

New Pilates studio opens in Kensington



New business *do pilates* has opened a studio in Kensington, with locals and City of Melbourne councillor Andrew Rowse (centre right) joining owner Becca King (centre left) at the official launch on May 2. More on page 8.

Council pushes for no-truck zones in Kensington as tunnel impacts deepen

“The City of Melbourne has significantly escalated its response to the West Gate Tunnel’s inner-city impacts, unanimously backing a push to investigate 24/7 no-truck zones in suburbs including Kensington, and North and West Melbourne.”

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR

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Amid rising concern about freight traffic, safety, road damage and tree loss, councillors went beyond management’s original recommendations at the April 14 Future Melbourne Committee meeting, and instead supported an amended alternative motion moved by Lord Mayor Nick Reece and later refined by Cr Dr Olivia Ball.

The final motion has requested management to report back in July on changes in vehicle movements, particularly heavy vehicles and their impact on safety, amenity and road damage since the tunnel opened, potential roads that could be made permanent no-truck zones, additional streets where speed limits should be reduced, and progress on replacing trees removed to build the project at the promised five-to-one ratio.

As reported separately in this edition, the motion also noted that management would return on May 19 with an update on Hawke St greening, and that the long-awaited draft Spencer Street North Master Plan will come to councillors in August.

The change in tone was unmistakable. Introducing the amended motion, Cr Reece said it was “a considerable strengthening” of what had originally been proposed and argued that the city was now several months into the tunnel’s operation and already seeing “very significant changes to traffic flows through this municipality”. He said those changes were especially visible in heavy vehicle movements.

“We’re not talking here about the trucks that deliver groceries, parcels and meals to our homes; we’re talking here about big trucks, B-doubles, huge vehicles travelling through what are inner-city neighbourhoods and having a very significant impact upon the amenity of those areas,” he said.

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High Court to hear public housing tower demolition challenge

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“Option 2” set to end long Hawke St saga as council moves to lock in greening plan



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Extraordinary chef shares classic dish

“If you’re in a room with West Africans, and you want to start the conversation, just talk about who makes the best jollof,” says Evette Quoibia, the owner of Jollof Vibe.

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High Court to hear public housing tower demolition challenge

The long-running legal battle over Victoria's public housing tower demolition program is heading to the nation's highest court, in a major development for residents in North Melbourne and Kensington fighting to stop the destruction of their homes.

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



Inner Melbourne Community Legal (IMCL), which is acting for local residents in the class action against the state government, announced that the High Court of Australia had granted special leave to appeal the earlier Victorian court decisions that allowed the demolition and redevelopment program to proceed.

The case centres on the first three towers slated for demolition under the Victorian Government's broader plan to redevelop 44 public housing towers across Melbourne by 2051. These include 33 Alfred St in North Melbourne, and the Racecourse Rd towers in Flemington.

IMCL argues that Homes Victoria failed to afford procedural fairness to residents before announcing the demolitions, and before deciding not to rebuild any public housing on at least some of the affected estates.

In a statement, IMCL managing lawyer for housing and tenancy Louisa Bassini said the legal service welcomed the High Court's decision to hear the matter later this year.

"We are very pleased that the High Court has agreed to hear an appeal against the Victorian Supreme Court decision finding the demolition program proposed for the North Melbourne and Flemington public housing towers to be lawful," she said.



"We look forward to the opportunity to present this case to the High Court to argue that public housing residents should have been consulted with before a decision of this kind that has so deeply affected them and their communities."

The High Court move keeps the challenge alive after IMCL's original case was dismissed in May 2025 and an appeal failed in December.

In the meantime, residents who remain in the first three towers can continue living there for now. IMCL said an injunction granted by the Victorian Court of Appeal remains in place, preventing Homes Victoria from issuing notices to vacate until the legal proceedings are finalised.

That injunction has provided an important reprieve for the remaining "hold-out" households, some of whom had refused to leave their flats while the legal fight continued.

Ms Bassini said the stakes extended well beyond the three towers currently protected by the injunction.

"The communities that have been built on these public housing estates over many decades are being torn apart by these

demolitions and the refusal to rebuild public housing," she said.

"Many who have been moved already tell us that they want to come back."

She also called on Homes Victoria to halt plans affecting seven more towers across Melbourne while the legal uncertainty remains unresolved.

"This has created fear and uncertainty for hundreds of residents who face having to move out of their homes and communities at a stage in their lives when they should have stability about their accommodation," she said.

The case is significant not only because of what it may mean for the remaining residents in North Melbourne and Flemington, but also because it now places the broader demolition program under renewed scrutiny.

As previously reported by North West City News, critics of the government's redevelopment plan argue that the issue is not simply the towers themselves, but the loss of secure public housing in a city already facing an acute housing crisis.

The High Court appeal is expected to be heard later this year. ●

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North & West Melbourne Precinct Association

All Things Equal: a café where inclusion comes first

“All Things Equal and GingerSnap have returned to West Melbourne with their second pop-up café, now operating five days a week and offering six trainees with disabilities the chance to build real-world hospitality skills in a live café environment.”

”

WORDS BY
CHRIS JACKSON



step outside their comfort zones and try new tasks.

“Once they build that confidence, they can do it. Patience and encouragement make all the difference,” Michael told *North West City News*.

“Being in this space with the trainees is extremely fulfilling. They’re genuinely excited when they’re coming to work. They genuinely want to be here, working, learning, getting experience and being given an award wage. It’s exciting to see them grow.”

The café has also been warmly embraced by the local community.

“We have regular customers from the local community, which is great,” Michael said. “Ultimately it’s all about getting people through the door and giving them great service.”

The pop-up exposes trainees to all facets of café life, from making coffee to food preparation. As part of the broader training program, each trainee also completes a 10 to 12-week cooking course to build practical kitchen skills and a stronger understanding of how professional kitchens work.

“The coffee machine is the most exciting part, everyone loves learning about coffee, that and serving customers,” Michael said.

The café’s new menu was designed and developed by the All Things Equal chef and hospitality team. The offering includes seasonal salads, toasties, grab-and-go items, baked goods and Veneziano coffee, alongside GingerSnap’s plant-based desserts.

All of it is served with care, pride and purpose.

GingerSnap is located at 114 Adderley St, West Melbourne. Open Tuesdays to Saturday, 8am to 3pm. ●

Located at GingerSnap on Adderley St, the café is built around a simple but important idea: inclusive employment should be the norm, not the exception. Trainees are paid hospitality award wages while gaining front- and back-of-house experience designed to build confidence, skills and long-term career pathways.

All Things Equal, a successful social enterprise with its flagship café in Balaclava, runs an inclusive hospitality employment pathway program supporting people with disability through training, award-wage

employment, and pathways into open employment and long-term careers in hospitality.

The current West Melbourne pop-up café is hosted in collaboration with GingerSnap Patisserie, founded by siblings Jess Colgan and Brett Duncan. The café has become a key platform for that mission, blending quality food with purposeful employment.

Brett, a qualified pastry chef who was born profoundly deaf, helps shape the menu with creativity and precision, while chief executive Jess leads the organisation’s broader vision for inclusive, award-wage

employment.

With longer opening hours introduced due to strong demand, the expanded program is giving trainees even more opportunity to learn on the job and engage directly with the local community.

The aim of All Things Equal is to provide paid jobs, training and pathways into hospitality for people with disabilities. The GingerSnap pop-up gives trainees practical experience in customer service, food preparation and kitchen operations while serving local residents and workers.

“It’s incredibly rewarding,” café manager Michael Connerley said.

“Seeing how the trainees are on the first day to where they are now, it’s incredible.”

Each trainee arrives with their own strengths and challenges, and with support from trainers they are encouraged to

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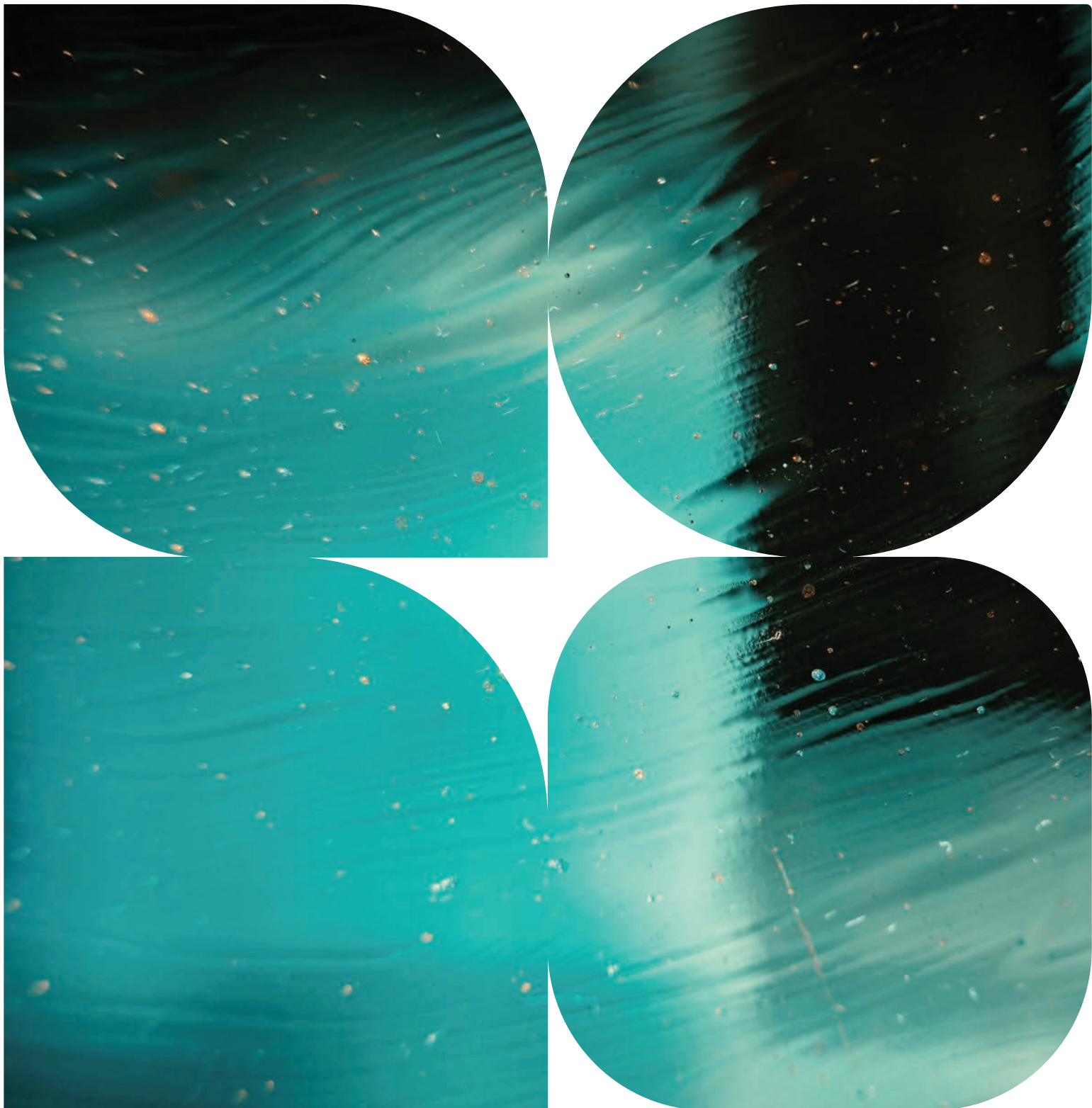
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Council pushes for no-truck zones in Kensington as tunnel impacts deepen

Continued from page 1.

Cr Reece added that the issue was now being felt widely, "from Kensington, to Macaulay, through West Melbourne, North Melbourne, and Carlton", and pointedly contrasted the situation in Melbourne's inner north-west with the western suburbs, where roads such as Francis St, Somerville Rd, Buckley St, Moore St, Hudsons Rd and Blackshaws Rd were made 24/7 no-truck zones when the tunnel opened. "We have not seen the same thing happen at the east end of the West Gate Tunnel," he said.

For Kensington residents, who have spent months warning that the tunnel would simply shift freight impacts eastward, the council's decision is likely to be viewed as a major win.

Speaking to the committee, Kensington Association chair Dr Kate Kennedy said the suburb had long feared exactly this outcome and had been raising concerns about rat-running and truck safety since 2016 through the West Gate Tunnel Community Liaison Group.

"We did feel that rat-running would become an issue here," she said, adding that truck safety had long been an issue close to residents, "seeing that we've lived with some fairly tragic truck accidents over the years, three in particular, two resulting in deaths and one was someone who is a quadriplegic and still lives in our neighbourhood."

Dr Kennedy said Kensington residents had become almost obsessive about documenting truck movements, with locals photographing heavy vehicles and posting them online, while also noticing signs of road damage, especially on Macaulay Rd where a historic sewer collapse decades ago remains in local memory.

The Kensington Association's written submission reinforced those concerns, saying the "current volume of HV traffic indicates that the WGT opening has resulted in increased heavy vehicle movement and rat-running via Macaulay Rd, Epsom Rd and Kensington Rd". It said residents were concerned not only by their lived experience of more trucks, but also by resulting road wear and an "anomaly" in the Macaulay Rd truck-ban rule.

That anomaly has become an important local issue. The submission argues that current exemptions tied to vehicle height allow many trucks to avoid the Newmarket Rd restriction and instead use Macaulay Rd, undermining the purpose of the ban.

The association wants the rule reviewed



and narrowed so Macaulay Rd functions only as an over-dimensional and over-mass route, not as a broader alternative for heavy vehicles.

Management's presentation to councillors suggested those concerns are at least reflected in early data. Infrastructure boss Rick Kwasek said monitoring had already shown an "uplift in volumes" on Kensington Rd and Epsom Rd, with a slight reduction on Macaulay Rd, though he stressed that work was continuing with the Department of Transport and Planning to understand vehicle classifications and compare current movements with the pre-opening baseline.

The issue is not just trucks, but what streets can safely absorb them.

West Melbourne residents have been especially vocal about Victoria and King streets, where the state is proposing to reduce the speed limit from 60 km/h to 50 km/h between Dryburgh and Curzon streets on Victoria St, and between Curzon and Dudley streets on King St, by mid-2026. Mr Kwasek described this as a "key initiative" following strong feedback from North Melbourne and West Melbourne residents about increased speeds since the tunnel opened.

But many residents believe even that reduction does not go far enough.

Jamie Paxton, in a detailed letter to Transport Minister Melissa Horne shared with *North West City News*, argued that the state's plan still allowed unsafe heavy vehicle speeds through a residential corridor with a long crash history.

He pointed to data showing 62 casualty crashes on the relevant section of King and Victoria streets over the past five years, including 25 serious injuries, more than 20 times the minimum threshold for a metropolitan black spot. He also noted that the same corridor had nearly three times as many serious injury accidents as Spencer St over the same period.

Mr Paxton said the corridor intersected numerous community facilities, including Flagstaff Gardens, schools, a crisis accommodation service, North Melbourne Primary School and North Melbourne Station, and warned that a B-double truck travelling at 60 km/h needed 90 metres to stop. He argued that the state should reduce speeds to 40 km/h along King and Victoria streets and to 20 km/h at the Curzon St intersection.

That broader question about 40 km/h local roads also surfaced in the council debate. Supporting the amended motion, Cr Dr Ball reminded colleagues that the city's own Transport Strategy 2030 set an

objective for local roads to be no more than 40 km/h, a point later confirmed by Mr Kwasek.

Cr Dr Ball said the amended motion highlighted three key issues beyond the immediate speed reduction proposals: trucks, tree replacement and local road speeds.

She singled out the revelation that the promised 5:1 replacement ratio for trees removed to build the West Gate Tunnel would not be achieved within the City of Melbourne, despite previous commitments from ministers and the project's approval process. "To find in this report that the State Government finds that it cannot achieve or does not intend to achieve that 5:1 promised replacement ratio is of great concern," she said.

Mr Kwasek told councillors that around 824 trees had been removed for the project and that while the overall 5:1 ratio would be met across the broader tunnel corridor, "that won't be within the City of Melbourne". said the then-Transport Infrastructure Minister Danny Pearson had written to the Lord Mayor in 2024 committing to identify additional planting opportunities in the municipality, and that the city had already identified purple-shaded locations in its urban forest plans where additional planting could occur if compensation or direct delivery were secured.

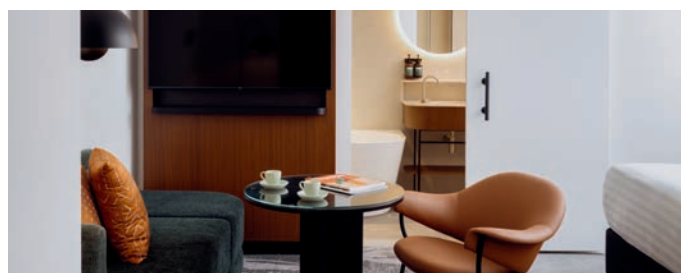
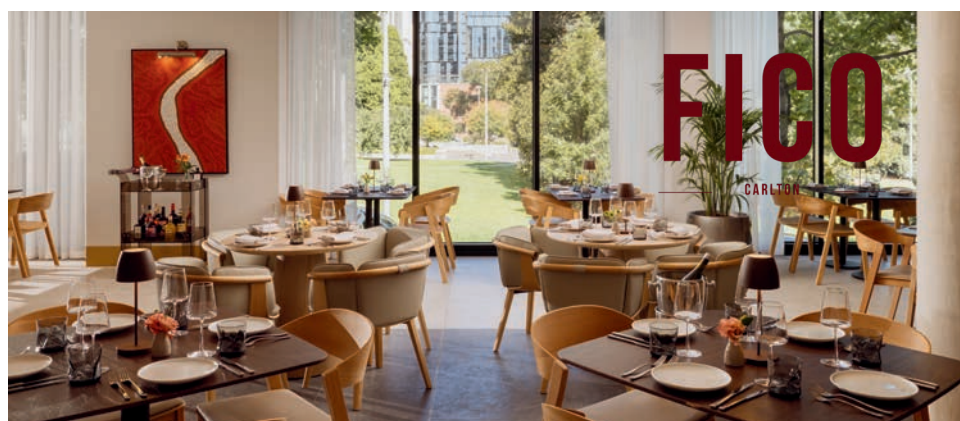
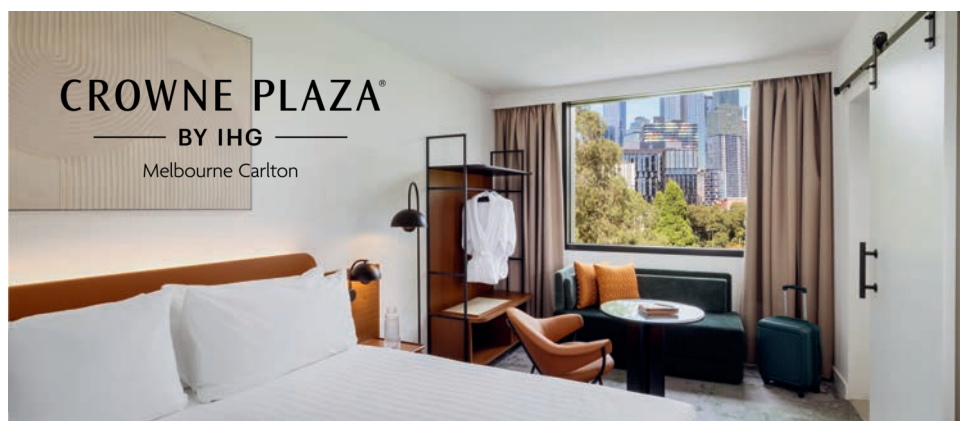
Cr Davydd Griffiths, supporting the motion, said it was vital not just to meet the technical ratio, but to honour the spirit of the earlier promises so that those neighbourhoods which had lost the trees were the ones that benefited from replanting.

Management will not just analyse truck volumes and classifications, but will also specifically examine roads that could be turned into 24/7 no-truck zones, including through a review of signage and exemptions.

It will also look at where additional speed reductions may be needed to respond to heavy vehicle impacts, and at how the city can hold the state to its tree-planting promises.

For residents across Kensington and West Melbourne, that represents a meaningful escalation.

Whether it ultimately leads to no-truck zones on roads such as Kensington Rd, Epsom Rd, Macaulay Rd or in parts of North and West Melbourne remains to be seen. But after months of frustration, the signal from Town Hall is now much stronger: the council is preparing to seriously test whether Melbourne's inner-city neighbourhoods deserve the same protections as those in the western suburbs. ●



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We're looking to expand smoke-free areas, with community consultation to begin on plans for a 10-metre smoking and vaping ban around more council facilities.

The proposal would increase the network from 16 areas to more than 70 locations across the municipality, including libraries, community centres, creative spaces and sports venues.

It's the next step in our Smoke-free Melbourne policy to protect the community from second-hand smoke and vape aerosol, reduce smoking rates and create healthier public spaces.

Many of the proposed areas are used daily by families,

young people and vulnerable community members, with consultation to begin later this year before returning to Council for consideration.

Public support is strong, with more than 70 per cent of respondents in favour, including 76 per cent at Queen Victoria Market and 72 per cent at Council administration buildings.

The move is part of Melbourne's work with the Partnership for Healthy Cities - a global network backed by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the World Health Organization and Vital Strategies that helps cities tackle public health challenges.

Melbourne is the only city in Australia and New Zealand in the network.

"The success of a city comes down to the health of its people -

that's why we're proud to be part of the Partnership for Healthy Cities." Community and City Services portfolio head Councillor Gladys Liu said.

Everyone deserves access to food that supports their health and wellbeing, but cost of living and pressures are making this difficult for many. Last year, almost half



Experts say there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke



Eduardo Cavaliere, Mayor of Rio de Janeiro

Earlier this month, representatives from member cities met in Rio de Janeiro to share ideas on tackling public health challenges.

"The summit highlighted how cities like Melbourne are leading the way in tackling complex public health challenges and creating safer, healthier communities," said Dr. Kelly Henning, who leads Public Health programs at Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Smoke-free areas are one focus of Melbourne's work through the Partnership for Healthy Cities network, but they're not the only public health issue on our radar.

of our residents experienced food insecurity, while nearly one in three skipped meals or were worried they would run out of food.

Since July 2024, the City of Melbourne has provided more than 10,000 free healthy meals as part of our FareShare Library Feeds program and supported communities to grow their own food.

"Whether it's clearing the air from harmful smoke or improving access to healthier food, we're making Melbourne healthier and more liveable." Lord Mayor Nick Reece said.

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CITY OF MELBOURNE



“Option 2” set to end long Hawke St saga as council moves to lock in greening plan

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After years of redesigns, delays and community frustration, the City of Melbourne appears finally set to bring the long-running Hawke St greening saga to a close, with councillors expected to endorse the now clearly preferred “Option 2” at the Future Melbourne Committee meeting on May 19.

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WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



A new council report recommends approval of the refined Option 2 design, allowing the project to move into detailed design and documentation ahead of delivery. The report, considered by councillors shortly after the May edition of *North West City News* went to print, says the revised concept emerged as the clear community favourite during consultation, with 49 per cent of respondents backing it, compared with 28 per cent for Option 1. Another 16 per cent liked neither option, while seven per cent supported elements of both.

The decision marks a significant moment for West Melbourne, where Hawke St has become one of the city’s most contested local streets in the wake of the West Gate Tunnel project and the collapse of the original Hawke Street Linear Park concept.

The council was forced back to the drawing board after the 2023 endorsed design was found to be unworkable because of a high-pressure gas main and other underground and overhead service constraints.

The redesign process triggered fresh debate among residents, including a 269-signature petition from locals arguing that the city’s proposed concepts would bring traffic closer to homes and reduce amenity on the south side of the street.

But the new report makes clear that the city does not accept that characterisation.

According to management, the proposed concept “does not alter the existing kerb alignment and therefore maintains the current separation between residential properties and the adjacent traffic lane”. It says the inclusion of a protected bicycle lane would in fact increase the overall distance between dwellings and moving traffic compared with the current layout.

The council also says all existing trees between residential properties and the roadway are to be retained, directly rebutting one of the major concerns raised by petitioners.

The report goes further, arguing that the residents’ alternative concept would actually weaken the project’s greening outcome. It says the petition proposal would require the removal of the planned 934 sqm expansion of Hawke and Curzon Street Reserve, replacing it with a much smaller landscaped kerb extension and resulting in a significant net reduction in greening. It also says the petition design could not safely accommodate both two traffic lanes and protected bicycle lanes without reducing the centre median and potentially affecting existing trees.

The attraction of Option 2 is obvious in the numbers. Under the report, Option 1 would have removed the centre median and all 23 existing median trees between Adderley and King streets, delivering 164 trees overall and an estimated 34 per cent canopy cover. Option 2 instead expands the centre median, retains and enhances its landscape role, and lifts the total tree count to 240 with projected canopy cover of 43 per cent. It also slightly reduces on-street parking from 102 spaces under Option 1 to 96 under Option 2, while further expanding Hawke and Curzon Street Reserve and adding more greening and buffer planting opposite the reserve.

The report notes that the project is part of the broader Transport and Amenity Program intended to offset some of the impacts of the West Gate Tunnel on roads in the City of Melbourne. It says the design remains subject to formal ministerial approval and Treasury release of state funding, but that early traffic analysis suggests the volumes and patterns should support the proposal.

Community engagement has been extensive. The project has now gone through four phases of consultation, including the most recent round between December 2025 and February 2026, when residents were asked to choose between the two revised options. The council says there is now a strong desire for “resolution to come quickly” after years of repeated consultation and changing designs.

For many in West Melbourne, that may be the biggest takeaway. The Hawke St project has been under discussion for more than a decade, first through the West Melbourne Structure Plan and then as part of the city’s response to West Gate Tunnel traffic. It has become symbolic of both the promise and the frustration of trying to retrofit more greenery, safer cycling and better public space into streets heavily constrained by utilities and transport infrastructure.

If councillors endorse Option 2 as expected, the project will progress through detailed design and approvals before construction can begin. ●

Council report backs return of \$2 swims and free lessons after strong summer results

The City of Melbourne is set to make its cut-price pool entry and free swimming lesson programs a regular feature of summer after a new evaluation found both initiatives delivered strong take-up, broad community benefits and measurable gains in water confidence.

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



A report due to be considered by councillors at the Future Melbourne Committee on May 19 recommends the city again deliver the \$2 Pool Splash initiative at Carlton Baths and North Melbourne Pool from December 1, 2026, to February 28, 2027, alongside another round of free swimming lessons at Melbourne City Baths and Kensington Community Aquatic and Recreation Centre in January 2027. It also recommends both programs be adopted as annual initiatives under the council plan.

The evaluation found the \$2 swim pilot, run on weekdays over summer 2025-26, generated 22,245 discounted swims at Carlton Baths and North Melbourne Pool. Of those surveyed, 67 per cent said the \$2 offer was the reason for their visit, while 23 per cent were attending the pools for the first time. Almost half said they came to cool off in hot weather, while others cited health, fitness and relaxation. Ninety-seven per cent rated the experience positively.

Lord Mayor Nick Reece said the community had clearly embraced the initiative.

“Our \$2 pool splash initiative has been a remarkable success this summer – with almost 23,000 swims sold showing us that our community have lapped up the chance to stay cool and active – at mate’s rate prices,” he said.

The free swimming lessons program also posted strong outcomes.

Delivered from January 5 at Melbourne City Baths and Kensington Community Aquatic and Recreation Centre, the program offered 616 places for City of Melbourne residents in a five-day intensive learn-to-swim

format. A total of 3080 lessons was delivered, with 51 per cent of participants reporting minimal or no prior swimming experience and 97 per cent saying their swimming ability improved. Nearly half were born overseas, 61 per cent were women, and 64 participants have since signed up for ongoing classes.

Cr Reece said the impact extended well beyond the pool.

“And our free swimming lesson program has given more than 600 residents the life-changing opportunity to build confidence in the water and learn important water safety skills,” he said.

“Newly arrived Australians, senior citizens and bubs and more have all embraced this initiative, which is breaking down boundaries and teaching life-long lessons in the pool.”

The report highlights several examples of the program’s reach, including a resident living with a disability attending with a carer, 12 women from the Kensington Somali Women’s Development Association joining classes, a family of five children attending from 7.15am each day, and a full week of lessons delivered in Mandarin and another for participants aged 58 to 65. One participant said they had not previously understood the meaning of red and yellow flags at Australian beaches.

Community and City Services portfolio head Cr Gladys Liu said the programs were about more than affordability.

“Our \$2 splash initiative is about inspiring people to be more active, more often. This program goes beyond the pool – bringing people together, building friendships and strengthening our communities,” she said.

One issue still unresolved is whether the \$2 swim offer can be expanded to Kensington.

The report says extending the initiative to Kensington Community Aquatic and Recreation Centre and Melbourne City Baths would significantly reduce revenue and create customer experience issues, particularly at indoor pools with limited capacity. However, councillors have previously flagged interest in Kensington, and the report notes a feasibility assessment will be undertaken ahead of summer 2026-27 to further examine whether the initiative can be introduced there in future. ●

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New Pilates studio opens in Kensington with strong local turnout



A new Pilates studio has opened in Kensington, with locals turning out in force to welcome *do pilates* Kensington at its official launch on May 2.



WORDS BY SEAN CAR



Owner Becca King said the grand opening was a warm and encouraging sign of community support, with around 80 people attending and only one slice of pie left over by the end of the day.

"The grand opening on May 2 was really lovely, and we were so grateful for the support from the local community," she told *North West City News*.

To mark the occasion, the studio partnered with Rumble Coffee and Double Dutch for what King described as "pie and lattes", or "pi-lates", while also offering complimentary mini-Pilates sessions throughout the day so people could try the space in a relaxed and welcoming environment.

"That was a real highlight and was received so warmly by the community as well," she said.

The opening marks the arrival of a new local business with a strong neighbourhood focus. King and her husband have lived across North Melbourne, Kensington and Ascot Vale over the past 12 years, and she has been teaching Pilates in the area since 2018.

Over that time, she said she had seen how powerful movement could be, not just for physical strength, but also for mental well-being. But just as importantly, she said many people were also looking for connection.



That idea sits at the heart of *do pilates* Kensington, which King says was created by locals, for locals.

She said the studio was designed to feel different from larger or more impersonal Pilates chains, with more room between reformers, natural light, fresh air and a stronger focus on community. But just as importantly, she wanted to build a team of instructors who could make people feel genuinely welcome.

The studio offers a blend of reformer and mat Pilates, with small classes led by around five instructors focused on form, care and creating a supportive environment. Hands-on adjustments are offered

with consent, and the aim is to cater to a wide mix of clients, whether they are completely new to Pilates, returning from injury, or have years of experience.

Local client Edel Rafferty said the instructors were what really set the studio apart.

"They are warm, welcoming and inclusive," she said. "They all have different styles but are uniformly well informed and great at sharing their knowledge."

Josh Spillane echoed that view, describing them as "the best I've come across".

"[The classes are] interesting and varied, but with a focus on mindfulness, technique and breath work," he said. "Lots of non-judgement options for different difficulty levels

and timetables too."

King said that sense of belonging was central to what the studio is trying to build.

"At *do pilates* Kensington, we want people to feel like they belong exactly as they are, regardless of age, gender, experience, body shape or fitness level," she said.

For her, the studio is about more than exercise.

"We're not trying to be just another Pilates studio chain," she said. "For us, it's about real Pilates, moving together and building community."

The *do pilates* Kensington studio is located at 19 Thompson St, Kensington. dopilates.au

"Luminous pulse" shines through Cheng Lei's story



A "gripping and unexpectedly revealing" work written and performed by journalist Cheng Lei that is premiering at Arts House this month is not just about retelling the suffering of her three-year detention in China, Lei says, but "explor[ing] something universal".

WORDS BY JENNY DENTON



Cheng Lei was a glamorous TV presenter on state-owned Chinese Central Television's English language channel *Global Business* show in August 2020 when she was summoned to a meeting with her boss.

Arriving at the meeting room on the 37th floor of the US\$900 million CCTV building in Beijing where she worked she was met by security officers who told her she was under investigation for supplying state secrets to foreign organisations and took her into custody.

Within a few hours she was blindfolded and taken to a secret location.

A few months earlier Australia's foreign minister and prime minister had infuriated the Chinese government by calling for an

independent investigation into the source of COVID-19, a call that triggered a dramatic deterioration in the relationship between the two countries.

It would be more than three years before Lei, who has described herself as "a human pawn", would see her children, family and the outside world again.

For the first six months of her detention, Lei was held under a system known as Residential Surveillance at a Designated Location.

Used by the Chinese Communist Party against individuals accused of endangering state security, RSDL has been condemned by human rights experts as a kind of enforced disappearance where detainees may be tortured.

It is defined by isolation, surveillance and silence.

For Lei it meant sitting in a small room with a guard close beside her on either side and being unable to talk or even move without permission for 13 hours a day.

Her performance, *1154 Days*, provides "a rare and vivid window" into the largely hidden world of the RSDL system, its producers say.

Directed by Emma Valente and Clyde White, the work uses multi-camera projection combined with live performance to put the audience inside the "shifting worlds" of "a Beijing apartment where life suddenly fractures, the stark, controlled space of RSDL and a return to Melbourne, where freedom brings its own complexities".

Now a journalist at Sky News, Lei, who was released in October 2023 after sustained campaigning and a change of government in Australia, has published a memoir, appeared in documentaries and given many interviews about her experience.

But she continues to process and explore it.

According to her artist statement on *1154 Days*, it demonstrates the power of the

mind, finds dark humour in the absurdity of China's "opaque justice system" and "celebrates human connection – the dazzling creativity that arises from our instinct to reach out and comfort one another" with small acts that "defied the machinery of dehumanisation".

It also asks, "urgent questions about what we value in a society" and is "a meditation on the meaning of freedom".

The work, which will have its world premiere at Arts House at the end of May, was also intended to be performed at Melbourne's RISING, which opens on May 27, although according to *The Australian*, there was no formal agreement in place when it was axed by the festival in February.

In a letter to the RISING chair, Lei and director Emma Valente described the cancellation of the work, which had been in development with the festival for more than a year, as an act of political censorship.

The Australian reported the work was understood to have been dropped on the basis of a "risk and audit report" conducted by the festival, while a RISING spokesperson said the decision had been made as a result of budget constraints.

Fellow former detainee Dr Kylie Moore Gilbert wrote on social media that Lei had "poured her heart and soul into staging a very public and challenging conversation with a live audience on what happened, and what was done to her".

"Lei's voice is vital, and this play is more urgent than ever," she wrote on Twitter.

"Shame on RISING festival for cancelling Lei!"

According to Lei the performance is "ultimately ... a tribute to all who are punished for thought, speech, and truth [which] weav[es] tragedy with comic relief to reveal the luminous pulse of humanity that no system can fully crush".

1154 Days opens at the Arts House on May 28 and runs until May 31. ●

Funding lifeline for cohealth clinics, but management concerns remain unresolved

The federal government has pledged a further \$1.5 million to help keep cohealth's general practice services operating in Collingwood, Fitzroy and Kensington for another year.

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



However, while the funding has offered a welcome reprieve for vulnerable patients, it has done little to quiet growing concern about the organisation's leadership and governance.

The funding announcement is good news for community health in Melbourne's inner city, where cohealth's clinics play an important role supporting people with complex health and social needs. But it comes with strings attached.

The new Commonwealth support, together with a matching \$1.5 million contribution from cohealth, is tied to the organisation making changes in response to an independent review into its GP services, finances, governance and management. That review has not been made public, leaving the community largely in the dark about its findings and the reforms now expected.

In a statement, cohealth said the review had provided "a clear pathway" to strengthen care into the future and support a transition towards a "more sustainable, future-focused model of care while maintaining continuity of services".

Board chair Sam Sondhi said the organisation's immediate focus was on keeping services open while working with patients, staff and the community to shape what comes next.

"This reflects our longstanding advocacy for better funding and policy arrangements that better support people with complex health and social needs," he said.

"As the review found, change is needed to help build a more sustainable future for these services."

Cohealth also acknowledged that the review had identified areas where it "needs to do better", including governance, leadership and management, although it said the board did not support all of the findings in those areas.

That caveat is unlikely to reassure critics.

Community concern around cohealth has been building for months, particularly since the organisation first flagged plans late last year to close its GP services in Fitzroy, Collingwood and Kensington. Although the clinics have now been granted another 12 months of life, campaigners say serious questions remain about how cohealth has handled the crisis and whether the same leadership team should be trusted to oversee the next phase.

Save Our Community Health, one of the most vocal advocacy groups in the campaign, has been sharply critical of management and recently called for the dismissal of senior leadership.

The group argues that community trust has been badly damaged by decisions already made during the review period, including cuts to counselling and pharmacy services, as well as what it sees as poor communication with patients and staff.

"We call on the Victorian Minister of Health to use her powers to dismiss the cohealth board immediately," the organisation said in a press release. "While we are hoping that services in Kensington, Fitzroy and Collingwood will remain, we are angry and anxious."

"We want to know the full facts from the review. Not an abridged version," the group stated, adding that it had "no confidence in the board and the senior management" and was worried about "about their financial mismanagement".

"We demand a new governance structure that is open, transparent, collaborative and accountable."

The issue has also been complicated by instability at board level. As previously reported by sibling publication *CBD News*, former Scope chief executive Kate MacRae was appointed chair earlier this year to help steady the organisation through the review. But she has already since left the role, citing personal reasons, adding another layer of uncertainty at a sensitive time.

For now, the funding extension means cohealth's inner-city clinics will remain open while consultation begins on what the organisation describes as a stronger multidisciplinary model of care. That is an important outcome for local communities who rely on the services. But the bigger questions have not gone away.

Without the review being released publicly, patients and advocates are being asked to trust a reform process they cannot fully see, led by an organisation whose management remains under heavy scrutiny. The funding may have bought time, but it has not yet restored confidence. ●

Ninetieth anniversary of the Lort Smith Animal Hospital



Honouring the past, shaping the future was the theme of a recent event celebrating the 90th anniversary of the Lort Smith Animal Hospital in North Melbourne.



WORDS BY
FELICITY JACK



A morning celebration was held in the beautiful gardens of the Toorak home Cranlana, hosted by the two Hospital Patrons, Lady Southey, previously Victoria's Lieutenant Governor, and Samantha Baillieu.

In the early 2000s I had the honour of researching and writing the history of the Lort Smith Animal Hospital and Animal Welfare League that funded it. My book, *The Kindness of Strangers* was launched by Victoria's Governor, John Landy, in 2003.

It traces the history of the League, founded in 1926, that funded and built the hospital that opened in 1936, having in the meantime run a part-time clinic in Parkville.

It was initially named the Lort Smith-Lyle Hospital after two very active volunteers, Mrs Louisa Lort Smith and Lady Clare Lyle. However, after a falling out with the board, Lady Lyle asked that her name no longer be associated with it. There was a reconciliation some years later, and subsequently the original hospital building was named Lyle House.

There have been many changes to the hospital in the 23 years since my book was published.

One of the biggest changes was the opening of a new hospital campus in Campbellfield. This services Melbourne's inner north but several of its programs were moved there, including one of its most important programs, the rehoming of pets, particularly cats and dogs.

The hospital has always strived to be at the cutting edge of veterinary science. In the 1930s Louisa Lort Smith did several overseas trips to research the latest developments in animal care and she arranged to acquire an X-ray machine in 1943, the first in an animal hospital in Australia.

The financial viability of the hospital has always been a serious concern. This is not surprising given the hospital's policy to never turn away an animal for lack of the owner's ability to pay and considering that it prides itself on having the most up to date equipment and knowledge.

It runs one costly program that is summed up with the words "Keeping people and pets safe through life's hardest moments". This funds an emergency boarding program for pets when families are faced with family violence, homelessness, mental health crises and hospitalisation.

There has been a substantial reliance on philanthropy, bequests and fundraising events to fund the increasingly expensive programs and the running of the hospital. And the hospital continues to receive support from some of the well-known names of people in Victoria.

The hospital relies heavily on volunteers. One of these, Joan Sturzaker, was instrumental in setting up a pet therapy service to local hospitals in the 1980s, a service that has expanded significantly. Other volunteers have worked hard at fundraising and raising the profile of the hospital.

Staffing of the hospital has always been something of an enigma. A core of long-term staff contrasts with a number who remain for only a short term. One of the veterinary surgeons, Patrick Cheah, has been on the staff for 30 years, having joined in 1996. There have also been quite a few changes of CEO over the years, the current CEO Frances Mirabelli having been appointed in September 2024.

One link with the past is Mrs Lort Smith's desk: it has remained in the hospital's CEO's office over the years and symbolises the traditions and hard work that are so much a part of the hospital's success. It isn't simply tradition that has been handed down throughout the years but also the ethos of community service, care, and compassion.

More information about the hospital can be found on its website: lortsmith.com ●

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Fresh budget funding keeps Arden Secondary School moving, but questions remain

The long-awaited Arden Secondary School has received a further funding boost in the Victorian Budget, offering another positive sign that planning for the new inner-city high school is continuing, even if key details remain frustratingly unclear.



community. Our planning gets the project designed and ready for works."

On background, Ms Watt's office confirmed that Arden Secondary School, currently an interim name, had received a share of the \$419.6 million allocated for new schools in the 2026-27 budget. That funding is to go towards planning, design and early works.

The latest allocation builds on last year's initial funding announcement, when the 2025-26 budget included \$1 million to identify sites for new schools in growth areas, including Arden. That earlier commitment was broadly welcomed but also prompted questions about whether land had actually been secured and whether the school could arrive in time to ease mounting enrolment pressure in the inner city.

Those concerns have only grown since. University High School, which is the main secondary school for much of Docklands, North Melbourne and the surrounding area, is already operating beyond capacity and has had to expand into a leased CBD office building for its Year 9 cohort. Meanwhile, Docklands Primary School has only just secured budget funding for land for a second campus after rapidly outgrowing its original site.

The state government's latest investment is therefore clearly a step in the right direction. But for many families and advocates, the core issue remains urgency. ●

WORDS BY SEAN CAR



The latest budget includes new funding for the project as part of a broader \$419.6 million package for new schools across Victoria. While the government has not disclosed the exact amount allocated specifically to Arden Secondary School, it has confirmed the money is intended to support planning, design and early works.

For families in North and West Melbourne, Docklands and the wider CBD, that is welcome news. But with pressure on inner-city secondary schools continuing to intensify, many in the community are still looking for greater transparency and a clearer timeline for delivery.

When pressed by *North West City News* for more detail, Northern Metropolitan MP Sheena Watt said the project was continuing to progress as part of the government's broader planning for growth.

"Arden is one of Melbourne's most significant urban renewal opportunities – well-connected, centrally located, and ready to deliver for a growing city," she said.

"We're planning a new school in North Melbourne – delivering for the future of our growing

Antisemitism submission sparks protest debate at Town Hall

A City of Melbourne submission to the Royal Commission into Antisemitism that flags changes to the management of Melbourne's pro-Palestine protests caused division as well as "furious agreement" when it came before the Future Melbourne Committee on May 5.

WORDS BY JENNY DENTON



The submission, written in response to a request by the Commission for information about council policies and procedures, contains a series of recommendations focused on areas of council influence.

Five of the six recommendations, on the implementation and federal funding of broad national, local and workplace anti-racism initiatives, had the unanimous support of councillors.

The sixth, which calls for the federal government to establish a "protest framework", sparked disagreement, with Greens councillor Dr Olivia Ball putting forward an amendment proposing its removal from the document.

The recommendation says the Royal Commission should "recommend the federal government coordinate a review across all levels of government to establish a framework that safeguards the right to protest while reducing disruption to the functioning of cities and maintaining a safe environment for the community".

Cr Dr Ball argued that it sought "to limit the right to peaceful protest, which has no inherent bearing on antisemitism".

"The current council plan seeks ways to limit the disruption of public protest, but this ambition has no place in a submission on antisemitism," she said.

Cr Davydd Griffiths agreed. While the Flemington local was "very supportive of the vast bulk" of the City's submission, he said if there was antisemitic activity at rallies it should be dealt with under existing laws and through the recommendations of the Royal Commission.

"People should be able to take to the streets to protest," Cr Griffiths said.

Deputy Lord Mayor Roshena Campbell observed

there was "furious agreement" among councillors "that in this country there is a right to peaceful protest" and said the right was preserved in the recommendation under debate.

It had "become abundantly clear that saying we should condemn antisemitic attacks or antisemitic acts of protest [was] not enough," she said.

She and Lord Mayor Nick Reece cited a string of "unacceptable" events in Melbourne, including the targeting of the restaurant Miznon, the abuse of Jewish schoolchildren at Melbourne Museum and the plastering of Flinders Lane with stickers featuring a Star of David with a cross through it.

Jewish individuals had reportedly been assaulted at a protest outside Town Hall and a nearby coffee shop had its door knocked off the hinges, Cr Campbell said.

Cr Reece, who said that despite being Lord Mayor he still liked to think of himself as an activist, referred to the impact these events had had on members of the Jewish community.

He also condemned the chants "globalise the intifada" and "from the river to the sea" as "statements of menacing intent", prompting interjections from the public gallery.

Three members of the local Jewish community had earlier added their voices to the debate, expressing appreciation for action now being taken on antisemitism but coming down on different sides of the protest issue.

Philip Zajac, from the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, said his son, who wears a kippah, had been asked by police to leave the CBD on a Sunday for his own safety, while his brother, who lives in the city, makes sure to leave it on Sundays.

The protests were causing unacceptable impacts to businesses, public access and the Jewish community, he said.

Rebecca Parker from Jewish Advocates for Understanding Antisemitism raised concern about what she described as a "personal endorsement" in the Lord Mayor's cover letter of the Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism's plan, arguing it had not been fully discussed or adopted by the City of Melbourne.

A third submitter, Rebecca Rigby, identified herself as "an anti-Zionist member of the Jewish community" who had attended multiple rallies in support of Palestine in Melbourne. While she did not doubt antisemitism was increasing, she said she had never experienced it at the protests.

Cr Dr Ball's amendment was backed only by herself and by Cr Griffiths. With the amendment lost, the council's submission, including the "protest framework" recommendation, was endorsed. ●

NORTH & WEST MELBOURNE PRECINCT ASSOCIATION

Winter light on Errol St: the Courthouse Hotel brings the neighbourhood together

“

There's a particular kind of winter in North Melbourne that doesn't ask you to stay inside.

”

The cold arrives early, yes, but so do the lights in the shopfront windows, the smell of something warm from the kitchen next door, the sound of a neighbour you haven't seen since autumn.

On Saturday, June 20, the longest night of the year, Errol St leans into all of it.

From 4pm to 9pm, the Courthouse Hotel is once again anchoring a neighbourhood-wide winter celebration that's less

"event" and more collective exhale. The kind of evening that reminds you why you chose to live here, or makes you wish you did.

Ryan Moses, who helps drive the Courthouse's vision for the precinct, puts it plainly.

"There's a real sense of belonging around here. People know each other. Businesses support each other. We wanted to create something that celebrates that feeling and invites everyone into it," he said.

That collaborative instinct shapes the whole evening. Bear's Wine Bar will pour a carefully chosen winter selection. Here's Looking at You Kid is teaming up with Bakery Hill and the soon-to-open Amaro Distillery on Queensberry St to serve warming cocktails, the kind you hold with both hands. There's face painting and lawn games for families, live music drifting down the street, and food worth coming out in the cold for.

For those drawn to the darker and more storied side of the neighbourhood, the Hotham History Project will be running

ghost walks and fireside chats with local historian Sean from Melbourne Ghost Signs, because North Melbourne has layers, and winter feels like exactly the right time to uncover them.

This is a precinct that's always worn its history lightly alongside its ambition. Old institutions and new ventures share the same footpath. Creatives and tradies drink at the same bar. It doesn't happen by accident; it happens because people here actually show up for each other.

Ryan knows it too. "It's not just about one venue. It's about creating energy across the whole street and giving people a reason to come together in winter. When local businesses collaborate, everyone benefits, but more importantly, the neighbourhood feels alive," he said.

On the longest night of the year, Errol St will be lit up, loud in the best way, and very much alive.

Bundle up. Bring the family. Come find out what winter in North Melbourne actually feels like. ●



Extraordinary chef shares classic dish

“

“If you're in a room with West Africans, and you want to start the conversation, just talk about who makes the best jollof,” says Evette Quoibia, the owner of Jollof Vibe.

”

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



The rice dish, a staple in countries of the region, from Mauritania to Nigeria, is prepared differently in each of them, and has become the subject of a good-natured rivalry.

Evette, who was serving it in a catering business she ran in Reservoir, noticed that at festivals and pop-up stalls it “just disappeared”.

“Everything else will be sitting there, and everybody just go crazy over the jollofs,” the 34-year-old told *North West City News*.

“It wasn't long [after that] I also heard about the jollof war on social media, and I said to myself, ‘why don't you just have it all in the one place?’”

“Let's have a jollof vibe – all the most famous jollofs just in one place, and people can come and try for themselves.”

Running initially out of a Kensington garage, Jollof Vibe was well received and opened in Racecourse Rd in October last year.

In addition to its rice speciality, the restaurant serves a range of beef, chicken, fish and eggplant stews, fried plantain and okra dishes, semolina, salads and fufu.

When it comes to ordering jollof, there are choices to be made.

The base of the dish is a tomato, onion and spiced sauce but beyond that there are many variations.

“The Liberians make it exactly like pilaf,” Evette says.

“We put the prawns, the meat, the vegetables and everything ... usually jasmine rice, a lot of ginger and the base.”

“Then you go to the Nigerians, they cook it more plain, so they just put a bit of seafood flavour – prawn or crab fish powder – and they use Basmati rice, because they don't like the rice sticking together.”

“They cook the sauce together with the rice then they eat it with, like, spicy turkey, chicken, or meat with coleslaw salad.”

In Senegambia, the border region between Senegal and Gambia, where the dish originated, Evette says, it is made with “basically everything cooked in one pot”.

On the menu there are also Ghanaian,



coconut, vegan and vegetarian jollofs.

While African diners occasionally grace the venue the majority of customers haven't grown up with the food.

Awareness of different African food is growing thanks to social media, Evette says.

“We actually attract more Aussies and Asians and different cultures because the Africans, they make this at home.”

Evette herself, who was “conceived in Liberia” and born in the Ivory Coast, grew up making jollof.

The eldest of eight children and “the first girl”, she was taught by her mum to cook from a very young age and loved it.

But the idea of turning cooking into a career didn't dawn on her until much later.

As a result of war, the family went through upheavals in both their home and adopted countries and spent five years in a Ghanaian refugee camp before coming to Australia through the UNHCR when Evette was 15.

As a teenager, put into Year 9 on the basis of her age despite a fragmented education, she found school “really, really frustrating”.

An English-as-a-second-language class

eventually gave her basic skills for work, and she got her first job – at an abattoir in Braebrook.

“It prepared me for the kitchen, funnily enough,” she says.

“But it was hard work. Sometimes I'd come home with my hands swollen.”

As she continued to cook for her friends, family, church and cultural communities, one day something clicked.

Evette realised that her food brought happiness and she had some sort of gift for it.

“Whenever I made something, there was just some kind of joy brought to people, and I wanted to see more people happy with food,” she says.

Since having this realisation, she has worked hard on her dream.

A year ago, she took the surprising step of renting a commercial kitchen and stocking up on masses of ingredients in order to challenge the Guinness World Record for individual “marathon cooking”.

The astonishing attempt saw her cook for six days straight, with just a 20-minute break every four hours, with the dishes she prepared fed to volunteers and supporters from her Liberian community, church and family, who gathered in the kitchen, dancing, singing and playing music.

The experience, although fun for a few days, involved a lot of hallucination and her body eventually “shutting down”, Evette says, but it was an opportunity to “do something big”, and she won the record.

Having since opened Jollof Vibe – the third, and most established, iteration of her West African cooking business – the determined young chef has hung her extraordinary qualification on the wall there.

“If I have a vision and dream for something I just don't kind of give up easily,” she says.

“I know it takes time and hard work, and eventually you see the results.”

Eat in or order online and pickup at Jollof Vibe, 268 Racecourse Rd, Flemington. ●

Boy seriously injured after falling under train at North Melbourne Station

A schoolboy remains in hospital in a serious but stable condition after becoming trapped under a train at North Melbourne Station on the afternoon of Monday, May 11.

Ambulance Victoria said it was called to the incident in North Melbourne at about 3.50pm on May 11. Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance and Advanced Life Support paramedics treated the boy at the scene before he was taken by road ambulance to the Royal Children's Hospital with a serious lower body injury.

In a statement issued on May 12, St Aloysius College North Melbourne confirmed the boy was a Year 7 student at the school and said the incident had occurred at around 4pm on Platform 6.

According to information provided to the college, the student had been standing with friends near the edge of the platform as a train arrived when his school bag became caught, causing him to fall onto the tracks.

The college said fellow students responded immediately, with one pressing the platform emergency button and calling Triple Zero while others communicated clearly with transport authorities. It praised the “calm and responsible actions” of those at the scene.

Emergency services and transport officials arrived promptly and enacted established emergency procedures, according to the school. Senior members of the college leadership team, including the Year 7 leader, attended the station as soon as possible to support students who had witnessed the incident, liaise with emergency services and provide care and reassurance. After being freed by emergency crews, the student was taken to hospital by ambulance.

“As of 8.30am this morning, the student remains under medical care,” the college said in its statement on May 12, adding that its thoughts, prayers and support were with the student and his family.

The school said the wellbeing of students, staff and the wider college community remained its priority, with counselling and pastoral care being offered to those affected by the incident. Parents and guardians concerned about their child's wellbeing have been encouraged to contact the college directly.

St Aloysius also thanked first responders and emergency services personnel who attended the scene, and again acknowledged the actions of the students present during what it described as a distressing situation.

The college has asked the media and public to respect the privacy of the student, his family and the wider school community at this time. ●

44-YEAR-OLD MALE HAS NEAR FATAL ENCOUNTER

BOWEL CANCER IS THE DEADLIEST CANCER FOR PEOPLE AGED 25–54.



KNOW THE RED FLAG SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS. TALK TO YOUR GP.



Kensington's Bakery Hill offering new whisky tours

“A boutique family-owned whisky distillery in the heart of the north-west is offering peeks into the creation of its enticing beverages as well as tastes, tales, learnings, atmosphere and a general love for the drink.”

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



One of the “weird myths” about whisky is that you need pure Scottish water and air to make the good stuff, says Bakery Hill’s Ash Clinton.

The distillery’s founder, David Baker, “called bull***t” on that, she says, “because the climate there is so still and stagnant”.

In Victoria, by contrast, where David set up in 1999 – initially in Bayswater – the changeable weather means the wooden casks the spirit is aged in expand and contract, speeding up the chemical process.

An eight-year-old Victorian whisky is thus the equivalent of an 18-year-old Scotch, Ash says.

So, in fact, “the Scottish make fabulous whisky against all odds!”

While her boss, a former chemistry teacher who is dogged by Breaking Bad jokes, was among the first to dare to produce the spirit in Australia, there are now around 600 distilleries here, Ash says – more than in Scotland.

Despite that, the now family-run label, which moved to Kensington in 2022, where it cranks out 1000 litres a week, can’t keep up with demand, she says.

On a grey, wet Sunday the distillery, with its exposed brick walls, repurposed wooden barrels, Chesterfields, heaters, piano, rugs and range of tasty whiskies, is pretty inviting.

Marketing manager and budding distiller Ash, who is hosting half-hour tours, is another source of warmth.

“I have the best job on the planet,” the 25-year-old says. “I talk about whisky for a living.”

While once considered “an old man’s drink” the spirit is so popular now that there are a lot of young people in the industry, she says.

“I’m no longer such an anomaly.”

From Ash, the visitor learns that the Baker family business has traditionally made single malts, which are aged in ex-bourbon casks for six to eight years, although it has recently also launched a more “cost-effective” blend.

Its whisky is “a Speyside style”, which refers to a region in northeast Scotland dense with big name distilleries.

While the business used to import barley

from Scotland, it is now sourced more locally, with “everything milled on site”.

Ash runs through the stages of production, which include the water and grain being “cooked like porridge” in the “mash ton”, the resulting “wash” being heated in a “kettle” to bring out the fermentable sugars, and the liquid being fermented in tanks before going to the still.

For the uninitiated a surprising fact about whisky is that “you’ll never get one bottle exactly the same as the last,” with variables



like the weather at the time of production and position of the barrel when stored influencing the end result.

And crucial in the question of flavour is the barrel, or cask itself.

“The barrel gives it its colour and flavour. It’s super important,” Ash says.

At Bakery Hill the barrels in use include former French and American oak wine casks and sherry, port and stout ones.

But rather than talking about equipment and analysing barrels, some people will prefer to sit down at them and get on with sampling the product.

On offer alongside a dry gin are classic and peated malts in both regular (46 per cent) and cask (60 per cent) strength, a double wood and a single blend.

A bottle of this lovely stuff will set you back a bit.

But if you savour it and drink slowly, you might be able to keep yourself warm for a fair while to come.

Bakery Hill is offering short half-hour tours of its Macauley Rd distillery on Sundays in May.

bakeryhill.com ●

HISTORY

1851: North and West Melbourne

July 1, 1851, was an important date in the history of Victoria, and particularly for North and West Melbourne.

WORDS BY
FELICITY JACK

It was the year that the building of the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum was completed, and the date that Port Phillip was proclaimed to be no longer a part of the Colony of New South Wales but the independent colony of Victoria.

This occurred on July 1, and celebrations were held throughout the colony. Fireworks, firing of cannons from Flagstaff Gardens, and the ringing of church bells meant that it must have been a raucous, noisy time.

But, for society’s rich and privileged, it meant attendance at a Grand Ball held in

the magnificent Benevolent Society building that, three or four months later, was to house many of the poor and crippled residents of the colony.

The history of Melbourne’s Benevolent Asylum was written by Mary Kehoe and published by the Hotham History Project in 1998. The very first chapter describes the celebrations held to commemorate separation that were held in the “impressive Tudor structure situated on the brow of a hill in rolling green countryside”.

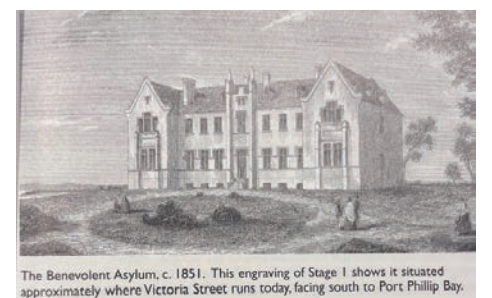
The guest of honour was Charles Latrobe, the Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria, previously the Superintendent of the District of Port Phillip. There were at least 250 paying guests, and the night must have been rowdy as 246 bottles of spirits and wine were emptied.

The building was at that time situated in bushland, accessed along a muddy track where there was a danger of getting “bogged”. The area was patrolled by police and soldiers to prevent any mishap to the elegantly dressed revellers. The evening

ended with a display of fireworks.

These celebrations were the preliminary to what was to become a bonanza to the local area as the discovery of gold led processions of diggers to the goldfields. Shops sprang up to provide tools and provisions for the adventurers who arrived in great numbers to seek their fortunes. And no doubt some of them found only destitution and ended up in the Benevolent Asylum, by which time the surrounding bushland had been replaced by shops, workshops, and homes, including boarding houses. The Benevolent Asylum soon attracted more residents than it could house and 60 years later (1911) it was relocated to Cheltenham.

As the city expanded in area and population the St James Cathedral that had been built close to the corner of King and Collins streets became too small to accommodate all who wished to attend. It was moved to its present position on the corner of King and Batman streets some years later. At the time of separation there was only one



The Benevolent Asylum, c. 1851. This engraving of Stage 1 shows it situated approximately where Victoria Street runs today, facing south to Port Phillip Bay.

bell in its belfry, an old ship’s bell, but new ones were acquired and rung for the first time in 1852. But no doubt in 1851 the one bell rang out in celebration

This year is the 175th anniversary of the Colony of Victoria and there are likely to be more than usual celebrations to mark the occasion. There are plans for a peal of bells to be rung from the St James Old Cathedral on the corner of King and Batman Streets during the afternoon of July 1.

More details will follow in the next edition of the North West City News ... ●



Cooling our neighbourhoods

Changes in land cover due to increased urbanisation can affect the urban environment and climate substantially.

One well-documented effect of urbanisation is the Urban Heat Island (UHI); that is, higher temperatures in urban areas compared with surrounding rural areas.

Inner-city Melbourne experiences increased temperatures of two to four degrees higher than surrounding rural areas, particularly during the night. This temperature difference increases significantly up to 10 degrees during heat waves, and these are becoming more frequent, intense and longer.

Contributing factors to this heat island effect are lack of trees and open spaces, building density, dark non-reflective surfaces (asphalt roads, dark roofs), building materials, building forms and the thermal properties of construction materials,

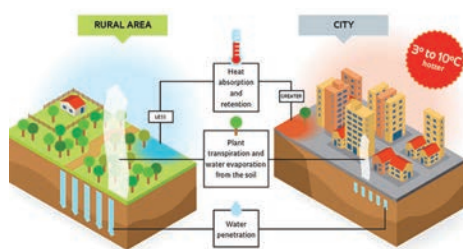
The UHI can contribute to heat-related illnesses including heart disease, which can lead to mortality, particularly during summer. For example, the deaths of a total of 4555 people were attributed to extreme heat over the period 1900–2011 in Australia, which is 55.2 per cent of the total natural hazard deaths

Melbourne is the fastest growing city in Australia and, according to Plan Melbourne 2050, is expected to expand into the surrounding suburban regions.

According to Monash University the intensity of the UHI effect is not uniform across the city and heavily depends on tree canopy cover and building density. Leafier suburbs typically have more mature tree canopies, which mitigate temperature increases through natural shading and evapotranspiration.

Considered urban planning that incorporates smart growth principles such as cool roofs, cool pavements, multiple transport options, more open and green space is important to mitigate these expected effects from more development.

Individuals can counteract the urban heat island (UHI) effect by encouraging their



local council to create more green and open space, put a limit on density of development, reduce roads and create walkable neighbourhoods.

Individuals can take actionable and localised steps around their homes and neighbourhoods by increasing local shade through planting trees and vegetation, replacing dark, heat-absorbing surfaces with reflective “cool” materials, and minimising personal energy consumption during peak heatwaves.

Specifically, upgrading to a “cool roof” by applying solar-reflective coatings or using highly reflective shingles. This reflects sunlight away from your property rather than absorbing, and radiating it back into the atmosphere.

By converting empty rooftop space or bare walls into vegetative gardens significantly lowers roof temperatures and provides natural insulation.

By replacing dark, heat absorbing asphalt and concrete with porous pavers, grass or gravel allows water to absorb into the ground and naturally cool the surface.

The City of Melbourne’s urban forest strategy plans to mitigate the heat island effects by increasing canopy cover from 22 to 40 per cent by 2040.

A question remains, when the tipping point for urban density that it becomes intolerable to live in the cities? ●

Jacqui van Heerden

CO-CONVENER OF TRANSITION TOWN KENSINGTON

JACQUIVANHEERDEN@GMAIL.COM



Autumn shine in Parkville Gardens

Bright blue skies and mild sunny days have been an autumn treat in Melbourne this year. In these conditions Parkville Gardens looks splendid.

Exotic trees and shrubs with bright colours are the exception, but eucalypts have their own appeal and our grassy nature strips, and the Galada Ave Reserve are a glorious green. A big shout out to the teams that keep the neighbourhood looking so attractive.

Thanks also to the works people who resurfaced Garrard St and parts of adjacent roads recently and those about to upgrade paths in the Cade Square precinct.

A third and big thank you goes to the City of Melbourne for granting the Parkville Gardens Residents' Association (PGRA) most of the funding we requested for community events in the 2026-27 financial year. We have a very special event in mind for later this year. More will be revealed in July.

Next up in our calendar is a social special in late June – an evening to come together, meet neighbours, make connections, share views, enjoy a meal, and have lots of trivia fun.

At this point the exact date and venue are still being sorted out, but we're looking at a weeknight towards the end of the month. Details to follow in next month's bulletin, along with flyers in every letterbox, posters on our noticeboards and in the local cafes,

and a posting on the City of Melbourne website.

Don't wait, though, start spreading the word to friends and neighbours now. In these very fractured times PGRA wants to play its part in bringing people together in a safe, inclusive and positive way.

We are especially keen to do this as car damage and theft continues to be a challenging problem in the area. Please come to our winter social!

Two recent City of Melbourne initiatives deserve mention ...

Its Tai Chi program has been so successful (thanks partly to the run of good weather we've enjoyed) that consideration is being given to extending it further. We await an update on these plans.

In the meantime, feedback from the Parkville Parking Review is being processed. It must be noted that the review covers the whole of Parkville.

Parkville Gardens has its own parking issues but in areas such as the hospital precinct around Royal Parade and Flemington they are more acute. Planners will need the wisdom of Solomon to balance competing interests. We wish them well. ●

Tom Knowles

PRESIDENT

PRESIDENT@PGRA.ORG.AU



North and West Melbourne: growing with community at the centre

North Melbourne and West Melbourne sit on the edge of the CBD, but they are communities with identities all their own, shaped by history, diversity and a strong sense of local connection.

WORDS BY
SARAH WITTY
FEDERAL MP FOR MELBOURNE



Over the past few months, I've spent time across both neighbourhoods meeting with residents, small businesses and community organisations, and hearing directly about the opportunities and challenges they see ahead.

In North Melbourne, there is a deep sense of continuity. Long-term residents, many with strong ties to the area, live alongside newer arrivals drawn by its proximity to the city and its village feel. There are also incredible businesses and organisations here, including Assembled Threads, a social enterprise helping long-term unemployed people access training and work. Walking

through Errol St and the surrounding area, I've spoken with traders who are proud of the suburb's local character, but also mindful of the pressures they face. Rising costs, changing customer patterns and broader economic uncertainty are all part of the conversation.

At the same time, North Melbourne is home to significant public housing communities, where the focus is often on stability and support. Residents and service providers have spoken to me about the importance of maintaining community connections, particularly as discussions about redevelopment and renewal continue. Change is inevitable, but it needs to be

managed in a way that respects the people who have built their lives here.

In West Melbourne, the story is one of transition. With new developments reshaping parts of the suburb, there is a sense of momentum, but also a need to ensure growth is matched with infrastructure. Residents have raised issues around traffic, pedestrian safety and access to public transport. These are practical concerns, but they go directly to quality of life.

Small businesses in West Melbourne have also shared their experiences, particularly around the challenge of establishing themselves in a changing environment. There is optimism about the future, but also a recognition that activation will be key to long-term success.

Across both suburbs, housing remains a central issue. Whether it is protecting existing public housing, increasing the supply of affordable homes, or ensuring new developments contribute to a balanced community, the need for thoughtful planning is clear. People want to see growth, but they also want to see fairness and inclusion.

Open space and community infrastructure are also front of mind. From local parks to neighbourhood centres, these are the places where connections are built and maintained. As density increases, access to

these shared spaces becomes even more important.

In Parliament, I've been working to reflect these local priorities in national discussions. Investment in housing, support for cost-of-living pressures and funding for essential services all have a direct impact here. But just as importantly, it's about making sure the voices of North and West Melbourne are part of the conversation.

What stands out to me most is the level of community engagement. People care deeply about where they live and are actively involved in shaping its future. That engagement is a strength. It helps ensure that change is guided by local knowledge and lived experience.

North Melbourne and West Melbourne are both evolving, but they are doing so on strong foundations. The challenge is to build on those foundations in a way that keeps these suburbs inclusive, connected and true to their character.

That's what I'll continue to focus on: listening, representing and working towards outcomes that reflect the priorities of the people who live and work here. Because ultimately, the success of these neighbourhoods will be measured not just by growth, but by the strength of the communities at their heart. ●

Quiz



- In which year were the first Winter Olympic Games held?
- What percentage of the Kensington Primary School upgrade project remains unfinished?
- Which former local councillor featured on the *Future Melbourne* podcast to discuss the future of Arden-Macaulay?
- In which month is NAIDOC Week observed?
- Vinnie Jones won the 1988 FA Cup Final with which soccer club?
- Of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, what is the only surviving site?
- What percentage of vehicles using the West Gate Tunnel during its first year were trucks?
- Who played Carrie in the original 1976 film of the same name?
- What is the name of the West Melbourne Asian-inspired pop-up restaurant set to close after six months?
- Which crime thriller stars Jodie Foster (pictured) as a 12-year-old named Iris?
- What speed reduction is proposed for Victoria St?
- What is the name of the local design studio founded by Sylvia Hungria?

QUIZ SOLUTIONS

1. 1924 2. Around 40 per cent 3. Rohan Leppert 4. July 5. Wimbledon 6. Great Pyramids of Giza 7. Around 20 per cent 8. Sissy Spacek 9. Pebble Dining 10. Taxi Driver 11. From 60 km/h to 50 km/h 12. Studio Vico

5x5 No. 323

Insert the missing letters to make 10 words – five reading across the grid and five reading down.

W		G		R
	G		E	
F		O		A
	O		I	
S		E		T

SOLUTIONS

WAGER, AGREE, FLORA, TOPIC, SWEET

Sudoku

No. 058

Fill in the blank cells using the numbers from 1 to 9. Each number can only appear once in each row, column and 3x3 block

EASY

1		5	8		4		6	
		9						
			9	3		7	8	
7	9			8				5
4			6					2
5			1				7	6
	4	8		1	2			
						9		
6		4		9	3			8

HARD

				1	2			
2						3		1
						6	2	
	5		2		8	9		7
		7	3		1	4		
1		2	4		5		3	
	4	6						
7		3						5
			5	4				

SOLUTIONS

EASY

2	6	7	4	5	9	3	1	8
3	5	1	7	8	6	9	2	4
5	4	8	3	1	2	6	7	9
6	8	2	1	9	3	4	7	5
4	1	3	5	6	7	8	9	2
7	9	6	2	4	8	1	3	5
6	2	4	9	3	5	7	8	1
8	7	9	6	2	1	5	4	3
1	3	5	8	7	4	2	6	9

HARD

9	8	1	5	4	7	2	6	3
7	2	8	6	1	4	5	3	9
1	9	2	4	7	3	8	6	5
8	6	7	3	9	1	4	5	2
3	5	4	2	6	8	9	7	1
4	1	5	7	3	9	6	2	8
2	7	8	6	5	4	3	9	1
6	3	9	8	1	2	5	7	4

Wordfind Theme: The Beach

The leftover letters will spell out a secret message.

E	S	B	S	T	L	L	M	I	C	D
W	L	A	U	P	E	I	E	O	S	N
A	L	T	N	S	W	K	A	W	T	A
T	S	H	S	S	H	S	C	H	O	S
E	H	E	C	A	T	E	O	U	P	T
R	O	R	R	O	C	N	L	I	B	S
P	R	S	E	S	G	D	E	L	U	P
L	E	A	E	S	P	R	N	W	R	A
S	U	N	N	F	I	S	H	A	N	D
A	L	L	E	R	B	M	U	V	S	E
I	C	Y	P	O	L	E	F	E	E	R

- | | |
|------------|-----------|
| BATHERS | SHORE |
| BUCKET | SPADE |
| BURN | SUN |
| COAST | SUNSCREEN |
| FISH | SWIM |
| ICY POLE | THONGS |
| PIER | TOWEL |
| REEF | UMBRELLA |
| SAND | WATER |
| SANDCASTLE | WAVE |
| SHELL | |

Secret message: Slip, Stop, Slap

Crossword

No. 058

ACROSS

- Insects (7)
- Recipe (7)
- Transcribed (11)
- Long, slippery fish (3)
- Burn (6)
- Software (7)
- Nigh (4)
- Conglomerate (10)
- Aficionado (10)
- Daze (4)
- Weapon (7)
- Sweethearts (6)
- Expired (3)
- Senile decay (11)
- Late (7)
- Equal; even – (7)

DOWN

- Ram (4)
- Eager; anticipatory (9)
- Depress (5)
- US museum (11)
- Excess (3)
- Enmity (7)
- Netizens (5)
- Attraction (10)
- Chart toppers (11)
- Comprehended (10)
- Break (9)
- Blasphemous (7)
- Rubbish (5)
- State (5)
- Tidings (4)
- Churl (3)

1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
9												10		
	11							12						
13														
14					15								16	
17					18								19	
20		21								22		23		
														24
25					26		27							
28										29				

SOLUTION

S	N	E	A	I	S	D	E	A	V	L	T	E	D	
M	G	C	R	V	T	V	O							
E	D	N	I	P	E	R	O	E	D					
N	L	O	T		O									
S	R	E	A	O	T		N	O		I	O	H	S	
I	B	E												
N	U	I	S	I	S	V	I	S	N	H	I	N	E	
S	N													
N	U	I	J	O	S	N	O	G						
E														
S														
S	M	O	R	B	H	C	O	G						
I	U													
L	I	P	E	R	O	E	D							
L	S													
V	L													
L	U													
L	I													
T	L													
L	U													
L	U													

Codeword

No.028

4	2	4	11	21	20	15		20	3	21	1	26	Y	
26	Y		2		23		2		5		23		12	
5		12	8	16	20	5	14		25	F	23	19	5	23
20			14		5		14		20		5			8
4	1	20		25	F	F		1	12	22	20	4	2	5
					19		12					17		12
10	19	4	11	1	12		21	1	23	26	Y	12	7	
19		2				9		20						
8		12	21	1	23	4	12		13	19	23	4	11	
8			26	Y		7		24		19		3		20
20	7	20	2	3			12	26	Y	12	10	23	1	1
15		5		20		1		25	F		18		5	
2	19	14	17	15		6	1	26	Y	5	12	6	6	

SOLUTIONS

Y	L	E	W	A	X	P	U	Z	H	V	T	G		
Q	E	K	B	J	R	D	S	N	C	M	O	L		

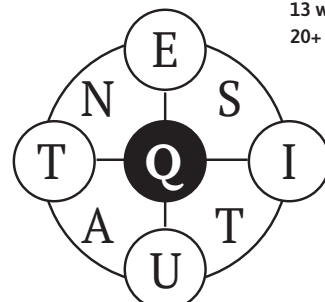
1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

9-Letter

No. 058

- Today's Focus:
- 9 words: Good
 - 13 words: Very good
 - 20+ words: Excellent

Using the nine letters in the grid, how many words of four letters or more can you list? The centre letter must be included and each letter may only be used once. No colloquial or foreign words. No capitalised nouns, apostrophes or plural nouns ending in 's'.



Reference: Macquarie Dictionary

SOLUTIONS

antique, asquint, equitant, inquest, quant, quantest, quantise, quantises, quest, quene, quest, quiet, quiers, quin, quint, quinte, quinter, quiter, quites, sequin,

WHAT'S ON May



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



MELBOURNE DESIGN WEEK: PANEL DISCUSSION WITH SWEE LIM
Designer, and stylist Swee Lim explores Art Nouveau and post-Baroque influences on contemporary art during a Melbourne Design Week panel discussion.
West End Art Space, West Melbourne
THURSDAY 21 MAY, 2PM – 4PM



A FAMILY GATHERING OPENING NIGHT: ASIAN HERITAGE WEEK
Join opening night of A Family Gathering during Asian Heritage Week featuring 40 artists, DJs, performances, stalls and gallery exhibition.
Dark Horse Experiment, West Melbourne
SATURDAY 23 MAY, 4PM – 9PM



RECONCILIATION WEEK STORYTIME
Join North Melbourne Library this Reconciliation Week for First Nations stories, including 'Ninni Yabini', plus take-home craft activities for children aged 3 – 5. No bookings required.
North Melbourne Library
TUESDAY 26 MAY, 10.30AM – 11.15AM



FAMILY ART DAY AT ACCA
Free family art workshop at ACCA inspired by Julius von Bismarck's exhibition, featuring collaborative nature-themed activities for children aged 3–10 with adults accompanying.
Australian Centre for Contemporary Art
SATURDAY 30 MAY, 11AM – 2PM



CLAY SCULPTURE WORKSHOP
Learn hand-building clay techniques with tutor Ilona Herreiner. Explore shaping and decorating clay to create sculptures. All materials provided, no experience needed, and beginners welcome.
Kensington Neighbourhood House
SATURDAY 30 MAY, 1PM – 5PM



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 30 MAY, 12.30PM – 2PM



GOOD FOOD AND WINE SHOW
The Good Food and Wine Show features celebrity chefs, wine tastings, baking, cooking classes, live demonstrations, cheese sampling and premium dining experiences.
MCEC, 1 Convention Centre Place
29 – 31 MAY, 10AM – 5PM



JAKE'S BIRTHDAY BASH
See Melbourne's finest emerging comedians in a curated stand-up showcase featuring festival and international club performers. Around 10 comedians, nonstop laughs, and tickets for only \$10.
Club Voltaire, North Melbourne
SUNDAY 31 MAY, 5PM – 6.30PM



YOUNGHUSBAND MARKET
Youngusband Market brings Rose Street Market's creative vibe to a historic woolshed, transforming it monthly into a lively hub of local makers, art, workshops, music, food and community.
Youngusband, Kensington
SATS UNTIL 15 AUGUST, 10AM – 3PM



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



KENSINGTON MARKET
Browse the carefully curated range of homewares, sustainable goods, delicious homemade treats, freshly brewed coffee and ceramics. Enjoy live music while you wander around the beautiful town hall. Runs on the third Sunday of the month.
Kensington Town Hall
UNTIL 13 DECEMBER, 10AM – 3PM

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

POLITICIAN

ELLEN SANDELL
STATE MP FOR MELBOURNE
(03) 9328 4637 office@ellensandell.com 60 Leicester St Carlton VIC 3053

PRECINCT




SCHOOL



www.sccmelb.catholic.edu.au
273 Victoria St, West Melbourne
9321 9200
SIMONDS CATHOLIC COLLEGE

Reduced rent homes for families or sharers.

Swift Walk, Kensington

Brand new · Move in now · 1-5 year lease options · Eligibility criteria apply

Brand-new family homes now renting on the edge of Kensington Village, where income eligibility unlocks reduced rents.

Swift Walk delivers spacious 2- and 3-bedroom homes designed for family or group households: quality finishes, open-plan living, communal spaces. And all moments from schools, parks, Kensington & Macaulay Train Stations, and everything this vibrant suburb offers.

Secure stability with long-term leases and reduced rents designed for families or groups who want space and time to truly settle in.

Beyond your apartment



Multi-purpose communal rooms



Landscaped rooftops



On-site resident gym



Workshop for your DIY projects



Coworking space



Pet-friendly building

Some of our available homes:

Apartment 703

2 1 1*

Brand new two-bedroom home, with rent reduced by 25%.

Market rent: \$765 p/w

\$574 p/w

for eligible families and groups

Apartment 704

3 2 1*

Brand-new family home, with reduced rent & 1-5 year lease options.

Market rent: \$1,110 p/w

\$745 p/w

for eligible families and groups

Apartment 211

3 2 1*

Brand-new 3-bedroom home, with reduced rent & long-term lease options.

Market rent: \$1205 p/w

\$796 p/w

for eligible families and groups



View available homes & eligibility conditions.
swiftwalk.assemble.com.au

Assemble

* Additional fee applies for car park not shown in rental figures above.

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