

Sydney Observer

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MARCH 2025 - SYDNEYOBSERVER.COM.AU

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IN PRINT SINCE 1996

Dave Hughes

and his bits

**WORK FROM
HOME DEBATE**

**A CRUISE
THROUGH
NORWAY**

**PAYING FOR
LOCAL MARKETS?**

**AMAZING
HUMANS OF
THE NORTH
SHORE**

**THE DIY
DINING SCENE**

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EDITOR'S HIGHLIGHTS

Yes, it's us, *Sydney Observer*, but back this month with a new look and a whole new bunch of material.

We have of course our regular contributors providing their usual gems, and some new contributors endeavouring to both inform and entertain.

Comedian and television personality Dave Hughes is our profile this month, and we take you all the way to Norway on a two week cruise up through the Arctic Circle.

Enjoy marvellous March and the new *Sydney Observer*.



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Nelia, Outback Queensland

Gladesville water: If you're after a nice weekend walk, check out Bedlam Bay in Gladesville. It's just past Lane Cove, has beautiful views of the water and is dog friendly!



Macquarie University fountain: The North Shore's local university campus grounds has a beautiful green field with a waterfall feature that is open to the public. It makes for a great walk.



Typical struggles locals face in West Crete, Greece



Dural stall: We couldn't help but take a snap of this fruit and vegetable stall on the way to Dural.



Turramurra flowers: There have been plenty of eye-catching blooms across Kuring-gai over the warm months, including this flowering gum tree in Turramurra.



Harbour Bridge seat: This spot at Lavender Bay Ferry Wharf has gorgeous views of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.



Balmoral shells: Someone was feeling rather creative with shells they had foraged along the shore of Balmoral Beach.



Wonderful opportunity to ask questions and gather information

Northern Sydney & Central Coast Retirement Village & Resort Expo

Sunday 23rd & Monday 24th March 2025 | 10am-3pm daily
Hornsby RSL Club, 4 High St Hornsby | FREE ADMISSION

On display will be the latest resort style developments as well as established villages from many different organisations. All offering a wide range of services & facilities, sizes, prices and locations, all under one roof with free admission.

www.retirementexpo.com.au



KU-RING-GAI'S MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL

Sunday, 23 March, will see the St Ives Showground host council's first Multicultural Festival to celebrate local diversity. Between 10am and 3pm there will be music and dance performances, workshops and a variety of stalls featuring community information, food and cultural wares from around the world.

There will be entertainment for children including craft, camel rides and mini train rides. Highlights include workshops on African drumming, the French language, Egyptian belly dancing and dancing Bollywood style. Food stalls will be offering cuisine from Peru, Hawaii, Japan, Holland, Spain, Germany, Malaysia, India and Korea.

According to the latest Census in 2021, nearly 40% of Ku-ring-gai's residents come from non-English speaking backgrounds. In 2022 the Council established a Multicultural Advisory Committee to ensure diverse cultural groups were represented in decision-making.

Visit krg.nsw.gov.au/multicultural for full details of the Festival. St Ives Showground is at 450 Mona Vale Road St Ives and there is free parking on site.



SING AUSTRALIA!

Sing Australia accepts that everyone can sing – no judgements, all welcoming. Their mission to make it possible for everyone to sing together in a non-judgmental environment and to be inspired to sing the most glorious songs ever composed.

They provide a chance to make happy connections with people from all walks of life and demographics within groups and through performances, gatherings, tours and impromptu opportunities to sing.

Their next mission is a series of Regional Gatherings that will be part celebratory and part looking at the exciting possibilities ahead. These will be packed with classic songs and showcase some of their newer repertoire.

These Gatherings will be the perfect opportunity for you to come along and bring a friend or relative. They are really needing to take this opportunity to attract younger people to Sing Australia. People in their 50's, 60's continue to flourish, but of course anyone is always welcome.

Email Gatherings@singaustralia.com.au for more information.

Another part of their celebratory year is to host some very special tours. Their 40+ overseas tours include

- UK/Ireland in May/June – contact Margaret Slater on 0429 921 500.
- Norfolk Island in April.



HKWS CELEBRATES WOMEN'S DAY

A momentous event in Ku-ring-gai's calendar is the annual Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Women's Shelter's (HKWS) International Women's Day Luncheon at Pymble Golf Club.

This year was bigger than ever as it marked the 10th anniversary of the Shelter's founding; and was filled with hope by over 300 locals out in force to acknowledge the vision and great work that's been done by HKWS, and to recognise the courage and strength of women who have rebuilt their lives after experiencing domestic violence and homelessness.

HKWS is a frontline community funded service that empowers women to escape from domestic and family violence, helping survivors to rebuild their lives with holistic trauma-informed care, such as crisis accommodation, health and wellbeing, employment and legal support.

HKWS Chair Catherine Knox said, "Our community supported our mission before we even opened our doors, and we are grateful they continue to do so; allowing the women who seek our care to create an independent future that is free from violence."

There is a significant gap in Sydney's North Shore for domestic violence refuges, despite concerning reports that family and domestic violence is on the rise, with recorded criminal incidents from March 2020 to March 2024 showing a 7.8 per cent increase per year within the North Sydney to Hornsby region.

"Domestic violence is not somebody else's problem. Every single one of us has a responsibility to take action when and where it is needed," said Gisele Kapterian, Liberal Candidate for Bradfield.



"I'll be doing my bit to help address the causes of this issue, but also ensure that there's the right help for the many affected in our community."

A long-time supporter of HKWS, retiring MP for Bradfield Paul Fletcher said, "I was delighted to be there and to see such a strong attendance – and touched when guest speaker Annabelle Daniel reminisced about the 2014 Bradfield Comedy Debate I organised which raised some \$10,000 to support HKWS in its early days."

On the impact of community funding to enable these vital services, Ku-ring-gai Financial Services director and HKWS patron Emeritus Mayor Jennifer Anderson OAM said, "Today's event was another inspiring example of how our amazing community has come together to fund and support HKWS; the community Bank Lindfield has been privileged to assist the shelter to realise its vision."

The event was attended by many other local community and advocacy leaders, including Women's Community Shelter's CEO Annabelle Daniel OAM; mental health charity Lifeline CEO Elizabeth Lovell; Davidson MP Matt Cross; Wahroonga MP Alister Henskens; Ku-ring-gai Mayor Christine Kay; Ku-ring-gai Councillor Barbara Ward and Hornsby Councillor Sallianne McClelland; Women's Shed Hornsby & Ku-ring-gai's Mala Mehta OAM; and Ku-ring-gai Neighbourhood



OPINION

WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN COMBATTING ANTISEMITISM

by Matt Cross

A few months ago, the local rabbi invited me to the synagogue to help plant a tree. This was no ordinary event with a shovel and watering can. That day we planted a dedicated tree of peace.

Our local synagogues are places that bring our vibrant Jewish community together to share faith, worship, and prayer. They are safe spaces of love, peace and inclusion.

The antisemitic language, graffiti, vandalism, violence and terror we are tragically witnessing are acts of hate, evil and exclusion.

Our Jewish community justifiably feels unsafe. This is heartbreaking.

Antisemitism goes against everything we stand for as Australians and the values we hold dear – and it's been on the rise since 7 October 2023.

Data released to the NSW Parliament shows the NSW Police Force received 130 incidents of antisemitism in the financial year before October 2023. In the following year, there were 425 incidents – representing a shocking 227 percent increase.

We cannot, under any circumstance, allow antisemitism to become normalised in our community.

In February, the NSW Parliament strengthened crime laws to address graffiti and activities on or near



The tree of peace I helped plant with the rabbi continues to grow in the local synagogue garden.

places of worship. Whilst I support peaceful protest, there is no place in our community to target places where people congregate to share and express their faith. To do so removes the freedom, safety, and dignity of a community.

Data released to the NSW Parliament shows 117 public assemblies were held in the year after October 2023 in Sydney's Hyde Park opposite the Great Synagogue. This has resulted in our Jewish community changing or cancelling plans, such as bar and bat mitzvahs. A protest that directly impacts the freedom of a community is not the Australian way.

WHAT CAN EACH OF US DO RIGHT NOW?

Firstly and fundamentally, we all have a role to play in combatting antisemitism. It begins by calling it out – in all its forms. Whether it's an antisemitic comment from a colleague, friend or family member – or serious acts of antisemitic vandalism, graffiti, violence or terrorism. We can no longer stay silent when we see it and hear it.

Secondly, we need to talk to and educate our children and young people that antisemitism is not acceptable. In my community, Jewish students have told me they've been bullied by antisemitic language and graffiti. Our schools and campuses should be safe, welcoming and inclusive places for learning. In NSW, I am pleased the new education curriculum for year 7 and 8 students includes mandatory learning about the Holocaust and post war experiences of Jewish survivors in Australia. Knowing our history will help never repeating it.

The tree of peace I helped plant with the rabbi continues to grow in the local synagogue garden. I know the love, peace and inclusion of the local Jewish community will help it stand strong and tall, to weather any storm. We all have a role to play in combatting antisemitism.

Matt Cross is the NSW Member for Davidson



FREE FOR SENIORS NAVIGATING THE AGED CARE SYSTEM

Right at Home has launched its Community Program to help seniors across Sydney's Upper North Shore and Northern Beaches navigate Government funding, Home Care Packages, and Private care options. Many older Australians find the Aged Care System overwhelming, and understanding what support is available can be challenging. These sessions are designed to provide clarity, offering practical advice on funding options, available services, and financial contributions.

Aged Care expert Natalie Hollings presents each session, guiding attendees through the complexities of the system and assisting them in making informed decisions about their care. Whether you are exploring support for yourself or a loved one, these sessions offer valuable insights and personalised assistance in finding suitable providers.

Sessions will take place at Hornsby Central Library on Wednesday, 12 March, and Wednesday, 26 March. Attendance is free for seniors and their families, but bookings are essential as spots are limited.

ESSENTIAL INFO

When: Wednesday, 12 March and 26 March.

Where: Hornsby Central Library (Bookings only - limited spots).

Cost: Free for Seniors and their families.

Info: bit.ly/rah-12-mar or bit.ly/rah-26-mar.

As your NSW Member of Parliament,
I'm fighting for our community.



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Working for our
COMMUNITY



(02) 9880 7400 davidson@parliament.nsw.gov.au

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International Women's Day

Join us in celebrating International Women's Day with this year's inspiring theme, *March Forward!*

Juanita Phillips, an experienced journalist and bestselling author, will share her professional journey, personal reflections, and insights on the remarkable achievements of women, the challenges they continue to face, and the path forward toward a more equitable and inclusive future.

Guests will also be invited to participate in round table discussions and hear from local students on their feedback on the recent Next Generation Forum on respectful relationships.

Thursday 6 March 11:45am to 2:15pm
Pymble Golf Club Cowan Rd, St Ives

Free to attend - Bookings essential

For more information and bookings go to
krg.nsw.gov.au/iwd

Enquiries: kharris@krg.nsw.gov.au





Photos: Kristin Brown

GREEN SPACE ON THE AGENDA

Ku-ring-gai is green in look, thanks to our beautiful canopy, but also green in its interests. Just take a look at council's grants over the past two years.

In 2023, the council launched their Net Zero campaign with a new website, rebates and workshop. It's all in the name of trying to reach the goal of zero emissions by the year 2040. Then in came the Net Zero grants. The category was designed to provide additional funds for projects which help Ku-ring-gai address energy use, waste reduction and efficient transport. The environmental grants, funded by the council's environmental levy, are \$100,000 per year, with dozens of green-focused projects on the North Shore now in either fruition or already completed.

So let's see where some of the money went in redeveloping our local greenspaces.

TWO NEW PLAYGROUNDS

The playgrounds were opened at Robert Pymble Park in Pymble and Dukes Green in East Lindfield. Accessibility and inclusivity were the focus, along with a discovery and nature play area beneath

The environmental grants, funded by the council's environmental levy, are \$100,000 per year, with dozens of green-focused projects on the North Shore.

existing trees, which sounds rather picturesque.

BEE HOTEL

Yes you read that right - a bee hotel. \$11,480 was given to projects focused on bee conservation, including \$1,500 for Holy Family Primary School in Lindfield to establish a bee hotel. A Turramurra project will also include the installation of a native bee hive.

MAKEOVER FOR ONE OF LINDFIELD'S LARGEST PARK

Queen Elizabeth Reserve is known for its off-leash dog exercise area, soccer field, tennis courts, a multi-use sports court and picnic areas. BUT - there's always room for improvement.

Pedestrian pathways, new picnic shelters, BBQs and seating were funded.

ST IVES PARK UPGRADE

A recent completion, locals can enjoy a new playground with climbing equipment (including a very cool bouldering pillar and caterpillar climber), a wheelchair-accessible carousel, an outdoor gym, picnic shelter and BBQ.

NEW HABITAT HOMES

You might have spotted a few microbats, parrots, frogs and kookaburras being enticed into the new habitat homes in West Pymble. A dead gum tree in Ironbark Forest fashioned habitat stags and hollow homes, which are very cute.

LINDFIELD AND WAHROONGA GETS A SPRUCE

Princes Park at Lindfield and Eldinhope Green in Wahroonga also benefited from funding. Wahroonga has a new playground, and Primula Oval in Princes Park had laser levelling of the oval's playing surface to make it more suitable for more sports.

WANT TO SELL AT LOCAL MARKETS? IT WILL COST YOU

On the North Shore we are blessed to have a range of great markets. But for the market holders themselves, it is quite pricey to sell your goods locally at events like these. It's far more expensive than one would expect.

EAST LINDFIELD VILLAGE MARKETS

The markets at East Lindfield are nestled in a quaint village setting at the local community hall, with mature trees and a brand new kids playground nearby. The community hall allows for both indoor and outdoor stalls. It takes place on the third Sunday of the month, between 9am and 2pm. A variety of items are sold at the markets, including food, produce, artisan products, and handmade and designer pieces. To have a stall at the market comes at a pretty penny though.

- **Option 1:** 1 market in an inside position, \$110
- **Option 2:** 3 pack of 3 markets in an inside position, \$300
- **Option 3:** 1 market in an outside position, \$90
- **Option 4:** 3 pack of 3 consecutive markets in an outside position, \$250

More information can be found here: duralvillagemarkets.com.au/public/about-us.

KIRIBILLI MARKETS

These markets have been running for decades now. All funds go towards running the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre. Today, Kirribilli Markets is one of Sydney's oldest and most popular markets. It features over 220 stalls selling new and recycled fashion and accessories. There is also an artisan section, where good from emerging local fashion designers are sold, as well as gifts and homewares, arts and craft, jewellery, plants, gourmet food and more. The dates for the markets change often, so best to keep up to date on their website or socials.



- **Option 1:** Umbrella section (1x table), \$90
- **Option 2:** Umbrella section (2x tables), \$100
- **Option 3:** Gazebo on Sydney Road section, \$100
- **Option 4:** Gazebo Corso section, \$120

Stall equipment like the actual umbrellas, gazebos and tables are available for hire at a cost if you cannot provide your own.

More information can be found here: www.kirribillimarkets.com.

LANE COVE MAKERS MARKET

Lane Cove Makers Market is all about embracing produce and gifts that are Australian made and designed with care. It takes place on the third Sunday of the month, between 9am and 3pm.

- **Option:** Stall size 2.4m x 2.4 m, \$90

More information can be found here: www.thebeachesmarket.com/lane-cove-makers-market.

THE COAL LOADER'S ARTISAN MARKET

Similar to the Lane Cove Makers Market, this one in North Sydney

offers an opportunity for people to purchase original and creative handmade products directly from emerging and contemporary designers, artists and makers. It's then set in a very nice historic site in Waverton, which used to function as a transfer depot for coal.

- **Option 1:** Top level indoor or undercover table stall, \$95
- **Option 2:** Top level outdoor BYO marquee space, \$95
- **Option 3:** Top level food stall space, \$140

More information can be found here: www.northsydney.nsw.gov.au/xfp/form/192.

GORDON MARKETS

If you have a pile of vintage items, interesting knick knacks or bric-a-brac, then Gordon Markets are ideal for you as a stallholder. They appear to be the cheapest option on offer across the North Shore too.

- **Option 1:** 1 site, \$50
- **Option 2:** 2 adjacent sites, \$90
- **Option 3:** 3 adjacent sites, \$130

More information can be found here: www.gordonmarkets.com.au/index.php/faq.

OPINION COUNCIL DRAMA ALL FOR A POOL

A hop and skip away from Ku-ring-gai is North Sydney. It's charming, full of heritage-listed homes and tall skyscrapers. Part of it is a concrete jungle fit with bustling businesses, a train and Metro station, the other has picturesque views of Sydney Harbour Bridge and busy lifestyle markets on weekends.

But disrupting this rather idyllic picture is a big council drama. And it's impacting tenants and home owners the most. Those living in the North Sydney council district are facing a rate hike of 87% in the coming year or two.

Late last month, North Sydney Council made a decision to increase rates over two years – all in the name of a pool. The heritage-listed North Sydney Olympic Pool to be exact. How much has this pool cost in refurbishments you might be asking? It's estimated to cost \$90 million. All for a pool.

The majority of residents have criticised the council for the budget blowout on the pool refurbishment, saying a rate rise will impact them significantly. Particularly in a cost-of-living crisis.

THE NUMBERS

If confirmed, this rate rise would see an increase in the ordinary rates in North Sydney's local government area over the next two years. Specifically, it would be a 45% rate increase for the 2025-26 financial year and then a 29% increase for the following year. From the two-year point onward, it wouldn't be expected to rise any further.

To crunch the numbers, that would see minimum residential rates - which are currently at \$715 annually – move to \$1,548 next year and then around \$1,800 the following year.



It's a lot of money – but there's a point that needs to be stressed.

THE PRIVILEGE DILEMMA

Paying \$715 currently for minimum residential rates per year when living in North Sydney is an absolute steal, in comparison to other nearby Sydney councils.

Ryde Council's annual rates are around \$1,500 annually, Ku-ring-gai Council's annual rates are around \$2,500 annually, said one local home owner, and Lane Cove Council's annual rates then stand around \$1,600 approximately for an apartment.

Some property listings in Hornsby Council district even have their council rates listed at around \$1,600 annually too, and they are even further away from the CBD compared to North Sydney.

North Sydney is a wealthy area – the median household income as per the Australian Bureau of Statistics is around \$130,000. A large percentage have a tertiary education. The suburbs included in the local government area are held in high regard, their properties are worth millions and they are on the footstep of Sydney Harbour.

All things considered, a rate rise to \$1,800 per year to live in one of Sydney's most privileged and beautiful spots isn't outrageous. More so what does feel extremely unfair is the overarching reason behind the rise itself – a very exxy pool.

HAVE YOUR SAY

Do you have an opinion on something local and wish to share it? We welcome it! Feel free to email us at editor@kamdha.com for the chance to have your voice heard.

DID YOU GET WHAT YOU EXPECTED UNDER THE WILL?

by Wal Abramowicz


In a case before the Court of Appeal in October 2023, a woman named Irene passed away, sparking a series of family disputes. Irene's estate was valued at \$36 million, mostly held within a family company of which she was the managing director. Irene had 4 children. Under Irene's will, one of the children, Nick, was gifted the management shares of the company, which gave him full control. The other shares were split evenly amongst the other 3 children. They held no control.

Nicks' 3 siblings claimed that they were told by Irene that they would receive substantial wealth from the company. The Court agreed with the siblings and claimed that they had been left without enough from the estate for their "maintenance, education or advancement in life" because of their expectations based on what Irene had told them. The court ordered that the management shares be divided evenly between the siblings, giving them equal voting rights over the company.

Nick appealed this decision, claiming that what The Court awarded the siblings was unreasonable and beyond what the siblings needed financially. Nick further claimed that his siblings' lack of financial need should have been considered. He also argued that the siblings' expectations of benefitting from the family company were irrelevant.

The Court has the power to consider any relevant matters when deciding whether to amend a will and change the distribution given to the beneficiaries. The Court of appeal ruled that expectations of the children to receive wealth from the company was relevant in this case. The case highlights the range of factors that can be considered during estate disputes, which requires proper legal advice.

Fox & Staniland Lawyers (foxstaniland.com.au) have a team of lawyers with extensive experience in making notional estate claims on behalf of claimants, defending notional estate claims on behalf of estates, and acting for clients in all aspects of contested estate litigation.



For or more than 50 years, Fox & Staniland Lawyers have been delivering pre-eminent legal services to Sydney's North Shore. We have grown to become a Sydney city alternative with one of the largest practices north of the harbour.

We are trusted advisors to our clients in matters of Will Disputes and claims against Estates.

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*Parking available at the Gordon Centre and Ku-ring-gai Council on Dumaresq Street.

HUMANS OF THE NORTH SHORE: EUGENE BUFFA

Every so often in *Sydney Observer*, we like to profile a local person doing good in the community who has an interesting perspective or occupation.

This month's feature is St Ives local Eugene Buffa, who is a veterinary surgical specialist. Almost 20 years ago, he and his family migrated from South Africa for a new start in Australia - ending up on the beautiful North Shore. He is the founding surgeon of The Pet Specialists Group in Terrey Hills. Meet Eugene.

What do you love most about what you do for work?

I love making animals and their owners happy. I feel incredibly lucky to have turned a passion for animals and their welfare into my everyday profession. Being a vet is special because you are not only treating pets, but supporting the patient's family as well.

What is your number one piece of advice for dog owners?

Make sure you cherish your pet throughout each stage of their life. Find joy in watching your furry friend grow from a cute, and often hyperactive, puppy to a faithful

old companion – and every stage in between.

Do you have pets of your own? What do you love most about having family animals?

Yes, we have two dogs and a cat. Our first dog is the older and sophisticated Miss Cali – a 15-year-old Schnoodle. Our second dog is the younger and more adventurous Mr Jerry – a 6-year-old mixed breed. In addition to the dogs, we have a crazy but lovable cat called Mr Fudge, who was a rescue cat brought into work for an operation and has since never left our side. What I enjoy most about our pets is that each one has its own particular personality and adds something special to the family dynamic.

Why did you and your family decide to choose the North Shore as your home?

We love the lifestyle it offers. We are spoilt with incredible natural beauty, from the large open green spaces to the multitude of beautiful beaches right on our doorstep. Additionally, we love the safe and community-first environment it offers us and our children. Honestly, we couldn't think of a better place to live.



Eugene with Koala: Eugene Buffa operates on a wide variety of animals.

Do you have a local restaurant recommendation?

We love The Palms in Terrey Hills. Conveniently next-door to our hospital, it has great food, coffee, scenery and decor. My personal favourite dishes are the prawn linguini and the Italian sausage pizza.

What is your favourite Sydney beach and why?

Palm Beach. I love the beautiful, long sandy beach with open sea on one side and the quieter wading waters of Broken Bay on the other side. P.S. the milkshakes from the café by the beach are amazing.

What is something you think the North Shore could improve upon potentially?

I may be biased, but I would like to see more dog parks and beaches in the area. Other than that, we think the North Shore is hard to fault.

Is there something in particular that you miss about South Africa?

I miss the African wildlife and bush, growing up on a farm as well as going on safaris which offered unique sights and sounds. That said, I have found equally beautiful places close to nature in Australia.

Do you have a mantra that you live by?

Strive to be a kind person and treat others as you would like them to treat you.

For more from Eugene, you can visit: thepetspecialists.au.

WHEN BLUE BAGS WHITENED OUR WASHING

by Margaret Simpson

Do you remember those little bags of blue dye your mum swirled through the final rinse water on washing day? They were essential for whitening articles in the wash, disguising any hint of yellow from bar soap or age.

Probably the most well-known were Reckitt's blue bags. These were cylindrical-shaped solid blocks of blue synthetic aniline dye combined with glucose. They were made by Reckitt and Colman (Australia) Ltd in a Sydney factory and sold with distinctive red and white checked wrappers. The wrapper was

removed and the block wrapped securely in a piece of flannel or sometimes a handkerchief. Dearer versions came in their own small muslin bag. Once the block was immersed in water, it turned blue, giving the blue bag its distinctive name. It had to be used sparingly though, otherwise all your laundry turned blue. If this happened, vinegar could counteract the result.

Blue bags, being alkaline, performed other minor miracles like easing the pain from acidic bee stings, once the stinger had been removed. Similarly, they were said to be a fairly effective remedy for blue bottles at the beach. As well as laundry, blue bags squeezed

into washing-up water were said to give a 'lovely gloss' to china and glassware. It was also claimed they were effective in removing tea stains, pencil marks on paintwork and for washing paint brushes and windows.

Dressing up as a Reckitt's blue bag was a popular choice for children's fancy dress parties and balls. It was sometimes used as a name for racehorses too. In the 1950s water in the equestrian water jumps at Sydney's Royal Easter Show was even dyed blue with blue bags.

Probably the strangest use I have discovered for blue bags was for whitening wedding cake icing!



HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY!

To all the women in Bradfield, from Paul Fletcher MP and Gisele Kapterian, Liberal Candidate for Bradfield

— Authorised by P. Fletcher, Liberal Party of Australia, Lindfield NSW 2070

IT'S NOT A BIT

by Jay Houhlias

When *Sydney Observer* spoke with Dave Hughes, he was sitting on a park bench while some carpenters worked on his house. It was a tranquil image. He was just about to get a latte in his keep cup because Hughesy is all about saving the planet.

He is also about many other things like being very appreciative (“Yeah I appreciate that”), putting his deceased dog’s ashes to good use, being a television personality, and of course, making people laugh.



“I had the desire in me to be funny and make people laugh. I could always get a laugh in groups. I was naturally quite good at it, and making people laugh is addictive... I was about 13 when I knew comedy is what I wanted to do with my life, and I was lucky I knew at such an early age.”

Despite his distinct look and wit, Dave did not simply slide into a barrel of laughs and success, and this was a good thing. It gave him material, a life to make fun of, and he was all the funnier because of it.

“I dropped out of two university courses - IT and business. Could not focus. No motivation. Moved to Perth and started doing stand up comedy. Went on the dole. Did a stack of day jobs to help pay rent - dishwashing, petrol pump attendant, brickie labourer, cucumber picker, door to door salesperson...”

“Got sacked from almost all of them. Then I would go on stage and talk about my failures and I would get a laugh. I definitely didn’t get sacked from jobs on purpose. I tried really hard. I was just hopeless apparently. But it led to great comedy material! That’s what my comedy is mainly, using my failings to my advantage for laughs.”

The stage is a different beast though. Speaking for myself, every amateur comedy club I’ve been to, I watch the performers and think, ‘I could get up there and get a laugh, easy, I could do comedy.’ Dave explained beautifully how it’s very different onstage.

“I remember I used to just sh*t myself! I’d go up on stage and the first joke wouldn’t land and then I would just drown, I’d just die. You’re in for a long night if that happens. Once you feel the anxiety, there is nothing the crowd can do to help you.”



Dave Hughes on *Taskmaster Australia* season 4, with comedians Takashi Wakasugi and Tommy Little.

Having performed around the world, I asked Dave if humour is universal and if different cultures find similar things funny.

“Every audience is similar really, as long as they understand English. I have to slow down for American audiences though as they can have trouble with my accent.”

“Having done Montreal comedy festival a number of times, I find, in general, UK comics more relaxing to be around than USA comics. They are more self deprecating and less outwardly ambitious. Again that’s a generalisation and the descriptions don’t fit everyone.”

Dave has spent his career using humour not only on stage, but as a tool to connect and inform people. He has played pivotal roles in shows like *The Project*, *Rove*, and *The Glass House*.

His latest work in television is on the game show *Taskmaster Australia* alongside other funny people like Tom Gleeson.

Working with other comedians, Dave gave his thoughts on competitiveness. Fighting for laughs sounds odd, but as comedians, laughs are the commodity.

“...I would go on stage and talk about my failures and I would get a laugh... That’s what my comedy is mainly, using my failings to my advantage for laughs.”

“I have been very competitive in the past. It sounds bad, but it was like ‘every laugh that someone else gets is a laugh that I didn’t get’ and that’s not a good attitude.”

“But these days I just want to be part of the laughter. If someone else can get a punchline off me, that’s great. I want everyone to be laughing. As long as I’m in the room, or even if I’m not in the room, people can make fun of me behind my back, I’ll take it.”

“I hosted this show *Hughesy*, *We Have a Problem*, and as a host,

you want everyone to be at their funniest. Your goal is to make the best show.”

“So now I have a host mentality, not just for comedy, but for everything, for life. You want to be a host for your life and get everyone around you at their best. That’s the way I look at it.”

We then spoke about Dave’s life at home, and how his career as a comedian translates to his family. Do they get all his test material?

“No, family stays out of the comedy. The comedy is for the stage. I wouldn’t do that to them.”

“Sometimes they’ll ask me, ‘Is this a bit?’ and then I’ll say ‘No this isn’t a bit’. Well, I mean, it might become a bit, in future, but this isn’t a bit I’m doing right now. All these bits, I’m not doing a bit!”

To see more of Dave Hughes’ bits, but not his actual bits, not those bits anyway, you can see him in all his glory in *Taskmaster Australia*. You can also find out more on his upcoming 2025 comedy tour at davehughes.com.au.

THE BIG DEBATE TO WORK OR NOT WORK FROM HOME

Here at *Sydney Observer*, we like to unpack thorny issues that are big topics of conversation among locals. Like with many metropolitan cities, Sydney is experiencing the work from home debate in real time. Is it a good thing for employees? Or is it a step too far in the name of productivity?



FOR

- Hybrid workers report a higher job satisfaction rate, equivalent to receiving a pay rise of about 8%.
- Workplace flexibility is especially beneficial for working parents, those who care for a loved one and those who have mobility challenges.
- There's less fuss with no commute, and more time to do things around the house where appropriate.
- Some workers believe they are more productive at home versus feeling distracted by conversations with colleagues in the office.
- Studies suggest better work-life balance comes from hybrid working.

AGAINST

- Only about 40% of people believe working from home is good for productivity, according to a Committee for Economic Development of Australia report.
- Employers paying high rent on office spaces feel they aren't getting bang for their buck, and hospitality businesses in these CBDs have less foot traffic.
- Some workers believe they are less productive at home due to feeling distracted by things around the house, and not having a manager or superior physically present to keep them accountable.
- Some experts worry about the potential of workers experiencing feelings of isolation if not connecting with people outside their homes.

HOW PEOPLE ARE REALLY FEELING

Recent research by the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) says that for many employees – especially women, carers, and those with disabilities – workplace flexibility has actually had a positive benefit. However, CEDA's report also found that many senior leaders “remain sceptical” of working from home's impact on productivity and innovation. It's this disconnect between what the majority of employees want (a hybrid model) versus what employers want (a majority or all-in office model) that causes the most tension.

Layla* is a North Shore local who has spoken with *Sydney Observer*, but she has changed her name for publication for fear of retribution from her employer. Recently, Layla's

workforce has forced everyone to return to the office, despite the roles being advertised as 100% remote positions. It has left Layla in an upsetting situation.

“I wanted a job with flexibility, a job that was predominantly work from home as I have health issues that mean I prefer to be working from home versus in an office. Now this return to the office order has meant I am searching for a new job. It's a sentiment so many of my friends share too – many of us seeking jobs that prioritise work-life balance and flexibility,” she said. “Although my original contract said my role was 100% from home, my workplace has now sent us all new contracts to sign. The pressure is intense.”

But recently, as the debate rages on. The Right to Disconnect legislation has worked in the favour of workers, giving them the right to ignore managers who try to contact them outside of work hours. They also have the right to refuse to monitor, read or respond to contact from an employer or third party.

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EDENGLASSIE (2023)

ESSENTIAL READING FOR AUSTRALIA'S UNFINISHED BUSINESS WITH TREATY

by Andrew McLean

Missa Lucachenko's multi-award winning novel *Edenglassie* (2023) tells two stories, separate in time yet deeply interwoven. The first, set in present-day Meanjin / Brisbane, follows the story of Winona, "Blak, beautiful and fighting to hold on to her sanity", and her grandmother, Granny Eddie, as they continue ongoing efforts in asserting their unceded sovereignty over the land. The second narrative, drawn from historical archives, is also set in Meanjin / Brisbane, though 175 years earlier. It follows Mulanyin, a young Yugambah man from the salt waters of Nerang, and his companion Yerrin, of the nearby Yagara people. Together, they attempt to navigate the violent collision of two opposing legal systems—one encoded in the land and upheld by Meanjin's federation of First Nations peoples, the other forcibly imposed by the distant British Empire and intent on furthering the material interests of an ever-expanding propertied settler class, be it through bullets, poisoned flour or otherwise.

Lucachenko tells these stories with regaling wit and lyrical finesse. *Edenglassie* is an electrifying showcase of the acerbic humour that has come to characterise her writing. It is also enrichingly experimental in its challenging of assumptions held towards the non-human world. For instance, in one deeply memorable passage, Country itself keens alongside Mulanyin's mourning for his loved ones: the fish take his "mourning cries into their dreams" while dingoes "point their noses at the moon", howling in solidarity in a "symphony of sorrow for the slain". This vibrant

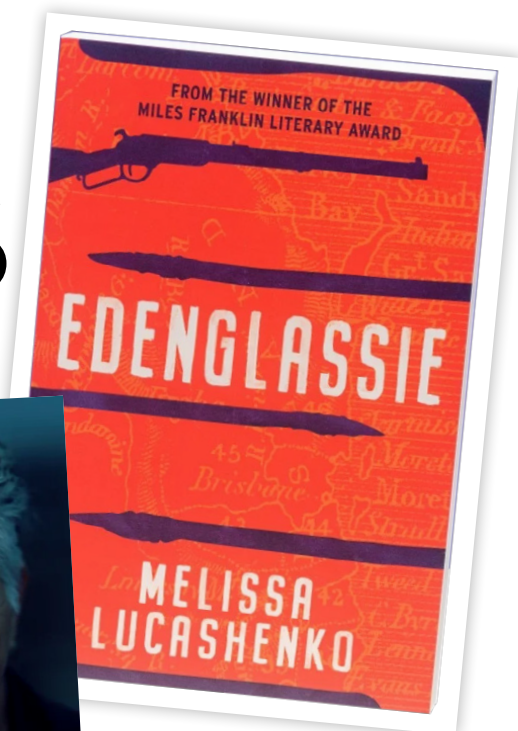
world of 19th-century Meanjin / Brisbane, teeming with colour and verisimilitude, is the result of three years of archival work and it shows.

However, Lucachenko's greatest gift to readers is her generative use of the archive to allow readers to imaginatively reconstruct the possibilities for how settler-First Nations relations might have unfolded in this country and might still unfold, especially in the ongoing struggles towards treaty-making. In writing *Edenglassie*, Lucachenko has said that she was thinking about "Australia'[s] urgent need to finish its unfinished business with treaty" and that the novel "had to be about possibility as much as the past."

Using historical archives, she locates one such site of possibility: the Yagara people's generous invitation to Thomas Petrie, an early settler of Meanjin (Brisbane), to live relationally with them on their land – albeit an invitation extended under the ever-present threat of settler violence. From her reconstruction of this relationship, Australian readers can discern a relational framework that, were it applied to treaty-making processes, could foster enduring mutual prosperity for all life on this continent. Early on in the novel, at the prompting of an intrusive journalist, Granny Eddie gives an account of Tom Petrie's land selection process. Granny Eddie says of Tom Petrie that he was "the only one to ask. Ever... [he] was raised with the Yagara mob, so

when he grew up and got married, he knew to ask where to select his land, he got permission off of "Old Man Dalapai" and "went through the Bora ceremonies." Discernible from this process, I believe, are generative principles for treaty-making. Crucially, Petrie's land selection was mediated by its sovereign owner and a legal authority on the land: Old Man Dalapai. "Old Man Dalapai is a custodian of many generations-worth of inherited knowledge on the land and its needs. As such, his mediation can ensure Petrie's site selection aligns with the legal imperatives of this knowledge, as upheld in traditional law. Abiding by traditional law has seen First Nations peoples through climatic extremities ranging from ice ages to super droughts. Today, as we face similar threats, readers of *Edenglassie* might consider how settler recognition of First Nations' legal authority in land use decisions could foster mutual thriving for all human and non-human life on this land.

Lucachenko's novel, as entertaining and regaling as it is visionary and urgent, is essential reading for all Australians wishing to imagine better ways of living on this continent founded on justice and mutuality, as governed.



THE MINECRAFT EFFECT

With 141 million active players and a rampart following, most kids have played, or at the very least heard of Minecraft, the global sandbox video game. This of course means parents have too.

Its overwhelming popularity makes it integral to our children's learning culture.

Video games have classically had a bad wrap with how they effect children's learning, development, and overall health. However, according to a new study, Minecraft can also play a significant role in shaping children's development, social interactions, and cognitive learning.

It appears the content of the video game really does make a difference, and it appears the stereotypes of video games 'rotting brains' needs to be reconsidered.

Researchers at the University of South Australia found when children engage in collaborative Minecraft play, they foster teamwork, communication, and social skills as players exchange ideas and problem-solve in real-time.

As Minecraft Education Edition becomes more prevalent in school curricula worldwide, understanding how children interact within these digital spaces is critical for parents and educators.

"From what we see of children's interactions on Minecraft," author and UniSA researcher Dr Vincenza Tudini says, "it's far more than just a digital pastime; it's a virtual playground where children can develop problem-solving skills, collaboration, and language abilities."

"We also know that Minecraft is a pro-social game with players demonstrating greetings and positive play evaluations as they interact with each other. As they play or watch videos, they're growing their language skills, and increasing their digital literacy.

"Team and problem-solving skills are also prominent in Minecraft. Unlike traditional video games that tend to focus on competition and scoring points, Minecraft is an open-ended experience that encourages children to build, explore, and interact, with players often working together to achieve common goals."

"We also see many instances where knowledgeable players are actively guiding less experienced players through challenges. Such scaffolded-learning supports

creative thinking, motivation and growth, and because it's peer-delivered, it builds team-skills and confidence."

But just like with any technology, Minecraft and its more common use also comes with challenges.

"All online spaces have safety risks. While Minecraft promotes positive social interactions, public servers can expose children to online risks such as bullying or interactions with unknown players," Dr Tudini says.

"Ensuring children's safety and maximising the game's educational potential requires active involvement from both parents and educators. We need to teach children about safe gaming practices, encourage play with known friends, and monitor content to ensure a safe gaming experience."

"By adopting safe gaming practices and integrating Minecraft into learning environments, we can help children harness its benefits while navigating the digital world responsibly."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are some recommendations for parents who would like to maximise the benefits of their children using Minecraft while minimising the potential downsides.

- Encourage collaborative play with known friends or siblings to enhance social skills and teamwork.
- Opt for family-friendly or private servers to reduce risks associated with public multiplayer gameplay.
- Monitor YouTube and online content to ensure channels are appropriate.
- Teach online safety, set boundaries about sharing personal information, and encourage respectful online communication.
- Ensure a healthy balance between screen time with other offline activities – take regular breaks from screens and keep kids moving.

LET'S FOREST BATHE

Anxious? Tired? Feeling flat? Irritable? Often we're told to "touch grass" when we're coming across as a little overwhelmed. Maybe there's a hint of wisdom to the saying. In comes forest bathing.

Also known as Shinrin-yoku, forest bathing is a Japanese practice that encourages people to immerse themselves in a natural environment, ideally a forest. Both Shinto and Buddhism have long revered nature, with Shinto believing that spirits inhabit natural elements like trees and waterfalls.

Now, does Sydney have a plethora of giant, leafy forests available to frolick in - not exactly. But there are plenty of greenspaces, bushwalks and mini forests that will achieve the same effect. This technique is therapeutic in essence, designed to enhance physical and mental wellbeing. But how does one... forest bathe?

TREE HUGGING ON A WHOLE NEW LEVEL

First step is to find your green spot. Turn your phone on silent. Make sure it's a quiet and serene green spot that isn't teeming with people who could distract you. Next, find a calm area to sit or lie down within this natural environment. You could consider taking a blanket with you for maximum comfort. The experts say it's important to set clear intentions at this point - relaxing the senses, focusing on mindfulness, observing your surroundings and taking big, deep breaths. You have begun to forest bathe. Enjoy this moment for however long feels right. The feeling afterwards will be very soothing for the soul.

SERENE SPOTS

Although we would like to keep these serene spots a secret, we know *Sydney Observer* readers deserve some insider info! Great local spots to consider for forest bathing include Swain Gardens in Killara, Lane Cove National Park and Sheldon Forest in Pymble.

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A BETTER PERSPECTIVE ON HEALTH AND LONGEVITY

by Serge Houhlias

There isn't anything I can tell you about the basic principles of health that you don't already know. But just to humour you, here is a diluted list: eat real food and drink clean water, get a good night's sleep and manage your stress, develop close knit relationships, and exercise moderately. None of this is really all that profound. Being healthy constitutes doing seemingly basic things consistently. If you are consistent enough, you will probably enjoy a long, quality life. So, the question arises: If you know what you need to do in order to be healthy, why don't you do it?

There is a case to be made that the abundance of information in the health and longevity space causes the player to become confused and overwhelmed. One PhD recommends fasting; another carnivore. Your neighbour swears by CrossFit, and on the other side, triathlon. That's why you're stuck: it all seems to contradict so you take no action. Generally however, if you stick with the basics, it's very difficult to go wrong. The problem is, most don't. We get distracted by the latest gadgets or groundbreaking exotic supplements. And then we get bored and move onto the next. Rarely we do anything long enough to see genuine progress.

"Health and Longevity" has been marketed this way in our culture; as the weekend juice cleanses, the superhero workout programs or the 30 day supplement courses. While some of these may be useful interventions for the right person at the right time, by definition, they don't support longevity – unless of course, you plan to live off celery juice for the rest of your life. Something that encourages longevity needs to be sustainable because health is the culmination of positive choices made over time. You don't get healthy in a weekend; just as you don't develop diabetes over night. Your body is the best barometer for this. It directly reflects your lifestyle for better or worse.

For a behaviour to be considered "healthy", it needs to be able to be done long term. The second part of this equation is what is most important. Most spend too much time agonising over what is healthy when in reality it is quite simple – as we have established thus far – and we forget to properly consider whether we can sustain it. Because if it's sustainable, it's probably healthy.

It's only a matter of time before your body breaks down courtesy of your highly processed diet; or your knee blows out due to your overly intense workout schedule. Put these behaviours on a long enough time scale – even the seemingly "healthy" ones like the strict keto diet or the long distance running – and you realise they are unsustainable. True, you change and so should your behaviours: what was once sustainable is now unsustainable. But this implies you have developed the awareness to recognise when a transition is necessary.

This is not to say you should never compete; or go through periods of highly specific training or focused efforts. Phase these in and out, for these periods serve arguably just as significant a purpose. It is to say that if health and longevity are primary concerns, you need to look through the lens of sustainability. "What am I interested in?"... "What do I enjoy doing?"... "What can I sustain?".... These are more appropriate questions in this context.



Serge Houhlias is a wanderer who has developed a talent for provoking a deeper conversation. For a decade, he has coached in gyms and taught in high schools; long enough to learn that he doesn't know very much. Through the mundane and profound, Serge is interested in exploring his own capacity for change and writes infrequently on this at his website: changeisthepoint.com.



FINDING YOUR WAY NAVIGATING DEMENTIA AND WANDERING

guidance on home safety. Additionally, monitoring and alarm systems can detect wandering and alert caregivers.

Remember, support is available. A brain-healthy lifestyle, combining exercise, social interaction, and a balanced diet, can benefit cognitive health. Don't hesitate to seek help and utilise available resources.

Managing wandering requires a comprehensive approach. By combining environmental adjustments, engaging activities, and assistive technology, caregivers can create a safer, more comfortable environment for those with dementia.

Karis Life understands these challenges and offer support and resources not only for individuals and families, but also to Case Managers and Therapists who are caring for those affected by dementia. Please visit www.KarisLife.com.au to explore the various resources including videos and to register for a suitable Training or Seminar.

As we celebrate Seniors Week in NSW, let's take a positive step towards supporting those seniors confronted with dementia. It's a time to shine a light on their experiences and offer our support in navigating this challenging journey.

by Rejimon Punchayil

Dementia can be a challenging journey, especially when it leads to wandering. This behaviour, affecting many dementia patients, arises from memory loss, confusion, or the urge to find familiar places. Early signs, triggers, and understanding its connection to dementia are crucial first steps.

Creating a secure environment is essential. Simple measures like securing doors and maintaining routines can make a significant difference. Engaging activities, both mentally and physical, can also help manage potential triggers.

Technology offers additional support. Assistive tools like the Cura 1 system can detect wandering and alert caregivers, providing timely notifications. These solutions are user-friendly, reliable, and customisable to individual needs.

Creating a dementia-friendly home involves more than just technology. The National Dementia Helpline offers

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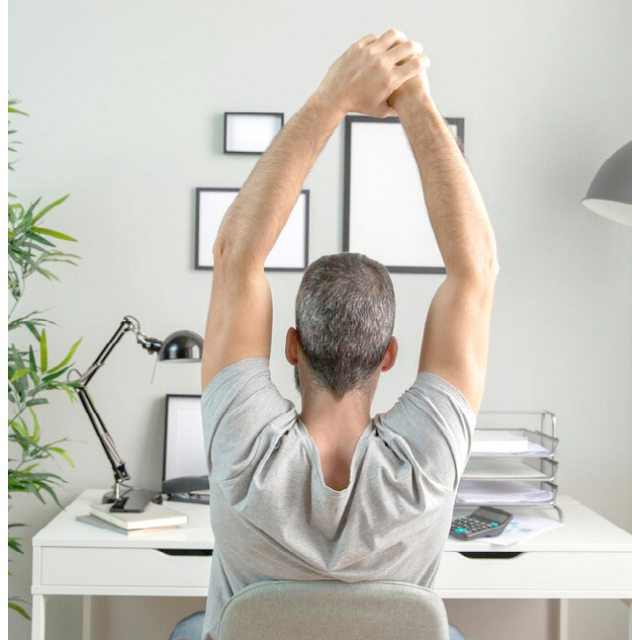


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DESK EXERCISES

by Divya Rawat

It seems for this generation that sitting is the new smoking. Sitting down for prolonged periods of time can be unhealthy for you, especially in positions of poor posture. Here are some desk exercises that can help you while sitting down.

1.Hand and Finger Stretches - are the simplest desk exercises you can do. Typing for a long time can cause repetitive strain injuries and tendinitis. Doing these exercises can help alleviate stiffness.

- » Make a fist and hold it for 30 - 60 seconds.
- » Open your palm and spread your fingers wide.
- » Complete at least 4 repetitions with each hand.

2.Neck Rotations - your neck and shoulders often get stiff if hunching over a computer or desk. The correct comfort design at your workplace can reduce muscle

tension. Neck stretches are another way of helping to reduce neck pain.

- » Lower your chin and roll your neck in a circle.
- » Lift your chin and bend on each side for 10 seconds.
- » Repeat as necessary throughout the day.

3.Chair calf raises - doing chair calf raises can help strengthen your calves. Your calves help you to walk, run, jump, and balance. Perform calf raises while standing behind your chair.

- » Sit straight in your chair, with your back unsupported and your feet shoulder-width apart.
- » Slowly raise your heels as if on your tiptoes and hold.
- » Release and lower your heels back to the ground. Do 10 reps.

4.Chair Squats - 'dead butt syndrome' can cause tight hip flexors, weaken glutes, numbness, pain in the buttocks, hips, and lower back. Chair squats can help strengthen those parts of the body.

- » Stand in front of your chair with your feet shoulder-width and toes pointing forward.
- » Keeping your chest and head up, bend your knees and drive your hips back as if you were going to sit in the chair.
- » Stop just above the chair and slowly rise back to the start position. Aim for 10 reps.

5.Leg Extensions - Doing leg extensions is easier while at your desk as it can be beneficial to your knees. You can shift to doing leg extensions as your next desk exercise.

- » Extend one leg until level with your hips.
- » Hold as long as possible and then relax.
- » Do each leg ten times.

Making exercises part of your daily routine at work can prove helpful, reducing the negative effects of a sedentary lifestyle. Make it a habit by finding a workout partner, setting alarms that tell when to exercise, make exercise an office challenge, and reward yourself after exercising.

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elleran
Lingerie

Leila O'Toole

BOUNCING YOUR WAY TO HEALTH

BOUNCE, in capitals, because there really isn't a better way to say the word.

BOUNCE is an indoor freestyle playground featuring iconic and custom-built activities including interconnected free-jump trampolines, cliff jumping, a wall climb arena, an X-Park parkour adventure challenge course, and a High-Performance Area where adrenaline-seeking freestylers hone their skills.

Through a unique blend of fun, freestyle, progression, and development, the space provides an environment where balance, coordination, and agility can be developed and harnessed. It's the

perfect destination for families, schools and young people. It is designed to inspire everyone to forget the serious stuff for a while and get immersed in an atmosphere of fun, all the while keeping active and moving.

There is also a miniBOUNCE Zone – a supercharged extension to soft play providing a bigger interactive play area exclusive to the smallest of bouncers.

Since opening in July 2023, the BOUNCE Homebush venue has become one of the busiest in the BOUNCE network worldwide.

Find more information about BOUNCE at www.bounceinc.com.au.



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HAVE YOU HEARD OF FLOAT THERAPY?

by Frederico Carvalho

Imagine the sensation of drifting in a pool or at the beach, weightless and detached from everything. It's that same feeling – often depicted in pop culture, like Eleven's experiments in Stranger Things – that some spas and wellness centres now offer as float therapy, also known as sensory deprivation or isolation therapy.

This practice involves floating in a tank designed to block out light and sound, filled with warm water saturated with Epsom salt. The high salt content increases buoyancy, allowing the body to float effortlessly. In the absence of external stimuli, the mind and body enter a deep state of relaxation, helping to reduce stress and promote mental clarity.



Research from the University of Birmingham (epsomsaltcouncil.org) has shown that soaking in Epsom salt can increase magnesium levels, which may help relieve muscle tension, reduce inflammation, and aid recovery from physical exertion.

Curious to try it? We've found 13 float therapy locations in Sydney, including two on the North Shore in Kirribilli

and Brookvale. Check out our list and treat yourself to the ultimate relaxation experience.

13 PLACES TO TRY FLOAT THERAPY

- **Sydney Float Centre** - Kirribilli e Brookvale.
- **True Float** - Paddington.
- **Saltuary** - Five Dock.
- **Float Culture** - Bondi Junction.
- **City Cave** - Darlinghurst.
- **Beyond Rest** - Marrickville.
- **Float Tank Sydney** - Surry Hills.
- **The Float Room** - Manly.
- **Zen Float Spa** - Newtown.
- **Float Oasis** - Mosman.
- **Body** - Rosebery.
- **Massage and Float Bondi Junction** - Bondi Junction.
- **Haikoo Massage & Float** - Waverley.

WHAT IS YOUR SELF-CARE SECRET?

by Corbin Barry

Sydney has hit the ground running in 2025. The days already seem to be slipping through our fingers, moving at a pace that can feel relentless. In the rush, it's easy to forget to slow down – to take small moments for ourselves, to breathe, to prioritise even the simplest acts of self-care.

At Sage Space, we've been thinking a lot about what self-care truly means. That's why, at the end of January, we introduced Sage Sessions – an initiative designed to bring people together, spark conversations, and explore wellness beyond just dental care. Our goal? To foster a sense of community, share knowledge in a relaxed setting, and, most importantly, show appreciation for those who've supported us since the beginning.

For our first event, we hosted "A Somm at Sage", teaming up with Anthony Philip, sommelier at 10 William St, Paddington (if you haven't been, put it on your list!). We invited 15 of our patients and their plus-ones for an evening of wine tastings, education, and connection.

Now, I know what you're thinking – a dentist hosting a wine night? A little contradictory, right? But self-care isn't just about rules and restrictions. It's about balance, growth, and



embracing experiences that bring joy. Sage Sessions is our way of exploring self-care from a broader perspective – through education, social connection, and supporting local businesses. And if that means sharing a good glass of wine with great company, so be it.

The night was everything we had hoped for – an effortless mix of laughter, learning, and new friendships. Anthony shared his expertise on wine production and tasting, while guests stepped outside their comfort zones, engaging in something new. The atmosphere was warm, open, and completely judgement-free – just like the community we're building at Sage Space.

So, as I write this, I want to challenge you to think about your version of self-care. Maybe it's trying something new. Maybe it's something small, like smiling to yourself while driving (I've started doing this – it's surprisingly

uplifting). Or maybe it's simply taking two minutes while brushing your teeth to pause, close your eyes, and be present. And self-care doesn't have to be just for you – it could be a kind word to a stranger, a smile to someone passing by, or an unexpected compliment that brightens someone's day. Small moments, big impact.

And because we need a little dental wisdom – if you're indulging in wine (or anything acidic), moderation is key. Each sip wears down your enamel, and over time, thinning enamel can lead to tooth sensitivity and yellowing. A few simple habits can help:

- Stay hydrated and rinse with water after anything acidic.
- Wait at least 30 minutes before brushing to allow your saliva to neutralise acids.
- Spit, don't rinse after brushing – this lets fluoride from your toothpaste continue protecting your enamel.

Enjoy the month ahead, and here's to making self-care a priority – in all its forms.



Corbin Barry is a general dentist who owns two practices in Sydney focussing on preventative dental care. Head to sagespace.au for more information.



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SENIORS FESTIVAL KU-RING-GAI

It's that time of year again... Ku-ring-gai's Seniors Festival. It's a month-long celebration of our older population on the North Shore, with various workshops, tours and additional services up for grabs.

Ku-ring-gai Council and other community-based organisations are offering a range of fun and educational events, with many being free of charge.

Ku-ring-gai Mayor Christine Kay said: "If you're over 55 and living locally, you can enjoy a month of activities from Monday March 3 to Monday March 24. It's our way of recognising the value that our older residents bring to the community and to encourage you to meet new people and try some activities."

Sydney Observer has rounded up our favourite options on offer, but for the full list, be sure to visit council's website. Mayor Kay recommended people try to book into the activities to ensure a spot. You can find more information, including booking guidelines, here: www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Things-to-do/Events-and-festivals/Seniors-Festival.



SYDNEY TRAMWAY MUSEUM

Join Ku-ring-gai Council on their visit to the Sydney Tramway Museum in Loftus, southern Sydney. Take a tram ride through the local national park, wander through the museum and then join the group for lunch in Bundeena. Everyone will then catch a ferry to Cronulla and head on the bus home to Killara.

When: 5 March.

Where: Meet at Marian Street Theatre car park, Killara.

Cost: Lunch at own expense.

Info: www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Things-to-do/Whats-on/Sydney-tramway-museum.



SENIORS CHESS CLUB OPEN DAY

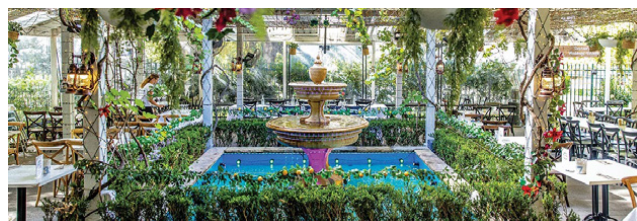
This club meets casually on every 1st, 3rd and 5th Monday of the month where applicable. All levels of proficiency are welcome and boards and pieces are supplied. There is also a tutor at the open day morning on March 3 to help attendees improve their game.

When: 3 March.

Where: Turramurra Seniors Centre.

Cost: Free.

Info: www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Things-to-do/Whats-on/Seniors-Chess-Club-open-day.



FLOWER ARRANGING DEMONSTRATION DURAL

Enjoy a morning tea at the beautiful Vintage Secret Garden Cafe in Galston, and then watch a demonstration of various techniques and styles of flower arranging. The group will then go for lunch at Wild Pear Cafe in Dural.

When: 6 March.

Where: Meet at Marian Street Theatre car park, Killara.

Cost: \$65.

Info: krg.nsw.gov.au/Things-to-do/Whats-on/Flowering-arranging-demonstration-and-nursery-visits-in-Dural.



Riverboat Postman cruise Hawkesbury River.

ENERGY SAVING WORKSHOP

This friendly and informative workshop will show attendees simple but effective ways to improve your comfort levels and lower your energy bills in your home. This includes selecting energy efficient appliances, lowering bills and learning how to block key draught areas.

When: 10 March.

Where: Council Chambers, Gordon.

Cost: Free.

Info: www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Things-to-do/Whats-on/Energy-saving-workshop.

EVERYTHING FOR SENIORS DAY

Explore fun and interesting things to do in the Ku-ring-gai area at this local event. You can find out more about joining a community organisation or club, seeking help-at-home services or volunteer opportunities.

When: 12 March.

Where: Council Chambers, Gordon.

Cost: Free.

Info: www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Things-to-do/Whats-on/Everything-for-Seniors-Day.

RIVERBOAT POSTMAN CRUISE HAWKESBURY RIVER

Attendees will take a cruise from Brooklyn Wharf around the Hawkesbury River and enjoy lively commentary on the history of the riverside communities. There will be lunch at Ploughman's.

When: 18 March.

Where: Meet at Marian Street Theatre car park, Killara.

Cost: \$95.

Info: www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Things-to-do/Whats-on/The-Riverboat-Postman-cruise-on-the-Hawkesbury-River.

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RUSTIC DÉCOR



- **Indoor-outdoor living:** Many rustic Australian homes embrace open-plan spaces with large windows and seamless connections to outdoor areas, bringing in plenty of natural light and fresh air.

CREATING A RUSTIC FEEL IN ANY HOME

Rustic style is often associated with a strong, welcoming country home. However, as our living spaces become smaller and greener areas decrease, the demand for parks and natural elements in cities is rising. This shows that urban life isn't just about concrete and technology – it's important to bring some soul into our surroundings.

With this in mind, rustic décor incorporates materials like stone, exposed brick, timber, and leather, along with various natural elements in flooring, furniture, and decorative pieces. These materials create a warm and inviting atmosphere, reminiscent of life in the bush or by the coast. The boundaries of rustic design have expanded, and today, it's natural to see raw-finished furniture and simple, sturdy designs in homes of all kinds – whether surrounded by nature or nestled in an urban setting.

The key to incorporating this aesthetic in a modern way – without turning your home into a traditional farmhouse – is to mix rustic furniture, details, and finishes with contrasting styles, such as classic or industrial, in line with the homeowner's personality. This creates a balanced and contemporary look.

Rustic décor can be applied to any space. Even small, simple details can bring a strong rustic feel to a room. This doesn't mean that embracing nostalgic elements and bringing nature-inspired features into our homes is limited to rural life. A relaxed, nature-driven style with modern touches is a timeless and practical solution for those who love the outdoors but need to live in the city.

This style relies on raw materials to create a country feel. You know when you're out and about, and you spot something and think, "That would look great at home"? That's the spirit of rustic décor – using natural elements to bring warmth and comfort. Let the essence of heritage, sustainability, and a love for nature shape your home. Make space for natural elements and let them take centre stage. Nostalgia, warmth, and comfort – this is the essence of rustic décor.

by Suzy Leoni

When we think about our origins, it's common to find emotional ties to rustic décor. Most of us have family roots in the countryside. Grandparents who came from rural areas or childhood experiences on a farm are part of many families' histories.

This grounded lifestyle, with bare feet on the earth and close contact with nature, is a legacy of the past but is becoming increasingly rare in our daily lives. Rustic décor is a way to reconnect with the land, our heritage, and a more natural way of living.

Rustic style is rooted in rural settings and nature. Even in an apartment in the heart of a metropolis, rustic décor introduces elements that evoke the countryside – unpolished forms, natural textures, and earthy tones.

A RUSTIC AESTHETIC WITH AN AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY

Rustic aesthetics have long been associated with country homes, where people used locally available materials to build and furnish their spaces. In Australia, this style takes on a distinct identity influenced by the outback, coastal landscapes, and sustainable design.

- **Natural materials:** Australian rustic décor makes use of local timbers such as jarrah, spotted gum, and blackbutt, as well as sandstone and soapstone. Reclaimed wood is also widely valued for its character and sustainability.
- **Outback influences:** Leather, raw fabrics, and handcrafted Indigenous-inspired pieces are often incorporated to bring warmth and authenticity to the space.
- **Coastal connection:** Given Australia's strong coastal culture, rustic interiors sometimes blend with coastal elements, featuring natural fibres, linen, and lighter tones for a relaxed feel.



Suzy Leoni is an interior designer, vet (cats and ultrasound postgraduate), and mother of two. As a designer, she specialises in planning family and professional environments.

THE SOUNDS OF DECORATION

A classic grand piano in the corner of the room. For decades, this has been a key design element, particularly in wealthier families.

Whether you could hold a tune or not, it was undeniable how its beauty could elevate the entire room.

These days, instruments are more accessible. They can be mass produced, and many are opting to use them as home design features rather than instruments to be played.

While the grand piano will always be a classic, here are some other ideas which can be integrated with a little more ease.

Guitars are probably the easiest instruments to get your hands on today. Once again, mass production means you can buy a bunch and create your own pieces.

You can saw shapes in the guitar to make it fit to certain walls and angles. You can also just hang them as they are, straight on the wall, using wall hangers. If you're a



player, you can also stand them from the ground and give the room a whole 'studio' feel.

If you are after a more eclectic look, you can buy dozens of instruments and hang them close together as a kind of collage. This will give the room an antique shop feel.



You can saw shapes in the guitar to make it fit to certain walls and angles.

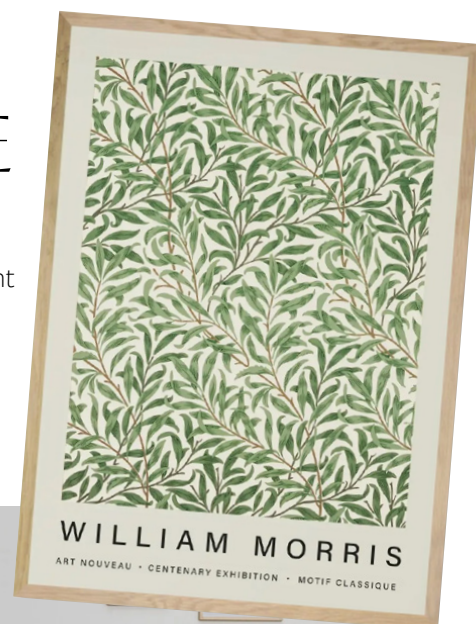
GOING GREEN FOR SAGE

Sage is here to stay in interior design. It's calming, versatile and brings a clean vibe, not to mention it is a very aesthetic hue generally speaking. The best part about sage is that it's the most palatable of all the different shades of green - not too dark or light, not too bold or dull. It therefore makes sense why it's such a popular colour when it comes to furniture and accessories lately.

There are also emotional benefits to the colour green being used in interior spaces. Its association with nature can promote feelings of balance, and help reduce anxiety. Its association with growth and renewal brings good chi to the home, and it's also been found to not cause eye fatigue, unlike other colours like red.

To bring some inspiration to your interior musings, we've rounded up some of our current sage favourites on offer. Maybe today is the time to refresh your home and start new!

Inka Arthouse Greenery print by William Morris, \$50
<https://inkaarthouse.com>



Koala Getaway sofa three-seater sofa in Kakadu, \$3,495
<https://au.koala.com>



Mocka Maisie scalloped bedside table in Sage, \$130
<https://www.mocka.com.au>



Kmart Noah boucle chair in Sage, \$89
<https://www.kmart.com.au>

Bed Threads Sage and Olive French flax linen scalloped European pillowcases, \$140
<https://bedthreads.com.au>



STYLISH AND VERSATILE CUSHIONS

by Suzy Leoni

Cushions can become the standout feature of any space. With them, we can be bold with textures, patterns, shapes, and colours, bringing balance and personality to a design. Such versatility shouldn't be treated as just an accessory. So I am bringing to you some tips to make the most with what you have and explore options, reusing cushions inserts while only periodically swapping out the covers

If you love colour but are still hesitant to incorporate it into your space, set a palette and get to work. Try different combinations and take photos of them all. Let the best one win! Plain cushions work best at the back of an arrangement, providing support for the overall composition.



Try richer or more vibrant colours, as they won't be in the immediate line of sight. You can mix stripes with florals and other patterns! To avoid any clashing, repeat one or two colours throughout the different designs, and you'll see how harmony prevails over visual confusion.

Feeling bored with your space? Swap out the cushion covers and take inspiration from the colours of artwork

and surrounding décor. If your sofa has a pattern, go for plain cushions and play around with different fabric textures and handcrafted finishes. If your sofa is plain, patterned cushions will bring the balance you're looking for. Try different shapes and styles! Plain ones can act as a base layer in some arrangements.

Refresh your spaces with the seasons: in summer, go for bright, solid tones. Spring calls for a mix of patterns and pastel shades. In autumn, embrace warm ochres and earthy hues. And in winter, opt for cosy textures and deeper, moodier tones!

Do you think cushions are just for sofas and armchairs? Think again! Bring them into the bedroom and pair them with your pillowcases for an extra touch of comfort and style.

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NEW LOCAL PANINI BAR & CAFÉ OPENING

Fourth Village Providore, the beloved Italian food destination in Mosman, has expanded its offering with the launch of the Fourth Village Panini Bar & Café.

This new chapter in Fourth Village's story maintains its commitment to authentic Italian cuisine while creating an accessible, everyday dining experience that welcomes the community to gather, share, and enjoy the simple pleasures of Italian food.

"While our restaurant has been a special place for many years, reopening as Fourth Village Panini Bar and Café has been a heartfelt evolution of our family's passion for sharing the authentic flavours of Italy with our community. The café brings a fresh and inviting space where everyone can enjoy our family recipes and traditions in a casual setting," says Dominic Quattroville.

"Most importantly, this new chapter honours our family's commitment to genuine Italian hospitality, where every guest is treated like family. We're creating a space where people can drop in any time of day, whether it's for a morning coffee and pastry, a relaxed lunch with friends, or a quick afternoon gelato. We're thrilled to offer this new experience and menu offering while continuing to create moments of joy over great food, just as we always have."



At the heart of the new menu is the panuozzo, a distinctive Italian street food that bridges the gap between pizza and panini. Made with woodfired pizza bread and filled with gourmet ingredients, the signature panuozzo offerings include combinations like salami and mortadella with stracciatella, and a vegetarian option featuring chargrilled Mediterranean vegetables.

The menu extends beyond the signature panuozzos to include house-made focaccia, fresh burrata salads, pastries, woodfired pizzettes, and Italian gelato. Guests can also indulge in Fourth Village's renowned desserts, including their distinctive panettone French toast and tiramisu by the slice.

Open Wednesday through Sunday for breakfast and lunch, the café introduces a fresh interpretation of Italian casual dining while maintaining the warmth and authenticity that has made Fourth Village a community favourite.

The family owns 100 acres of prime farmland in Pokolbin allowing them to create farm-to-table products for their Sydney customers. With over 30 years of food retail experience, Peter, Annette, and their three sons John, Sal, and Dominic continue to create something truly special for their local Mosman community. Experience the passion of our family business, where every product is sourced and made with love.

THE DIY DINING SCENE

Going out just to cook your own food does seem counterintuitive, but Sydney's restaurants are embracing the DIY trend, as are diners. According to SevenRooms, 50% of respondents are willing to pay more for a personalised dining experience, while 41% value an element of theatre in their meal. Meanwhile, Tillster data shows 65% of customers would visit a restaurant more often if self-service was available.

Here are a few restaurants moving the DIY dining scene forward.



BUTCHERS BUFFET

Korean BBQ with an all-you-can-eat selection of meats, sides & hot dishes.

The “DIY” trend has been a commonplace practice at Korean barbecue restaurants for years – and Butchers Buffet has capitalised on this, thriving (and opening their sixth venue in Lidcombe), even amidst the cost-of-living crisis. Their all-you-can-eat Korean BBQ lets diners grill premium meats like Bulgogi and Wagyu Beef Belly at their table, with sides like Japchae, kimchi, and lettuce wraps perfect for creating your own ssam (traditional Korean dish).

CBD Address: Shop 8/363 Sussex St, Haymarket NSW 2000.

www.butchersbuffet.com.au



GYUNIKU

Premium Japanese BBQ + DIY Chirashi Sushi (Poke) Bowl & DIY frozen yoghurt station

For an elevated take on the trend, Gyuniku in Sydney's CBD offers high-marbling Wagyu, fresh seafood, and daily-made sushi and sashimi made by sous chefs, alongside a DIY Chirashi Sushi (poke bowl) station where guests can build their own creations with salmon, dressings, and colourful toppings. To end on something sweet, guests can enjoy a DIY frozen yoghurt station with mixed berry or yuzu yogurt with topping options including chocolate brownies, matcha cake, tapioca pearls, mochi, and fruit jelly.

Address: 34/1 Dixon St, Haymarket NSW 2000.

www.gyuniku.com.au



MIJI BAR & GRILL

Sydney's first DIY self-serve wine, sake and cocktail bar

The rise of the DIY trend is now however also extending beyond dining. Miji Bar & Grill in North Sydney brings the trend to mixology, offering Sydney's first “build-your-own” self-serve cocktail bar. With over 19 liquors, wines, and sake mixes, plus garnishes like orange slices, mint leaves, shaved coconut – guests are encouraged to get creative, enhancing the restaurant's fun, vibrant atmosphere.

Address: 100 Miller St, North Sydney NSW 2060

www.miji.com.au

THE BEST SET MENUS ON THE NORTH SHORE

Do you feel like a nice long lunch or long dinner among friends or family? Often when there's eight or more people at the event, your table has to book a set menu. But as for which ones around Sydney and locally are the best... we have you covered.



FOR A MODERN AUSTRALIAN VIBE

Sails at Lavender Bay - shared three-course tasting menu, around \$155 per person.

- » Artisan butter and bread
- » Crudo
- » Barbeque king prawns
- » Moreton bay bug spaghettini
- » Scotch fillet
- » Dark chocolate cremeux



FOR AN ASIAN VIBE

The Rice Den, St Leonards - banquet menu, \$90 per person.

- » Edamame with Fried Shallot
- » XO Chilli Oil Prawn Dumplings
- » Roast Duck San Choi Bao
- » Sourdough Sesame Prawn Toast
- » Hong Kong Chicken Fried Rice
- » Kung Pao Prawns
- » Steamed Barramundi Fillet
- » Crispy Shandong Chicken Maryland
- » Broccolini and Bok Choy



FOR A FRENCH VIBE

Chez Blue, Rozelle - shared menu, \$90 per person.

- » Baguette and butter
- » Salad
- » Tuna tartare Niçoise
- » Chicken liver pâté
- » Barramundi
- » Steak frites
- » Fries
- » Green beans
- » Creme brûlée
- » Mille feuille
- » Chocolate mousse

FOR CASUAL DINING

Green Moustache, North Sydney - shared two-course Blossom menu, \$65 per person.

- » Garlic Tuscan flatbread
- » Salt and pepper squid
- » Handmade burrata
- » Bruschetta
- » Beer battered chips
- » Choice of one per person:
Japanese bowl, Indonesian curry,
vegetarian pasta, chargrilled
lamb rump, bbq spiced chicken,
Shisho wrapped fish



NORWEGIAN WOOD

High up on Rønvikfjellet in Nordland County Norway, you'll find Wood Hotel Bodø. Built out of wood, they are an outdoor resort, proudly drawing inspiration from the nature of Bodø, as well as the past and present of local traditions.

Rønvikfjellet is a place with many chapters in its history. From the landmark Turisthytta to our outdoor resort, this mountain has witnessed generations of travelers seeking adventure and solace in the woodlands.

Built in 1890, Turisthytta, translated to the "tourist cabin", served as a popular gathering spot for locals and tourists alike. The Turisthytta was the ideal vantage point to experience the midnight sun and marvel at the views of the sea, city, and the iconic Lofoten wall.

Turisthytta was also an important hub for hikers and one of the most popular excursion destinations in Bodø. It housed a café, serving refreshments for hikers heading out on, and back from, the mountain.

Turisthytta underwent several transformations over the years. In

1965, it took the shape of a modernist two-story building with expansive glass windows. Despite its popularity, the structure dilapidated and was demolished in 2016, leaving the Rønvik mountain awaiting its next chapter.



Today, the Wood Hotel Bodø aims to be a beacon of progress on Rønvikfjellet. The hotel is primarily built out of massive wood/glulam from spruce. The impregnated glulam pillars on the first floor are made out of pine, and the outside panelling is made out of heartwood pine.

NORWEGIAN DESIGN AND NORDLÆNNINGER

Wood Hotel Bodø aims to be a great place to stay, hold meetings, enjoy good food, and fully relax. The hotel is comfortably furnished by *Slettvoll*, with Norwegian products. *Slettvoll* is located

by the beautiful Geiranger World Heritage Fjord, and all the furniture is produced there by skilled craftsmen.

Slettvoll places great emphasis on using local and short-traveled materials in their products, allowing them to support the local community and take care of the environment while offering quality furniture.

Enjoy comfortable furniture from *Slettvoll*, fabrics from *Gudbrandsdalens Uldvarefabrik*, and heavenly beds from *Jensen*. The lamps in our hotel are hand-blown from *Hadeland Glassverk*, and the carpets are made from

recycled fishing nets. The fireplace is made of soapstone from *Kvam*, and the slate is from *Otta*.

The art you'll find in the reception and restaurant is created by Her Majesty Queen Sonja. The Queen loves the nature in Nordland and is known for her passion for hiking. The seven pictures adorning the walls of Wood Hotel Bodø are inspired by the magnificent nature in Lofoten and are hand-colored graphics. In the rooms, you'll find pictures taken by Ann Cathrin Buchardt - a Royal Norwegian Court photographer.



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NORWAY STOWAWAY

Jay Houhlias

In Search of Northern Lights. It is a grand name for a cruise tour and an even grander way to feel the pressure of not seeing northern lights.

The allusive little green dancers are unpredictable and temperamental, and everyone is constantly on the lookout for them, which may explain their stage fright.

But stage fright is not a critique on talent or quality, it occurs because

everyone's watching, for when there is no one watching, there is no stage fright.

Fred Olsen Cruise Lines have 175 years of experience at sea. This assurance would guide us through the two week journey from Portsmouth in the UK across to Norway, up past the arctic circle and back down again. The combination of long distances and winding, broken up, sometimes ice laden roads, makes cruising the easiest and most practical way to see the country.



Fred Olsen channel 175 years of experience sailing and discovering the world into their cruises. For more information and to book, visit <https://www.fredolsencruises.com>.



ÅLESUND

I went straight on a Hjørundfjord boat trip which took us through the Sunnmøre Alps with their great and sheer granite walls. Small establishments littered the coastline along the way.

Our guide shared stories of swimming, hiking and fishing during summer in the surrounding villages. Across the board, Norwegians seem to share a true respect for nature, a constant relationship they nurture, all year round, through the winters when it is harsh and through the kinder summer months. They are committed to it like a marriage because it is one.



TROMSØ

If you were to do any research on the northern lights, you will find Tromsø pop up for the top place to see them. It is, geographically, the best place to catch them. In theory.

However, Tromsø has their weather to contend with. 250 days per year of precipitation, which means clouds, which means very low chance of northern lights.

It has a milder climate due to the gulf stream providing moist, warm air to the region, and the

mountains surrounding the town act as a barrier from any wild wind. It can be very icy, very slippery, and very wet.

We took a city tour. Tromsø is vibrant, full of bars and cafes and because of the university, young people. Our guide was a young German who'd moved only a few years ago. "This season has been garbage weather," he said.

Our older Norwegian bus driver was amused, "Well you don't have your own house in Tromsø. I do, and I'm always shovelling snow out of our driveway. That's garbage."

ALTA

In 2000, Alta was named the city of the northern lights. The world's first Northern Lights Observatory was established here, and so really now, no pressure.

A frank reality of northern lights is our eyes do not do a great job perceiving colour at night. Cameras do a much better job, hence why photos come out far better than experiencing them live.

I found the best thing to do is sit there and watch because unless you plan on using a camera to guide the rest of your life visually, the two globes are on your head are what are going to get through. You should stick with them, despite their flaws.

Let others take the photos while you watch, then, you just steal their photos after they are done like I did.

Fellow Passenger Stuart Smith



The dancers came early evening and hung around for about 20 minutes. The predictions for them were not great, but maybe that's why they decided to show up. They really do move around a fair bit, kind of shapeless, intense for one moment then barely visible the next.



TIPS TO NOT ENTER A CRUISE AS A PASSENGER AND LEAVE AS CARGO

I met a passenger called Vince who has spent the last two years aboard different cruises, only having 8 days not on a cruise. He had some tips on staying healthy.

1. Take the stairs. There is a lot of level changes and you're always moving up and down. Taking these steps will accumulate over the trip.
2. Eat your three. Coming in the price of the cruise are three buffet meals a day. Just eat these three meals, eat them healthy, heartily, and you should be ok.

Where you get caught is all the little added snacks and bits between meals.

3. Find excuses to walk around. Check out the show on the other side of the ship or head down to the gangway for a walk around the town you're docked at.
4. Keep at least one part of your normal health routine. You're on a cruise so it's a break, but it is helpful to keep at least one thing consistent regarding what you would normally do to keep healthy.

“WELCOME TO THE SECRETS”



It's what one of the chefs said as we were being shown behind the scenes in the kitchens. We got a walkthrough of all the different rooms, from the fish and meat rooms to the bread rooms to the storerooms. We then toured the engine rooms downstairs and all the way back to the bridge room on top with the captains and navigators.

As a passenger, you don't realise the logistics and how much work goes into keeping the cruise running. Everyone has to work together, and you can be sure it helps if they all get along.

Norwegians love meat, and that means I love Norwegians, and their meat. The main restaurant on board is a buffet and it is highly pillage-able. I always had my one server I went to because he knew me and my stomach's desires. His name was Sandeep, and toward the end of the trip we fostered a telekinesis and he would start putting food on my plate without my needing to say what I wanted.

The staff are not just smiles for customer service and professionalism, they are genuinely happy people. Many of them sing. I don't know if it's a job requirement, whether it's standard regulation, but you could always catch at least one of them in a tune, either quietly to themselves or louder if they didn't mind the audience.

SORTLAND

The Sámi are the indigenous population of northern Scandinavia and Russia. We visited a Sámi home and our host spoke to us about her life, and for that entire hour, everyone was completely silent and completely immersed. It was not a presentation or a bit she dusts off for tourists, it was her explaining all she knew and experienced, and how their family live.

The Sámi's relationship with their reindeer is their livelihood. When slaughtered, the whole animal is used – its hide for clothing, its bones for tools and toys, its brain, blood and organs for extra nutrition. A modern Sámi family need about 300 reindeer to make a living.

They are unusual animals. The ones we saw were obviously used to people, but they don't really want anything to do with you unless you have food. If you try patting them, they just walk away. It's not a frightened jump away though, it's just a bugger off walk away.

They do not grow at all in the winter because their body goes into conserving mode, using the little resources just to survive. Only in the summer will they grow. Their main food in winter is lichen under the snow and in summer,



they have their pick of mushrooms and berries and whatever else they can forage.

Both males and females have antlers, however, a functional, male will shed its antlers during the winter. If a male has a full set of its antlers at Christmas like beloved Rudolf, it means he is castrated, and this is a fun fact for the kids.

BERGEN

It was our final stop before we headed back. Surrounded by seven mountains, Bergen is beautiful but functional, a real city city. The main centre lies on the docks, and the few streets from the water are all fashionably bohemian yet clean and neat.

We caught the Fløibanen Funicular up to the top of Mount Fløyen. Everyone says the funicular is a must do but I don't agree because you can also walk up – Mount Fløyen is the must do. It's great up there, almost a suburb in itself. It has a café a several walking tracks which all go off somewhere.



Coming back to Portsmouth had everyone feeling sated. Northern lights were searched for and northern lights were found, plus some other things along the way.

It is my layman belief the northern lights are always around, perhaps every night, just a little bit, even for a second, but we miss them because it's hard to track every second. We also dedicate specific times to look for them, but old gal mother nature doesn't work in specifics.

The search for the northern lights is in fact, not a search, but a special strike of luck. I found rather than expect or search for them, it's probably best to just glance out the windows every so often with your cup of tea or take a few extra minutes after dinner and just sit.

I think it's in these moments they'll most likely show up, if they want to. Otherwise, you've got a whole cruise and a whole country to enjoy.

Jay Houhlias is a writer and journalist currently traveling and freelancing. Follow more of his work at jayhouhlias.substack.com.



SENIORS BALLET FOR BEGINNERS

Ballet for Better Balance 55+™ is a registered program with the NSW government's Active and Healthy Program. The class aims to improve balance, stability, flexibility, coordination and mental agility in Seniors. Traditional ballet steps will be taught at a gentle pace. All exercises are choreographed to classical ballet music so dancers are able to get the true experience of a traditional ballet class. Participants do not need to have any prior ballet experience.

When: 7, 14, 21 and 28 March. 10am-11am.

Where: Dancing for Wellbeing Seniors Ballet, 1A Lindfield Avenue, Lindfield.

Cost: First class free, thereafter \$26 per class or \$120 for a 5 class pass with 4 month expiry.

Contact: Veronique, 0497 453 068 or veronique@seniorsballet.com.au.



EASTWOOD NIGHT MARKETS

Experience a fun night out and support this great initiative, showcasing Eastwood's reputation as a food and entertainment hub. Eastwood Night Markets offers handmade goods, fun kids activities, multicultural delicacies and community education sessions. Stalls offer everything from plants to fresh produce, handicrafts, tasty street food and more.

When: On Saturdays, 1-29 March, 4pm-10pm.

Where: Eastwood Plaza, Rowe Street, Eastwood 2122.

Cost: Free.

Info: Kelly Wen, 0404 306 610, Eastwoodnightmarket@outlook.com.au.

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COCKATOO ISLAND SUNSET SESSIONS

Everyone's favourite live music series is back! Grab tickets for Sunset Sessions 2025 and spend your Saturday afternoons in the heart of Sydney Harbour! You'll have an opportunity to picnic on the lawns of historic Biloela House, enjoy a jaw-dropping harbour views and be taken to

your happy place by a diverse line-up of emerging artists.

When: Saturdays, 8-29 March.

Where: Cockatoo Island.

Cost: \$35 person with children 12 and under free.

Info: www.cockatooisland.gov.au/en/whats-on/sunset-sessions.



ARIA

A symphony of discord unfolds in David Williamson's brand-new play – a darkly funny exploration of the intricate dynamics and rivalry inherent within every family.

When: from 2-15 March.

Where: Ensemble Theatre, 78 McDougall St, Kirribilli NSW 2061.

Cost: Tickets from \$43.

Info: ensemble.com.au.



TERM 1 INTRODUCTION TO TAI-CHI

Active Ku-ring-gai invites you to join our 10-week beginner Tai Chi program, a gateway to the ancient Chinese martial art renowned for its flowing movements and holistic benefits. This program is perfect for those new to Tai Chi and seeking to explore its principles and practices.

When: 6, 13, 20 and 27 March. 10am-11am.

Where: Blair Wark VC Community Centre, Dunstan Grove, Lindfield, 2070.

Cost: \$12.

Info: Ku-ring-gai Council - Active Ku-ring-gai, 9424 0754 or recreationbookings@krg.nsw.gov.au.

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SUDOKU

MEDIUM

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

HARD

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

ANSWERS

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

MEDIUM

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

HARD

1. March 17; 2. Green; 3. Ireland; 4. Shamrock; 5. Chicago; 6. British; 7. Guinness; 8. Roman/Luck; 9. Snakes; 10. Atlantic Ocean; 11. March 8; 12. Purple; 13. 1911; 14. Inspire Inclusion; 15. South Australia; 16. Julia Gillard; 17. Mimosas; 18. 1902; 19. Gender equality and women's achievements; 20. UN Women.

MARCH TRIVIA SPECIAL

- When is St. Patrick's Day celebrated?

- What colour is associated with St. Patrick's Day?

- Which country is St. Patrick the patron saint of?

- What plant symbolizes St. Patrick's Day?

- What city dyes its river green annually?

- What does a four-leaf clover represent?

- Which alcoholic drink is popular on St. Patrick's?

- What nationality was St. Patrick originally?

- What creature did St. Patrick supposedly banish?

- Which ocean borders Ireland?

- When is International Women's Day celebrated?

- What is the official colour of IWD?

- Which year was International Women's Day first celebrated?

- What is the IWD campaign theme for 2024?

- Which Australian state was first to grant women's vote?

- Who was Australia's first female Prime Minister?

- What flower represents International Women's Day?

- What year did women gain the right to vote in Australia?

- What does IWD celebrate globally?

- Which UN body promotes women's rights worldwide?



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MARSFIELD RETIREMENT VILLAGE, 14 VINCENTIA STREET, MARSFIELD

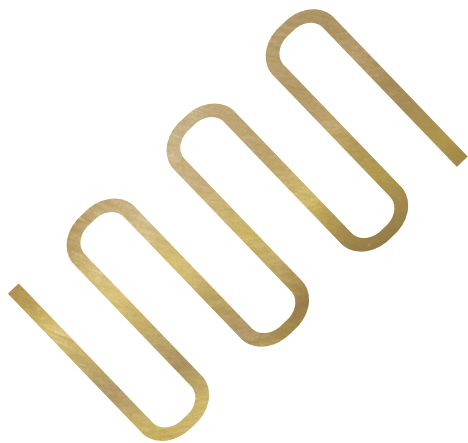
Marsfield Village is the ideal next move if you want to live an independent lifestyle with access to great shopping and social activities. Easily make new friends and meet like-minded people in this friendly community that sits adjacent to historic Curzon Hall and just 3km away from Macquarie Shopping Centre.

You may have to pay a departure fee when you leave this village. Subject to availability.

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