

# New social and affordable housing for Green Square

URBAN DESIGN

GEOFF TURNBULL

CITY West Housing will deliver 135 social and 129 affordable rental apartments close to Green Square station, on land between 330 Botany Road and 20 O’Riordan Street fronting the new Ngamuru Avenue, which will connect Bowden Street in Alexandria to Geddes Avenue in Zetland.

Council purchased industrial land for the new avenue and part has been sold at a discount to City West Housing, as well as St George Community Housing opposite for its 111-unit development.

City West’s \$255m Acacia Apartments project is one of the latest housing projects funded through the Federal Government’s Housing Australia Future Fund Facility (HAFFF). It also receives some affordable housing developer contributions from the City of Sydney, financing from Commonwealth Bank’s onstruction financing (Social Loan) program

and will have eight commercial / retail tenancies.

The project is scheduled for completion in mid-2029 and might be able to assist relocations from the Waterloo South redevelopment, as did City West’s Boronia Apartments with its 36 social and 38 affordable homes at 895 Bourke Street, Waterloo, again with Council and HAFFF support. HAFFF funding approves the affordable / social mix; it is then delivered in line with state requirements.

While City West is a Community Housing Provider (CHP), it manages no Homes NSW social properties. All its housing is affordable housing but at the lowest income tiers, set by the NSW government. It already houses some people who qualify for social housing.

City West can access Commonwealth Rental Assistance (CRA) for low-income tenants where Homes NSW cannot. City West says a pensioner on \$532.70 still pays \$133.17 rent (25%) while the CHP also gets \$106.00 CRA. Almost 80% more than Homes NSW gets for the same tenant.



Alan Yazbek, Managing Director, Infinity Construction; Josh Burns MP, Federal Special Envoy for Social Housing and Homelessness; Leonie King, CEO, City West Housing; The Rt. Hon Clover Moore AO, Lord Mayor of Sydney; Diana D’Ambra, Chair, City West Housing; The Hon. Rose Jackson MLC, NSW Minister for Housing. Photo: Supplied

The mixed model of surplus land provided at a discount, affordable housing contributions, funding from state or federal governments, the ability to borrow against assets and concessional building finance are all important ingredients to deliver these and future projects.

The NSW government needs to follow Council’s example in the projects above, by making land available at a discount and finding additional ways to help fund new social and affordable housing on its surplus land.

Geoff Turnbull is the Spokesperson for REDWatch.

# Green Square has no public high school – and that needs to change now

EDUCATION

JOEL O’CONNOR

ONE of Australia’s fastest-growing urban hotspots, Green Square is set to explode by another 40% by 2046. Families are flooding in, yet there’s still no local public high school for their teenagers.

The closest option, Alexandria Park Community School, has just been redeveloped but its secondary campus will hit capacity by 2027–28. That shortfall is about to get worse. More than 4,000 new apartments are coming to South Waterloo and the Waterloo Metro Quarter, sending a fresh wave of students into an already strained system.

The Green Square Primary School Parents and Citizens Association (P&C) and the City of Sydney have both reached the same clear conclusion: a new local public high school must be built.

That’s why the P&C has launched a petition demanding action from the NSW state government.

The urgent realities:

- The hugely popular new Green Square Primary School will shrink its catchment next year, pushing hundreds more students into an overcrowded high school pipeline.
- Almost half of the families currently leave the area once their children reach high school age because there are no local options.

P&C President Steve Robinson put it bluntly: “A public high school is not optional, it’s a fundamental necessity. The government keeps approving dense housing but fails to deliver the schools that make communities liveable.”

The campaign has serious momentum. The City of Sydney

Council passed a unanimous motion in support.

Lord Mayor Clover Moore will write directly to the Premier, calling for a full needs analysis focused on Green Square and Waterloo. State MPs Ron Hoenig, Alex Greenwich and Marjorie O’Neill, plus federal MP Tanya Plibersek, have all backed the push.

With a state election looming, the community is organising vibrant public forums so residents can hold candidates to account. This is becoming a ballot-box issue.

Right now, numbers matter most. The petition is open until 8 September and welcomes signatures from people under 18.

“This is their future,” Steve says. The P&C is urging people to sign, share and make it impossible to ignore.

Scan the QR code to sign the petition



Steve Robinson, president of the Green Square Primary School Parents and Citizens Association (P&C). Photo: Supplied

SAVE WATERLOO  
EVERYONE DESERVES HOME

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Vale Les Brennan, South Sydney Rabbitohs Legend P8

This issue inside & online

South Sydney Herald

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PUBLISHER

South Sydney Uniting Church  
Raglan Street, Waterloo.  
The views expressed in this newspaper are those of the author and the article and are not necessarily the views of the Uniting Church.

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Redfern NSW 2016

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DISTRIBUTION

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DESIGN

Gasoline Group | gasolinegroup.com.au

PRINTER

News Corp Australia | newscorpaustalia.com

*"We gratefully acknowledge the many volunteer contributors and distributors who make this publication possible."*

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# Getting your bond back: What every tenant should know

## LEGAL

ANDREW PAVLI

**AT the end of a tenancy, getting your bond back should be straightforward but many renters lose money by falling into avoidable traps.**

Your bond is held by NSW Fair Trading, not your landlord. This means it cannot be taken without a proper claim.

A common mistake is waiting for the landlord or agent to act. You can lodge your own claim online as soon as you return the keys, either through Rental

Bonds Online or by submitting a bond claim form with NSW Fair Trading, which often speeds things up and puts the responsibility on the landlord to respond.

Cleaning causes many disputes. The law requires the property to be reasonably clean, not spotless or professionally cleaned (unless your lease specifically says so). Taking photos when you leave is essential if there is a disagreement.

It's also important to understand the difference between damage and fair wear and tear. Everyday use, such as minor marks or worn carpet, is usually acceptable, but broken items or significant damage may justify a deduction.



Photo licensed under CC BY 4.0

If there is a dispute, it can be resolved through the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal, which handles tenancy matters

quickly and informally.

Being organised and proactive can make all the difference to getting your full bond back.

SSH

# Reduce, reuse and rummage!

## LOCALS

CHLOE FRAGOS

**LOVE one-of-a-kind finds and curbing fast fashion? Curious about hosting a market stall but unsure where to start? The Sydney Suitcase Rummage might be for you.**

On Sunday, 3 May, collectors, crafters, and the curious gathered on the Goods Line, in Ultimo, for a community event where elitism goes out the door and what comes in is an event for all. What to bring? A suitcase or a few, full of treasures.

Part of the national Suitcase Rummage, the concept was founded on the belief that being a marketer should be accessible for all. With a small registration fee of \$30 and no overheads, people can sell their goods and treasures from a suitcase.

Nancy Wang, co-coordinator of the Sydney Rummage alongside Lan HE (Anne), shared why the event is unique:

"It is an intimate event, no racks or shelves, just a nice day out for people to be in the sun and doing this not for the money but for the commitment to and appreciation of beautiful, carefully made things."

The latest Sydney Suitcase Rummage had over 30 marketers lining the street with their



Nancy Wang and Lan HE (Anne), co-coordinators of the Sydney Suitcase Rummage. Photo: Silvia Casolari

suitcases ready to sell to regular followers and new folk alike.

What was on offer included vintage clothes, hand-painted bookmarks, jewellery, custom pottery, pressed flowers, crochet, kids' toys, kitchen utensils, 3D-printed items, and more.

Being part of the day is about more than taking home a new treasure. It is also a chance to

make a statement about how we treat the things we own. Nancy shared why she got involved with the rummage after previously being a stall holder:

"We are drowned by fast fashion and a fast-consumption economy, and it is hard to find quality things. At this event you can take home something made with care. I love second-hand."

You can be part of the next Sydney Suitcase Rummage on Sunday 26 July. Whether a marketer or appreciator of fine things, you are guaranteed to take home a new keepsake and put your values into practice. Beautiful things for all.

SSH

**Sydney Suitcase Rummage**  
**Next market: Sunday 26 July, 11am-4pm**  
**Location: The Goods Line, Ultimo**

# Finally, Donald Trump is owed an award

## POLITICS

IVES HEM

**"TRUMP decarbonises global economy" was not on any bingo card for 2026 but things have a way of working out for The Man Who Wanted an Award, because thanks to his war against Iran, the price of fuels has recently rocketed by up to 40%. This time, with credible alternatives now readily available, it's forcing consumers and businesses alike to reconsider electrification.**

What's that exactly? Electrification simply means swapping any appliance or



Photo: Gage Skidmore / Wikimedia Commons

machine from non-electric (such as petrol or gas) to electric power. Once it's electric, this then paves the way for it to be powered by renewable energy, permanently shielding the user from the vagaries of fossil fuels and their associated conflicts.

A less discussed benefit of renewables is that they transform energy from a geopolitical supply chain conundrum to a simpler finance problem. Instead of worrying about the cost of fuels next month or next year, consumers and businesses can finance their electrification investments, and thus worry less about the next fossil fuel war.

Well, electrification is happening, "bigly." As of March 2026, Australia has seen demand for electric cars surge by over 40% year-on-year. Search queries for EVs are up 100%. This phenomenon is global.

And it's not just cars: Aussies have sought to reduce their home

energy bills, too. The timing has coincided with the federal cheaper home battery scheme peaking this April: demand has exploded and Australia is on course to add over 40,000 battery units per month, a seven-fold increase year-on-year. This massive influx of storage capacity is already stabilising the grid by optimising storage of renewable power, and reducing the need for coal- and gas-fired power plants.

This is only the beginning: governments are now re-examining their long-term electrification policies and incentives, and what's coming will have more impact than 30 years of COP conferences. Bravo Donald!

SSH

# Redevelopment begins at Waterloo South as community debate intensifies



Photo: Michelle Haywood

**HUMAN AFFAIRS**  
**LUCY GLEESON**

**AFTER weeks of protests, resident relocations and community action, the first excavators have arrived in Waterloo South, marking the next stage of a redevelopment over a decade in the making.**

The 3,300 new dwellings will combine social, affordable and private housing, with the first social homes expected to be ready by 2030.

The redevelopment is the key point of contention between campaigners seeking to preserve

and renovate existing public housing and the NSW Government, which argues the project will deliver more homes overall.

**Two opposing sides**

Protesters, including Action for Public Housing and House You, argue the redevelopment represents a loss of public housing at a time of severe shortage. They say the Minns government’s election commitment to protect public housing has not been met and are calling for a halt to demolitions in favour of renovated, government-owned housing on the site.

The NSW Government maintains the project will deliver more homes overall, including a mix

of social, affordable and private housing. It says the redevelopment is necessary to replace ageing buildings and that tenants are being relocated rather than evicted.

**Why the debate is complicated**

At the centre of the dispute lies the distinction between public housing and social housing.

Public housing is owned and operated directly by Homes NSW, with rents typically capped at around 25 per cent of household income. Under the Waterloo South redevelopment, future housing will instead be managed by community housing providers, including Link Wentworth, City West Housing and Birribee Housing.

Although tenants will continue to be drawn from the state’s social housing waiting list, management will sit outside government control.

The shift can be understood as largely financial. Community housing providers are eligible for Commonwealth Rental Assistance payments that are not available to Homes NSW, increasing the funding available per tenant.

The NSW Government retains ownership of the land but transfers day-to-day management to non-government providers under long-term agreements.

Geoff Turnbull, spokesperson for REDWatch, says the distinction is often misunderstood.

“Definitionally, we’re losing public housing,” he said. But in terms of people coming off the waiting list, there’s no change. Both systems are drawing from exactly the same pool.”

Turnbull says the policy shift reflects broader funding constraints in public housing, but also notes that many existing tenants support redevelopment due to long-standing maintenance issues in the estate.

“For the bulk of tenants, this can’t happen quick enough,” he said.

**What’s next**

Planning is now focused on detailed design and management arrangements for the new precinct.

“The mantra is social mix, but what’s been delivered is tenure mix,” Geoff Turnbull said. “The question is how you make that actually work in practice.”

He says key unresolved issues include whether sufficient on-site support services will be provided for residents with complex needs, and how mixed-tenure communities will function day to day.

“This is why we’re focused on the Social Impact Assessment, which is basically about what you need to do to make this model that they’re talking about work.”

As demolition proceeds, the debate is increasingly shifting from whether Waterloo South should be redeveloped to how the new precinct will operate once it is built.

SSH

## TANYA PLIBERSEK MP Federal Member for Sydney



*Dear SSH readers*

We’re delivering more cost-of-living help and building a more productive economy, a better tax system, a fairer housing market and a stronger and more sustainable budget.

**Keeping costs down for families and boosting early educators’ wages**

Early educators help children learn, grow and get ready for school. It’s one of the most important jobs in the country and they should be paid fairly. That’s why we’re investing \$3.6 billion more to lock in our historic 15 per cent pay rise for early childhood educators.

**Child Care Centres will be required to limit fee increases** and meet national safety standards as a condition of the payment.

**Ending the weaponisation of child support**

We are delivering \$183 million over four years from 2026–27 to better protect children and parents against weaponisation of the child support system.

- Services Australia will have more power to step in when there is family violence, harassment or misuse of the system.
- Detailed financial information will not be automatically shared with the other parent when a change of assessment or objection is lodged.
- There will be stronger protection for parents in Private Collect arrangements and those moving from private to Agency Collect child support arrangements.

**We are also:**

- **Taking stronger action on unpaid child support**, including greater use of international travel restrictions for parents who owe \$10,000 or more.
- **Ensuring child support payments are made in full and on time** by increasing the use of ‘employer withholding’ provisions and speeding up payments to the receiving parent.
- **Providing clearer information for separated parents** to understand their child support options including explaining how child support works alongside Family Tax Benefit.
- **Delivering more accurate child support assessments** by improving tax lodgement compliance and expanded use of payroll data.
- **Ensuring better child support arrangements for parents living overseas** including strengthening child support arrangements with other countries and providing **support for community organisations** helping parents with children living overseas.

**Protecting kids and social media**

Apple will roll out new parental controls following our world-leading online safety laws. Apple CEO Tim Cook briefed Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on the changes, which he said were in part inspired by **Australia’s world-leading social media age ban**, as well as research that Apple is undertaking.

More than 5 million under-16s’ social media accounts have now been removed or deactivated. Tech companies must comply or face fines of up to \$49.5 million.

*Tanya*

## JENNY LEONG MP

MEMBER FOR NEWTOWN



### 50 Years of NAIDOC

This week marks 50 years of NAIDOC – a significant milestone that celebrates the history, cultures, achievements and resilience of First Nations communities across Australia. While it is a time for celebration, this year's theme – 50 Years of Deadly – is also an opportunity for all of us to reflect on the ongoing pursuit of justice and self-determination.

For five decades, NAIDOC Week has provided a platform for First Nations voices to be heard and for communities across Australia to recognise the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is a reminder that the oldest continuing cultures on Earth have survived despite the devastating impacts of colonisation and policies that sought to erase culture.

But true celebration needs to also include truth telling, dignity and respect – and a recognition of the wrongs and injustice that continue.

Justice and sovereignty must remain at the heart of NAIDOC. First Nations communities continue to face disproportionate barriers in health, housing, education and employment. Likewise, the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system and the ongoing impacts of intergenerational trauma highlight the urgent need for structural change.

NAIDOC Week challenges us all to move beyond symbolic support by engaging with the work of reconciliation and truth telling. It invites us to listen, learn and follow the lead of the deadly First Nations elders, activists and community leaders, and to show up every day of the year for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As we celebrate 50 years of NAIDOC Week, we honour the generations of Elders, activists and community members whose determination achieved so much and continues to inspire. The next 50 years present an opportunity to continue that work so that justice and self-determination are not aspirations, but realities.

So while NAIDOC week is a celebration of culture – let us also use it as a call to action for allies to remember to keep showing up and to keep doing the work.

Find a NAIDOC event near you at [naidoc.org.au](http://naidoc.org.au)



*Jenny Leong*

Jenny Leong MP  
Greens Member for Newtown

Authorised by Jenny Leong MP. Funded using parliamentary entitlements.



Dr Ashley Roach. Photo: University of Sydney / Fiona Wolf

## Engineering campaign to lift gender equity enters second year

### SPONSORED

MARK SCOTT

**THE Faculty of Engineering has announced a second recruitment drive to offer academic roles reserved for women, after a successful 2025 campaign to encourage the best and brightest academics into the field.**

A quantum physicist and engineer investigating how light can be used to control quantum systems and a mechanical engineer aiming to establish a major battery testing hub are among 16 outstanding women engineers and computer scientists who will join the Faculty in 2026.

The 2025 Women in Engineering recruitment campaign was the first and largest of its kind in the University of Sydney. The campaign has been the cornerstone of the Faculty of Engineering's investment to address systemic gender inequities in the industry.

Over the last three years, the Faculty of Engineering has increased the number of

women academics by more than 45 per cent. The 2025 recruitment drive attracted a record-breaking number of applications from women, nearly 600 from over 40 countries.

"I was excited to find that the roles were designed specifically to hire women engineers. It opens doors and is a beautiful way to address the issue of gender equity in Engineering," says Dr Ashley Roach, a mechanical engineer who is joining the University of Sydney from the University of Cambridge.

"Most importantly, the roles give a sense of ownership and stability for early-career researchers to make their start in a supportive environment and build their careers with a long-term vision."

Dr Roach is a specialist in materials science and is interested in the ways material and design choices will influence how a battery fails. She has always loved problem-solving and her goal is to create a testing hub for new and current battery designs at the School of Aerospace, Mechanical and Mechatronic Engineering, the first at the University of Sydney.

Professor Renae Ryan, Associate Dean of Culture and Community in the Faculty of Engineering, says the strong response to the 2025 recruitment campaign clearly shows it is filling a long-standing gap in academia.

"We had a huge number of outstanding applicants from around the world, which confirms that there are amazing women engineers out there and more institutions should be actively creating opportunities for engineering talent to flourish, develop and grow.

"Due to the overwhelming response, we are announcing an additional 2026 recruitment round to add to our growing community of women engineers and computer scientists at the University of Sydney."



Authorised by Vice-Chancellor and President Prof. Mark Scott.  
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The 2026 Homeless Persons' Memorial Service was held in Sydney on Sunday 21 June, coinciding with the winter solstice, to honour people who died while experiencing homelessness. The candlelight vigil at the Martin Place Amphitheatre brought together community organisations, choirs and advocacy groups.

Photo: Michelle Haywood



# Salt and light – local journalism in the Age of AI

RELIGION & ETHICS  
ANDREW COLLIS

POPE Leo XIV’s encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas* asks how human dignity can be safeguarded in an age shaped by artificial intelligence (AI), digital platforms and concentrated technological power. AI can serve human beings and the common good, but only when governed by ethical responsibility. It must not reduce people to data, displace human judgement or become an instrument of manipulation, exclusion and commercial domination.

This challenge resonates with the founding vision of the *South Sydney Herald* (SSH). First published in 2002 by South Sydney Uniting Church, the newspaper seeks to give voice to local people and concerns and to participate constructively in community life.

The SSH ‘About’ sheet describes this as a prophetic commitment to justice and neighbour-love. The church is challenged to understand “the gospel in journalistic mode”: to be salt and light, helping to bring about reconciliation, wholeness and justice while resisting divisiveness and sectarianism.

A longer *Vision & Guidelines* document (2011) gives this vocation a clear journalistic expression. Publishing a community newspaper is understood as a means of engaging residents, businesses, artists, activists, politicians and community organisations. It requires discerning genuine public interest from sensationalism and gossip and maintaining “strength of evidence over ferocity of opinion”.

That principle becomes especially urgent in the age of AI.

AI may assist journalists with research, transcription, translation, data analysis and routine production. Used responsibly, it can make information more



Photo: Getty

accessible and help small publications work effectively. But it must remain in service of human dignity. It cannot replace verification, editorial accountability, local knowledge or the relationship of trust between a journalist and a community. Its use should be transparent, and its outputs tested for error, distortion and inherited bias.

The gospel images of salt and light offer an ethical framework. Light makes things visible. Good journalism brings to light what has been overlooked, obscured or deliberately hidden: beauty and achievement, but also exploitation, exclusion and institutional failure. It asks whose experience is missing, where power is operating invisibly and what facts must be established.

Salt preserves and sharpens. Local journalism keeps memories, cultures and identities from being dissolved into a generic urban product. It does not invent the character of a community; it helps

people recognise what is already present in particular lives, streets, histories and relationships.

Together, salt and light suggest journalism that is neither publicity nor relentless exposure. It reveals, preserves and intensifies the life of a place.

Leo calls for communication marked by “a clarity that sheds light and a frankness that unlocks new possibilities”. This means clarity without humiliation and frankness without foreclosure: reporting that may challenge or disturb, yet does not treat any person as disposable.

A guiding editorial question might therefore be: “Does this story shed light without humiliation, speak frankly without sealing off possibility, and help the community recognise the dignity of those involved?”

In the age of AI, the *South Sydney Herald’s* vocation remains deeply human: to help life together become more visible, truthful and capable of hope.



Photo: Rob Swystun, licensed under CC BY 2.0

# A shivered plate

OPINION  
GILL ROBSON

I can juggle three balls (badly), provided there’s a wall to bounce them off back towards me.

I can keep a hacky sack in the air for around 30 taps.

I can do ‘toe basketball’ and get the ball in the basket (on the floor) with my toes, at least part of the time.

Here’s what I can’t do: stop myself from occasionally shivering the plate.

Splat! Shattered on the floor. Crash! Creak! Crinkle! “Oh crap...”

In a high-stakes game of precious good china shards vs bare feet on a linoleum floor, nobody is winning.

Many of my plates are hand-me-downs attached to memories.

I look at this cup and think of the house my great-grandfather built. I look at that plate and I think of my favourite fruit cake, eaten in a formal setting, dressed to impress. The stress was high, but the cake was worth it.

When I lose one of those plates, it’s a double reminder of relationships lost and long-ago grief.

Here’s what I’ve been thinking

about recently: mosaic art.

South Sydney Uniting Church has a free-ish (by donation) art group that meets regularly on a Saturday morning. When people make art, they turn their emotions and ideas into tangible objects and create aesthetic beauty from truths.

If many of the losses in my life can be symbolised in a plate no bigger than 10 cm wide, many of the gains in my life can be symbolised in the act of creating beauty out of the broken pieces.

Come along to South Sydney Uniting Church on Sundays at 10am. Everyone is welcome. Gay, straight, bi, trans, black, white, Asian, Indigenous, mothers, fathers, kids, adults, brothers, sisters, cousins, humans, cyborgs, aliens: you’re welcome.

You might be surprised how good it is to create a new life in a community of people all trying to clean up a small portion of the universe.

Sunday, 10am, Factory Community Centre in Redfern. Morning tea at 11am (and you’re welcome for that if you’re not a God-botherer but like to chat). Free packaged food every week.

We’re a truly cosmopolitan mosaic. And we’re not broken.

SSH

## South Sydney Herald READERS’ COMMENTS

“Thank you David – an important article worthy of thoughtful, compassionate and creative attention.”  
Graham Beattie, reader response to ‘What prison has taught me’ by David Russell (May 2026 edition)

“Beautifully written. I am so glad to see the women behind the works and their creations get the recognition they deserve.”  
Phil W, reader response to ‘Joy, Maxine and the women of Darlinghurst who refuse to be looked away from’ by Joel O’Connor (June 2026 edition)



# Learning to see: Inside Sydney Photographic Workshops

Part of an ongoing series shot during the Speedlite workshops, this image demonstrates how a single off-camera light can be used to show the way light falls across a scene. Workshop participants played the role of paparazzi. Photo: Linnet Foto

## ART

GERRY SONT

ALEXANDRIA holds plenty of creative secrets, but tucked away on its industrial edge is one of Sydney’s most highly regarded photographic institutions.

Backed by no less than 342 five-star Google reviews, Sydney Photographic Workshops has spent over two decades helping students move beyond automated camera settings. I sat down with co-founder and Canon Master, Daniel Linnet, to get a bit of a close-up on my subject matter.

Daniel immediately sets the scene: “I was already painting as a hobby, a friend in Bondi had an Olympus OM1 and gave it to me as I figured I could use it to remember images I wanted to paint but then, I became obsessed with the camera and the immediacy of the medium. I already watched loads of movies so wanted to capture that cinematic feel, that artistry, inside a single frame.”

When I ask Daniel why he opened his school back in 2005,

he leans back in the sofa chair and smiles. “Well, strangely I fell into it. A client rang me and said his teacher at Manly Community College had dropped out. Could I fill in as the course starts in two weeks? Of course, I said yes without processing what I am really getting into. Suffice to say that after two years, I felt qualified to open my own school.”

Daniel runs the school with co-founder Wendy Linnet and they are known as the dynamic duo.

“The bottom line is we care. We care that the students leave with the answers they came for, which probably explains our Google reviews.

“Once Wendy and I decided to take the leap, we set up a variety of courses to cater to different levels, including an eight-week beginners course, an introductory half-day taster-style, a travel workshop where we go to different locations and portrait one-day workshops. We also do private sessions if people don’t have the time to commit to a full course or have a particular challenge they need to address.” I can see a bemused look

on Daniel’s face and he continues: “It’s ironic because we are set up to prepare students for the industry but the vast majority of them are simply keen hobbyists.”

And like the industry, the school is also evolving, as it is launching a brand-new course entitled *Documentary Photography and The Photo Essay*. “I wanted to offer a pathway for people who were interested in photography as more than a hobby but also as a way to encourage the storytelling behind photography to help them become more involved in their community. It’s like photographing with a purpose. We intend to kick it off with our final intake for the year in September.”

Ultimately, Daniel and Wendy’s enduring success comes down to a simple, unyielding focus on the craft itself. In an era of instant, throwaway imagery, Sydney Photographic Workshops continues to prove that real storytelling requires moving past the gear and learning how to truly see the world.

For more information, visit [sydneyphotographicworkshops.com.au](http://sydneyphotographicworkshops.com.au)



Illustration: Gloria Liang

# The Ladies of Erskineville

## SHORT STORIES

TUG DUMBLY

THEY sit emporchod, like seals in the sun, drink tea and that, and natteron. Yes they natteron till the creek of talk reaches a little pool of quiet, across which floats a slow leaf to a trickle of falls on the other side. Then the creek starts up again, and they natteron, just natteron ...

What could be left to say after all the decades? Ah, they go small, so incredibly small. They find new veins in a loose paling, a neighbour child’s cry, a slammed door. Nothing is beneath notice or note, of rheumatic anecdote, as a world of affairs gets shrunk to a suburb, a street, a yard.

And they smoke. Yes, unbelievable! In this sourdough village of gymnastic drag queens these ladies lead extreme and dangerous lives. They eat sliced white bread, slabbed in butter, full fat milk and gristly cuts of cheap red meat. They gnaw giblets and brains, lamb’s fry and tripe.

No, don’t muck with these old eaters of innards. Benign they may seem, but they’re weathered leather poppet dolls witching baristas’ nightmares with International Roast and Nescafé. They’re the last links in a rusty chain reaching back to a land of dirty dunny lanes, with mother-mangled sheets on crucifix clotheslines.

That gilded age, with still a Victorian

lick of soot on the blade, when pollution was unashamed and the afternoon Sun was tabloid king, full of husband poisoners and backyard baby buriers ... and speak of the devil where is your Father? Six o’clock swilling, pissing against the crush of the bar.

They’ve outseen them all, shelled like peas husband, father, grandfather, that starvo line of horse and beer men, brewery drivers and anvil smackers from the rail yards, when the suburb screamed to shift whistles and tramped to work boots, when school was a shoeless option, and chicken a Christmas luxury.

I can almost envy your kingdom, ladies, of hibiscus and azalea, and the straight-razor impulse of your days, and how you fill them with good sense, like a petrol tank on payday, and the smallness of your voyages, crossings between hydrangea and bougainvillea, vines trained like those dead men never were.

If they can’t talk to each other they talk to their animals – a palsied foxie, a fat ginger tom, last pets they’ll have, and the game’s become a slow sack race of who’ll be first there. They eye their creatures with rheumy love – ‘don’t you go first, Doxy, just don’t you dare, don’t you dare ...’

Charles Dickens would have all their hearts cease painlessly upon the same midnight pulse, ladies and animals, all abed, as the bar heater ticks off and the stewed rhubarb cools in the fridge, their suburb snug and silent of song. But for now, sweet ladies, let the creek run on, just natteron, please natteron ...

# Harry Potter: The Exhibition makes its Sydney debut

## EXHIBITION

SASHA IMADA

AFTER captivating audiences across 19 cities worldwide, *Harry Potter: The Exhibition* has finally made its long-awaited Sydney debut and it is well worth experiencing. From iconic movie props to interactive displays, the experience is a masterfully crafted journey through the Wizarding World that will delight Potterheads of every generation.

The exhibition spans 28 rooms, each distinct and meticulously designed around a different corner of the Harry Potter universe. It took around three months to build in its



Photo: Harry Potter: The Exhibition

Sydney configuration and the hard work is apparent in every detail.

The magic begins in the very first room. Visitors register their names into a kiosk, which seems like an administrative formality until they are escorted into the Marauder’s Map room and watch their name appear on the big screen alongside their favourite characters. It was a lovely

way to start the exhibition and set the tone for everything that follows.

From there, house sorting kicks in and points can be earned for your house through interactive activities such as potion making, casting spells and discovering your patronus. The points are displayed at the end of the exhibition for visitors to view on their way out.

The Quidditch room was the standout of the experience. It was essentially an arcade basketball game except with Quidditch hoops and quaffles as the balls. It was a clear fan favourite and brought out a fun sense of competitiveness in visitors of all ages. Broomsticks and the Golden Snitch were displayed around the space, tying the room together.

The only element that fell short of expectations was the Butterbeer, an iconic drink heavily featured throughout the series that is served in a non-alcoholic form, despite its name. The novelty alone makes it worth trying, though its appeal will depend entirely on individual taste buds.

For those who are interested in photographic keepsakes or merchandise, the gift shop has an

extensive collection of memories to take home. Additionally, professional photographs are taken at the beginning of each session, which are available for purchase at the counter.

*Harry Potter: The Exhibition* is a thoroughly enjoyable experience and a welcome addition to Sydney’s side quests. It is one of the most interactive exhibitions to come through the city in recent memory, and the craftsmanship across all 28 rooms reflects the immense effort put into it. For Harry Potter fans, whether die-hard or those simply chasing the nostalgia, it is well worth the visit.

Harry Potter: The Exhibition  
Until 11 October, Paddington  
Pavilion, Sydney Showgrounds,  
Sydney Olympic Park

Music review  
by Orli Jacoby



**You Seem Pretty Sad for a Girl so in Love**  
**Olivia Rodrigo**  
**Geffen Records, 2026**

At just 23, Olivia Rodrigo has been labelled the “voice of a generation”, as her music consistently captures the experience of teenagers and young adults in the modern world. Her third album *You Seem Pretty Sad for a Girl so in Love* only confirms this statement, exploring the complexities of love and heartbreak through a more mature lens than her previous albums.

The quality that sets Rodrigo apart from other current artists is her relatability. While the typical pop star may seem unreachable and perfect, Rodrigo reminds listeners that she is a regular young woman who doesn’t quite fit in with the celebrity lifestyle. This awkward but lovable voice is consistent in all her albums, most recently highlighted in songs like *Stupid Song* where she sings “all the girls at this party are so cool/that’s never been a thing I could do”.

Rodrigo’s friendship with alt-rock legend Robert Smith clearly informed the creation of *You Seem Pretty Sad for a Girl so in Love*, as he features on *What’s Wrong With Me* and is referenced in the lead singles *Drop Dead* and *The Cure*. The album is infused with ‘80s new-wave pop and early 2000s post-punk instrumentation, with *Expectations* sounding like a Madonna hit and *My Way* reminiscent of Paramore. That being said, there are still a couple of staple ballads that Rodrigo excels in, especially *Less* which features a gorgeous piano melody overlaid with heart-wrenching lyrics.

The album is told chronologically, with the first half detailing the smitten beginning of a relationship and the second half unravelling the inevitable descent into heartbreak. In an interview with the New York Times Popcast, Rodrigo explained

that following the downfall of the relationship, she went back to the original lovestruck songs and “injected them with sadness”. This editorial hindsight is present in songs like *Purple*, which contains one of the thesis statements of this album, “I had big dreams ‘til I tied myself to you”.

Rodrigo’s experimental endeavours into new themes and sounds paid off beautifully, creating a cohesive, yet diverse, album. With *You Seem Pretty Sad for a Girl so in Love*, Olivia Rodrigo proves once again that she is deserving of all her success.

Film review  
by Lindsay Cohen



**Disclosure Day**  
**Director: Steven Spielberg**  
**Starring: Emily Blunt, Josh O'Connor, Colin Firth**  
**Genre: Less Terrestrial**

Steven Spielberg is famous for many of the classic science-fiction films he’s directed, including *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982) and *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001). Alas, *Disclosure Day* isn’t as clever or as interesting. It doesn’t revolutionise perceptions or thinking and lacks new ideas and concepts.

*Disclosure Day* is essentially about revelations of alien contact with humans and government cover-ups. But compared to the sci-fi films and some other famous classic Spielberg films such as *Jaws* (1975), *Jurassic Park* (1993), *Schindler’s List* (1993) and Indiana Jones films, *Disclosure Day* is over complicated. There are many subplots and actions that have no meaning and don’t add value. Lots of them are also contradictory, making other parts of the script confusing.

*Close Encounters* and *Jaws* are great examples of perfect, relatively simple films. They start slowly, gradually build up, capture your attention and then have exciting, powerful final scenes.

Unfortunately, *Disclosure Day* has

multiple action scenes that often make no sense, such as speeding, escaping cars, invisible fire trucks and mystery alien metallic-style sticks that do something different every time they are used. Even the references and flashbacks to characters encountering aliens as kids and adults are inconsistent and puzzling.

Mind you, while *Disclosure Day* is certainly not Spielberg’s best film, like all his films it is interesting. It also makes some obscure references to *Close Encounters* and other Spielberg films and locations, such as the Inn-Di-Ana Motel. And the aliens are the same third kind!

Rating: Close Encounters of the 2-stars kind.

Book review  
by Celia Berrell



**Locust**  
**Joel O'Connor**  
**Tales from the Treehouse, 2026**

Try reading *Locust* by Joel O’Connor slowly and silently to yourself. You might settle into the innocent persona of a solitary grasshopper watching “Parrots strolling the ruptured clay with Churchillian ponderance” as you sit in the arid outback. But there’s possible trouble ahead – once the rain breaks.

I was captivated by the detailed biological revelations of how these cutesy-critters (short-horned grasshoppers) go from being Dr Jekyll to Mr Hyde without any changes in DNA. But that’s only part of the story in this (almost 2,000-word) carefully crafted exposition.

Try reciting *Locust* aloud and it becomes theatrical. The human elements of this provocative narrative take over. As grasshopper numbers increase, their personal space decreases. “While taking up a spot along pews of straw”, “The recluse within a crowd” is changed by the touching presence of others, as if in church. Bonding, we find ourselves

caught up in a dizzying fervour “To throw ourselves headlong into the pleasure of eating the world” and “killing in the name of utopia”.

I anchored myself again in the lines below:

“Renaissance, Enlightenment, Manufacturing  
Outbreak, upsurge, and plague  
The wheel of life for a locust  
Matching our modern age.”

Reminiscent of Shakespeare’s *Song of the Witches* (“Double, double toil and trouble ...”), instead of appearing just once, I would have loved a repeat appearance for this significant call and response.

There’s more to *Locust* than its poetry! Like tiny triggers that provoke grasshopper-to-locust plague, Joel O’Connor prods us with hints and historical topics to think outside the box. At one point, my mind buzzed with visualisations of human-brained robotic space invaders. I admit, I abandoned reading lines in other languages (there are translations in brackets underneath) towards the end, simply because I was on a frenzied roll with this exciting multifaceted poetic rampage. A cautionary tale for us to keep in touch ... but carefully.

Theatre review  
by Yvonne Hocothee



**The Roommate**  
**Writer: Jen Silverman**  
**Director: Lee Lewis**  
**Ensemble Theatre, Kirribilli**  
**19 June – 25 July, 2026**

Director Lee Lewis crafts a pacy, entertaining amalgam of two very opposite women negotiating midlife problems in this darkly humorous piece.

The set (Simone Romaniuk) is a utilitarian Iowa kitchen, with a fruit bowl on the table as befits the style. Sharon (Lucy Bell), recently divorced, is facing the dilemma of finding a new direction in life – life in Iowa as a 50-ish single does not offer much scope socially, so she advertises for a roommate. The successful applicant,

Robyn (Belinda Bromilow), is pretty much diametrically opposite in personality to Sharon. She’s from the Bronx, New York, admits to being gay and having had a previous life as a potter and slam poet. Nevertheless, the two women intrigue each other. Sharon, buttoned-down and conservative, is fascinated by Robyn’s edgy, street-wise, somewhat mysterious personality and her curiosity is piqued.

It’s soon evident that Robyn has a vivid past which seems to have broken all of society’s rules, in contrast to Sharon’s comparatively innocent background. Soon, however, they are sharing booze and smokes. The women develop a tentative camaraderie and seem to be warming to each other.

Sharon begins to sense there are darker elements to Robyn. Her small-town curiosity continues to probe. Why does Robyn have so many passports? Why does she carry a bag of ceramic dolls? Most of all, Sharon is becoming entranced by Robyn’s free-wheeling ways and eagerly announces she’d like to try some of the edgy stuff herself, actions that sail close to or border on illegality.

Much of the dark humour emanates from the contrast between the women’s past lives and their current status. It also highlights the problems and loneliness of middle age without strongly established social connections. Lucy Bell creates a gauche but charming Sharon, presenting her as neurotically nervy as she evaluates her new roommate. Belinda Bromilow’s Robyn is more contained, retaining some mystique while exuding East Coast knowledgeability. Both actors give outstanding performances in their roles.

Matt Cox’s subtle lighting design creates a variety of visual moods which are quite atmospheric, depicting morning or evening scenes. However, the percussive elements in Madeleine Picard’s compositions really provide emphasis and liveliness, accenting the points of tension in the play.

This production is altogether a charming piece of theatre, enthusiastically received by the Friday-night audience.

Firepop serves up  
woodfire magic  
in Enmore

FOOD

MARINE GRANGIER

THERE’S nothing quite like Enmore Road during the Sydney Comedy Festival. Laughter echoing on every corner, restaurants and bars full to the brim with joyful diners, Uncle Ay-Jay’s cooking up a storm outside of Jacoby’s Tiki Bar, the smell of their chimichurri octopus skewers stopping pedestrians in their tracks.

If you love woodfire cooking but Uncle Ay-Jay’s is not outside Jacoby’s Tiki Bar that day, all you have to do is cross the road to

Firepop, a sleek Japanese-looking restaurant that hides many surprises.

As you enter, the long open kitchen welcomes you with the smell of vegetable skin roasting and meat juices dripping on open fire.

If you love a dinner and a show, sit at the bar and get lost in the dancing flames and ballet-like moves of the chefs but if you like surprises, ask to be sat upstairs. Like visiting someone’s house, you’ll go through their lounge at the back of the restaurant before going up the stairs to what feels like an entirely different venue altogether with its own bar, staff and decor. Here it feels like you’re in someone’s dining room, much like Kindred



Photo: Marine Grangier



Photo: Marine Grangier

in Chippendale, which is visibly a house turned into a restaurant, but that’s a review for another day.

The menu is eclectic yet simple, heavily focused on meat of course (this is a woodfire restaurant after all) but with a healthy dose of options for pescetarians, vegetarians and vegans (this is Enmore after all).

Their Wagyu slices took me straight back to Japan and its street vendors selling skewers of wagyu so soft you don’t even need teeth.

The absolute star of the show,

however, was their stracciatella. Now I know stracciatella covered with seasonal fruit and olive oil is not groundbreaking, it is the new burrata and I’ve eaten at least seven different variations in Sydney alone (special mention to the ones at Cafe Paci and Ragazzi). This one was by far the best I have ever tasted. I don’t know if it was the lime, the red onions or the Koroneiki olive oil but it was like I was tasting this dish for the very first time.

You can, however, skip the zucchini

“accordion” steak. We ordered it precisely because we never understood why zucchini is so under-represented in restaurants. Now we do. There’s only so much zucchini you can have, especially when it’s cooked over fire and the inside remains quite mushy. I love creative thinking when it comes to vegetables, I really do, but maybe some vegetables are not destined for the woodfire grill.

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**Firepop Restaurant & Bar**  
**137 Enmore Rd, Enmore NSW 2042**



Photo: Supplied



Photo: Supplied



Les Brennan (top row, second from right). Photo: Supplied

# Vale Les Brennan

**SPORT**  
**JIMMY BERRY**

**SOUTH Sydney Rabbitoh player No. 421 passed away on June 25, aged 95. Les Brennan will be remembered by family and friends as one of the most kind-hearted people on the planet and will be in the rugby league history books for his short but outstanding career.**

Brennan was a quick and agile winger who made his first-grade debut for South Sydney in 1954. He scored 29 tries in 19 matches that season; a feat that still stands as the fifth most in a first-grade season. It stood at third for 67 years (behind Dave Brown’s 38

tries in 1935 and Ray Preston’s 34 tries in 1954) until Alex Johnston surpassed it with 30 in both the 2021 and 2022 seasons.  
In 1954, Brennan played alongside one of the greatest to ever play the game, Clive Churchill. They ended up beating Newtown in the grand final, but by the following morning, Brennan had forgotten all about the game and woke up in a hotel on the Gold Coast (the match was played at the SCG). He only discovered South Sydney had won when he read the morning newspaper.  
It turned out Brennan had suffered a heavy concussion as well as a crushed vertebra during the match, hence his poor memory of the previous day’s events.

The injury was so severe he only returned for a further five matches the following season before retiring.  
Brennan also flew up to the Gold Coast after the match to continue his honeymoon with his new wife, Margaret. The two had married earlier that week.  
In 2021, Brennan was awarded Rabbitohs life membership for his service to the club. A large part of this was his work as a junior referee for 20 years.  
Outside of rugby league, he worked at the Department of Motor Transport as a paymaster for 43 years.  
Brennan is one of just seven players to finish their career with more tries than games played (minimum 20 games). Of these players, Brennan has the highest strike rate (1.33 per game), scoring 32 tries in 24 games.

SSH



Photo: Andrew Brinsmead

# Is inequality hiding behind Sydney’s expanding tree canopy?

**ENVIRONMENT**  
**EMMANUELLE BOTTÉ**

**TREES are good for humans. For decades, we ignored this simple fact and stripped away vegetation to build offices, dwellings and shops with bricks, concrete and steel. It appears that the City of Sydney has acted to reverse this trend, as trees occupy an ever-increasing amount of space around us. At what price is the question.**

According to a study conducted by local researchers in 2020, tree canopy benefits people suffering from hypertension, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Importantly, tall trees (producing a canopy) do the job, not cricket ground grass or low-level vegetation. Tree canopy

is also excellent for thermal regulation, reducing summer air temperatures by up to 8°C at street level.  
Sydney’s tree canopy has steadily spread, covering 15.5% of the LGA in 2008 and 19.8% in 2022. This increase over 14 years may sound small but it means that for every 100 trees present in 2008, there were an additional 28 in 2022. The city has set a target of 27% tree canopy in 2050 so that a Sydneysider born in 2008 would see tree canopy almost double in surface area between their birth year and their 40s.  
While this is objectively very good news, we should not embrace the positive narrative without scrutiny. This is because the City of Sydney praises in its Urban Forest Strategy the rise in property value as a positive outcome of tree canopy expansion,

despite the profound housing crisis we are currently facing.  
Research conducted across several cities worldwide has shown that city greening often occurs alongside gentrification and is used by developers for financial gain. Of course, this happens at the expense of lower-income populations. Our very own local example of this issue is the Waterloo renewal project.  
In fairness, the City of Sydney states that “the percentage of areas with less than 10% canopy cover was halved” since 2008, so that at least tree canopy is expanding “everywhere”.  
Will trees become so common that people don’t need to indirectly pay for them anymore? I hope so. Meanwhile, allow me to be cautiously optimistic and ask whether inequality might be the price we pay for widespread shade.

SSH



Photo: Joe Fenech

# Out & About – July 2026

**PAT CLARKE**  
**NSW Winter School Holidays 6 July to 17 July**  
Plenty of winter activities these school holidays including Skate at Carriageworks, 245 Wilson Street, Eveleigh on Saturday 18 July from 10am-1pm for kids aged 6 and over. The precinct will become a fully equipped skate park with workshops, skate sessions and pro-skater demos and is free to attend. Registration and signed waivers are required for all sessions. Another session will also be held on August 15. [carriageworks.com.au](http://carriageworks.com.au)

**Bastille Festival, Thursday 16 July to Sunday 19 July, Circular Quay and The Rocks**  
Break out your berets and almost forgotten school French for four days of French food, wines, films and live performances. [bastillefestival.com.au](http://bastillefestival.com.au)

**The Galloway Hoard, Treasures of the Viking Age, Australian National Maritime Museum until 11 October**  
Found on church land in Balmage in south-west Scotland in 2014, the Hoard includes 5kg of silver, gold and other objects buried around AD 900 by Vikings.  
I’m very excited to see these treasures, as they were discovered some 50-odd miles from where I grew up in Scotland.

Tickets: Adult \$25/Family \$69/Concession \$20/Child \$15 (4-15 yrs). There is a different price for See it All tickets which include vessels in the harbour.  
[www.sea.museum](http://www.sea.museum)

**Congratulations Koori Radio 95.7 FM – 25 Years of First Nations Broadcasting**  
For 25 years, Koori Radio has provided cutting-edge broadcasting for many of the First Nations peoples living in Australia. The station is now launching a Supporter Drive – Celebrating 25 Years with You for 25 more. All donations are tax-deductible [givenow.com.au/kooriradio](http://givenow.com.au/kooriradio)

**Welcome to our new volunteer contributors**  
As a community newspaper run by volunteers, it is great to welcome:  
**Bronwyn Evans, Seaton Kay-Smith, Fredo Lucin and Mitchell Rudman** – Photographers.  
**Andrew Brinsmead** – Photographer and Writer.  
**Marine Grainger** – Theatre and Food reviewer.  
**Lucie Brumont** – Theatre reviewer.  
**Ives Hem** – Technology.  
**Seyfi Bostanci** – Locals.  
**Carelle Snounou** – Culture and Human Affairs.

Pat Clarke  
.....  
[volunteers@ssh.com.au](mailto:volunteers@ssh.com.au)

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**Spotted in... Waterloo**

Photo: Murray Gillett