

# Latest Newtown mural chronicles the past and present

ART

CHRISTINE CHEN

A youthful vignette of the Inner West’s history has popped up on the corner of Albermarle and Baltic Street, Newtown, in a new mural by artist Sharon Billinge. Unveiled on Saturday June 24, it is the latest product of the Inner West Council’s Perfect Match program, connecting muralists with willing property owners to reduce graffiti and breathe new life into community spaces.

The mural features six young children, standing together and looking on enigmatically at the viewer. A composite work, Billinge painted the mural by combining a 1930s photograph of boys collecting firewood, found in an old book on Newtown’s history, with a photo of homeowners Pip and Peter’s daughter.

Sam Hood’s photograph was initially presumed to depict child labourers known as “block boys” in the 1930s. Further research, however, revealed a far more poignant narrative.

“When we first found the photo [Pip and Peter] were like, ‘I’m not sure we want to have a child labour picture on the wall,’ explained Billinge, “but we learnt it was just kids trying to basically keep their homes warm ... these kids had nothing apart from the community that was around them.”

Despite this discovery, the boys in Billinge’s mural remain anonymous, with their names, ages and lives lost to the passage of time. “You could look at their faces and you could think what their characters were like, the lives they were having,” Billinge mused. Public art, she explained, “can transport people – they’ll look at something and it’ll take them somewhere different, or just delight them.”

The lone girl in the mural, however, is a different story. She was added in after the Council expressed concerns about a lack of diversity in the original 1930s reference photo. “I was very, very adamant that we wouldn’t just make one of these figures like a token. That really stank to me,” Billinge said.



Sharon Billinge with her new mural, which is an interpretation of Sam Hood’s image from the 1930s but with a contemporary twist. Photo: Christine Chen

Initially, Billinge tried including a girl from a different photo by the same photographer, until the homeowners, Pip and Peter, felt an opportunity to personalise the mural, suggesting using a childhood photo of their

daughter Zoe instead. Painting Zoe proved to be the most demanding aspect of the mural. “I painted her face about four or five times trying to make her match with the others,” Billinge recalled.

Zoe, now 27, spoke to The South Sydney Herald about the inclusion of her 8-year-old self among the mural’s five boys, and what it means for representing Newtown’s diversity.

“Sharon incorporated the history of children of the Inner West and then myself as a child – who grew up in the Inner West almost 100 years later. It was an honour to be immortalised on my childhood home,” she said.

On Sunday June 18, the ashes of Sarah Murdoch King OAM – known to most Glebe locals as Sadie (and to some as the ‘Queen of Glebe’) – were scattered in the garden at St John’s Anglican church in Glebe where she had been a parishioner. Sadie died on January 17, 2022, just one month after her 100th birthday. In 1985, she received a Medal of the Order of Australia ‘for service to the trade union movement and to the community’, which included actively campaigning for public housing in Glebe and advocating for women’s rights in the workplace. Sadie’s longest and closest friend living in Glebe, Kay, is pictured here at the scattering ceremony with Mazie the dog and relative Kate.

Photo: Michelle Haywood





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## TANYA PLIBERSEK MP

Federal Member for Sydney

### PARLIAMENT SAYS YES TO VOICE REFERENDUM

It has been a big month in Parliament - and an historic one. The bill to hold the Voice to Parliament referendum has passed the parliament and now is in the hands of the people. We are one step closer to finally recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our nation's founding document.

**The referendum is about two things: recognition and listening.** It's a chance to recognise 65,000 years of First Nations history, and to deliver practical outcomes to close the gap.

If you would like more information on the Voice or want to get involved in the campaign, my office has fact sheets, posters, stickers and other helpful resources that you may find useful to share with your friends and family. To come and collect any of these, please contact my office on (02) 9379 0700 or email [Tanya.Plibersek.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Tanya.Plibersek.MP@aph.gov.au)

### SYDNEY VOICE TO PARLIAMENT CAMPAIGN CONVERSATIONS TRAINING

You're invited to our community campaign training workshop at UTS on Saturday 29 July between 10:00am - 12:00pm.

At the event you'll hear from YES23 campaigners about the referendum campaign and how you can be involved. They'll take you through what the campaign will look like and provide hands on training about how to have conversations with friends and family about why you're supporting the YES campaign.

**The event is free and open to anyone in the Sydney electorate. RSVPs are essential for planning purposes.**

**Saturday 29 July**

10:00am - 12:00pm

University of Technology Sydney

UTS Great Hall

Level 5, Tower 1

(enter via 15 Broadway, Ultimo through UTS Tower 1)

**RSVP at <https://tanyaplibersek.com/voicetraining> or call my electorate office on (02) 9379 0000**

### TAX HELP 2023

My office in Redfern will be offering Tax Help again this year. Tax Help is free and helps people earning \$60,000 or less lodge their tax return online. If you would like assistance and are eligible, please contact my office on 02 9379 0700 or [Tanya.Plibersek.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Tanya.Plibersek.MP@aph.gov.au) to book an appointment.

You must have an appointment and a mygov account to be able to access this service.

Best wishes,

*Tanya*

## TANYA PLIBERSEK MP

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Minister Jackson (right) outlined the underlying principles that will be used in making a decision about Waterloo and other public housing redevelopments at a REDWatch housing forum on June 5. Photo: Lyn Turnbull

# Minister looks to rework Waterloo South

## URBAN DESIGN

GEOFF TURNBULL

**WHEN the current stage of the previous government's procurement process for Waterloo South ends in about a month, the new NSW government will review the proposal to see how it can be turned into something that Labor can support. This was the key message delivered by Minister Rose Jackson at a REDWatch housing forum on June 5, 2023.**

Under the current stage of the procurement process inherited by the incoming NSW Labor government, interest from four potential development consortiums is to be reduced to two by mid-2023. Minister Jackson told the meeting that "we aren't able to stop that without massive compensation to the participants in that process and potentially we want to see what comes out of it".

Ms Jackson said "the previous government's proposition in relation to that redevelopment was a bad plan and we didn't support it" and went on to set out a number of underlying principles that will be used in making a decision about Waterloo and other public housing redevelopments.

The first principle is that developments have to provide "a substantial uplift in the number of social and affordable housing". Ms Jackson said the "voice of people on the waiting list is a really important voice not to forget. So that is a core principle. We want more".

The second principle, Ms Jackson said, is we want homes that deliver dignity to people – "homes and modern amenity, not shit boxes".

Thirdly, "We don't want to sell government land and we won't sell government land as part of these projects. That is not what any of these renewal projects will result in".

The Minister welcomed the federal housing initiatives and said if passed they could deliver around 16,000 new homes in NSW but that the federal contribution alone was not enough. "The state government is going to have to step up and do a lot more and we're interested in doing that," she said.

Fourthly, Ms Jackson said there would be an "automatic guaranteed right of return to anyone who is temporarily moved as a result of redevelopment and any relocations" and that "temporary relocations will occur in the local area".

Finally, Jackson indicated that the *Charter on Estate Renewal*, which was developed in 2016 by the Tenants Union and Shelter NSW with City Futures at UNSW will be reactivated. It "talks about delivering control and autonomy and agency and voice."

In response to a question about the 2022 NSW Labor Conference motion, Jackson confirmed that she considered the conference motion to be the policy of the NSW government.

That motion called for implementing legislation in a number of areas "which places a moratorium on the privatisation of public housing including the sale, outsourcing or leasing of any public housing assets or services". It also included legislation which guarantees that the number of public housing residences in NSW and in the inner suburbs of Sydney increases in both aggregate terms and as a proportion of total new housing stock.

Ms Jackson emphasised that her current focus was on the many things that could be done immediately without legislation. She cited building more social housing stock and getting the maintenance contracts redone in public housing as examples.

Waterloo tenants will have to wait a month or two longer to see how the principles outlined by the Minister will shape the decision about Waterloo South. It is clear, however, that while the new government has inherited a process from the previous government, it is not planning to just let it proceed without examining how it can improve the outcomes for those on the waiting list and for existing tenants.

How the NSW government will pay for these improved projects while not selling government land remains an unanswered question.

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**Geoffrey Turnbull is a co-spokesperson for REDWatch. You can find both a full transcript of Minister Jackson's comments and audio from REDWatch meeting on the REDWatch website.**



# Mo-tivational baker, coffeemaker

## LOCALS

ANDREW COLLIS

**REDFERN:** Baffi and Mo Espresso on Redfern Street was established in 2001. Baffi is Italian for moustache and the mo-tif is celebrated by present owner-managers Zach and Margarita.

Zach tells the SSH: “We bought the business in 2020. In late 2021, my sister Byan sent me a photo of our father Noori, a photo I’d never seen before. Margarita thought it’d make an ideal graphic for the cafe. We came up with a line drawing with the help of an artist we know. And we love how it turned out.

“Dad was the head of police in my hometown, Kirkuk, an oil-rich town in northern Iraq. He was a good man and remains an inspiration.”

Zach speaks of his hometown

with affection and sadness. “It was a beautiful town ... pretty much destroyed by war.”

Exiled for being Kurdish, Zach spent two years in a refugee camp in Turkey before seeking asylum in Melbourne. At 21, he had no money and didn’t speak English.

Within a few years he’d met and married Margarita, learned to read and speak English (he is also fluent in Kurdish, Arabic and Greek), completed studies in business and opened his own bakery-cafe.

A series of corporate jobs in the gaming and liquor industry left Zach unfulfilled. “I realised it wasn’t healthy for me,” he says.

At Baffi and Mo he has found satisfaction. Staff members Rani and Aaron share in the work and fun.

“I love being here in Redfern,” Zach says. “It’s a diverse community of many cultures. In some ways it reminds me of Richmond



Zach at Baffi and Mo Espresso. Photo: Andrew Collis

in Melbourne. Redfern is an amazing place, and a cafe is somewhere for people to meet and interact. We laugh a lot.”

The art of coffeemaking involves a lot. “Our roaster, Toretto, creates unique blends for us,” Zach says. “There’s a single origin from Tanzania and a blend from Brazil, Columbia and Ghana.”

Zach makes all the cakes and Margarita makes Brownies as well as traditional cheese and spinach Spanakopita.

The all-day menu features cafe favourites the Hash Benny and Corn and Pea Fritters. The burgers and omelettes are excellent, and light lunch options include the Baffi Buddha Bowl

and Moroccan Hash Stack.

Opening hours are 6am to 3pm, Monday to Sunday. Takeaway, dine in (the space is well lit and ventilated, with large bi-fold windows) and al fresco.

“We’ve survived three lockdowns and life is good,” says Zach, grinning cheek to cheek.

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## Let’s have a heart-to-heart about this killer



A properly fitted 24-hour or ambulatory blood pressure monitor and unit can give your GP a clearer picture of how your blood pressure might be affecting your health. Photo: Supplied

## HUMAN AFFAIRS

MARJORIE LEWIS-JONES

**WHEN my blood pressure reading consistently came in at around 149/83 my doctor was concerned. That my mother died of a heart attack at around my age now added urgency to her recommendation to get it checked out.**

I put it off for a while due to time pressures from work – but I finally realised messing with my heart health was foolish.

Heart disease kills one Australian every 24 minutes and it is also the number one killer of women – not the kind of stats with which I (or anyone) should be playing fast and loose.

The result? This morning I’ve been to a pathology lab to be fitted with a 24-hour ambulatory blood pressure monitor and unit. The unit consists of a blood pressure cuff that is worn on my upper arm and connected to

the monitor which sits snugly on a strap around my waist and there’s also a connective cord looped over my shoulder.

For the next 24 hours, my heart rate and blood pressure will be measured at 20-30 minute intervals during the day and night. When I feel the cuff inflating and getting tighter, I’m meant to stop and rest until the measurement is complete. Each reading takes around 30-40 seconds.

What does the test show? The blood pressure monitor is measuring the force at which blood is travelling around my body when I’m doing various activities like gym classes, shopping, cooking, working at my desk and sleeping. The results will help my doctor see how my blood pressure changes during the day and – given that high blood pressure is a very important risk factor for heart disease – may use my home measurements to make treatment decisions.

It’s now several days since I finished wearing the blood monitor for the required time – and preliminary results show my pressures are lower than when I get them taken in the GP’s room (white coat syndrome!) and I have mild diastolic hypertension, which my GP says does not need to be medicated. Changing lifestyle factors is pivotal to improvement – for example a diet with more fruit, vegetables and grains and fewer sugary treats is a good place to start.

I’m writing this piece because heart disease can present very differently in women than to men and often goes undiagnosed.

Sometimes there are no early signs of heart disease – so being proactive is key.

I was one of the 40,000 or so people who signed the Heart Foundation’s petition to save the Medicare Heart Health Check, which is a 20-minute appointment with a General Practitioner, aimed at detecting and preventing heart disease in Australians aged 45 and over, or 30 and over if you’re of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

On May 5, the Australian government announced the crucial extension of the Check for another two years, ensuring millions of Australians can continue to access preventative measures to reduce their risk of heart attack or stroke.

Given the Check is free under Medicare, why not book yours in with your GP today?

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To find out more about the Heart Health Check visit [www.heartfoundation.org.au/Heart-health-education/Heart-Health-checks](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/Heart-health-education/Heart-Health-checks)



Mindfulness can help you to enjoy the present moment, free from stress or worry. Photo: Supplied

## Mindfulness meditation brings benefits

### HEALTH

GILL ROBSON

**MINDFULNESS is a great self-care skill. It can involve walking while being aware of your body, eating while being aware of your sensory experiences, breathing consciously and lots and lots of smiling.**

The first time I heard Thich Nhat Hanh say, “As I breathe in, I smile to my body. As I breathe out, I know that I am glad to be alive” I was hooked.

There are so many teachers who are working on kindness, calm and emotional regulation. Many of these teachers are in the mindfulness space.

Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, funder of the International Plum Village Community of Engaged Buddhism, was a great teacher but he passed away in January 2022.

Happily, his work lives on via the Plumwood Village website and a free app with guided meditations and deep relaxations offered by him and his monastic community.

Alternately, if you’re a reader, you could try a new book released in late May by Emeritus Professor of Clinical Psychology at Oxford University Professor Mark Williams and bestselling author and qualified mindfulness teacher Dr Danny Penman.

*Deeper Mindfulness: The New Way to Rediscover Calm in a Chaotic World* offers an eight-week guided meditation program its authors say has proven to be effective at treating anxiety, stress and depression and offers a new and more fruitful direction for novice and experienced meditators.

Locally, you could check out one of the yoga classes at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence in Redfern – an excellent way to gain greater awareness.

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**JENNY LEONG MP**

MEMBER FOR NEWTOWN

**Freeze rent increases now**

NSW is in a rental crisis the likes of which we have not seen in generations.

Rents are increasing four times faster than wages, evictions are on the rise, and too many renters are just one rent hike away from homelessness.

It's why we've just introduced an Emergency Rent Freeze Bill that would freeze rents for two years – to press pause on skyrocketing rent increases, relieve renters from the stress of worrying about unfair rent hikes, and keep people in their homes.

Without a rent freeze, rents will continue to rise unchecked and too many renters will be forced to choose between rent they can't afford and eviction.

In unprecedented crises we have seen how governments can take urgent action.

During the pandemic, the Federal Government doubled JobSeeker and lifted more than a million people out of poverty. In Victoria all rents were frozen for six months, alongside a ban on evictions while NSW froze commercial rents alongside a ban on evictions. And just last December, NSW Parliament was urgently recalled to pass laws to cap coal and gas prices and reduce electricity bills in the face of escalating cost of living pressures.

This is the responsibility of the government. To intervene in crises – just like the crisis renters are facing right now.

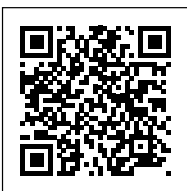
Rents in NSW are sitting at unprecedented levels of unaffordability. More and more people are experiencing severe rental stress, and there is a dire shortage of rentals that are affordable for people on lower incomes.

The Greens know a rent freeze alone won't solve the housing crisis. It's the start – not the end – of desperately needed reform to put a stop on the massive profits big investors and developers are reaping from the housing crisis and make renting more affordable and secure.

But we also know that renters can't handle this financial stress any longer – and they need urgent relief while long-term solutions are worked out.

A freeze on rents isn't only possible, it's urgently necessary. All we need is the political will.

**Will you join us in the campaign to freeze rents and demand NSW Parliament fix the rental crisis? Sign the petition by scanning the QR code or head to: [www.jennyleong.org/fix\\_the\\_rent\\_crisis](http://www.jennyleong.org/fix_the_rent_crisis)**



Authorised by D. Hayden for The Greens NSW. 19a/1 Hordern Place Camperdown NSW 2050.



Research flight image, 2019. Photo: Courtesy of Qantas

**New research suggests ways to reduce jet lag****SPONSORED**

MARK SCOTT

**RESEARCH findings by the University of Sydney's Charles Perkins Centre and Australian airline Qantas show it is possible to reduce the impacts of jet lag by reshaping the inflight travel experience.**

Different lighting and sleep schedules, mealtimes, and specific ingredients like chilli and chocolate during long-haul flights have been shown to contribute to improved traveller wellbeing in preliminary studies. Movement and exercise is, unsurprisingly, a key element.

The world-first research was conducted during 2019 research flights for Qantas' Project Sunrise program, which will connect Sydney directly with New York and London for the first time from late 2025.

The airline has been working with the University of Sydney's Charles Perkins Centre since 2015, when it first began preparations to launch Perth to London direct flights.

Qantas operated three Project Sunrise research flights from New York and London to Sydney in 2019 in partnership with Charles Perkins Centre researchers to collect real-world passenger data.

Researchers travelled on the aircraft and monitored 23 volunteer customers who were fitted with wearable device technology during the 20-hour flights as they followed specially designed menu, lighting, sleep and movement sequences.

Initial findings, as yet unpublished, indicate that compared to customers on a traditional inflight sequence of light exposure, eating and sleeping, those on the tailored schedule experienced: less severe jet lag (self-reported); better sleep quality inflight; better cognitive performance in the two days after flight.

The inflight trials involved tailored cabin lighting schedules to facilitate adaption to the destination time zone and integrating simple stretch and movement activities.

They also adjusted the timing of meal services to align the passenger's body clock and encouraged waking and sleeping by using specific menu items including fish and chicken paired with fast-acting carbohydrates, as well as comfort foods like soups and milk-based desserts to encourage sleep. The aim was to promote the brain's production of the amino acid tryptophan ("tryp") to help passengers drift off more easily.

The specially designed Airbus A350s that Qantas will use for

Project Sunrise flights include an onboard Wellbeing Zone informed by the research and unveiled last month in New York, where passengers can take time out to stretch and do simple exercises onboard, guided by video screens.

Peter Cistulli, Professor of Sleep Medicine at the University of Sydney said while the research was ongoing, there were clear signs that the interventions implemented during the trial flights reduced the impact of ultra-long-haul travel.

"We have a multi-disciplinary team of more than 10 researchers from medicine, science and engineering backgrounds working together on this project. This includes sleep researchers, circadian experts, nutrition and movement experts. No airline has ever done this kind of research before.

"The early findings have given us optimism that we can make a real difference to the health and wellbeing of international travellers thanks to this partnership with Qantas."

SSH



Authorised by Vice-Chancellor and President Prof. Mark Scott.  
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An Interfaith Prayer Service to promote justice and treatment for people living with drug and alcohol dependency was held on June 19 at the State Library of NSW. Religious leaders across a range of different faiths, including Imam Mahmoud Alazhari from the Australian National Imams Council (pictured), united for a common purpose and extended their compassion and support. Drug policy and treatment is being reconsidered across Australia and around the world. Consequently, this service was a timely opportunity to affirm the inherent dignity and value of all people.

[www.fairtreatment.org](http://www.fairtreatment.org)







More than 60 people and 20 organisations attended a forum on 'Ending Loneliness in the City' at the Sydney Town Hall in June. Photo: Supplied

# Addressing and preventing loneliness

## GUEST EDITORIAL

SYLVIE ELLSMORE

RECENT studies have found that 54 per cent of people feel lonelier today than before the Covid-19 pandemic. Loneliness makes people sick – people who feel lonely are at higher risk of serious health issues, including heart disease and depression.

As a Councillor for the City of Sydney, I had been hearing from different groups that loneliness was increasing. In June we hosted a forum on “Ending Loneliness in the City” at Sydney Town Hall. The forum discussed – what do we know about loneliness and who it impacts, what works to prevent loneliness, and what opportunities exist to address loneliness in the city?

Sixty people attended and around 20 organisations including resident action groups, community organisations, health researchers and health services, human rights groups, homelessness services and architects.

Speakers included the Executive Officer of Inner Sydney Voice and Council for the Ageing, Marika Kontellis; CEO of Wayside Chapel, Jon Owen; loneliness researcher and research fellow at the University of Sydney’s Matilda Centre, Dr Marlee Bower; member of the Coalition of Caring for Community Centres, Melanie Tait; and student leader at the Sydney Alliance Eliza Putnis.

While loneliness affects everyone, people who are experiencing change or transition can be the most affected. This includes younger people, students, older people,

newly arrived migrants and new parents. Public housing tenants and low-income households also tend to be impacted. Too often it costs money to go out or take part in the kind of social activities that bring our local communities together.

The forum was rich with suggestions for how we can both prevent and address loneliness. Most ideas were focused on the importance of creating free, safe spaces where diverse members of the community can connect, get to know each other, form friendships and ask for help if they need it.

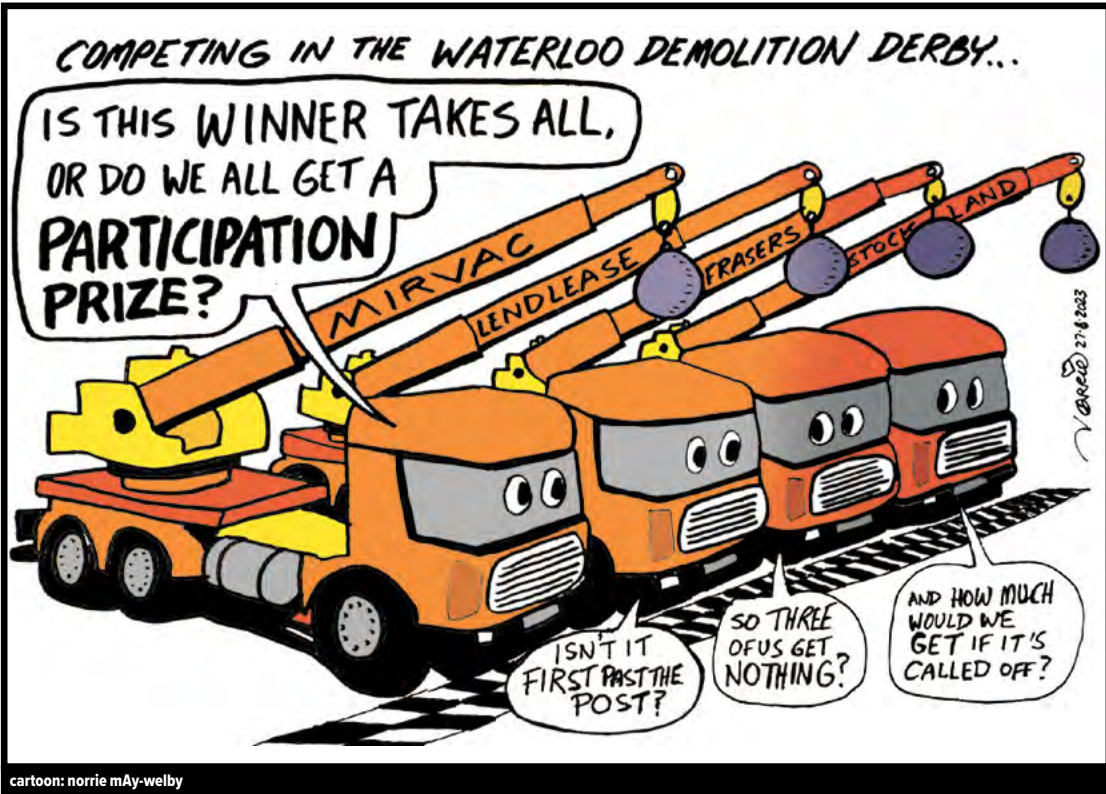
Well-maintained natural spaces and well-designed, inclusive and accessible public spaces are essential for planned and unexpected social interactions. Access to spaces the community feels safe in and owns is very important to encourage connection and social cohesion, such as community centres, neighbourhood centres and libraries.

Local councils have a key role to play in addressing loneliness.

We know that connected neighbourhoods are key to strong communities. The challenge is how we support people who feel more disconnected and isolated post Covid, and how we can support our changing and growing communities in the inner city.

A report is being developed out of the first forum, and we’ll continue to work with groups about practical actions. We’d love to hear from you and organisations working to address loneliness in the inner city. SSH

Sylvie Ellsmore is Deputy Mayor City of Sydney and a representative of the Greens. [SEllsmore@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:SEllsmore@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au) or phone 9246 7357.



cartoon: norrie may-welby

# Wisdom of our Elders - the story of Elvis Fields

## FIRST PEOPLES

ELVIS FIELDS

MY name is Elvis Fields and I live in Surry Hills where I have lived for 27 years. I was born in Walgett, NSW, and my totem is the kurrajong tree. I was brought up on a merino sheep station out west where so many Aboriginal people came from all over to work.

My family moved to Orange in the 1970s as part of the Aboriginal Resettlement program and then to Sydney in 1983. We moved into Louis Street, Redfern, on The Block.

The Block was a very interesting place to live in the 1980s. There were so many Aboriginal people who lived there who came from the different Aboriginal countries from all over Australia. Redfern was a big melting pot of different Aboriginal people but everyone seemed to be very friendly and we all got on like just one big family.

I couldn’t read or write until I was 40 years old. I went to the Eora TAFE College in Abercrombie Street, Redfern. It was so comfortable to be there because most of the students were Aboriginal and many of the teachers were Aboriginal also. It was so comfortable to learn in such a supportive environment. I have maintained lots of friends who I went to Eora with.



Elvis Fields at Wyanga with handcrafted coolamon and bundi stick. Photo: Vicky Haines

It was there that I wrote my first book, *Wieja the Green Tree Frog*. It was published by Blakes Education Department in the 1990s. I have since written two more children’s books which I and my family are so proud of.

I started attending Wyanga Aboriginal Elders program, Redfern, in 2020. Again, I met so many great people. At that time there were only three men who were attending. I felt really good sitting with the Elders and listening to their stories; learning from them about their lives growing up under the Aboriginal Welfare Act.

I started making Aboriginal artifacts back in the bush. I now get my own wood from my Aboriginal country like Walgett. I get box tree, yellow box, giddjee. I make

coolamons, digging sticks, bundi sticks and spears. I also do traditional Aboriginal smoking ceremonies for local schools and talk to the young ones about Aboriginal culture.

I love living in the local government area, going to Wyanga, doing my art and artifacts and cultural activities, and catching up with my people. SSH

## CITY OF SYDNEY South Sydney Herald

This is part of a series of articles by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living and working on Gadigal land. The series, a joint project of the SSH and the City of Sydney, is curated by Aunty Norma Ingram.

# ‘Just come home’

## FAITH

FAHIMAH MEL DWYER

REFLECTING on the inspiration of my grandmother’s life of simple faith, I realised that filling my life with relationships and the competitiveness of elite sport were not filling the void in my heart, and that only God could do that. And so, like the prodigal son, I came home.

I came home to discover a personal relationship with God who loves me as I am, not as I want to be. I came home to

realise that my heart was made for love without limits and that I wanted to make a difference with my life by serving God as a consecrated woman.

And God ran to meet me and continues to run to meet me every day, in the highs and the lows, promising me that He is with me, and that from death and darkness there can be life and light.

We see the image of a merciful father at the moment when the father sees the younger son returning in the distance. Hiking up his robes, the father runs to his

son. Not with demands of explanation, not with words of “I told you so” – just with welcome ... just with love.

Here stands a powerful reminder for each of us. Despite making unwise choices in life and at times turning our backs on God, God continues to remain faithful, patiently waiting for our return.

Undeniably, Jesus told the story of the prodigal son for

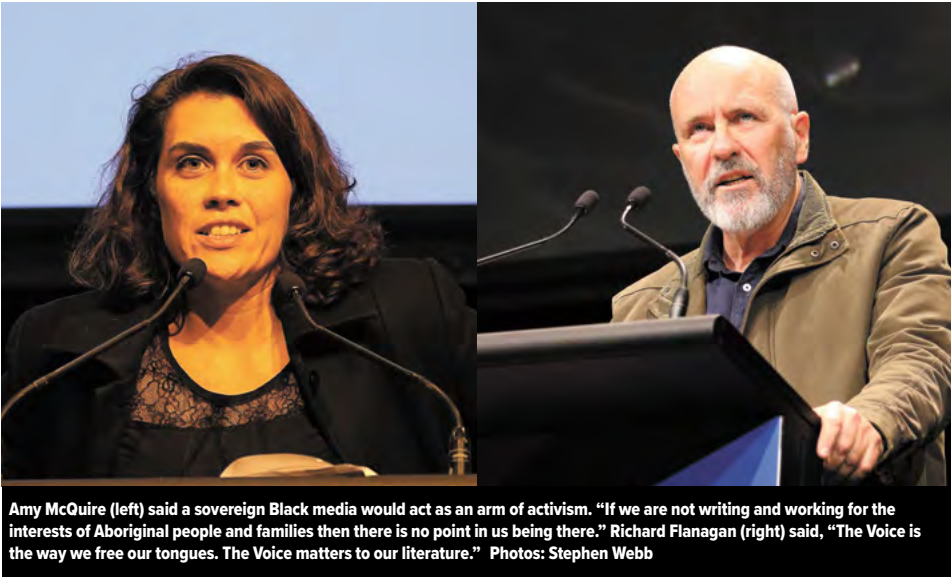
a reason. It says to us all: never mind what you’ve done. Just come home.

God needs our availability and our willingness to get up again and again every time we make a mess. And when we realise that we are not who we are because we are any better than anyone else, but because of God’s mercy and God’s grace, then perhaps we can become a little more accepting of the differences of

others, and a little more ready to not just welcome but accept all people at the table. SSH

Mel Dwyer FdCC is a Canossian Daughter of Charity, prior to which she was a national-level javelin thrower with a dream of representing Australia at the Olympics. She is currently a member of the General Council of the Congregation, residing in Rome. This extract is from *In Her Voice: Raising Women’s Voices in Preaching the Gospel*.





Amy McQuire (left) said a sovereign Black media would act as an arm of activism. “If we are not writing and working for the interests of Aboriginal people and families then there is no point in us being there.” Richard Flanagan (right) said, “The Voice is the way we free our tongues. The Voice matters to our literature.” Photos: Stephen Webb

# Believing the Black Witness and the power of YES’

FIRST PEOPLES

MARJORIE LEWIS-JONES

**TWO keynote speakers at the Sydney Writers’ Festival raised questions about the power of words to eradicate racism and build a more equitable future for Indigenous people in Australia.**

Writer and journalist Amy McQuire, who gave the Annual PEN Sydney Lecture: *Believing the Black Witness*, said Black Witnesses had been silenced for two centuries, their accounts only accepted when legitimised by white people.

Author Richard Flanagan, who won the 2014 Man Booker Prize for his novel *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, used his Closing Night Address at the Sydney Writers’ Festival to emphasise the poisonous power of racism and the importance of constitutional recognition of the Voice for Indigenous people to the Australian parliament.

To begin telling the truth of this country, McQuire said, we must support and adequately resource a Black media that acts as an arm of advocacy for protest and that always re-centres the voice of the Black Witness.

Addressing racism in the media was often framed around the need for greater diversity, namely we needed more Black journalists and people of colour in mainstream newsrooms, she said.

But that was not enough.

“In the mainstream media, Black journalists are employed not to actively contest the violence of the state or even the media but to translate it into a mode most understandable to white Australia and, sometimes, that means not speaking of violence at all.

“This sanitation process often means that Aboriginal journalists are made to conceal the parts of their work that are most important to our communities because their role in the mainstream media is not set up to fight for our communities but rather to inform on them.”

McQuire said, “A sovereign Black media would not be separated from activism. It instead acts as an arm of activism. If we are not writing and working for the interests of Aboriginal people and families then

there is no point in us being there.”

Flanagan spoke of his concern for his friend, Wiradjuri presenter and journalist Stan Grant, who had recently resigned from the ABC due to the racism he’d encountered.

Flanagan also condemned the Murdoch media for what he believed “amounted to a campaign of race hate and racial division the only beneficiaries of which are the Coalition parties as they now find themselves needing to win the NO vote in the hope it will stop an otherwise possibly inexorable slide to becoming a One Nation type minor party.

“All of this is camouflaged with talk of equality and concern for constitutional propriety by the Coalition. Thus Tony Abbott argued that the Voice will mean two classes of Australians [quote] ‘with the few given a special right to influence legislation over and above that accorded to the many’ [unquote], which sounded phoned in, and no more than a succinct description of the power of the fossil fuel industry, the Murdoch family or the IPA have over the Liberal Party.”

Flanagan said, “The great question that our nation can answer later this year is the question of whether or not we support the Voice.”

He said, “The Voice comes to us now, not simply as being about a minor rejigging of our constitutional arrangements but as something infinitely larger. Something which non-Indigenous people have to confront not simply out of guilt or pity or goodwill or altruism but in an awareness of what, just now, confronts us as a nation. The extraordinary possibilities of saying ‘yes’ and the profound costs of saying ‘no’.

“The Voice is the question mark that now appears over our country and, by implication, our literature. For us to be secure, for us to prosper, the answer lies not in relentless exploitation nor more inequality, nor yet in reckless acts of external aggression to please larger countries.

“The answer lies in us, in our land and in the way we answer this great question later this year.

“I hope, I pray that our reply will be YES.”

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**The Sydney Writers’ Festival was held at Carriageworks and other venues from May 22 to May 28 and addressed the theme “Stories for the Future”. [www.swf.org.au](http://www.swf.org.au)**



ABC producer Vanessa Gorman with feel-good fiction author Amber Jakeman at the launch of her novel *Summer Beach* at Better Read Than Dead in Newtown on June 25. Photo: Supplied

# ‘Summer Beach’ launch spreads warmth and joy

BOOKS

SSH

**THERE was laughter and joy when ABC producer and journalist Vanessa Gorman interviewed feel-good fiction author Amber Jakeman at Better Read Than Dead in Newtown at the recent launch of *Summer Beach*.**

*Summer Beach* is Volume 1 in Amber’s *Escape to the Coast* series, published by Lorikeet Press.

Vanessa, who has known Amber for many years, described her as having “a beautiful moral compass, set to true north and made of love” and said she had enjoyed escaping into the fictitious world of *Summer Beach*, where “you get to block out everything and just be with these lovely characters.

“We are all people and we care about relationships,” said Vanessa. “We’re curious. We gain something from it.”

Amber, a former journalist, said she’d craved escape from the endless news cycle of tragedy – and fiction gave her the perfect diversion.

Through fiction, she said she loves to “tap into the joy that’s all around me” and write about love, friendships and family.

“I’m interested in the choices people make; in what motivates us,” she added. “We can all make changes, not only in our own lives, but in the lives of others.”

Amber describes *Summer Beach* as a “love song” not just because the hero is a musician, but because love songs celebrate hearts, hope and love.

Vanessa and Amber discussed changes in books and writing since the 1950s, including the breadth of the romance genre. Amber’s fiction is at the sweeter end of the spectrum, also described as “wholesome” and young adult friendly.

“The world has changed and novels have changed as well,” said Amber. “They are now rich with diversity and empowered characters. We want the characters to come to decisions and make the best choices. Consent is essential. Mutual respect and inclusivity matter. The genre has expanded and its richness benefits us all.”

.....

**Amber has a giveaway e-news sign-up offer running where everyone can download her first book in her recently launched *House of Jewels* series, *House of Diamonds*, for free from the home page of her website at [www.amberjakeman.com](http://www.amberjakeman.com). A free copy of the *Summer Beach* e-book is also on offer to the fifth person to email her at [Amber@AmberJakeman.com](mailto:Amber@AmberJakeman.com) to request a copy.**



**ETHICAL  
EXPRESSIONS 2**

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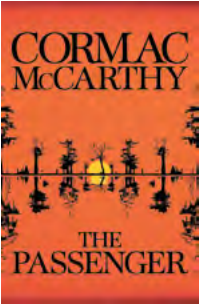
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Book Review  
by Melinda Kearns



**The Passenger**  
**HB \$45**  
**Stella Maris**  
**PB \$34.95**  
**Cormac McCarthy**  
**Pan Macmillan**

The two companion novels of Cormac McCarthy’s latest writings follow the lives of brother and sister Bobby and Alicia Western, focused on their mutual devastation at the hands of their father’s involvement in Robert Oppenheimer’s atomic project and how to come to terms with the scale of such violence. Both brother and sister are brilliant, and both are lost. It is early in *The Passenger* that we learn Bobby has lost his sister, first to mental illness and then to suicide, and that he clearly struggles to find identity and direction without his sister.

Symbolically, he works as a salvage diver, trying to find the value in wrecks. He also traverses the natural world to find some semblance of solace.

The time shift between the two novels is unclear. While Alicia’s absence is felt throughout *The Passenger*, *Stella Maris* vividly brings her last years to life.

Stella Maris is the psychiatric hospital where Alicia resides and each chapter records a conversation between Alicia and her psychiatrist, who tries to understand her and her problematic relationship with her brother.

A brilliant mathematician, Alicia discusses the role of science and academic pursuits in a nihilistic world and how the logic of knowledge can coexist when humanity has perfected the ultimate means to its destruction.

Both texts, probably Cormac McCarthy’s last fictional output, offer a thought-provoking and challenging examination of human responsibility and love in the nuclear age.

*Postscript: Cormac McCarthy, born on July 20, 1933, died on June 13, 2023.*

Theatre Review  
by Catherine Skipper



**Yuldea**  
**Choreographer: Frances Rings**  
**Bangarra Dance Theatre**  
**Sydney Opera house**  
**June 13 - July 14, 2023**

*Yuldea*, the anticipated full-length performance choreographed by Frances Rings in her new role as Artistic Director of the iconic Bangarra Dance Company, is

an extraordinary achievement. With a lovely meld of lyricism and tragedy, Rings’ work tells the story of the impact of colonialism upon the First Peoples of the far west region of South Australia – a truth hard to bear but one integral to the process of healing.

The set design (Elizabeth Gadsby), while economical, creates a sense of a special place using a double arch symbolic of the threshold between time and space. Initially high above the stage, a white velvety semicircle floats above a semi-circular backdrop of long shimmering strips, a veil through which dancers can enter, leave or be partly visible. The story’s setting, Yooldil Kapi, a permanent clay pan waterhole concealed by surrounding dunes, was the gathering place for many Indigenous groups, important for survival in a harsh environment and a repository of sky lore and ceremonial practice.

The story begins on an ominous note as the clans gather to observe the night sky. With that special facility known only to Bangarra, the cast of dancers move as one, slip into groups, cling and cleave, and flow back into a whole in repetitive mesmerising movements that compellingly convey difference but unity. Fear permeates the group – their sensing hands spasm, their fluid bodies stiffen – as a supernova signifies a coming change.

To establish the catastrophic nature of that change, Act II lyrically evokes the sacred and crucial nature of the clay pan to the desert clans’ way of life. In a hauntingly beautiful pas de deux, Lilian Banks and Kallum Goolongong depict the creator water spirits to whom the landscape owes life, their twining movement enhanced by the delicate frothing of Banks’ costume. In turn, the life-supporting water diviners – birds, dingoes and the roots of the red mallee – each with a defining choreography and divine costuming (the incomparable Jennifer Irwin) show the deep reverential connection between place and life.

Act III depicts the violence and horror of the changes brought to a way of life, thousands of years old, by the juggernaut of governmental decisions. Tellingly and painfully, decisions that resulted in the draining of Yooldil Kapi – the railway’s construction is cleverly imagined – and the pollution from Maralinga are preceded by a voiceover enunciating a royal promise through a Letters of Patent (1836) guaranteeing the rights of Aboriginal people and their descendants and happen against a striking score provided by *Electric Fields*. The agony of loss and the incomprehension of the clans – the “x” on their costumes signifying their apparent non-existence and transition from unity to separation – is heartbreakingly captured by the dancers through anguished choreography.

*Yuldea* ends with the gentle, reverie-like performance from the full ensemble. Despite human dislocation, sky lore is eternal as the constellation overhead signifies. The memory of suffering can never be erased – as the rails suggest – but *Yuldea*, the story of Rings’ own heritage, signifies a refusal to be a victim by giving voice to the truth of the past.

Many thanks to all – the very creative team, the generous cultural consultants – who contributed to production. And a special acknowledgement to the passionate

commitment of the dancers whose energy and dedication made *Yuldea* a joy to witness.

Book Review  
by Catherine DeMayo



**We Come with This Place**  
**Debra Dank**  
**Allen&Unwin, \$29.99**

*We Come with This Place* won an unprecedented four prizes in the NSW Premier’s Literary Awards, an achievement even more impressive for a first-time author.

Dank is a Gudanji/Wakata woman who spent much of her childhood in Camooweal, then on a remote station near Oban, Queensland, before moving to Mount Isa with her family. Part memoir, part history of her father “Soda”, part meditation on Country and its significance, part travelogue, this beautifully written book moves between these various guises, often, though not always, seamlessly.

Sadly, like many works by and/or about the violence that accompanied white Australian settlement, *We Come with This Place* will probably not be read by those who object to “a black armband view of history”.

At a tender age, Soda witnessed unspeakable violence, including the rape of his mother. Thanks to his intelligence and survival skills he escapes from the abusive station manager and crosses from the Northern Territory into Queensland (itself hardly a mecca for Aboriginal people at the time). Soda is a hard worker who finds steady, albeit hard and often dangerous work in Queensland. From the age of 9, Debra becomes his erstwhile assistant; she is also an excellent student, for which she thanks her intelligent and studious mother.

While Debra is entrusted with tasks at age 9 that boggle the mind, she recounts a childhood filled with love – of family, of words and reading (she rejoices in learning new words like “arid”, excited to apply it to the land she loves so much), of being with, and learning about, her Country.

One of the most poignant chapters details an older Debra’s visceral reaction to one of Soda’s violent outbursts. The pain, shame and catharsis are searing. Because the book is not organised chronologically, the reader never learns the long-term outcome. Does Soda overcome the anger that causes him to strike out at those he loves? How does Debra cope with this duality in the beloved father of her childhood?

While parts of the book are harrowing to read, Dank also celebrates the abiding love of her family, particularly her grandparents. There are even some glimmers of kindness and acceptance from white Australians. Dank writes of the family’s arrival at the Corbetts’ station: “It seemed that along the road ... we had entered a twilight zone and had really arrived in Wonderland

... where it was possible for a black man to have a white man as an offsider, and a little black girl could select all the best cuts of beef and be given them, no questions asked.”

I found the book’s structure both intriguing and, at times, frustrating.

Its interweaving of stories serves as a reminder of the connections between its disparate narratives, but at times (such as with Soda’s violence) I found myself wishing for more coherence and context. Perhaps, if we are lucky, Dank will treat us to a second book.

505 WILSON ST, REDFERN  
(REDFERN NORTH EVELEIGH) –  
ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE  
ASSESSMENT

Artefact Heritage, on behalf of Transport for NSW (the proponent), invites Aboriginal people and Aboriginal groups who hold cultural knowledge relevant to determining the significance of Aboriginal objects and places for the Chief Mechanical Engineers Building (CME Building) at 505 Wilson Street, Redfern to register to be consulted.

To register your interest please contact:

**Phillip Obah**  
Artefact Heritage  
Suite 56, Jones Bay Wharf, 26-32 Pirrama Road,  
Pyrmont NSW 2009  
consultation@artefact.net.au

Registrations must be received by phone or in writing by **19 July 2023**. In your response please advise if you do not wish your details to be provided to Heritage NSW and the Metropolitan LALC.

Transport for NSW proposes heritage conservation and adaptive reuse of the former CME Building and geotechnical contamination investigations. Consultation will support two ACHARs for the project. An ACHAR will be prepared to support SSD-39971796 and meet the conditions of the SEARs for the proposed former CME Building works. A second ACHAR will be prepared to support an Aboriginal Heritage Impact Permit (AHIP) application to Heritage NSW for combined test excavation and geotechnical contamination investigation.

The proposal may result in Transport for NSW:

- Applying for an AHIP under Part 6 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, and/or
- Undertaking investigations in accordance with the *Code of Practice for Archaeological Investigations in NSW 2010*, and/or
- Undertaking an environmental impact assessment under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

The contact details of the proponent are:

**Goldie Markovits**  
Development Manager, Redfern-North Eveleigh  
Precinct  
Infrastructure and Place  
Transport for NSW  
goldie.markovits@transport.nsw.gov.au





## Hauser triumphs at World Triathlon Championships

### SPORT

STEVE TURNER

**MATT Hauser has found top form ahead of next year's Olympic Games, finishing strongly to win Australia's first men's gold at the World Triathlon Championship Series (WTCS) in four years.**

Hauser, the first Australian male to win a round of the WTCS since Jake Birtwhistle in 2019, produced the fastest swim and run times to beat Brazil's Manoel Messias into second place by 11 seconds. He broke free of a group of eight athletes with less than one kilometre to run, dropping all but Messias and hanging on for the win.

Hauser, ranked fifth overall in the world championship series, was delighted to finish one step higher on the podium than his second place in Yokohama in May.

"After Yokohama, I knew I had a better lead-up in my preparations," he said.

### US Open victory to Wyndham Clark

Wyndham Clark won his maiden major title at the US Open last month, defeating Rory McIlroy by a shot at the Los Angeles Country Club.

"There's been so many times I've visualised being here in front of you guys and winning this championship. I just feel like it was my time," Clark stated after his win.

Clark has had an under-the-radar career on the PGA Tour but picked up his first tour win in May, securing the Wells Fargo Championship.

Clark had a three-shot lead on Rory McIlroy at one stage in the final round, but back-to-back bogeys cut his lead to just one with two holes to play. The 29 year old held his nerve with two holes remaining, parring both and finishing one shot ahead of McIlroy.

SSM

## OPTUS

### PROPOSAL TO UPGRADE EXISTING OPTUS MOBILE PHONE BASE STATION WITH 5G AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATION

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- The proposed upgrade to the existing facility consists of the following works; New walkway system, New antenna mounting poles and braces on new support beams, replacement of three (3) existing panel antennas with three (3) new panel antennas (each no longer than 2.8m) on new mounts, Installation of two (2) new 5G antennas (each no longer than 2.8m) on new mounts, replacement of one (1) GPS antenna, installation of associated ancillary equipment including new wall-mounted Remote Radio Units and reconfiguration of existing equipment on the facility and within the equipment shelter.

Optus regard the proposed installation as a Complying Development in accordance with the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Transport and Infrastructure) 2021* based on the description above.

In accordance with Section 7 of C564:2020 Mobile Phone Base Station Deployment Code, we invite you to provide feedback about the proposal. Further information and/or comments should be directed to: BMM Group, 1300 260 834, [submissions@bmmgroup.com.au](mailto:submissions@bmmgroup.com.au) by **20th July 2023**. Further information may also be obtained from the website provided above.

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