

THE ROTUNDA

NORTH FITZROY'S COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

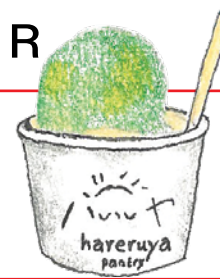


**The songs of
North Fitzroy**
Page 7



**Update on
drinking ban**
Page 2

**Ice cream
crawl**
Page 6



PUPPY RUN OVER BY LAWNMOWER

By Charlie Gill

A puppy run over by a lawnmower has spent three nights in hospital to treat fractures in three places. Bunny, a fourteen-week-old rescue, was playing in Edinburgh Gardens when her legs were caught beneath a council-contracted mower. Now, as a local couple consider their \$10,000 medical bill, dog owners have pressured Yarra City Council into making preventative changes.

"We all thought we were going to see a dog get chopped up," one witness told *The Rotunda*. "It was horrific."

For months, drainage issues in parts of the Edinburgh Gardens off-leash area have forced dog owners to congregate on Alfred Crescent Oval. On the morning of September 28th, at around 7:30am, approximately 30 dogs and as many owners were gathered in its north-western corner, wary of a mower on the other side of the oval.

"It was particularly busy because it was a particularly beautiful morning," says Joe, who was there with Tammy, his Saint Bernard. "We'd been seeing the lawnmowers at least twice a week on that oval. Over the last six months, we'd all been complaining about it."

"I noticed that the lawnmower was there," says a local named Sunni, who was in the park with her new puppy. "But I also saw there was a big group of people with their dogs, and Bunny was really excited to see all the puppies that she's been hanging out with."

Suddenly, the mower began skirting the oval's perimeter in their direction.



Bunny in Edinburgh Gardens

"We all realised his route was going to intersect with where we were," Joe told *The Rotunda*. "The group parted to allow the tractor to go through. In the confusion,

we became aware of a puppy that had taken a wrong turn...It had gone under the rollers of the mowing unit."

continued Page 2

EDITORIAL

There's trouble in paradise

It looks like something transplanted from the Las Vegas strip or Bangkok's Khao San Road: opposite the Pinnacle, across the road from the BP, huge neon lights flashing down St Georges Road so that the North Fitzroy village suddenly looks like Times Square.

The source of the glow is the petrol price board outside our brand new service station. At first glance, it seems a bit much for a humble community like ours. But that raises a question in itself: are we really just a quaint little neighbourhood where nothing much goes on?

We're certainly not acting like it. In recent weeks, North Fitzroy and surrounds has been home to dramatic firebombings, puppy-lawnmower incidents and mass civil unrest as caused by a drinking ban on median strips. And while we'd love to fix it all with a little prayer asking the gods to return us to tranquility, Yarra City Council just removed the wishing tree in Edinburgh Gardens.

Then again, while you couldn't be begrudged for thinking North Fitzroy has officially become a failed state, we're mostly ticking along as usual. The primary school's fete is coming up, the ice cream shop is still open for business—even if the tobacconist isn't—and *The Rotunda* has come out with a spring edition.

So if there's trouble in paradise then at least it's still paradise. In this issue, you can learn the details of our recent misfortunes *and* enjoy features on North Fitzroy's musical footprint, a local woman's personal reflection on Inner Northern ice cream, Ludo's regular column, Poet's Corner and our crossword and quiz. There's even an article about North Fitzroy's attempt to establish itself in New York City: the only place in the world that's got as much going on.

If you'd like to see your article in a future edition or would like to advertise your business in the best way possible, contact us at northfitzroyrotunda@gmail.com. Visit our website for merch. Anyway. Please enjoy our spring edition!

Charlie Gill

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COUNCIL MOVES FORWARD ON CANNING ST



Locals gather on the median strip to protest the ban

By Charlie Gill

Yarra City Council has made a step towards resolving the drinking ban on Carlton North's median strips. After the Wine Corner Store on Canning Street took to Instagram to announce the ban as caused by "unrelenting miserable neighbours", a petition to 'Free the Strip' gathered over 9000 signatures and prompted mass outrage. The story was even covered by a Ukrainian news site. Seriously.

At a council meeting on October 13th at Fitzroy Town Hall, a member of the 'Canning 29'—a.k.a one of the 29 residents who signed the petition preceding the ban—addressed the council.

"The mainstream and social media coverage misrepresented our position and much of the reporting has been biased," she said. "To be clear, we support social and recreational activities on the strip, as happens on parts of Canning Street and other parts of the neighbourhood. They're very important to building and developing community."

This kind of sentiment was oft-expressed at what turned out to be a diplomatic council meeting. The major order of business centred around one motion for a report exploring various solutions.

"Council officers will come back in a month's time with their report, which we'll either love, hate or amend," said Mayor Stephen

Jolly. "That's when the real debate will happen, not tonight."

Potential solutions have already been put forth by various councillors. As the media storm unfolded in late September, Ed Crossland—former mayor, Greens member and councillor representing that section of Carlton North—promised to move a motion to reverse the ban. Meanwhile, the Victorian Greens gathered for a protest picnic and Greens leader Ellen Sandell gave a speech in state parliament describing Mayor Jolly as a "killjoy".

Some clarification: the ban was caused by the enforcement of a previously ignored law prohibiting drinking on median strips. In Yarra, you're free to crack open a beer in 'open space', but in 2020 the Open Space strategy was revised to exclude median strips. After complaints, the council found that drinking on the strip was technically illegal. Jolly said the issue was being framed incorrectly by both the Greens and Premier Ben Carroll—who promised to reverse the ban if elected—ahead of the state election.

"You can't overturn a law, you've got to change a law," he told *The Rotunda*. "We're not in North Korea where the great leader can go: 'Oh, that's my brother accused of murder. I'm going to overthrow that law for him'...This idea that councillors or me as mayor closed down the strip is just ridiculous."

"Now that it's hit the media, they think they're going to get votes out of it...So the solution will not come through Ed Crossland or the Greens. It will come through the community, the pub, the council, all working together to find a solution."

This solution, announced in early October via Jolly's Facebook page, was to either introduce a bar-managed parklet on the

strip or a road closure to turn that section of the median into a park. He said he would put forward the proposal at the upcoming meeting. But Crossland—who instead suggested revising Yarra's Open Space strategy—was sceptical.

"What I've seen by the Mayor won't actually resolve most of the genuine amenity issues people have raised, nor the broader issue," he told *The Rotunda*. "People on Drummond Street or elsewhere on Canning Street having a drink with their neighbours would still be prohibited under what's been put forward. I don't understand what that's resolving other than exploring the commercialisation of the strip."

On October 13th, three days after a party on the strip was thrown in response to the ban (pictured), the council meeting was finally held. Instead of both putting forward their rival proposals, Jolly and Crossland combined them into one motion calling for a report to be presented to the council at its next meeting on November 10th. This report would investigate options such as establishing parklets in front of the store, amending the relevant law, reviewing the Open Space strategy and reclassifying the strip as open space—so that people are free to drink on it like they can in Edinburgh Gardens.

It passed unanimously. The council also agreed that the Canning Street petitioners had been treated unfairly in the mainstream news and social media. On Instagram they were described as "fun-sucking demotors" and *The Age* was not much kinder.

"There's something really lovely about neighbours gathering in a space. It's an iconic image, and that's why it's generated so much attention and outpouring of concern," said councillor Sophie Wade. "That said, I don't think the residents intended to stop a long-term pastime."

PUPPY RUN OVER BY LAWNMOWER

From Page 1

"When I picked her up, she was quite limp," says Sunni. "I just ran home because I was scared that she was going to die. I thought maybe her organs were crushed."

As witnesses were left in tears, Sunni and her partner Pete drove Bunny to a veterinary hospital where she spent three nights undergoing surgery. Her fractures in her femur and pelvis might result in a permanently shortened leg and somewhat restricted movement for the rest of her life.

"So now we're like \$10,000 in debt, and also have a compromised little baby dog."

Soon, a community petition—created without Sunni or Pete's knowledge—demanded the council and contractor take accountability for both the medical bill and their management strategies. In response, the council held a public meeting at Alfred Crescent on October 7th, a stone's throw from where the incident took place.

Ken Gomez, councillor for Nicholls Ward, stood with a tennis-ball holder on his waist and leash strung across him like a mayoral sash. The actual mayor, Councillor Stephen Jolly—who has announced his intention to run for Lord Mayor of Melbourne having recently been acquitted of an assault charge—stood nearby in dark sunglasses.

Multiple locals spoke about the indifference to safety shown by mower operators throughout Edinburgh Gardens in general. One witness described the driver involved in the incident with Bunny, who did not get out of his seat after the incident and eventually drove away, as "callous and discompassionate". Another suggested that the situation was possibly a consequence of a "neoliberal model" that burdens workers with unreasonable deadlines.

Pete briefly spoke to thank the community for its support, but the relief of tension was short-lived. A woman reported multiple near

misses over the past six months involving both dogs and children. The people wanted answers from their council. Eventually, Mayor Jolly stepped forward and offered the crowd a solution.

"While it's true that under Section 2526 of the Domestic Animals Act—that oversees all our parks here in Yarra—everyone's got to have their dog in the lead when there's maintenance going on in the area, it seems to me crazy to do the maintenance just before nine o'clock when so many people are out here with their dogs."

He proposed for mowers to no longer operate any time prior to 9am from Monday to Friday, a change that was formalised a few days later. Councillor Gomez also committed to increased signage whenever mowing is happening nearby. For many at the meeting, this was a common sense quick-fix, but for Sunni and Pete there's no quick way to fix up \$10,000.

"I feel like that's sort of what public liability insurance is for," Sunni told *The Rotunda*, after a City of Yarra higher-up told her and Pete that any insurance claim would have to go through the contractor itself. "That is what it should be serving, and we should be compensated... You don't need to be mowing the lawns at 8am. You don't need to come that close."

"The council can't just have contractors, then shirk responsibility for how they act," says Joe.

Meanwhile, Bunny's road to both psychological and physical recovery is just beginning.

"I carried her close to the oval the other day, and she did start trembling a little bit," Sunni says. "So she definitely has an association now with that place as being a bit scary... But I do feel like her personality is coming back, and I think she's going to be okay."

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TOBACCO WARS COME TO NORTH FITZROY



By Charlie Gill

On the morning of October 12th at 7am, Manali Purohit, head chef at a plant-based patisserie and cafe on St Georges Road named And Bodega, woke up to countless sympathetic messages on Instagram.

"It took me time to figure out what they were talking about, and then I saw images from news channels about the firebombing," Manali told *The Rotunda* later that day. "By the time we were driving to the site, we knew that things were going to be really bad."

After arriving, Manali's husband and business partner Ash walked through their building to retrieve CCTV for the police. The wall was covered in soot, the roof had caved

in, the pipes had burst and the flooded floor was strewn with nitrous oxide canisters.

"It's a double brick wall, but still, the cans must have blown through and come to our side," says Manali. "It's shocking, the bombing element of firebombing."

A bit after 3:30am that morning, arsonists had attacked the tobacco store just past Holden Street, causing nearby residents to flee their homes. Ken, a barista at a local cafe, lives near the tobacconist.

"I was woken up by an explosion, but I thought it was a gunshot and went back to bed. The second explosion was a fire,

and my whole room went red...I got up, got dressed, called triple zero and rushed out. My neighbours yelled at me "run!" and then we ran across the road. There was like a bunch of explosions happening, and it felt like an earthquake...I was just waiting for the fire department, like: 'Oh my gosh, I don't want my house to burn down.'"

Thirty firefighters soon arrived to contain the blaze before it spread, but these dramatic scenes had not come as a surprise. Recently, masked assailants threw bricks through the tobacconist's windows, captured by And Bodega's CCTV camera and provided to police. Over the past few years the Tobacco Wars have swept through the city. Finally, they've arrived in North Fitzroy.

"The place next door was dodgy from the beginning," says Manali. "But it just happened very quickly. We didn't really get a chance to think through what we need to do to be prepared."

The tobacco store itself was totally destroyed (pictured). But while firebombings have almost become expected for Melbourne's tobacco stores, the same can't be said for vegan bakeries. And Bodega was featured in *The Rotunda's* May edition and quickly made a mark after opening just three months ago.

"We were getting a lot of love and support from our neighbours and the community, especially on weekends we were very busy," says Manali. "I don't know what we'll do tomorrow or the day after. For me, it was my whole purpose and existence."

A Facebook post in a community group incorrectly claimed that And Bodega's insurers would not pay them out having

been denied fire insurance after the tobacconist opened. This has happened to other businesses in Melbourne, but Manali says their contents insurance paid out \$25,000. Still, this doesn't cover the far greater sum they put into renovating the space, and things went from bad to worse when opportunistic thieves stole equipment and technology from the shop in the days after the fire.

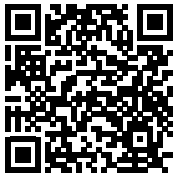
At the Yarra City Council's most recent meeting on October 13th, councillor and Nicholls Ward representative Ken Gomez asked CEO Sue Wilkinson whether there's scope for the council to discourage illegal tobacconists popping up in Yarra.

"Enforcement of illegal tobacco activities is not within council's remit," Wilkinson said. "We have no legislative powers in that regard. I can't state more clearly: this is a criminal activity."

It now looks like reconstructing the buildings could take around a year, meaning that Manali and Ash think their time at 340 St Georges Road is probably over. Instead, they plan on finding a takeaway window from which to serve their pastries and coffee, hoping to move back into a bigger space once they can afford it.

"North Fitzroy has been so supportive, coming up with all kinds of ideas to get us back on our feet. So we're just very, very grateful for the community."

If you'd like to donate to the GoFundMe to support Manali and Ash, use this QR code.



WISHING TREE FORCED OUT

The wishing tree in Edinburgh Gardens has been forced to pack up shop by the City of Yarra, who have cited multiple complaints about littering in its vicinity. It has since been stripped of the ropes, twine and small pieces of paper upon which were written our community's deepest desires. But Sylvia, the young woman responsible for the project, is not going down without a fight.

"I wasn't expecting it at all," Sylvia told *The Rotunda*. "I've only gotten good feedback...so it's pretty devastating. I was keeping it up pretty well, I think."

A regular at North Fitzroy library, Sylvia was inspired by the whimsical bird boxes in Alfred Crescent and the wishing tree in Clifton Hill. She went through an exhaustive process to find the right host for a North Fitzroy equivalent.

"I went around to all the different trees and then asked this one for permission. It gave me a yes."

"I just think it's cute. Everyone could use a little wish."

The elm has a branch that juts out horizontally and, as such, was perfect for the job.

Once she got permission from the council, Sylvia put twine, paper and pens

in a pretty yellow wooden box staked into the ground, and set up an email (eddiegardenswishingtree@hotmail.com) so people could tell her when materials ran out. She then fixed it with a piece of blue-painted plywood displaying an original poem:

"When wonder strikes you real and true / The magic blossoms right in you / The wishing tree would love to aid / With one good deed your wish is paid / Hug your friend or cook a meal / Help an injured bird's foot heal / Tell a stranger they're amazing / The hopes of all you will be raising".

Indeed, there was a moral dimension to the tree—a sense of true community spirit—that is lacking in your average fountain or well.

"I just want everyone to be nice to the tree and use it for good," Sylvia told *The Rotunda* when it went live in early August. "There are a few people that I've blacklisted from the tree, so their wishes will not work."

The Rotunda asked Sylvia why this was the case.

"I have enemies," she said.

This proved to be a prescient comment. On October 5th, Sylvia woke to an email from the Open Space Services team at Yarra City Council, informing her that "due to a number of concerns about litter around the



Wishing Tree in Edinburgh Gardens, we'll be removing the rope and other attached items on Thursday, October 8th".

Sylvia says that sometimes the paper wouldn't stay tied to the twine. This must've accounted for the litter. Still, couldn't that be fixed by putting a sign up imploring people to keep their knots tight? The people of Edinburgh Gardens had demonstrated a desire to look after the tree themselves.

"Someone broke the lid a few weeks ago...And I went to check on it, and she'd brought it back and fixed it herself. So I feel like the community has gotten around it. It's really cute."

"I was working on improving the wishing tree, but not to be."

Two months into its life as a North Fitzrovia landmark—Sylvia had listed it as a tourist

attraction on Google Maps—the tree was no longer. A great many people had already visited it through spring and had their chance to commune with destiny, but it no doubt would've peaked during idyllic summer days in Edinburgh Gardens. Sylvia says there was more than enough twine to accommodate Christmas wishes.

The council told Sylvia she could come save whatever she wanted prior to the "clean-up", and so she quickly rescued the twine, the yellow box, plywood and—most importantly—the wishes themselves, planning to either display them in a gallery space or reinstate them on the tree at a later date.

"I'm gonna work something out. I feel like I can be very convincing...it's the right tree for the job."

"It just looks so beautiful, when they're swinging in the wind."

TAKE TWO: KAY STEWART AND HER NICARAGUAN GRANDSON

Our new column Take Two celebrates dynamic local duos. *The Rotunda* got a coffee at the Tin Pot with local artist Kay Stewart and her grandson Nick, who recently moved to Melbourne from Nicaragua

By Elisabeth Storor

Kay Stewart

I moved to Fitzroy North from Canterbury twelve years ago. Nick came to live with me in 2024. After he finished high school in Nicaragua, he decided to move to Melbourne for uni. My son, his father, is a journalist who lives in Kolkata, and his mum still lives in Nicaragua. Everyone told me I was mad to let him move in, but I love having him here. He's a good housemate besides his occasional dirty clothes. We mostly do our own cooking because we have different schedules, but he helps me out, he takes me to the shops and carries all the bags home!

I grew up in Sydney and studied at the National Art School. After that I went overseas to keep studying art. First I learnt painting and drawing in Salzburg—the school was based out of a castle on top of a mountain, we'd get to class by taking a funicular! After Salzburg, I studied at a convent in Perugia, Italy, and later to London for art school.

After Europe, I came back to Australia and worked as an illustrator at *The Australian*. This was in the 1970s when it was popular for newspapers to feature illustrations done in a black and white style in the fine artiste tradition instead of photographs. They would send me to Derby Day to draw people at the races, or to meet celebrities who were being interviewed for the paper. Once I was asked to draw Dame Joan Sutherland! I did more freelance illustrating later at *The Age*, using watercolours. Now I'm retired, but I still paint

and draw. My work is shown through Bridget McDonnell Gallery in Carlton.

I love living in Fitzroy North. This time of life is fabulous for me, I love that after kids and everything, I have my own time. Everyone in my street is interesting and unique in their own way. Usually you might get on with one or two people who live near you, but truly all my neighbours are lovely people. There are a number of single women well past the halfway mark, we all look after each other. During Covid there was a WhatsApp group where people checked in on each other. Nick is well-loved on our street because of his computer engineering degree, he can help out all the oldies with their computer problems. It's lovely having my grandson live with me, he knows he can stay as long as he wants.

Nick Egerton

I moved to Australia in 2024, and I've lived with my grandma in Fitzroy North since I arrived. When I first got here, I had a bit of a gap year settling into Australia. I only visited a couple of times as a kid, my family came to Nicaragua the rest of the time. Now I'm in the second year of my computer engineering degree at RMIT.

I grew up in a small town called León, and later we moved to Chinandega, a university town which is well known for its political frescos. They have a famous one of Indigenous Nicaraguan people fighting back against Reagan and Henry



Kissinger! I've only met a few people here who've visited Nicaragua. It's popular to go sandboarding on the volcanos, I've met some people who've done that.

We both like it here in Fitzroy North. Our favourite place to hang out together is the Tin Pot. All the staff are so nice. Our neighbours are cool too. They always ask me to come help them when they have technology problems. They think I'm a tech expert because I'm studying computer engineering, but honestly most of the time I just show them that they need to restart their computer.

Most of the time me and Grandma get on well living together. At the start I got in trouble a bit for leaving dirty clothes

around, but we're good now. We do have a few generational differences. I got in trouble the other week because I wanted to wear shorts to a restaurant. Grandma said that men wouldn't be caught dead in shorts at a restaurant in her day. Also we disagree about Barkly Square. Grandma loves it, but I hate it.

My plan is to keep living with Grandma if she'll still have me. She says I'm alright to stay as long as I don't start listening to any 'horrible music', whatever that means! I don't mind listening to classical music with her, so I think we'll be good for a while longer.

Do you know a local duo who we should interview for the next edition of Take Two? If so, get in touch!

YOUNG FILMMAKER ANNOUNCES NEW FITZROY DOCO



Photo credit: Sam Biddle

Zoe Coldham, a Fitzroy-born and raised filmmaker, knows how much the neighbourhood has changed in the last couple of decades. She grew up in a Gore Street terrace house in the 1990s and says she has always loved the area's specific kind of beauty.

"It's the way the light hits the buildings at different times of the day. A lot of the streets run east to west, and so you get lots of different light formations on all the buildings and through the trees. Even the Woolworths carpark looks beautiful," she told *The Rotunda*.

Coldham's trajectory—from a student at Fitzroy Primary School and Melbourne Girls College to graduating from Swinburne Film and Television school in 2013—owes a lot to her Fitzroy beginnings.

The 19th century buildings and the light, of course, but also the Video Busters store on Smith Street that, at one point, was said to be the biggest video shop in the Southern Hemisphere. Serendipitously, her sister had a part time job there.

"She would get a certain number of free rentals each week, and so she'd come back with a big stack of videos, and I just fell in love with films and cinema. And then she bought a video camera in her late teens, and I would use it all the time, making little films and little documentaries." The cast of these documentaries were sometimes Barbies lounging about her backyard pond.

Since leaving Swinburne, Zoe has directed *Charlotte*, which won best documentary at St Kilda Film Festival, and last year her 25-minute documentary *Gore Street, Fitzroy* premiered at an outdoor screening on Gore Street itself. The documentary traces the history of the street and the stories of its residents.

"When I was interviewing older people for *Gore Street, Fitzroy*, they told me that their neighbours and people walking down the street don't interact with them as much as they used to."

"They're these classic Fitzroy characters who are part of the everyday landscape and then one day they're gone, and you don't know where they went, and no one recorded their story."

That experience has prompted Zoe's next film: *Fitzroy: A History of Protest and Activism*, a feature-length doco that will look at the suburb's rich vein of activism and its famous stories, such as the saving of the Fitzroy Pool and the fight to protect the homes of residents in Brookes Crescent.

"We've got lots of written history, but I want to capture the essence of what

Fitzroy was. I want to explore, through interviews with past and present residents, and people who took part in some of its pivotal campaigns, what it is about Fitzroy that created such a strong culture of activism and collective action, and what happens to that tradition as the suburb changes."

The project has received development support from the City of Yarra and VicScreen and is hoped to be produced in 2027 by raising \$80,000 by donations through the Australian Cultural Fund.

She and her production team are looking to hear from people who have "lived, worked, gathered, created or protested in Fitzroy, and particularly those with stories, photographs, film or archival material connected to the suburb's past".

To contribute to the making of this portrait of Fitzroy and its vibrant activism, or to find out more, visit the film's profile on: www.australianculturalfund.org.au or use this QR code.



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CLIFTON HILL TENNIS CLUB AIMS TO EXPAND

By Charlie Gill

Clifton Hill Tennis Club is planning a major redevelopment of its current home at Mayors Park. The tennis club, tucked away at the junction of Heidelberg Road and Hoddle Street, wants to add two additional tennis courts, create eight permanent pickleball courts and build a new “civic-style” pavilion.

These plans comprise what the club is calling its ‘Mayors Park Centenary Vision 2029-2030’, with the written proposal citing increasing population density in the City of Yarra and that nearly half of residents are expected to be living alone by 2030. It also suggests the number of tennis courts in the City of Yarra is far fewer than it should be based on the council’s target ratio.

“We believe that if we provide opportunities for people to play and connect, it’s good for their well-being,” President of the Clifton Hill Tennis Club Pietro Papantuono told *The Rotunda*. “The number of tennis courts that we have in the City of Yarra is very, very small compared to other councils. We’re really underrepresented.”

The proposal’s most unique element is its embrace of a sport that their website asserts “has the potential to become the most popular sport in the world”: pickleball. *The Dink*, a film released earlier this year by Apple TV, is about a tennis player who discovers the joys of pickleball. Clifton Hill first introduced it in 2022 and has seen the rate of participation steadily increase.

Yarra City Council is likely to look favourably upon the idea. This is because council officers themselves encouraged the club to make a proposal after it mentioned the growing demand for pickleball and tennis at a meeting. It now plans to engage in discussions with each member of the nine-person council to ascertain their support.

Three Hat Buildings, the architectural firm that’s been contracted to design the redevelopment, provided an AI mockup of the ‘Centenary Pavilion’ to *The Rotunda* (pictured). It looks like a restored Roman villa, but nothing is close to set in stone yet. Meanwhile, change is never popular with everybody—especially



Photo credit: Three Hat Buildings

the old-school tennis lovers who regard pickleball with contempt.

“Initially they were complaining about the noise and why there were so many people on the court...But some of the older players started switching out of tennis into pickleball.”

One club regular described the proposal as an unabashed land grab and told *The Rotunda* there are a number of tennis and pickleball courts not far away in Parkville and Northcote. If the proposal—or a version of it—is approved, it will certainly come under further scrutiny. More to come.



Is it okay to describe someone as “unbelievably ravishing” anymore? I don’t think Frankie would object. This young woman equipped with a teddy bear tatt is a sometime-habitue of the ‘hood with so much fashion know-how it left your Street Style correspondent a little jealous. She revealed an unusually up-to-date take on current global design.

NAME? FRANCIS HARDY.

HOW COME YOU SPELL IT THE BOY WAY? I was having an identity crisis and it stuck.

WHO ARE YOU WEARING? A label called Kitten D’Amour. I bought this dress in their boutique in the Queen Victoria Building in Sydney. I like their stuff as it’s a limited run and I like to think I’m part of the Kitten D’Amour network, getting piece 264 out of 300. I’m wearing it with vintage Repetto flats. I had it tailored to fit perfectly.

HOW IMPORTANT IS STYLE TO YOU? Paramount. Also a priority is makeup, nails, accessories, they all have to bring it together.

STREET STYLE

WHAT LABEL WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO HAVE FREE CLOTHES FROM? Gucci with Demna. He’s taken Balenciaga and made it Gucci. I don’t mind a bit of sex appeal—while I’m young and definitely when I’m old, too.

HOW WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR STYLE TO BE DESCRIBED? Eclectic. I’ll change up my look according to the weather. Sometimes vintage, sometimes modern, athleisure, whatever.

WHO ARE YOUR STYLE ICONS? Dita Von Teese. Rockabilly to die for. And Lily Rose Depp because she blends French and American style so well.

WHAT DO YOU DO? I’m doing an online makeup course at the moment. I’ve been a florist in the past. And in a year or so, I might go back to study.

DO YOU LIVE IN NORTH FITZROY? I live in Hawthorn but I hang out in North Fitzroy because I met this cool guy. I bring a bit of the South East to the Inner North.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR COFFEE?

I make it at home. Long Black or Iced Long Black.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO? Hang out with my boyfriend, go to the movies, go to the cemetery. No one talks to you there.

WHAT IS YOUR FAMILY LIKE? My Mum is Type A, my Dad is Type B and I’m the best of both worlds.

WHERE DO YOU HANG OUT WHEN YOU COME TO NORTH FITZROY? I really like North Fitzroy Vintage on Brunswick Street.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE NORTH FITZROY IN THREE WORDS? Spacious. Educated. Indie.

WHO’S YOUR FAVOURITE AUTHOR? F. Scott Fitzgerald. *This Side Of Paradise*. I called my dog after him. He answers to the full name but he’s also called Fitzy. (Editor: How perfect is that?)

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE IN TEN YEARS, DOING WHAT? Married with two kids and another on the way.

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THE BEST ICE CREAM IN THE NORTH

A girl from Melbourne’s west, finding her feet in the gelato wonderland of the Inner North, meditates on the nature of both ice cream and happiness itself

Words by Maddison Wandel with Lily Fforde
Illustrations by Marnie Florence

The Lick-a-Prize competition was a 2000s promotion where some Paddle Pop sticks came with prizes written on them. As a child, I hacked the Wyndham Vale IGA’s stocking system (they were always at the bottom of the freezer) and ate hundreds of free chocolate Paddle Pops. My friend’s dad owned the store, I always wondered if he knew and would let me get away with it. Ice cream has followed me through my jobs in life too. At 16, I got a job at Wendy’s Milk Bar in the Werribee Plaza. At Wendy’s, I learned to make up the soft serve mixture, pouring massive packages of white powder into a poorly cleaned white bucket. I made thickshakes and milkshakes, wiped spit off glass display cabinets and scooped a lot of ice cream.

Throughout my life, I have enjoyed the adventure of going to get an ice cream. It’s always been something that brings me closer to people, and these days it’s my alternative to “let’s get a drink”. Getting a scoop is an affordable way to spend an evening with friends, and my enjoyment depends as much on context as on taste: the location, distance travelled, the company I’m with. It’s usually the cherry on top of a hangout, prolonging the evening a bit longer to avoid that abrupt parting of ways outside a restaurant or exhibition opening.



Coming from the West, I am a new resident of the North, but have been a frequenter of Northside ice cream shops for years. I’ve often travelled upwards of an hour from the South to get a scoop. When it comes to taste, I am a traditionalist. I like the taste of milk and sugar, but I acknowledge differing opinions. I have tried daring spots like Good Daze canteen and Fluffy Torpedo on Smith Street, with their milo-vegemite nonsense, but have struggled to get on board. I am sure these unconventional flavours appeal to a different market that I’m not a part of, maybe those in search of breaking what ain’t broke?

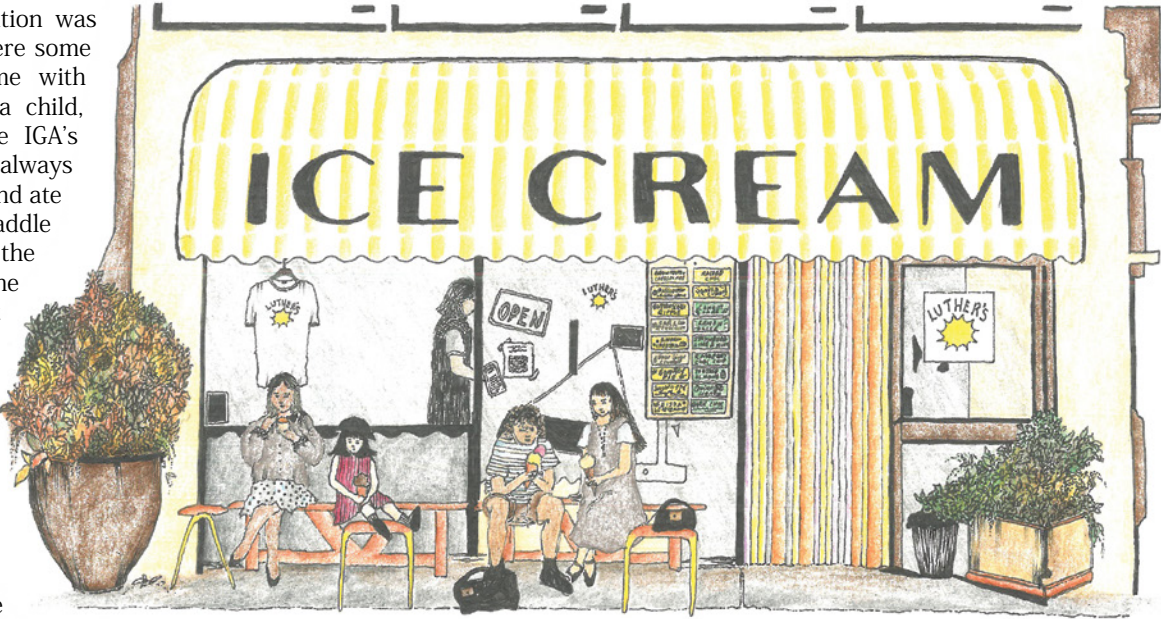
Regarding preference, I believe everyone should have a Fallback Flavour: an option that you know you like at each store. For me, it’s usually salted caramel. But I am not afraid to try flavours at the counter, and believe that it is a perfectly acceptable way of making the most important decision. If you are reading this and feel a certain anxiety around this perfectly normal and reasonable request, let me help you: always try up to three flavours before you make a selection.

Lastly, all involved, from customers to staff to owners, would do good to remember that ice cream is meant to lead us towards an experience of happiness. With this in mind, here are my favourite flavours in the North (non-extensive).

Butterscotch Ripple and Earl Grey Chocolate at Luther’s Scoops, Brunswick

Luther’s Scoops off Sydney Road in Brunswick has a special place in my heart for its consistency and simply the amount of times I’ve been there. My frequent combination is Butterscotch Ripple and Earl Grey Chocolate, but I always taste their rotation of specials. They are the most generous in terms of portion size out of any ice cream shop and they’ll let you put two flavours in the one scoop for an extra \$1.

While waiting in line is often quite a self-conscious activity, blocking the street and annoying passers-by, it often gives me time to squeeze in a full therapy session with my best friend. Once our ice cream is acquired, our deep and meaningful continues either



in the front seat of my heated car on a winter evening or on the outdoor benches underneath their striped awning lit by the yellow street lights.

Salted Caramel White Choc at Messina, Collingwood

At Messina, a Melbourne institution, I always get a Salted Caramel White Choc in a cone. I’ve sampled other flavours but nothing tempts me like salted caramel. At the Collingwood location, an elevated experience is provided with a glass screen showing a peek into the production process, while posters on the wall celebrate the jersey cows they use to make the ice cream. On a recent trip overseas I met a lovely group of girls on a hike in Santorini. I mentioned this article to them and one girl told me that her friend who worked

at Messina in Brunswick East had witnessed an in-store pigeon removal via BB gun, apparently with a family and child as witnesses. I still love Messina, but question the necessity of the alleged BB gun.



Strong Matcha at Hareruya Pantry, Carlton

The strong matcha flavour at Hareruya is true to its name, unlike many blandly matcha flavoured things. You also have the unique option to enjoy your scoop in a crisp wafer sandwich or in a mochi ball (I opt for the wafer because I think it’s cute). I always find myself in a rather primal state at Hareruya. Often alone, I enjoy my wafer sandwich on a bench in the adjacent Lincoln Square gardens, watching rats forage KFC scraps from a bin. I always consider trying a hot drink, and maybe I will one day, but I’m a woman of habit.

Mint Choc and Cherry Ripe at Billy Van Creamy, Fitzroy North

Billy Van Creamy is an established new-wave ice cream shop, the most traditional you can get in Melbourne without opting for classic Italian gelato. They always felt a bit southside to me, something to do with the interior design, or that they focus on classic flavours done to a high standard with good ingredients. Mostly, I really love their little metal ice cream cups. I actually love those cups so much, I think it’s maybe one of the reasons I go there. My pick at BVC is mint chocolate, and they once had my dream flavour, Cherry Ripe, sadly a limited edition. Consider this a direct call to Mr Billy for Cherry Ripe’s return.

In my few months living in the North I’ve observed a vibrant community, one which cares about the wellbeing of the establishments they frequent. As a business dream, ice cream is pure joy. As a customer it’s a reason to leave your house, a sweet extension of time with friends. Yes it’s custard, cream and sugar, but ultimately it’s also the people who surround it. It won’t solve all our problems but it makes space for choice. It’s a pretty addition to our day. Ice cream is bonding in the car with a friend, heater blasting to escape Melbourne’s cold winter. A moment of contradiction: the whirlwinds of life and the bliss of a quickly melting delight. This well-loved treat would be nothing without the circles of people we bring to it, and my life wouldn’t be as bright without mine.



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HOW OFTEN DOES FITZROY SHOW UP IN POP MUSIC?

How often is Fitzroy given its dues in the world of song? North Fitzroy certainly doesn't get mentioned much—but sometimes it does. *The Rotunda* spoke with two legendary local musicians for whom a sense of place is essential to their songwriting

By Charlie Gill

“New York, New York”. “London Calling”. “Streets of Philadelphia”. The canon of Western music is littered with place names, but when is a song going to bring attention to our little pocket of the world? North Fitzroy, I Love You But You're Bringing Me Down.

This state of affairs left *The Rotunda* so aggrieved that we put a call-out in a local Facebook page for songs referencing the area. Our post reeled in over 90 responses, from classics like “Charcoal Lane” by Archie Roach (*Side by side / We walk along / To the end of Gertrude Street*) to unexpected tracks like “Slater” by American rap superstar Tyler the Creator (*Chips Ahoy, boy, listening to “Cowboy”, ay! / Boy, land in Melbourne and skate to Fitzroy, ay!*).

Meanwhile, in “The Young Crazy Peeling” by U.S. punk rock band The Distillers, Australian-born frontwoman Brody Dalle sings: *My name is Brody / I'm from Melbourne / Fitzroy, Melbourne*. In the next line, she declares to her huge American audience: *I grew up on Bell St, then on Bennett Street*. There is no Bennett Street in Fitzroy. SHE WAS TALKING ABOUT OUR BENNETT STREET!

But North Fitzroy rarely seems to get the spotlight. As such, it was heartening to hear that beloved Melbourne band Things of Stone and Wood have released a new album named after the street it was recorded on. *Rae Street* is their first album in over 20 years.

“Rae Street has a strangely big footprint through music,” says North Fitzroy local Greg Arnold, the band's songwriter and frontman. “People are like: ‘I swear Red Symons used to live in that house, Angry Anderson used to live in that shop’...But the reason I feel so Fitzroy North about this album, in addition to recording it here, is that I lived overseas for eight years.”

Along with his two children and his wife Helen, Greg moved to Switzerland in 2014. Recording a new album never quite worked.

“It's hard to make a record in a band when you're in different hemispheres. When we started working on *Rae Street*, you could just go: Ah, this is how it's meant to be. I felt like I had my perspective back on how things look—from here.”

Things of Stone and Wood's breakout single was 1992's “Happy Birthday Helen”, dedicated to Greg's future wife: *Let's not forget last night / Yeah, how we drove along the Yarra*. The song's music video—in which the band walk down city streets with trams passing in the background—was parodied by Rob Sitch and friends on ABC's *Late Show* as “No More Melbourne Cliches”.



Marty and Greg pose in front of the Rotunda. Photo credit: Finn Robilliard

So, as Greg says: “A sense of place has always loomed large!”

“I remember playing the song in Canada, and obviously they don't know what the Yarra is, but people translate it into their own experiences. There's a school of thought in songwriting that you've got to keep things general. I think the more specific, the better. People might not know it, but they'll hear the authenticity of your connection to a place.”

Rae Street reflects that principle. On “Devonport Drive”, Greg proclaims: *It's a cliché / The road is long / Words and music are but a song / Whispered to the bustling Fitzroy throng...*

It's like a crossover between *Offspring* and *The Odyssey*: Inner North songsmiths returning to the Fitzroy throng after years lost in parts unknown. For Greg, it was Switzerland. For Marty Donald—former guitarist and songwriter for prolific indie pop band the Lucksmiths—it was somewhere a lot closer and yet so much further away: the eastern suburbs.

“I spent 18 years living out in Belgrave, in the hills. I've only just moved back to the Inner North,” says Marty over a beer at the Tramway.

Across eight studio albums, from songs like “The Sandringham Line” to “The Great Dividing Range”, the Lucksmiths drew

from their surroundings to furnish their lyrical landscape. Their 1997 album *A Good Kind of Nervous*, written while Marty was living on Holden Street, features a song he wrote named “Under the Rotunda”.

It's already Friday / And soon it'll be Friday night / And if you've got something planned / I suppose I'll understand / But give me half an hour / And I'll meet you in the gardens / I'll probably be waiting under the rotunda if it's raining / And somewhere near the seesaws if it's not

“Our whole world was in that little area,” says Marty. “For a lot of the songs around that time, I wrote about me and my friends' lives. I love stuff that has a sense of place, like *Monkey Grip* by Helen Garner.” And while the song might be the only mention of Edinburgh Gardens in the history of recorded music, Marty's experience aligns with Greg's: locally specific songs can still garner international affection.

“If you're writing songs about North Fitzroy and you're playing shows in North Fitzroy, most people are going to get it. But when we toured *A Good Kind of Nervous* in 1998, we played those songs to audiences in Europe and North America, and I was really struck by how people still responded to them.”

So, between “Under the Rotunda” and “Rushall Station” by indie rock band *Underground Lovers*—headed by North Fitzroy local Vincent Giarrusso—there are a couple songs aside from “Rae Street” by Courtney Barnett (who did not respond to our request for comment) that have made waves overseas.

When you turn to Fitzroy, there's Dan Sultan's “Old Fitzroy”, Jenny Hval's

“American Coffee” and Mark Seymour's “Stars of Fitzroy”. So is it just that good songwriters come to live here? Or is there a uniquely inspiring quality in the air?

“When we moved from the suburbs, the Inner North was like this romantic wonderland of bluestone laneways,” says Greg. “It just had this incredible artistic energy to it.”

But surely the reason the Inner North produces good music is because of its music venues. These days, North Fitzroy's only proper gig spot is the Tramway. Marty says it's one of his current favourites, along with the Merri Creek Tavern and Shotkickers in Thornbury. Back in the day, the Lucksmiths used to play at the Empress on Scotchmer Street and, of course, the Punters Club.

“In the nineties there were so many venues around. We used to play like four or five shows a week just in the Inner North, which seems kind of extraordinary now. But I don't want to fall into romanticising how it was much better back in the day, because Melbourne's been remarkably resilient as a live music city.”

As such, Marty's new band Last Leaves has recently played a gig at the Tramway, and might return to the re-opened Punters Club when they release their third album later this year. Meanwhile, Things of Stone and Wood are launching *The Final Forest*—a piano-based twin album to *Rae Street*—and kicking off their national tour on November 3rd at the Brunswick Ballroom.

“Coming back to Melbourne, you realise what a thriving music scene it is,” says Greg. “And Fitzroy and Fitzroy North are particular stars within that sky.”

So why not reference Fitzroy, and North Fitzroy, in the songs themselves? Greg encourages young songwriters to keep the tradition alive:

“You can mention more than London, Paris and New York in songs. You're allowed to have a sense of understanding of where we are.”



NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE CELEBRATES 50 YEARS



Mary and a member of the community outside the house

By Charlie Gill

Did you know that there are more Neighbourhood Houses in Australia than McDonald's franchises? It seems strange that we're all familiar with the art-deco Maccas in Clifton Hill, but not many of us could locate our local community centre offering classes, support and friendship. Well, it's on Holden Street, and it's been there for 50 years.

Neighbourhood Houses began in the 1970s as part of social reforms spearheaded by North Fitzroy favourite Gough Whitlam. The movement began in Victoria, where women joined forces to combat social isolation in their respective communities. Now, there are over 1000 Neighbourhood Houses across Australia (McDonald's is at 970).

"There's so much research that if you're socially connected, your general health and mental health will be better," says Mary Parfrey, manager at the Holden Street Neighbourhood House and recipient of a Medal of the Order of Australia for her work in community services.

The Neighbourhood House at Holden Street is a family home that was converted in 1976. It offers a range of initiatives, from weekly card games, playgroups and breakfast clubs to Tai Chi, sewing tutorials and Italian conversation classes run by two locals named Giovanni and David.

"They're both people giving back to their community in their seventies. We find a niche for them to do that, and at the same time

other people benefit from their expertise. Because it's free, that means that we're in a position to offer more to people who are on Centrelink or who are low income."

But Mary stresses that Neighbourhood Houses are for *everyone* in the neighbourhood, no matter who you are.

"The community can see a Neighbourhood House and think it's just for old or disabled people, and that can be incorrect...We're for anyone and everyone, whether you're rich, whether you're poor, whatever your colour, whatever your religion, whatever your age."

Sadly, in the past two years, five Neighbourhood Houses in Victoria have closed due to the cost of living crisis and a lack of government support. Ahead of the recent state government budget, peak body Neighbourhood Houses Victoria unsuccessfully lobbied for an additional \$11.7 million annually to be spread across the 400 Houses in Victoria.

"This is the most precarious financially it's been in my almost 30 years in the sector," Mary told *The Rotunda*. She says Holden Street itself would be in deficit were it not for donations amounting to \$30,000 brokered by Nicholls Ward representative Councillor Ken Gomez.

So while Neighbourhood Houses are receiving less money than they need to survive, the need for what they provide is only growing greater.

"The number of extra people needing food has been quite scary for us. Ten years ago I was not giving food to anyone. That was not something that Neighbourhood Houses did...We gave chocolate to this young student because we had a whole lot from the Coles, and he was in tears because he had lost his job. He didn't have money for chocolate. He hadn't had chocolate for six months."

As such, Holden Street's 50th anniversary couldn't have come at a more poignant time. Despite the lack of state government support it just keeps kicking on, and on October 16th it threw a party at Fitzroy Bowls Club to celebrate.

"Fifty years, that's a big thing. Not everyone gets to 50 years in the not-for-profit sector," says Mary.

Before our interview is over, conversation class member Flora and Italian teacher Giovanni introduce us to his "new student": Flora's neighbour's dog. I ask Giovanni about whether I can join the class next week, and he assures me that everyone is welcome to join. Neighbourhood houses are for the neighbourhood.

"We want to hear from the community about what they need for their education and recreation," says Mary. "Come and talk to us!"

FUTURE UNCERTAIN FOR FAMOUS PLINTH

The bright blue countdown clock on show in Edinburgh Gardens has had its stay extended as Yarra City Council considers the future of the 'Plinth Program' that originally put it there. *Zone Red*, by artist Yandell Walton, was installed in 2024 as part of the program that has given the community works such as *Tanderrum*, an inverted plinth by Stephen Rhall, and *The Unsung Hero*—otherwise known as the iconic Golden Worm—by sculptor Kathy Holowko.

The grand piano-resembling countdown clock is ticking down until the year 2030, when carbon emissions must be cut by 45% to limit global warming at 1.5°C. Many have appreciated the message, but others

have derided its aesthetic incongruence with the surrounding parkland, even if this was partly the point.

While previous works have occupied the plinth for 18 months each, *Zone Red*'s official stay was over in April. The work has now inhabited the plinth for over two years, and the City of Yarra is yet to even think about its replacement.

"No new work has yet been commissioned for the Edinburgh Gardens plinth," a council spokesperson told *The Rotunda*. "Council is currently developing a Public Art Framework as part of its next Arts Strategy, which will inform the future of the program in 2027."

When asked if the entire Plinth Program itself is under review, the council again pointed to their Arts Strategy.

"This will inform how it fits in with the program. There's no set date as to when that will be released, but it won't be until next year."

Given it seems like the council won't have anything ready to replace *Zone Red* for a good while longer, there's every chance it might just stay in place until it's ticked down to 0 in 2030 and the world's about to end anyway. Much like planet Earth itself, the future of the plinth seems uncertain. What would you like to see on it?



SURVEY GATHERS CRUCIAL DATA, BUT WILL BIGWIGS LISTEN?

By Charlie Gill

Over the next 15 years, the state government plans to increase North Fitzroy's population by 44%. That's 6000 more people. Late last year, a group of locals decided to create an online survey named 'Project3068', aiming to gather data for future planning decisions to take into consideration.

The survey wanted to know what North Fitzroy locals love most about North Fitzroy. The most common theme amongst the responses was the community feel: "Knowing neighbours and business owners, being greeted by name, feeling part of something." This was followed by green spaces, walkability, heritage character and public transport.

The average respondent skewed towards older homeowners rather than young renters—49% of North Fitzroy are renters, but only 19% of respondents were. Given the prevalence of homeowners, 82% of respondents said they intend to live here over the next decade.

Of particular concern to Project3068 was the future of the three shopping villages, including

St Georges Road south (a.k.a. 'The Village').

"Piedimonte's as a social hub was really high on what people liked about that particular village," says Bruna Evans, one of the survey's architects. "But still, there were lots of comments about not wanting a development of the scale that was planned." Many were concerned that the expansion could "alter not just the physical character but the way residents think about and experience this place".

But others disagreed. "Density brings life—more foot traffic, more spending, more vibrancy," said one respondent. "Stop pandering to the loud, regressive minority who want to freeze the suburb in amber."

In St Georges Road north, incentives to attract diverse retailers were suggested as a solution to its issues: "It needs a far better mix of shops... it is largely dead." Meanwhile in Nicholson Street, increasing rents are forcing shopkeepers out: "The owner of the building is unable to offer an affordable and secure rental situation moving forward."

But now that Project3068 has its data, will governmental bodies take notice of it?

"It's very comprehensive," says Ken Gomez, City of Yarra councillor and Nicholls Ward representative. "We've got a copy of the report...It just forms part of the information backdrop that helps us make decisions."

A planned development at 290 Park Street, directly next to the Railway Hotel, encapsulates the difficulty in balancing residents' concerns and growth requirements. A seven-storey block of apartments is currently being assessed under the state government's Great Design Fast Track initiative. The initiative has the power to bypass council approval, who originally ticked off a four-storey development at the same spot.

"We as council will always try to work with the community and the applicant to try and find the best outcome for the community," says Ken. "We don't believe that's the case with the Fast Track...The applicant has gone to the Planning Minister and sought a much

more prominent development. Now we've got an issue, because you've got the Railway Hotel next door to it, and there's going to be impacts from overshadowing."

As per Project3068's report, only 13% of respondents approved of buildings in the Nicholson Street shopping village being seven storeys or higher. Bruna also says the Fast Track pathway isn't delivering the social and public housing that respondents expressed a desire for.

The website for Project3068 asserts that the survey responses give the community the power "to influence future planning by local, state and federal governments". But as both the government and property developers scramble to build quickly, it's hard to know the extent to which that power might be exercised. Read the full report yourself via the QR code below.



THE DARK ART OF STREET INSTALLATIONS

By Peter Barrett

For several years Ivan has been stealthily exhibiting his playful art along Inner North bike trails and railway lines. Some of his latest work appeared for a while along the Rushall Station cyclone fence. Maybe you saw it: large, disco-silver letters made from aluminium ducting tubes that spelled the word “PEACE”; a white rectangle covered in an abstract pattern of square, circle and donut multicoloured shapes; and an open suitcase labelled “THIS SUITCASE IS EMPTY”, with a mirror placed inside so the viewer sees their own reflection (some people laugh, others are more introspective).

The local guerrilla street artist has one rule: everything must be removable. Most of his materials are recycled from hard rubbish, altered in his studio, and then zip-tied where people can see them. “If I take it away, it has to leave no damage,” he says.



But Ivan wasn't always an artist. He once worked as an accountant, then spent years in the environmental sector. In his 30s and 40s he discovered macrame and for many years made plant holders. But something else beckoned. “I just had all these pieces of material,” he says. “I didn't know what to do with them. So, I thought, I'll just weave them into the fence.” The word he spelled out first was “DISCOMBOBULATED”, with one B deliberately placed back-to-front. People saw him at work and, to his surprise, a few even said they liked it.

Ivan's art is gently subversive. A colourful banner reads, “THIS IS NOT ART”. A rocket built from a hard-rubbish space

heater includes a helpful sign: “Space rocket, capacity: one small dog. Dog provided, only speaks Russian” (a Laika reference that some *Rotunda* readers might catch). Another work comprises a row of mini footballer figurines, with accompanying one-word labels, such as “COMPASSION”, “THOUGHTFULNESS”, “LIBERTY” and “LOVE”.

Not everybody likes his work. A Bob Dylan line (“he not busy being born is busy dying”) upset a grieving neighbour—Ivan moved it; a Shakespeare passage kept getting smashed (the quote was from *Twelfth Night*: “Virtue that transgresses is but patched with sin, and sin that amends is but patched

with virtue.”) Other works simply vanish—spirited home, perhaps, by budding art collectors. Ivan once discovered that someone had set alight one of the letters from his DISCOMBOBULATED piece—it's not clear whether this was an example of criticism or collaboration.

Lately, Ivan's work has inspired other artists. *The Rotunda* observed that next to his Rushall Station art someone fixed a painting of a group of women surrounded by cut out bats, spiders, cats and mice. If there was any doubt on the subject matter, beneath the scene was written “Aquelarre,” a word that appears to be a Spanish/Basque term for “Witches' Sabbath”. That piece lasted no more than

a fortnight, most likely thanks to the ephemeral material it was made from: cardboard.

So, why does Ivan do it? He says his art is motivated by humour, irony and playfulness. “I'd like it if somebody looks up from their phone, out the train window and sees something—which is obviously art—that says, ‘This Is Not Art’. It should put a smile on their face.” His advice to any budding guerrilla installation artists reading this is, ‘just do it’. “Don't worry about what other people think, their opinions don't matter. If you like it, you should do it—as long as you're not offending anyone or damaging anything. I wouldn't advocate that.”

RAISING A GLASS TO DR BHASKAR

By admirers in the community

After nearly 40 years of medical practice in North Fitzroy and Clifton Hill, Dr Priya Bhaskar retired from her Queens Parade clinic at the end of June. Across those decades, she has cared for over 7,000 patients, often including several generations within the same family.

Along with her own clinic, Dr Bhaskar tirelessly visited the elderly residents of the Old Colonists community in Rushall Park. She frequently attended to those of limited mobility, with multiple house calls never being seen as a problem.

An appreciative—even loving—crowd of staff, friends, patients and neighbours gathered in North Fitzroy in mid-July to celebrate her extraordinary commitment.

They heard from the mayor of the City of Yarra, Councillor Stephen Jolly, who thanked the doctor for her commitment to the well-being of so many from the local community. Former mayor Jenny Farrer made a separate presentation on behalf of the Bendigo Community Bank, of which Dr Bhaskar has been a long-time supporter. Fiona Perucic spoke for former and current staff at the clinic, acknowledging Anna Russo who worked with the practice for 30 years. Fiona revealed some secrets: Dr Bhaskar had learned Italian so she could better communicate with the many migrants from Italy that made up her community.

Almost hidden by the flowers and gifts bestowed upon her, Dr Bhaskar told her fans something of her life story: from being a star school student in India to specialist training in ophthalmology in Austria before migrating to Australia.



It was not easy for a woman of Indian origin to establish herself. Through hard work and an unwavering commitment to patients' well-being, word of mouth generated a reputation that led to a devoted following.

Her first practice was behind what was then a chemist shop on the corner of Queens Parade and Michael Street. Once established, purpose-built premises were built around the corner in Queens Parade, where she juggled a perpetually overflowing waiting room for another 27 years.

It was not uncommon to see the doctor's car still parked outside her surgery late into the night. Nor was it unusual for her to call patients on weekends to make sure of their well-being. Along with bulk billing, these are rare traits in a time of corporate medicine, group practices and 24-hour clinics where continuity of care is difficult if not impossible.

Consensus amongst those raising a glass to Dr Priya Bhaskar was that we were lucky to have had such care for so long. It will be a struggle to fill the void created by her retirement.

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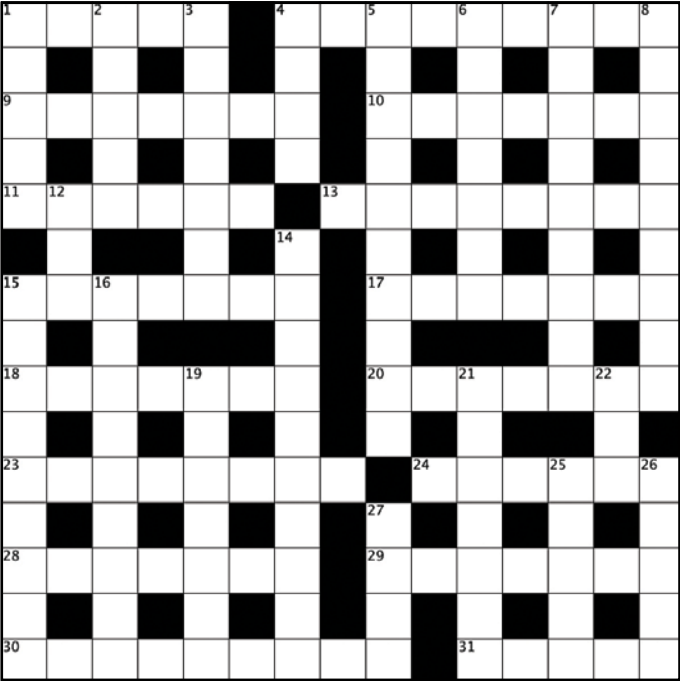
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- ACROSS**
- 1 I dream of getting everything now I'm educating leaders! (5)
- 4 Growth of former Greek god is back on (9)
- 9 US intel uncovers device (7)
- 10 Typical lassi is served in chic surroundings (7)
- 11 Animal feet surround hot stoves (6)
- 13 Frenzied people persisting without stopping get more tired (8)
- 15 Weird garnets sparkle (7)
- 17 Sailor splashing thing around washing (7)
- 18 Macho man carelessly lost a few seats to 1-down! (7)
- 20 Garfield's casserole a la snag! (7)
- 23 Funny artist is exaggerating! (8)
- 24 Play legato, smooth like cream? (6)
- 28 Virtuous cheat hastily added second and third alibi (7)
- 29 Misfit was not in with actors (7)
- 30 But tsetse flies are used in labs! (4,5)
- 31 I hear you posted the perfume (5)

Solution: northfitzroyrotunda.com/cheat

- DOWN**
- 1 Good start, mostly enough to beat Billy 18-across (5)
- 2 New Spanish venue scrapped last scene about nothing (5)
- 3 Which files created tense Intellectual Property mishap? (7)
- 4 She's in the cellar (4)
- 5 Preserve dance for sporty singles or pairs? (10)
- 6 Eastern roundabout is closest (7)
- 7 Motivational breathing (9)
- 8 I said, "See you in Niagara Falls or Central America?" (9)
- 12 No idea what finishes porridge essentially (3)
- 14 Place is blunt since axing neighbouring elm trees! (6,4)
- 15 70% cocoa seems twee if melted without 50% beef (9)
- 16 Plays again and energetically cheers team lacking energy (9)
- 19 Harry caught noisy Bean (7)
- 21 Take rests when touring southern Tassie (7)
- 22 Short tune up and bolt? (3)
- 25 Up and about, starting amateur karate in awe (5)
- 26 Returning after October: the Maori group (5)
- 27 Remove core of womboks for stirfries (4)

THE ROTUNDA SPRING QUIZ

- 1 Last year, writer Helen Garner was interviewed by which global pop sensation?

2 In which Victorian town was Ned Kelly's last stand?

3 Both Indonesia and Poland's flags are made up of two bands of red and white. On which flag is the red on top and the white on bottom?

4 Fitzroy-born religious sister Mary MacKillop is Australia's only Catholic saint. In which century did she die?

5 Netflix recently released a new documentary about infamous breakdancer Raygun. What's her actual first name?
- 6 On the side of the Royal Derby on Brunswick Street is a mural of three former Fitzroy and Brisbane Lions players. Name any of them.

7 North Fitzroy is currently in Australian Eastern Daylight Time (AEDT). What timezone is South Australia currently in?

8 In Courtney Barnett's Depreston, the narrator drives to a house inspection in Preston. What kind of home is it?

9 In what year was Gough Whitlam dismissed?

10 The gelato flavour bacio is made up of chocolate combined with what?
- 11 According to Yarra Trams, a tram weighs the equivalent of how many rhinos?

12 Emerging Melbourne artist and donut-obsessive Joseph Doggett-Williams is born on June 27th. What star sign does that make him?

13 In what film does Robert Downey Junior play a fictional Australian actor named Kirk Lazarus?

14 Which brightly coloured spring-blooming flowers are deadly to dogs?

15 The direct translation of the Italian idiom 'acqua in bocca' is to have water in your mouth. What is its meaning?

QUIZ ANSWERS: 1. Dua Lipa 2. Glenrowan 3. Indonesia 4. The 20th century 5. Rachael Gunn 6. Kevin Murray, Jonathan Brown and Chris Johnson 7. Australian Central Daylight Time (ACDT) 8. A Californian bungalow (in a cul-de-sac) 9. 1975 10. Hazelnut 11. 30 12. Cancer 13. Tropic Thunder (2008) 14. Tulips. Also hyacinths, daffodils and peonies 15. To keep a secret

THIS AD WAS WRITTEN WITH AI.
YOURS SHOULDN'T BE.

By Finn Kinsella

I'm Finn, born and raised in North Fitzroy, and I run Nudge: a marketing firm that helps local brands sell online through Google Ads, Meta Ads and email.

But I've got to make a confession. I asked a robot to write this ad. Here's the opener it gave me:

AI DRAFT #1

"🚀 In today's fast-paced digital landscape, it's not just about selling — it's about unlocking your brand's full potential. ✨"

Our feeds are filled with content like this and thankfully we're learning to skip this slop.

AI has a 10% chance of killing us all, and a 99% chance of ruining your relationship with your customers.

Yet, working with some of Australia's biggest retailers and eCommerce brands, I still see them hand their creative decisions to AI. Big mistake.

The thinking here is that AI is faster and cheaper (which it is). But cheap ads that nobody reads are the most expensive ads you'll ever run.

Every piece of content you develop puts your reputation on the line. Don't outsource your creativity to AI. Whatever your business is—whatever industry it's in—it deserves better than that.

Want AI to write your next ad? Don't book a call with me. Think it's time to get serious about your business? Give yourself a Nudge.

FREE AUDIT

Ads + website, free for Rotunda readers



Finnian Kinsella, Nudge.

- ✓ Your Google & Meta ads
- ✓ Your online store
- ✓ What's wasting money
- ✓ What I'd fix first

nudgeagency.co/rotunda
@finnbuidbrands

ROTUNDA STATE OF MIND: NTH FITZ MAKES NYC BOND

By Charlie Gill

Last year, *The Rotunda* embarked on a mission to identify North Fitzroy's "sister suburbs". In our September 2025 issue, we identified six candidates including Yeonnam-dong in Seoul, Ivan Vazov in Sofia and Santa María La Ribera in Mexico City. This process involved taking a South Korean influencer to lunch at the Tin Pot and using Google Translate to beseech a Parisian local mayor. The City of Yarra didn't rule out a formal relationship, but none of the international municipal authorities got back to us, so we decided to aim somewhere higher: New York City.

Ed Krutsch—*The Rotunda's* council election analyst, who moved to New York to campaign for Zohran Mamdani—suggested we look into a Brooklyn neighbourhood called Clinton Hill. That it's one letter off sharing a name with Clifton Hill is purely coincidental, and so is the fact that Australian sprinter Clinton Hill won gold at the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne. *The Rotunda* asked Fitzroy Pool regular Ralph Sauburn, visiting the U.S. on a business trip, to check it out.

"Arriving on the G train from Manhattan, I came to Clinton Hill in search of two things: a bit of quiet and a decent cup of coffee," begins Ralph's comprehensive written report. He notes the "rows of brownstones, tree-lined streets and small formal parks that would make any resident of North Fitzroy feel right at home".

But we needed to hear the perspective of an actual New Yorker: the kind of character you'd see rushing to work in the background of a *Gossip Girl* episode. Eventually, we

found Cecilia Barron, a 25-year-old editorial assistant at a prestigious publishing house that counts Ben Lerner and Rachel Cusk among its authors.

The Rotunda stayed up until 3:30am for a chance to chat with the real-life New Yorker and potential future bigwig in the literary industry. Over WhatsApp, Cecilia explained that after working in Manhattan she travels to Clinton Hill to babysit a family (from Melbourne!).

"Clinton Hill is a lovely neighbourhood," she confirmed. "It's got Danish coffee shops and Swedish wine bars, definitely very European-focused, and a lot of families in strollers."

The Rotunda was interested in a nearby park named Fort Greene, which is technically in a different neighbourhood but very close to Clinton Hill. Like Edinburgh Gardens, the park in Fort Greene is home to a war memorial built at the turn of the 20th century. For us, it's the Rotunda itself and for the Brooklynites it's the Prison Ship Martyrs' Monument.

"The park is very nice," says Cecilia. "On the weekends, everybody lies out on blankets. It's sort of like the main green of a college campus." Doesn't that just perfectly describe those summer days in Edinburgh Gardens when everyone comes out with a Finska set and a six-pack?

"People are out walking dogs in the late autumn sunshine," reads Ralph's report. "There are no office blocks and hardly any big chain stores. There's a little



There's been a new addition to New York City's skyline

supermarket, a vintage clothing shop, a local library and even an old converted trolley car parked in the street."

"It sounds pretty similar to what you're talking about," Cecilia told *The Rotunda*. "But you guys probably don't have Biggie Smalls, or a really notorious rapper."

The Notorious B.I.G. grew up in and around Clinton Hill, yes. But clearly Cecilia hasn't heard of 01.EKKA, the Australian hip-hop artist and Merri Creek Primary School graduate who, in his music video released earlier this year, sits atop a horse outside Flinders Street station and proclaims: "Melbourne to the motherf***in' world, how you feel?"

Well, to be honest, here at *The Rotunda* we feel like this could just be another pathetic expression of cultural cringe. Contriving a relationship with a random neighbourhood in Brooklyn might give us a sugar-hit of pride, but would it fill up the void of meaning fundamental to the Australian condition? No. Then again, nothing would, and given that no one in Korea, Mexico, or Bulgaria warmed to our advances, it would be nice to get something going with the Big Apple—because if you make it in New York, you can make it anywhere.

The Rotunda has contacted the admin team at Brooklyn Community District 2. We patiently await their response.

FEARFUL DOGS EMBRACE 'SPOOKY SEASON'

By Ludo

As a good North Fitzroy household, my family only watches movies that pass the Bechdel test: films that feature at least two female characters who have a conversation about something other than a man. This inspired me to invent the Barkdel test, for which films must feature at least two dogs who talk to each other about something other than a human. One of the few films to pass is *Scooby Doo* (2002). Set on 'Spooky Island', the plot involves ritualistic dog sacrifice and features Scooby's precocious nephew, Scrappy Doo. I usually watch it around this time of year.



subsequent council meeting, I wanted to express my profound concern at canine distress in the community—but then I was distracted by a tennis ball. Since the incident, it's been difficult to make dogs feel safe during 'spooky season', but I've found a solution: exposure therapy. Dogs ought to embrace Halloween, too. In previous years, I've rushed to the front door when kids ring the doorbell, but my working knowledge of psychoanalysis isn't really the kind of 'trick' kids are interested in. And when it comes to the treats, I always forget that we both like ice cream, yes, but only one of us likes raw meats.

But for the dogs of North Fitzroy, Halloween this year came about a month early. Just as Canis lupus was enjoying a period of peace after millennia spent dealing with megafauna, ice ages and extermination attempts...out of nowhere, our most fearsome enemy yet: lawnmowers. If having to avoid cars and cats wasn't difficult enough, they've been combined into huge metallic beasts with sabre-toothed blades that hunt us down while we frolic in the park.

I was relieved to hear that Bunny is going to be okay. As the only literate dog at the

So this year we're going to go trick or treating ourselves. Please don't be alarmed if, come October 31st, you see a pack of hounds strolling through the block in strange outfits. I'm going as Scrappy Doo, who in a somewhat Lacanian twist ends up being revealed as the film's villain. My friends are going as dogs from movies that pass the Bechdel test but not the Barkdel test (*Legally Blonde*), movies that pass the Barkdel test but not the Bechdel test (*Lady and the Tramp*) and movies that pass the Bechdel-Barkdel test, in which two female dogs must have a conversation about something other than a male dog (*101 Dalmatians*). Another dog I know is just going as a lawnmower.

POET'S CORNER

Dear poets,

I love the way a poem can interrogate stillness, a moment.

What starts in the ordinary breeze of a pedestal fan can end somewhere bigger, outside the room, outside the body.

We slip between the everyday and extraordinary, the inside and outside between stanzas, a well-placed line break.

If you'd like your work featured in Poet's Corner, please email: poetscornerrotunda@gmail.com

Love and poetry,

Steph

@theatticpoet (IG)



Dave Clark is a writer-poet with chronic fatigue syndrome, living in Mparntwe (Alice Springs). Dave writes about grief, disability and the many ways we can hold an experience. He works as a counsellor, creating space for stories of significance.

IG/Threads: @DaveClarkWriter

NECTAR

The sweet nectar of a pedestal fan on a blazing night rotates me to tears. Worlds are roasting and I am given respite. Has a gift greater than this ever been received? Possibly only the offering of kindness without condition, an action solely for

my benefit, a wet flannel on a fevered heart. It is a love that costs something which convinces me I am worth everything, not in terms of money or time, but a soul-being that stretches beyond measurement, past the need to prove anything.

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TRAVEL AGENCY COMES HOME TO NORTH FITZROY



For Emma Whiting Travel, the question of distance has never seemed particularly significant. It doesn't matter if you're travelling 6700 kilometres away (Cambodia), 9900 kilometres away (Kathmandu) or 16800 kilometres away (Paris), the Queens Parade-based travel agency will get you there. As such, it's ironic that a much shorter distance has come to feel so significant. By making the 163-metre journey from one side of Queens Parade to their new office on the other, Emma Whiting Travel has officially arrived in the promised land: North Fitzroy.

Of course, they've already been working with the people of North Fitzroy and our neighbours in Clifton Hill for a long time. Twenty years ago, Emma first started her agency up on the south-east side of Queens Parade, and since then she's planned countless holidays for countless locals.

"There are clients who have become friends, families we've watched grow...they're part of our story too."

"When you've known people for 20 years, you share a lot of life," says Emma. "There are clients who have become friends, families we've watched grow, and some very special people who are sadly no longer with us. They're part of our story too."

Indeed, the agency's modus operandi has always been to embrace the community around them. Over the years, they've been

involved in events for local primary schools, football clubs, bowling clubs, local businesses and other community organisations.

"I've always loved the village feel around here," says David, retiring this year after 20 years working with the travel agency. "You walk down the street with the dogs and there are always people to stop and talk to. Some are clients, some are other traders, some are people we've just known around the neighbourhood for years."

After all, running a travel agency is an endeavour that is both global and local. Yes, it's about helping people access international experiences, but once they gather those memories from honeymoons, safaris, cruises, European summers, rail journeys and family adventures, they bring them right back to Queens Parade. Invariably, the fantastic stories lead to the same exciting question: where to next?

It's a question the agency has asked itself, too. Having moved into new headquarters in a beautiful double-storey terrace at 406 Queens Parade, Emma Whiting Travel is in a time of transition. It has adopted a fresh new look, updated its website and created a space at the agency where destination specialists can join them for events in-store.

Of course, its philosophy has never changed: a dedication to creating highly personalised travel plans around the world, from the fjords of Norway to the icebergs of Antarctica and everywhere in between. But as it's embarked on its new chapter in North Fitzroy, the agency is bringing a new focus to a particular kind of experience, and maybe the most enjoyable kind: group travel.



Its new Groups Department, headed by Groups Specialist Tim Beckensall, can create and manage travel for all types of private groups. Recently, the agency has planned a river cruise for 20 friends, co-hosted a 50-person trip to Uluru and is currently building the itinerary for a group of 30 on a rail journey from Brisbane to Adelaide. The possibilities are endless, whether you're an extended family celebrating a milestone, a school taking its students on an adventure, a sporting club, a food and wine group, a local business planning a retreat..

"People can come to us with an idea," says Tim. "They might say, 'There are 12 of us who would love to go to Japan,' or 'Our golf club has always talked about doing a trip together.' That's enough to start the conversation. We can help work out what the trip could look like, bring the right people and experiences together, and then manage all the travel and logistics."

For Tim, an important part of the service is taking the pressure off the person who first gets the group together.

"There's nearly always one person who becomes the organiser. Suddenly they're dealing with everyone's flights, rooms, payments and questions. We can take care of that side of it so they get to enjoy the experience too."

Drawing on twenty years in travel, the agency is extremely well-placed to use its extraordinary network of international relationships to ensure the best for its clients. That might mean special hotel benefits, an upgrade when available or simply knowing the right person to call, which is especially important when managing big groups.

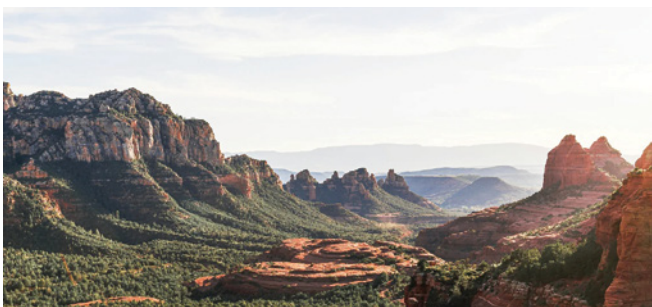
Helping people bring their own friends, families, clubs, communities and businesses together feels like a natural next step. And as the agency celebrates its 20th anniversary across October and November, they'll be sharing exclusive offers across cruises, tours and holidays, along with new travel ideas and special opportunities from its travel partners.

"As it celebrates its 20th anniversary, the agency is bringing a new focus to group travel—for sports clubs, schools, businesses and more."

So if you're interested in working with Emma Whiting Travel to plan your next trip whether as an individual, a family, or for a larger group, use the QR code below to take a look over their Travel Deals, or pop into their new office at 406 Queens Parade.

"Our clients have trusted us with some of the most important trips of their lives, they've come back to us and they've recommended us to their families and friends. We've had wonderful people work with us, incredible support from our travel partners and we've always felt part of this community," says Emma.

"We genuinely couldn't have done it without all of them. We'd love people to come in over the next couple of months, see the new space, join us for an event, catch up and celebrate with us."



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