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SYDNEY OBSERVER

EST. 1996

AUGUST 2026

**Adventurer
Catherine
DeVrye** takes
the road less
travelled



**Is it curtains
for Roseville
Cinemas?**

**WHO WON
WHAT**
in the Local
Business
Awards

**Not happy with the
29% Council rates rise?**

**Goodbye LLV, Hello
'Lindfield College'**



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your Census.**

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Census

HONOURS FOR OUR SPACES & PLACES

FROM THE EDITOR &
SYDNEY OBSERVER TEAM



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Architecture awards for local spaces

Penelope Andrews



The Upper North Shore isn't just replete with stunning heritage buildings and beautifully designed homes – we also have award-winning public spaces. The state's most outstanding new architecture was revealed in the Australian Institute of Architects' 2026 NSW Architecture Awards, and there were two local projects we had to spotlight.

Mark Taylor Oval Pavilion in Waitara, top left, won a Commendation in the Public Architecture category. Rather than demolish the 1929 grandstand, the project retains and restores the original structure, introducing a complementary 'contemporary twin' pavilion beside it. The new pavilion and updated grandstand officially opened in March, with its design featuring accessible facilities, umpires' rooms and a generous first-floor club and community space overlooking the field.

The Southern Lookout in Hornsby, top right, won an Award in the Small Project Architecture category.



The lookout is a 40-metre viewing platform set within 60 hectares of spectacular bushland surrounding a former rock quarry. Conceived as a dramatic object within the landscape, the lookout is the first element open to the public, providing access to the site and its layered natural and industrial histories. The design draws directly from the site's legacy, referencing the character, scale, and drama of the quarry and its exposed rock walls.

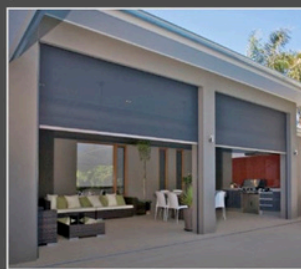
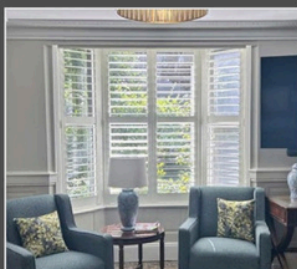
Other notable wins include Macquarie University's Engineering Innovation Building (Commendation for Educational Architecture), the new Sydney Fish Market (Award for Commercial Architecture) and the Sydney Harbour Bridge Northern Access Cycleway (Heritage Award for Adaptive Reuse).

The Awards' Chair of Juries, Bill Tsakalos, said the winning projects were "distinctly Australian in character" and "make our urban environments more connected, more accessible and more memorable".

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Best in Business honours

Any chance we get to shout-out our local entrepreneurs and owners, we'll do so! The 2026 Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Local Business Awards have been announced, with **Turramurra Veterinary Hospital** named **Business of the Year**. There were 16 winners from Ku-ring-gai, with all awards recognising outstanding local businesses and individuals who contribute to the growth and vibrancy of our community.

CATEGORY WINNERS

Beauty Services: North Shore Aesthetics, Gordon

Café: Vivana Café, Wahroonga

Community Services: The Village Chef by Meals on Wheels, Turramurra

Early Childhood Centre: Little Leo's Early Education & Childcare, Killara

Education Service: C3 Education Group, Wahroonga

Florist: Wahroonga Flower Shoppe

Most Inclusive Employer: Chartswell Pymble

Music Tuition Business: Studios FiftyOne, Pymble

Pet Care: Turramurra Veterinary Hospital

Pharmacy: West Pymble Pharmacy

Professional Services: Ku-ring-gai Financial Services Limited, Lindfield

Real Estate Agent: The Marshall Group, Gordon

Restaurant: Tetas Authentic Lebanese, Roseville Chase

Specialised Business: Seals HQ, Security Seals Sydney, Gordon

Tourism Services: Running Away, St Ives



Florist winner:

Wahroonga Flower Shoppe

Every flower that comes into the store is sourced and hand selected by Kerry and Jason at Sydney Flower Market. They love to support local growers, and their posies and bouquets are extensive and beautiful.



Beauty Services winner:

North Shore Aesthetics

This cosmetic skin and body clinic specialises in non-surgical face and body rejuvenation, offering bespoke treatments like Cooltech fat freezing, muscle building, wrinkle reduction and customised facials.

Community Services winner:

The Village Chef

Part of the national Meals on Wheels network, The Village Chef has grown to serve communities across Ku-ring-gai, Hornsby and the Northern Beaches. They deliver home-cooked meals to thousands of older Australians.



Pharmacy winner: West Pymble Pharmacy

Serving West Pymble since 1958, the pharmacy has been a staple across generations. For over 30 years, owner and pharmacist Matthew Burton has provided dedicated and compassionate care to the local community.

A busy month for Bradfield

Nicolette Boele MP
Federal Member For Bradfield

From the cost of childcare to the future of our local cinemas and theatres, and the rapid growth of data centres – it's been a busy month taking Bradfield's priorities to Parliament.

Data centres have been a big focus. I launched a community survey to hear your views, and more than 750 of you replied. The message was clear: over half of you feel negatively about the growth of data centres, more than 80% aren't confident the Government will regulate them effectively, and 3 in 5 worry we'll repeat the gas industry experience – where communities carried the costs while companies took the profits. You've left me in no doubt about where our community stands. The Government needs to set the rules before these projects proceed and make sure they deliver for the public first.

Childcare is another issue you've raised again and again. Bradfield has some of the highest fees in the country. Even after recent reforms, childcare remains out of reach for many families, and much-loved community providers are struggling to stay afloat. In Parliament, I called for a National Early

Childhood Education and Care Commission, with a firm timeline, and for an updated timeline on the Government's Deloitte pricing review. Families can't keep waiting on reviews while the bills pile up.

Closer to home, the news that Marian Street Theatre in Killara and the iconic Roseville Cinema could close for good has hit our community hard. Our cultural spaces are worth preserving. I've called for federal funding to secure Marian Street Theatre's future and for Roseville Cinema to be protected from demolition even if the building is sold.

Our community knows what matters: protecting our local character, supporting families, and investing in the places that bring people together. That's the Bradfield I'll keep working for in Canberra.



**Nicolette
BOELE MP**
FEDERAL MEMBER
FOR BRADFELD



Stay ahead on North Shore news, wins and community updates.

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- ✓ Ways to have your say
- ✓ Local events and activities





Roseville Cinemas: Will the curtains rise again?

Penelope Andrews

The future of Roseville Cinemas is more up in the air than ever. For a long time, the iconic spot has been a North Shore favourite.

But the challenges of modern-day streaming, limited street parking, the cost of living and a slow decline in bottoms on seats in cinemas over the past few decades have been a dilemma for movie theatres nationwide. In recent years, there has been much chatter about the future of Roseville Cinemas – could it remain financially viable and open for coming generations? A recent Court judgment makes that glossy vision far less likely.

In late June, the Supreme Court of NSW handed down a judgment that appointed a trustee to oversee the sale of all of the property held by Macos Holdings Pty Ltd, the private owner of the Roseville Cinemas site on Pacific Highway. The proceeds of sale will be distributed in a number of ways, including for payment of debt owing to ANZ Bank Group and the testamentary trust of the late Susan van Pinxteren. Ms van Pinxteren and her late husband Hans bought the cinema in 1974.

The golden question is who will now buy the Roseville Cinemas site? Will they buy the movie theatre in a bid to keep it in the community and revamp it? Or could it be a developer who wants to use the space on Pacific Highway to make way for

housing or other grand plans? An annual general meeting of Macos Holdings Pty Ltd is to be convened for the date which is the 15th business day after the payments have been made following sale, the judgment said.

In a statement to *Sydney Observer*, Federal Member for Bradfield, Nicolette Boele, said the loss of an independent cinema for the North Shore community would be a disappointment.

Along with the uncertain progress of Marian St Theatre in Killara, which we reported in our June issue, Ms Boele said it had been a “devastating few weeks for the local cultural scene”.

“These are losses for future generations of Ku-ring-gai locals who’ll grow up in a community with less going on, less of a thriving cultural scene, fewer venues to bring people together to create and connect,” she said.

Ms Boele added that both cases were an opportunity to preserve and revitalise spaces that the community already treasures, rather than build new from scratch.

“A strong arts scene is critical for a thriving community. And given the role of the arts for challenging perspectives, building connection and providing entertainment, there has never been a more important time for communities and their governments to support the arts.”

Roseville Cinemas has long been loved by locals. Following the judgment, *Sydney Observer* took to the streets to get a feel for public opinion about the iconic venue. One member of the public stated she'd "been going there for years, and the experience always puts big, chain movie theatres to shame."

And it wasn't just people of older generations who felt strongly. Some youths in their early 20s, whose parents took them there to "educate and enlighten" them, said their parents emphasised "supporting local businesses and looking out for the community".

The building is older than all of us. It was erected in the early 1900s by Ku-ring-gai Council to serve as the Town Hall for the area. It was used for dances and festivities, and from 1919 it was used as a cinema. In 1936, the theatre was renovated in the beautiful art deco style of the time, which remains today, primarily to accommodate a larger capacity.

Though the cinema only has two screens, Ku-ring-gai residents have been attracted to the independent, family-owned licensed theatre that screens quality arthouse films.



With its carpeted foyer, comfy armchairs and freshly made choc tops, Roseville Cinemas sits alongside The Odeon in Hornsby and the Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace in Cremorne for its independence and golden age charm.

The site is conveniently located across the road from Roseville train station. That fact alone may make it more attractive to a buyer.

The NSW Government's recent Low and Mid-Rise Housing Policy, part of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021*, changed planning controls to encourage more low and mid-rise housing to be built within an 800-metre walk from nominated town centres and transport hubs. It is expected to deliver up to 112,000 homes across NSW over the next five years, with the Transport Oriented Development program declaring four train stations in Ku-ring-gai – Gordon, Killara, Lindfield and Roseville – as nominated transport hubs.

So it's likely Roseville Cinemas' desirable location will be more enticing to a developer rather than an investor keen to save the movie complex. But only time will tell. In the meantime, we'll miss the freshly made choc tops.



Grace Cossington Smith Gallery Program

Abbotsleigh Grace Cossington Smith art award Finalists	18 July to 15 August
HSC 2026 Showcase Abbotsleigh Year 12 Visual Arts	25 to 29 August
Follow You Home Cambodian and Australian-Cambodian female artists explore belonging in transnational spaces	4 to 26 September
The Event of a Thread 20 emerging artists engaging with fabric	3 to 24 October
Richard Dunn After Namatjira Explorations on place and meaning in the gorge paintings of Albert Namatjira	31 October to 28 November
Local artists Christmas Sale	3 to 12 December

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02 9473 7878 | gcs-gallery.com.au | An Anglican Pre K-12 Day and Boarding School for Girls



Abbotsleigh Grace Cossington Smith art award 2026

National art award supporting contemporary Australian artists

Exhibition of finalists 18 July to 15 August 2026

2024 winner Virginia Keft matjam bagin tja (flying fox in the twilight), 2023, synthetic polymer and textiles on canvas, 93x123cm



Higher fares: Not fair



Matt Cross MP, State Member for Davidson

Each time we hop in the car, the little tag on the inside of our windscreen lets out a beep as we pass through another toll.

It's now no longer just about roads. Tolls are a cost-of-living issue for all of us, from families to tradies who rely on Sydney's road network.

Before the 2023 election, NSW Premier Chris Minns declared, "Going forward, there should be no new tolls on existing roads." By 2028, that will no longer be the case.

Earlier this year, the NSW Labor Government confirmed motorists will pay two-way tolls on the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Sydney Harbour Tunnel

when the Western Harbour Tunnel opens in 2028.

To add insult to injury, motorists have again been hit on the Harbour Bridge and Tunnel, with the peak toll increasing from \$4.41 to \$4.55 since 1 July 2026. This is despite the NSW Budget forecasting the Government will collect around \$1.2 billion in toll revenue from roads it owns over the next four years.

Labor came to office in 2023 promising to end what it described as "toll mania", yet is expanding tolls in government. They commissioned an Independent Toll Review (costing taxpayers over \$5.5 million), which included creating additional bureaucracy by establishing a NSW Motorways Customer Advocate and NSW Tollway Ombudsman. These will not reduce tolls.

But there is hope. If you spend more than \$50 a week on tolls using a personal toll account, you may be able to claim a rebate through Service NSW at www.service.nsw.gov.au/services/toll-relief. I am also happy to share that the NSW Liberals' policy of \$100 off your yearly rego was adopted in the NSW Budget. This will provide some cost-of-living relief.

Governments need to keep their promises, manage infrastructure, and look for ways to reduce cost-of-living pressures, not increase them. Leadership is about solving problems, not simply asking people to pay more.

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



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From family promise to courtroom drama

Wal Abramowicz

Family promises can get messy and sometimes they end up in Court. That's exactly what happened in *McFarlane v McFarlane*, a case that shows why not every family promise is legally binding.

An 88-year-old woman owned a house in Bronte, Sydney. As she got older, she wanted to sell it to pay for a place in a retirement village. There was just one problem: her daughter-in-law, who had been living there with her children for seven years, refused to move out. Why? She claimed that the homeowner had promised she could live in the house for as long as she wished and that eventually the house would be left to her and her husband in the owner's will.

To back up her claim, she asserted that the homeowner had made a clear promise about the property and that she relied on that promise to her disadvantage in renovating the house and building her family's future around the expectation that it would one day be theirs. She contended that a Court may step in to prevent this unfair outcome.

The Judge wasn't convinced. After reviewing the evidence, the Court found there was no clear, unconditional promise that she would inherit the property. The evidence was patchy and inconsistent,

and there was nothing to prove the house had definitely been promised to her.

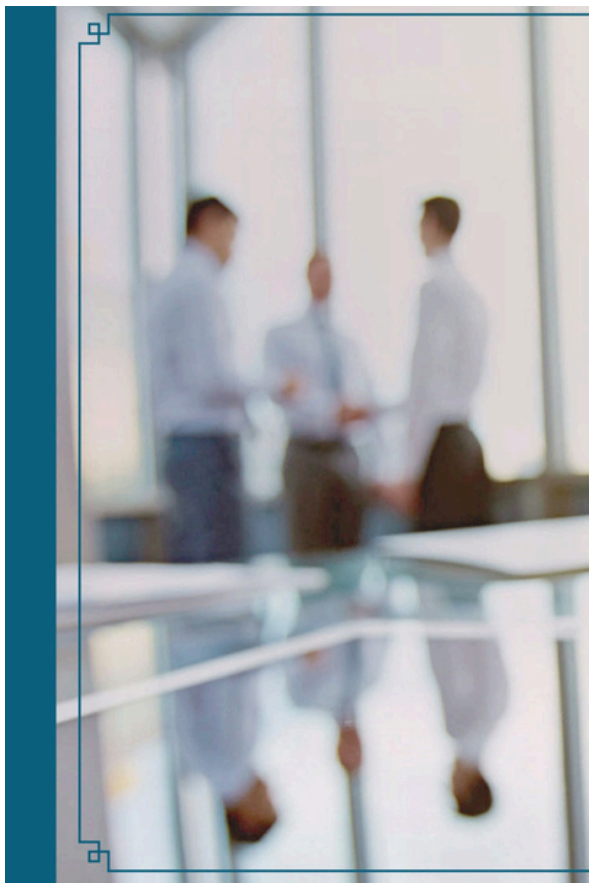
The Court also found there were plenty of other reasons why she had lived in the home and helped with renovations. Families often help each other out, and that alone doesn't mean someone has been promised ownership of a house. On top of that, life had changed dramatically. The elderly owner now needed to sell the property to fund her retirement, and the daughter-in-law had separated from the owner's son. Even if a promise had once been discussed, the Court decided it wasn't unfair for the owner to change course given those major changes.

The result? The homeowner won. She regained possession of her house, and the daughter-in-law's claim was dismissed.

The decision highlights an important lesson: not every family promise creates a legal right. If you want a Court to enforce a promise about property, you need strong evidence that:

- a clear promise was made;
- you relied on that promise; and
- you suffered a real disadvantage because of it.

Courts look for proof not assumptions or intentions.



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Not rating the Council rates rise?

Penelope Andrews



Did anyone else open their letterbox recently only to find a delightful letter that notified them of a rates rise? I sure did, and it was rather anxiety-inducing!

Ku-ring-gai Council's application for a special rate variation was approved in full in June by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. Council has said the reason behind the variation was to fund badly needed infrastructure improvements.

The approval is for a 24.6% special rate variation and a 4.4% rate peg – totalling 29% in the current 2026-27 financial year. Rates can be paid in full by 31 August, or in quarterly instalments due 31 August, 30 November, 28 February and 31 May.

Although not everyone in the same local government area pays the exact same amount in

council rates (it's based on land valuation, property category and so on), one price rise example shows a jump from about \$2600 to \$3360 per year in Killara.

Council has said the special rate variation will deliver an additional \$20.7 million each year to fund improvements to community buildings, stormwater drainage, footpaths, recreational facilities, traffic and transport infrastructure, and for repayment of a loan for the new St Ives Indoor Sports Centre.

"Council has had significantly low rate revenue per capita compared to other metropolitan councils. Low rate revenue, combined with rising costs and ongoing cost shifting from state and federal governments, has created a significant funding shortfall for our Council and community," Mayor Christine Kay said.

Member for Davidson Matt Cross wrote in a popular local Facebook group: "It's a shocker rate rise in a cost-of-living crisis for both households and businesses." He added, "costly project blowouts such as the St Ives Sports Centre" should not be repeated.

Regardless of any resident's perspective on the reasons behind the rates rise, it's clear the decision was not taken lightly by Council. But homeowners will certainly be bearing the cost.



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Friday 14th August: 7pm
Saturday 15th August: 2pm & 6pm
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Wednesday 19th August: 7pm
Friday 21st August: 7pm
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Sunday 23rd August: 11am & 3pm

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Meet 'Lindfield College'

Penelope Andrews

Lindfield Learning Village is taking “the next step in its educational journey”, according to the NSW Government – a move not entirely welcomed by its whole school community.

When the K-12 school opened in 2019, it was positioned as a carefully designed model of best-practice education, with a focus on inclusion and meeting the needs of contemporary students through stage-not-age and student-directed learning. Some viewed it as alternative or ‘experimental’. Those who founded the school said it was mainstream but more innovative than the standard public school model.

Now, it’s had a change of name and is pivoting in a new direction. The NSW Government says the school will “move away from its past iteration as an ‘alternative educational setting’” and, from term 2, it has been known as Lindfield College. The school’s move to a more conventional structure includes mandatory uniforms, the introduction of regular parent-teacher interviews and academic reports, along with a new gifted education program related to the creative arts and a STEM program.

Academically, the school already has a strong reputation on the North Shore for its high HSC results and NAPLAN outcomes. In a statement, the NSW Government says the new direction is instead about “strengthening community confidence and

addressing lingering perceptions that the school is an ‘alternative educational setting’”.

NSW Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Early Learning, Prue Car, said the school had “engaged closely with the community” on the changes, while Lindfield College Principal Ben Rekić said the school’s new chapter “reinforces our commitment to student voice and input, including the establishment of student leadership structures”.

“This will empower students to contribute meaningfully and translate their ideas into action,” he said.

However, not everyone agrees that the new plan is a win. The majority of parents in online comment threads expressed disappointment with the shift.

“What a shame that an inclusive and progressive model of schooling has now been forced to conform by mindless bureaucrats,” one person said. Another noted: “Calling a move back to mainstream ‘success’ ignores what’s being lost. Not every child fits the same mould, and public education should reflect that. It’s a shame to see such a unique and valuable option being diluted rather than supported.”

Share your thoughts at editor@kamdha.com.



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What's on



South Asian stories and social change

Join an evening of cocktails, community and courage to raise funds for the Aunties Fund, which supports South Asian women and their children experiencing domestic and family violence. Councillor Indu Balachandran has been a leader in promoting the initiative in Ku-ring-gai. The event will feature a panel discussion on shifting narratives to create change and a curated canapé menu prepared by Plate It Forward, which creates employment and economic pathways for migrants and refugees.

When: Thursday 13 August, 6pm-9:30pm

Info: auntiesfund@gmail.com



Rotate through engaging science stations, with hands-on activities led by Hornsby Council's environmental scientists. Learn about fire behaviour, pollinators, how to tell native plants from weeds and keep waterways clean.

When: Thursday 20 August, 4-6.30pm

Where: Hornsby Library, 28-44 George St

Info: library@hornsby.nsw.gov.au



Celebrate the old boy!

Celebrate the amazing dads, granddads, uncles and men who raise us with a \$25 Sunday Roast at the Greengate Hotel this Father's Day, Sunday 6 September. Can't think of a pressie to make Dad happy? Kids eat free from 12-6pm.

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.

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HSC ready, set, go!

**Sarah Wainwright, Sydney-based parenting expert
@parentingandlifetips**

For a Year 12 student at this time of the year, procrastination may be a familiar and unwanted predicament. Procrastination is intentionally delaying or postponing a task despite knowing there will be negative consequences. Typically, it's a coping mechanism involving avoidance of temporary emotional discomfort – including stress, anxiety or boredom – associated with a specific task.

FEATURES OF PROCRASTINATION INCLUDE:

Irrational delay: Postponing a commitment despite having an opportunity and intention to do it on time.

Displacement activity: Choosing to do something of lesser importance or instant gratification instead of doing the necessary task.

Boredom/Lack of autonomy: The task feels tedious, repetitive, uninteresting or as if you're forced to do something rather than choosing to do it.

Negative consequences: The stress or guilt of postponing a task leads to rushed, low-quality work.

Perfectionism: Unrealistic standards can lead to a fear of failure and then an inability to start the task.



Glenda Butler, an HSC English marker for 20 years, has some wise words: "We all know what we have to do – study – so having the right tools to get started is key. A good study plan is one of those tools." Here's a few others she suggests to help beat procrastination before it takes hold:

- 1. Find a paper-format study timetable** that works for you – a page-a-day or week-at-a-glance formats show all you need to do.
- 2. Be realistic about your commitments** and schedule study time around your daily life. For example, don't schedule an hour of study before breakfast unless you usually get up 2 hours before breakfast!
- 3. Stick to the hours you dedicate** to study and make sure they are kept free.
- 4. Break your subjects down into topics** and assign them to a spot on your timetable until you have covered each subject's content.
- 5. Use your phone to time study sessions.** Do 25 minutes study then take a 10-minute break over a 2-hour period, then take a longer break.
- 6. Find a study app** to help you study effectively.

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THE ADVENTURES INTO COMMON GROUND

by Jay Houhlias



Looking at Catherine DeVrye's photos, they seem unreal. Almost like someone photoshopped her into these extraordinary places. Far from the far-flung countries chronicled in her newly released book, *Beyond Timbuktu: Journeys of Hope and Humanity*, we caught up with the best-selling author, twice-awarded Australian Keynote Speaker of the Year, carrier of the Olympic Torch at the Sydney Olympics' opening ceremony and Australian Executive Woman of the Year at her home in Freshwater.

Growing up on the so-called 'wrong side of the tracks' in Calgary, Canada, DeVrye started working odd jobs at 13. At 22, she moved to Australia with \$200 and no return journey.

She made the move after her parents' death, and being an only child, she chose faraway Australia because her best friend just happened to be teaching in Melbourne. Upon reflection, she says, "If my parents were still alive, I'd probably still be teaching back in Canada. Who knows?"

DeVrye says candidly that she never consciously considered the move as courageous.

"When my parents died, I was an absolute wreck. I did it to clear my head. It wasn't a rational decision in many ways, but the biggest problem turned into the biggest opportunity," she explains.

The move eventuated into an international career with IBM and her status as one of Australia's best-

known keynote speakers. DeVrye's story requires a book in itself (which she has already published – her 2005 memoir, *Who Says I Can't?*, was nominated for the National Biography Award) but these days she happily characterises her professional identity as author and speaker.

During her career-building phase, however, DeVrye seemed to effortlessly, and in a perfect trajectory, pinball from one thing to the next. But she says there wasn't magic behind the career moves.

"I just took the opportunities," she explains.

"It sounds like a cliché; I had this boss who said, 'the opportunity of a lifetime has to be grasped within the lifetime of that opportunity'. I am a bit of a planner in some ways. There are a lot of opportunities I've missed but, mostly, if something has felt right, I've just done it. Right time, right place, then just gone for it."

DeVrye has (so far) published 10 books, with *Beyond Timbuktu: Journeys of Hope and Humanity*, detailing her adventures in off-the-beaten-path countries from Albania to Zimbabwe. It's full of true stories of ordinary people showing extraordinary kindness in some of the world's least-known places.

Speaking with her is also an adventure in itself, every topic spiralling into 20 different stories and tangents but, interestingly, not into the realm of advice on how to inject more adventure into one's life. DeVrye did, however, offer this: "Do what you want to do as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else. Also, if you're in doubt, do it! If you're not sure about it, do it!"

DeVrye refers to the comfort zone and the courage zone, a different framing on being outside of one's comfort zone. She goes on to say she personally feels more alive when she travels, but also says, "other times, it's quite nice to be inside your comfort zone."

Rather than offer blanket statements, it seems important for DeVrye to ensure there is room for nuance – even when making distinctions. When we met, for example, she sported one white and one black shoe to show "life isn't black and white".

So despite her adventure-filled life, DeVrye doesn't believe it's obligatory for fulfilment.

"People are different, and some people are very happy where they are and don't need adventure. Maybe we even lead a less fulfilling life when we go off and have adventures," she says.

"My first trip to Australia I went hitchhiking in Tasmania. I met this old farmer and he'd never been to Hobart, and I'm going, 'Are you crazy? It's just down the road,' and he said, 'I have everything I need here, why would I have to leave?' I can picture this guy. I thought, gee, he is so content with where he is."

Sometimes the most unfulfilled people are the ones who have done the most travel, perhaps because they are still searching for contentedness, filling the void with more places, more experiences.

"Some people travel for adventure," DeVrye says, "and some people travel to get away from things."

It's also clear the idea of authentic travel for DeVrye is actually about seeing locals in their element, completely content in their small and beautiful corner of the world. Rather than meeting other travellers, it's about encountering the old Greek grandmother who has cut potatoes in her village for 60 years, or the Icelandic sheep farmer who lives by the seasons and hasn't left the island.

But the irony in all this, DeVrye concludes, is that despite vast differences in lifestyles, beliefs, values, virtues, people's travel experiences (or lack thereof), we are more alike than different. It's the crux of her latest book and the key lesson of her enduring travels: "It's just about people."

"I've been to over 150 countries and I've never met a 'government'; I've only met people. I've met the leaders of some of these countries, but never a 'government,'" she says.

"If you look behind the headlines, people are kinder than the narratives and the news cycle. I truly believe that (as I write in the book) Iran is the friendliest place I've been to. People would invite us to their home for dinner, they said 'thank you for not believing the media and administrations'"

DeVrye says she's got her own political opinions "but that's not the purpose of this book".

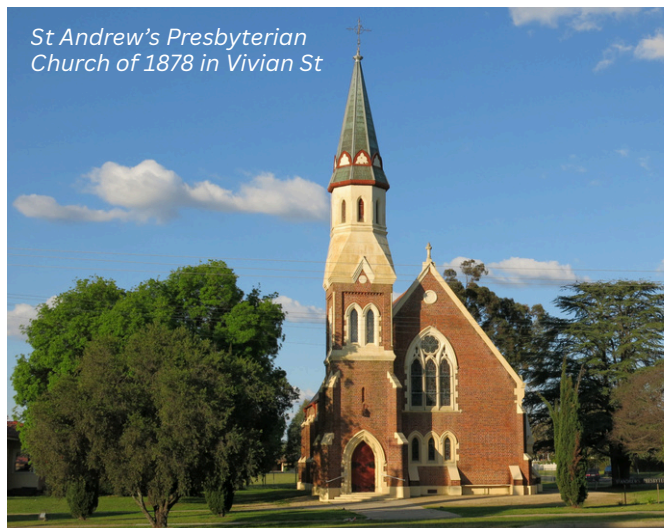
"When I get asked questions about politics and policy, I often throw my hands up; it's beyond my pay grade. I can't comment," she says.

"I don't really write about the negatives, and if anyone accuses me of being overly optimistic, I don't apologise because the mainstream media, by nature, are overly negative. So if I am overly positive, hopefully people will meet somewhere in the middle because, ultimately, that's where most of us live our lives."

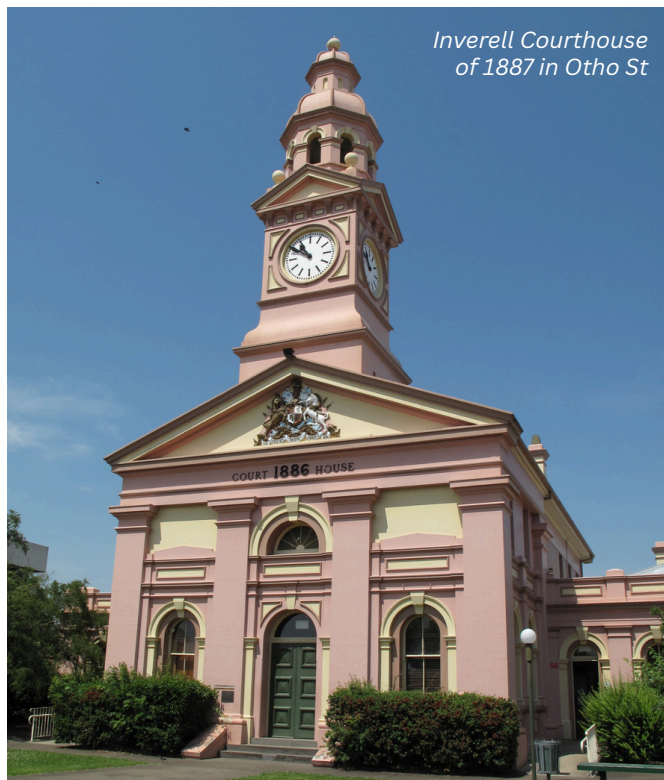
Although one can argue Catherine DeVrye has lived a life anywhere but the middle, speaking at her home in Freshwater certainly is grounding. Walking past surfers and snorkellers, restaurant workers and families with their dogs on the rocks, we did not know anything about them – where they'd been or what they'd done. However, in a way, it didn't really matter; we are all just people, and that's good enough ground for all of us to meet on.

*Catherine at
Mount Everest, Nepal*





St Andrew's Presbyterian Church of 1878 in Vivian St



Inverell Courthouse of 1887 in Otho St



Inverell Ambulance Station of 1947 in Otho St

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

Towns of NSW: Inverell

Phillip Simpson

Founded in 1853 by Colin Ross, Inverell is in the New England region, 589km north of Sydney. Its first lots were sold in 1859, and it expanded considerably in the 1870s with the discovery of its mineral wealth, including tin, sapphires, zircon and diamonds.

A wide range of crops are grown in the area's fertile soil. The town's name is Gaelic for "meeting of the swans" (on the Macintyre River), and today it is sometimes referred to as the 'Sapphire City'.

Most NSW country towns usually had at least one non-conformist church (for example, Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational or Baptist). In 1977 nearly all these groups joined the new Uniting Church in Australia, however, quite a few Presbyterian churches elected to remain separate. St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Inverell is one of these. It was built in 1878, with a beautiful 26-metre spire, to the design of Alexander Leckie Elphinstone.

One of the most imposing buildings is the town's pink courthouse, completed in 1887, with an oversized clock tower added two years later. It was Inverell's third courthouse and was designed by the colonial architect, James Barnet, in his typical Italianate style. In order to open the building, a judge from the tin mining town of Emmaville rode 77km on horseback to do so.

With the coming of the motor car came an increase in rural ambulances, which were needed to convey the injured to hospitals. Larger towns had ambulance stations erected to house ambulances and some staff. Following WWII, until 1960, motor vehicle accidents tripled and deaths doubled, radically increasing demand. As a result of this situation, Inverell got its ambulance station in 1947, constructed in a 'modern' style known as Inter-war Functionalism, which was embraced in the 1920s and 1930s. The building features a projecting upper-floor area with curved corners and glass in line with the style's focus on simple geometric shapes.

To conclude, here are some unusual facts: the town had a Chinese joss house during its mining era; survived a number of diphtheria outbreaks in the early 1900s; had a fruit dehydration plant in 1921; experienced a grasshopper infestation in 1937; helped the war effort with a camouflage netting factory in 1942; and suffered frequent outbreaks of typhoid until 1953.

When visiting the town, you could try your hand at fossicking at several public fossicking areas nearby, and visit Inverell Pioneer Village on Tingha Road.



When Mark Foy's was ritzy

Margaret Simpson

The cantilevered entrance awning of the old Mark Foy's store was made in Paris.

The distinctive entrance to Sydney's Downing Centre law courts is regularly seen in news reports during doorstep interviews. This iconic building, bounded by Liverpool, Elizabeth and Castlereagh Streets, opened in 1909 as the Piazza Store of Mark Foy's Ltd, and was one of Australia's foremost shopping landmarks. It was established by the flamboyant retailer, Francis Foy, and was called Mark Foy's after his father's Bendigo drapery store.

Francis Foy's store was erected in a late-Victorian Second Empire style, reminiscent of French Renaissance architecture and partly modelled on Le Bon Marché in Paris, one of the world's first modern department stores. Along Mark Foy's Elizabeth Street façade, ceramic-style mosaic signs still advertise the store's silks, linens, hosiery, laces, shoes, gloves, millinery, corsets, costumes and flowers, while Mansard roofs on the rooftop corners accentuate the roof line.

The building incorporated many innovative design features, including the first escalator to be installed in Australasia. It arrived from France in a "thousand pieces", and when assembled, the press described it as a "magic staircase".

The emporium boasted the first restaurant in a drapery store, the first motorised delivery service, a circulating library, a ladies' reading and writing room, an iced-drinks fountain and a telephone bureau for customers to make phone calls.

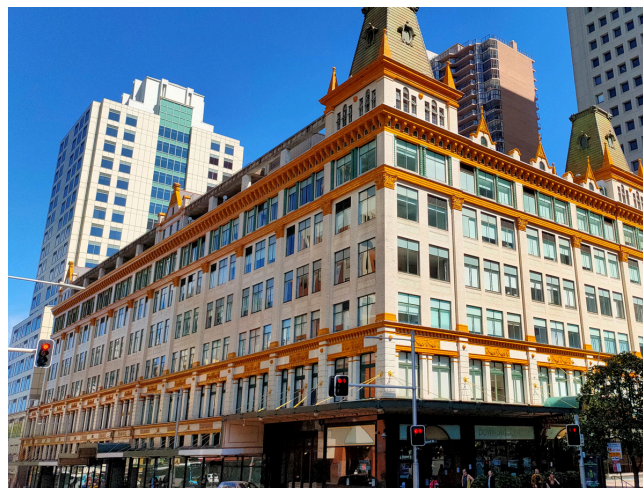
The store featured acres of floor space with counters and showcases of Siberian oak, Wunderlich pressed metal ceilings, cedar staircases with wrought-iron balustrades, chandeliers and sumptuous marble finishes.

Mark Foy's became the fashion centre of the city, and fashion houses clamoured to have their garments sold there. Trading peaked in the late 1920s, but by the 1960s, the halcyon days were over. The main shopping precinct of Sydney had moved northwards. As chain stores and boutiques gained in popularity, the family store was less favoured. In 1980, Mark Foy's Piazza Store closed; one floor was briefly rented by Grace Bros, but retailing in the building finished in 1984.

Purchased by the NSW Government, the building was restored and converted into the Downing Centre. It opened in 1991 to accommodate civil claims courts, district courts, local courts, the Sheriff's Office and the Victims Compensation Tribunal.

Now, after 46 years, the famous Mark Foy's name is back in the retailing business selling 'luxury label' goods online. The venture is being developed by the appropriately named Mark Foy, great-grandson of the store's former managing director Hugh Victor Foy, and great-grandnephew of founder Francis Foy.

Mark Foy's Piazza Store brought the Parisian shopping experience to Sydney.



Stained-glass stoicism

Kim Sparkes

Stoicism is an ancient Greek and Roman philosophy founded around 300BC. It takes its name from the Stoa ('porch'), a covered walkway supported by rows of columns in the Athenian marketplace where philosophers gathered and taught. Followers became known as the Stoics.

Stoicism has wide appeal because it teaches us to focus on what we can control – our beliefs, character, actions and reactions – rather than on external events beyond our control. Central to this philosophy are the four virtues: wisdom, courage, justice and temperance (moderation, self-control).

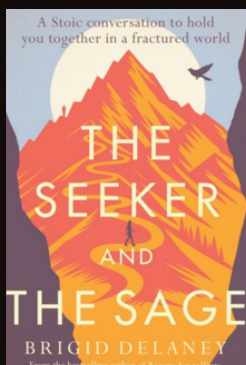
There has been an explosion of interest in Stoicism over the past few years, with hundreds of nonfiction books, websites, self-help guides and journals – ranging from classic texts to modern interpretations – becoming bestsellers and trending worldwide.

Alongside this resurgence, literary learning, or story-based learning, uses fiction to introduce ideas and deepen understanding in ways that complement traditional nonfiction. For example, one of Harvard University's courses uses stories featuring characters such as Wolverine and Wonder Woman to explore complex issues including power, race, disability, identity and justice.

Rather than presenting Stoicism as a conventional self-help guide, as she did in her previous bestselling book *Reasons Not to Worry: How to be Stoic in chaotic times*, author Brigid Delaney brings Stoic philosophy vividly to life in her new novel *The Seeker and the Sage* by weaving its principles into an engaging narrative.



Images: Allen & Unwin



Speaking at Gordon Library as part of the recent Sydney Writers' Festival, Delaney explained the book's structure.

"If you actually wrap the philosophy in a story, you're a lot freer as an author," she said, adding that she wants her readers "to learn as well as be entertained".

That learning comes through putting her characters to the test and allowing her readers to see how they react.

"To give your character some really challenging situations that you mightn't have personally been in, such as death, illness and grief, that means inventing characters that have the whole spectrum of human emotions."

Through the experiences of a traumatised journalist who interviews the Mayor of Silver Springs – a town whose citizens live according to the teachings of the ancient Stoic philosophers Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus – *The Seeker and the Sage* demonstrates how fiction can illuminate philosophical ideas, making it a welcome addition to the growing field of literary learning.

If you wish to lead a happier life with less stress and suffering, *The Seeker and the Sage* is well worth reading. It demonstrates that the wisdom of the ancient Stoics remains as relevant today as it was more than 2000 years ago.

"Stoicism is like a stained-glass window. It is a full picture of how to live from cradle to grave," Delaney says. "If you try and break it up and just use little bits of it, it's like smashing a beautiful work of art. You need to see the full scope; it really comes into its own when you apply or wash it throughout your life."

The Seeker and the Sage

Author: Brigid Delaney

Allen & Unwin 2025 | PB | 360pp

ISBN: 9781761470776 | RRP \$32.99

Kim Sparkes works as a librarian and is an advocate of bibliotherapy – using the power of literature to heal.

Bold initiatives for better education

Russell Bailey, Headmaster, Redeemer Baptist School

To be a school teacher for a lifetime can be very interesting, exciting and inspiring as better outcomes and new ground is broken for children through their education.

Next year it will be 200 years since the death of a great Swiss educator, Pestalozzi. His motto in education was 'learning by head, hand and heart.' He is credited with helping to nearly eradicate illiteracy in Switzerland by 1830. His students included Friedrich Fröbel, the creator of the concept of kindergarten. Wouldn't it have been interesting to teach with Pestalozzi in his live-in community school at Yverdon?

At about the same time in England, there was the great social reformer Hannah More, who is famous for establishing Sunday schools because she believed that every child would benefit from the opportunity to read and write, especially the ability to read the Bible because she thought that would guide them into a good life. Some say this, along with Lord Shaftesbury's Ragged Schools, was the beginning of universal education.

Wouldn't it have been fulfilling to teach the poor alongside Hannah More in Somerset, England?

There was a loose association of communities in Europe in the 1400s called the Brethren of the Common Life. One of their pupils was the famous Catholic scholar and languages expert Erasmus. They built large homes for poor students to live in with them while they were learning. They taught 'for the love of God alone.' Wouldn't it have been a pleasure to receive from their former student, Martin Luther – the great Protestant reformer – this defence of their community life to the city council: "Your way of life, since you teach and live according to the Gospel, pleases me no end."

Each of these educational reform movements had their opponents. But history smiles on them for their impact on schooling in general and their pupils who famously benefited society.

I've had the privilege of spending my vocational lifetime in a school with remarkable teachers who foster excellence in education, with a Christian worldview, for students from a variety of national and religious backgrounds.

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Getting by with a little help from my friend

Jay Houhlias

"Hey pal."

"Whatcha doing over there?"

"Smells good in here, doesn't it?"

"It's warm in here, isn't it?"

"Your paw is on the door now, are you knocking?"

You have some good manners, you do."



Here I was, talking to the kangaroo. His ears were pricked up while he listened. He had jumped his way to my front door as soon as I'd lit the fire. It was raining, but just his head and paws were wet. He was too fast to get rained on.

He circled the cabin, stopping at all the doors for a sniff. He certainly knew his way around. He had this other friend who didn't hang around, and he had another bush turkey friend who was just skulking in the background. They made a good, albeit unusual, team. It looked like they'd all been here before.

I was at Gum Leaf Cabin in Carawirry Forest Escape. Sitting on 250 acres of private forest in the Dungog region of the Hunter Valley, with 10 kilometres of walking trails, bike trails, access to national parks, waterfalls and swimming holes, as well as birdwatching opportunities, it is a great place to do everything and a great place to do nothing.

I was on a solo weekend away with plans to do nothing, yet here I was with my pal and, upon being here, I found sudden inspiration to do stuff. Nothing crazy of course, and all within walking distance.

A few metres from the cabin there was a waterfall trailhead that took you on a 10-minute walk to the local swimming hole.

As always with secluded bodies of water, there are bonus points if you do a nudie swim. Or, it's only really bonus points if you do a nudie and don't get caught, because doing a nudie and getting caught is generally horrible, for everyone.

But if you can manage it, uncaught, there is a final set of bonus points. If you do the nudie then the second you get dressed, people arrive at your spot and you remain cordial, unsuspecting and skip away with a feeling you've just stolen some magic, that's an added little victory.

The victorious beget rewards and the retreat offers food hampers that are delivered to your cabin. There is something about having your own space, a large kitchen with all the utensils and cooking utilities that makes you want to cook something grand. I used the BBQ to cook the steaks, sausages and bacon.

(I believe it was Banjo Patterson who once said it was a crime to cook steak on anything other than a barbie, or maybe it was Bob Hawke, I'm not sure. Ned Kelly?)

When I wasn't walking or cooking or swimming, I was simply hanging in the cabin. The funny thing about deciding not to do much means things like cooking, for example, take up a lot of time and focus. Those are your plans for the rest of the day.

Another funny thing is it's meant to be quiet, but it's actually not. Yes, I was in a forest escape, generally quite far away from people, however, the forest was alive.

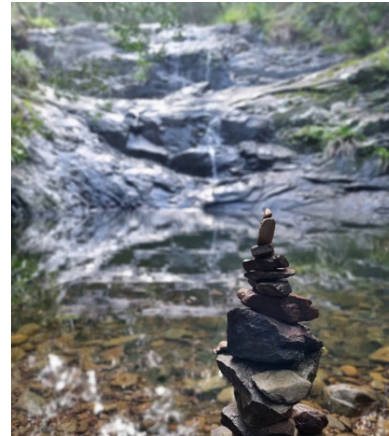
It was making sounds the entire time, birds singing and plants falling and branches moving randomly. The cabin did its thing as well, the fire crackling downstairs, the rainwater landing on the roof then flowing through the pipes.

All of it reminds you that even though you have decided to take some time for yourself, you are not out there alone.

On the morning I left the cabin, my pal came back out the front. His two friends did not join, so it was just him and I. I got the feeling Gum Leaf Cabin was in fact his place.

I wondered if it was somewhere he came every morning to say g'day to whoever was staying there. Maybe he'd gotten used to this routine, or maybe he was a secret employee of Carawirry.

He is probably paid with whatever food the guests are inclined to give him. I don't imagine his job description is super detailed. It is probably something along the lines of introducing yourself and your buddies to the guests, checking in at regular intervals to make sure the guests are doing well and, most importantly, yet requiring the most subtlety, always ensuring the guests don't ever feel lonely.



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Loads of flipping, squealing, giggling kids. And that was just in the party rooms. The main arena had to be numbering in the hundreds; there were kids everywhere and the atmosphere was electric. Tucked away in an obscure building off Victoria Road, we discovered where the cool kids hang on a rainy, chilly Saturday afternoon – an indoor trampoline park, Flip Out, in Gladesville.

Nothing gets the under-12 adrenaline pumping more than a series of tramps, complete with a wipeout (for the uninitiated, that's equipment with giant inflatable rotating arms that you jump or flip over; timing is everything), air bags, slides, tunnels, soft play and climbing walls. Phew.

Our kids were there for a birthday party (along with many, many more). Manager Baxter says that's Flip Out Gladesville's "main form of foot traffic" – and it's easy to see why. Parents stayed well out of the way while hot, sweaty, happy kids ran back and forth from the main play zones to the party rooms to rehydrate, refuel and restock (lollies, chips and gummy snakes).

That 1.5 hour play time felt like 1.5 minutes until the call for nuggets and chips with classic cordial



brought all of them bounding back to devour whatever they could find first. Clearly they'd worked up an appetite: they even polished off the parents' fruit and sandwich platters in record time.

Lucky the party host was so calm. (She'd clearly done this before, multiple times that day alone.) In and out with the platters, plates, chips and drinks until the ice-cream cake signalled a call for song.

The franchisees, a local couple, are keen to replicate the Gladesville venue. It's their first location, Baxter says, and they've been prioritising "safety, staff enjoyment and a better environment for customers". He says the owners have invested heavily into the venue's staff and presentation.

"Out of the whole Flip Out franchise, Australia-wide, Gladesville has been rated number 1 for customer feedback and cleanliness," Baxter chuffs.

In a sometimes-challenging business environment, it's good to diversify. So Baxter says next up for the business is focusing on activities like skill-based ninja classes, which are run onsite on Mondays and Wednesdays.

"The ninja classes are designed to teach kids trampoline skills, flips and tricks, and how to use the equipment safely," he says, adding that the American coach "has had nothing but awesome feedback". Funny, after two hours of non-stop flipping – high on life (and a few gummy snakes) – that's the same feedback we got from our kids.

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The Ultimate Stuffed Pancake

Elliot Styche @elliots.table

These chocolate-stuffed Snickers pancakes are a real treat, a weekend breakfast made seriously fun. The surprise of the hidden chocolate centre is always a beautiful moment, and from there it's all about the build. Layer with peanut butter, drizzle with caramel, scatter with crushed salted peanuts and chocolate chips, and you have yourself a proper Snickers stack.

The beauty of this recipe is how versatile the master batter is. Swap the peanut butter for strawberry jam and pile on fresh strawberries for a chocolate strawberry stack that's just as impressive. Really, the options are endless; once you have the stuffed pancake technique down, the flavour combinations are yours to play with.

INGREDIENTS

200g plain flour	30g melted butter
2 tsp baking powder	4 tbsp chocolate hazelnut spread
2 tbsp caster sugar	4 tbsp smooth peanut butter
1 pinch of salt	3 tbsp caramel sauce
250ml whole milk	2 tbsp crushed salted peanuts
1 tbsp lemon juice	2 tbsp chocolate chips
1 large egg	
1 tsp vanilla extract	

METHOD

1. Make your master batter: Stir the lemon juice or white vinegar into the milk and rest for 5 minutes; it will curdle slightly, and that's perfect. Whisk the flour, baking powder, caster sugar and salt in a large bowl. In a jug, whisk the milk mixture with the egg, vanilla extract and melted butter, then fold into the dry ingredients. A few lumps are fine; don't overwork it.

2. Cook the pancakes: Heat a non-stick pan on medium-low and lightly butter. Add an ice cream scoop of batter per pancake. Cook for around 30 seconds, then add a teaspoon of chocolate spread, followed by just enough pancake mix to cover the chocolate. Wait around 1 minute, then flip and cook through.

3. Build the stack: Pancake down, spread a dollop of smooth peanut butter across it. Repeat: pancake, peanut butter, pancake...all the way to the top. Four layers is the aim, but go higher if you like.

4. Finish and serve: Drizzle the caramel sauce, letting it cascade down the sides. Scatter the crushed salted peanuts and chocolate chips over everything and serve immediately.

TOP TIPS: These freeze beautifully. Make a big batch, cool completely then layer between sheets of baking paper and freeze. Pop them in the toaster or a warm oven straight from frozen. **Get ahead with the batter.** Make the master batter the night before and keep it covered in the fridge. Stir gently before cooking; don't overwork it.

Feeding a crowd? Cook the pancakes in advance and keep them warm in the oven at 160°C on a baking tray.





Caffeinated at Café Nate

On Hill Street next to Roseville station, you'll find Café Nate, which, if you say it quickly enough, becomes caffeinated, which, if you spend enough time there, you become. Inside it feels like a blend of cosy restaurant and modern café, with a diner-style hole-in-the-wall where customers can glimpse inside the kitchen, where the magic happens.

Darmawan, one of the managers, has been working at Café Nate since 2017.

"Our owner is from Thailand," Darmawan says, "so we are going for more of a fusion. We try and change the menu every three months. If people like something and it is popular, we try and keep it on the regular menu."

Café Nate still provides breakfast classics on the regular menu but also offers Thai-inspired meals like chicken karaage udon, roasted duck dry egg noodles and their signature, tom yum prawn pasta.

Darmawan says Café Nate is a place for everyone to slow down and enjoy the company.

"Before working here, it was always work, work. I didn't have enough breath to speak with people. But now, it's nice because you can have relationships with customers – 'how was your day?', 'how are you doing?' Even if it's only a little thing, it makes a difference."



Café Nate's egg stack is manager Darmawan's favourite dish on their menu. The Sydney Observer team member who sampled it concurs.

Delightful drinks

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

NON-ALCOHOLIC

NON N.9 Oaked Blackberry & Plum, \$30

Founded by Melbourne entrepreneur Aaron Trotman, who believes "conformity is boring", NON is an alternative alcohol-free beverage. Designed by a team of expert food and bev professionals (chefs, bartenders, food scientists and winemakers), NON is built with similar production methods and flavour profiles to wine. Tannins, floral aromatics, salinity and acidity are extracted from real produce using techniques from the culinary and viticulture worlds.

The result is a complex, wine-inspired drink with vinous qualities. Lightly carbonated, it balances sweet and savoury flavours with notes of blackberry, plum and beetroot, finishing with warming spices. Shiraz grape skins contribute firm tannins and texture, chilli adds a gentle warmth, wine pine needles bring a distinctive herbaceous character.

Pairing Guide: Rib eye with peppercorn crust and charred beetroot. The juicy, marbled beef stands up to the drink's tannic structure, while peppercorn enhances its spice. The sweetness of the beetroot mirrors the blackberry, plum and beetroot flavours.



RED WINE

Topper's Mountain 'Finder' Nebbiolo 2023, \$37

Perched at 900 metres above sea level in the cool-climate New England region of northern NSW, Topper's Mountain is among the country's highest family-owned vineyards. Surrounded by state forest and farmed using organic practices, the vineyard sits on rare volcanic red basalt soils, making it truly unique in the Australian wine landscape.

Working with Mediterranean varieties, Topper's Mountain crafts wines that are textural, aromatic and full of character. Their Nebbiolo is a compelling expression of what these soils and low-impact viticultural approach can achieve. The volcanic soil gives the medium-bodied wine its vibrancy. Pale garnet in colour, it opens with aromas of sour cherry, sandalwood and cranberry. A juicy palate underpinned by Nebbiolo's high acidity make it one of the most food-friendly reds you'll find.

Pairing Guide: Crispy duck with roasted beetroot and balsamic glaze. The earthy sweetness of the beetroot and the acidity of the balsamic bring out the wine's sour cherry and cranberry flavours.



Headlines come and go but good financial planning endures

Phil Broadbent

Each year, the Federal Budget generates discussion about taxation, superannuation and wealth management. The recent Budget debate has been no exception, with attention on capital gains tax, negative gearing, discretionary trusts and the treatment of testamentary trusts.

For many, these headlines create uncertainty. While the detail and timing of any reforms remain uncertain, much of the debate has centred on:

- Changes to the taxation of capital gains
- The future of negative gearing and its impact on residential property investment
- The taxation and ongoing role of discretionary (family) trusts
- The treatment of testamentary trusts, with recent commentary suggesting they may be carved out or treated differently where they are used for genuine estate planning purposes

These issues matter because they may influence how Australians invest, structure family assets and plan for retirement. However, they should not be viewed in isolation. Successful wealth creation is rarely determined by a single Budget announcement or policy proposal. It is usually the result of disciplined planning, long-term investing and sound decisions made consistently over time.

While governments can change the rules, there remains much that individuals can control: building a diversified portfolio, managing debt, making appropriate superannuation contributions, reviewing insurance and updating estate planning.

For families with discretionary trusts, recent commentary has understandably raised questions. Trusts can still be valuable for managing family wealth, succession planning and asset protection. Whether a trust remains appropriate should be assessed against the family's broader objectives, not simply in response to future law change speculation.

Similarly, investors concerned about capital gains tax or negative gearing should avoid hasty decisions. Property and investment strategies should be based on long-term goals, cash flow, risk tolerance and personal circumstances, not short-term debate.

Rather than getting caught up in the noise, focus on what you can control and seek quality advice before making significant decisions.

You can't control government policy, but you can control your financial strategy. And over the long term, that's often what makes the biggest difference.

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The Verdict: Slower, and a little cheaper

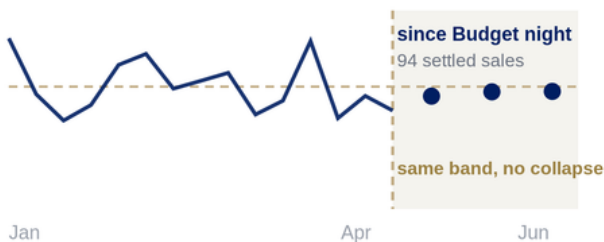
In May, the headlines promised a crash. The settled records have now caught up with the period since Budget night. They tell a quieter, more useful story. The last in a series of three, Mike Kaye, co-founder and director at Sarah Kaye & Co Buyers Agents, gives the verdict.

Start with the record, not the commentary

Begin with the only dataset in this debate that is neither a model nor a survey: the NSW Valuer General's register of settled sales. It is every legally registered transfer in our suburbs, drawn from Land Registry Services.

It runs slow by design, because a sale only appears once it has settled and been registered, which is why we have counselled patience for two months. Our updated analysis of that register now takes in 94 registered post-Budget purchases across the core suburbs of the Upper North Shore.

Last month's gap, now filled in



Weekly/monthly median sale price, cleaned NSW Valuer General settled sales, 7 Upper North Shore suburbs.
Source: Sarah Kaye & Co Research / NSW Valuer General.

What do they show? Medians sitting inside the same band they occupied through summer and autumn. Sale by sale, suburb by suburb, there is nothing in the registered record that resembles the collapse forecast in the days after 12 May. That is not an interpretation. That is what is on the register.

A little cheaper, and it started before Budget night

The register tells you what sold and for how much. What it does less well, in markets as thin as ours, is compare like with like: the mix of homes sold swings a suburb's median from month to month.

For that we lean on Cotality's value series, which controls for the mix. Across Ku-ring-gai's suburbs and Hornsby, it shows house values easing by roughly 2%-6% over the past year: Wahroonga toward the sharper end, Roseville Chase barely moving, Hornsby's units actually firmer.

The number we put on the record

Two details matter more than the headline number. The easing began in spring (see chart on facing page): values across our patch peaked around November, half a year before Budget night. The steeper stretch began in March, before the Budget too. There is no lurch in the line at 12 May.

And it is a drift, not a drop: a few per cent over a year, after several years of strong growth. The tax changes did not cause this; at most they kept it company. That is what we argued in May, and the record now agrees.

Last month we did something commentators mostly avoid: we put a number on the record. Our sense, from the homes we had bought for clients, was that like-for-like prices sat around 5% below the previous quarter and that most of the adjustment was already baked in. We said the data would judge us. It has: the mix-controlled series lands within a whisker of that figure.

Still slower, and choice is returning

Days on market has kept stretching. A Gordon house now averages 90 days on the market; Pymble 83 days; Wahroonga 66 days (up from 47 days only a month ago). Even Hornsby, the affordable corner of the area that was still selling briskly in June, has slowed from 32 days to 56 days on the market.

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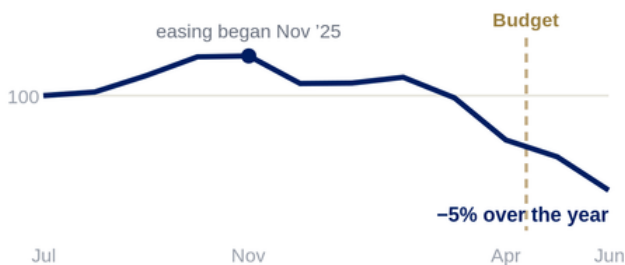
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The easing began before Budget night



Like-for-like house values, six Upper North Shore suburbs, indexed (Jul 2025 = 100). Mix-controlled; no kink at 12 May. Source: Cotality / RP Data.

On the sellers' side, the picture has turned more interesting. Fresh listings remain scarce through the leafy centre of the district, but they have surged at the affordable end: Hornsby's new listings have nearly doubled over two months, so more choice is arriving for exactly the buyers who have been most starved of it.

The auction circuit, for what it is worth, has now run cold for nine straight weeks; we give that metric as little weight as ever, but its direction merely confirms what the better data already shows.

It is worth noting the industry's own history. The average Australian downturn of the past 30 years has run for eight months and cost about 3%; the average upswing that followed returned more than 30%. Short and shallow, then long and strong. Nothing suggests this cycle will be different.

You may have read that prices in Sydney's affluent suburbs have fallen 4% or more in just two months, and that auction results are worse than during the pandemic.

The Upper North Shore is affluent by any definition, but neither the register nor the value series shows anything of the sort here: the two months since the Budget look like a 1%-2% decline – orderly, negotiated, unhurried.

The sharper falls are real, but they belong to other markets: waterfront trophy postcodes and the inner city, where prices flew highest and the buyer pool is thinnest.

Four groups. Four different effects.

Owner-occupiers have seen nothing change since May: the family home sits outside these reforms entirely. One independent researcher recently called it the last tax shelter; he is right.

Buyers, meanwhile, now have conditions that have quietly become the best in years: more time to decide, more room to negotiate, and now more stock arriving at the accessible end of the market.

For **investors**, the rotation the policy intended is visible and real: money is moving to new builds, and competition for established homes has thinned.

Renters are the group we would flag: the record rents nationally remain the numbers to watch. We expect modest pressure, which gives us no pleasure.

In May we said the Budget was not the biggest story. The settled record now agrees. In June we said slower, not cheaper – yet. The yet has arrived, quietly, at a few per cent, most of it in train before the Budget was ever announced.

A market that reprices modestly and keeps trading is a market doing its job, and right now it is treating prepared, well-advised buyers well. That is the story the data tells. It was never as loud as the headlines. It was just true.

Ku-Ring-Gai

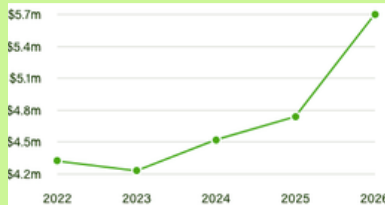
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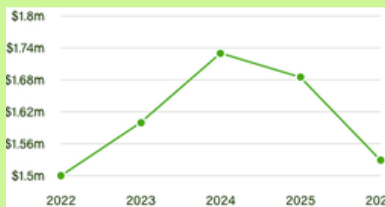
Suburb snapshots

SNAPSHOT Lindfield



5-BEDROOM HOUSE

Median price 2026 **\$5.7m**
 12-mth growth **20.3%**
 12-mth sales **36**



3-BEDROOM UNIT

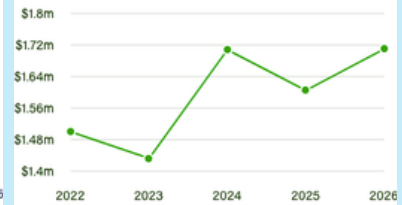
Median price 2026 **\$1.53m**
 12-mth growth **-9.2%**
 12-mth sales **37**

SNAPSHOT Killara



5-BEDROOM HOUSE

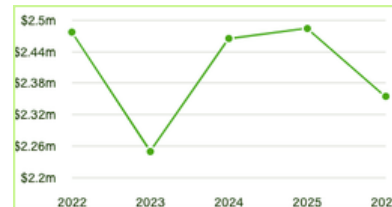
Median price 2026 **\$4.71m**
 12-mth growth **-11.5%**
 12-mth sales **31**



3-BEDROOM UNIT

Median price 2026 **\$1.71m**
 12-mth growth **6.5%**
 12-mth sales **44**

SNAPSHOT Wahroonga



4-BEDROOM HOUSE

Median price 2026 **\$2.35m**
 12-mth growth **-5.2%**
 12-mth sales **86**



2-BEDROOM UNIT

Median price 2026 **\$841,000**
 12-mth growth **-1.1%**
 12-mth sales **28**

powered by **Domain Insight**

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