

the South Sydney Herald

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Sydney's home of queer history and culture

HUMAN AFFAIRS

ANDREW COLLIS

A memorial to people who died during the AIDS epidemic and a museum celebrating Sydney's queer history has opened to the public. Qtopia, Sydney's first queer museum – and the largest in the world – is located on the site of an old police station next to Taylor Square in Darlinghurst.

The launch on February 23 was a moving and celebratory event. A Welcome to Country was given by Nadina Dixon, with musical performances by Seann Miley-Moore.

The museum, which invites the public to add further names to the memorial in the first room of the complex, features exhibitions about Indigenous history, transgender history, the changing legal status of homosexuality, queer media and police brutality.

Qtopia chief executive Greg Fisher said the place showed the dramatic social changes over time. "When you walk into Qtopia Sydney, the first thing you will notice is that it doesn't

look anything like a police station anymore," Mr Fisher said. "We've transformed the building into a storyteller."

The Qtopia building also includes a new 60-seat theatre called the Loading Dock that will showcase stories from the LGBTQIA+ community.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced \$1.5 million in federal funding for further upgrades to the museum at a launch also attended by NSW Premier Chris Minns and Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore.

Mr Albanese paid tribute to the 78ers, a group of LGBT activists who marched in the first Mardi Gras in 1978, and to Paul O'Grady, the first out politician in Australia. "It has been a long journey, a history of struggle and brave leadership," the prime minister acknowledged.

"Qtopia is a sign of social change and inclusivity. When that happens, society as a whole benefits. Difference is not just tolerated but celebrated – and that's what Qtopia does."

HIV/AIDS survivor David Polson said the opening fulfilled the vision of the doctor who cared



Prime Minister Anthony Albanese speaks at the launch of Qtopia, National Art School, Darlinghurst, February 23. Photo: Michelle Haywood

for him, the late David Cooper AC, who wanted an AIDS museum in Sydney.

"Under David's great care, I undertook 28 HIV trial drugs,

all of which were extremely toxic and horrendous," Mr Polson said. "But all those years of feeling ghastly and suffering were worth it. HIV is now a manageable

chronic condition, not a death sentence.

"Qtopia will be a wonderful place of memory, celebration and education."

SSH

McRae-McMahon Place honours beloved trailblazer



The Rev. Dorothy McRae-McMahon at the Leichhardt opening of the affordable aged care facility named in her honour. Photo: Lyn Turnbull

HUMAN AFFAIRS

LYN TURNBULL

THE Rev. Dorothy McRae-McMahon pushed for the recognition of clergy in committed same-sex relationships from the mid-1980s in the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) which was ratified by the church's National Assembly in 2003. The naming of an aged care facility after her in the leadup to Mardi Gras was well timed.

Dorothy's unwavering stand for this and other social justice issues allowed many people of faith who had been ostracised by the mainstream churches to take the risk to reengage. Dorothy is a member of the South Sydney parish that produces this

paper and both she and her late partner Ali were actively involved with the SSH.

The push for an affordable aged care facility came from the Leichhardt UCA congregation which wanted to redevelop the site of a derelict aged care building. For 10 years they worked with Uniting, Inner West Council and the NSW government to create the affordable aged care outcome to maintain an integrated, mixed diverse community in the former working-class suburb. They hope a process can be put in place to facilitate additional affordable aged care facilities. All parties involved in the opening on February 27 are recognised on the plaque.

SSH



The Settlement needs our help Online-only



A carer's journey (part 1) Online-only



Mardi Gras 2024 Online-only



South Sydney Herald

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Peers help the community stay healthy

SPONSORED

LAN HAYNES

NAVIGATING the health system can be challenging. To address this, Sydney Local Health District (SLHD) has established the Health and Wellbeing Peer Education program. The peer education program is a community-led project to promote health literacy and empower participants with a greater understanding and awareness of the local health system, and share this within their local community and neighbourhoods.

Local residents who participate are offered a series of workshops on a range of topics including drug and alcohol addiction, mental health issues, oral health and nutrition. Those residents then share that knowledge with their community, either through workshops and town halls or lighter events such as trivia nights or community gatherings.

Phong Luu participated in the peer education program in October 2022 and has since helped organise events in the local neighbourhood to better equip his community with the knowledge to maintain and improve their health.

Phong took a particular interest in one topic that meant a lot to him, one he thought needed to be tackled in his community. "When I moved into the area, I really saw that there was quite a high rate of alcohol and drug use and I wanted to educate myself and better support others," Phong said.

He attended an education session run by SLHD Drug



Shane Brown (left) with participants in the Health and Wellbeing Peer Education program, Waterloo. Photo: Supplied

Health Services explaining addiction and recovery. "I was getting anxiety from just witnessing it, so instead of being judgemental to the community I was able to run a workshop telling the community what I had learned."

Phong also set up a community barbecue where he cooked healthy Vietnamese food for the local residents and got speakers to talk about healthy lifestyles.

Fiorella has also participated in the peer education program. She volunteers for many different charities in the area and had nothing but praise for the peer education program.

"The training was wonderfully

laid out – a very good basic knowledge of every subject dealing with health," she said. "It was very comprehensive. We looked at bloodborne diseases, mental health, oral health, eye health, nutrition – we covered just about everything. Understanding the health system from the national, state and local point of view – now that was a big one!"

Shane Brown, manager of District's Waterloo Healthy Living program said the peer education program is a valuable way of getting the message of healthy living into communities.

"We value the work our peer educators do in enhancing the lives of the communities

where they live," he said. "A lot of work goes into selecting participants – those who are community minded, have great social networks and are respected by their peers."

Keep an eye out for workshops or events run by peer educators in Waterloo in 2024.

If you are interested in participating in the program, contact Shane by email: shane.brown1@health.nsw.gov.au



Authorised by Dr Teresa Anderson AM, Chief Executive, Sydney Local Health District.

Where does the housing we need go?

URBAN DESIGN

GEOFF TURNBULL

THE NSW government plans to increase housing within existing city footprints and communities are on edge fearing what it means for their neighbourhood. Inner Sydney is already denser than inner London, Melbourne and Brisbane.

What does this mean for the Sydney Local Government Area (LGA)?

From 2016-2021 Sydney Council added 14,000 dwellings or 6 per cent of the total for greater Sydney. It is also the city's transport hub with many stations and light rail stops.

The government's low and mid-rise housing proposal has Sydney Council worried if it goes ahead unchanged. That proposal would mandate minimum controls within 800 metres of every station (metro, rail or light rail) and town centre precincts, overriding Council's existing planning controls, including



NSW Minister for Housing and Homelessness Rose Jackson with (L-R) Premier Chris Minns, Georges River Mayor Sam Elmir and Campbelltown Mayor George Greiss at Harold Park precinct to discuss the government's plan to address housing affordability. Photo: Michelle Haywood

heritage, if they are inconsistent with the proposal. With many village centres and stations little is untouched by the 800m radii.

The non-refusal standards enable a typical six-storey apartment within a radius of 400m and three storey apartments from 400m to 800m,

with the possibility for additional two-storey affordable housing bonuses in some areas. The proposal also captures low-density residential areas in Rosebery and Moore Park by allowing manor houses, townhouses, semis and terraces to be built. The densities proposed are lower than existing

terrace densities that could be removed under the 800m proposal.

Council's submission proposes radius around tram stops be halved and argues that most of the LGA's town centres should not be subject to the height increase due to their existing service levels. It also questions the practicality of non-refusable standards in its LGA, providing examples of potential adverse outcomes. Council urges the government to provide the housing targets due last year to allow Council to determine where the density required is best delivered in its existing manner rather than mandating controls that are likely to slow housing delivery in the LGA.

Under the National Housing Accord these planning reforms were to be developed with local government. With the exhibition over, inner-city residents are waiting to see if the government will work with councils in response to submissions.

Geoff Turnbull is the spokesperson for REDWatch.

TANYA PLIBERSEK MP

Federal Member for Sydney



The Albanese Labor Government is legislating to give every Australian taxpayer a tax cut. Under our plan middle income earners will get a much larger tax cut, and low income earners, who were previously going to miss out altogether, will also receive relief.

Labor has changed Scott Morrison's tax plan so we give more people a bigger tax cut to help with cost of living pressures.

We have found a way to give a tax cut right up and down the income scale but with an emphasis on middle Australia in a way that is good for the economy, good for cost of living pressures, good for women, nurses, truckies, teachers and workforce participation.

Every taxpayer gets a tax cut.

All 13.6 million taxpayers will receive a tax cut. That's 2.9 million more than under Morrison's plan. In fact, 84 per cent of Australians get a bigger tax cut than they would have under the proposal Scott Morrison legislated five years ago.

Earnings per annum	Tax cut under Scott Morrison's plan	Tax cut under Labor's plan
Around \$40,000	\$0	\$654
Average income around \$73,000	\$700	\$1,504
Around \$100,000	\$1,375	\$2,179

A person earning \$200,000 still gets a tax cut. They will receive \$4,529.

In the Sydney Electorate this means 112,000 people will receive an average tax cut of \$1,915.

In addition, the Government will increase the income threshold for the Medicare Levy. For a single person earning \$30,000 a year, it means they will keep an extra \$170 in their pocket.

We've put people before politics. We've come to the right decision for the right reasons: the economic circumstances changed so we changed economic policy.

The Morrison tax plan was designed five years ago, before the pandemic, before the global inflation spike before interest rate rises and greater global uncertainty.

Current tax rates		New tax rates from July 1, 2024	
\$0 - \$18,200	0% (no tax)	\$0 - \$18,200	0% (no tax)
\$18,201 - \$45,000	19%	\$18,201 - \$45,000	16%
\$45,001 - \$120,000	32.5%	\$45,001 - \$135,000	30%
\$120,001 - \$180,000	37%	\$135,001 - \$190,000	37%
>\$180,000	45%	>\$190,000	45%

Our plan is a more responsible way to ensure more people get a bigger tax cut to help ease the pressure they are under.

We plan for these changes to take effect on July 1. To find out how you will benefit, please use the calculator on the Treasury website:

<https://treasury.gov.au/tax-cuts/calculator>

TANYA PLIBERSEK MP

Federal Member for Sydney

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JENNY LEONG MP
MEMBER FOR NEWTOWN



NSW Labor must keep its election promise to end no grounds evictions

One year into the Minns NSW Labor Government’s first term, we are still yet to see progress on their election promise to finally end unfair no grounds evictions in NSW.

In spite of unending stories of young people being kicked out of their homes in retaliation for requesting basic maintenance, or single mothers for whom a drastic price hike is a de facto eviction notice, Labor has done nothing to expand protections for the 2 million people who rent statewide.

Under current NSW law, landlords do not need to provide a reason for evicting people from their rental home. Housing security for tenants is at the whim of their landlord – regardless of how long they have lived in a home, how they have treated it, and whether they have always paid rent on time.

According to data from Fair Trading, one tenant is evicted every 18 minutes in NSW. This grim picture is compounded by the Tenants’ Union of NSW’s Evictions Map, which shows that across the state 13,011 landlords applied for an eviction through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) in 2023 – the actual number of evictions is likely to be much higher, given that not every landlord progresses evictions through NCAT.

Tenants who are evicted from their homes face an incredibly bleak rental market in which vacancy rates are at all-time lows and rents continue to rise unchecked. It’s clear that action must be taken now to protect them from this dire reality – and if the NSW Labor Government won’t move to do this, the Greens will.

At the last Parliamentary sitting in February, I introduced a Greens Bill to finally end unfair no grounds evictions for all tenancies in NSW. The Bill would establish clear grounds on which tenancies could be terminated, alongside penalties for landlords who claim to be evicting a tenant so they themselves can move into a rental home or to renovate it but do not actually do so.

We will be progressing the Bill through Parliament as soon as possible, and urge all members of Parliament to listen to the renters in their communities and urgently pass this overdue reform.

Watch my speech introducing the Bill here:
<https://youtu.be/sFn4dSdJa0g>



Authorised by Jenny Leong MP. Funded using parliamentary entitlements.



Dance class. Photo: Supplied

Dancing may be better than other exercise for improving mental health

SPONSORED

MARK SCOTT

A structured dance program of at least six weeks’ duration can significantly improve psychological and cognitive health outcomes equivalent to other forms of structured exercise interventions, finds new research from Australian researchers.

Published in *Sports Medicine*, the study is a large systematic review with meta-analyses investigating the effect of dance on psychological and cognitive health. The multidisciplinary authorship team includes researchers from University of Sydney, University of NSW, Macquarie University and Queensland University of Technology.

The studies in the review included participants across the lifespan (7-85 years) encompassing people who are healthy and those with chronic disease, i.e. Parkinson’s disease, heart failure, cerebral palsy, fibromyalgia. The dance interventions encompassed a broad range of genres including theatrical dance, aerobic dance, traditional dance forms and social dance, and were compared to a number of physical activities including team sport, martial arts, walking, and weight training.

The study found that undertaking structured dance of any genre is generally equal to and occasionally more effective than other types of physical activity interventions for improving a range of psychological and cognitive outcomes including emotional well-being, depression, motivation, social cognition,

and some aspects of memory.

Lead author Dr Alycia Fong Yan from University of Sydney’s Faculty of Medicine and Health and Sydney Musculoskeletal Health said: “Preliminary evidence suggests that dance may be better than other physical activities to improve psychological wellbeing and cognitive capacity.

“These findings were not just seen in older adults, but also younger populations and people with clinical conditions as well.

“Learning dance sequences may challenge cognition, partnered or group dance may benefit social interactions, and the artistic aspect may improve psychological wellbeing.

“Adherence to physical activity is an ongoing challenge in clinical trials and even more so in community. Dance can provide an enjoyable physical activity that is easier to maintain.

“Most people know that physical activity is beneficial for health compared to doing nothing, but they may not realise that dance can be an effective alternative to standard exercise like running, going to the gym, and other sports.”

This research forms the second part to Dr Fong Yan’s well-cited systematic review exploring the effect of dance on physical health outcome measures.

In contrast to the predominant social dance genres assessed for older adults, six of the seven studies of participants under 55 years, examined the effects of dance genres that could be performed individually in a group setting such as aerobic dance and modern dance, suggesting dancing in itself improves psychological health not just the social benefits of partnered dance genres.

The study also found that in those 54 years and under, the current literature pool focuses on psychological outcomes, while for those 55 years and over, there is a greater focus on cognitive capacity. The effectiveness of dance interventions is most evident in the domains of self-efficacy, anxiety, depression, motivation, and health related quality of life, particularly in older individuals. While there is considerably less evidence in those 16 years of age and below, dance appears to be superior to other exercise in lessening the impact of somatization (the expression of psychological distress as physical symptoms).

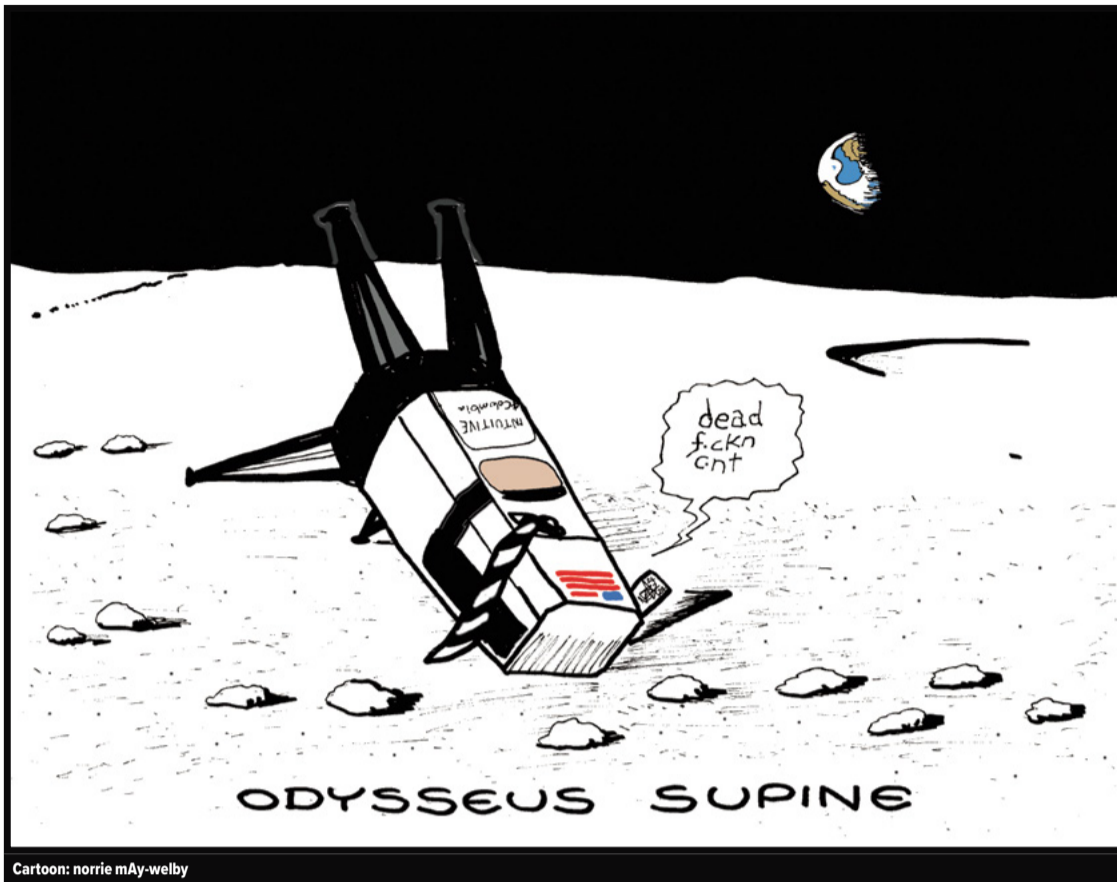
Dr Fong Yan added: “Dance has far-reaching health benefits. If you stick to a physical activity, the long-term, physical health benefits will reduce the risk of health conditions related to sedentary behaviour, the social connectedness and psychological effect of dance will alleviate the symptoms of mental health conditions, and improvements in cognition could aid the independence of older adults.

“Ultimately, this reduces the burden of these conditions on the health sector.

“Structured dance can be considered an evidence-based alternative for individuals who might prefer it to more traditional forms of exercise.”



Authorised by Vice-Chancellor and President Prof. Mark Scott.
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Sovereignty, security and dignity

EDITORIAL

SSH

ISRAEL and Palestine have grappled with enduring territorial disputes and complex geopolitical tensions across generations. Peacemakers insist that the “side” we’re called to support isn’t exclusively pro-Israel or pro-Palestine, it’s “pro-solution”.

In the wake of Hamas’ brutal October 7 attack, as Israel’s retributory assault was gearing up, Ali Abu Awwad, an activist who lives in the West Bank, wrote: “Now more than ever, we all must refuse to use violence to justify more violence. We should not allow our pain to blind us to what is most needed: mutually guaranteed sovereignty, security and dignity for both Israelis and Palestinians.”

Awwad has been an advocate of nonviolent action for 20 years. The founder of *Taghyeer* (an Arabic word meaning “change”), he was recently awarded the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2023.

“The anger is there,” Awwad says. “The challenge is not to be led by it. I’m angry, and I can be humiliated at any time, at any checkpoint. The question is, what do you do with it? “[W]e have to create a place where we will no longer be prisoners of the anger that this situation creates every day.

“The role of nonviolence is to speak to people’s despair – not to tell them they are right, but to show them a way out.

“[W]hen you open up your heart and you see the other, you begin to see the truth is complex – that my truth is true, but it’s a partial truth and there’s another truth that’s also partial and I have to learn to put them together and make the larger truth. I believe we can do that.”

Awwad is not alone in recognising the humanity of all involved. For instance,

some Israelis who suffered terrible loss in the Hamas attacks have been among the strongest proponents of peace.

Noy Katzman’s brother, Haim, was killed on October 7. In her eulogy, Noy called for the end of the killing of innocents. “I call on the government and all of us not to use our death and pain to cause death and pain of other people or other families,” Noy said. “I demand to stop the cycle of pain, and understand that the only way is freedom and equal rights.”

Israeli peace activist Maoz Inon, whose parents were killed by Hamas, implored Israel to stop its war on Gaza. “Revenge is not going to bring my parents back to life,” Inon wrote on Aljazeera.com. “It is not going to bring back other Israelis and Palestinians killed either. It is going to do the opposite. It is going to cause more casualties. It is going to bring more death. We must break the cycle.”

“The Jews are not my enemy; their fear is my enemy,” says Awwad. “We must help them to stop being so afraid – their whole history has terrified them – but I refuse to be a victim of Jewish fear anymore.

“Nonviolence is the art of practising your humanity, it is the art of being a human being. Peace is a place where we can live by accepting our differences and respecting each other’s rights.

“The nonviolence movement I’m leading is not about hummus and hugs. It’s not about good intentions ... Dialogue is not the goal. Dialogue is a tool for a bigger goal. We need to build a new political reality that can speak to both sides ... We need to guarantee that these two identities can be practised in a fashion that no one has to pay the price of their dignity, land, rights or nationality.”

Draws from articles by Ray Suarez and Jim Rice, *Sojourners*, January 2024.

Help provide urgent medical assistance to civilians in Gaza: actforpeace.org.au/gaza-emergency

The fragility of the neighbourhood

COMMENT

KARINA KREMINSKI

THESE days we often talk about the importance of a resilient neighbourhood. There is a “resilient city” global network which Sydney is a part of that keeps cities accountable to becoming sustainable. This network exists to help keep neighbourhoods connected and strong. But what I’ve been reflecting on lately is about the fragility of the neighbourhood.

I live in Surry Hills and I love this unique little village in the heart of the inner city. I love the terrace houses, the public spaces, artworks and the cafés. But most of all I love the people and community.

I walk out of my door to go catch the bus or to buy my groceries or walk my dog and I know for certain that I will bump into someone I know. What keeps this little neighbourhood strong is relationships and connection. If this is compromised, then the whole neighbourhood feels it. It’s as fragile as a spider’s web.

You tear one thread and the whole web wavers and is made vulnerable.

The other day I noticed that all the staff at my favourite local café had changed. I had noticed a few shifts over the recent months but one day I turned up and everyone except one barista had left. And he tells me that he too will leave in a few months. I know that many customers including myself had made friendships and connections with the team. I felt a little sad.

I know we are supposed to get used to these movements, it’s only normal if you live in a big city, we have become accustomed to the impersonal, transient and efficiency. But the reason I love my little village of Surry Hills is exactly because of those fragile connections – the things that don’t change like the familiar smile and quips from the people I know at my local café.

I wondered to what extent this small change would affect our neighbourhood, perhaps in ways we have no idea about and which will impact the web of relationships in the neighbourhood.



Karina Kreminski Photo: Supplied

I am not against change, movement, growth and sustainability. We need that. We need resilience. But we also need stability, familiarly and neighbourhoods that carefully tend that intricate web of relationships. Because a neighbourhood is not only resilient, but also fragile, and ultimately protecting that might not be such a bad thing for our cities.

Karina Kreminski is co-director at Neighbourhood Matters. She is also on the board at the Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre which runs events and programs for community development and relationships.

Noisy buses mostly empty

LETTER

FOR five years Transport NSW has been running nearly empty buses 301, 302 and 303 and then 392 route 200 times per day in both directions to service Waterloo Metro which hasn’t been commissioned yet.

The frequency of these buses is a killer for our established community of mostly disadvantaged house-bound people living along Raglan Street – community gardens,

a childcare centre, a community centre, a charity for the elderly, the Uniting Church, 66 terraces open to the street, as well as high-rise residential towers, a recreation area at Waterloo Green, etc. Elderly residents with serious health problems have been deprived of the little pleasures left in their lives – they can’t even talk to each other on the street for the noise of the buses. The 392 is mostly used by students to go from UNSW to Redfern instead of taking the light rail to Central. Transport says

the 392 is a very successful route, serving 1.4 million passengers over six months. Calculations based on data obtained by Freedom of Information, however, show only 318,000 with >80 per cent of buses running with <15 passengers. This corresponds with our observations. The future park planned for Waterloo Central will be greatly affected by such heavy traffic.

Svetlana Rodgers Waterloo



Fire and Rescue NSW marked its 140th birthday on February 14 with a special ceremony at the City of Sydney station in Castlereagh Street. Retired firefighter Peter Ryan from Oberon (pictured) served for 59 years. Photo: Michelle Haywood

'A celebration of blackness by queer black artists'



ART

ANDREW COLLIS

BOOMALLI'S 2024 Mardi Gras exhibition, *My Sovereign Black Body*, explores First Nations identity, "stripped back to the basics". Curated by Wamba Wamba man Steven Lindsay Ross, the show is "a reclamation of our skin and bones and essence, of the beauty defined by our own eyes and by Country, kinship connection, song, culture and dance – it is a celebration of blackness by queer black artists".

Exhibiting artists include Jeffrey Samuels, Jasmine Sarin, Ella Noah Bancroft, Hayley Pigram, Peta-Joy Williams, Kyra Kum-Sing, Kirilly Dawn, Dennis Golding, Jessica Johnson, Nioka Lowe-Brennan, Nola Taylor, Graeme Walker, Nathan Frank, Peter Waples-Crowe and Nebbi Boii.

Nioka Lowe-Brennan is the daughter of a Dunghutti-Birripi woman and artist, and a Gomeroi man who was both a poet and musician. She grew up on Gadigal, Wiradjuri and Dharawal land. "Culture and creative practice were the strongest elements of my life while growing up," she says.

Nioka's painting, "Barrier Breakthrough", is a stunning acrylic on canvas. There's a drama to it – the blues, the sea, the fish, two dancing figures, fabric and patterns ...

"When I started the piece, my thoughts were to create something that was acknowledging Gadigal people and country," the artist explains. "I moved away from Sydney at a young age, then came back and everything fell into place. I wanted to honour a sense of community. It wasn't a conscious thing, it just kind of happened that way.

"My whole family had been coming to Redfern for generations, like so many displaced First Nations people. I did the same thing.

"When I was living in Wollongong, I'd come up to Redfern for dancing. That was with Aunty Rayma Johnson, a Wiradjuri woman, and the Budja Budja Dancers – contemporary and traditional dance, which I loved.

"The story of the painting is about recognising traditional people in modern times. I included the harbour as a way of saying the traditional custodians are still here, there's still a community here and it's thriving."

The mood of the painting is uplifting, defiant.

"At the time I painted it, I was listening to 'Treaty' by Yothu Yindi as a way to find strength during the referendum. The song informed the painting somehow and is part of the reason it was important to me as an Aboriginal person, sensitive to being a visitor on Gadigal land.

"I've always been really into art. It was very normal for us to be painting at the kitchen table. My mum became a member at Boomalli and that really inspired me. I knew I wanted to work in the arts, so after completing a TAFE course, I had opportunity to become a gallery assistant at Boomalli. That gave me a lot of inspiration, just being around art all day, getting so much encouragement and love from the group.

"I was 18 then, I'm 22 now and my love for painting has grown (I also used to do photography and sculpture). I've started seeing myself as an artist, and art as a means of storytelling.

"I usually paint at home, after work, or whenever the inspiration comes. I try to do it as much as possible."

This is the artist's third show with Lindsay Ross. "It's been a formative experience," she says. "I sort of had this moment [during the first show], realising that mob have always been a part of Mardi Gras. I felt their strength."

Nioka will curate next year's show. "Boomalli supports me so much," she says. "I'm so excited. It means a lot."

***My Sovereign Black Body* at Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-op, 55-59 Flood Street, Leichhardt, until April 13.**

Art of intuition and composition

Artist Profile: Hillary Monckton

ART

ANDREW COLLIS

IMAGE-MAKER Hillary Monckton is newly enrolled in a visual arts program at the University of Sydney. "I feel I am more of an art student than an artist," she says. "There's so much reading to do!"

It's an adjustment Hillary is excited to make. A keen art workshop participant, she is a committed member of groups in Waterloo and Woolloomooloo. She's also exhibited work – drawings, paintings, photography, print and mixed media – in a number of group shows.

Fellow artists admire Hillary's commitment to art practice – a willingness to learn different techniques and risk experimentation.

"My work is often more intuitive than intentional," she says, "and it's usually spontaneous."

'Zebras', for instance, was the result of finding a discarded canvas at the Ozanam

Learning Centre (OLC) and pasting some black-and-white prints (another artist had thrown them into the paper recycling) onto the gessoed canvas.

"I then added pink, green and blue, and some yellow fluoro paint. The process unfolded over several days.

"I consciously chose to paste the zebras in vertical sequence, but the paint was applied with a feeling for balance and harmony."

While not "consciously symbolic" the zebra stripes are strongly graphic. They also connote camouflage – and evoke associated themes of home/habitat and hiding, even hidden meaning. The figures are wild animals, vibrant, vibrating in a field of colour.

"I found them and liked them, and was able to use them," Hillary smiles.

.....
Saturday Art Workshops at South Sydney Uniting Church, second and fourth Saturdays of the month, 12-4pm. Phone 0438 719 470.

.....
OLC Art Programs include painting, drawing, photography, screen-printing, ceramics and more. Phone (02) 9358 8100.



'Zebras', 2023 (detail). Image: Hillary Monckton



Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras 2024 launch at Sydney Town Hall. Photo: Michelle Haywood



'Polly's Follies', Mardi Gras Parade, March 2. Photo: Michelle Haywood



Dykes on Bikes Sydney, Mardi Gras launch. Photo: Michelle Haywood

**Book Review
by Melinda Kearns**



Bright Shining: How Grace Changes Everything
Julia Baird
Fourth Estate, 2023

The premise of *Bright Shining* is both profound and simple – grace is everywhere and we are enriched by it as individuals and as a community when we are receptive to its power and beauty.

In our frail, broken humanity, there are many factors that impede our acceptance of this benevolence.

There are people who have gone through the worst experiences of violence, humiliation, exploitation and loss at the hands of others and those who have perpetrated these acts. Some of these persecutions have been institutionalised, and carried out over decades while abusers have been protected and endorsed while victims have been vilified and burdened with guilt, shame and the expectation of forgiveness.

Taking its title from the world's most popular hymn, Baird discusses the idea of grace, mercy and forgiveness in religious and secular contexts, writing that grace goes beyond kindness, goodness or empathy, but definitely has elements of all of the above. She stresses how challenging it can be, how harrowing and how transformative.

Baird discusses those who are motivated to perform acts of service to others, such as committed blood donors and health professionals during the Covid crisis who filled gloves with warm water so that patients could feel like someone was holding their hand when they were most isolated.

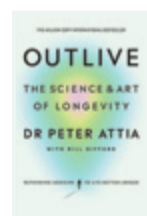
She describes how the experience of an enriched life can be passed on in our DNA in the same way that trauma can and how release from anger has been found for

some through restorative justice.

One of the strongest themes of Baird's writing is the importance of the natural environment, being nurtured by the Elders of the Ningaloo Reserve in WA and being welcomed to Country, and how this outpouring of grace sustains her through her own health crises.

Julia Baird, with her usual compassion, wit and clarity, details the many facets of grace and how it is a rare and remarkable attribute requiring courage and strength. *Bright Shining* is deeply moving, inspiring and as the title suggests, illuminating.

**Book Review
by Gill Robson**



Outlive: The Science and Art of Longevity
Peter Attia
Harmony, 2023

Have you ever wondered how it might be possible to make your life 30-50 per cent longer? I have.

Peter Attia is a Canadian American physician known for his medical practice that focuses on the science of longevity. He is also the first person to make the round-trip swim from Maui and Lanai!

Outlive by Peter Attia (with Bill Gifford) is a series of practical tips on how to live longer and be happier and healthier while you do. There's helpful advice on nutrition, exercise, sleep, and stress management.

This book is also available for around \$11-15 on Audible, if you're not into reading books.

If Audible is a bit pricey (and for a long time it was for me) you can try listening to some of Peter Attia's talks on YouTube.

Plenty of good tips for people who want to be healthy, happy, and long-lived.

Check out Gill Robson on YouTube by searching @GillRobson

**Theatre Review
by Catherine Skipper**



Agapi and Other Kinds of Love
Writer: Luka Lesson
Co-Directors: Luka Lesson, Sam Foster
Riverside Theatres
February 29 – March 1, 2024

Agapi and Other Kinds of Love is an innovative and intriguing show merging hip-hop beats with music for ancient instruments and swinging in time between Athens in 416 BCE and the modern-day city. The text, exploring different kinds of love and inspired by Plato's *The Symposium* is performed by poet and rapper Luka Lesson who brings to the spoken word an enormous outpouring of energy, emotional generosity and passionate commitment and for whom the universe had its origins in creative love.

Chaos and Cosmos, the primal lovers, can sit back and watch all universal events switching time channels at will. Sometime in 416 BCE, Socrates, who is amongst a party of friends who have met to philosophise (something like *Insight*), imparts the wisdom teaching given to him by the mysterious Diotima, his one-time lover and old friend. She describes for him the seven rungs on the ladder of love: Eros (romantic love), Storgi (sustaining love), Filoxenia (love for others), Philautia (self-love), Filia (friendship), Pragma (enduring love) and finally, Agapi is celebrated in a magnificent finale. Lesson's performance as it unfolds pictures vividly, frighteningly and beautifully the full complexity of each kind of love, sympathetically supported by an intelligent musical score (James Humberstone).

We begin at Eros and by the will of the all-powerful Chaos and Cosmos, and economical back projection, we are transmigrated to modern Athens as the souls of

philosopher and high priestess incarnate as a young Greek girl, Sophia, and Pavlos, an Australian-Greek youth. They meet and fall in love against a background of escalating resistance against police and state condoned violence directed at ethnic minorities. "How beautiful", says the poet, "to fall in love/ as the world/ falls apart", romanticism later countered by the wise Sophia's observation that "we have to fight/ but with love/ because a loveless revolution/ makes a future/ not worth fighting for".

Part of the enjoyment of Lesson's performance is bold rhyming and lively rhythm. In a switch back to 416 BCE, Socrates laments the conflict between Sparta and Athens, because "we are them/ and they are us/ and we all look the same/ when we turn to dust." In describing the fall of Athens from the glory of its past, Lessons chants: "Athens is now melancholic/ crestfallen and chaotic/ full of lost souls/ alcoholics/ the painfully patriotic" and he pictures for us the young Molotov cocktail thrower, Aristocles, as "a squat dweller/ a Low-Bap rap fan turned weed seller, who volunteers/ at the local homeless shelter ... his parents were polytechnic student activists/ so now he is an anarchist/ turned masked antagonist".

The presentation is strikingly simple. The two musicians, Mae Lin and Greta Kelly, stand to either side of the stage, their gracefully draped costumes evoking female figures from Greek pottery. A few pallets with assorted litter suggest both the poor area of Exarcheia, "a safe place for refugees/ the homeless/ and migrants" and the "heart of the protest movement" as well as the destruction of rioting. At one point, the image of the ancient ruin, the Parthenon, is projected onto the back wall creating a poignant contrast between the richness of the past and the decay of the present.

Unfortunately, *Agapi* has a very short run, so buying Lesson's book of the same name would be a great idea. You could appreciate at your leisure not only Luka's deeply felt lesson but his love for, and adroit use of, words and rhythm.

**Film Review
by Lindsay Cohen**



Poor Things
Director: Yorgos Lanthimos
Starring: Emma Stone,
Mark Ruffalo, Willem Dafoe
Genre: Pornless

Poor Things is surreal, deep and meaningful, tiptoes around political correctness, varies between darkly comic and slapstick, and is sexually complex. If that sounds like you, then *Poor Things* is your perfect film – and you're an immense character much like most of the characters in the film.

No doubt you love *Monty Python*, *The Addams Family* (original version), *The Munsters* and plenty of offerings from David Lynch (*Twin Peaks*) and Peter Greenaway (*The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover*).

That's not to say that if this doesn't sound like you that you'd hate the film. It's visually fascinating, indeed the director Yorgos Lanthimos is probably going to be the next Wes Anderson (you heard that here first) given his great attention to detail in weird set designs, characters ranging from subtle to extreme, and highly interesting and obscure stories selected and written with big ideas and complexity.

Poor Things may focus on the massive role that sex has in society and with individuals, but it's in the context of social classes, ageism, European history, health and all sorts of gender issues.

As a result, it may be too obscure and stimulating to pick up any of the Academy awards it's been nominated for, but it's deserving of much greater interest than the limited box office takings suggest. Being R-rated may also explain that, but don't let that hold you back from checking out the most interesting film of the year.

Rating: Five O faces

Living with dementia – a carer’s journey

2. Learning and understanding

HUMAN AFFAIRS

ALICIA DONG

FROM the day of the diagnosis, my learning as a carer began.

I was determined to do everything I could to give Stuart the best possible care, by using all the services, education and dementia-related programs available to support us. My motto was “no stone unturned”. I would never let myself be in a situation of having regrets and wishing I could have done more. I wanted to have inner peace within my heart and soul.

On July 6, 2018, a day after the diagnosis, I started to make enquiries. I contacted Dementia Australia and Carer Gateway to get all the help that I could. Following this, I contacted My Aged Care to request an assessment for Stuart.

By having some knowledge and understanding of dementia, I would be able to provide better care for my husband. The Dementia Advisor at Dementia Australia recommended a number of courses and workshops.

I enrolled in “Understanding Dementia” and “Preventing Dementia” online courses with

the University of Tasmania, which I completed in July and October 2018 respectively.

On July 17 Stuart and I attended the “Recently Diagnosed with Dementia” workshop organised by Dementia Australia. The information was very helpful, and Stuart was able to understand most of it. Astonishingly, about 250 people join the dementia population every day. We were also advised to get the legal documents Will, Enduring Guardianship and Power of Attorney in place if we didn’t already have them. It is vital to do them while the person living with dementia (PLWD) is still able to make decisions independently.

On July 24 we saw the solicitor and got the legal documents signed and updated.

I attended further workshops between August 2018 and September 2019: “Effective Communication”, “Nutrition, Mindfulness and Dementia”, “Keeping Love Alive”, “Dementia and Medications”, “Meaningful Activity for PLWD”, “Dementia and Future Planning”, “Managing Emotions” and “Benefits of Physical Exercise for PLWD”.

It was vital for me to learn how to communicate with Stuart effectively, and I also needed to



Image: Gloria Liang

train myself to be patient with him. Commonly in a conversation, 7 per cent of communication is words, 38 per cent is tone and 55 per cent is body language. I learned to engage with Stuart closely when communicating with him.

On September 25, 2018, geriatrician Prof. Smerdely reviewed Stuart and was happy with his condition and commended me for all the activities I had arranged for Stuart.

From October to November 2018, we joined the “Living with Dementia” program run by Dementia Australia, on Wednesdays for seven weeks.

This education and support program aims to maximise the health and wellbeing of people living with early-stage dementia and their carers. We met other couples in the group and shared our stories and ups and downs.

My journey is made of “more downs than ups”, as my husband’s dementia deteriorated rapidly and had many challenging behaviours and symptoms.

Throughout 2024 Alicia plans to share her experiences to support and empower carers and their loved ones. She welcomes your feedback on this column – please comment on the online article, on Facebook or email editor@ssh.com.au

The footy is back!

SPORT

STEVE TURNER

THE NRL season launch was held in Las Vegas on March 3.

The Roosters defeated the Broncos 20-10. Despite succumbing to the Sea Eagles 36-24, the Rabbitohs showed plenty of promise. Rugby league reporter John Lanzky writes: “My top eight predictions for this year – 1. Rabbitohs; 2. Broncos; 3. Panthers; 4. Tigers; 5. Sea Eagles; 6. Roosters; 7. Cowboys; 8. Knights. My tip for the Wooden Spoon – Dragons. My colleague Kelvin Coe’s predictions – 1. Panthers; 2. Roosters; 3. Broncos; 4. Knights; 5. Bulldogs; 6. Storm; 7. Warriors; 8. Tigers. Wooden Spoon – Dragons (sorry Dragons fans).”

Matildas march towards Paris Olympics

It took just 34 seconds for the Matildas to send a warning to their Paris 2024 competition, with an own goal off Uzbekistan setting the green and gold alight at Marvel Stadium in Melbourne.

It was a total demolition job by the Matildas, who ended up taking a 10-0 victory to officially qualify for the Olympic Games, now just five months away.

SYDNEY STREETS

EAT • SHOP • PLAY

Potts Point • Darlinghurst • Glebe
Redfern • Pyrmont • Surry Hills

17 February – 6 April

CITY OF SYDNEY



The Bourbaki Ensemble Photo: bourbakiensemble.org

Volunteers’ News

PAT CLARKE

MARCH is shaping up as a very busy month, with lots of activities and religious festivals.

NSW Seniors Festival – March 11-24
The Premier’s Gala Concerts are on Wednesday 13 and Thursday 14 March, two sessions each day at 11am and 2.45pm at the ICC Sydney Theatre. Audience members are asked to reach beyond and wear purple for the performances. Tickets are free and available online from Ticketek or by phone: 02 9215 700. You can also register to live stream the concerts at: www.events.humantix.com/2024-premier-s-gala-concerts-live-stream

Seniors Festival Expo 2024 also at ICC Sydney Hall K on March 13 and 14 from 9am-3pm.

Marrickville Fashion Frenzy Saturday 15 and Sunday March 16
Marrickville Town Hall, Marrickville Road
This 2024 Frenzy is presented by Dress for Success, and features pre-loved clothing and accessories, starting at \$5 per item. Entry is by ticket only, and there are various times and price levels for

each day. For tickets and all the details contact: www.events.humantix.com/march-2024-fashion-frenzy-sydney

Harmony Week 2024 March 15-21
The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The theme for this year is EVERYONE BELONGS.

The Bourbaki Ensemble Concert – Longing for Peace Sunday March 17 at 2.30pm
St Georges Hall (above Corelli Café, King Street, Newtown)
The Bourbaki Ensemble is a chamber string orchestra based in Newtown, and the concert will feature classical and works by Australian composers, conducted by David Angell. Tickets are various prices, including discounts for the under 30s. www.trybooking.com/events/1175683

Other Dates for March 2024
Ramadan March 9–April 8
St Patrick’s Day March 17
Purim March 23-24
Holi (Hindu Festival of Colours) March 25
Easter Sunday March 31 (Orthodox Easter is May 5 this year)

Pat Clarke
volunteers@ssh.com.au