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FROM THE EDITOR &
SYDNEY OBSERVER TEAM



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COVER: DUSTY ON THE SURFACE 2 - RALPH KERLE

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Central's Centrepieces

Photo Story: Jay Houhlias







Marian Street Theatre ACTION Group

A Marian Street Miracle

Penelope Andrews

A miracle happened in Ku-ring-gai recently. A miracle that, for now, has saved Marian St Theatre's future. For 13 long years, the empty Marian St Theatre in Killara has been boarded up. For decades it was the cultural backbone of the Upper North Shore and operated as a professional theatre. Then in 2013 it closed.

Ku-ring-gai Council in 2018 resolved to undertake the renewal of the theatre as an arts centre and to allocate funds to the project. The development application (DA) for the space was approved in August 2021 — but for five years, no progress was made on the new theatre vision. As the years went on, and the deadline for the DA lapsing on August 19, 2026, grew closer, the voices of passionate community advocates became louder.

It culminated in a sea of locals wearing red on August 2, rallying outside Gordon Library (located opposite Ku-ring-gai Council's chambers), and calling for the theatre's DA to be saved. If not, the approved DA for turning the long-closed venue into a contemporary arts centre would lapse, and its future would likely be next to nothing.

Then on August 10, Ku-ring-gai Council held an Extraordinary Meeting to discuss the theatre, where the decision was made to preserve the DA for the site. Mayor Christine Kay said: "The passion of the theatre's supporters is undeniable ... our role now is to facilitate the best possible outcome for the theatre and the arts in Ku-ring-gai."

Minutes from the Extraordinary Meeting show that present-day estimates for the redevelopment feasibly reach the high $30 millions to low $40 millions. The immediate progress commencement works to preserve the DA were estimated to cost $100,000. Council did not pay this. The Save Marian Street Public Fund instead raised the necessary funds. Those funds were received, and council subsequently commenced the physical internal demolition works required for the DA.

The council did note: "This is not yet a commitment to reviving the Marian Street Theatre due to the limited funding options for the substantial costs involved." In a statement to Sydney Observer, a Ku-ring-gai Council spokesperson said under state planning legislation, the DA is preserved once commencement has occurred. "As works have been undertaken, the DA is preserved and won't lapse," it said.

Options for funding and delivering infrastructure will be presented for consideration to council in mid-2027. One of those passionate advocates from the Marian St Theatre ACTION group, Jessica Blaxland Ashby, said they were proud of their efforts and credited the "extraordinary generosity of the community". "We are galvanised to be successful," she said.

Jane Salmon, a volunteer, told *Sydney Observer* she felt "hopeful, heartened, determined". Fellow volunteer Howard Gwatkin said: "I feel disappointed that council didn't fully commit to reopening the theatre; nervous that too many councillors will want to procrastinate further; yet hopeful that, with sustained community pressure, we can have it reopen within three years."

In the weeks since, the ACTION group has continued campaigning and put out a petition which received tens of thousands of signatures. The petition is supported and presented by Davidson MP Matt Cross in the NSW Parliament. It asked the Legislative Assembly to call on the government to work with Ku-ring-gai Council to commit to a clear plan to open the new site within three years as essential cultural infrastructure.

Further funding is needed to continue progress on the site, with the council minutes noting community interest in applying for the Federal Government's Thriving Suburbs grants program. "By funding up to $15 million, requiring council to commit to at least matched funding, and a delivery timeframe of two years, it gets the theatre reopened in the shortest possible timeframe, avoiding further cost increases and further delays," Ms Blaxland said.

In the meantime, those who wish to see the Killara arts site prosper have their fingers crossed and hearts hopeful.

St Ives road proposal

There's been an update in the St Ives Shopping Village story we brought you in the March Issue of *Sydney Observer*.

For a quick recap, last year Iris Capital contracted to acquire St Ives Shopping Village and a few adjoining properties – for a pretty penny in the many, many millions. Iris Capital is proposing improvements to St Ives Shopping Village such as a newer retail space, restaurants and eateries, an entertainment precinct and a new venue called St Ives Tavern. The tavern's plan noted 204 square metres of gaming, aka pokies.

But an equally strong topic of community interest has been Iris Capital's hope to buy the council-owned local lanes around the shopping centre and then close them down for development plans. The application was made by E K Nominees Pty Ltd, the then owners of the St Ives Shopping Village, to close council-owned local roads at Denley Lane, Cowan Lane and Durham Avenue and to acquire other adjacent council land to facilitate the expansion and redevelopment of the shopping village.

This is where our new update enters the chat. On September 15, council held an ordinary meeting where the results of the public exhibition of the road closure application associated with the redevelopment were discussed. Councillors resolved to defer considerations of the road closure application until Iris Capital prepared a traffic management plan and other relevant material to address gaps identified. It may also require the approval of Transport for NSW. If the application meets council's approval, the proposal will be publicly notified in accordance with the Roads Act.

Council further notes that any decision to divest public land will require a formal and separate resolution of council which will be the subject of a separate report," the minutes read. "The report will include mechanisms to protect against future upzoning of the land or alternatively capture an appropriate share of the value of any future uplift."

Interestingly, reports suggest the public exhibition of the application attracted 126 objections and 15 in support. As a local myself, the opinions I've heard from St Ives neighbours and friends have been very mixed—some are all for the village's redevelopment (including the small road adjustments), while others feel concerned about the smaller businesses located around those roads and what the impact would be on them.

For the frequently asked questions page included on the Ku-ring-gai Council's website related to the proposed road closure, E K Nominees Pty Ltd said no impact on the lanes would occur until a development application for the entire site is submitted, consulted upon and approved. So, locals will have to see what emerges next.



Map of the St Ives road proposal
https://www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Council



Mother's estate after death

Wal Abramowicz

Kathleen Pallister died on 30 November 2023. She had five children. In her Will, she chose her youngest son, Timothy, to be the executor. An executor is the person responsible for looking after the deceased person's property, paying bills and then giving the estate to the people named in the Will.

The main asset was the family home at Annangrove, worth about $3.5 million. The Will allowed Timothy to live in the house for 12 months after his mother died. After that, the house became part of the estate to be shared equally between all five children. Timothy continued living in the house after the 12 months ended. The other four children wanted the house sold so that their mother's estate could be divided between the five children.

They became concerned because Timothy was not selling the house. They also said he was not properly communicating with them or keeping them informed. Lawyers wrote to Timothy about these problems. At different times, Timothy said the house would be sold, but it was still not sold. There was also evidence that Timothy had said words such as "I'm not selling the place if I don't have to."

The other four children eventually went to the Supreme Court of NSW. They asked the Court to remove Timothy as executor and appoint two of the sisters to take over the estate. Timothy knew about the court hearing but did not attend. The Judge decided that Timothy had been given enough notice and continued the hearing without him.

The Judge said the most important question was whether the estate was being properly managed. The Judge found that it was not. The administration of the estate had "completely stalled" because Timothy had failed to take proper steps to sell the house and distribute the estate. The Court removed Timothy as executor and appointed his sisters to manage the estate instead. Timothy was ordered to hand over the estate's money, property and documents. He also had to provide details of what he had done while managing the estate. Importantly, the Judge ordered Timothy personally to pay the other four children's legal costs. Those costs were not to be paid by their mother's estate.

Timothy was trusted to look after his mother's estate. He was allowed to live in her house for one year, but afterwards he did not properly move things forward. The Court decided the estate could not remain stuck, removed him from control and appointed two of his sisters to finish the job





Educating toward peace

A chat with Rabbi Nochum Schapiro

Unfortunately, it's a topic which has been firing through our news cycles: antisemitism. Global events and events here in Australia have forced this to the forefront of our attention.

In our North Shore, and there are people doing their best to educate, inform and spread positivity about inclusiveness and peace regarding different faiths. One such individual is Rabbi Nochum Schapiro, who, among his various speaking roles over the years, will be speaking at St Ives this month about Judaism's response to antisemitism.

The talks will come in the form of a four part course called *For All Humankind* running from 8-29 October, exploring Judaism's universal values and how these timeless principles can help address antisemitism and build stronger communities.

One of the first points in *Sydney Observer's* conversation with the Rabbi was *why now?*

"In the context of the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion," Rabbi Schapiro began, "I believe it is particularly important that the wider community has opportunities not only to hear about antisemitism, but to genuinely engage with Judaism, Jewish people and Jewish ideas."

Rabbi Schapiro says it is this engagement which is fundamental in asking why now.

"Social cohesion can't only be discussed; it has to be practised. When people from different backgrounds meet face-to-face, listen to one another, ask difficult questions and discover values they share, barriers begin to come down."

"An in-person course also creates genuine conversation. You don't simply hear a lecturer, you hear the questions and perspectives of the people sitting alongside you. At a time when so much of our public conversation takes place through screens, algorithms and social media, creating spaces where people can respectfully engage with one another in person has become even more important."

The next point of conversation was *why this?* We spoke about why Judaism specifically - what is it about Judaism that people would benefit from hearing about in this course format?

"Judaism has been grappling with the big questions of human life for thousands of years: What gives a person dignity? What do we owe one another? What makes something right or wrong? How do we balance individual freedom with responsibility to the wider community?"

"What I find particularly valuable is that Judaism doesn't leave these questions in the realm of abstract philosophy. It translates values into practical responsibilities and everyday behaviour."

"The course For All Humankind explores a number of these ideas not simply as 'Jewish values for Jewish people,' but as universal principles Judaism believes have relevance to every human being. In a society wrestling with questions of respect, responsibility, difference and social cohesion, these ancient ideas can make a very contemporary contribution to the conversation."

The course was originally developed by the Jewish Learning Institute and has already been taught in hundreds of locations around the world. It aims to take something ancient and makes it accessible and relevant to contemporary life.

"What I've done is take this four-part course and adapt its presentation specifically for the wider community. That means assuming no previous knowledge of Judaism, explaining concepts in universal and accessible language, and focusing on the questions that these ancient teachings raise for the world we live in today."

For more information on the course and to attend, go to https://www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Things-to-do/Whats-on/For-all-Humankind



Meet your new local mayor: **Councillor Kim Wheatley**

Penelope Andrews

Dear Observers: Councillor Kim Wheatley has been elected to the top job, with Councillor Matt Devlin elected as Deputy Mayor.

Pymble resident Mayor Wheatley serves the Wahroonga ward and has been on the council for the past five years. She was first elected to the council in 2021 and became Deputy Mayor in 2024. With a strong corporate background, Mayor Wheatley has held senior executive roles in Australia and the United States, and is the chair of the Heritage Committee and the Council representative on the Sydney North Planning Panel. She told *Sydney Observer* she moved to Ku-ring-gai in 2016 and that her three daughters were all educated locally.

As for Deputy Mayor Devlin, he too is no stranger to the council - he was elected to Ku-ring-gai Council in 2024 and represents the Comenarra Ward. He is a longstanding volunteer in the Rural Fire Service and has also serves as chair to the Flood Risk and Management Committee and the Ku-ring-gai Local Transport Forum.

Both councillors showed gratitude for their elected positions, with Mayor Wheatley also acknowledging the work of former mayor Christine Kay.

Mayor Kim Wheatley (left) and Deputy Mayor Matt Devlin



The elephant in the room: Norman Griffiths Oval

The new mayoralty came following a council meeting on the night of September 15. Shortly after the decision was locked in, other major local issues were addressed, including the Norman Griffiths Oval upgrade and the results of a public exhibition of the road closure application associated with the proposed St Ives Shopping Village redevelopment. In a statement to *Sydney Observer*, Mayor Wheatley said Norman Griffiths Oval was “obviously a priority”.

“There are several projects such as Norman Griffiths Oval which need kickstarting to satisfy the majority of our residents and we have a responsibility to see projects get completed. At the end of the day, ratepayers want to see a tangible return on their investment,” she said.

On September 21, an extraordinary council meeting saw a majority of councillors push ahead with the $24.4 million synthetic field development. The mayor was in favour of the resolution.

Another area of interest for the mayor is Ku-ring-gai’s heritage. “I’ve been Chair of the Council’s Heritage Committee for several years and perspectives on heritage are changing. Our alternative housing policy, which was approved by the state government for the Lindfield, Roseville, Gordon, and Killara areas, aims to protect Ku-ring-gai’s built heritage,” Mayor Wheatley added.

We also asked Mayor Wheatley about what makes Ku-ring-gai a unique area to govern. She pointed to our local government area’s proximity to the city and environment, and its unique heritage.

“There’s no shortage of people who want to live here. What we must do as a council is manage the demands being placed upon us for population growth and new housing, while ensuring that the things that make Ku-ring-gai so desirable are not lost. It’s a balancing act that councillors are very conscious of,” she said.

Lastly, given Ku-ring-gai has one of the largest cohorts of seniors compared to other local government areas in Sydney, we asked Mayor Wheatley how she would cater to this demographic.

“Ageing in place is a big issue for elderly people who’ve lived here all their lives and want to stay in the area. Obviously, providing housing choices that allow this to happen is vital. Making the area more accessible for older people is important too and one of the reasons why I want to see our town centres modernised,” she said.

So join us in welcoming the new mayor - we wish her well with the very important job ahead.

Leila O' Toole
by elleran

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- *What support is available to me emotionally and financially?*

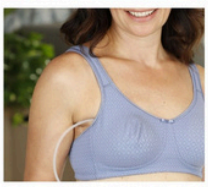
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Fair's 50 years of family, fun, and fundraising

1976 marked the beginning of a cherished tradition in Lindfield. The parents of Holy Family Catholic Primary School, eager to support their children's education, decided to host a fundraiser. The idea was simple: an exhibition of art that would bring the community together. Thus, the Holy Family Arts and Craft Show was born.

As the years went by, this art show blossomed into the beloved Lindfield Art Show and Fair. While art remained at its heart, the event grew to include a variety of attractions - book stalls, homemade delights and handmade treasures.

This year, hundreds of locals gathered to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Lindfield Art Show and Fair from 18 to 20 September. The 50 year milestone was made possible by the commitment of parents and the generosity of the local community and businesses.

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Ku-ring-gai Deputy Mayor Cr Matthew Devlin, and Member for Davidson Matt Cross MP, a regular *Sydney Observer* contributor, were in attendance.

Matt Cross commented on "...one of the best-known art shows on Sydney's North Shore", saying he is "...proud to represent such a creative, culturally rich and faith based community in the Parliament of New South Wales."

But our elected resprestitives weren't the only ones with positive words about the show. We heard from two other attendees.

"I wanted to come to the fair today because I knew it would be fun and I wanted to play with my friends and cousins."
- Elena Zammit, 8 years.

"My mum and aunties used to go to Holy Family and we've travelled all the way from the Blue Mountains to come here today."
- Jessica Applebee, 9 years.

Children play an intergral role in the Lindfield Art Show and Fair, as each year students at Holy Family Primary School vote on their favourite artwork.

And such is the nature of the show, something for everyone, for there was also, for the more avid art lovers, a live painting demonstration by renowned local artist Jennifer Mullens (pictured below).



The show is renowned for its diverse array of high-quality artworks, with a history of artists including Pro Hart, Norman Lindsay, and Wilmotte Williams.

So if you didn't get a chance to particpate in the show this year, don't fret, there's always next year, and hopefully many years to come. There's also always something for the kids, no matter how old they get.

Keeping Sydney **Liveable**

Nicolette Boele MP
Federal Member for Bradfield

Last month, I convened a roundtable in Canberra with developers, super funds, councils, community housing providers and researchers, and asked them the question I have been carrying since the day I was elected: what does affordable housing actually mean? What struck me was how quickly the room agreed.

Around that table were people who normally only meet each other across a planning panel or a funding negotiation, and who have every reason to see this differently. They converged within the first hour on a single finding: Australia does not have a system for affordable housing.

We have programmes, funding streams and planning provisions, all measured against benchmarks that have never been reconciled with each other, with no shared definition holding any of it together. In our current system, you could pay wildly different rents for the exact same property and still have them all deemed 'affordable' by one definition or another. The bigger problem, in a market like Sydney's, is that our affordable homes are rarely affordable.

When the market rent is so far out of reach, a discount off the top gives us housing that is affordable in name only. There was no argument in that room about whether this system is needed.

That's why this week, I put forward a private member's bill to establish a transparent, consistent definition of affordable housing and attach it to federal programmes that fund affordable housing.

Image credit: Sylvie Veness, Woven Void (detail), 2024, Cotton rag paper, 50cm x 50m



GCS's The Event of a Thread

The moment a single thread or idea takes shape, unfolding into a network or connections.

It was this notion which inspired Anni Albers' view of thread as a link, culminating in "The Event of a Thread", a new exhibition showcasing 19 emerging artists who use textiles to explore how textile techniques and ideas connect different materials, cultures, and technologies.
Exhibition: 3 to 24 October 2026
Exhibition Opening Event: 2-4pm Saturday 10 October 2026
Info: https://www.abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au/grace-cossington-smith-gallery/

After hearing from the experts at my roundtable, my community in Bradfield, and over 12,000 people who signed the petition, this is the definition I proposed: affordable housing is only affordable if it's rented at whichever number is lower: 75% of market rent, or 30% of a household's income. I started this process asking what affordable housing actually means. There's now a clear definition, a bill before Parliament, and broad public support for it. Now the question is, will Parliament finally catch up with the sector and vote to put the definition in law?



Inside our local primary schools

Penelope Andrews

The North Shore is blessed with fantastic primary school education - but data shows us that some schools have more advantage than others. We have collated all the publicly available data on 10 of the local government area's most popular primary schools, including enrolments, the number of demountables - which are never an ideal classroom environment - and other interesting index scores.

The Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI) is a school-level index of educational disadvantage related to socio-economic background. The score typically ranges from 0 to 300, with 0 or low numbers referring to high advantage or wealth. Language Background Other than English (LBOTE) is also handy to know, describing where a language other than English is spoken at home by the student, parents, or primary caregiver.

Lastly, we have the Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA), which compares student academic results fairly between Australian schools. A score of 1,000 is the average score representing the midpoint of educational advantage across Aussie schools, so anything above 1,000 represents a higher-than-average level of socio-educational advantage. The demountables data is sourced from the NSW Department of Education's School Infrastructure dataset, reporting annual statistics every April.

Sydney Observer's Verdict based on the data

Ultimately, when you look at the right side data and compare it to the other schools in other areas of Sydney - these public schools are fantastic. *Sydney Observer* however isn't a fan of demountable spaces being used as teaching environments. Looking at enrolments as well, both high-enrolment and low-enrolment schools offer distinct advantages and drawbacks. We do tend to lean to the side of smaller enrolments, only because smaller classes can mean teachers get to know each child well and can offer targeted help. But ultimately, it's the parents at these schools that have the final say. And we've heard nothing but strong recommendations about Ku-ring-gai's public school system.

Here's the who's who of primary education in Ku-ring-gai *(April 2026 data)*

Beaumont Road Public School in Killara
- Enrolments in latst year: 310
~ FOEI: 1 ~ LBOTE: 62% ~ ICSEA: 1,164 ~
- Demountables: 0 teaching spaces

Killara Public School
- Enrolments in latest year: 273
~ FOEI: 0 ~ LBOTE: 73% ~ ICSEA: 1,148 ~
- Demountables: 0 teaching spaces

Gordon East Public School
- Enrolments in latest year: 195
~ FOEI: 5 ~ LBOTE: 53% ~ ICSEA: 1,163 ~
- Demountables: 0 teaching spaces

West Pymble Public School
- Enrolments in latest year: 250
~ FOEI: 5 ~ LBOTE: 28% ~ ICSEA: 1,173 ~
- Demountables: 1 teaching space

Pymble Public School
- Enrolments in latest year: 519
~ FOEI: 0 ~ LBOTE: 61% ~ ICSEA: 1,176 ~
- Demountables: 2 teaching spaces

Lindfield Public School
- Enrolments in latest year: 584
~ FOEI: 0 ~ LBOTE: 66% ~ ICSEA: 1,162 ~
- Demountables: 2 teaching spaces

Roseville Public School
- Enrolments in latest year: 520
~ FOEI: 0 ~ LBOTE: 62% ~ ICSEA: 1,172 ~
- Demountables: 0 teaching spaces

St Ives Public School
- Enrolments in latest year: 465
~ FOEI: 3 ~ LBOTE: 48% ~ ICSEA: 1,155 ~
- Demountables: 7 teaching spaces

St Ives North Public School
- Enrolments in latest year: 846
~ FOEI: 0 ~ LBOTE: 77% ~ ICSEA: 1,164 ~
- Demountables: 0 teaching spaces

Chatswood Public School
- Enrolments in latest year: 1,083
~ FOEI: 8 ~ LBOTE: 92% ~ ICSEA: 1,143 ~
- Demountables: 9 teaching spaces









Don't toss it, fix it!

During the first and second Sunday of each month, a group of skilled and dedicated lower North Shore residents band together behind the motto - “Toss it? No way!! We want to fix it!"

The Repair Cafe is an initiative of sustainability. It focuses on ending the cycle of buying, using, and discarding. You can bring in items like jewelry, ceramics, shoes, toys, clothes, zippers, bags, umbrellas, small woodwork, and household battery-operated and electrical items for repair. Alterations to new clothing however aren’t offered, as they don't align with the cafes' philosophy of repairing.

This month, the Repair Cafe will be open on 4 and 11 October, 2pm to 4pm at the Living & Learning Centre, 180 Longueville Road, Lane Cove.

In addition, Artarmon will also be hosting their own cafe on the 31 October, as well as 28 November. These will also run from 2pm to 4pm, taking place at Barry Thompson Community Hall, 139 Artarmon Road.

You do not need to make a booking. Just turn up and you will be allocated a time slot between 2-4pm. The cafe will endeavour to fit in as many repairs as possible, however depedning on how busy it is, might not be able to repair everything. The cafe advises to be considerate of the numbers of items you bring.
Info: http://www.repaircafesydneynorth.net/

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Renters: today's forgotten people

Matt Cross MP,
State Member for Davidson

In my very first speech to the NSW Parliament in 2023, I began advocating for renters:

> **"Renters are today's forgotten people ... they need greater certainty about how much they need to save for a deposit."**

Many renters aspire to own a home, but that dream is becoming increasingly difficult. How can the next generation save a deposit when rents have risen to crisis levels?

As a renter living in a strata building in Lindfield, I understand many of the challenges firsthand. If you are struggling with the cost or uncertainty of renting, please know you are not alone.

Over the past three years, I have proudly supported reforms to give renters a fairer go. Some of these included ending "no grounds" evictions by requiring landlords to provide a valid reason for terminating a lease, making it easier for tenants to keep pets, limiting rent increases to once a year for all lease types, banning upfront fees for background checks and preparing tenancy agreements, and ensuring tenants can pay rent by bank transfer or Centrepay.

I am also focused on improving life for people living in strata communities. Among some of the recent reforms are requiring off-the-plan contracts to disclose exclusive supply arrangements, such as embedded networks, supporting owners experiencing financial hardship, providing payment-plan options for strata levies, strengthening developer accountability in new strata schemes, and encouraging more sustainable strata communities.

There is still much more to do to support renters and people living in strata. That is why I want to hear about your experiences and the changes you believe are needed.

Please visit www.mattcrossmp.com.au to complete my survey and share your views.





Data centre boom



Julius Avenue data centre render: Greenbox Architecture Pty Ltd

Penelope Andrews

Sydney is emerging as the engine room of Australia's data centre boom. As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes the norm and cloud computing surges, the need for data centres has increased. But what are they, you might ask? Essentially, they are a dedicated physical facility that houses computer systems, servers, data storage devices and networking equipment—all the physical tech needed to power our digital realm.

Sydney has approximately 100 data centres. There is a cluster in south-west Sydney near Kemps Creek and another cluster in inner Sydney. In the north, there are at least five in Macquarie Park, one in North Ryde, a proposed centre in Lane Cove West and a cluster around Artarmon. Ku-ring-gai does not host major commercial data centres within its local government area. As for the stance on data centres from our local councils—they have banded together to note some level of hesitation.

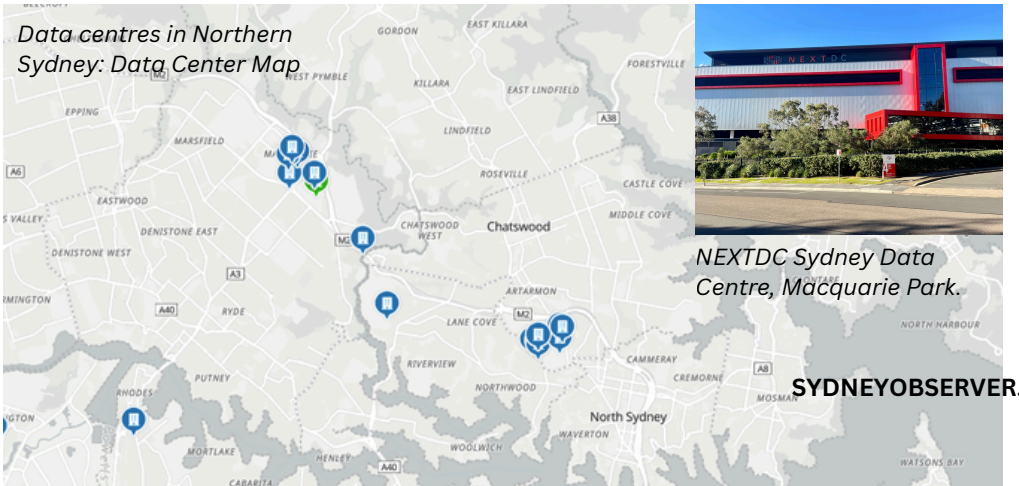
The Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) is a group of eight northern Sydney councils—Hornsby, Hunter's Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Mosman, North Sydney, Ryde and Willoughby. NSROC provided a submission to the NSW Legislative Council's Inquiry into Data Centres back in March, where they noted their overall support for investment in data centres but also voiced concerns.

"We are supportive of investment in data centres and related infrastructure," they said. "We are seeking to work collaboratively with the NSW Government to ensure a strategic and spatial approach to planning for data centres in NSW. We are seeking stronger state controls to support regional and local benefits, and deliver on national expectations."

The concern noted was specific to Macquarie Park and the lower north shore, as these locations are already experiencing pressure from increasing employment uses, growing housing demand and transport network constraints. Ku-ring-gai, thankfully, is quite safe to avoid data centres, given its limited commercial and industrial zoning.

It's not just for logistical reasons why councils aren't super keen on too many data centres. For the communities themselves, the prospect of having a data centre in their local area isn't appealing for a number of reasons. This includes the humming noise these buildings often emit, the high local water and electricity use they require, and the risk of decreasing property values if in close proximity to homes.

Friends of Lane Cove National Park have also voiced their concerns, noting North Ryde's Julius Avenue Data Centre proposal. The State Significant Development lists the proposal as a 24/7 data centre with a power consumption of up to 170 megawatts, comprising a six-storey building, office space, diesel storage, back-up generators, car parking and a subtransmission switching station, and a new road. The proposal remains in the assessment phase with no determination made yet, as per the NSW Planning Portal. In a submission, Friends of Lane Cove National Park asked that decision-makers recognise the need for "meaningful changes to protect both biodiversity and the connected integrity of Lane Cove National Park."



Data centres in Northern Sydney: Data Center Map

NEXTDC Sydney Data Centre, Macquarie Park.

Pink Oct 2026

YOUR GUIDE TO MOVING FORWARD AFTER BREAST CANCER

Practical specialist support for life after breast cancer

ReStart

The right support starts with an individual assessment. Following surgery, your breast care needs may change as swelling settles and your body heals. A professional fitting can help identify the most appropriate breast prosthesis, post-surgical bra or other support for your current stage of recovery.

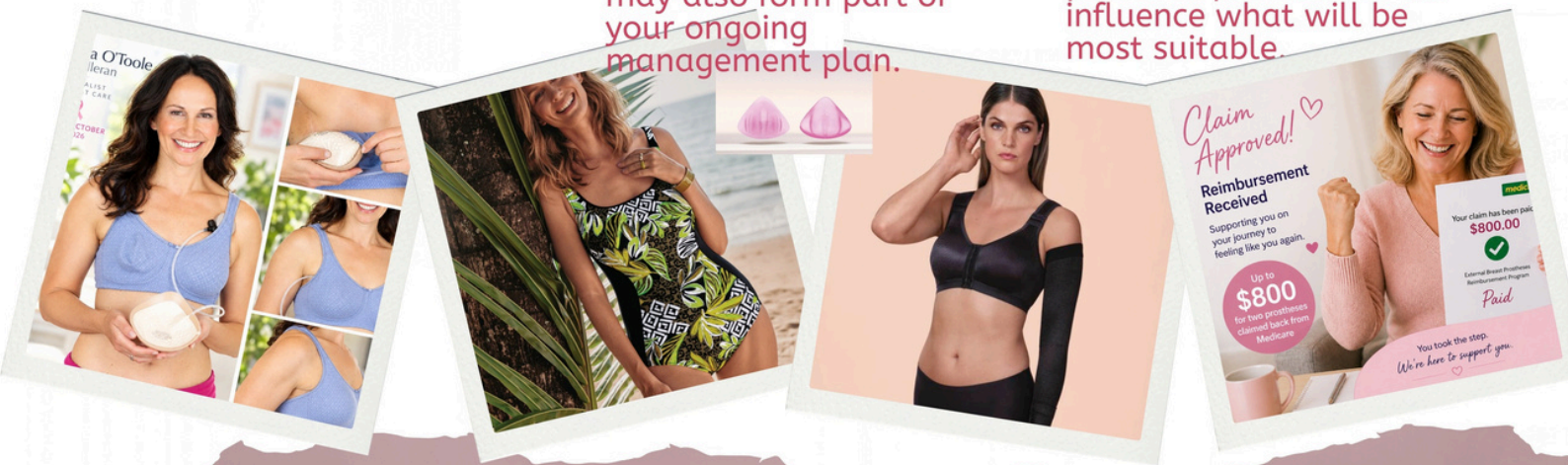
ReBalance

Changes in breast shape, volume or weight distribution can affect comfort, posture and clothing fit. Specialist prostheses and bras can help restore visual balance while providing appropriate support. If you experience swelling associated with lymphoedema, professionally fitted compression garments may also form part of your ongoing management plan.

ReClaim

As recovery progresses, many women want to return to swimming, exercise, work and everyday activities. Specialist breast care products are available for different lifestyles, including swim prostheses, activewear and lightweight options designed for day-to-day comfort.

There is no single solution for every woman. Your surgery, treatment, body shape, lifestyle and personal preferences all influence what will be most suitable.





www.leilaotoole.com Sydney's Breast care Specialists since 1953

Local caregiver of the year

In Ku-ring-gai, the challenges of dementia touch the lives of nearly 2,700 residents. When you extend the view to the Northern Beaches and the Upper North Shore communities, this number extends to over 10,000, underscoring the crucial role of caregivers in these areas.

Among these dedicated caregivers is Trudy Taylor, a local hero recently celebrated as Dovida's NSW Caregiver of the Year. Known for her compassionate and personalised approach, Trudy's journey through the year was not without its hurdles, particularly when clients resisted assistance.

In one example, Trudy tapped into her and her client's shared love of flowers and gardening to gradually built a bridge of trust between them. This small but crucial detail reflects Dovida North Shore & Northern Beaches' over 20-year commitment to providing local, relationship-focused care.

Congratulations to Trudy Taylor!



L-R: Rose (People Experience Manager), Trudy (Caregiver), Jo (General Manager), Matt Oliver (Director)



A local senior's perfect day

Penelope Andrews

For our wonderful Ku-ring-gai seniors - of which there are many - our local area has a plethora of activities and spaces that make for the perfect day out. We wrap up some of our favourite highlights that our local seniors can enjoy.



10am

Eryldene House is one of the hidden gems of Ku-ring-gai. The Gordon property is the former home of Professor E.G. Waterhouse and his family. The house was built and its garden created in the early last century, and it is home to some incredible camellia plants. Each month they have a ticketed Friday open morning where they offer garden tours with informative guides, and you can enjoy a home-made morning tea or coffee there too. There's plenty of street parking nearby, and the property regularly accommodates senior visitors.



credit: KRG Council

2pm

When you think of Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden, some might assume it is not older people-friendly, given its intermediate bushwalking trails. But actually, its visitor centre and wildflower nursery are well worth visiting. There's plenty of parking right in front of the centre, and it's accessible. They stock a variety of Australian natives and locally occurring plants for just about every position in your garden, which is perfect for Ku-ring-gai retiree green thumbs. They also offer a regular Seniors in Nature programme, so over 55s should check that out.



credit: Archie's Café

3:30pm

A nice and simple 8-minute drive from the Wildflower Garden is St Ives Shopping Village. It is the local mecca for seniors in the Upper North Shore thanks to its simple layout, two levels and carpeted flooring. We'll head to the village for an afternoon tea and cake at Archie's Café Co. This café is super popular with the locals (especially ladies who like to long lunch) and its interiors are chic.



credit: Chatswood Concourse

7pm

Our last stop for the day, likely after a rest and restore at home, is to catch a train on the North Shore Line to Chatswood and go to The Concourse for a show. We could drive, and there is parking if wished, but driving at night can be harder, and so the ease of public transport might make things simpler! There's always plenty of amazing shows and performances on at the venue, but some highlights in the coming months include Willoughby Symphony Orchestra, Jazz at the Lounge or the Australian Burlesque Festival.



Volunteer gardener Daniele Di Paolo in her happy place

Acts of Service:
The beauty of senior gardening

Joaquin Araullo

As we age, we may no longer be able to safely do the things we have enjoyed doing over our lifetime. Gardening is one example.

The activity revolves around doing tasks that require physical and mental strength. However, not all seniors are ready to give up on taking care of their garden. It is, after all, constantly cited in longevity research as a key activity which can help increase lifespan.

Back in the good old 1980s, a small group of volunteers decided to kindly help an elderly neighbour with her garden. That small act of kindness would change the lives of seniors over the years, as it would lead to the establishment of Easy Care Gardening, an organisation dedicated to helping seniors with their gardens through the help of their community-spirited volunteers.

For Daniele Di Paolo, a gardener with Easy Care Gardening, volunteering was a way to do something special after retirement - “I had retired a year earlier and was looking for ways to participate in the community by doing something in a field that I was interested in,” she said.

That field of interest began in childhood. She says“Gardening was one of these, an interest that started as a child under my dad’s guidance as he was a keen gardener.”

Just like she would have listened to her dad's stories, Di Paolo now does the same for other senior's stories, “Listening to their life stories and sharing our own experiences."

For Di Paolo, spending time with seniors means learning from them, explaining “Most of them have had a life full of varied experiences, and some continue to be relatively active in the community.”

She goes on to say there is no 'us' or 'them' and the gardening relationships are equal. She explains that “they are just a relaxed gathering of like-minded people.”

However, she also notes the downside that many Australian seniors face. She notes that “Isolation is sometimes an issue – due to health problems and/or lack of mobility, family moving away, friends getting older and not being able to see them as regularly.”

As mentioned earlier, people may gradually lose the ability to do the relaxing task of gardening as they age. Di Paolo reminds us, “Many of them have been keen gardeners, and that interest is still there.”

Stay keen, stay interested, stay healthy. Gardening can be one of many ways to satisfy all three.

Is a self managed super fund for you?

Peter Vickers, Chartered Accountant, Lindfield

It does not matter if you are a member of an industry super fund, a retail super fund, or a self-managed super fund. The rules about contributions, tax-free pensions, and tax on the income of the funds are the same. The differences are who runs the fund and thus makes decisions about investments, and also who is entitled to the proceeds on death.

With a SMSF, generally all the members must be trustees or directors of the trustee, and all trustees and directors of the trustee must be members. However, there are extra rules if you are a single member or have a difficulty in exercising your role, e.g., have dementia.

Investments

The large funds do offer a choice of investment styles. The SMSF offers you greater choice; for example, you could choose to hold gold or even an artwork, but under strict rules.

A common investment is to own your business premises in your super fund. Again, there are rules to comply with.

Proceeds on death

There is a limited group that can inherit the balance in a super fund on death. It is limited to the spouse, child, dependent, or the estate. Naturally, there are rules about the definitions of these. There are also different tax consequences. Your will does not decide who gets the money, and the trustee, including the trustee of the industry or retail fund, makes the decision. You are able to make a Binding Death Benefit Nomination.

However, unless you have a specific issue with the people in this group, my advice is to leave this up to the trustee of your SMSF.

As an example of the complexity, I had a client who died middle-aged suddenly and had a spouse and adult children but with different mothers. He had a SMSF and a life policy in a retail fund.

The spouse was a trustee of the SMSF and thus made herself the beneficiary, and the proceeds going to a spouse are free from tax. The retail fund asked for the names and addresses of the children so that

Community Connection Chats:
From little things big things grow

Dr Belinda Siew Luan Khong, consulting psychologist

In Spring, wonderful things happen—lovely weather, scented blossoms and flowering trees embrace everyone with hugs. North Turramurra, an inter-generational, friendly suburb, is a showcase for delightful happenings. Senior citizens with their walkers and carers, volunteers from the Rural Fire Service, cyclists, residents, families and kids from nearby sports fields and playgrounds greet each other warmly over coffee and food.

From 1 October, I am organising a fortnightly community drop-in—CONNECT (Drop In, Say Hi). I am keen to foster a community for dialogue, to connect over friendly chats or just a place to drop in if you feel like some company (see the flyer on the right for details). Sophia and Nick, the owners of North Turramurra Deli & Café, and their friendly staff will be on hand to welcome everyone. Bring your friends and family. No special skills are needed. Just an open heart.



they could write to them. I warned the trustee that the children were on various parts of the spectrum and would not reply. As they were over 18, they would have had to pay 17% tax on the proceeds. One of them had not lived with his father and was happy to receive a portion..

It was agreed that the spouse would receive all the money tax-free and would then gift a portion to the children. Then there is Katz's case where Erwin Katz, a jeweller, and his daughter were trustees of his SMSF. On his death, the daughter gave the proceeds to herself. The court ruled that this was her decision as the trustee, and the brother was thus not entitled to any amount. There are now further cases where it is being held that the trustees must exercise their discretion correctly.

The industry and retail funds are supervised by APRA, while SMSFs are supervised by the Taxation Office. Both bodies and also ASIC warn that trustees have an onerous duty to run their fund correctly.

However, the recent report by the ATO said that there are 680,301 funds with 23% of Australia's super savings equalling $1.107 trillion. So there are plenty of precedents to run your own.



When it is not suitable

The lowest cost is around $3,000 to run your own SMSF. If the guide is 0.8%, then the starting balance should be $350,000. With larger balances, the cost is substantially less than 0.8% for a SMSF. However, many clients find the mental worry of running their own fund at some stage becomes too much for them and thus transfer to an industry or retail fund.

Please note that this is general advice and extremely brief and not specific to your circumstances. We hold an AFSL no 229302

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How retiring can only get better

Images are artist impressions







Sharing a morning coffee with neighbours, or joining a new interest group, or participating in wellness activities, or attending community events - this doesn't sound like traditional retirement.

That's because retirement today, once considered a time of slowing down, is being redefined. It is less about slowing down and more about opening the door to new possibilities.

It is a time to rediscover passions, build meaningful friendships and embrace the freedom to enjoy experiences that may once have been put on hold. More Australians are seeking a lifestyle that offers connection, adventure and the opportunity to make the most of every day.

One such place offering this is Living Choice Galston, where residents enjoy the benefits of a welcoming community with social opportunities right at their doorstep.

An extension of residents' own homes, the Galston Leisure & Wellness Centre is the heart of community life. Designed as a place to connect, unwind and stay active, it provides an inviting setting where neighbours become friends and every day presents new opportunities to learn, socialise and pursue personal interests.

From fitness and recreation to special events and shared experiences, the centre adds another dimension to everyday living, not only keeping leisure alive and well, but building on it.

Modern retirement is also about having the freedom to explore. Organised outings, day trips and group excursions make it easy to discover new places, revisit favourite destinations and experience attractions you may never have had the time to enjoy before - scenic drives through the countryside, cultural outings, waterfront lunchs or visits to local events.

And then there is the return home after a satisfying day out. Surrounded by the natural beauty of the Hills District, Living Choice Galston provides the perfect base from which to enjoy this enriching lifestyle. Residents can retreat to the comfort of their own beautifully designed home while enjoying access to a connected community filled with opportunities for friendship, wellbeing and adventure.

Retirement is no longer simply the next stage of life. New experiences, new freedom, new you, new retirement - why not?

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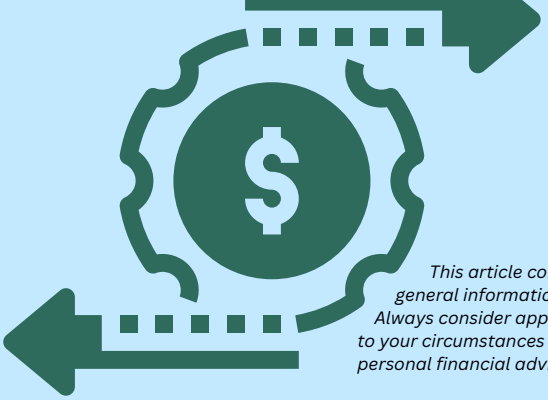
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Fixed Fees For Life. Purchasers who pay a deposit on a selected Living Choice Galston villa between 1 July and 31 October 2026, and settle within 90 days of depositing, will be eligible for the guaranteed 'Fixed Fees* For Life' offer. See website for full T&Cs. You may have to pay a departure fee when you leave this village which may impact on capital gains received when leaving the village.

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Retirement Portfolios: Agility in an inflationary world

This article contains general information only. Always consider appropriateness to your circumstances and seek personal financial advice.

Phil Broadbent

For self-funded retirees, cost-of-living pressure isn't just a household budgeting problem — it's a portfolio design problem. Many retirees still rely on an investment approach built for a different era: one where bonds and other defensive assets reliably cushioned a portfolio whenever share markets wobbled. In today's more inflationary conditions, that relationship can no longer be taken for granted.

For decades, the logic was simple: when equities fell, bond yields tended to fall too, pushing bond prices up and offsetting losses elsewhere. It was a dependable pairing — equities for growth, bonds for ballast. But persistent inflation changes the dynamic. Rising interest rates can pressure both equities and bonds simultaneously, meaning a "set and forget" defensive allocation may not protect retirees at precisely the point they need it most.

This doesn't mean abandoning defensive assets — it means building portfolios more thoughtfully. Agility, rather than a fixed formula, matters now: diversifying defensive exposure beyond traditional bonds, considering shorter-duration holdings and other assets that behave differently under inflationary pressure, and revisiting settings as conditions shift, rather than assuming a decade-old "balanced" allocation remains balanced today.

A well-structured cash buffer remains central to this. Holding sufficient cash to cover a meaningful period of income needs means growth assets are not forced to be sold during a downturn — giving the portfolio room to stay adaptive rather than reactive.

For retirees relying on their own portfolio to fund day-to-day living, cost-of-living pressure adds urgency to a question worth asking regardless: is your portfolio still structured for the environment we're in, or the one we used to be in?

If it's been a while since your income strategy, asset allocation and cash buffer were reviewed together, now is a sensible time to do so. Forest Wealth's team of 13 financial advisers is offering a complimentary review meeting — reach out at support@forestwealth.com.au or 1800 31 41 51.

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Rebuilding Autonomy in Senior Mental Healthcare

Liesel Hool

It is well recognised that the mental health system has historically relied upon an imbalance of "power", often driven by information and knowledge held by healthcare professionals such as psychiatrists who provided medical care to patients considered incapable of making decisions on their own behalf when medically unwell.

Whilst this clinical approach was being used to diagnose and treat mental health conditions, it often failed to humanise mental health conditions and preserve autonomy as a key principle in mental health recovery, particularly for those who are retired and ageing. Therefore, as a society, we have failed to prioritise the core principle of autonomy in strengthening our mental geriatric health system.

However, in a positive turn, over the next two yeats, the National Mental Health Commission will be working towards implementing a strategy on lived experience—the Lived Experience Capability Project—focusing on building strong, ethical, and consistent ways of engaging and partnering with people with lived experience.

The future of the mental health system, both within our own state and nationally, is contingent upon prioritising strengths-based care in mental health recovery and continuity of care for those who are retired and ageing. We must learn to value the richness of knowledge obtained through lived experience of mental health conditions and separate the illness or condition from the individual while managing a mental health condition.



Local business founder honoured

Karis Life founder and long time *Sydney Observer* contributor Rejimon Punchayil was presented with a Community Impact Award by NSW Premier Chris Minns at Sydmal's 50th anniversary celebration.

The award recognised Rejimon's contribution to the community and his work through Karis Life, a Hornsby-based assistive technology provider helping older Australians, veterans and people living with disability maintain their independence, dignity and mobility.

Rejimon has written extensively over the years about the different technologies seniors can use help them live more fulfiling lives, and *Sydney Observer* congratulates him on this award.

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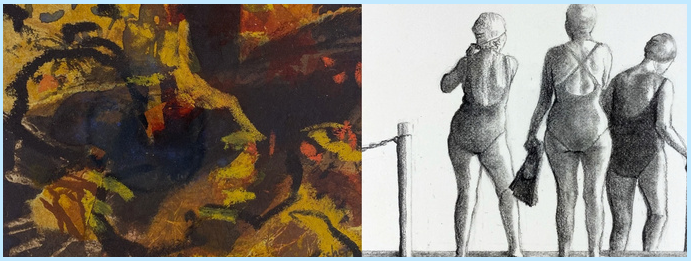
Freebie senior exhibitions

Here are a few senior friendly exhibitions you can visit this month - absolutely FREE.



Lorrie Graham: Photojournalist archive

Featuring over 100,000 images and negatives from 1975 to 2025, this collection highlights one of Australia's most important photojournalists Lorrie Graham's; her career and unique storytelling. Open Monday to Thursday until 31 October. Book tickets at: https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/lorrie-graham-photojournalist



National Awards Exhibition – miniature art

Head to the Willoughby Art Centre to see over 100 artworks on display as part of the annual Australian Society of Miniature Art (NSW). Opens Friday 23 October until Saturday 7 November. More information at: https://www.instagram.com/aust_society_of_miniature_art



Ceramic Art Festival

Spruce up your Saturdays with *One Vessel, One Realm,* bringing together thirteen local ceramic artists in a celebration of contemporary craftsmanship. Running until 31 October at the Rochfort Gallery: https://rochfortgallery.com

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.

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Bruce Carter (seated) with wife Janne Carter behind him, and their sons, Nicholas on the left and Jonathan on the right

Life lessons from The Landings

Joaquin Araullo

The Landings in North Turramurra is a beautifully rich community with a village atmosphere, gorgeous gardens, sunny courtyards and pocket parks. As a safe haven for seniors, the community is home to many who are treated with the proper care they need by dedicated team members and registered nurses 24/7.

Within The Landings community are couples who are currently still by each other's side. In aid of our Golden Years Special this month, I took the wonderful opportunity to come down to The Landings to meet two seniors who have been married for 51 years, still together, still hand in hand, still very much loving life.

Meet Bruce and Janne Carter, a couple with a strong academic background, something which undoubtedly helped the future success of their sons, whom really looked up to both their parents. Bruce was a headmaster of various schools and holds a PhD, while Janne was a teacher at Emmanuel School.

Janne reflects on how she and Bruce were able to maintain their relationship for decades. It was built on a solid foundation of support—earning money, making an honest living, and providing a home (literal and metaphorical) so their family could flourish.

Janne said, "I believe that a successful life is built on compromise... and not to have regrets." She notes relationships are not without their challenges, however, these are what make them stronger and more connected. As a family, they were brought closer when one of their sons was diagnosed with cancer at age 19. Fortunately, "he got through it all," she explains, and would get married, have two kids, and have a successful career.

Janne also reflected on the issues that have been going on with her husband's health for 10 years. She says they "...care about each other," and they "...lived a life together," and this beautiful investement in one another makes the challenges all the more meaningful. "We've been lucky to have each other," she smiled.

We had a beautiful long chat, and a lot of this chat was something best experienced in person and is difficult to contain to words on paper.

For any young people in a relationship who are hoping to be with the love of their life for generations to come, Janne Carter gives this important advice.

"My feeling is to be kind to each other... human nature and individual personalities and everything impacts on that."

For anyone currently in a relationship, young or old, Bruce Carter's advice is "not to rush into it, into a relationship. Really know your partner and their families as much as possible."

Thank you for your time Janne and Bruce Carter.

From a kayak on the harbour



By Jay Houhlias

"You're talking to a crazy artist here!"

It was one of the first things Ralph Kerle said to me when we spoke. I believe he was trying to set some backdrop to what would be a unique exploration into both who he is and how he explains his craft.

Kerle is a fourth-generation Willoughby resident and artist whose work is both inspired and informed by years of exploring Sydney Harbour by kayak.

Kerle's genre is photographic art. He describes it as "...Capturing real abstract images that exist in nature, focusing on water surfaces to create an abstract form of ocean and nature art photography."

He was the winner of Willoughby City Council's 150th Anniversary Photographic Competition and his work has been exhibited in Berlin, Lisbon, Melbourne, Palm Beach, Riga, Vilnius and Sydney.

This month, *Sydney Observer* is talking Golden Years, and because Ralph Kerle has lived a few himself, and lived a few crazy ones, we spoke about the longevity of art and how it can sustain health.

Since the 70s, Kerle was involved in fine art, graduating from the Victorian College of The Arts which eventuated in his role as associate director of Sydney Theatre Company, leading him to work with in televsion with some of Australia's leading advertising agencies.

But Ralph Kerle's abstract photography journey did not begin romantically. He says plainly - "midlife crisis resulted in a period of depression." However, one of the things he discovered during that time was the value of physical exercise.

"Exercise helped me enormously, but it also taught me something that has stayed with me ever since: if you keep your body fit, you also help keep your brain fit... if your brain remains active, you can continue to learn, experiment and create throughout your life. Age does not have to mean withdrawing from new experiences."

Through his meditative experiences in nature, and in particular his kayak on Sydney Harbour, Kerle's mind began opening, and as he emphaises, continues to open. For Kerle, curiosity is not only important for his work, but the purpose in his life.

He followed this curiosity by developing his abstract photography, "What began almost as a hobby eventually became a serious art practice."

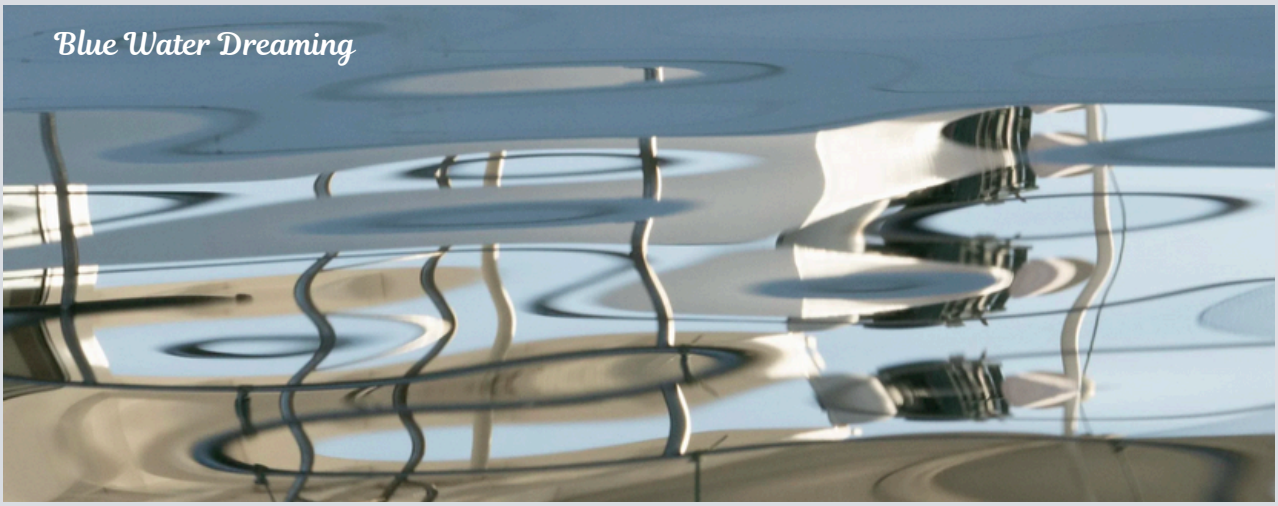
That serious practice has formed the basis of Kerle's life, a creative life, something Kerle has always seen as something carrying over to far more than painting or photography.

"There is something wonderful about working creatively, and by creativity I don't mean only painting, photography, music or the areas we traditionally think of as the arts."

"Creativity is also about the way you approach a problem, the way you think about something and your willingness to try something you haven't done before. While you are learning, questioning and experimenting, your mind remains active."

"I believe we are all born with an instinct to create. Somehow, as we move through life, many of us lose touch with it. Perhaps one of the secrets of ageing well is simply reminding ourselves that we never have to stop creating."

On the following pages, see some of Ralph Kerle's work and hear how he explains their inspiration, where they came from, and what they mean to him



As soon as I saw this reflection, I breathed a huge sigh of relief and breathed into it. Masts and rigging bent into slow, wavering lines, and the light painted pale rings of silver and blue, like brushstrokes laid down on a moving surface. I sat in the kayak, paddle across my lap, and waited for the surface to hold. Nothing here is constructed; there is no Photoshop, no layering. It is a moment nature made, and I was there to receive it.



I have kayaked the same waters of Middle Harbour, Sydney, almost every week for more than a decade, so avoiding repetition is a constant challenge. The mind, once accustomed, tends to repeat itself, and I try hard not to contrive a shot. Yet I keep returning to the same thing: light on the surface of the water. Here it gave me what looks like a scorched ochre sky, a band of red earth and a dark line of trees above rippling water, an atmospheric landscape that might have come from J.M.W. Turner.



This was made in Middle Harbour, Sydney. What reads as an eerie, blood-red sky is the hull of a moored yacht, and the lower half of the work is its reflection on the water. A sliver of blue, crusted with weathered paint and marine growth, breaks across the red like a horizon, and suddenly there is a landscape where none exists. The work pays homage to colour field painting, and especially to Mark Rothko, one of its founders. Others have also seen in it the Infinite Horizons of the Australian painter Fred Williams.

This artwork has a life of its own. Its central character is the yacht itself, its mast, rigging and furled sail reflected on the surface, setting out on a journey to an unknown destination. My inspiration was Yves Klein, the French Nouveau Réaliste painter credited with inventing International Klein Blue. Klein trusted a single colour to carry a whole work, and here the water did the same. Where this yacht is going, I cannot say. Longlisted in the 2025 Booooooom International Photo Awards (Colour category). Vancouver, Canada.



On the Way to Bluedom



Rip's Liquid Surrealism 3

The water has done what only the great surrealists once dared: it has dissolved a moored yacht into warm amber ribbons, draped them across a rippling sky and hung a row of regatta flags upside down, purely for the joy of it. Then, as if Dalí had slipped back for a final, mischievous flourish, a seagull settled on the boom, tilted its head and quietly stole the show. Nothing here is invented. Every curve and shimmer is nature's own brushwork, caught in one fleeting moment. It is an invitation to slow down and smile.

Sea Dunes was the first of my photographs to speak to me as a reflection on Australian Indigenous culture. Pale, sand-coloured forms rise and fold like dunes, and a deep blue channel runs through them like a river crossing country seen from above. None of it was arranged or altered. It is an artwork created by nature, a single moment of light on moving water that I happened to be present for. The work was shown in The Indeterminate Sublime exhibition at the Rothko Museum, Daugavpils, Latvia.



Sea Dunes



North Sydney cable tram set showing a grip car in the foreground and a trailing car in the background at St Leonards c.1893. Photo by Arthur Phillips.

When the Independant housed trams

Margaret Simpson

The Independent Theatre at 269 Miller Street, North Sydney, was originally erected as a tram shed to house cable trams and their steam winding equipment. Cable trams were propelled by being attached to an endless cable moving in a shallow channel between the tram tracks. The cable was operated by a steam winding engine in a winder house at the depot. From 1886, cable trams ran from the North Sydney depot to the Milson's Point ferry terminus and later to Crows Nest.

In 1910, the former tram depot was divided into two, with one half converted into a roller-skating rink and the other a vaudeville theatre, known collectively as the North Sydney Coliseum. An elaborate Bavarian Baroque façade of stuccoed brick was added across both halves of the Coliseum. Skaters whirred around the rink to music provided by a live orchestra, and sometimes themed fancy dress mask carnivals were held.

While the roller-skating rink was eventually demolished, the theatre next door survived. From 1919 until 1930, Harry Clay's vaudeville company performed vaudeville, revue, and pantomimes there to "packed houses". This was followed by a short-lived period as a boxing venue.

By 1939, despite being run-down, the theatre began its most significant period when leased by Doris Fitton and her Independent Theatre Company. Renamed the Independent Theatre, Doris was usually the producer and director, and often the leading lady as well. At this time, the theatre featured stalls on a sloping floor, a rickety gallery across the back, a proscenium arch, and a shallow stage behind which were two dressing rooms. Beneath the stage were wardrobe and dressing rooms for "non-star" performers, while upstairs were offices and the studio, where the Independent Theatre School operated.

In late 1947, the theatre almost closed down as its owners wanted to convert it into a furniture warehouse, but a public meeting raised £7,000 to buy the building and save it. Doris and her company continued on until 1977, performing scores of plays, from Shakespeare to pantomimes and the work of Sumner Locke Elliott, on a semi-professional basis until 1977. After several abortive attempts through the 1980s and 90s, the theatre was eventually restored and, in 2013, purchased by Wenona School. It is significant as a rare surviving example of a small suburban variety theatre built in the traditional music hall style where renowned Australian actors, including Reg Livermore, Helen Morse, and Ruth Cracknell, honed their skills.



The Independent Theatre today showing its extravagant façade.



Historic coal-loading jetty originally built in 1888

Towns of NSW: Catherine Hill Bay

Phillip Simpson

Visiting the former coal mining village of Catherine Hill Bay would make for an unusual and relaxing day trip this Spring. Catherine Hill Bay is located on the coast, 124 km north of Sydney.

The village was named after the schooner, the Catherine Hill, wrecked there in a gale in 1867. The vessel was carrying pine and cedar from the Richmond River, and two of its six crew lost their lives trying to beach the ship. Coal was found close to the sea, and development began by the New Wallsend Coal Co. in 1874 with the construction of a mine manager's house, a timber jetty, and miner's cottages for the 100 workers. Industrial disputes led to the company's failure and the abandonment of the settlement when the jetty burnt down.

A new company, the Wallarah Coal Co., was established in 1889 to continue mining. It built a railway to nearby Mine Camp in 1890 and a sawmill to serve the mines that had opened up. This time the settlement flourished with the provision of a school, a lock-up, a telephone connection, and a United Methodist Free Church in 1890, a cemetery and telegraph station in 1894, and a courthouse in 1906.

In 1910, the Holy Trinity Anglican Church was extended. The little weatherboard building was relocated in 1923, and though now closed, it survives in the adjacent village of Middle Camp together with a 1915 school, now a private home. The miners lived in small timber cottages which still line Flowers Drive.

Throughout the first half of the 1900s, strikes by miners were frequent, especially during the 1920s and 30s. During World War II, a radar station, complete with two tall towers, was established near Mine Camp. It was an RAAF Radio Direction Finding Unit and formed part of a chain of nine such stations around Australia using radar to detect approaching enemy aircraft.

It was in operation until 1947, and the towers were dismantled and sold in 1948. Today, three bomb-proof concrete bunkers remain on the site, which housed the transmitter, receiver, and generator.

The last of the mines closed down in 2002, and the coastal vegetation has hidden the last vestiges of their existence. The one striking reminder of coal mining operations is the impressive steel jetty striking out into the ocean.

Today it's a photographer's drawcard and is even used as a location for wedding photos

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

The tall windows of the former 1915 school building in Flowers Drive indicate its former use



The Kyoto Loop

Local Kyoto based artist Ki-Yan's work is displayed in the Agora Place Kyoto Nijo lobby

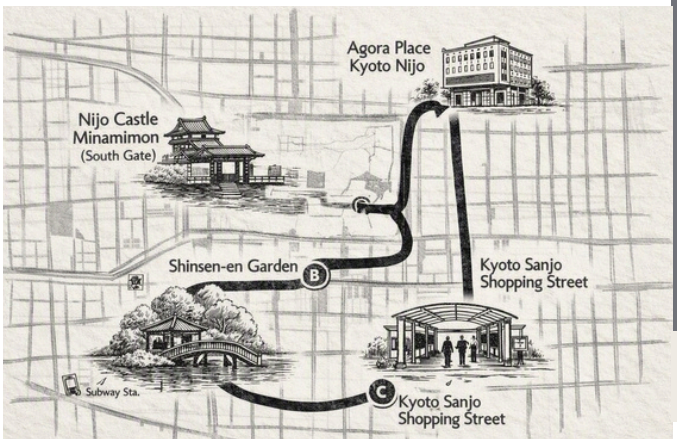
The author was a guest of the hotel: https://agoraplace-kyoto-nijo.com/en/

Everybody loves a loop while they travel. The idea of going back the same way you came when you're in a new place is counterintuitive, especially when that new place is Kyoto, Japan.

Kyoto is a traveller's city. In geographical terms, it's not as big as Japan's other main cities, however it still supports around 50 million tourists per year.

The city served as the capital of Japan for over 1000 years and as such, is bursting with culture and traditional industry shops selling goods like kimonos and tea bowls, as well as 14 UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites.

In aid of our Senior's Special this month, we teamed up with Agora Place Kyoto Nijo Hotel to bring you an easy, low effort walking loop which you can do starting from the doorstep of your hotel.





Agora Place Kyoto Nijo

Practicality first, a so-called 'essential stay'. The goal here is to diminish the idea of 'heading out for the day', carrying a backpack of supplies, then coming back late at night exhausted and with blistered feet. The hotel offers breakfast bread boxes and coffee and is designed to be frequented throughout the day, and the rooms are set up as such too, minimal and efficient. There are a few other main cultural/attraction hubs in Kyoto like Shijo and Gion, but Nijo is where we will be heading, so Nijo is where we are staying.

Total loop walking time: 45 minutes, approx 3-3.5km

Nijo Castle

One of Kyoto's UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Nijo Castle is no more than a ten-minute walk from the hotel. The site has several gardens with a corresponding number of photographers crouching for the perfect flow of water coming from the ponds, and of course Ninomaru Palace (no photos are allowed inside), both beautiful and informative, detailing samurai life and many depictions of tigers and leopards. It opens at 8:45am and gets busy fairly quickly, with many guided tour groups operating within. To break away, some skilful and elegant sidestepping should do the trick, or if the tour group is in your language, surely there is no harm in trailing behind and listening in. For example, a fun fact is many of the artworks of tigers in the palace were based purely on other depictions, as Japan didn't have tigers for firsthand sources.





Sanjo Shopping Street

A few streets down from the gardens you will find Sanjo Shopping Mall, running for about 800m undercover. There are a few great coffee houses and antique stores, but actual antique stores – not curated or attractive, ones where you literally have to dig for treasure. Indoor shopping malls are very common in Japan; however, Sanjo is different in that it's not crowded at all. It seems like a place local people do everyday shopping for bakeries, cafes, fruit, vegetables, and fish, and not for photos or to soak up the usual chaotic market atmosphere – for this, head to Nishiki Market. This will extend the loop an extra thirty minutes (not including shopping time); however, it is well worth it.



Shinsen-en Garden

While it's only small, perhaps taking a few minutes to walk around, these gardens historically hosted ceremonies and rituals for rainfall during droughts. If you could only see one Japanese Garden, Shinsen-en Garden has all the quintessential aspects covered: a vibrant red bridge, murky green ponds, wooden shrines, and fish that open their mouths at you expecting some of your bread box.



Un-Berry-d Treasure

Jay Houhlias



My back was pressed into the seat, neck muscles working slightly, and so too the abdomen, and when the time came to zigzag back, I leaned into it, cutting the corners because it is one of the few joys of driving on a road where you can see what's coming.

It took about fifteen minutes to get to the top. In the distance was the coast, Seven Mile Beach. Just before was the town of Berry, ninety minutes south of Sydney by car, somewhere one always has to stop at when passing through its main street of boutique shops, cafés and bakeries.

But I hadn't explored inland from Berry before, and so as I came to the top of Mt Hay, I came to Mt Hay Retreat, a place that's the opposite of a Berry'd treasure. It's one of the most exposed locations for kilometres, but exposed in a one-sided sense, for you can see it all, yet you can't be seen by anyone.



Oh hi Griffy

Opening the car door I was welcomed by a wagging-tailed Griffy, one of the owners of the retreat. His coat was wet, the nature of the area seemed permanently stained on his body, and he was happy, the nature of the area clearly doing things to sustain his permanent elation.

The place on top of Mt Hay has been with the Houghton family since 1987. Completing construction in 2008, the retreat has a 33-metre heated indoor pool and spa, kitchen gardens and fruit trees, and is surrounded by dams and walking trails. The family chose to use an already cleared area to minimise the impact on the environment and retain its farm characteristics. It still remains a working farm run by Anthony (one of the original five Houghton children), his partner Louise, and dog Griffy, whom we have already met.

Up there, there was just space, but space with no need to be filled. The rooms' floor-to-ceiling glass and expansive sliding doors provide nothing but views. All you see are views, from the balcony, the living room, even the bathroom. Once again, all one-sided. If you leave the windows unblinded, you get woken by the sunrise.

I headed into Berry for a coffee at one of the cafés open at 6am (thank god for the 6amers). There were a few locals with their dogs and some tradies standing around with takeout cups in hand.

As the morning lit up, I tried looking back up at Mt Hay, for the retreat, for my balcony room, to see if I could spot where I'd be spending the next part of the morning. But I couldn't see anything. I believe that's the idea though, for I know I can see it all when I'm up there.

The author was a guest of the retreat: mthay.com.au

Quest for the local sphinx

Joaquin Araullo

Somewhere in North Turramurra lies a small replica of the great Sphinx of Giza, a monument which serves as a reminder to those who lost their lives fighting for our country. This month I went to see the Sphinx memorial, located at Ku-ring-gai National Park in North Turramurra. But before I went to that exact spot, I had to travel on a long, hot, sandy trail to reach that spot - it was well worth it.

What was very bewildering for me was the difference between the trees and bushes on my left and the ones on my right. The left were filled with ashes, entirely coloured black with no life in or soul.

The ones on my right still retained their green colours and life. This is for a couple of reasons, most notably to protect the entire park and its living enhabitants should an actual wildfire break out. As I moved along I walked past a number of elderly couples who greeted me, to which I greeted them back. This made me smile, and I kept this smile all throughout my journey. As I was by myself, these encounters made my day more enjoyable.

Past the hot sands, bush trails and smiling faces, I arrived. After walking for an hour, I was in one of Australia's famous war memorials, the Sphinx Memorial, built by Private William Shirley.

It's a very unique memorial as it replicates an entirely different culture from a different place. The memorial embodies the sheer dedication that one man had in crafting this monument and as a reminder of those who served.

Before immigrating to Australia, Private William Shirley was a stonemason, which gave him the experience and knowledge to craft the memorial.

Shirley would join the Australian Imperial Fourth, serving with the 13 Battalion. Unfortunately, when he was on service on the first battle of Bullecourt, he would suffer a terrible gas attack, which made him medically unfit to keep fighting.

He would then be shipped to Australia, where he received treatment for tuberculosis. It was at the Lady Davidson hospital where he was encouraged to build the Sphinx in North Turramurra.

I simply walked around, observing my surroundings. It was astonishing that one man had built this, one man with the goal of commemorating his fallen comrades while at the same time suffering from an illness that was slowly taking him away. I felt the least I could do to pay my respects was endure the hot sandy trail for an hour.









What's on

Spring Twilight Concert in the Park

Join for a **free** evening of live music at Wahroonga Park. Enjoy funky grooves by the Nick Norton Band and the main act, Don't Change - Ultimate INXS, performing hits from this iconic Australian band. Bring a picnic or buy food from stalls. Seating allows for picnic rugs and low chairs in front, with high chairs in the back.
When: Saturday 17 October, 5-8pm
Where: Wahroonga Park, corner of Illoura and Millewa Avenue
Info: Email events@krg.nsw.gov.au or call 9424 0000



The North Shore's Christmas Carol

Local theatre association Pymble Players will be performing this rich and heartfelt retelling of Dickens' beloved tale brings Ebenezer Scrooge's journey of redemption to life.
When: 13-22 November
Where: Zenith Theatre and Convention Centre
Info and tickets: https://pymbleplayers.com.au

State Library's 200th anniversary

The State Library is celebrating 200 years with displays of objects from their extensive collections. There will also be lunch at Circular Quay during this full day council-run event.
When: 18 November, 9:30am-3:30pm
Where: Meeting at Marian Street Theatre 10 mins prior to departure
Info and tickets: events@krg.nsw.gov.au

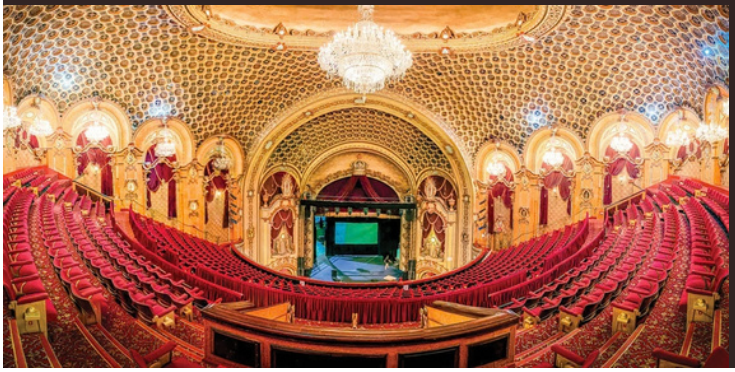




Wahroonga Food and Wine Festival

One of the most anticipated spring events, the free Wahroonga Food and Wine Festival will bring together an outstanding selection of NSW wine, boutique spirits, craft beer, gourmet food, artisan produce and entertainment for a day in the park.
When: Sunday 25 October
Where: Wahroonga Park, Coonanbarra Road
Information contact: margot@eventproject.com.au

King Street Wharf State Theatre tour and lunch at King Street Wharf



Our Ku-ring-gai seniors have the chance to marvel at the State Theatre's stunning Gothic, Italian, and Art Deco designs on this day tour. Explore the exotic Character Lounges and the 2,000-seat auditorium, highlighted by 13 hand-cut crystal chandeliers. After the tour, enjoy lunch at King St Wharf. Note: tour will require both standing and climbing steps.
When: Tuesday 13 October, 9:15am-3pm
Info: Ku-ring-gai Seniors events, rhall@krg.nsw.gov.au

The North Shore's **Malaysian Magician**

At *Sydney Observer,* we love featuring beloved local establishments serving our community. This month, we spoke with Victor Zhang, who, in our chats, modestly refered to himself as 'Cindy's husband'. Cindy (pictured right), is the chef at Chloe's Mama Kitchen in Turramurra.

In an effort to divulge the secrets of Malaysian cooking, we spoke with Victor about their shop and background, and he was indeed kind enough to provide some recipes.

"Cindy was born in Malaysia to a Teochew father," Victor began. "After a career in sales and business development, she gradually shifted her focus to raising our two children. During COVID, she began sharing homemade food with friends. Encouraged by our daughter Chloe, she started taking small orders through Malaysian Facebook communities."

The family then later found an affordable shop near home in Turramurra Plaza. They renovated and equipped it as Cindy's professional 'second kitchen' Victor is a technology entrepreneur, so we imagine this was handy in putting together a functional shop set-up.

Victor describes the shop as an amalgamation of Malaysian dishes, Nyonya kuih and Teochew favourites.

Below, you'll find two of Chloe's Mama Kitchen's more popular dish recipes as outlined by Victor.



Chloe's Mama Kitchen
Shop 4, Turramurra Plaza, 1380 Pacific Highway, Turramurra NSW 2074
https://cgmkfoods.com/
0482 035 320

Teochew Png Kuih (peach-shaped savoury rice cakes)



Three generations of Cindy's family have enjoyed these peach-shaped Teochew cakes. For the savoury filling, soak glutinous rice in advance. Fry shallots with Chinese sausage, dried shrimp and shiitake mushrooms until fragrant. Add seasonings and the soaked rice, stir-fry, then steam until cooked. Mix in roasted, chopped peanuts, weigh portions and shape into balls. Cindy makes a springy wrapper using her own recipe, adding a little beetroot juice for its pink colour. Enclose each filling portion in the dough, press into a traditional patterned mould, then steam the shaped cakes. The wrapper recipe remains a little secret of Cindy's kitchen.

Spiral chicken curry puffs



Cindy's spiral curry puffs begin with free-range chicken cooked in Nyonya rempah, a spice paste with lemongrass, shallots, garlic, turmeric and chilli, fried until fragrant with curry leaves. Cook the curry until thick, then leave it to cool. The handmade pastry uses two doughs and French Lescure butter. Wrap the inner pastry dough in the outer dough, then roll twice, resting for about 20 minutes after each rolling. Shape the pastry into shells, add the cooled chicken curry and seal. Fry the puffs until cooked and crisp. The result is a flaky, savoury Malaysian snack with distinctive spiral layers.



The ultimate crowd pleasers

Elliot Styche @elliots.table

Party season is fast approaching, and a crowd pleasing sausage roll is always the perfect way to start any gathering.

These are not your average sausage rolls. The filling is a proper flavour bomb, the secret is a handful of dried apricots and dates, which bring a beautiful natural sweetness to the pork, while a splash of port added to the onion mix gives everything a wonderful depth and richness. Fennel seeds tie it all together beautifully.

What I love most about these is how brilliantly they freeze. Assemble them uncooked, pop them in the freezer, and when guests arrive simply pull them out, bake and serve. Warm, golden sausage rolls straight from the oven with very little effort.

A tip for Christmas, swap the apricots and dates for dried cranberries and you have the most festive party bite going.

Pork, Fennel and Date Sausage Rolls

INGREDIENTS (makes 16)

2 sheets puff pastry, store-bought and thawed
1 small red onion, finely diced
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 celery stick, finely diced
1 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp port (optional)
6 dried apricots, finely chopped
2 dates, finely chopped
500g pork sausage meat
100g sourdough fresh breadcrumbs
1 tbsp dried Italian herbs
1 tsp fennel seeds, lightly crushed
1 tsp salt
½ tsp black pepper
1 large egg, beaten, for egg wash

METHOD

1. Heat the olive oil in a pan over medium heat. Add the onion, garlic and celery and cook, stirring, until soft and translucent but not coloured, about 6 minutes.

2. Add the apricots, dates and port and let it bubble for a minute to cook off the alcohol. Tip the mixture onto a plate and spread it out to cool completely, about 10 minutes. Warm onion will make your filling greasy and hard to slice.

3. Combine the sausage meat, breadcrumbs, Italian herbs, fennel seeds, salt and pepper. Add the cooled onion mixture and mix well with your hands until evenly combined. Don't overwork it or the texture goes dense.

4. Lay each sheet of pastry on a board. Divide the filling in half and shape each portion into a log along one long edge of the pastry, leaving a small border. Brush the far edge with a little beaten egg, then roll the pastry tightly around the filling, sealing along the egg-washed edge, seam-side down.

5. Slice each roll into 8 even pieces, about 5cm each. Score the top of each piece with two shallow diagonal cuts, then brush all over with the remaining beaten egg.

6. Bake until deep golden and cooked through, oven at 200°C (180°C fan) for 30 - 40 minutes, or air fryer at 180°C for 20 -25 mis minutes, checking at the 10-minute mark and turning the basket halfway for even colour. They're done when the pastry is golden all over and the filling reaches an internal temperature of at least 74°C.

7. Rest for 5 minutes before serving.

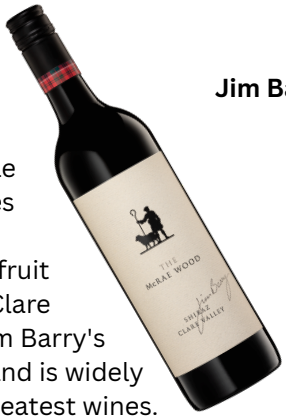
ELLIOT'S TIPS

•Swap the dried apricots and dates for dried cranberries at Christmas for the most festive party bite going.
•Assemble up to a day ahead and refrigerate unbaked, or freeze unbaked for up to 3 months. Cook directly from frozen, just add 10 minutes to the cooking time.
•Serve with a good quality tomato relish or chutney.

Delightful drinks

Reviews by Natasha Ciesielski,
Bacchus at the Theatre

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness of breast cancer and the importance of support for those affected by the disease. However, cancer in all its forms touches almost every family, highlighting the need for access to specialist care. For the fifth consecutive year, Jim Barry Wines is a Nurse Funding Partner of the McGrath Foundation, helping to ensure no one goes through cancer without the care of a McGrath Cancer Care Nurse. During October and November, 50c from select Jim Barry Wines, including those below, will contribute towards funding Monica Jessop, a McGrath Cancer Nurse in South Australia. The McGrath Foundation has now expanded its care to support people with all types of cancer, providing free clinical, emotional and psychosocial support to people with cancer and their families. Cancer impacts almost every family, with around 1 in 2 people in Australia expected to be diagnosed in their lifetime and approximately 170,000 new cancer diagnoses occurring each year.



RED WINE

Jim Barry, The McRae Wood, Shiraz 2022, $60

First released in 1992, The McRae Wood Shiraz is made from grapes declassified from the legendary Armagh vineyard, blended with fruit from some of the family's best Clare Valley parcels. The Armagh is Jim Barry's flagship single-vineyard Shiraz and is widely regarded as one of Australia's greatest wines. Rich and intense, it delivers strong aromas of violets, eucalyptus, clove, dark chocolate, red currant and ripe black plums, followed by a long, satisfying finish with fine tannins and a subtle hint of oak.

Pairing Guide: Slow-roasted lamb shoulder with rosemary, garlic and roasted root vegetables. The richness of the lamb complements the wine's full-bodied structure and plum fruit, while rosemary and garlic enhance its eucalyptus and spice notes.



WHITE WINE

Jim Barry, The Watervale, Riesling 2025, $23

A Clare Valley classic, the Watervale Riesling has been consistently awarded since its first release in 1974. Sourced from 50-year-old vines with naturally high acidity levels, it has an aroma of white florals, lavender and orange blossom, layered with vibrant lime and orange rind. Crisp, elegant, refreshing, this wine could be enjoyed now or cellared for up to ten years, developing greater complexity over time.

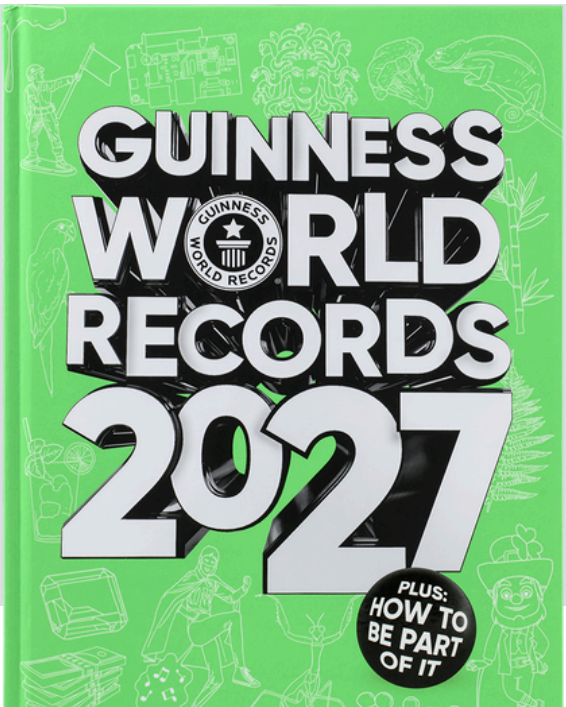
Pairing Guide: Grilled South Australian prawns with garlic, herbs and a light citrus dressing. A light and refreshing pairing, the wine's high acidity balances the natural sweetness of the prawns, while the citrus profile works beautifully with the dressing.

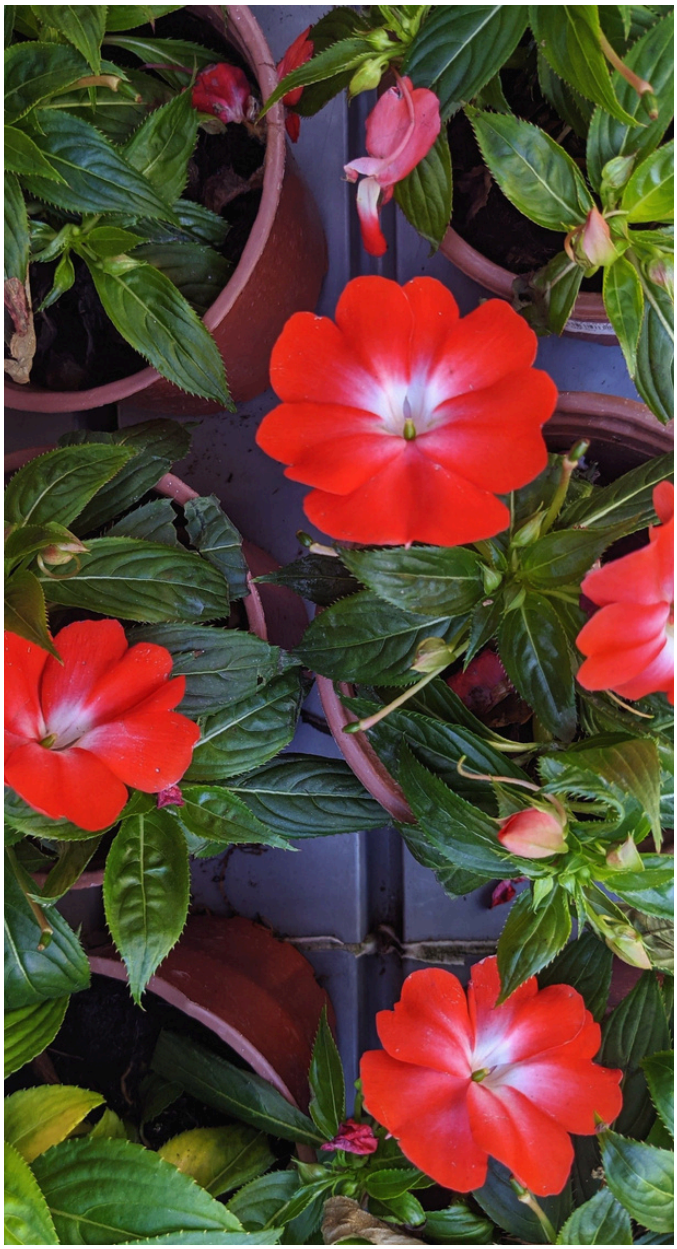
A Guinness Giveaway!

Who doesn't love a world record? - especially when there is a record for everything, and everyone! This year's Guinness World Records opens a new chapter of record breaking with everything green - frogs, emeralds, Yoda, the Incredible Hulk and Wicked's Elphaba.

Meet eight more incredible young achievers defying their age to break remarkable records, and the newly selected GWR ICONS - record holders who embody the spirit of record breaking who are rewriting the rulebook in their respective fields.

Sydney Observer is giving away 5 copies of the great green this month. Email editor@kamdha.com with your name, email address and phone number for your chance to win!





The plant you just can't kill

Penelope Andrews

There is nothing I love more than beautiful blooms in my garden all year long, but in spring, we really are spoilt for choice. Impatiens (scientific name Impatiens walleriana) are a staple on many front porches and in hanging baskets, known for their beautiful pink, purple and peach petals as the perfect pop of colour.

They are one of the most common varieties on offer in your local gardening centre, Flower Power or Bunnings too. But a common conversation among my neighbours and fellow green thumbs is how temperamental this variety is, especially in the warm spring sunshine and leading into summer.

They love shade and easily scorch in direct sunlight. And given we are in an El Niño phase at the moment, and our past winter was unseasonably warm, opting for plants that can handle the sun is key this season. This is where SunPatiens come into the conversation. They are hybrid impatiens bred to thrive in full sun and high heat. They can also tolerate humidity, blooming from spring right through to frost. If you spot these at your local gardening centre, here's how to ensure they thrive:

- They require full sun to part shade.
- For soil, opt for a special potting mix and well-drained soil.
- Water them regularly for the first week or two upon planting.
- Feed sparingly with a half-strength fertiliser.

I personally love them in pots on my patio, but they are also quite a wide-growing bush plant if you want them to line your driveway for landscaping. Happy spring planting!

Ken Wolf real estate



Ken Wolf
0418 675 611
J.P., MRE (UNSW) FAPI
Principal & Licensed Real Estate Agent • Certified Practicing Valuer
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Two markets, and the line has moved

Mike Kaye, co-founder and director Sarah Kaye & Co. Buyers Agents

The papers spent September describing a reckoning. Sydney values are seven per cent off their February peak. Auctioneers count two bidders where there used to be seven. Readers of this column know we check that kind of headline against the register first. The register is the NSW Valuer General's record of every settled sale in the state.

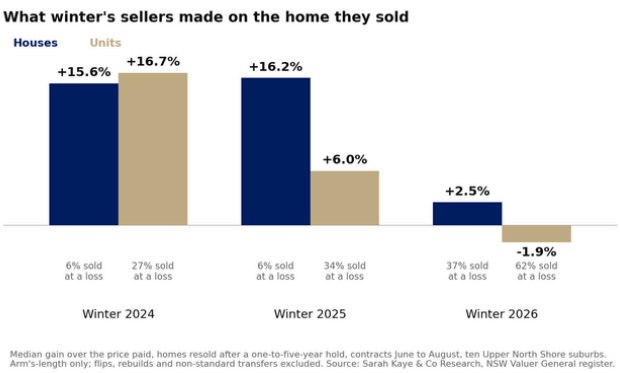
It runs a few weeks behind the market, but no agent or website can massage it. Last month we promised to report what winter actually did. The register has caught up, and this month we can do something new with it. We have followed the same homes through two sales. That shows what winter's sellers actually got.

What winter sellers actually got

Take every home in our ten suburbs that sold this winter. Keep only the ones that had also sold between one and five years before, so we can compare the two prices. Drop the flips, the rebuilds and anything that was not an ordinary sale. What is left is the cleanest price test the register can give.

Last winter, the typical seller made 13 per cent on what they paid. The winter before, 16 per cent. This winter, nothing. Half of them sold for less than they paid. For houses, the typical gain fell from 16 per cent to 2.5 per cent. Roughly a third of house sellers took a loss, up from about one in sixteen. For units, three in five sellers took a loss.

The turn was quick. From January to May, sellers were still making eight per cent. From June it stopped. Winter also traded thin: 248 settled sales against 299 and 308 in the two winters before. Fewer homes sold, and the ones that did sold for no gain. That is where spring starts from.



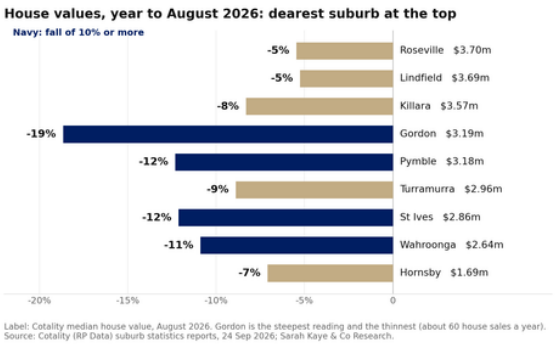
Who can sell this spring

Unit owners are the least likely to list of all. So expect a spring with fewer homes for sale than the calendar suggests, sold mostly by people who have owned for a while.

The squeeze is in the middle

Now split the sellers by what they paid. Under $2.5 million, the typical gain barely changed: seven per cent last year, 6.6 this year. Over $4 million it eased from 14 per cent to 11.5, though few of those owners are selling at all. In between, from $2.5 million to $4 million, the gain fell from 14 per cent to 3. The share selling at a loss went from one in eight to four in nine. Sales in that band were also down 31 per cent on a normal winter, the biggest fall of any band. Cotality's suburb figures point the same way.

The three dearest suburbs, Roseville, Lindfield and Killara, lost the least over the year: five to eight per cent. The next band down lost the most. Gordon is off 19 per cent on Cotality's reading, Pymble and St Ives 12, Wahroonga 11. Houses in Ku-ring-gai took 32 days to sell for most of last year and 40 by June. Units did not slow. The reason is simple. People can only pay what they can borrow, and three rate rises hit the family with the big mortgage first.



Spring so far

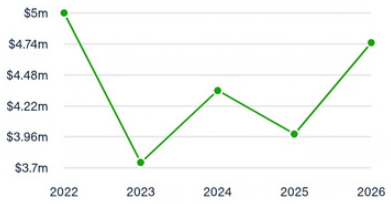
The register cannot see spring yet. Last month we set an exam question: does the school-year clock bring family buyers back to the top end before Christmas? Too early to say. The tell is five-bedroom clearance through October, and we will report it either way. So here is spring's test, on the record before the season can influence it. Winter's sellers made nothing and half took a loss. If spring's sellers do better than that, the season worked. The first reading comes in November.

The move you are weighing

The upsizer's window is still open. Your apartment or three-bedroom house held its value through winter. The larger home you want did not. But a fourth rate rise is widely expected, and each one shrinks the loan that bridges the gap. If you are downsizing, the trade still runs against you. Most sellers here are choosing realism rather than being forced into it. Winter is in the book. Spring is on the clock, with a rate decision attached.

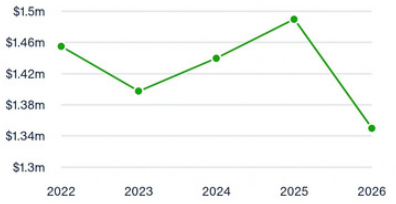
Suburb **snapshots**

SNAPSHOT Gordon



5-BEDROOM HOUSE

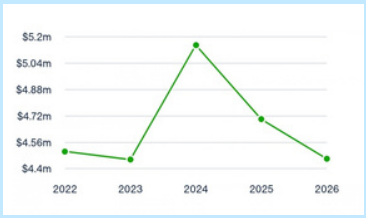
Median price 2026	**$4.75m**
12-mth growth	**+19.2%**
12-mth sales	**24**



3-BEDROOM UNIT

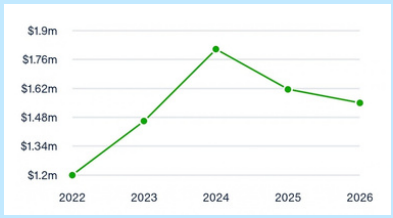
Median price 2026	**$1.35m**
12-mth growth	**-9.4%**
12-mth sales	**29**

SNAPSHOT Roseville



5-BEDROOM HOUSE

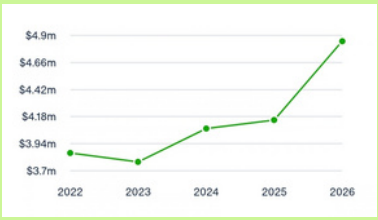
Median price 2026	**$4.46m**
12-mth growth	**-5.1%**
12-mth sales	**26**



3-BEDROOM UNIT

Median price 2026	**$1.55m**
12-mth growth	**-4.1%**
12-mth sales	**29**

SNAPSHOT Pymble



5-BEDROOM HOUSE

Median price 2026	**$4.85m**
12-mth growth	**16.9%**
12-mth sales	**49**



1-BEDROOM UNIT

Median price 2026	**$730k**
12-mth growth	**7.7%**
12-mth sales	17

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