

the South Sydney Herald

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Dolly Kadek Pops. Photo: Supplied

Mental Health Month: Dolly Kadek Pops on learning to live with bipolar disorder

HEALTH
KRISTEN PHILLIPS & STEPHEN WEBB

OPENING a live music venue should have been the moment Kings Cross bar owner Dolly Kadek Pops proved what she could do. Instead, it exposed how unwell she had become.

Before opening Sean & Dolly’s with her partner, musician Sean Mackenzie, Dolly had built a reputation as a capable problem-solver. But as their dream became real, she found herself unable to plan, finish tasks or understand why she was walking in circles.

“I could feel I was letting Sean and the business down,” she said. “Every perceived failure created more shame. The shame made me withdraw, and the further I withdrew, the more secretly I drank.”

In November 2025, that spiral culminated in a severe mental health and alcohol-related crisis. Dolly was taken from the venue to hospital on her 45th birthday.

Although medical records from her early 20s referred to mood swings, anxiety, depression and alcohol problems, she was not diagnosed with bipolar disorder until she was 38.

Her experience shows how

easily illness can hide behind apparent capability.

“For years, alcohol was treated as the entire problem,” she said. “It was a very real and dangerous problem, but it was not the whole explanation.”

Bipolar disorder involves episodes of depression and mania or hypomania. For Dolly, the diagnosis brought a name, but no instruction manual for recognising the illness in her thoughts, decisions or relationships.

Working in hospitality and music, amid late nights, pressure, disrupted sleep and constant proximity to alcohol, made the warning signs harder to see.

She is careful not to use illness to erase responsibility. “The bipolar diagnosis helps me understand patterns in my life, but it does not erase my responsibility or the effect my behaviour has had on other people,” she said. “Recovery means being honest about both.”

Now sober, Dolly says recovery remains unfinished and sometimes painful. “Sobriety did not suddenly solve everything. It meant I had to feel everything I had spent years trying not to feel.”

Her decision to speak during Mental Health Month is not a request for sympathy, but

an attempt to make shame less powerful.

“Connection is not a cure or a substitute for medical care,” she said. “It is asking what is happening, what someone needs and whether they feel safe.”

“I am still here. I am sober, I am learning, and for the first time I am trying to understand my life rather than simply survive it.”

SUPPORT: If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call triple zero (000). Lifeline provides 24-hour crisis support on 13 11 14. For more information about Mental Health Month visit: wayahead.org.au/mentalhealthmonth



Australia braces for sea lion mortalities amid bird flu outbreak P2



Putting artists first: Diane Larter's Rogue Pop Up Gallery P6



Beck returns with new album Ride Lonesome P7

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New training rules for strata committees

LEGAL

ANDREW PAVLI

IF you own an apartment and serve on your strata committee, a significant change to NSW strata law starts on 1 October 2026 (Strata Schemes Management Act).

New and returning strata committee members appointed from that date will be required to complete online training within three months of their appointment. The free, self-paced course provided by NSW Fair Trading takes about one hour.

The training is designed to help committee members understand their legal duties and



responsibilities, including making decisions about budgets, repairs and maintenance, long-term planning and dispute resolution.

Importantly, the requirement is not optional. A committee member

who fails to complete the training within the required three months automatically ceases to be a committee member.

There are some exemptions. The requirement does not apply

to members of two-lot strata schemes, strata managing agents or people filling a casual vacancy for less than three months.

Committee members appointed before 1 October 2026 do not have to immediately undertake the training. The requirement applies when they are next appointed.

With so many Sydneysiders living in apartments, strata committees make decisions affecting both people's homes and substantial amounts of owners' money. The new rules recognise that committee membership carries responsibilities as well as voting rights.

SSH

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

Australia braces for sea lion mortalities amid bird flu outbreak

ENVIRONMENT

EMMANUELLE BOTTÉ

SINCE June, Australia has experienced its first outbreak of bird flu. The current H5 variant has now spread to a unique and iconic endangered mammal and scientists fear the worst for the future of an entire species in the coming months.

The Australian sea lion and Australia have a very special bond: the Australian sea lion is the only pinniped (or seal) living in our country and Australia is the only place in the world where the species lives. Australian sea lions are found along the coast of Western Australia and South Australia. Presently, 42% of the species is concentrated on three colonies in South Australia, and the number of Australian sea lions falls between 10,000



Photo: Didier B, creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en

and 12,000. With such a small population, they are officially classified as an endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

After large population declines due to hunting and disturbances in their environment, sea lions now face an outbreak of the avian influenza, or bird flu. This virus

“family” has been infecting birds for more than a century. Since 1997, the highly pathogenic variant H5N1 has also occasionally infected humans, and since 2021, non-human mammals, including seals, have been infected.

As the outbreak developed among Australian birds for the first time in history this winter,

scientists have increasingly feared the advent of bird-to-mammal transmission, with particular concerns for sea lion populations. And for a good reason: in 2022, a bird flu outbreak killed more than 5,000 American sea lions in Peru. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, South Australia has reported four cases of infected sea lions. With the mammals living close to infected bird colonies, the southern state is bracing for what could be devastating mortalities. Put simply, the survival of the Australian sea lion species is at stake.

Vaccination is providing a glimpse of hope for bird populations but is currently not available for mammals. The public is urged to report any suspected case of bird flu to the authorities via a hotline (1800 675 888). In heartbreaking fashion, learning how to do so efficiently may be the only power in our own hands.

SSH

Keeping your cool in hotter summers

HUMAN AFFAIRS

GEOFF TURNBULL

SUMMER is coming and we all need to think about our plan for that hot day, or run of hot days, when our homes are too hot for us to be comfortable.

If you are lucky enough to own your home, you have many options you can explore if you can afford them. These include properly insulating your home to keep heat out in summer and heat in during winter and installing fans and reverse cycle air conditioning that will help during both extremes. But if the power fails or it becomes very hot and the air conditioner's heat transfer slows down, then even the homeowner might need to think about fallback options.

Those who are renting have fewer options if their landlord is not concerned about their tenant's thermal comfort. Victoria has introduced some changes to address tenant thermal comfort and NSW may follow suit. NSW has



Photo: Michal Kulesza (StockSnap)

finished consulting on proposed Minimum Energy Rental Standards (MEERS) but legislation has not yet emerged like in Victoria. Only minimum habitability standards exist in NSW, including locks, structural soundness and plumbing.

If you rent a hot house, options such as portable air conditioners are costly and often inefficient. The City of Sydney has a “What to do in hot weather” guide and has a report on how summer heat differs across its suburbs' microclimates. NSW Health has “Plan ahead to beat the heat” resources and Red Cross has an “Extreme Heat” page. On hot days the City Council also

operates mobile cooling hubs primarily for homeless people.

Tenants in older, poorly insulated public housing are especially at risk. These buildings do not currently have an entitlement to air conditioning unless the tenant has medical grounds in accordance with the Home Modifications (Disability) Policy. In some hotter parts of NSW, Homes NSW has a policy of retrofitting air conditioning.

Academics presenting to the REDWatch September meeting on thermal comfort in social housing suggested that, in the absence of in-home air-conditioning, community rooms should be air-conditioned and open during hot days so that tenants do not have to travel in the heat to air-conditioned places like libraries, community centres and shopping centres to get relief from the heat.

The new social housing above Waterloo Metro relies on passive cooling. It does not have air-conditioning nor was it requested of the developer for Waterloo South.

At the September REDWatch, Homes NSW advised that the project would apply for funding to include air-conditioning in

Waterloo South in line with the Homes NSW heating and cooling policy that “Homes NSW will provide energy efficient reverse cycle air conditioning units and solar photovoltaic (PV) systems to all new properties in all ... climate zones, where possible.”

Tenants welcomed the announcement, but it is still dependent on Homes NSW making available the funding to do it. Tenants have written to Minister Rose Jackson and CEO Rebecca Pinkstone requesting commitment to the funding with the support of organisations like Counterpoint and Shelter NSW. Council is also supporting the request with both a letter from Clover Moore and Council unanimously accepting a motion in support of air-conditioning in Waterloo South.

Hopefully, Homes NSW will ensure all future social housing has excellent thermal properties, including air conditioning, and the NSW government will soon introduce MEERS legislation to ensure the thermal comfort of all renters.

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Geoff Turnbull is the Spokesperson for REDWatch



Dr Braxton Jones with stick insects. Photo: Fiona Wolf / The University of Sydney

New stick insect species revealed in Australia's backyards and rainforests

SPONSORED

MARK SCOTT

INSECT 'detectives' have discovered two new types of large stick insects, showing scientists are still uncovering new species in some of Australia's most well-studied landscapes.

Researchers at the University of Sydney have revised the Australian representatives of the stick insect genus *Anchiale*, identifying two new species, one with unique 'lidded' eggs. They also reinstated a third species that had been hidden in plain sight for decades.

The findings reveal that what were considered two species are five distinct species stretching in range from northern NSW through coastal Queensland and into the tropical north.

Despite more than 1000 citizen science observations of stick insects through iNaturalist and the Atlas of Living Australia, plus decades of scientific study, the researchers say Australia is still only scratching the surface of its insect diversity.

Lead author Dr Braxton Jones from the Aola Richards Sydney Insect Hub at the University of Sydney said the discovery highlights how

much remains unknown about our insect biodiversity.

"Taxonomy is often a bit like detective work. Even among some of Australia's most photographed and frequently reported insects, we're still finding species that have escaped scientific recognition," said Dr Jones, a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Molecular Ecology, Evolution and Phylogenomics Laboratory.

One of the biggest surprises involved a large stick insect long known to scientists and insect enthusiasts. After combining DNA analysis, museum collections, surveys, citizen science records and studies of captive populations, researchers discovered the insect had been misidentified for decades.

It is now recognised as an entirely new species, *Anchiale robusta*. The findings are published in *Austral Entomology*.

The team also described *Anchiale mabiensis*, a new species found in Queensland's critically endangered Mabi rainforest on the Atherton Tablelands. Its eggs contain a structural lid unlike anything previously recorded in stick insects or their closest relatives.

The research has practical implications as well. A stick insect known for forming plague-like population outbreaks that

can strip foliage from trees was found to consist of more than one species. Untangling those species relationships will help improve future management of impacts on forestry and agriculture.

The study even identified a likely additional undescribed species from Cape York, but more specimens are needed before its identity can be confirmed.

Dr Jones said: "These findings demonstrate the importance of protecting threatened ecosystems and documenting Australia's extraordinary biodiversity before we lose species without us having even discovered them."

SSM

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Authorised by Jenny Leong MP. Funded using parliamentary entitlements.

JENNY LEONG MP
Member for Newtown



Protest at Taylor Square

About 100 people gathered at Taylor Square in Darlinghurst on Sunday, September 20, 2026, for a snap protest against recent NSW Police raids on gay bars along Oxford Street.

Photo: Michelle Haywood

TANYA PLIBERSEK MP

Federal Member for Sydney



Dear SSH readers

My feed, my way

We led the world with our social media age ban. Now **we're creating Digital of Duty Care laws to better protect our kids and give you more choice and control over your social media algorithms.** Social media platforms design algorithms to watch what you do online and steer you to content that will keep you there so they can sell more advertising.

A person might begin viewing relatively mainstream material but, through repeated algorithmic recommendations, end up watching more extreme content which shapes the way they behave.

Tech companies design these algorithms with no oversight or public accountability for the power they wield over how people see the world.

Our **Digital Duty of Care laws** will require social media platforms to **let users opt out of what the algorithm chooses to feed them.** of course, **you will be free to keep your algorithmic recommendations if you prefer. It's your choice.**

Digital services like online games, apps and AI chatbots will also be required to protect under 18s from: design features that are addictive and can affect a young person's self-esteem; harmful content that promotes, encourages or accelerates eating disorders or promotes hostile ideas about women and gender equality and pornography; content that glorifies crime or life endangering stunts and causes serious mental health distress, including abuse and bullying.

The eSafety Commissioner will have the power to issue removal notices for nudify apps or websites. Failure to comply with the Duty of Care could attract penalties of up to \$109.2 million.

Remember – with the internet – if the product is free, you are the product.

Medicare Mental Health Centres

We're expanding Medicare's Mental Health Centre network to deliver a total of 92 outlets across Australia by mid-2030. Anyone can walk into a Medicare Mental Health Centre to access free mental health support without an appointment, referral or mental health treatment plan.

Find a centre here:



Tackling skills shortage in housing

We're helping up to 6,000 experienced trade workers get free, nationally recognised qualifications to tackle the skills shortage in construction. We're investing \$78 million over three years to establish the Advanced Entry Trades Training (AETT) program, with enrolments expected to open from late 2026.

Experienced workers in residential housing and civil construction, such as labourers, trades assistants and plant operators will now have a free, faster pathway to formal vocational education and training qualifications. **Australians with at least three years of experience can apply.** The program **runs until 30 June 2028.**

Protecting families against child support weaponisation

The child support system should never be used to punish, harass and control ex-partners and deny children the support they need but in Australia there is almost \$2 billion in unpaid child support. And there are almost 100,000 parents in the child support system who have experienced or are at risk of family and domestic violence. Australian children deserve better.

We are closing legislative gaps that have let family and domestic violence perpetrators use child support payments as a means of abuse. This includes ending the requirement that information provided by one parent during an application or objection be shared with the other parent.

Debt recovery will also be fairer. Families will be supported to recover more unpaid child support when they move into Agency Collect arrangements.

If you or someone you know is experiencing, or at risk of domestic, family or sexual violence, call 1800 737 732 or text 0458 737 732.

The Men's Referral Service on 1300 766 491 and MensLine Australia on 1300 789 978 can help if you're concerned about your behaviour or use of violence or if you're concerned about your wellbeing or relationships.

Robodebt compensation to be tax exempt

People involved in the Robodebt class action appeal settlement will receive their full compensation payments under new legislation and regulations exempting recipients from Commonwealth taxation, income testing and compensation recovery arrangements. For class action members, settlement payments will not be treated as income if they receive Commonwealth support payments. Gordon Legal, which is determining eligibility, is expected to start making settlement payments before the end of 2026.

Banning unfair non-compete clauses in employment contracts

Whether you're a child care worker, a tradie or a receptionist, you should be able to take a better and higher paying job without being held back by a "non-compete" clause buried in a contract. We've drafted legislation so that if you earn less than \$190,100 a year you will no longer be stopped from moving to a better job in the same industry.

Creative kids in Parliament House

Year 5 and 6 students are invited to submit an artwork to feature in a projection on the Australian Parliament House façade during the Enlighten Festival 2027 celebrating 100 years of Parliament in Canberra. Think about the places, people, animals, plants and landscapes that make Sydney special. Submissions due 29 October, 2026.

Find out more here:



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Cartoon by norrie mAy-welby



Resuscitation set, Europe, 1801-1850. Photo: Wellcome Collection, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license, creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en

Where there's smoke there's fire

HISTORY

JOEL O'CONNOR

INDULGING in our Australian tall-poppy syndrome, we pour scorn on toadies who try to get a leg up by “blowing smoke up someone’s arse.” Few of us know the phrase’s origin, or how accurately it still describes the way societies seize on half-understood ideas and blow them out of proportion.

The expression began quite literally on the banks of the Thames in the eighteenth century. A woman pulled from the river appeared drowned. A passing sailor suggested her desperate husband insert the stem of his smoking pipe where the sun doesn’t shine and blow. Up the pipe went and up went the woman, jolting awake like the wolf in *The Three Little Pigs* after climbing down the chimney and getting a bumful of coals.

There was a thread of logic. Tobacco was already being

touted as a medical wonder, and European reports of Indigenous Americans using smoke for abdominal complaints seemed enough to justify wider application. “Hallelujah!” cried the witnesses. “There must be something in this.”

The medical community responded with industrial enthusiasm. Papers were written, theories expounded. Intricate brass bellows designed specifically for the rectum were manufactured and hung in pubs along the Thames like early defibrillators. Anyone dragged from the water could be subjected to the treatment – their return to consciousness attributed to the magic smoke rather than, perhaps, the involuntary rectal examination and the fact that they weren’t actually dead.

It was pure Lewis Carroll: wigged gentlemen in waistcoats solemnly debating rectal insufflation while shiny contraptions waited on riverside walls for the next unlucky drinker to tumble in.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, Burke and Wills were staging their own tragedy of hubris. Laden with Victorian excess – tons of equipment, canned food and confidence – they declined sustained help from the Yandruwandha people who knew the country. When starvation forced them to try nardoo, they observed the preparation but skipped the critical processing that rendered it safe. They ate heartily and died of thiamine deficiency. The sole survivor, who accepted proper guidance, lived.

In both cases, a kernel of Indigenous knowledge was encountered, stripped of context, and overlaid with European certainty. The result was elaborate machinery for failure: bellows on the riverbank, toxic porridge by Cooper Creek.

The absurdity endures in the language itself. We still speak of blowing smoke up someone’s arse long after the practice was abandoned, perhaps because the underlying behaviour never really went away.

SSH



Gascoyne River downstream of Killili Bridge, July 2021. Photo: Calistemon, creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/

A sacramental view of the world

RELIGION & ETHICS

ANDREW COLLIS

ASK the Rev. Fr Alasdair MacKinnon-Love to describe his spirituality in one word and his answer comes quickly: “Sacramental.”

Alasdair is an Anglican priest on the Far South Coast of New South Wales. For him, Christian faith is grounded in people gathering for worship that is “heartfelt, dignified and beautiful”.

He speaks of giving thanks to God, of redemption through Jesus the Christ, and of fellowship in communion.

This sense of communion resonates especially in Sydney, where people can live close together yet still feel lonely and divided.

“Even when we are divided, for any reason, Christians believe that we remain connected in our sacramental communion,” Alasdair says.

A sacramental spirituality looks for the presence and grace of God in ordinary things: bread and wine, water and oil, words and gestures, bodies gathered. It invites us to see the world not as something to fear or possess, but as gift.

That way of seeing matters at a time when racism, suspicion of migrants and other forms of hostility are again finding a place in Australian political life.

Senator Pauline Hanson’s remarks about Indigenous Australians are particularly offensive.

The sacramental imagination asks us to see connection where some see only separation.

“The gospel commands us to love God, love our neighbours, and love ourselves,” Alasdair says.

To love our neighbour is to recognise the fellow human being before us. Christian love reaches beyond those who look like us, worship like us or come from the same place.

Alasdair’s affection for two apparently distant places offers an image of this.

Two of his favourite places are the Gascoyne region of Western Australia and Botswana in southern Africa. He is struck by their similarities in landscape, vegetation and climate, a reminder that Australia and Africa were once joined within the ancient supercontinent Gondwana.

“Our peoples are so much alike it is extraordinary,” he says.

He has found friendliness and hospitality in both places and speaks warmly of their people-centred ways of life and leadership.

“Botswana has a much better train network than WA!” he adds with a smile.

At a time when some voices encourage Australians to become more suspicious of one another, perhaps the sacramental imagination offers another possibility: to look again.

To see the world as gift. To see another person as neighbour.

And, in the gathering of different people, to glimpse something of God.

SSH

South Sydney Herald

READERS’ COMMENTS

“Thank you. I’ve had this happened to me and dismissed it at the time saying it was “inadmissible and unusable” so I’m glad I have the full facts.”

Mark Bond, reader response to ‘Can you record a conversation without permission?’ (September 2026 edition).

“Sydney’s queer community deserve places to create, perform, laugh, dance and belong, particularly in the Inner East.”

Kelly Noble, Community Response and Engagement Coordinator, Office of the Lord Mayor, in response to ‘The Inner Est never closes the curtain on defiance’ (September 2026 edition).



Diane Larter. Photo: Andrew Brinsmead

Putting artists first: Diane Larter’s Rogue Pop Up Gallery

ART

ANDREW BRINSMEAD

IT’S an uncommon sensation to enter a gallery and feel that you’re in a down-to-earth artist space. That’s the experience of walking into Rogue Pop Up Gallery, the wonderfully unaffected, artist-focused gallery run by Diane Larter.

Diane sees her role as a gallery owner as very simple: “It’s just to represent the artists and I hope to do it properly. Make sure they get paid, they get their exhibitions.” She learnt her trade the old-fashioned way, by working in one of Sydney’s pre-eminent art galleries, Watters Gallery for 20 years before it closed in 2019. “I come from a family of artists so I understand a bit about the arts” Diane grew up with her artist

parents Richard and Pat Larter, both influential Sydney artists in the mid-twentieth century; Richard for his pop art paintings and Pat for her involvement in the international mail art movement. The relationship between gallerist and artist is essential to Rogue Pop Up Gallery, which has a non-exclusive approach that allows artists to exhibit elsewhere when opportunities arise. Diane doesn’t involve herself

in her artists’ work. She doesn’t believe a gallerist should interfere, instead she lets them create and provides a space for them to exhibit their work. The common thread to the artists who exhibit through Rogue Pop Up Gallery is that they’re all obsessed with creating art. They have to create compulsively and have a prolific output. But Diane is only interested in authentic art – art that’s created

because of a genuine need to create it. She also has some advice for potential art buyers, and it’s simple: “If you like what you see, buy it. Don’t buy it simply because it’s a name, as a lot of people do. Buy what you like. You only live once. Just do it!”
.....
Rogue Pop-up Gallery
130 Regent St, Redfern.
roguepopup.com.au

Author Kathryn Heyman at Sydney Writers’ Festival *Homegrown* program

FESTIVAL

KARINA KREMSKI

LUMINOUS. That’s the word being used to describe author Kathryn Heyman’s new novel, *Circle of Wonders*. When I ask her about why this might be, she replies, “It describes well the quality I was after. And I think it’s such a beautiful word and such a particular word that speaks to wonder; it speaks to a sort of delight.”

She describes the book as a luminous little gift she wanted to give to the reader. “Like when you’re a child or you have children and it’s nighttime and you’ve got this night-light that is cozy and lovely.”

This luminous quality that emanates from her book is something she will try to pass on to participants in her workshop, “Harnessing Wonder,” on 11 October at the State Library as part of the Sydney Writers’ Festival *Homegrown* program. For Heyman, “The act of writing is an act of attention and, at its best, it’s an enactment of wonder.” She has been a mentor to many writers over the decades and believes that the writer’s task is to pay attention – a posture that draws them towards wonder and illuminates their writing. “That is what writing does for the world. It says to the reader, look at that, just look and pay attention. Wonder is about curiosity. And so, for the writer, that deep curiosity and the willingness to pay careful and

close attention are crucial. I’m also in the territory of awe here.” Despite rumours that reading is in decline, there is evidence of a “renaissance” in the desire to write and read. Sydney Writers’ Festival events are increasingly popular and often sold out, as are other writing workshops, writers’ studios and book clubs on offer from various publishers, literary magazines and organisations. I ask Heyman about this renaissance. She believes that these creative activities remind us that we are human in a society that is bewildered by the rise of AI, anxious about environmental decline and deeply concerned about the state of our world. “It’s one of our most foundational human desires, to make a mark.



Kathryn Heyman. Photo Luke Stamoulah

Making stories, recording stories, that are fundamentally telling the human story,” she says. The Festival is also running diverse panels, talks and interviews with a variety of Australian authors and

writers, which are free and open to the public. Communications expert Ed Coper will be in conversation with presenter Craig Reucassel about his latest book *Angertainment: How social media outrage ruined everything*. Lebanese-Australian writer and journalist Antoun Issa, author of *Rebirth*, and Sri Lankan-Australian playwright and storyteller S. Shakthidharan, who wrote *Gather Up Your World in One Long Breath*, will be in conversation. They will talk about the challenges and joys of writing about family, immigration, history and cultural heritage in a session titled *Write about Ourselves*.
.....
You can find out more about the Sydney Writers’ Festival’s offerings here: www.swf.org.au/program.

Beck's *Ride Lonesome*: melancholy with a familiar feel

MUSIC

JOHN T BOTTOM

BECK'S *Ride Lonesome* arrives not as a reinvention but as a refinement: a quietly devastating return to the chamber-folk terrain of *Sea Change* and *Morning Phase*, rendered with such care that it feels less like an album and more like a long, salt-air exhale.

It is thick in tone colour, a real sonic treat well deserving of high-quality headphones and an ocean-side walk, where the orchestral swells and spectral guitars can breathe without competition from traffic or notifications.

From the opening bars of the title track, Beck establishes the record's central thesis: solitude as both wound and path. "You got to ride lonesome," he intones over plaintive acoustic guitar, setting a tone that the rest of the album honours with unwavering consistency. Tracks like *Falling Through My Hands* and *In the Night* deepen this mood, wrapping aching melodies in broody, cinematic strings that suggest both James Bond gravitas and early-2000s political thriller

tension. The orchestration, arranged by Beck's father David Campbell, is never showy; instead, it enriches simple guitar songs into a tapestry of texture, where slide guitar drifts from atmospheric backdrop to plain Americana with effortless grace.

Lyricaly, the album reads as a post-divorce ledger, a sequel to the heartbreak that birthed *Sea Change* and the career-threatening injury that shadowed *Morning Phase*. There is regret here, yes, but also a seam of acceptance that keeps the record from collapsing into self-pity. Beck's vocal delivery, pensive and often hushed, cuts through the arrangements with remarkable clarity, making even the simplest hooks feel like small revelations.

If there is a critique, it is that *Ride Lonesome* rarely surprises. The palette is familiar, the emotional consistent to the point of predictability. Yet this restraint is also its strength: in an era of maximalist pop and algorithm-driven singles, Beck offers a 12-track suite that rewards patience and attention, inviting listeners to sit with its melancholy rather than rush past it. Like the ocean's slow but powerful swell, the album's sonic swell asks for the same steady, salt-air attention.



Theatre review by Yvonne Hocothee



Dixon and Daughters
Writer: Deborah Bruce
Director: Kim Hardwick
Old Fitzroy Theatre, Woolloomooloo
18 September – 3 October, 2026

When Mary (Vanessa Downing), the family matriarch, arrives home to reunite with her daughters after three months in prison for perjury, one would expect some familial jubilation. Instead, their interaction is reminiscent of an ongoing argument which continues from where it left off before Mary went to jail. The dialogue between the family members is acerbic and confrontational but still manages to deliver some humour throughout, before progressing to revelations of the dark secrets that affect them all.

Writer Deborah Bruce sets her play in working-class Yorkshire, revealing the effect of long-established aberrant social behaviour on the lives of women in this dysfunctional family. Stoic and unemotional, Mary attempts to re-establish her matriarchal authority by finding fault with everything. Her invitation to, and fawning over, a young prison acquaintance, Leigh (Rylea Eilis), is seemingly an attempt to create a buffer against her daughters' accusations. Her children, being of a later generation, are deeply outraged that she did not

protect them and was seemingly complicit with their predatory father.

Mary's incomprehensible loyalty to her abusive husband is understandable, if not acceptable, in the context of the social norms of her time – survival meant attending to domestic duties and total subservience. She existed in a time when women were given little or no education, and thus had little economic power. Mary's desperately bleak question "If I'm not his wife, then what am I?" is deeply chilling to a modern audience.

Each daughter has dealt with abuse, or maternal neglect, in a different way. Julie (Romney Hamilton), the eldest, is broken by her experience, carrying the bruises left by her abusive husband, while Bernie (Linda Nicholls-Gidley), the second eldest, works hard at keeping some equanimity in the family. She hopes for a better future for her daughter, Ella (Danette Potgieter), who is attending university.

The light at the end of the tunnel for the women is provided by the stepdaughter, Tina (Sarah Jane Starr). After renaming herself 'Briana', she appears to have stepped away from the family's psychological baggage, her speech suggesting that she has sought and benefitted from some therapy.

Director Kim Hardwick coaxes a wonderfully cohesive, believable rapport from her cast, who are uniformly excellent. They achieve well-rounded characterisation and the clarity of their Yorkshire-accented dialogue is particularly impressive.

Mia McCormick's well-designed set exudes the claustrophobic, utilitarian style of a working-class family. While it manages to incorporate several rooms, the actors can move easily between the divisions and the action can

be clearly observed throughout.

While the production is emotionally disturbing, it is nevertheless an excellent, thought-provoking slice of domestic drama and well worth viewing.

Film review by Lindsay Cohen



Resident Evil
Director: Zach Gregger
Starring: Austin Abrams, Zach Cherry, Kali Reis
Genre: Medi Evil

Resident Evil (2026) is pretty amusing and worth watching even if you know nothing about the video games it's based on. Indeed, if you don't play *Resident Evil* – now available in many editions – you might appreciate and enjoy the movie even more, maybe even more than kids who play the games.

Apparently, there are lots of *Resident Evil* game players who have protested that the movie isn't fully dedicated to the games' components. I would argue that's a good thing. While the film is full of lots of evil creatures and zombie-type characters and there is pretty much no explanation of why any of them exist, the storyline based on the games is interesting and the character interactions are suitably extreme, violent and sometimes even hilarious.

Admittedly, if you don't play *Resident Evil*, you won't understand or appreciate all the iconic or subtle imagery and references. The main character – a courier delivering supposed medical solutions to a lab – uses lots of devices, maps and weapons, all of which are critical to progressing through the games. It's why many are extreme, ridiculous or make no sense.

Similar to the TV show *Stranger Things*, which has many similar creatures to the *Resident Evil* movie, the movie should not be treated as science fiction or a horror film but as a thriller. From that perspective, it's worth watching if you're into unimportant, irrelevant, and purely entertaining video games and movies.

Rating: Two-and-a-half Up Hevils

Book review by Melinda Kearns



Marooned: A Memoir of Fandom, Fatherhood, and the Far Side of the World
Darren Groth
Hawkeye Publishing, 2026

Darren Groth's memoir opens on a single, precarious morning: watching a State of Origin replay in a Vancouver townhouse with his elderly parents and brothers, uncertain whether it will be the last time he shares the ritual with

his father, Des, who is living with incurable blood cancer. That moment becomes the hinge for a much longer story, one that ranges back across five decades of Groth's life.

Structured as 37 chronological essays, the book traces Origin matches from the series' inception in 1980 through more than forty years of fandom, moving from a hardscrabble backyard in the outback Queensland town of Hughenden to the unlikely, frostbitten rugby league landscape of British Columbia, where Groth has lived as an immigrant since becoming a Canadian citizen in 2012. Along the way, supporting the Maroons becomes the connective tissue for his relationships with his father and his autistic son, and a way of staying tethered to home despite the distance.

What elevates the book above a straightforward sports retrospective is this emotional throughline. Groth doesn't simply recount matches; he uses each one as an occasion to circle back to family, migration, and identity, so the football becomes a vehicle rather than the point. That approach invites comparison to books like Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch* and Helen Garner's *The Season*, sports writing that uses a game as a lens on something larger, and the premise suggests Groth is reaching for that same territory, even for readers with no particular stake in the Maroons or NSW.

You don't need to know a State of Origin scoreline to be pulled into this one. At its heart, it's a book about fathers and sons, distance and belonging, and the strange, specific things we cling to when we're far from home. Anyone who has ever felt homesick or watched a parent grow older from another country will find something to recognise here.

Drug checking trial a success, now make it permanent

HEALTH

CARELLE SNOUNOU

NSW drug checking will become permanent at up to 15 music festivals a year, but demands to expand the service into community settings have been rejected despite evidence that testing can change people’s drug-taking behaviour.

The NSW Government has made drug checking a permanent program at music festivals after an independent University of Sydney evaluation found the services changed drug consumption behaviour and were associated with fewer hospitalisations.

From October, the program will be available at up to 15 festivals a year, with the government rejecting calls for regular community-based drug checking.

“The Minns Government has finally accepted the evidence that drug checking saves lives, and it’s great to see that it will finally become permanent at music festivals,” Greens MP and drug law reform and harm reduction spokesperson Cate Faehrmann said.

“But there’s no logical reason why they limited this to 15 music festivals, and it’s a huge missed opportunity that they did not commit to community-based drug checking services too.”

The government announced \$4.3 million in funding for drug checking at 15 selected festivals per year, following a 12-month trial involving more than 1,800 people and around 1,500 samples.

The evaluation found 8.1 per cent of samples contained an unexpected substance, and people were more likely to take less or discard drugs when given information about unexpected or unknown substances.

Around 69 per cent of people who used the service had never discussed their drug use with a health or harm reduction professional. Faehrmann said these findings showed why drug checking should not be restricted to festival settings.

“Community drug checking in NSW could be delivered through permanent or regular drop-in services where people can have their drugs anonymously tested by health professionals and receive confidential harm

reduction advice,” she said.

“It would also provide an opportunity to connect people who may never otherwise engage with the health system.”

Faehrmann also emphasised the scale of drug-related deaths in NSW, with the Penington Institute’s latest annual overdose report recording 575 accidental overdose deaths in the state.

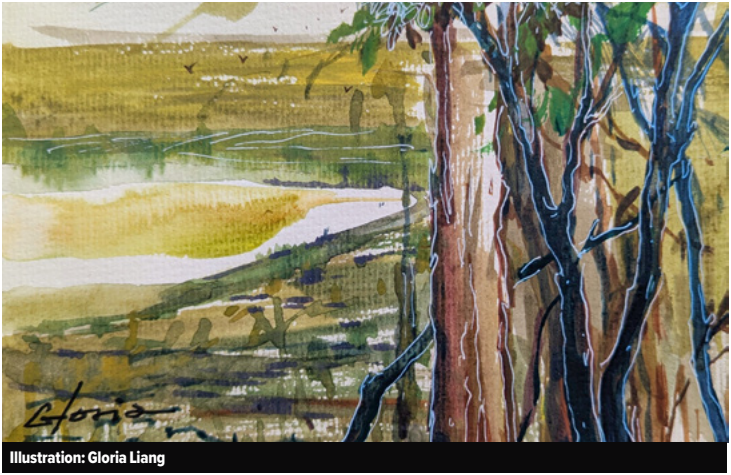
But the government has maintained the stance that drug checking is a harm reduction measure rather than an endorsement of illicit drug use. Health Minister Ryan Park said illicit drugs remain illegal and drug checking services are not a “silver bullet” for drug-related harm.

Faehrmann rejected that argument and said drug checking does not remove the risks associated with drugs.

“What it does do is give people the chance to find out what’s actually in the drugs compared to what they were expecting before they consume it,” she said.

“So let’s make sure these services are rolled out where they need to be to save more lives.”

SSH



Out & About – October 2026

PAT CLARKE

THERE are so many interesting things to do this October so I apologise that Out & About this month is mainly art related.

Sculpture by The Sea
16 October – 2 November
The Bondi Tamarama Coastal Walk will again host the world’s largest free outdoor exhibition for the 28th year.
sculpturebythesea.com

The works of three icons of Australian art and photography are on exhibition this month:

Margaret Olley – Australian Intimiste
the National Art School Gallery until 25 October. Margaret Olley is a beloved Australian artist, and this exhibition has sixty artworks by her and also works by her friends and associates. Also included is the famous (or infamous) 1948 Archibald Prize portrait of Olley by Sir William Dobell. Entry is free, and the Gallery is at 156 Forbes Street, Darlinghurst, open 11am-5pm Monday to Saturday (and some Sundays).
nas.edu.au/exhibitions

Definitive Dupain – Max Dupain Photographer
State Library of NSW until 18 July 2027
Opening hours: 9am-8pm Mon-Thurs, 9am-5pm Fri and 10am-5pm weekends. Max Dupain lived in Sydney and photographed people and places. He is described as the father of modern photography in Australia. There are wonderful black and white photographs from the 1920s to the 1990s, including Sydney streets, fashion, worksites and many more. Also showing are works by Lorrie Graham and Mervyn Bishop.
sl.nsw.gov.au/visitus

Hidden Gems in our City & Suburbs
Korean Cultural Centre Australia, Ground Floor, 255 Elizabeth Street Sydney – Open weekdays 10am-6pm
The Centre is part of the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea and features an exquisite timber traditional Korean house (Hanok). You must remove your shoes to go inside. There is an art gallery which has art exhibitions year round. Currently the exhibition is Aqua Paradiso, with water-based sculptures, films and installations. Also on-site is a beautiful reading room where you can relax. For information on year-round activities, including dance, K-pop, and film festivals, visit: **koreanculture.org.au**

Household Chemical Clean-Out – Alexandria Canal Depot 67C Bourke Road, Alexandria. Saturday 17 October, 9am-3.30pm
All welcome, not only City of Sydney residents.
cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/waste-recycling-services.

The Community Festival returns for free at the University of Sydney on Saturday 7 November
The activities include Calum Murrapuma McKenzie and his band performing on the Festival main stage 11am, a boxing class led by Tribal Warrior on the Front Lawns at 11am. and free entry to the swimming pool with inflatables at Sydney University Sports and Aquatic Centre, 1-4 pm.

Film Festivals at Palace Cinemas
Italian Film Festival – until 14 October
31st Greek Film Festival, 13-25 October
30th Japanese Film Festival, 26 September to 20 December

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

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Redfern boxing legend and father of Anthony Mundine passes away, aged 75

SPORT

JOE MCLEAN

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that this article contains the name of a person who has died.

BESIDE a boxing ring in Redfern, an image of a glove-clad Tony Mundine sits alongside a bouquet of purple and yellow flowers.

The photograph belongs to the Elouera Tony Mundine Gym, where Mundine provided mentorship after retiring from a stellar 15year career. He is, famously, the only Australian boxer to have held national titles across four different weight divisions.

Tony Mundine passed away on 30 August, aged 75. Raised in the

regional New South Wales town of Baryulgil, where his family worked in an asbestos mine, Mundine moved to Redfern at the age of 18 in hopes of a career in rugby.

However, shortly after joining the Redfern All Blacks rugby team, he was spotted for his promise in boxing.

“You got to have spirit,” said Mundine in a 1972 interview with The Bulletin, who at the time attributed his own prowess to his determination to raise his economic status.

But in raising himself, Mundine also intended to raise Redfern’s First Nations community, opening the Eloura Gym in 1984 with the Aboriginal Housing Company. The Gym not only has acted as an important community space for First Nations youth, but directs its proceeds to support

affordable housing for the local neighbourhood.

The gym would also be where Tony would train his son and successor Anthony Mundine.

“My dream was to run a gym that could be the centre not just for Aboriginies [sic] but all inner-city people” said Tony Mundine in a 2017 interview with the Sydney Morning Herald.

Alex Tui, manager of the gym from 1990, a Tongan man and Redfern resident, observed to the *South Sydney Herald* that while Redfern is made up of various First Nations and non-Indigenous groups, “The gym is one of the things that unifies the people in this community”.

“He [Tony] has inspired a lot of young people here...” adds Tui, “As long as this is going to be on, he will be well remembered for sure”.

SSH

In talking about death, we get closer to health justice

HEALTH

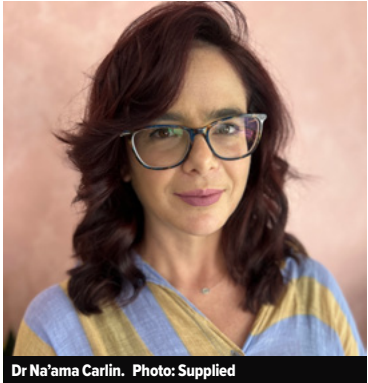
CHLOE FRAGOS

TALKING about death isn’t a conversation most people want to have. For a lot of people, it is a conversation that is outright avoided, but what if this conversation turned into reflective questions?

Who do we want to be remembered as? How do I want to say goodbye? What do I want in place for when I die?

All these questions have one thing in common. They are about agency and choice.

On 14 September 2026, researchers, people with lived experience and end-of-life



Dr Na'ama Carlin. Photo: Supplied

practitioners came together with members of the Sydney community at UNSW to explore why death and dying remain so difficult to talk about, and what might change if we became more comfortable having these conversations.

The panel included Dr Na’ama Carlin, UNSW sociologist and co-author of *Being Patient: Close Encounters in Cancer World*.

Dr Carlin’s work challenges why we must include death in discussions about health. In her research, it became obvious that the taboo around death and dying takes away agency in health care access and justice. This is detrimental to people who are dying and everyone involved.

“Language matters for how we talk about death,” Dr Carlin said. “Someone doesn’t lose a battle to cancer, for example – this is an individualistic lens about death and dying that removes the role of the health care system.”

“We don’t do grief well. When we are allowed to be held in grief,

we also give permission to grieve collectively.”

In confronting death, we can reframe the experience people will have. Death is not a problem to be solved, and it is not someone who has failed at health.

It is an experience every person will go through. It is part of the human experience. When reframed as a health justice issue, people who are dying can access a different system where their health needs are met and not ignored.

As part of the community event, organisers were prepared to support people through difficult conversations. What emerged was the opposite. In talking through death as a human experience, the desire to feel alive also emerged.

Excitement and energy shone through the conversations about how we can, in the now, choose to live.

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You can listen to the event here:
www.youtube.com/shorts/BsDvKr9Zwsk