

the South Sydney Herald

Number Two Hundred and Sixty-Two ~ September 2026 First Published 2002

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Redfern pensioner Philip with the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP. Photo: Supplied

No shame in asking for help: A Redfern pensioner’s scam story

HUMAN AFFAIRS

WHEN Philip from Redfern received a call from someone claiming to be from the NBN, he thought he was speaking to a legitimate service provider. Instead, he became the victim of an impersonation scam that cost him \$15,000.

The caller sounded genuine and claimed there was a problem with Philip’s NBN service that required urgent attention. Like many victims, Philip believed he was dealing with a trusted organisation. By the time Philip

realised something was wrong, his life savings had been taken. For Philip, a pensioner living on the Age Pension, the loss was devastating. The money represented his financial safety net – the savings he relied on for unexpected expenses and peace of mind. But the financial loss was only part of the ordeal. Philip says the shame and embarrassment of being scammed were overwhelming. While he sought help to recover his money, he felt unable to tell his friends or family what had happened. The stigma associated with being scammed left him carrying the

burden largely on his own. The stress took a severe toll on his health and wellbeing. At a time when he most needed support from those around him, he found it difficult to open up about what he had experienced. Looking back, Philip fears that same sense of shame may stop other scam victims from seeking help. Philip pursued every available avenue to recover his money, including contacting the Federal Member for Sydney, Tanya Plibersek, whose office helped guide him through processes to recover his money. The process

was lengthy, but Philip was eventually successful. But many are not, partly because the victims often feel ashamed and blame themselves. Philip is sharing his story because he wants others to know that scams can happen to anyone. He also wants people to understand that the emotional impact can be just as devastating as the financial loss, and that there should be no shame in asking for help. “I needed as much help as I could get and [Tanya Plibersek’s electorate office] provided that. Without [their] help I don’t know

how I would have managed.” SSH
Text supplied by the Office of the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP.
.....
Been scammed? Here’s who to contact:
If you’ve lost money or shared financial details, contact your bank immediately.
IDCARE: Free support for scam and identity theft victims. 1800 595 160 | idcare.org
Scamwatch: Report scams and get advice. scamwatch.gov.au
Services Australia: For scams involving myGov, Medicare or Centrelink. 1800 941 126
NSW Police: Report fraud and scams. 131 444 | In an emergency, 000.
There is no shame in asking for help.



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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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Gasoline Group | gasov.linegroup.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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Students of the Olive Garden School in Gaza. Photo: Mohammed Hussein

Redfern gallery brings artists together for Gaza

HUMAN AFFAIRS

PAUL MALLAM

A Redfern gallery will bring together more than 60 artists this month to raise funds for a school serving children in Gaza.

Artists for Gaza's Future is returning to Rogue Pop-Up Gallery for a second exhibition, following last year's event, which raised \$25,000 for Gazan families in need of food, water, shelter and medical aid. This year, the exhibition will support the Olive Garden School,

established by teacher Mohammed Hussein in April 2026 to provide education for children whose schooling has been disrupted by war.

The school began with 20 students learning in a single tent but the need for education was so great that within weeks, Mohammed had 60 students. With extra funding, the school would be in a position to better meet the needs of current students and to take in more children.

Artists for Gaza's Future is the brainchild of long-term friends Marguerite Bunce and Sydney-

based artist Jane Burton-Taylor. Marguerite has maintained a large circle of Palestinian friends for many years. She first met Mohammed in 2024 and has closely followed the progress of the school.

"These children obviously need to be taught to read and do maths but they also need a place where they can be children who are having fun and feel as safe as possible together. Mohammed wanted them to see the school as a kind of haven where they could make friends and feel looked after."

While there has been much international focus on the physical

reconstruction of Gaza, the real work is in nurturing a new generation that has the education, skills and ambition to revitalise the community.

Jane has drawn on her connections with Sydney's artistic community to bring together artists who have generously donated work to the exhibition.

"We were delighted that so many artists contributed work to this project and I would also like to thank Diane Larter for again generously offering the use of Rogue Pop-Up Gallery in Redfern as our venue," Jane said.

The organising committee is absorbing all administrative and other costs, meaning 100 per cent of proceeds from the exhibition will go to the Olive Garden School.

The exhibition showcases artists across the spectrum, from the famous, such as Mental As Anything member Reg Mombassa and Wynne Prize winner Jude Rae, to the less well-known.

"The works also vary in size and price, making the show very accessible for both dedicated and casual followers of art,"

Jane said. SSH

EXHIBITION DATES:

Wed 2 Sep – Sun 27 Sep

Opening: Sat 5 Sep

OPENING HOURS:

11am-6pm, Wed–Sat; 11am-5pm Sun

VENUE:

**Rogue Pop-Up Gallery,
130 Regent Street, Redfern**

Can you record a conversation without permission?

LEGAL

ANDREW PAVLI

IS it legal to record a conversation secretly? Before pressing the record button on a private conversation, you should be aware of the law.

In NSW, the law prohibits the use of a listening device, which can include a mobile phone, to secretly record a private conversation; Section 7 of the Surveillance Devices Act 2007



(NSW). However, there are important exceptions.

If you are a party to the conversation, a recording may

be permitted where:

- All the principal parties consent to the recording.

- You make the recording without intending to communicate or publish it to people who were not parties to the conversation.

If you are not a party to the conversation, secretly recording or listening to a private conversation is generally prohibited.

The penalties for unlawfully using a listening device can be substantial, including fines and imprisonment. SSH

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

New homes, unhealthy food and the planning grey area in between

URBAN PLANNING

CARELLE SNOUNOU

THE Minns Labor Government wants councils to plan 30 years ahead for new housing but researchers say another part of liveability remains unsolved: who controls the food outlets that move in around these future communities?

University of Sydney food environments research fellow Dr Sisi Jia is concerned that people's diets are being shaped long before they move into their new homes.

The issue is becoming more urgent as the Minns Labor Government accelerates housing development around transport hubs, where thousands of future residents are set to live closer to train and metro stations.

The Transport Oriented Development program is expected to deliver more than 170,000 new homes across 37 precincts over the next 15 years, including nearly 60,000 homes in eight accelerated precincts at Bankstown, Bays West, Bella Vista, Crows Nest, Homebush, Hornsby, Kellyville and Macquarie Park.

A University of Sydney study led by Dr Jia found that across eight accelerated Transport Oriented Development precincts, 79 to 94 per cent of food outlets within 1.2 kilometres of each station were classified as unhealthy or less healthy.

Last year, a proposed 24-hour McDonald's was rejected in Redfern after residents raised concerns about health and local character.

Dr Jia said governments need to consider food environments earlier

in the planning process and find ways to incentivise healthier retail.

But Professor Susan Thompson, a recipient of the Sidney Luker Memorial Medal for her contribution to urban planning, said if land is zoned for commercial use, a council cannot reject a food outlet because the area has too many, "or if they did, they'd have a big fight on their hands".

Thompson has spent more than three decades arguing that health belongs in planning and said public interest still has a place in the system, even when rules appear to be limited.

However, as NSW tries to speed up housing supply, public concern might become harder to protect.

"There's more and more of a push to make that much more streamlined in a way that perhaps will cut out a lot of people." SSH



Dr Sisi Jia's research focuses on food environments and how policy can support healthier eating, a concern now being tested in NSW's accelerated housing precincts. Photo: University of Sydney

TANYA PLIBERSEK MP

Federal Member for Sydney

Labor



Dear SSH readers

Cost of Living

We know Australians are under pressure and there's much more work to do but we have made progress. Under Labor, 1.25 million jobs have been created, we've had the lowest average unemployment for any Government in half a century, business investment is the highest in nearly a decade, and debt is down on what we inherited.

We've achieved this while delivering a series of tax cuts for every single taxpayer including this financial year and the next. That will be five tax cuts in total. Combined, our tax cuts have put up to \$2,800 extra in the pocket of the average Australian worker.



Scan here to estimate your tax cut:

We've also delivered cheaper medicines, more support for parents, debt relief for students, free TAFE, and a \$20,000 instant asset write-off for small businesses.

Boosting Social Security payments

Social security payments like the age pension, Jobseeker and Commonwealth Rent Assistance will increase on 20 September thanks to indexation, helping more than 5.3 million Australians. Under Labor, Pensions are 25% higher than when we were first elected and Commonwealth Rent Assistance is up 53% driven by a 15% boost in 2023-24, the largest single increase in over 30 years, followed by another 10% increase in 2024-2025.



Scan here for payments and other details:

Paid Prac

We introduced Prac Payments for students training to be teachers, nurses, social workers and midwives. Now we're expanding Prac Payments for students in clinical psychology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, paramedicine, radiography, pharmacy, rehabilitation therapies, audiology and podiatry.

The \$338.60 weekly payment during placement, is means tested, benchmarked to the single Austudy rate and indexed annually.

Mental health support

We're expanding Medicare's Mental Health Centre network, rolling out 32 new or upgraded centres to deliver a total of 92 outlets across Australia by mid-2030. Anyone can walk in and access free mental health support without an appointment, referral or mental health treatment plan. Centres are staffed by multidisciplinary teams, including mental health clinicians and peer workers.



To find your nearest centre, scan the QR code:

Housing women and children fleeing family and domestic violence

People often ask, 'why doesn't she leave?' when what we should be asking is 'where would she go?' and 'what help is available?'. Women think twice about leaving violence if they think they will make their kids homeless.

We are building 448 new homes for 22,000 women and children nationally.

It is part of our ambitious commitment of more than \$1.2 billion in crisis and transitional housing to deliver 55,000 social and affordable homes across the country. We've delivered 7,200 dwellings and we have another 23,000 in planning or construction.

AI & data centres

Our Government will introduce a world-leading artificial intelligence framework so that Australia can capture the opportunity, share the benefits and keep Australians safe. The new standards will set out clear rules for large data centres— including a legal obligation to underwrite their own power supply, pay their full share of connection costs so energy bills are not impacted, and to be water efficient.

Gambling reform

We've delivered new laws to reduce wagering advertising across television, radio and online to minimise children's exposure to gambling ads and protect Australians from online gambling harm.

We have banned wagering ads:

- during live coverage of sporting events on broadcast and online content services
- in sports venues and on players' and officials' uniforms
- on the radio during school drop-off and pick-up times

We've also banned:

- the use of athletes, celebrities or influencers to promote wagering
- broadcasting promoting sporting odds
- wagering ads on online platforms, unless people have a logged in account, are over 18 and have the option to opt out of wagering advertising
- online keno "pocket pokies" and foreign-matched lotteries
- direct marketing of inducements for 14 days after signing up with a wagering company, three months after a person deregisters from BetStop, and to all customers identified as at risk of gambling-related harm.

And we've

- established a Wagering Advertising Opt-out Register
- permitted banks and payment systems to block transactions to illegal gambling operators
- restricted wagering advertising on TV to no more than three ads each hour between 5am and 8.30pm

Tanya



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



JENNY LEONG MP
Member for Newtown

NSW Labor's public land audit is more like a highly efficient stocktake sale

This month, an exclusive story in the Sydney Morning Herald revealed seriously concerning details about the privatisation of public land under NSW Labor.



After more than three years, the Minns Labor Government's land audit doesn't appear to have actually delivered a single home. Instead, it has functioned as a highly efficient stocktake sale of public land and public assets that even the Liberals hadn't touched.

As reported in the story, confidential documents have revealed nearly 300 publicly-owned sites worth more than \$1.39 billion could be sold on the private market through this public land audit.

The Minns Labor Government has spun this as a means of addressing the housing crisis, however, a Guardian report last year revealed that more than two thirds of the sites were being sold to private developers with many not requiring the delivery of any actual affordable or social housing. Some existing Government owned housing in the Inner West was also sold to the private market – rather than being retained as public housing.

If NSW Labor were serious about tackling housing affordability in our city that the private market profits from, they would be keeping publicly owned housing and land in public hands – not flogging it off to cashed up developers. The Greens will be scrutinising the 30 page list of sites on the chopping block exposed in the Sydney Morning Herald and working with communities to stop the sell offs.

Public land belongs to all of us – and selling it off is inexcusable by a NSW Labor Government that was elected on a promise of ending the Liberals privatisation agenda.

Jenny Leong

Jenny Leong MP
Greens Member for Newtown



Read more about the public land audit and view the sites NSW Labor wants to sell off!



Authorised by Jenny Leong MP. Funded using Parliamentary entitlements.



The new canteen space opened to students on Monday, 24 August. Photo: University of Sydney / Fiona Wolf

New student canteen serving \$5 meals opens

SPONSORED

MARK SCOTT

THE University of Sydney has opened a dedicated student canteen which will serve subsidised \$5 meals as part of an initiative to bring quality, more affordable meals to campus.

Located on the Camperdown campus near Cleveland and Shepherd Street, the canteen will provide nutritious and inexpensive food and beverage options in the busy Faculty of Engineering precinct.

Tasty and fresh \$5 breakfasts, lunches and dinners will be available during set service periods on a first-come, first-served basis and students can expect a wide selection of options and a menu that rotates weekly.

The initiative is backed by a significant University investment over three years which will cover staffing costs and the meal subsidy, ensuring students can focus on their studies rather than worrying about where their next meal will come from.

Vice-President (Operations) Nicole Gower said the canteen is part of a broader strategy to improve food and beverage offerings across the University.

"Students told us they want more affordable food options on campus and we listened," she said.

"Following a successful \$5 meal pilot last year, we wanted

to expand the offering to reach more students, extending it to three meals a day and providing space for students to connect.

"The new canteen provides a high volume of nutritious and inexpensive meals so our students can focus on their studies instead of worrying when the next meal might be."

Head of Student Life Lydia Dutcher said the cost of living remains a key concern for many, which is why the new canteen was developed in partnership with students to make sure it meets the needs of the community.

"The design itself was guided by representatives from key student groups; their feedback helped shape everything from the location to the overall student experience, ensuring the space feels relaxed and welcoming," she said.

"The canteen will give students a dedicated space to connect with friends, study and refuel, helping them to feel supported and at home at university."

PhD student Weihong Liang, who was involved in the creation of the canteen, knows how food insecurity and cost-of-living pressures can impact students' wellbeing and their academic experience.

He works with fellow students every day in his role as education officer for the Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association (SUPRA) and represents their interests to the Senate, the governing

authority of the University.

Inspired by other low-cost food programs in Australia and overseas, he sat down with senior leaders in early 2025 to discuss how to urgently tackle food affordability on campus.

Members of the Students' Representative Council (SRC), the University of Sydney Union (USU), Student Life and other student-facing teams quickly assembled a working group and a trial was launched in August, which soon became a huge hit with students.

Over 60,000 meals were served from August 2025 to May 2026, each one at the small cost of \$5 and soon afterwards, the decision was made to open a permanent canteen on campus.

Weihong said student feedback played a central role in shaping the design of the new space, from the physical location to the naming of the canteen itself.

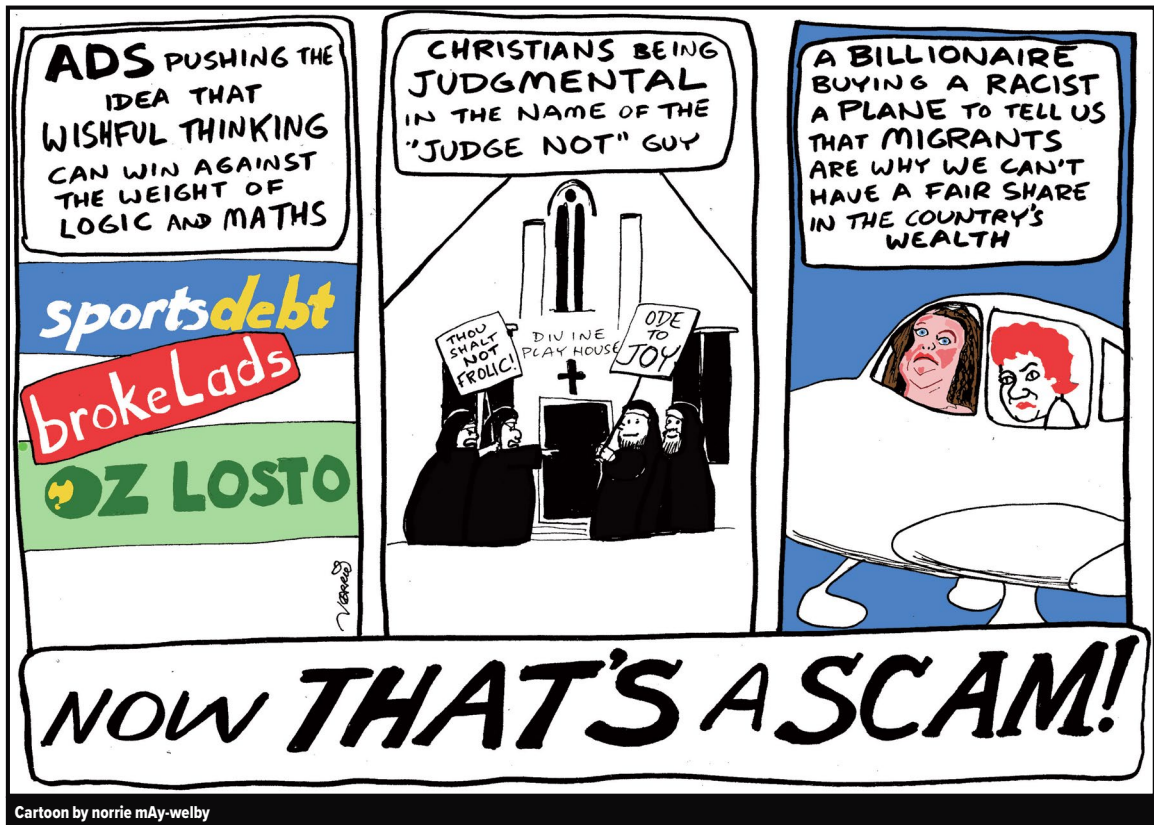
"We hope the space can also host student events when the canteen isn't serving food, for it to become a real social hub," he said.

"One day, I hope students will tell their friends, 'let's meet at the canteen'."

SSH



Authorised by Vice-Chancellor and President Prof. Mark Scott.
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info.centre@sydney.edu.au



Cartoon by norrie mAy-welby

The Inner West never closes the curtain on defiance

HISTORY

JOEL O'CONNOR

THE Divine Playhouse lasted mere days in July 2026 before the lights went out. A queer arts space in a deconsecrated church, it was shuttered after religious protests and a landlord's resurrection of an 1842 "offensive trade" clause once aimed at colonial abattoirs.

The complaint was a mockery of sacred imagery. Cue the outrage.

Yet the Inner East has staged this drama for nearly two centuries, and the house rarely stays dark for long.

In the 1840s, the Cabbage Tree Hat Mob turned the approaches to Observatory Hill and the surrounding thoroughfares into theatre.

Palm-leaf hats on their heads, they specialised in crushing the silk toppers of respectable gentlemen – class warfare as public performance. Moral panic followed.

A century later, Rosaleen Norton, the Witch of Kings Cross and later Bourke Street, Darlinghurst, raised the stakes. Trance magic, pagan erotica, deliberate provocation of Christian sensibilities: she met police raids and obscenity trials with theatrical poise and refused to apologise for the discomfort she caused. Norton's theatrics were the point. She understood that power does not experience "harm" the same way the marginalised do.

That same unapologetic spirit of punk – raw, DIY, allergic to authority – surfaced with Johnny Rejex and the Grand Hotel crowd in the late 1970s, when they collided productively with the gay liberationists who claimed Oxford Street after the 1978 Mardi Gras riot. Shock arose on the one hand, solidarity on the other.

The protestors who closed the Divine Playhouse chose their offence. They immersed themselves in an environment of satire, then escalated their complaints through corporate



An estimated 2,000 people gathered for a peaceful "sing-in" protest at Sydney's Hyde Park on Saturday, July 25, 2026, following the sudden closure and lease termination of the queer arts venue The Divine Playhouse. Photos: Andrew Brinsmead

channels to outrage people who were never there and likely would not have cared.

In method, it mirrored the lobbying and pressure that the Mad Fucking Witches have used with ruthless success for a decade, toppling target after target that is hostile to women's rights and anti-sexism campaigns.

The likes of MFW would almost certainly draw a distinction, viewing the Playhouse closure as pushing down rather than up – against a community that remains vulnerable and, amid pressures ranging from Trump's ban on transgender people in the US military to Australian protests against drag-queen story time, is becoming more so again.

The performers aren't at a loss for friends, though. Independent Member for Sydney Alex Greenwich says that while we should be celebrating and supporting additions such as the Divine Playhouse to Sydney's

nightlife, culture and economy, what we are seeing is part of a concerning trend.

"Sydney's reputation as a global city is on the line and we cannot risk the closure of more venues where adults can choose to have fun. Venues that celebrate freedom of expression should be encouraged," Mr Greenwich says.

The supporters of the Divine Playhouse know the performers were simply doing what they have always done, so artfully played out in a scene from the film *Pride*, where Mark Ashton declares, when young activist Joe is called a pervert, "When somebody calls you a name... you take it and own it."

The Divine Playhouse may be dark for now. The rebels keep writing new scenes. The artistic heartbeat of the Inner East, queer and/or otherwise rebellious, does not ask permission. It never has.

Smashing down the hats. 200 years and counting.



Pinch pots with thanks to Camilla and Briar at Fired and Ground, Tura Beach. Photo: Andrew Collis

Something to hold – sharing art and stories in aged care

RELIGION & ETHICS

ANDREW COLLIS

WHAT happens when we bring art into an aged-care home – not simply as an activity to fill the time, but as an invitation to look, touch, remember, imagine and create?

I have been making a series of small ceramic pinch pots to share with residents at a local facility. Each is small enough to sit comfortably in the hand and to be passed from person to person.

The pots draw on stories and images from Matthew's Gospel.

One, inspired by Jesus' words about "salt and light", is a little vessel for a tea-light candle. Coarse sea salt has been pressed into one side, while small holes allow light to shine through.

Another has eight small forms around its rim, recalling the eight blessings of the Beatitudes. A triangular pot represents the Trinity. Another carries impressions of native plants inside and feathers outside: "Consider the lilies ..."

A fifth has two patterns winding towards one another – love of God and love of neighbour, the "two great commandments".

The point is not to explain what each object means. The hope is that touching and looking might prompt a memory, a question or a story.

Textures matter. So does weight, shape and the movement of an object from

one pair of hands to another.

Even the empty space inside the pots matters. It suggests receptivity: openness to another person, to love, to prayer and perhaps to God.

Such approaches are increasingly valued in dementia care.

Dementia Australia encourages meaningful creative engagement as a way of supporting connection, identity and enjoyment. Artists also recognise that making and responding to art can provide ways of expressing experience when words are difficult.

This is not art therapy as such. But there is much we can learn from its respect for creativity, embodiment and communication beyond words.

The next step might be to bring some soft clay along to share.

The temptation with an "art activity" is to decide beforehand what everyone should make. I would rather offer the clay and ask: What would you like to do with this?

Someone might make a bowl. Someone might make a face, a bird or something unrecognisable. Someone might simply enjoy pressing fingers into the clay.

Curiosity is key.

Art can be more than distraction. At its best, it creates a little space in which a person can still choose, play, wonder, communicate and surprise themselves – and in which the rest of us might learn to pay attention.

SSH

South Sydney Herald

READERS' COMMENTS

"Re Waterloo, they should renovate, not detonate. The state government should be massively increasing the amount of public housing being built to repair the damage caused by previous LNP and ALP policies regarding Public Housing (...). We should follow the example of Vienna in that regard (see Green Left Issue #1393 of 1 November 2023; an article titled 'In Vienna, secure, affordable housing is not a utopian dream')."

Leigh, reader response to 'The Battle for Waterloo – a resident's perspective' by Catherine Skipper, online article, July 2025.

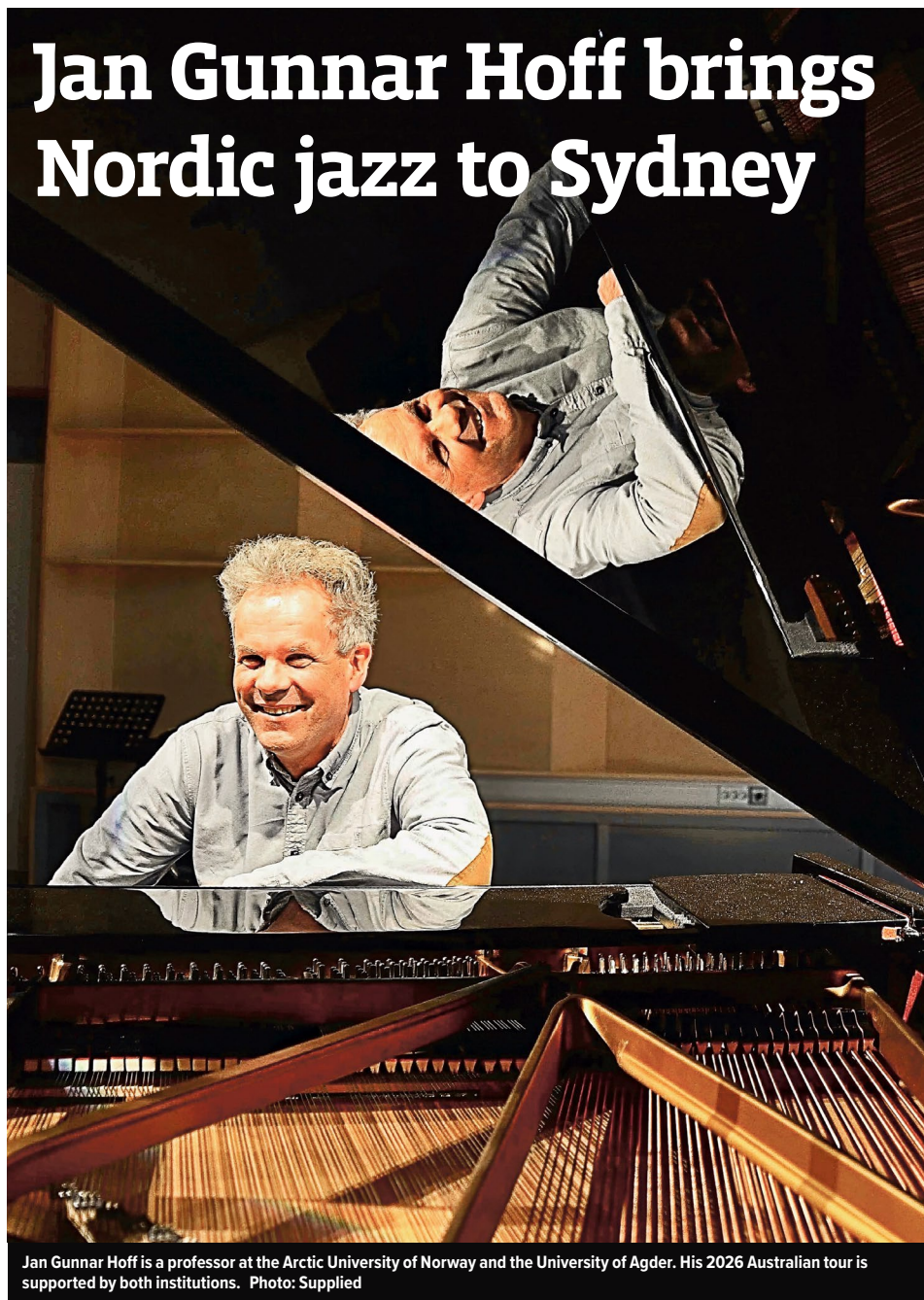
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Jan Gunnar Hoff brings Nordic jazz to Sydney



Jan Gunnar Hoff is a professor at the Arctic University of Norway and the University of Agder. His 2026 Australian tour is supported by both institutions. Photo: Supplied

MUSIC

STEPHEN WEBB

ACCLAIMED Norwegian jazz pianist Jan Gunnar Hoff will make his Australian debut in October with two Sydney concerts in collaboration with Sydney-based Scandinavian-inspired ensemble Elysian Fields.

Hoff, celebrating 50 years in music, is said to combine the melodic sensibility and dexterity of Pat Metheny Group keyboardist Lyle Mays with the edginess of American jazz pianist Chick Corea.

He has recorded and performed with international jazz luminaries including Metheny ("an adventure of a lifetime"), Corea, Mike Stern (named one of the best jazz guitarists of all time) and Weather Report's drummer Alex Acuña.

With 27 albums released as a solo artist and co-leader, his honours include the Buddy Award (Norway's highest jazz honour) and the prestigious Edvard Grieg Prize for his jazz mass Meditatus.

The Sydney concerts mark the culmination of a longstanding creative partnership between Hoff and viola da gambist Jenny Eriksson, founder and leader of Elysian Fields.

Of Swedish heritage, Eriksson has recorded several of Hoff's compositions and has performed alongside him in Norway.

Hoff is based in Bodø, a coastal city in northern Norway above the Arctic Circle.

From his studio overlooking a fjord, he draws inspiration from the surrounding landscape, a connection that also informs his commitment to environmental issues, climate action and the preservation of Norway's wilderness.

His large-scale choral work Heartlands is a tribute to nature.

Connecting genres

Hoff's music incorporates a blend of genres and influences, from the people and landscape of northern Norway to his personal experience and emotions.

His expressive pianistic repertoire – solo, in trios and larger ensembles – extends from a "folkloristic" touch to the so-called Nordic sound in Norwegian jazz, and then to fusion, incorporating synths with elements of funk, pop and rock.

"I consider myself an artist in a kind of crossover landscape. I started with classical piano at the age of 8, then I was invited to play with some prog-rock groups. I was really fond of Emerson Lake and Palmer, Yes, and Focus.

"What I'm trying to do in my little world is to connect the genres.

"I just keep making my own music, keep doing my own thing, which is basically compositions; compositions performed by dedicated musicians and artists, people who can make a difference in your music.

"I feel I make music for musicians."

On Saturday, 3 October at 4.00pm, Jan Gunnar Hoff will illuminate the Utzon Room, Sydney Opera House, with solo piano plus intimate duos alongside viola da gambist Jenny Eriksson. Book tickets here: www.sydneyoperahouse.com/contemporary-music/northern-lands?



On Friday, 9 October at 7.30pm, Hoff and Elysian Fields will unite at The Lounge, Concourse Theatre, Chatswood. Book tickets here: www.aucentury.sales.ticketsearch.com/sales/salesevent/165594



The old is new: Inside the collections of Sydney's newest fashion designers

DESIGN

CARELLE SNOUNOU

A live recording of Jimi Hendrix's *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)* accompanied the young models strutting down Oxford Art Factory's runway in patchwork denim and warm-coloured stripes that would not have looked out of place half a century ago.

Most of 20-year-old Piper Finnegan's pieces had another life before reaching the runway. The 1970s aesthetic began with garments collected either from op shops, her own wardrobe or her mother's.

Finnegan was one of the 17 emerging designers brought together for *On Cue Runway* at Oxford Art Factory on August 13. The sold-out event was produced by Love Zainab with Debaser Events, who dedicated the night

to fashion and music.

Alongside their fashion lines, each designer created a playlist around the emotions and references behind them, which DJs interpreted live as the models walked.

Backstage, it was easy to tell which models belonged to the same collection. But despite each one having its own identity, the references behind many of them were recognisable at first glance.

Finnegan's was one of the easiest to place. Her collection radiated 1970s style through denim, stripes and warm colours.

Yet backstage, she said she had never set out to make a '70s collection. Only after noticing the warm palette of the secondhand pieces she had gathered did the decade come to life. She described the result as a "70s present fusion".

Another *On Cue* designer, Amelie Carter, was less concerned with making something nobody had seen before.

"Everything's been created already," she said.

Carter believes designers can expand on what already exists and "create new versions of it".

The cycle of familiar trends continued as the runway moved through its four acts.

South Coast designer Charlie Owens opened with Lana Del Rey's *West Coast* and channelled country influences through vintage repurposed textiles like old tablecloths.

Romantic-turned-gothic looks then emerged on the runway with *Perverved Desire*. The collection drew on designer Alina's interest in darkness and desire within identity.

Less than an hour before her collection hit the runway, Finnegan described clothing pieced together from things that had already existed as "Frankenstein garments": a fitting description of the pieces that followed.



Piper Finnegan's standout look brought together a denim bolero, '70s-inspired colour blocking and upcycled jeans. Photo: Cassidy Morris



Grappa's new chapter in The Rocks

FOOD & DRINKS

MARINE GRANGIER

Grappa The Rocks
107-109 George St, The Rocks
NSW 2000
grappa.com.au

GRAPPA is an institution in Leichhardt. Despite being located on the “wrong end” of Norton Street, it has been a landmark of Little Italy since Charlie and his father Antonio opened the doors in 1999. Now, 27 years later, they’ve expanded to another historic area, dominated by long-term tenants and heritage brands: The Rocks.

Nestled in a classic sandstone terrace that used to be a bakehouse, the new outpost looks right at home. A very European terrace spreads out onto the street, and not even the winter chill of an August evening seems to deter diners from enjoying this little slice of Italy.

As my husband and I walk in, we are engulfed in the electrifying buzz of a CBD restaurant on a Friday evening. *Grappa Leichhardt* feels like a library in comparison. There’s energy and all your senses are triggered in the best possible way.

We rocked up without a booking (scandalous), so the host offers to sit us at the kitchen counter. Now I know that for some people this is a second-rate seating option but we love a kitchen counter. We’ll take the kitchen counter over the cushy booth any day, simply because when you sit at the kitchen counter, you get dinner and a show. You get to meet some of the most passionate people you’ll ever meet and you get to see the menu come to life.

You don’t even need to look at the menu when you sit at the kitchen counter, you can simply

look at the dishes being handed over the pass to pick what you most want to eat. It will be difficult, however, as every dish looked better than the last, and when you finally think you’ve made up your mind, they’ll bring out another tantalizing option to tempt you.

Based on our observations that night, the fresh figs wrapped in prosciutto and drizzled with warm Gorgonzola sauce are the stars of the show (understandably).

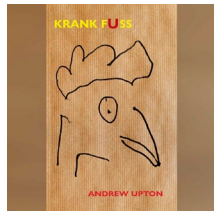
But we came for pasta and we were glad we did. The rigatoni Grappa is a non-alcoholic take on the rigatoni alla vodka that will make you question the need to add vodka in the first place and the spaghetti vongole had my husband fishing out every single strand of pasta from his plate.

At *Grappa Leichhardt* the decor is quite simple; it’s a modern big open room encased in floor-to-ceiling windows. But *Grappa The Rocks* is different. It’s an old building full of nooks and crannies, lovingly restored to the standards of modern comfort. Think sandstone walls, dark, rich woods, plush burgundy velvet and warm lighting. It’s elevated yet homey and just beautiful to look at.

But the most beautiful part of *Grappa The Rocks* is the staff. From the host to the waitstaff and the chefs, everyone takes extra care to ensure the experience is flawless for guests. I have never seen so many waiters in a restaurant, so you know you’ll never be left hanging and despite being in the middle of the Friday night rush, the chefs were more than happy to have a chat and take us on a culinary journey with them.

So next time you’re in The Rocks, give this brand-new iteration of *Grappa* a shot (pun intended). Or book ahead if you really want to avoid the kitchen counter.

Book review by Anna Jahjah



Krank Fuss
Andrew Upton
Puncher & Wattmann, 2026

Andrew Upton, long known to Sydney audiences as a playwright and former artistic director of the Sydney Theatre Company, makes an assured debut as a novelist with *Krank Fuss*.

A son transcribes a manuscript left by his late grandfather, written on a German small farm on the eve of the Second World War. Within it, a chicken with a deformed foot, Krank Fuss, ‘sick foot’, is ostracised by her flock and befriends Gibby, a toad who insists it is a frog. Together they journey through the farm as the wider world edges toward catastrophe.

The echoes of *Animal Farm* are clear but the spirit is closer to Camus’s *The Plague*: this is a story about the loss of innocence, rather than illusion. Krank Fuss doesn’t end up wise exactly but she keeps her hope, which feels like the harder-won, more honest outcome. There’s also something of Jean de La Fontaine here, in the way animal fable is used to smuggle in moral and social observation without ever tipping into simple allegory.

The writing is often lyrical: the moment Krank Fuss learns to look up rather than down, and finds a sky above her, is quietly beautiful, alongside flashes of imagery genuinely terrifying enough to linger after the last page.

The rats function as this book’s pigs, complicit and self-serving rather than simply villainous. Upton is sharpest on the farmers, who drift into neglecting the flock’s welfare and then blame a convenient scapegoat, the fox, while the real bullies, an ageing rooster and the rats, go unnoticed.

Line drawings punctuate the text, sometimes striking, occasionally a little flat. Despite this minor reservation, this is a powerful first novel.

Film review by Lindsay Cohen



The Odyssey
Director: Christopher Nolan
Starring: Matt Damon, Tom Holland, Anne Hathaway
Genre: Mythological

The Odyssey (2026) is based on Greek mythology that has been the subject of lots of movies and TV mini-series since the early 20th century. But that’s OK because while knowing post-Trojan War Greek mythology may help you understand the film, its main attraction is the type of film.

Director Christopher Nolan is excellent because he likes intense storylines, lots of detail and big budgets! *Oppenheimer* (2023), *Dunkirk*

(2017), *Interstellar* (2014) and *Batman v Superman* (2016) admittedly was a shocker though he was the executive producer). Nolan’s obsession with traditional acting, costumes and filming, with limited or no Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI) is part of the reason why *The Odyssey* is of great interest.

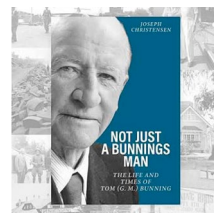
Also massively relevant, and as is highly promoted, *The Odyssey* is the first movie filmed exclusively on IMAX 70mm (250 kg total). While it’s an important challenge to the filmmakers and projectionists, that’s a major reason why it’s worth seeing – not the storyline necessarily! Ideally you should view it non-digitally on big screens and with excellent sound (e.g. Randwick Ritz as Sydney IMAX is only digital but is huge).

The Odyssey also features great actors in authentic, aggressive and impressive style. Matt Damon, as always, is very committed and dedicated. His role of Odysseus feels genuine as a result. The monsters (referred to as ‘creatures’) are played by actors and mechanical systems and much of the scenery is also authentic and stunning, in Greece, Italy, Morocco, Scotland, Iceland, Malta, and the USA.

So don’t worry if you don’t understand much of the mythological and complicated storyline. Treat the film as sketches if needed and it’s highly enjoyable.

Rating: Three-and-a-half imaxximus.

Book review by Melinda Kearns



Not Just a Bunnings Man: The Life and Times of Tom (G.M.) Bunning
Joseph Christensen
UWA Publishing, 2026

Joseph Christensen has produced something rarer than another corporate success story: a genuinely humane portrait of the man behind Australia’s most recognisable hardware name.

Drawing on extensive private and company records, Christensen, a UWA historian with a strong background in archival research, traces Tom Bunning’s remarkable arc from the Depression-era sawmill his father founded, through three and a half gruelling years as a prisoner of the Japanese in Changi, to decades steering Bunnings through the post-war boom and, finally, the shrewdly timed sale of a stake to Wesfarmers that secured the company’s future.

What elevates this above a standard business biography is the way the Changi years are woven into the whole rather than treated as a grim aside. Bunning’s later reputation as a steady, deeply respected leader of his company and of the WA community more broadly reads as inseparable from what he survived, and Christensen handles that connection with evident care rather than sensationalism.

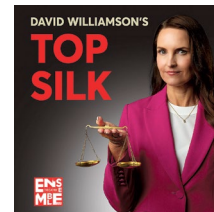
The result is a book as interested in character as in commerce: a study of quiet resilience and unshowy

leadership set against the backdrop of one of the great Australian corporate stories of the twentieth century.

For a debut into business biography from a historian better known for maritime and environmental history, it’s an assured piece of work: meticulously researched and clearly written with genuine affection for its subject without tipping into hagiography.

The biography is highly recommended, particularly for anyone interested in Western Australian history, family business or the generation of leaders shaped by wartime captivity. A thoughtful, well-researched addition to Australian business biography.

Theatre review by Marine Grangier



Top Silk
Playwright: David Williamson
Director: Mark Kilmurry
Ensemble Theatre, Kirribilli
31 July – 12 Sept, 2026

David Williamson’s sharp legal satire *Top Silk* centres on a successful barrister whose professional and personal lives begin to collide when a high-profile legal case exposes tensions within his marriage, family and workplace. Written in the 1980s, the play’s exploration of the divide between public and private life still carries conviction.

Directed by Mark Kilmurry, the production is beautifully served by Ailsa Paterson’s outstanding set and costume design. The Ensemble’s creative crew consistently find clever ways to transform the theatre’s intimate stage into multiple locations, and this production is no exception. The staging is seamless, imaginative and never feels constrained by the space.

The cast is uniformly strong, although a little stiff at times, which could simply be first-night nerves. Rachel Gordon, Nicholas Brown, Samir Nasser, Jeremy Waters, Jamie Oxenbould, Thomas Campbell and Laurence Coy all deliver assured performances. The diversity of characters keeps the play engaging, with each actor creating distinctive personalities that bring Williamson’s satire on institutional corruption, power dynamics, marital and family relationships to vivid life.

The play’s biggest weakness is its first half, which feels slow and light on story. While there are enjoyable moments and strong performances, it takes time for the central narrative to emerge, and the pacing occasionally drifts. Once the plot gathers momentum after the interval, however, the emotional stakes become clearer and the production finds its rhythm. Overall, *Top Silk* is an entertaining evening of theatre, elevated by exceptional design and a talented cast. Even if the opening act requires a little patience, the creativity on display, particularly Paterson’s ingenious and committed design, and the engaging performances make it well worth seeing.



At the finish line

Tribal Warrior CEO Shane Phillips celebrates after completing the 14km City2Surf from Hyde Park to Bondi on Sunday 9 August.

Photo: Michelle Haywood



Spotted in... Redfern

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

Remembering Carolyn Miller



Yvonne Hocothee, Catherine Skipper and Carolyn Miller at the last art group workshop for 2025. Photo: Supplied

LOCALS

SSH

CAROLYN Miller, a gifted artist and much-loved member of the South Sydney Uniting Church Arts Group, died on 1 August 2026, just short of her 75th birthday.

She brought warmth, generosity and creativity to the group's classes, exhibitions and art fairs, and generously supported local projects and events. Her exquisite drawings and whimsical depictions of nature, especially dragonflies, a symbol

of personal transformation that held special significance for her, became a much-loved part of the community's artistic life. She will be deeply missed and remembered for her strength, kindness and creative spirit.

Carolyn's daughter Rebecca read the following poem at her funeral. The poet, Axiomsense, is a participant in South Sydney's Wordplay group.

Life's Tapestry
Axiomsense

Amid the whispers of time's embrace,

*In the tapestry of moments,
they find their place,
Traces of existence, stories untold,
Invisible imprints, like secrets
to behold.*

*Footprints in the sand, washed
by the sea,
A fleeting memory of where we
used to be,
Whispers of laughter in the
autumn's breeze,
Traces of joy, lingering as the leaves
freeze.
Stars above carry light from
ages past,
Traces of brilliance, in galaxies vast,
Whispering secrets of the
universe's song,
Through constellations, these
traces belong.*

*In the echo of a long forgotten
rhyme,
Traces of poetry, transcending time,
Words once written, inked with
emotion,
Leave their mark, a lasting
devotion.*

*Aged hands-on weathered paper
leaves a mark,
Traces of wisdom, a journey
embarked,*



Out & About – September 2026

PAT CLARKE

WELCOME to Spring, readers, and very welcome it is. In Australia, Spring is calendar-based from 1 September until 30 November. The meteorological date for Spring in the Southern Hemisphere starts on 23 September 2026.

Sydney Fringe Festival 1–30 September – Curiosity Starts Here
What an enormous line-up of arts, comedy, dance and ideas throughout Sydney City and suburbs in September. There will surely be a venue somewhere near you, on all sorts of subjects. www.sydneyfringe.com

Fringe Kids – A festival for curious minds, 26 September–11 October
Includes magic, circus and disco. Check the enormous program at www.sydneyfringe.com/fringe-kids

Africa Film Fest Australia 3–6 September
A four-day celebration of African cinema and stories from across the continent and its global diaspora, featuring 14 Australian premieres at the Sydney Opera House and Event Cinemas Parramatta. Highlights include *The Eyes of Ghana*, executive produced by Barack and Michelle Obama's Higher Ground Productions; *Muganga: The One Who Treats*, produced by Cynthia Pinet and Angelina Jolie; the highly anticipated Arab music biopic *El Sett*; and Closing Night documentary *Black Is Beautiful: The Kwame Brathwaite Story*. More info: africafilmfest.au

Sydney Writers' Festival: Homegrown 18–19 September and 9–11 October
More than 25 free events featuring 65 Australian and international writers at the State Library of NSW this spring. Across two weekends, the program brings together leading authors, journalists, poets and playwrights for talks, panels,

live podcast recordings and workshops. Info: swf.org.au

HIDDEN GEMS IN OUR CITY & SUBURBS

Chrissie Cotter Gallery 31A Pidcock Street, Camperdown
This is a small gallery that opened in 1965 and was named in honour of Mrs Chrissie Cotter, known for her humanitarian and social work. It was transformed into a community gallery in 1996. It now supports local Inner West artists and all exhibitions are free.

The current exhibition until 6 September is SARI by Anjum Olmo. Then, 10–27 September: *The Art of Coming Together* – painting, sculpture and ceramics from Joel Cunningham, Manuela Serje, Miriam Montgomery and James Lesjak-atton.

Opening hours are Thursday–Sunday, 10am–4pm. All exhibitions are free and the premises are accessible.

Expressions of interest from artists for the 2027 program are now open. Apply: innerwest.smartygrants.com.au

Thirty percent of all artist sales go to Newtown Neighbourhood Centre to assist with crisis support and outreach for people experiencing homelessness. www.innerwest.nsw.gov.au/chrissie-cotter-gallery

For Your Diary
R U OK? Day, Thursday 10 September. The theme for this year is R U OK? *Any Day because life happens every day*
International Talk Like a Pirate Day – 19 September
International Day of Peace – 21 September
NSW Spring School Holidays – 28 September–9 October

Pat Clarke
.....
volunteers@ssh.com.au

SSH

*Lessons etched in every wrinkle
and line,
Traces of life, a story defined.*

*In the quiet spaces where memories
reside,
Traces of love, hearts open wide,
Moments shared, etched on the
heart's wall,
A tapestry of feelings, woven to
enthrall.*

*So let us cherish these traces we
leave
In the tapestry of life where
memories weave,
For in each fleeting moment, a
legacy's born,
Traces of who we are, forever adorn.*

From Promptings...WORDPLAY
2023, Finnegan Press, Waterloo, 2023