

the South Sydney Herald

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Uncle Charles (Chicka) Madden. Photo: Lindsay Williams

Always learning, always sharing – 80-plus years serving the community

FIRST PEOPLES

CHARLES MADDEN

HELLO everyone, I'm Charles (Chicka) Madden and people call me Uncle Chicka.

My family are Gadigal people from the local Redfern area. My wife is Lily Gordon, a Bundjalung woman from Baryulgil near Grafton on the north coast. I'm one of six children, and Lily and I have four children and 11 grandchildren. We are very proud of all our grandchildren. Madeline and Miah Madden are both successful actors.

Lily and I met at the Palms milk bar on Regent Street in Redfern many years ago. It was where Aboriginal peoples in the area socialised. In those days, we were restricted from going to hotels and other places. There were lots of restrictions for our people back then.

I worked on the NSW railway for 36 years. There were lots of

Aboriginal peoples working on the railway then. It was one of the only places where Aboriginal peoples could get employment at the time. I worked on the Gladsville Bridge and Qantas House in the city, among many other jobs. I worked as much and as long as I could to support my family.

I went to Redfern Public School, which is now the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence (NCIE). I'm a lifetime member of the local Aboriginal football club, the Redfern All Blacks, and I haven't missed one Koori knockout since it started. I have been part of many boards over the years. I was on the board of the Aboriginal Medical Service for about 40 years and also on the board of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. I'm still very active in the community.

My wife Lily and I love to travel around Australia and overseas. When we were at the Aboriginal Medical Service, we were able to organise a fashion

parade with the young people from the Redfern area. The gowns showcased Aboriginal designs in Paris.

I went to TAFE at Hawkesbury and then to TAFE Eora College in Chippendale where I learned to make ceramic pots. They are very unique and in demand, it turns out. I incorporate a lot of Aboriginal art and native fauna and flora on them. I have gifted my pots to people such as members of the English royal family, the previous Governor-General and the Governor of NSW. I also sold some, but I prefer to give them to my family.

I'm very proud because this year I was nominated for the 2025 National NAIDOC Male Elder Award. NAIDOC is a national annual program that showcases our wonderful culture and people. The ceremony was held in Perth during NAIDOC Week in July.

Ed. – Congratulations to Uncle Harry Phillip Hall and all NAIDOC award recipients.



FBI Managing Director Tyson Koh in FBI's iconic CD library. Photo: Stephen Webb

FBI survives to plan for the next 20 years

MUSIC

STEPHEN WEBB

INDEPENDENT, not-for-profit community radio station FBI has weathered a financial crisis with an emergency fundraising campaign that saw it "live to fight another day".

FBI, with studios located in Alexandria, has been on air since August 2003.

It places a heavy emphasis on local emerging music with a policy that at least 50 per cent of its music content is to be Australian, half from Sydney, "handpicked by people not algorithms".

The station is recognised as an important platform for emerging artists and underrepresented voices not usually heard on mainstream radio.

It is also an incubator for the next generation of Australian radio, media and creative talent, equipping young people with skills and pathways into media, broadcasting and creative work.

In February, faced with a rising operational deficit and declining membership and sponsorship revenue, FBI cut 10 permanent staff and told volunteers it needed to find \$1 million to survive and \$2 million to thrive.

In June, the station asked supporters for \$30,000 to keep the lights on until the end of the financial year.

Tyson Koh – formerly director of anti-lockout campaign Keep Sydney Open and producer of the ABC's music program *Rage* – joined the FBI board and became Managing Director in April.

He said through the appeal FBI was able to receive a lot of support from its listeners and people in the community. It had been a huge boost to the station.

"It's meant that we live to fight another day. Now we have to look to the ongoing support from our listeners as well as sponsors."

Part of FBI's appeal to its donors is that community radio supports the local economy by spotlighting the small businesses, cultural initiatives and neighbourhood icons that make Sydney vibrant.

Mr Koh said FBI was more than just a radio station. "We put on events, we sponsor gigs and festivals and other happenings around the city. So, if we were to vanish, I think that impact would be felt without a doubt."

Mr Koh said, "Ultimately, people need to understand that community-based organisations, not-for-profits like FBI, aren't guaranteed. They need money to exist like any business does."

"Now's the time for our audience to step up and support us in the same way we have supported Sydney music, arts and culture for over 20 years."

You can find FBI on 94.5FM and www.fbi.radio.



Vale Dr Sally Goold OAM Online-only



Folk Bitch Trio's impressive debut Online-only



Theatre - Henry VI Part 3 Online-only



South Sydney Herald

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Is your strata leaking? Recent court case warns owners corporations

LEGAL

ANDREW PAVLI

SOUTH Sydney is home to thousands of strata schemes, from high-rise apartment blocks to converted terrace buildings. Disputes around common property defects such as water leaks are common and a recent decision from NCAT (NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal) and the NSW Supreme Court in 2024 provides essential guidance for both lot owners and strata committees.

In the Selkirk case, a Sydney lot owner suffered damage to their bathroom caused by a long-standing leak from common property. The owners corporation* failed to repair it in a timely manner and the owner sought compensation for lost rent.

The NSW Supreme Court clarified that owners corporations have a strict legal duty under the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015 to maintain common property. But compensation isn't automatic. The owner must also prove the breach caused their loss, and that they didn't contribute to the delay or damage.



Photo: Julia Mikhailitskaia/iStock

With many ageing apartment buildings in Redfern, Surry Hills and Waterloo, common property defects like leaks and balcony defects are frequent. This case reinforces

that owners corporations must act diligently to repair common property defects, and affected owners should document their own conduct if seeking compensation.

SSH

*An owners corporation, previously known as a body corporate, is the legal entity that represents all lot owners in a strata scheme. If you have any questions about strata matters, you can contact NSW Fair Trading via phone on 13 32 20.

Stage One Relocation – cassette tapes, costumes and letting go

LOCALS

NORRIE MAY-WELBY

WHEN I first looked at my old place in Waterloo seven years ago, I was told I would have to move again when the Waterloo Redevelopment Project called for it, so I had been preparing for this possibility, saving boxes from every appliance so they could be safely moved.

Then, I really liked where I lived, in the walk-ups, and didn't think much of the previous Liberal state government's plans to move half a thousand of us for a net long-term gain of a measly few dozen social housing places. When Labor promised to stop privatisation of public housing before the last state election, and then said it would be proceeding with the privatisation of the Waterloo Public Housing estate after the election, I was disappointed. But when they said their new plan would double the amount of social housing in the area, I figured that had more merit. I like having a roof over my head, and if the hassle of moving house would give someone else a roof over their head, that seemed worthwhile.

I started throwing out old clothes when I got notice of being in Stage One. I thought I was safe from relocating for six months, but then my relocation officer said they'd found a place nearby they thought would really suit me. I was busy in rehearsals for a show, and said I couldn't possibly even begin packing until that show was over. "Oh, just have a look at it," they said. So I did, and really liked the vibe of it, and signed up, on the understanding the actual move wouldn't be for a month, a fortnight after the show wrapped up.

The new place looked quite sizeable, for places look bigger with nothing in them, and my previous place seemed smaller than it was, because all my stuff was in it. Oops. I had to eject some furniture to fit in a more compact space. On the one hand, perhaps I should have used the tape measure before I signed up, but on the other hand, I do really like the vibe of my new place. So, after the move, there was no room for all the boxes used to transport appliances, but also no need for them anymore, so out they went. Out went the show costumes I had used in my thirties and forties, because I'm 64 now, and the costumes are no longer



Photo: norrie mAy-welby

fitting, in any sense ... Out went *The Goon Show* cassette tapes, because *The Goon Shows* are all online now, and I no longer have a cassette player. Basically, I've got less junk that I can't use.

The removalists (courtesy of Homes NSW) were very impressive, a team of four

that just kept going for hours, loading in one end and unloading at the other, including placing 42 boxes of comics in the right order into four bookcases.

I'm happily settled into my new place, and glad that the relocation process is now behind me.

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Sydney rocketry students crowned world champions

SPONSORED

MARK SCOTT

THE University of Sydney Rocketry Team has claimed victory at the 2025 International Rocket Engineering Competition (IREC), taking first place with their record-breaking rocket, Pardalote.

The team was awarded the prestigious New Horizon Award, recognising overall excellence, and won the Student Research and Developed (SRAD) Hybrid/Liquid Category. They also finished runners-up for both the Jim Furfaro Award for Technical Excellence and the Charles Hoult Award for Modelling and Simulation.

This year's IREC drew a record 156 student teams representing 19 countries. Held in Midland, Texas, the six-day event tested students' skill and endurance under intense conditions, including extreme heat and unpredictable windstorms. Of the teams present, 136 achieved successful rocket lift-offs.

Pardalote soared to an altitude of 10,342 feet (3.15 km), with an error margin of just 3.42 per cent – making it the most accurate apogee ever recorded by a 10k SRAD Hybrid launch vehicle in the competition's history.

The result marks USYD



Pardalote test flight at Tolarno Station. Photo: USYD Rocketry Team

Rocketry's second overall world championship. The team previously won in 2022 (then called the Spaceport America Cup) with their rocket Bluewren, making them the only team to win the overall competition twice.

USYD Rocketry, based in the University's Faculty of Engineering, is Australia's first tertiary student rocketry team. Formed in 2019, the team became the first Australian group to attend, compete in and win their category at the IREC.

"Pardalote shows what's possible when passionate, multidisciplinary engineers are given the freedom to lead, design, and build something they care deeply about," said Ricky Purani, a third-year electrical engineering student and team executive director.

"Launching far from the comfort of our Australian backyard, Pardalote's record-setting accuracy on American soil sets a new benchmark for undergraduate rocketry," added Gigi O'Rourke, a third-year mechanical engineering (space) student.

Operated by the Experimental Sounding Rocket Association (ESRA), the IREC has been running since 2006 and achieved international status in 2011. The competition fosters student learning in engineering design, team collaboration, and real-world problem solving under industry-like pressures.

Declaration: Project Pardalote was supported by the Schools of Aerospace, Mechanical and Mechatronic Engineering (AMME) and Electrical and Computer Engineering (ECE), as well as sponsors including Pirtek, Coregas, Sydney Composites, Investment NSW, Calm Aluminium, Royal Aeronautical Society, and Terracotta Roasters, among others.

SSH



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY

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Social housing refurbishment vs redevelopment

URBAN DESIGN

GEOFF TURNBULL

WATERLOO: Refurbishing the Matavai and Turanga towers would cost around half as much as rebuilding the same number of new apartments, according to a study by the not-for-profit architecture firm OFFICE.

Its proposal is to add prefabricated modules containing a bedroom and balcony on each corner of the buildings, turning bedsits into one-bedroom apartments.

For the Marton, Solander, Banks and Cook high-rise buildings, OFFICE suggests adding new balconies to the exteriors while internally breaking each building into three serviced by new external lifts. These changes would cost about 63% of a new build.

For all buildings the costs include service upgrades, new kitchens and bathrooms with over 80% reduction in energy usage through double-glazed windows, insulation as well as heating and cooling upgrades.

The community pushed for these buildings to be upgraded in the 2012 redevelopment plans. One of the 2019 Waterloo



For the last year OFFICE have been undertaking a research project called Retain Repair Reinvest (RRR). RRR is a community-informed feasibility study that assesses the viability of refurbishment as an alternative approach to estate renewal. The above shows render of the retrofitted towers and slabs, with new infill envelopes in white. Image: OFFICE

redevelopment options retained Matavai and Turanga and the City of Sydney plan proposed adaption rather than knockdown and rebuild.

The recent study underlines the feasibility of such an approach with the possibility of infill housing around the existing buildings.

The current Waterloo model delivers 30% new social housing paid for by the rest of the redevelopment. The same approach in North and Central needs a development

of 4,200 units to replace the existing 1,260 high-rise units.

On OFFICE's refurbishment figures, no loss of units is achieved at the cost of 790 new homes and so the total development would only need to be around 2,630 units to fund the upgrade.

OFFICE's infill proposal at about 3,000 exceeds that required to make the Homes NSW model financially viable but it would not necessarily meet Homes NSW's "deconcentrating" objective.

One weakness in the report is the proposed relocation cost savings. With the Waterloo redevelopment expecting to relocate tenants into newly built housing by the time the high-rises are developed, there seems no basis for the suggested cost savings in Waterloo.

You can download the full report at www.horturl.at/wAxK3.

You can also read the launch reflections of Waterloo resident Catherine Skipper on her almost 10-year Waterloo redevelopment journey at www.shorturl.at/CZNZa.

Homes NSW say they will not look at redeveloping the high-rises for at least 10 years.

SSH

Geoff Turnbull is the Spokesperson for REDWatch, which supported the OFFICE study grant from the City of Sydney.

Cover the city in messages that matter

In recent weeks, we've seen the genocide in Gaza accelerate with the forced starvation of thousands, and draconian anti-protest laws used to violently suppress those who oppose the actions of the apartheid state of Israel. Meanwhile, the perpetrators of the genocide are met with nothing more than "strongly worded" letters.

It's understandable to feel overwhelmed when looking at the images coming out of Gaza, and hearing our Government's response. But where so-called leaders are failing to act with courage and humanity, we must find courage and solidarity in communities coming together to demand progressive change—whether locally or overseas.

Grassroots movements must take inspiration from the brave activists mobilising around the world—from the people putting their safety on the line to push back against ICE in the USA, to the courageous activists who set sail on the Freedom Flotilla to bring desperately-needed aid to Gaza.

When our so-called leaders fail to draw attention to the events that deserve urgent attention it's up to all of us to keep raising our voices, taking to the streets, and ensuring those in power can't continue to ignore us—whether it's calling for justice in Palestine, demanding action on the housing crisis, or protecting the right to protest.

To help keep these issues front of mind and visible, we have created a fresh batch of stickers. Let's cover the city in messages that matter—and remind each other that we're not alone in the fight for justice, dignity, and a fairer world. It might just be a sticker, but it's also a signal: we see what's happening, and we're not backing down.

Scan the QR code to order your free stickers.



Authorised by Jenny Leong MP. Funded using parliamentary entitlements.

JENNY LEONG MP
MEMBER FOR NEWTOWN



TANYA PLIBERSEK MP

Federal Member for Sydney



Dear South Sydney Herald readers

No one plans to fall on hard times, yet it can happen to any one of us. In those difficult periods every person deserves respect, support and opportunity.

That's why the Government is boosting funding for food relief and financial wellbeing.

We are boosting funding for front line services by 25 per cent to help ease cost-of-living pressures for half a million Australians.

Fuel vouchers, food relief and financial counselling may sound simple but for many they're life changing which is why we're delivering \$460 million over five years to more than 300 organisations across the nation.

This funding will:

- provide petrol vouchers, clothes, bedding, or toiletries.
- fund food relief providers to increase the supply of affordable food.
- help Australians manage their finances and combat problem gambling.

Combined with Labor's tax cuts, increased wages, cheaper medicines, big increases to Commonwealth Rent Assistance, cuts to student debt, and energy bill relief, Labor is making a real difference to help ease the cost of living.

Student debt

We promised to cut student debt and now we are delivering. We've introduced a bill to parliament so that every Australian with HECS or student debt, including VET and TAFE loans, will see a 20% reduction in their debt in the next six months. On average people will save \$5,500.

Bulk billing

The Albanese Government is getting on with the job of strengthening Medicare.

In our first term of Parliament, we delivered more doctors, more bulk billing, cheaper medicines and opened 87 Medicare Urgent Care Clinics.

We're now making the single largest investment in Medicare since its creation over 40 years ago. Our \$8.5 billion investment will deliver more bulk billed GP visits, hundreds of nursing scholarships, and thousands more doctors.

Australian patients and families will save hundreds of dollars a year in out-of-pocket costs and by 2030 nine out of 10 visits to the GP will be free.

Boosting support payments

On 1 July 2025, a range of rates, thresholds, and limits increased by 2.4 per cent to ensure they keep pace with the cost of living, helping more than 2.4 million recipients of social security payments. Indexation keeps payments in line with the wider economy and ensures that the social security system remains a safety net that Australians can rely on.

Tax help

This year, my electorate office is again providing free assistance to low income earners preparing tax returns.

Should you wish to book an appointment, please contact my office on 02 9379 0700.

Our volunteer accountant is available, 1pm-4pm on:

- Friday 22 and 29 August
- Friday 5 September
- Friday 3 October

We know that people are still under pressure and that's why our ongoing cost-of-living relief measures are so important.

TANYA PLIBERSEK MP
Federal Member for Sydney

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Authorised by T. Plibersek, ALP, 1a Great Buckingham Street, Redfern 2016





Cartoon by norrie mAy-welby

A preventable death, a call for urgent reform

EDITORIAL

SSH

We are grieving the death of our neighbour, Collin Burling.

Collin was a much-loved member of our community – described by his partner as “a burly man with a heart of gold”. He died after calling emergency services for help during a mental health crisis. He asked for assistance – not confrontation. Instead, the situation escalated and ended fatally, just metres from his front door.

The official account says police and paramedics were there to help. But bodycam footage and videos recorded by Collin’s partner show a man crying out,

“I’m not a threat”, and “Help me”, as four officers restrained him on the pavement. Minutes later, he went into cardiac arrest. He died soon after.

This is not an isolated incident. It follows the deaths of Jesse Deacon (Glebe, 2023), Todd McKenzie (Taree, 2019), and more than 50 others in recent years – all experiencing mental health crises, all fatally harmed during interactions with police.

These deaths demand answers. More than that, they demand change.

We echo local voices and mental health advocates: police are not trained mental health clinicians. They should not be the default responders to critical mental health emergencies. What we need – urgently – are specialised crisis teams: mental health professionals

supported by paramedics, trained in de-escalation and care.

There must be a full, independent investigation into the circumstances of Collin Burling’s death. But investigation alone is not enough. We must overhaul how our state responds to mental health crises – starting with implementing existing recommendations for a dedicated mental health emergency response system, separate from police.

We offer our deepest sympathy to Collin’s partner, family and friends. As a community, we honour Collin by demanding justice – and by ensuring this never happens again.

Mental illness is a health issue. It must be met with care, not force.

SSH



Antoinette Lattouf outside court following the Federal Court verdict. Photo: Michelle Haywood

Politics, posts & payouts: What the ABC got wrong

COMMENT

GERRY SONT

Antoinette Lattouf recently won her case against the ABC for wrongful dismissal and was awarded \$70,000 in non-economic damages. The case cost the ABC more than a million dollars. The question is: did the ABC make a mountain out of a molehill?

Giuseppe Carabetta, Associate Professor, Workplace & Business Law at UTS Ultimo took the time out of his busy schedule to look closely at the judgement. “The most significant aspect of the ruling from an employee perspective is that the Court took a fairly broad approach to ‘political opinion’, finding it extends to the expression – not just the holding of – political views. From an

employer perspective though, Justice Rangiah very carefully made the point that this was not a decision where an employer had issued a firm direction – or had a more expansive policy – regarding social media postings by their employees.”

For those of you unfamiliar with the case, Ms Lattouf shared on her social media page an article from Human Rights Watch claiming

Princess Olga of Kyiv – no blushing flower

RELIGION & ETHICS

PHILOSOPHILIA AT HOME

THIS month, in an occasional series on historically neglected women of note, Philosphilia commemorates Olga of Kyiv, whose feast day was July 11.

Olga was a 10th-century queen consort, mother and grandmother of kings, and for 12 years herself regent of Kievan Rus, the first Eastern European state and a cultural ancestor of Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. Olga was instrumental in bringing Orthodox Christianity to Slavic (animist) Eastern Europe; she forged diplomatic connections with Constantinople, converting to and advocating for the faith – an introduction which would result, in her grandson’s time, in the Christianisation of Kievan Rus, beginning the joining of Eastern and Western Europe under the umbrella of Christendom.

For this Olga is celebrated as a saint “equal to the Apostles” in the Orthodox tradition – but today her contribution is too often reduced to an approved submission: she was the first leader of the Slavic tribes to “see the Light”. This ignores her significance as a powerful ruler and a legendary strategist: there are multiple accounts of her use of reason, diplomacy, deception, unflinching iron will and demure seduction to outwit both allies and enemies. As the widow of Igor, himself only the second-generation ruler of the federation of Slavic tribes, Olga avenged her husband’s murder with chilling ferocity, then toured the newly formed empire with her

young son Sviatoslav and their entourage, establishing laws, hunting grounds, trading posts, administrative centres, towns and boundary posts; consolidating the kingdom culturally, economically, ethnically and geographically. When Sviatoslav was 19, he ascended the throne and headed straight out on a series of military campaigns while Olga continued to rule in Kyiv.

Sviatoslav was a warrior; he lived and died by the sword and didn’t see his 30th birthday. He did significantly enlarge the kingdom, though not for long. He remained staunchly pagan, and sidelined Olga after she tried to have Christian bishops installed. After Sviatoslav’s death, his two legitimate sons raised armies and fought a war of succession; his other son Vladimir, by a concubine who had been a servant of Olga’s, left the country, raised an army of Vikings, and returned to fight the winner, emerging victorious. Since he was the one that duly made Christianity the state religion of Kievan Rus, I can’t help suspecting he was Olga’s favourite.

It goes without saying that Vladimir Putin’s unchristian belligerence against a sister state insults Olga’s memory and defiles her legacy. Though Olga didn’t flinch from extreme violence when it was necessary to repel a threat to both her person and the stability of the federation, and although she allowed her son to do the dirty work of colonial expansion, she demonstrated a clear preference for diplomacy, negotiation and alliance – as it turned out even in her time, a far more successful strategy than aggression.

SSH

Israel was using starvation as a weapon of war in Gaza. Ironically, the ABC had already posted the same article to its website.

Middle management initially decided to let the infraction slide. However, senior management apparently felt pressured to act and with guidance from in-house counsel, Elizabeth Green (Content Director) advised Ms Lattouf that she would “not be required” for her final two shifts.

Ms Lattouf acknowledged in Federal Court that she was encouraged to “keep a low profile on social media” but was never told explicitly not to post.

So, what may have been a simple misunderstanding by Ms Lattouf mushroomed into a global media storm costing over a million dollars in legal fees.

Prior to going to court, Ms Lattouf’s lawyer Josh Bornstein had made a settlement offer for \$85,000 in damages, a written public apology from the ABC and Ms Lattouf’s reinstatement as a fill-in presenter. The ABC’s legal team took the position that they

had no case to answer, having paid out her five-day contract in full and that her post on social media breached an ABC directive and the organisation’s posting guidelines.

Professor Carabetta warns that “this ruling will be a wake-up call for all media organisations and indeed have repercussions across all industries to review their policies and decision-making processes. Many organisations will now need to implement an expansive and complete policy regarding social media postings by employees.”

However, in a kind of *Catch-22* situation, Professor Carabetta advises that “employers could then be challenged on whether it was a lawful and reasonable direction (based on the nature of the employer and employee’s position) and how such a direction would interact with the statutory protection against termination for political opinion.”

The ruling is clearly a win for freedom of speech, freedom of expression, employees, Ms Lattouf, and her lawyers.

SSH

‘In poetry I can write creatively and openly. There are no limits.’

BOOKS ELIZABETH ARRIGO

WHILE all of Story Factory’s programs aim to help young people develop their creative writing SKILLS, the Year of Poetry program dials this to the max, as young writers discover their poetic voice and publish their own book.

Year 10 student Kaarthik Raja Nallakumar from Arthur Phillip High School joined the program in late Term 1 on a recommendation from a friend. And the Year of Poetry turned out to be just the right thing. “I was initially planning on joining Year of the Novella, but was a little late in enrolling, so joined Year of Poetry instead and I think I like it better,” Kaarthik says. “I enjoy writing generally, but in poetry I can write creatively and openly. There are no limits.” The program has guided Kaarthik in his creative expression and to tell stories in a new and interesting way. “When it comes to writing, you’re either creating a world or recording your own,”



Kaarthik Raja Nallakumar. Photo: Supplied

he says. “I like reading and writing poems that convey a continuous story, rather than talk about a specific object. For me, it’s about storytelling through poetry – carrying a plot and a narrative through a poem.”

Already one of Story Factory’s most committed students, Kaarthik is well on his way to publishing his own collection of poetry at the end of the year. “I try to write a poem every two days –

that’s a goal that I have. When I write every day, it’s easier to be inspired by whatever’s around me. “From Story Factory, I’ve learnt there are many more types of poems than I initially realised. I’m really

looking forward to seeing all of my poetry in a book at the end of the program. I’ve been writing lots of poems during the school holidays and have taken part in a local writing competition recently. I want to spend the rest of the year learning more about poetry and exploring new ways in which I can write.”

“A Visionary” by Kaarthik Raja Nallakumar

The sky, stained, with clouds so white / Brushed gently, with a wet wash of blue / Spotted here and there, with specks of birds / Hinted, with a pale yellow sun. / The forest, dark, with leaves of dark green / Forming canopies, over tree bark / Emphasised with brown strokes / Thin strokes of grass with a bright green hue. / A wave, of water so blue, covering the centre page // With nothing but dry grey, hovering over the horizon / Making white lines and curves appearing below, / A dolphin, jumping out of the water, making a big splash. / Such beautiful images, warming my heart / Such perfect lines, creating beautiful art / If I could ever dream, of scenes so many, / That, I would call, a visionary.



Shalvey Public School students with budgies in a Story Factory workshop. Photo: Natasha Capstick

A highlight for jazz lovers

Multi-Grammy winning guitarist Bill Frisell appears with Thomas Morgan (bass) and Rudy Royston (drums) at City Recital Hall on Wednesday October 22 to perform music from the Bill Frisell Trio’s acclaimed Blue Note release, *Valentine*, dubbed by DownBeat as “jazz playing at its most sublime”.

Scan QR code for ticket info

Photo: Monica Jane Frisell

Young students take flight with Dharug language

BOOKS ANNA ZABOW

PRIMARY-SCHOOL students at Shalvey Public School in Western Sydney have taken a creative approach to reviving Dharug language by dreaming up a pet budgie for themselves, and then writing all about it in Dharug.

In a term-long program delivered by Story Factory, Year 4 students created budgie characters and wrote about them using Dharug words. The school has a significant

number of Indigenous students and a strong focus on First Nations culture. Students were fascinated to learn that many English words originate from First Nations languages. The program, named Gidjirrigaa!, means budgerigar in Wiradjuri and Kamiliraay, and it’s where the English word comes from. “It’s about celebrating First Nations culture and celebrating a language that’s survived,” says Tony Britten, Storyteller Manager at Story Factory. “It was important to get the students writing in Dharug language on Dharug country (where the school is located) because the language is being revived and we wanted the

kids to be a part of the revival.” The students also felt a local connection to the program, learning that some of the first budgerigars collected in Australia in the 1800s were from Parramatta. Students spent time devising their budgie’s character, coming up with a name, personality traits, a trick it could perform, and even designing a portable budgie travel device. When asked what they enjoyed most about the program, one student responded: “Going more into my imagination and using different ideas.” Throughout the term, the students fully embraced learning

about budgies and Dharug language, finding out fun facts about budgies, and playing charades with Dharug names for animals. “By the time they wrote about their budgie at the end of the term, they already had a portrait in their head of who their budgie was, which took the cognitive load off when writing about it in Dharug,” says Tony. At the final workshop, there was much excitement when one of the volunteers, Jeannie, brought real-life budgies into the classroom, and students received a beautifully bound publication of their work. Students were in awe of the birds,

with one reflecting, “My favourite thing that I will always remember is when we saw the budgies, a memory I will always keep.” “Dabura (Portrait) of Luna Yanada (Moon)” by Astrid, Year 4 My budgie’s name is Yanada (moon or Luna), / Yanada is a waruwi (girl) dibung (small bird). / Yanada is a very colourful yidbing. / The colours are yarragul (yellow) to bulga (green) / and her dun (tail) is dyarri yarragul (pink) to bura (blue) dawari (fade). / Yanada can make things duwali (hide) as a trick.

Book review
by Melinda Kearns
*Painting Portraits of
Everyone I’ve Ever Dated*
Joseph Earp
Pantera Press, 2025

This hugely entertaining and engaging novel begins with the protagonist, artist Ellie Robertson, winning a major prize for one of her paintings and trying to come up with her next project to continue her successful trajectory. She decides to embark upon a series of portraits of her ex-partners, and what follows clarifies her own processes of looking, selection and evaluation.

Ellie curates and investigates her own past through the process of portraiture and in turn illuminates her experiences of love and future expectations about what a relationship could be for her. Her search for personal identity and how that has been shaped by the people she has loved is distilled over the course of her investigation.

Beginning with Diana, her luminous art school first love, who is now partnered and pregnant, trying to find her childhood boyfriend Jeremy, negotiating an exploitative academic from her past and finally realising her love for the unavailable Frances, Ellie reveals as much about herself through the portraits as the people she is painting.

With the juxtaposition of the narratives of her friend Rebecca’s engagement and the dissolution of her parents’ marriage, Ellie comes to a new understanding of the process of painting and the role of observation.

Earp also writes vividly about the role of art in developing appreciation of ourselves and the wider world, as Ellie considers her new-found fame, asked to paint a portrait of a dying tycoon by his family with neither love for their father nor appreciation of art.

Earp’s novel vividly creates characters who are in the process of change and re-evaluation at all stages of their lives, trying to work out what is most important and finding their true selves.

Book Review
by Orli Jacoby
Not Quite Dead Yet
Holly Jackson
Penguin Random House UK, 2025

Not Quite Dead Yet is Holly Jackson’s latest novel and her first jump into adult fiction. Jackson has previously aimed her novels at young adults; however, this novel is a more mature mystery that still contains the same magic as her previous work.

Not Quite Dead Yet centres around Jet Mason who finds out she is going to die at the end of the week, following an attempted murder, meaning she has just seven days to solve her own case. As the mystery unfolds, Jet is forced to question things she thought she knew about her life and the people in it, raising the question: if you had one week to live, how would you choose to live it? If you are a hopeless romantic like me, fear not, as this book does contain a romantic subplot, though it takes the backseat to the central mystery. The premise is unlike anything I’ve read before – filled with high stakes and peppered with heartwarming moments that create an enjoyable balance throughout the novel.

One of Jackson’s strengths in her writing is her ability to craft a compellingly complex lead female character. Jet is no exception to this rule; her witty commentary, perseverance, and relatability incite an

emotional connection from any reader. This connection only makes the mystery more poignant, as readers piece together elements of the narrative alongside our leading lady, determined to change the outcome of her story before it is too late.

The structure of the book is also incredibly well thought out, beginning with longer chapters and finishing with chapters that get shorter and shorter as we reach the end. This helps build up the tension as readers physically feel the time of Jet’s life running out before their eyes.

Not Quite Dead Yet is a fast-paced and emotional read that will get anyone out of a winter reading slump, and I would recommend it to anyone wanting to dip their toes into the thriller genre.

Film Review
by Lindsay Cohen
Jurassic World: Rebirth
Director: Gareth Edwards
Starring: Scarlett Johansson,
Mahershala Ali, Jonathan Bailey
Genre: Redundant

Before I start this review, I must admit that I’ve lost track of the Jurassic films and gave up on them after *Jurassic Park 3* (2001), once the quality had dropped as well as my level of interest. I also must admit that the reason I saw *Jurassic World: Rebirth* was because it was on during the school holidays, my teenage boys were keen, and the film was supposedly a return to high quality. Alas, we were sucked in by good marketing.

Now, I’m not going to go into the plot or spoil any alerts because all the Jurassic films are essentially humans vs dinosaurs, some humans survive and the dinosaurs kick on to the next film. My greatest frustration though is that, admittedly from memory over 30 years ago, only the original *Jurassic Park* (1993) was very scientific and philosophically based. Every Jurassic film since has made some token references to science, philosophy and/or the environment but is essentially all about special effects and action.

A good example of this (according to my online research) is that in previous Jurassic World movies, experiments made dinosaurs bigger, meaner and scarier. In *Jurassic World: Rebirth* a D-Rex is featured, a giant genetically engineered alien- (ie. *Alien*) style monster. The science nerd in me questions why do that when there are already lots of true giant dinosaurs on the non-existent island? All that results in is less credibility and interest (from me admittedly).

So, I have no idea why the film is called *Rebirth*. The movie doesn’t and neither do the true or imaginary dinosaurs. However, if you like the previous Jurassic films, you’ll probably like this one too, although my kids didn’t! Rating: Two Exstinktions

Theatre Review
by Siobhan Humphreys
1984
Adaptation: Nelle Lee, Nick Skubij
Director: Michael Futcher
Riverside Theatre, Parramatta
July 24-26, 2025

Over 75 years since its first publication, George Orwell’s dystopian classic remains disturbingly relevant to our modern times. This is evident in Shake and Stir’s acclaimed adaptation of *1984* which returns to the stage for a national tour. This formidable performance will leave you questioning the political powers at play in our own lives.

Winston Smith, an editor at the Ministry of Truth, spends every

living moment under the oppressive surveillance of Big Brother until he finds a gap in the cameras. As criticism is forbidden, Winston makes use of his hidden sanctuary to voice his resentment of the totalitarianism regime in a diary. The more he voices his discontent, the more he is compelled to find others who share his hatred of the Party. However, in a world where anyone could be a member of the Thought Police, it is impossible to know whom to trust.

The stage is dominated by huge telescreens that loom over the characters, reflecting the omnipresent surveillance of the regime. Director Michael Futcher uses these telescreens to great effect, both as surveillance cameras and propaganda machines. In the age of big tech and social media, these screens echo the surveillance and media narratives we accept in our own lives.

Another of the play’s compelling themes is the destruction of language and truth, and one of the more challenging aspects of the narrative to translate to the stage. Futcher effectively addresses the challenge by using the telescreens to share Winston’s internal world, while the Winston on stage must remain silent to survive. Through the screen Winston shares his concerns that the regime is altering not only day-to-day reality but also rewriting historical records to accord with the current party line.

Again, the parallels between the world of *1984* and the present day are striking. We watch on as Trump relentlessly lies in his second presidency, from falsely claiming that grocery prices are “way down” to falsely claiming that Ukraine started the war with Russia.

This powerful production is carried by a small but talented cast. Michael Whalley uses wonderful physicality to convey the terror Winston faces. Whalley brings a deep sense of fatalism to Winston. His rebellion is clouded by the belief that the Party will eventually capture him. His characterisation is in stark contrast to Julia, played with a shrewd but hopeful optimism by Chloe Bayliss. Meanwhile, Tony Cogan lends a clinical manner to O’Brien, delivering every line with measured precision.

First staged over 10 years ago, this adaptation feels more relevant than ever. It is a powerful rendition of this classic cautionary tale.

Theatre Review
by Yvonne Hocothee
Emerald City
Writer: David Williamson
Director: Mark Kilmurry
Ensemble Theatre, Kirribilli
Until August 23, 2025

Emerald City is an energising dose of satirical comedy on these cold, wintry nights. Nothing delights Sydneysiders more than to see the foibles of their beloved city and its citizens explored with the laser-like perception of Australia’s favourite playwright. From the gales of laughter, it seems this revamped version of his iconic play resonates just as much with a contemporary audience as it did at its inception.

Colin Rogers (Tom O’Sullivan), a successful playwright experiencing a dry spell in his career, decides to relocate from drizzly, conservative Melbourne to the warmer, sub-tropical city with the magnificent harbour, in the hope of fresh opportunities. His wife, Kate (Rachel Gordon), a publishing editor, is less optimistic but willing to give it a try.

They are soon caught up in the maelstrom of Sydney’s conflicting, fast-paced drive towards wealth and the

all-encompassing yearning for harbour view residences. The play examines sets of rivalries: the old Sydney-Melbourne comparison, the struggle between artistic integrity and commercial interests, trying to preserve Australian cultural identity against pervasive American influence and the more personal ones revolving around marital fidelity.

And there are the various movers and shakers in this city to contend with. Colin tentatively teams up with a wannabe producer, Mike McCord (Matt Minto), who wants to co-write with him, but whose intentions are purely to make money – lots of it. Despite his angst about losing his artistic integrity, Colin is gradually drawn into more commercial projects.

His agent, Elaine (Danielle Carter), is dubious about Colin’s choices, but she too has a harbourside mortgage to finance and clearly everyone is working towards and protecting their own agenda. Kate, however, still manages to maintain her artistic integrity by holding out for publication of her Aboriginal author’s book which gets nominated for the Booker prize.

Drifting between these anxiety-ridden, middle-aged contenders and adding a touch of youthful sparkle, is Mike’s girlfriend, the beautiful Helen (Aisha Aidara), a poster child for 80s fashion with her bubbly hairdo and designer fashion. Ultimately, all their efforts are futile unless they can convince

their merchant banker, Malcolm (Rajan Velu), to finance them.

Mark Kilmurry directs his excellent performers with an assurance that highlights the wonderful comedy and opportunity for characterisation. The acting, too, is immensely satisfying with the cast clearly enjoying their witty dialogue and great one-liners.

Tom O’Sullivan plays Colin with relatable diffidence and anxiety, Rachel Gordon as his wife is supportive but also subtly competitive. Matt Minto injects huge energy into his role as the wheeler-dealer Mike, his characterisation drawing much laughter from the audience. Aisha Aidara, as Helen, is charming and visually attractive, while Rajan Velu’s Malcolm is a typical businessman – corporate efficiency with his eye on the bottom line.

The attractive set (Dan Potra) is depicted as a huge film strip and inevitably consists of the opera house and the much-desired harbour views in various incarnations, sometimes as paintings, sometimes as monochrome drawings.

The cast can be forgiven for having some trepidation with Williamson in the audience, but they need not have worried – at curtain call, he gave them his nod of approval, no doubt much to their relief. All in all, it’s a terrific piece of theatre – vintage Williamson satire and humour, fine direction, strong performances and a sly dig at Sydney’s perennial mercenary and social obsessions.



Constraint and spontaneity

ART
ALKY AVRAMIDES

GEMMA Smith is an Australian artist with a unique and marvellous output. Her paintings engage the viewer in unexpected ways.

I first met Gemma without knowing who she was or anything about her work. She mentioned she had a show on at Sullivan+Strumpf in Zetland and that she often keeps paintings in reserve, only showing those that connect through a visual or conceptual thread. I was curious – so I went. The works knocked me for six: colour, gesture, luminosity, depth – yet with a disarming immediacy, playful and seemingly childlike. These are sophisticated abstractions, born from a practice of both constraint and spontaneity. The tension between those approaches doesn’t cancel out; it creates space for

transformation. There’s deep knowledge of paint and colour – their limits, their potential. The paintings are fully abstract, with no figure or landscape to anchor the viewer. Circular, spiralling motifs overlap and dissolve. They call you in to look closer, to connect meditatively, without the cue of a familiar form. Some passages resemble intricate dotting. One imagines our primal ancestors, moved by the first fires of creativity, reaching forward with finger or tool to make a first mark – a dot, a smear – becoming something loved, craved or feared. Gemma’s work carries that same spark into the present. This August, she’ll be artist in residence at the Australian Tapestry Workshop in Victoria. In September, she’ll show with Sullivan+Strumpf at Sydney Contemporary, also featured in *Installation Contemporary*. Yes, there’s magic in the air – and occasionally, we’re lucky enough to witness it.



The Rabbitohs Indigenous jersey for 2025 has been designed by proud Wahlabul man, Uncle Joe Walker, and his daughter, proud Wahlabul and Dunghutti woman, Destinee Walker, and represents smoke and fire. Smoke represents cleansing and starting fresh, whilst fire represents the strength of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people that is passed down through the generations. The jersey also features the totems of the 11 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander players in the Rabbitohs full-time squad including Alex Johnston (pictured), a proud Koedal Klan Saibai man (represented by the Crocodile). Photo: Rabbitohs.com.au

Shootout for dreaded Wooden Spoon

SPORT
JOHN LANZKY

IT’S shaping up to be a shootout between the Rabbitohs and the Titans for this year’s Wooden Spoon. I hope not – but at the moment it’s hard to see improvement coming. Souths just aren’t firing, with too many players going one out.

On a brighter note, big congratulations to Alex Johnston, who is just five tries shy of Ken Irvine’s all-time NRL record of 212. Johnston made his NRL debut for South Sydney on Anzac Day 2014, scoring a try in a 28-26 win over the Broncos. Since then, he’s racked up 207 tries in 235 appearances, making him Souths’ all-time leading try-scorer.

A proud Koedal Klan Saibai man and product of the La Perouse United Panthers, Johnston has shown remarkable consistency over 11 consecutive seasons. Despite often being overlooked for State of Origin selection, his attacking flair and defensive effort have been second to none. When he breaks the record – and I believe it’s only a matter of weeks – it will be a moment of immense pride for the Rabbitohs and rugby league fans everywhere. His dedication to the club and the game deserves full recognition. And I’m very happy to hear that Johnston has signed on for two more years at Souths. Meanwhile, credit where it’s due: the Panthers have made a stunning turnaround. Just seven weeks ago they were sitting at the bottom of the ladder; now they’re firmly in the top eight. A fifth premiership would be extraordinary.

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With One Voice Redfern choir at the NCIE for NAIDOC Week. Photo: Michelle Haywood

Out & About – August 2025

PAT CLARKE
WELCOME to our new name, and farewell to “Volunteers’ News”.

But hello to our newest volunteers, whose work you will see in upcoming issues: Joe Fenech and Sarah Malone (photographers); Betty Stroud (Religion & Ethics); Andrew Pavli (Legal) and Alky Avramides (art reviewer).

Redfern Walk – Sunday August 10, 10am-12pm
This is a two-hour architecture walk to explore the changing landscape of Redfern’s built environment with Klan, a knowledgeable Australian

Architecture Association guide. The walk will start at the Clock Tower, Old Redfern Post Office. Cost is \$40 for adults and \$30 concession. Bookings at www.eventbrite.com.au/e/redfern-walk-tickets
Sydney Cherry Blossom Festival – Saturday August 16 to Sunday August 24, 9am-4.45pm daily
This annual festival is at Auburn Botanic Gardens, Chiswick Rd, Auburn, with 150 blossoming trees in a traditional style Japanese Garden. Tickets must be booked online for entry to the festival as numbers are capped within the gardens. Tickets are \$16.60 for adults, \$8.95 for children 5-16 years, Seniors Card

holders \$8.95 (conditions apply). www.cumberland.nsw.gov.au/sydneycherryblossomfestival
National Art School and Galleries, 156 Forbes St, Darlinghurst
Situating on Gadigal land in the heritage listed former Darlinghurst Gaol, as well as wonderful historic buildings, the NAS Gallery is showing *The Neighbour at the Gate*, until October 18. The exhibition shows works by leading Australian artists focussing on immigration, legacies of colonialism, exclusion and resilience. Entry is free and the Gallery is open from 11am-5pm Monday to Saturday.

University of Sydney Community Festival 2025 – stallholder EOIs now open
After two incredible years, this year’s festival on November 8 will come alive with music, talks and tours, family-friendly activities, and so much more. Stallholders are invited to join the action with clothes, homewares, vintage finds and art. EOIs close August 10. Submit here: www.form.jotform.com/251197296928068
Artisans in the Park – Saturday, September 6
It’s shaping up to be another great one at Dr Foley Rest Park in Glebe with locally made ceramics, jewellery, paintings, handmade glass and crocheted items, even a young lad who

creates personalised braille cards on request. Instagram: [@artisansintheparksydney](https://www.instagram.com/artisansintheparksydney)
What else is on this month?
National Science Week August 10-18
World Elephant Day August 12
World Lizard Day August 14
Children’s Book Week August 16-23
Daffodil Day August 21
Pat Clarke
.....
volunteers@ssh.com.au

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Photo: Hector Estrada/Pexels

Beyond breeding – rethinking whale migrations in Australia

ENVIRONMENT
EMMANUELLE BOTTÉ

EVERY season has its charm and one of the biggest joys of winter in Sydney is heading down to Maroubra with a pair of binoculars, and trying to spot a splash in the water, no matter how far, indicating that a whale is passing by ...

’Tis the season indeed, and a tradition for those who want to connect with the ocean. The whales that many Sydneysiders love to watch along the coast are either humpback whales or southern right whales, who come to Australia at the coldest time of the year to mate and give birth. Both species follow a migratory route taking them from the nutrient-rich waters surrounding Antarctica all the way to the Australian tropics. This pendular lifestyle allows them to take advantage of very different ecosystems.

During the summer months, the adults can gorge themselves on the abundant food available in the Southern Ocean. Once they have accumulated a thick layer of fat, they start moving north. And while the water seems cool to us, by the time they reach Australia it is comparatively much warmer for them, especially as they usually give birth along the Queensland coast and within the Great Barrier Reef. In nature, any trick to conserve energy is exploited. In that respect, being born in warm water is better, as the calves spend less energy to regulate their body temperature, and more to grow, than if they lived their first weeks on the planet in Antarctica.

Scientists also think that the mother-calf duo is more protected from killer whale attacks on the Australian east coast than

in the Southern Ocean. Australian waters are calmer for the calves, and adult whales might even use this quiet environment to shed some of the dead skin that builds up on their body for months prior. So here goes the nice and neat tale of why we see a couple of whale species go up and down the coast every winter ... or is there more to it? The truth is, the “feeding then breeding” paradigm is perhaps a simplistic view, as new research has found that whales keep swimming north, even after giving birth, instead of heading down south straight away. They can also give birth in temperate waters, and not exclusively in the tropics. These nuances could be seen as details of little importance. But in reality, they illustrate how much we do not know about what governs these animals’ lives. Whales are not important just because they make for a fun winter outing. Through their migration, they transport enormous quantities of nutrients from polar to tropical regions. They also feed other species, and contribute to the biodiversity of the deep ocean, as whale carcasses become homes to entire ecosystems that exist far from sunlight, only thanks to them. And while protection measures have helped populations of humpback whales bounce back from the whaling days, scientists have recently reported that the southern right whale is showing concerning signs of decline. So next time you make your way to the shore, and admire a puffy cloud springing out of the water from a distance, or perhaps (lucky you!) a whale breaching out of the ocean, remember that seeing even a glimpse of these animals is always a privilege, as each individual is evidence of one of the great animal migratory routes that we can witness every year in our beautiful city.

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