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SYDNEY OBSERVER

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From Wahroonga to the ARIAs

PROPERTY
Prices dive 22%. Did Spring's sales upend the North Shore?

An Aussie Summer

Holiday Special

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Thongs: The history of an Aussie icon

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HAPPY HOLIDAY READING

FROM THE EDITOR &
SYDNEY OBSERVER TEAM



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EDITOR/DESIGN: Jay Houhlias, editor@kamdha.com

CONTRIBUTORS: WAL ABRAMOWICZ, PENELOPE ANDREWS, JOAQUIN ARAULLO, JOE COOK & JESSE GALLUZZO, LACLAN HANNAN & EDWARD BATEMAN, NICOLETTE BOELE, NATASHA CIESIELSKI, MATT CROSS, MIKE KAYE, BELINDA SIEW LUAN KHONG, KU-RING-GAI HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY, MATTHEW SELF, MARGARET SIMPSON, PHILLIP SIMPSON, KIM SPARKES, JAY SJ STAFFORD, ELLIOT STYCHE

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4 | Manly to Spit Walk



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Looking back at Manly Cove



Relaxing at Fairlight Beach



The headland around the Cove



The low-tide route at North Harbour Reserve



Around to Forty Baskets Beach



Getting bushy entering the National Park



View from Dobroyd Head



Castle Rock Beach from above



Coming into Clontarf Beach



Sandy Bay with Spit Bridge behind

What's next for Roseville Cinemas?



www.realestate.com.au/sold/property-unitblock-nsw-roseville-152296784

Penelope Andrews

The North Shore is celebrating as their local movie house, Roseville Cinemas, is here to stay. Recently acquired by new owners who are also in the cinema business, this local theatre has entertained its loyal audience with blockbusters and arthouse films for nearly a century.

However, financial difficulties led a judge in the Supreme Court of NSW to appoint a trustee to oversee the sale of all properties owned by Macos Holdings Pty Ltd, including the Roseville Cinemas site. Residents worried that a developer might quickly purchase the site to build apartments in this desirable suburb.

Fortunately, the historic cinema will remain. On 26 October, the property was sold for $8.23 million, with the listing managed by Knight Frank and McGrath Lindfield.

Five Star Cinemas, a family-owned business run by brothers Peter and Stephen Sourris, purchased it. Roseville Cinemas will be their second location in NSW, with another in Newcastle, alongside several locations across Queensland.

The Five Star Tower Cinemas in Newcastle experienced a similar scenario, originally opening in 1976 and closing in 2018, only to flourish again under new ownership.

The new business owners aim to offer cinema enthusiasts "a mix of retro style and state-of-the-art sound and vision, while bringing the 'experience' back of a trip to the movies".

James Sutton, Principal at McGrath Estate Agents Lindfield, told *Sydney Observer* that the cinema has been "part of the fabric of the North Shore for more than a century".

He said that the campaign attracted significant interest from a variety of buyers, including investors, developers, and groups considering alternative uses for the property.

Mr Sutton confirmed that the new operator "intends to retain the cinema use." He added that, "achieving a sale in excess of $8 million was an outstanding commercial result, but knowing that the cinema is intended to remain operational for the community makes it even more rewarding."

When a *Sydney Observer* team member visited the site, there were tradesmen present, renovations being made to the box office, and plans for a new slushie machine in the works.

Who says the North Shore goes to bed early?

If you still think the Lower North Shore rolls up the footpaths at 8pm, it might be time to step out after dark. New figures reveal Willoughby has officially outpaced every city in Australia for growth in night-time leisure and entertainment businesses.

According to the *Measuring the Australian Night-Time Economy 2026* report, the number of after-hours leisure and entertainment venues across Willoughby jumped by 12% during 2024-25, a pace six times faster than the national average.

That boom brings the local tally to 193 evening entertainment operators, keeping 870 people in local jobs. Willoughby's broader night-time economy is also enjoying a healthy glow-up, with total evening businesses rising 4% to 695, and annual after-dark turnover climbing 8% to reach $592 million.

While grabbing a bite remains the undisputed hero of a Willoughby night out – accounting for 68% of the core night-time economy – locals are clearly finding plenty of excuses to linger well past dessert, whether it be for a live show, a market stroll, or a cultural festival.

Willoughby Mayor Tanya Taylor said the results are great news for both night owls and local traders.

"Chatswood has long been known for its incredible multicultural food and dining, and now there are even more reasons to stay and enjoy the evening."

While the Chatswood CBD remains the champion of evening buzz, neighbouring hubs in Artarmon, Willoughby, and St Leonards are also quietly building their own after-hours followings.



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When a Will fails to provide enough for a surviving spouse

Wal Abramowicz

A recent NSW Supreme Court decision shows how the Court balances the needs of a surviving spouse against the inheritance rights of adult children.

Pettit v Davis (2026) NSWSC 1363

Christopher Pettit and his wife, Danuta, were married for 29 years. They had a close and loving relationship, and both had children from previous marriages. Danuta died in November 2024, aged 73. Her main asset was the family home in Maitland, worth approximately $785,000.

Under her Will, Christopher was allowed to live in the home rent-free for the rest of his life. However, that right would end if he remarried, entered another relationship, moved out or failed to meet certain conditions.

When his right to live in the property ended, the house was to be sold and the proceeds divided equally between Danuta's two adult children, Shane and Tannia. At first glance, the Will appeared to protect Christopher. However, the estate had outstanding debts and expenses, with no other funds available to pay them. The house therefore needed to be sold, meaning Christopher would lose his right to remain in his home.

The Husband's Claim

Christopher was 70 years old and retired. His only income was the age pension. He had very little savings and suffered from several health problems.

During the marriage, Christopher had made substantial financial contributions. Although Danuta had purchased the house using an inheritance, Christopher had helped pay off the mortgage and had paid approximately $120,000 towards renovations and improvements. He had also supported his wife financially for much of their marriage and cared for her during her final illness.

Christopher brought a claim under section 59 of the Succession Act 2006 (NSW), arguing that the Will did not make adequate provision for his future needs. He sought approximately $612,000 to allow him to purchase another home, pay his debts and retain some savings for emergencies.

Danuta's children opposed that amount. They also had financial difficulties and wanted to preserve their inheritance.



What did the Court decide?

Justice Richmond agreed that the Will had failed to make adequate provision for Christopher.

The Court considered several important factors:

- The marriage had lasted 29 years, during which Christopher had provided substantial financial support and personal care.
- Christopher was elderly, retired and unlikely to improve his financial position.
- His greatest need was secure accommodation.
- Danuta's children also had legitimate claims on their mother's estate.

The Court rejected Christopher's request for approximately $612,000. It also rejected the children's proposal that he receive only $350,000.

Instead, the Court adopted a different approach. Christopher was to receive $120,000 outright, reflecting his contributions towards improving the family home.

The remaining net proceeds from the sale were to be made available to Christopher as a loan to purchase another property in his own name. The loan would be secured against that property and adjusted for inflation.

Unless repayable earlier, the loan would be repaid from Christopher's estate after his death, with the benefit of that repayment passing to Danuta's children. The Court directed the parties to prepare orders giving effect to this arrangement.

The Court explained that a surviving spouse does not automatically have a greater entitlement than adult children. Every case depends on its particular circumstances.

However, where an elderly spouse has limited income, little savings and no realistic prospect of improving their financial position, the need for secure housing may carry considerable weight.

The Court also recognised that simply giving Christopher a right to live in the family home was not sufficient when that right could disappear if the property had to be sold.

The loan arrangement was designed to meet Christopher's housing needs while preserving an eventual inheritance for Danuta's children.

This case highlights the importance of careful estate planning, particularly in second marriages where both spouses have children from earlier relationships.

The important lesson is that a Will should provide not only for what happens immediately after death, but also for the changing needs of those left behind.

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Let's keep investing in Sydney Metro

Matt Cross MP, State Member for Davidson



Just as John Bradfield's vision of the Harbour Bridge connected Sydney, so too does the Sydney Metro. In October, Sydney Metro Southwest officially opened. The 66-kilometre metro line will carry passengers from Tallawong to Bankstown via the CBD.

It's a transformational public transport project that would make Bradfield proud.

For corridor communities, it means rapid, frequent, and faster services. It means increased economic productivity. It means more time with family and friends.

Planning approval for the project was announced in late 2018 by then Liberal Premier Gladys Berejiklian. She deserves much of the political credit for Sydney Metro. Gladys was Transport Minister when the project began in 2013 and, as Premier, advanced Metro Southwest. We know Gladys is on the right side of history in championing Sydney Metro.

But at the time, she faced opposition from Labor and the Greens.

Bold infrastructure needs to outlast short-term political populism and electoral cycles. The opening of Metro Southwest should prompt a bigger conversation about what comes next.

Metro Western Sydney Airport will open in 2028, connecting St Marys with the airport and Bradfield. Metro West will open in 2032, linking the CBD with Westmead. We still need public transport connections across Sydney's northwest and southwest. This is why NSW Liberal Leader Kellie Sloane and I want to keep investing in Sydney Metro.

For starters, we have a plan for three-minute metros by expanding the fleet. That means 20 metros per hour to the CBD and an additional 5,760 passengers per hour. Second, we aim to establish a Sydney Metro investment fund to create a long-term framework to partner with superannuation funds, infrastructure investors, and the private sector to help finance future metro projects.

Finally, we need to further connect Sydney by progressing planning for future metro projects, including a potential extension from Bradfield as part of a new Western Sydney City Deal with the Federal Government by 2028.

Bradfield's Harbour Bridge was once considered an audacious ambition. Its value came from connecting people. The opening of Metro Southwest carries that same promise.

Let's celebrate its opening and keep Bradfield's big transport picture alive.



Supporting local sporting

Joe Cook and Jesse Galluzzo

In Australia, sport weaves itself into the fabric of our lives. The shared dreams of reaching the pinnacle were no different for us. Rugby has played a fundamental role for us while growing up on Sydney's Northern Beaches, shaping us into the young men we are today. And while the sport we love has its peaks, its troughs in recruitment and identifying talent have long been a point of tension. Across all sport in our vast nation, it sometimes may feel impossible to stick your head out above others to grasp at an opportunity, or even a chance, to progress towards the goals we have always desired. This is where we found a problem worth solving, so we took it to what we knew best: rugby.



INREACH
inreachrecruitment.com

Founders Joe Cook (L) and Jesse Galluzzo (R)

INREACH is a platform that addresses the challenges many young rugby players face: limited exposure, talent going unnoticed and the frustration of feeling overlooked despite having the ability and ambition.

Through listening, learning and countless conversations across the rugby community, we have shaped INREACH into what it is today. It's a platform that displays a player's attributes across three key layers: logistics, persona and rugby evidence. This information gives clubs a clearer understanding of each player, allowing them to identify talent and connect directly with players.

Our goal? To offer a pathway for players, regardless of who they know, where they come from or their circumstances, to give themselves the best chance of being reviewed and reached out to by premier-grade clubs and leading rugby academies across Australia. We hope that in this world where everything is becoming more connected, our platform will provide a free service for players to step into the spotlight, progress their rugby journey and help revolutionise the sporting industry, one connection at a time.

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AI and social media: **We need common sense!**



Dr Belinda Siew Luan Khong,
Consulting psychologist

The French philosopher, Voltaire, lamented "common sense is not so common". In my final column for 2026, I consider where common sense appears to be returning – and where it is still urgently needed.

Education: Restoring balance in the classroom

In my November column, I discussed the links between excessive screen time in schools and poor learning outcomes. Schools in the US and Australia are now advocating digital detoxing and encouraging more offline activities.

Two US senators warned Google that its push to introduce Gemini, its AI agent, into classrooms has resulted in declining test scores. They also warned that many students were "increasingly unable to think critically or complete assignments independently after AI."

In response, Google made Gemini an "optional opt-In." Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, however, pointed to a condition attached to that choice: "if a school district does NOT turn on Gemini, then the students lose Google search, which is deeply woven into the fabric of education. This is coercion, not choice."

Australian students rank among the highest users of technology at school in the OECD, however, we have also put into place restrictions and restrictions on AI such as screen limitations and digital detoxing taskforces (some common sense appears to be returning to the education sector).

Mental health: Caution on AI therapy

The use of AI in mental health keeps rising, with many mental health professionals supporting it.

Advocates of AI therapy argue that AI therapy is more accessible and cost-effective. Yet a crucial question remains: what happens when a client expresses suicidal thoughts or other signs of significant distress as many seriously ill patients do?

A therapist needs to understand and be familiar with a client's history and arrange timely real-world care when necessary. In my own practice, I have had to do this. When a client experienced a psychotic breakdown, I worked with her psychiatrist to admit her to emergency hospital. I also briefed the admitting doctor about her mental health history and medications.

My concern is whether an AI chatbot can respond similarly, and whether a person in crisis receives the help they need in time.

AI is a technological tool and business product, not a human therapist. We would hesitate to discuss our problems with a stranger or leave a machine to teach our children. Why then, are we welcoming AI into such personal areas of our lives so readily? More common sense and professional judgement are needed here.

Social media: Habits begin with the adults

At breakfast in a café, I witnessed two scenes that disturbed, but did not surprise, me. At one table, a five-year-old girl demanded her mother's phone to play an online game. Looking embarrassed, her mother handed it over. The child remained absorbed on the phone throughout breakfast.

At another table, a mother sat down with her two-year-old son and began scrolling on her phone. When he tried to get her attention, she handed him another mobile: "Here, watch this; I need to check my phone."

I worry about where these habits may lead: from a two-year-old occupied by a screen to a five-year-old demanding one, and eventually to a student struggling with excessive screen use and learning difficulties. I also worry about kids growing up reliant on AI chatbots for companionship, mental health information, and support.

Parents: Model the restraint you want to see

I have repeatedly counselled parents that they have the primary responsibility for their kids' wellbeing when it comes to digital devices. There is no sugar-coating my concerns. My advice is to stop using devices as nannies to relieve your child's boredom, engage with your child instead, and model restraint in your own use of devices.

Happy Holidays. Enjoy quality time with the family – free of devices.

The family conversations worth having this summer

Phil Broadbent

When families gather over summer, Wills and Powers of Attorney rarely make the menu. Yet the holidays can be one of the best opportunities to raise these.

Start with three simple questions

Do your Wills still reflect your wishes? Has someone you trust been appointed under an Enduring Power of Attorney, and do they know where the documents are kept? Are your superannuation death benefit nominations current?

Keep the conversation low-pressure. You do not need to discuss dollar figures. Start with three practical questions: who is responsible, where are the documents, and what should happen if someone can no longer make decisions for themselves?

If a parent may soon move into residential aged care, it is also important to seek advice before making significant financial decisions. Whether the family home is sold, rented or retained, and how accommodation and care costs are met, may affect pension entitlements, aged-care fees, cash flow and the eventual estate. Planning calmly as a family is usually preferable to making decisions under pressure following a hospital stay.

Tax changes investors should know about

Investors also have tax changes to understand. From 1 July 2027, the existing 50% capital gains tax discount for individuals, trusts and partnerships will generally be replaced by cost-base indexation, with a minimum 30% tax rate applying to certain net capital gains. Gains accruing before 1 July 2027 will generally remain subject to the existing capital gains tax treatment under transitional arrangements.

This does not mean investors should automatically sell, hold or restructure their assets. The outcome will depend on the asset, ownership structure, acquisition date, future value and the investor's broader circumstances.

From 1 July 2027, negative gearing will also be limited for established residential property acquired after 12 May 2026. Properties held before that time are grandfathered, while eligible new builds remain outside the restriction.

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Good COP, **Bad** COP

Nicolette Boele MP, Federal Member for Bradfield

In September, I joined world leaders in Türkiye for COP31. COP is the United Nations' annual climate conference, where countries come together to agree on how to tackle climate change.

This year, Australia led the negotiations. It was a big responsibility, and one that raises questions about how Australia is delivering on climate action at home. My job at COP31? To hold the Australian Government accountable for putting its climate commitments into practice. So, how did they do?

The Good

- Australia and Denmark signed a clean energy agreement, with our Queen Mary involved in the announcement.
- Environment Minister Bowen recommitted to making the switch from fossil fuels to electricity a key focus of COP, with more countries backing the pledge. The Government backed the pledge to deliver 300 million solar panels.
- Pacific leaders defended Australia's presidency as an opportunity to elevate their priorities.

The Bad

- Phasing out fossil fuels was left off the official negotiating agenda, with no strong support from Australia.
- Prime Minister Albanese spoke about Australia's climate efforts but didn't address our ongoing coal and gas exports.
- No new funding was announced to help Pacific nations deal with the impacts of climate change.

Minister Bowen argued that Australia's fossil fuel exports do not undermine our climate leadership.

So, did Australia do enough to earn the title of climate leader? If Australia is serious about climate leadership, these are the three things we should start with: develop a clear roadmap to phase out fossil fuels, cap the fuel tax credit scheme at $50 million a company, and remove barriers to investment in clean energy.

After COP31, the world is watching. The question is whether or not the Government puts their promises into practice.

Getting home safe after hospital

Rejimon Punchayil

Recent ABC News coverage highlighted a problem facing older people across NSW. Some are medically ready to leave hospital but are still waiting for the care or support they need to leave. Talking with local hospital teams, occupational therapists and Support at Home providers, practical issues can delay a return home. Can we get a walking aid delivered before discharge? Who will be there to help in those first few days?

That's why Karis Life is hosting the Hospital to Home Forum in Hornsby in early 2027. We're inviting leaders from these sectors, along with those in home modifications and assistive technology, to agree on practical changes we can put into action together so people in our local community can get home sooner and more safely. If you lead or shape how services are delivered, register your interest at karislife.com.au/HospitaltoHome.



A practice in practicality

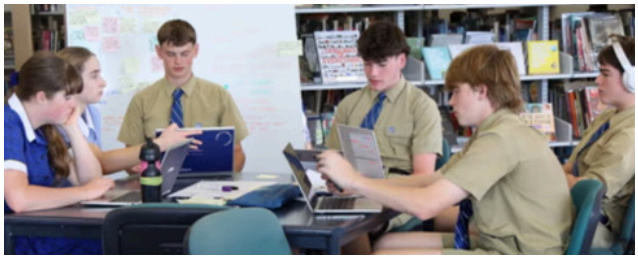
There's no flipping to the back of the textbook when you're trying to solve a genuine headache for a major airline or Australia's national science agency – a reality hundreds of local teenagers discovered when they swapped routine lessons for a high-stakes innovation sprint.

During early November, Year 10 students from Loreto Normanhurst joined forces with Saint Ignatius' College Riverview for their annual SPRINT Week project. Marking the finale of Loreto's four-year Integrated Learning curriculum – a core pillar of the Loreto Normanhurst Student Growth Model – the program drops students into messy, open-ended challenges with no single 'right' answer.

Using the Design Sprint methodology pioneered by GV (formerly Google Ventures), mixed-school teams spent four days researching live briefs, grilling subject-matter experts, testing ideas, and pitching their solutions back to major organisations including Qantas, CSIRO, Flight Centre Travel Academy, House of Welcome, Ronald McDonald House, Urban Challenge, and Baptist World Aid.

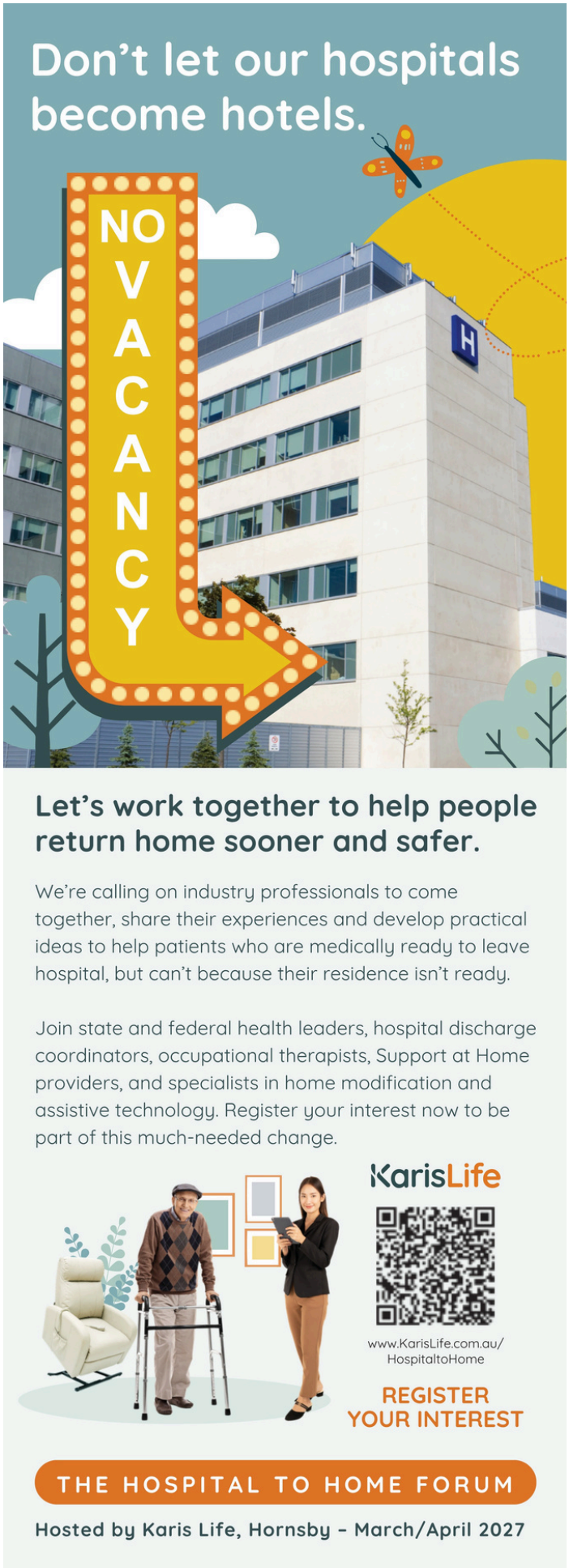
At the end of the challenge, the teenagers had built website and app prototypes, mapped out work-experience programs, and overhauled marketing campaigns. And for students? Well, ditching the standard grading rubric was half the fun.

Year 10 student Lexi said, "Instead of being given specific instructions or working towards one expected answer, we were encouraged to take the initiative and work things out for ourselves."



Another year 10 student Tayla relished the cross-campus shake-up. "It was different to what we're used to at school, and I particularly enjoyed meeting new people, working with Saint Ignatius' College Riverview students and being able to apply our ideas to a real business," she said. "You're not just learning information for an assessment; you're applying it to a real situation, meeting new people and developing skills that you might not normally get to practise in a classroom."

As the cohort gears up for the senior grind of Years 11 and 12, their week in the deep end showed that the best preparation for the real world isn't memorising the right answer – it's knowing how to improvise when there isn't one.



How to keep up with the grandkids this summer

Matthew Self, physiotherapist with a special interest in hip and knee osteoarthritis, takes us through osteoarthritis and grandparenting

It's the summer holidays and the grandkids have arrived. Within minutes you're on the floor, playing hide and seek or chasing them around the local park. You're having a wonderful time until that familiar ache in the hip or knee returns.

If you have hip or knee osteoarthritis, that ache doesn't mean retreating to the sidelines. Small tweaks can keep you in the game.



Pacing across the week

Pacing yourself by spreading activities across the week sounds simple, but it's often easier said than done. If you clean, cook and shop the day before, you're already exhausted before the grandkids walk through the door.

Try spreading the preparation across the week. When the grandkids arrive, pace yourself and break up the playtime with snacks. Mild soreness that settles by the next morning is usually fine. Severe pain or pain that lingers means you've overdone it.

Consider the terrain

Mulch, sand and long grass look gentle but make your hips and knees work harder to keep you steady. Wide paths and firm, flat surfaces ease the load.

If the walk to the park is likely to leave you tired or sore, consider driving so you can save your energy for playing with the grandkids. The parks listed are chosen with this in mind.

Watch out for awkward positions

Kneeling or sitting cross-legged for long periods can make getting back to your feet particularly challenging. Try using a light folding stool that isn't too low and change position every 20 minutes.

Build strength

The stronger the muscles around your hips and knees, the better equipped they are to support your joints when you're walking, bending, climbing stairs or playing with the grandkids. A physiotherapist can tailor a strengthening program to suit your abilities.

So, when the grandkids arrive this summer, don't sit on the sidelines. With planning and a bit of attention to hips and knees, you can join in the fun.

Top North Shore parks that offer easy access, plenty of space and somewhere to take a break

St Ives Showground Regional Playground: wide paths, large play area, picnic tables, car park.

Bicentennial Park, West Pymble: good amount of seating and shaded picnic areas, play equipment/sandpit, open grassy area for ball games, car park.

The Canopy, Lane Cove: a large playground with sandpits and mini trampolines, a village green, cafes and shops nearby. Parking is free for up to 3 hours.

Wahroonga Park: beautiful gardens, seating areas and a small playground. Be aware that some areas are sloped. Free timed street parking.





Manly beyond the beach

Lachlan Hannan and **Edward Bateman, Year 12 students and founders of MyStreetapp.com**

On your next walk through Manly, look away from the water for a moment.

The building on South Steyne, the path around to Shelly Beach and the town centre each have a story about what the neighbourhood could become in 2027. You can walk past all three without seeing the changes being planned.

Start with the Royal Far West redevelopment. Behind the beachfront apartments is a story that reaches beyond Manly. Sales of its 58 Aurora homes will help support health services for country children, while the wider precinct includes renewed accommodation for visiting families.

The planned retail and commercial spaces could bring new reasons to stop along South Steyne. Completion is targeted for the end of 2026, although individual business opening dates are not confirmed. The interesting question is how this familiar stretch will feel once people begin using it.

Keep walking towards Shelly Beach and the changes become smaller, but closer to everyday life. Council's foreshore renewal concept includes improved paths, renewed seating, landscaping and clearer signs. Those details matter when you are pushing a pram or finding a place to sit after a swim.

The work is planned for after summer, with completion expected in spring 2027. Some reserve areas may be restricted during construction, but Council says beach access and the Manly Scenic Walkway will remain available.

Now imagine heading back into town for dinner. Manly's proposed Special Entertainment Precinct could change how long the evening lasts, with indoor trading from 5am until midnight on weeknights and 2am on weekends, and earlier closing times outdoors.

It is a proposed, reversible 18-month trial, with Council expected to decide whether to proceed in early 2027. Businesses would choose whether to use the proposed hours, and liquor licence changes would still need separate approval.

Nearby residents would also have a stake in proposed sound controls, including lower limits later at night and near quieter residential areas.

A single beach walk connects new homes, a changing public space and a possible shift in the town's daily rhythm. Like our area, each plan answers one question and opens another: when will it happen, what will it look like, and how might it change your routine?

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BOOKINGS • EVENTS • CATERING



Manly Weekender

Feeling burnt out as we wind down for the year? *Jay Houhlias* suggests that a quick getaway to our Northern Beaches neighbour might be just the thing you need to relax, reset and reenergise.

Manly is iconic.

It has an undeniable universality. Travellers and tourists see it on a map and feel they must come to see how the north coast lives, and Sydneysiders, even those who already live on the coast, feel they owe Manly a regular visit.

A bit of history before we get on. Manly's name has colonial roots as, in 1786, Governor Arthur Phillip described the Aboriginal men his party encountered at Manly Cove as having "confidence and manly behaviour".

Apparently, Governor Phillip had forgotten about the women; however, the Manly Art Gallery & Museum hasn't. On the beach at Manly Cove, the museum is small and the workers there are lovely, and they hold regular exhibitions.

When I visited, it was 'Girly in Manly', a reshaping of 'girly' from its 'diminishing' connotation to one of 'strength, courage, and physicality.' The museum is free and always worth a pop in.

In the name of iconoclasm, we start on The Corso, and at one of the most prominent stays in Manly, **The Sebel**. The hotel occupies the perfect space, almost too perfect and too convenient. Staying in one of their balcony rooms feels like you've set up camp at the beach itself. I woke up early for a swim, and, as I am inclined this way, didn't wear any shoes, because, not only could I see the water, I could hear it over my air-conditioning.

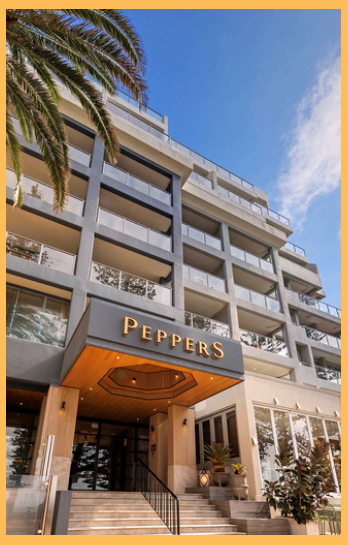
It did feel odd walking in and out of a luxurious hotel barefoot, so I asked reception, "Are guests usually barefoot here when they go out for a swim?"

"Some of them, sure," reception said, and this was enough for me.

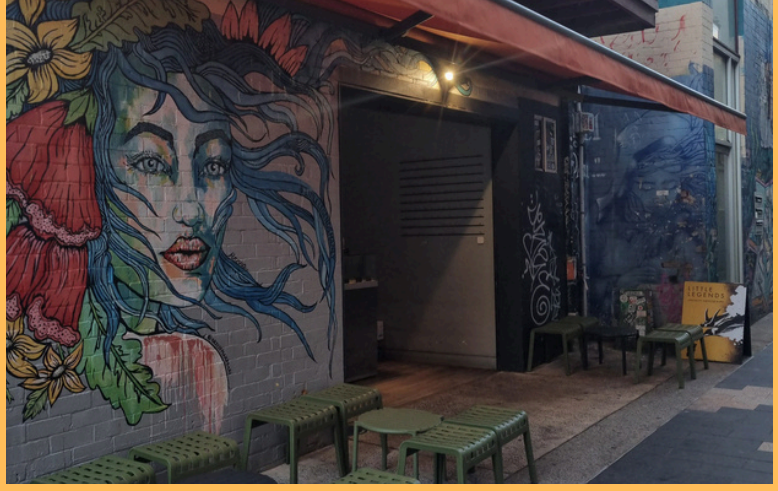
The pigeons and seagulls like the location too, and they'll come join you on your balcony. But they don't stay, nor do they like posing for photos too long.



The Sebel also has an onsite Chinese Yum Cha restaurant downstairs if you don't feel like going out. The rooms and interior have nailed coastal living – light cream colours, airy and minimal – there is a reason it's an essential stay in Manly. Book in advance though, especially during summer.







Apart from a swim, it's obligatory to start your day with coffee. The café and coffee scene in Manly is fantastic. There are a heap of good coffee places around The Corso, and the nature of their location means you will inevitably walk past them accidentally, so you'll be just fine.

But for serious coffee aficionados, a great local business lies a few streets back, **Soprano Coffee.**



Established in 1998 by Craig Sommer, Soprano Coffee began with a café in Mona Vale, featuring its own freshly roasted coffee. During COVID, Craig expanded the business by opening a warehouse café, giving locals the opportunity to enjoy a freshly brewed espresso in addition to their beans.

Today, based in Manly Vale close to Mackellar Girls High, Soprano Coffee is a hidden gem, with Craig saying "Not many people actually know we are here!"

The café is next to Manly Creek and various walking trails. So walkers, families and exercisers will often stumble across it. Over the years, the café has earned recognition at the Royal Easter Show and even a five-star review from your editor who sampled some fresh beans.

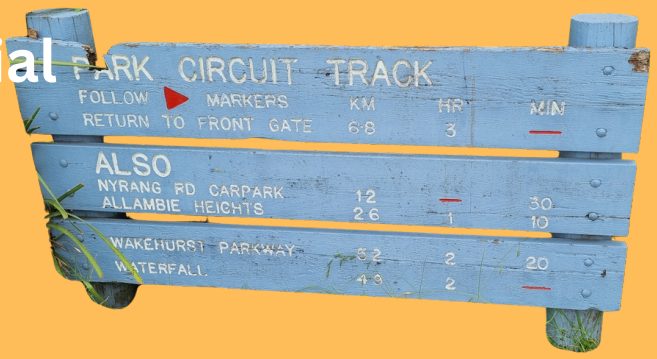
My favourite was the Super Crema. As its name suggests, the crema on the espresso is like a milkshake, and I genuinely get a little shiver of joy watching that golden foam fill the espresso cup with my machine at home.



From the backstreets back to the main drag, we wanted to source a local café for a breakfast do. Word of mouth and online reviews were unanimous, and thus we landed at **Sketch Manly**. The idea of curry and coffee is an interesting one, but it's been faithfully serving the community since 2016.

Sketch is a terrific example of what one can accomplish with being authentic in their vision – roadside Indian soul meets Aussie beach town charm. They have their own coffee roasted in Melbourne, and their food is so unlike Australian breakfast café food. Yet it feels so correct, and brilliant, especially their famous Frankie Roll.





If you're after a larger dining experience, all you need to do is cross the road from the ferry. 4 Pines pub is hard to miss for that reason, but also because it's always lively; lots of people and lots of laughs.

Bonsai by 4 Pines is a contemporary Japanese izakaya downstairs from the 4 Pines Brewpub. Bonsai pairs share plates, sake and cocktails with fresh, cold pours from the brewery upstairs.

This festive season, they are offering a Bottomless Festive Feast – two hours of bottomless Japanese share plates and festive drinks for $99 per person, for groups of four or more.



So with my four compadres at 4 Pines, we did as 4 Piners do. For me, the highlight of the meal was the roasted eggplant and veggie gyoza, and yakitori is always fun!

They also serve bottomless brunch every Saturday and Sunday, offering two hours of bottomless Japanese share plates and drinks for $89 per person, with sessions at 12pm and 2:30pm. So if you miss out this festive season, you can still enjoy a feast year round.



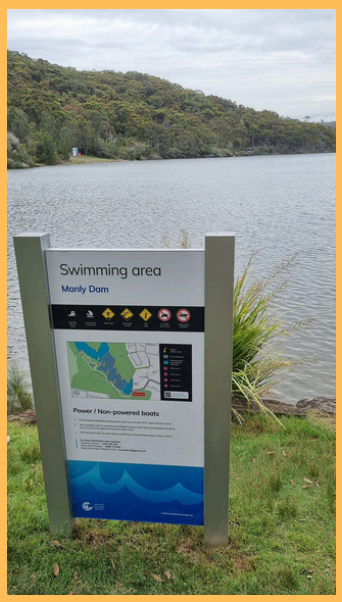
Somewhere slightly beyond the main hub is Manly Dam. In all my years coming to Manly, I had never visited, but it is actually a beautifully quaint spot away from the craziness of The Corso.

The streets around are quiet and residential. There are plenty of dogs and families, and big groups of people just coming for a relaxed day out. You can even swim there, which was a great surprise to me. It's also probably why families might prefer it over the waves of the ocean.

When I was there, a man came up to me and said he was going to swim the entire perimeter of the dam. While he swam, I did the walking trail alongside him and gave a thumbs up when I veered off. I think he did the same back, but I am not sure. I must go back and see if he's still finishing that perimeter.

The walking trail takes you around the entire dam and can veer off into Manly Creek Waterfall. It's somewhere I would certainly go again.







To leave Manly, here is an idea if you've got the legs and a light backpack: the Manly to Spit Walk. The Corso walk is world-class, as is seeing the wormhole and continuing the walk all the way through Freshwater and up to Palm Beach (that's a joke, but maybe). However, if you're after something a little more wild, this walk is a goodie.

It is, first and foremost, a walk – a long walk, not quite a hike, but around 10kms. Part of the walk cuts through Sydney Harbour National Park, from Forty Baskets Beach all the way to Castle Rock Beach, so for a good third of the walk, expect to see big lizards and classic Australian dark green shrubs and trees.



I did the entire walk in thongs, but I am also strange, so you might want some runners. Hiking boots aren't really necessary. Most of the path is exposed, so either do it early or later in the day, or wear appropriate clothing.

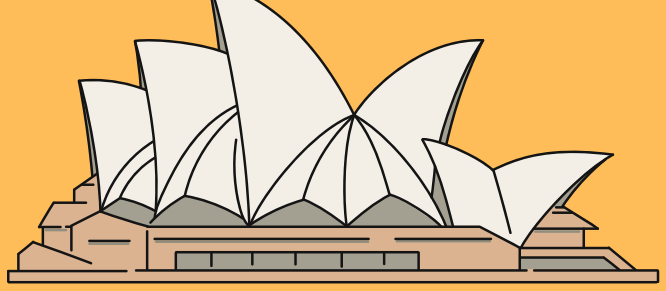
You can make the walk as long or as short as needed. Fairlight is an epic spot to veer off course and head up to some of the shops and cafés. Clontarf doesn't have as many shops, but much like Manly Dam, it's a popular spot for families and dogs.

Finishing at the Spit Bridge, you can catch a bus either way – back to Manly or straight into the city. You could even walk back to Manly via Sydney Road past Balgowlah, another cool suburb for cafés.

Regardless of what you decide on your weekend getaway, Manly is quite contained. You don't need a car or public transport. Everything is walkable and, more importantly, beautifully walkable.







Summer of **Sydney Opera House** spectacles

As summer makes its official entrance, the Sydney Opera House is swapping its classic winter black-tie elegance for a more classic Sydney experience: open-air soundtracks, twilight harbour vistas, and a packed calendar of events. Relax on the Forecourt steps with a refreshing drink while the sun sets behind the Harbour Bridge, or head into the Concert Hall to enjoy performances from international touring stars and local legends. Here are a few picks from the Sydney Opera House's upcoming calendar.

Leon Bridges

Leon Bridges, the Grammy-winning artist, will perform at the Sydney Opera House's Forecourt on 26 February, showcasing songs from his album, *Happiness Anytime*, along with his popular hits. Since his 2015 debut, he has become a key figure in contemporary music, blending R&B, gospel, and folk, with his new album reflecting the warmth of his earlier work and the adventurous spirit of his collaborations. It's ideal for sunny days.



Damien Rice

Irish singer-songwriter Damien Rice will perform at the Sydney Opera House Concert Hall on 11-12 February. These concerts celebrate the 25th anniversary of his debut album, *O*, which gained global recognition with hits like *The Blower's Daughter*, *Volcano* and *Cannonball*. Rice will perform these beloved songs and other highlights from his career.



Angus & Julia Stone

Australian duo Angus & Julia Stone will open the 2027 Forecourt summer season at the Sydney Opera House on 28 February. They will perform their new album, *Karaoke Bar*, along with popular hits. For nearly two decades, this brother-sister pair has captivated audiences worldwide with their unique music and performances.



School holiday program

We mustn't forget the kids! The Sydney Opera House's all-Australian school holiday program invites kids and families to connect with creativity, dream big and make lasting memories. Audiences will enjoy a world premiere page-to-stage adaptation, breathtaking outer-space acrobatics and an array of free and accessibly priced workshops with poets, stargazers and local artists. Details at sydneyoperahouse.com/kids-families



Time to try something new

Sydney Observer has gone all round Sydney to source a few unique classes to try these holidays. Hear from the owners about what's on offer. Note: Your editor has tried each of the experiences so can vouch for them!



The Jungle Body

The Jungle Body Sydney is redefining fitness by bringing the energy of a nightclub to your workout! More than just a fitness class, it's a feel-good experience where movement, music and community come together. Expect an addictive mix of cardio, boxing, toning, dance and feel-good choreography, set to an epic soundtrack of Hip Hop, R&B, Afrobeats, Dancehall, Reggaeton and club classics. With easy-to-follow moves, no dance experience is needed. Whether you're a complete beginner or a seasoned fitness lover, everyone is welcome. Come as you are, move at your own pace and leave feeling stronger, more confident and energised. Founded in Sydney in 2018, The Jungle Body Sydney has grown from one small community class into a vibrant fitness community across multiple locations. Our philosophy is simple: it's about how you feel, not how you look. We believe in movement as medicine and community as magic. Come for the workout, stay for the people. Dance. Sweat. Connect. **Much love from Yin Chuah-Marcos (founder and director), thejunglebodysydney.com**

Editor's note: Go crazy, it's more fun that way.



Bikram Yoga Darlinghurst

People ask how a hot yoga studio lasts 24 years. Honestly? We never close. Think of us as the 7-Eleven of yoga: open every day of the year, morning, afternoon and evening. We just don't sell slurpees. Bikram Yoga Darlinghurst has been servicing humans on Oxford Street since 2002 and, for Katie and I, it's our second home. We're independently owned and proudly Australian (I'm a Canadian with the citizenship papers to prove it), and the people who sweat it out with us have become family.

Our 90-minute Bikram class is 26 postures and two breathing exercises in a room hotter than Sydney in January. Not keen on balancing on one leg? Our 60-minute Inferno Hot Pilates is a low-impact core workout in the same heat. You don't need to be flexible or fit to start. Just turn up, lie down if you need to, and come back tomorrow. We always say the heat shapes you, the discipline strengthens you and the practice transforms you. It also gives you the best shower of your life. If you're curious, newcomers get 21 days for $99. Come and say hi. We'll be here. We're always here. **From owners Marty and Katie, bikramyoga.net.au**

Editor's note: Push through the first few challenging sessions and do Bikram Yoga enough so you get used to it. The benefits will astound you in ways you never realised.

Roastville Coffee Roasters



For the past 11 years, we've been welcoming Sydney coffee lovers into our dedicated training and sensory room to discover what really goes into a great cup. Our cupping sessions are hosted by our head roaster. Much like a wine tasting, you'll taste a range of coffees side by side and explore how each one was processed after harvest: washed, natural, honey and more experimental methods. You'll see how the way a coffee cherry is handled at origin can completely change the coffee in your cup. Our Home Barista workshops pair you with our expert trainers so you can make café-quality coffee in your own kitchen.

Prefer filter? Our Manual Brewing workshops cover pour-over and other filter methods, so you can bring out the best in every bean. And if you want to up your latte art, our Latte Art workshops are run by latte art champions, who will have you steaming silky milk and pouring your own designs in no time. Small groups, expert guidance and plenty of coffee make every class welcoming, whether you're a curious beginner or a dedicated enthusiast. **From owners Destiny and George, roastville.com.au**

Editor's note: Roastville also has a local store in Mosman, however, for the coffee snobs, Marrickville is the coffee capital and place to go. Latte art is super fun and for everyone, not just baristas.

Massive improvement in hearing aid technology

Alastair Bacon

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

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

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

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

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



Celebrate all of us at Lunar New Year and Australia Day events

Lunar New Year and Australia Day celebrations are just around the corner! From delicious foods and wonderful performances, **Joaquin Araullo** highlights the unmissable events in 2027.

Year of the Goat at Chatswood



The Chatswood Year of the Goat Festival is set for February 2027, with the primary Lunar New Year celebrations occurring on Saturday 13 February from 10am to 9pm, and Sunday 14 February from 10am to 6pm. The Concourse at 409 Victoria Avenue will be the main venue for outdoor entertainment, offering a diverse lineup of traditional and modern performances on both days. Attendees can enjoy exquisite crafts, art, international cuisine, and family-friendly activities. Willoughby Council is focused on delivering a huge number of Asian food stalls in an attempt to create a large outdoor food party. Some might even think of it as an open-air yum cha experience.

Sydney Lunar New Year Dragon Boat Races at Darling Harbour



Here's a more energetic and hectic one. For families who want to celebrate Lunar New Year beyond the North Shore, you really have to visit the Dragon Boat Races on Cockle Bay. For two days, visitors watch the athletic paddlers as they churn the water vigorously on 12m-long dragon boats. Aside from the thrilling boat races, there will be music and entertainment to accompany the event. The opening ceremony brings together different cultures to celebrate harmony and the power of teamwork.

Australia Day at The Concourse, Chatswood



For families living in Chatswood, celebrate Australia Day with the Mayor and Councillors of Willoughby City Council at the Concourse. This event has a formal, respectful, and welcoming atmosphere. The Mayor and Councillors will introduce new citizens to Willoughby, which will be followed by a keynote speech from the Australia Day ambassador. Afterwards, visitors will be entertained by performances by the Willoughby Band and Australian Institute of Performing Arts.

Ku-ring-gai Fitness & Aquatic Centre's pool party



A gold coin donation is all you need for the Ku-ring-gai Fitness & Aquatic Centre's pool party. If you're keen for a swim this Australia Day (an Aussie tradition) but aren't braced for the crowds at the beaches, this day out includes a BBQ, face painting, inflatables, a poolside DJ and a treasure hunt. Keep the cool kids entertained!

Sounds of Christmas

From beach days and backyard barbecues to road trips and summer get-togethers, the best moments deserve a great soundtrack. Australian tech accessories brand Sprout is turning up the volume with its new Soundwave 2 speaker range, bringing powerful portable sound, vibrant design and clever tech to wherever good times take you. **sproutinc.com.au**

Soundwave 2 Lite, $99. Soundwave 2, $159. Soundwave 2 Pro, $209.





Full charge

Most Christmas gifts are forgotten by February. A smart EV charger earns its spot on the driveway every day. The Evnex E2 Flex charges up to four times faster than a standard wall socket and can schedule charging for cheaper off-peak hours. Plug in at night and wake up to a full battery, with built-in protection against power overloads. For homes with solar, the E2 Core automatically directs excess solar energy into the car, effectively charging on sunshine. **evnex.com**

Evnex E2 Flex, $799.
Evnex E2 Core, $1099.



The all natural clean-up

Inspired by Ayurvedic traditions, Australian brand Euclove offers a range of plant-based cleaning products for various home surfaces. Utilising Australian eucalyptus oil, neem, and clove oils, these products clean, deodorise, and enhance hygiene while providing a natural alternative to harsh chemical cleaners.



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Festively Fossil GIVEAWAY

'Tis the season to show up and show out – and Fossil is here for it. Their holiday collection has arrived, all decked out and ready for celebrating. From shimmering mini watches to celestial jewellery, awe-inspiring automatics to monogrammed pendants, these styles are party-ready and present-perfect. RSVP yes, and bring the most-talked about gifts.



Harlow Watch Ring 17mm
Two-Hand Gold-Tone Stainless Steel

For the full present-perfect product line, visit **fossil.com/en-au/**.

Fossil and *Sydney Observer* are giving away a **Harlow Watch Ring** (left) and a **Danni Shoulder Bag** (right) to two lucky readers. Email editor@kamdha.com with your name, address and contact info plus a picture of you with this issue of the mag for your chance to win!



Danni Leather Shoulder Bag

Natural **rejuvenation** backed by medical expertise

Simona Adochiei

Balance Aesthetics MediSpa is a doctor-led cosmetic and skin rejuvenation clinic located in Turramurra. Founded by Dr Mihaela Lefter, Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeon, the clinic combines advanced aesthetic medicine with personalised care, patient safety and natural-looking results.

Working alongside experienced dermal therapists Giselle and Lucy, Dr Lefter offers tailored treatment plans using evidence-based technologies to address concerns including skin ageing, acne scarring, pigmentation, body contouring, hydration and hair thinning.

One of the clinic's most popular treatments is Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) therapy, a regenerative treatment using the body's own healing properties to improve skin quality and stimulate hair growth. For facial rejuvenation, PRP stimulates collagen and elastin production to improve skin texture, firmness, hydration and while softening the appearance of fine lines. Rather than dramatic changes, PRP delivers gradual, natural-looking improvements leaving skin brighter, smoother and healthier over time.





Crescent Nest

Crescent Nest's **All in One Set, $254.94,** includes a Sustainable Sonic Toothbrush, extra bamboo brush heads, premium travel case, tongue scraper, bamboo dental floss and a refill. **crescentnest.com/en-au**



Kioni Skin

Designed to cleanse without stripping, the **Hydrate & Balance Multi-Biotic Cleanser, $69,** is a creamy, non-foaming formula created with sensitive and reactive skin in mind. **kioniskin.com**



AYURSCIENCE

The **PURITY Foaming Gel Cleanser, $39.95,** is a gentle yet effective daily formula designed to reset skin without stripping away essential moisture. **ayurscience.com.au**



BONDS®

Bonds is teaming up once again with Bluey for an exclusive new baby, kids and adults sleep collection. As one of the brand's most requested collaborations, this highly anticipated release brings new prints, family favourites and the launch of a limited-edition Bluey 12 Days Baby Advent Calendar for the whole family to enjoy. **bonds.com.au**



Cereria Mollá 1899, a luxury Spanish fragrance house with over 125 years of candle-making heritage, has just launched in Australia. Prices start at $79, making them a gorgeous 'affordable luxury' gifting option. **florabelle.com.au/pages/cereria-molla**

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What's on



Museum of Illusions Sydney

Explore an amazing array of mind-bending rooms, captivating installations, and mesmerising images. The Museum of Illusions' exhibits will show the kids these summer holidays that things are not always what they appear to be.
Where: 413 George Street
Info: moisydney.com



Moonlight Cinema Returns

Moonlight Cinema has been a beloved Australian summer tradition for over 30 years, where audiences enjoy films under the stars in scenic sopts like Sydney's Centennial Park. The Christmas Favourites series runs from 11-23 December and features classics like *Love Actually*, *The Polar Express*, and *Home Alone*, alongside the new release *Ebenezer*. Families can also watch Disney's *Hexed* on Boxing Day.
When: Until Sunday 28 March 2027
Where: Belvedere Amphitheatre, Centennial Parklands
Info: moonlight.com.au

Drama-fuelled School Hols



Foster the good kind of 'drama' over the holidays. With Improv Theatre Sydney, your kids can develop spontaneous creativity and collaboration skills in a supportive setting. They will learn to create engaging characters and stories while building confidence aligned with the NSW drama syllabus. Connect with peers and enjoy a fun experience, culminating in a short performance for family and friends. Open to ages 8-11 and 12-14.
When: Thursday 21 January 2027, 9:30am-3:30pm
Where: 44-54 Botany Road, Alexandria
Info: Improv School Sydney, schools@improvtheatresydney.com.au



Enjoy a delightful, family-friendly evening free of alcohol, complete with swimming, pool inflatables, and entertainment, all set against the stunning backdrop of Sydney Harbour. Guests will have the chance to witness both the 9pm family fireworks and the midnight fireworks display from the venue.
When: Thursday 31 December, 6pm-12:30am
Contact: Nick, 0466 997 267
Tickets: Adult (16+ years) $250. Child (3 to 15 years) $125. Children under 3 years free (ticket required)



Enjoy carols as a community to celebrate Christmas 2026. Food trucks and kids' activities will be available. Bring your picnic rug!
When: Sunday 20 December, 6:30-8:15pm
Where: West Pymble Village Green
Info: Anthony Barraclough, 9498 0000

Summer-proof your lashes and brows

Jay SJ Stafford, lash and brow artist and owner of Jay Lash and Brow, St Ives

Summer in my studio always brings the same stories: brows that slid off by lunchtime and mascara that ended up under the eyes at the beach. After 20 years of doing lashes and brows, my advice is simple. Let your treatments do the work, so your makeup doesn't have to. Every year, around the first hot week of November, my phone fills with the same text: “Can I get a lash lift before my holiday?”



Lift your own lashes

A lash lift curls and tints your natural lashes and lasts around six to eight weeks. There’s nothing to come loose in the pool or the surf, which makes it my favourite summer treatment. The one rule: keep them dry for the first 24 hours.

Tint and laminate your brows

Brow pencil and powder struggle in the heat. A tint colours the fine, pale hairs you already have, so your brows show up without makeup. Lamination sets the hairs in place and keeps them looking brushed and full for four to six weeks, even on a humid day.

If you love extensions, look after them

Extensions and summer get along well with a little care. Sunscreen, sweat and salt water build up along the lash line, so wash your lashes gently every day with a lash-safe cleanser and brush them through once they’re dry. Keep oil-based sunscreens and makeup removers away from the lashes, as oil weakens the bond. Over summer, plan on infills every two to three weeks.



Time it right

If you have a holiday or a Christmas party coming up, book your lashes and brows a week or so ahead, not the day before. They have time to settle, and if anything needs a small tweak, there’s time to fix it.

A word on cosmetic brow tattoo

If you’re tired of drawing your brows on every morning, cosmetic tattoo can be a lasting option, but the start of summer isn’t the ideal time to begin. A fresh tattoo needs to stay out of the sun, the pool and the sea while it heals, so the cooler months are often a better time to book, giving it time to heal well before the next beach season.

Summer should feel easy. Spend a little time on your lashes and brows now so you can wake up, put on sunscreen and head out the door.

jaylashandbrow.com





Lisa working with Abbie Chatfield @sebastianpro_anz

From **Wahroonga** to the **ARIAs**

When podcaster Abbie Chatfield stepped out for the ARIA Awards in November, marking her official launch as an ambassador for Sebastian Professional, the hair behind the red-carpet moment had roots right here on the Upper North Shore.

Lisa Muscat Vitale, Creative Director at é SALON in Wahroonga, was the stylist behind Chatfield's ARIA look. It's the kind of high-profile assignment that sits comfortably alongside her day-to-day work in the salon, where her focus remains on the person in the chair.

"I love creating looks with my clients – whether we're in the salon or preparing them for the red carpet," Lisa told *Sydney Observer*. "I also love working backstage at fashion shows and shoots. It's a completely different dynamic. I really enjoy the challenge of bringing a creative vision to life."

Despite the glamour of awards nights and campaign launches, Lisa's approach to style starts with real life. Ask whether the Upper North Shore has a signature look, and she points back to individuality over geography.

"There may be a distinct Upper North Shore style, but what I've found is that it comes down to the individual: their personality, their lifestyle and the story they want to tell," she explains. "Life is busy, so style needs to work for you. It should feel like you, suit the way you live and give you confidence when you walk out the door."

Choosing Wahroonga as the home base for é SALON wasn't accidental. For Lisa and her husband, the salon is built on decades of family history and genuine local connection.

"My family has been part of this area for a long time, and my husband and I have built a strong connection with the people and community. At é SALON, our philosophy is 'We See People First, Hair Second.' That reflects how much we value the relationships we've formed over the years."

Working across neighbourhood appointments and national red carpets has also shaped how Lisa views her own personal style – as a reflection of growth.

"I think our style naturally evolves as we do," she reflects. "It shifts with who we are and where we're at in life. Working with so many different people has reminded me that style is a mix of how we feel on the inside and how we want to express ourselves to the world. Sometimes it's who we are now, with a little bit of who we dream of becoming."



Sunburnt Santa and the Tea and Sugar Train

Kim Sparkes

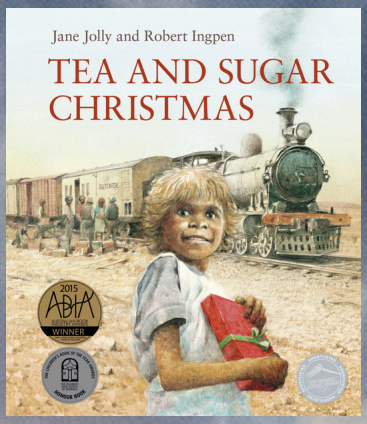
Between 1915 and 1996, the Tea and Sugar Train travelled 1,693 kilometres from Port Augusta to Kalgoorlie, crossing the Nullarbor Plain. This six-day journey through the searing heat stopped at 45 isolated settlements, providing essential supplies and services to people scattered across the flat, arid and treeless terrain.

The train was a lifeline and delivered everything they needed – household goods, groceries, fruit and vegetables, water, fresh meat, medicines, a post office, banking facilities and a theatrette car for showing films. The train also served as a rolling social community hub.

The first Christmas Train ran in 1957. Children would dress in their best clothes to meet Santa, and every child received drinks, lollies, comics and a present. In 1959, engine driver Alf Harris became affectionately known as the "Sunburnt Santa". He continued this Santa tradition for the next 36 years. Jane Jolly and Robert Ingpen's exquisitely crafted picture book, *Tea and Sugar Christmas*, brings this remarkable piece of Christmas railway history and nostalgia to life.

"*The Tea and Sugar Train only came once a week on a Thursday. But the special Christmas train only came once a year. Today was Sunday. Four more days without sugar. Four more days until the Christmas train. Please, please be on time. Please don't be late.*"

The story is told from the perspective of Kathleen as she eagerly awaits the train's arrival and offers a glimpse into the anticipation and excitement of remote Aboriginal communities awaiting the annual train bringing Santa, Christmas presents and essential supplies.



Tea and Sugar Christmas
Author: Jane Jolly
Illustrator: Robert Ingpen
National Library of Australia, 2022
| PB | 32pp | ISBN: 9781922507402

Jolly's vivid, sensory storytelling will captivate young readers while introducing them to a fascinating slice of Australia's railway history. An award-winning author of many picture books, Jolly has worked in Aboriginal schools and has a personal connection to the story, having travelled to Tarcoola on the Tea and Sugar Train.

Robert Ingpen's meticulous attention to detail brings authenticity to the railway carriages and a moving picture of outback Australia. His stunning double-fold-out watercolour landscapes, complemented by charming pencil-sketch portraits, beautifully capture the magic of this uniquely Australian Christmas.

This Christmas story set against our brown dirt and vast outback landscape feels much closer to home than snowmen and roaring fireplaces. Will Kathleen get to meet Father Christmas? And, more importantly, will he have a special Christmas present just for her?

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Towns of NSW: Gundagai

Phillip Simpson



Flood's flour mill in Sheridan Street

Main image: the impressive abandoned railway viaduct

For a holiday road trip, Gundagai, located about 380km southwest of Sydney on the Murrumbidgee River, is a recommended destination. The site was discovered by Sturt in 1829, settled in 1836, but in 1852 the entire town was washed away, with 89 fatalities. The only building to survive was the ironically named Flood's flour mill, built in 1849 for Edward Flood. It was steam-powered and ground wheat between two circular millstones until 1918, after which it was converted to a freezing works capable of treating 3,000 pairs of rabbits a day.

After the 1852 flood, Gundagai was rebuilt on higher ground and thrived in 1865. There were gold rushes in 1861 and 1894, cereal crops were grown, and butter, cheese, ham, and bacon were produced.

Unlike many towns, Gundagai still has its 19th-century gaol. It held both male and female prisoners who were imprisoned for minor offences, including horse and cattle stealing, absconding from hired service, and for "furious riding". Famous bushrangers, such as Captain Moonlite, were held there for brief periods before being transferred to larger gaols. The historic Gundagai gaol closed in 1909 but continued as the police lock-up until the late 1970s and is now open to the public.

Other than the Dog on the Tuckerbox nearby at Snake Gully, Gundagai is probably best known for the very long road and railway viaducts over the Murrumbidgee floodplain. Readers may remember clattering across the old road viaduct (Prince Alfred Road Bridge) driving south.

The viaduct closed in 1984 and survived until 2021 when the northern 711-metre timber section was dismantled. Although the road viaduct has gone, the heritage-listed 821-metre railway viaduct survives. It comprises 77 timber truss spans and was completed in 1903. It connects to the 61-metre steel truss span railway bridge over the river, which was fabricated in Pennsylvania, USA, and shipped to Sydney.

The town's famous monumental stone mason (for gravestones), Francis Rusconi, began operation at Gundagai in 1905. Over a 30-year period, he also made a magnificent model of a cathedral from almost 30,000 small marble pieces now on display at the Visitor Information Centre.

Other things to see when visiting Gundagai include the Australian Pen Museum, the Truck Museum, and the sculpture commemorating the long-running radio serial, *Dad and Dave from Snake Gully*, in Carberry Park. While in town, try eating at the classic art deco Niagara Café in Sheridan Street.

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



Thongs acquired by the Powerhouse Museum, 89/1346. Photo by Sue Stafford.

When thongs were reluctantly discarded

Margaret Simpson

With summer in full swing, I thought it was timely to explore the story behind the humble rubber thong and how it became an Australian icon. Australians were apparently introduced to thong wearing during the 1956 Olympics in Melbourne when Japanese swimmers wore their zōri sandals poolside.

Two years later, Japanese rubber thongs were being imported into Australia. In January 1959, a Sydney wholesaler tried to order 1 million pairs from Japan, but import restrictions cut this to 250,000. Either way, thongs were flying off the shelves here.

Thongs were ideal for the relaxed Australian outdoor lifestyle, for camping, fishing, boating, going to the pool, the beach, or just hanging out. They were more practical than leather sandals as it didn't matter if they got wet. They were easily slipped on and off, simple to clean, and cheap to purchase. Once worn in, they were comfy, and some wearers became so attached to them that they were quite reluctantly replaced.

By 1959, Dunlop was producing thongs locally, though colours were limited to red, blue, and green. Dunlop had a long history of making numerous diverse rubber products at their huge Drummoyne factory until 1975. It's now the Birkenhead Point Outlet Centre.

By the 1970s, thongs were an integral part of the unofficial weekend uniform of the Australian male, together with a T-shirt, shorts, and a terry-towelling hat. In 1977, when the Australian population was 14 million, *The Bulletin* reported that Woolworths variety stores had sold 2.5 million pairs of thongs in that year alone.

In 1989, the Powerhouse Museum acquired a pair of thongs into its collection. What's interesting is that they weren't a brand-new pair but were worn out. They were donated by a retired Tasmanian barrister who'd purchased them in 1978 for 99 cents and worn them while touring Europe in 1983 and later to drive around Australia. He offered the thongs to the Museum to quell friends' and family's jibes about the thongs' condition, never expecting they'd be acquired.

Thongs had become so entrenched in Australian culture that one was represented in the Sydney Olympics 2000 Closing Ceremony. Kylie Minogue rode into Stadium Australia on top of a giant thong carried by Sydney Swans AFL players dressed as lifesavers. And in a quirky modern homage to the famous footwear, thong trees have popped up around the country where forgotten or washed-up thongs are nailed to tree trunks.



Thong tree on the Central Coast, 2013.



History beckons at a Sydney secret

Penelope Andrews

I recently had the joy of being a tourist in my own city and visiting an iconic Sydney location for the first time – Cockatoo Island. We pass it on the water regularly and spot it from Sydney Harbour, but how many of us have taken the time to take a ferry and see this historical island for ourselves?

After spending the day, I can say it is well worth booking a day trip or overnight stay this summer.

Convict history

From 1839 to 1869, Cockatoo Island was the site of a convict gaol. In a bid to stem the overpopulation of London's prison system, convicts were sent over to Australia to serve their sentences. The deep waters and bull sharks surrounding the island prevented detainees from escaping.

While there, you can purchase an audio tour. Pop your headphones on and be immersed in a world of yesteryear where 'convicts' (aka voice actors) detail their harsh living conditions and backbreaking work. On the tour you can see Cockatoo Island's guardhouse, mess hall, solitary confinement cells, grain silos and Biloela House; all constructed from sandstone quarried by convicts.



Later, from 1857 to 1992, Cockatoo Island was used as a major shipbuilding and repair facility. The island features heritage objects, landmarks and structures from this time in maritime history.

The sweeping harbour views from the island's vantage points are magical as well, with the Sydney Harbour Bridge standing strong in the mid ground.

From day stays to camping

If you're heading over for the day, take a picnic and have it on the green lawns overlooking the harbour. But if you're thinking of an overnight stay, a camping experience is the perfect option.

The waterfront campground has unbeatable views and caters to a range of budgets and group sizes — including family vacations. A highlight is the ferry to the destination itself. For North Shore locals, one of the easier options is getting on at Woolwich Wharf or Huntley's Point Wharf. There's plenty of parking at these wharves.

So if you're looking for summer activities in Sydney, you can't go wrong with exploring your own backyard – and Cockatoo Island is now a favourite among my family. Just don't expect many cockatoos to be flying around on the island, as the name suggests, they're almost nowhere to be found!

The Fuji Files

There are four main trails – Yoshida, Fujinomiya, Subashiri and Gotemba – to summit Mount Fuji. Editor **Jay Houhlias** took the quieter Subashiri trail to welcome a new day on Japan's tallest peak.



The author was a guest of Fuji Mountain Guides' Sunrise Summit 2-day Mt. Fuji Tour: Details: **fujimountainguides.com**.











“I wish to see Mount Fuji,” said the man next to me at the onsen. Then he raised his arms in the air questionably and perhaps a little indignantly, “But, I cannot, and so, I am sad.”

It was the evening before the climb, and I decided to loosen up at the local onsen. After spending some time in the indoor baths, I then came back to the open-air viewing baths, and miraculously, the clouds had lifted in that post-rain way, where the contrasting colours made the landscape look like it had been etched in heavy ink.

I saw my friend again, and he was smitten. “I see Mount Fuji!” he exclaimed when he saw me. “Are you happy?” I asked. “Yes, very happy," he said. "Tomorrow, I will be climbing Mount Fuji,” I said. “Woah,” he said, eyes widening. “I will be happy,” I said, “let’s hope you can see me”.

The town of Gotemba lies at the foot of Japan’s tallest mountain, Mount Fuji. However, Fuji is, as you could tell by my onsen conversation, an elusive mistress, rarely seen, mostly covered in clouds or fog or whatever else they have going at an altitude of almost 3800m.

The best way to see Fuji is to climb it. Despite the fog and rapidly changing weather patterns, you can pretty much always see the ground in front of you, and can always feel the air and rain and wind, and whatever else they have going on up there.

Fuji Mountain Guides (FMG) offers pickups from Tokyo, but I was already in Gotemba, so base camp was only a short drive. When we arrived, everyone geared up.

While we layered on the clothing, there was the feeling of a challenge in the air, a keenness for what was to come. A kind of excitement, but not strong or outright excitement, and it didn’t veer near angst either.

At the time, I didn’t know how to describe the feeling. It was an elusive feeling, a Fuji special apparently. A few younger kids ran around the base camp joyfully. They didn't feel the need to analyse the pre-hike feeling.

The bus took us to the foot and we got a briefing. “Take your time,” the guides said, “it’s tempting to start fast, but it will get harder the higher we climb, so pace yourself.”

And then, we set off, fast. There were springs in everyone’s steps. Everyone walked quickly, strong, still with that indescribable feeling of neither excitement nor angst.

“Take your time, and breathe,” the guides reminded us. “It seems easy now, but you’ll start to feel it later. The air gets thinner, it gets colder, you get hotter, your legs start feeling each step, so take it slow now, ease in.”

As a large group of about 30, we walked one after the other, taking breaks every 30 minutes so we could stick together. The higher we climbed through the trees and shrubbery, the less trees and shrubbery there were. Quite soon, it was rocks, and rock derivatives like dirt and stone.

Along the climb, there were huts every hour or so. Usually, you can see the next hut from the one below. However, just because you see it, it does not mean it’s close.

These huts do food, but it’s minimal – cup noodles mostly. Even rice is scarce, and the meat is in tiny packet quantities. I would highly recommend bringing your own food.

After about five hours, we reached our hut for the night. We piled into the wooden room for our dinner, provided by our guides. We all looked at the curry plonked in front of us. The guides said, “Eat up, it’s all part of the experience.”

I am a hungry boy, so by the time the guides got to the part where they said “experience”, I was experiencing an empty bowl in front of me.

At around seven in the evening, we all went upstairs to the shared dorm. The beds were single mattresses stacked next to each other with a little sheet hung to separate. All part of the experience, the guides said again.

I smiled as I got into bed. I love this stuff. I mean, I wouldn’t do it every night, but just for a while, occasionally, it can be a real joy when sleeping suddenly is an adventure. I am an infamously terrific sleeper, so I was out by eight and up again at two.

Fuji Mountain Guides offers a sunrise tour, meaning you summit Fuji at sunrise. To do that, you have to wake up and leave your hut by 2:30am for the additional two-hour hike to see the sunrise at 4:30am.

In the hut, everyone was bleary-eyed, walking around slightly rattled, but again, that feeling of keenness was there. We set off once again, feeling oddly energised despite the time. We all caked the mountain slopes like fairy lights on a Christmas tree, and soon, the headlights of all the walkers started to lose intensity as brightness reigned in.

We realised we were at the summit. But it was not done. The sunrise was coming, and we needed a spot to watch it. All the successful summiteers took their seats and settled in for the show, and we found our seats too.

It was a new day in Japan. But for us climbers, it felt like one long day since we’d set off yesterday. The morning lit up and that lit everyone on the mountain up. Everyone was happy. It’s quite a thing to be in a place where everyone is remarkably happy.

Coming back down was also a treat. There is a path you can take of pure loose gravel. The idea is to lean back and slide down, letting the gravel slide with each heel strike of a step. The guides told us to be careful, and that many people get injured in this part.

I was not careful. I bounded down that gravel like it was 1965, if that’s the correct reference year. Disclaimer because I won’t recommend anything, but this was so much fun. I made it to the bottom unharmed but with small rocks and pebbles in every nook and cranny of my lower half.

Finally, I sat down, and here I realised how utterly spent I was, but more importantly, the gravity of what I just did.

The reason it was so significant was, yes, climbing Fuji was hard, but it’s also not some unclimbable beast you have to train years for. It’s a challenge you simply respect.

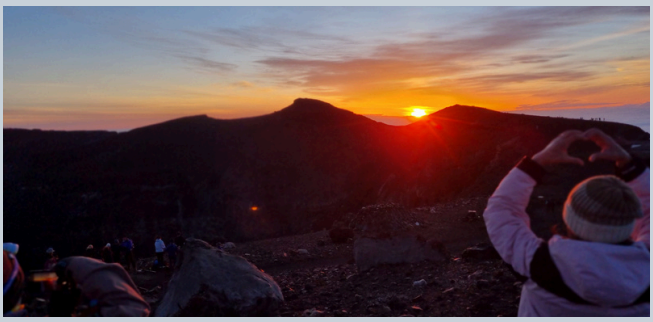
Then I realised that this, too, was the feeling in the air before the climb. Excitement, but respect, and reverence.

Coming back to ground level in the bus, I looked back to catch a final glimpse of the elusive titan. But I just saw clouds. That felt good. I respected Fuji more for that.













Pistachio, Raspberry and Lemon Christmas Tree Trifle

Elliot Styche @elliots.table

A festive showstopper of raspberry jelly, lemon custard and pistachio sponge, layered high and finished with clouds of mascarpone cream and a pistachio Christmas tree border.

My love for trifle goes right back to childhood. The fresh zing of fruit with silky layers of custard always stops me in my tracks, and I don't think I've ever not eaten leftover trifle on Boxing Day.

I developed this trifle last year as the centrepiece of my Christmas table, and what I love most is that you can get ahead. The cake can be made in advance and the custard a few days out, so there's no last-minute stress. I use packet jelly because there's something so nostalgic about the taste, and I don't over-sweeten the cream, which keeps everything perfectly balanced. It serves 10-12 trifle-lovers.

I hope your table is filled with joy this year. Wishing you a merry Christmas and happy new year.



Pistachio sponge

INGREDIENTS

- **450g unsalted butter, softened**
- **450g caster sugar**
- **9 large eggs, room temperature**
- **360g self-raising flour**
- **225g finely ground pistachios**
- **4 tbsp milk**
- **2 tsp vanilla extract**
- **Pinch of salt**
- **A few drops of green gel colouring (optional)**

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 165°C fan. Grease and line a 23 x 33cm rectangle tin, or two smaller tins.
2. Cream the butter and sugar for 3-5 minutes until pale and fluffy.
3. Beat in the eggs one at a time. If the mixture curdles, add a spoonful of flour.
4. Fold through the flour, pistachios and salt.
5. Stir in the milk, vanilla and optional colouring.
6. Spread evenly in the tin and bake for 25-30 minutes, until golden and springy.
7. Cool completely, then slice horizontally to reveal the vivid green interior.
8. Use Christmas tree cutters to cut shapes for the trifle border. Cube leftover sponge for middle layers.

Rasberry jelly

INGREDIENTS

- **1 packet raspberry jelly**
- **150g fresh raspberries**

METHOD

1. Make the jelly according to the packet instructions.
2. Pour a layer into the trifle bowl.
3. Add the raspberries evenly and chill 1-2 hours.

Sponge syrup

INGREDIENTS

- **50ml raspberry liqueur or limoncello**
- **50ml water**
- **1 tsp caster sugar**

METHOD

1. Warm gently to dissolve the sugar, then cool completely. For an alcohol-free version, use 50ml sugar syrup and 1 tsp lemon juice instead.

Lemon custard

INGREDIENTS

- 1 litre whole milk
- 300ml double cream
- 8 large egg yolks
- 200g caster sugar, divided
- 50g cornflour
- Zest of 4 lemons
- 2 tbsp lemon juice

METHOD

1. Heat the milk, cream, half the sugar and the lemon zest until steaming.
2. Whisk the yolks, remaining sugar and cornflour until smooth.
3. Temper the yolks by slowly pouring in the hot milk mixture while whisking.
4. Return to the pan and cook gently, stirring, until thickened. Do not boil.
5. Stir in the lemon juice and cool slightly before using. You can use store-bought custard here. Just grate the zest of two lemons directly into it.



Marscarpone cream

INGREDIENTS

- 900ml thickened cream
- 250g mascarpone
- 2 tbsp icing sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

METHOD

1. Combine cream and mascarpone in chilled bowl.
2. Whip on medium speed until slightly thickened.
3. Add the icing sugar and vanilla, then whip to soft peaks, smooth, thick and stable.
4. Chill until ready to assemble.

ASSEMBLY

1. **Base:** Start with jelly layer and set raspberries inside. Chill until set.
2. **Soak:** Brush the sponge generously with the syrup.
3. **Pistachio tree border:** Press the tree cut-outs around the inside edge of the trifle bowl. Fill the centre with cubed sponge.
4. **Custard:** Pour over the lemon custard, smoothing to the edges. Chill until just set.
5. **Cream:** Spoon or pipe the mascarpone cream on top for a high, cloud-like finish.
6. **Garnish:** Sprinkle with slivered pistachios, fresh raspberries and extra Christmas tree sponges. Finish with lemon zest curls for brightness.

ELLIOT'S TIPS

Prep ahead. The jelly and sponge can be made a day in advance. Assemble the trifle on the day of serving for the best texture. **Make it easy**; use store-bought custard. Chill each layer briefly before adding the next for clean, defined lines. **This trifle serves generously**, so it's perfect for a crowd.



Delightful drinks

Reviews by Natasha Ciesielski, *Bacchus at the Theatre*



Krondorf '121 Settlers' Old Vine Shiraz, 2022 $110

Krondorf (German for 'Crown Village') was established in South Australia in 1847 by a small group of settlers from Silesia, a Central European region that today spans parts of Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic.

Known for producing quality small-batch wines, Krondorf sources its Shiraz from a single vineyard site on the Barossa's cooler southern edge. The 121 Settlers range honours the 121 pioneering souls who formed the original community, celebrating the region's rich winemaking heritage.

The wine captures the heart of the Barossa through carefully selected fruit from hardy 60-year-old vines, a character that shines through in every glass. Dark, ripe blackberry, plum and concentrated blue fruit lead the aromatics, followed by notes of graphite, aniseed and dark chocolate. The red clay and loam soils encourage early ripening, producing bold fruit balanced by firm, tannic structure. Aged for 16–18 months in a combination of new and second-use French oak barrels, the wine develops texture and complexity. It's full-bodied and intensely flavoured, with finely structured tannins that lead to a long, satisfying finish.

Krondorf's values of love, faith and hope carry a fitting message at Christmas. Presented in an impressive gift box, this is a thoughtful addition to a festive table or a special gift for a red wine lover.

Pairing Guide: Roast goose with red cabbage and potato dumplings. A traditional Central European festive combination that will stand up to the wine's tannins, while the savoury-sweet flavour of the cabbage provides a refreshing contrast.





Frogmore Creek Chardonnay 2024, $38

Tasmania's Coal River Valley is a leading cool-climate region, renowned for producing ultra-premium wines. Its pristine growing conditions and slow-ripening grapes result in lively, fruit-driven wines. Frogmore Creek's senior winemaker, Alain Rousseau, brings a French influence to the Chardonnay, with French oak ageing adding texture and complexity. Barrel-aged for 10 months, the wine develops toasty, cedar aromas alongside subtle almond and creamy lees notes. White peach, citrus and stone fruit flow across the palate, balanced by crisp minerality and refreshing acidity. Delicate yet complex, it's an elegant choice for the Christmas table.

Pairing Guide: Grilled lobster with garlic butter, lemon and fresh herbs. A luxurious Christmas centrepiece. The wine's acidity cuts through the butter's richness, while its freshness enhances the natural sweetness of the lobster.



Summer gardening

Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society

A walk through the northern suburbs in mid to late spring will reveal clouds of blue, pink and white flowers. These belong to the hydrangea family. In years gone by, just about every garden would have one or more large bushes of mostly blue hydrangeas that flowered reliably every year.

Nowadays, these large but often untidy bushes have given way to smaller and neater bushes with a variety of flower shapes and colours – the hybridisers have certainly been hard at work. You will be spoilt for choice at your local garden centre. Most hydrangeas in nurseries are Hydrangea macrophylla (the mop-head hydrangea). Their colour range has now increased to include red as well.





So now, how to grow them. They do best in a lightly shaded area and need about a metre of free space. The soil should be improved with some well-dug-in cow manure. After planting, put some fertiliser pellets around and mulch the hydrangea well with sugar cane mulch or your own compost.

They suffer from very few pests or diseases but will need an annual prune in winter when the stems should be taken back about halfway to a pair of nice fat buds.

It is important to keep the hydrangeas well-watered in summer. The flowers can be left on right into autumn when they will change colour to a lovely rusty-green shade.

This is a great time of the year to feed your larger plants such as azaleas, camellias and roses as well as large shrubs such as weigela, spirea, gardenias, fuchsias, salvias, and the like, with the appropriate food. Check with your garden centre as some products are specific to the more acid-loving plants and some are all-purpose fertilisers. The general rule about applying fertiliser is to water the plant well first, then apply the fertiliser and water the plant again to water in the fertiliser.

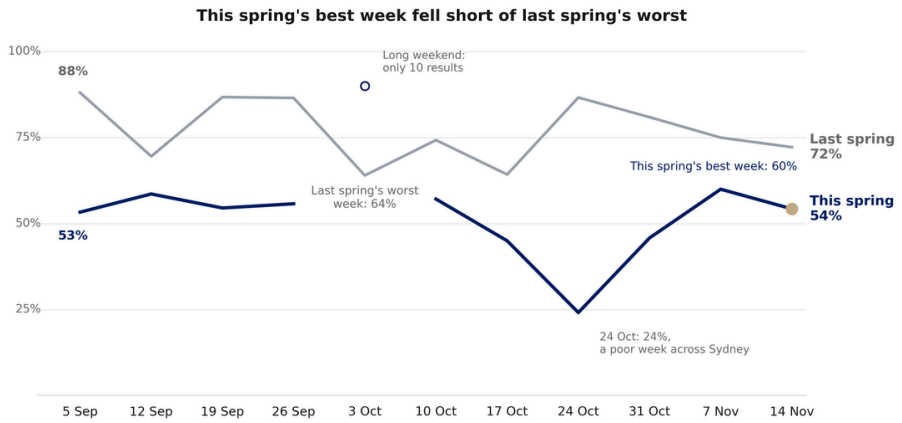
Most of us will have at least one citrus plant, either in the garden or somewhere in a pot. At this time of year, keep your eyes open for the dreaded citrus bug – the bronze-orange beetle. When they emerge from their eggs, they are small and green but as they develop, they go through a second stage as an orange beetle and then, in their final stage, they are black and have reached about 25mm in size.

In all stages, they attack new foliage and leave it limp and wilting. Control is difficult but if there are not too many, removal by hand is best (but take care not to be sprayed by the insect, especially anywhere near the eyes – they are not called 'stink bugs' for nothing!) The best control is to get in early in the season and spray with a horticultural oil on a 2-3 weekly basis. This will serve to keep them at bay.

KHS's meets monthly. **www.khsgardenclub.org.au**



The spring that sorted the Upper North Shore



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

Last spring, a home taken to auction on the Upper North Shore almost always sold. This spring, about half did. What separated the two halves was the kind of home it was, and where it sat.

We counted every auction result published for 17 suburbs, from Roseville to Wahroonga and St Ives, over the 11 weeks to 14 November. Then we counted the same weeks last year. This is our last column for the year, so it does two jobs: it sums up spring, and it sets out what the numbers suggest for the new year.

Sales more than halved, and stayed there

Agents reported 162 auction sales this spring, a drop of 62% from last spring's 425. The reported clearance rate also fell from 78% to 53%. It was not a slide. Spring opened at this level and held it.

What it means for you: If you are waiting for the season to pick up, it has had 11 weeks to do so. This is the market, not a bad patch.

Far fewer homes sold under the hammer

Only 52 homes sold under the hammer this spring, against 132 last spring. Properties withdrawn from an auction went the other way, from 34 to 98.

One thing did not change. In both springs, about two in three sales were agreed before auction day. The serious buyers still moved early. There were simply fewer of them, and many more owners withdrew before auction day.

What it means for you: An offer that arrives before auction day deserves real attention. This spring it was often the best one an owner saw.

What you own, and where, now decides the result

Apartments have cleared at 64%. Houses with five or more bedrooms (the home this area is known for) have cleared at 41%.

Place has mattered too. In Roseville, Lindfield and Killara, 65% of auction results were sales. In Pymble,

Ken Wolf real estate



Ken Wolf
0418 675 611
J.P., MRE (UNSW) FAPI
Principal & Licensed Real Estate Agent • Certified Practicing Valuer
API No#67590



Samantha Wolf
0405 348 878
Property Manager
Licensed Real Estate Agent

GPO Centre, 3/741 Pacific Highway Gordon | 9498 3516
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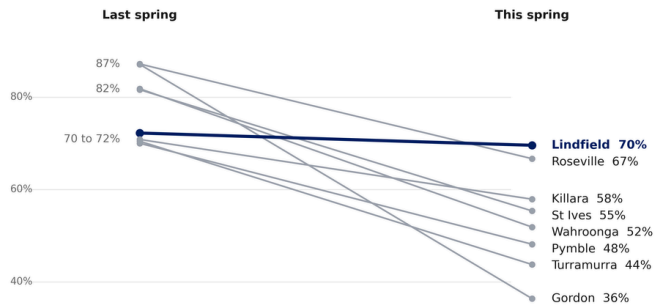
Turramurra, Wahroonga and St Ives it was 50%. Apartments between Roseville and Killara sold about as readily as they did a year ago.

Put the two together and the gap is wide. A house in Wahroonga or Turramurra cleared at 46%. An apartment in Lindfield or Killara cleared at 83%. Gordon was the exception. It sits in the middle of the line and is mostly apartments, yet only 8 of its 22 results were sales. A handful of apartment buildings were relisted week after week. Sometimes the building matters more than the suburb.

None of this showed last spring. Then, a house in St Ives and an apartment in Lindfield cleared at much the same rate. A strong market hides the differences; a weaker one reveals them.

Lindfield held. Every other suburb sold far less of what went to auction



Prices tell the same story. Cotality's valuations show house values lower over the year to September in all 17 suburbs: by 10% to 22% in 10 of them, and by about 5% in Roseville and Lindfield, two of the most southerly Upper North Shore suburbs. The NSW Valuer General's sales register, which runs some months behind, shows the fall began in April. Apartment prices largely held.

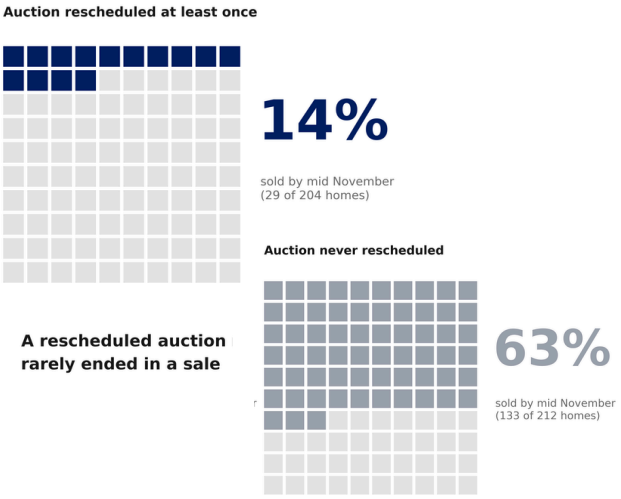
What it means for you: Suburb averages tell you less than they did a year ago. Compare your home with recent sales of the same type, in your own pocket, from the last few months. A sale in your street last spring is out of date.

A changed auction date rarely ended in a sale

Of the 416 homes taken to auction this spring, 204 had the date moved at least once. By mid November, only 29 of those had a reported sale.

The homes that were never rescheduled sold at more than four times that rate. Moving the date did not find the buyer.

Nor was it a handful of homes. About 50% of all listed auctions were rescheduled (295 of 602),



against about 25% across the rest of Sydney. St Ives had more auctions than any other suburb, most of them houses, and 71 of its 127 were rescheduled. If we count a rescheduled auction as a home that did not sell that week, then the Upper North Shore's clearance rate was 27%, not 53%.

What it means for you: If a campaign is not producing offers, look at the price before you move the date.

The new year starts with a backlog, not a clean slate

Last November the Upper North Shore went into summer with most of its auction stock sold. This year, about 250 of those 416 homes (60%) had no reported sale by mid November. A few have sold quietly since.

Many listings will come back in the new year. They will be joined by the usual February listings. Buyers will have more to choose from, and more time to choose.

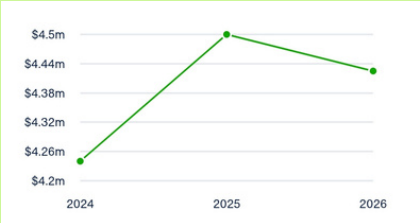
Nothing in 11 weeks of auction results this spring points to a turn in sales. Clearance was flat from September to November. Prices are a different matter. Cotality's monthly valuations show the fall in house values slowing, from about 3% a month in July to about 1% in September.

What we see at inspections and appraisals each week says it has slowed further since. That may prove temporary. So the first months of the new year are likely to look much like spring for sales, with more homes on the market and steadier prices than in winter.

Three things would tell us it is changing; a clearance above 60% for several weeks in a row, fewer auctions rescheduled or withdrawn, and homes that come back in February at a lower price and sell.

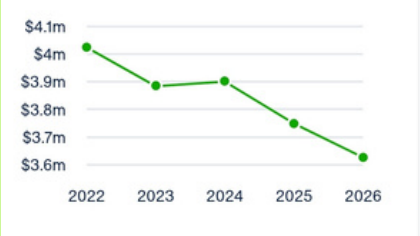
Suburb **snapshots**

SNAPSHOT Castle Cove



5-BEDROOM HOUSE

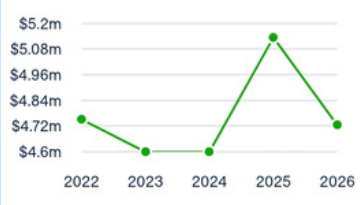
Median price 2026	**$4.42m**
12-mth growth	**-1.7%**
12-mth sales	**12**



4-BEDROOM HOUSE

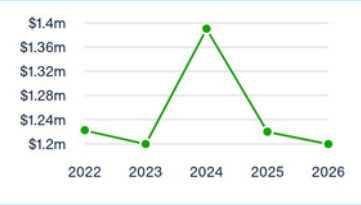
Median price 2026	**$3.63m**
12-mth growth	**-3.3%**
12-mth sales	**13**

SNAPSHOT Northbridge



4-BEDROOM HOUSE

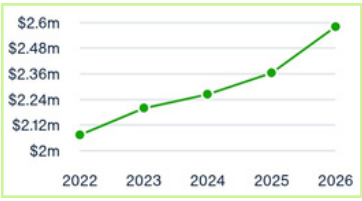
Median price 2026	**$4.72m**
12-mth growth	**-8%**
12-mth sales	**27**



2-BEDROOM UNIT

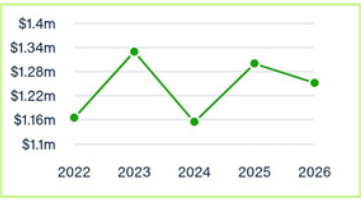
Median price 2026	**$1.2m**
12-mth growth	**-1.6%**
12-mth sales	**12**

SNAPSHOT Crows Nest



2-BEDROOM HOUSE

Median price 2026	**$2.58m**
12-mth growth	**9.2%**
12-mth sales	**12**



2-BEDROOM UNIT

Median price 2026	**$1.25m**
12-mth growth	**-3.7%**
12-mth sales	**30**

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