 height limitation of 16 storeys.

Cr Reece said the saw-tooth roof and windows would also be retained.

Objectors were concerned about the excessive height, the impact on the heritage character, glare from the glazing, loss of daylight to the west, overshadowing to the south and west, including the communal open space at 33 Jeffcott St, and loss of views to Flagstaff Gardens.

Devaluation of property, noise, odour and insufficient side and rear boundary setbacks were also listed as concerns in the report to the council ●

CSL open to creating mRNA vaccine tech

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*
HEALTH

Biotech giant CSL is open to supporting the domestic manufacturing of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine production, after the Victorian Government’s announced \$50 million to fund mRNA vaccine technology in late April, paving the way for Pfizer and Moderna.

The Parkville plant is currently pumping out a 50-million Astra Zeneca vaccine order. But following the federal government’s recommendation people under the age of 50 get a different dose due to a very rare blood clotting disorder, the nation’s under 50s now need a different vaccine.



▲ The current Younghusband complex.



▲ A render of the proposed site.



▲ An aerial sketch of the future of Younghusband.

Likely vaccine candidates to fill the void, Pfizer and Moderna, both require mRNA vaccine technology for manufacturing – something Australia currently does not have.

CSL’s chief scientific officer Dr Andrew Nash said the \$123 billion blood plasma behemoth welcomed discussion with the government about how CSL could support.

“We welcome the Victorian Government’s announcement that it will seek to advance the country’s domestic manufacturing capabilities for mRNA vaccines and look forward to hearing more about the proposal and how industry might contribute,” Dr Nash said.

“CSL is exploring future possibilities for mRNA vaccines within our portfolio and Seqirus, our influenza vaccines business, is working on the development of a next generation mRNA-based influenza vaccine.”

Meanwhile, calls for Australia to start producing mRNA vaccines are ramping up.

The University of Western Australia’s associate professor Archa Fox said it could take as little as three months for Australia to begin local production of COVID-19 mRNA vaccines such as Pfizer.

Associate Professor Fox, who is also RnA Network Australasia president, said the assumption was based on the precedent of a factory that was repurposed in Germany, where they had a three-month turnaround.

“This was an undertaking that was done by Pfizer/BioNTech to make a factory that could make from one billion doses of mRNA vaccine a year,” she said.

“We do not need to make that many doses here in Australia and that, in Germany, required a huge investment.

Associate professor Fox said the scope for mRNA vaccine technology beyond viruses was huge, with the technology originally set up to deal with cancer treatments ●

Wool stores to be turned into Kensington community hub

WORDS BY *Katie Johnson*
PLANNING

Kensington is set to have a vibrant new community hub by 2025 if plans to revitalise heritage-listed wool stores are approved.

Impact Investment Group (IIG) intends to transform the 100-year-old Younghusband complex on Elizabeth St into a community-focused commercial hub that will attract innovative businesses.

Younghusband development manager Callum Evans said the complex was currently under-utilised, and that the community was supportive of the development plans.

“We expect Melbourne to grow through the inner northwest over the coming decades in an environmentally sustainable and socially equitable way and believe Younghusband will make a valuable contribution to that larger theme.”

“I think everyone wants to see Younghusband given another 100 years of great life.”

The historic red-brick warehouses were purchased by wool giant Younghusband & Co in 1902 and are one of the last remaining wool stores in Victoria.

One facet of the development will include demolishing a warehouse built in 1957 to create an eight-storey connected hub of office and co-working spaces, with a two-level basement carpark below it.

The original heritage warehouse built in 1900 will also be redeveloped into a five-storey building, however the southern facade and eastern facade facing Elizabeth St will be retained.

To keep with heritage values, the eight-storey building references the existing buildings through the use of industrial metals and recycled brick and will look similar to the adjacent flour mill silos.

Mr Evans said the development will also focus on ensuring the buildings and office layout provide a sense of openness and connectivity.

“The internal layout of office space has been designed to encourage socialisation, collaboration and community,” Mr Evans said.

“The industrial village will have a variety of uses including art, food, education, technology, hospitality and office space which will ideally attract start-ups and other creative industry tenants.”

Stage 1 of the Younghusband project commenced in mid-2019 but was put on hold due to COVID restrictions.

The planning application for Stage 2 of the project is currently with City of Melbourne after feedback from the community was incorporated into the design.

Kensington Association president Simon Harvey said there were many “environmental

and architectural positives to the plans”.

“While I have some reservations about the height of the S4 building, genuine efforts have been made to design connections between heritage building and the neighbouring mills,” Mr Harvey said.

“I do believe it will contribute to the community socially, and could serve to revitalise the area in many respects, especially if Stage 1 proposal is revived.”

Mr Harvey said the only concern with the plans was the amount of parking.

“Will the new development cause parking spill-over into the neighbourhood that will and become a negative for residents and businesses? I think it will, unless IIG are very proactive in promoting their Green transport plan which is a good progressive initiative.”

The entire Younghusband development will adhere to a net-zero carbon target and environmentally sustainable building techniques that are above those set out in the Melbourne Planning Scheme.

Mr Evans said the community was looking forward to the rejuvenation of the Younghusband precinct.

“I think the community is disappointed, like us, that we had to stop work on Stage 1. They have been very supportive through our design processes from the very start,” Mr Evans said ●



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Your City of Melbourne community update



MELBOURNE’S ROAD TO RECOVERY

Enjoy the city’s revival by exploring upcoming events that bring the buzz back to Melbourne and boost local business.

Festivals, events and a host of not-to-be-missed experiences will be the talk of the town thanks to a recent \$5 million investment in events as part of the \$100 million Melbourne City Recovery Fund, a joint initiative from the City of Melbourne and the Victorian Government.

The funding will support events such as the RISING festival, new night markets and the Jurassic World by Brickman exhibition, among many others.

With more than 100 COVID-safe events receiving funding support, organisers are anticipating a combined audience of up to five million people to the city – which will help support jobs and businesses in the city.

‘Supporting events with this joint fund is another way we are working to bring back the buzz to Melbourne,’ Lord Mayor Sally Capp said.

‘Our city is famous for its world-class events – whether it’s sport, art, food or fashion – and it’s critical we support this sector to create jobs and deliver a boost to local hospitality and retail businesses.

‘Every visitor we can attract to Melbourne through events and activations provides more opportunities for local businesses for their cash registers to be ringing with more sales.’

Local businesses can also expect a boost from a five-month marketing campaign encouraging people to ‘Get to the city or get FOMO’.

Businesses during COVID-19

Melbourne’s businesses were hit hard this past year. Early and effective support has been crucial in helping businesses keep their doors open and

find new and innovative ways to offer their services.

This support included targeted COVID-19 grants and an expanded Business Concierge Service.

In 2020 the City of Melbourne’s business grant programs delivered \$17.3 million in funding for almost 3000 businesses.

The funding helped businesses adapt through digital and online measures, business transformation, and reopening costs including COVID-safe equipment, small-scale capital works and outdoor dining furniture and infrastructure.

The Business Concierge Service was established in March 2020 to provide direct support and advice to businesses impacted by COVID-19.

The service has made more than 11,000 outbound calls and responded to almost 9000 inbound calls, providing information about ways businesses can access funding and support.

Earlier this year, the City of Melbourne sought feedback on business grants and the Business Concierge Service.

A survey of 675 inner city businesses found that two in five respondents (38 per cent) said their business would not be operating without the support, and 89 per cent said the support had had a direct positive impact on their business.

‘The past 12 months have been the toughest trading conditions in living memory for many businesses and that’s why it was so critical to deliver timely and valuable support to help keep Melburnians in jobs,’ Lord Mayor Sally Capp said.

‘Many businesses indicated that the grants helped them keep their teams together or get the right equipment to keep customers safe.’

Support your local retailers

Right across Melbourne, businesses are seeing foot traffic pick up as people rediscover their neighbourhoods.

The City of Melbourne supports local precinct associations, which are at the heart of their communities.

We recently provided nine recognised precinct associations with an

additional \$100,000 one-off payment for activation programs, to further stimulate economic activity in areas such as the central city, Docklands and Kensington.

Among the many creative initiatives being delivered, the Docklands Dollars program will offer rebates for people taking a two-night ‘staycation’ near the harbour.

To find out more about what’s on in your local area, browse whatson.melbourne.vic.gov.au

UPCOMING EVENTS

RISING FESTIVAL

See stunning art and performance in secret spaces

26 May to 6 June

Visit rising.melbourne

WINTER NIGHT MARKET

Enjoy cosy meals at the Queen Victoria Market

3 June to 25 August

Visit qvm.com.au/whats-on/night-market

JURASSIC WORLD, BRICKMAN

Explore a prehistoric world build from Lego

1 April to 31 May

Visit exhibition.thebrickman.com

OZ COMIC-CON

Experience cosplay, gaming and comic art with fellow pop culture fans

3 to 4 July

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SUPPORT FOR BUSINESSES

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Your City of Melbourne community update

10 HIGHLIGHTS OF YIRRAMBOI FESTIVAL

Explore more than 150 dynamic events that celebrate First Nations culture presented by YIRRAMBOI Festival between 6 and 16 May.

Meaning ‘tomorrow’ in the shared local languages of the Boonwurrung and Woiwurrung peoples, YIRRAMBOI Festival is a celebration of the diversity and continuous evolution of the longest living cultures in the world.

The festival features a dynamic program of free and low-cost events spanning genres and art forms including music, dance, theatre, film, exhibitions, markets, fashion parades, family-friendly events, talks and symposiums.

Creative Director of YIRRAMBOI Festival and Boonwurrung and Wemba Wemba woman Caroline Martin said this year’s festival is all about what’s next.

‘When you immerse yourself in the many free and paid events you will be a part of the first live audience that many of our creatives have had in more than 12 months, and we can’t wait to celebrate with you,’ Caroline said.

Here are 10 of the festival’s highlights:

1 Women’s Healing Place

Until Saturday 15 May, various dates and times
Queen Victoria Women’s Centre

Attend a series of workshops led by proud First Nations women that explores identity, culture, trauma, healing and self-care through storytelling, yarnning, visual art, song and movement.

2 Crumbs

Until Sunday 16 May, various times
ArtPlay, Birrarung Marr

Bring kids aged 5 to 10 to enjoy a magical story of a cubby, a sneaky neighbour and a fight for survival. See the epic battle unfold in this hilarious show from writers NazAree Dickerson and Nathan Maynard.



3 Coconut Woman

Until Saturday 15 May
Meat Market, Flat Floor Theatre

Watch a fish-out-of-water story unfold. Raw, funny, poignant, with just the right amount of musical punctuation, this Torres Strait Islander led production explores disconnection and reunification.

4 BRED

Until Saturday 15 May, various times
Meat Market, North Melbourne

See the stars of Briefs Factory interrogate First Nations history with trademark drag, sass and performance art at Meat Market. This cabaret creates space to salvage cultural connections and closeness post-lockdown.

5 The Fae

Until Sunday 16 May, at 7pm nightly
Signal, Northbank

An ethereal garden tucked away in the city is a-flutter with Fae. This whimsical tale of displacement captures the similarities between the origins of fairies and early colonial writings on Blak peoples.

6 Deadly Narratives

Until Sunday 30 May, 10am to 5pm daily
Koorie Heritage Trust, Yarra Building, Fed Square

Immerse yourself in stories about culture and connection to country, told through a range of media including acrylic on canvas, prints, ceramics, textile, pokerwork possum skin, weaving and jewellery.

7 Deadly Funny Showcase

Friday 14 May, 6.30pm
Malthouse Outdoor Stage, Southbank

Giggle and guffaw at some of Australia’s freshest and funniest Blak comedians. Cheeky and loud, Blak and proud, these side-splitting acts will be welcomed to the stage by your host, Gurindji showgirl Constantina Bush.

8 Considerable Sexual Licence

Until Saturday 15 May, various times
Northcote Town Hall

Take a flirty, filthy and passionate look at the true history of sensuality down under. This provocative performance led by proud Wiradjuri man Joel Bray celebrates country, community, consent and kinship.



Nartarsha Bamblett will facilitate a workshop as part of the Women’s Healing Place program

Photo: Yotography



9 Yulendji

Until Saturday 15 May
Arts Centre Melbourne

Journey through the undercover walkway between Hamer Hall and the Theatres Building to listen to a soundscape that tells the stories of the ancient and evolving Birrarung (Yarra River).

10 SEASONS in Blak Box

Until Saturday 5 June
Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne

Experience a multi-part sound work that explores the integral role of plants in the Kulin seasonal calendar. Listen deeply to music, spoken word and song amid an award-winning sound pavilion.

Deputy Lord Mayor Nicholas Reece said the festival showcases the diversity and creativity of First Nations arts and culture.

‘We’re bringing the buzz back to Melbourne through Australia’s largest and most exciting First Nations festival, celebrating a cultural history stretching back more than 65,000 years,’ the Deputy Lord Mayor said.

‘Melbourne’s First Nations people make significant contributions to our city and we’re incredibly proud to have this opportunity to appreciate and recognise their culture and their talent through the YIRRAMBOI Festival.

‘Not only is YIRRAMBOI Festival a celebration, it also provides genuine economic benefit to more than 200 First Nations people working in the creative sector.’

For bookings and further information, visit yirramboi.com.au

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

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

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CITY OF MELBOURNE

“Don’t let the perfect get in the way of the good”

Reason Party leader Fiona Patten is your local member for the seat of Northern Metropolitan in the Victorian upper house (Legislative Council) of parliament. But what does that mean for locals in practice?

WORDS BY *Sean Car*
FEATURE

As an independent, Fiona’s vote is incredibly valuable to the government which only holds 17 of the 40 upper house seats, meaning her ability to advocate for change on many critical laws and issues is stronger than what many may assume.

But with a “whopping great electorate” spanning from Craigieburn to the CBD and incorporating 11 lower house seats, including that of Melbourne held by Greens MP Ellen Sandell, her role is more focused on policy than “fix the traffic light type issues”.

However, don’t think this prevents her from getting out in the community to hear from her constituents on all fronts. If anything, providing independent access to government through advocating and holding decision-makers accountable makes her the most effective representative locals could ask for.

Having first been elected to state parliament in 2014 as the leader of the Sex Party, which she founded with her partner Robbie Swan in 2009, Fiona’s acute rise in the Victorian political sphere has been no accident.

While she now represents her constituents under the admittedly “less-catchy” Reason Party, her movement to instil a “voice for reason” in parliament has garnered support from all sides of politics.

And it’s this approach, underpinned by respecting the government’s mandate and being willing to compromise and negotiate in good faith, which has seen her effect change on a diverse range of issues during her time.

She told *CBD News* that when it came to getting things done in parliament, she had always abided by a philosophy of not allowing “the perfect to get in the way of the good”.

“I wouldn’t call it horse trading, but the government does need my vote from time to time,” she said.

“So that does provide a relatively open door and I’ve always seen it as my role to work with the government, so I try and maintain good relations with the government. And that’s



meant that a lot of the campaigns that I’ve been passionate about I’ve been able to successfully progress.”

“You can have an effect and it’s remembering that you’re not there to be the opposition. The government holds the chequebook and they’re the government.”

“As an independent it’s an interesting position because every vote is a conscience vote. Every week this office has to get its head around anywhere up to five pieces of legislation, plus the amendments that my crossbench colleagues or the opposition will put forward.”

“I go into all that with an open mind and we look at and assess the legislation, we talk to stakeholders about it, we ask questions of the government, we then talk to opposition about their amendments and there will be time I support their amendments. There will be times I don’t. But I won’t be opposing things just for the sake of opposing things.”

“I think you also have to take into account that governments do have a mandate. I do recognise that I’m not government. That’s not my role. My role is to represent Northern Metropolitan and

to advocate for the policies that I took to the election as well.”

A proud “Canberra girl”, the 55-year-old Ms Patten said she came into politics “somewhat unwillingly” off the back of 20 years of advocating for small business, sexual health organisations, sexual freedoms and censorship reforms.

Before relocating to Victoria in 2010, she ran a small fashion design business during “the recession we had to have”, which is when she first became politically active after meeting a lot of people working in the sex industry.

This activism was brought into particularly sharp focus with HIV/AIDS, which she described as a “moment in time” through which she passionately fought against the discrimination and stigmatisation of those affected by the disease.

And off the back of such tireless advocacy and lobbying, Australia became the first jurisdiction in the world to decriminalise sex work and continues to be a leader in dealing with a range of complex public health and social issues.

Today, with the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19 representing another “moment in time”, Fiona finds herself at the coalface once again, and like HIV/AIDS, she said the pandemic presented a significant opportunity to “do things differently”.

One such opportunity she said was ending homelessness in Victoria, which as the first independent to ever chair a parliamentary committee in Victoria, she recently led a landmark inquiry into (as reported in the April edition of *CBD News*).

But in addition to chairing the Legal and Social Issues committee, she has been central to a lot of important work through her positions on the Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations committee and the Procedure committee.

Having been able to drive reform on issues including ride sharing, voluntary assisted dying, spent convictions, supervised injecting rooms, cannabis, firearms prohibition, and more recently, contact tracing and testing, she said she “loved the work of committees”.

“Victoria will be the first state to have pandemic specific legislation. Now I don’t think I’m boasting when I say that was because of the

work that we did,” she said.

“We have been working with the government to ensure we have legislation that doesn’t require us to go into this State of Emergency constantly, that we can go ‘yep, we need to quarantine incoming travellers, we need to isolate people when they’ve come into contact with COVID’ but we don’t have to have that sense of emergency.”

“I’m still digesting the homelessness report. It was all-consuming for most of 2020 and now that we’ve got the recommendations and now, I’m looking at those and thinking how can I progress them? And to me, that’s my job to make sure that happens.”

But when it comes to representing her local electorate – one of the fast growing in Australia – Fiona said the vast range of issues and “big pockets of disadvantage” meant her to-do list was constantly getting bigger.

Maximising her parliamentary communication budget by employing people to communicate with her constituents, she said her Sydney Rd office in Brunswick was always there to answer the phone and advocate on behalf of the community.

“Specifically for people in my electorate, I’m more than happy to advocate for better roads, or better trains or better transport and I do that, and I certainly get to put in bids to the budget for certain special projects, but I think more importantly it comes back to that policy area and I think that’s where we can have the greatest effect.” ●

For more information:

fionapatten.com.au

Sean Car

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Disability-led Weave Movement Theatre coming to Meat Market

WORDS BY *Jess Carrascalao Heard*
ARTS & CULTURE

North Melbourne’s Meat Market will soon welcome a new work by disability-led, independent dance company Weave Movement Theatre (WMT), which this year celebrates its 24th anniversary.

The work, called *Wanna Be A Rabbit*, will begin its run at the end of May, with a cast of 10 made up of disabled, neurodiverse and non-disabled performers portraying the subversive piece.

WMT’s artistic director Janice Florence, who will be performing in the work, said the piece was “thoughtful mayhem laced with comic mischief”.

“We’re also approaching the issues of survival, identity and belonging from a darkly humorous perspective,” she said.

Wanna Be A Rabbit is a collaborative work, featuring texts and stories created by the company’s members.

The work is portrayed in a series of scenes tied together through movement and dance.

Whimsical and absurd, the show features several characters, including a scientist who has created human/rabbit creatures which he believes are better than humans, as well as a politician who wants to use the creatures to make money.

Running through the show is an exploration of the idea of identity, a theme which Ms Florence said kept popping up during the creative process.

“The idea that’s evolved along the way is identity, and the fact that sometimes disabled



people find it hard to know their identity, and they identify with how society sees them as disabled,” she said.

She said that, in a way, the rabbit represented disabled people in wider society.

“I guess the rabbit, in a way, represents disabled people as a bit of a despised species and outcast, but also very robust and great survivors,” she said.

The show, which has been directed in collaboration with Butoh performance artist Yumi Umiumare, will also feature soundscapes created by Dan West along with a large-scale art installation by Thai sculptor and multimedia artist Pimpisa Tinpalit.

Ms Tinpalit has also created Cubist-inspired rabbit masks for the performers, which will be paired with bold costume design by sought-after set and costume designer Brynna Lowen.

Wanna Be A Rabbit has been in development for some years, with the group performing works-in-progress of the show in 2018 and



2019.

Last year, COVID-19 saw the show postponed several times, but despite the setbacks, the company continued to collaborate and rehearse via Zoom.

“At the beginning of the first lockdown we had quite a few Zoom rehearsals, and still developing stuff. And it’s only really been since this year we’ve been able to get together in person,” Ms Florence said.

It wasn’t WMT’s only project during lockdown, with the group creating a short film, *Red Thread*.

The film, which was made with the help of Creative Victoria, show the company’s experience of dancing at home in lockdown, with digital media techniques used to create a visual, collaged artwork with footage of the performers dancing at home.

Ms Florence said that last year’s lockdowns meant that everyone suddenly experienced isolation that disabled people already faced.

“In many ways, having a disability can be very isolating, due to the ongoing barriers to travel, transport, attending performances and fully participating in our world. COVID-19 lockdown meant that everyone suddenly experienced that isolation, and new worlds of understanding and creativity opened up for everyone,” she said.

Now in its 24th year, WMT was the first disability-led dance theatre company in Australia.

The company’s focus is on empowering disabled and neurodiverse performers and embracing the unique strengths and each performer brings to the table, rather than zeroing in on anyone’s particular disability.

Ms Florence, who acquired her disability in a dance-related accident, said it was important for the company to be disability-led.

“Not being led by disabled people feeds into that dependent image of disability. It’s important to see people in a variety of roles, and to think that people can aspire to be leaders,” she said.

Ms Florence hopes *Wanna Be A Rabbit* breaks through the stereotypes the audience might hold about disability.

“I hope [audiences will] enjoy themselves and be entertained. And I hope they’ll be a bit challenged, and maybe bring into question some assumptions they have,” she said ●

For tickets:

[eventbrite.com.au](https://www.eventbrite.com.au)

Mouse plague hits Abbotsford St

WORDS BY Rhonda Dredge
HEALTH

Among the factories and Victorian houses of Abbotsford St in North Melbourne lurks a pest that some are saying has reached plague proportions.

Number 46 has recently been renovated and the creature's habitat disturbed there.

At number 212 the blighters have been scampering over desks and setting off alarms.

No one was making much of a fuss though. Mice were just a fact of life. If you had only one, you were lucky.

Recently on Facebook, however, 72 people in the North Melbourne Good Karma Network responded to a call for help by Maddison Quarm, a resident of the street.

"Is anyone else experiencing the mouse plague that has hit the eastern states?" she wrote on April 19. "My flatmates and I have seen so many mice running around our home recently and it's terrifying."

Some of the Facebook accounts were so convincing and remedies, such as Vicks Vapour Rub so bizarre, that *North West City News* went investigating. Was there actually a plague of mice in Abbotsford St or were reports exaggerated?

People are often wary about admitting they have a mouse problem and sure enough, the first informant, a neighbour of number 46, was shy about pointing the finger of blame.

"We've seen some," was all he said. "I don't particularly like having them close to home."

Abbas Rehmtulla at Goodway Tyres and Automotive was more upfront. He said they did have a mouse problem a while back, but he had solved it with some poison that he applied on a monthly basis.

"Our alarm went off all the time," he told *North West City News*. "It picks them up running



▲ One Facebook user rescued a mouse from her cat. She named him 'Jeremy'.



across the desk. I had to come in all the way from Yarraville."

Chris Hubbard from North Melbourne Books also admitted to having trouble during the lockdown at his Provost St property, just off Abbotsford St.

Not everyone goes for poison. His solution was to block off holes with steel wool.

"The house is full of holes. We had to find the key entry points. It worked," he said.

The main problem they had was sourcing the steel wool because it came already soaped up at the local supermarket. They recommend Bowens on Macaulay Rd for mass supplies.

"If there is a mouse plague, I hope people will adopt a cat from Lort Smith," he suggested.

Cats are not necessarily active pest control agents. However, witness Candice Kelso said she has a mouse that lives off her cat food.

"I live in Flemington and I have a resident mouse. I'm secretly hoping cat will stop sleeping and chase him out."

She has pets, possums and fallen fruit that attracts mice but "we all live on the planet together," she said.

A resident of Spencer St agreed with her laissez faire attitude. "We've lived with rats and



▲ One of the affected properties in Abbotsford St.

mice for centuries," he said, but even he was drawing the line at a rat "a foot long" that fell out of his rafters onto the floor not that long ago ●



Rhonda Dredge
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Ever heard of cribbage?

WORDS BY Rhonda Dredge
ARTS & CULTURE

A good opening hand should have plenty of possibilities if you want to avoid being double skunked in the old English game of cribbage.

The hand should have multiple runs, a pair and two cards totalling 15 points, for example.

But will it be good enough to beat Katy's mom in Canada?

North Melbourne dentist Dr Katy Theodore is seeking partners to help her improve her game.

Her sample hand is worth eight points, after laying down two cards in the crib. It's an okay hand. Six is the average value.

Even though Katy won at a family tournament with 27 cribbage players, her mom Layla wins twice as many of their weekly Skype games.

"I want to beat her. I'm hoping someone will be able to teach me something I don't know," she said, throwing out the challenge.

Katy envisions setting up competitions with other experienced cribbage pros at one of the local North Melbourne pubs.

But so far, she hasn't found anyone despite googling Melbourne Cribbage Club and Melbourne Cribbage meet-up.

"I'm craving some serious players," she said. "I can't find them. It's a very old English game played in pubs."

She's afraid the game could go extinct and won't rest until she rescues it. Just two other people played at her high school. One was the chaplain and the other the art teacher.

The game is quite complex with points allocated to various combinations of cards and a host of terms to learn, such as "being skunked" if you lose by more than 31 points.

"It's a mix of skill and luck," she said, but really it's the tradition that tugs at her heart strings.

Her grandfather played and she has a weekly ritual game with her mom on Saturday night in Canada and Sunday morning in Melbourne.

"Canadians are very good at indoor activities," she said, because of the long winters.

She said it was an excellent mother and



▲ Katy with a sample cribbage hand.

daughter activity. "The cards are a good focus for our interactions."

A quick game can take 30 minutes, "but the way mom and I play takes two hours."

Katy has 15 years' experience and would like to cut the deck with other talent.

Cribbage players can contact Katy at the email below ●

For more information:
katytheodore@gmail.com

Community groups fight for West Gate Tunnel Bridge 75 change

WORDS BY Rachael Fleury
CAPITAL WORKS

Community groups are calling on the Minister for Planning to intervene after the West Gate Tunnel Authority (WGTA) rejected proposed design changes to realign an elevated veloway over Moonee Ponds Creek.

The group made up of the Friends of Moonee Ponds, The Kensington Association and the North and West Melbourne Association say the proposed new design of Bridge 75 over Footscray Rd would remove the horseshoe bend of the current design and would better serve the needs of the community and environment, as well as cost less.

Representative of the Friends of Moonee Ponds Kaye Oddie said the group had written to Minister for Planning Richard Wynne because the West Gate Tunnel had so far offered no explanation for the rejection of the group's revised design.

"Their reasons for rejecting the changes have not been explained. We don't understand it, we'd like to know the rationale behind it, and we'd like to see the decision reversed and a much better solution for the veloway built," Ms Oddie told *North West City News*.

Ms Oddie said the new design would offer "enormous" benefits for the community and the environment and that removing the overhead veloway infrastructure would enhance the biodiversity, habitat and open space outcomes of the area.

"The amended design will be beneficial for cyclists, who don't suddenly have to ride around the loop, it would avoid all of the new pylons and extra costs in building an elevated structure, and it would reuse an existing bridge," Ms Oddie said.

"The cost-benefit from an environmental point of view is that the open space amenity of the area will be improved by the extra planting and it will not be impacted by an overhead structure."



▲ The revised design for the elevated veloway.

Ms Oddie said the redesign process had been initiated by the Bicycle Network and that all the community groups represented in the letter had been very involved in the consultation and planning process for the Westgate Tunnel project.

"It's not as if we have just flown in out of the sky. We were in there right at the beginning in all the hearings and we've all had long associations with the creek and we're all in support of the redesign," Ms Oddie said.

"You can't tell me that it's not cheaper to take a veloway straight across the creek than to have it do a loop through what is supposed to be open space underneath."

"Surely, a change like this that has no negatives, and all positives is something that would get the tick. It is not in any way impacting negatively on the project; in fact, it's acting positively on a lot of aspects of the project."

A spokesperson for the WGTA said changes to the horseshoe bend in the veloway would only be considered after detailed assessment.

"CPB John Holland Joint Venture's design for the West Gate Tunnel Project's veloway includes a horseshoe bend west of Moonee Ponds Creek," the spokesperson said.

"As agreed with CPB John Holland Joint Venture, changes to the bridge design will be considered once it completes a comprehensive assessment and provides it to the project parties." ●

The need for clear rules on accessible housing

“Welcome to the ninth 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 centered 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 Dr Ben Gauntlett, Disability Discrimination Commissioner, to share his thoughts about why the objective around housing all Australians is important, and in particular, for those of us who have disabilities...

Good disability policy benefits all Australians. Sometimes it requires governments to mandate outcomes to overcome market failures.

It is important that we house all Australians, rich or poor, because it reduces pressure on Australia's health, welfare, disability support and aged care systems.

More than four million Australians presently have a disability and to future-proof the country from health and disability policy challenges it is necessary for all levels of government to act decisively (and cleverly) on housing policy.

It is not enough that governments give someone a roof over their head and ignore their other needs. The housing must be adequate and appropriately designed for a person's circumstances so they can remain healthy and undertake social, community and economic participation.

For Australia to have enough accessible housing will take a combination of well-designed social housing, mandatory laws regarding the incorporation of accessibility features into new houses, and the temporary or permanent renovation of existing housing. The scale of the problem requires action from both government and non-government organisations.

Some people and organisations think social and economic policy concerning housing can be divided into “disability” and “non-disability” silos. This siloing ignores that around 80 per cent of disability is acquired in a person's life, universal design principles benefit everyone and the majority of disability is invisible. For example, parents of young children can benefit from step-free access to a house and a bathroom area just as much as a retiree living at home and dealing with mobility challenges.

In addition, accessible housing is not just of benefit to individuals who presently have mobility challenges. It may also benefit individuals of all ages with a significant intellectual and cognitive disability (e.g. early-stage dementia), sensory disabilities (such as people with low vision) and people who are neurodiverse. When care or support is provided in the home, it is cheaper, safer and easier if it is provided in an appropriately designed space. Furthermore, a well-designed home can mean care or support does not need to be provided.

In the United States of America, it has been estimated that there is a 60 per cent probability that any new house will be occupied by a person with a disability over its life span. In Australia, more than 90 per cent of people with disability live in private housing. There is no reason to expect this US figure to be different in Australia. This highlights the need for private housing to exhibit accessibility features.

But it has been estimated that only five per cent of new private houses built in Australia are accessible. This is troubling given the human rights imperative to live in appropriate housing, the likelihood of people with disability living in poverty, the wish of many Australians to remain in their own home as long as possible and the dangers created by institutionalisation.

All Australians have a human right to an adequate standard of living, which includes appropriate housing. This right has been

recognised in numerous human rights' treaties that Australia has signed and ratified. For example, the right has been recognised in Article 25 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and Article 11 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1996). Later human rights treaties, including those relating to violence against women and the elimination of racism, have also acknowledged the importance of an adequate standard of living and appropriate housing.

For people with disability, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities acknowledges the right to an adequate standard of living (which includes housing) and social protection. This right has been recognised together with a need for accessibility in the community and a right to live independently as part of the community.

However, in 2019, when Australia's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was reviewed by the supervising Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it was found Australia needed mandatory rules regarding accessibility of new houses. Furthermore, it was concerning to the committee only limited consideration of persons with disabilities, particularly indigenous persons with disabilities, had occurred in strategies to reduce poverty and homelessness – including the National Affordable Housing Agreement and National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. Any organisation advocating for compliance with human rights or sustainable development goals should be concerned by these findings of the committee.

People with disability are more likely to live in poverty, be jobless and require social or public housing than people without disability. The Australian Institute for Health and Welfare has reported in 2020 that 41 per cent of all households in social housing include a person with disability and 62 per cent are single adult households. Therefore, social housing policy must be informed by the ongoing and future needs of people with disability in Australia.

Perhaps unsurprisingly Australians want to remain in their communities near families and friends for as long as possible. When the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety commissioned a research paper in July

2020 concerning, “What Australians Think of Ageing and Aged Care” the following question was asked: “where do Australians want to live if they need support or care?” Older Australians indicated a strong preference to stay in their own house if they need support or care. Only 25 per cent stated they would prefer to live in a residential aged care to access required care.

Care institutions, which includes aged care facilities, can unfortunately be gateways to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. The World Health Organisation has found that people in aged care facilities are twice as likely to experience abuse. Institutions for people with disability are unlikely to be any different.

Reliance upon institutional care options has led to the need for Royal Commissions and compromises the efficacy of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

But what is the solution? The National Housing Dialogue on Universal Housing Design in 2010, which led a consensus agreement by industry, the community, government and human rights organisations to seek to have minimum liveable housing design standards by 2020 has failed.

It is obvious we need clear rules.

I hope you found the above perspective by Ben 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 ●



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

New-look Metro Tunnel HQ back in business

Metro Tunnel HQ is back doing what it does best – giving Victorians the chance to explore some of the biggest construction projects underway in our state.

The visitor centre was closed temporarily when COVID hit last year, but it's once again open to the public with a new look.

Jo Hopgood of Rail Projects Victoria (RPV), the agency delivering the Metro Tunnel Project for the Victorian Government, said the revamped centre on Swanston St now included information and education about the broader range of RPV projects.

Jo, who is deputy director, marketing and brand, said, “We've been reviewing what visitors liked best about the existing spaces and experiences as well as considering what stories we'd like to be able to tell at HQ and what digital capability we would need to tell those stories.”

Part of that has been thinking about how best to incorporate more than one project into the space for the first time.

“New visitors will notice a lot of changes,” Jo said.

“That includes new projects to learn about with Melbourne Airport Rail, Regional Rail



Revival and Geelong Fast Rail included in the displays, as well as the traditional Metro Tunnel content.”

Staff at Metro Tunnel HQ are thrilled to be back in their revitalised city space.

“They're excited to welcome visitors to the new space and check out the new experiences,” Jo said. “They are enjoying chatting with visitors again and getting back to what they do best.”

RPV has been monitoring visitor traffic on Swanston St closely, as the city comes back to life after tight COVID restrictions.

“Visitor numbers on the footpaths around Metro Tunnel HQ are back to around 65 per cent of pre-COVID traffic,” Jo said. “There are plenty of people back in the city and we are also looking forward to welcoming lots of schools to HQ again.”

For details of HQ's opening hours and current activities, check out the Metro Tunnel website.

Metro Tunnel HQ is at 125-133 Swanston St, across the road from the Melbourne Town Hall. Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm; Saturday and Sunday: 10am to 4pm ●

For more information:
metrotunnel.vic.gov.au

Moonee Ponderings

Unless you subscribe to *Ponderings* (The Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek (FoMPC) seasonal newsletter) you, like me before I subscribed, are likely to have a very limited perspective on our local waterway.

The FoMPC is a group of like-minded people who 20 years ago formed a group supporting the natural environment of the creek. Its website mooneepondscreek.org.au which holds previous copies of *Ponderings*, is a fascinating and colourful resource, especially for twitchers and historians.

I'm sorry to say that my "Kensington" perspective on the creek was (and still is) cluttered by pylons, graffiti, weed-infested banks and rubbish traps. However, after a good rain my feelings lift somewhat with the water level, as the water covers the scrubby banks and attracts some wonderful birdlife. Flocks of the Australian White Ibis descend to feed in the low-lying flooded sections of the creek; a variety of small birds hide in the prickly Bursaria, and if you're lucky you might see a solitary White-Face Heron picking its way along the creek. Only a few years ago on an evening walk along the creek you would be accompanied by the somewhat comforting croak of frogs, but alas, they have now disappeared, a sad reflection on the health of the creek.

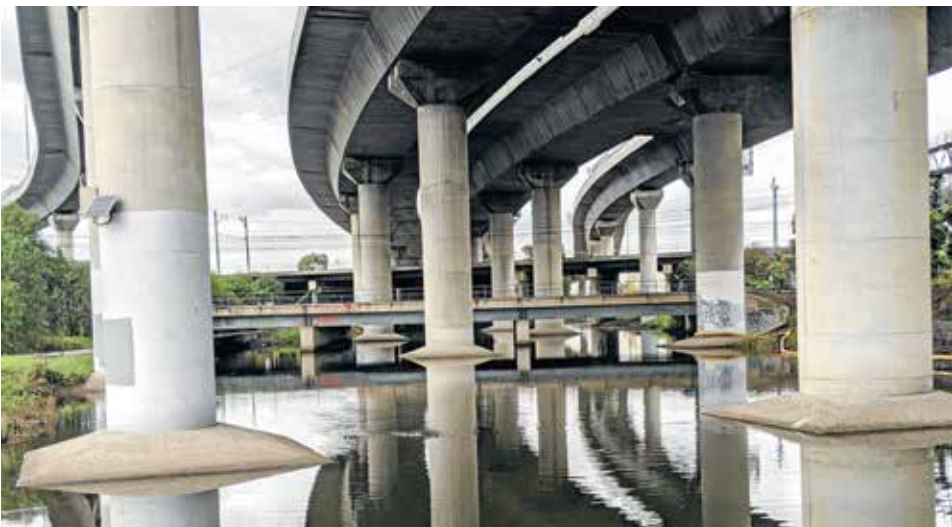
At the Kensington Association we have a monthly Moonee Ponds Creek Report (MPCR) by our resident creek walker, John Widmer, who keeps us up-to-date on MPC developments. The creek is a persistent sore point in our line of sight, we have been teased for years with visions of refurbished and peaceful creek banks – particularly between Racecourse Rd and Arden St. We've been wondering if COVID



might unplug something and turn the tease to a reality, so we can get a long-overdue addition to our green open space.

Reading *Ponderings* you discover that every section of the creek – from Greenvale to Travancore – has passionate residents on its banks who have their own local visions of how the creek could be, and wrestle with their own local bureaucratic masters. You also discover fascinating historical details of the creek and its tributaries, as well as wonderful pictures of feathered creek inhabitants. Recently, Kensington and North Melbourne residents, under the leadership of local activists, have obtained grants and worked hard to replant some of the western levee bank adjoining Bent St, Kensington. STOP PRESS: there will be one of these planting sessions on May 23 from 10am until noon – meeting near the corner of Bent St and Macaulay Rd.

As North Melbourne and Kensington residents know, the MPC widens out to more of a channel from Macaulay Rd through to its mouth at the Yarra. This section of the creek



has a completely different feel from further upstream. Regular Capital City Trail cyclists will be only too familiar with the way both creek and bike path are shadowed by the oppressive presence of the CityLink above. The community has seen much of the value of the lower MPC and surrounding open space/wetlands area eroded to accommodate infrastructure projects. Twenty-plus years ago it was CityLink and now it is the West Gate Tunnel Project. Through our long time Kensington Association member, Fran Araneda, together with other community groups on a Community Advisory Group, we are currently wrestling with the Tunnel Authority in an attempt to have infrastructure designed in such a way as to allow, as much as possible, the maintenance of biodiversity and open space in the creek corridor. We know that a sum of \$100 million has been apparently set aside by the City of Melbourne and the state government to mitigate the negative impact of the West Gate Tunnel Project on the lower MPC neighbourhood. We are watching closely to see how those funds are spent.

One final ponder ... I shudder to think how earlier Indigenous people would react to seeing how the creek has changed from a source of life to a suburban drain shadowed by a frenetic tollway above. With the development of the new suburb (Arden) adjacent to the lower MPC, it is certain that new residents will want more insightful environmental support for this forgotten waterway ●

For more information:
kensingtonassociation.org



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ABORIGINAL MELBOURNE



More than a walk

For many of us, the walk from the city to the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) usually signifies one thing. Bright lights, colourful scarves, meat pies and butterflies running rampant. But for indigenous man Rob Hyatt, the walk to Melbourne's cultural home of footy means much more. "There was a ceremony camp at the site of the MCG," he said.

WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*

"In the modern context, whether it's a major event, we still have Welcome to Country, and elders practising ceremonies there where their ancestors before them practised."

As Koorie Heritage Trust's (KHT) manager of education and visitor experience, Mr Hyatt takes people on walking tours across Melbourne, educating and informing the public about indigenous culture, language and diversity. "Culture is practiced in the urban landscapes, and that means the broader public, tourists and visitors can experience Culture as well," Mr Hyatt said.

"I enjoy promoting Aboriginal Victoria and Aboriginal Melbourne because there's still sometimes a lack of understanding, or a lack of knowledge if you like, of the fact that Aboriginal people are present in our urban spaces."

The Birrarung Wilam walk begins with an introduction to Aboriginal artefacts at the KHT centre at Federation Square. Along with providing a space for the broader community to engage with culture, Mr Hyatt said the KHT also enabled local Aboriginal



community members to visit and experience the artwork in their own ways as well.

"One of the things our visitors come to learn is that there is a diversity to Aboriginal Victoria, and the Heritage Trust and the site that we're on actually is the lands of a particular nation, and in this case, we talk about the Wurundjeri people," he said.

From there, walkers amble along the banks of the Yarra River adorned by Aboriginal art installations, while Mr Hyatt explains the nuances of life by the river and the impact of colonisation.

He also highlights the towering legacy of Wurundjeri elder, William Barak, who became a spokesperson for Aboriginal social justice in the 1800s during Melbourne's formative years. Known for his artwork depicting indigenous life and encounters with Europeans, Barak also played a key role in the survival of his own people while gaining the support of non-indigenous people, Hyatt said.

The William Barak building in Swanston St – a visually striking 32-storey residential apartment block – displays Barak's face through the ingenious use of negative dark spaces flowing through balconies.



As part of the walking tour, Mr Hyatt explained how the building was the largest piece of Aboriginal artwork in Victoria.

"The entire building is the canvas," he said. "He's looking over his traditional country right across the CBD."

Up until recently, the Aboriginal walking tour was delivered only in person.

But now, in the wake of COVID-19, the walk is also delivered online, ensuring regional Victorians, including students, can gain the same experience as Melburnians. And for city and country folk alike, Mr Hyatt said the experience "blows people away."

"It's about understanding your own backyard and understanding the connection," he said. "It takes people away from the typical or romanticised perspectives of Aboriginal environments."

"Aboriginal culture is everything – it's connection to country, it's connection to your ancestors, it's connection to our stories." ●

For more information:
koorieheritagetrust.com.au



Faces of North West City

What are you grateful for when it comes to North and West Melbourne/Kensington?



HENRY
Great community with good people. We moved here only two weeks ago.



MADISON
The food is great, there are too many good coffee shops around here; it is hard to pick just one, so we are trying new ones on the go.



AMARA
I'm pretty new to the area, but I already like these streets in autumn time. People seem to be friendly here, I find it easier to connect with locals.



WILL & JERRIE
Good vibes, lots of cats and pets on the streets seem to make these suburbs look like they are family oriented.

MELBOURNE ZOO

All together now

It's a beautiful thing to watch elephants interact. As an elephant keeper at Melbourne Zoo, every day is different, and we are always learning about our beautiful animals.

WORDS BY *Lucy*
MELBOURNE ZOO TRAIL OF THE ELEPHANTS ACTING COORDINATOR

On a bright morning recently all seven of the elephants came together in the same space for the first time since our newest arrival Luk Chai joined the herd. And it was one of our most exciting days of the year!

Melbourne Zoo is home to seven Asian elephants: females Mek Kapah, Dokkoon, Num-Oi, Kulab and Mali, our young bull Man Jai, and new breeding bull Luk Chai, who only arrived at the Zoo from NSW in December last year.

Why gather the herd now? Simply because our approach to caring for elephants at Melbourne Zoo is all about relationships. They all have different personalities, and they all play a vital role within the social dynamics of our herd.

You may have seen that Zoos Victoria previously announced plans to move our entire Asian elephant herd from Melbourne Zoo to Werribee Open Range Zoo in 2024, following completion of an \$84.5 million expansion of Werribee funded by the Victorian Government. The future is exciting, but what is happening right now at Melbourne Zoo is also exciting.

Melbourne Zoo is part of a regional breeding program for Asian elephants, with the overarching objective of supporting the conservation of the species, which is classified as endangered

by the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List. Habitat loss is a huge threat, often associated with the spread of unsustainable palm oil plantations. That's what our "Don't Palm Us Off" initiative is all about.

As elephant keepers, what we aim to do is work on replicating the natural biology of elephants and their social networks, so that their life reflects as closely as possible what they would experience in the wild. We have a wonderful social network of female elephants that are cohesive and live together all the time. And then, on the periphery, we've got males Luk Chai and Man Jai, who was born in the maternal unit and weaned out of it when the time came. This is just how it is in the wild, with a core female unit and males who regularly join the herd and then leave to spend some time alone. But the arrival and inclusion of 11-year-old Luk Chai meant that we could now start doing introductions of all seven together for the first time.

What we saw from Luk Chai at the herd gathering was absolutely perfect. He's a lovely breeding bull with loads of confidence, but also loads of respect. He's become very familiar with them all through the introductions we've done over the past months. He waltzes into that herd unit with those females. He heads in and starts eating a bit of food with the females. Then Man Jai comes in and watches that. This is a great life-learning opportunity for Man Jai. He's like, "okay, that's how you behave. That's



the right way to enter a herd unit with females." Just to be calm and confident. Luk Chai is such a perfect role model for Man Jai, and the herd gathering was a perfect life-skill development opportunity for every individual in the herd.

I couldn't be happier with how the day went. We saw calmness at the start with them all eating and watching each other. And then, after a good feed, you saw the interactions pick up, and the play, and the communication.

When they spend time together, you can really see how interactions and relationships are managed by each individual. They all read each other's behaviours and act accordingly. The beautiful thing is that they make their own decisions. When the herd shows us it's time, we can separate them. We could see Luk Chai start to wander off from the herd, which was perfect. He's telling us, "All right, I'm ready to head off now back to my space." So, we pick up on that behaviour and he's able to leave. The females enjoy the rest of the day together, and the males move away from them, exactly as would happen in the wild. We ended that session on such a high!

It's such a varied, dynamic situation at the Trail of the Elephants. We've got different habitat rotations, and different social opportunities. It might be bulls together one day, or a bull in with the females. And what we see from that is great enrichment because every day they have something new to experience. The Trail of the Elephants is a great place to sit and spend some time, to observe and enjoy this amazing, endangered species. I hope you'll set some time aside to do just that next time you're at the Zoo! ●

Olivia gets the ball rolling on council

First-time councillor Dr Olivia Ball is bringing a renewed focus on human rights to the City of Melbourne.

As a member of The Greens, Cr Ball joins her experienced Greens colleague Rohan Leppert on the new-look council and fills the party's void left by the departure of former Cr Cathy Oke, who served three terms at the City of Melbourne.

While the experience of an election campaign last year wasn't new to her having run on the Greens ticket at the previous two City of Melbourne elections, she told *North West City News* that nothing could have prepared her for stepping inside Town Hall.

"I've run twice, but you don't know until you get inside really the magnitude and the detail," she said. "There's no way of campaigning on any of that. It's just massive – you have no idea!"

"I mean people say it's just roads, rates and rubbish and that's the least of what council does. I have two portfolios now, which I'm delighted with, and they have nothing to do with roads, rates or rubbish!"

Born in East Melbourne, a current resident of Carlton and having lived, worked and studied in the City of Melbourne for most of her life, you'd be hard pressed to find a more "local" councillor if you tried!

As the chair of the council's health, wellbeing and belonging portfolio and the deputy chair to Lord Mayor Sally Capp on the Aboriginal Melbourne portfolio, Cr Ball's wealth of human rights expertise is already being put to good use at the council.

With a Masters and PhD in human rights, Cr Ball began her career as a psychologist working with refugees and survivors of torture and trauma. She is also a published author, a founding director of the non-government organisation Remedy Australia and currently works at Fitzroy Legal Service. And as if that's not enough, she is also currently studying urban planning.

When it comes to the portfolio she chairs, which focuses on the city's health, recreation and community services, and oversees critical issues like homelessness, she said she was "delighted" to be playing a leading role.

"I think human rights is relevant in all levels of government but the most obvious issue for me is homelessness, which falls under my portfolio. We have some very exciting potential there," she said.

"Housing lies with all levels of government so it's not just an advocacy role. We have a role. We can provide land and build social housing as we've done before, and we can do again. And we certainly provide services for people experiencing homelessness."



When it comes to the portfolio she chairs, which focuses on the city's health, recreation and community services, and oversees critical issues like homelessness, she said she was "delighted" to be playing a leading role.



"But I'm pleased to say that the council already has a housing-first model which is a philosophy or approach in homelessness that is not focusing on services which basically allow people to remain homeless. That's not what we want to do."

While originally a Labor Party member as a student, Cr Ball has been a member of The Greens for the past 20 years. She said like many other generational Greens members, she was drawn to the party by the then-federal government's handling of the Tampa affair in 2001.

But she said her political activism first began as a student when she campaigned against the apartheid in South Africa, kickstarting a life-long passion for human rights which has since extended to a range of other issues, including the environment, refugees and indigenous affairs.

And now as the deputy lead on the council's Aboriginal Melbourne portfolio, which last year passed its new Reconciliation Action Plan complete with a landmark component of "truth-telling", she said her experience from South Africa was very applicable.

"Coincidentally, I wrote a book with a Zimbabwean activist named Paul Brady, he's a British academic and specialised in the Truth Commission [South Africa], and that winds us back to Victoria – we're going to have a truth commission in Victoria."

"It's a very exciting time to be alive! It's terrible in many ways but I'm very thrilled to have this [Aboriginal Melbourne] portfolio."

"Of course, we have an Aboriginal department that is fully staffed by indigenous people. But we [the council] are keen to look at ways of how we can govern with the five sovereign nations that are components of this municipality. What does it mean to recognise their sovereignty?"

While she is still learning the ropes as a councillor, she said the new council was a diverse and hard-working group of individuals who were all equally committed to "revitalising" Melbourne amid COVID-19.

But while the pandemic has caused a great deal of devastation on the city, Cr Ball said it had presented new opportunities to do things differently.

"Revitalisation of Melbourne is our biggest priority. I won't use the word 'recovery' because it implies going backwards. I don't want to go back. A lot of what he had before wasn't working. We have, in fact, worsening inequality," she said.

"We have just finished a community consultation and the number one issue is health and wellbeing, which is hardly surprising in these crazy times. If you haven't got your health, what have you got?"

"But the number two issue, is climate. We [the council] have declared a climate emergency and we need to make that part of our everyday activity on council. Economic revitalisation is primary, but we don't have an economy without the environment."

"I know we [councillors] can work together and grow to understand and listen to each other. I'm adamant that we have to work together – I'm not interested in party politics for its own sake. I want to get the outcomes." ●



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PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS' NETWORK

We all need affordable housing and job opportunities

The new call to provide affordable housing for "essential workers" by the Committee for Melbourne has added support for solutions to a growing problem.

However, I don't agree with its idea of a "bushfire type levy" to raise funds to build this housing.

It has proposed a levy on all Victorian residents and businesses to fund the construction of new dwellings. I don't accept that those who have not created this problem should pay to fix it.

Private developers could step up to solve the crisis by offering to support the building of affordable housing as part of their new developments, whether they are residential, commercial or industrial in the City of Melbourne. This is called "inclusionary zoning" across the globe and City of Melbourne has it in its draft housing strategy.

Under inclusionary zoning, land and/or money can be offered by developers for public or community housing to be built, with governments adding additional funds to build public

housing or community housing organisations raising funds to do so. The state government's own current planning laws encourage this to happen. This is not a radical – it just seems that the state government prefers to not challenge nor mandate through planning laws for developers to do the right thing.

The Arden Precinct in the city's planning process is a great opportunity for this to happen. Public housing could be built in the new precinct through funding available in the state government's Big Housing Build. More than 4000 Victorians have signed the Save Public Housing Collective's petition to Premier Daniel Andrews and Minister for Housing Richard Wynne for this type of investment to happen as a fundamental part of their proposed 10-year strategy for social and affordable housing.

There is widespread community support for public housing in the Melbourne community. We all saw this with the huge community support for public housing tenants who were locked down during last year's COVID-19 lockdowns that the Victorian Ombudsman found

“The Arden Precinct can have both new public housing for those on the state's waiting list and to reduce overcrowding in the towers.”



breached their human rights!

Community members in their thousands were the first responders with culturally appropriate food and other support within hours of the lockdowns happening.

The Arden Precinct can have both new public housing for those on the state's waiting list and to reduce overcrowding in the towers.

The Committee for Melbourne could complement this approach to providing affordable housing by supporting and seeking funds for training programs that would enable public housing tenants to become the "essential workers" Melbourne needs living close to their future workplaces ●

For more information:
change.org/p/daniel-andrews-prioritise-public-housing-to-protect-the-most-vulnerable



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Pet's Corner

“Cat-dog” and “demonstration-dog” roam Kensington

“

“An odd little dog with an eccentric personality”. That’s how Justine Mizen describes her 15-year-old, white scraggly dog Colombo.

”



WORDS BY *Spencer Fowler Steen*

“He has trouble walking over lines. He wouldn’t step over a line or a cord, he just waits and then does a massive jump over it,” Justine said.

“This is how he is all the time, just quiet and keeps looking around like a cat.”

Known as “cat-dog”, Colombo was once owned by an elderly gentleman who was put into a nursing home, Justine said.

Colombo, then three years old, was left behind in the back garden, and the man’s children told Justine and her partner, Hans Wolfgang Gellinsen, they could have Colombo.

“He had fleas and ear infections, but my friend did a great job in getting him sorted and then we took him over and he has been with us ever since,” Justine said.

Their second dog, Mishka, was rescued from Mornington Second Change Dogs.

Hans said Mishka was “very timid” and easily spooked but was steadily improving.

“She is very funny dog, quite well-behaved and likes running around other dogs and cats,” he said.

Having just finished up a professional dog training course, Hans is training Mishka to be a “demonstration” dog as part of his project to start dog-training part time.

“She is my project dog,” he said.

“Once she is more confident and happier, I’ll take her along with me to show to people how I train the dogs.”

Justine and Hans moved to Australia from the UK in 2004.

As a nurse, Justine said the transition was easy for her.

Hans was in IT at the time, switching professions to a personal gym trainer, and now, a clinical myo-therapist ●

STATE MP

“Cash for cans” is finally coming to Victoria!

After more than 10 years of campaigning from the Greens and community groups, Victoria is finally about to introduce a “cash for cans” scheme! The final design of the scheme was announced in April and we’re really pleased.

South Australia has had a scheme like this for more than 20 years, and almost every other state and territory now has one too. Victoria is late to the game, but it’s better late than never.

From 2023, Victorians will be able to take their bottles and cans to depots at convenient and accessible locations across Victoria to return containers including shops, reverse vending machines, depots, pop-ups, and drop-off points. These will be run by recyclers, small business, and charity, community, and sports groups.

This will get litter off our streets and clean up our waste stream so recyclable materials like bottles and cans don’t end up in landfill, but are actually recycled. It will also add welcome cash to sports clubs and other organisations and people who can collect the money for the cans and bottles.

This scheme is a direct result of the Greens in Parliament. When China stopped taking our waste, it led to a crisis in Victoria which finally shone a light on the fact we were shipping our rubbish overseas and not dealing with it here at home. The problem was, the state government had very few plans for what to do next. So, the Greens initiated a Parliamentary Inquiry to look at solutions. This inquiry recommended a cash for cans scheme, among other solutions, like a fourth glass kerbside bin and building more recycling factories right here at home.

We’re really pleased the state government has taken up so many of these solutions.

While 2023 isn’t as soon as I’d hoped for when it comes to a “cash for containers” program, it will be a major step forward to reducing our waste and cutting out dangerous litter pollution on our streets and in our local parks, rivers and creeks.

I’m also pleased that companies like Coca-Cola and other big corporations didn’t get their way when it comes to the design of the program. They were lobbying the state government to design a scheme that would’ve locked out local community groups and kept more profit with big corporations, which we fought against.

I will now be turning my attention to what needs to happen next. Many people in the CBD and Docklands still don’t have access to composting, and this needs to change.

One of my personal pet peeves is pointless single-use plastics, like bananas and other fruit wrapped in plastic, and the enormous plastic packaging that confronts us when we head to the supermarket. We need to end pointless unnecessary plastics packaging and take solid steps to move away from this disposable society.

I’ll continue to advocate in the State Parliament to reduce the amount of waste we produce, by banning unnecessary single-use plastics and ensuring food scraps are composted (not sent to landfill) in our green waste bins,

▼ *Ellen Sandell MP at the Recycling 2 Parliament action in 2019 calling on the state government to implement a 10-cent refund scheme for cans, bottles and containers.*



among other solutions.

I’d love to hear about your experiences with recycling or ideas for how we can move to a less wasteful city. If you have questions or concerns, 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

News from Parkville Gardens

Autumn is welcome in Parkville Gardens. The neighbourhood is green and leafy, tended well by Parks Victoria and the City of Melbourne.

Most of the many trees in the area are indigenous – and therefore non-deciduous – species. But scattered through the area are exotics sporting foliage in the brilliant red and gold hues of autumn. They add a lovely splash of colour in counterpoint to the dominant green.

It's been a relatively quiet time in Parkville Gardens. Children and parents came out in plenty for the annual Easter egg hunt on the last day of the school holidays, even though it was two weeks after the Easter weekend itself. The mild weather helped make the event a great success. This and the community picnic in early March have been great opportunities for local residents to come together and enjoy meeting up safely after last year's prolonged lockdown.

The Parkville Gardens Residents' Association has been seeking more information about the new residential tower to be built in Galada Avenue. A meeting with a representative from the joint venture partners Frasers and Citta and from Housing First who will own and manage the social housing complex is scheduled for May 6. It is hoped that this will shed light on a whole range of issues that are of concern to the association. Questions have been submitted about the building design, the construction plan and several social issues. Parkville

Gardens continues to suffer from a lack of any central amenity or convenience store and from inadequate public transport. The association is keen to know how the needs of the residents in the 151 apartments of social housing will be catered for.

To continue the process of reconnection within the local community the association is planning a dinner for members and residents late in June. More details next time ●

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



ENVIRONMENT

Saving our seeds

Seeds provide the majority of the world's food supply. Nearly everything we eat today is a result of the careful and selective plant breeding and production of our ancestors worldwide.

Over time through human and natural selection, crops have evolved into new forms with different characteristics called landraces. Landraces are genetically diverse, affording each crop the chance to survive different environmental conditions, which is important in a world of rapidly changing climate.

In recent times, there has been a major shift away from collecting and growing out our own seeds to purchasing seed annually from commercial seed suppliers, and to hybridise or clone plants.

We are facing challenges to our seed diversity, which makes us vulnerable to corporate greed and climate change. Some of these challenges being:

Extinction of plant species

In the past century, as much as 75 per cent of the genetic diversity – hundreds of thousands of plant varieties – has been lost, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation.

The corporatisation of seeds

- In 1985, 280 seed companies were brought by Dutch Shell.
- Monsanto, Union Carbide, Volvo, Sandoz, Rhone Poulenc, Shell, Bayer and others have brought 1000 small seed companies.
- Byerley bought up 27 seed companies in



1985 in Australia and the range of varieties diminished rapidly through company restructuring.

- Around 2000 varieties were deleted by Seminis in 1999. Seminis is the largest developer, producer and marketer of vegetable and fruit seeds. It is operating in 120 countries and has 70 research stations.
- Genetically-modified seed costs eight times the price of open-pollinated ones.

A hero and activist against this corporatisation of our seeds and food is Vandana Shiva. In 1991 Shiva founded the organisation Navdanya, which stands for the protection of biological diversity of seeds. Navdanya collects regional varieties and saves them from extinction. In addition, it protects farmers from dependence on patented seeds. The preservation of indigenous seeds in the hands of local communities and chemical-free agriculture with local markets are among Vandana Shiva's most important goals.

Freezing of seeds and seed banks

While seeds are being frozen in banks around the world, does this mean that only those seeds, which can survive freezing conditions, are kept? Thereby, diminishing biodiversity? An important aspect of maintaining seeds is to keep them viable and to do this they need to be grown out annually – land is required and not every seed bank is able to grow out its seed collections.



Hybridisation and loss of species/biodiversity

Hybridisation is the crossing of two widely different varieties resulting in the plant having characteristics from both parents. However, the seed produced by the second generation (F2) of the hybrid does not reliably produce a true copy of that hybrid and often loses much of its yield potential.

While comprehensive figures are hard to come by, it is believed that thousands of varieties of vegetables and flowers are being lost, due to reliance on commercial hybrid seed.

Widespread use of these hybrid seed varieties is said to be eliminating many open-pollinated varieties, especially the local variations.

The concern is that this erodes the gene pool, resulting in less hardy, more vulnerable plants.

Vegetables are the most threatened species – in the USA in 1903 there were 46 varieties of asparagus, 338 varieties of rockmelons and 164 varieties of celery commercially available. Today there are three varieties of asparagus, 37 varieties of rockmelons and three varieties of celery available in the USA commercially.

In agriculture and gardening, seed saving is the practice of saving seeds or other reproductive material (e.g., tubers) from open-pollinated plants.

Open pollination is the key to seed saving. Plants that reproduce through natural means tend to adapt to local conditions over time, and evolve as reliable performers, particularly in their localities, known as landraces or "folk varieties".



Open pollinated plants are free from pesticides, chemicals and any other form of genetic modification by humans. The modern trend to rely on hybridised and cloned plants negates these evolutionary processes. Hybrid plants are artificially cross-pollinated, and bred to favour desirable characteristics, like higher yield (in monocultures) and more uniform size to accommodate mechanised harvesting.

Without seed savers networks, seed exchanges and local seed banks, we gardeners would have lost most of the seeds developed by our ancestors.

A number of local seed saving networks and groups have been formed globally to ensure food and seed sovereignty. For more information visit facebook.com/seedsaversnetwork

The Kensington Seed Savers have been collecting and growing seeds for the last year. These seeds have been saved from local community gardens where only heirloom, organic and heritage plants have been grown in chemical free environments. The seeds of these have been collected and shared in a seed swap box at the Kensington Neighbourhood House.

Some of seedlings grown from local seeds collected for the COVID Food Surplus program in 2020, which provided around 400kg of fresh locally grown food to our community ●



Jacqui van Heerden

CO-CONVENER OF TRANSITION TOWN KENSINGTON

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BUSINESS

Mörk Chocolate: an Errol St institution

For Mörk Chocolate, business has always been more than just producing some of Melbourne’s highest quality drinking chocolate.

WORDS BY *Jack Hayes*

Accountability, traceability, sustainability, and an unwavering commitment to their community both here and abroad has been the underpinning of almost a decade of Mörk Chocolate’s success.

According to co-owner Kiril Shaginov, using the same approach taken by specialty coffee-makers; with respect for the traceability, quality and unique origin of ingredients all the way from bean to cup is what made his product different from the drinking chocolate you’re likely to find in supermarkets.

“What we wanted to do was create a product that was truly traceable down to its source. When we started, traceability in chocolate was an afterthought, where coffee has a huge focus on single origin and fair trade,” Mr Shaginov said.

“We wanted to create a product that people would genuinely enjoy and for people who use our product, from baristas to customers, to become educators for drinking chocolate and drinking chocolate culture.”

“I’ve always loved chocolate. My wife Josefin is a chocolatier and I have a coffee background.



I’ve always had a strong interest and appreciation for food, wine and coffee.”

While some Mörk Chocolate products are organic and fair-trade certified, they choose not to highlight this on their packaging. Partly due to a lack of universal regulation over the use of the label and an inaccessibility for smaller producers to gain the accreditation due to exorbitant costs.

In its own separate pursuit of accountability,



Mörk’s commitment to traceability is illustrated by personally sourcing each ingredient, working directly with independent businesses from all over the world in a way that supports ethical and sustainable trade practices, ensuring producers able to compete on the market and receive fair prices for their ingredients.

“We source our cocoa powder from Peru, which is single origin, we have Cocoa liquor which we shave from a block and add to our

blends that is from Venezuela, and we use a natural organic sweetener called coconut blossom sugar from West Java, Indonesia,” Mr Shaginov said.

“Our difference is that you know where it’s made and you know it is great quality, not just in terms of taste, but also in terms of a traceability and sustainability point of view. That is enough incentive for customers to buy a quality product pay a little more money for it.”

“As a full circle, that money goes back to the farms. We pay for cocoa at a much greater price than a mainstream chocolate producer would.”

Support for their community is not limited to their network of producers abroad, Mr Shaginov and his team have also been providing free products for any health care worker who enters their shop, in thanks for the incredible work they have done during the grips of a global pandemic.

“All of our house chocolates are free to health care workers. It could be any anyone from doctors and GPs to nurses and research workers. It doesn’t really matter whether we see them with a badge, they can just let us know,” Mr Shaginov said.

“It’s a nice way to thank them for the hard work they do. Obviously, the situation is a little bit different now, but back during lockdowns when the workload was crazy – to brighten up their day and put a smile on their faces was super important for us.”

Mörk’s list of drinking chocolates include Junior Dark 50 per cent, Original Dark 70 per cent, Dark Milk and Salt 65 per cent and Even Darker 85 per cent.

All of its drinking chocolates are complemented by a range of cakes produced by Söt by Mörk; a business offshoot supplying some of Melbourne’s favourite cafes with exclusively chocolate and cacao-based treats.

You can find Mörk Chocolate at 150 Errol St, North Melbourne everyday between 10am and 5pm ●

For more information, visit morkchocolate.com.au

Coffee and community

WORDS BY *Jess Carrascalao Heard*

Morning Brew. Bean Juice. Cup of Joe. Liquid Energy. Rocket Fuel.

A much-loved beverage with many nicknames, Melburnians every day wake up desperate for their morning cup of coffee.

But for Kensington local Ikram Ali, coffee is much more than a hot drink to get her synapses firing.

She’s Oromo and was born in Ethiopia; a country which is widely understood to be where coffee originated from.

“Coffee means a lot. Because, we are Oromo,” she said.

When Ms Ali chatted to *North West City News*, she had just a few weeks before conducting an Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony with Kensington Neighbourhood House, which was open to the public to attend.

The ceremony features much more hands-on engagement with the coffee than the growl of a machine grinder and the barista’s rhythmic “tap-tap-tap” of a solitary latte to-go.

It’s something that brings people together – friends, neighbours, family – and it begins with green, unroasted coffee beans.

“You wash the beans. Sometimes you wash, and sometimes no, but everybody’s different the way they do it,” Ms Ali said.

Then, the coffee is roasted on a flame until it smokes, and the beans turn brown – “little bit brown in a lighter way”, as Ms Ali put it.

She smiles when she thinks about this part of the process.

“When I roasted it, the beans, the smells that come out, that’s my favourite,” she said.

The coffee is then ground and added to hot water and it’s at this stage that Ms Ali adds an aromatic ingredient which might surprise those

who have never drunk coffee in this way before.

“I put [in] some ginger, the powdered ginger ... it smells very good,” she said.

After that, it’s served, poured from a height into cups without handles, with the ceremony featuring three brews of the coffee grinds, each weaker than the last.

Ms Ali serves it with a variety of accompaniments, including the traditional popcorn.

“They put the popcorn, Himbasha [flat bread], some sweets, a lot of stuff. Different finger foods ... we cook a lot of foods, Ethiopian foods. We eat like that with friends. We get together,” she said.

When the coffee is shared, it’s not just the aroma of the beans that fills the house, but rather it is intermingled with the perfume of incense.

“It smells beautiful with the charcoal, we put it [the incense] on the fire. And so, it smells good everywhere like that in the house all day,” Ms Ali said.

For the local community to be able to attend a coffee ceremony put on by Ms Ali is a great privilege; she’s had to travel a long way to get here.

Born in Dire Dawa in Ethiopia, Ms Ali came to Australia when she was a teen in 1998, having spent her childhood in Kenya as a refugee.

Ms Ali said it was thanks to her auntie that she and her family ended up in Melbourne.

She loves it here and values the peace and social support which for her is juxtaposed against the armed conflict which continues in Ethiopia.

“Australia, to me, is nice. And what the Australian Government is doing for us, they give us work, everything, you know. If you don’t work, you get welfare. It’s a beautiful country. Peace,” she said.

She has lived across inner-city Melbourne,



“

It’s something that brings people together – friends, neighbours, family – and it begins with green, unroasted coffee beans.

”

but now resides in Kensington where she helps the community, particularly at The Venny, where she often cooks.

She’s always been a helper, ever since she was a child and it’s something she values.

“I used to go to anyone’s house, anyone. If they had babies, you know. I used to help them. If someone died, or they had a funeral ... even when I was young, I helped,” she said.

“I help the community, the kids, a lot. I feel it. I love helping. If you help someone, you get back in a good way.” ●

For more about Kensington Neighbourhood House workshops and events, visit kensingtonneighbourhoodhouse.com

What's On: May 2021

Community Calendar

Pop up toy library

Wednesdays @ 11am-12pm
Baptist Church and Community Centre
4 Miller St, West Melbourne
www.melbournecommunitytoylibrary.org.au
Facebook - Melbourne Community Toy Library
Carlton - Kensington-Docklands



SWITCH: Strengthen Women in Touch Football

JJ Holland Park
Childers St, Kensington
Wednesday, May 12: 6.30pm – 7.30pm
Free

All abilities welcome
0414 315 957

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Fundraiser Dinner

Kazbah Egyptian Street Food
174 Bellair St, Kensington
\$40. Book online

Each year the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre runs a Feast for Freedom program encouraging people to cook amazing recipes provided by asylum seekers.

Residents at Railway Place need a noise wall

Labor's West Gate Tunnel mega toll road project will drive thousands of extra cars and trucks into West Melbourne, bringing dangerous traffic, noise and air pollution. Local residents have asked for a new noise-protection wall to protect them, but the Labor Government has rejected this request. Sign the petition: www.ellensandell.com/noise-wall-now

Parkville Tennis Club

151 Royal Parade
Parkville 3052
Monday – Sunday, 6am – 11pm
Bookings: 0412 279 156

Play tennis on synthetic clay courts, day and night. Free social tennis events are also on each month.

Improving our neighbourhood parks and streets

City of Melbourne
Friday, May 7
Bedford Street Reserve, North Melbourne
4pm – 6pm including two community walks at 4.30pm and 5.45pm
Free
Workshops and activities for you to explore how the council can improve the



Wandering Stars

Birrarung Marr
Lower Terrace riverside
Melbourne
May 26 – June 6
Free

When you look up at night, the stars and sky contain ancient, unifying stories.



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



Arts House - MASS MOVEMENT FOLAU: The Arrival

Sunday, May 16, 3pm
Free
Flagstaff Gardens
All ages

An orchestrated movement of drumming and percussive dance.



Osteo Joint Run Club

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

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

Business Directory

Association

North & West Melbourne Precinct Association

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

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Liquor Licence Notice

I/We Buddy Four Pty Ltd applied to the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation on 16/04/2021 for the grant of a packaged liquor licence at/to 111 BATMAN STREET, WEST MELBOURNE VIC 3003.

Any person may object to the grant of this application on the grounds that:

- it would detract from, or be detrimental to, the amenity of the area in which the premises are situated, and/or
- it would be conducive to or encourage the misuse or abuse of alcohol

An objection must state the reasons for the objection.

All objections are treated as public documents.

Objections must be made in writing to:
Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation
GPO Box 1988
Melbourne VIC 3001

Objections must be made no later than 30 days after the date of this notice.

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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