



A loving portrayal  
of West Melbourne

Thanks to a stroke of luck, the City of Melbourne's Art and Heritage Collection is staging an exhibition of work by social documentary photographer Viva Gibb, who over 20 years "lovingly portrayed" her North and West Melbourne neighbourhood, including this shot of "Jill and Tim" at 44 Hawke St in 1988. Continued on page 9.

## Planning shock as Minister sidelines Macaulay panel for state-led committee

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The state government has stunned councillors and residents by scrapping a long-awaited independent planning panel for Macaulay and instead appointing a state-led advisory committee to rewrite the precinct's future planning controls.

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



On December 22, Planning Minister Sonya Kilkenny formally established the Macaulay Structure Plan Advisory Committee under section 151 of the *Planning and Environment Act*, instructing the Department of

Transport and Planning (DTP) to prepare new draft controls to replace Amendment C417.

The move effectively halts the City of Melbourne's request, made on December 2, to refer its amendment to an independent panel after receiving 63 submissions. Instead, the Minister has directed a different pathway, with hearings beginning in February and April and a final report due by May 29.

For many locals, the change came out of nowhere. "We received information this week from Planning Panels Victoria that the proposed planning panel hearings for the Macaulay Planning Scheme Amendment have been cancelled and that the amendment is now on hold. What???" one resident told *North West City News* in January.

"After so many years of work, why is the state government overriding the council? Where does this leave residents?"

The Macaulay Structure Plan 2021 covers a 90-hectare renewal area in Kensington and North Melbourne, expected to accommodate around 10,000 residents and 9500 workers by 2051. Amendment C417 was designed to lock in new built-form controls, open space contributions and affordable housing settings to guide that growth.

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The first installation to be shown in a new downstairs exhibition space at Arts House is an atmospheric meditation on chance and life that has been programmed with "a nod to the Lunar New Year".

# MELBOURNE, MEET 9MILE

*Detroit-Style  
Pizza*  
BY SILO NO.9

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NEWS

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# Soil works complete at Abbotsford St site, but future development remains unclear

“Residents living near the long-vacant Abbotsford St site in North Melbourne have been advised that recent site works have now wrapped up, though uncertainty remains about when the final stage of the project will proceed.”

**WORDS BY**  
SEAN CAR



In January, locals received a works notice from Homes Victoria informing them that specialist contractors would be undertaking soil excavation and remediation works from January 19 until mid-February as part of stage two of the redevelopment.

The letter, issued under the state government’s “Big Housing Build” banner, outlined temporary traffic management measures and confirmed the works were in preparation for future development.

A Homes Victoria spokesperson has since confirmed that the remediation works have been completed.

“Every Victorian deserves access to a safe and secure home, and the Victorian Government is using every lever to house as many people as quickly as possible,” the spokesperson said.

“Homes Victoria, in partnership with MAB Corporation, completed the first stage of the Abbotsford St, North Melbourne housing site in 2024 as part of the Public Housing Renewal Program. This included the delivery of 127 social housing homes and 17 market townhouses.”

“In early 2026, specialist contractors completed soil remediation works on the site of the final stage to prepare it for the future development of market homes.”

The site, at the corner of Abbotsford and Molesworth streets, was cleared in 2018 following the demolition of ageing public housing walk-ups. While part of the broader renewal has been realised – including the Academy North Melbourne development and adjoining primary school – the remaining parcel has sat behind hoarding for several years.

North West City News understands that plans for the final stage, which previously included 151 market apartments approved by the Minister for Planning in 2021, remain in limbo amid challenging market conditions.

While community members have floated ideas for temporary activation, including the installation of a pop-up park or green space, the government says the land is not suitable for interim uses.

According to background provided by Homes Victoria, “while we understand community interest in seeing the site used in the interim, the site is not suitable for pop-up activations. We will keep the community informed about when development will start.”

That has done little to ease local frustration. One resident said neighbours were “heartily sick” of the site’s current presentation, describing the hoarding as “ugly” and questioning why a temporary park could not be installed if construction was not imminent.

Another community member noted that while the fencing is required for security, its continued presence reinforces the perception of stagnation in a precinct otherwise undergoing significant change.

The City of Melbourne placed the site on its monitoring list last year as part of a broader review of long-vacant or underutilised land parcels across the municipality. However, the council has previously indicated that the Residential Growth Zone does not compel temporary activation.

For now, with soil remediation complete, attention turns to what comes next – and when. While the government maintains that development will proceed in due course, residents are again left waiting for clarity on the final piece of a renewal project first announced nearly a decade ago. ●

NORTH WEST CITY NEWS

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# North & West Melbourne Precinct Association



## New chapter for North Melbourne Language and Learning as it doubles in size

“

Cliff Rundle is more than a general manager. Over the past nine years, he has guided North Melbourne Language and Learning (NMLL) through one of the most significant transformations in its history, including a major relocation that has reshaped the organisation's future.



and functional learning environment. While the former facilities were heavily used, they were no longer fit for purpose. The new site also enables NMLL to share space with unfunded community organisations, ensuring vital grassroots services can continue despite limited resources.

NMLL's students are all adults, representing a wide range of cultures, countries and life experiences. Many are recent arrivals to Australia; others face social and economic disadvantage. The focus is not only on practical language skills, but on building confidence and helping students participate fully in Australian society and the workforce.

One former student, who volunteered in the school's office, had never considered that speaking seven languages could be a career asset. With tailored support from NMLL – including résumé preparation and interview coaching – she secured work at a local community legal service. She has since returned as a paid assistant language teacher, one of many success stories reflecting the organisation's impact.

People come to NMLL for more than



English lessons. The organisation offers a range of community engagement activities, such as neighbourhood networking, seeks funding for projects and events, provides volunteering opportunities, provides student teacher placements, supports community organisations prepare and run events and assists with funding applications. NMLL also assists with job applications, Centrelink matters, court paperwork, public housing issues and general advocacy – particularly during uncertainty surrounding local tower demolitions. For many, it is a first point of contact when navigating unfamiliar systems.

Courses are carefully structured. English language students are assessed and placed into one of five English levels, progressing over time toward employment or further study. By Level 3, many are ready for entry-level work or Certificate II and III courses at TAFE. Additional classes include conversational English, numeracy for everyday life,

computer skills and job readiness.

Funding is provided on a per-student basis and tied to attendance and enrolments, placing pressure on the organisation as costs rise. In response, NMLL is developing alternative income streams, including hiring out its large classroom space to community groups and seminar providers – income that can be reinvested into teaching and outreach.

NMLL also supports partner organisations such as the North Melbourne Public Housing Residents Association and youth employment group Young Australian People, reinforcing its role as a broader community hub.

Under Cliff's leadership, NMLL has expanded not only in size, but in ambition – creating pathways to confidence, connection and independence for hundreds of Melburnians.

For more information visit us at level 1 /178 Macaulay Road North Melbourne or call on 93267447 or email us [enquiries@nml.org.au](mailto:enquiries@nml.org.au)

WORDS BY  
CHRIS JACKSON



Established in 1989, NMLL is a not-for-profit community organisation working alongside some of Melbourne's most diverse and vulnerable adult residents. It provides English language, literacy, numeracy and computer courses, alongside practical support and community programs.

At the end of last year, the organisation moved from its long-time home within the North Melbourne public housing estate to new premises on Macaulay Road. The move has allowed NMLL to double its physical space and create a far more welcoming

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## Joni Mitchell warned about paving paradise for a parking lot. We're flipping that, making Melbourne a garden city by turning car parks from grey to green through our Urban Forest Fund.

On the roof of a 9-storey Docklands car park, volunteers harvest vegetables on a farm high above the bustle of the city.

There's an orchard, bees move between planter boxes and birds flit about helping to pollinate. For a moment, the city feels quieter and greener.

"It's described as a mindful experience, even though it's right in the heart of Melbourne's CBD."

That sense of calm is something Alana Roberts, OzHarvest's Engagement Manager, sees time and again among the volunteers who forage for produce on the rooftop farm.

"It's one of our most popular volunteering shifts," Alana said.

Known as Melbourne Skyfarm, the 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> rooftop was once a high-rise car park.

It's undergoing a transformation, thanks to funding from the City of Melbourne's Urban Forest Fund, and support from the Melbourne



Convention and Exhibition Centre. It will open to the public this year.

The Urban Forest Fund is our city-greening community grants initiative that provides matched financial support to help green private property.

Melbourne Skyfarm is one of 21 projects that the fund has invested in since it began in 2017.

The fund has already contributed more than \$3.2 million in funding to help create over 42,400 m<sup>2</sup> of new green cover.

We've supersized the fund to support more projects this year, with up to \$1 million of total matched funding up for grabs. It's part of our mission to maximise urban greening and establish Melbourne as the garden city.

With almost 75% of land in the municipality privately owned, the future of Melbourne's urban forest depends on the ideas and enthusiasm of the community.

Not all greening projects need to be as big as Skyfarm.

Eight years ago, North Melbourne resident Ying-Lan Dann joined neighbours to apply for an Urban Forest Fund grant.



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Together, they turned their apartment block's car park into a luscious green space.

"It's been lovely to see the community come together around this project," Ying said.

"Particularly the kids – they all flock to play in the garden, shoot hoops at the basketball net we had installed and play soccer together."

Apartments in the block are selling above reserve, as the community get together for six-monthly working bees and Christmas parties.

"It showed us that this is not just about greening – all these other great benefits emerged."

## KEEP IN TOUCH

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CITY OF MELBOURNE

# Lord Mayor calls to end Racecourse Rd “complexitron” as council backs strategic update

Melbourne Lord Mayor Nick Reece has called for Racecourse Rd to be brought under the control of a single council, arguing that the current split between the City of Melbourne and the City of Moonee Valley has created an unnecessary “complexitron” that is holding back one of the city’s most important corridors.

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



The comments were made at the February 3 Future Melbourne Committee meeting, the first for 2026, during debate on a report updating progress on the Racecourse Road Strategic Improvements Plan (RRSIP). Councillors voted unanimously to note and support the update, which outlines advocacy efforts, early works and next steps for the busy arterial running through Kensington and Flemington.

Racecourse Rd carries more than 30,000 vehicles a day, functions as a key tram and freight route, and serves as a long and diverse high street. According to the update, the road’s future depends heavily on coordination between local councils and the Victorian Government, particularly the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP).

Moving the motion, Cr Reece described Racecourse Rd as sitting “at the intersection of state infrastructure and local community life”, with competing demands that make reform difficult but essential.

“It carries 30,000 cars a day. It’s a busy tram line. It’s a long and busy high street. It has parks. It has a brilliant bowls club. It’s got everything,” he said.

The council’s long-term vision is to transform Racecourse Rd from a traffic-dominated corridor into a greener, more people-focused street that supports walking, cycling, public transport and local business. The update confirms that both councils have been working together to advocate for state-led changes that sit outside local control, including accessible tram stops, speed limit reductions and safer cycling infrastructure.

A key breakthrough outlined in the report is the DTP’s agreement to undertake a formal “movement and place” assessment of Racecourse Rd following the opening of the West Gate Tunnel. Council officers say this assessment is critical to rebalancing the road’s transport function with its role as a

neighbourhood high street.

In a submission to councillors, the Kensington Association (KA) welcomed news that the assessment would commence within six months of the tunnel’s opening, describing it as an important step forward. However, the group raised concerns about other aspects of the state’s plans.

KA chair Dr Kate Kennedy warned that the DTP appeared to be progressing a net reduction in tram stops along Racecourse Rd, including a new stop near Coronet St that would not be fully accessible.

“The RRSIP does not anticipate reductions in the number of tram stops, but it does anticipate that all tram stops will become fully accessible,” Dr Kennedy wrote, questioning why new infrastructure would not meet accessibility standards and seeking clarity on how the council intended to influence state decisions.

The association also called for safe,

physically separated bicycle lanes on both sides of Racecourse Rd, arguing that the current painted lanes create “unacceptable risks” as they intermittently disappear within four lanes of traffic, particularly near the Flemington public housing precinct.

Cr Davydd Griffiths, who seconded the motion, supported the Lord Mayor’s call for stronger coordination and highlighted the scale of behind-the-scenes advocacy already undertaken.

“The Department of Transport and Planning has agreed to undertake a movement and place assessment of Racecourse Rd, and that really is going to be an important step,” he said, again describing the corridor as “another complexitron in Kensington”.

The update also lists smaller-scale works already delivered or planned, including recent footpath renewals, minor lighting upgrades, new seating locations, and the planting of 16 new trees across 2025–26, all funded within existing council budgets.

Beyond specific infrastructure concerns, the Kensington Association also urged the council to publish its Racecourse Rd Advocacy Plan and commit to further public updates once the movement and place assessment is complete, warning that without transparency “we cannot see how the council’s unanimously endorsed advocacy actions will be effective.”

While councillors acknowledged that many of the most transformative changes remain dependent on state government investment, the unanimous vote signals a clear political push to keep pressure on.

As Cr Reece concluded, Racecourse Rd “could be one of the best high streets in Melbourne”, but only if structural complexity is addressed and long-promised improvements – from accessible trams to safer bike lanes – are finally delivered. ●

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## Firearms manufacture

A North Melbourne man has been charged with multiple counts of possessing an imitation weapon after Victoria Police searched a property in Melrose St and found two 3D-printed handguns, 3D ammunition, an imitation revolver and an imitation long-armed rifle.

Also uncovered in the search was a gel blaster assault rifle, various firearms parts, two gravity knives and a 3D printer.

Detectives allege the 28-year-old, who also faces charges of possessing a prohibited weapon, was manufacturing and storing the weapons at the address.

He was arrested and later bailed to appear at Melbourne Magistrates' Court on September 3.

## Australia Day antics

A motorcyclist has been charged with speeding and other traffic offences after allegedly being clocked at 127km/h in an 80km/h zone while doing a "mono" in West Melbourne.

The 42-year-old had his bike impounded after he was spotted on Footscray Rd just after 10pm on Australia Day.

Police pulled the St Albans man over and impounded his bike for 30 days as part of a statewide road policing operation over the Australia Day long weekend.

He is due to appear in the Melbourne Magistrates' Court on March 16.

## Warning over "offensive slur"

Police tracked down and issued a warning to a Kensington man who yelled a "prejudice-based" insult at another man in JJ Holland Park in Childers St last month.

The 53-year-old who used the "offensive slur" was believed to be a regular visitor to the Kensington park and was jogging there on January 2 when he yelled at the victim, a 34-year-old, who was walking his dogs.

The victim took a photo of the man, who then "fled the scene", and police later released CCTV footage of him.

"There is absolutely no place for hate-based behaviour in our society and police will not tolerate such activity," police said in a statement.

## Monuments vandalised

Police say an investigation into the vandalising of two monuments at Flagstaff Gardens overnight between Wednesday January 21 and Thursday, January 22 is ongoing.

It is believed machinery was used to pull down the 1871 Pioneer monument – erected to commemorate early colonists – which was then vandalised.

The nearby Separation Memorial – erected in 1950 to mark 100 years of the Victorian government – was also defaced with red paint.

Anyone with information is urged to contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or submit a confidential online report at [crimestoppersvic.com.au](http://crimestoppersvic.com.au) ●

# Planning shock as Minister sidelines Macaulay panel for state-led committee

Continued from page 1.

Under the Minister's referral, however, the advisory committee's scope is narrower than a conventional panel. The terms of reference explicitly exclude advice on whether affordable housing provisions should be mandatory, whether floor area uplift should be allowed, and whether the new zones and overlays now being drafted by the Victorian Government to replace the council's proposals are the appropriate choice of tools.

That has sparked anger among some in the community.

Another Kensington resident described the decision as "a slap in the face" and "planning paralysis", claiming the new process appeared to rule out mandatory affordable housing and uplift schemes before evidence was tested.

In a formal submission to the council, Kensington Association chair Dr Kate Kennedy said she was "alarmed" by the decision and did "not support this course of action".

The association, which has been involved in Macaulay planning processes since 2011, said it had supported Amendment C417 "on balance" because its density-based controls would create greater certainty for developers and residents and help fund "desperately needed public open space".

It warned the new pathway risked procedural unfairness if rewritten planning controls were not publicly exhibited.

"If the rewritten planning controls are materially different in effect to the council's exhibited planning controls, and if we will be barred from making submissions about the rewritten planning controls, that would be egregiously unfair," the association wrote.

The group also pointed to what it described as shifting ministerial directions over time, noting that earlier advice from the previous planning minister had called for stronger affordable housing mechanisms and clearer floor area ratio controls, matters now ruled out of scope by the new advisory committee.

"How is the council meant to undertake precinct planning with any confidence, and keep the community informed about that process, if the Minister keeps moving the goalposts?" Dr Kennedy asked.

"We are deeply frustrated by this latest complication, following so many other complications since 2012. While planning controls remain as uncertain as ever, half of the precinct's developable sites have now been developed."

At the City of Melbourne's February 3 Future Melbourne Committee meeting, councillors were told the new pathway represented a "material change of circumstances".

The municipality's city strategy director Jo Cannington said the advisory committee would replace the panel process and



that the council had been asked to pause Amendment C417 while the state-led process unfolds.

She acknowledged key differences, including that mandatory affordable housing would not form part of the committee's scope, although broader affordable housing considerations could still be discussed.

Deputy Lord Mayor Roshena Campbell moved an amended motion supporting the pause but also calling for transparency and the opportunity for third parties to be heard. She thanked Dr Kennedy for raising concerns about whether residents might be shut out of the revised process.

"We acknowledge that the changes initiated by the Minister midway through what has been a very, very long planning scheme amendment process may cause some concern within the community," Cr Campbell said.

The council ultimately resolved to pause C417 and participate in the advisory committee, while maintaining its advocacy for the Macaulay Structure Plan 2021 and the version of C417 endorsed in December.

The Minister's letter argues the new process will support the "timely resolution of new planning controls" and help align Macaulay with other activity centres and new housing targets.

But critics fear the intervention could dilute hard-won provisions on open space and affordable housing or at least delay certainty yet again in a precinct that has already endured years of interim controls and stalled negotiations over Moonee Ponds Creek land.

With hearings set for April and a report due by late May, the final say still rests with the minister.

For Kensington residents who have spent more than a decade advocating for parks, infrastructure and liveability to match rapid apartment growth, the question now is whether this "faster" pathway delivers clarity – or simply adds another layer to the "complexitron".

In response to questions to the Minister for Planning from *North West City News*, a Victorian Government spokesperson said,

"the best way to make homes more affordable is to build more of them and Victoria continues to build more homes than any other state."

"We know we need to do more, which is why we're working closely with the City of Melbourne and the City of Yarra to deliver more homes in these well-connected areas," the spokesperson added.

As part of its Train and Tram Zone Activity Centre program, the government said it was working collaboratively with councils as part of two "city-wide" centres in Inner City (Yarra) and Inner City (City of Melbourne) to deliver them, and that "this includes in Macaulay".

The government indicated that this work would involve detailed identification and mapping, with the aim of considering upzoning strategic sites, using newly developed planning controls, and fast-tracking specific site developments. It stated that this was "just one pathway we're using to build more homes".

On affordable housing, it said it had already delivered more than 20 per cent affordable housing under the Development Facilitation Program's mandate of at least 10 per cent affordable housing.

It said it planned to work with industry, councils and planning experts to implement the head of power for affordable housing through the new *Planning and Environment Act* to provide certainty for the community and developers around how more affordable homes are delivered across Victoria.

The government also touched on Arden in its response, stating that the neighbouring precinct would set a new benchmark for urban renewal and "help shape a future city that is not only the world's most liveable but also one of the most forward-looking".

It has pledged that Arden will be "transformed into a vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhood with a sustainable, high-density community and quality, affordable housing to support residents and key workers".

The government's Housing Statement commits that a minimum of 10 per cent of the housing on government land will be affordable housing, including the Arden Central sub-precinct. ●



# Summer

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◀ Rel Pham with a surreal blended image from his installation *When Your Number's Up*.

▼ A woman watches the installation in the new supper room space at Arts House  
Photos: Hanna Komissarova

## Lunar New Year casts glow at Arts House

“

The first installation to be shown in a new downstairs exhibition space at Arts House is an atmospheric meditation on chance and life that has been programmed with “a nod to the Lunar New Year”.

”

WORDS BY  
JENNY DENTON



From the darkened basement of the North Melbourne Town Hall come the wavering strains of traditional Vietnamese music, which overlap and give way to the thrum of a humid rainforest, then a hypnotic electronic beat.

On a large screen in the new Arts House Supper Room, artist Rel Pham has created

shifting dreamlike sequences of virtual Vietnamese jungles merging with banks of neon poker machines, Asian altars and other images and scenes of chance.

Other installations in the room feature flashing neon symbols and mad scatterings of TAB-style betting slips.

They reflect Rel Pham's feelings about luck, fate, place, identity and how the world keeps moving after tragedy.

As a child he often drew on the back of betting slips while his father filled them out, he says, and his father's death and an absence of rituals to deal with it was the jumping off point for the work, *When Your Number's Up*.

“I wanted to explore how people try to find meaning in chaos,” he told *North West City News*.

“The I Ching and the algorithm feel like the same impulse, both promise answers that make the future feel less random.”

One-hundred-and-forty people turned up for an Arts House *Neighbourhood Gathering* on February 12, including the opening of the Supper Room's inaugural exhibition.

The space has been earmarked for video-focused installations, programming manager Naomi Velaphi explained, with the idea of opening the building up more and “making sure there is something on for people to see during the day.”



Among other fresh initiatives, the venue has pushed its occasional get-togethers – where locals can enjoy a drink and snack, hear artists talk and mill around with them – to an evening time that might allow more people to come along.

Arts House is also trying to unearth more local artists, Ms Velaphi says, and “creative minds who are interested in exploring things.”

New ground is certainly being explored in the venue's upcoming *Opera for the Dead | 祭歌*, which also features themes around death, and animation by Rel Pham.

The “modern Chinese cyber-opera”, which comes fresh from sold-out seasons at the Sydney Festival and last year's OzAsia and Asia TOPA, has been described as “part installation, part concert, part collective act of remembrance”.

One of its Chinese-Australian creators, award-winning guzheng – or Chinese zither

– virtuoso Mindy Meng Wang, has said it was about “finding beauty and connection in grief and the light in the darkness.”

Her collaborator, “boundary-pushing” sound designer Monica Lim, described it as an opportunity for audiences to “experience music, movement and technology in a way that mirrors how memory and mourning are layered in our own lives”.

The opera, together with *When Your Number's Up* and a window display of Year of the Fire Horse-themed illustrations by Malaysian-Australian artist Pei Chi, has been programmed with “a bit of a nod to the Lunar New Year,” Ms Velaphi says.

*When Your Number's Up* is a free installation showing at the Arts House Supper Room in the North Melbourne Town Hall from 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday until March 6.

*Opera for the Dead | 祭歌* runs from February 26 to March 1. ●

ON THE STREET  
WHERE I LIVE  
*Viva Gibb*  
A PORTRAIT OF  
NORTH & WEST  
MELBOURNE



Curated by Savannah Smith  
5 March to 7 August 2026  
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Viva Gibb, *Mason*, 64 Capel Street,  
West Melbourne, c.1975-80,  
silver gelatin print, 21.5 x 16.5 cm.  
© Courtesy of the Estate of Viva Gibb.

 CITY OF  
MELBOURNE

## NORTH WEST CITY LOCAL

## Community-minded local cop honoured

North Melbourne-based Nektarios "Nick" Parissis, who has spent almost his entire career in the inner north, was recognised for his commitment to community causes with an Australian Police Medal on Australia Day.

WORDS BY  
JENNY DENTON



Acting Sergeant Parissis remembers being described at parent/teacher nights as a kid who was "quite hyperactive and wanting to always be talking to people".

Thirty-six years after starting in the police force as an 18-year-old he is still enjoying "being out speaking to people and helping them with their problems".

One of the helping roles he has been recognised with an Australian Police Medal for is coordinating the Victoria Police Christmas Toy and Food Drive for the past 14 years.

"It's great to be able to support the kids at Ronald McDonald House but also to support their parents," the acting sergeant told *North West City News*.

"We will come down, bring some police cars and motorbikes, do a big drop-off and speak to them for a while, give them a bit of an outlet to speak to someone other than doctors."

As part of the drive, they also support the Venny community backyard in Kensington, who "do a lot of breakfasts and support for people on the Kensington housing estate who are doing it tough".

The veteran officer has also been singled out for his commitment to building relationships in the community.

In Carlton from the 2000s he helped run more than 60 police and youth camps, taking groups of kids, many of them from the local housing estates, away to central Victoria for the weekend.

Despite an initial wariness from local families, the officers ended up with "more kids wanting to come than we could actually take," he said.

Last year one of the participants from 20 years ago stopped him in the street to say hello and introduce his own child.

Outside of community work, there have been plenty of other interesting engagements.

"I was at Carlton in the 1990s when we had all the *Underbelly* stuff going on and

we used to come across quite a few of those colourful characters," the acting sergeant says.

"We had a staff Christmas party one year upstairs at a restaurant in Lygon St and downstairs were half the cast of *Underbelly* – the real *Underbelly* guys."

"They were doing their own thing and we were doing ours."

He also had the rare privilege of being paid to go to the footy.

"I'm a Carlton supporter and I was lucky enough to work 70-w or 80-odd games at Princes Park where we'd be on the field escorting umpires on and off, so I'd have the best seat in the house," he said.

"I haven't seen a Grand Final win in 30 years but I'm hoping."

In his career of close to 40 years, Acting Sergeant Parissis observes, he has seen "some amazing things", including his life flash before his eyes when he had a gun pointed at him.

"You see some great sights, and you see some pretty ordinary sights," he said.

"You have some amazing days, and you meet some amazing people both in and outside the force."

According to the 54-year-old, one of the best things about receiving this year's Australian Police Award has been reading the letters written by colleagues and community groups in support of his nomination.

"They were wonderful – really nice words," he said.

"It was humbling to see they had taken the time out to write them."

Acting Sergeant Parissis, who is based at the Melbourne North Police Station, will be officially presented with the medal at a ceremony at Government House in May. ●

## Impasse over Royal Park's eighth tee sparks calls for urgent fix

A long-running dispute over the eighth hole at Royal Park Golf Course has come to a head, with club representatives calling for urgent action to restore what they describe as the course's "signature hole" to its former glory.

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



Bruce Sutherland, speaking on behalf of the four golf clubs based at Royal Park, used public question time at the City of Melbourne's February 3 Future Melbourne Committee meeting to press councillors for a resolution.

"The stakeholder meeting with the clubs and the Melbourne City Council must be convened as soon as possible so the decision can be made and implemented that works effectively for us all," Mr Sutherland said.

In a written submission to council, Mr Sutherland described the 123-year-old public course as a "gem" enjoyed by around 60,000 golfers each year, primarily Melbourne residents. He said the controversy stemmed from a decision in May last year to move the tee on the eighth hole to a temporary forward position.

The eighth runs alongside the Royal Melbourne Rehabilitation Hospital car park and Poplar Rd. Over the years, errant tee shots have damaged cars, prompting safety concerns. In 1983, following expert advice and consultation with stakeholders, a large protective fence was erected to prevent balls entering the car park and road. According to Mr Sutherland, the fence "fixed the problem".

When that fence deteriorated, some damage reoccurred, but it was replaced with a significantly higher barrier in 2019. Mr Sutherland said there was "no evidence of any damage to cars or people subsequently".

Despite this, the tee was relocated last year as a temporary safety measure following reports of golf balls leaving the course. Cr Gladys Liu told the February 3 meeting that the council had undertaken a safety risk assessment and moved the tee to reduce risk to park users and the wider community. The six-month review period ended in January 2026, with no further

safety incidents reported.

However, Mr Sutherland argued the new position – located in front of the protective net – had reintroduced risk while undermining the integrity of the hole. In his submission, he described the temporary tee as "unsightly, poorly managed and almost impossible to put tees into", saying it "ruins the experience of playing this iconic hole".

Lord Mayor Nick Reece, who visited the course last July and has publicly praised its Peter Thomson-designed layout, acknowledged the issue at the meeting.

"I don't think they're satisfactory," he said of the changes, noting that strong golf drivers could now send balls towards Poplar Rd, creating "a new hazard".

He suggested options such as upgrading the cyclone fencing to minimise risk while reinstating the original tee location but emphasised the need to properly investigate alternatives.

Mr Sutherland expressed surprise at some of the commentary, saying he was speaking at the request of the four club presidents and captains, and hinting at a breakdown in communication.

Council officers said improvements to irrigation, landscaping and seating around the tee area were planned, and that safety would continue to be monitored over the next six months while long-term options were considered.

For Royal Park's golfing community, however, the issue is about more than turf and fencing. As Mr Sutherland put it, they are seeking a solution "that works effectively for players, the public and the City of Melbourne" – and one that restores a much-loved hole to its intended design. ●

## Reading Party Melbourne brings quiet pages and community to Kensington

A different kind of night out is coming to Kensington next month, with Reading Party Melbourne set to host an evening dedicated to books, quiet and connection at Enbarr restaurant on Wednesday, March 18.

Billed as a chance to "stop scrolling and start reading", the event invites guests to bring along any book of their choice – whether it's a well-loved favourite or something that's been sitting unread on the bedside table – and simply spend time reading together.

There's no assigned text, no discussion questions and no pressure to prepare. Organisers are quick to point out that a reading party is not a book club. Instead, it's about carving out uninterrupted time away from screens, rediscovering the joy of reading and meeting like-minded people in a relaxed setting.

The evening will begin with a period of silent reading, allowing guests to settle in with their books and a drink. Afterwards, there will be an opportunity to mingle, swap recommendations and chat about what everyone's been reading.

The event will be held at Enbarr, a newly opened modern Irish restaurant in Kensington. Named after the mythical Irish horse said to travel across both land and sea, Enbarr offers a refined yet welcoming space, with comfortable seating and a drinks list that includes cocktails, wine, beer and, fittingly, Guinness.

Tickets include a complimentary first pour from a select drinks list, with guests able to order additional food and drinks throughout the evening.

Reading Party Melbourne has been gaining traction for its simple but appealing premise: creating intentional, screen-free spaces in busy urban lives. In an era of constant notifications and digital distractions, the idea of gathering to read quietly alongside strangers has struck a chord with many.



The March 18 event runs at Enbarr in Kensington, with tickets available via Humanitix. For more information, readers can follow @readingpartymelb on Instagram or contact the organisers at [readingpartymelbourne@gmail.com](mailto:readingpartymelbourne@gmail.com).

For those looking to swap their phone for a paperback, even just for a few hours, this might be the perfect excuse. ●





## On the West Melbourne streets where she lived

“

Thanks to a stroke of luck the City of Melbourne's Art and Heritage Collection is staging an exhibition of work by social documentary photographer Viva Gibb, who over 20 years "lovingly portrayed" the North and West Melbourne neighbourhoods where she lived.

”

WORDS BY  
JENNY DENTON



It was only by chance that council staff found themselves in possession of a large collection of pictures taken in North and West Melbourne by photographer Viva Gibb.

"We had a gentleman donate three of her photos who then said, 'I could put you in touch with her daughter, Sybil,'" Savannah Smith, from the council's Art and Heritage Collection, told *North West City News*.

"It was just through that interaction that this more significant donation came about." "We just got lucky!"

The gift from Ms Gibb's children of more than 200 black and white silver gelatin prints taken from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s includes some images of the generous donors themselves, who grew up with their mother in the neighbourhood.

It was one of the most significant representations of the area that exists, Ms Smith said.

"West Melbourne is kind of underrepresented, so for that reason alone it's really significant but also the photographs themselves are very special," she said.

Living and working for two decades around Capel, Hawke, Stanley and Victoria streets, Ms Gibb captured locals' characters and goings-on with a warm, democratic gaze.

Hawkers and vendors, neighbours, people with their pets, punk squatters – all found their way in front of the social documentary photographer's lens.

So too did local businesspeople – from the boss of Don Camillo Café, posed behind his Gaggia, to Errol St barber and tobacconist Lindsay Williams, from a Victoria St gun dealer to a drag queen at Trish's Coffee Lounge.

According to Smith, some businesses the artist photographed are still running today.

The donated collection creates "a vivid, compassionate" portrait of life in the two suburbs in what was a moment of profound social and urban transformation, according to Ms Smith, who has curated an exhibition from it.

"It was sort of that really pivotal moment in Melbourne's history when... young people were in the city and had places to live, and it was a really creative as well as politically charged period of time, and a lot of good art came out of it," she said.

"West Melbourne isn't usually considered as a part of that [movement] but there were a lot of artists in West Melbourne too."

From 1975 Ms Gibb shared a house in Capel St with Helen Garner, who was writing the book *Monkey Grip* at the time.

The women's shared environment fostered a "deep attentiveness to the lives unfolding around them", Ms Smith said.

Ms Garner has written a contribution for an illustrated catalogue for the exhibition.

While Ms Gibb exhibited widely in the



1970s and '80s, and her work is held in major public collections, the fact that she stopped taking photos after around 2000 saw her reputation wane, according to Ms Smith.

"There's this real sense now of rediscovering her and putting her back into history, which is an exciting project," the curator said.

The exhibition, "invites audiences to rediscover an extraordinary photographic legacy" as well as the community that the artist "so lovingly" portrays.

On *The Street Where I Live: Viva Gibb's portrait of North and West Melbourne* opens on March 12 at City Gallery, Melbourne Town Hall, and runs to August 1. Entry is free.

On Saturday, March 14 there will be a talk by curator Savannah Smith and special opening hours of 10am to 4pm. ●

# Sarah Witty

Federal Member  
for Melbourne



I am your local voice in  
Canberra. Tell me what  
matters to you.

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# Reprieve for public housing tower tenants, but bigger questions loom

“Hold-out” tenants at three local public housing towers have won a reprieve from eviction on the grounds of their human rights. But some commentators argue the loss of public housing in the planned redevelopments is an issue that affects everyone.

WORDS BY  
JENNY DENTON



During the first week of February Inner Melbourne Community Legal (IMCL) won an injunction on behalf of its class action clients restraining Homes Victoria from moving to evict 32 households who have so far refused to leave their flats in the three towers, which are scheduled to be redeveloped by 2031.

The towers, at 33 Alfred St, North Melbourne and along Racecourse Rd in Flemington, are the first of the 44 the government has announced it will demolish and redevelop by 2051.

The injunction will be in place until the High Court deals with an application for “special leave” to appeal the legality of the government’s decision – a process that could take several months, according to IMCL lawyer Louisa Bassini.

Ms Bassini described the injunction as “certainly a win” for her clients, who wanted “to stay in their homes and neighbourhoods, where they feel connected to their community and to essential services, including health care and public transport”.

The development is the latest in a series of twists and turns for the communities involved, who were blindsided by the announcement in September 2023 that the towers were to be demolished.

The IMCL legal challenge, initiated in January 2024, has so far seen the initial case dismissed in May 2025 and an appeal fail in December.

The Y-shaped Alfred St building has now been emptied of most of its residents, including the action’s former lead plaintiff, Barry Berih, who moved out late last year.

The chance to now have the class action, with new lead plaintiff Jason Mallard, heard in the High Court keeps legal hopes alive for the resident group and others watching it closely.

But according to University of Melbourne urban geographer Dr Kate Shaw, who has



focused on public housing renewal programs for more than a decade, the case – while “an excellent initiative that draws attention to very important human rights issues” – is unlikely to save the towers.

“This government is hell-bent on divesting itself from the responsibility of providing housing,” she told *North West City News*.

“What it wants to do is shift the responsibility to the not-for-profit sector, to ‘community housing’, notwithstanding that it’s becoming increasingly clear that community housing organisations are financed by large companies that expect a return on their investment, which is a real problem.”

While there is little transparency around plans for the 44 tower sites, the government has said their current capacity for 10,000 public housing tenants would be increased to 11,000 tenants in “social housing” – an umbrella term that covers both public and community categories.

Another 19,000 new residents would live in private or “affordable” housing.

At Alfred St the current 143 public housing units are to be replaced with 300 community housing dwellings and 500 private or affordable dwellings, with no provision for public housing.

The distinction between community and public is crucial, according to Dr Shaw,

because while the community housing sector has many different providers, in general it is much less stable for tenants.

“People are being evicted by community housing organisations on unreasonable grounds,” she said. “It is not secure housing, particularly for people whose situation is most precarious.”

Undertakings given to relocating tenants that they will be given a new home at their current rental conditions are not guaranteed, in the academic’s view.

“The relocated tenants might have a continued public tenant rate for one year or two years, but there is no certainty,” she said.

Residents’ promised “right of return” once the new housing has been built is another source of uncertainty, with the wording of the government’s commitment unclear.

In Flemington, Homes Victoria plans that the current public housing units in the Racecourse Rd and Holland Drive towers will be replaced with “400 social homes and up to 300 affordable homes”.

According to Dr Shaw, “affordable housing” is an almost irrelevant category because the government’s definition of it as housing that costs up to 90 per cent of market rates makes it unaffordable to people on low incomes.

There are currently 56,500 people waiting for social housing, according to the Victorian Housing Register, while more than 105,000 Victorians sought homelessness assistance last financial year.

In the context of a crisis in low-income housing, critics argue that now is not the time to take public housing stock out of operation.

A recently published “open letter” by a coalition calling itself Building Action Now and signed by more than 570 workers and students from the “built environment industry” is calling on the government to “immediately halt the reckless demolition” of the towers, which it says is being done “without releasing condition reports, feasibility studies or cost-benefit analysis, and without adequately considering the alternative of retrofit and refurbishment”.

The lack of publicly available evidence for the need to redevelop the towers was also a key finding of an opposition-controlled parliamentary committee inquiry last year.

While there were differences of opinion among stakeholders, a clear pattern emerged that the planned 10 per cent social housing increase was inadequate, especially given Victoria’s social housing proportion of just 2.9 per cent – the lowest in Australia.

Dr Shaw argues that building more private market housing won’t ease the crisis because the problem is not lack of middle-to-high income housing but lack of low-income housing.

“We don’t need more market housing, there’s more than enough market housing,” she says.

The academic believes that when society’s most disadvantaged are properly accommodated in public housing the effect will ripple up through the system, releasing private housing for other low-income households.

“Ultimately it affects the whole housing market so it’s in everybody’s interests,” she says.

“And socially, it’s in everybody’s interests to have everybody housed, to get rid of homelessness and reduce the number of people with complex and multiple needs living on the streets.”

In the end, she believes “push will come to shove” on the housing towers and activists will be forming picket lines around them to try to stop the demolition squads.

“When push comes to shove it’ll be people putting their bodies on the line,” Dr Shaw says, “saying to the government, ‘you don’t have the right to demolish an important part of Victoria’s social justice legacy; it’s actually not yours to demolish.’” ●

## West Melbourne pop-up café creates award-wage jobs for people with disability

“A West Melbourne café collaboration is proving that good food and social impact can go hand in hand, with six trainees stepping into award-wage hospitality roles as part of an extended pop-up.”

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



All Things Equal and GingerSnap have announced the return of their West Melbourne Pop-Up Café, running from Tuesday, February 17 to Saturday, May 9. This time, the partnership will operate five

days a week with extended hours, creating more consistent paid employment opportunities for people with disability.

All Things Equal is a Melbourne-based social enterprise focused on inclusive employment. Through structured training and award-wage roles, it supports people with disability to build confidence and long-term career pathways in hospitality. The GingerSnap pop-up is a practical extension of that mission, placing trainees in real front- and back-of-house roles in a working café environment.

The extended program will allow six trainees to gain hands-on experience while earning award wages, a key distinction in a sector where people with disability have historically been underpaid or excluded from mainstream employment.

CEO of All Things Equal Jess Colgan said the longer stint would make a meaningful difference.

“This extended pop-up allows us to move beyond short-term training and offer award-wage employment in a supportive hospitality setting,” she said.

“Operating more days each week gives our trainees consistency, confidence and a genuine sense of belonging, all while showing that inclusive employment and excellent food go hand in hand.”

The collaboration is led by siblings Brett Duncan and Ms Colgan. Mr Duncan, a qualified pastry chef who was born profoundly deaf, founded GingerSnap and brings his signature plant-based desserts to the pop-up menu.

Visitors to the café at 114 Adderley St can expect a refreshed menu combining favourites and new grab-and-go options suited to weekday workers and weekend visitors. Offerings include signature toasties such as Yay! Foods’ feta, pesto and sundried tomato, and Gaga’s kimchi and roast pumpkin, alongside Veneziano coffee, seasonal salads and GingerSnap’s well-known desserts.

Open Tuesday to Saturday from 8am to 3pm, the pop-up aims to serve the local community while modelling what inclusive, award-wage employment can look like in practice.



For West Melbourne, it’s more than just another café. For six trainees, it represents a paid pathway into the hospitality industry – and for customers, an opportunity to support a business where purpose is built into every plate.

For group bookings of seven or more, contact [sally@allthingsequal.com.au](mailto:sally@allthingsequal.com.au) ●



## Works begin on Macaulay Rd protected bike lanes following safety push

Construction of long-awaited protected bike lanes along Macaulay Rd has recently begun, marking a significant milestone in efforts to improve safety on one of Kensington's busiest and most contentious corridors.

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



The City of Melbourne confirmed works will begin rolling out on Macaulay Road by early March to deliver 1.4 kilometres of new kerbside protected bike lanes between Eastwood St and Boundary Rd. The project is expected to be completed by mid-2026, subject to weather conditions.

The works will introduce new bike lanes on both sides of Macaulay Rd, repositioned next to the footpath and separated from traffic by concrete kerbs and parking bays. Green surface treatments and new line markings will be installed to improve visibility, along with upgraded traffic signals and a consistent 40km/h speed limit along the corridor.

Lord Mayor Nick Reece said the changes were a direct response to long-standing safety concerns in the area.

"The Kensington community sadly needs no reminder of the dangers faced by bike riders – and we're taking action to improve safety for all road users on Macaulay Rd," Cr Reece said.

"We're separating bike lanes from traffic, and adding colour and line markings – making it safer to ride past train stations, new developments and peak-hour traffic."

"We'll also deliver consistent 40km/h

speed limits and improved traffic signals, to help ensure everyone is moving around this part of Kensington as safely as possible."

The announcement comes less than five months after the death of a young cyclist at the intersection of Macaulay Rd and Rankins Rd in September last year, a tragedy that reignited calls for urgent safety upgrades. The intersection had already been identified as a high-risk location due to heavy vehicle movements and proximity to Kensington Station.

According to the works notice, safety improvements were delivered at the Rankins Rd intersection in 2025, including new yellow kerbs, line markings and green surface treatments to improve visibility and encourage drivers to slow down when turning.

The new protected lanes will see 29 parking bays retained, with 36 removed along the section from Eastwood St to Boundary Rd. During construction, parking will be temporarily suspended in impacted sections and speed limits reduced to help maintain safe passage for riders. Work will generally occur between 7am and 5pm Monday to Friday, with occasional overnight or weekend activity.

The City of Melbourne said more than 400 community members participated in consultation in 2023, with 87 per cent supporting the installation of protected bike lanes.

The project has been approved by the Victorian Government and is co-funded by the City of Melbourne and the Department of Transport and Planning through the Transport and Amenity Program. It forms part of the council's Transport Strategy 2030, which aims to create a safer and more liveable city by expanding protected cycling infrastructure.

Future stages are also planned, with works to extend the protected lanes from Boundary Rd to Arden St expected to commence in the 2026–27 financial year. ●

No.116

No.118

No.120



## Bellair St heritage extension set for approval despite 22 objections

A modest proposal to partially demolish and extend a heritage-listed cottage in Bellair St, Kensington, is expected to receive council approval, despite drawing 22 objections from nearby residents.

WORDS BY  
SEAN CAR



The application for 118 Bellair St went before the City of Melbourne's Future Melbourne Committee on February 17, with officers recommending that councillors issue a planning permit.

The proposal seeks approval for partial demolition of the rear of the existing single-storey Victorian dwelling and construction of a two-storey addition, along with reconstruction of the front fence and external painting of the home.

The property sits within a neighbourhood residential zone and is covered by a heritage overlay as part of the Kensington Precinct. The dwelling is graded as "contributory" to the heritage character of the area.

According to the officer report, the key issues for consideration include heritage impacts, residential amenity and compliance with Clause 54 (one dwelling on a lot) of the Melbourne Planning Scheme.

Public notice of the application resulted in

22 objections. Concerns raised by residents include the visual bulk and prominence of the two-storey addition, overshadowing of neighbouring private open space, overlooking and loss of daylight, and whether the contemporary design is in keeping with the heritage character of Bellair St.

The application was amended several times during the assessment process in response to objector concerns, including a reduction in maximum building height, removal of a double-storey rear garage, and design refinements to address amenity impacts.

In their assessment, officers concluded the proposal retained the principal part of the Victorian-era dwelling, with demolition set back beyond the front two rooms. The addition is positioned behind the heritage façade and is designed to remain visually recessive from the street.

While some Clause 54 standards require variation, officers state these departures are appropriate in the context of the established streetscape and will not result in unreasonable off-site amenity impacts.

Given the number of objections, the application must be determined by councillors rather than under delegation.

If approved, objectors will have the opportunity to seek a review at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal before a permit can be issued.

Although modest in scale compared to many inner-city developments, the proposal has reignited ongoing tensions in Kensington about balancing contemporary housing needs with the preservation of neighbourhood character. ●

## Detroit squares land in West Melbourne as 9MILE fires up at Silo No.9

West Melbourne has a new slice on offer, with The Talisman Group launching 9MILE by Silo No.9 – a Detroit-style pizza concept baked inside the suburb's historic flour mill at the Lennon Mills precinct.

The new venture, operating out of Silo No.9 Café at 1 Lennon St, puts Detroit-style pizza front and centre rather than as a side act. According to the group, 9MILE is "wholly devoted" to the deep, rectangular pies known for their airy crumb and crisp, caramelised cheese edges.

Detroit-style pizza is baked in steel pans, with cheese pushed right to the edge so it melts and crisps against the sides. At 9MILE, each base is made from long-fermented dough and finished with a house "secret cheese mix" designed to create those signature golden corners.

The menu leans into bold, balanced flavour combinations, with pizzas named after Eminem tracks in a nod to Detroit's

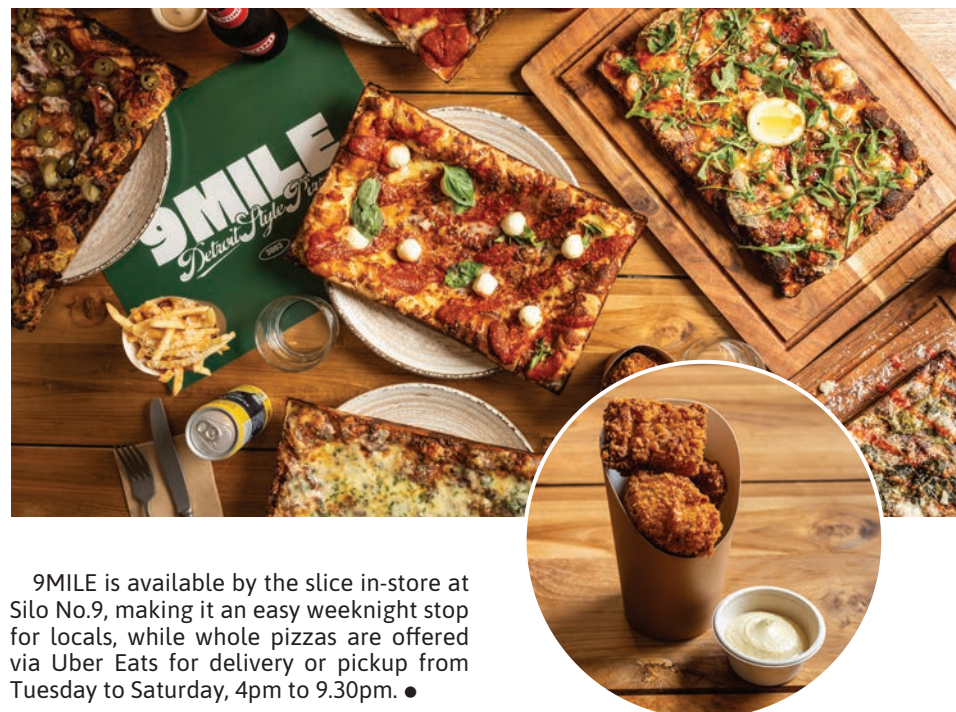
cultural grit. Options include the "9MILE SIGNATURE" with pepperoni, rich marinara and chilli honey; "LOSE YOURSELF" with provolone, blue cheese and chives; and "NOT AFRAID" topped with prawn, fermented chilli sauce, garlic oil and lemon.

There's also "THE REAL THICK SHADY", a loaded combination of BBQ sauce, pancetta, pepperoni, sausage, smoked ham, red onion, olives and pickled jalapeño.

Snacks such as truffle mac and cheese bites and cacio e pepe chips round out the offering, alongside value-driven combos and limited-time launch specials.

Behind the concept is The Talisman Group, whose portfolio includes Sasso Italiano, South City Wine, Casa Chino and Silo No.9. The project is led by founder Vincent Lombino and executive chef Gabriele Di Landri, blending American food culture with classical Italian technique.

There's a certain symmetry in serving Detroit-style pizza inside Melbourne's original flour mill. The building that once milled flour for the city now bakes it into thick, square slices that feel built for sharing.



9MILE is available by the slice in-store at Silo No.9, making it an easy weeknight stop for locals, while whole pizzas are offered via Uber Eats for delivery or pickup from Tuesday to Saturday, 4pm to 9.30pm. ●

# The good news ...

With powerful nations rolling back climate protections, temperatures soaring and extreme weather conditions increasing, eco-anxiety is on the increase.

With almost daily stories of destruction and loss of life due to the impacts of this man-made climate damage, hearing good news helps to balance the narrative and provide hope.

Globally, grassroots community, government and group action is changing and dismantling damaging structures not born of caring for humanity and the earth.

**New York transforms its organic waste into free compost for residents.** New York City transforms 100 to 200 tons of daily organic matter into nutrient rich compost and delivers nearly three million kilograms of compost to New Yorkers in a year – most compost goes free to city residents, public schools and community gardens.

**The Mexican Jaguar population has grown from 4100 animals in 2010 to 5326 in 2024** for a species that was feared to number fewer than 1000 animals across the country.

Dr Ceballos from the National Alliance for Jaguar Conservation led a census to track the big cats that now live throughout Mexico. According to Ceballos, three key factors drove this increase. First, Mexico maintained its network of protected natural areas where jaguars roam and hunt without human interference. Second, conservation groups worked to reduce conflicts between cattle ranchers and jaguars that often ended with the cats being killed. Third, a public awareness campaign transformed



the jaguar into one of Mexico's most recognised animals.

**Norway's government announced it will ban all deep-sea mining exploration and development in Arctic waters until at least the end of 2029.** The deep-sea mining ban represents a significant challenge to an industry that argues these minerals are essential for renewable energy technology. However, expertise points to recycling as a viable alternative that could meet demand without destroying ocean ecosystems.

Current e waste (the fastest growing waste stream) contains substantial amounts of valuable minerals. Studies show that recycling existing electronics could recover up to 80 per cent of the cobalt, copper, and nickel currently locked in discarded devices.

**The High Seas Treaty has come into force, marking a "historic milestone" for global ocean conservation.** Covering almost half of the planet's surface, the High Seas lie beyond national borders and form part of the global commons. Until now, there was no legal framework dedicated to protecting biodiversity in these international waters and ensuring the benefits of their resources were shared fairly among nations.

**Wind and solar generated more EU electricity than fossil fuels for the first time in 2025.**

The rise of citizen science is protecting nature by empowering the public to collect, analyse, and share vital environmental data, filling research gaps and informing government decisions.



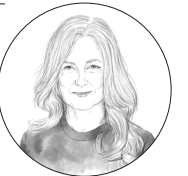
**A promising development in capturing microplastics.** In research undertaken by a university in China, a biodegradable sponge removes up to 99.9 per cent of microplastics from water.

Closer to home, **The Kensington Repair Hub has run more than 63 sessions, fixing nearly 1500 items and potentially keeping approx. 3000 kgs of hard rubbish out of landfill.**

**Jacqui van Heerden**

CO-CONVENER OF TRANSITION TOWN KENSINGTON

JACQUIVANHEERDEN@GMAIL.COM



## FEDERAL MP

# Melbourne is inclusive, creative, sustainable and confident in its diversity

It's a privilege to spend so much of my time in places where Melbourne comes together to celebrate, to belong, and to imagine what comes next.

**WORDS BY SARAH WITTY FEDERAL MP FOR MELBOURNE**



One of the most moving parts of my role is attending citizenship ceremonies, particularly those held at Melbourne Town Hall and more recently at AAMI Park. These are moments filled with pride, anticipation, and hope. People from every corner of the world stand together, raise their right hands, and commit to a shared future as Australians.

The settings themselves say something important: our civic heart at the Town Hall, and one of our great sporting arenas at AAMI Park, both opening their doors to new citizens. It's a powerful reminder that citizenship isn't just a legal status; it's participation in a community that values fairness, opportunity and respect.

Those values are also reflected in how we invest in our city. Labor's commitment to the Greenline project along the Birrarung/Yarra River is about more than beautification - though anyone who has walked the river knows how transformative that can be. It's about reconnecting people with our most iconic natural asset, creating accessible public spaces, improving biodiversity, and supporting local jobs. The Yarra is central to Melbourne's story, from its deep cultural

significance to First Nations peoples to its role in shaping the city we know today. Investing in the Greenline means ensuring the river can be enjoyed by everyone, now and into the future.

Culture, too, is a cornerstone of who we are. Inner-city venues and festivals give Melbourne its pulse, but they've faced enormous challenges in recent years.

That's why Revive Live grants have been so important. These grants support the small and medium venues where emerging artists cut their teeth, where local audiences

discover new sounds, and where communities gather. The grants also back festivals that spill onto our streets and laneways, bringing energy and economic activity to neighbourhoods that thrive on creativity.

When we support live music and performance, we're not indulging a luxury; we are investing in jobs, good mental health, and the soul of our city.

Sustainability and community wellbeing come together beautifully at the Victoria Point Edible Garden in Docklands. I had a chance to visit the garden recently. This

project turns underused space into something practical and inspiring: a place where locals can grow Indigenous food, learn new skills and recipes, and connect with one another.

Urban gardens like this show what's possible when we think creatively about city living. They promote healthier eating, reduce food miles, and build a sense of shared responsibility for our environment. Just as importantly, they create spaces where neighbours meet -something that matters more than ever in a growing city.

As we move into February, many families across Melbourne will be celebrating Lunar New Year. It's a time marked by reunion, generosity, and optimism; values that resonate far beyond any one community. I want to wish everyone celebrating a Happy Lunar New Year and a year filled with good health, prosperity and joy. The colour, food, and traditions associated with Lunar New Year are a vivid reminder of the multicultural fabric that makes our city such a wonderful place to live.

From citizenship ceremonies to riverside walks, from live music venues to community gardens, these moments and investments are all connected. They speak to a vision of Melbourne that is inclusive, creative, sustainable and confident in its diversity. I am proud to be part of a government that believes in backing our communities and public spaces, and I am grateful every day for the chance to work alongside people who care so deeply about this city.

Melbourne's story is still being written; by new citizens, by artists and volunteers, by families celebrating old traditions and creating new ones. It's a story worth investing in, and one I'm honoured to help tell. ●

## Changing names: Flemington, Flemington Bank, Flemington Bridge

When first subdivided and sold in 1849 the area bounded by Boundary Rd, Racecourse Rd, Rankins Rd Kensington and Macaulay Rd, with the Moonee Ponds Creek in the middle, was known as Flemington. Stubbs St is the north-south road in the middle.

WORDS BY  
GEOFF LEACH

The area was section two, portion 16 of the Parish of Dousta Galla, subdivided into two-acre small farm allotments. Allotments that included the Moonee Ponds Creek itself, which isn't even shown on the map, and which at the time, was marsh and shallow ponds, that likely dried out, or mostly did, in summer, like the West Melbourne Swamp into which it ran, or seeped. The east-west streets, Parson St, Smith St and Robertson St, most likely just tracks if anything, ran from Boundary Rd to Rankins Rd straight through the creek area, and were before the 1884 Coburg (now Upfield / Craigieburn) railway line was built, which then cut them, eventually leading to the renaming of the eastern halves to Alfred, Sutton and Mark streets.

James Watson was the owner of two large allotments of land to the north, and named his land, and the wider area it seems,



Flemington. He built his mansion atop the hill, possibly known as Flemington Hill, in what became Travancore. It was replaced by an even more elaborate mansion by Hugh Glass, one of Melbourne's wealthiest men, who bought the property in 1849 from Watson.

The allotments on the higher areas in the initial 1849 auction sold better, those away from the "Bed of the Moonee Ponds". In fact, allotments along Stubbs St didn't receive any bids, but by 1855 all the allotments had been sold.

George Kirk purchased allotments 1-4 in the initial auction. He owned tanneries in Richmond along the Yarra, and the "Avoca

House" mansion in South Yarra next to the river.

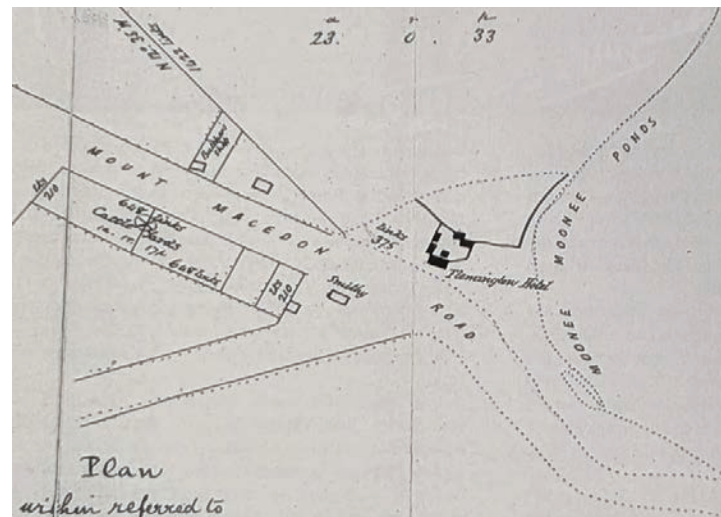
Back to names, the area between Boundary Rd and the Moonee Ponds Creek was known as Flemington Bank, at least by the locals, as it doesn't appear to have been made official, and yet to be found any old maps. Was it because that area is actually, sort of, a creek bank – it is higher than the "Bed of the Moonee Ponds". Boundary Inn mentioned in the article below was a small hotel on Boundary Rd between Alfred St and Racecourse Rd.

Flemington Bank, even if initially

sold as small farm allotments, became an area with a considerable number of tanneries, and the "nuisances" associated with them, eventually relocating, like tanneries upstream along the Yarra and Maribyrnong Rivers.

So, there was Flemington, Flemington Bank (or Banks), Flemington Hill – and Flemington Bridge, which is still with us and refers to the same locality.

And now with the next turn of major development, the Macaulay Structure Plan and City of Melbourne Amendment C417, we might see these areas renamed yet again, becoming the Stubbs and Boundary precincts. ●



### PARKVILLE GARDENS RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

## Up and running

First up, the Parkville Gardens Residents' Association pays tribute to our former state member Tim Read and wishes him well in his battle with cancer.



Tim has been a great advocate for our community. We're especially grateful for his successful campaign for a more frequent bus service. Great job, Tim, you've earned our heartfelt thanks. Go well.

We're off to a busy start in 2026. Our first event of the year is a two-session event in support of women's safety.

Session One will start on the Galada Ave Reserve at 6.30pm on Thursday, March 5. All local women welcome. Children will be looked after during the hour-long session. There'll be safety briefings from a female police officer and, we hope, from a City of Melbourne staffer. There's be time to download safety apps and an opportunity to raise questions, meet others and enjoy light refreshments.

Session Two will include a guided twilight walk in a nearby section of Royal Park, an address from local resident and Upper House member Sheena Watt, and time to talk, meet and enjoy refreshments. We plan to meet at 7.30pm on Wednesday, March 25 at the car park on Oak St next to the Ross Straw playing field (note the different time, day of the week, and place).

All this information will be displayed on posters around the neighbourhood and on a flyer in everyone's letterbox. We hope there'll be a great turnout of local women.

Next up will be our annual children's Easter egg hunt on the morning of Sunday, March 29, followed by a social event in June. More on that as plans take shape. We're also working on an exciting surprise event for November. That will be dependent on

the success of our latest City of Melbourne grant application, so details for that will have to wait.

The council has its own plans for a Healthy Ageing initiative in the neighbourhood. That's also still in the planning stages, but we hope it can be launched in the next month or so.

Social housing provider Housing First has informed us that Muka Marcovich has been engaged as their community engagement coordinator. We look forward to fruitful collaboration with Muka.

Two wildly different transport items to finish with. The Parkville Gardens Bike Bus to Flemington Primary is back in business. Details on our two noticeboards. The state government has announced plans for the removal of eight level crossings on the Upfield Line by 2030. For more information go to [levelcrossings.vic.gov.au/brunswick](http://levelcrossings.vic.gov.au/brunswick) ●

**Tom Knowles**  
PRESIDENT  
PRESIDENT@PGRA.ORG.AU



### METRO TUNNEL

## The Big Switch transforms Victoria's rail network

February marked the biggest transformation of Victoria's public transport system in more than 40 years, with the Metro Tunnel's Big Switch.

The Metro Tunnel is now fully integrated into the state's wider transport network, while a new timetable has added more than 1200 services every week to the new Cranbourne, Pakenham and Sunbury Line.

Victorians have already embraced the Metro Tunnel, with thousands of people travelling through the tunnel's five new state-of-the-art underground stations since its opening in November.

As part of the Big Switch, all services on the Cranbourne, Pakenham and Sunbury Line now travel exclusively through the tunnel, changing how thousands of passengers move around Melbourne day-to-day and freeing up space in the City Loop for more services on other lines.

Trains are running at least every 10 minutes for most of the day between Watergardens in Melbourne's north-west and Dandenong in the south-east, through the Metro Tunnel.

During the peak, services between Watergardens and Dandenong are on average every three to four minutes.

The Big Switch also means Frankston Line services have returned to the City Loop, improving access to the CBD for thousands of passengers.

A new timetable includes buses and regional and metropolitan trains.

With two of Melbourne's busiest train lines no longer running through the City Loop, space has been freed up to run more



trains, more often, on more lines.

Trains are running almost 100km end-to-end on the Metro Tunnel line without boom gates, all of which have been removed from the Cranbourne, Pakenham and Sunbury Line.

The Metro Tunnel means faster travel across the city – around 12 minutes end-to-end through the tunnel – plus direct access to Melbourne's major hospitals, universities and St Kilda Road for the first time.

The Big Switch is just the first installment of more services that will be added to the rail network – with more frequent services to come from mid-2026 including on the Werribee, Sandringham, Craigieburn and Upfield lines.

For information on the new timetable and to plan your journey on the Metro Tunnel, visit [transport.vic.gov.au/news-and-resources/projects/metro-tunnel/more-ways-to-move](http://transport.vic.gov.au/news-and-resources/projects/metro-tunnel/more-ways-to-move) ●



## WHAT'S ON February



Experience the north west city buzz this month with markets, workshops, exhibitions and more.

We're looking for...

### VOLUNTEERS!

- Urban Farming
- Seed Saving
- Composting
- Fresh Food Market
- Event Promotion

**TRANSITION TOWN KENSINGTON VOLUNTEERS**

Be a part of our local food movement, learn about initiatives and the many ways you can be involved. Join us for this event to find out more.

**The Venny, 85 Kensington Road**

**SATURDAY 21 FEBRUARY, 10AM – 12PM**

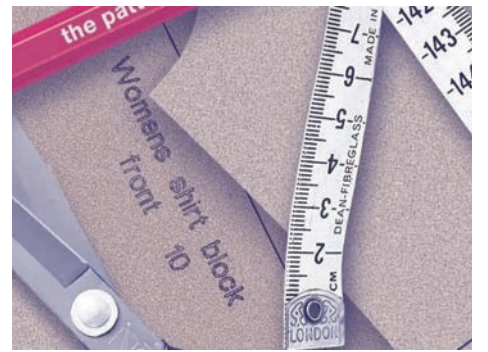


**YOUNGHUSBAND MARKET**

Younghusband Market brings Rose Street Market vibes to a historic Melbourne precinct, showcasing local makers, art, music, workshops, and food monthly.

**Younghusband, Kensington**

**SATS 21 FEB – 16 MAY, 10AM – 3PM**



**OPEN STUDIO PRACTICE: PATTERN MAKING WORKSHOP**

Join us for a hands-on pattern making workshop exploring creative techniques, design skills, and practical garment construction in a collaborative setting.

**92 Leveson St, North Melbourne**

**SAT 21 FEBRUARY, 10.30AM – 3.30PM**



**BLOOM: POST GRAD EXHIBITION**

Bloom showcases VCA, RMIT and Monash graduates, spotlighting emerging Australian artists and future voices, with an opening celebration featuring guest speaker Anna Gowers.

**West End Art Space, West Melbourne**

**UNTIL 24 FEBRUARY, 11AM – 4PM**



**BAKERY HILL WHISKY DISTILLERY TOUR AND TASTING**

Bakery Hill's 90-minute tour features whisky production insights, tasting six single malts, exploring barley and peat, plus exclusive distillery bottle purchases.

**Bakery Hill Distillery, Kensington**

**UNTIL 29 MARCH, 12.30AM – 2PM**



**ILLUMINATING CREATIVITY: BEGINNERS LEADLIGHT**

Learn stained glass basics with Anna Kulusniewski: safely cut, assemble, and solder lead cane designs. All materials provided. BYO lunch.

**Kensington Neighbourhood House**

**SUNDAY 1 MARCH, 10AM – 4PM**



**SUMMER NIGHT MARKET**

Melbourne's original night market celebrates 25 summers with food, drinks, shopping, live music, entertainment, and themed pop-ups, creating a vibrant, lively summer night atmosphere.

**Queen Victoria Market**

**UNTIL 11 MARCH, 5PM – 10PM**



**TASTE OF JAPAN**

Join Kate Ngo in this hands-on workshop to confidently recreate Japanese favourites, including comforting miso soup, three styles of salmon nigiri, a trio of sushi rolls, and mochi dessert.

**Kensington Neighbourhood House**

**SUNDAY 1 MARCH, 10.30AM – 1PM**



**HARMONY BLOCK PARTY 2026**

River Nile School's free 2026 Harmony Block Party in North Melbourne celebrates refugee and asylum seeker youth through performances, art, food, culture, and community connection. Visit [events.humanitix.com](http://events.humanitix.com) for tickets.

**River Nile School Carpark**

**FRIDAY 27 MARCH, 4PM – 8PM**



**ENGLISH READING CIRCLE**

Read along with others and practice pronunciation. Improve your English comprehension and vocabulary. Meet new people in a safe, welcoming environment. The program welcomes both native and EAL speakers.

**Hotham Room, North Melbourne Library**

**UNTIL 17 APRIL, 10.30AM – 12PM**



**SONGBIRDS**

Engage newborns to 18-month-olds with songs, rhymes, and stories, fostering early language development and rhythm. Programs run only during school terms, pausing for school holidays.

**North Melbourne Library**

**UNTIL 9 DECEMBER, 10.30AM – 11AM**

## Business Directory

### ANIMAL WELFARE

**Better behaviour starts here**

Get expert, affordable help for your pet's behaviour – and support animals in need at the same time.

[dogshome.com/behaviour](http://dogshome.com/behaviour)

### POLITICIAN

**ELLEN SANDELL**

STATE MP FOR MELBOURNE

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Carlton VIC 3053

### PRECINCT

### SCHOOL

[www.sccmelb.catholic.edu.au](http://www.sccmelb.catholic.edu.au)  
273 Victoria St, West Melbourne

**9321 9200**

**SIMONDS CATHOLIC COLLEGE**



## SNAP, SEND, SOLVE UNWANTED GRAFFITI

Emily Bardella in Rankins Lane

Melbourne may be famous for street art in iconic laneways, but when graffiti spills into places where it's unwanted or unsightly, emotions can run high.

That's why City of Melbourne's Clean City manager and street art lover Emily Bardella has a watchful eye on the shifting canvas of our streets and laneways as she roams the city.

"Street art in Melbourne's laneways is an ever-changing subculture. It's one of the coolest street art scenes in the world," Emily said.

Originally trained as a graphic designer, she gets a particular kind of job satisfaction from working alongside artists who add beauty to city streets.

"Graffiti is an art form. It can transform everyday laneways into cultural landmarks," Emily said.

"There are places throughout

Melbourne that are well known for street art, like Hosier Lane, AC/DC Lane and Presgrave Place, but even beauty has its place," Emily said.

She oversees the crew that removes illegal tagging and graffiti from private property and public places, helping to keep the city clean and safe.

"We find a strong psychological link between graffiti, general grubbiness like litter, and people reporting that they feel unsafe," Emily said.

"Clean spaces make people feel safe," Emily said.

You can help. We've made it easier and faster than ever to report unwanted graffiti using the popular app Snap Send Solve.

### Snap Send Solve: an easy way to report unwanted graffiti

Report graffiti directly to City of Melbourne from your phone in just a few taps when you download Snap Send Solve at the App Store or Google Play.

When you upload photos of the graffiti to the app, the job now goes straight to the contractor.

That means the crew can act fast, and it also frees up our customer experience team to support Melburnians in other ways.

You can also track the progress of the job within the Snap Send Solve app.

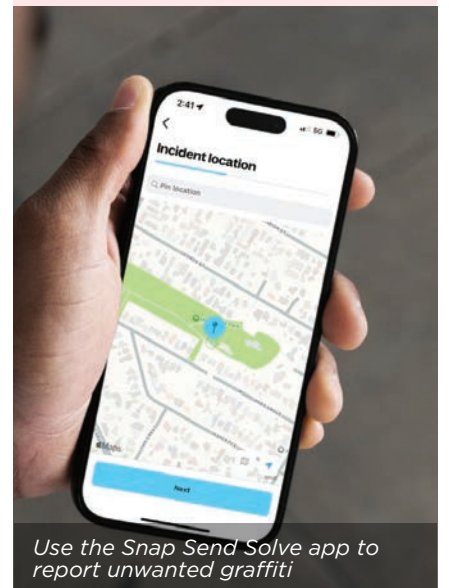
"It's an incredibly powerful tool. I hope people get a lot of satisfaction out of seeing when something they reported has been restored or repaired or rectified," Emily said.

### DID YOU KNOW

Since we added graffiti to the list of issues that can be reported through the app, customer satisfaction has increased to **88%**, up from an average of **75%** for graffiti services using the previous system.

Find out more at [melbourne.vic.gov.au/managing-graffiti](https://melbourne.vic.gov.au/managing-graffiti)

### HOW SNAP SEND SOLVE WORKS



Use the Snap Send Solve app to report unwanted graffiti

- **Snap a photo:** Open the app, select 'Snap' to add your photo
- **Confirm Snap location:** Use the map pin or address bar
- **Select incident type:** Select the relevant incident type
- **Send your Snap:** Select 'Send Snap' to send your Snap off to be solved.
- **Solve it:** City of Melbourne will receive your Snap and solve it swiftly.

The app is growing in popularity for reporting a range of issues within the City of Melbourne, including rubbish and bins, abandoned trolleys, parking and cars, roads and signage.



Melbourne's Hosier Lane, an icon of the city's street art scene.

### KEEP IN TOUCH

To stay connected with all the latest news from the City of Melbourne, follow us on social media and subscribe to *Melbourne News* at [news.melbourne.vic.gov.au](https://news.melbourne.vic.gov.au)

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