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# the South Sydney Herald

*Number Two Hundred and Sixty-Four ~ November 2026* *First Published 2002*

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# Art from the Heart of the Cross: 25 years of saving lives in Kings Cross



Lord Mayor Clover Moore. Photo: Tamara Joksimovic



Comedian and artist Gretel Killeen, guest speaker. Photo: Tamara Joksimovic



Photo: Tamara Joksimovic




Dr Marianne Jauncey, Medical Director of MSIC, in front of one of the artworks. Photo: Tamara Joksimovic

## ART

JULIE MCCROSSIN

**THE Uniting Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC) has just celebrated 25 years since opening its doors in Kings Cross. It was the first harm reduction service of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. A quarter of a century later, there are still only two in Australia. The other is in Melbourne.**

The Sydney service opened in May 2001 amid much controversy. It would not have opened at all if the Uniting Church had not agreed to host the service, with strong support from the late Reverend Harry Herbert AM.

Dr Marianne Jauncey, Medical Director of MSIC, says of Herbert, "I think it needed somebody with his vision, his unwavering steadfast commitment, to doing what was right. He believed it was right because it was about reaching out to support and help people who had very little of that in their life."

Harry Herbert was a lifelong advocate for the most vulnerable people. He helped create Uniting NSW.ACT. It is now a major not-for-profit organisation delivering community services and advocacy for people across the life cycle.

A service like MSIC, on the wild streets of Kings Cross, was right up Herbert's alley. It prevents death and injury from overdose, offers non-judgmental care and support, and amplifies the voices of its clients. He considered it one of the major achievements of his life.

The current service continues to keep the wellbeing and voices of its clients at the forefront of all it does. To mark the 25-year milestone, comedian and artist Gretel Killeen launched MSIC's 16th annual exhibition, *Art from the Heart of the Cross*, at Paddington Town Hall from 16-19 October 2026. The theme was *Beyond Stigma*. The exhibition featured 133 artworks, which were also available to purchase through an online silent auction that closed on 28 October. All proceeds went directly to the artists.

Dr Jauncey spoke to me just after the launch. She highlighted her gratitude to Uniting and spoke of "a moment of revelation" when she realised why the work of the Medically Supervised Injecting Centre was such a "good fit" with Uniting.

Years ago, Jauncey and her team sat down to draft a statement of the principles that underpin their work. They started by reading Uniting's vision at the time: "a just, fair and compassionate world in which all people are treated with dignity and respect and enabled to be part of their society". Jauncey says the room went silent for a moment. Then they all agreed. "Well, that's us then!"

Working with Uniting has changed Jauncey's approach to public health and the practice of medicine. "I've learnt the importance of being very explicit about our values and not being apologetic about them. In the past I would primarily talk about the medical evidence and that is important. The evidence can tell you how to get somewhere most efficiently, but it doesn't tell you what direction you should be headed in. If you want to live in a dignified, respectful society in which people are welcomed exactly as they are, then that dictates the type of medicine you want to practise. And the type of organisation you want to run and the way you want to do it."

"Our clients come to a service that welcomes them exactly as they are," Jauncey says. "And the Uniting Church has a tagline of 'welcoming you exactly as you are'. This is a profound value we share." SSH

***Art from the Heart of the Cross*: Scan the QR code to view the exhibition and artworks.**



The kids are alright: Olly Arkins and the gold in Sydney's broken nightlife P2



Duane Fraser calls for independent and enduring First Nations body P4



London lockdown to global stages: the story behind Sir El Tom P8

This issue inside & online

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# Moving house? Your rental bond can now move with you

LEGAL

ANDREW PAVLI

**Moving home can be expensive. Until recently, NSW tenants often had to pay a new rental bond of up to four weeks' rent while waiting for the bond on their old home to be returned. The new Smart Rental Bonds scheme is designed to overcome this problem and became available in NSW on 16 September 2026.**

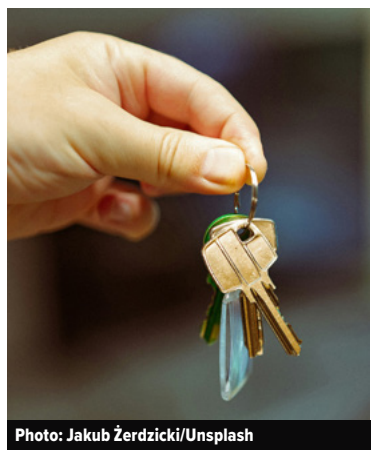


Photo: Jakub Żerdzicki/Unsplash

An eligible tenant can use Rental Bonds Online, operated by NSW Government Fair Trading, to transfer the bond from the old tenancy to the new one rather than paying another full bond. A $25 administration and processing fee applies.

If the new bond is higher, the tenant pays the difference. If it is lower, any surplus is ultimately refunded, subject to any claim relating to the old tenancy.

But what happens if the former landlord claims part of the old bond after it has been transferred? The landlord's rights are preserved. An agreed deduction is paid by the NSW Government and the tenant must then repay that amount to Revenue NSW.

If the tenant disputes the landlord's claim, the usual NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) procedures continue to apply.

There are eligibility requirements. Generally, the same tenants must be moving between two NSW rental properties and must vacate the old property within four weeks of moving into the new one.

Also, a transfer cannot proceed if, for example, a claim on the old bond is already underway.

For many renters, the change should remove one significant upfront expense when moving home. SSH

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



Tanya Plibersek and Olly Arkins. Photo: Supplied

# The kids are alright: Olly Arkins and the gold in Sydney's broken nightlife

HUMAN AFFAIRS

JOEL O'CONNOR

**THERE are cities that know how to have a good time, and cities that need permits and police before anyone can enjoy themselves. For years, Sydney belonged to the latter.**

The lockout laws surrounded a living culture with regulation, frightened people away, then acted surprised when the place went dead. Young people seeking music, friendship and identity faced raids, sniffer dogs and nights that felt like auditions for the justice system.

Culture is stubborn. When official doors closed, it found other entrances.

In the warehouse parties of Marrickville and the inner west, a generation improvised its escape. Spaces were makeshift and raids a constant risk, yet people found each other, music and the chance to be themselves without asking permission.

Olly Arkins was among them. Today, she is Sydney's Deputy Lord Mayor, the first openly trans woman in the role. That fact matters, but it tells little unless you understand what came before: a Sydneysider who experienced the underground as a place to explore identity and find belonging.

She also saw its shadow. You could find your people, but police might still arrive. Solidarity existed in the struggle, yet no one should have to live permanently looking over their shoulder. Arkins wants the next generation to inherit the freedom without the danger.

As Deputy Lord Mayor, she is working on special entertainment precincts, creative spaces, support for emerging artists and a permanent home for FBi Radio.

These initiatives pose a larger question: will a city let its people create culture or keep stifling it?

Nostalgia for the Cross or the pub-band era is understandable, but the old landscape has gone. On ordinary wages, it is hard enough to live in inner Sydney, let alone find a studio or venue. The city has been remade around property. You cannot simply restore the old furniture.

Arkins's approach recalls kintsugi, the Japanese art of repairing broken vessels with gold, acknowledging fractures rather than hiding them. The result is not an imitation of the past but something that carries its damage forward. Drawing on both the creativity and precarity of the warehouse years, she is working to remove barriers and create conditions for artistic life in new forms.

At the Australian Festival Association, she brought regulators face-to-face with the communities they controlled, helping challenge assumptions about overregulation. That kind of work has helped bring city and state priorities into alignment on culture and nightlife in a way not seen since the Olympics.

Special entertainment precincts aim to give venues longer hours, flexible planning and workable sound rules, allowing operators to respond to audiences rather than be constrained by top-down control. Regulation should enable cultural life, not suffocate it.

Sydney's nightlife needs that kintsugi treatment. The gold lies in the cultural life that survives the damage, and in the work of Arkins and the artists, operators and advocates helping it flourish. What emerges will not look exactly like the old scene. It doesn't have to.

The point was never the pub, the warehouse or the decade. It was what happened inside: discovering you belonged, that you could be different, that music could bring strangers together. Arkins knows what that freedom felt like, and what it cost when it was made precarious.

The kids are alright. They always were. The question is whether the city will give them somewhere to prove it – and whether, this time, they can dance without looking over their shoulders. SSH




## *Pacific emerging leaders gather in Waterloo*

Around 16 members of the Pacific Australian Emerging Leaders Network recently joined Sunday worship at South Sydney Uniting Church in Waterloo ahead of their annual summit in Canberra. Bringing together young leaders from the Pacific Islands, First Nations Australia and Pacific communities, the Network advocates for a more just and sustainable future. More info: www.micahaustralia.org/take-action/pael-network.

**Photo: Supplied**

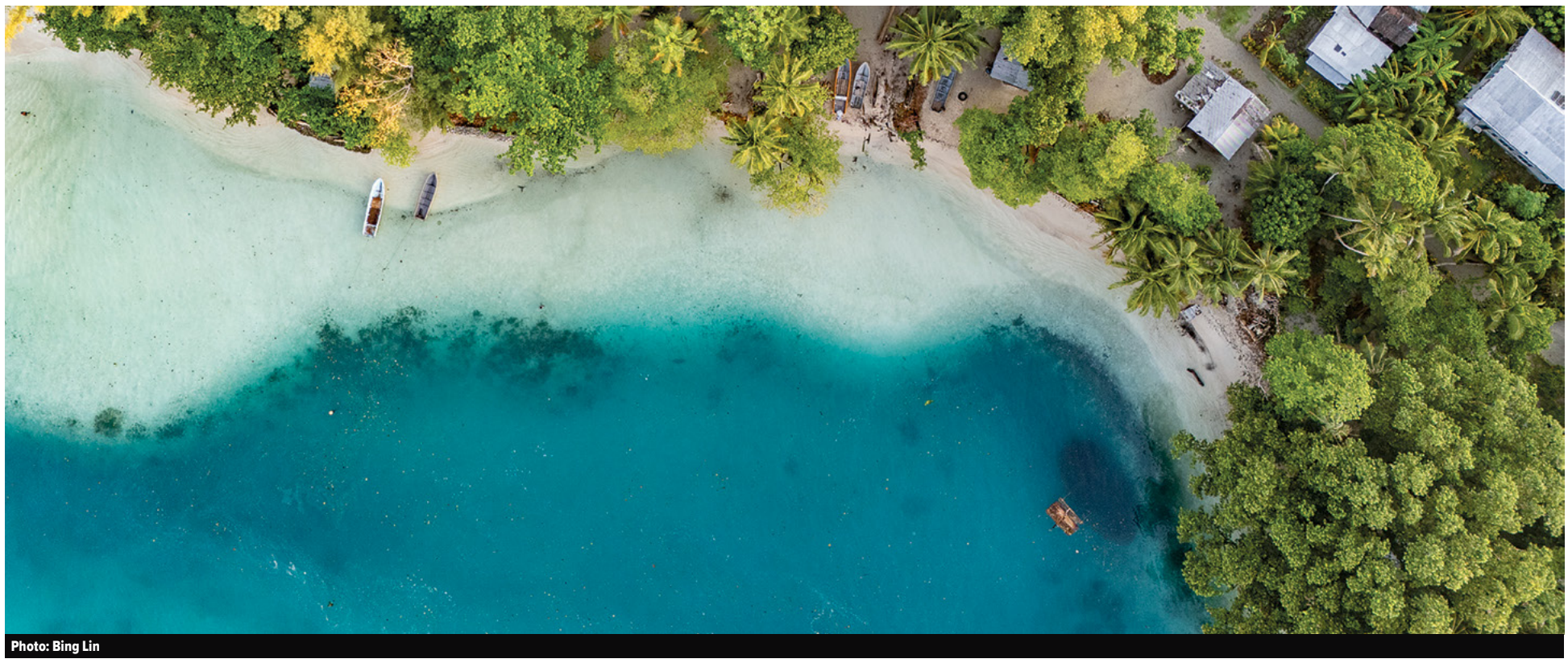


Photo: Bing Lin

# Not all gloom: how positive human action can support natural ecosystems

ENVIRONMENT

EMMANUELLE BOTTÉ

**WHEN it comes to the state of the natural world, reasons to rejoice are scarce. But amid the gloom are success stories that tell a positive tale. While "bright spots research" has only flourished recently in ecology, new research reveals why some natural places are healthier than expected, and it all starts with how people care for them.**

Ten years ago, researchers working on coral reefs around the world and in close association with local reef users asked the following question: "Are there reefs that are doing much better than expected given the pressures they face, and others much worse?" After analysing data from 2,500 reefs, the answer was yes, and outperforming reefs were identified as "bright spots".

The study, written by Professor Joshua Cinner of the University of Sydney and his co-authors, essentially introduced to ecologists the concept of bright spot research, already used in medicine and human development. Since then, environmental studies have identified hundreds of bright spots – places that are unexpectedly healthy – in a wide range of ecosystems worldwide (chimpanzee territories, temperate forests, lakes, etc.).

For this research to be truly useful for conservation purposes, though, the next challenge was to identify what sustained bright spots. By compiling and analysing more than 70 studies, Professor Cinner and postdoctoral researcher Bing Lin have now shown that bright spots share common features: these are places where local knowledge is valued, populations are involved in decision-making, and management practices adapt to local social and environmental settings. The study also provides the first unified overview of environmental research on bright spots and is the first to quantify its impact on policymaking.

Importantly, bright spots are not always pristine. In fact, two-thirds are found in populated areas. But "doing good when you should be doing terrible is already great," Professor Cinner says. And this is especially true because of the study's findings: if human mindsets and actions overwhelmingly sustain the existence of bright spots, nothing is predetermined. It is up to us to create the conditions for bright spots in an increasing number of places across the planet. SSH




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CITY OF SYDNEY



# JENNY LEONG MP
*Member for Newtown*

## The NSW Greens Want to Cap Your Rent

YouGov polling from October confirmed what the NSW Greens have long suspected - a majority of people (about four in five) support some form of government regulation to control rent increases. 55% of voters believe that landlords should only be allowed to increase rents by inflation or less, and another 23% want to go further and temporarily freeze rents.



14 October 2026 news.com.au

**'Breaking point': Overwhelming majority of Aussies demand nationwide rent caps**

And it's not just renters who are ready for concrete action to rein in rents - 71% of those who own their home outright, and 73% of people with a mortgage also back a rent freeze or rent cap.

A home should not just be a commodity, or an asset in a portfolio to deliver profits to investors. But the law currently places no limit on how much a landlord can raise the rent each year.

A safe, decent, affordable home is a human right, but for more than two million renters in New South Wales, this human right is treated like stocks on a share market - **with a cruel twist: the price only ever goes up.**

Recently we have been hearing stories about house prices going down, but has anyone in New South Wales ever received a rent decrease? If you have, please get in touch so we can celebrate.

The sad truth is, after three years of a NSW Labor Government rents have spiked by 22%.

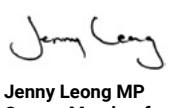
Renting has become so grossly unaffordable that a median income earner in a median rental in Sydney spends 70% of their income on rent.

Because of these massive increases in rental prices, the social housing waitlist has also skyrocketed under the NSW Labor Government.

According to their own figures, the waitlist has grown 25% since the last election - that means there are now 16,000 households that are waiting even longer than they were under the Coalition to be housed.

The worst part is that, according to recent Budget Estimates figures, these increases to the waitlist are hitting the most vulnerable people in our community the hardest - including 1,400 more single mums with kids, almost 4,000 more people aged over 65, 345 more people escaping family violence, and 2,587 more people who are homeless now added to the waitlist.

How many more renters need to be pushed to extreme housing stress and poverty while investors reap the profits and the social housing waitlist grows? There is no better time for our Parliament to act to bring relief to renters in our state - that's why I brought our Greens' Rent Control Bill to Parliament in October. You can show your support by signing our petition using the QR code below.



**Jenny Leong MP**
**Greens Member for Newtown**

**Sign our Rent Caps petition!**

THE GREENS

Authorised by Jenny Leong MP. Funded using Parliamentary entitlements.




CEO of the Council of First Nations, Duane Fraser delivers the 2026 Dr Charles Perkins AO Memorial Oration. Photo: University of Sydney / Bill Green

# Dr Charles Perkins Oration: Duane Fraser calls for independent and enduring First Nations body

SPONSORED

MARK SCOTT

**DUANE Fraser evoked Dr Charles Perkins' metaphor of 'fire in the belly' to deliver the 26th Dr Charles Perkins AO Oration at the University of Sydney's Great Hall on Tuesday night.**

Honouring the long history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and peoples coming together to self-determine, share knowledge and shape their futures, Fraser also shared a call to action for First Nations groups and organisations to join with him and the Council as founding members.

A Wulgurukaba and Bidjara man raised between Tennant Creek and Magnetic Island, Fraser is a longstanding advocate for First Nations autonomy, sovereignty and caring for Country.

Beginning his Oration, Fraser reflected on the legacy of Dr Perkins, reminding the audience that boarding the bus that became the Freedom Ride was not the end of his work for civil rights.

"Charles Perkins spent his life fighting for our people to have a say at the national level," Fraser said.

"He was not satisfied with our people being heard only when it suited the government of the day. He wanted a national voice that could influence the choices being made about our lives."

Speaking three years after the Voice referendum, Fraser argued that First Nations people should continue pursuing reform while also building institutions independent of government and electoral cycles.

His address reflected on lessons passed between generations of First Nations leaders, including from Dr Perkins to Fraser's own grandmother, through to him.

Fraser spoke about the importance of collective action and community leadership, noting that many leaders whose hard work improved lives for generations established programs and built organisations with little money but extraordinary determination.

The address outlined a vision for the emerging Council of First Nations, which Fraser described as "a permanent, independent national institution" governed by First Nations and representative organisations with authority for Country.

He spoke of the "remarkable inheritance" from those who have organised to protect and grow First Nations rights.

"We've also learnt something from the national bodies that came before us. Each had achievements and reflected a determination to give our people a national voice. But institutions that depend on the decisions of government can be weakened or dismantled when the politics change.

"Our children should inherit institutions that grow stronger with every generation. Institutions that can withstand changes of government, changes in political priorities, and the passing of those who helped build them.

"We have an opportunity to leave something behind that none of us will own, but generations of our people will inherit."

Awarded annually, the Dr Charles Perkins Memorial Prize is presented at the Oration event and recognises the highest-performing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Each recipient is awarded $4000 in recognition of their academic excellence. The 2026 recipients are Elvie Howell, Jadzia Stronell and Lily Thomas-McKnight.

Lily and Jadzia met at the university's Gadigal Centre in their respective first years of study and became friends. Being recognised for their achievements, with an award bearing Dr Perkins' name, is especially meaningful to them.

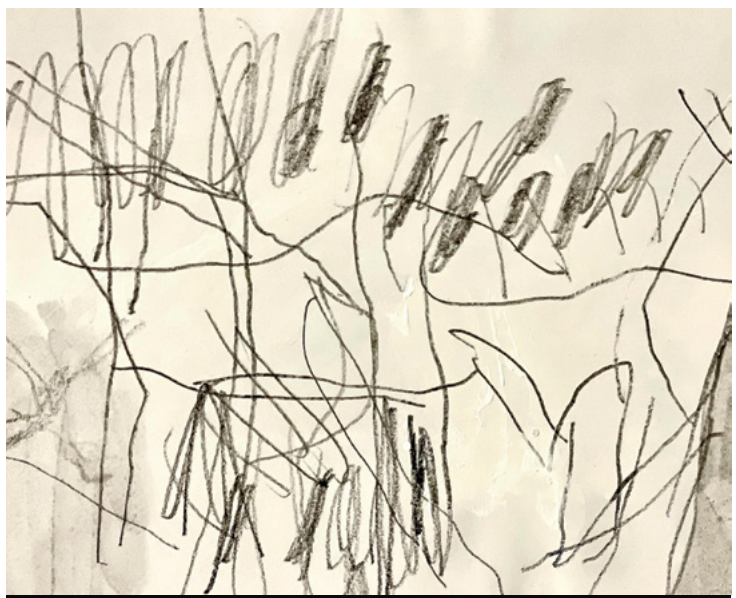
"Dr Perkins' legacy is a big source of inspiration for me, my family and my community as well," said Jadzia, a PhD candidate and Bachelor of Arts (Honours) graduate.

"My mum always told me to 'walk the walk', but to never forget to stop, turn around, look behind you, and bring your community along with you, and that's what this award represents for me.

"I see it as an award for my mum and my community, because they've equally achieved this. I wouldn't have been able to achieve what I have at university without them." SSH

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

**Authorised by Vice-Chancellor and President Prof. Mark Scott.**
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Pambula River Mouth, charcoal drawing, 2026. Artwork: Andrew Collis

# Learning to pay attention

RELIGION & ETHICS

ANDREW COLLIS

**WHAT if the way we pay attention to the world changes the world we experience?**

This is the fascinating question explored by psychiatrist and philosopher Iain McGilchrist in his books *The Master and His Emissary* (2009) and *The Matter with Things* (2021).

McGilchrist draws on neuroscience, philosophy, literature and the arts to argue that the two hemispheres of the human brain attend to the world in different ways.

The left hemisphere favours focused attention. It grasps and measures. It attends to particular parts of the whole.

The right hemisphere is more receptive to relationships, patterns and possibilities. It attends to the whole, appreciating things in their living context.

Both hemispheres are essential and constantly work together. But McGilchrist argues that the right hemisphere has a certain primacy. It provides the wider understanding within which the specialised work of the left hemisphere finds its place.

He worries that modern Western societies increasingly privilege the left hemisphere's way of attending. We become preoccupied with information and control, at the expense of imagination and wonder.

Consider a tree.

We might identify its species, calculate its age or estimate its value as timber or carbon storage.

These are useful ways of knowing a tree. But they are not the whole story.

We might also encounter the tree as beautiful, a living presence shaped by sunlight and rain, home to birds and insects, connected to soil, water and the surrounding bushland.

We begin to appreciate not simply the tree but the world of which it is part – and our own place within that world.

The tree becomes more than an object of study or a resource to be managed. It invites us into relationship.

What might this mean for religious faith?

For one thing, faith may be less about possessing correct answers than learning to pay attention.

Prayer and contemplation become practices of openness and receptivity.

The stories and parables of Jesus invite us to see familiar things in unfamiliar ways. A tree, a seed, a neighbour. The kin-dom of God.

How we attend shapes what we notice, what we value and how we respond. A tree is more than timber. A person is more than a number.

To pay attention is to recognise that we belong to a living world of relationships. Learning to pay attention is learning to love. SSH

South Sydney Herald

## READERS' COMMENTS

"Good onya luv for getting this far and hope you can go further love. Gail from the river."

**Gail Cumming, reader's response to 'Mental Health Month: Dolly Kadek Pops on learning to live with bipolar disorder' (October 2026 edition).**

"Brilliant piece!"

**Luke, reader response to 'In talking about death, we get closer to health justice' (October 2026 edition).**

"This can be a stressful situation, especially when you're trying to figure out what happened. Take your time to gather as much information as possible and review everything carefully before making any decisions. A measured approach and thorough research can help you avoid unnecessary mistakes. Speak to us about your situation"

**4victimsbyvictims.org, in response to '"No shame in asking for help": A Redfern pensioner's scam story' (September 2026 edition).**



Photo: Murray Gillett

# Sydney Harbour's best-kept swimming secret

OPINION

MURRAY GILLETT

**THE recently opened Marrinawi Cove swimming pool on Sydney Harbour is one of the best attractions in Sydney.**

It's an intimate harbour swimming pool, open to the public, shark-netted and with three sets of stairs for safe entry. It's also free.

The surrounds feature large cut Sydney sandstone blocks, perfect for sunbathing. It's in a sheltered spot in Sydney Harbour at Barangaroo, with both shade and sun.

There are newly installed showers and toilets, with all the food and beverage options of Barangaroo and Darling Harbour just a few minutes' walk away.

Marrinawi Cove is five minutes' walk from Barangaroo Metro, meaning I can leave my house and be swimming in 20 minutes – door to water.

Whatever you do, don't tell anyone. I'll be swimming here regularly! SSH




Cartoon by norrie mAy-welby

# The Review

Arts & Culture in Your Neighbourhood

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MILFHAMMER. Photo: Supplied

## Inner-west dads turn rock dreams into movie magic

FILM

MATTHEW WALKER

**"We should get together for a jam" is the kind of suggestion that often goes nowhere. But for four inner west dads, that line, casually thrown out at school drop-off, led to the formation of a band called MILFHAMMER and will soon result in their big-screen debuts in a film of the same name.**

It was the drummer's doing. Behind the kit in this particular dad-band was Shane Abbess, the director of three science-fiction feature films: *Gabriel*, *Infini* and *The Osiris Child*. But almost a decade since his last film, *MILFHAMMER* is a big genre shift.

The film is a comedy-drama with elements of mockumentary, a tale of middle-aged men addressing the unfinished business of their rock dreams and turning what could have been into the real thing. Shane's storytelling instincts were initially piqued by the positive impact the Tuesday night band rehearsals had on the four dads. Like him, they were all in the midlife fog of career and child-rearing.

"One of the biggest things with mental health, for men especially, is social isolation," bass player Ziglord explains. "Finding an activity you enjoy, finding a tribe that you can join up with – that's always going to help with mental health."

At the pub, a friend from the USA jokingly suggested they should tour America, playing their Oz rock covers in college towns. For a moment, the band imagined: 'What if we actually did it?'

When it came to naming the band, they decided to honour their wives and redefine an acronym.

"Our now manager, Paul Stones, came up with the name MILFHAMMER. MILF being the acronym for Mothers I Live For. The irony being that all the characters are actually happily married … we just thought it was funny," Ziglord explains. "What we try to do is retake the name and reframe it into something a bit more positive."

MILFHAMMER went to America on tour with a small film crew, following Shane's script and making a hybrid film with elements of doco, comedy and drama. For the dads involved, it has clearly been a transformative experience.

"What the film is saying in a nutshell," Shane explains between the tightly scheduled final shots, "is only die once. At the end, and not in the middle."

***MILFHAMMER* will hit cinemas in the first half of 2027. Follow the epic rock adventure on socials. Insta / Facebook / TikTok / YouTube.**



Illustration: Gloria Liang

## *The shy spring*

SHORT STORY

UZMA SYED

She found the neighbourhood intriguing, like an ocean disguised as a street, each house a tidepool of lives she had yet to discover. People here seemed to be stitched together by invisible threads, a kind of communal heartbeat she wasn't aware of. On the left, a Nigerian family, who blasted classical music, reaching its crescendos. On the right side, Mr and Mrs Poe were minor celebrities around the area for their potato farm on the edge of the village.

Directly across stood a house with a white fence and a scarecrow guarding the garden of roses, tended by a man everyone called 'demure'. He seemed gentle when she noticed him handing out fresh lemons the way some offer prayers: soft-spoken, sun-coloured.

Spring arrived like a shy lover. The children's laughter intertwined like a ribbon through the music, the chatter of the grandmas on the bench and the rustling of the bushes satisfied people's earlobes. She liked visiting the potato farm when the sun melted into the shade of apricot and assisting Mr and Mrs Poe with packing the potatoes. Mr Singh would let her ride in the back of his ute, while the wind tugged at her hair like an impatient friend. Other evenings, she perched with the villagers on overturned buckets, listening to the tales: who baked best, who lied worst, who secretly fed the stray cats behind the church, but the rose man never came. When he did, he arrived like a zestful breeze, rushing through her ribs.

He handed her a basket of yellow lemons, labelled 'welcome'. His fingers trembled like shivers when he retreated quickly. He had terracotta crimson plastered on his cheeks. It was never expected, not even in her gentlest hopes, to think her door might be the one he would knock on. A blush of rose peeked through the bundle of lemons, "For you." he whispered.

## Reading together: Ashley Kalagian Blunt brings books to Randwick

BOOKS

KARINA KREMINSKI

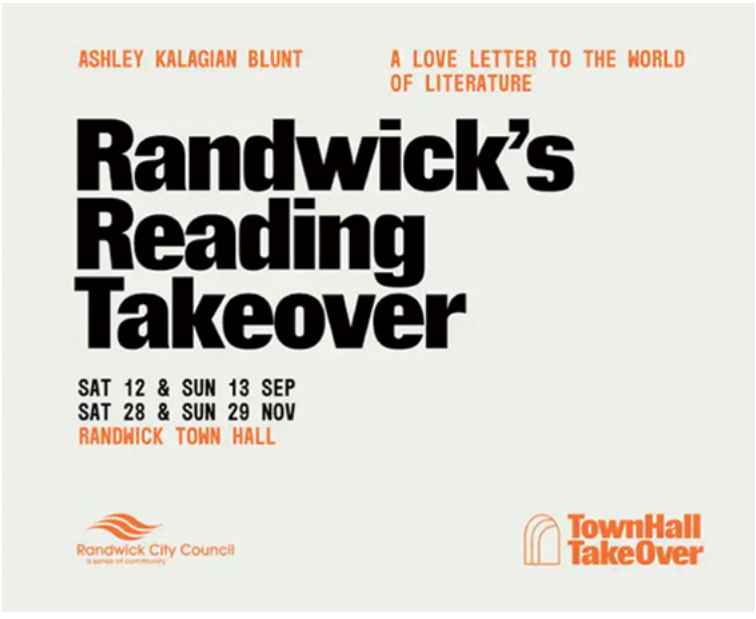
**IN a cafe at Circular Quay, one of Australia's most popular crime writers, Ashley Kalagian Blunt, shares with me an early childhood memory about writing.**

"When I was a kid, I loved books. I had to write a story in grade one. I was living in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. And I wrote this little story called 'The Wizard Who Had a Cat'. And I'm sure it was wildly plagiarised from some picture book my parents had read me. But it got selected to be in the school district anthology – the *Young Saskatchewan Readers*. So, I was convinced at the age of seven that I was, like, a real writer."

The Canadian-born multi-genre author has published several books. Her first work was a creative mix of genres: a novella, a memoir and essays combined in one volume, *My Name is Revenge*, that focused on her Armenian heritage and the struggles of that nation. She then started writing crime novels.

Kalagian Blunt's current bestselling book, *Like, Follow, Die*, is a psychological thriller that explores toxic masculinity and the dark side of the internet.

Kalagian Blunt is also passionate about reading. "There's research that shows that when people are reading in public, that encourages other people to pick up a book. Also, most people have good memories of reading as a kid, whether that's with parents or teachers or of books they love. So many people in adulthood become lapsed readers because they don't have time, but by creating spaces and by reading a book in public, it actually encourages people to pick up a book again."




This is why she initiated the Reading Takeover at Randwick Town Hall. The event, taking place on 28–29 November, will feature a range of activities for readers and writers.

"As part of the public programming, I wanted to create a space and time dedicated to reading." On Sunday 29 November, there will be a reading and writing drop-in session open to everyone. "We've got tables and chairs, but we're going to have a bunch of beanbags and there'll be snacks. It's just come and read with other people."

Kalagian Blunt believes that reading and connecting with local bookshops is a small way we can create community in our society. "This can actively work against the attention economy that the tech industry has created. It's a way to bring nuance back into our discussions in communities and to slow down."

**Scan the QR code to find out more about Randwick's Reading Takeover.**

# Sidney Nolan's Origins: the making of an Australian artist

**EXHIBITION**

SCARLETT THOMPSON

**THE Art Gallery of NSW has opened a major exhibition dedicated to Australian artist Sidney Nolan, displaying more than 150 paintings created before his move to London in 1953.**

Born in Melbourne in 1917, Nolan began his career as a commercial artist before developing his distinctive artistic style, which is now widely recognised. His travels through Australia significantly influenced his work, transforming his art into a reflection of Australia's landscapes.

The exhibition showcases Nolan's work from the late 1930s to 1953, focusing on his formative years before he moved to London, where he began exploring European landscapes.

Stepping into the immersive world of Nolan, visitors are presented with his work in a cohesive order, taking them on a journey through his artistic development. Starting with his early abstract works, such as *Boy and the Moon* (c. 1939-40) and *Bathers* (1943), the exhibition presents paintings that have not been displayed together for 60 years, including the reunion of the complete Ned Kelly series.

Nolan's Ned Kelly series (1946-47) depicts events from Kelly's life, with all 27 paintings on display in the exhibition. Ned Kelly (1854-80) was an Australian bushranger who became a controversial symbol of resistance to authority, police corruption, class injustice and anti-Irish discrimination. Regarded by some as an Australian hero, he has left a significant cultural imprint. The display of Nolan's complete Ned Kelly series adds significance to the immersive experience, as visitors are able to view the paintings together as a unified body of work.

The exhibition reveals Nolan's extraordinary creative process and the development of a young artist who boldly explored new ideas. Denise Mimmochi, Senior Curator of Australian Art, describes the idea that "art happens somewhere else" as an important influence on Nolan's artistic journey. Mimmochi believes that Nolan's travels continually influenced his work, offering new experiences and possibilities for artistic expression.



Sidney Nolan, Kelly at the Mine 1946–47, Ripolin enamel on hardboard. Photo: Seaton Kay-Smith

Maud Page, Director of the Art Gallery of NSW, describes Nolan as "bold, mysterious, humorous and surprisingly contemporary", highlighting how an artist sees things from a different perspective, as reflected in Nolan's striking paintings. His work also portrays what Page describes as "colonial discomfort on a land that is not ours", encouraging viewers to consider the continuing effects of colonisation and the dispossession of First Nations peoples.

*Origins* allows visitors to consider the influence of Nolan's work on the course of Australian art, and how his paintings helped transform the nation's view of Australian landscapes and national identity through a modern lens.

***Sidney Nolan: Origins***
**Art Gallery of NSW**
**Free entry**
**3 October 2026 to 7 February 2027**
**Open Monday-Sunday**
**10am-5pm**

## Film review by Lindsay Cohen




***Pressure***
**Director: Anthony Maras**
**Starring: Andrew Scott, Brendan Fraser, Kerry Condon**
**Genre: Might Fight Dwight**

*Pressure* is a clever title for an interesting film.

Set in the lead-up to D-Day in World War II, *Pressure* (2026) is very factual and surprisingly accurate to a very large extent. So, describing the story below won't spoil the viewing experience.

Britain's then chief meteorological officer James Stagg, who was impressively played by Andrew Scott, cleverly and scientifically stuck to research and facts. He forecast whether or not D-Day should happen as scheduled due to the predicted barometric pressure which would lead to lots of rain, wind and big waves on the English Channel. Lots of internal pressure and arguments between the weather forecasters and the Allied military leaders occurred as a result, especially with Dwight 'Ike' Eisenhower, commander of the then Allied Expeditionary Force and later President of the USA.

Ultimately, Stagg justified his position and D-Day was rescheduled and successful, despite around a third of the Allied military being killed or very badly injured.

Historical purists and documentary lovers would think the film is awesome, and it is very impressive. However, from an entertainment perspective it's neither as intense nor as compelling as legendary films such as *Casablanca* (1942), *Schindler's List* (1993) or *Oppenheimer* (2023).

The movie was also very popular and well received at the Sydney Film Festival back in June. Indeed, there are lots of obscure, strange and interesting film festival films and upcoming general release movies worth exploring – the Japanese Film Festival is happening in Sydney from 17-29 November. See you there!

Rating: Three D Days

## Theatre review by Lizzy Draven



***Yerma***
**Playwright: Federico García Lorca**
**Director: Barry Nielsen**
**Genesian Theatre, Rozelle**
**24 October – 14 November 2026**

*Yerma* is a compelling production that brings to life Barry Nielsen's translation of Federico García Lorca's classic tragedy, a haunting tale of longing and loss.

Yerma is a young woman married off to a cold and emotionless farmer and sheep herder who holds no love for her. Confined to their rural home with nothing to fill her days, she grows restless and increasingly despairing, yearning to hold a child of her own.

Year after year, her hopes go unanswered, and she is drawn down a winding path of turmoil, pushing against every restraint in her determination to receive what she sees as God's gift, the one thing that might fill the gaping hole in her life. As the years pass, Yerma feels increasingly out of place and left behind by the women around her, convinced that she is failing at the only role her society has given her.

Norah Masige's portrayal of Yerma is emotionally charged, capturing the genuine sorrow that women of that era endured when they could not have children. Her performance was especially compelling in Act II, as Yerma's descent into madness unfolds. Masige convincingly conveys Yerma's desperate struggle as her intense desire to bear a child becomes an obsession that consumes her.

Jenny Jacobs's comedic timing was impeccable as a local woman with nine sons. The sarcastic, worldly edge she brings to the character is a striking contrast to Yerma's anxious questioning when she comes seeking wisdom. Another standout was Monique Pueblos as Maria, Yerma's close friend. Although she appeared only briefly on stage, she brought high energy to every scene she was in.

With too many talented actors to name, this is a production not to be missed.

## Book review by Melinda Kearns




***Once We Were Wildlife***
**Inga Simpson**
**Hachette Australia, 2026**

Inga Simpson's books keep returning to the bond between people and the places and materials that shape them. Willowman centres on a Melbourne batmaker who crafts a bat for a promising young cricketer, and her picture book *The Peach King*, illustrated by Tannya Harricks, is a fable about how nature endures. In it, an unusually hot, dry summer sends animals running and threatens an entire orchard. *Once We Were Wildlife*, her first short story collection, carries that preoccupation into adult fiction.

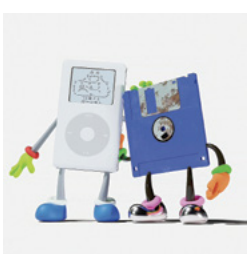
Its eleven stories and single poem unfold across burnt country, rough seas and stony ground, following characters caught between longing, loss and transformation. Landscape is more than a backdrop. Simpson has explained that she wants to close the distance between human life and the rest of the living world, and the structure of the book reflects this. The opening stories focus on people, with hiking as a central motif, but the final stories contain no human characters.

The title story anchors the book. Running to roughly eighty pages, it reads like a novella, weaving desire into a vision of a ruined future that one critic finds surprisingly hopeful. The Black Summer fires, which Simpson endured on the NSW south coast, reshaped her life and work, and that experience lends the book's ecological concerns their urgency.

Those who came to *Willowman* for its narrative pull may find this collection slower and more reflective, which suits what it sets out to do. The prose is evocative, and compassion for all living creatures runs through every piece.

Where *The Peach King* introduces young readers to resilience, *Once We Were Wildlife* invites adults to recognise themselves as part of the natural world. It's a thoughtful, absorbing contribution to Australian nature writing, and one to recommend to longtime fans and new readers alike.

## Music review by John T Bottom



***No Bad Memories***
**The Avalanches**
**Modular Recordings, 2026**

There are bands, and then there are institutions. The Avalanches belong firmly in the second category. Formed in Melbourne in 1997, they rewired Australian music with 2000's *Since I Left You*, a sample-crazed marvel that turned thousands of borrowed fragments into one of the most joyous records this country has produced. After a famously long silence, they returned with *Wildflower* in 2016 and *We Will Always Love You* in 2020, proving that their strange, warm, collage sound had lost none of its magic. Nearly three decades on, they remain one of Australia's most distinctive musical exports.

*No Bad Memories*, their fourth album, is another gloriously odd creation. Across 31 tracks in just over 50 minutes, Robbie Chater and Tony Di Blasi build a world from floppy disks, Nokia tones, computer start-up chimes, old advertisements and half-remembered jingles. It is a record about the sounds that live in our heads without permission, and it turns that cluttered cultural attic into something funky, emotional and often beautiful. The guest list is typically enormous, with Jamie xx, Karen O, Panda Bear, Carly Simon and others drifting through the mix, yet the album never feels like a parade of famous names. It feels like a broadcast from a kinder, stranger universe.

At its best, *No Bad Memories* is wonderful. "Together" flips a familiar phone sound into a dancefloor rush, while "Can't Get Over Losing You" and "Blue Shadows" show that beneath all the samples and static, The Avalanches remain exceptional writers of sweet, sad pop songs. The short interludes and advertising fragments give the record its personality, though they occasionally interrupt the flow. That unusual rhythm through the album can be a drawback for many listeners. It is ambitious, inventive and full of heart, but it can feel a little overstuffed, like channel-surfing through a beautifully bespoke daydream.

Still, what a thrill it is to have them back. In an era when so much music feels assembled by committee, The Avalanches continue to make records that could only come from a particular group of people with a particular obsession. They are not chasing trends or retreating into nostalgia. They are digging through it, rearranging it and making it dance.

That is the real excitement here. Quality bands do not always stay together, and quality ideas do not always survive long careers. The Avalanches have done both. *No Bad Memories* may be messy in places, but it feels alive in every second, and it reminds us why this band matters so much to Australian music.

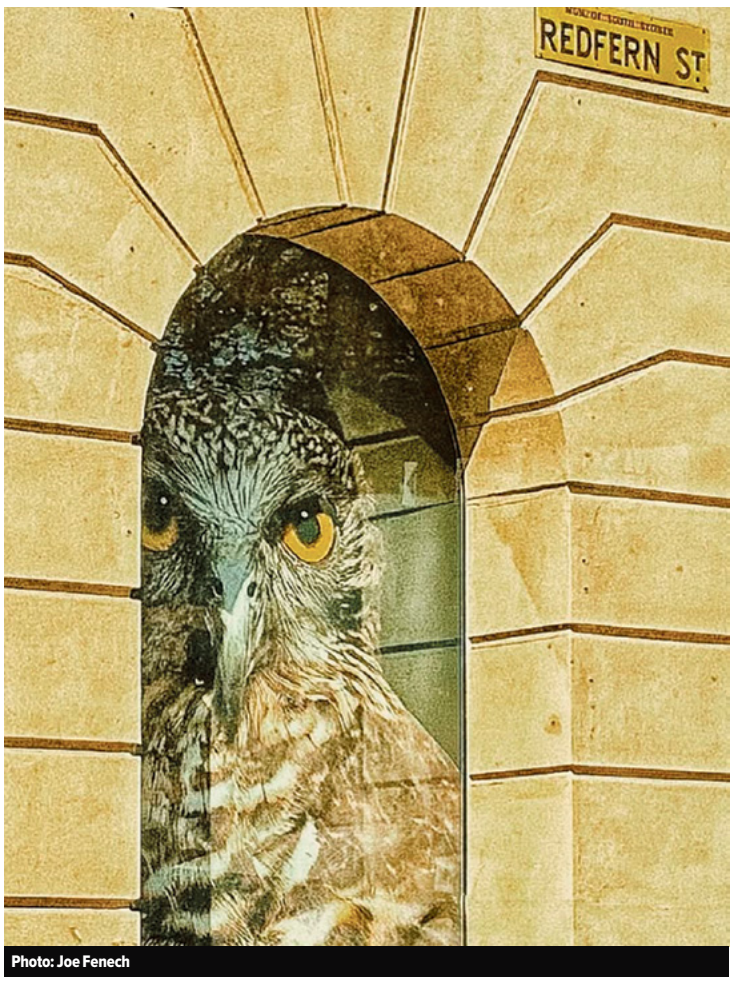


Photo: Joe Fenech

# Out & About — November 2026

PAT CLARKE

**Playgroups in the Park, Tuesday 10 November, 10am–1pm at Redfern Park.**

This free event gives families from Redfern, Waterloo, Alexandria, Zetland, Surry Hills and surrounding areas an opportunity to meet other parents and have fun with their children in a relaxed setting. For more information, go to: **counterpointcs.org.au**

**2026 Social Enterprise Festival, Saturday 14 November, 10am–3pm at the Belinda Hutchinson Building, Codrington Street, Darlington.**

This is a great opportunity to learn more about social enterprises as a consumer. If you are interested in fair trade products and services, there will be activities and workshops to keep you informed. Entry is free and you can book your place at: **secna.org.au/festival**

**The Finders Keepers Sydney Design Market, Carriageworks, Friday 13 November, 4–9pm, and Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 November, 10am–5pm.**

Some of Australia's best designers and makers will be in attendance with their works for sale. Tickets cost from $7.49 for adults, with free entry for children under 13. There will be music, food and drink. Tickets are available at **carriageworks.com.au/events/the-finders-keepers-market**

**Hidden Gems in Our City and Suburbs: Wendy Whiteley's Secret Garden, Lavender Bay**

This is a genuine gem, hidden away on former railway land near Clark Park, Lavender Street, Lavender Bay. Following the death of her husband, Brett Whiteley, Wendy set about clearing the overgrown land and transforming it into a wonderful public garden, a cool place to be enjoyed by everyone. She worked initially by herself and was later assisted by paid gardeners and dedicated volunteers. You can get there by ferry to Milsons Point Wharf, or Sydney Trains to North Sydney Station. Unfortunately, the Lavender Bay ferry is no longer running. You can find more information about this wonderful garden at: **www.wendyssecretgarden.org.au**

**Summer Blockbusters at the Art Gallery of NSW and Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) until 2027:**

**Art Gallery of NSW: Takashi Murakami – *When the Mountain is High, the Moon Rises Higher*, 5 December to 18 July 2027, in the Naala Badu building.**

Earlier works will be displayed in the main gallery and new works in The Tank. Adult tickets $40.

**MCA: *Philippe Parreno: 5 Moons*, until 26 April 2027.**

The exhibition features large-scale works by this contemporary French artist, exploring his unpredictable and ever-changing world. Adult tickets $28.

**MCA: *Robyn Kahukiwa: My Ancestors Are Always With Me*, until 7 February 2027.**

Born on Gadigal Country in Sydney, Robyn has become one of Aotearoa New Zealand's pre-eminent painters of Māori life, culture and politics.

***Ai Weiwei – Mushrooms*, Tallawoladah Lawn, until April 2027.**

The installation features helmets that serve as the artist's call for peace.

Summer officially starts Tuesday 1 December 2026 and ends Sunday 28 February 2027. The Summer Solstice will be on Tuesday 22 December 2026.

Pat Clarke SSH

**To submit an event listing, please email editor@ssh.com.au**


Photo: Sir El Tom

# London lockdown to global stages: the story behind Sir El Tom

MUSIC

GERRY SONT

**WHEN British musician Tom Cridland first sat down to learn piano during lockdown, he could hardly have imagined where it would lead. Today, he tours the world as Sir El Tom, performing an Elton John tribute show that aims to recreate the music authentically, without backing tracks or artificial intelligence. His next stop is Sydney's State Theatre on 13 November.**

Cridland, visiting Australia for the first time with his wife Deborah and their baby daughter Julia, says his musical journey began with a very personal challenge. He had struggled with alcohol, which affected his physical health, mental wellbeing and finances. During lockdown, learning piano gave him a positive focus and helped him remain sober. The piano became much more than a musical instrument; it became a lifeline that helped him stay on a better path.

"I basically needed to stay sober, and learning piano was kind of where I reversed the incorrect path that I was heading down," he said.

"I play by ear," he explained. "I tried learning sheet music, watched some clips, looked up a few apps, but it was all a complete disaster." Rather than give up, he concentrated on Elton John's music and basic chords, practising for hours every day.

His admiration for Elton John goes beyond the flamboyant costumes and celebrity lifestyle. What captivated Cridland was the singer's musicianship and commitment to performing live. "I was seeing a lot of concerts back then and it was clear that Elton was playing completely live. Remember, he was doing maybe 100 shows a year and each gig would be two and a half hours. I find that thrilling."

Cridland strives to honour that approach in his own performances, remaining faithful to Elton's vocal style and playing live without click tracks or backing tracks.

Cridland's career has also taken an unconventional route. After university, he lasted just six weeks in an accounting job before moving into fashion design. His clothing business supplied touring clothes for Elton John's longtime drummer, Nigel Olsson. He called his label *30 Year Clothing* because he believed a well-made pair of trousers, designed using good materials, should last 30 years.

A triple threat in showbiz is known as a singer, dancer, actor. You could say Tom Cridland is a singer, designer, musician. "Well, I'm certainly not a dancer," he retorts with a laugh. "Ironically, neither is Elton. Arlene Phillips, who choreographed his famous *I'm Still Standing* video clip, said Elton was the worst dancer she had ever worked with. I relate to that!"

His advice to aspiring musicians is straightforward: never give up, and do not take criticism personally. "Keep moving forward with positivity and making an effort. That's the best that you can do." SSH

**Sir El Tom, the Elton John Show will be performed at Sydney's State Theatre on Friday 13 November at 8pm. Info and bookings at sireltom.com**

## WIN A DOUBLE-PASS TO THE SHOW

**We have two double passes to give away for the show on Friday 13 November. To enter: Email editor@ssh.com.au and tell us your favourite Elton John song and why. Entries close Friday 6 November.**

# Waterloo's got talent

LOCALS

LIZZY DRAVEN

**OCTOBER saw the launch of the first local karaoke afternoon, held at the Waterloo Neighbourhood Centre. With an excellent turnout and a lively selection of songs, the event proved an immediate hit with attendees.**

A warm atmosphere filled the venue as guests arrived and were greeted by name by the host. Once settled into their seats, song requests began flowing, ranging from Frank Sinatra to Elvis Presley.

As the first performance began, the venue erupted into cheers and sing-alongs from the audience, encouraging the shyer attendees to give it a go. During a welcome break, residents were provided with light refreshments and attendees chatted among themselves, forming bonds within their local community.

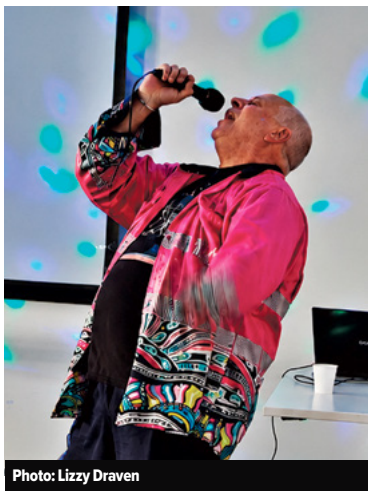
Terry Donovan, one of the attendees, said, "Today was amazing; it was just so interactive. If this was on every week, I'll come every week!

"Everyone comes out of a shell and just, you know. You don't worry about whether you sound good or not. It's social. You get some food, some drink, get to sing some songs. You get to talk to some people, laugh and have fun."

These programs are vital within the Waterloo community as they foster much-needed connections among local residents.

Navin Lamsal, a community development worker at Counterpoint Community Services in Waterloo and the event organiser, believes these events make it easier for residents to connect with one another.

"Engaging with the tenants with these kind of activities makes me have a strong relationship".


Photo: Lizzy Draven

Navin particularly enjoys providing a welcoming space for local residents, giving them something to look forward to and hearing how they have practised their songs ahead of the event. Watching residents participate in singing and dancing, meet new people and form friendships is the highlight of the event for him. SSH

**For the next karaoke event, please visit: counterpointcs.org.au**