

the South Sydney Herald

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Photo: Michelle Haywood



Auntie Beryl Van-Oploo OAM with Lord Mayor Clover Moore and Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales. Photo: Michelle Haywood



Pastor Ray Minniecon and Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales. Photo: Michelle Haywood

Always was and always will be Aboriginal land

FIRST PEOPLES – On Anzac Day, hundreds gathered in Redfern for the 19th annual Coloured Diggers March, honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander veterans and their enduring contribution to Australia’s military history. This year’s commemoration also carried a strong focus on youth engagement, with organiser Pastor Ray Minniecon noting the growing number of young people attending to learn about the roles their ancestors played in overseas conflicts. The march took place amid ongoing national conversations about racism faced by First Nations veterans, including booing directed at Pastor Ray Minniecon as he acknowledged country at the cenotaph in Martin Place. “Just to stand strong, stand tall. Know who we are, where we come from, and that this is Aboriginal land,” he said. “Always was and always will be Aboriginal land. We stand on the truth, and truth can’t be shaken. That kind of truth will never be destroyed.”

Why local news could miss out on the tech levy

POLITICS
CLAIRE STUCHBERY

YOU may have heard that the government is proposing a new levy on tech giants like Google and Facebook to help fund Australian journalism. Before you look away, thinking ‘what has this got to do with me?’ – a quick question. What do you like about the website or newspaper you’re currently reading?

Maybe it publishes stories and issues that other news outlets would never cover. Maybe it represents your culture and platforms voices that too often go unheard. Or perhaps it tells you what’s on in the community and contributes to making the place you live feel like home.

All those things matter – a lot. Which is why we are fighting for the funds raised from the new levy on tech giants to make their way to local and independent newsrooms.

Because the concerning thing is, under the government’s current plan, they probably won’t.

To back up a little, what the government is essentially trying to do is ensure Australians still have access to quality news and information.

As advertisers have increasingly moved towards digital platforms, newsrooms – whose work is often read or watched on those same digital platforms – have lost revenue despite still providing a valuable service to the public.

To use a sweet little metaphor, you could say newsrooms are making chocolate, but because the



Claire Stuchbery. Photo: Jacob Jennings

ads are printed on the wrapper, only the wrapper manufacturers are making money.

As a result, many Australian newsrooms have closed, laid off journalists or simply have not had the resources to dive deeply into the stories that matter.

So the government’s on the right track, broadly-speaking, because protecting news from our

own backyard is crucial. But it’s a question of which backyard.

Democracy happens all around us, every day. In the decisions of councils, the actions of local MPs, and the experiences of everyday people. But in news deserts, democracy fights for air.

Australia already has one of the most concentrated media markets in the democratic world. Our democracy has strong foundations in many other ways – think compulsory and preferential voting – but the lack of diversity in media ownership and voices takes us down a rung on the democratic health ladder.

The government’s proposed legislation risks further entrenching this if it doesn’t create a clear path for local, independent and emerging newsrooms to benefit from the levy on tech companies.

A percentage of funds raised through the levy should go to

growing diversity in the news media industry, bringing new voices into the public dialogue and addressing news deserts.

Basing eligibility around revenue thresholds, as the current proposal does, will only entrench the status quo, further harm small publishers and volunteer-based community media, and benefit the big players (who have an important role to play, but not the only role).

The government’s proposed levy on tech giants is a rare chance to move the needle on media diversity and public interest journalism without dipping into its own pocket.

The trick now is to make sure the benefits flow to strengthen publications like this one right here. **ssh**

Claire Stuchbery is Executive Director of the Local and Independent News Association, a not-for-profit representing more than 170 digital, local and independent newsrooms around Australia.



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This issue inside & online



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NSW tightens e-bike rules amid safety crackdown

LEGAL

ANDREW PAVLI

SINCE our last update in September 2025, New South Wales has moved to tighten rules around e-bikes, with a mix of new laws already in force and further changes on the horizon. This follows growing safety concerns, including a number of e-bike and e-scooter deaths across Australia last year.

A key development is proposed legislation currently before Parliament. The NSW Government has introduced the Road Transport Amendment (Non-registrable Motor Vehicles) Bill 2026, which, if passed, would give police expanded powers to seize and dispose of illegal high-powered e-bikes, particularly those modified to operate more like motorbikes than bicycles.

At the same time, the state has committed to aligning e-bike standards with international norms. This includes a shift



towards a 250 watt limit for pedal-assist bikes, with assistance cutting out at 25 km/h. While existing bikes will be subject to a transition

period running through to 2029, new purchases are expected to increasingly meet this standard.

Safety has also been a major focus. From early 2026, stricter requirements will apply to lithium-ion batteries and charging equipment, following a rise in battery-related fires. Retailers now face significant penalties for selling non-compliant products.

Looking ahead, the NSW Government is also considering further reforms, including the introduction of a minimum rider age.

SSH

Youth Week event brings music, health and social connection

HEALTH

SYDNEY LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT MEDIA DEPARTMENT

YOUNG people across Sydney Local Health District came together in Redfern to celebrate Youth Week on 15 April. Held at Charles Kearne Reserve, just steps from Youthblock's headquarters on Abercrombie Street, the outdoor event transformed the space into a vibrant hub of music, art and health promotion.

Attendees were treated to live DJs, open decks and performances from local artists, including Gabe Pickard DR DJ, Nelson Edgardo and Harley Ruha on acoustic guitar, who donated their time to support the event.

Alongside the entertainment, young people were able to access a range of free health services, including health checks, immunisations and sexual health information and testing through HARP and Priority Populations programs.

The Youth Drug Health team was on hand to offer information and advice. There was also a series of artworks created by young people exploring different issues, which sparked conversation and engagement throughout the day. A free barbecue, supported by The Settlement, ensured attendees could enjoy a meal while connecting with services and each other. There was also a clothing and book swap available.

Sydney Local Health District Chief Executive Deb Willcox AM attended the event, spending time



Staff at the event provided the attendees with information and a range of free health services. Photo: Supplied

speaking with young people and joining the atmosphere alongside performers.

"Events like this create opportunities for young people to engage with health services in a way that feels accessible and welcoming, while also recognising their talents and voices."

The event was delivered through a collaboration between Community Health Youthblock staff, the District's Health Promotion and Multicultural

Health teams with support from Redfern Community Centre and Thorne from Last Minute Productions, who provided artists and sound equipment.

Eora TAFE also contributed an Aboriginal artwork, which formed a striking backdrop for performances throughout the day.

The Youthblock event highlights the importance of creating inclusive, youth-led spaces that bring together culture, creativity and health in meaningful ways.

SSH

Planning growth in the City and Waterloo

URBAN DESIGN

GEOFF TURNBULL

THE Development Applications (DAs) that people often react to are the final step in the planning process. Key decisions about what can be built are made much earlier and are often missed. Two pre-DA opportunities to comment are currently underway.

Sydney Council has started a consultation about where growth in its area will go. A Housing for All discussion paper is open for feedback until 19 June 2026. Council says it has sufficient planned development to meet the current NSW Government targets but that it needs to plan for future growth so Council, not the NSW Government, proposes where growth happens. Changes to the planning controls to deliver more density in certain areas happen at the end of a five-year process.

The first section of Council's paper has ten ideas for where more housing could be delivered in areas where it has responsibility. The second section comprises 15 suggestions on NSW Government sites that are already zoned for development and 17 sites that the Government had previously considered for delivering more

housing. Finally, the study looks at issues around delivering the diverse housing needed in the city.

If you have an interest in housing then have a look at this consultation and put your feedback and suggestions in.

The other opportunity for input is the imminent exhibition of the Waterloo South Concept DA. The total floorspace for this site was set in 2022. In pre-lodgement consultation, the developer, Stockland, discussed the need to change how that floorspace is distributed, changing heights and creating more ground level space, as well as showing where different sorts of housing go. This exhibition will change the planning controls that Stockland will then build within.

The formal exhibition includes unseen technical studies and a reference scheme to show the controls can accommodate the floorspace with good amenity. This is not what might be built. After the Concept Plan exhibition, Stockland will start a conversation with the community about the design of buildings in Stage 1, which will then be exhibited as DAs.

So, don't wait for the DAs to raise your concerns. Get in early.

SSH

Geoff Turnbull is the Spokesperson for REDWatch

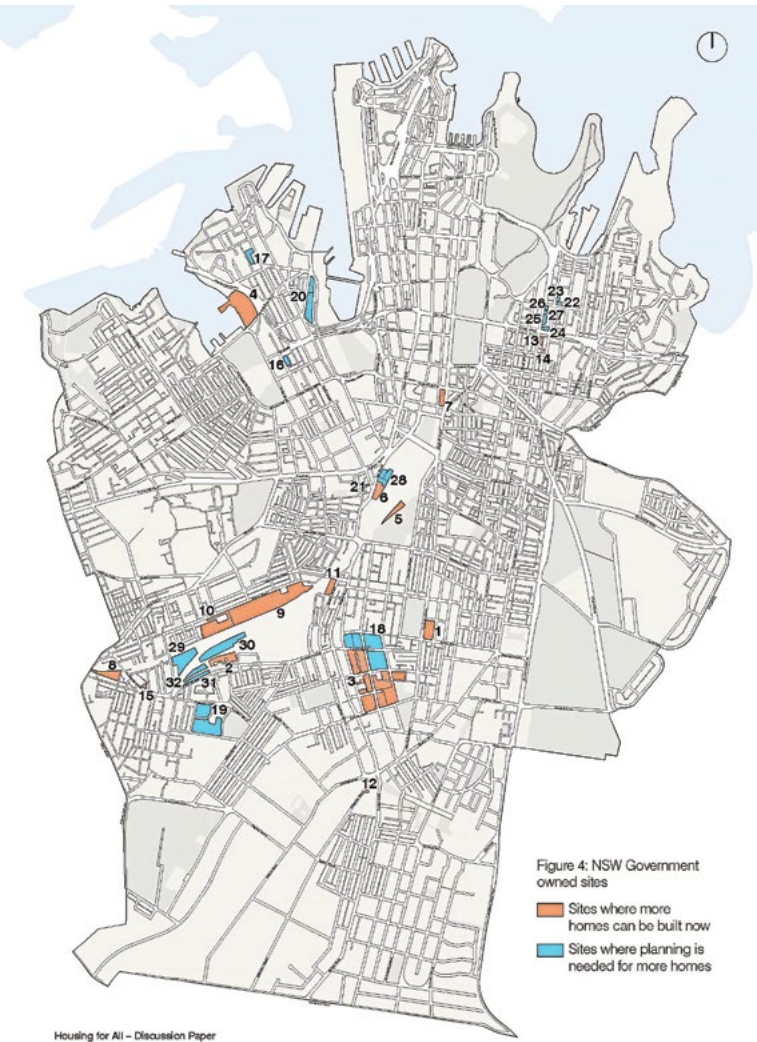


Figure 4: NSW Government owned sites
Orange Sites where more homes can be built now
Blue Sites where planning is needed for more homes

Illustration: Housing for All – Government-owned sites suggested for housing growth.

The push to eliminate cervical cancer for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

FIRST PEOPLES

SOPHIA POOLE

THE World Health Organization has a global goal to eliminate cervical cancer, requiring all countries to reach fewer than 4 cases per 100,000 women.

While Australia is on track to meet its 2035 target, a study has found that cervical cancer elimination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women will take 12 years longer to be achieved.

Incidence rates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are approximately twice as high as the national rate, currently at 11.7 cases per 100,000 women compared to 6.3 cases per 100,000 women.

Vaccination has brought overall cervical cancer rates down, but starting from such high numbers simply means cases in Indigenous women will take longer to fall.

“Vaccination absolutely works but it just doesn’t change things quickly,” Associate Professor Megan Smith from the University of Sydney’s Cancer Elimination Collaboration told the SSH.

The solution is cervical screening, the most effective short-term prevention.

Cervical screening detects abnormalities in the cervix. It has been a national program for 35 years, freely available for women aged 25 to 75. However, Professor Smith said the disparity stems from decades of Aboriginal women, especially those in remote areas, not having the same access.

“What we really need to do is ensure that everybody gets the benefits of vaccination and screening treatment that Australia in theory offers,” she said.

“If you could make sure every Aboriginal and Torres Strait



Photo: Getty

Islander woman was screened at least once, that would be the single most powerful thing you could do to bring forward the timing of cervical cancer elimination.”

Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer among women worldwide. It is caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), a sexually transmitted disease which can cause infected cervical cells to replicate uncontrollably.

Cervical cancer has a 76.8% survival rate. However, Professor Smith emphasised that the disease must be detected early.

“You don’t get screened because you’ve got cancer, you pick up something before it’s cancer.”

Traditionally, doctors use a speculum and swab to examine the cervix, but now women have the option to do a self-collection test.

Participation is encouraged by the greater sense of privacy, fast test results, ease of use and lack of shame when taking the sample themselves.

“It just gives people more choice and it gives services options to take screening into the community rather than having it in a clinic setting,” said Professor Smith.

“There are real shortages of GPs in some parts of Australia,

so having a convenient way of accessing something like self-collection could help that.”

In Western Australia’s remote Kimberley region, women have access to self-collection, immediate HPV testing and same-day specialist follow-up through culturally respectful community programs, guided by Aboriginal leadership.

The creation of these safe, welcoming health spaces has been well received by the community, with many women recommending the services to others.

“This isn’t about inventing new solutions but backing what communities already know works,” said Professor Lisa Whop from the National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Research at the Australian National University.

“A concerted effort, funded by government and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, will help to overcome longstanding inequities in cervical cancer screening.”

This piece was produced with support from the Copyright Agency’s Cultural Fund – an initiative helping newsrooms to amplify the work of previously unpublished writers – and in partnership with the Local & Independent News Association (LINA).



CBD rally shows support for Lebanon and calls for de-escalation

Protesters marched from Town Hall on Sunday 26 April, answering a call from Lebanon Action Group and Palestine Action Group to rally in solidarity with Lebanon. With flags raised and chants echoing through the CBD, demonstrators called for an end to the aggression, respect for Lebanese sovereignty and peace for the region.

Photo: Michelle Haywood

Federal Member for Sydney

TANYA PLIBERSEK MP



Dear SSH readers

Bans on gambling advertising

Over the years I’ve received many letters from and had conversations with Sydneysiders about banning gaming advertising, especially when sports are being broadcast. On becoming the Social Services Minister I was determined to make a meaningful difference.

Last month we introduced a series of bans on gambling advertising, beginning 1 January, 2027, so that children and young people can watch and listen to sport without a deluge of ads – on TV, radio and online – normalising punting.

Fuel and energy costs

We know the Middle East conflict is putting household budgets under additional pressure. To help, we’ve removed the fuel excise for three months, cutting the cost of fuel by 5.7 cents a litre. Australia is currently at Level 2 of the National Fuel Security Plan so we are also asking Australians to conserve fuel when they can.

The Albanese Labor Government’s commitment to transitioning to renewables is also providing a bit of a buffer.

From July energy retailers will be required to provide all customers at least three hours of free electricity in the middle of the day when solar generation is at its peak. You do not need solar panels to benefit from Australia’s abundant rooftop solar but you will need to contact your retailer about installing a smart meter.

More tax help

Two more tax cuts are on their way in 2026 and 2027 in addition to the recently announced \$1,000 instant tax deduction beginning 1 July, 2026. It will save around 6.2 million workers about \$205 in taxes.

Free mental health therapy

We’ve launched our Medicare Mental Health Check so you can access early mental health support from trained practitioners. Anyone aged 16 years or older who has, or is at risk of, mental illness or temporary distress is eligible to use the service if Low-intensity Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is suitable for your needs.

Economic inclusion

We’re helping with the cost of living and economic inclusion by expanding Paid Parental Leave to 26 weeks, making it easier to see a GP, making medicines cheaper, investing in more housing – including social and affordable homes – and guaranteeing three days of childcare for families who need it.

But we know there is more to do because Australians are still under pressure. That is why cost of living relief has been the key focus of our government, and why the upcoming May Budget will focus on tackling inflation and dealing with some of the unfairness that exists in our economy.

Tanya



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JENNY LEONG MP

MEMBER FOR NEWTOWN



Housing is a Human Right – But Not in NSW

Earlier this year, three public housing tenants in the ACT took the Government to court for trying to evict them – and won.

Between 2020 and 2022, the ACT Government had a policy in place called the “ACT Growing & Renewing Public Housing Program”, which involved evicting public housing tenants so they could redevelop their homes or sell them off. They would then use some of the proceeds to build new public housing.

If this sounds familiar, it’s because the NSW Labor Minns Government has been ‘asset recycling’ in a very similar way – even though they made an election promise not to continue this approach started by the Liberals.

It’s a counterproductive way of building more public housing, because you lose good homes years before they’re actually replaced so the overall pool of public housing actually shrinks until, many years down the line, it starts to grow again. Not to mention the cruelty of displacing people most in need of a stable place to call home.

Under the Growing & Renewing Public Housing program, the ACT Government tried to evict three tenants, one of whom had been living in their home for 42 years. The tenants took the ACT Social Housing Commissioner to the Supreme Court, arguing that their human rights hadn’t been considered, and that they were denied procedural fairness.

The Supreme Court agreed with them, citing Section 12 of the ACT Human Rights Act that recognises that everyone has the right “not to have their privacy, family, home or correspondence interfered with unlawfully or arbitrarily”.

This decision shows us that a Human Rights Act is not just a feel-good, ideological document, but a tool that people can use to fight for their rights and challenge decisions that harm them.

Unlike our neighbours in the ACT, Queensland, and Victoria, people in NSW don’t have the same pathways to justice through a Human Rights Act – yet.

That’s why I introduced a Bill in October last year to establish a Human Rights Act for NSW, which has now been referred to an Inquiry – a critical next step in realising this protection for everyone in NSW.

Submissions are now open – and we want to keep you updated about how you can help make this a reality. Scan the QR code to support a Human Rights Act for NSW – and find out more about the campaign.



Authorised by Jenny Leong MP. Funded using parliamentary entitlements.

Jenny Leong

Jenny Leong MP
Greens Member for Newtown



A Welcome to Country ceremony officially opened the new student centre in March. Photo: University of Sydney

University launches new student centre for Dubbo medical students

SPONSORED

MARK SCOTT

THE University of Sydney’s School of Rural Health has launched its new Student Centre in Dubbo, supporting students studying the University’s Doctor of Medicine (MD).

The new building, named Dabaamalang Ngurang, which means “gathering place” in Wiradjuri, is funded through a generous philanthropic donation and provides a dedicated space for students to study, socialise and host events.

It recognises that connection, community and life outside the classroom are central to a positive student experience.

“During our MD program, students learn not only the science of medicine, but also the art of practising in country communities,” said Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Professor John Prins, who officially opened the centre in a ceremony with students, their educators and the local community.

“Just as importantly, their experience outside of study is central to their wellbeing and sense of belonging. Since launching our four-year Doctor of Medicine program in Dubbo, we’ve grown our cohort to almost 100 students and the new Student

Centre provides a vital space to come together, build friendships and feel part of a close-knit community,” he said.

“Studying in Dubbo offers a unique experience. Students become part of the local community while receiving a world-class education and spaces like this help foster that sense of belonging.”

The new facility reflects the University’s longstanding commitment to enhancing rural medical education and improving healthcare outcomes in regional communities.

“Providing high-quality facilities at our rural sites is an important part of supporting our students’ education and wellbeing,” said Professor Jane Bleasel, Dean of Sydney Medical School.

“Our students deserve an outstanding learning environment that not only supports their academic success but also encourages connection, collaboration and a strong sense of community.”

Featuring kitchen facilities, study areas and recreational spaces, the Centre complements the School’s existing facilities, including a teaching building and simulation suites, student accommodation, lecture and tutorial rooms, and outdoor amenities such as a BBQ area and vegetable garden.

Students can now complete

the entire Doctor of Medicine program at the School of Rural Health in Dubbo.

Those in the Dubbo stream receive the same world-class medical education as their peers in Sydney, while benefiting from living and studying in a regional setting and gaining hands-on experience in rural and remote healthcare.

The Dubbo Stream was created to address a critical need: more doctors in rural and remote areas. Developed under the Australian Government’s Murray–Darling Medical Schools Network (MDMSN), the program provides students with immersive clinical experiences across western NSW, giving them a first-hand understanding of rural health challenges and the rewards of working outside metropolitan centres.

The program is available to students eligible for a Commonwealth Supported Place, prioritising First Nations students and those from rural and regional backgrounds.



Authorised by Vice-Chancellor and President Prof. Mark Scott.
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Suitcase Rummage pops up on the Goods Line

Suitcases popped open and treasures spilled out at Suitcase Rummage on the Goods Line, Ultimo on Sunday 3 May. From handmade pieces to pre-loved finds, locals bought, sold and swapped in a laid-back, no-fuss market celebrating community and conscious consumption. Next market in two months.

Photo: Silvia Casolari

ERRATUM

In the April 2026 issue, the photograph for Andrew Chuter’s article, “Sydney’s growing love affair with pinball”, should have been credited to Matthew Venables (www.mvenables.com). Please accept our apologies.



Bill Robinson and Shirley Temple dance on stairs in "The Little Colonel" (1935). Photo: Wikimedia Commons (commons.wikimedia.org)

So who's writing the positive stories for our future?

OPINION

NEVILLE WILLIAMS

SHIRLEY Temple had it right at a very dark period in human history when she sang *Be Optimistic And Smile*.

While some of those books reviewed by Andrew Leigh (*The Future is Unnerving*, Herald March 21) may present some hope amidst gloomy future scenarios, can I please ask who is writing the books or for that matter making the plays, films, paintings or speaking through any medium towards the "certain" positive stories of our future?...Or doesn't that sell as a subject in our cynical horror/violent/anger fuelled times?

I note that eight feature films listed on the top ten for my streaming service are stories with a general negative outlook, some outright vicious and nasty, and just plain humanly destructive.

I don't know about other cultures but certainly our Western capitalist economic rationalist consumerist values system has darkly focused on negative destructive human interaction since Shirley Temple had millions focused on her simple heartfelt messages.

All of this negativism that is so prevalent today has been fuelled by ourselves and some addictive need to smash up the place. Why? Whether we want to face this or not, it is the truth. Part of the human condition is a lust to put down "the other," That is a deep flaw in too many psyches. Why so much self-hate that has to be paid for by someone else?

Sure, there will always be the story of good vs evil because that is the very foundational playbook of our lives. The journey from dark to light is what it is all about... isn't it? But where are the storytellers and positive advocates such as a modern speaking Miss

Temple who can light the way?

Masculine energy has proved itself too limiting and self-defeating. You will note that I'm not talking about male and female but masculine and feminine energies. Each is present in both sexes. We need more balance in live and our story writing and who we choose to listen to if we want to make a better future for ourselves.

The stories the likes of Trump, Netanyahu and Putin (and others) are spinning us only lead to a very short shelf life. Their playbook could be characterised as pulp fiction made real. So very destructive.

What about a story where we are encouraged to accept more individual responsibility for ourselves, each other and a fragile beautiful world that we seem intent on turning into a trash novel simply because it sells?

Miss Temple please take your place centre stage. We need many more stories filled with hope.

SSH



What prison has taught me

RELIGION & ETHICS

DAVID RUSSELL

PRISON is a "culture" that most people look down on because it lies beyond their experience and understanding.

As a chaplain in a remand prison with men in maximum, minimum and protection classifications, I have come to understand and appreciate the humanity of those I see and speak with each day. But I could not recommend that anyone choose to be incarcerated.

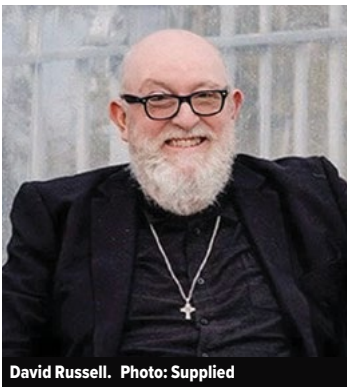
Prisons are dehumanising. Where else would you have an evening meal delivered to your cell at 2.30pm, before being locked in at 3pm, and then remain there with a cellmate until 8.30am the next morning? In the confined space of that cell, you eat, sleep, shower and use the stainless-steel toilet in each other's company. Where is the humanity in that?

Oh sure, there is a television to share. And yes, there is the possibility of making a phone call on the shared phone in the yard – but only if you have enough money in your jail account.

There are also opportunities to attend programs such as art, anger management, fitness, literacy and numeracy, and positive lifestyles. Prisoners have access to a library and, of course, the prison provides chapel services through chaplaincy. These programs and activities are aimed at creating a pathway towards rehabilitation – or at the very least, they provide some respite from the routine boredom of life in the wing with 200 other inmates.

Sadly, in NSW, the rate of recidivism – reoffending and returning to prison – is around 50–60%. So perhaps imprisonment is an inadequate solution to reducing crime and recidivism. One justice reform organisation has a motto: "Jailing is Failing." There is truly so much more that we could, should and must do to reform how we punish those who fall foul of the criminal justice system.

I have never exercised my training and experience as a



David Russell. Photo: Supplied

minister of the Church in a place where I encounter such genuine honesty and compassion. The "men in green" have undoubtedly done things that have led to their incarceration. Nevertheless, I have found good men who truly want to become a better version of themselves. This is possible with just a bit of kindness and compassion from me – from us.

Yesterday, at a chapel service, one of the boys spoke up and said that he believes that "heaven is here with us." And you know what? The other inmates understood exactly what he meant. I was moved and inspired by him.

Every day, the inmates have something to teach me. So, for me at least, prison has the potential to be a culture of hope and possibility, not only of judgement and punishment.

There are some post-release services that are making a big difference to the lives of men and women as they strive for the often elusive goal of rehabilitation. But there are simply not enough.

How in God's name, and I use the term quite deliberately, can someone released from custody with only enough money for a bus fare, hardly enough for something to eat or drink, and nowhere to stay, even begin on the road to rehabilitation? Is it any wonder that so many end up back in prison?

This chaplain believes that there must be a better way, and I truly hope we can find it. Surely it is time for both justice reform and social reform that make a real difference.

If not me, then who? If not now, then when?

SSH

The Rev. David Russell is Uniting Church Chaplain at Parklea Correctional Centre.





Photo: Stephen Webb

Warm welcome for Colorado rockers to Sydney music scene

MUSIC

STEPHEN WEBB

AMERICAN indie rock band Santa Ana Rodeo last month entertained audiences in pubs across Sydney while warming up for a national tour in May.

Formed in 2023 while studying at the University of Colorado Boulder, Santa Ana Rodeo started as a cover band but took original songs into the studio in 2025 and recorded their debut EP *Crooked Company*. In preparation for the launch of their debut full-length album *Farewell for Now*, three members of the band, singer and guitarist Lander McNamee, guitarist Jude Shaw and drummer Oskar Pedersen, relocated to Australia without bassist Malcolm Holman. Filling in for the first half of their Australian expedition is Rob Courtney-Morris from Newcastle's indie rock darlings Nana Klumpp. He will be touring with the band from Adelaide to Sydney, then another

friend from the States will join for the leg up to North Queensland. Band members have been enjoying their experience of the Sydney music scene. McNamee said, "Sydney is phenomenal. It's like a dream. It's my first time living out of the States and I've had a blast, surfing a bunch. On the music side, it's been fun. I think we have been surprised at how well-received we've been." Shaw said seeing Dope Lemon at Taronga Zoo was one of his favourite shows. "It was totally insane, that venue overlooking Sydney Harbour. Some of the bands that we've got to play with have been very, very cool. Nana Klumpp are absolutely incredible. Defair was super cool from our Freshwater Brewing show." McNamee said seeing River Langford's set at a hip hop open mic at The Trocadero Room in Newtown was the best live drumming he'd ever seen. Farewell for Now was recorded in 2200 Studios in Sausalito, California, where artists such as Fleetwood Mac, Grateful Dead,

Metallica, and Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers have recorded. While the band lists influences such as The Backseat Lovers and Gary Clark Jr., and describes their sound as fusing indie rock swagger with bluesy undertones, Shaw said *Farewell for Now* sounded more Americana/western-influenced, with an indie-surfie groove. He said, "Our earlier songs did a good job of getting the energy we wanted across, but now we have a lot more intricate song structures, chord progressions and melodies. The actual songwriting has taken a step up." Shaw said the band was grateful for the way Sydney had received them. "It's cool to be able to come here as foreigners and still be welcomed into the music scene. Thanks for that." **Santa Ana Rodeo's Australian Regional Tour begins 7 May in Adelaide and concludes 1 July in Mission Beach, QLD. See them in the Sydney CBD on Friday 29 May with Telopia at Chuck Trailers and again at the Butchers Brew Bar in Dulwich Hill on Saturday 30 May.**



Illustration: Gloria Liang, ChatGPT-assisted

Tales from Tokyo

SHORT STORIES

ANDREW PAVLI

IT'S a cold Saturday night in the dark back alleys of Kabukicho, Tokyo, where I find myself confused, disoriented and now hopelessly lost.

My map is no help, so I decide it's time to play the "help, I'm a pathetic lost tourist" card. Like a lion in tall grass, I wait patiently before picking my prey and pounce on a startled young Japanese couple who appear to be enjoying each other's company, laughing and giggling. They speak a little English. The first surprise is their names, Yamoto and Kerata, which actually sound very similar to some blasphemous Greek words. I recall my mother using these words

constantly when I played evil tricks on my twin sister. I am a lot older and wiser now, so it's been a long time since hearing them. Unbeknownst to me, I am about a 20-minute walk from where I want to be: Shinjuku Station. I expect them to point me in the right direction, but they start walking. And walking. To my surprise, they say, "go together"! Time passes quickly as we have a cross-cultural conversation covering the usual topics. We arrive at Shinjuku Station and I give them a small box of chocolates, which I happen to be carrying. They are totally surprised and delighted but it is a small token of my appreciation. As I wave them goodbye, sadly, I think I will never see them again. But I will always be grateful to them for reminding me of the joys of travel.

Inside Mitch Cairns' *The Artist's Mouth* at NAS

ART

ALKY AVRAMIDES

MITCH Cairns returns to the National Art School with *The Artist's Mouth*. After graduating twenty years ago, he presents his most comprehensive body of work to date.

In the preceding years, he has established himself as a leading Australian artist. He won the prestigious Archibald Prize in 2017 with a quirky and intimate portrait of artist and partner Agatha Gothe-Snape. His unique, uncompromising style crosses painting, sculpture, printmaking and concrete poetry. His work has wit, humour and irony. His slightly muted colours combine like musical notes, becoming beautifully colourful, even carnivalesque. There is a joyous playfulness here as he creates

dreamlike images from the everyday. You may be dazzled at first by the technical, rigorous handling of his mediums. Edges are clean and precise. Within them, forms are articulated in random, almost flippant renderings; some flat, like hard-edged patterns, others transparent and softly graded. You are seduced by their quirky mastery. It's as if Mitch is playing with the idea of painting. The process of constructing an image becomes a subject in his works. Even the construction of a stretched canvas is dealt with in wild, untamed angles and shapes. The process becomes the painting. His use of text to create imagery is also disarming. A large gallery wall is covered in multiple repetitions of four-line verse, continually rearranged. This small pool of labels, exponentially multiplied, was garnered from an uncle's Polaroids. Is there meaning here, or is there a

refusal to define? Are these patterns for the sake of patterns? Meanwhile, snippets of images show themselves like the instant snap of a Polaroid. Often described as an artist's artist, Mitch actively supports other artists through his operation of gallery spaces adjacent to his studio. This allows for work that is not immediately commercially accessible to be shown, and gives time and space for experimentation outside a mainstream context. No wonder he is so highly regarded by his peers, as he quietly fosters communities around the practice of art. As fellow artist Elizabeth Pulie writes in her introduction to the show, "while his images and words come from the artist's mind and the artist's mouth, the generosity shown in his broader practice comes from the artist's heart." **Mitch Cairns, *The Artist's Mouth*, is on at the NAS Gallery until 11 July 2026.**



Mitch Cairns, *Artist's Mouth*, 2019, oil on linen, framed, 78.5 x 68.5 x 4.5 cm, Private collection, Sydney. Photo: Alky Avramides

Theatre Review
by Catherine Skipper



Three Sisters
Playwright: Anton Chekhov
Director: Clara Voda
Old Fitz, Woolloomooloo
17 April 17 – 9 May, 2026

Director Clara Voda’s insistence on an undiluted Chekhovian experience has resulted in a remarkable theatrical experience. The complex, unstable world of the play created by Chekhov, both a relentless and compassionate observer of the human community, is beautifully realised by an empathetic cast and a skilful creative crew.

In a small provincial town in pre-revolutionary Russia, the Prozorov family – three sisters, Olga, Masha and Irina, and their brother Andrey – live in anticipation of a better life based on possibly illusory memories of happier times when their father was alive, and the family resided in Moscow. For the sisters, and to a lesser extent, Andrey, the dream of an imminent return to Moscow represents an escape from the tedium of their present existence and the promise of passionate commitment and intellectual fulfilment. As the play develops, the prospect of return increasingly fades as circumstances erode their hopes.

Olga, movingly performed with a dignified, wounded weariness by Teodora Matovic, has borne the responsibility of the household since her father’s death and works as a schoolteacher. Her married sister Masha, a tempestuous and entrancing Madeline Li, who feels she was “married off” at an early age to a man while under the illusion he was “clever”, conveys through gesture and subtle expression changes how discontented and sceptical she has become. It becomes apparent that Olga once had hopes of attracting the man whom Masha now can scarcely tolerate.

Irina, the youngest, by contrast, is fresh to life, and on her Saint’s Day,

discovers with joy that she knows “the way she ought to live” and that she “longs for work”. While it can be observed that the Prozorovs’ nanny works hard without any vestige of dignity, Tessa Olsson brings an innocent radiance to her portrayal of the white-clad Irina, inspiring the hope that she will find the illusory fulfilment she desires.

The destiny of the three women is very much dependent on the men available to them – first on their father whom they miss so much and now on their brother Andrey. This difficult role is played with immense conviction by Matthew Alexander, whose behaviour is spineless, but for which he can be pitied. Pitiable, too, is Kulygin, Masha’s schoolteacher husband, a pedantic, loud bore, brought to startling life by Faisal Hamza who knows he is barely tolerated.

Apart from relatives, the women’s limited world includes several army officers stationed in the town who gravitate to, and disrupt, the Prozorov household. Alfred Kouris’s portrayal of Vershinin is a perfect portrayal of a frequent Chekhovian “type”, as he ignites the unfulfilled passion of Masha with his passionate ‘philosophising’, and Ren Watson is suitably indifferent as the dissolute Chebutykin who remains uninvolved although those he loves will suffer.

Completing the picture is the likeable Baron Tuzenbach, engagingly and movingly performed by Tobey Carey, whose gentleness and warmth towards Irina contrasts with the other, less emotionally intelligent males. Unfortunately, the ingenuous Baron should have been less accommodating of his hanger-on, Solyony, performed with a demonic intensity by Lâp Nguyễn.

Add to this mix Natasha, the empire-building wife of Andrey. In a well-tuned performance, Emma Wright changes from a shy girl into a domestic termagant who lords it over the servants. Her cruel treatment of the elderly nanny, Anfisa – with the actor Cym scuttling like a mouse between household tasks – is almost totally alienating, although Natasha herself was treated derisively by the sisters.

Enclosed in a wonderfully claustrophobic and cluttered stage

evocation of a provincial household (Ella Wilkinson), repressed passions seethe, lifelong frustrations mount and the grief for loss is sublimated as the table is set for meals beneath an enormous mirror. A play should reflect reality according to Chekhov, and the reality is that most of us would like to feel that our lives have meaning.

Book Review
by Orli Jacoby



The Belly of a Wolf
Julianne Negri
UWA Publishing, 2026

The Belly of a Wolf is a moving verse novel written by award-winning Australian writer Julianne Negri. The novel follows our protagonist, Red, as she navigates life after the death of her best friend Wolf due to suicide. While *The Belly of a Wolf* is predominantly set in high school and is classified as a young adult novel, I think it’s one that adults can enjoy and learn from all the same.

Negri’s use of the poetic genre works incredibly well for the subject matter, as the fragmented structure reflects the non-linear nature of grief. I was lucky enough to ask Negri about her choice of poetry, and she said she “used old diaries and letters” from her teenage experience of grief, which helped inform Red’s journey in the novel. The fragments also jump between times, peeling back the layers of Red and Wolf’s relationship over a ten-year span from childhood to the present, from adolescence to adulthood. Within the first few poems, readers find out that Red and Wolf’s names were coined when they did a production of *Red Riding Hood*, which was the catalyst for their friendship. These names simultaneously act as a metaphor for Red’s grief, as Wolf lured Red into a friendship that eventually leads her into darkness after Wolf’s death.

The Belly of a Wolf uses incredibly vivid imagery, painting a clear setting

that blends biographical elements from Negri’s life. She stated that she “wanted to communicate the way landscape permeates identity”, and her connection to the story is beautifully evident throughout, making the novel’s impact even more emotional and inspiring for readers.

One of my favourite parts of the novel was Red’s journey with music as a coping mechanism and relief from her sadness. Red meets a new friend through music and discovers the magic of piano, which I appreciated and related to as a fellow pianist. Negri’s musical experience shines through here and encourages readers to find their own way of self-expression, as grief is something that needs to be explored in order to move forward.

Overall, this novel is a tragic, but beautiful tale of friendship, loss and identity. It is an honest and respectful depiction of grief and raises awareness for youth suicide, a topic that is lacking representation within media.

Concert Review
by John T Bottom



Deftones
Qudos Bank Arena
Saturday 2 May

For a band now three decades into its career, Deftones strode into Qudos Bank Arena looking and sounding unnervingly vital.

From the moment Chino Moreno appeared in a sharp black suit and the band plunged into a soaring *Be Quiet and Drive (Far Away)*, the room felt less like a nostalgia trip and more like a band in its prime testing how far its music can still stretch.

Moreno remains the group’s gravitational centre, slipping from a whisper to a serrated scream in a heartbeat, pacing the length of the stage, then dissolving into the band’s undertow on tracks like *Sextape*. Around him, Abe Cunningham’s fluid drumming, Frank Delgado’s eerie textures and

Shaun Lopez’s guitars (standing in for Stephen Carpenter) kept everything tight but never clinical.

The setlist underlined that this is not a museum piece. Yes, the band delivered the essential touchstones that first galvanised the fanbase: *Around the Fur* detonated a physical surge in the stands, *Change (In the House of Flies)* became a mass singalong, and the encore run of *Cherry Waves*, *My Own Summer (Shove It)* and *Hole in the Earth* sent everyone out hoarse. But those classics sat comfortably alongside deep cuts and fresh material, as the band moved through songs from almost every era: the humid drift of *Digital Bath*, the punch of *Diamond Eyes*, and a clutch of tracks from this year’s much-adored new album, including *Milk of the Madonna*, *My Mind Is a Mountain*, *Infinite Source* and the live-debuted *Departing the Body*.

What makes nights like this remarkable is how rare this model has become. In an age where the cultural conversation has shifted towards solo pop stars, short-form content and algorithm-friendly singles, rock bands that can still fill arenas on the strength of a decades-long catalogue are increasingly uncommon.

Many of Deftones’ peers from the late 90s and early 2000s now tour almost exclusively on 20- or 30-year anniversary laps of the one album that made them; the hook is memory, not momentum. Deftones, by contrast, are a living, evolving proposition: still producing adventurous, critically acclaimed records that justify tours in their own right, while being smart enough to honour the songs that built their following in the first place.

Saturday’s show in Sydney captured exactly why the band has not only endured but quietly grown, seducing a new generation without losing the old guard. The crowd skewed surprisingly young, proof that these songs now belong to more than one era, and that the band’s blend of beauty and brutality still feels contemporary rather than retro.

With this Australia and New Zealand run rolling on through Brisbane and beyond, Deftones are making a strong case that in a time when bands are supposed to be fading out, some can still sell out stadiums on the strength of the present tense.

Bessie’s & Alma’s brings a fresh Mediterranean edge to Surry Hills

FOOD
MARINE GRANGIER

I’VE always felt that “Mediterranean” restaurants in Sydney were really Lebanese restaurants with a kingfish crudo and a lamb shoulder thrown in the mix to give the rest of the area some air time. That was until I dined at Bessie’s & Alma’s. Here, every Mediterranean cuisine is getting some love.

Love Greek food? You’ll die for their lamb shoulder and halloumi. If you prefer Lebanese, their warm flatbread and roasted pepper dip should satisfy you. But the happiest will be fans of Spanish cuisine. From croquetas and jamón ibérico to chorizo and chilli pipis, you won’t know where to stop (and neither should you!).

Nestled on the ground floor of a modern corner building in Surry Hills, Bessie’s & Alma’s is charming from the outside. Rows of old bottles sitting on the window ledge and flickering candles invite passers-by to take a sneak peek inside. Half bar, half restaurant, with its fully open kitchen, the layout offers something for everyone. The colour palette is warm and the art on the walls is funky. It feels premium but also homely – a very hard balance to nail. Everything from the décor to the service feels familiar yet elevated. Our waitress was friendly and efficient, and the dishes came out at the perfect pace.

A lot has been said about the standardisation of Sydney menus (looking at you, kingfish crudo and burrata...) and even though Bessie’s & Alma’s menu might look like it’s no exception at first, it is not what it

seems. The dip is roasted pepper, not hummus; the sourdough, a flatbread; and the lobster roll, a Moreton Bay bug sandwich. No barramundi or snapper, but flathead and Murray cod instead.

There’s creativity and a deliberate effort to hero lesser-known ingredients such as fennel, cuttlefish and oxheart tomatoes. And if you like your meals saucy, you’re in luck – almost every dish we ordered came with a delicious, unique sauce, on the side or as the bedrock of the dish. There is no dry food at Bessie’s. Only simple flavours and contrasting textures that collide beautifully.

The desserts are light and on the small side, so don’t hold back. There’s always room for more.

Bessie’s & Alma’s
11-115 Albion St, Surry Hills
Open 7 days a week



Photo: Marine Grangier

Surry Hills actor Jared Gerschwitz steps into *My Inner Child*

LOCALS

GERRY SONT

WHAT does it mean to reconnect with the person you were before the world told you who to be? That question sits at the heart of *My Inner Child*, a new independent feature currently in post-production, written, produced and starring Sydney-based filmmaker Michelle Rouady.

We sat down with Surry Hills-based actor Jared Gerschwitz, who features in the film, to talk about his journey into acting and what it means to reconnect with his own inner child.

“I grew up on a farm near Maitland, and knew from an early age that farm life was not for me, as I was allergic to everything my family grew,” he laughs. “At 15, I saw my older brother perform in a production of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and knew that theatre was for me. Even though their second son had now turned away from farm life, my parents were very supportive,” he quips.

Trying to be responsible, Jared started a Bachelor of Science degree at the University of South Australia, but felt bored, so crossed



Photo: Tom Wilkinson

over to Media Arts, majoring in Drama, Film and TV. “I felt that I wanted to learn everything about being both in front of and behind the camera,” Jared explains.

Leaving school, Jared ventured to London and completed a Diploma in Musical Theatre at Associated Studios, where he supported himself for two years by being a teacher’s assistant and actor at Gingerline dinner theatre. It was no easy task.

The young kid from a conservative rural Australian town had already come a long way.

The year is 2021. The world is bouncing back from COVID-19, so at 25 Jared produced his first one-man show entitled *Country Chic*. “At uni, they always ask us to work out what makes you

different, so for me that was being a country lad who seeks something more than crops and sheep shearing. I was lucky to pick up a grant and entered the Adelaide Fringe,” he chuffs.

Jared was on his third vertical series when he met Michelle Rouady, and they started chatting. “I casually remarked to her that if she ever needed a Broadway voice, then I’m your man,” he declared. The next day, he was in the recording studio with Michelle, laying down “Return to the Stage”. Michelle (producer/actor of *My Inner Child*) was so impressed she wrote the role of Ashtar for him.

“It was really my first role in a big independent film, so a bit bewildering but very professional in every way. I had a great time. My character is like a younger version of Michelle’s character, who realises he doesn’t want to end up like her.”

Jared is currently living the greatest adventure of his life, having moved to Sydney and being part of the cabaret and burlesque scene. “I have produced several shows at Two80 Cabaret, both for them and independently. I’m very busy – it’s great fun.”

Jared is truly a triple threat. His inner child is always ready to entertain and delight.

SSH

Out & About – May 2026

PAT CLARKE

WELCOME to Autumn, to enjoying the sunny days (hopefully), and looking at last year’s winter wardrobe. Sydney is alight with things to entertain us in May, and some of them are free!

Vivid Sydney – 22 May-13 June

This year’s Vivid again has Dream as its main theme and *Lighting of the Sails: Opera Mundi* will be illuminating the Opera House 6pm-11pm each night. Curator is renowned French multimedia artist Yann Nguema, with music by Romanian classical and electronic composer Mischa Blanos. Other light projections are: *Mythical Mashup* by Indigenous artist Brian Robinson at Darling Harbour, *Vaiola* by Samoan-Australian artist Angela Tiatia at Circular Quay and the Rocks. Another highlight is the 6.5 kilometre-Light Walk and new daytime experiences. The extensive program from free to paid events can be found at vividssydney.com

Fantastic Film Festival – until 15 May

For lovers of *Cinema Without Restraint* at the Ritz, Randwick. In its seventh year, I am amazed at the breadth of vampire films and J-horror. Tickets range from \$25 per session and you can get the full program and other details from fantasticfilmfestival.com.au

Sydney Writers’ Festival

Show Me the Truth – 17-24 May

As well as Carriageworks, there are a number of venues, including Sydney Town Hall, Barangaroo, State Library of NSW and Riverside Theatre, Parramatta. Writers and guests include Melanie Saward as Guest Curator, Barrie Cassidy, Jacinda Arden, Yann Martel, chef and cookbook author Stephanie Alexander and Roddy Doyle. Highlights include *Art and Culture in the Age of AI* on Wednesday 20 May, 8pm-9pm at Bay 20. Cost is \$40, \$30 Concession. *Sydney Writers’ Festival Family Day* on Sunday 24 May at Carriageworks Way, 9am-4pm. There will be storytelling and creativity for kids of all ages. Tickets are \$10,



Photo: Joe Fenech

but there are free kids activities 10am-3.30pm at Bays 22-24. Lots of free events this year, mostly at Carriageworks, and bookings are essential even for free events. You can pick up a copy of the Festival program at your local library or cinema. Book tickets at swf/org.au

Flight Path Theatre, Addison Road Community Centre

On Gadigal land in Marrickville This is close to my heart, as I’m also under the dreaded flight path and it will only get worse when Badgerys Creek airport is fully operational. However, jet boom doesn’t stop creativity and the next offering is *Ordinary Days: The Musical*, 7.30-9pm, Tuesday 5 May until Saturday 9 May. The next play will be Edward Albee’s *At Home at the Zoo*, Wednesday 20 May – Saturday 30 May, 2026. Tickets available at events/humantix.com If you want to follow this independent company, contact flightpaththeatre.org.au

Dates for your diary

5 May: International Day of the Midwife
10 May: Mother’s Day
12 May: International Nurses Day
17 May: International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT)
21 May: Shavuot
24 May: Pentecost
26 May: National Sorry Day
27 May-3 June: National Reconciliation Week with the theme *All In*
3-14 June: 73rd Sydney Film Festival. For tickets and information contact sff.org.au

Pat Clarke

SSH

volunteers@ssh.com.au

Navigating the waters of NSW Housing

HUMAN AFFAIRS

MURRAY GILLET

HERE are some tried and proven hints, advice and suggestions to help you navigate Homes NSW housing services.

[Ed. note: maintenance has its own process for reporting issues via the My Housing App or the Maintenance Hub, and the Housing Response Centre on 1800 422 322.]

Firstly, let me start by saying: I understand. It’s not easy.

Let’s start with the basics: Normally, you would raise your issue with your local Client Service Officer (CSO) or at your local office. Keep a record of that conversation. Always be polite, never raise your voice, lose your cool or swear (trust me, I know how difficult this is). The moment you do, your case may be closed down.

Homes NSW has escalation processes that can be accessed through local service providers or your local MP. If you do not receive a response within 14–28 days, depending on the issue, it should be escalated to a team leader.

Never be frightened of the NCAT Rental Tribunal. NCAT is impartial, it hears both sides and it considers each case on its merits. It is straightforward to lodge an application for a hearing. It is recommended to call or visit in person, as the website can be difficult to navigate. Call 1300 006 228.

Redfern Legal Aid and the Tenants’ Advocacy Service are located at Redfern Town Hall and are open Monday to Friday,



Illustration: Gloria Liang, ChatGPT-assisted

9am to 5pm. They are free and easy to speak to. Make an appointment: tenancy@rlc.org.au

Your local Member of NSW Parliament is your elected representative. That is why they are elected through democracy: to help you.

In Waterloo and Newtown there are two, depending on your address. You can search “NSW Parliamentary representative for your address” online to find your local MP. They can advocate on your behalf. It’s their job! In Waterloo: Hon Ron Hoenig MP, electorateoffice.heffron@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Redfern Health Centre can also advocate on your behalf. They have a liaison worker who supports tenants in discussions with Homes NSW. Contact: Debbie, social worker. 103 Redfern St, Redfern.

NSW Police may also assist with issues relating to legal matters involving Homes NSW. Contact Redfern or Mascot

Police. customerassistance@police.nsw.gov.au

Factory Community Centre can also assist and advocate on your behalf. Contact Elle, Rory or Sophie. 67 Raglan St, Waterloo.

You can also email housing local offices directly. Each office has a team-based email system. For example, Waterloo is t101@homes.nsw.gov.au.

Housing local office contacts include the Client Service Officer (CSO), Specialist CSO, Senior CSO, Team Leader, Manager of Housing Services, Sydney Area Director and the Minister for Housing.

Here is a useful tip that is not widely known: Homes NSW contact email addresses often follow a standard format. If you know the correct spelling of an official’s first and last name, you may be able to email them directly, for example: john.smith@homes.nsw.gov.au (this does not apply where multiple staff share the same name).

Good luck!

SSH



Spotted in... Surry Hills

Silvia Casolari shares her monthly local jungle photos for SSH. Nature is never far if you look closely.

Photo: Silvia Casolari / Analogue Olympus AF mini