

# the South Sydney Herald

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**‘No matter where you are in life you can make progress’**

Mohsen Lack at the NCIE. Photo: Paul Bramble

## HUMAN AFFAIRS

ANDREW COLLIS

**MOHSEN Lack is a full-time duty manager at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence (NCIE) in Redfern. He has been on staff at the NCIE for five years. A qualified lifeguard, Mr Lack also volunteers with Wrestling NSW and Wrestling Australia. He has a coaching role with the national team but is currently unable to travel overseas due to his refugee visa restrictions.**

Freestyle wrestling is the national sport of Iran, attracting huge crowds and a passionate following. “I grew up with it,” Mr Lack says, “I love it. Wrestling is the root of all martial arts. It’s a tough sport. It taught me to be a disciplined person, physically and mentally.

“I started when I was 11 years old and just 28 kilograms. Three years later, I was 60 kilograms and able to dominate every person in the class. Wrestling is about skill and strength – and more than that, no matter where you are in life you can make progress,

you can improve. Wrestling gave me this confidence.”

In short, opponents wrestle over two three-minute rounds, scoring points for “take downs”, “rolls” and “flips” (no hitting, kicking, choking or gauging is allowed). The aim of the contest is to pin an opponent’s shoulders to the mat. One second secures a win.

Granted refugee status in Australia (having endured several years of detention on Manus Island), Mr Lack continues to serve as a volunteer trainer and coach of men’s, women’s and junior squads – at the Cortex MMA facility in Alexandria, with Wrestling NSW and Wrestling Australia – up to three times a week.

“I was interviewed for the position of head coach”, Mr Lack says, “but unable to take on that role. I’ve volunteered at two week-long camps in 2022 – with the AIS [Australian Institute of Sport] in Canberra – in April and May. Wrestling Australia wants the camps to be held every month.”

A Temporary Protection Visa does not permit overseas travel, so Mr Lack missed the recent Commonwealth Games

in Birmingham. He would dearly love to accompany the Australian team to Serbia for the World Championships this month (September 10-18).

Jasmine Ryan, chief executive of the NCIE, says: “Mohsen is one of the most dedicated, hardworking and innovative people I’ve had the pleasure of working with. He is also compassionate and kind and has never missed the opportunity to help others at work and within the Redfern community. He is the type of person you can count on to keep a cool head in a stressful situation, and his positive outlook on life shines from within.”

Andrew Kanatli, president of Wrestling Australia, says: “Mohsen has demonstrated a coaching skillset and professionalism that is desperately needed for our sport. Although we are very lucky to have him based here in Sydney, his current visa status denies him the opportunity to assist our teams at their most critical moments. We hope he can soon be eligible to also apply for coaching positions that involve travel with our athletes to important international tournaments.”

SSH

## Dementia doco puts its maker to the test

### FILM

MARJORIE LEWIS-JONES

**REDFERN resident Renée Brack agrees she was crazy to have a lumbar puncture, MRI, PET scan and a battery of cognitive assessments in her quest to understand Alzheimer’s – the disease that finally killed her father in 2011.**

“Of course, that’s an insane thing to do!” she admits. “Reminiscent of when Morgan Spurlock, earlier this century, filmed *Supersize Me* to see if eating McDonald’s for every meal for a month was really healthy or unhealthy.”

Renée’s initial plan had been to film a half-hour documentary about an exhibition of her father’s art she’d mounted posthumously to honour his memory.

One of her producers upped the ante – saying they should make a feature. The other asked her how she’d feel about getting tested.

“Well, not great,” was her immediate response – but then she had an epiphany.

“I realised it wasn’t Alzheimer’s that damaged my relationship in later life with my dad, it was my own fear and ignorance around Alzheimer’s that did it.

“Once I knew that, I thought, ‘Let’s just go with the old classic of facing your fears. Well, what does your future hold, Renée? Now’s the time to be brave.’”

The result is *Ticketyboo*, which premiered at the Melbourne Documentary Film Festival on July 30, and it is definitely brave. It’s also a rollercoaster ride – raw and compelling.

The film probes the uncomfortable feelings Renée had pushed down about her dad’s Alzheimer’s and captures her guilt and grief about the things she did and didn’t do as he declined.

Armed with insights gleaned during interviews with the dementia specialists, advocates, carers and people living with dementia who appear in the documentary, as well as through



In her new feature documentary, *Ticketyboo*, Redfern-based filmmaker Renée Brack faces her fears about Alzheimer’s, the disease that killed her father. Photo: Supplied

her own grief counselling, she says she’d do things very differently now – capitalise on the really joyful moments she had with her father, and make the most of them.

The tests Renée undergoes in *Ticketyboo* are to confirm whether she’s at risk of getting Alzheimer’s, which affects up to 70 per cent of the nearly 500,000 people in Australia with dementia.

Dementia is also the leading cause of death for Australian women and the second leading cause of death for Australian men, after heart disease.

Dealing with the fear of a diagnosis of dementia is extremely difficult, Renée says, because it’s a disease with no cure. It’s also degenerative – so you don’t get better, you get worse – and you can “lose people”.

A number of dementia sufferers in the film admitted they’d lost friends who didn’t know how to be with them. A staggering 50 per cent of Australians don’t know how to talk to people with dementia.

It’s this lack of understanding and stigmatisation that makes many sufferers keep their cognitive degeneration a secret.

Renée’s father, Thom Brack, tried to hide his decline from his family for around 13 years.

Throughout her career, Renée has completed numerous courageous assignments as a journalist, public

Continued on page 4



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**JENNY LEONG MP**

MEMBER FOR NEWTOWN



**Greens call for rent freeze, caps on rent**

With a cost of living crisis in full swing, affordability is on everyone's mind. Recent polling shows that 70% of people want price caps on essential services like energy, off the back of price hikes that pushed up electricity bills by up to 18% for households in NSW.

But energy isn't the only cost that's climbing: median rent has surged by 6.6% in a year, the biggest annual rent increase in 14 years. In the Inner West and south Sydney, we know that more than 66% are in rental stress and having to spend more than a third of their income on rent each week.

As wages go backwards and inflation soars, people shouldn't be forced into financial stress to keep a roof over their head and their lights on.

The Liberal National government could take practical, immediate steps to provide relief and strengthen protections for the more than 944,000 people in NSW who rent. Ignoring the plight of renters as capital city rents grow seven times faster than wages is a political choice and a complete disgrace.

We back the calls from our federal Greens colleagues for a 2-year rent freeze to immediately stop rents going up any further and protect renters from price-gouging landlords.

Right now, we've got a bill in NSW Parliament that includes urgent measures that would make renting fair, stop skyrocketing rents and put an end to unfair no grounds evictions.

Everyone deserves a safe, healthy, and affordable place to live, whether they rent or own their home. Our bill would also make landlords responsible for keeping rentals mould-free and making sure they're properly waterproofed.

Too many people are at a financial tipping point – one rent increase could send them over the edge into eviction or homelessness. We can't afford to wait any longer for better protections for renters.

Sign our petition for rent caps and renters' rights here:



*Jenny Leong*

Jenny Leong, MP for Newtown

If you have a question or are keen to be involved, send a text to 0421 665 208 with your name, suburb and message and we'll give you a call or you can email [newtown@nsw.greens.org.au](mailto:newtown@nsw.greens.org.au)



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Authorised by Jenny Leong MP using parliamentary entitlements.

# Saving soles for over 60 years

**LOCALS**

ANDREW COLLIS

**THE South Sydney Herald (SSH) continues in print every month. The paper is available from a range of venues across all suburbs in South Sydney – from cafés, pubs and restaurants, community centres and service shops such as Roger's Shoe Repairs in Redfern.**

Roger's Shoe Repairs has been saving soles for over 60 years. "When we first arrived here in 1960, there was just a chemist, a dry-cleaner's and a paper shop," Roger says.

It's quite an accomplishment and locals are quick to acknowledge the quality of service. "Go to Roger's!" one repeat customer urges. "He can fix just about anything – soles, toes, heels, straps, elastic gussets – fixing a favourite pair of shoes is so much better than buying new ones."

"I just had my boots re-heeled and soles re-glued," says another. "Roger did an impeccable job at a very affordable price."

Roger Metry was born in Lebanon. He now travels to Redfern from Coogee every day. "South Sydney is the best," he says. "I enjoy getting to know my customers – men, women,



Roger Metry at his shoe repair shop in Redfern. Photo: Andrew Collis

people from all walks of life!"

Appreciative clients include the Belvoir Theatre, Tap Dogs and Opera Australia. Filmmaker Baz Luhrmann also goes to Roger's for reliable service – Roger and his son handle all sorts of different footwear, from ballet flats to Blundstones.

The SSH is grateful to all participating organisations and businesses, and acknowledges long-standing commitments throughout the Covid lockdowns. SSH

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## No bridging credibility

**URBAN DESIGN**

GEOFF TURNBULL

**THE failure to include a pedestrian and cycle bridge connecting Carriageworks to South Eveleigh in the recent North Eveleigh exhibition is the latest in a long line of broken promises from the NSW government about providing this infrastructure.**

Since 2006 the NSW government has been collecting developer contributions towards the bridge's construction, along with other local facilities, that have not been delivered. The Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA) Contribution Plan is still current on the Infrastructure NSW website.

In 2006 the RWA proposed two bridges, one near Carriageworks and another just west of Redfern station, as part of its vision of "a research and technology zone". The current Tech Central Place Based Transport Strategy still has investigating an Eveleigh bridge as a priority.

Of the Carriageworks bridge in 2006 the RWA said: "The RWA and its subsidiary company ATP [Australian Technology Park] have recently committed \$6 million to the project, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2008."

In April 2007 the RWA submitted a preliminary plan for the Carriageworks Bridge. Under pressure from RailCorp, it dropped the bridge near Carriageworks and changed the application to cover

the bridge near Redfern station. This bridge was in RWA's 2008 North Eveleigh master plan.

The community push for the eastern pedestrian and cycle link as part of the Redfern Station Southern Concourse was rejected. The Transport Asset Holding Entity (TAHE) has confirmed a bridge near Carriageworks is technically possible but it does not want to pay for it, even though it is planning to sell both North Eveleigh and the Large Erecting Shop that the bridge will connect.

When the government sold ATP, the contributions plan still said "the bridge will also be part funded by the Australian Technology Park". The NSW government pocketed the sale proceeds including the funds promised towards the pedestrian bridge. It included an easement to allow a bridge to land on the ATP side if ever built.

So the NSW government has reneged on its promise to build the bridge, pocketed the promised ATP contribution, is holding, and still collecting, developer contributions towards it, but is now saying the bridge is "outside the project scope and does not have NSW government funding"! SSH

**You can support a campaign to Build a Bridge on Action Network ([www.actionnetwork.org/letters/build-a-bridge/](http://www.actionnetwork.org/letters/build-a-bridge/)) or write to Minister Stokes asking about the Carriageworks Bridge and the funds collected towards it.**

**Geoff Turnbull is Urban Design editor and also a co-spokesperson for REDWatch.**





Singer Elizabeth Cooper at Pitt Street Uniting Church. Photo: Andrew Collis

## New works from opera company for social change

### MUSIC

SYLVIA LESTAVEL

ON the evening of July 30, The Cooperative staged the Australian premiere of *Émilie*, a monodrama by Kaija Saariaho and Amin Maalouf. This complex and surprising work explored the life and final writings of *Émilie du Châtelet*, an extraordinary 18th-century scholar who died in 1749 due to complications during childbirth.

Under the baton of conductor Joanna Drimatis, in the surrounds of Pitt Street Uniting Church, this powerful work gave a haunting voice to women's experiences of despair.

The Cooperative is a Sydney-based arts company founded to stage productions of new, rare and canonical works,

which are impactful, relevant and elicit social change. The company's mission is to create and champion art to inspire change, and to explore and confront contemporary social issues through opera.

The Cooperative's next production will be Benjamin Britten's two-act opera, *The Turn of the Screw*, written in 1954 with a libretto by Myfanwy Piper.

Exploring themes of lost innocence, the opera recounts the terrifying tale of a governess and the two young children in her care in an imposing mansion in the English countryside. The role of the governess, a sensitive, naively emotional and fiercely zealous young woman, explores the destructive power of declining mental health and the volatility of sanity.

This chamber opera is a compelling psychological thriller based on the famous ghost story by Henry James. Tickets will go on sale soon.

SSH



Wayside Chapel's Long Walk Home is a chance for people to put themselves in the shoes of people experiencing homelessness by walking 28 kilometres – the average distance per week that a person who is a rough sleeper walks to find a place to sleep. Photo: Wayside Chapel

## Long Walk Home supports rough sleepers

### HUMAN AFFAIRS

SOUTH SYDNEY HERALD

IN an average week, a person sleeping rough walks a distance of 28 kilometres looking for a place to sleep. This is the reality for some of the 116,000\* people who are sleeping rough in Australia (\*ABS Census 2016).

The Long Walk Home is the Wayside Chapel's major fundraising event and involves a 28-kilometre walk from Parramatta to Kings Cross.

It's a chance for people to put themselves in the shoes of people experiencing homelessness by walking the same distance.

Since it launched in 2018, thousands of people have participated, and raised over \$1.5 million for the charity's work with people experiencing homelessness, addiction, social isolation and mental health issues.

In 2022, the Long Walk Home is a hybrid event. Meaning: You can join an afternoon/evening walk from Parramatta to Kings Cross at 4pm on Friday October 7 or walk 28 kilometres virtually from Saturday October 1 until Friday October 7 in a path of your choosing, anywhere and anytime.

Participants log their kilometres on their Long Walk Home dashboard with Strava, FitBit or manually. There are also social media tiles and other resources to help participants promote their fundraising efforts.

SSH

[www.longwalkhome.com.au](http://www.longwalkhome.com.au)

## TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE MARRIOTT STREET, REDFERN

12th September 2022 to 13th September 2022

19th September 2022 to 20th September 2022

(This date is in place in case the initial date is impacted by weather)

26th September 2022 to 27th September 2022

(This additional back up date is in place in case the initial date is impacted by weather and or any unforeseen circumstances that impact the duration required)

Marriott Street will be temporarily closed to traffic from Cooper St to Cleveland St on Monday 12 September 2022 from 7:30am to Tuesday 13 September till 3:30pm. The road is closed to allow construction activity.

Traffic controllers will be in attendance at Cooper St, Young Lane and Marriott St corners to provide local access.

The back-up date for these works is Monday 19 September 2022 from 7:30am to Tuesday 20 September till 3:30pm.

Additional backup dates thereafter include Monday 26th September 2022 to Tuesday 27th September 2022

For more information, please contact SHV Community Number on 0491 691 752

 TOGA



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## TANYA PLIBERSEK MP

Federal Member for Sydney

After a busy few weeks, I wanted to provide a quick update about what our government has been up to.

We got straight to work delivering our election commitments. In fact, in our first week of Parliament we introduced 10 new bills including action on climate change, aged care reform, cheaper electric vehicles, paid domestic violence leave, and more.

We backed a wage rise for 2.8 million of our lowest paid Australians. Next, we want to deliver more secure jobs and grow the economy.

We set a more ambitious emissions reduction target of 43% by 2030, and passed it through the House of Representatives. This puts us on track to achieve net zero by 2050, and gives business and industry the certainty they need to invest in renewables and new technology.

We passed our first piece of legislation to fix the aged care crisis. We are getting to work putting dignity and respect back at the centre of aged care, creating greater transparency and accountability within the sector.

We introduced legislation for 10 days of paid domestic and family violence leave for all workers. This will mean victim-survivors can attend appointments, court hearings, find housing, look after kids, and more, without worrying about how they'll afford it or keep their job.

We've just announced our Robodebt Royal Commission. Robodebt was a human tragedy that cost human lives. Our Royal Commission will make sure it never happens again.

We've begun the important task of implementing the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full, including enshrining a Voice to Parliament in the constitution. I'm proud that Labor will make history by taking this step on the path to reconciliation.

We're committed to building a better future for all Australians – and we're getting straight to work to deliver it.

### 2022 VOLUNTEER GRANTS EOI NOW OPEN

Local not-for-profit groups in the Sydney electorate are invited to apply for the 2022 Volunteering Grants. If you would like an application please email our office on [Tanya.Plibersek.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Tanya.Plibersek.MP@aph.gov.au) or drop in and pick up a form. Please return your application to my office by Friday 16th of September.

## TANYA PLIBERSEK MP

Federal Member for Sydney

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# Historic \$478m investment to change healthcare in Australia forever

## SPONSORED

MARK SCOTT

**THIS week the University of Sydney announced its largest ever capital investment, a landmark \$478 million, to build a nation-leading biomedical precinct to fast-track research and patient care in NSW.**

The Sydney Biomedical Accelerator (SBA) will create a first-in-Australia, 36,000m<sup>2</sup> health, education and research precinct co-located at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and the University's Camperdown campuses within the Tech Central precinct.

Scientists will conduct cutting-edge research into the building blocks of life, regenerative medicine, drug discovery and medical device development, and harness the latest in nanotechnology and gene and stem cell therapy to transform health outcomes in the state.

The range of world-class buildings and facilities from this historic investment will make up the Sydney Biomedical Accelerator and bring together the brightest scientific and clinical minds with entrepreneurs, industry, and government.

The Accelerator will give the University's renowned researchers and partners the infrastructure to take a major step forward in the global quest to find solutions to the world's biggest health challenges and the potential to dramatically improve the future of health and medical care in Australia.

The SBA is a partnership between the University, the Sydney Local Health District, and the NSW government, in collaboration with the Centenary Institute.

Cementing a long-standing partnership with the Sydney Local Health District, the project has been helped significantly by the NSW government's commitment of \$143.3 million in funding, which was announced in June.

The Accelerator has been benchmarked against the world's leading biomedical facilities such as the Karolinska Institutet, the University of Toronto's MaRS Discovery District and MassBio.

Over 1200 world-class biomedical researchers and clinician scientists will be located onsite at the SBA, including over 800 university laboratory researchers and PhD students and 100 industry researchers.

Work at the SBA and the University's facilities at Westmead will have shared access and collaboration. Capabilities will be designed to complement each other across the two sites seamlessly.

The work will place Sydney at the forefront of global biomedical research, attract international talent and fast-track research commercialisation.

Unprecedented philanthropic support funding for the Sydney Biomedical Accelerator includes \$73 million in philanthropy to the University.

A \$20 million donation from the Susan and Isaac Wakil Foundation will establish The Isaac Wakil Biomedical Building.

The Isaac Wakil Biomedical Building connects to the Susan Wakil Health Building (not part of SBA), opened in 2021 and is generously supported by a \$35 million donation from the Wakils.

University of Sydney Chancellor Belinda Hutchinson AC said: "This \$20 million gift to the Sydney Biomedical Accelerator is the latest in one of many transformative donations made by the Susan and Isaac Wakil Foundation to the University of Sydney. These extraordinary philanthropists have now gifted more than \$66 million, the largest named donation to a single institution in NSW history, to the University to enhance the future of healthcare and teaching in Australia. We are forever thankful for their vision."

Isaac Wakil AO said the past two years have shown the importance of supporting medical research: "The Susan and Isaac Wakil Foundation is proud of its long relationship with the University of Sydney and is very pleased to be able to help make this important project a reality. We hope our initial support encourages further investment in the Sydney Biomedical Accelerator."



Authorised by Vice-Chancellor and Principal Prof. Mark Scott.  
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## Dementia doco puts its maker to the test

Continued from page 1

speaker and filmmaker – including reporting on the war in the Middle East. But she says making some parts of *Ticketyboo* was harder than being in a war zone.

*Ticketyboo* got a standing ovation at its Melbourne launch – and Renée is glad that, at a grassroots level, the film is helping people to feel a little less fearful and a little more comfortable with interacting with dementia sufferers.

The main message she hopes ordinary people will take from

her film is to approach, speak with, and interact with someone who's older if they seem confused or lost because it can mean so much to them, even life or death.

At SAE Creative Media Institute in Chippendale, Renée's a part-time lecturer in documentary and short film, educating students to think beyond themselves to community impact and what stories they can tell on screen to make the world a better place.

"Nurturing the next wave of emerging filmmakers is key to

my personal happiness now. It's also making up for what I didn't do with dad at the end of his life, because he wanted to have an exhibition, but he was too shy – and I did nothing about it while he was alive."

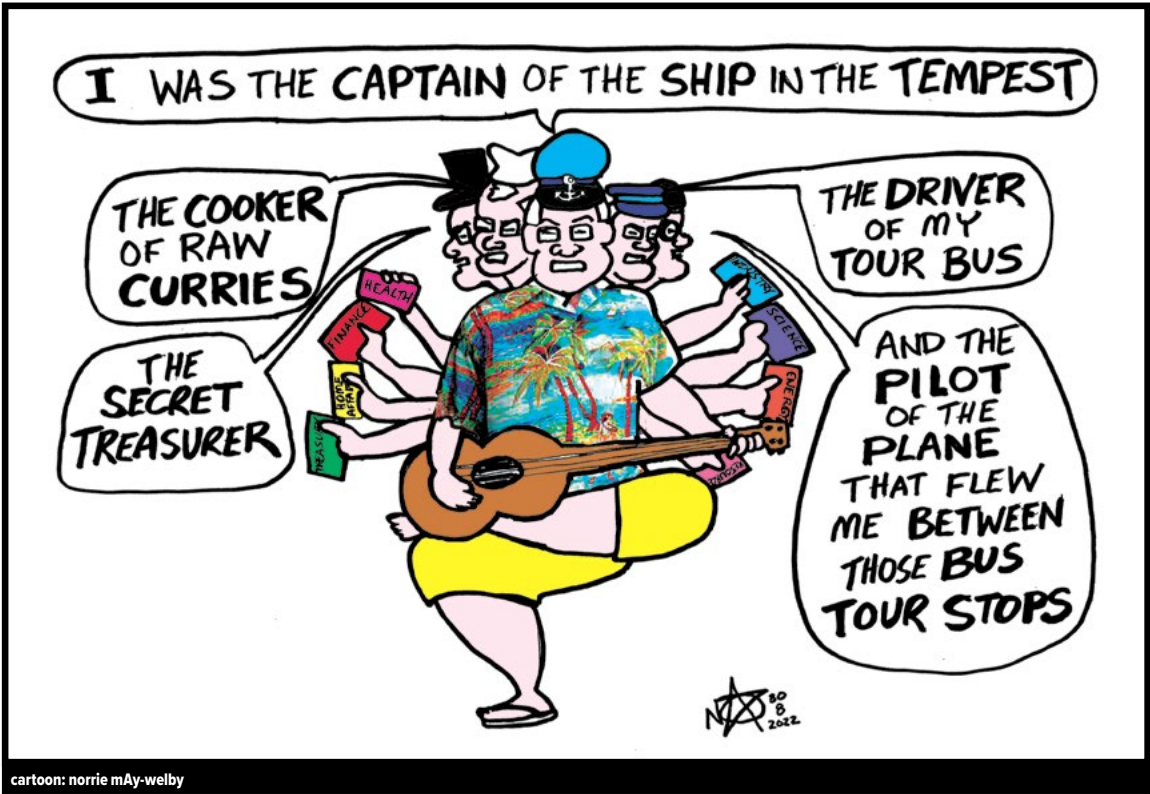
Posthumously, she's getting it right.

Scan the QR code to view the trailer for *Ticketyboo: A Secret in Plain Sight*.

Dementia Action Week 2022 is September 19-25







cartoon: norrie mAy-welby

# City’s fossil fuel ad ban to be applauded

## GUEST EDITORIAL

STEPHEN WEBB

**IF you weren’t already aware, we are in a climate crisis that is leading to profound global societal and environmental change.**

Changes to Earth’s climate driven by increased human emissions of heat-trapping greenhouse gases are already having widespread effects on the environment: glaciers and ice sheets are shrinking, plant and animal geographic ranges are shifting, and plants and trees are blooming sooner.

Many communities on the front line of the climate crisis, particularly those in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and Latin America, are already facing the devastating consequences of more frequent and

intense droughts, floods, cyclones and rising sea levels ... effects that have also reached Australia.

This is why the City of Sydney is to be applauded for voting to ban fossil fuel advertising on its properties and events.

The decision was in response to a local campaign for Fossil Ad Bans, similar to international efforts to fight fossil fuel advertisements that keep us invested in a fossil fuel world and prevent regulation of the fossil fuel industry.

The campaign aims to achieve tobacco-style bans on ads and sponsorships for fossil fuels at local, state and federal levels.

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report said that corporations have attempted to derail climate mitigation by targeted lobbying, doubt-inducing media strategies and through corporate advertising and brand

building to deflect corporate responsibility to individuals.

The City of Sydney’s CEO is to investigate restrictions on advertising for fossil fuels for any council controlled signage or property, as well as a ban on accepting sponsorships from companies whose main business is the extraction or sale of coal, oil or gas.

Deputy Lord Mayor Jess Scully said the ban was in line with the council’s commitment to climate-change action.

She is right to argue it’s time to draw a line in the sand and say, “not here” and “no more”. We need climate action now for the sake of the planet and any semblance of life as we know it. If we are to move away from a fossil-fuel dependent economy, we need to get rid of the fossil fuel sector’s whitewashing and self-promotion.

SSH

# Reclaiming wisdom of the Sabbath

## FAITH

ANDREW COLLIS

**FOR many Christians, Sabbath observance seems odd or optional – a matter of personal spirituality or something we do, somehow, on Sunday rather than Saturday. Might there be a way to reclaim the wisdom of the Sabbath – in community?**

The Sabbath (the seventh day) means to rest in God, or, better, to rest with God in the beauty of Creation, which means to rest both prayerfully and playfully.

The Hebrew Bible includes many references to this Sabbath, this slow time – as commandment, as commemoration of divine rest and release from slavery – freedom for life together (vigilance with regard to all manner of enslavement – addiction to work, accumulation of wealth, exploitation of workers, indifference to the hardship of others, and so on).

No wonder wise rabbis and religious leaders, ancient and contemporary, worry over proper observance of the Sabbath. Slow time matters – lest we succumb to frantic self-importance, weighed down by greed or guilt.

In the New Testament and according to church traditions, Sunday (symbolically the eighth day – day of resurrection) means to start again, to give thanks (Eucharist) for new life and recreation in Christ ...

The Christian challenge is to hold these two symbols, “slow time” and “start again”, to acknowledge promises in the spirit of Torah and Gospel. A certain imaginative space is required.

In a way, Sunday worship includes Sabbath observance, affirms the commandment to rest and remember, to set free. Broadly speaking, this is Catholic teaching – Sabbath-Sunday as double movement of “slow time” and “start again”.

Still, there are good reasons to maintain Saturdays and Sundays as distinct holy days (it can be burdensome to roll so much into Sunday).

The Orthodox churches, for example, revere the seventh day in the spirit of Holy Saturday, the Great Sabbath when Christ “rested” in the tomb – as occasion for prayers in loving memory of departed souls (may they rest in peace).

Catholic and Orthodox communities have long held masses on Saturdays and Sundays.

At South Sydney Uniting Church, our pattern of weekly activities maintains some distinctions between the seventh and eighth days.

Our Saturday activities, in general, are sabbatical – resting in the beauty of Creation, we enjoy writing poems, painting and drawing, gardening and praying together (pastoral care).

As a liturgical community we might continue to reflect on this weekly pattern – wary of a Protestant tendency to privatise or psychologise the Sabbath.

The seventh day is a day of rest, nourishment, even comforting silence – “slow time”. The eighth day is a time to give thanks – a day of renewal and encouragement – “start again”.

Contrary to Puritan teaching (the Westminster Confession forbids recreational activities on the “Sabbath”), we pray and play. Saturday and Sunday worship are joyful occasions.

SSH

# Lived experience guides patient doctor



Ben Bravery with his partner (now wife), Sana Qadar, after his surgery for stage 3 colorectal cancer. Photo: Supplied

## HEALTH

MARJORIE LEWIS-JONES

**AT 2 am during chemotherapy, while suffering from insomnia, Ben Bravery had a light-bulb moment. To start the conversation with doctors about how things could be better with patients, he had to become one.**

**In this Q&A about his new memoir, *The Patient Doctor*, he reveals just how far he’s come.**

**You were 28 when you were diagnosed with stage 3 colorectal cancer. What bowel cancer symptoms would you now advise people to never treat lightly or ignore?**

I had diarrhoea, constipation, as well as blood in the toilet bowl. It’s important to

speak to a GP if you have these symptoms and they persist.

**How do you feel about the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program?**

The kit is convenient and private and detects if there is a tiny amount of blood in your poo. This can be an early sign something is wrong. When bowel cancer is caught early, over 90 per cent of people survive.

**What are a few simple things patients can do to empower themselves in medical situations?**

Discuss what you read online with your doctor. Take a notebook where you’ve written questions and use this to record what the doctor tells you and any test results. If a friend or family member is free, take them along.

**What would the healthcare system in Australia look like for patients and doctors if “injecting humanity back into healthcare” were achieved?**

In an ideal world we would design places and systems alongside the people who have to use them. If you focus on the humanity in the system you can protect it – patients will heal with less frustration; doctors will feel more valued.

**What needs to change to ensure all communities can receive equitable health treatment?**

We should be training doctors who reflect the cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of patients. Yes, grades are important – but so is a person’s lived experience, or their commitment to compassion, or their ability to connect with people.

**In one tutorial you invited fellow students to ask questions about your own cancer journey. Why is this kind of encounter so vital to a doctor’s training?**

By marrying the facts with my illness story, they were able to get a fuller understanding of bowel cancer. The facts became real, they had a face and feelings

associated with them. Only then could they empathise with someone with bowel cancer.

**You say there were few units in your first medical degree dedicated to cancer. Why is this?**

The medical curriculum is overflowing because medical knowledge continues to increase at a rapid rate. Topics compete for attention in this busy space, and one of the casualties is cancer.

**Your next step is finishing your psychiatry study and training. Why psychiatry?**

I chose psychiatry because it struck me as the branch of medicine that had best held on to the idea that the patient is a person, and the notion of the patient-doctor “relationship”. It feels like the space where I have the best shot at being the kind of doctor I think patients deserve.

SSH

***The Patient Doctor* by Dr Ben Bravery Hachette Books, \$32.99**



## Best young jazz musicians compete in Opera House final

### MUSIC

STEPHEN WEBB

**THREE finalists competed for the most prestigious prize for young Australian jazz musicians under 35, in a play-off in the Studio at the Sydney Opera House on September 3.**

Tom Avgenicos (trumpet) and Holly Conner (drums) from Sydney and Flora Carbo (saxophone) from Melbourne went before esteemed judges Virna Sanzone, Andrew Robson and Steve Barry for the chance to take home the \$21,000 award.

The Freedman Jazz Fellowships, awarded annually, began in 2002 and have contributed to the careers of Australia's most distinguished jazz artists, including such luminaries as Andrea Keller, Julien Wilson, James Muller and Phil Slater.

Candidates apply with a sound recording and a description of a career-advancing project they would undertake with the award funds.

The three finalists were already highly accomplished and acclaimed. One, Flora Carbo, has even been nominated for the Freedman three times before.

Former Freedman judge and Australian jazz legend Mike Nock, who played a special guest set with Julien Wilson while the judges deliberated on September 3, said, "It is a strong group. By the time they get to this level they haven't come out of the blue. They have a history. It is very competitive."

Flora Carbo's compositions push boundaries between genres.

Holly Conner has worked across the fields of contemporary improvised, jazz, free jazz, and experimental music.

Tom Avgenicos, who won this year's prize, has established himself as a distinctive innovator in the Australian jazz scene and as bandleader of jazz group Delay 45, who this year released the album *Flux*.

He will use the Freedman funds to develop two multidisciplinary works



Flora Carbo has been nominated for the Freedman three times before and played in the finals again on September 3. Photo: Mardy Bridges

for his quartet while collaborating with string quartet Ensemble Apex, contemporary dancer/choreographer Reina Takeuchi and motion graphics artist Jordan East.

Nock said Freedman Jazz was important for jazz in Australia because it encouraged younger talented musicians.

It was also important given

the lack of recognition afforded contemporary music in Australia – and especially compared to the kudos offered to Australia sport.

"That's the way Australia has been for a long time but that doesn't mean the level of expertise and commitment in jazz is any less."

Asked how hard it was now for a jazz artist to offer a distinctive

creative voice, Nock said all three finalists had such a voice.

"It's no harder than how you can look inside yourself," he said.

"Jazz has always gone forward through the individual ... But the jazz we are hearing in the Freedman is truly Australian because it is a personal thing, and relating to the world."

## An emusing tale – an interview with Alex Kendall Robson

### THEATRE

CATHERINE SKIPPER

**ACTOR, writer and director, Alex Kendall Robson is elated that his most recent venture *The Tale of the Great Emu War* is finally making its stage premiere as part of this year's Sydney Fringe Festival. Written and directed by Alex and intended for performance in 2021 but stymied by Covid, this quirky tragicomedy is based upon the campaign to curb the large emu population ravaging soldier-settlement farms in Western Australia in 1932.**

The seeds for *The Tale* were first planted as far back as 2015 when then "country kid" Alex and his mates were playing the game *Cards for Humanity*. The stranger-than-fiction scenario caught Alex's imagination and, as he mined the sensationally written and humiliating critical news articles of the time, he saw the potential for developing the events into a verbatim-docudrama. While Alex says the play is written "tongue-in-cheek", he adds that the performance includes some "incredibly dark moments".

As Alex points out, the historical



For Alex Kendall Robson, the key characters of *The Tale of the Great Emu War* are four very articulate emus who highlight how the governmental solution to providing for veterans was ill-conceived. Image: Supplied

situation evokes the injustices of the colonial narrative, but he has highlighted poor governance and governmental reliance on violence. The governmental solution to providing for veterans was ill-conceived as few had experience of farming and the acreage allotted to them was on the less arable margins of the wheat-belt area. Promised subsidies had not eventuated. Rabbit-proof fencing funnelled emus into WA.

Migrating emus were unlikely to pass up the opportunity of taking food from the outlying newly

cultivated land with access to water, which added to the distress of the farmers. When the desperate soldiers-turned-farmers protested it was not to the Department of Agriculture but to the Ministry of Defence. The response was to send several highly trained soldiers with Lewis machine guns and thousands of rounds of ammunition to the area. What could go wrong?

For Alex, the key characters of *The Tale* are four very articulate emus. One of the mythologies of the Emu War is that these six-foot-plus birds – with toe joints that enabled them to turn as fast as a cat – won.

In fact, they *lost* once culling replaced direct onslaught. Giving the emus a voice is a clever corrective to the dictum that history is written by the victors who erase the experience of the defeated. Alex gives the emus the opportunity to put their side, and their voice is "the more humane".

"Do emus have a collective memory and is it possible that one day they will mount a counter-

offensive?" asks Alex. He dreams of a possible sequel and let's hope it is a dream that can be realised.

*The Tale of the Great Emu War* will be on at the Emerging Artists Share House – The Living Room, Erskineville from September 20-24.

Book tickets from Sydney Fringe Festival [www.sydneymfringe.com/events/the-tale-of-the-great-emu-war](http://www.sydneymfringe.com/events/the-tale-of-the-great-emu-war)

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## Theatre Review by Catherine Skipper

**Tell Me I'm Here**

**Writer: Veronica Nadine Gleeson**

**Director: Leticia Cáceres**

**Belvoir Street Theatre**

**August 24 – September 25, 2022**

*Tell Me I'm Here* is based upon Anne Deveson's personal and passionate account of her son's battle with schizophrenia, her struggle to find help for him and the chaos his condition wrought on her own and her family's lives. Her 1991 memoir has been powerfully adapted by Veronica Nadine Gleeson and compellingly staged by the Belvoir under the direction of a committed Leticia Cáceres. Stark and unflinching in charting the course of Jonathan's mental deterioration, despite its grimness and heartbreak, the play is lit from within by admiration for Deveson's resilience.

Initially, an unencumbered stage set, white, spare, a long table, functional chairs close to the back wall, occupied by a very large, filled bookcase conveys the impression of a pleasantly efficient and well-educated orderliness. A cheerful family meal is broken into by the teenage Jonathan (Tom Conroy) returned early from camping with a nervous friend who describes him as "sick". Huddling against a wall – which is to become an archive of his torment – his uplifted arms hiding his face, he giggles helplessly.

And so begins the journey for Anne (Nadine Garner) into a bizarre world where she becomes comforter and enemy, feeling responsible but often rancorous as progressively her once well-ordered space is occupied by Jonathan's disturbed visions.

Garner brings to the role of the beleaguered Anne a heart-wrenching authenticity, her body language

always movingly expressive of her complex responses. Her too neatly attired figure, her jumper a brave splash of red, appears appropriately diminutive in the open stage space as she struggles to find treatment for her son in a largely uncomprehending world. Her partners, Jonathan's father, the self-centred Ellis and later the Architect (both played with an affable remoteness by Sean O'Shea), are unable to deal with the havoc that Tom brings or the demand his condition makes on Anne's time and emotional energy as she struggles to find treatment for her son and maintain her challenging work as a journalist.

Garner and Conroy have chemistry if of a different kind. Conroy too is authentic as he swings between a remembered affection and violence, between duplicitous conformity and outrageous rebelliousness. "Don't harm Anne" he writes on the wall, and he and Garner establish between them the mutual pain of need and rejection, of love and loss. As much as Garner's stance conveys her emotional muscle – at times much tested as she hunches down into an unaccommodating chair – Tom's seemingly loosening body conveys his recession from the agreed world. In a powerfully moving moment, he begins to outline his feet on the ground in chalk but manages a half-imprint of one foot before he loses track of himself.

Anne is not entirely alone. There are warm moments shared between her and the mother (Deborah Galanos) of another schizophrenic child, we the note the growing understanding of her daughter, Georgia, whose changing emotions are sensitively conveyed by Jana Zvedeniuk, and O'Shea brings a genuine good-heartedness to his role as a friend from the Matthew Talbot Hostel for the Homeless.

Gleeson allows her audience to depart on a hopeful note with the birth of new life, a new beginning. And while we know that treatment for, and attitudes towards, schizophrenia have changed since the '80s, nevertheless under the direction of Cáceres the merciless torment of

mental illness, and its devastating repercussions for women and family life, is given a forceful iteration.

» [theatre@ssh.com.au](mailto:theatre@ssh.com.au)



## Film Review by Lindsay Cohen

**Bullet Train**

**Director: David Leitch**

**Starring: Brad Pitt, Joey King,**

**Aaron Taylor-Johnson**

**Genre: Derailing**

*Bullet Train* is a blatant attempt at style over substance. Alas, it has very little of either and so as a film fails miserably.

That's not to say that *Bullet Train* has no style. The bestselling book of the same name written by Kōtarō Isaka that the film is based on was a very cutting-edge "dark, satirical thriller" that "fizzes with an incredible energy and surprising humour" – quotes from someone else's review, of course.

The film is nothing of the sort. It comes across as an over-the-top comic romp with extreme cartoon characters and a ridiculous level of gratuitous violence that somehow tries and fails to capture either the spirit of Tarantino or of Asian-style gangster shoot-em-ups. Couple that with western actors in effect attempting to play roles best suited to a Japanese anime film and what you end up with is a complete mess.

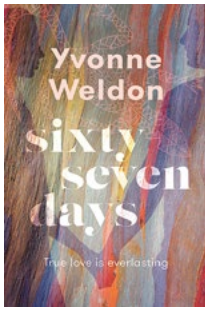
And even Brad Pitt fans are likely to be disappointed as he cruises through one of the easiest and most one-dimensional roles he's ever had to not play.

If only the film had been made in

Japan, in Japanese and with Japanese actors. There is a clear cultural misalignment here. That's not to say it is insensitive or cruel, but only that the subtleties of any societal-based story are inevitably going to be missed if someone from another culture attempts to tell the story, no matter how much money is being thrown at them and their lead actor.

Rating: One-and-a-half train wrecks.

» [film@ssh.com.au](mailto:film@ssh.com.au)



## Book Review by Catherine DeMayo

**Sixty-Seven Days**

**Yvonne Weldon**

**Penguin, \$32.99**

Yvonne Weldon's *Sixty-Seven Days* tells the story of a romance, but it is about a lot more than the "boy meets girl" plot that forms its centre. Weldon's book also raises a range of other topics, among them extended family, Indigenous people's connection to land and place, sexual abuse and its consequences, domestic violence, racism, identity and grief.

If that makes this book sound heavy and polemical, it isn't. Weldon writes with a light enough hand that the reader doesn't feel she is preaching to us or using her characters simply as mouthpieces for political views.

Narrated by Evie, age 19 when the book begins, an Indigenous woman living in the inner west and studying at Sydney Uni, *Sixty-Seven Days* tells of the romance between Evie and James. The plot device of organising the book into short chapters representing days since the two meet works well and maintains an aura of suspense.

The first entry, Day 67, has Evie in a chapel saying her wedding vows – alone. We then skip to Day 1, when Evie meets James, and follow the course of their relationship.

A chance encounter on a Redfern street brings the two together, and they fall quickly, deeply and devotedly in love. (Much of *Sixty-Seven Days* is set in the inner city, so locals will recognise many of the places the characters frequent.)

James, an apprentice electrician, and Evie bond almost immediately; her family welcomes him, including her extended family in NSW's Central West. The sense of community and extended family is strong, and Evie delights in taking James to meet her aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents.

Yet early on, Evie hints that there is trauma beneath the surface, and there are repeated references to the predator. We learn that it was he who abused 15-year-old Evie, who eventually fills in the backstory.

The predator is no stranger; he is the partner of Evie's Aunt Trudy and the father of her three children; he plays a prominent role in a local Aboriginal organisation. Despite having a loving, understanding family, Evie has avoided telling her parents about the abuse. Its memory plagues her, casting a shadow on even her happiest moments.

Evie, as narrator, is strongly drawn, as is her immediate family. Although he is present in much of the action, we never really see what makes James tick; I found him a less convincingly drawn character than Evie. He is patient, supportive, understanding and protective, but I would have found him more believable had he had more depth, and perhaps even a fault or two.

There is both heartache and, ultimately, a sense liberation for Evie by the end of the book. A dramatic plot twist (no spoilers here!) changes the course of her life irrevocably and upends the reader's expectations. *Sixty-Seven Days* is a tale that is both heartbreaking and uplifting, skillfully told.

» [books@ssh.com.au](mailto:books@ssh.com.au)

# Local love story broaches Indigenous issues

## An interview with Yvonne Weldon

### BOOKS

CATHERINE DEMAYO

**"I was resigned to the fact that it might never get out there," says Yvonne Weldon, referring to the fact that *Sixty-Seven Days* was shortlisted for a literary award for an unpublished manuscript in 2016 – and appeared in print in August this year.**

"It's pretty mind-blowing," she says, adding that it has been "really lovely" to get messages of congratulations and support.

Weldon is the current Deputy Chairperson of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council and an independent councillor for the City of Sydney. Last year, she was a candidate for Lord Mayor of Sydney. A Wiradjuri woman,

she was named NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year in 2022.

The book, she says, "really shaped itself," adding, "I've always wanted to write a non-fiction about the movement in Redfern, being a part of that, and so many of my family members being on the front lines ... that's something I want to do one day, and still hope to do. That's a whole lot of time, though, the referencing, interviews and a whole heap of things." While Weldon still hopes to write a non-fiction work, she says writing fiction still allowed some of the political issues and history of the area to be woven into *Sixty-Seven Days*.

Asked about the unusual structure of her novel, Weldon explained, "Once the action came to me, that created the structure. I went to bed thinking, what should I

call it? It (the title) just came to me.

"I was extremely scared – when I think about how fiction is structured, and this is unorthodox – I worried that people would try and change it, and I didn't want to budge."

Was there a particular reason for including the character of the predator? "The reason why I did that, is that there are a lot of taboos, about what's acceptable, and what shouldn't be. We don't make the positive change that's needed for women, children, men, to be safe.

"I anticipate that some people will take exception to it. But we don't make positive change unless we speak out. The silence is far too loud."

The continued deaths of Aboriginal people in custody and their overrepresentation in prisons are other issues on which Weldon is passionate. "How do you change it if

people say, 'I'm not racist?'" There is a need, she stresses, to scrutinise legislation that has had the effect of disadvantaging Aboriginal people.

Australia's age of criminal responsibility – age 10 in all jurisdictions save the ACT – is one such law. Another, in NSW, is the Suspect Target Management Plan (STMP), which lists certain individuals deemed to be a potential risk to the community. These people are subject to increased monitoring, with police having expanded powers to question and search them.

In an article in *Vogue Australia*, Weldon explained: A 2017 report prepared by the Youth Justice Coalition (YJC) STMP working group ... identified that almost half of the STMP targets on this hidden list were young people, with the youngest just



NSW Aboriginal Woman of the Year in 2022, Yvonne Weldon, weaves the political issues and history of Redfern into her new novel *Sixty-Seven Days*. Photo: Supplied

10 years old, and more than 44 per cent are Aboriginal people.

Weldon cites the example of the legislation which enabled the removal of Aboriginal children during the years when it was official policy, resulting in the Stolen Generations. It is now widely acknowledged that the policy was racist and caused tremendous hurt and trauma. "That was a policy – people said it was what was needed" at the time. "But what will we be apologising for in the future?"





## Debate over award for top NRLW player

### SPORT

STEVE TURNER

AT the end of the NRLW (National Women's Rugby League) season, the best player will be recognised with an award named after a man. Voted on by a panel of experts, the NRLW's most valuable player wins the Dally M female player of the year, and while Dally Messenger is justifiably a storied giant of rugby league, many believe the women's game is overdue its own champion.

It is recognised that the brilliant teenager Maggie Moloney, who became a star in the fledgling women's rugby league in the 1920s in Sydney was so good she was labelled the "Dally Messenger of the Blues". What better than the Maggie M medal? Even her name offers a nice symmetry to the men's medal.

Sporting opportunities for a working-class teenager like Maggie were scant to say the least. When a women's rugby league competition was mooted, her enthusiasm was palpable – "Oh, Mum!" Debuting before 30,000 excited and curious spectators at the Sydney Showgrounds in September 1921, the Sydney Reds and Metropolitan Blues played under the same rules and wore the same football attire as the men.

The indisputable star was the Blues winger, Maggie Moloney, who scored four tries and was "the idol of the crowd". She was awarded two medals, for best and fairest player and most points scored. When the Sun's front page declared her "the Dally Messenger of the Blues", it cemented her status as the women's game's first star. But unlike Messenger, Maggie's stardom and talent never had the chance to flourish.

100 years on, the NRL is in a position to address this. We can only imagine Messenger himself would approve. He would surely enjoy the NRL placing Moloney's name alongside his own (as reported by Katherine Haines in the *SMH*, February 25, 2022).

### Compensation granted for Vanessa, Kobe Bryant's widow

Los Angeles County has lost its lawsuit with champion US basketball player Kobe Bryant's widow and will be forced to pay as much as \$15 million for releasing photos of the aftermath of the helicopter crash in which seven people, including Kobe Bryant and daughter Gianna, lost their lives on January 16, 2020.

"I live in fear of my daughters and being on social media and seeing those pictures," Mrs Bryant expressed during the trial. "Some officers and firefighters have, in fact, shared, on private chats, some photos of the bodies of Kobe and our daughter, taken directly at the scene of the accident."

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## Volunteers' News

PAT CLARKE

### Showreel – Local Stories Live

Big thanks to Walter McIntosh for editing a showreel of last year's online fundraiser (Local Stories Live on December 11).

See great performances by Boy Torch and Toby Martin here: [www.bit.ly/3ReMGpW](http://www.bit.ly/3ReMGpW)

### Little Sydney Live Exhibition

September 15 to October 9

This is an exhibition of the 20 finalists in the City of Sydney's children's photography competition. This is a free event in Hyde Park, at the Sandringham Memorial Garden and Fountain, and is open all day, every day of the exhibition.

### Muddy Paws Festival, Sydney Park Village Green, Alexandria – Sunday September 25, 10am-4pm

This is a day for dog lovers presented by Maggie's Rescue, and will feature entertainment, food trucks, market stalls and kid's activities. Entry is free. Host will be Luke Carroll, and there will be other speakers. Cats won't be left out either. [www.muddypawsfestival.org](http://www.muddypawsfestival.org)

### Digital Literacy Classes

Cliff Noble Community Centre

Monday September 26, 10am-12pm

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Monday October 24, 10am-12pm –

Access to emagazines. Classes are free but bookings are essential.

Email [lrobinson@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:lrobinson@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au)

or phone 9265 9116. Bring your own

device or use one supplied.

### Blak & Blu 2022 – Saturday September 10

Entries have now closed for this prize, and the exhibition launch will be held at the Orchard Gallery, 56a Raglan Street, at 2pm on September 10.

Archibald prizewinner Blak Douglas will announce the winners (judged this year by Dee Smart). Local musicians Svetlana Rodgers and Sharon Kelly will perform Ukrainian folk songs and pop classics.

### Save the Koala Month – September 1-30

It aims to raise awareness and funds for the conservation of wild koalas and their habitats, especially after the devastating fires and floods. For more information and to donate contact [www.savethekoala.com/](http://www.savethekoala.com/).

### History Week – September 2-8

The theme this year is Hands on History. Check with your local Council for exhibitions of local history, people and events.

### Sydney Fringe Festival until Friday September 30

### Sydney Design Week – September 15-22

Lots of interesting aspects of design and art during this week at various venues around the City mainly centred on Powerhouse Ultimo. For more information <https://sydneydesign.maas.museum/>.

### SSH Volunteers and Supporters Picnic

October 15, Redfern Park, 12-2pm

We will meet at the Park Café on Chalmers, with thanks to Peter and Elly for coffees and muffins. Volunteer distributor Eleanor will emcee a Special Trivia Quiz with prizes. The Sydney Street Choir will perform too. Bring a picnic lunch, blanket or chair, sun hat and sunscreen.

Until next time,  
Pat Clarke

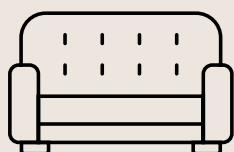
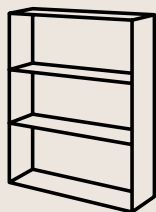
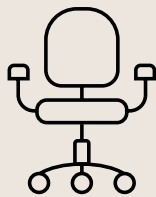
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