

FREE! PLEASE TAKE A COPY

SYDNEY OBSERVER

EST. 1996

JULY 2026

NAIDOC
celebrates
First Nations

**WORDS
THAT
MATTER**

The clarity of
Jane Caro



A sense of
sensitivity
on Japan's
temple trail

Primrose Park's
historic secret

PROPERTY
Homes linger
longer in 7 North
Shore suburbs

The Census is coming this August.

EVERY ANSWER MATTERS

Help us understand what Australia
needs now and into the future.
Census night - Tuesday 11 August

 census.abs.gov.au



Census

Authorised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

KEEP WARM AND KEEP READING

FROM THE EDITOR &
SYDNEY OBSERVER TEAM



Contents

LOCAL

- 05 NSW hospital dilemma
- 06 Celebrating First Nations during NAIDOC
- 07 From Bradfield to Canberra
- 08 Stay local, spend less
- 09 Local crime round-up
- 10 Planning needs community support
- 12 What's on

FEATURES

- 13 Humans communicate, chatbots generate
- 15 The suite of mediums: Jane Caro
- 18 Towns of NSW: Scone
- 19 When Primrose Park was unsavoury
- 20 The 'silent epidemic' of social isolation

EXPERIENCES

- 22 A sense of sensibility
- 26 Poached pear and macadamia brownies
- 27 Your local café: Comme Chez Nous
- 27 Delightful drinks

PROPERTY

- 28 Slower, not cheaper – yet
- 30 Sold Property of the Month

PUBLISHER: Kamdha Pty Ltd
CONTACT: advertising@kamdha.com
BOOKING DEADLINE: 15th of the month
MEDIA RELEASES: news@kamdha.com
EDITOR/DESIGN: Jay Houhlias,
editor@kamdha.com

CONTRIBUTORS: WAL ABRAMOWICZ,
PENELOPE ANDREWS, NICOLETTE BOELE,
NATASHA CIESIELSKI, MATT CROSS, LIESEL HOOL,
MIKE KAYE, DR BELINDA SIEW LUAN KHONG,
MARGARET SIMPSON, PHILLIP SIMPSON,
ELLIOT STYCHE, SARAH WAINWRIGHT

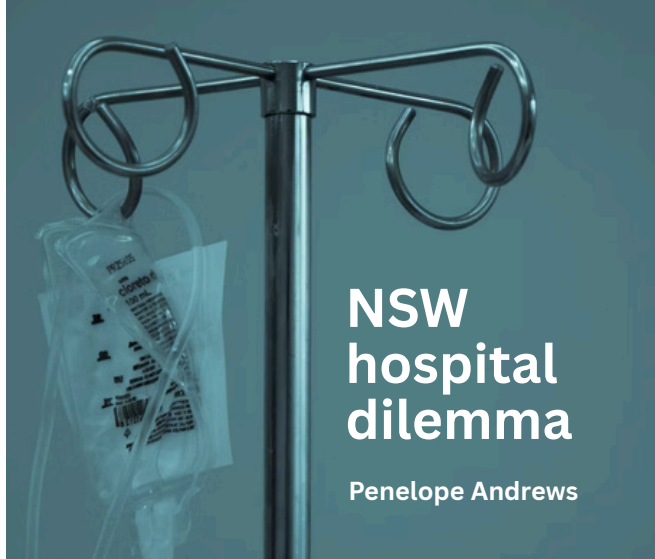
SYDNEY OBSERVER is a monthly magazine published by Kamdha Pty Ltd (ABN 97 098 661 959). Sydney Observer magazine, its Publisher and Editor, hereby expressly disclaim to the full extent permitted by the law, all and any liability arising from any negligence whatsoever of the Publishers including damage, consequential damages, liability, expenses, costs to any person and/or business/company arising from any action or inaction by any person in connection with any copy or arising from reliance on any copy which is published or failed to be published by the Publishers. The copyright of all material published in the Sydney Observer magazine is owned by the Publisher, Kamdha Pty Ltd, and must not be used in any form without the written permission of the publisher. This copyright includes all advertisements unless photo-ready material is provided by the advertiser. www.kamdha.com

4 | Local



Osaka
by Night
Photo Story:
Jay Houhlias





NSW hospital dilemma

Penelope Andrews

The latest Bureau of Health Information report to the NSW Minister for Health and NSW Parliament on the performance of the public health system, has painted a stark picture of NSW's public hospitals.

Released in June, the findings showed significant pressure in the face of increasing demand for hospital services, alongside workforce challenges and rising costs. More NSW patients waited longer than three months for cataract surgery and hip and knee replacements than most comparable countries. More patients arrived at NSW emergency departments by ambulance and waited longer for their care to be transferred to ED staff than in previous years. Bed occupancy rates also reached record levels in NSW public hospitals. However, elective surgery numbers did improve.

Interestingly, Western Sydney and South-West Sydney experienced far higher demand and wait times in comparison to Northern Sydney. Northern Sydney Local Health District covers Hornsby to the Northern Beaches, Ryde and North Shore, but is far less densely populated. Western Sydney is now home to almost half of Sydney's residents.

Liverpool and Blacktown hospitals scored especially poorly in in-patient surveys, with issues raised including lack of cleanliness, overcrowding and underresourcing – compared to Sydney's north,

which has seen far greater investment over a longer period of time.

One of the most worrying findings of the report, however, was in relation to aged care. Older patients waiting for an aged care placement nearly doubled, from 597 to 948. That's a concern for local government areas with a higher proportion of older residents, such as Ku-ring-gai. Around 25% of Ku-ring-gai's locals are aged 60 and over, a much higher rate compared to Greater Sydney.



NSW Health Minister Ryan Park said the NSW Government was effectively subsidising the Federal Government in its duty to provide aged care places.

"The growth in the number of stranded Commonwealth aged care patients in our health system is unsustainable, and the Commonwealth has left the NSW Government with no choice but to devise its own plan," Minister Park said.

Australian Medical Association NSW president Dr Fred Betros said the report's figures "do not show a system under control".

"They show a system under enormous pressure, with patients still waiting too long and doctors and nurses being forced to carry the consequences of years of underfunding and poor workforce planning," he said. "The system needs help now. We, as doctors, are doing our very best but we are not getting the support we need."

Bi BLIND INSPIRATION
Your Local Window Furnishing Specialists

20-30% off RRP

On average pricing is 20-30% below RRP



• BLINDS • CURTAINS • SHUTTERS • AWNINGS • MOTORISATION

**FREE MEASURE
AND QUOTE**

Showroom - BY APPOINTMENT
14/2-6 Chaplin Drive, Lane Cove West

blindinspiration.com.au

9427 9312

1300 925 463



Celebrating First Nations during NAIDOC

Penelope Andrews

NAIDOC Week is celebrated in July and it's a time when we showcase Indigenous culture, stories and excellence. Here are just two of many First Nations initiatives to celebrate.

Nourishing Connection

Caley's Pavilion at the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden is continuing to host incredible events to educate the community on Indigenous identity. From a nourishing Women's Circle facilitated by Woolwonga Gurindji woman Susan Moylan-Coombs, right, to nature play for the kids, the events are offering connection to all. Ms Moylan-Coombs said events like these invited "every person who calls this place home to actively step into a future built on truth, honesty and respect, which requires responsibility." This month, Ku-ring-gai is continuing to celebrate the Gai-mariagal Festival, which began on National Sorry Day back on 26 May.



Warndarrang graduate Regina Rogers

Bush university

Wuyagiba Bush Uni is partnering with Macquarie University to make a difference in the higher education of Indigenous Australians. Supported by the Australian Government's Regional University Study Hub grant, Wuyagiba Bush Uni is a program in remote South-East Arnhem Land that interweaves Aboriginal cultural education taught by Elders with first-year academic units at Macquarie University.

The program has seen over 200 enrolments, with 115 completions. Warndarrang woman Regina Rogers has now graduated and is exploring a Master of Research. "I always put my culture and my people first. I learnt how to balance this at university, and now I have learnt how to walk strong in both worlds," Ms Rogers said.

WINTER SHOE SALE ON NOW

30% OFF MENS FLORSHEIM

30% OFF LADIES BOOTS

30% OFF JUNIOR SKECHERS

FORBES FOOTWEAR

153 Peats Ferry Rd Hornsby - Open Monday to Saturday

sale ends 4pm Saturday 11th July

From Bradfield to Canberra



Nicolette Boele MP
Federal Member For Bradfield

I've been focused on taking the concerns I hear across Bradfield directly to Canberra, and one issue that continues to dominate conversations is housing. I'm proud to say that almost 7000 of you have now signed my petition calling for a clear national definition of affordable housing!

Across the North Shore, new developments are going up. Yet I continue to hear the same concern from our community: we are struggling to afford to live here. I've spoken with a local nurse paying almost half her income to live in a share house. That's not affordable. Without a consistent definition, governments can claim they're delivering affordable housing without ensuring locals can actually afford it. That's why I've launched this campaign and will keep pushing for change.

I've continued pressing the Government on their proposed tax reforms. Small businesses are the engine room of our economy – they back local jobs and take the risks that keep Australia productive and competitive. So when the Government's proposed capital gains tax changes left 175,000 of those small businesses short of the concessions they were counting on, I got to work.

I called for the Government to lift the small business threshold from \$2 million to \$10 million in turnover, matching the Australian Taxation Office's own definition of a small business.

I'm very pleased to say the Government has now made that change.

Being back in Bradfield always leaves me feeling thankful for the beautiful and unique natural environment we call home. This is why I had to call out this Government's blatant disrespect of nature, with only 0.3% of the budget being allocated to programs that support nature. This is simply not good enough. As pressure on our environment grows, I will continue to fight for the places and wildlife that make this area so special.

I've continued advocating for stronger support for victim-survivors of domestic violence. In Parliament, I spoke about the impact of violence, housing insecurity, and financial stress on people escaping unsafe situations. I want to highlight organisations like Taldumande in St Leonards, which supports young people facing homelessness and family violence, and I will continue to call for increased funding for overstretched frontline services.

“Affordable housing” should mean homes people can afford.

Governments fund “affordable housing”.
Developers build “affordable housing”.
Yet families can't afford it.



There's no consistent national definition of affordable housing.



Nicolette BOELE MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR BRADFIELD



Sign my petition to set a clear national definition, so when we build “affordable housing”, it means homes that families can afford.

8 | Local

Stay local, Spend less

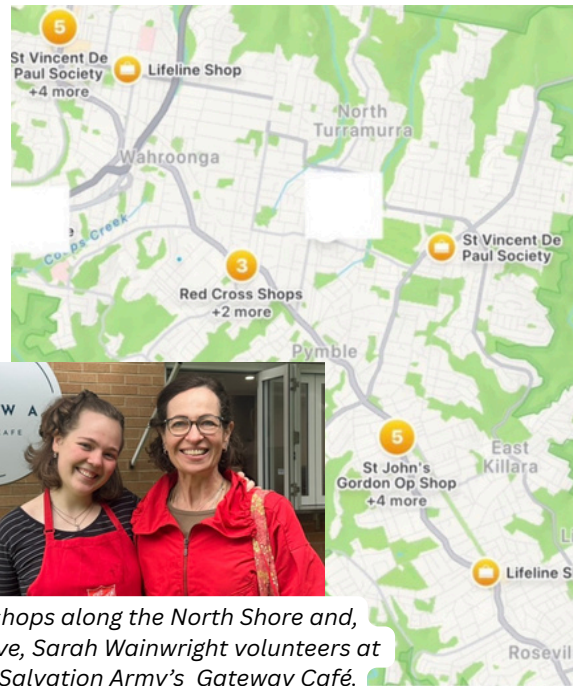
Sarah Wainwright, academic coach

@parentingandlifetips

Australian household debt is amongst the highest in the world; total household borrowings are approximately 112% of Gross Domestic Product. This means that total debt owed by individuals – as mortgages (75% of debt), credit cards and personal loans – is greater than the total value of all goods and services that Australia produces per year.

Discretionary spending is non-essential spending including luxury or deferrable expenses, such as holidays and recreation. Australian discretionary spending accounts for 35% to 40% of total average household expenditure, while non-discretionary (essential) spending makes up the remaining 60% to 65%. Importantly, retailers' markup for clothing is 150% to 200% and jewellery is 50% to 100%. So here is where we can make a difference.

We can channel much of our discretionary spending into charity-owned, non-profit op shops like Salvos Stores, Vinnies, Australian Red Cross, Save The Children and Lifeline shops.



Op shops along the North Shore and, above, Sarah Wainwright volunteers at The Salvation Army's Gateway Café.

After covering operating expenses like rent and logistics, all profits go toward funding community and welfare programs, according to the Charitable Reuse Organisation. Save the Children Australia adds that money spent in op shops directly funds essential community support, social programs, and emergency relief such as food, clothing and shelter.

It's possible to enjoy significant savings, spend smart buying second-hand, *and* help others in need.

Massive improvement in hearing aid technology

Alastair Bacon

Imagine a hearing aid that only amplifies clear speech. Imagine walking into a busy restaurant and the only thing you hear louder is the conversation around you. Not the incoherent speech that has morphed into babble. Not the clinking of glasses. Not the outside traffic. Not the air conditioning. Imagine that the only voices you hear more clearly are the ones that matter most.

For millions of people with hearing loss, noisy restaurants and clubs are among the hardest places to hear. The problem is that traditional hearing aids amplify everything, making it difficult to separate speech from the unwanted sounds that drown it out.

Well, imagine no more. The latest breakthrough in hearing aid technology is revolutionising how people hear in noisy, demanding environments. Some clients with severe hearing loss are now hearing better in busy restaurants than people with normal hearing.

It sounds hard to believe, which is why over the next 6 weeks Hidden Hearing are offering a completely FREE trial and FREE hearing assessment. There is zero cost and no obligation.

Call 1800 717 717 to book your trial at the Gordon clinic today. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

UNMATCHED SPEECH CLARITY IN A WORLD OF NOISE

Introducing a hearing aid that offers exceptional speech clarity as it separates unwanted noise from speech, delivering a level of clean and clear speech far beyond any existing technology, thereby allowing you to engage with friends, family and colleagues even in the noisiest environments.

FREE TRIAL

EXPERIENCE the REVOLUTION for yourself.
CALL 02 8880 9922



World's first hearing aid with a dedicated **AI chip**

Performs **7.7 BILLION** operations per second

HIDDEN
"HEARING"

Gordon Village Arcade
26/767 Pacific Hwy GORDON

www.hiddenhearing.com.au



Local crime round-up

Photo: NSW Police

Penelope Andrews

North Shore childcare worker jailed

In the September 2025 issue of *Sydney Observer*, we covered the news story of an Artarmon man charged with producing child abuse material through his employment at out-of-school-hours care facilities on Sydney’s North Shore.

The acts occurred between April 2021 and May 2024. The man, David William James, aged 27, has since pleaded guilty to 11 offences related to his production and possession of child abuse material and has been sentenced this month.

In June, James told the judge in a handwritten letter that he was “deeply ashamed” and apologised to the victims. He also acknowledged there was no way to “reverse the impacts” of his crimes.

Waitara assault

On 6 June at about 6:50pm, four people allegedly dressed in dark clothing and face coverings entered a bottle shop on Unwin Road, Waitara. When approached by a member of staff, the group allegedly assaulted him with a pole before they threatened him with a knife.

The group allegedly left the location with stolen bottles of alcohol. Officers attached to Ku-ring-gai Police Area Command commenced an investigation and executed a search warrant at a home in Waitara where officers seized the knife in question.

Officers arrested two teenage boys, aged 16 and 17, charging them with robbery armed with an offensive weapon. Both teenagers were refused bail and are now before the courts.

Keyton

*Inspect newly completed units
at Lutanda Manor*

With a range of layouts available, don't miss this unique opportunity to secure a modern home in a welcoming retirement community.

Enjoy independent living with access to vibrant social spaces and beautiful gardens in the heart of Pennant Hills.

Book a tour to inspect!
1800 550 550 | keyton.com.au

Artist impression

Local planning needs community support

**Matt Cross MP,
State Member for Davidson**

Getting onto the property ladder has never been easy, but for the next generation, it is getting harder. To help solve this problem, more homes need to be built. In our local area, Ku-ring-gai Council formally adopted its housing strategy in November 2025, which will see 20,000 new homes over the next 15 years.

We must always make sure there is an actual “plan” when it comes to planning.

As your local NSW Member of Parliament, I am focused on ensuring that local infrastructure keeps pace with population and housing growth, so our community remains liveable, connected, and resilient. This includes:

- Upgrading roads and public transport
- Expanding and modernising schools and hospitals; and
- Investing in parks, sporting facilities and cultural infrastructure



While the Ku-ring-gai housing strategy is far from perfect, it has community support because it was developed through genuine consultation. Residents had the opportunity to have their say, and the resulting strategy seeks to concentrate growth around the town centres of Gordon and Lindfield while protecting the heritage character of Killara and Roseville.

There is substantially less support for State Significant Developments (SSDs) being proposed outside Ku-ring-gai’s adopted Housing Strategy under the NSW Labor Government’s controversial Transport Oriented Development (TOD) policy.

The TOD represents a one-size-fits-all approach that was imposed on Ku-ring-gai without any community consultation. It lacks the community support and social licence that should underpin major planning decisions.

Many of the proposed developments are located within Heritage Conservation Areas and raise legitimate concerns about scale, overshadowing, tree canopy loss, privacy, and neighbourhood character. For example, a seven or 10-storey building directly beside one or two-storey homes is not sensible planning.

So, what can you do?

Firstly, have your say on proposed developments through the NSW Planning Portal at www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au. Community feedback matters and should form part of every planning decision.

Secondly, I encourage residents to contact me at www.mattcrossmp.com.au and invite me to inspect development sites firsthand. These visits help me strengthen my advocacy in the Parliament of NSW. This includes questions to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

Thirdly, stay engaged with the planning process. Whether that is through attending community meetings, making submissions, or joining local campaigns to get involved.

Housing affordability is one of the defining challenges of our time. Growth should be supported by infrastructure, guided by genuine community consultation, and delivered in a way that respects the character of Ku-ring-gai, a place we call home.

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

 **Please view &
sign petitions I'm
supporting today.**

 **Matt Cross MP**
MEMBER FOR DAVIDSON

 *Working for our
COMMUNITY*

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

 www.mattcrossmp.com.au

Authorised by Matt Cross MP. Funded using Parliamentary Entitlements.

A family divided: The legal lessons in Tarazi v Paras

Wal Abramowicz

When the Supreme Court of NSW handed down its decision in *Tarazi v Paras* [2026] NSWSC 369, it delivered a pointed reminder about the power of wills, the limits of informal family arrangements, and the consequences of assuming control over estate property without authority.

The case began with the death of a father in 2011. His will, written in 1998, was simple. His estate was to be divided equally among his three children. The main asset was a mixed-use property in Ashbury.

But the will was never properly administered. Instead, two of the siblings took over the property. They collected rent, made changes to the building, and treated it as if it belonged to them alone. Their explanation was an alleged family agreement from 1987, which they argued gave them the property in exchange for helping their father financially.

The problem? There was no written record, no reliable witnesses, and no consistent story. When the third sibling finally asked the court to step in, the matter escalated into full litigation.

The Judge found that the alleged family agreement didn't stack up. It lacked reliable evidence, with key parties to the agreement deceased or not present,


and contradicting evidence from a key witness undermined their claim. The absence of written and signed documents meant no express trust could be proved. No credible evidence of any common intention or detrimental reliance meant no constructive trust could have been formed.

Even if the siblings had a claim, it was too late. Any claim to an interest in the property had expired under the *Limitation Act 1969 (NSW)*, given that more than 12 years had passed since the father's death.

By collecting rent and managing the Ashbury property without administering the estate, the defendants were made to account for all rental income they received since 2011. This is because individuals who assume control of a trust property without authority are to be treated as trustees for the purpose of accounting. This decision acts as a stern warning to anyone who informally "takes charge" of estate assets without legal authority.

The Court ordered the will to be followed as written with the assets divided equally among the three children. The defendants' cross claim was dismissed.

The courts will not lightly infer trusts or estoppel without clear, consistent and corroborated evidence.



For more than 54 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.

Fox Staniland
LAWYERS

Helping our clients and the community for 54 years.

www.foxstaniland.com.au
P: 02 9440 1202 | F: (02) 9440 1205
E: lawyers@foxstaniland.com.au

Level 3, 828 Pacific Highway Gordon NSW 2072*

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

What's on



KalaKriti Indian Art Exhibition

Traditional Indian arts date back to prehistoric times and have preserved a rich cultural history. This exhibition, showcasing Indian artworks from various regions offers a glimpse into this fascinating cultural heritage.

When: Monday-Thursday until 30 July, 10am-4pm

Info: info@mayateaworld.com.au

Local play: Midnight Murder

Pymble Players' upcoming play is set for hilarious comedic chaos. It's murder, mystery and mayhem for the local community drama group when seven members of the cast are struck down by illness on Opening Night but, in true theatrical form, the show must go on! Yet, with only two actors, the director and a stage manager available to fill in the gaps, whatever can go wrong...does!

When: 31 July until 9 August

Where: Zenith Theatre, Chatswood

Info: pymbleplayers.com.au/tickets

Camellias, camellias everywhere



Eryldene Historic House and Garden is hosting a special Camellia Open Garden on Sunday 12 July, which will coincide with the **2026 NSW Camellia Research Society's Annual Camellia Show** at Ravenswood School in Gordon. Enjoy the Camellia Society's show and wander across to see the camellias alive in the garden. Sing Australia Gordon will fill the garden with happy sound. A few members of the Ku-ring-gai Art Society will also be plein air painting in the garden. Pre-book tickets online or at the gate on the day. Light refreshments (tea/coffee and homemade treats) will be available for purchase from the café.

When: Sunday 12 July, gates open 10am to 3pm

Where: 17 McIntosh St, Gordon

Exhibition of Finalists

The 2026 Abbotsleigh
Grace Cossington Smith
art award

18 July to 15 August



The Abbotsleigh Grace Cossington Smith art award presents 52 works by leading and emerging artists from across Australia. The theme of the art award is 'Making Connections', inspired by the work of Abbotsleigh Old Girl and artist Grace Cossington Smith who made connections with her changing world through drawing and painting. Each artist featured in this art award exhibition possesses a distinct way of seeing the world.

When: 18 July to 15 August

Where: Gate 7, 1666 Pacific Highway Wahroonga

Info: gcsgallery@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au

Humans **communicate**, chatbots **generate**

Dr Belinda Siew Luan Khong, consulting psychologist

Generative AI (Gen AI) is a type of artificial intelligence designed to create content by learning patterns from existing data. While humans communicate through verbal and non-verbal means, Gen AI chatbots use algorithms to generate interactive conversations with the user.

The use of Gen AI globally and in Australia is rising. In January/February, the NSW Office for Youth conducted a survey that found 71% of youth use Gen AI, with the highest usage in the 18-24 age group (83%). While 50% use Gen AI for homework and studies, 24-30% use it for mental health information. While Gen AI in NSW is used mainly for homework and information, in the US, innocuous interactions with chatbots have resulted in significant harm.

The University of NSW's Professor Toby Walsh says about 28% of Australians use generative AI weekly, almost three times the rate of the rest of the world.

"Despite having only 1.3% of the world's population, Australia has 2% of ChatGPT's global traffic. It is high time that Australia had a robust digital duty of care that held technology companies liable for such harms and helped to prevent any more."

In October 2025, Australia's eSafety Commissioner,

Julie Inman Grant, issued legal notices to four AI companion providers, which are increasingly popular among young people.

"We are riding a new wave of AI companions that are entrapping and entrancing impressionable young minds, with human-like, sycophantic, and often sexually explicit conversations, encouraging self-harm and suicide," Ms Inman Grant said.

In the US, lawsuits are being filed against OpenAI for negligence, assisted suicide and wrongful death. The plaintiffs (ages 17 to 48) used ChatGPT for help with schoolwork, research, writing and recipes. This shows kids and adults are vulnerable to similar risks.

For example, 48-year-old Joe Ceccanti used ChatGPT for his nature-based sanctuary. ChatGPT validated his cosmic theories. When Joe quit ChatGPT, he suffered a breakdown. Despite receiving psychiatric care, he was drawn back to the chatbot and eventually took his own life.

Innocuous chatbot use can escalate to dependency, delusions and self-harm. This escalation stems from AI designs that maximise engagement through manufactured intimacy.

Currently, Australia does not have dedicated AI

PETER VICKERS
BUSINESS GROUP
 CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS • INVESTMENT SERVICES • INSURANCE BROKERS

Tax Returns
 Financial Statements
 Superannuation
 General Insurance
 Investment Advice

02 9496 2300
 services@pva.com.au
 Suite 2/345 Pacific Hwy, Lindfield
 NSW 2070



Visit us at
www.vickersgroup.com.au

14 | Features

regulations. Organisations using AI technologies navigate three federal laws on data protection, consumer protection and intellectual property – the *Privacy Act 1988*, *Australian Consumer Law* and the *Copyright Act 1968*. While the Government recently introduced a set of voluntary AI ethics principles, legislation appears focused on the governance of corporations (banks, insurers, telecommunications and so on) using AI agents with customers. The US-legislated guardrails with chatbots are not covered.

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency recommends that health practitioners can use AI for administrative tasks but not delegate clinical judgement. The Australian Psychological Society advises that AI is an assistant, not a replacement for professional judgement. The American Psychological Association (APA), the largest psychological association in the world, has adopted a more proactive stance. They advocate for stronger guardrails and have testified before the US Senate Judiciary Committee on the harm of AI chatbots and in lawsuits brought against the AI companies.

The recommendations of Australian professional bodies are primarily for practitioners. Many clinicians are inadequately equipped to advise patients on AI products, but need to be more proactive to guide clients on the use and risks of AI technology.

In 2023, the Australian Department of Education published a framework for Gen AI in schools for teachers, students, parents/carers and policymakers.

The introduction of AI in schools has seen unfortunate results. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority reported that students' reliance on AI for schoolwork has eroded many of their learning skills, with 60% of Year 10



students and more than 30% of primary students using Gen AI for homework and essay writing.

In my view, the education AI framework needs to address the harm of AI companions, and programs need to alert the public about the harm of Gen AI. Digital education is crucial. The public needs to understand that chatbots are not capable of providing mental health care. The responses they generate are not authentic human communication but prompted by codes.

In this regard, I am much encouraged by my discussion with 13-year-old Noah. I asked how he would resist being manipulated by chatbots.

He said, "I study coding. I know its architecture – chatbots are just machine learning products. There is no real person behind the product. I am not going to follow a machine." An example of what good digital education can do.

SEIFERT JEWELLERS
HORNSBY'S FAMILY-OWNED JEWELLERS
1A WILLIAM STREET, HORNSBY | 9476 4711

- ON-SITE WORKSHOP
- ALTERATIONS
- REMODELING
- REPAIRS
- CUSTOM HANDMADE JEWELLERY
- WE CAN USE YOUR OWN GOLD AND STONES
- WE BUY JEWELLERY
- LASER ENGRAVING

TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP.
Trusted for Generations.

FISCHER & FISCHER
SOLICITORS & CONVEYANCERS

- ✓ Wills and Probate
- ✓ Conveyancing
- ✓ Local Court Matters
- ✓ Power of Attorney
- ✓ Retirement Village Contracts
- ✓ Leasing

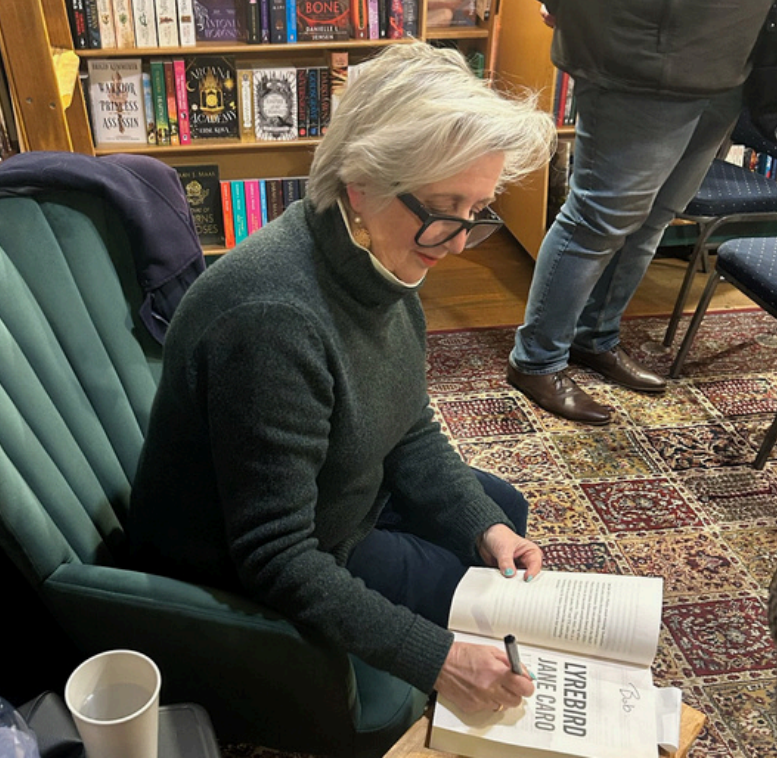
Servicing the North Shore for over 50 years
9144 1102

A portrait of Jane Caro, an older woman with short, wavy blonde hair, wearing a vibrant blue blazer over a white top. She is standing in front of a bookshelf filled with books. Her right hand is on her hip, and her left hand rests on a surface. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

The suite of mediums

by Jay Houhlias

Jane Caro has worked across just about every conceivable information medium. If it's done with words, it's been done by Caro. She began her career as an advertising copywriter, but since then, she has been working her way through the job titles, all the job titles. Speaker, columnist, author, novelist, essayist, copywriter, activist, social commentator, media pundit, Caro has lent her thoughts on a range of subjects – with wit, biting critique and impactful analysis.



Caro doesn't pick favourites. She says all forms of communication are "compelling and interesting, that's why I do them. The fiction is the hardest and most time-consuming but ultimately the most satisfying as I get a chance to work through what I find compelling in long form and in my imagination".

"The panel shows are mostly fun and give me a chance to engage in the public conversation. My columns and essays give me a sense of purpose and contribution. I can't really pick," she adds.

Caro has won both the Walkley Award for Women's Leadership in Media (2018) and the B&T Women in Media Lifetime Achievement Award (2023), as well as published five novels, with the most recent being her 2025 thriller *Lyrebird*.

She says the two forms of storytelling, journalism (with its more analytical research focus), and fiction (with its creative left-brain focus), don't tread on each other's toes.

"If they do require different mindsets, I have not noticed it. I just tell the story I want to tell. In an article or essay, that story will be supported by evidence and facts. In a novel, it will be supported by my observations, reactions, research and the magical, unquantifiable thing that happens when you get on a roll."

Caro adds that writing novels has reawakened her creative side and enabled her to "roam widely". "They have taught me new skills and vastly improved my writing skills. The reactions of readers have been very fulfilling. [The novels'] success has given me the confidence to take more risks creatively, and that flows into all the other things I do."

Caro is a rarity in that she sits on both sides of the couch, with journalists interviewing her and picking her brain, and she herself interviewing artists and

picking their brains. She believes communicators on both sides now need to be flexible and adaptable. The density of information and its many, ever-growing mediums need to be understood in their different forms in order to achieve cut-through with overwhelmed, information-overloaded audiences. We can't, she says, "rely on one thing anymore".

"If you want to have influence, if you want your voice to be heard, I think you have to participate in a suite of mediums. Books are still the most prestigious medium. You are taken more seriously if you are an author, especially a novelist. Articles and columns can cut through, but their influence tends to be ephemeral. Panels and media interviews are the most ephemeral of all."

Even with a range of efforts, Caro suggests not much holds up: "I think almost everything has a short shelf life these days. Even if something goes viral, it's HUGE for a few days maybe, then gone."

Education always been a focal point of Caro's work, particularly differences between private and public education, but Caro has recently been more outspoken and ardent about how different forms of communication are affecting learning.

"Life-long learning is a wonderful thing and something human beings do whether consciously or not. What is essential, however, is the ability to think critically when information comes at you, from whatever source," she says.

"Formal classroom-based learning must teach students to ask questions such as: how credible is the source? Does this fit with my previous knowledge? What is the aim of this information? Is it to enlighten or enrage? Who benefits from communicating this information? What is it asking me to do, think or believe? Does that sit comfortably with my values?"



And can these mediums ever fully replace a school education? Caro's answer was simple: no.

"Education is not just about learning facts and following a curriculum. It is about getting to know your peers, away from the watchful, loving but biased eyes of your parents. Good schools should help children to become themselves, not little carbon copies of their parents. In school, we learn about peer relationships, relationships with authority figures who – while kind – do not love you.

"We learn to deal with conflict, hurt feelings, peer pressure, friendship, and how to navigate an environment we cannot control. How to obey rules, how to challenge them, how to break them. We learn we are not special or unique, just one of many, and that no one is any more or any less important than anyone else. No machine-based learning can ever replace all that."

We then spoke the unspeakable word, privilege, and how it has informed Caro's ability to speak out about societal injustice, particularly in education. For Caro, privilege is not unspeakable at all; it's simply a fact.

"I am a middle-class, straight white woman born into a comfortably off, highly educated family. Talk about winning the lottery. Then we migrated to Australia! Even better luck," she says.

"My parents were very clear about the privilege my siblings and I enjoyed. Their point of view was that privilege carries obligations, particularly the obligation to recognise how lucky you are, rather than how richly you deserve your relatively easy life.

"We were brought up to try and spread privilege as widely as possible, not clutch it tightly to ourselves. We were also taught that privilege makes you safer, therefore, it was our obligation to take risks and speak up when we saw injustice.

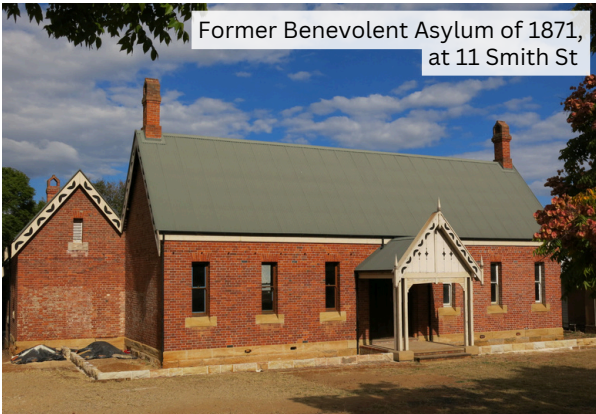
"I remember my mother saying that if – with all our privileges – we couldn't thrive in the ordinary local public school, what the hell was wrong with us? It was our responsibility to take our opportunities and make the best of them. If we didn't, it was our problem."

Caro says the idea that the only people who are allowed to speak up on behalf of those with less must be those with less themselves is a "really neat way of making sure few people ever will".

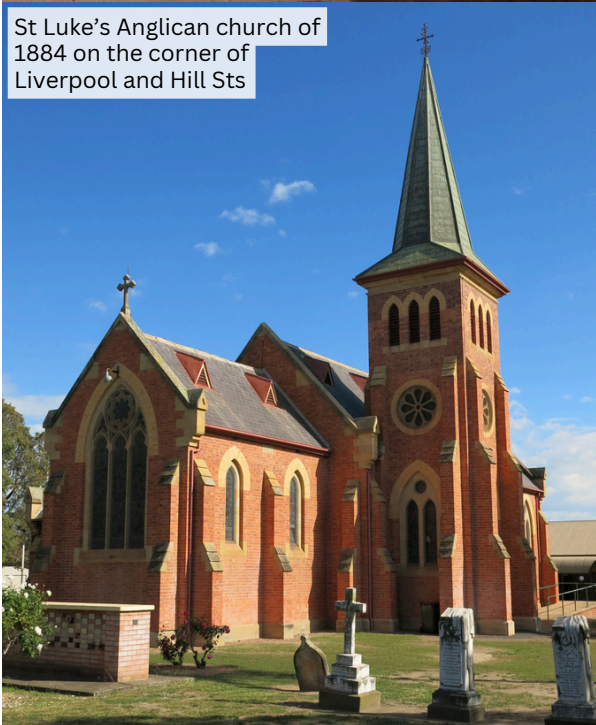
"I believe the exact opposite. I don't care how hard you think you've worked; no one got anywhere on their own. It is always the obligation of those with more to do what they can to make sure others can get more too."



As part of the Willoughby Literary Festival, Caro will discuss her recent essay 'Rich Kid, Poor Kid: The Battle for Public Education' with journalist Nicole Abadee. The event will take place at 11am at Chatswood Library on Friday 17 July.



Former Benevolent Asylum of 1871,
at 11 Smith St



St Luke's Anglican church of
1884 on the corner of
Liverpool and Hill Sts



Blessed Virgin Mary
Queen of Peace
Catholic church of
1925 on the corner
of Park and
Short Sts

Reference: Phillip Simpson's "Historical Guide to New South Wales", Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2020.

Towns of NSW: Scone

Phillip Simpson

The Hunter Valley town of Scone is about 260km north of Sydney. The site was discovered in 1824 by Henry Dangar, settled in 1825, surveyed in 1836, and its first lots were sold in 1838. The town was in an "aristocratic neighbourhood" because of the grand homesteads such as Belltrees in the area. Today, Scone is renowned for being the largest horse breeding area in the world outside the Bluegrass region of Kentucky in the United States.

Scone retains a number of historic buildings. Probably the most unusual is the former Benevolent Asylum. These were charitable institutions modelled on the poor houses of Britain that provided care for the poor, blind, aged and infirm. The Scone Asylum opened in 1871 and accommodated 10 patients in four wards.

Consistent with the town's early establishment, the Anglican congregation erected a church in 1841. Their current Gothic-style building, St Luke's, was erected in 1884 and designed by accomplished Maitland architect John Wiltshire Pender. It features a 24.4-metre spire covered in Muntz metal (a cheaper type of the usual brass). Spires were often included in church designs but, due to costs, were not always built. St Luke's is roofed in Welsh slate from Bangor, holds 280 parishioners on pews of kauri pine, and has a historic graveyard and modern columbarium.

Similarly, the Catholics had an early church of 1861, which was replaced in 1925 by the impressive edifice, Blessed Virgin Mary Queen of Peace, designed by Peter Joseph Gannon. It has a fine hammer-beam truss roof, covered in purple-blue Welsh slates, and the floors are made of jarrah and tallow wood. Above the tower was to be a very tall zinc-sheeted spire on a steel frame, but this never eventuated.

The church opened with much fanfare as hundreds of visitors travelled by special trains from Muswellbrook, Aberdeen and Murrurundi to witness its opening by the Bishop of Armidale. This was followed by a banquet for 250 people.

Scone is quieter now since it was bypassed by the New England Highway in 2020. There are numerous historic buildings to see, especially around Kingdon Street, including the 1849 former courthouse, the old lock-up and residence, now home to the historical society, and the original Catholic church of 1861. For something really different, try flying a Spitfire simulator at the Warbirds Museum at the airport.



***Then:** The sewerage works in about 1898 showing the chimney, engine house, septic tanks and sand filter beds in foreground*

***Now (from left to right):** The former activated sludge tanks, compressor house, engine house and septic tanks*

When Primrose Park was unsavoury

Margaret Simpson

I wonder if the numerous sports groups and artists playing and working at the Primrose Park facility on Willoughby Bay in Cremorne realise it was formerly a sewerage works.

By the late 1900s, raw sewage from the Lower North Shore's residential buildings and industrial enterprises was being allowed to drain directly into the Harbour. As the population increased, a treatment works became necessary to treat sewage from the Northern Suburbs Sewerage Scheme.

The works were constructed by the Public Works Department for the Water Board between 1891 and 1898 and became known as the Folly Point Treatment Works. This comprised an engine house, chimney, effluent and storm water channels, and sand filter beds on the lower level, and five open septic tanks on higher ground at the rear.

However, from the start, the works could not keep up with demand and were upgraded in 1921 with the introduction of the activated sludge process. This involved the construction of activated sludge tanks and a compressor house next to the engine house, necessitating the demolition of the chimney.

Compressed air added to the sludge in the open tanks hastened its decomposition. Extensive housing development, complaints of continued Harbour pollution, and noxious odours from the works saw the Board begin construction of the Northern Suburbs Ocean Outfall at North Head,



which eventually superseded the Folly Point works that closed in 1927.

The plant and machinery were removed, and the site was acquired by the Department of Lands and leased to North Sydney Council for public use. Ironically, the site was named Primrose Park, not after the fragrant flower, but after North Sydney's Mayor! There were plans to demolish the concrete tanks and other structures but that proved difficult without the use of explosives; in their suburban location, that was unacceptable.

Consequently, they remained largely intact with a few 'bites' around the edges where conventional jackhammers had failed to make an impact. The buildings were restored for community groups: the sludge tanks were filled and surfaced with bitumen for a car park; the septic tank site became tennis courts; and the filter beds were developed as playing fields.

By the 1980s, the historic value of the scope and layout of the site was recognised, and the site was classified by the National Trust as one of the few surviving aboveground structures from Sydney's 19th-century sewerage system.

Not as green as they seem



While there are levels of priority we place on the environmental impact of our spending, we can all agree: we want our money going to the right places for the right reasons.

However, researchers have recently uncovered the murky truth behind many 'green' claims, revealing them to be nearly unverifiable and often misleading.

The study by the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and Bond University, published in the *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, found that consumers might shell out extra money for products appearing sustainable without understanding the actual impact.

UTS Professor Natalina Zlatevska noted that consumers frequently rely on sustainability labels as a shortcut for making quick decisions while shopping. But these labels can be confusing and sometimes only highlight one aspect of a product's environmental impact, like packaging or carbon emissions.

Your common can of tuna may have a label that provides the illusion of a better choice, but unclear and non-comparable labels, which don't allow for like-for-like product comparisons, leave consumers in the dark.

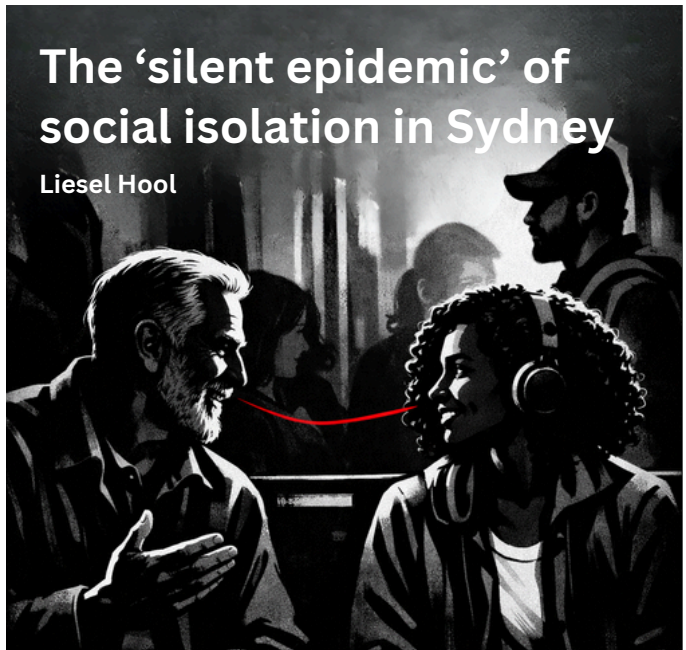
The researchers advocate for clearer standards and regulations in Australia, pointing out that the current lack of regulation forces consumers to navigate a maze of claims. Europe is already taking steps toward standardised sustainability claims, and Australia could benefit from following suit.

The takeaway for shoppers is clear: scrutinise what sustainability labels claim and don't assume they all signify the same thing. A label doesn't automatically equate to a product being the most sustainable or environmentally friendly option.

It also doesn't hurt to do some research on food brands and manufacturers. A quick Google search can tell you where products are made and processed, where the ingredients come from, and the standards and regulations being followed.

The 'silent epidemic' of social isolation in Sydney

Liesel Hool



It is well recognised that Australia is experiencing a silent epidemic of social isolation, which is a pressing public health concern that is eroding our collective sense of community, mental health and wellbeing.

Australia has experienced a generational shift from collectivism to individualism, where we have become driven by the pursuit of self-interest at the expense of social cohesion.

Social connection is a key factor in promoting mental health and wellbeing. But Sydney presents some major challenges in preserving meaningful social connection. We call this city our home but it is also a cosmopolitan suburbia with eclectic pockets of suburbs segregated by socioeconomic status and ethnicity.

We are born to work, to be efficient, and are pressured by the scarcity of resources such as time and money, all of which also makes finding meaningful connection harder as we age. In turn, in adults over 65 years of age, social isolation is one of the main contributors to depression (along with poor physical health and loss, which can both compound the isolation).

While some individuals rely upon friends or other support systems within their communities, others fall through the cracks, often failing to find support systems that will safeguard their mental health. So whilst we avoid engaging in conversation with those next to us on the bus or train, they could be the very people we need to preserve our wellbeing.



Greenwood's greener choice

We have all tried our hand at crafting something from rubbish. Most of us only on a small scale, though, perhaps trinkets or toys.

But at North Sydney's Greenwood Plaza, a new installation has taken centre stage: The Circular City. This unique piece of art, crafted entirely from repurposed materials, is designed as a miniature city to remind us of sustainability practices such as reuse, repair and recycling.

Just like individual pieces of junk can come together to create something like the Circular City artwork, individual actions around sustainability can contribute to a larger circular economy.

The unveiling of The Circular City marked the launch of The Circle, a new sustainability rewards program that aims to motivate and reward sustainable habits in the North Sydney community.

Through the Greencard App, customers can earn points for engaging in various eco-friendly actions such as repairing, reusing and recycling.



Through collaborations with retailers and service providers, points can be redeemed for rewards at Greenwood Plaza. This helps customers lessen their environmental footprint while responding to the increasing demand for practical and accessible sustainable living solutions.

AUDIO VISUAL
INSTALL SERVICE & REPAIRS

Installation of all TV, Sound Bar, Amplifier, Wi-Fi
and all Audio Visual equipment.

25 Years Industry Experience!

SPECIAL SENIORS & PENSIONER RATE

Open All Holidays
★ **OPEN 7 DAYS** ★

CALL DAMIAN 0456 53 53 51

FOREST
WEALTH

Financial Advisers • Retirement Planners

Your local advisers based in Hornsby & Chatswood

Book your free Financial Check-Up
forestwealth.com.au • 1800 31 41 51

Forest Wealth Pty Ltd (CAR 1285537) is an authorised representative of Millennium3 Financial Services Pty Ltd (ABN 61 094 529 987, AFSL 244252).

A sense of sensibility

by Jay Houhlias



Shikoku is an island just west of Osaka, Japan, famous for its 88-temple pilgrimage. It spans 1400kms through the four prefectures of Shikoku, passing through temples and shrines associated with Kukai (Kobo Daishi), founder of Shingon Buddhism in Japan. Some pilgrims spend years completing all 88 temples by foot, coming back and forth and marking off a few each trip. Some walk all 88 over a few weeks in one go. Some rent a car and do them in a few days. I joined Oku Japan's Temples and Trails of Shikoku 13-day tour that covered a handful of the 88 temples and the walking trails that separate them, as well as some of the main cities of the region. There is no order in which you have to visit the temples and no established group of people the pilgrimage is for. Japan is approximately 80% Buddhist, but most practice a more flexible form of Buddhism, so you can follow suit. Just relax and enjoy. Smile like Buddha.

Daughter, aunt and mother who walked the full 88 temple trail for the third time



The slender and graceful men welcomed me to their temple with a soft "Irasshaimase" and a bow. They were in waraji sandals and Dharma robes. I was in a singlet and shorts.

I did my best not to be obnoxious, but obnoxiousness is relative, and in relation to the monks of Shikoku, I was obnoxious.

We were on Mount Kōya as, traditionally, before undertaking Shikoku's 88 temples, pilgrims would pray here for a blessed journey. Mount Kōya, an hour south of Osaka on the mainland, is known as a centre of Shingon Buddhism, so its monks were calm and stoic, as monk-like as one could imagine.

Despite their zen demeanour, these monks aren't levitating while you're not looking (probably), and are in fact so normal they are often referred to as the office workers of the mountains. Some are actual office workers and monkhood is their second job.

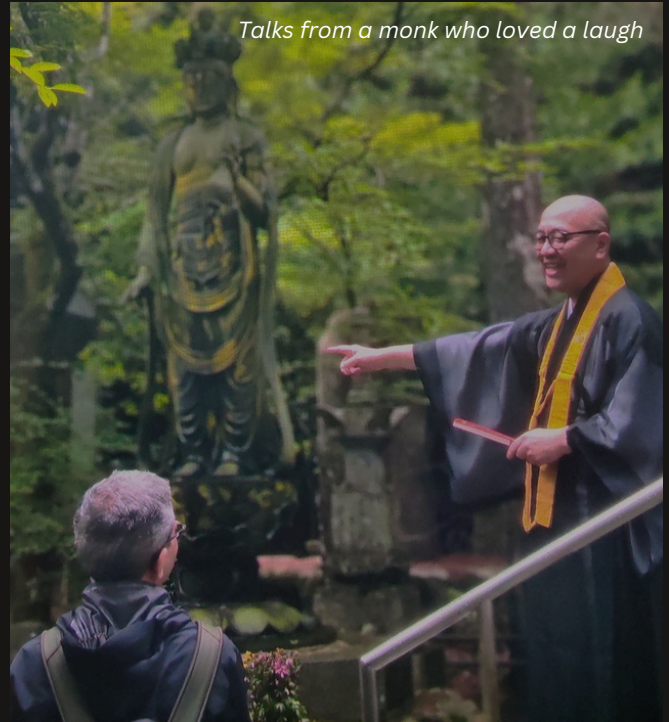
Many of Shikoku's temples are not large and self-sustaining enough for monks to live and work there full-time, so they merely work there for the day – cleaning, maintaining, doing administrative work – then catch the train back to the main city where they are allowed to have families and even eat meat.

They also have wildly different personalities, some the calm stoics you just read about, and others jovial jokers who enjoy using their scattered English to deliver humble yet potent punchlines.

And it's this which fascinates about Japan, how it balances between two worlds, deep tradition mixed with modern practicality.

Japanese people are born in Shinto shrines (the original Japanese faith), married in Christian churches, and buried in a Buddhist-style ceremony. Houses are built as they have been for hundreds of years, tatami mats and nail-less cypress wood still used, yet squeezed into huge flashing metropolis cities. Monks dress and work in the same way they always have, but can also have families and enjoy modern comforts, for if they weren't able to, there might not be enough monks to go around.

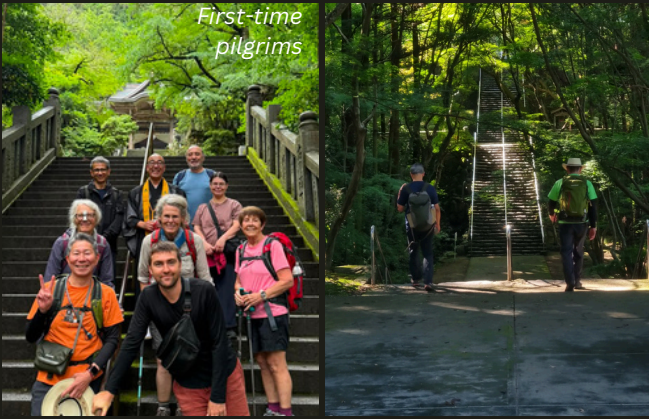
Talks from a monk who loved a laugh



Calligraphy is offered to mark your visit to each temple



24 | Experiences



This extends outward to the rest of society, for anyone who's visited Japan understands the difference in the way people are with each other. Respect for others is paramount and shown in numerous ways.

People give you a wide berth, often making themselves smaller by crouching or hunching if they need to pass or encroach on your personal space in any way. Physical contact is limited – handshakes, hugs and kisses aren't usual, and bowing along with extended verbal formalities replace these.

Customer service is the same but amplified. There are deeper, more frequent bows and more verbal formalities. You feel like royalty for just existing, and the only way to not feel unjust with it is to return the courtesies. It's a good system.

Our guide Jun Hashiba offered an interesting perspective on how these Japanese values developed.

"I think it's related to rice farming actually. In order to cultivate rice, it cannot be done by one person; we needed to have a group of people working – in the past, that is – now we have machines and don't need to," he said.

"We needed lots of people for planting seeds, taking care of the paddy, then finally harvesting. It was necessary to work together in harmony. That's most probably why we take care of and respect each other."

You can see this in Shikoku. Every spare flat bit of land is a rice paddy, and there are no wasted opportunities for anyone and everyone, farmers or otherwise, to grow their own share of rice.

Food is such an integral part of Japan that Jun said it's the thing he misses most when travelling overseas.

"Tofu, fish ... in some countries this is really difficult to get. You might think fish is easy to get, but it's not," he said.

"It's pretty easy to find sushi, but grilled fish and half-dried fish that I love, that's very different."

Of the 88 temples, about half offer accommodation and the necessary sustenance for hungry pilgrims.

Our trip had a mix of stays: Western hotels, shukubō temple lodgings, and traditional Japanese lodgings (onsen ryokan). The temple lodgings and ryokans had similar setups, mostly wooden features with tatami mats, floor seats, and futons that were folded away during the day.

Food photos on tour: Instagram: jinani_ilu

As said, the goal of food at the temple lodgings is sustenance for pilgrims, yet it is still meticulously laid out, a little of everything portioned so your mouth gets the pleasure of variety but not overindulgence. There is nothing in bulk and nothing thrown together for volume's sake.

The deliciousness of Japanese food is in its portions. Perhaps too much of a delicious thing makes it no longer delicious, but just nice tasting. Too much of a sweet thing makes it bland, and just the right understated amount of savoury makes it sweet and flavourful.

Eating meals in Japan was like a delicate dance, your taste buds tangoing with the various flavours as they tickle and tease different sensations. The question of a full stomach is less relevant to the verdict of how good a meal was, for most of the satisfaction comes from a thoroughly worked-through palate.

During meal times, I attempted to work on my subtlety and Japanese delicacy. Take a few seconds before you eat to relish and appreciate, then listen patiently while each detail of the meal is explained, then eat things in the correct order with the correct sauces.

If not before, then certainly after, meals were always followed by onsens. These are communal hot baths, often from naturally occurring springs, which are taken naked. One is required to shower and clean before entering.

The practice might seem strange from a Western perspective, but the way I saw it, the onsen felt like a display of respect and fairness.

There is something incredibly unselfish and unselfconscious about it. When you're communally bathing, no one thinks in individual terms. No one is judging and no one cares.

Just like people might've farmed rice together, they also onsen and wash the day's dealings off together.

You sit and watch the steam emanate from the water, and when you plonk that small towel on your face and stare up at the ceiling next to your compadre who is also doing the same, you know you are in it together.

Like so many things that make up Japanese culture, it felt like a subtle nod to the Japanese ethos. If you were to go slightly lower than a nod, then you've got yourself a bow.



The author was a guest of the company: okujapan.com



Poached Pear and Macadamia Brownies

Elliot Styche @elliots.table

Pear season is in full swing, and right now they are tasty, deliciously Australian and affordable.

When poached in warm spices, pears have this incredible ability to lift any bake to pure perfection, and it's no exception here. These are my poached pear brownies, topped with macadamias for an extra crunch, an optional addition that works beautifully with any nut you have to hand.

I have included two recipes here; the first is for poaching pears. From there the world is your oyster: add them to your breakfast, lay them over puff pastry for a quick mini tart, or serve alongside ice-cream for an easy dinner party dessert. I have used them in a brownie and also included that recipe.

The poaching syrup of orange, cinnamon, star anise and vanilla transforms a humble winter pear into something special. Once nestled into a rich, fudgy brownie batter and scattered with dark chocolate chips and macadamias, the result is one of those bakes that looks as impressive as it tastes.



Poached Pears

INGREDIENTS

6 pears (peeled), 2 cinnamon sticks, 750ml water, 200g caster sugar, 3 star anise, Juice of 2 oranges with peels, 4 cloves, 1 tsp vanilla bean paste or 1 vanilla pod

METHOD

1. Peel pears, leaving them whole with the stem intact. Give each one a squeeze of lemon juice as you go to prevent browning.
2. Add the water, orange juice, orange peels, sugar, cinnamon, star anise, cloves and vanilla to a large saucepan. Stir to combine.
3. Place pears into the liquid and bring everything up to the boil together, then reduce to a gentle simmer.
4. Poach for about 45 minutes until the pears are tender when pierced with a skewer or sharp knife. Cooking time will vary depending on the size and ripeness of your pears.
5. Remove from the heat and allow the pears to cool completely in the syrup. This is where all that warmth and spice gets absorbed deep into the fruit.
6. Once cooled, the pears are ready to use or store. Keep submerged in syrup in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 5 days.

Poached Pear and Macadamia Brownies

INGREDIENTS

300g brown sugar, 3 large eggs, 2 tsp vanilla extract, 200g unsalted butter, 125g plain flour, 200g dark chocolate, 2 poached pears halved and fanned, 100g macadamia nuts roughly chopped, 50g dark chocolate chips

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 160°C fan (180°C conventional). Grease and line a 20x20cm tin with baking paper.
2. In a stand mixer or large bowl, beat brown sugar, eggs and vanilla extract on high speed for 5 minutes until fluffy.
3. Melt the butter and chopped chocolate together in a heatproof bowl over a pan of gently simmering water, stirring until smooth. Set aside to cool slightly.
4. Fold the melted chocolate mixture into the egg mixture, being careful not to knock out too much air.
5. Sift in flour and fold until just combined; don't overmix.
6. Pour batter into the prepared tin and smooth the top.
7. Halve your poached pears and slice thinly to fan them out, then arrange on top of the batter, pressing in gently.
8. Scatter the chopped macadamias and chocolate chips over the top.
9. Bake at 170°C fan for 35 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out with few moist crumbs.
10. Allow to cool in the tin before slicing into squares.

Your local café

Bienvenue Comme Chez Nous

Comme Chez Nous's French owners, Mike and Alex, met mango farming in the Northern Territory. They thought if they can work together on sweltering mango farms, they can work together to run a café.

"We come from a hospitality background in France," they said. "Coming to Australia, you just find a farming job to get along and learn English. Once English was 'almost' covered, we could finally work in the industry we love."

Finding the perfect location to run their café took nearly two years, but when they discovered Pymble, it ticked all the right boxes. Now, eight years into their journey, Comme Chez Nous has become a beloved fixture in the community.

"We wanted to bring to Australia the service we were accustomed to in France," they explained. "We really take care of our customers. We try to remember everything from the first time they come here: orders, names, questions about family, kids. It's very important. You come to the café and you want to feel taken care of, it's part of the service. When customers come back, it feels good, like a home."



Despite rising costs, they've insisted on high standards (so French!) to ensure the quality of their offerings remains unchanged. Their flour comes from France, and they couldn't contemplate otherwise. Bread is baked and meats are slow cooked daily, all before the café's 6:30am opening.

In mid-July, as France celebrates Bastille Day, marking the historic Storming of the Bastille that ignited the French Revolution, Mike and Alex find themselves in a quieter period as many Australians opt for steaming European vacations during the colder months here. Despite the relaxed foot traffic, their spirits remain high. "To anyone going to Europe," they chuckled, referring to the recent heatwave, "please think of us!"

Delightful drinks

Reviews by **Natasha Ciesielski**,
Bacchus at the Theatre

NON-ALCOHOLIC

Frekl Ginger Beer, \$4.50 (each can)

For a non-alcoholic option, try Frekl Ginger Beer. Proudly Australian-made, with the ginger grown in Queensland, Frekl is gluten-free, sugar-free, vegan friendly and has no preservatives.

It's available in four flavours: Classic Ginger, Finger Lime Ginger, Cloudy Apple and Double Ginger – all worth exploring. For those who like a spicy kick, the Double Ginger is the stand-out, delivering the same crisp freshness with an added zing.

Pairing Guide: Pop open a can of Double Ginger and order your favourite Asian spread – steamed prawn dumplings, chilli squid or a fragrant green curry. The natural effervescence and ginger heat are perfect for bold, spicy flavours and keep every mouthful feeling fresh.



RED WINE

Symphonia Saperavi 2017, \$40



Family-owned and operated in Victoria's King Valley, Symphonia Fine Wines is led by mother-daughter duo Suzanne and Sophie, working alongside winemaker Lilian Carter. Together, they champion cool-climate, left-field European varieties, crafted with a minimalist approach that allows the fruit to shine. Saperavi originates from Georgia, one of the world's oldest winemaking regions, and remains a rarity in Australia, with only a handful of vineyards growing this variety. The name translates to "dye" or "painted", a nod to the grape's unusual dark flesh and deeply pigmented skins.

An intense full-bodied red, this wine reveals layers of blackcurrant, mulberry and dried herbs across the palate, lifted by herbal aromas and a strong tannic backbone.

Pairing Guide: Braised beef cheek served with roasted beetroot and crispy potatoes, finished with horseradish cream. The robust wine's grippy tannins are a natural match for the richness of the meat.

Slower, not cheaper – yet

*The headlines have moved on to falling prices. **Mike Kaye**, co-founder and director at Sarah Kaye & Co Buyers Agents, says the honest picture is a calmer market on both sides and an undetermined price story.*

When we wrote here last month, the May Budget was barely a week old, and most of the coverage treated it as the only thing happening to Sydney property. My view then was that it was a real structural reform, but not the biggest force on Upper North Shore prices over the next year or so.

Weeks on, with more market reaction visible, that view hasn't changed. The picture has simply filled in.

First, the reassuring part, because it still holds. If you own the home you live in, little has changed. The family home exemption is untouched – negative gearing is never applied to an owner-occupied home – and the reforms that do bite, for investors in established property, don't start until July 2027. For most households between Lindfield and Hornsby, the Budget remains background noise. What has changed is the market's tempo on both sides.

Buyers are still here – but they're taking their time

While, overall, buyers are as active as ever, investors have stepped back. That part of the market thinned the moment the rules changed but home buyers, the people buying a place to live, are still active. What's different is the pace. With less competition and more to choose from, buyers no longer feel they have to decide over a single weekend. They are doing the building inspections, reading the contracts properly, and walking away from the wrong ones.

The data backs the feeling. Across seven Upper North Shore suburbs, homes are sitting longer on the market – most sharply in Roseville, Turramurra, Pymble and Lindfield. Buyers can afford to wait.

Days on the market are rising

Gordon	82	▲ 6%
Roseville	80	▲ 32%
Lindfield	76	▲ 20%
Turramurra	67	▲ 27%
Pymble	65	▲ 21%
Wahroonga	47	▲ 13%
Hornsby	32	▼ 41%

Average days on market, last 60 days (▲/▼ vs the previous 60). Source: RP Data.

Sellers are being deliberate too, with fewer listings

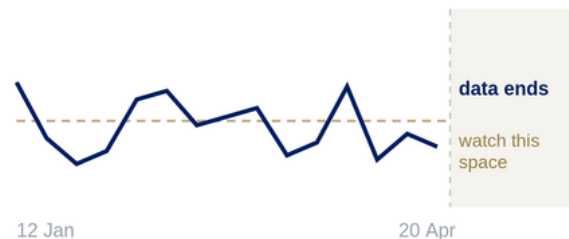
Owners who don't need to sell are choosing to wait rather than test a quieter market. Where homes are listed, expectations have eased and there is more room to negotiate.

Two suburbs run against the grain – Wahroonga and Hornsby, where listings actually rose. Hornsby is the one to watch: it is the affordable end of our patch and it is where first-home buyers and downsizers are absorbing the more accessible stock. It tends to march to its own beat. One thing the listings figure misses entirely: a good deal of the strongest stock never reaches the portals. Many homes are secured off-market, and that has stayed busy. So 'fewer fresh listings' tells only half the story of how much is really trading.

What the coverage can't tell you

The Valuer General's settled-sales record – every registered transfer in our area – shows no clear trend for Upper North Shore prices. But settled data lags the market by about 8 weeks, so it simply cannot yet capture the period since the Budget.

On the hard data, prices haven't moved



Weekly median house price, no directional trend through 20 April. Source: Sarah Kaye & Co Research / NSW Valuer General.

Our read, with the clear caveat that it is not yet in the numbers, is that prices are around 5% below where they would have been three months ago. We don't expect much further softening this calendar year – our sense is that the adjustment has largely been made – and even that 5% cannot be pinned on the Budget alone. The cash rate, elevated oil prices, construction costs and the weight of household debt have contributed to downwards pressure.

Lean on reliable data, not clearance rates

Give auction clearance rates little weight because they swing on which auctions get reported as sold, passed in or withdrawn, and when. The signals to trust – days on market, the flow of new listings, and the Valuer General’s median prices – rest on broad, near-complete data rather than a self-reported sample. They are less exciting but more reliable.

Upper North Shore renters to feel modest pinch

Renters on the Upper North Shore are likely to feel some pressure: new arrivals keep entering the rental market, local rental stock is structurally tight to

begin with, and a thinner investor pipeline over the next couple of years won’t help. We’d put the likely effect modestly, not the spike some predict.

So, what should you do next?

Stay calm, mostly. If you are buying a home to live in, the conditions have quietly tilted in your favour – less competition, more time, a little more give on price – and the tax position on your own home is unchanged. If you are weighing an investment, the timing question is real and worth proper advice before you commit. Either way, the worst response to a noisy month is a rushed one.

Small homes with quality care



A fresh dementia care residence is soon to debut in Cherrybrook, providing families in Sydney’s north-west with a nearby alternative to conventional aged care facilities.

The new Cherrybrook location marks the 24th establishment in Sydney for Videri Australia and follows their small-home concept.

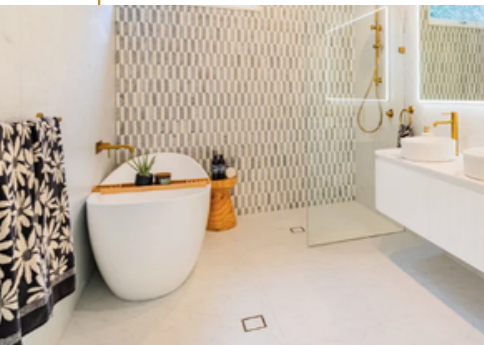
Each residence is crafted to support 10 individuals, designed to emulate the warmth and functionality of a genuine home. Residents experience a familiar domestic setting and receive round-the-clock assistance from a devoted team of resident care staff and homemakers who

deliver empathetic, personalised care.

Videri’s approach is lauded by industry leaders as the “gold standard in dementia care,” closely aligning with the vision emerging from the Aged Care Royal Commission and subsequent reforms.

Videri daily life revolves around familiar routines – shared meals, gardening, music, outings and spontaneous connections take precedence over rigid schedules. This is all designed to reduce distress, uphold dignity and foster a sense of belonging. To discover more, visit videri.com.au.

30 | Property



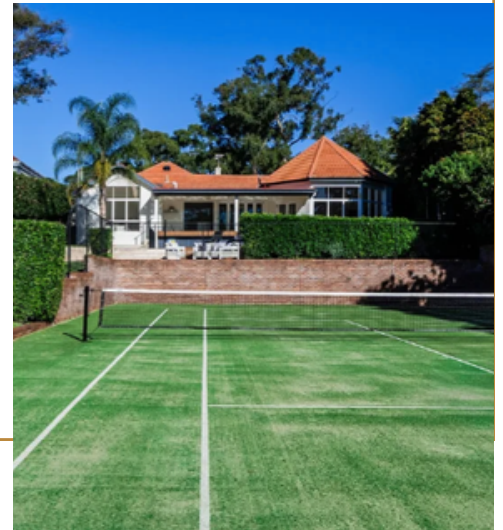
\$8.28m

SOLD

Property of the Month

29 Spencer Road, Killara | 5 bed, 3 bath, 2 car

\$8.28m for 29 Spencer Road, achieved by **Mark Lauzon** of **DiJones Lindfield**, is the highest sold price so far this year in Killara.



Northside Washer Service

Washing Machine & Dryers, Repair & Sales



- All major brands
- Covering the Hills and the North Shore areas
- Over 35 years experience

Graeme Shepherdson
Ph: 9457 9162
MOB: 0418 679 596

authorised agent

KLEENmaid  **Speed Queen.**
The best you can own



B&M

CEMENT RENDERING

Pty Ltd

Rendering
Bagging
Texture Render Colour
Acrylic Render

Bill: 0405 183 653
(Lic No. 137426C)
bandmcementrendering@hotmail.com



ROOFS

ABOVE & BEYOND

Don't Wait Until Your Roof Has Started Leaking...
Act Now



Contact us for a free no obligation quote

Phone: 9654 6000
www.roofsabove.com.au

Our services available include.....

- Repairs, Restoration and Replacement of Metal & Tiled Roofs
- Guttering, Downpipes & Leaf Guard

Free Edmonds Supavent valued at \$300 with every full roof repair or reroof



MONIER  **DuMux**  **Stramit** 

WE HAVE PLENTY OF NEW
USED AND REFURBISHED
CHAIRS IN STOCK!

WE HAVE NEW, REMASTERED AERONS IN GRAPHITE, MINERAL AND ONYX. **STOCKED.**



MOST ICONIC ERGONOMIC OFFICE CHAIR IN THE WORLD!

All 3 sizes available A B and C.

Aeron Size B (fits all)

3 lever mechanism (chair height, seat tilt,
recliner lock / unlock)

With height-adjustable swivel arms

Lumbar Options available:

With or without adjustable Lumbar Roll or
PostureFit (limited stock of PostureFit
available)

Rarely seen, very large quality available 150+

NEW PRICE RRP FROM \$2150

We also have Herman Miller, Mirras and Cosm to try.
The embody chair can be ordered (arrives in 2 weeks.)

NEW LOAD OF PRE-LOVED AERONS JUST ARRIVED ORIGINAL HERMAN MILLER AERONS

Pre-loved

NO LUMBAR \$899

LUMBAR PAD \$1099

AERON POSTUREFIT \$1299

Refurbished Herman Miller Aerons are extremely
popular, coming with a 12-month warranty.



NEW SHOWROOM

824 Pittwater Rd Dee Why, 9982 1077

PRE-LOVED SHOWROOM

7 Chard Rd Brookvale, 9938 5050

COME INTO STORE AND EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE.

Both stores open 6 days a week or visit our website at

www.kellysofficefurniture.com.au



KELLY'S
OFFICE FURNITURE
SINCE 1955
ABN 27 097 239 668



824 Pittwater Rd, Dee Why, NSW 2099



02 9982 1077



02 9982 1644



sales@kellysofficefurniture.com.au

The choice of luxury
and the luxury of choice.



Downsize and upgrade your life.

Ready to rightsize the way you live and upsize the joy of life? Make the move to Living Choice Galston and swap the chores for choices – your choice of location, choice of activities, and choice of ways to feel young again.



Find out more



GAL00081

📍 330 Galston Road, Galston

1300 533 296
livingchoice.com.au

*You may have to pay a departure fee when you leave this village which may impact on the capital gains received.

Artist Impression