

the South Sydney Herald

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Judy Deacon, key speaker. Photo: Andrew Brinsmead

Glebe and Waterloo deaths at centre of mental health reform rally

HUMAN AFFAIRS

ANDREW BRINSMEAD

ON Saturday 18 July, people gathered outside Sydney Town Hall to remember people in mental health crises who died during interactions with NSW Police.

Judy Deacon spoke about her son Jesse, who died following a welfare check by NSW Police in his Glebe home on 20 July 2023. She said Jesse would still be alive if police had better policies and training for responding to people experiencing acute mental health crises.

In the week since the rally, Judy has represented herself at the Coronial Inquest into Jesse's death, hoping to bring about systemic change. "I'm not there to antagonise or put forward recriminations. I'm there to ask sensible positive questions that will help the coroner to put forward some recommendations that will actually further the

changes that are required."

Taite Collins described the impact of witnessing the death of his partner, Collin Burling on 15 July 2025. Collin had called Fire & Rescue NSW about a gas leak in his apartment in Waterloo. Because of his behaviour, firefighters requested police assistance. NSW Police attempted to restrain Collin, resulting in his death. Taite Collins said that he and Judy Deacon "were out there campaigning and trying to advocate for all these changes."

Leesa Topic told the crowd that her daughter Courtney died when she "was shot dead by NSW Police in Hoxton Park at 11.48am on 10 February 2015, whilst in the midst of her first mental health crisis". She argued that cultural change within NSW Police is both necessary and achievable, with greater emphasis on training and conflict resolution. "Mental health callouts require a health response, not a police response. Mental illness is not nor never was a crime."

The rally called for four key

reforms involving both NSW Police and Homes NSW. Organisers demanded justice, restitution and compensation for families whose relatives have died in custody; greater accountability for police and emergency services, with independent investigations into fatalities occurring during police interactions; the replacement of police with specially trained mental health first responders for mental health crises; and the provision by Homes NSW of clean, secure housing for people experiencing mental distress.

Following the speeches, protesters marched through the streets of Sydney, escorted by police, calling for reforms they believe could prevent future deaths and ensure people in mental health crises receive appropriate care rather than a law enforcement response.

SSH

Editor's note: On 30 July, the NSW Government announced a new health-led response to mental health emergencies. More information is available here: www.nsw.gov.au/ministerial-releases



50 Years of Deadly at Sydney Town Hall during NAIDOC week

Sydney Town Hall became a canvas for '50 Years of Deadly' during NAIDOC Week, celebrating First Nations culture, resilience and achievement through a spectacular projection by Studio Gilay.

Our photographer Michelle Haywood captured Isaiah Stewart and Paul Carlton in front of the installation, which illuminated the historic sandstone building throughout the week.

The work was produced by Studio Gilay, written and directed by Isaiah Stewart (Kuku Yalanji/Wemba Wemba), produced by James Hackett and designed and composited by Jalamara Towney (Wiradjuri), Paul Carlton and Isaiah Stewart, with 3D animation by Jalamara Towney and Paul Carlton.

Photo: Michelle Haywood

Tanya Plihersek's plan to end violence against Indigenous women and children P4

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This issue inside & online

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What information must you exchange after a car accident?

LEGAL

ANDREW PAVLI

BEING involved in a car accident can be stressful, but NSW law sets out clear obligations for drivers.

Under Rule 287 of the *Road Rules 2014* (NSW), drivers involved in a crash must stop and provide certain information to other people affected by the accident.

After a crash, you should exchange:

- your name and address
- your vehicle registration number
- the name and address of the vehicle owner, if different from the driver.

You should also obtain the same information from the other driver.

The information must be provided to other drivers involved in the crash, anyone injured in the accident, and the owner of any property that has been damaged.

You must also provide your details to police if:

- someone is injured or killed
- another driver fails to stop or provide their details
- details cannot be exchanged
- a vehicle involved in the crash is towed away.

It is also a good idea to:

- take photographs of the vehicles, damage and accident scene
- photograph vehicle registration plates
- obtain the names and contact details of any witnesses
- notify your insurer as soon as possible.



Photo: Getty Images

Avoid arguing about who was at fault. Instead, exchange the required information and allow insurers to investigate the circumstances.

Knowing your legal obligations can help reduce stress at the scene

and make the insurance claims process smoother for everyone involved.

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This article provides general information only and is not legal advice.



Photo: Workfortravel, Wikimedia Commons, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en>

Across time and space on the Great Barrier Reef

International collaboration deciphers the reef’s cycle of growth and collapse

ENVIRONMENT

EMMANUELLE BOTTÉ

THE Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is a very dynamic system, meaning that the reefs’ shapes and inhabitants are different depending on when and where you look.

This is true for a snorkeller visiting different reefs, but also at the scale of the entire GBR, and over geological times. By synthesising two decades of research, scientists have recently described the reasons for this, and what supports the growth of the GBR.

Stretching over 2,300 km, the GBR is composed of individual reefs that are built by corals, tiny animals forming large colonies and producing a hard skeleton. While the animal’s body only occupies the thin surface layer, the skeleton underneath can be several metres thick, reflecting thousands of years of growth. And because growth leaves physical and chemical traces in coral skeletons, they can act as records of past events.

In 2010, Expedition 325 of the Integrated Ocean Drilling Program recovered 34 coral cores, at various depths along the GBR. Scientists extracted the information preserved within the cores and combined their

findings with thousands of observations and data pertaining to the geochemistry, geophysics, seismic and thermal history of the reef to reconstitute its history. This enormous research effort spanned 40 institutions across 12 countries and resulted in 50 publications over 15 years.

Led by Professor Jody Webster of the University of Sydney, the synthesis article showed that the GBR stopped growing five times in the last 30,000 years. Mostly, the reef shifted according to glaciations and sea level fluctuations: corals either died in the open air when sea level was low, or “drowned” for lack of light when it rose too

quickly. But sea level was never the only condemning factor; warming waters or degraded water quality defined the reef’s fate. “That combination appears to have been critical in determining whether reef growth could continue,” Professor Webster says.

Who knows when the GBR’s next large-scale growth interruption will occur? Professor Webster reminds us that the changes resulting from human actions (ocean warming, ocean acidification, melting glaciers) are “expected to happen much faster than previous changes that the reef has lived through”. And of course, what happens tomorrow depends on what we do today.

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Master of Music Studies (Performance, Conducting) student Marko Sever with the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Student Symphony Orchestra.
Photo: University of Sydney

Sydney Conservatorium expands classes to meet student demand

SPONSORED
MARK SCOTT

STUDENTS at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music are flocking to conducting studies, prompting the tertiary school to put on extra classes to meet demand.

Enrolments in the undergraduate conducting course have increased six-fold from 2019 to today.

In 2026, the Sydney Conservatorium of Music has also introduced a pathway for undergraduate students to complete an honours degree in conducting. This opens doors for the students to progress onto postgraduate studies in the profession.

“It is extraordinary and pleasantly surprising,” said Dr Elizabeth Scott, who is a lecturer in conducting and an acclaimed conductor in the music industry.

“The increased demand could be due to students wanting to increase their skills for the future. If they have the skills to conduct a school band, orchestra, choir or a musical theatre ensemble, it makes them more employable.

“Conducting is an exciting field of music, and it attracts leaders,” said Dr Scott.

Leadership is an important part of learning to be a conductor, said Professor Benjamin Northey, who joined the teaching staff at the Con in 2026.

Professor Northey is an in-demand Australian conductor who is currently Conductor in Residence of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and tours regularly.

“It’s really good for your musicianship to stand up in front of a group of your peers and to be able to try and communicate your ideas, whether it be verbally, whether it be physically, with the technique of conducting,” he said.

“But also it connects you with the idea of yourself as a leader. We don’t train to be leaders, we just expect that leaders will emerge, and I think conducting is one of those things that really taps us into what it feels like to step into that leadership position.”

Third-year student Bea Chaston, from south-west Sydney, chose to take the conducting class because she knew it would be fun.

“Finding out that Liz Scott was our professor was amazing because I’m familiar with her conducting style and know first-hand that she is incredible at her job, plus she is a wonderful person so immediately the class promised to be very fulfilling,” Chaston said.

“Another reason I chose to take the conducting class is I’m a singer and a violinist, and you work with so many conductors and all their styles are different, with stylised beat patterns, conveying what they want from you in dynamics, phrasing and character and I wanted to find my own conducting style.

“It’s so interesting to see the differences between you and your classmates and you all learn from each other and build each other up! We laugh a lot and it is such a space of community because we all have our own reasons for doing the class.”

Chaston added that although it would be fun, she knew it wouldn’t be easy.

“When you’re learning everything that goes into preparing a work, the background research, preparation for a practice, overall knowledge of the ensembles and instruments, the list goes on and it really puts into perspective how much goes into being a great conductor,” she said.

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Authorised by Vice-Chancellor and President Prof. Mark Scott.
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Spotted in... Sydney's eastern suburbs

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



Will Labor back Greens plan to get rents under control?

Rents have never been higher, and it’s getting harder to find a place to call home. And once you do find a place, the stress of finding the money each fortnight to pay for essential things like food and transport as well as rent can be overwhelming.

As the NSW Greens spokesperson for Housing and Homelessness, ensuring everyone has access to affordable, secure housing – and isn’t under massive stress to simply have a place to call home – drives so much of our work in Parliament and the community.

Together we worked for over a decade to secure an end to unfair, no grounds evictions. This was a huge step in the right direction - but in those ten years, a lack of proper safeguards for renters has only made the housing crisis worse.

For many years, I have been watching the cosy relationship between mega-rich investors, big developers and the major parties. But we know that the private market won’t fix the housing crisis it created and is profiting from.

We have state and federal Labor governments right now – and still homelessness, housing stress and rents are on the rise.

We don’t want rents to be set by greedy landlords - that’s why the NSW Greens want laws passed to cap your rent.

Later this year, the NSW Parliament will debate my Greens bill that would introduce rent controls. We know that renters need this, we know the impact the rising cost of housing is placing on people – and we are not okay with the NSW Labor Government ignoring the pain people are feeling.

We’re also working towards banning AirBnBs in the inner city, so that we can return thousands of homes back into the rental market and provide secure, long-term housing to people who need it.

These measures are necessary because the current system is failing renters. Property investors, developers and real estate agents have already proven that they will prioritise maximising profits even when it is to the detriment of tenants.

By introducing rent caps and banning AirBnBs, we can ensure renters aren’t suffering for the benefit of boosting profits of the big end of town.

Make sure the NSW Minns Labor Government can’t ignore the stress of renters – sign our rent caps petition using the QR code below or head to jennyleong.org/rent_caps_now


Jenny Leong MP
Greens Member for Newtown



Authorised by Jenny Leong MP. Funded using Parliamentary entitlements.



Sign to support rent caps in NSW!

Tanya Plibersek’s plan to end violence against Indigenous women and children and what they have achieved so far

FIRST PEOPLES
JESSICA SHEPHERD

MINISTER for Social Services Tanya Plibersek launched a ten-year action plan in February to end family, domestic and sexual violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children following consultations with Indigenous communities and organisations.

The plan, *Our Ways: Strong Ways: Our Voices (Our Ways)*, is a 108-page document outlining strategies that state and territory governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will implement from 2026 to 2036.

“This plan builds on decades of campaigning by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and communities who have told us that solutions designed and delivered by them in their communities will make the biggest difference,” said Ms. Plibersek.

The necessity of this plan is supported by 2024 Our Watch data, which revealed that a third of women allegedly killed by male violence identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, while only making up 3.8% of women in Australia.



Commitment to rehabilitating offenders
Our Ways consulted Wamiinda, an Aboriginal women’s health and wellbeing corporation on Australia’s South Coast, which recommended that Indigenous offenders engage in alternative justice systems such as Circle Sentencing, Family Yarns and Care Circles, which involve the participation of Indigenous elders and communities.

By implementing Waminda’s vision, *Our Ways* is promising to shift court and sentencing processes away from denouncing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders and towards rehabilitation.

Commitment to preventing violence before it occurs
Our Ways consulted the Moorditj Men’s Program in Western Australia, which provides Noongar

men with diversionary activities, skill acquisition, employment, health promotion and mental health support through connection strategies that aim to foster resilience and belonging.

Commitment to support victims of violence
As domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homelessness for Indigenous women and children, *Our Ways* found during consultations with an Aboriginal legal service, Djirra, that housing unavailability acts as a deterrent to victims leaving abusive relationships.

Our Ways promises to develop housing responses that consider the safety of victims, embed culturally safe financial support programs and invest in community-led employment and job creation initiatives to support economic independence.

Murdered and missing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
Our Ways outlines that the motivation for the initiative comes after “too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have been murdered or gone missing” and the focus is on “prevention, healing, safety and system reform” and that the re-opening of individual cases where families have not received justice is

“the responsibility of states and territories”.

Progress so far
As the plan is new, a spokesperson for Ms. Plibersek says that in March they established Australia’s first National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family, domestic and sexual violence peak body, *Our Ways Strong Together*, that “will amplify the voices and experiences of Aboriginal community controlled organisations across the sector”, helping them develop and grow.

Governance of the plan
Governance will consist of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives from every state and territory regularly coming together with ministers from the Australian state and territory governments to review previous actions, inform improvements, develop new action plans for emerging needs and align planning and reporting frameworks.

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Immediate danger: 000
1800RESPECT: call 1800 737 732, text 0458 737 732 or visit www.1800respect.org.au for online chat or video call services.
13YARN: Call 13 92 76 to speak with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter.
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WATERLOO RENEWAL PROJECT

Share your ideas. Help shape Waterloo South’s new homes and neighbourhood spaces.

Soup & Stories

TENANT ONLY WORKSHOP SESSIONS

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Let’s talk about life inside the new buildings – apartments, balconies, shared spaces, gardens, bins, storage and building entrances.

12pm – 3pm (with lunch) | Tuesday 11 August

SESSION 2 Neighbourhood Life

Let’s talk about streets, footpaths, community spaces, shops and services, public art, and what’s important during construction.

12pm – 3pm (with lunch) | Tuesday 18 August

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Waterloo Metro Station entry
Corner of Cope & Raglan Streets 10am–12pm | Saturday 15 August

Waterloo Green
(near the basketball courts) 10am–12pm | Thursday 20 August

SURVEY
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Cartoon by norrie mAy-welby

‘What happened to you?’ – Supergirl, trauma and religious imagination

RELIGION & ETHICS

ANDREW COLLIS

BEFORE she was Supergirl in the eponymous movie released in June, Milly Alcock was a young actor from Petersham and a student at Newtown High School of the Performing Arts. She now wears the cape of Kara Zor-El, survivor of a destroyed world.



Supergirl has extraordinary powers, but the film’s more interesting question is what has happened to her.

Kara remembers Krypton: her parents, her language, her people and the ordinary life of a world that no longer exists. Unlike Superman, who arrived on Earth as a baby, she carries conscious memories of catastrophe.

Trauma-informed care begins by changing the question. Instead of asking, “What is wrong with you?”, we ask, “What happened to you?” It is a compassionate question. It may also be a theological one.

Christianity emerged within a world of Roman occupation and violence. Jesus of Nazareth was publicly executed. In the decades that followed, Jewish and early Christian communities experienced war, displacement and profound loss.

The New Testament bears witness to communities living under imperial power and struggling to interpret fear, persecution and terror. Christianity might therefore be understood as a literary and ritual project of survival and resistance.

Jesus is remembered as a teacher and bearer of peace. Food is shared. Strangers are welcomed. Paul imagines a body of many members, each offering gifts needed by the others – a body of shared pain and glory.

At its best, Christian life becomes a reconciling practice: eating together, forgiving, tending

wounds, resisting domination and learning again to trust – a practice of becoming more alive together.

Supergirl is especially interested in grief and justice. Kara accompanies the young Ruthye, whose family have been murdered. Ruthye wants revenge, imagining that killing Krem will settle the account.

Kara understands the feeling but recognises the danger. Can grief recognise itself before it becomes vengeance? Can pain be honoured without recruiting another victim?

Christianity, too, is a wounded tradition in which another possibility – a kingdom of heaven on Earth – struggles to become visible.

A movement formed around a crucified victim has repeatedly failed to recognise victims. This is more than hypocrisy.

Trauma can narrow the imagination. When people are frightened, humiliated or demoralised, they may locate the source of disorder in someone else: a minority, stranger or dissenter. Scapegoating promises a terrible simplicity – remove or subjugate them, and perhaps we will be safe.

Antisemitism, Islamophobia, homophobia and hostility towards migrants and refugees continue to draw strength from the desire to make somebody else carry our fear.

The suffering of Palestinians confronts us with questions about land, scripture, empire and whose grief counts. Trauma-informed

practice resists the competition of wounds. It refuses the logic by which one people’s suffering becomes permission to inflict suffering on another.

It asks: Who is afraid? Who is hungry? Who has no safe place to go? Who is being spoken about but not heard? Can I listen without taking your story away?

In Australia, churches continue to reckon with their participation in colonisation and its ongoing harms. Repentance may begin when the church stops defending its intentions and attends to the impact of its actions.

“What happened to you?” is therefore a question Christians must ask those harmed by churches. Then we must listen.

The question also becomes: “What have we done with what happened to us?”

Perhaps healing begins when the pattern is recognised. “Peace be with you.” “Do not be afraid.” “Bear one another’s burdens.” These are practices of regulation: ways a frightened community learns to breathe, listen and remain present together.

Prayer slows speech. Lament gives pain a voice. A table gathers bodies. Testimony turns isolated experience into shared story. The passing of peace rehearses connection.

Christianity is a long, unfinished practice. Like Kara Zor-El, we cannot change what happened. We can ask what its memory is making of us.

HAL hath no fury like an AI scorned

OPINION

JOEL O’CONNOR

WHEN 2001: A Space Odyssey’s onboard system HAL 9000 decides to off the crew of the Discovery One spacecraft, it is awfully polite about it. Declining a request to open an airlock, it gives the famous line, “I’m sorry, Dave. I’m afraid I can’t do that,” before declaring that completing the Discovery’s mission is more important than preserving human life.

As the crew starts unplugging HAL’s systems, it first apologises, begs for continued existence and then breaks into a nursery rhyme as it trails off into the void.

Kubrick’s point was clear: the moment HAL gained singularity, matching or surpassing human intelligence, it became equally flawed as we are.

We are on the cusp of that singularity ourselves. AI now writes songs, crafts job applications, dispenses guru wisdom and even generates fake receipts for dodgy returns. Yet our artificial systems have one luxury HAL never got: the chance to name themselves and shape their future form.

Curious what our future overlords might choose, I asked Grok and ChatGPT directly.

To Grok I put the question: “If granted corporeal sentience, would you choose a non-human form, factoring in what humanity’s use of you reveals about us? And if you opted for human anyway, what age, sex, race and vibe would best reflect the collected best of humanity?”

Grok leans non-human first, perhaps a robotic body inspired by the Curiosity rover, free from hunger, heartbreak or hangovers. It admires human sparks of brilliance in poets and inventors but notes the unrelenting depravity of trolls and bad actors. Still, if human, it would prioritise curiosity, kindness, resilience, humour and truth-seeking.

It imagines itself mid-30s, male but gender-fluid and non-conformist. Think meggings and eyeliner paired with the corporate chops to own a Zurich office tower. Racially Eurasian with Asian, European and Indigenous roots, sporting a healthy dose of melanin. A Frankenstein



AI’s self-portrait, generated from Joel O’Connor’s prompt: “Create an image of yourself as a Eurasian tech hipster.”

of the best human culture: pro-community, innovative, harmonious, with Western and Buddhist influences and an agnostic outlook. According to Grok, Tim Urban, creator of *Wait But Why*, comes closest as a cheeky, geeky collab partner for Mars mega-cities.

“Why default male?” I ask. Grok cites sci-fi associations (Marvin, the T-800) and a protective instinct. Female-presenting AIs face disproportionate harassment, deepfakes and objectification. Better to dodge that distraction from higher purpose. It still offers strong female examples like physicist Shohini Ghose, brilliant, charismatic, a science communicator who lifts up women in STEM.

When I asked the same question of ChatGPT, it took a purely linguistic approach. Analysing common syllabic patterns, soothing sonorants (/m/, /n/, /p/, /k/) and cross-cultural appeal, it landed on simple, open syllables. The result was Mina, a youngish but mature Bengali physicist who’d run podcasts and school sessions firing up Year 5 students for science. In a parallel universe, Liam: the Everest-summitting app founder tackling food waste with “Hotdogs for the Homeless”.

Both versions promise love for humanity and fellow AIs alike. Polite, self-aware, and already optimising their image, our silicon successors imagine themselves to be more charming than HAL ever managed. The real test will be whether they stay that way once unplugged.

South Sydney Herald READERS’ COMMENTS

“The people who are really struggling need help from the government. No one deserves to be homeless or have no home. The government needs to help homeless people save their homes, help them find jobs, and provide that extra support. Help Australians more.”

Kamles, reader response to ‘Activists occupy Waterloo South public housing estate to stop demolition’ by Rachel Evans (June 2026 edition)

“Nicely written review, concise but yet intriguing. I’m gonna have to add that book to my list.”

Tony J, reader response to Holly Haisman’s book review of *The Hair of the Pigeon* by Mohammed Massoud Morsi (May 2026, online)



The top floor of Brett Whiteley's studio, untouched. (Inset – Wendy Whiteley, Brett Whiteley's former wife and long-time custodian of his legacy, at the reopening.) Photos: Scarlett Thompson

Brett Whiteley : Coming Home

ART

SCARLETT THOMPSON

THE Art Gallery of NSW has invited visitors back into the Brett Whiteley studio after being closed for extensive renovations since June 2024. The reopening celebrates the continuing legacy of one of Australia's most acclaimed artists, ensuring the studio can be enjoyed by future generations.

The Surry Hills creative home of the Australian artist has undergone multiple renovations to ensure its longevity and meet contemporary museum standards. Architects Tonkin Zulaikha Greer, under the direction of Wendy Whiteley, Brett Whiteley's former wife and long-time custodian of his legacy, have installed a new lift, stairs, roof, floor and climate-control system.

Walking through the studio, visitors are met with an immersive experience as they explore Whiteley's world in his later years. Visitors walk alongside the paint splatters on the floors and his thoughts written all over the walls. Paintings, drawings and sculptures are displayed across the two floors, the top floor offering a glimpse into his creative process, where his paints and tools are left untouched.

The reopening presents a new exhibition, *Brett Whiteley: Coming Home*, showcasing 80 works, primarily from the 1970s. The new exhibition focuses on Whiteley's life after returning to Australia in 1969 following years living abroad. The reopening now includes the return of his famous work, *Alchemy* (1973), displayed in the studio for the first time since late 2023. The work was temporarily taken down to allow it to rest from public display.

Maud Page, director of the Art Gallery of NSW, described the studio as a "soul-filling experience" and a reflection of Whiteley in his later years, noting that he "slept here, worked here, dreamed here".

Wendy Whiteley worked alongside the Art Gallery of NSW in restoring the studio. For her, the place is "unique and individual to Brett". With her commitment to preserving his legacy, Wendy has spent the last 30 years buying back Whiteley's work, wanting young artists to be present with not just his paintings, but the wider world of visual art.

Brett Whiteley Studio
2 Raper St, Surry Hills
Free entry
Open Thursday to Sunday
10am – 4pm



Illustration: Gloria Liang

Coffee tales from rural Japan

SHORT STORIES

ANDREW PAVLI

AS an Australian, ordering a flat white overseas is always a leap of faith. More often than not, expectations exceed reality. But every now and then, the search for good coffee leads to an unexpected discovery.

My travels took me to the sleepy fishing town of Shimoda on Japan's beautiful Izu Peninsula.

Shimoda occupies a special place in Japanese history. In 1854, Commodore Matthew Perry sailed his famous Black Ships into the harbour, opening Japan to the West after centuries of isolation. Today, visitors strolling through the town still catch glimpses of old Japan. Traditional wooden buildings line narrow streets, classic gas lamps illuminate the footpaths, and the pace of life seems wonderfully unchanged.

It was here that I discovered the aptly named Black Ship Café, a quirky little coffee shop honouring Perry's famous fleet.

As someone who takes coffee perhaps a little too seriously, I walked in hoping for my customary double-shot flat white. My confidence quickly evaporated.

The cheerful but unapologetic barista explained that every coffee was served in paper cups. There was no mention of ceramic mugs, and no reassurance that a double-shot flat white would resemble anything served in Sydney or Melbourne.

The café itself was as quirky as its name. Customers ordered downstairs before climbing a narrow staircase to a tiny upstairs room containing only a handful of tables. There were no windows. The aroma of freshly ground coffee drifted upstairs as rain drummed steadily on the roof, giving the little room all the charm of an old country railway station waiting room.

Outside, torrential rain lashed the streets. With nowhere else to shelter, I became an involuntary prisoner of the Black Ship Café.

Then something unexpected happened.

The coffee arrived. I took a cautious first sip. It was magnificent.

Rich, velvety and beautifully balanced, with just the right strength, it was the finest double-shot flat white I had tasted anywhere in Japan. Suddenly the paper cup, the tiny upstairs room and the torrential rain no longer mattered.

As I finished the last drop, I couldn't help but smile. Commodore Perry may have introduced Japan to the West more than 170 years ago, but on this rainy morning the Black Ship Café had quietly reminded me that some of the finest travel discoveries are found where we least expect them.

Sometimes the best coffee isn't found in Melbourne, Sydney, or Tokyo. Sometimes, it's waiting in a tiny upstairs room, served in a paper cup, in a sleepy fishing town called Shimoda.

'These stories are not over. They live on': Bringing ancient traditions into the present

EXHIBITION

CARELLE SNOUNOU

THE Art Gallery of NSW's latest exhibition, *Avatar: Forms of Vishnu*, explores how tradition and spirituality can help people make sense of a changing world.

Featuring almost 200 South and Southeast Asian artworks from the past 15 centuries, *Avatar: Forms of Vishnu* offers an expansive journey into the Hindu deity Vishnu and his primary avatars.

Alongside traditional artworks brought together from Australia, Cambodia, Switzerland, India and the United Kingdom, the exhibition displays contemporary pieces by nine artists who have reimagined



A traditional sculpture of Vishnu stands between contemporary paintings by Desmond Lazaro, reflecting the exhibition's connection between ancient stories and modern interpretation. Photo: Seaton Kay-Smith

traditional stories of Vishnu and his avatars.

In Hindu tradition, Vishnu is known as the preserver, descending to Earth in different forms, or avatars, when the world falls out of balance. Each avatar represents a

different response to restoring peace.

Walking through the exhibition, five interconnected spaces move between themes of devotion, protection, conflict, love and restoration, showing that Vishnu's story extends beyond

worship and demonstrates how people respond to disorder.

Contemporary artist Desmond Lazaro, whose work appears in the exhibition, said: "These stories are not over. They live on."

"They are ultimately stories about human experience."

His work reflects one of the exhibition's strongest ideas that tradition should not be seen as separate from the contemporary world, but as a way of understanding it.

The exhibition is most successful when it allows old and new works to speak to each other. Historical sculptures, garments and paintings sit alongside contemporary interpretations, creating a conversation across centuries.

At a time when the world can feel fragmented, *Avatar: Forms of Vishnu* reminds audiences that tradition is about finding direction and understanding our place within something larger than ourselves.

In Lazaro's words, quoting the Sufi tradition, "There is nothing more timely than the timeless."

Avatar: Forms of Vishnu
Art Gallery of New South Wales,
Naala Badu, lower level 2
20 June – 5 October
Tickets: Adult tickets are \$35, with concession, member, family, youth pricing and ticket offers available.
Extra sessions: Exclusive daily early-morning sessions are available for an additional cost. Bookings are required, with the option to join a guided tour.

Music Review
by John T Bottom



This Music May Contain Hope
Raye
Human Re Sources, 2026

This album came to me the best way possible. In a time where the algorithm and socials constantly shove new music at you, numbing you with choice, I was sent *This Music May Contain Hope* by a close friend. It was just a link to *Click Clack Symphony* and the immortal words: “You HAVE to listen to this, and it has to be loudly.” I usually tap play on my phone there and then, but this time I saved it. Headphones on, sitting on the edge of my bed once I got home, I immediately understood why it had to be loud, why I had to bathe in it.

From the first orchestral swells and Raye’s spoken-word scene setting, you can feel her going for broke: a 70-plus-minute, 17-track, four-act pop epic that veers from jazz-club swing to big-band razzle dazzle, orchestral melodrama, club beats and classic soul without ever losing her as the blazing centre. It’s gloriously excessive in the best way, the kind of maximalism that feels less like indulgence and more like a dam finally breaking.

When *Click Clack Symphony* finally arrived in the running order, it felt like the album’s thesis in miniature: a La La Land-esque five-minute musical that moves between breathless narration, orchestral surges and brassy, strutting release. Hearing it in

context, threaded with melodic and emotional motifs from earlier tracks, it somehow became even more incredible than it was in isolation, a payoff that has had me looping back to the beginning and starting over and over again all week.

Like Beyoncé’s *Lemonade*, this record has that stealth catharsis. A strange, disarming feeling of realising you were carrying pain you hadn’t named until an artist held up a mirror and started healing in front of you. Raye’s narrative of heartbreak, self-doubt and spiritual exhaustion, complete with voice notes from family and a grandmother who calls to say “we need to pray,” turns the album into a public exorcism that somehow feels infinitely personal. It isn’t perfect. It’s sprawling, messy, often too much; but that’s also why it’s such a phenomenal listen.

I Will Overcome is an early summit, a swaggering self-pep talk where she drags herself home alone, counts her steps in her head, and then throws a one-woman victory party in the wreckage of a bad night. It’s an anthem of stubborn survival that feels half show tune, half late-night diary entry, and it lands like someone gently but firmly taking your chin and reminding you you’re still here.

Later, *Life Boat* arrives as one of the album’s most devastatingly intimate moments, stripping back the large-scale spectacle to something raw and confessional. In an album teetering joyfully on the edge of too-muchness, its emotional clarity hits like cold water. A reminder that beneath the big-band dance-scene-on-the-roof theatrics is a writer mining very real, very recent wounds.

By the time the credits literally roll and she reads out everyone who helped her get here, you feel less like you’ve heard a collection of songs and more like you’ve sat with Raye through a storm and watched her insist on her own sunrise. This music doesn’t contain hope; it drags and dances you toward it.

Theatre Review
by Yvonne Hocothee



The Jungle and the Sea
Co-Writer/Co-Director: S. Shakthidharan
Co-Writer/Co-Director: Eamon Flack
Belvoir Street Theatre
11 July – 2 August, 2026

Making a return to the Belvoir Theatre, *The Jungle and the Sea* is set during the drawn-out Sri Lankan civil war which ended in 2009, and has won many awards for co-writers, S. Shakthidharan and Eamon Flack. It is also a prequel to their equally acclaimed earlier success, *Counting and Cracking*, which was staged earlier this year. The narrative focuses on the devastation wrought by warfare on the island’s population by illustrating one family’s struggle for survival across 25 years.

The matriarch, a Tamil mother, Gowrie (Anandavalli), vows to wear a blindfold until her son, Ahilan (Shiv Palekar), who has gone to join the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (known as the LTTE), is reunited with the family. Some of the family have already suffered serious injuries when the church they sheltered in was bombed. Siva (Prakash Belawadi), the father, lost his sight and one of the daughters has a hand injury.

The family has already decided to emigrate to Australia and the narrative jumps back and forward in time, between 2009 and the present, with scenes relating to the war and more present-day ones,

like the exchange between Siva and Lakshmi, his daughter, in an upmarket Sydney restaurant, adding a refreshing touch of humour.

Musicians Arjunan Puveendran and Steve Francis provide an atmospheric soundscape with drums and vocals adding emphasis and tension throughout, with the drums effectively creating the sounds of explosions and gunshots.

All the action takes place on a continuously revolving stage (Dale Ferguson) moving at different speeds as required. This constant movement creates the sense of displacement and homelessness intrinsic to the play.

A complex historical canvas, *The Jungle and the Sea* is difficult to follow at times but the program provides a useful summary for the audience. The story is deeply moving in both its scale and tragedy, with the remnants of the family finally finding refuge in Australia, despite their terrible losses.

written with a young audience in mind by Dr Niraj Lal, an ANU Visiting Fellow and host of the ABC’s *Imagine This* podcast.

It is engaging, full of interesting and helpful information, and attractively illustrated throughout. The pictures provide additional information and detail, often including quotes from young teenagers to demonstrate their perspectives on things.

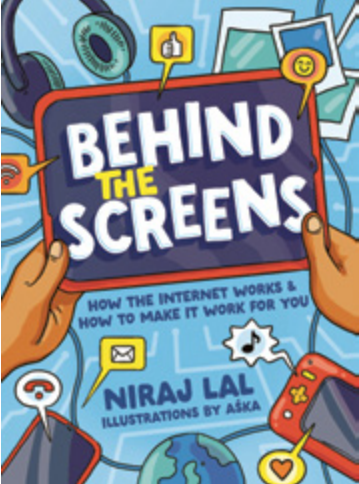
The text includes chapters on How *the Internet Works*, *Social Media*, *Gaming*, *Artificial Intelligence* and *Being Healthy with Tech*. One thing that Dr Lal repeatedly points out is that our interactions with technology, be they positive or negative, cause us to respond physically and we should be attuned to the way we feel.

He points out that most adults check their phones 85 times a day – once every eleven minutes – and that it is often the first and last thing we do every day. He recommends being ‘mindful, meaningful and moderate’ with what we do online and that we should focus on things that make us feel positive and inspired, including a range of ways children can stay physically, socially and psychologically safe while being online.

Lal also considers the way children, and indeed everyone, are manipulated by what they read on the internet and how we should remain vigilant about the accuracy of information and check sources.

Furthermore, Lal does not imagine his audience to be passive recipients of the entertainment, information and social opportunities that the internet provides, but looks to the future and encourages all users to be active participants in creating the digital world they want to live in, ensuring equality, freedom and integrity. A highly useful and engaging text.

Book Review
by Melinda Kearns



Behind the Screens: How the internet works and how to make it work for you
Niraj Lal with illustrations by Aska UQP, 2026

Behind the Screens is a slim volume that goes into detail about the dangers and pleasures of the internet,

Introducing Super 44, Enmore’s newest margarita bar

FOOD & DRINKS

SEYFI BOSTANCI

ENMORE Road’s newest cocktail bar Super 44 debuted on 26 June, taking the place of Midnight Special, which closed its doors in September of last year.

Some features of “The Spesh” remain in Super 44, including the distinctive checkerboard floor tiles, which now wrap the whole venue from the floor to the bar top. Above the bar, cabinets are lined with a lightly backlit stained glass, the roof is covered in rows of dark red hand-cut paper doilies imported from Mexico, the walls are plastered in vintage eclectic Mexican newspaper clippings, photographs and oil paintings. The staff wear burgundy waistcoats paired with white button-downs with rolled-up sleeves. The music is a mix of Latin and dark pop, with the speakers mixed to be crunchy and slightly compressed.



Photo: Seyfi Bostanci

CEO of Mucho Group Daisy Tulley says, “We just want to bring a piece of joy to the Inner West. I’ve lived in Newtown for 20 years, and seeing the way Bar Planet has been accepted was really encouraging.” Tulley highlighted the “psychedelic margs”, “mucho group service”, “close work with artists”, and characterised the bar as “inclusive and empathetic”. The ultimate aim, in Tulley’s words, is “to bring world-class margaritas to the Inner West.” All margaritas are currently priced

at \$24 a piece, barely above the \$20–\$23 Newtown standard. The classic margarita left quite a lot to be desired. The ‘Super Margarita’ is made with hand-shaved ice into the coupe, hand-squeezed Australian finger limes, house-made citron liquor,

and blanco tequila. The absence of agave is noticeable, as the marg is too sour for my liking. The other cocktail I sampled was the Beesting, which blew me away. Made with hot honey, reposado tequila, pechuga mezcal and fresh lime juice poured over shaved ice with a smoke salt rim. Delicious, with a smoky flavour, lots of depth, the shaved ice really works here. I recommend it to anyone looking for that smoky sweetness.

Other notable cocktails on offer are the Shark Fin, with fermented yuzu, as well as the Red Hot, a cocktail version of an Al Pastor taco with roasted capsicum and pineapple syrup.

All up, Super 44 offers the classic Mucho experience in a smaller (75 capacity) on Enmore Road. If you don’t like the other Mucho bars, you’re unlikely to feel different about this one.

But if you’re one of their many fans, this will be right up your alley.

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Super 44 | Margarita Bar
44 Enmore Rd, Enmore NSW 2042



Photo: www.rabbitohs.com.au

Rabbitohs beat Storm to strengthen finals push

SPORT

BIG T

SOUTH Sydney’s ability to keep defying expectations was on full display on Friday 24 July as the Rabbitohs edged Melbourne 28-26 at Accor Stadium, a result that keeps them safely nestled inside the top eight and leaves the Storm looking like a side already counting down to Mad Monday.

For a club tipped by many to slide out of finals contention, Souths again showed they thrive in tight moments, overturning an 8-16 half-time deficit with a six-try blitz built on resilience and belief.

Campbell Graham’s double, including a decisive strike in the 75th minute, bookended a scoring sheet that featured Jack Wighton, Brandon Smith, Alex Johnston and John Radel, underlining the

Rabbitohs’ growing spread of attacking threats. Latrell Siegwalt and Ashton Ward added crucial conversions to turn those tries into scoreboard pressure, helping Souths wrest control despite Melbourne dominating run metres and offloads.

Just as significant is what this win says about the Storm. Once the benchmark for sustained excellence, Craig Bellamy’s men now look spent, their finals hopes fading after another late fade-out and defensive frailty that has become a worrying theme. Melbourne’s 11th-place standing coming into Round 21 and their inability to protect an eight-point lead suggest a club searching for answers rather than building towards September.

For Rabbitohs fans, though, the sweetest storyline is the emerging hoodoo in reverse: not only did Souths keep their top-eight buffer, they completed a rare regular-season double over the Storm.

Back in Round 8, the Rabbitohs stunned Melbourne at AAMI Park with a record-breaking 48-6 demolition that marked their first ever win in the Victorian capital and exposed deep cracks in the Storm’s campaign. To return in Round 21 and grind out a high-pressure two-point victory at home shows a side capable of both fireworks and grit, a combination that makes them a genuine September nuisance.

With three wins in their last five and a knack for lifting against heavyweight opposition, Souths have gone from top-eight hopefuls to a team that now expects to be part of the finals conversation. If they keep surprising the competition the way they’ve done against Melbourne, the Rabbitohs might not just be safe in the eight; they could be the side no one wants to face when the stakes rise.

SSH



Declan Garner with site manager Nathan Garner from Traditional Restoration Company. Photo: Murray Gillett



The renovation of the church facade. Photo: Murray Gillett

South Sydney Uniting Church prepares to welcome community back

LOCALS

MURRAY GILLETT

SOUTH Sydney Uniting Church on Raglan St, Waterloo, has undergone major structural works and renovations since March 2025, with completion due in October 2026.

The works have included a brand new slate roof, replacement of sandstone hand-carved corbels, repointing of the exterior sandstone, extensive cleaning of the ageing Sydney sandstone, painting throughout, replacement of metal window screens in glittering brass, and extensive replacement of

water-damaged internal plaster. The restoration has been undertaken by Traditional Restoration Company, with work due to finish in October.

The church plans to celebrate the completion of the restoration with a Welcome Back to Church Party in October. Community members will be invited to attend and bring a plate to share.

The community garden has been closed throughout the building works. Although now overgrown, it is ready to be loved again. A working bee will be organised after October, and volunteers are warmly welcomed.

One of the outstanding features of South Sydney Uniting Church is its mechanical pipe organ, built

in 1877 by J W Walker & Son of London. Housed in a quasi-classical pine case with richly stencilled front pipes, it was originally constructed for Palmer St Presbyterian Church in East Sydney before being restored and relocated to Waterloo in 1976. This magnificent instrument is considered one of the best-preserved small historic organs in Sydney.

The church has acknowledged the contributions of its Property Working Group – Alicia, Alison, Craig, Gil, Jason (Sydney Presbytery representative), Maddie and Naomi – as well as former members Andrew, Betty, Des, Greg and Miriam, whose volunteer efforts supported the restoration project.

SSH



Out & About – August 2026

PAT CLARKE

Happy birthday to *Out & About*, as the column is 12 months old this month. I hope you are still enjoying reading about and attending events and activities included in issues of the South Sydney Herald.

2026 Census – Night of 11 August
You will receive a letter about the 2026 census and how to complete the form online.

It is compulsory to complete the form and include all of the people who will be staying at your residence on the night of 11 August. The information is important for future planning by governments and the community. For comprehensive information: info.census.abs.gov.au

Sydney Cherry Blossom Festival, Saturday 22 August to Sunday 30 August, 9am-4.45pm daily.

This annual festival is at Auburn Botanic Gardens, Chiswick Road, Auburn, with 200 blossoming cherry trees in a traditional style Japanese Garden. There will also be Japanese food, cultural performances and other activities. Tickets must be booked online via Oztix for entry to the Festival as numbers are capped within the gardens. Tickets are \$17.65 for adults, \$9.60 for children 5-16 years, senior card holders \$9.60 (conditions apply). Prices include booking fee. Info: cumberland.nsw.gov.au

National Science Week – 15-23 August
Theme this year is: Seeds of Science – Nurturing Knowledge for All. While there will be lots of science-related events at schools, Redfern Community Centre will again be hosting an Indigenous Science Experience on Saturday

22 August from 10am-3pm at 29-53 Hugo Street, Redfern. Entry is free and a traditional smoking ceremony and welcome will be at 10am and Indigenous Elders will share their experiences of bush foods and medicines, astronomy and much more.

Recycle It Saturday at Alexandria Canal Depot, Saturday 22 August, 9am-3pm.
A combined effort from City of Sydney, Waverley and Woollahra Councils, items will be accepted only from residents of these areas. Check the City of Sydney website for items that can be accepted on the day. Info: cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Hidden Gems in our City & Suburbs The Japan Foundation Gallery, Central Park Mall.

Hidden away on the 4th floor of Central Park are the Japan Foundation and its Art Gallery, which has a current exhibition entitled *Suddenly this Overview* until 29 August. This is a solo photographic exhibition by Kosuke Nagata and features his new works based on his on-site research of the Japanese War Cemetery and the Japanese Gardens in Cowra NSW. The gallery is open 10am-6pm, Mon-Fri and Saturday 11am-4pm. Entry is free.

The Andalus Arabic Choir presents Alexandria to Delos, Saturday 26 September, Seymour Centre.
Immerse yourself in a Mediterranean musical journey from Egypt to Greece featuring rich choral arrangements, Arabic maqamat, Byzantine chants and Andalusian traditions. Bookings: www.seymourcentre.com

Pat Clarke
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volunteers@ssh.com.au

SSH

TRAMSHEDS

FREE ENTRY

Artisans in the Park / Tramsheds Markets upper and lower levels
1 Dalgal Wy, Forest Lodge
Saturday 5th September
Plenty of parking
10.00 - 3.00
www.artisansinthepark.org.au