



Getting happy on exercise

Motivated by her background and a desire to improve people's wellbeing, 72-year-old Li Sha started doing exercise and dance sessions outside the Melbourne Museum 13 years ago. For many who have joined in, the experience has been life-changing. More on page 9.

Photo: Hanna Komissarova.

RMIT maps out a more flexible future for its campuses with new Living Places Plan

“ RMIT University has launched a new long-term framework to guide how it evolves its campuses, setting out a broader vision for the future of its spaces at a time when the institution is thinking more deeply about its place in Melbourne and the communities around it.

WORDS BY
CHRIS JACKSON



Unveiled on April 23, the university's new Living Places Plan is being pitched as a different kind of campus strategy, less a fixed master plan than a more flexible framework to guide decisions about property, public space and the student experience over time.

The launch was held through what RMIT called the *Living Places Exchange*, an immersive exhibition designed to bring the strategy to life through displays, projects and interactive installations. The event was hosted by chief operating officer and vice-president Fiona Nolly and attended by councillors, City of Melbourne representatives and other strategic partners.

The significance of the plan lies not only in the projects it may shape, but in the fact that it marks the first time RMIT has tried to formally articulate a long-term, university-wide approach to “property and place” in this way.

RMIT's estate is vast. Across its Melbourne campuses in the city, Brunswick and Bundoora, as well as other sites, the university controls more than 67 hectares of land and close to 500,000 square metres of university-owned space, spread across 110 buildings. Its Property Services Group manages a \$3.3 billion portfolio, with an operating budget of more than \$80 million and more than \$100 million a year in prospective capital works across Melbourne and at its three campuses in Vietnam in coming years.

That scale helps explain why the university sees the need for a broader framework.

Executive director of property services Seamus McCartney said the plan was intended to help RMIT respond to a period of rapid change in the tertiary sector and the city more broadly.

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HERITAGE, PAGE 03

St Patrick's Cathedral renewal project launched

PLANNING, PAGE 05

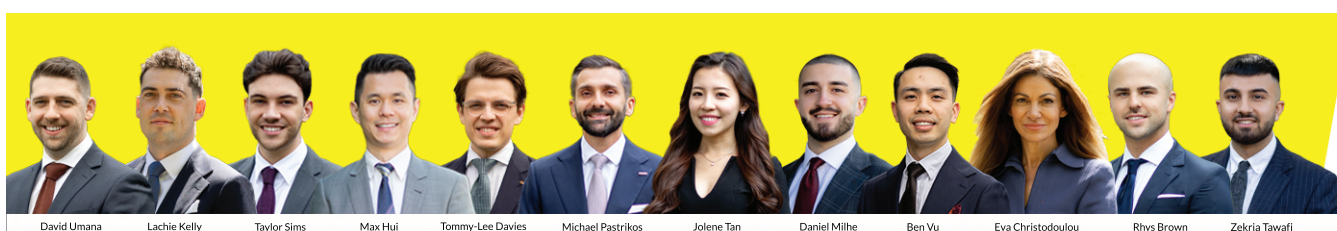
Calls grow for a master plan to guide Lygon Street's next chapter



LOCAL NEWS, PAGE 12

Future Melbourne podcast turns to Lygon St with Sergio Alderuccio

Future Melbourne turns to one of Melbourne's most recognisable main streets, with Carlton Inc. president Sergio Alderuccio joining the podcast to unpack the changing identity of Lygon St.



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RMIT maps out a more flexible future for its campuses with new Living Places Plan

Continued from page 1.

"This is unlike anything that we would see for a traditional university master plan," he said. "It is not a fixed blueprint for a single future – it's a living framework for the future we know we'll need to adapt to."

He said pressures ranging from sector uncertainty and affordability challenges to digital transformation, AI and climate imperatives meant universities could no longer rely on rigid long-term planning assumptions.

The Living Places Plan is built around four core goals.

The first is Country, Place and Identity, which seeks to celebrate First Peoples culture and embed Indigenous knowledge in how RMIT designs, uses and cares for its spaces. The university says this will involve working more closely with Traditional Owner groups and exploring place naming and other initiatives that deepen the identity of campus environments.

The second goal, "Community, Connection and Experience", focuses on making RMIT's spaces more welcoming, inclusive and socially connected. One example highlighted at the launch was the Frugal Canteen Festival, part of the university's 2025 North Activation Challenge, which tackled food insecurity through community-led food initiatives and affordable meals.

The third, "Applied Innovation and Knowledge", reflects RMIT's longstanding practical and industry-linked approach to education. The idea is that campuses should not only house learning, but actively enable it through spaces that support collaboration, experimentation and applied problem-solving.

The fourth, "Sustainability and Regenerative Futures", points to the university's desire to make its campuses more



adaptable and environmentally responsive, including through ideas such as retrofitting, flexible solar systems and more nature-based approaches to design.

Vice-president Alex Cameron said the university had always been shaped by its relationship to place. Since its first classes in 1887, he said, RMIT had been deeply connected to the city and surrounding communities, and that connection needed to be renewed for a changing era.

The timing of the plan is notable given the broader planning conversations already surrounding RMIT's role in the inner north.

As *Inner City News* reported last year, the university has been pressing the City of Melbourne to better recognise its landholdings and long-term ambitions in Carlton, where heritage fabric and low-rise neighbourhood character sit alongside RMIT's desire to modernise and expand its education environment. That debate emerged through the now-paused review of the council's Municipal Planning Strategy, with RMIT arguing that its future growth could be constrained if planning policy did not better reflect its strategic role.

The new Living Places Plan does not directly resolve those planning tensions, nor does it set out detailed development proposals. But it does provide a clearer picture of how RMIT sees its campuses evolving and why it believes flexibility matters.

For nearby communities, that may be both reassuring and open-ended. The plan speaks repeatedly about inclusiveness, connection and community benefit, but it also reinforces that RMIT intends to keep reshaping the physical environment it occupies in order to remain competitive and contemporary.

In its latest column, the Carlton Residents' Association said limits needed to be placed on tertiary growth in the area as part of the Municipal Planning Strategy.

In noting that the strategy "proposes changes to encourage tertiary education and knowledge and innovation in Carlton east of Swanston St", it had "submitted an objection noting that RMIT should be confined to the Swanston, Queensberry, Lygon and Victoria streets area and Melbourne University to the Swanston, Elgin, Cardigan and Grattan streets area."

"A Design and Development Overlay should be prepared to set development forms including maximum heights and heritage protection for the two areas," it added.

Traceable master plans often focus on buildings. RMIT's new language is broader. It is talking about place, culture, sustainability and lived experience, with a framework designed to evolve as the university and the city change around it.

What that means in practical built-form terms will likely become clearer only over time. For now, the message from RMIT is that its campuses are no longer being thought of simply as a collection of teaching buildings, but as living places that should adapt with the times. ●

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St Patrick's Cathedral renewal project launched

“

The Archbishop of Melbourne has launched a \$190 million project to repair and renew St Patrick's Cathedral and “reimagine” its precinct, with an appeal to parishioners and other potential donors to “be part of the vision”.

”

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



◀ Archbishop Comensoli and participants outside the cathedral after the annual Mass of St Patrick for Schools.

Speaking at the cathedral on St Patrick's Day, Archbishop Peter A. Comensoli launched the ambitious renewal plan, dubbed “Light into the City”, to be carried out in two stages.

The first, costing \$130 million – \$90 million of it already secured – will see urgent repairs to the Gothic Revival cathedral carried out, a crypt and chapel created within it, a new assembly building or auditorium constructed next to it and landscaping work, including the provision of more toilets, undertaken “to make the precinct more accessible and welcoming”.

The second stage would involve the restoration of the cathedral's presbytery and Cardinal Knox Centre buildings – “heritage landmarks” which in the future could potentially be used for initiatives connected with culture, the arts and social outreach, Archbishop Comensoli said.

The “once-in-a-generation project” for a “long-term renewal of one of Melbourne's most significant spiritual, cultural and architectural landmarks” was one that would require “very significant generosity”, the Archbishop acknowledged, urging the community to “participate in the public campaign to bring both foundational stages of the project to fruition”.

“For more than 125 years, St Patrick's Cathedral has been a light into the city; a place of prayer, beauty, welcome and refuge,” he told the March 17 congregation.

“Light into the City is about caring for what we have inherited, while ensuring that



this cathedral and its precinct can continue to serve the people of Melbourne, Catholics across the archdiocese, and all those who visit through faith, hope and hospitality for generations to come.”

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne estimated nearly a million people entered the cathedral every year, the Archbishop said.

For the first stage of the five-to-10-year project, \$30 million has already been pledged by members of the community and \$60 million is set to come from the federal government.

A spokesperson for the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts confirmed the \$60 million commitment.

“The project is in the planning stage, and we are working with the Victorian Government and Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne to bring forward a detailed proposal to support a funding agreement,” the spokesperson told *Inner City News*.

On the \$100 million funding gap, the archdiocese said its newly launched campaign was “designed to draw on a broad mix

of support, including individuals, philanthropic donors, parish communities, foundations and other institutional partners”.

In the month since its announcement there had already been strong support, it said.

All funds raised for Light into the City were purpose-specific, the archdiocese hastened to add, and would not be redirected away from existing commitments, including support and compensation programs.

The cathedral's most urgent repair issues related to its deteriorating sandstone, particularly evident in its spires and window tracery, where sections were weathering and, in some cases, had begun to crumble, the archdiocese said.

Sandstone in the external façades also required conservation and repair.

Much of the slate roof and associated drainage systems required replacement and sections of the tiled floor needed to be reset and stabilised, while some internal stone and paintwork features needed to be cleaned, repaired and conserved.

These works were essential to preserving the cathedral's integrity and safety, the archdiocese said.

The lighting, sound and audiovisual systems needed to be upgraded for its operation.

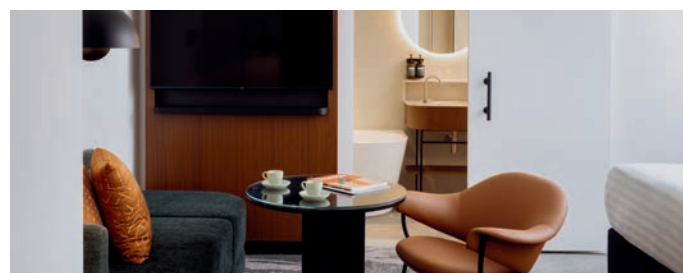
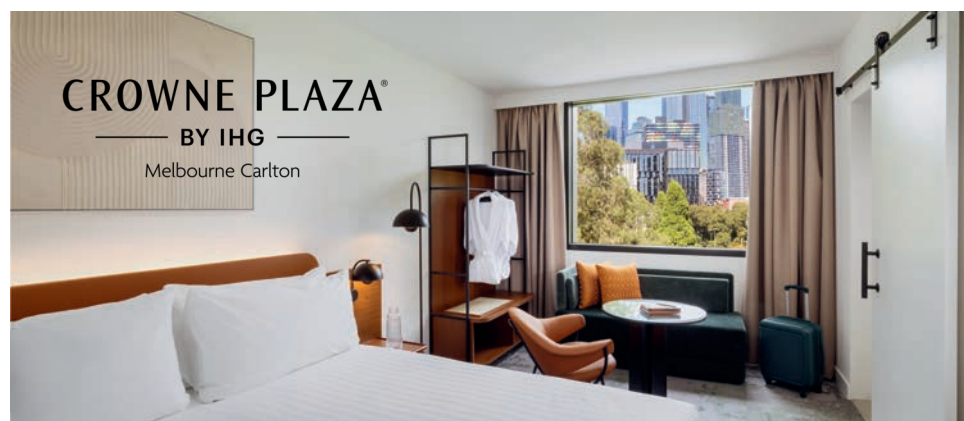
For the new building, which would provide “gathering spaces and an assembly hall for parish life, for community and social celebrations, civic dialogue, cultural events, education, music and outreach”, architect Angelo Candalepas had been engaged.

Mr Candalepas had “a strong track record in major cultural and civic architecture” and the careful integration of contemporary design with heritage contexts, the archdiocese said.

He had now been working on the design for some time, and planning approval was anticipated sometime this year, with construction expected to start in 2027.

A further, final stage of the project involving the construction of new facilities for mission agencies was yet to be developed and not part of the Light into the City fundraising campaign. ●

For more information:
lightintothecity.org.au.

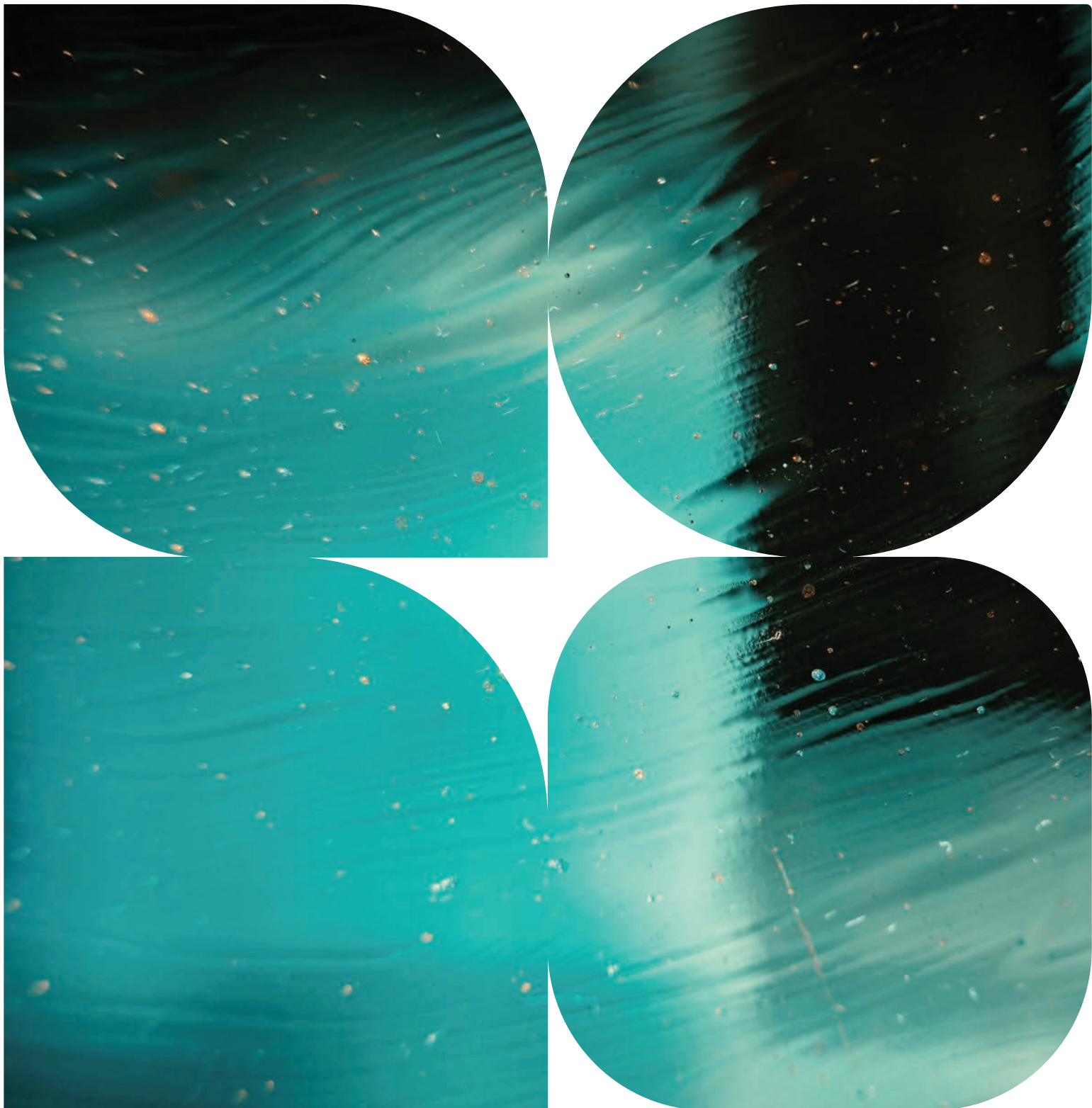


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CITY OF MELBOURNE

La Mama lines up two sharp and funny May shows with *STUCK* and *GAG REFLEX*

La Mama is set for a lively and darkly funny May, with two new productions bringing very different kinds of comedy to its Carlton stages.

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



Running across the month, *STUCK* will play at La Mama HQ from May 6 to 24, while *GAG REFLEX* will have its Australian premiere at La Mama Courthouse from May 7 to 23. Together, the two shows offer a strong snapshot of the kind of original, boundary-pushing work for which La Mama is known.

The first, *STUCK*, is a new black comedy by playwright Megan Twycross, whose previous work includes *Smudged*, and *Cluster*. Set in a small-town supermarket deli, the play centres on two nameless women working beneath fluorescent lights and the constant hum of refrigeration, slicing meat while cutting each other down.

According to La Mama, the story is a battle of wit, will and survival, with “Old One” clinging to the old rules and “Young One” longing for something more. The future may be hers, the blurb suggests, if she can survive the present.

The production is directed by acclaimed theatre-maker Susie Dee and stars Caroline Lee and Eva Seymour, two performers with strong credentials across independent and mainstage work. Twycross said bringing the work to the stage after two years of development had been especially meaningful.

“Set in regional Australia, and shaped by my own journey through motherhood, explores how strongly women are influenced by the stories and expectations they grow up with,” she said.

Director Susie Dee said the script’s honesty was what first drew her in.

“The play asks what it means to be and challenges the assumption that people can always just choose differently,” she said.

Notably, *STUCK* has also been selected for the 2026 VCE Drama playlist, giving it an added profile for students and teachers as well as general audiences.

At La Mama Courthouse, *GAG REFLEX* promises something more chaotic, awkward



and openly outrageous.

Written by Flick and directed by Tansy Gorman, the new comedy follows three Year 12 best friends who decide that the easiest way to make enough money for a great summer is to enter and win an erotica writing competition. The catch, of course, is

that they have absolutely no sexual knowledge to draw from.

What follows, according to La Mama, is “mayhem, hilarity, and the vulnerability that comes with being a teenager smashing into an adult world.”

The production comes from the creative team behind *SLUTNIK* and *SLUTNIK 2: Planet of the Incels*, and appears set to continue their interest in tackling taboo subjects with humour and irreverence.

Director Tansy Gorman said the work was ultimately pushing for more open conversations around sex with young people.

“What *GAG REFLEX* does underneath its plea for better, more open conversations around sex with young people is refuse to shame curiosity and desire – instead, it encourages it,” she said.

For La Mama audiences, the two productions offer very different moods but a shared commitment to sharp writing and uncomfortable laughs. One is a tightly wound workplace black comedy, the other a teenage sex farce with something more pointed underneath.

STUCK runs from May 6 to 24 at La Mama HQ, while *GAG REFLEX* runs from May 7 to 23 at La Mama Courthouse. ●

Calls grow for a master plan to guide Lygon Street’s next chapter

The idea of a long-term master plan for Lygon St is gaining momentum, with traders, residents and civic leaders increasingly converging around the view that Carlton’s most iconic strip needs a coordinated strategy to secure its future.

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



The latest support has come from Carlton Inc. president Sergio Alderuccio, who used his recent appearance on the *Future Melbourne* podcast to argue that Lygon Street’s identity had “eroded” in recent years and that a unified strategic plan was now needed to help restore it.

“I feel that a lot of Lygon St’s identity has eroded, been diluted over the last few years, and we need to work to restore that,” he said.

“It does need a unified strategic plan.”

Mr Alderuccio said any such plan would need input from traders, residents, community organisations and the City of Melbourne, and would have to strike a careful balance between preserving the strip’s heritage and making it more attractive to a

broader audience.

He pointed to the need to improve the streetscape, create more continuity and explore more activations, public art and potentially traffic changes to make the street more pedestrian-friendly.

“It just has no resemblance to a European streetscape at all,” he said. “There’s uneven footpaths, different paths, different awnings. There’s just no continuity in the strip.”

The comments echo growing calls in recent years from the Carlton Residents’ Association, which has also pushed for a coordinated action plan to revive Lygon St. In its April column in *Inner City News*, the CRA argued that while the street remained lively and attractive, it needed a long-term plan to address through traffic, noise, inconsistent parklets and a lack of integrated public realm improvements.

CRA member Peter Sanders this month reiterated that point, saying the strip “needs a boost” and calling on the council to work with Carlton Inc. and others to prepare an action plan.

The significance of the current moment lies in the fact that key stakeholders increasingly appear aligned around the idea that Lygon St needs more than piecemeal improvements.

Carlton Inc. has been instrumental in driving some of that thinking. The trader group has recently helped bring the monthly Lygon Street Market to Argyle Square and

is also in discussions about reviving the much-loved Lygon St Festa, both signs of a renewed appetite for activation and coordinated placemaking.

But the longer-term issues remain clear. One of the enduring challenges for Lygon St has been the disconnect between its quieter southern end, broadly from Queensberry to Grattan streets, and the more active northern section around Faraday St, Lygon Court, King and Godfree, and Readings. Bridging that gap, physically, visually and commercially, would almost certainly be a central task of any future master plan.

Lord Mayor Nick Reece has signalled support for the broader conversation. In comments to *Inner City News*, he said Lygon St was undergoing a “renaissance” as a food and cultural destination and noted that people were spending more at Carlton restaurants than in 2019.

“Lygon St is undergoing a renaissance as an institution for food and culture – backed by the City of Melbourne and local businesses,” the Lord Mayor said.

“Events like the Argyle Square market, monthly Lygon Street Market, Carlton Writers’ Festival and the Melbourne Italian Festa are major drawcards – with the latest data showing people are spending more at Carlton restaurants than in 2019.”

“New bluestone paving has transformed the south end of Lygon St, and more works are under way – making it easier to walk

around and visit local restaurants and retailers.”

Cr Reece has also posed a more pointed question about the strip’s future retail mix, asking: “why are there no fruit and veg grocers on Lygon St?”

That remark goes to the heart of another emerging issue: not just how the street looks, but what kinds of businesses it attracts and retains.

The City of Melbourne says it is already investing in the area through bluestone footpath upgrades, activations, expanded Community Safety Officer coverage and new CCTV cameras installed in response to trader feedback.

In late April, the council began works to replace the asphalt footpath with bluestone on the western side of Lygon St, between Queensbury St and Argyle Place South. Last year, the eastern side, between Queensbury and Pelham streets, was also upgraded.

Still, many now see those measures as only part of the answer.

Mr Alderuccio said discussions were already taking place informally between Carlton Inc., the CRA and others, including architects interested in the street’s future, and that momentum was building towards a more unified push.

“I think we’re very close to coming together and being more united and then certainly going to the City of Melbourne with that,” he said. ●

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NEW PLAN IS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

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The proposal would increase the network from 16 areas to more than 70 locations across the municipality, including libraries, community centres, creative spaces and sports venues.

It's the next step in our Smoke-free Melbourne policy to protect the community from second-hand smoke and vape aerosol, reduce smoking rates and create healthier public spaces.

Many of the proposed areas are used daily by families,

young people and vulnerable community members, with consultation to begin later this year before returning to Council for consideration.

Public support is strong, with more than 70 per cent of respondents in favour, including 76 per cent at Queen Victoria Market and 72 per cent at Council administration buildings.

The move is part of Melbourne's work with the Partnership for Healthy Cities - a global network backed by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the World Health Organization and Vital Strategies that helps cities tackle public health challenges.

Melbourne is the only city in Australia and New Zealand in the network.

"The success of a city comes down to the health of its people -

that's why we're proud to be part of the Partnership for Healthy Cities." Community and City Services portfolio head Councillor Gladys Liu said.

Everyone deserves access to food that supports their health and wellbeing, but cost of living and pressures are making this difficult for many. Last year, almost half



Experts say there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke



Eduardo Cavaliere, Mayor of Rio de Janeiro

Earlier this month, representatives from member cities met in Rio de Janeiro to share ideas on tackling public health challenges.

"The summit highlighted how cities like Melbourne are leading the way in tackling complex public health challenges and creating safer, healthier communities," said Dr. Kelly Henning, who leads Public Health programs at Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Smoke-free areas are one focus of Melbourne's work through the Partnership for Healthy Cities network, but they're not the only public health issue on our radar.

of our residents experienced food insecurity, while nearly one in three skipped meals or were worried they would run out of food.

Since July 2024, the City of Melbourne has provided more than 10,000 free healthy meals as part of our FareShare Library Feeds program and supported communities to grow their own food.

"Whether it's clearing the air from harmful smoke or improving access to healthier food, we're making Melbourne healthier and more liveable." Lord Mayor Nick Reece said.

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CITY OF MELBOURNE

Carlton lunch to celebrate food, friendship and community connection

Long shared tables, home-style food and live music will transform a Carlton community space next month, as residents gather for a free lunch designed to bring people together.

WORDS BY
GABRIELLE SHI



The Great Big Carlton Lunch, hosted by the Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre (CNLC), will be held on May 12 as part of Neighbourhood House Week 2026, a national initiative celebrating community connection across Australia.

Similar events will take place around the country during the week-long program, highlighting the role neighbourhood houses play in creating spaces for connection, participation and belonging.

CNLC executive officer Tony Milne said the lunch was part of a broader effort to bring people together in simple, everyday ways.

"This is one of Australia's biggest community lunches, and we're hosting it here in Carlton to bring people together," he said.

Mr Milne said the event was particularly meaningful in a diverse suburb like Carlton, where people from different cultural backgrounds live, study and work.

"It's important for people from diverse backgrounds to come together, connect and celebrate, using food as a way to share cultures and experiences," he said.

"Food allows people to tell stories about where they come from and to learn from each other."

This year's Neighbourhood House Week theme, "Your Place to Connect", reflects the

role of neighbourhood houses as spaces that foster inclusion, participation and everyday community life.

"It's a place to make friends, a place to belong, and a place where people can share experiences, join programs and learn new skills," Mr Milne said.

The event will feature long communal tables set up in the CNLC garden, creating a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. A farm-style meal will be served, with food placed along the tables for guests to help themselves, encouraging conversation and shared experience.

"We'll have a big, long line of tables, with flowers on every table, music throughout the event, and people sharing stories about what food means for them," Mr Milne said.

Live music and informal speeches from

CNLC participants will also form part of the afternoon, with some guests sharing personal reflections on food, culture and community.

The lunch has been designed to be inclusive, with halal food available and an accessible venue to ensure people from different backgrounds can take part comfortably.

Beyond the meal itself, the event also responds to broader issues of loneliness and social isolation.

"We know that many people in the community experience isolation and loneliness," Mr Milne said.

"This event creates a safe and welcoming space for people to meet, connect and potentially make a friend."

He said loneliness could affect a wide range of people, including international

students adjusting to life in a new country and older residents living alone.

The lunch is open to everyone, including CNLC students, volunteers, local residents and partner organisations such as universities and community groups.

"We're hoping people from across the community will come along and celebrate together," he said.

The centre also runs ongoing food relief programs, providing essential groceries and fresh produce to people in need, reflecting its broader role in supporting the local community.

Organisers hope people will leave not only well fed, but feeling more connected.

"We hope people will take away fun and laughter, a full belly, a sense of joy, and possibly a new friendship," Mr Milne said. ●

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A season of change and renewal in Parkville

The week before ANZAC Day delivered near-perfect autumn weather in Parkville, with the grand four-row elm avenue along Royal Parade and surrounding street trees turning from green to gold as leaves began to fall.

WORDS BY
RAY OSBORNE – PRESIDENT,
PARKVILLE ASSOCIATION



The Parkville Association's 59th annual general meeting was held on April 20 at Naughtons, with thanks to Ryan and the team for providing food and beverages. The evening marked an important transition for the association, with Rob Moore stepping down after 10 years as president, as noted in the farewell article published in the April 1 edition of *Inner City News*.

Attended by more than 70 members, the gathering reflected the high regard in which Rob is held by the Parkville community. It was fitting that both current Lord Mayor Nick Reece and former Lord Mayor Sally Capp attended and spoke warmly in recognition of Rob's dedicated work over the past decade. He leaves big shoes to fill, and I wish him all the very best for the future.

Members also heard a thought-provoking address from guest speaker Reverend Professor Russell Gouldbourne, the new Warden of Trinity College. In addition, the City of Melbourne's senior traffic engineering department presented an update titled *Rat Running*, the solutions. A recent traffic study found that 51 per cent of vehicles travelling through south Parkville in the morning, and more than 60 per cent in the afternoon, did not have a destination in the suburb. A number of possible responses were outlined, with further consultation to follow.

Easter was also busier than usual in Parkville, with Royal Park and Princes Park hosting the 38th Annual Sikh Games from Good Friday through to Easter Sunday. The



newly-opened Parkville Station came into its own, with thousands of Sikh families streaming up the escalators and making their way to the parks.

Through our close connections with Trinity College, members of the Parkville Association and the wider community were invited to the opening of the current exhibition *Melbourne in Retrospect* by Harper & Charlie. James Tylor was commissioned to paint images of Trinity College, and these works, along with others, will remain on display until May 28.

Tesorina Café, on the corner of Morrah and Wimble streets, has also seen a change



of hands. We welcome Thomas and Zoe, who have taken over from Alex after more than four years. Originally from France, they are bringing a new direction to the café, reflected in both the décor and menu.

Parking, along with traffic, remains one of Parkville's ongoing concerns. The City of Melbourne has now commenced a review of parking in Parkville and engaged Movement & Place Consulting to undertake community consultation. I encourage all residents, whether members of the Parkville Association or not, to make a submission and stay engaged with this important project.

Looking ahead, the Parkville Association, formed in 1967, will celebrate its 60th anniversary next year. Conscious of current financial pressures, and recognising several City of Melbourne initiatives in this area, the AGM agreed that existing paid memberships due for renewal on July 1, 2026, will now be extended until June 30, 2027.

To help grow our membership, joining the Parkville Association will also be free until June 30, 2027, on a "try before you buy" basis. Membership forms are available via the association website. And if you would also like to donate, we certainly would not say no. ●

Tony Birch to give Writers Festival address on the joys and ethics of writing

Acclaimed Indigenous writer, teacher and activist Tony Birch, a Parkville resident, is appearing in three events at the Melbourne Writers Festival, one of which is delivering its closing night address – on "the ethical imagination".



WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



Tony Birch wants to share his work.

"Sometimes people are too cautious about how to engage," he told *Inner City News*.

"I'm someone who is dedicated to sharing my work, and I want to share it with non-Aboriginal people in a way that they feel comfortable and that they appreciate the writing."

The theme for his closing night Melbourne Writers Festival (MWF) address, he says, evolved out of a session with school students, who are sometimes "almost immobilised" by their fear of saying the wrong

thing about First Nations texts, given the "200 years of misappropriation of culture".

"But my approach as a teacher is to say, well, there are ways that we can work together, and there are ways these texts should be taught and read," he says.

One way is to contextualise them with an appreciation of the "remarkable and extensive volume of work" that is the letters of protest produced by "Aboriginal women around Victoria and Australia who were incarcerated on reserves and missions in

the early 20th century".

Birch sees the women "as sort of the forebears of today's literary culture".

Their "framework of narrative" about rights for their children informed his prize-winning 2019 novel *The White Girl*.

The address by the University of Melbourne's Boisbouvier Chair in Australian Literature will also discuss the work of published contemporary Aboriginal writers Alexis Wright, Melissa Lucashenko, Kim Scott, Ali Cobby Eckermann and Sam Wagan Watson.

And it will consider the issue of cancellation and the way writers have in recent years come to be framed as spokespeople on subjects such as the war in Gaza.

"I've engaged with those issues, but some writers don't, and I think ... that's fine, because I think that some writers, [either] don't feel capable of entering that public debate or they simply may not feel that that's what they're writing is concerned with," Birch tells *Inner City News*.

"My position in regard to Gaza is [for] people who aren't directly affected or involved in it, "it might be better if we take a position of being better listeners".

One way he has done that is by getting involved in an independent Palestinian-led initiative to teach online workshops

to university students in Palestine in the attempt to help them "improve their writing or find ways that their writing reaches an audience".

"I think that I can do something more important as a teacher, rather than speaking on someone else's behalf," he says.

Birch has been helped by Dr Nick Robinson at Melbourne University in participating in the initiative, which has recently won funding from the British Council of Palestine, he says.

While the responsible reader listens and reads closely, learns from the experience and is attuned to historical links and contemporary developments in the social and literary landscape, the relationship between reading and social change is mysterious, according to Birch.

"The fact is that there are many people out there, thousands of people, reading books, and we don't know the impact, we can't quantify it," he says.

"We just hope that people engage and they learn from it.

"Some people will and some won't. To what extent ... we don't know. It's a mystery."

Tony Birch will present the MWF closing night address on May 10 at the Capitol. The Melbourne Writers Festival runs May 7 to May 10. ●



Getting happy on exercise

“

Motivated by her background and a desire to improve people's wellbeing, 72-year-old Li Sha started doing exercise and dance sessions outside the Melbourne Museum 13 years ago. For many who have joined in, the experience has been life changing.

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON

”



When Li Sha was in primary school in Beijing she was selected for elite level ballet training.

Like Li Cunxin, the author of the memoir *Mao's Last Dancer*, she was sent to Madame Mao's dance academy.

For 10 years from the age of eight Sha lived and studied at the military-run school.

She loved dancing but it was very hard, she says. The discipline was extreme and her feet bled.

At the age of 18 she left and wouldn't dance again for decades.

Instead, Sha got into television, working in the industry until the early 1990s, when her marriage broke down and she decided to bring her young daughter to Australia, where her sister already lived.

In 1994 she arrived with a thousand American dollars, ready to start a new life.

But with little English it wasn't easy.

For many years she worked as a cleaner, doing very long hours – from six in the morning to six in the evening every day.

Then, when she was 58, she slipped on a wet floor while cleaning a shopping centre and seriously injured her arm.

After surgery, which included the insertion of a metal pin, Sha was put on a disability pension.

The government told me, "no working, go home," she says.

"But I like working. I don't want to stay home long time."

After two years out of action, she needed to get out.

Taking a portable speaker, she set herself up outside the Melbourne Museum and started running through a graceful, rhythmic exercise and dance routine she had created.

Set to "beautiful music", it incorporated "forward and back marching aerobics", hand-gripping, arm-swinging and tiptoe movements, which Sha says offer a host of benefits – for joints, balance, core strength, reaction time, peripheral nerves, blood circulation and overall "relaxation and

vitality".

Later, she added shoulder and neck routines.

For three months Sha did the routine by herself, untroubled by shyness because of her experience as a dancer.

Then two people joined in, and another, then four, then five, then eight, she says.

Sha knew outdoor exercise sessions, which are common in parks across China, were good for mental health, and she would smile and call out to people, "come and follow me! After, you go home happy!"

The museum, meanwhile, was supportive. Sharon Benton came across the group 10 years ago when she was recovering from breast cancer.

Like a lot of the mainly older women who take part, she had been advised to exercise by her doctor and found the public sessions a great option.

"This is a process where you're not doing any damage, you can do it to your own capacity and you can come and go as you like," she says.

"You also meet a lot of ladies, have a bit of a chat and it keeps you going."

Sharon, who helps leads the sessions, used to come every day until Sha cut them back to three times a week after COVID.

She says the practice has been good for her concentration, balance and memory and she has lost her previous aches and pains.

"I just don't know how I'd go without it," she says.

CBD resident Colleen O'Brien feels the



Li Sha (right) with friend and fellow organiser Ella Xu, helper Sharon Benton and long-term participant Colleen O'Brien (left).
Photos: Hanna Komissarova.

same way.

She was drawn into the group because it was on her regular walk circuit.

"People would say, 'come, come and join us!'"

Five years on, Colleen is clear about the significant health benefits she has experienced.

"I really feel like it's helping me maintain strength and balance in older age," she says.

"I did Pilates as well but this feels like something delightful to do."

One of her sisters also comes to the sessions and Colleen catches up at them with some neighbours who she would never see otherwise.

Altogether Li Sha has 84 participants' names on a list she keeps for insurance purposes.

Between 25 and 40 of them usually turn up to each session, travelling from Carlton, Kew, Docklands, Ascot Vale and as far away as Sunshine to attend.

Although Sha used to live in the nearby public housing towers, these days she comes from an apartment in Southbank that her daughter bought for her downstairs from her own.

After a lot of hard times, the past 13 years have seen the music and dance lover really hit her stride, sharing her "joyful energetic fitness routine" widely.

"I'm really happy, I want to help everyone," the fit and healthy 72-year-old says.

And she hopes to continue for many more years.

"Because for myself [also] it's very important." ●

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LYGON LOCAL

Fun and friendly late-night retreat

“

Like an old boat bobbing on the waves, late-night venue the Carlton Yacht Club is a relaxed place of escape at a remove from its more hard-surfaced surroundings. The atmospheric venue has been serving up the drinks for 24 years.

”

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



Growing up in a Greek Cypriot family, food was important to Andrew Leonidas and he was introduced to alcohol “in a sort of a slow and civilised way” by his father.

After finishing school Andrew had thought he would study fine art or graphic design but turned instead to hospitality.

In 1981 he got himself a job as trainee manager of a city pub and enrolled at William Angliss to study, and he has been in the business ever since, working in cafés, hotels and fine dining restaurants as well as teaching hospitality.

But drinks were his speciality.

Andrew had always been interested in wine and from the late '80s, when “people started importing beer and producing craft beers” he “took a real interest”.

“Then the spirit market sort of started to explode, then drinks and cocktails,” he says.

After deciding he was going to start his own business, the Brunswick resident spent a while looking for a venue.

He hadn't thought about Lygon St until a

friend who had a Chinese restaurant there told him one day he was sick of the business.

“He said, ‘take this place off my hands, and open up your bar here.’”

It didn't take long to transform the former noodle bar into the Carlton Yacht Club – its name chosen for the relaxed environment its owner wanted to create and the inner-city irony – and to fit it out with nautical paraphernalia.

“I did all the work with some friends who chipped in and helped, and we were up and running in two months,” he says.

From the beginning Andrew's formula was “to keep it simple and cater to everybody, and though it might sound corny, just focus on what the customer wants”.

For three-quarters of the clientele, that is beer, wine and spirits, he says.

The bar stocks a big range of them, doesn't say no to any requests and tries “to accommodate everybody”.

And while it doesn't take itself too

seriously the bar does take its drinks seriously, its owner says.

For cocktail fans there are new creations twice a year, and hundreds available on request from the back catalogue.

A few favourites from the summer list include the cucumber and mint flavoured Screaming Viking, the raspberry and salted caramel Treacle Tart and the fruit and mint-infused Watermelon Sugar High, while for the coming cooler months, a spiced rum hot toddy with house-made spiced syrup or a dark-spirit-laced Old Fashioned variation with “smoky, peaty Scotch whisky” beckon.

As the only late-night venue on the strip – with a 3am Thursday to Saturday licence and a 1am Sunday to Wednesday closing time – the Yacht Club has attracted local hospitality workers “pretty much from day one”.

They are part of a diverse crowd – from local workers, businesspeople and students to interstate and international

visitors, which “gets younger as the night progresses”.

“We get a lot of people coming from all over the place because they know we're open after 11pm when no-one else is,” Andrew says.

“In Lygon St everything pretty much shuts down around 11 o'clock.”

These days although he is still involved in all aspects, the boss runs the business “from a little bit of a distance,” handing off operations to his “loyal, hardworking” staff.

He says he gets a lot of compliments when he's out and about from people reporting they had a great night at the bar “because the staff were very friendly”.

“It's a bit rare to be around for as long as I have, and there's no secret to it, but I don't understand why more bars don't follow the focus of listening to the customer,” he says.

“Fun and customer-friendly is what we're all about.”

carlton-yachtclub.com ●

Crowne Plaza Melbourne Carlton opens with local-inspired dining at Fico

The newly opened Crowne Plaza Melbourne Carlton has brought fresh life to a prominent corner of Lincoln Square, a site that had sat dormant for several years. In this case, the wait appears to have paid off.

WORDS BY
CHRIS JACKSON



Positioned on the corner of Swanston St, the hotel is a collaboration between IHG Hotels & Resorts and Pelligra, offering a new take on hospitality in Carlton while overlooking the greenery and daily rhythm of Lincoln Square. The setting gives guests a front-row seat to one of Melbourne's more picturesque inner-city parks.

The 107-room hotel features a curated collection of artworks, including Indigenous pieces, helping ground the space in local context and cultural reference. Alongside its accommodation offering, the hotel also includes function and event spaces, a fully equipped gym, and its signature restaurant and bar, Fico.

Named after the Moreton Bay fig trees that frame Lincoln Square, Fico draws directly on Carlton's Italian identity while



interpreting the neighbourhood's traditions through a more contemporary lens. Facing onto the park, the venue is filled with natural light and leafy outlooks, creating an open and welcoming dining room.

The menu has been built around locally sourced produce, with ingredients prepared in-house and shaped by seasonal Victorian offerings. From farmers and butchers to

distillers, there is a clear focus on supporting local producers.

Crowne Plaza Melbourne Carlton general manager Anna Marie Lennon said the team had been central to shaping the venue's identity.

“Our colleagues create a vibe, they are essential to creating the overall guest experience,” she said.

That values-led approach is evident in the tone of the hotel, with a sense of welcome carrying from reception through to the restaurant floor.

In the kitchen, executive chef Patrick Chung and food and beverage manager Chris McNally have worked closely to bring the concept to life. Open 24 hours a day, the kitchen has been positioned as the heart of the venue.

Attention to detail runs through the menu, from refining the right shoestring fries with truffle oil and parmesan to shaping traditional potato gnocchi with sage burnt butter using techniques drawn from the owners' Italian family heritage.

The broader result is a menu that feels confident without being overly complicated. Dishes range from roasted chicken with plum purée and tarragon jus to barramundi cooked over fire with caponata, pickled green olive and capers.

Fico also leans into a little theatre. A vermouth trolley offers a curated drinks experience, while the scroppino, made tableside with lemon gelato, prosecco and limoncello in large silver bowls, adds a lively finish to the meal.

Looking ahead, a rooftop bar and pool are expected to open in time for summer, adding another layer to the precinct and broadening the appeal of the venue for both hotel guests and locals.

Crowne Plaza Melbourne Carlton is located at 701 Swanston St, Carlton. ●

UMAC to host exclusive return of landmark Back to Back Theatre work in Parkville



Photos: Jeff Busby.

“ University of Melbourne Arts and Culture (UMAC) will host the exclusive Australian return of Back to Back Theatre’s acclaimed production *Ganesh Versus the Third Reich* this June.

WORDS BY
ZENNY ZHOU



It brings one of the country’s most celebrated contemporary theatre works back to Melbourne for a strictly limited season in Parkville.

The production will run from June 17 to 19 at the Union Theatre and marks the first time Melbourne audiences will have a chance to see the work here in around 15 years. Its return comes ahead of a major international appearance by Back to Back Theatre at Paris’s Festival d’Automne later this year.

Originally premiering at the Melbourne International Arts Festival in 2011, *Ganesh Versus the Third Reich* has since toured more than 34 cities worldwide and become one of Australia’s most recognised contemporary theatre works. Along the way it has collected major honours including a Helpmann Award for Best Play, an Edinburgh International Festival Herald Angel Critics Award, three Green Room Awards and The Age Critics’ Award at Melbourne Festival.

The work comes from Geelong-based Back to Back Theatre, one of Australia’s most internationally respected theatre companies, known for creating original performance led by an ensemble of actors with

disability. The company has continued to build its reputation in recent years, becoming the first Australian company to receive the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement in Theatre at the 2024 Venice Biennale, and winning the prestigious International Ibsen Award in 2022.

Ganesh Versus the Third Reich begins with the elephant-headed Hindu god Ganesh travelling through Nazi Germany to reclaim the swastika, an ancient symbol with deep cultural and religious meaning long before its appropriation by the Nazis. But the production also unfolds on another level, as the actors themselves question authorship, representation and the ethics of storytelling.

According to UMAC, the result is a work that is “poignant, beautiful, disarming” and deeply engaged with questions about who has the right to tell a story and who has the right to be heard.

Back to Back Theatre artistic director Bruce Gladwin said the themes of the work remained highly relevant.

“At its core it’s a piece about agency, about authorship, authority, and representation and it continues to hold us to those questions,” he said.

UMAC’s director of performing arts, Virginia Lovett, said the return of the production was a major moment for Melbourne audiences.

“It has been 15 years since Melbourne audiences experienced this landmark production,” she said.

“I am thrilled to be able to program it for UMAC’s 2026 season before the company heads to Paris for the prestigious Festival d’Automne.”

For Parkville, the season adds another significant cultural event to the University of Melbourne’s growing arts and performance offering. UMAC has increasingly positioned its northern CBD-edge precinct as a destination for major contemporary works, and the return of *Ganesh Versus the Third Reich* continues that push.

Tickets are on sale now via UMAC and Ticketmaster. ●

STATE MP

Time to fix the “roundabout of death”

We all know the “roundabout of death” in North Melbourne – also known as the “Haymarket intersection”.

The Haymarket roundabout is near the Queen Victoria Market. We all know how dangerous it is – and so does the State Labor Government.

But disappointingly, they haven’t done anything about it. Now I’m spearheading a new campaign to change this roundabout to make it safer for cars, pedestrians and cyclists, and create a whole heap of new open space at the same time.

In 2019, the Department of Transport released a major report on the future of the Haymarket precinct. It recommended the immediate “commencement of a design-led masterplan process” to transform the intersection and surrounding boulevards. Seven years later, that transformation still hasn’t happened.

Instead, the same confusing and dangerous layout remains. The Haymarket roundabout on Flemington Rd is widely considered one of Melbourne’s worst intersections, posing serious safety risks for the tens of thousands of vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians who use it every day. Just to walk across the



road as a pedestrian sometimes means you have to cross five different crossings!

This is despite Haymarket sitting at the centre of the rapidly growing biomedical precinct, and now directly connected to the new Parkville Metro Tunnel station. That means significantly more pedestrians moving through an intersection that was

never designed for this level of foot traffic. The government knew change was needed. It commissioned the work. But it hasn’t followed through.

At the same time, the government has invested billions in the Metro Tunnel, but there is little that has been spent at street level at this site to make surrounding areas

safe and accessible. Surface-level safety and amenity should not be an afterthought. This is a failure of planning.

You cannot increase pedestrian traffic through major infrastructure projects without redesigning the streets people rely on every day. Safe crossings, simpler layouts and protected bike lanes shouldn’t be optional, and they shouldn’t still be missing. That’s why I’m calling on the State Government to finally deliver a full redesign of the Haymarket intersection and properly invest in road safety across the precinct.

There is already a very sensible design on the table – backed by the RACV, Yarra Trams, and all the biomedical institutes surrounding the intersection. It works for cars, pedestrians and bikes.

Now all that’s needed is political will by the State Labor Government. ●

Ellen Sandell

STATE MP FOR MELBOURNE

OFFICE@ELLENSANDELL.COM



Carlton's future in the balance

The Carlton Residents' Association (CRA) has decided to be proactive in promoting issues that will protect and improve Carlton.

WORDS BY
PETER SANDERS

The CRA has developed several policies that will guide our promotion of ideas to protect and enhance Carlton, particularly the area of postcode 3053 east of Swanston St, but also including Melbourne's City North precinct.

A meeting with the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor, whose portfolio includes planning, was held in mid-April. Seven issues were presented by the CRA ...

Significant heritage places should be conserved and not partially demolished

The City of Melbourne's unwritten policy is to retain only the fronts of significant heritage buildings, sometimes some side façades, and to demolish rear sections, interiors and roofs, and to allow multi-storey structures to be built over what remains.

We believe that this is a mockery of accepted conservation principles. CRA requests that the Melbourne Planning Scheme be amended to provide unambiguous protection for our remaining heritage buildings that add so much to Carlton and Melbourne's liveable city quality.

The CRA is gathering support from other Melbourne residents and action groups.

We are proud of the Lygon St commercial strip

While it is lively and attractive it needs a boost (to overcome some faults) and to make it a top attraction.

The CRA article in the April 2026 edition of *Inner City News* "The future of Lygon St

is no laughing matter!", discussed the issues and suggested solutions.

Current problems include excessive through traffic and hooning and unattractive parklets, which reduce parking and pedestrian movement. With one lane of traffic each way, widened footpaths, coordinated landscaping, there would be increased parking, less noise and increased pedestrian amenity.

We asked the council to work with Carlton Inc. and others to prepare an action plan.

The Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor showed initial support.

Limiting university growth in Carlton
Amendment, C432 – New Municipal Planning Strategy – Carlton proposes changes to encourage "Tertiary Education and Knowledge and Innovation" in Carlton, east of Swanston St.

We have submitted an objection noting that RMIT should be confined to the Swanston, Queensberry, Lygon and Victoria streets area and Melbourne University to the Swanston, Elgin, Cardigan and Grattan streets area. A Design and Development Overlay should be prepared to set development forms including maximum heights and heritage protection for the two areas.

Action on the former Cancer Council eyesore

The former Cancer Council Building, 1-23 Rathdowne St, is both an eyesore and a health and safety risk. After a failed development application to the council, the property is on the market.

CRA encourages the demolition of buildings on the site and temporary landscaping perhaps for public use.

Encouragement to undertake the works could include financial incentives such as municipal rates and land tax rebates.

Traffic

With the opening of the West Gate Tunnel Project roads there is excessive traffic in parts of Carlton.

Princes St suffers from additional trucks



with noise levels well above acceptable maximums. Queensberry and Lygon streets also have additional traffic. CRA asked the council to urgently undertake studies to alleviate the problems.

The City of Melbourne noted that the Queensberry St traffic reductions and introduction of upgraded bicycle lanes and street planting have been approved and are planned to be undertaken soon.

Mandatory height controls

Mandatory maximum height levels should be introduced over Carlton, east of Swanston St to give certainty to developers and avoid frequent appeals to VCAT.

The World Heritage Environs Area

(WHEA), with the support of the council and CRA now has mandatory height controls.

Governance reform for Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens

The Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens, a World-Heritage place, should have centralised management.

The CRA is also concerned about the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show use of the southern portion of the Carlton Gardens for the annual show. CRA proposes a Melbourne-wide show using the Royal Exhibition Building and hard surface outdoor areas of Carlton Gardens, together with displays in areas such as Birrarung Marr. ●

Future Melbourne podcast turns to Lygon Street's past, present and future with Sergio Alderuccio



“

The latest episode of *Future Melbourne* turns to one of Melbourne's most recognisable main streets, with Carlton Inc. president Sergio Alderuccio joining the podcast to unpack the changing identity of Lygon St and ask what comes next for the city's so-called Little Italy.

”

Hosted by Hyperlocal News publisher and editor Sean Car, the new episode explores Lygon Street as both a place of deep memory and a precinct now facing many of the same pressures confronting high streets across Melbourne.

For generations, Lygon Street has occupied a special place in the city's imagination. It has been synonymous with Melbourne's café culture, Italian migration, outdoor dining and major public celebration. But

as the conversation makes clear, the street is no longer one simple story. It remains iconic, but it is also evolving.

Alderuccio, who leads Carlton's main trader association, brings both personal connection and on-the-ground knowledge to the discussion. The episode traces the street's rise from postwar migrant hub to cultural institution, revisiting its golden years of packed restaurants, street festas and unforgettable scenes such as World Cup celebrations spilling into the boulevard.

The conversation also broadens beyond food, touching on the wider identity of the precinct as a place shaped by arts, books, ideas and performance, with institutions such as Readings, Cinema Nova, La Mama and the Museo Italiano all forming part of the broader Lygon Street story.

But much of the episode is focused on the present and future.

Like many traditional shopping strips, Lygon Street is grappling with changing foot traffic, shifting spending habits, business turnover, vacancies, cleanliness and safety concerns. The discussion examines how those pressures are playing out differently across various sections of the street, and whether the centre of gravity has shifted in recent years.

One of the key questions raised is whether Lygon Street is still "Little Italy" in any simple sense. As new cultures and

cuisines reshape parts of the strip, especially toward the southern end, the episode asks what that phrase really means in 2026, and whether preserving identity should mean holding the street in time or allowing it to evolve while keeping its soul intact.

The role of Carlton Inc. also features strongly, with discussion around trader support, precinct activation, the Lygon Street Market, and efforts to bring traders and residents into closer alignment around the future of the strip.

The possibility of reviving the much-loved Lygon Street Festa is another major theme, framed not just as an events question but as a broader test of whether the precinct can reclaim some of its former civic and cultural energy.

As with earlier episodes in the *Future Melbourne* series, the discussion aims to move beyond nostalgia and into something more useful: a conversation about identity, adaptation and what it takes to keep a great Melbourne street alive.

Previous episodes have explored Queen Victoria Market, the city economy, Docklands, housing, city safety and Arden-Macaulay, with guests including Matt Elliott, Stephen Mayne, Jamal Hakim, Rob Pradolini, Dale Huntington and Rohan Leppert.

The latest episode of *Future Melbourne* is available online now, with the full video also available on YouTube. ●



A mansion on Rathdowne St

On the south-west corner of Rathdowne and Pelham streets in Carlton there is a brick pillar that looks out-of-place. It is all that remains of a brick wall that once surrounded a substantial house on the site.

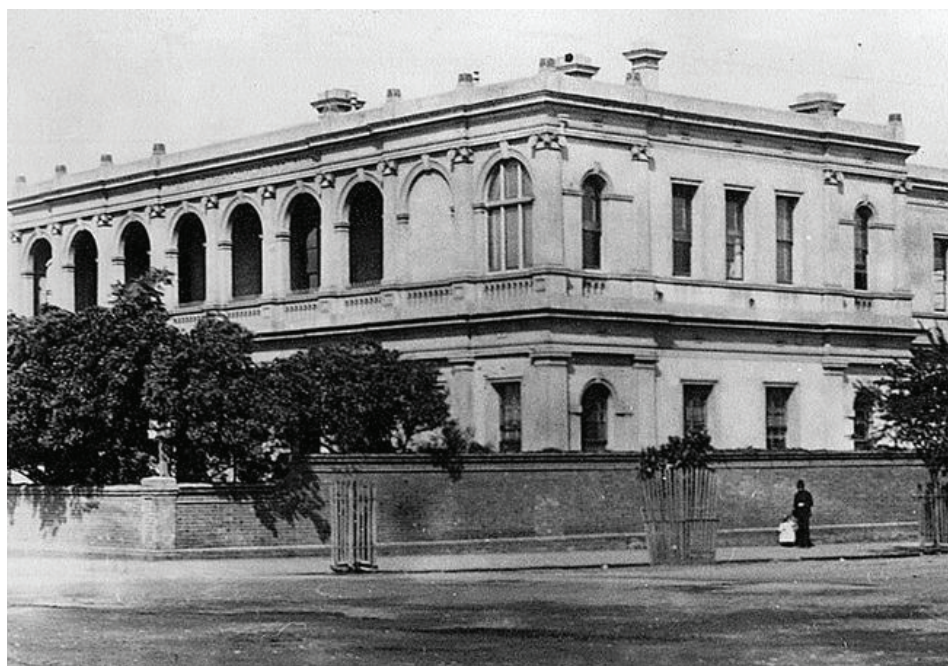
WORDS BY
JEFF ATKINSON

The house was that of Sir Redmond Barry, a prominent figure in colonial Melbourne.

Barry was one of the pioneering settlers in Melbourne, having arrived in 1839, before the gold rush. He was a qualified solicitor from Dublin and quickly rose to prominence in the small town on the Yarra.

He became Victoria's first Solicitor-General, and in 1852 a judge of the bench of the new Supreme Court of Victoria. Later he served as acting Chief Justice and Administrator of the government. As a judge, Barry presided over some of Australia's well-known early trials, including that of the Eureka Stockade rebels in 1855, and Ned Kelly in 1880.

Barry devoted great energy to developing Melbourne's institutions. Among his most significant achievements were the founding of the University of Melbourne and the State Library of Victoria. He was the inaugural Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, serving from 1853 until his death in 1880, and president of the Trustees of the State Library.



In 1856 he had this house built in Carlton – a substantial building with 14 rooms plus stables and coach-house set in spacious grounds – and lived there for the next 20 years.

Barry never married but had four children by his mistress Louisa Bridget Barrow whom, judging by their correspondence, he obviously loved dearly. She was quite a fiery character, and they used to have terrible rows.

She never lived with him in the big house on Rathdowne St. Initially she lived in Flinders St, and after 1860 in a house that Barry bought for her in Brunswick St,

Fitzroy. When they first met, she was a married woman with a daughter. But then the affair with Barry started and she eventually had four children by him, all of whom Barry acknowledged and supported.

Even after Louisa became a widow in 1859, Barry did not marry her. This may have been because, although they were both Irish, she was working class and Catholic while he was upper class and Protestant.

Barry died on November 23, 1880, and was buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery. Buried with him in the same grave are his mistress Louisa Barrow and several of their children.



Some time before his death, Barry sold the house in Rathdowne St and moved elsewhere. When he died in 1880, he was living in East Melbourne. In 1876 the property in Rathdowne St became the Hospital for Sick Children, and his former house became "the old surgical ward" of the hospital. New buildings were erected around it, and eventually it was demolished in 1912.

Pictured above: Sir Redmond Barry's house in the 1880s. Photo: Royal Children's Hospital Archives. The brick pillar on the corner of Rathdowne and Pelham streets. Photo: J. Atkinson. ●

FEDERAL MP

Listening to the priorities shaping East Melbourne, Carlton and Parkville

East Melbourne, Carlton and Parkville each have their own distinct character, but together they form one of the most vibrant and interconnected parts of our city. Over the past few months, I've spent time across these neighbourhoods listening to residents, workers, students and local organisations, and what stands out is a shared commitment to community alongside a clear set of local priorities.

WORDS BY
SARAH WITTY – FEDERAL MP

In East Melbourne, conversations often begin with liveability. With its historic streets, proximity to the CBD and important institutions, it is a suburb that balances heritage with change. At a recent meeting with the East Melbourne Group, residents spoke about the importance of preserving that character while also ensuring essential services, transport access and public amenities keep pace with the needs of a growing population.

Just across the way in Carlton, the energy is different but equally compelling. Carlton is defined by its diversity, with students, long-term residents, small businesses and cultural institutions all contributing to a dynamic local environment. Spending time



along Lygon St and in surrounding areas, I've heard directly from traders navigating cost pressures and changing patterns of foot traffic. At the same time, community organisations continue to play a vital role in supporting vulnerable residents, particularly in public housing communities. Attending the welcome assembly at Carlton Gardens Primary School, I was reminded of the diversity and strength of the wider Melbourne community.

Parkville brings yet another dimension. As home to major hospitals, research institutions and the University of Melbourne, it sits at the forefront of education, healthcare and innovation. Meeting with staff, students and researchers, there is a strong sense of purpose, but also an awareness of the pressures facing these sectors. In conversations with stakeholders, including the Florian Institute, it is clear how much important

work is being done, and how much potential there is to do even more. Workforce challenges, funding constraints and the broader cost of living all have an impact here, not just professionally but personally.

Across all three areas, housing remains a central issue. Whether it is students seeking affordable accommodation, key workers wanting to live close to where they work, or long-term residents concerned about affordability, the message is consistent: we need more housing options that are accessible and sustainable. That is why I have continued to advocate for increased investment in social and affordable housing, alongside policies that support renters and help maintain community stability.

Open space and amenity are also recurring themes. From the parks of East Melbourne to the shared public spaces of Carlton and the institutional precincts of

Parkville, people value places where they can connect, exercise and take time out from the pace of the city. Protecting and enhancing these spaces is an important part of planning for the future.

In Parliament, I've been working to ensure national decisions reflect these local realities. Investments in healthcare and medical research have a direct impact in Parkville. Support for small business and cost-of-living relief matters deeply in Carlton. Infrastructure and service delivery shape everyday life in East Melbourne. Representation means connecting these local experiences to broader policy outcomes.

What has impressed me most is the level of engagement across these communities. People are informed, thoughtful and willing to contribute to conversations about the future of their neighbourhoods. That engagement is a strength. It helps ensure change is guided not just by policy, but by the lived experience of those who call these areas home.

Each of these suburbs will continue to evolve, as all cities do. The challenge is to manage that change in a way that preserves what people value while creating new opportunities for the future.

From what I've seen so far this year, there is a strong foundation to build on. East Melbourne, Carlton and Parkville are not just places of activity, they are communities with a clear sense of identity and a shared interest in shaping what comes next.

My role is to listen, to represent and to work towards outcomes that reflect those priorities, ensuring these neighbourhoods remain inclusive, liveable and connected parts of Melbourne for years to come. ●

Quiz



- In which year were the first Winter Olympic Games held?
- On which Richmond street did cycling advocates recently stage a protest with regards to the narrowing of bike lanes?
- Which open space in Carlton recently received funding in the latest council budget?
- In which month is NAIDOC Week observed?
- Vinnie Jones won the 1988 FA Cup Final with which soccer club?
- Of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, what is the only surviving site?
- Which City of Melbourne councillor is contesting the November state election for the seat of Melbourne for Labor?
- Who played Carrie in the original 1976 film of the same name?
- Which Carlton community stalwart recently announced her retirement from the Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre?
- Which crime thriller stars Jodie Foster (pictured) as a 12-year-old named Iris?
- Sky rail is proposed above which Parkville street?
- What major master plan is currently being finalised in East Melbourne/Jolimont?

QUIZ SOLUTIONS

- 1924 Elizabeth St 3, University
- Driver 11, Park St 12, The Yarra Park Master Plan
- Sissy Spacek 9, Elle Morrell 10, Taxi
- Pyramids of Giza 7, David Griffiths
- July 5, Wimbledon 6, Great Square 4
- Elizabeth St 3, University
- 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100
- 1924 Elizabeth St 3, University
- Driver 11, Park St 12, The Yarra Park Master Plan
- Sissy Spacek 9, Elle Morrell 10, Taxi
- Pyramids of Giza 7, David Griffiths
- July 5, Wimbledon 6, Great Square 4
- Elizabeth St 3, University
- 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100

5x5 No. 323

Insert the missing letters to make 10 words – five reading across the grid and five reading down.

W		G		R
	G		E	
F		O		A
	O		I	
S		E		T

SOLUTIONS

WAGER, AGREE, FLORA, TOPIC, SWEET

PUZZLES AND PAGINATION
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May, 2026

Sudoku

No. 058

Fill in the blank cells using the numbers from 1 to 9. Each number can only appear once in each row, column and 3x3 block

EASY

1		5	8		4		6	
		9						
			9	3		7	8	
7	9				8			5
4				6				2
5			1					7
	4	8		1	2			
						9		
	6		4		9	3		8

HARD

				1	2			
2						3		1
						6	2	
	5		2		8	9		7
		7	3		1	4		
1	2	4		5			3	
	4	6						
7		3						5
			5	4				

SOLUTIONS

8	1	3	6	5	4	7	9	2
3	5	1	7	2	4	8	6	9
2	2	4	9	8	3	1	5	7
7	6	5	2	1	9	3	8	4
4	1	8	3	9	6	7	2	5
8	9	6	2	7	4	5	1	3
3	5	4	2	8	6	9	1	7
4	1	8	3	9	6	7	2	5
2	7	9	6	2	1	5	4	3
6	9	8	7	4	2	1	3	5

Wordfind Theme: The Beach

The leftover letters will spell out a secret message.

E	S	B	S	T	L	L	M	I	C	D
W	L	A	U	P	E	I	E	O	S	N
A	L	T	N	S	W	K	A	W	T	A
T	S	H	S	S	H	S	C	H	O	S
E	H	E	C	A	T	E	O	U	P	T
R	O	R	R	O	C	N	L	I	B	S
P	R	S	E	S	G	D	E	L	U	P
L	E	A	E	S	P	R	N	W	R	A
S	U	N	N	F	I	S	H	A	N	D
A	L	L	E	R	B	M	U	V	S	E
I	C	Y	P	O	L	E	F	E	E	R

- | | |
|------------|-----------|
| BATHERS | SHORE |
| BUCKET | SPADE |
| BURN | SUN |
| COAST | SUNSCREEN |
| FISH | SWIM |
| ICY POLE | THONGS |
| PIER | TOWEL |
| REEF | UMBRELLA |
| SAND | WATER |
| SANDCASTLE | WAVE |
| SHELL | |

Secret message: Slip, Stop, Slap

Crossword

No. 058

ACROSS

- Insects (7)
- Recipe (7)
- Transcribed (11)
- Long, slippery fish (3)
- Burn (6)
- Software (7)
- Nigh (4)
- Conglomerate (10)
- Aficionado (10)
- Daze (4)
- Weapon (7)
- Sweethearts (6)
- Expired (3)
- Senile decay (11)
- Late (7)
- Equal; even – (7)

DOWN

- Ram (4)
- Eager; anticipatory (9)
- Depress (5)
- US museum (11)
- Excess (3)
- Enmity (7)
- Netizens (5)
- Attraction (10)
- Chart toppers (11)
- Comprehended (10)
- Break (9)
- Blasphemous (7)
- Rubbish (5)
- State (5)
- Tidings (4)
- Churl (3)

1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
9												10		
	11							12						
13														
14					15								16	
17					18								19	
20		21								22		23		
														24
25					26		27							
28										29				

SOLUTION

S	N	E	A	E	I	S	G	E	A	V	T	E	D	
M	O	C	H	V	A	L	Y	O						
E	D	N	I	F	E	R	G	O	D	E				
N	T	O	L	O	F	I								
S	R	E	A	O	T	N	N	O	H	S				
I	E													
N	N	I	S	I	S	V	I	S	H	I	N	E		
E	N													
W	N	T	I	H	O	S	N	O						
E														
E	S													
N	S	M	O	B	E	R								
U	R													
L	S	V	W	O	X	U								
V	L													

Codeword

No.028

4	2	4	11	21	20	15		20	3	21	1	26	
26		2		23		2		5		23		12	
5	12	8	16	20	5	14		25	23	19	5	23	
20		14		5		14		20		5		8	
4	1	20	25	F	F		1	12	22	20	4	2	5
				19		12					17		12
10	19	4	11	1	12		21	1	23	26	Y	12	7
19		2			9		20						
8	12	21	1	23	4	12		13	19	23	4	11	
8		26	Y		7		24		19		3		20
20	7	20	2	3		12	26	Y	12	10	23	1	1
15		5		20		1		25	F		18		5
2	19	14	17	15		6	1	26	Y	5	12	6	6

SOLUTIONS

Y	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Q	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10	23
11	24
12	25
13	26

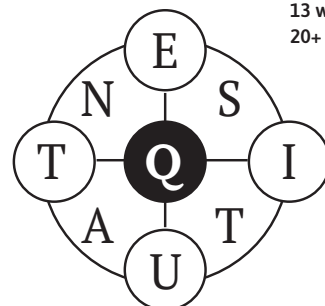
9-Letter

No. 058

Today's Focus:

- 9 words: Good
- 13 words: Very good
- 20+ words: Excellent

Using the nine letters in the grid, how many words of four letters or more can you list? The centre letter must be included and each letter may only be used once. No colloquial or foreign words. No capitalised nouns, apostrophes or plural nouns ending in 's'.

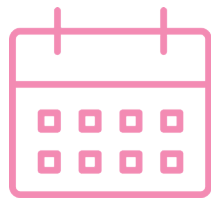


Reference: Macquarie Dictionary

SOLUTIONS

antique, asquint, equitant, inquest, quaint, QUINTEST, quirt, quantise, quantises, quasi, quare, quest, quiet, quiers, quini, quint, quinte, quinter, quirt, quire, quirts, sequin, squab, squint

WHAT'S ON May



Experience the inner city buzz this month with music, markets, exhibitions and more.



ROYAL EXHIBITION BUILDING OPEN DAY

Royal Exhibition Building celebrates 125 years since Australia's first Parliament opening with free public events, tours, performances, exhibitions, and activities.

Royal Exhibition Building, Carlton

9 – 10 MAY, 12PM – 5PM



MOTHER'S DAY CLASSIC

The Mother's Day Classic invites participants to walk or run, raising funds for breast and ovarian cancer research while supporting community efforts to end these diseases.

The Tan, Birdwood Ave

SUNDAY 10 MAY, 6.45AM – 2.30PM



MOTHER'S DAY HIGH TEA WITH EMELIA JACKSON

MasterChef Australia winner, pastry chef and author Emelia Jackson hosts a Mother's Day high tea, with new recipes, elegant pastries, drinks, and live music.

Melbourne Town Hall

SUNDAY 10 MAY, 11AM – 4PM



CHOIRS IN THE ROUND 2026

An afternoon of song in support of CAN Community Support featuring The Melbourne Mass Gospel Choir, Thursday's Children, Gorani and The Raglins.

Church of All Nations, Carlton

SUNDAY 24 MAY, 2PM – 4.30PM

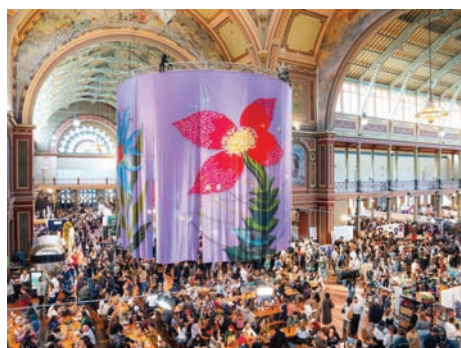


AFROBEATS PAINT JAM

Afrobeats Paint Jam mixes guided painting, DJ music, karaoke, and party vibes – no experience needed, just bring drinks and friends.

Drip Splash Melbourne, 113/119 Lygon St

SATURDAY 9 MAY, 7PM – 10PM



THE BIG DESIGN MARKET: ALMOST WINTER

The Big Design Market showcases 250+ designers, artisanal food, fashion, art, and ethically made products in a vibrant space with installations, prizes, and family fun.

Royal Exhibition Building, Carlton

22 – 24 MAY, 10AM – 6PM



STUCK

Stuck is a darkly comic play about two deli workers clashing over power, survival, and control, exposing misogyny and patriarchy through sharp dialogue, absurdism, and raw performances.

La Mama HQ, 205 Faraday St

12 – 31 MAY, 6.30PM – 7.30PM



DINOS AT THE ZOO

Melbourne Zoo dinosaur trail features animatronic dinosaurs, fossil digs, puppets, themed food, photo opportunities, shop souvenirs, interactive play spaces experiences.

Melbourne Zoo, Parkville

UNTIL 12 JULY, 9.30AM – 4.30PM



FITZROY GARDENS HERITAGE TOUR

Fitzroy Gardens tour showcases historic landmarks, wildlife, and formal gardens in an accessible Melbourne experience blending nature, history, and beauty.

Fitzroy Gardens, East Melbourne

UNTIL 31 DECEMBER, 2PM – 3PM



SONGBIRDS

Songs, rhymes and stories will engage your budding bookworm's mind and introduce them to the fun and rhythm of language. Age: newborn to 18 months.

East Melbourne Library

UNTIL 10 DECEMBER, 10.30AM – 11AM



SWINGING 60s

This exhibition explores 1960s Victoria, showcasing music, fashion, protest items, instruments, and Barbie memorabilia, highlighting youth culture, rebellion, and social change.

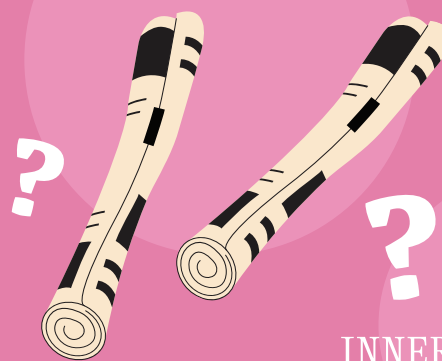
Old Treasury Building, East Melbourne

UNTIL DECEMBER, 10AM – 4PM

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INNER CITY NEWS

A HIGHER STATE OF MIND



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AURA rises majestically as the gateway to the Melbourne Square precinct. An elevated state of living where every moment is designed to inspire clarity, connection, and quiet transcendence. AURA offers a refined lifestyle with crafted residences, expansive wellness spaces, sky-level lounges and dining, and lush garden retreats. Surrounded by Melbourne Square's thriving community, residents enjoy immediate access to Woolworths, childcare, and the lush expanse of Kennedy Park—embedding AURA within a connected, convenient and already flourishing urban address.



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