

the South Sydney Herald

Number Two Hundred and Forty Three ~ December 2024

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Joe Ambour in his hardware store in Redfern Street. Photo: Lucy Gleeson

Ambour Hardware – end of an era

LOCALS

LUCY GLEESON

IT'S the end of an era for Redfern. After 55 years of serving the community, Joe and Marie Ambour, longtime owners of Ambour Hardware, are closing the doors.

An institution on Redfern Street, Ambour has supplied locals and travelling tradies with all the supplies, tools and advice needed to complete projects of any size.

The shop has been operated by Joe's family since 1958, with Joe taking over from his brother in the early 1970s. After decades of six-day weeks spent stocking shelves, cutting keys and timber, Joe says he's ready for retirement.

"I started when I was 19 with my brother, and 12 years after that I bought it from him and have been here ever since. So, it's been 55 years," he said.

"I just want to get rid of the business and have my own life back again, because I've been here too long and think I need a break."

The inner handyman in Joe won't leave when he closes

up shop. He said that after retirement he's still willing to help others out with odd jobs, whether that's "changing their taps, or anything else".

Over the years, Joe and Marie have been loyal supporters of the *South Sydney Herald*, keeping copies of the monthly paper available at their store counter for customers to take home or flip through.

As their doors prepare to close, Joe and Marie are looking forward to enjoying their retirement, taking the time to relax, spend time with family, and possibly travel.

"We have a lot of other things to do at home, working six days a week there isn't time to do anything else. We have to clean up everything, then after that we can go for a holiday," Joe said.

"I'm 74, it's time to retire and find someone who really wants to buy hardware. If I can't find anyone, I'll just have to put all the goods for sale and reduce the stock."

Small, family-owned businesses like Ambour keep Redfern's heart beating strong. We, like many others, will be

sad to see them go, but we wish them luck on the next exciting, and hopefully more relaxed, chapter of their lives.

"To come here every day, year after year, it goes by so quick," Joe said.

Ambour Hardware will be closing its doors in January 2025. Be sure to visit the store at 93a Redfern Street for discounted items, or contact Joe with any queries about purchasing stock on (02) 8937 0556.

SSH



The hardware store in Redfern Street. Photo: Andrew Collis



The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) has been selected as the recipient of the 2024 Sydney Peace Prize, for courageous and highly regarded humanitarian work that serves our common humanity. In a year marking the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, and amid unprecedented challenges to respect for international humanitarian law, the work of the global Movement is as important as it has ever been. The Peace Prize was presented by the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore AO to Mr Jagan Chapagain (pictured), CEO and Secretary General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies on November 18.

Photo: Michelle Haywood

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Transforming a Redfern car park into affordable aged care

FIRST PEOPLES

SSH

REDFERN: The City of Sydney is calling for expressions of interest to redevelop a council car park into a not-for-profit aged care facility for at least 50 older people.

Proposals are invited from registered not-for-profit residential aged care providers to design, build and operate the facility at 49 Cope Street. The project will be delivered by or in partnership with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations or providers.

Lord Mayor of Sydney Clover Moore AO said that while housing is the responsibility of the NSW government, the City of Sydney is being as creative as possible with land it manages to help those who need it most.

"There is a desperate need for culturally appropriate aged care in inner Sydney. We're selling this site for a token \$1 to a community housing provider on the condition it delivers aged care in perpetuity, and



Mural by Uncle Roy Kennedy, Cope Street, Redfern. Photo: Andrew Collis

a 55-space community car park under the development," the Lord Mayor said.

"This makes the affordable and diverse housing project viable, while locals will continue to have space to park their cars.

"We've heard what Redfern residents want and will make

sure Aboriginal organisations and communities are at the centre of the delivery and operation of this new project."

The City of Sydney is also transferring 240sqm of existing space on Cope Street to Wyanga Aboriginal Aged Care to keep as an outdoor area.

Visit cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/opportunities/build-run-affordable-residential-aged-care-facility-redfern or scan the QR code to find out more about this project and to submit a proposal. Applications must be lodged by 11am Thursday December 19.



The Birdman of Glebe

LOCALS

TOM MEHIGAN

GLEBE: Outside Le Petit Tarte Café and Patisserie, most days of the week, is Jethro and his lorikeet, Rosie.

Rosie's portable home is a plastic "bubble" which provides Rosie with security, food, shelter and exercise.

Passersby and tourists stop to ask Jethro about Rosie and perhaps watch as she takes a bath or plays with a dangling cord while lying on her back, as Jethro takes charge of the game.

"Father" Jethro takes his job seriously, constantly checking Rosie has plenty to eat and drink.

What has established an even tighter bond between them occurred one day a few months ago.

It was a cold and blustery day. Rosie was placed on a branch of a tree to exercise and find suitable food. The tree lay near a pond in Victoria Park



Jethro and Rosie at Le Petit Tarte in Glebe. Photo: Andrew Collis

next to Sydney University.

A sudden massive gust of wind sent Rosie flying into the sky, landing her into the pond 50 metres away.

Taken by surprise, Jethro

started an anxious search for his baby of almost a year.

Upward of half an hour passed before Jethro spotted her.

Struggling to get out of the pond, she had climbed up reeds

at water's edge until she reached a concrete construction nearby.

At this point, Jethro saw her and used a shawl he had to lower to her so she could climb up the shawl to be reunited with him.



An official ceremony was held on November 24 to mark the 90th anniversary of the opening of the Anzac War Memorial in 1934. Photo: Michelle Haywood



Remembrance Day 2024, Sydney Opera House. Photo: Michelle Haywood

TANYA PLIBERSEK MP

Federal Member for Sydney



Dear SSH readers

The Albanese Labor Government's economic plan is about helping people with their cost of living while fighting inflation and building a skilled, more productive and fairer nation.

Student debt relief

The Government is **cutting 20 per cent from all student loans** and making it easier to repay, beginning July 1 next year.

At present you begin repaying the your once you start earning around \$54,000 a year. We will increase the threshold to \$67,000 in 2025-26 so you don't begin repayments until you're earning more. We will also introduce a system where repayments are based on the portion of your income above the threshold income level, so you pay less overall.

This means that person with an average HELP debt of \$27,600 will see around \$5,520 wiped from their HELP loans next year.

This builds on the changes we have already made to **ensure student debts don't grow faster than average wages.**

Anyone with HELP, VET Student Loan, Australian Apprenticeship Support Loan or student support loan debts will benefit.

All up, we are **wiping close to \$20 billion off student debt.**

Guaranteeing fee-free TAFE for skills in demand

We are introducing legislation to ensure there are 100,000 fee-free TAFE places each year from 2027.

This builds on the Albanese Government's partnership with states and territories which has already delivered more than 508,000 enrolments in courses like disability and aged care, digital tech, construction and early childhood education.

Landmark legislation to properly fund public schools

We have just passed **landmark legislation** in the House of Representatives to **increase funding for public schools.** For the first **time it will allow the federal government to ensure our public schools are fully funded** and tie that funding to reforms to help students catch up, keep up and finish school.

Over the last eight years the percentage of students finishing high school has dropped, from 83 per cent to 73 per cent in public schools.

We need to turn this around and that's what this legislation is about.

The Better and Fairer Schools (Funding and Reform) Bill 2024 **enables the Commonwealth to lift its share of funding to public schools above the 20 per cent introduced by Malcolm Turnbull.**

The Albanese Government has put **\$16 billion of additional investment for public schools** on the table to help fill that gap.

This is **the biggest extra investment in public education by any Australian Government in this country's history.**

Better pay for early childhood educators and fee caps

We have also introduced **legislation to ensure early educators are fairly paid.**

The Wage Justice for Early Childhood Education and Care Workers (Special Account) Bill 2024 which **will deliver funding for a 15 per cent wage increase will tie child care centres to a commitment to limit fee increases.** We want to make sure workers are fairly paid without passing the the costs onto families.

From August 2024 **centres that receive funding for wage increases won't be able to increase their fees more than 4.4 per cent over the next 12 months. Fees in the second year of the wage subsidy will also be limited.**

We're working hard to get inflation back to where it should be so that you get to earn more and keep more of what you earn and don't pay more than you should.

Merry Christmas

Wishing you all a happy, safe summer and festive season and please remember to contact my electorate office should you need any assistance during this period.

Tanya



TANYA PLIBERSEK MP
Federal Member for Sydney

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JENNY LEONG MP
MEMBER FOR NEWTOWN



No grounds evictions finally banned

After over a decade of campaigning locally in Newtown and across the state, the NSW Parliament has finally passed laws to ban unfair no grounds evictions.

Once the changes come into effect in early 2025, landlords will no longer be able to evict tenants without a reason, regardless of whether they've always paid rent on time or looked after the property.

Instead, they'll have to give one of a specific list of reasons including undertaking major renovations or works to the rental home or moving back into the home themselves. Landlords will also have to provide evidence to support their reasoning, and will face steep financial penalties if they provide false or misleading evidence when providing a reason for terminating a lease.

These changes will make a huge impact on the housing security and stability of the more than two million people who rent in NSW, and are the bedrock on which we can continue to build for more protections for renters – like minimum energy efficiency standards and controls on rental increases.

The long-overdue reforms are also a gamechanger for all the renters who hesitate to challenge a rent hike out of fear of a retaliatory eviction, and everyone living in substandard conditions who are afraid to ask for essential repairs or maintenance for the same reason.

These changes wouldn't have been possible without years of consistent pressure and campaigning from tenants' advocates, housing experts, grassroots groups, activists, legal centres, unions and The Greens to keep renters' rights on the agenda.

When I first put my hand up to be the Member for Newtown over a decade ago, I committed to getting these reforms done. Now, thanks to the thousands who backed our campaigns to expand renters' rights and end no grounds evictions we've finally seen MPs from all sides of politics finally back this critical reform.

The new rental laws will also affect the way people in rentals can request permission to keep a pet, limit rent increases to one per year for all lease types, and make it illegal for tenants to be billed for their own background check.

Want to know more about what the changes will mean for you? Join our renters' town hall at the Inner West Pride Centre at Newtown Town Hall at 5.30-6.30PM on Tuesday 3 December to learn more – RSVP using the QR code below or visit www.jennyleong.org/renterstownhall



Authorised by Jenny Leong MP. Funded using parliamentary entitlements.



Students at the University of Sydney have created a guide to help their peers use AI responsibly and productively for smarter learning. Photo: Supplied

Learning to use AI responsibly and productively

SPONSORED

MARK SCOTT

A new online resource, co-designed by students and staff at the University of Sydney, shows how generative AI can be used productively and responsibly in assessment and learning.

Over a series of "hackathons", students created AI in Education, a publicly available website that shows how to use AI at university without cheating, to enhance the learning experience.

The site offers advice on writing prompts, acknowledging the technology's use in assignments, and using AI across different disciplines, from Arts and Social Sciences to Engineering and IT. It also provides ideas about how generative AI can help students learn at university and succeed in life after graduation. For example, the technology can explain complex concepts, help brainstorm ideas, proofread, or provide practise questions for job interviews.

"The truth is that many students know more about AI than most of us," said Professor Adam Bridgeman, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Educational Innovation). "They're going to be using this technology for 50 or 60 years so it's essential we equip them to use it productively and responsibly. It makes sense that we collaborate with our students as we embed AI into their educational experience."

The group behind AI in Education includes domestic and international students from a range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

"It was fantastic to collaborate with staff and students and meet people from so many disciplines. Everyone brought a different perspective to the issue," said Abigail Bobkowski, who is in her fourth year of a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Advanced Studies. "In taking part, I got a clearer sense on how I can use gen-AI in my studies and assignments."

As well as creating clear guidelines about ethical use, the students wanted the website

to demonstrate the potential of AI to boost learning, drawing on their own experiences. Bobkowski, for instance, uses the technology in her work as an academic English tutor. She uses AI to generate written passages with poor grammar, which her students then analyse and correct.

Another participant in the project, PhD student Yihong (Annie) Yuan, uses AI to help generate and critique ideas. Yuan's research in the School of Computer Science focuses on the role of AI in education.

"AI is like the best teammate you can have," she said. "It's always available and you can use it as an extension of your own knowledge and ideas. I might ask it to critique my thinking based on a particular framework. I don't always agree with what it says, but it sometimes raises things I haven't considered."

Jack Quinlan, a third-year student in a Bachelor of Engineering Honours and Bachelor of Science came to the project with excitement about how students can harness and shape emerging technologies.

"AI tools have a breadth equal to your imagination," he said. "They work like a mirror in that they reflect what you put in. If we put in optimism and creativity, we'll make it a powerful and positive tool for student engagement and learning."

AI in teaching and learning: University of Sydney initiatives

AI in Education is part of a range of University initiatives helping students and staff use generative AI effectively. The institution was named AI University of the Year in the 2024 Future Campus Awards, in recognition of its leadership in the field. Professor Danny Liu from the University's Educational Innovation Team won the award for Best Use of AI in Learning and Teaching for work including his leadership of the AI in Education project.

The University has partnered with Microsoft to make Copilot for Web, a generative AI tool, available to students and staff for free. Alongside the AI in Education

resource, workshops and training sessions are available for staff and students, boosting understanding of the technology and its use in education and assessment.

Professor Liu developed Cogniti, an AI assistant for students in use across more than 300 units of study. The tool allows teachers to create customised AI agents that can be steered with instructions and subject-specific information. Overseen by teachers, these AI agents can answer students' questions about content and syllabus, and provide instant personalised feedback, guidance and support, 24 hours a day.

Educators at the University set assignments that teach and encourage students to collaborate responsibly with generative AI, focusing on assessing the process of learning as well as the product. This is balanced with supervised assessments that restrict or control the use of AI. Inappropriate use of AI to generate content is identified as a form of contract cheating under the University's Academic Integrity Policy.

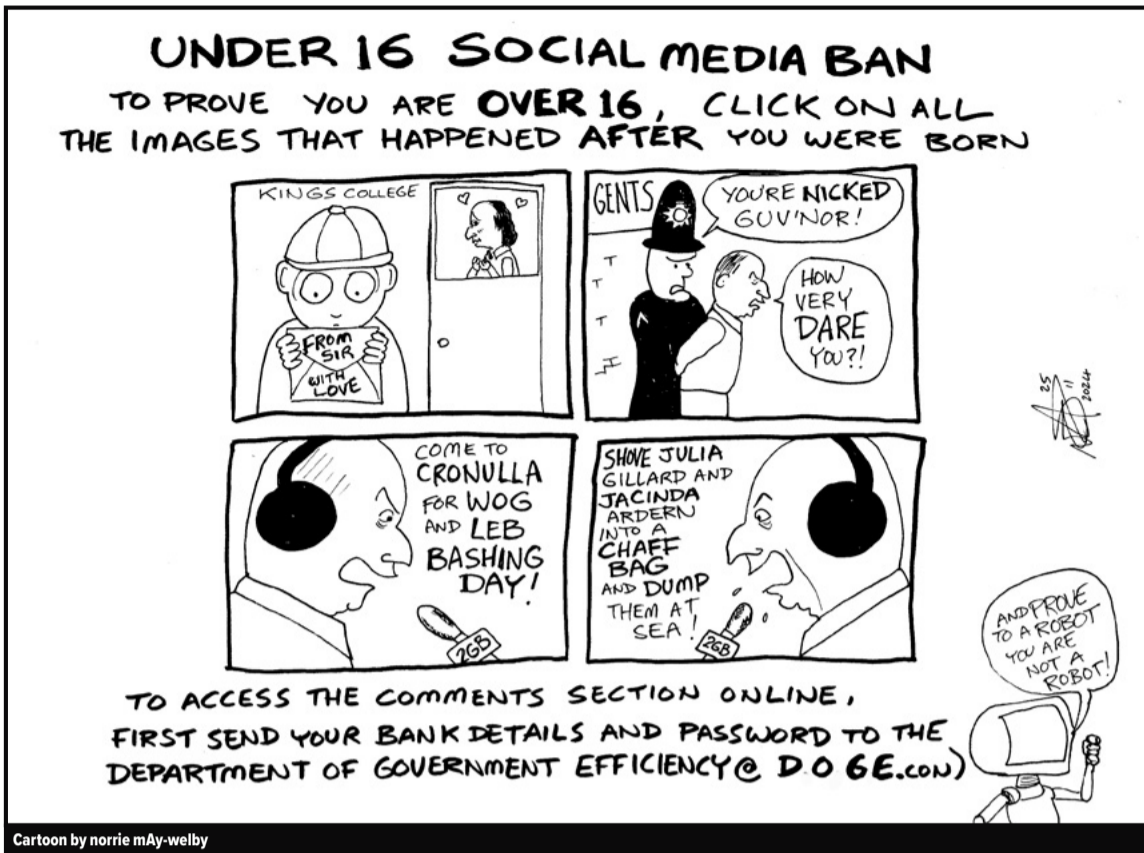
"What we don't want is an environment where students use AI but don't tell us about it," said Professor Bridgeman. "It's important to provide clarity around how and when it can be responsibly used."

"Using AI is a bit like using a calculator to solve a hard maths problem. It's not cheating to pick up the calculator, but you need to know and be able to show your methodology. And you're cheating yourself if you don't learn how to use it properly."

"If AI makes it easier for students to get through their degrees, we need to rethink the nature of assessment and create new challenges that prepare them for a future where this technology is an intrinsic part of life and work." SSW



Authorised by Vice-Chancellor and President Prof. Mark Scott.
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Cartoon by norrie mAy-welby

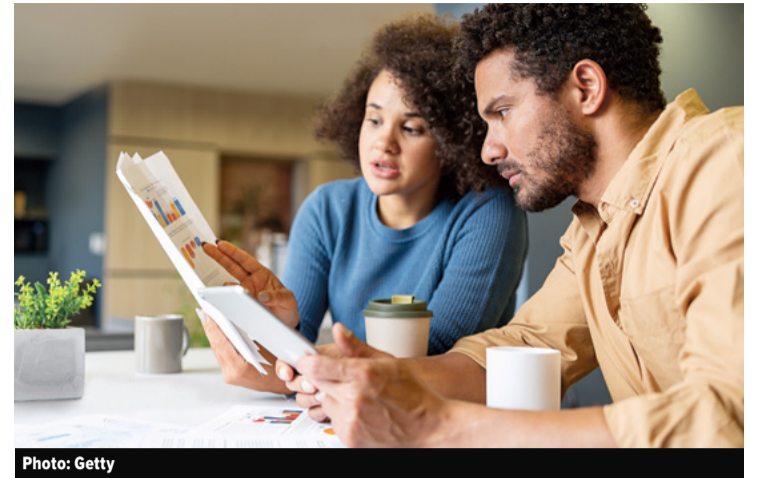


Photo: Getty

'Adulting'

RELIGION & ETHICS

PHILOSOPHIA AT HOME

DO you often have trouble "adulting"? Heaven knows, I do. This month's column is a reassuring reminder, going out to everyone who struggles with the endless, merciless administrative demands of the modern world.

The term *adulthood* was first used in 1929 by J.H. Doyle, and then briefly in the 1980s as a jocular verb form of *adultery*, but it has really come into its own in recent decades, especially among millennials on the internet. It still has a jocular aspect, but now we joke darkly about the difficulties of modern survival and keeping our little worlds running.

Unsurprisingly, that tracks with the frenetic, 21st-century growth of general bureaucratic obligation among western populations, as more and more people grapple with more and more inflexible government regulations, an overloaded justice system, easier purchasing paths, the constant bombardment of advertising in an increasingly treacherous economic landscape, complex literacy requirements, growing documentation demands, diverse claims on time, energy, bandwidth and brainpower, from the burdens of compliance to the cost of service fees, late fees, delivery fees, insurance fees – indeed, the entire, monstrous cost of living in an overblown capitalist democracy.

Some lucky few of us have all the resources we need – but the fact is, the vast majority

of people struggle one way or another, or several. Our society dwells obsessively on the hero's journey for the simple reason that so few of us get to live lives that feel in any way heroic – we're flat out putting food on the table, staying out of trouble and, if we're lucky, having a little fun and maybe ending up with a not-too-wretched old age. Heroic? It's fundamental to the hero's journey that it culminates in glory, proving it can be done – but not by most of us. We're reduced to counting simple survival as heroic – and all too often, it truly is.

If you are afflicted by trauma, or suffering one or more mental health conditions from the "Western disease paradigm" – if you are depressed, anxious or bipolar, have ADHD, autism or schizophrenia – you are likely to have problems with executive function. Executive function is a set of cognitive skills and mental processes that enable us to set goals and get things done – plan, regulate emotions, monitor progress and solve problems. In other words, they help you adult. The internet will tell you that executive functioning skills can be improved by consistent practice and monitoring – and of course they can.

But I want to tell you that if consistent practice is beyond you just now, start by spending regular time walking among trees and breathing fresh air.

***Philosophia**
Philosophia is a YouTube channel promoting intersectional, activist philosophy. Its core principles are radical reasoning and radical love. Email philosophiaathome@gmail.com

A fairer approach to drug use and dependency

EDITORIAL

SSH

THE NSW Drug Summit will conclude at the International Convention Centre on December 4 and 5.

The government has announced the summit will focus on five key themes. These themes represent the outcomes being sought to benefit the community: health promotion and wellbeing; equity, respect and inclusion; safety and justice; keeping young people safe and supporting families; integrated support and social services.

The key questions that will be asked at the summit are how responses to drug use, drug dependence and drug harms in NSW can be addressed in ways which enhance each of these five outcomes.

The government has appointed former NSW Deputy Premier Carmel Tebbutt and former NSW Leader of the Opposition John Brogden as co-chairs of the Summit. The role of the co-chairs will be to help facilitate discussion as participants share insights and develop a report on the summit outcomes.

Uniting Fair Treatment will be in the room advocating for better laws and more treatment

and harm reduction initiatives.

Over 70 organisations are partners of the Fair Treatment campaign. They have joined with the Uniting Church and Uniting to call for a fairer and more compassionate approach to drug use and dependency and for our laws to be based on evidence rather than stigma.

Partners align with Fair Treatment's two main aims: law reform for a primary health-response to personal possession of currently illicit drugs or "decriminalisation" and; more funding for alcohol and other drug treatment services.

www.fairtreatment.org



City of Sydney has narrowed the western footpath of Bridge Street, used to access Erskineville station's concourse, to just 1.3 metres. Photo: Christopher Standen

Unlawful footpath narrowing in Erskineville

URBAN DESIGN

CHRISTOPHER STANDEN

HAVE you noticed that many footpaths throughout South Sydney have been narrowed in recent years to make space for new garden beds? That some are now too narrow for a wheelchair, or for people to walk side by side or overtake? Not to mention the advertising signs, share bikes and parked cars blocking footpaths.

Greening our streets is welcome, of course. It cleans our air, provides cooling, and reduces flooding. But it needn't compromise accessibility, which is a fundamental human right. About 80 per cent of a typical residential street is roadway, leaving only 20 per cent for footpaths. If garden beds were built out into roadways instead of in footpaths, accessibility could be maintained, and the resulting traffic calming would make

our streets safer and quieter.

A particularly callous example of council's footpath-narrowing agenda can be seen in Bridge and Ashmore streets in Erskineville. These connect fast-growing residential areas with Erskineville's station, schools and shops.

While the NSW government recently spent about \$20 million on accessibility upgrades for the station, the council has been busy making the surrounding

footpaths inaccessible – narrowing them to as little as 70cm in places. A wheelchair needs 85cm and council's own accessibility guidelines stipulate a minimum width of 180cm (allowing two wheelchairs/prams to pass).

In a breach of its own Community Engagement Guidelines, council staff did not consult the community before undertaking these works.

In response to community anger over the footpath narrowing, the Lord Mayor and council staff attended an on-site community meeting earlier this year. They saw how the narrowed footpaths were forcing commuters and schoolchildren to share the roadway with traffic.

They agreed to investigate options to make it safer for people to walk on the roadway, and to create a few short passing bays on the footpaths. But they refused to reinstate the footpaths to the minimum width. They also confirmed they would continue to narrow footpaths across City of Sydney without consultation.

Intentionally degrading access for people with disability is unlawful under Australia's Disability Discrimination Act. That's why I've referred the council to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Dr Chris Standen is a research fellow in urban development and health at the University of NSW.

The Review

Arts & Culture in
Your Neighbourhood

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'Creativity is in us'

An interview with Johannes Geppert (#3)

ART

ANDREW COLLIS

JOHANNES (Johnny) Geppert is a Surry Hills-based artist. His studio-gallery on Crown Street, Collage Atelier, is open for exhibitions as well as weekly workshops in drawing, painting and collage. Framed and canvas artworks are available for purchase. In this third of three articles, Johnny reflects on colour and creativity, and the personal and communal aspects of artistic practice.

I think natural and earthy colours are calming to the mind. We've lived in the natural environment for tens of thousands of years I guess, a long time having around us just earthy natural tones and textures, and suddenly we are hit with a lot of concrete, a lot of neon ...

I feel that bringing back natural colours, working with natural textures and tones, and creating collage with these clouds, green grass, paddock, trees, sky, things like that, it lets you reconnect to the environment, revalue the environment. It connects you on

a spiritual level because as you paint clouds and things like that, it's almost abstract, and that's what I want to teach in my class, for people to really cut loose.

As you paint the clouds, as you paint the ocean, it's like you become the wind or the clouds. It maybe sounds a bit abstract, but as you do it and as you become aware of it, it really does that. And we cut out a lot of the noise that's unimportant.

And with some real people around you, fellow artists who love you whatever you do, whether you're up or down, you have some nice interesting conversations about art and culture and then you share what you have as well: "Look at my texture that I found, look at my material that I found".

I want to preserve the process of art. Sometimes, with AI especially, you give instructions to the computer and it creates something. You hit certain buttons and you have that melody ready. But back in the day we used to go, "Oh, look at this guitar pedal that I've got. Yeah, Jimmy's got the old one from Roland, he found it in an old vintage shop, listen to that." And five or six youths would come around, sit around the guitar pedals, try them out,



Johannes Geppert in his Surry Hills studio. Photo: Andrew Collis

connect them in different ways ...

And that's the process behind art, making art, making music, and when that's lost, our youth is lost.

Some people say, "Ooh, I'm not creative, I don't believe." I think from when we are born into this world, we are creative. Creativity is in us.

When I was in school, I had no

idea there was a creative bone in my body because I was not giving myself any credit or permission. And very gradually I realised there is something there. It's important that both young people and old people discover they can do something creative, they can either paint or do photography

or cook or do something with crafts – starting to be a maker.

Whenever you make something, you build a strong identity around yourself, and it builds structure and you become more observant. And when we have that in community, then we keep meeting again and the conversation is much more real and in-depth.

Same with our music. As we go through our practice, we learn to listen more, we listen to all the layers of music and the complexities, and we find out who the composers are and how they used to do it. And then there is philosophy and meaning within the lyrics and we learn about that, and that expands our horizons.

As we meet in community, the conversation becomes much more layered. And that's what Australia is missing – Sydney and other places as well.

Another thing I feel is when you have that inner strength through something creative, you gain confidence. After a while you draw the lines, you draw the clouds, you paint everything how you want it, and all of a sudden you're like, "Oh wow, I have a visual voice and I have the confidence and it's working out and people are liking it."

Collage Atelier

558 Crown Street, Surry Hills
Thu-Fri 4-9pm; Sat-Sun 4-7pm
www.collageatelier.com

Sisters telling otherworldly stories

BOOKS

ELIZABETH ARRIGO

NINE young people were invited to Story Factory in September for the Novella Kitchen, a two-day, bite-sized, book-writing bootcamp that gave them a taste of Story Factory's Year of the Novella program – and the challenge of writing an entire novella in a single weekend.

Sisters Amelia (Year 6) and Ella New (Year 9) took on this challenge together, brainstorming, drafting, editing and typing their way to victory. With the help of professional Storytellers (the educators facilitating the workshop), their completed novellas, *The Things That Fall from the Sky*, and *Monster*, are due to be published and launched by Story Factory this month.

"Novella Kitchen was a really creative workshop; I loved the atmosphere and the set-up," said Amelia. "It had everything young writers might have needed, like snacks. The Storytellers were really supportive and overall it was just really great."

"It was good to have an outline of what we needed to do and goals to work towards, but it was also flexible at the same time, which I found really worked for me," said Ella.

Both big fantasy fans, Amelia and



Ella and Amelia New. Photo: Supplied

Ella took inspiration from the books they love to read, and wrote two different stories set in other worlds.

"My novella is about a teenage boy who has the ability to pull down and throw stars," Amelia said. "There's a connection between him and the stars, but his powers start to go wrong – all the stars start falling and exploding on impact."

Ella said: "My novella follows the main character, Takari, who has been a pirate all her life.

When her crew runs into trouble with monsters behaving weirder than

usual, it throws her whole identity and way of life into question."

Amelia and Ella love to write, and found Story Factory's Novella Kitchen a great place to explore all their ideas. They have many more stories on the horizon.

"I loved the whole weekend; it was just all so good," said Amelia. "I have lots and lots of story ideas and am planning on continuing to write for as long as possible."

"There was something so cool about Novella Kitchen, especially at the end," added Ella.

"No one was talking, everyone was just getting down to it, trying to finish their novella."

With a plethora of programs running in 2025, Story Factory is looking forward to welcoming Amelia and Ella back, along with any other young people out there who love to write.

An excerpt from *The Things That Fall from the Sky* by Amelia New:

I should probably introduce myself before continuing. I'm Valmin Kingson, and I'm 17. Is that too

young for a villain? Absolutely.

I didn't ask for my powers, and I don't know how I got them.

This is the story of the biggest and probably scariest day of my life. Most of you probably picked this book up thinking: Fiction!

I wish it was. But if that's good for you, keep reading. It's fine if you think this is a work of imagination.

So go ahead, enjoy my stress and near-death experiences.

Happy reading.

An Excerpt from *Monster* by Ella New:

When I woke up this morning, getting thrown 10 metres in the air by a giant tentacle was not on my to-do list. In my defence, the kraken attached to the tentacle snuck up on me. You'd be surprised to find how stealthy a monster that big can be ...

Alright, time for introductions. My name is Takari Thalassa and I am a pirate.

On board the most magnificent ship of all time, *The Siren's Bane*, we were facing a rather ... tricky situation. Our boat had a lovely gaping hole in its dark blue sail, everyone was madly chopping at anything tentacle-esque, and the deep-green kraken that had just burst up the side of our ship was opening its gaping maw wide – man, do those things ever brush their teeth?

Film Review by Lindsay Cohen



Gladiator II

Director: Ridley Scott
Starring: Paul Mescal, Denzel Washington, Pedro Pascal
Genre: Crowe-sequel

Should a film set in ancient times be historically accurate and politically correct? If it is politically correct then can it possibly be historically accurate? And vice versa?

This was the dilemma while watching *Gladiator II*, the sequel to the also historically and politically questionable *Gladiator*. But does it matter?

I was probably overthinking these things while watching *Gladiator II*, which like its predecessor is mostly memorable for its great action and fighting scenes (featuring Russell Crowe, of course) in ancient Roman contexts. An irony is that modern technologically impressive CGI (Computer Generated Imagery) in the new film results in even more extreme fight scenes between soldiers, gladiators and animals. More extreme, but also more historically inaccurate.

Gladiator II is simply great, mindless fun. Ignore the hard-to-believe, two-dimensional human relationships, and the supposed politically correct and political messaging. Just enjoy the scale of battles and the fighting animals which weren't ever a thing in the Coliseum – not that there's anything wrong with riding a rhino or condemning your "bad guys" to shark attacks. So, boo the "villains" and cheer on the "good guys"!

And while it may be a challenge, ignore too the huge number of gruesome deaths, though that's probably the most historically accurate part of the film.

Ultimately, like most action-focused past (historical) films, and future (science-fiction) films, the easiest thing to do nearly always is just embrace movie fantasy and the non-science fiction.

Rating: Three empires.

Theatre Review by Yvonne Hocothee



August: Osage County
Writer: Tracy Letts
Director: Eamon Flack
Belvoir Street Theatre
Until December 15, 2024

Belvoir's excellent production of Tracy Letts' Tony and Pulitzer awarded masterpiece is an engrossing tragicomedy with a brilliant ensemble cast.

Eamon Flack's direction of this brilliant script is admirable, managing to keep the various subplots and intermingling action clear and understandable. This is assisted by the simplified set (Bob Cousins) showing a ramshackle clapboard homestead evoking the Midwest character of the play's setting.

The story follows the dysfunctional history of the Weston family. Beverly Weston (John Howard), the family patriarch, was once a noted poet, but age and alcoholism has reduced him to a shambolic shadow of his former self. At play's opening he is interviewing a young Cheyenne girl (Bee Cruse) for a live-in domestic position and as carer for his narcotics-addicted wife, Violet (Pamela Rabe), who can be heard moaning and screaming in the background.

It is high summer in the Midwest and the depressed Beverly goes off on an apparent fishing trip but commits suicide by drowning. Violet's mean-spirited,

contentious nature has estranged her family but with the loss of their father, she calls on them to gather around her.

As the various family members arrive, we gain insight into their fractured relationships and family skeletons get hauled out of cupboards. Barbara (Tamsin Carroll), Violet's eldest daughter, married to Bill (Bert LaBonté), is bent on hiding her impending separation and is in constant conflict with her mother; Ivy (Amy Mathews), the middle daughter, is constantly being criticised for being single; Karen (Anna Samson), the flighty youngest daughter, arrives with Steve (Rohan Nichol), a somewhat sleazy character, whom she announces she will be marrying. Mattie Fae (Helen Thomson), big-haired and opinionated, is Violet's sister. She constantly berates and belittles her husband and son, Charles (Greg Stone) and Little Charles (Will O'Mahony).

The family's fortunes are an illustration of the failed American dream. From hardscrabble beginnings some of the family rose to middle class status, but that achievement is gradually being eroded by personal choices or social circumstances.

At the post-funeral dinner any show of familial cohesion begins to unravel. Violet, high on her drugs and wanting to make a show of matriarchal power, sets about insulting and embarrassing each person at the table under the pretence of "truth-telling". Barbara is infuriated and confiscates her pills, yelling "I'm in charge now!" The dinner ends in comical chaos, with trays of food being slung around the set.

Further ruckus ensues when Steve, Karen's sleazy boyfriend, makes advances to Jean (Esther Williams), Barbara's teenage daughter, but is foiled by Johnna who hits him with a shovel. This is a "last straw" for everyone and they all scatter to their own homes. Violet sinks to the floor, alone in her addiction and despair, while Johnna, almost a ghostly presence, meanders pensively across the stage.

Pamela Rabe and John Howard are outstanding in this world-class performance, as are all the actors in this ensemble, each delivering a well-rounded, believable character.

The sober themes are lightened by dark humour throughout, and despite the three-hour-plus length it is completely engrossing – an excellent end-of-year offering by Belvoir and really should not be missed!

Theatre Review by Catherine Skipper



Dance Clan 24
Bangarra Dance Theatre
Artistic Director: Frances Rings
Bangarra Studio Theatre
November 29 – December 14, 2024

Dance Clan 24 is exciting, challenging, beautiful and groundbreaking. A unique programme, *Dance Clan* nurtures a new generation of artists by offering young members the opportunity to create original works reflecting both their personal story and their cultural heritage. While the programme emphasises mentorship it also encourages experimentation and fresh viewpoints.

For instance the first piece choreographed by Kallum Goolagong, a young Wiradjuri and Darkinjung man, titled "Metamorphosis" explores the theme of transformation, the idea conveyed by a striking stage setting (Annaliese McCarthy) of cocoon-like forms. While the concept is not unusual in traditional Indigenous performances, the dancers' costumes and movements have a distinctive Japanese feel to them, revealing Goolagong's personal involvement with Zen. However, the opening sequence is pure Bangarra as a dancer emerges from a cocoon,

apparently alone, but we become aware that there are others – silently, softly, and magically – present.

In a boldly innovative move, "Brown Boys", Daniel Mateo's dance film, co-directed with Cass Mortimer Eipper, is a first for *Dance Clan*. Inspired by his poetry, the multi-disciplinary Mateo, a Gamilaroi and Tongan man, explores his need to be comfortable in his own body through feeling he is at one with the land. Initially, a close-up of flesh immediately makes the connection between the skin and the land, the contours of the body and of the earth, interposed by the image of his eye, both reflective and challenging. We are asked to see, not just look, at the colour of skin as emblematic of a deep and vital connection to country. The setting (Elizabeth Gatsby) once again is significant as what begins as an enclosure opens out to form a star.

The last piece, "Yawuru Buru", choreographed by the very beautiful dancer, Lillian Banks, a Yawuru woman from Broome, honours her mother and homeland. The costumes which evoke either sea or shore, are based on designs made by her mother and Lillian's dance story enshrines her unbreakable connection with Broome. Perhaps the superb stage setting (AnnaLiese McCarthy), a striking arrangement of net, apart from its clever use to suggest below the sea or waves rushing the pipis into the baskets of gatherers, might also convey how thoroughly her distant home is enmeshed in memory. Banks' choreography shows her gift for physicalising the ideas and emotions she wants to communicate, all of which are precisely and passionately executed by the ensemble of dancers.

Artistic director, the lovely Francis Rings, is justifiably proud of her young artists, not just choreographers and dancers but also the very important composers, lighting, set design and costume design who have created a truly memorable evening.

Fairgoers support local arts activities

ART

ANDREW COLLIS

WATERLOO: I Cantarini is a Sydney-based group of madrigal singers and lovers of early modern music. The group performed a stunning set of Spring-inspired songs to open this year's Orchard Gallery Spring Fair on November 23.

The art fair, at South Sydney Uniting Church, is a fundraiser for regular arts activities at the church including bi-monthly art workshops in painting, drawing, printmaking, flower-making, ceramics and sculpture.

Following I Cantarini's showcase, fairgoers enjoyed a sausage sizzle (thanks to John Lanzky and Ron Harrison), clay workshop (led by Catherine Skipper), silent art auction (with auctioneers Anna Jahjah and Gerry Sont; works donated by local artists) and poetry book launch.

The Wordplay poetry group meets on the first Saturday of the month, and this year's anthology is called *Kaleidoscope*. Edited by Catherine Skipper, the book includes poems in various styles and forms.

Rosalind Flatman read her poem, "Rondeau for Róisín": "Rosie is waiting at the door, / ball of zest in a wiry core, / chases her tail in ecstasy, / leaping in somersaults of glee, / offers her slender rose-gold paw ..."

Carolyn May Miller contributed a wide variety of arts and crafts. Her stall was hugely popular.

"The hand-painted bottle-top fridge magnets are amazing!" one customer said. "I also love the hand-painted wine glasses, bookmarks and cards."

Stefan and Yuri played improvised jazz-rock guitars in the garden. "We'd never played together before," Stefan said.

Attendees were impressed with the duo's vibe. "So cool, smooth; I loved the dynamics," said one. Another commented: "I really appreciate their commitment. This would make a great live album!"

Closing act, Boy Torch, performed original country-blues and rockabilly in the church hall. "We love the acoustics in here," songwriter and vocalist Joe Fenech said.

Boy Torch is Joe, Edmond Kairouz on guitar and Nick Williams on banjo and harmonica. Their set was an assured celebration of country – strong storytelling, big choruses with harmonies.



Stefan and Yuri in Mirrung Garden at South Sydney Uniting Church. Photo: Andrew Collis

The Orchard Gallery Spring Fair raised \$2,500 toward cost of art workshops – teachers and materials. Thanks to sponsors Better Read Than Dead and Hum On King in Newtown; Abu and Nirajan at Woolworths in Redfern and Erskineville.

Workshops and poetry meetings will be held offsite in 2025 while restoration work is carried out at the church.

For updates go to www.southsydneyuniting.org.au

LEICHHARDT UNITING CHURCH PRESENTS
SWEET CHILD O' MINE
A NATIVITY MUSICAL
SAT 21 DECEMBER 7PM

Living with dementia – a carer’s journey 11. End of journey

HUMAN AFFAIRS

ALICIA DONG

MY darling Stuart passed away peacefully on August 27, 2024, the saddest day of my life. The funeral service was a beautiful tribute to his well lived life, thanks to funeral director Stephanie Kelly of www.personalfarewells.com.au, who delivered the service to perfection.

I would like to thank Professor Smerdely for his patience, guidance and support throughout this journey of six years from the diagnosis till the end, who also helped me overcome challenges with his profound clinical knowledge. I will be forever grateful. To this day I remember what he said to me: “Dementia is a terrible beast we all struggle with. It will win in the end.”

Being a partner on the journey that is Alzheimer’s requires more than merely watching others “treat” the illness. A partner must also become part of their loved one’s nonpharmacological treatment. Changing yourself is part of the treatment, as I did with Stuart along the way. I witnessed his deterioration to the finest details, his body language and facial expressions.

Only by spending a significant amount of time with him was I able to notice all those changes and to take immediate action when I noticed the signs of a stroke, unusual lethargy when he had an infection and abnormalities after a fall when he fractured his hip. I was therefore



Image: Gloria Liang

able to send Stuart to hospital in a timely manner, which minimised delays with appropriate treatment. My daily care for Stuart played a vital role in his wellness and health. I regularly reminded the staff and RNs to monitor residents for any abnormalities and unusual behaviours, not simply checking their vital signs.

It is impossible for families who visit their loved ones only occasionally to notice those fine details, instead, they only see their deterioration over a period of time. I saw some families complain about why their loved

ones declined so much, not understanding that spending quality time with their loved ones is an irreplaceable part of treatment and crucial to their wellbeing.

I advocated fiercely for my husband and the residents for better quality of care, I courageously took on all challenges to maintain my

husband’s dignity despite the difficulties. Families play an important part in the partnership with the care facility. Strong advocacy and regular reviews of medications, diet, and general health such as bowel movements are all vital. I worked closely with the RNs, the GP and the geriatrician, and ensured that Stuart was not taking any

medications unnecessarily, especially anti-psychotics. Stuart had hemiarthroplasty surgery after he fractured his hip in late March 2024. I worked closely with the physiotherapists three times a week for my husband’s rehabilitation. Sadly, his improvement slowed after a few weeks and eventually more serious infection took control of his body in late August and he was no longer able to fight the illness.

I am lucky to have so many happy memories that I will cherish forever. I am so proud that we lived a very fulfilled and happy life together and to have been able to continue to give my husband a life of good quality until the very end. I am proud that I was by his side on this journey of six years. He was loved more deeply than most and was in trusted and better care than most. We fought a long battle that in the end we could not win.

My darling Stuart, I wrote your name in the sand, but the waves washed it away, then I wrote it in the sky, but the wind blew it away, so I wrote it in my heart and that’s where it will stay.

Rest in peace my darling husband.

SSH

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The book *Living with Dementia – a Carer’s Journey*, with 11 reflections by Alicia Dong and original artworks by Gloria Liang, will be launched at Paddington Uniting Church (395 Oxford St) at 6pm on February 20, 2025.

Vale Eric Robinson

SPORT

JOHN LANZKY

I pay my respects to a dear friend, Eric (“Ecca”) Robinson, who passed away on November 14, aged 82. My respects to his family. Eric was a fine human being. He was always there with a smile for those who needed him.

Eric played junior football for the Alexandria Rovers and Redfern All Blacks, then the Rabbitohs (between 1960 and 1964), and was awarded Life Membership of the South Sydney Football Club in 2003.

A Bundjalung man, Eric’s legacy reaches across generations. His son Ricky Walford played first grade for Easts, Norths, and St George between 1982 and 1996, while his grandsons, Nathan Merritt and twins Travis and Reece Robinson, have each carved their paths in the sport.

Post his Rabbitohs era, Eric’s prowess saw him through stints with Maitland,



Eric Robinson. Photo: www.rabbitohs.com.au

Brisbane Wests and Bourke, including representing Western Division in the 1970 Caltex NSW Country Championships. His playing days concluded with a return to the Redfern All Blacks in the late 1970s.

Eric was a cornerstone of the Redfern community as an honorary Elder with the Babana Aboriginal Men’s Group. His enduring nickname, “The Legend”, not only reflects his remarkable career but also his role in paving the way for future Aboriginal sports stars. SSH

Volunteers’ News

PAT CLARKE

HOW quickly the end of year has come around. I hope all our readers have enjoyed reading our varied stories in print and online in 2024. The next year will be, I’m sure, just as interesting and thought-provoking. Also enlightening, with Norrie’s insightful and cutting cartoons.

There are lots of Christmas markets and concerts including:

**Alexandria Christmas Concert
 December 15, 6-8pm**

Hosted by The Listies with performers such as The Sticker Club and Poppy Galactic and the Beat, you can sing and dance and join in the Christmas carols. There will be free activities for kids, a fundraising BBQ by the Alexandria Rovers, food trucks, or you can bring a rug and have a picnic. Buses and trains to Green Square will get you there.

**Green Square Christmas Market
 December 21, 10am-4pm**

Green Square Plaza, 355 Botany Road, Zetland. Run by Cambridge Markets, this is a free event.

**Blak Markets at Dawes Pt, The Rocks
 Sunday December 22, 10-4pm**

Indigenous artists, designers and small business owners will showcase their wares for sale: www.blakmarkets.com.au/event/.



Image: sydneyfestival.org.au/events/colour-maze

**Sydney Festival
 January 4-26, 2025**

The biggest summer festival in Sydney will be in the New Year with 130 events across Sydney, from the streets to the beach. Programs are available at your local libraries and stores and you can check out free events online at: www.sydneyfestival.org.au/do-it-on-a-shoestring/.

**Vigil-Truths, Barangaroo Reserve
 7pm, January 25.**

This is a free event, and leading up to the Vigil is Vigil:Gunyah a gathering place at Barangaroo Reserve with a soundscape by Brendon Boney and with various activities over three weeks from January 7 to January 25: www.sydneyfestival.org.au/events/.

NSW Summer School Holidays
 Start Monday December 23 and end Thursday January 30.

THANK YOU to all our amazing volunteers in 2024,

whose talents readers will have to agree are nothing short of true professionalism.

Special thanks to Lucy Gleeson for excellent journalism over the last three issues, and Michelle Haywood for intrepid photojournalism and enthusiasm.

Big thanks to the SSH working group: Lyn, Louisa, Norrie, Matthew and Andrew.

Sincere thanks also to our designer, Rob, who continues to make our pages glow.

We look forward to seeing you all in 2025. Also, our best wishes to our regular contributors, advertisers, readers and friends.

Best wishes for the Festive Season and the holidays.

I hope 2025 might bring some sanity into our war-torn world and ease the suffering of victims and refugees everywhere.

Until next year,
 Pat Clarke.

SSH

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volunteers@ssh.com.au