



Tanzer serves up Italian disco magic

Italo pop diva TANZER brings theatrical flair to Melbourne Museum ahead of Discoteca Italiana, piping cannoli at the Brunetti Classico pop-up. The one-night-only event on Saturday, June 6 will transform the museum into a lively celebration of Italian music, food, culture and nightlife. More on page 7. *Photo: Hanna Komissarova.*

ARTS & CULTURE, PAGE 08

Potter Museum explores the art and meaning of the gum tree

COUNCIL AFFAIRS, PAGE 10

Expansion of council's safety officer program contested

“Tip the balance for good”: residents sound alarm over final Yarra Park Master Plan

“

The future of Yarra Park is again under scrutiny, with the East Melbourne Group preparing to hold an emergency meeting over fears the final master plan for the park will tip the balance too far towards commercial and event use.

The final plan presents Yarra Park as a place with “two modes”: event days, when the park operates as a major arrival, gathering and movement space for the MCG and wider sports precinct, and non-event days, when it remains a peaceful retreat for residents, workers and visitors.

It proposes a range of upgrades, including improvements to the northern recreation space, new accessible facilities, pathway upgrades, better lighting, tree replacement and management, cultural recognition, improved services infrastructure, a new gathering space near the MCG concourse, and future event, parking and night-time strategies.

But the East Melbourne Group says the final version does not adequately address concerns raised by residents during consultation, and risks permanently changing the character of one of inner Melbourne's most important open spaces.

In a letter to Planning Minister Sonya Kilkenny, EMG president Greg Bisinella said the group was not opposed to the MCG, major events or the “festival atmosphere” associated with the precinct.

However, he said EMG had maintained two “red lines” throughout the process: no permanent infrastructure embedded in parkland, and no erosion of the existing event permit pathway.

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



The Yarra Park Master Plan 2026, prepared by the Melbourne Cricket Club as land manager, sets out a 10- to 15-year framework for the future of the heritage-listed public park surrounding the MCG.

Continued on page 3.



LYGON LOCAL, PAGE 9

Cinema Nova: the heart of Carlton's film culture

Watching films on a big screen “collides with people's souls in a way we don't fully understand,” Cinema Nova CEO Christian Connelly says.



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Council backs St Nicholas Church redevelopment in East Melbourne

The City of Melbourne has approved a long-running planning application for St Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Church in East Melbourne, giving the green light to a heritage-sensitive redevelopment.

WORDS BY
 SEAN CAR



The \$4.3 million project, considered by councillors at the Future Melbourne Committee on May 5, combines new accommodation, a replacement church hall and restoration works at one of Victoria Parade's most prominent religious sites.

Councillors unanimously approved the proposal for 528-536, 538 and 540 Victoria Parade, on the corner of Simpson St. The project includes partial demolition at the rear of the existing church, removal of the current church hall, demolition of a single-storey building at 528 Victoria Parade, partial demolition to the rear of the dwellings at 538 and 540 Victoria Parade, and construction of a new multi-storey infill development.

The approved works will deliver a priest's residence, 13 dwellings, a replacement church hall and a basement car park with 19 spaces. Council planning documents also show 14 bicycle spaces and almost 729 sqm of landscaped open space, representing around 37.7 per cent of the site area.

Addressing councillors on behalf of the applicant, Ratio consultant Lewis Moore said the church had been part of the East Melbourne community for almost 100 years and stressed that the proposal had been carefully designed to respect that history.

He described the new residential



component as "a complementary element in the streetscape" designed in a "sympathetic and interpretive manner" and said the landscaping had been an integral part of the project.

A key issue during the meeting was heritage. Lord Mayor Nick Reece sought confirmation on the record that the part of the church proposed for demolition was not part of the original heritage fabric.

Mr Moore confirmed that it was a later addition that had been altered multiple times and was also structurally unsound. He said the proposed works would allow the original part of the church to be restored "to its former glory" and continue serving the community into the future.

Deputy Lord Mayor and the council's planning chair Roshena Campbell said the proposal represented an appropriate response to the site's significance and surrounding context.

She said the demolition was confined to "non-original, previously altered fabric at the rear of the site" and that the retention of the principal church building, together with the proposed reconstruction and restoration works, would help secure its long-term

conservation.

Cr Campbell also noted that objections had raised concerns about visual bulk, overshadowing, overlooking and neighbourhood character, but said these issues were adequately addressed through the officer-recommended conditions.

One of those conditions is a section 173 agreement to ensure the accommodation remains tied to church-related use, including clergy, parishioners and students, rather than becoming separate private dwellings. Cr Campbell said that was an important safeguard given the nature of the approval.

Seconding the motion, Cr Reece said East Melbourne was one of Melbourne's most scrutinised heritage suburbs and that any proposal there had to clear a high bar. He said the St Nicholas application did so.

"This development proposal is a very sensitive one, respectful of the original heritage church," he said.

"As part of this development will see improvements to the church to bring it back to its former glory, while also the new building will become an important one that can only add to the East Melbourne community and does so in a very sensitive way." ●

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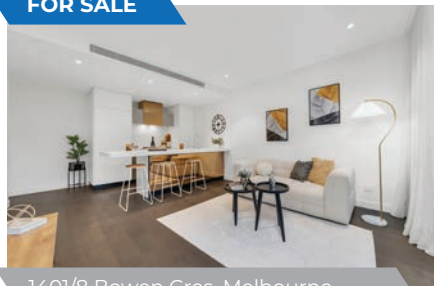


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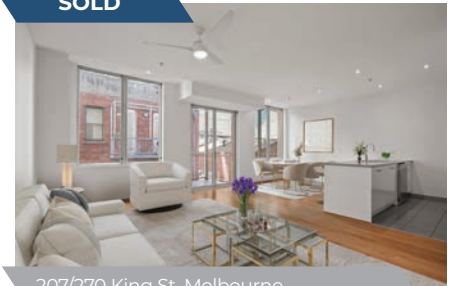


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“Tip the balance for good”: residents sound alarm over final Yarra Park Master Plan

Continued from page 1.

“The Amendment as drafted crosses both,” Mr Bisinella said.

According to EMG, the plan and associated planning controls would allow permanent underground utility services to selected paddocks, architectural lighting around the MCG concourse, new gathering and celebration spaces, and permanent hostile vehicle mitigation.

The group argues that while temporary structures have long been part of the park’s event-day life, permanent event-enabling infrastructure would mark a more significant shift.

In EMG’s latest *Inner City News* column, Mr Bisinella said Yarra Park had successfully held two roles for more than 150 years: as the green forecourt to the MCG on major event days, and as an everyday public park for East Melbourne and surrounding communities.

“That balance has worked,” he said.

“But a proposed new master plan now sitting with the Minister for Planning for approval would tip that balance for good.”

EMG’s concerns come despite several elements of the master plan being welcomed by the group, including proposed upgrades to the northern recreation space, tree management, pathway improvements and accessibility works.

The final master plan says Yarra Park will be retained as the place “local residents, visitors, sports fans and tourists know and love”, and that proposed works are intended to improve safety, protect tree avenues, make park spaces more functional and recognise the cultural significance of the site.

It also says Yarra Park will continue to



provide “a peaceful retreat from the city” on non-event days, while supporting major gatherings on event days.

However, EMG argues the planning framework does not provide enough safeguards for residents or everyday park users.

The group says its requests for a phase-out of grass parking by 2030, a 50-metre amenity buffer from Vale St and Jolimont Terrace, and passive-only designation for paddocks 12, 24 and 25 were not accepted.

It also says the City of Melbourne’s request for “residential amenity” to be adopted as a fourth guiding principle of the plan was not included.

Another concern relates to the proposed event management framework. The final master plan says an Event Management Strategy will be prepared to guide the number, scale and impact of events held in Yarra Park, including requirements around landscape protection, waste, noise, lighting,

temporary infrastructure and post-event assessment.

But EMG says the associated planning controls could create a more efficient event approval process by identifying permit exemptions, potentially reducing community input into future events.

The group has also raised concern about the removal of third-party notice and review rights for some advertising signage and the ability for some works to proceed without further planning approval.

Mr Bisinella said the cumulative impact was what mattered.

“Our concern is that the cumulative effect, rather than any single clause, is what is at stake,” he said.

The master plan’s implementation section says many future projects will require detailed design, engagement with government departments and other approvals, including heritage and Aboriginal cultural heritage processes.

But EMG says the amendment should not proceed to gazettal in its current form and has asked the Minister to defer her decision pending further community engagement or decline to gazette it as drafted.

If the amendment proceeds, EMG has called for minimum changes including broader community engagement requirements, restoration of third-party rights for advertising signage, adoption of residential amenity as a guiding principle, and clear height, footprint and setback limits for proposed new structures.

The group’s emergency meeting on June 3, which took place shortly after *Inner City News* published its June edition, is expected to focus on what residents can do next, with EMG warning the park’s shared future is under threat.

The MCC was contacted for comment. ●

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Our Budget plan for a more liveable Melbourne

THE CITY OF MELBOURNE'S BUDGET 2026-27 IS HERE

- Total budget: \$804.8 million
- Surplus: \$1.2 million
- Capital works program: \$175.1 million
- Safety and cleaning: \$73.2 million
- Events, arts, culture and activation: \$41.4 million
- Garden City: \$26.4 million

We know budgets aren't the most exciting thing to wrap your head around - but this year's Budget really matters, because it sets out a plan to support a more liveable Melbourne.

Here are some of the ways you'll see the difference:

WE'LL BRING OUR STREETS TO LIFE

- Streets and laneways will become safer with \$2 million for new lighting and the upgrade of existing fixtures in hotspots like Hosier Lane, Collins Street and Hardware Lane.
- Major events including New Year's Eve, Moomba and Christmas Festival will get a \$26 million boost - driving visitation and supporting local businesses.

WE'LL PROVIDE RESPONSIBLE RATES AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT

- While we delivered a full rebate on the Victorian Government's 3% rate rise last year, ratepayers will see an average of 2.75% increase on their rates notice - an increase that ensures we can continue providing reliable core services.
- Free fitness classes in the park, \$2 weekday summer pool entry and free summer swim lessons will continue - keeping people active and connected.

WE'LL KEEP THE CITY CLEAN, SAFE AND EASY TO GET AROUND

- The number of Community Safety Officers on the street will double from 11 to 22, with a focus on providing compassionate support to vulnerable people.
- People will be able to move through the city more easily, as we explore extending the iconic Bourke Street Mall and improving pedestrian access on Flinders Lane.

WE'LL GROW THE GARDEN CITY

- Thirteen new or upgraded parks and green open spaces will be fast-tracked, including Chapman Street pocket park in North Melbourne and Miles and Dodds Street reserve in Southbank.
- Works will progress on Market Square at Queen Victoria Market - the city's biggest new park in more

than 50 years - and a greener, more pedestrian-friendly Franklin Street, connecting the State Library Station to the market.

WE'LL GIVE EVERY NEIGHBOURHOOD A FAIR GO

- People experiencing homelessness with complex mental health challenges will receive more support to access housing, healthcare and social services with a \$2.3 million boost.
- Early childhood programs will get an additional \$500,000 - improving literacy, promoting healthy living, and supporting more families through early intervention and domestic violence prevention.



Scan the QR code for more information on the Budget 2026-27.

If you're feeling the pinch with the return of rates, financial support is available - including through payment plans and interest-free extensions.



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Carlton Gardens is one of Melbourne's world-class green spaces

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CITY OF MELBOURNE



Royal Exhibition Building marks 125 years since birth of federal parliament

“ Australia’s democratic story returned to one of its most symbolic stages on May 9, as national and state leaders gathered at Carlton’s Royal Exhibition Building to mark 125 years since the opening of the nation’s first federal parliament.

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



The event commemorated May 9, 1901, when the Royal Exhibition Building hosted the formal opening of Australia’s Federal Parliament, a defining moment in the country’s Federation and democratic history.

Held inside the UNESCO World Heritage-listed landmark, the anniversary brought together Governor-General Sam Mostyn, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan, senior dignitaries, First Peoples representatives, community groups and invited guests for formal proceedings reflecting on the nation’s democratic journey and the work still to be done.

A personal message from King Charles III was delivered by the Governor-General, encouraging Australians to reflect on the enduring spirit of the country’s democracy and describing Australia as a confident, forward-looking nation shaped by fairness and equality.

In her own address, the Governor-General said the anniversary was both a moment of celebration and reflection.

“125 years ago, we united as a modern nation,” she said.

“As we have grown and recognised the contribution of our Indigenous heritage and the diversity of our communities, we acknowledge past challenges, but importantly celebrate today the progress made since Federation, which has contributed to the modern, successful, stable, and optimistic nation we enjoy today.”

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Australians should take pride in the resilience of the democratic institutions first inaugurated in the building in 1901.

“Australians should take real, patriotic pride in our enduring democratic achievement,” he said.

“Today we celebrate the foundations laid 125 years ago – and the vibrant, inclusive democracy we are today.”

A notable part of the ceremony came from newly elected First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria co-chairs Meriki Onus and Djaran Murray-Jackson, who gave their first public speech since taking on the roles.

Their contribution brought a more complex truth to the celebration, acknowledging both the significance of democratic milestones and the pain that Federation represented for First Peoples.

“We all know it’s important to celebrate milestones, but for our people this milestone signifies dispossession, and pain,” Mr Murray-Jackson said.

Yet both co-chairs also pointed to treaty as part of a new democratic chapter, with Ms Onus saying the current generation had the chance to make the country’s democracy “stronger and more inclusive than how

we found it”.

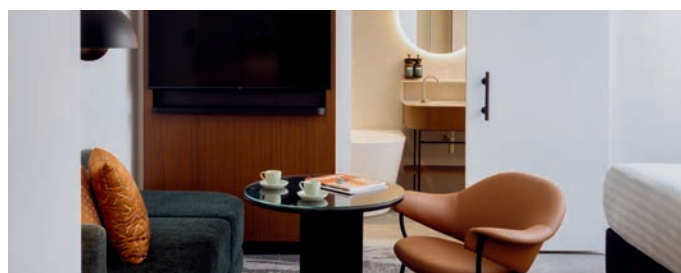
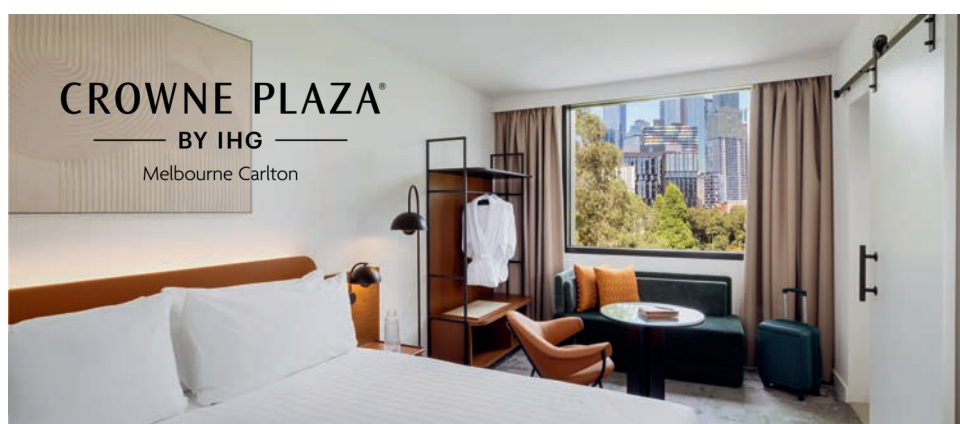
The formal proceedings also included the creation of a new commemorative image by Gunggari photographer Tiffany Garvie, offering a contemporary counterpoint to Charles Nuttall’s iconic painted record of the 1901 opening. The photograph will enter the State Collection.

The anniversary then flowed into a weekend of free public programming, with the Royal Exhibition Building opening its doors for civic dialogue, performances, exhibitions and guided tours. Among the objects on display were one of only four official Treaty documents on public display for the first time, Nuttall’s monumental *The Opening, Commonwealth Parliament (1901–02)*, and the State Landau Coach used in ceremonial processions in 1901.

For Museums Victoria, which helped lead the event, the occasion reinforced the enduring significance of the building as both a heritage icon and a living civic space.

“Not every building becomes a home for a nation’s story. The Royal Exhibition Building did,” Museums Board of Victoria president Mary Stuart said.

That story, 125 years on, is still being written. ●



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Why Melbourne Matters



Ahead of November's state election, Melbourne is back in the political spotlight – and we want to make the most of it.

We've launched a new advocacy campaign: Melbourne Matters. Because when Melbourne does well, Victoria does too.

Many of the decisions that will shape Melbourne's future sit outside Town Hall – including housing, schools, transport and other essential infrastructure needed to support growing communities.

Our campaign focuses on 3 priorities: supporting Victoria's growth, creating safe and healthy communities, and protecting Melbourne's place as Australia's cultural capital.

MELBOURNE MATTERS FOR VICTORIA'S GROWTH

Melbourne is one of Victoria's fastest-growing areas and generates 22% of the state's economic output, but we need the right investment and policy support to help that growth succeed.

- We're calling on the Victorian Government to give Melbourne the same level of support and policy attention as other major growth areas as our population continues to grow.
- We also want to work with the Victorian Government to unlock public land and create more green space for our growing community. The Moonee Ponds Creek corridor is one example: 1.3 hectares of locked-up land unable to be accessed by 60,000 nearby residents.

MELBOURNE MATTERS FOR SAFE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

We know that people in our community are currently under pressure to make ends meet, and we're seeing crime and antisocial behaviour escalating in our public places.

Melbourne must remain a city that feels safe, welcoming and accessible for everyone, including the most vulnerable members of our community.

- We need continued support from the Victorian Government

to help keep Melbourne's streets safe, including a more visible and consistent safety presence in busy areas and known hotspots.

- Many people experiencing homelessness are also living with complex mental health challenges. Too often, when someone reaches crisis point, there are only 2 places for them to go: hospital or jail. We're calling for greater investment in crisis accommodation and proven programs like Street to Home that help break the cycle.

MELBOURNE MATTERS AS AUSTRALIA'S CULTURAL CAPITAL

Melbourne's arts, music and events scene is a huge part of what makes this city special – and with the creative economy contributing more than \$41 billion to Victoria each year, it's also a major economic driver.

- Major events like our New Year's Eve celebrations play a huge role in bringing the city to life and attracting visitors from around Australia and beyond. An extra \$1 million in state funding

would support the expansion of programming and offerings.

- We're calling on the Victorian Government to restore funding to organisations like Creative Victoria and Visit Victoria. Creative Victoria's funding has fallen by almost one third since 2022, with cuts starting to take a real toll on Melbourne's creative sector.

As we approach the state election, Melburnians should expect ambition from all sides of politics – and politicians should expect to hear directly from the people they represent.

Call your local MP. Visit their office. Ask them what their vision is for Melbourne and whether they are prepared to fight for it.

That matters, because Melbourne matters.



Scan the QR code for more information.





Discoteca Italiana brings Italian buzz to Melbourne Museum

Melbourne Museum will be transformed into a one-night-only Italian nightlife experience on Saturday, June 6, as Discoteca Italiana brings music, food, dancing and after-hours exhibition access to Carlton.

Presented in celebration of the landmark exhibition *ROME: Empire, Power, People*, the event will take over the ground and lower ground floors of Melbourne Museum from 7pm to 11pm.

Designed as an after-dark celebration of contemporary Italian culture, Discoteca Italiana will combine live music, DJ sets, food experiences and social activations against the backdrop of ancient Roman history.

Under three spinning mirror balls, guests will be invited to dance the night away to a mix of classic and contemporary Italian-inspired sounds, with performances from Italo Pop Diva, opera singer and disco pop star TANZER, Italo Disco DJ Dischi Marciano and the Italo Oracle Hysterix.

Together, the performers will deliver a high-energy soundtrack inspired by Italian dance culture, bringing a distinctly Melbourne nightlife feel to the museum setting.

The event will also offer guests exclusive after-hours access to *ROME: Empire, Power, People*, allowing visitors to explore stories, artefacts and the atmosphere of Roman art, culture and daily life as part of the evening.

Food will play a major role in the experience, with Brunetti Classico and Florida Cheese serving tiramisu, gelati carts and roving cannoli throughout the night. Segafredo will also help revive the Espresso Social Club with espressos and espresso martinis.

Other highlights include the Amore Photo Booth, a vintage disco-inspired portrait experience, and Tarot & Love Readings.

Discoteca Italiana takes place at Melbourne Museum on Saturday, June 6 from 7pm to 11pm. Tickets are \$40 for adults, \$35 for members and \$30 concession. museums.victoria.com.au

La Mama to launch three-month season of bold new works

La Mama Theatre will launch one of its most anticipated annual programs on June 2, with *EXPLORATIONS* returning for a three-month season of brand-new works-in-progress.

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



Running from June through to the end of August, the much-loved program will feature 52 new works, each presented across a three-night season at La Mama HQ and the Courthouse.

With performances scheduled from Tuesday to Sunday, the program will offer audiences a constantly changing line-up of new theatre, experimental ideas and emerging voices.

EXPLORATIONS has long been regarded as a vital launching pad for new Australian work, having helped give rise to acclaimed productions including *Trophy Boys*, *Stuck*, *Flick*, *On the Production of Monsters* and *No Former Performer has Performed this Performance Before*.

Each work is still in development, meaning audiences may see something different from one night to the next as artists test new ideas, take risks and refine their pieces in front of a live audience.

La Mama CEO and artistic director Caitlin Dullard said *EXPLORATIONS* was a highlight of the theatre's artistic calendar.

"*EXPLORATIONS* is genuinely my favourite part of the artistic program and is the most exciting time of the year at La Mama," Dullard said.



"A brand-new audience experience every three days for three whole months is electric - both theatres vibrate with colour and movement. It's loads of fun."

La Mama pathways and partnerships manager Myf Powell, who oversees the program, said audiences played an important role in the development of each work.

"*EXPLORATIONS* gives audiences a wonderful glimpse into the creative process," Powell said.

"As the first audiences of these new shows, they're actually a part of what is potentially going to be the next big hit."

All tickets are \$20, with post-show conversations giving audiences the chance to engage directly with artists.

lamama.com.au

City of Melbourne chief Alison Leighton to take leave as acting CEO appointed

City of Melbourne councillors have endorsed the council's general manager of infrastructure and amenity, Rick Kwasek, as acting CEO for a six-week period from June 26 to August 7 while CEO Alison Leighton is on leave.

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



Under the *Local Government Act 2020* and the terms of a committee that oversees the CEO's employment, the council is required

to formally move to appoint a member of staff to the acting role if the CEO will be absent for more than 28 days.

A motion on the interim appointment moved by Lord Mayor Nick Reece and seconded by portfolio head on finance, governance and risk Cr Owen Guest, was unanimously supported at the May 26 meeting.

Cr Guest described Mr Kwasek as "a technocrat", who had previously acted in a similar role for nine months.

"I have every faith in his ability to do Alison's role while she's away," he said.

The City of Melbourne did not respond to a request for information about the nature of Ms Leighton's leave, saying only that the leave was planned.

Council engagement to include ongoing listening posts

The City of Melbourne will introduce ongoing councillor listening posts and clearer consultation rules under a new community engagement policy aimed at making public feedback more meaningful.

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



Councillors voted unanimously to support the updated four-year policy at the Future Melbourne Committee meeting on May 26, following months of consultation and policy development involving more than 360 residents, stakeholders and community group members.

The policy sets out a clearer framework for when and how the city should consult, who it should engage with, and when engagement is not recommended.

It also states that where there is "very limited opportunity to influence outcomes", the council's role will be to inform the community rather than seek feedback.

Community, health and city services portfolio lead Cr Gladys Liu said the policy would guide how the council listened to and involved the community in decision-making.

"This policy is important because it sets out how the City of Melbourne listens to, engages with and involves our community in decision making," Cr Liu said.

"It also reflects our commitment to transparent, inclusive and meaningful engagement across the city."

The policy places greater emphasis on inclusivity, including multilingual engagement, and responds to feedback that the council should prioritise ongoing conversations rather than transactional requests for feedback.

A review document said the "overarching theme" from consultation was that representative engagement required transparency, tailored methods and trust.

The need to "close the loop" after consultations, by actively sharing information about outcomes, was also identified as a key priority.

When the policy was previously discussed in March, Lord Mayor Nick Reece described the review as an attempt "to get the BS factor out of our consultation processes".

At the May 26 meeting, he said the new policy was "taking democracy to a new level in our city".

Cr Reece said the council had an active and engaged citizenship, and that ongoing councillor listening posts would help the city become "more present" in the community.

ELLEN SANDELL

GREENS STATE MP FOR MELBOURNE

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Angelo Gargasoulas sentenced on drug crimes

The brother of Bourke St killer James Gargasoulas has been sentenced for drug trafficking and drug possession crimes that took place at his Carlton address in 2024.

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



Angelo Gargasoulas pleaded guilty in the County Court to six charges, including one count of trafficking a drug of dependence, two charges of possessing a drug of dependence, and one of possessing precursor chemicals, after an exchange of drugs in Southbank that was captured on CCTV and a police raid on his Carlton home.

The court heard that on July 10, 2024, at 1.50am Gargasoulas was captured on CCTV entering the Southbank premises of his former partner Simon Simoudis carrying a box covered in Australia Post stickers and wearing a latex glove on his left hand.

A police raid of Simoudis's place a few hours later revealed the box contained 9.8 kg of the substance 1,4 butanediol – a drug described by the AFP as “linked to sexual assaults and overdoses” – in 21 bottles labelled as aloe vera.

When police raided Gargasoulas' home six weeks later they found a white bottle labelled as hand sanitiser that contained 323g of “bute”, two ziplock bags of methamphetamine and a cardboard box very similar in appearance to the one he had taken to Southbank but which had in it 19 bottles labelled as aloe moisturiser that were found to contain a precursor chemical.

Gargasoulas told police the substance had been “a dud of a purchase” that he had tried to melt down, thinking it might be GHB, but which had solidified instead of crystallising.

The court heard that Gargasoulas, who was born in Coober Pedy to a Greek father and Tongan mother, had a very turbulent childhood and early life, which included homophobic emotional abuse from his father, time spent staying with his mother, who was alcoholic and who had taken out family violence orders against him, and a period of living on the streets.

He had three prior convictions for drug trafficking and numerous convictions for drug possession and multiple family violence orders issued against him, the court heard, and at the time of his offending had been on a community corrections order with a drug treatment condition.

In recent years he had succeeded in building a relatively stable life, moving into public housing and starting a job as an electrician, Judge Wraight said, but he had left work to look after his mother when she became ill and relapsed into substance use after her death.

A psychological report described Gargasoulas as suffering from a range of psychological disadvantages including depression, stimulant misuse, complex post-traumatic stress and borderline personality disorder, which were factored into his sentencing, along with his eventual guilty plea and the relatively serious nature of the crimes.

But there was no evidence he had been acting purely for profit or as part of a larger syndicate, Judge Wraight concluded, and his offending had been “largely driven by his ongoing serious drug addiction”.

Gargasoulas was sentenced on May 18 to a total of two years and nine months imprisonment with a non-parole period of 21 months.

He had already served 620 days of the sentence. ●

Potter Museum announces major exhibition exploring the art and meaning of the gum tree



The Potter Museum of Art has announced a major new exhibition that will explore one of Australia's most enduring and complex symbols: the gum tree.



WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



Opening on July 10 and running until November 21, *Ngarn Wa'ngal: Art of the gum tree* will bring together 163 artworks spanning colonial, 20th century and contemporary practice, in what the University of Melbourne's Potter Museum describes as a wide-ranging examination of the eucalypt as both a living presence and a powerful cultural symbol.

The title comes from the Woi Wurrung language, with *Ngarn wa'ngal* meaning “breathing for us”, pointing to the deep cultural and ecological significance of the tree across time and place.

Curated by Alisa Bunbury, senior curator of the Grimwade Collection at the University of Melbourne, together with guest curator Sophie Gerhard, the exhibition will feature works by a broad cross-section of artists. These include colonial painters John Glover, Eugene von Guérard



▲ Rob McHaffie – *Single mums at the Reservoir (after Hermann Corrodi)* 2024. Oil on linen Bendigo Art Gallery, 2024. Photo: Rob McHaffie.

and Frederick McCubbin, twentieth-century figures such as Arthur Boyd, Hans Heysen, Albert Namatjira, Grace Cossington Smith and Jessie Traill, alongside contemporary artists including Nici Cumpston, Vincent Namatjira, Joan Ross and Christian Thompson.

Alongside historical works and loans from institutions around the country, the exhibition will also include five significant new commissions.

Among them, Australian photographer Jane E. Brown has created intricate images of gum blossoms and gum nuts using an experimental process involving eucalyptus oil as a developing agent. Dean Cross will present an installation of seed-filled

papier-mâché forms containing manna gum seeds, while Melbourne artist Megan Evans will show an installation of eucalyptus leaves collected over decades, including leaves preserved from the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires. Janet Laurence's contribution will examine scientific classification and environmental witnessing, and Wiradjuri poet and artist Jazz Money will create a floor-based text piece accompanied by a moving image of rising smoke.

Bunbury said the exhibition invited audiences to think more deeply about the role eucalypts play in Australian life.

“*Ngarn Wa'ngal* encourages us to reflect upon the fundamental role of eucalypts in our society and within Australia's natural and built environments,” she said.

“Through this recognition, it also asks us to accept responsibility for their continuity and survival as we negotiate the escalating climate emergency.”

Gerhard said the gum tree remained a powerful but complicated part of Australia's national imagination.

“This exhibition celebrates the eucalypt while drawing attention to how artists have harnessed it as a symbol of Indigenous sovereignty, colonial conquest and contemporary climate action,” she said.

Potter Museum director Charlotte Day said the exhibition would invite audiences to reconsider the eucalypt not just as an icon, but as something still actively shaping culture and meaning.

“The gum tree is one of the most recognisable and complex symbols in Australian life,” she said. “*Ngarn Wa'ngal: Art of the gum tree* invites audiences to reconsider the eucalypt not simply as an icon, but as a living subject that continues to shape artistic, cultural and environmental narratives across generations.” ●

Artist's career comes full circle in Carlton exhibition

A new exhibition in Carlton is celebrating more than two decades of work by Italian-Australian artist Liliana Di Lizio Barbieri, bringing together paintings, photography, installations and sculptural works created across her career.

WORDS BY
DANIEL GAWNE



Recurring Echoes, now showing at CO.AS.IT. in Faraday St, offers what Liliana describes as a “sampler of my career”, with works spanning from 2001 to the present day.

Born in the Abruzzo region of Italy, Liliana migrated to Australia with her family when she was just three years old. While she had long dreamed of becoming an artist, it was only after completing a Master of Arts degree in research as a mature-age student that she began pursuing her practice professionally.

The exhibition reflects the breadth of that journey, exploring cultural memory, migration, ritual, materiality and the act of making.

When selecting works for the exhibition, Liliana said she was drawn to pieces that were “colourful, eye-catching and had a deeper meaning”.

Among the works is a piece dedicated to the 2009 L'Aquila earthquake, the devastating 6.3-magnitude disaster in Italy's Abruzzo region that killed nearly 300 people. Another honours silent women throughout



history whose voices went unheard.

While much of the exhibition is grounded in memory and reflection, Liliana said she also hoped visitors would experience a sense of joy.

She said she loved the “idea of creating things of beauty” and hoped *Recurring Echoes* would be a “joyful experience”, while also encouraging people to contemplate the migrant experience.

The exhibition is being hosted by CO.AS.IT., the Italian Assistance Association, which has supported the Italian-Australian community since 1968. The organisation is strongly committed to the wellbeing and quality of life of the Italian-Australian community, making it a fitting home for an exhibition so deeply connected to memory, identity and cultural inheritance.

Liliana's work has travelled widely, with

exhibitions and projects in Australia, Italy, China, South Korea and New York. But Melbourne remains her home and creative base.

She continues to live and work in the inner city, which she describes as “just brilliant”, and has operated from the same studio for the past 26 years alongside four other women artists.

Her practice is research-based, but she is also an educator, teaching painting, design theory and visual culture.

Recurring Echoes runs until August 15 at CO.AS.IT., 199 Faraday St, Carlton.

The exhibition is open from 10am to 5pm Tuesday to Friday and 1pm to 5pm on Saturday. Entry is free.

An opening event will be held on June 11 from 6.30pm to 8pm, with guests asked to RSVP in advance. ●

Cinema Nova: the heart of Carlton's film culture

“Watching films on a big screen “collides with people’s souls in a way we don’t fully understand,” Cinema Nova CEO Christian Connelly says.

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



The cinema, which come August will be a Melbourne International Film Festival venue, is currently showing an independently made Australian drama about a bisexual, biracial couple who experience “racist-tinged” threats, Connelly says, and recently hosted a Q&A with the filmmaker. Overall, roughly a quarter of its program is “on the bleeding edge”, according to the CEO – for example, the currently screening surrealist biopic of Czech writer Franz Kafka.

Another quarter is “a little more accessible” – such as films from the French film festival or from US independent arthouse company A24, which produced *Moonlight* and *Everything Everywhere All at Once*.

A third quarter is made up of more commercial films, like *The Devil Wears Prada* and *Sheep Detectives*, while “repertory and classic films”, such as anniversary and cult screenings – for instance, Friday night disaster classic *The Room* – make up the rest.

“It’s got to be a mix of things that are going to keep people coming through the door, and then while they’re in the door, they get exposed to things they might not have previously been aware of,” Connelly says.

The cinema boss loves that he is part of an arts institution that sits in “a wellspring of Australian culture” in Carlton and not only reflects but also helps set the taste for a large slice of Melbourne’s cinema-going public, especially in the city’s north.

He finds it “enormously rewarding” to be involved in continuing to provide a welcoming venue with “an authentic, fun environment” and “more thoughtful films” for people from across the community that is clearly valued not only by the residents of Carlton but by those of the inner north, the City of Melbourne and beyond. ●

“People go to a movie, they put down their phone, they focus on that massive screen in front of them and ... they connect with it.”

Connelly believes a new generation has succumbed to that phenomenon, with the Nova, post-COVID, buoyed by strong patronage from 18- to 35-year-olds.

“It’s been acknowledged recently that that’s actually the audience that’s sort of lifting cinema out of the doldrums of the last few years,” he says.

“That’s the demographic who have actually been rediscovering cinema in a way that people didn’t think they would, because it is a generation that’s obviously enjoyed streaming for the last 10 years or so.”

The cinema has had recent hits with “young skewing” horror *The Obsession*, romantic black comedy *The Drama* and “raggedy” comedy *Nirvana the Band the Show the Movie*, Connelly says.

It is good news for the independent cinema complex, which opened in August 1992 with two cinemas and now boasts 16 of them, of

different sizes in a labyrinthine layout.

The venture was set up in the Lygon Court arcade, once the site of Carlton’s alternative theatre the Pram Factory, by former Longford Cinema owner and ACMI founding member Natalie Miller AO – an early champion of foreign films who became the first female film distributor in Australia, together with former Valhalla owner and film director Barry Peak.

A part of the building is heritage protected, Connelly says, because Helen Garner spent time working on her novel *Monkey Grip* there.

The Nova still features the golden egg-shaped speakers its initial two cinemas were fitted out with and signature purple carpet and walls.

These days there is a licensed bar with a serious wine menu as well as a popcorn and choc-top dispensing snack bar, and a large atmospherically lit area to lounge around in.

On Mondays, the complex goes “insane” with the viewing public taking advantage of \$8 movie tickets before 4pm and \$11 ones from late afternoon.

Natalie Miller and Barry Peak are both still directors of the company and work with its CEO on programming.

They have avoided “fast money” flicks, Connelly notes.

“We’ve not played a Marvel film or a Star Wars film, I don’t think. We tend to avoid the major franchises.”

The trio are, obviously, “very selective”.

“We take a curatorial approach to what we book,” Connelly says. “We prioritise a diverse selection of quality film and genre film from across the globe, as well as at home.”

In the process they watch every movie they “bring to the screen”. A lot of time and energy goes into “raising up locally made features and filmmakers and projects”.



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Taste & Temptation: Johnston Collection exhibition tour now open



The Johnston Collection house museum in East Melbourne is thrilled to welcome Dr Matthew Martin as guest curator of their latest exhibition tour *Taste & Temptation*.



Dr Martin is a specialist in European luxury arts of the 1600s-1800s. For 13 years, he was a curator in the Department of International Decorative Arts at the National Gallery of Victoria and is currently a faculty member in Art History and Curatorship at the University of Melbourne.

This autumn and winter, each room of the museum's historic, 1860s townhouse "Fairhall", has been theatrically reimaged to evoke the lavish art of eating and drinking in Europe in the eighteenth century. In the 1700s, food and drink were more than mere sustenance. A table could display wealth, style, and luxury, be the setting for gossip and social intrigue, and reveal powerful political allegiances.

In this exhibition tour, visitors explore a haven for political rebels; a stylish Continental *Kaffeeklatch* where women enjoyed coffee and conversation; a sumptuous dessert setting; a baroque dining room laden with silver; and an elegant morning room for the rituals of dressing and hot chocolate.

"I hope the exhibition inspires visitors to think about some of the frankly odd things we do at the dining table and reflect on why this is the case," Dr Martin said. "What one ate, and how one ate it, was inescapably political, and this social-political dimension of dining practices is still with us today."

The Johnston Collection houses a superb collection of English Georgian, Regency, and Louis XV fine and decorative arts and hosts a vibrant program of guided tours, lectures, workshops, and events.

"Fairhall" and the Collection were a gift to the people of Victoria from William Robert Johnston (1911-1986), a prominent Melbourne-born antique dealer, real estate investor, and collector. In line with Mr Johnston's wishes, the Collection is displayed in a regularly re-arranged domestic setting. Visitors have a unique opportunity to examine precious silver, furniture, glass, ceramics, timepieces, and objet d'art without the distraction of ropes or labels.

The Johnston Collection warmly welcomes visitors to experience *Taste & Temptation*. The exhibition is open Wednesdays to Sundays until September 27, 2026, for pre-booked tours (for individuals or groups of up to 22).

View exquisite fine and decorative arts from The Johnston Collection in an exciting new arrangement and discover the taste and temptations of eighteenth-century drinking and dining.

For more information, pick up a brochure at East Melbourne Library, the Melbourne Visitor Hub, or visit johnstoncollection.org

Expansion of council's Community Safety Officer program contested

The City of Melbourne's allocation of millions of dollars to put council-employed community safety officers on the streets has been met with significant opposition.

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



Greens councillor Dr Olivia Ball recently voted against the council's 2026-27 budget on the grounds of the allocation, which will see a doubling of the number of officers employed to tackle antisocial behaviour.

The nearly \$4 million price tag for the council's community safety program, which began at the end of October last year, includes \$1.7 million to increase the number of community safety officers (CSOs) from 11 to 22.

Up to 150 cameras are also set to be added to the Safe City CCTV network with \$320,000 allocated for round-the-clock monitoring of the system.

According to the council, the role of the CSOs, who operate seven days a week across the CBD and inner-city areas, is to: "address issues which impact safety and the perception of safety"; respond to antisocial behaviour using de-escalation and negotiation techniques; act to enforce local laws and specific state laws; provide welfare checks and support service referrals; and issue directions or infringement notices on matters affecting community safety until police arrive.

A council review of the program's initial



six months found that officers had recorded more than 50 engagements a day, with the vast majority described as constructive or supportive and less than three per cent negative.

This showed the program functioned "primarily as a support, connection and prevention role, rather than an enforcement mechanism," the report said.

City of Melbourne general manager of infrastructure and amenity Rick Kwasek told councillors the program, which was currently being reviewed by human rights experts, was "running successfully to date" as far as staff were concerned.

While Cr Dr Ball acknowledged the City had received 52 survey responses supporting the CSO program, she pointed to a recently-submitted petition signed by 966 people calling for an end to it.

Councillors had heard "a chorus of voices" speak out against the officers at a May 12 public budget session, she said, suggesting that if voices in such numbers had come from East Melbourne instead of the homelessness sector, their demands wouldn't have "fallen on deaf ears".

The Greens councillor reiterated some of the arguments made at the May 12

meeting, including "red flags" raised by Inner Melbourne Community Legal.

The IMCL's Shifrah Blustein had described the City's budget as "sacrific[ing] kindness for an optics of safety".

The CSO program "duplicates the doubled police presence in the CBD," she said, and was "ineffective, wasteful, and legally risky" with the council's blurred

lines between support and enforcement roles ... very problematic".

"Without clearly lawful authority, council risks civil claims, including torts of false imprisonment, assault and battery, breaches of human rights, negligence, and duty of care issues and discrimination claims," she said.

CSOs could face personal as well as criminal and civil action and if a member of the community was harmed by a CSO's actions, the council could be exposed to significant damages.

Pat Chiappalone, from Homeless Persons Union Victoria, labelled the program "disempowering" and "informed by bureaucrats".

"It has nothing to do with delivering a health and wellbeing service response. It is a strategy based on fault and a false sense of security, rather than generally building a participatory and inclusive community from the bottom up," he said.

Like the dozen or so public contributors at the earlier meeting, Cr Dr Ball urged councillors on May 26 to instead channel money into homelessness support.

"Now is the time to end this trial and spend that money instead to do our utmost to solve homelessness," she said.

Aside from Cr Owen Guest, who abstained from voting on transparency grounds, the remaining councillors – Griffiths, Le Liu, Camillo, Campbell, Scott, Liu, Rowse, Louey and Reece – voted in favour of the budget. ●

Local sexual health services struggle with demand

Changes to the operation of two of Melbourne's major inner-city sexual health services at a time when sexually transmitted infection (STI) numbers are soaring have reportedly left some user groups and experts concerned.

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



The services say the changes are needed to continue to treat patients effectively in the face of increasing demand.

The Melbourne Sexual Health Centre (MSHC) in Carlton, Victoria's only public sexual health clinic, recently announced an end to its decades-long policy of providing anonymous free walk-in appointments because it had "reached capacity" and had had to turn more than 4000 people away the previous year.

The centre experienced an increase in patient numbers of nearly 30 per cent in the past five years and had had more than 53,000 presentations in 2025.

A move to booked appointments, organised through a telephone triage system, enabled it to prioritise urgent and complex cases and reduce waiting times and congestion, it said.

The Swanston St clinic, which focuses on STIs, HIV care and prevention, as well as research, is now channelling many non-urgent, non-specialist patients to local GPs or other services, which may not bulk bill.

"While a walk-in model once suited the service, significant year-on-year increases in demand meant it was no longer the best approach for our patients or staff," a spokesperson said.

However, people needing sexual health services were still getting expert care, they said, with most patients given a same-day appointment and people able to remain anonymous if they wanted to, while very vulnerable clients would still be seen on a walk-in basis.

In the CBD, "independent charity" Sexual Health Victoria (SHV), which focuses on reproductive and sexual health care, education and advocacy, is closing its Elizabeth St clinic, channelling all patients, from June 1, to its Box Hill facility.

SHV had 14,350 in-person appointments at the two clinics last year and was currently experiencing increased demand across all appointment types, with wait times averaging around three weeks, a spokesperson said.

Government funding had been consistent but had failed to keep pace with "the rising cost of healthcare delivery, particularly workforce expenses," SHV said, with "no material review or increase in government funding for SHV in 15 years, beyond basic yearly CPI indexation".

Meanwhile, according to the organisation, gonorrhoea infections have risen 52 per cent in Victoria in the last five years and chlamydia, the most common STI, by 28 per cent, with more than 22,000 cases reported in the last 12 months, while both syphilis and gonorrhoea have more than doubled nationally over the past decade.

SHV said that it expected increased capacity as a result of an expansion at Box Hill would help reduce wait times and didn't



anticipate any significant change to its "everyBody Education" sexual health programs, which were delivered directly to students in schools, as a result of the CBD closure. Nor would telehealth services be affected, with future service growth set to focus on expanding this mode of delivery, the spokesperson said.

Media reports suggest a concern among sexual health-related organisations and experts about the situation.

The acting head of HIV/AIDS and LGBTIQ+ health organisation Thorne Harbour Health told the ABC that sexual health services were too difficult to access in Victoria, particularly for young people.

The Burnet Institute's head of public health Professor Mark Stooze, interviewed by *The Age*, said that underinvestment by successive governments in sexual health services had put a lot of pressure on the Sexual Health Clinic.

Having only one free public sexual health service for the state was not good enough, he said, with NSW funding 50 such clinics. ●



Feed me.
Fill me.
Fico me.

“ It reads like a line you shouldn't say out loud. That's exactly why you remember it. ”

Carlton doesn't struggle for good restaurants. It struggles for ones that feel different.

So, when a restaurant opens with a line like "Feed me. Fill me. Fico me.", it doesn't just catch attention, it challenges expectation. It feels a little too bold, a little too self-aware, a little too close to something you wouldn't normally see in print.

But spend a night at Fico Restaurant & Bar, and the meaning shifts. What reads as cheeky starts to feel deliberate. What feels provocative starts to feel considered.

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Feed me

At the centre of it all is the Feed Me menu. Not a gimmick, but the clearest expression of the kitchen.

A curated selection that moves through antipasti, pasta and secondi, designed to showcase the best of what's coming out of the pass at any given moment. Seasonal, generous, and grounded in Italian tradition, but without the formality that can slow things down.

Executive chef Patrick's philosophy is simple: let the food speak and let the table build. Homemade pasta extruded daily, slow-cooked meats, dishes that are meant to be shared, passed, and reordered.

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If the food sets the tone, the drinks keep it moving.

At Fico, there's a rhythm to the room. Glasses are topped before they're empty. A second bottle appears without being chased. The night doesn't pause between courses, it flows.

That rhythm is shaped by food and beverage manager Chris McNally, whose approach to service is instinctive rather than scripted. It's about reading the table, understanding the pace, and making sure nothing interrupts it.

Wine, cocktails, simple pours, it all plays its part.

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Fico me

This is the part you can't quite define. Which is exactly the point.

"Fico me" isn't something you order. It's something you feel.

It's the moment the table settles. When conversation deepens. When the room lifts just enough that time becomes irrelevant. It's the theatre of a tableside sgruppino, sharp and cold, spun together in front of you, equal parts ritual and indulgence.

It's the people. The music. The atmosphere that builds without trying too hard.

And it's the setting.

Across the road, the Moreton Bay Fig tree in Lincoln Square stretches wide, a constant presence framed through the restaurant's floor-to-ceiling windows. It's more than a view. It's a reminder of what Fico Carlton is built around.

A place to gather. To linger. To stay longer than expected.

The name itself comes from that tree. A symbol of connection, of shade, of time slowing down just enough.

Carlton has always understood that rhythm. Long dinners, shared plates, nights that extend without asking permission. Fico doesn't recreate it. It simply belongs to it.

Feed me. Fill me. Fico me.

It might sound like something else at first. But by the end of the night, it feels exactly right. ●



Installation view of *Tuengel* by Dr Wang Zhigang in Earthwise, Genesis Art Gallery, Beijing Art and Technology Biennale (2025). Photo: Lubin Bai.

EMERGENCE(Y) at Science Gallery explores survival in a changing world

The latest exhibition at the University of Melbourne's Science Gallery will explore how humans, ecosystems and technologies might survive and adapt in a rapidly changing world.

WORDS BY
DANIEL GAWNE



Opening on June 6 and running until December 5, *EMERGENCE(Y)* examines ecological collapse, rapid digitisation and social upheaval, while asking how we might endure, and even thrive, amid ongoing transformation.

The exhibition is the newest offering in Science Gallery Melbourne's annual program, which explores the intersection of art and science. This year's show will feature works ranging from coral soundscapes that may help restore damaged reefs to AI-driven political experiments.

Tilly Boleyn, head curator at Science Gallery Melbourne, said the exhibition highlighted adaptation as both a necessity and an act of creativity.

"*EMERGENCE(Y)* serves as a profound reminder that adaptation is both a biological necessity and a creative endeavour," she said.

"*EMERGENCE(Y)* invites us to explore the interconnectedness of all life and imagine how we might thrive collectively in a rapidly evolving world."

One of the centrepieces of the exhibition is a new commission by renowned

Australian artist Patricia Piccinini. The work follows a year-long residency with Science Gallery Melbourne, during which Piccinini spent time in stem cell research laboratories at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. With the new sculpture, she revisits her seminal early work *Still Life with Stem Cells* on its 25th anniversary.

Other featured works include a flourishing vertical farm that will produce fresh food harvested on site. Created by Greenspace in collaboration with researchers from the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology, the installation aims to show how sustainable food systems can be integrated into urban life.

Australian designer and academic Alia Parker will also present a collection of fire-resistant, non-combustible garments made from a composite of mushroom mycelium and post-consumer cotton textile waste.

The exhibition will also host the Australian premiere of *Tuengel* by Dr Wang Zhigang, professor of information and design at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Built from e-waste, the video installation immerses audiences in a post-apocalyptic electronic wasteland where humans, animals and intelligent machine lifeforms coexist among the ruins of obsolete technology.

Science Gallery Melbourne director Dr Ryan Jefferies said the exhibition could not be more timely.

"It encourages us to confront the pressing realities of our time in an increasingly turbulent world," he said.

"It's an invitation to step into a future where creative and intercultural collaborations inspire hope and foster resilience."

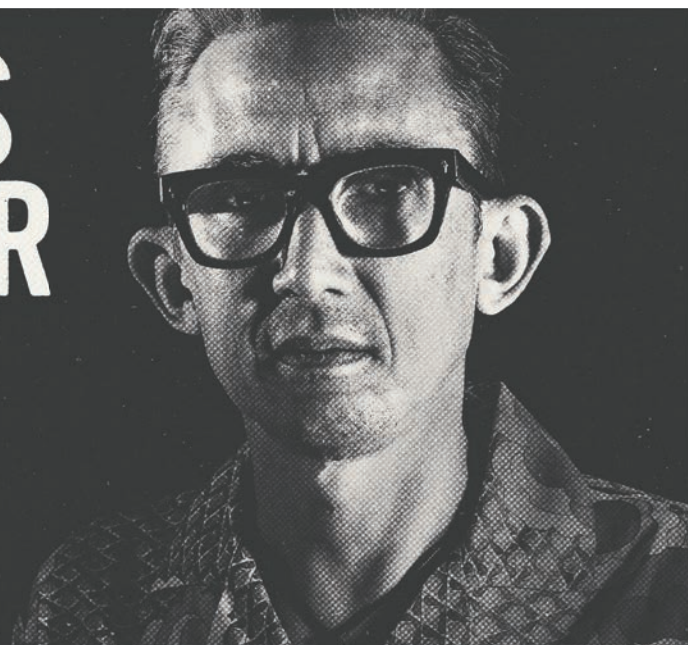
EMERGENCE(Y) is curated by Tilly Boleyn, with input from a team of academic experts and young people. ●

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Heritage lottery

Three weeks ago, on Saturday, May 9, there was a wonderful celebration of the 125th anniversary of the opening of Australia's Federal Parliament.

WORDS BY
TRISH O'LOUGHLIN – PRESIDENT

It was held at the very site of Australia's First Parliament – the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens, UNESCO and World Heritage site.

Brief background

1880: The building and grounds were designed by architect Joseph Reed and were initially constructed for the 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition.

July 1, 2004: the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens became both the first Victorian place and the first "built" Heritage site in Australia to be added to the World Heritage List.

July 20, 2004: the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens was also added to Australia's National Heritage list.

May 9, 1901: The Opening of the First Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.

A huge and brilliant painting of the opening and the first sitting of Parliament by Tom Roberts is now on permanent display at Parliament House in Canberra. The development of Canberra as the nation's capital was still many years away.

The artist Tom Roberts took two-and-a-half years and at great cost to his health to painstakingly complete "The Big Picture". In



this painting one can see the stunning interior of the Royal Exhibition Building with some of the architectural features.

Wikipedia – "The Big Picture" (painting) by Tom Roberts

On May 9, Carlton Residents' Association (CRA) representatives were honoured to share in this celebration of a wonderful asset to the heritage of the City of Melbourne. The CRA looks forward to sharing, with the Museum, in the future journey of the Royal Exhibition Building and surrounds.

And so ... it is with great sadness and

considerable frustration that we witness the neglect, inside and out, and lack of care, respect and appreciation shown towards this iconic Melbourne asset, especially as Melburnians we profess to pay homage to our heritage buildings.

We know that many others share our concerns and now is the time to come up with new ideas on how we can join together to preserve what we treasure.

Here's a suggestion:

A statewide heritage lottery proposal

To help preserve and restore our state's

most iconic heritage building and grounds, the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens, UNESCO and World Heritage site.

I propose the creation of a special state-wide heritage lottery.

The lottery could operate as a limited annual event, with proceeds dedicated specifically to the conservation, restoration and long-term protection of the building. Tickets could be sold across the state through newsagents, online platforms and community organisations, creating an opportunity for the wider public to directly participate in saving an important part of our shared history.

The campaign could include:

- Major cash prizes funded through ticket sales
- Heritage-themed events and promotions
- Public tours and exhibitions connected to the Royal Exhibition Building.
- Partnerships with local businesses, councils and historical societies
- Recognition for contributors and supporters

A heritage lottery would not only raise essential funds, but also increase public awareness, community pride and engagement with our architectural and cultural history. This strategy has had huge success in the UK.

Many people feel deeply connected to historic landmarks, yet traditional funding sources are often insufficient for the scale of restoration required. A statewide lottery offers an imaginative and community-driven solution, allowing ordinary citizens to play a direct role in preserving an irreplaceable part of our heritage for future generations.

This initiative could become a model for heritage preservation across Australia. ●

PARKVILLE ASSOCIATION

Parking and heritage remain front of mind in Parkville

On the coldest day of the year so far, around 15 residents of Parkville made their way to a workshop, in Carlton, organised by officers of the City of Melbourne and their traffic consultants.

WORDS BY
RAY OSBORNE – PRESIDENT

We discussed the thorny issue of car parking, as part of a review of parking in Parkville. They would have left with a comprehensive understanding of the issues, and with a number of suggestions for them to address. If you could not attend, you can still make a written submissions at any time via this link: participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/parkville-parking-review

The Planning Panel hearing for "Amendment C444melb" Parkville Heritage Review commenced on May 11. The timetable allowed for eight days of presentations to the panel. The panel report will be considered, in due course, by the City of Melbourne.

This process is the next iteration in the history of protecting and conserving South Parkville. This process stretches back to the mid-1960s, with the formation of the Parkville Association on July 14, 1967.

Just under 60 years of history forms the basis of an article published in *Urban History* (2026) titled, *Monuments to precincts: the National Trust, the Parkville Association and the invention of local heritage in Parkville, Melbourne, 1950s–2020s*, authored by James Lesh.

This open-source article was circulated to members of the Parkville Association, but deserves a much wider audience, scan QR code for more.

Part of this history included the publication, in 1974, of *South Parkville*, by Hilary Lewis, with its detailed history of virtually every portion developed in South Parkville from 1875 to 1972.

I am happy to be corrected, but I consider this detailed history is not matched by any other suburb in Melbourne, nor across Victoria. It was revised and reissued by the Parkville Association as a second edition in 1996. It is an invaluable resource, particularly for any new residents to Parkville.

On May 26, a meeting was held of the Royal Park stakeholders. An update of the timetable for the release of the Royal Park Master Plan was received. Also, there was a discussion on the physical impacts of unregulated parking which took place during the Sikh Games, as well as a program of remediation which was subsequently required.

Number 35-39 Royal Parade, which was the subject of a VCAT hearing in 2023, has now been sold. VCAT issued a conditional approval for the development of the site. Therefore, it will be of considerable interest to Parkville residents, and the Parkville



Association which opposed the development, to see what emerges from this sale.

It is almost a year since the tram stops along Royal Parade were upgraded. Unfortunately, you can still see cars, lorries, and in one case a police van, drive past a stopped tram with its bell dinging furiously, and its lights flashing. On some trips I have taken, traffic does halt at every stop, and at other times the tram driver refuses to open the doors for pedestrians as the traffic makes no effort to stop.

Just a reminder that joining the Parkville Association will be free until June 30, 2027, on a "try before you buy" basis. Several residents have taken advantage of this

offer. Membership forms are available via parkvilleassociation.org.com.

If, however, you also want to take a subscription or donate, to support the Parkville Association, this would of course be most welcome. ●



The Dewdrop Fountain, Fitzroy Gardens

On a piece of flattish ground near the Gipps St and Clarendon St corner of the Fitzroy Gardens and directly in line with Bishopscourt there once stood a rather impressive fountain.

It was designed by Charles Summers and installed in 1862. It was known as the River God and, if contemporary drawings are to be believed, a very powerful character he was.

Sprays of water burst from his head in rays of ecstasy, with no thought that one day water might be a precious commodity.

But in 1956 with the Olympics on its doorstep Melbourne was in the throes of modernisation and the River God was beginning to look tired. He was removed and put into storage, only to be reincarnated forty years later and reinstalled opposite the Eades St entrance to the Gardens. He is a much calmer god these days.

In the meantime, the City Council wanted a suitably modern fountain to take the River God's place and commissioned the architectural firm of Grounds, Romberg and Boyd to design it.

Robin Boyd apparently struggled to come up with a satisfactory solution and sought help from the up-and-coming sculptor Inge King. He stipulated that the design should include a birdbath.

King designed a great twining plant, with huge round waterlily-like leaves branching off it, topped with a stylised bird. The whole lot was over 12 metres tall. Quoted in *The Age* on June 8, 1960, King said, "It was a technical challenge to me, a sculptor, and to my husband, who is a painter."

Neither had previously worked with a welder. However, an engineer friend agreed to make them an electric arc welder and offered assistance in the construction if needed. It took six months to make. It was known as the Dewdrop Fountain and, quite unlike the River God, water dripped slowly from leaf to leaf just as a dew drop might. It was also known more familiarly as the



Fountain of the Birds possibly because it was usually covered with seagulls.

The photo here shows the fountain with lawn up to its edge but in later years a wide band of circular paving stones was placed around the fountain, with the shape of the stones echoing the leaves of the fountain.

Children loved to play chases here, leaping from one stone to the next, but never in-between. The fountain became a much-loved feature of the gardens but sadly by 1980 it was showing signs of rust and was dismantled and removed.

As the first of King's many pieces of public art it would add much to the appreciation of the work of one of our most significant modern sculptors to see the Dewdrop Fountain reinstated. ●

Photo: The fountain in 1960. City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection.

Sylvia Black

SECRETARY – EAST MELBOURNE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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The balance at the heart of Yarra Park is about to be broken

For more than a century and a half, Yarra Park has held two important roles.

WORDS BY
GREG BISINELLA – PRESIDENT

It is the green forecourt to the MCG on select event days. Every other day of the year, it is one of inner Melbourne's most-used public parks – the place where apartment-dwellers from East Melbourne, Richmond, Abbotsford, Collingwood, Jolimont and the CBD walk a dog, kick a footy, lay out a picnic rug, or sit under a tree.

That balance has worked. The City of Melbourne's own data shows three-quarters of East Melbourne residents use Yarra Park, with a catchment that reaches well past the East Melbourne boundary. The park's primary character has been preserved alongside the big events that make Melbourne Melbourne.

But a proposed new Master Plan now sitting with the Minister for Planning for approval would tip that balance for good – opening the door for heritage public parkland to be converted, by stealth, into a semi-permanent corporate event space.

The East Melbourne Group is not against the Grand Final, the Boxing Day Test, or the major concerts the MCG has always hosted. But the reality is these changes would authorise permanent event infrastructure embedded inside the park. New buildings with no maximum size set in the binding document. Underground power and water lines to selected paddocks. Permanent walls and barriers where temporary fencing used to come down after a match. Architectural lighting that extends out from the stadium into the parkland.



It would also change who gets a say in events held in the park. A new permit-exemption pathway would be carved out under rules that have not yet been written. A resident could turn up one morning to walk the dog, and find part of their park fenced off for a corporate event nobody got to comment on.

Temporary structures, put up and packed down for events, have always been part of the park's life. Permanent ones change what the park is.

The way this amendment has reached the Minister is part of the concern too. Submitters have not been allowed to see the final binding document now in front of her. The City of Melbourne asked for residential amenity to be added as a guiding principle. That request was refused.

Once gazetted, the amendment is in the planning scheme. Once permanent infrastructure is built, it does not come out. The Minister should send the amendment back to the department, so the issues submitters have raised can be properly resolved before any sign-off. ●

CARLTON NEIGHBOURHOOD LEARNING CENTRE

A cup of tea cannot be downloaded

Six years of my working life were spent in Aotearoa New Zealand campaigning against pokies with the Problem Gambling Foundation. What I learned sitting with people whose lives had been hollowed out by those machines has stayed with me.

WORDS BY
TONY R MILNE



Pokies are not accidents. They are designed, feature by feature, sound by sound, to hook people and keep them hooked.

I think about that work often now, when I watch what is happening with social media and the new wave of AI tools. They are being built using the same playbook. Endless scroll. Variable rewards. Notifications timed to catch you at your weakest moment. The people who design these products know exactly what they are doing. Our attention is the jackpot, and we are the ones being played.

I am the first to admit I am a doomscroller, particularly between the hours of 3am and

5am. Not ideal. Of all people, I should recognise the signs of a product designed to addict. The pokies work taught me exactly what these things do. I still scroll.

What worries me most is not the screens themselves. It is what they are quietly replacing.

The surveys keep telling us the same thing. People are lonelier than ever, and young people most of all. You can have a thousand followers and still have no-one to call when your car breaks down. A direct message is not a cup of tea. A heart emoji is not someone sitting beside you on a garden bench while the kettle boils.

This is where Neighbourhood Houses do something remarkable. They are places where people actually meet each other. A cooking class. A knitting circle. A chess game. A walk around the vegie garden. Someone new showing up for the first time and being offered a biscuit. These are small things, and they are everything.

The hunger for that kind of connection is showing up in unexpected places. In February 2024, three friends in the Netherlands – Jordy van Bennekom, Valentijn Klok and Ilya Kneppelhout – opened the doors of a small Amsterdam venue called Café Brecht and asked everyone who walked in to lock their phone in a wooden box for the next two hours. They called it The Offline Club. Within a month they had picked up 125,000 followers on Instagram, which is its own little irony. Their gatherings have since spread to cities including London, Copenhagen, Barcelona and Lisbon, with tickets often selling out within minutes.

What happens once the door closes is surprisingly simple. People hand over their phones and spend time reading, drawing, knitting, playing cards or quietly talking with strangers. Some sessions include periods of silence followed by conversation. Soft music plays. People end up swapping book recommendations or simply sitting together without needing to perform for

anyone.

Leah Davies, a young woman from Wales, told one reporter she had seen a post showing people reading and playing piano together and was struck by the simple appeal of going somewhere where you weren't checking your phone all night. That is the whole pitch. People are paying money to be told, gently, to put the thing down.

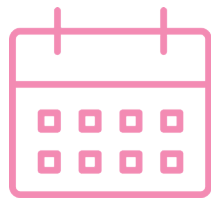
The strange thing is that we now need organised events to recreate what used to happen naturally. A cup of tea, a book on your lap, someone across the room asking what you're reading – none of that used to be a movement. It was just Tuesday afternoon.

That is, in a sense, the work Neighbourhood Houses have been doing for decades, before there was a name for it. Carlton's doors are open, no ticket required. The phone stays in your pocket if you want it to. Someone will know your name by the second visit.

AI will write our emails and plan our holidays. It cannot pour you a cup of tea. It cannot sit in the quiet with you. It cannot learn your name the way the staff and community members at your local Neighbourhood House, including ours at Carlton, will.

Some things only humans can give each other. If you pass an open door with a warm light inside, you might just walk in. ●

WHAT'S ON June



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



RISING: DAY TRIPPER

An eight-hour, multi-stage music and performance event featuring international and local artists, experimental acts and immersive experiences.

Melbourne Town Hall

SATURDAY 6 JUNE, 12PM – 8PM



DISCOTECA ITALIANA

Discoteca Italiana is a one-night celebration of Italian culture, featuring DJs, Roman-inspired food, museum experiences and exclusive after-hours access.

Melbourne Museum

SATURDAY 6 JUNE, 7PM – 11PM



THE LYGON STREET MARKET

Held monthly in Carlton, the Lygon Street Market celebrates Italian heritage with handmade art, local design, gourmet food and live entertainment.

Piazza Italia (Argyle Square), Carlton

SUNDAY 7 JUNE, 10AM – 3PM



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



COMIC BOOK WONDER DAZE

This July holiday program invites young people to create collaborative comics, win prizes, build creative skills and connect with publishing industry professionals. Tickets: \$25+ BF. Scan QR code for more.

East Melbourne Library

1, 3 & 8 JULY, 3PM – 4PM



LA MAMA EXPLORATIONS

La Mama Explorations 2026 showcases 52 bold new works-in-progress, offering audiences an early look at innovative future theatre productions.

La Mama HQ, 205 Faraday St, Carlton

UNTIL 30 AUGUST, 7.30PM – 9PM



MELBOURNE SUNRISE HOT AIR BALLOON FLIGHT

Experience Melbourne from above with a sunrise hot air balloon flight, soaring over iconic landmarks before enjoying breakfast and extras.

Pullman Melbourne On The Park

UNTIL 31 AUGUST, 4.30AM – 9AM



EMERGENCE[Y]

EMERGENCE[Y] explores how people and ecosystems adapt to global change through art, science and innovation, inspiring action toward reimagined futures.

Science Gallery Melbourne, Parkville

UNTIL 5 DECEMBER, 11AM – 5PM



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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