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the South Sydney Herald

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ALEXANDRIA BEACONSFIELD CHIPPENDALE DARLINGTON ERSKINEVILLE GLEBE KINGS CROSS NEWTOWN REDFERN SURRY HILLS WATERLOO WOOLLOOMOOLOO ZETLAND



Protesters outside Tanya Plibersek's office in Surry Hills Photo: Supplied

Emissions reduction target “not nearly good enough”

Flint Duxfield

A string of protests took place across the inner city last month as Sydneysiders voiced their opposition to the Federal Government's announcement of a 2020 emissions reduction target of five per cent.

Local residents and environmentalists chanted, “We didn't vote for five per cent” outside the offices of Labor MPs Tanya Plibersek and Peter Garrett and the Government's Phillip Street offices.

Lindsay Soutar of Climate Action Newtown (which organised the “step in” at Ms Plibersek's office with the Balmain-Rozelle Climate Group) said many people thought the Government had let them down. “This target betrays the Government's election promise to act as a global leader on climate policy and the claim that the Government is serious about averting runaway climate change,” said Ms Soutar.

Even some of the ALP's own supporters spoke out against the targets. “I'm a good Labor Party member, but let's be honest, five per cent is not nearly good enough,” said Barrie McMahon, a retiree from Darlington. “It's a minimalist target picked to get the support of an Opposition who don't really want to move on climate change anyway,” he said.

Not everyone reacted with gloom to the targets. Tim Davies of Newtown said he was impressed to see a target being set at all. “I can see room for improvement but five per cent is enough at this stage,” said Mr Davies, who is a member of the Labor Party's

Newtown branch.

But Chippendale resident and member of the Sydney Greens, James Diak, who attended the protests at the Federal Government's Phillip Street offices, disagreed: “In terms of carbon dioxide concentration, 450 parts per million (ppm) is really the maximum ceiling for safety, and a five per cent agreement would push us to over 650ppm which is not just dangerous climate change but devastating climate change.”

Similar protests were witnessed outside the Botany office of Peter Garrett where protestors dressed as sea creatures theatrically depicted the death of the Great Barrier Reef.

Federal Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull was also targeted by the community protests with around 30 people taking part in a parade of Merchant Bankers for Coal.

Damien Lawson, climate change campaigner with Friends of the Earth, said the protests were an expression of the community's disgust with the Government's climate change policy.

“If Kevin Rudd doesn't have the brains or the ticker to choose the [Great Barrier] Reef, the wetlands and the people over coal and other polluting industries, then he should get out of the way,” said Mr Lawson.

Community climate groups are now planning for a climate action summit in Canberra on February 3 to coincide with the first sitting day of Parliament.

Thousands of people are expected to attend the four-day summit which will culminate in the creation of a human chain around Parliament House in an effort to encourage the Government to raise its 2020 target to 40 per cent. **SSN**

Redfern activist calls for climate justice



Patricia Corowa ponders the future of the Pacific Photo: Ali Blogg

Laura Bannister

The Rudd Government's failure to adopt adequate greenhouse gas emission targets may prove devastating for Pacific Islanders, according to Aboriginal and Islander activist Patricia Corowa.

“Australia reaps the economic benefits of being the world's highest per capita polluter, while sovereign island nations like the economically disadvantaged Tuvalu, Kiribati, Tonga and Samoa watch rising seas sweep through their houses,” she says.

As a third-generation South Sea Islander or “saltwater Murroona woman,” Ms Corowa has always had a “strong sense and knowledge of country.”

The retired Sydney airport customs officer, and grandmother of one, says she has been an Aboriginal and Islander

activist since age 10, when remote Indigenous communities were persecuted by white settlers. During the 1970s Ms Corowa founded several pivotal welfare organisations including the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service.

Now living in Redfern, she is a strong advocate of climate justice for resource-poor Oceania nations and believes the Australian Government, as the dominant regional power, is bound by a duty of care for them. “I am not persuaded that there has been serious or even basic discussion about the rights of small Pacific Island nations under threat,” she says. “The situation [of many Islanders] is alarming.”

Tuvalu is one such struggling island nation. Made up of reef islands and atolls, the low-lying land is a mere five metres above sea level at its highest point and has few natural resources. With less than 100 tourists visiting annually, Tuvalu's

weak economy is heavily dependent upon foreign aid.

Yet industrialised countries refuse to adequately curb their consumption of dwindling resources or restrain greenhouse gas production, factors that could eventually result in the nation's complete submersion, Ms Corowa argues.

Ms Corowa says the displacement of Pacific Islanders contravenes Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which enshrines the right of every person to a home. “I contend that unrestrained greenhouse gas production by Australia and other economically developed countries for their own advantage constitutes arbitrary interference,” Ms Corowa says.

“When Australians sing ‘our home is girt by sea’ do they really understand that sea includes three great oceans ... with Indigenous Islander societies?” **SSN**

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News



Where to from here? Arne Hanna Photo: Ali Blogg

A question of access

Every day, Arne Hanna of Redfern, a muso by trade who's been in a wheelchair for 21 years, negotiates the same route in order to head out into the community to enjoy a cup of coffee at his local café.

Wendy Collis

Starting at his residence on the Block, Mr Hanna heads along Caroline Street and reaches the corner of Caroline and Abercrombie.

Up until approximately 18 months ago he says he used to safely cross Abercrombie Street and access the footpath with the aid of a small gradient or vehicle ramp that was moulded into the gutter.

However, around that time, this gradient was removed and the gutter and kerb were completely reinstated, resulting in Mr Hanna finding one morning that he was unable to get up onto the footpath.

"If you want to do anything in Sydney," he comments, "like put an extension on your house ... you've got to really jump through hoops to get anything happening, whereas if City Council decides for any particular reason that they want to get rid of a particular feature, they don't bother to ask anybody - and just away they go!" He adds, "I would have thought it'd be Council policy - rather than to remove these things - to put more of them in."

Since the disappearance of the small ramp it is not as easy for Mr Hanna to cross Abercrombie Street. Now he has to keep pushing up the road into oncoming traffic. Using the footpath on the other side of the street (heading up towards the Glengarry Hotel) is not an option as there are no ramps cut into the kerbs and it is not possible for Mr Hanna, while pushing his chair uphill, to mount these gutters.

"There are a few places around Sydney that are like this," he says. "Typically, what will happen is that you will get a pedestrian crossing with a gradient on one side and then on the other side there is a kerb ... so for anyone in a wheelchair it is pretty useless." He adds that Redfern

Station itself is another bugbear, with wheelchair access available into the station itself but no access for getting onto the platforms.

Deputy Lord Mayor Marcelle Hoff, when contacted about this situation, advised that the Council has a very strong commitment in relation to disability issues and has a Disability Access Forum. Regarding the "small ramp" in question she advised that "it would be extremely dangerous to construct a disabled access ramp in the same location as users of this ramp would effectively enter the road and be exposed to significant vehicular traffic". She added that there are pram ramps approximately 20 metres away at the traffic signals on the intersection of Abercrombie and Lawson Streets. These signals incorporate a pedestrian crossing. However, she admitted there are no ramps at Caroline Street and Caroline Lane but stated the following: "I'm told that Council's Construction team will be installing the four ramps as soon as possible."

Mr Hanna remains skeptical. He wonders why Council saw fit to remove the ramp at least a year ago without putting alternative access on either side of Abercrombie Street.

"The problem," he says, "is that Council, acting without community consultation, removed a ramp in a built-up area, thus making the lives of people with disabilities more difficult and dangerous. In the real world, able-bodied citizens cross roads at places other than designated crossings and do so safely in the majority of instances. If Council thinks it can force disabled people to cross at purpose-built pedestrian crossings exclusively, while the rest of the citizenry enjoys a greater degree of convenience, then this amounts to discrimination." **SSH**

The above statement has been forwarded to Deputy Lord Mayor Marcelle Hoff for comment.

Indigenous leaders cautious about carbon trading schemes

Reem Al-Gharabally

Local Indigenous business leaders are enthusiastic about a carbon trading scheme as a means of emissions reduction and promoting economic development in Indigenous communities, but are warning them about signing agreements with unscrupulous traders.

"In the last two years a lot of people have been going to Aboriginal communities trying to get them to sign up to use emissions trading. The legislation is not in place yet, and till such time as we know what is going on, we need to relax a bit and not rush off and sign up," says Warren Mundine, chair of the Australian Indigenous Chamber of Commerce (AICC), a non-profit company set up to promote Indigenous business and advise communities on emissions trading.

Carbon trading schemes work on a cap and trade system: a limit is set on the amount of carbon companies can emit in a given time period. If a company goes over its allocated portion of carbon emissions, it has to buy carbon credits from another market participant that has emitted less than its allocation and can therefore profitably trade them. Critics of the scheme say that companies will avoid making the necessary infrastructural changes to reduce emissions by keeping the price of carbon credits low.

A carbon trading scheme is set to be introduced in Australia in 2010. Mr Mundine believes the scheme has the potential to generate investment and jobs for Indigenous communities which own vast tracts of land across Australia but he warns viewing carbon trading as a cure-all.

"We do not want to get people thinking this is a panacea for economic woes in their community. It's not. It is



Warren Mundine Photo: Ali Blogg

part of a package that can help their community. We want to ensure that Indigenous people are not ripped off and that they don't miss the boat on the opportunities for their communities."

The AICC is currently conducting research to identify the ways the emissions scheme can benefit Aboriginal communities.

"We need support by our community and the wider community to see that it is a simple tool that could help everyone - a national Indigenous trading strategy which allows our people to be part of the process, at the beginning rather than down at the end, which is what normally happens to us," says Shane Phillips, one of the AICC's directors and Chief Executive of the Tribal Warrior Association that runs tours on Sydney Harbour. "Our people have known for thousands of years how the ecology works. I think we have a lot to offer to the rest of the world and that has been something that has been overlooked," Mr Phillips says. **SSH**

News

Resident action groups resist over-development

Jo Holder

Throughout the City there are resident action groups that over the years have played very important roles in the struggle against inappropriate development. Jo Holder gives a brief history of two of those groups.

Several of today's resident action groups have their origins in the proud fight for heritage and environment protection and affordable inner-city housing which led to the famous Green Bans and the building of the 'Loo, Waterloo and Glebe Housing Estates. Darlinghurst Resident Action Group (DRAG), Residents of Woolloomooloo (ROW) and Woolloomooloo Residents Action Group (run by the late Nellie Leonard) formed in 1973 to fight alongside Jack Munday's BLF, other unionists and church leaders like Edmund Campion. The fourth group was the more short-lived Victoria Street RAG associated with Juanita Nielson. The other long-standing group is the Millers Point mob (MRAG) which still meets on a monthly basis in the Older Women's Network Building (former Baby Health Centre) in Millers Point.

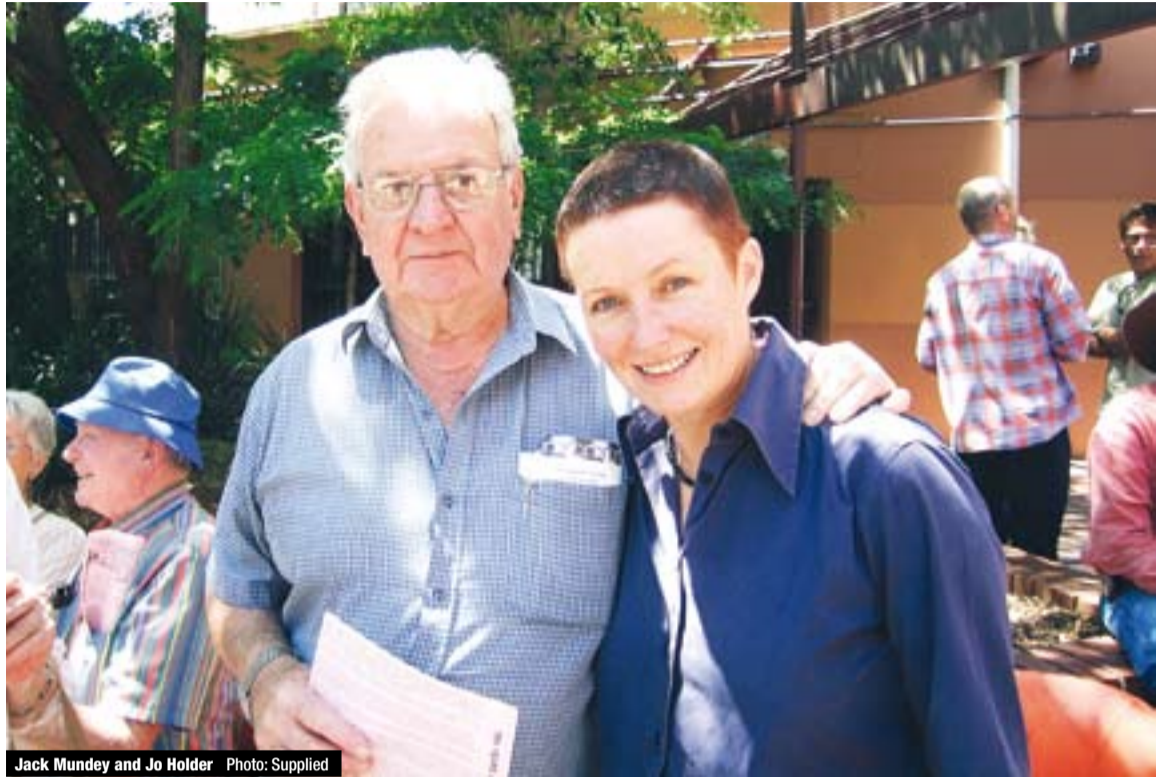
The first convenors of DRAG were artist Margaret Grafton (who made the great tapestry work on the history of Sisters of Charity on show at St Vincent's and the NSW Coat of Arms Tapestry in the new

Parliament Foyer for architect Andrew Andersons) and architect Colin James, honorary architectural advocate for The 'Loo residents. Local historian Honora Wilkinson and artist Brenda Humble are former secretaries of ROW. In 1977 the groups took part in the official opening for the first restorations under the Housing Commission Woolloomooloo Renewal Project.

The groups worked together for many years to keep the diversity and tolerance for which the area is famous. The early action groups in the Rocks, The 'Loo and Darlo and South Sydney formed a coalition. The late Marg Barry and Brenda Humble continued the tradition of a progressive social alliance and set up the Inner City Council of Social Services still based in Waterloo.

DRAG's focus is on planning and traffic issues, protection of landmark sites like St John's Church, Sacred Heart Church and the Caritas Mental Health facility in Taylor Square. In 2004 it worked with the National Trust and Art Deco Society to win recognition for the heritage value of Art Deco Neon in Darlinghurst Road and encouraged City Council to initiate a Neon Precinct.

All groups worked together under the banner of Action City East in 2005 to oppose public road closures associated with the infamous Cross City Tunnel. We won re-openings of 12 of the 72 road closures and obstructions.



Jack Munday and Jo Holder Photo: Supplied

Our alliance history continues with the initiation of the Community ACCORD which promotes responsible service and consumption of alcohol in August 2008. A second forum on the alcohol crisis in the inner city is in its planning stages.

On Remembrance Day, November 11 2006, artist and 'Loo local Jeanette Ravett organised a day commemorating the saving of Woolloomooloo from development. There were talks, an exhibition and BBQ. Green Bans leader

Jack Munday, then secretary of the Builders' Labourers' Federation, and Tom Uren, former Federal Housing Minister, spoke.

All SSH readers could take heart and act for the future!

SSH



Vegies on display at the Christmas Market Photo: Adrian Emilsen

Good turnout for RWA Christmas Market

Geoff Turnbull

The RWA Christmas Market was well supported with many people turning out to take a look and buy in the lead up to Christmas.

The RWA reported receiving much good feedback. Most people seemed to be walking to the site from around the area or from the station although local residents say that the area was parked out and that many were walking from cars parked around the area. Locals also say there were problems at the entrance to North Eveleigh as people tried to enter the park. The market seemed to have a big impact on the Darlington shops with café use and paper sales well down and little new passing trade.

The RWA proposes a weekly Farmer's Market between 8am and 1pm on the site from February 28. It will be interesting to see the take up for the weekly farmer's market. There were certainly people who were delighted to be able to get saltbush lamb at Eveleigh but there were also people who turned up expecting to buy vegetables who did not because of the restricted range and high prices. Public

housing tenants certainly won't be coming down to buy their vegies if the prices do not improve in February.

This was the first market at the site so we should expect some teething problems and hopefully the RWA will have learned a lot from the initial experience. This was also a Christmas Market so you cannot expect weekly farmer's markets to look like the Christmas Market.

The RWA is also planning Sunday markets from 9am to 2pm. Currently on the drawing board is a monthly Artisan's Market with options for other Sunday markets being considered. In the week before the RWA market CarriageWorks hosted the Finders Keepers craft market which reportedly was also well attended demonstrating good potential for an artisan's market.

More information about the markets will be available in the lead up to February 28 on www.eveleighmarkets.com.au. Community organisations interested in making use of the free community fund raising stall to be available at each market should contact Denny Hall at the RWA on 9202 9100.

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News



HAVE YOU HEARD? THE FAST NEWS WITH TREVOR DAVIES

Housing NSW a slum landlord

Last year we carried a number of stories about the appalling condition of public housing and the same neglect by the State Government this year doesn't look any better. The Central Courier, January 7 2009, tells of a block of units (and shows pictures) of public housing in Waterloo where a corridor was awash with effluent and left like that for four months. I wonder if Minister Borger would put up with sh-t for a day, let alone four months.

One women's magazine worth reading

Marie Claire (one of the better women's magazines) February edition carries an amazing story about a local Redfern woman, Belinda Carr, who now works at Mudgin-Gal Women's Centre. Her story is one of a journey from shooting up heroin on the Block. Now clean for seven years, Belinda, says Marie Claire, "is living proof that even the most dismal addicts can turn their life around". She works for a service station and a day a week at the Mudgin-Gal "where she lends an empathetic ear and gives heartfelt encouragement to women in trouble".

Surry Hills first with a small bar

The campaign for small bars seems to have been finally won. John Wardle, who has campaigned very hard for the changes to legislation to allow small bars, recently sent out an email proudly announcing Sydney's first small bar. It's in Crown Street, Surry Hills and will feature live blues and jazz on Sundays 7-10pm, with an in-house grand piano. Wardle explains: "The venue has a restaurant liquor license with a primary service authorisation (PSA) pending. PSA is a recent introduction to NSW liquor laws where restaurants can now serve a drink without a meal."

Henderson Road revolts

The residents of Henderson Road were issued a notice last month about a DA for three satellite antennas on the roof of the Australian Technology Park. One of the residents said, "I don't quite understand why they would be putting through an application for the installation of the antennas when the building is already in progress. I would have thought that this application would be incorporated with the original development application as part of the building." The residents are asking questions about the impact of radiation on those nearby and they are concerned about traffic and parking in the area.

Unauthorised roller shutters trash the ambience of Kings Cross

The SSH has expressed concern over the years about the use of roller shutters for shops on Redfern Street. One headline for the article, I think, read "Redfern Street Baghdad by night" - and that was before the Council amalgamation in 2004. The amalgamation happened and people hoped for an improvement. Andrew Woodhouse, President of the Potts Point and Kings Cross Heritage Conservation Society, points out in a recent media release the relevant planning control. The South Sydney LEP, covering the Potts Point and Kings Cross areas, Part F, design criteria section 5.2, states unequivocally: "Solid roller shutter doors are not permitted. Transparent or open grill shutters are permitted if located behind the shop front." Andrew cites seven places in the Cross where there have been DAs approved with roller door shutters. We will have a full report next month.

Talent at the Redfern Community Centre

Redfern Community Centre's music studio proudly launched its new CD Songbird Calling on Friday November 28 at Redfern Community Centre. Its media release tells us that: "Songbird Calling is a dynamic compilation of fresh new songs from artists local to Redfern who have been making good use of the recording studio and the music programs available at the Centre since it first opened adjacent to 'The Block' in 2005. Songbird Calling, the second compilation album from Studio RCC, particularly highlights the diverse talents of local Aboriginal and Torres Islander singers and songwriters, new and well known. Included on the CD are other great local artists and community performers whose contributions beautifully complement the voice of the album. What is achieved is a strong compilation of original songs from Redfern Community Centre that have a lot to say. All the performers and musicians, often in collaboration with each other, have worked with professional support to produce great recordings of great songs. Presenting a range of ages and styles the 13-track CD includes the artists: Dave Quinlan, Wire MC and Choo Choo, Nadeena Dixon, Lawrence Barlow (Lollipop), Cathy Stanley, Tim Bishop, Bryan Wymarra, Block Brothers, Rhubee Neale, The Dreamtime Brothers, Common Ground, Ricky Emmerton, Dr Greenthumb and Block Harmony." If you want to hear some genuinely talented Musos, drop in at the City of Sydney's Neighbourhood Service Centre, 158 Redfern Street, Redfern. Your donation of \$15 goes directly to funding future initiatives of support to local music artists developing their craft at Redfern Community Centre.

Redfern gets another IGA store at Souths

Geoff Turnbull, in his Redfern Waterloo updates, tells us that "Souths Leagues Club has revealed the supermarket to be included in the club's refurbishment will be an IGA supermarket. Souths say it has tenants lined up for the building when it opens. In addition to running the café on Redfern Park, Souths is also looking for a 'Signature Chef' as part of their plan to attract people to the area for functions and good dining at the renovated Club."

Housing NSW has some heart

You may remember the Age Pension flats in Darlington where the residents were campaigning for an intercom in the complex. Well, good news! They have now been promised it will finally happen in February. We will keep you informed.



Meredith Burgmann at the Harold Park Hotel Photo: Andrew Collis

Burgmann in Glebe: campaigning for Obama

Andrew Collis

On January 19, Labor Councillor Dr Meredith Burgmann, was guest speaker at a fundraiser for the NSW group of ANTaR (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation). The event took place upstairs at the Harold Park Hotel in Glebe. Ms Burgmann recounted experiences of a recent visit to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where she helped out during the final weeks of Barack Obama's presidential campaign.

A long-time and active campaigner for social justice, Ms Burgmann was clearly inspired by her "holiday" in the United States. "The campaign was incredibly inclusive," she said. "As soon as we arrived [the Australian contingent of eight] we were given various tasks - door-knocking, poster-making, data entry, and what the Americans call 'visibility' duties."

The latter entailed standing on a street corner with placards, in the freezing cold. "It was interesting," Ms Burgmann explained. "In the final stages of the campaign little effort is made to convince voters one way or another. In the context of non-compulsory voting, it's all about identifying your voters and making sure they vote."

Ms Burgmann's presentation, punctuated by slides and humorous asides (campaigning coincided with Halloween celebrations!), was structured according

to observed differences between the electoral systems of the United States and Australia. American peculiarities include non-compulsory voting, voter registration (which enables US voters to take part in the "primaries" which determine candidates), inconsistent polling hours and procedures ("in every town a different practice"), weekday as opposed to weekend voting, no preferential voting, and no paid officials to oversee proceedings on election day.

"I was quite surprised by much of it," Ms Burgmann said. "I'd have to say, that in each case, I prefer the Australian system. Compulsory voting forces parties to make policies for all the people, including minorities. Weekday voting is simply discriminatory - so many people can't get time off work in order to vote."

"On election day we'd get information as to which of our registered voters had voted. At the end of the day we'd wait outside in the dark for people to return from work, then bundle them into the van and off to the polling booth," she recalled.

There were positives, too. "We were given just one instruction with regard to our work - no negative campaigning. And I was impressed by the hospitality we received. I don't think there was a night we weren't invited to somebody's home for dinner." The Australian volunteers were treated to fine cuisine - from lobsters to quintessentially American peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

Sixty-two per cent of eligible voters turned out to vote on November 4. Normally, the percentage is in the low 50s. "The volunteers worked so hard," Ms Burgmann said. "One woman beside me on election night just cried and cried - she was so relieved and happy."

Ms Burgmann was impressed by the Democrat candidates, including Barack Obama (of course). "Obama did all his fundraising outside of the public funding system," she noted. "The Obama for President organisation is staying on," she added. "It's more to the left of the Democrat party as a whole, so will stay on as a pressure group to help the president. I think that's a good thing."

The evening concluded with a raffle and prizes including a "dress-up doll" Barack Obama fridge magnet and rare Obama-Biden placards.

ANTaR NSW Co-ordinator, Kate Aubrey-Poiner, was very pleased with the fundraiser. "Obama's election is a very significant event in world history. He overcame huge odds to be elected as America's first African-American President," she said. "Meredith's address on the eve of the inauguration analysed the importance of the event, not only for the US but more broadly for societies around the world."

For information on ANTaR NSW visit www.antar.org.au or email Kate Aubrey-Poiner: kate@antar.org.au.

Supermarket development rejected by court

Ellice Mol

Relief for some, as a community's battle to keep The Hive in Erskineville free of development, comes to an end. An appeal by developer, Arto Management, was unsuccessful in the Land and Environment Court. The Council had earlier rejected the application for a two-storey supermarket on Erskineville Road, as a result of the proposal's scale, intensity, traffic generation and adverse impact on the village.

Commissioner Trevor Bly said the \$12 million development would create significant traffic consequences and erode the amenity and character of Erskineville

village.

"The planning controls at Erskineville are designed to encourage smaller scale retail to service the local area and hence retain a village quality. A large supermarket would have changed the area's character and generated significant traffic on the village's already congested streets," said Deputy Lord Mayor Marcelle Hoff, after the court made its decision on Tuesday January 13.

It has been over 15 months since the application was first seen by local residents. Paul Howard, from Friends of Erskineville community group, says the City Council needs to be a bit more realistic and pragmatic about these developments.

"The Council policy on development

applications needs to be reviewed. As it is now, the Council need only to notify residents within a 75-metre radius of a proposed development," Mr Howard says. He says the guidelines are not appropriate when the development is a two-storey, 2,138 square metre building.

Mr Howard says Erskineville has a group of very passionate people who will jealously guard sites where the development proposal is inappropriate. "The community needs to band together when we are up against big corporations with lots of resources," he says.

On the day of the court hearing, 250 people in the community made their presence felt at the site of the unsuccessful development.

News

Signs of the times

John August

Sydney City Council is clamping down on organisations putting up posters "illegally" – and those organisations claim it's an obstruction of free speech. Yes, I suppose it's "illegal". But should it be?

The Council says it removes 340,000 posters a year at a cost of \$6 million. Still, advertisers have a monopoly on "legal" advertising, which we also have to pay for. But what's so different between companies and individuals who put up posters or signs?

And, much as we might pay for their removal, there's some benefit. But there's a difference between nightclubs and other for-profit businesses, compared to community and advocacy groups with limited budgets. Are they truly abusing the environment, or are they doing what they can within their means? It's sad the advertising firms' monopoly locks out such groups.

But let's not be naive. Nightclubs and other businesses poster not because they're struggling to make their message known, but rather because

its a cheap way of advertising for business. And look at those "legal" poles. They put up not just one poster, but several – squeezing out others as only competitive businesses can.

And, while many put up posters, few bother to take them down. I know a friend who impressed some locals when he took down a nailed sign after the election. Most put them up and then forget them.

Freedom of speech is a slippery notion. US Supreme Court Judge, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., believed in the free market ideas not for the benefit of the speaker, but rather for everyone else. The truth or the best policy arises out of the competition of widely various ideas in free, transparent public discourse.

Pursuing a different aspect, one protester thought freedom of speech changed when only some people have megaphones – "Of course it does!" was his comment.

We benefit seeing these posters, much as the groups are trying to get their point across. Yes. We benefit from councils running their finances well, and recovering their costs. We also benefit from the city being a place where communication can



Photo: Google Images

take place under the formal legal and financial radar. Probably more than the benefits of "legal" advertising.

OK, there's a cost. The cost of pollution, of clearing it away. Perhaps it makes sense to levy a charge on those who do it. Wonder if it would be less than hiring advertising from those with a monopoly on it? But, within reason, I don't mind as a ratepayer paying for it.

The opinions expressed are those of the author.

Volunteers sought for street count

SSH

The next City of Sydney Street Count will take place on Tuesday morning February 17.

The Homelessness Unit is seeking enthused volunteers to join its workers at odd hours of the morning to carry out a count of people who are sleeping rough across the City of Sydney Local Government Area.

Over 350 people were counted sleeping rough across the LGA in the August 2008 street count. With the benefit of lessons learned during the first count and warmer, less inclement weather this time (it is hoped) the Homelessness Unit is keen to see if there will be any major changes in the numbers of people sleeping rough in February.

In the last count, 165 people gave their time to assist with the count. The goal for February is 200 volunteers! This number will

enable the Unit to count some of the areas that it was unable to get to last time such as Glebe.

With the release of the White Paper on Homelessness the Federal Government has committed itself, and Council, to specific targets in relation to reducing homelessness.

The street count will be one way of measuring the impacts of policy changes and the adequacy of resources at a local level.

If you are interested in volunteering or just keen to find out more, visit the Council website where you will also find the registration form and volunteer manual. www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/Community/HomelessnessServices/StreetCount.asp
Contact Katie Price, Homelessness Project Coordinator, on 9265 9667 or kprice@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

EVERYONE CAN BE A LIFESAVER

PoolWerx and Royal Life Saving have teamed up to give you the chance to win some great prizes to support their Home Pool Safety campaign, aimed at preventing backyard pool drowning deaths in 0 to four year olds.

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Royal Life Saving and PoolWerx are also offering every reader a free checklist so you can do your own home pool safety check. To make sure no one you love becomes a statistic, make this weekend your Home Pool Safety Weekend by using the free checklist to ensure your fence is in working order and the area around it is safe for small children. You can get a free checklist by visiting www.homepoolsafety.com.au

The best ways to keep your children or grandchildren safe are to supervise the child, provide barriers to water locations, familiarise your child with water and learn resuscitation.

PoolWerx's John O'Brien says backyard pools are being targeted to ensure they are healthy, safe swimming environments – pointing out that you cannot put a price on saving lives.

Visit www.homepoolsafety.com.au

To try and win one of our great prizes all you need to do is send email with subject heading Pool Safety Promotion to editor@ssh.com.au



News



ABC Learning Centre in Alexandria Photos: Ali Blogg

ABC childcare debacle affects inner city

Pam Dagwell

Since the giant ABC Learning Group went into receivership in November 2008, there have been more twists and turns than a sideshow alley. Finally, a plan has emerged for Alexandria and Rosebery, the two inner-city learning centres whose continuation was initially in doubt when the collapse of ABC was first announced.

Rosebery is one of the 720 so-called "profitable" centres which will be restructured and continue to operate under the control of the receivers, McGrath Nicol, whose task it will be to help with a new business plan.

ABC Learning, Alexandria, belongs to the newly formed ABC2 Group (241 in total) identified as "unviable" in December 2008. The Federal Government has committed

\$34 million to this group so that their centres can stay open until March 31. This is on top of \$22 million worth of taxpayer funds given to keep the entire stable of 1,040 operating through to the end of 2008. ABC2 is now in the hands of Court Appointed Receivers, PPB, who have called for expressions of interest in their sale. The closing date for EOI lodgements was January 21 and the sales must be concluded by March 31 when Commonwealth funding will end.

According to then Acting Prime Minister,

Julia Gillard, the Rudd Government is seeking to inject diversity into the childcare industry. Non-profit groups will be looked on favourably by the receivers, as will smaller for-profit childcare companies. The monopoly of the sector by ABC Learning is obviously now recognised as not in the best interests of children and their parents.

The not-for-profit childcare attached to Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre currently offers occasional (4-6 hours) care only. Linda Scott, Chairperson of the management committee, said that when their new premises reopen in Crown Street in March/April, (they are now operating out of Bourke Street Public School) they may consider moving into the long daycare (8-10 hours) market. "Childcare

is a challenging business and shouldn't be used for profit," she said. "The ABC collapse is a strong reinforcement of the community based model for childcare. At this time, however, Surry Hills (Community Centre) is not in a position to offer an EOI for Alexandria."

Mel Gatfield, the Assistant Secretary of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union (LHMU), which covers the childcare industry, said its members were hopeful Alexandria Learning Centre would be sold quickly. The Centre is licensed to care for 39 children and currently employs eight workers. "The occupancy rate of 95 per cent (37 enrolments) is healthy for this time of the year and the inner city area is always desirable," she said. "While the

staff are concerned about their jobs they are also very worried about the children, should the Centre have to close."

Ms Gatfield said one of the reasons for the "unprofitable" tag might have been because of the higher number of babies being looked after, necessitating more staff. "The court receivers are applying different standards from the ABC group and the profit motive is not the main consideration. In any case, babies grow and parents are not inclined to keep moving their children around, so in the long run it is an advantage to have the babies there," she said.

The LHMU understands that there is a stipulation that the successful purchasers are to take over the entitlements of the staff.

State taxes tough on inner-city business

Tara Clifford

A recent report has thrown open the doors on the State tax system, exposing that NSW has the highest taxes on small business out of six Australian states.

The study by the Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) uses a methodology that provides a single information source on tax burdens if a business has operated in different states. The findings reveal that there is less disposable income for NSW businesses to grow and so many may be encouraged to invest elsewhere.

One of the authors of the IPA study, Julie Novak, says: "With slow economic growth combined with high taxes, this is a double whammy for businesses."

This outlook reflects the economic forecast by Access Economics, Australia's premier economic consultant that NSW is now in

recession. "It's in the interest of the Government to make tax systems deliberately complex and hard to work out," says Ms Novak.

The structure of the tax system affects business owners such as Redfern resident Richard Graham who is setting up a small business in tourism which requires a Hire Car licence. This is an annual upfront fee of \$8,200 payable to the RTA. "This major cost has to be paid before the business has a chance to start making money," says Mr Graham.

This view demonstrates the impact of the IPA's findings that taxes do not take account of business profitability, and so inhibit economic growth.

According to Brian Adams, Chair of the Surry Hills Business Alliance: "The general feeling among business people is that this incompetent State Government is sending business to the wall. We simply cannot keep paying huge taxes with no return for monies paid."

"If ever a tax revolution was due, it is now!" says Mr Adams.

Ms Novak believes that the report may provide such an opportunity. She says that informed businesses can push for reform, while the NSW Government can also use the report as inspiration to implement changes.

"Whether it does or not will have very important implications for the economy. If it does then it will kick-start business, economic growth and employment opportunities," she said.

But Matt Lee, Vice President of the Redfern Waterloo Chamber of Commerce says: "There is nothing you can do. The Government is unyielding with the way they deal with you."

This discouraged belief is also shared by Richard Ware, Vice President of the Glebe Chamber of Commerce and owner of Richard Ware Real Estate. "I think, unfortunately, they are too stupid," says Mr Ware. "Being in business at the moment is very frustrating," he said.

Tax justice

James Diack

The Institute of Public Affairs (IPA) is a Melbourne-based right-wing think tank, funded by corporations such as Telstra, Gunns and Monsanto plus key players from the mining and tobacco industries. The IPA is known for advocating privatisation and deregulation, reduction in the power of unions and denial of most significant environmental problems, including climate change.

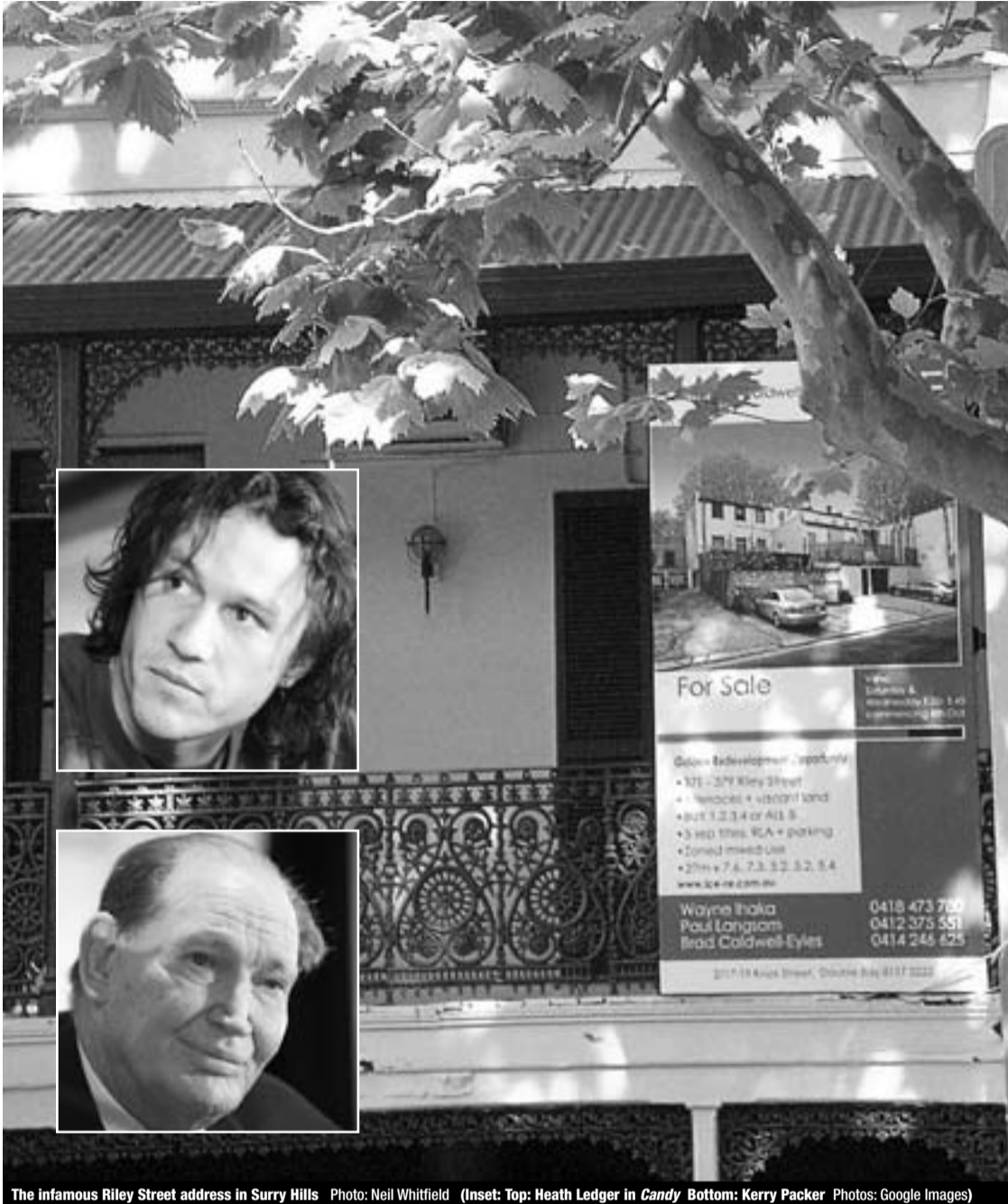
A recent report published by the IPA compares the differing levels of taxes levied by state governments on businesses. The report concludes that in some states some taxes are higher than in other states, while at the same time other taxes are lower. The main differences are between payroll and land-based taxes. NSW business pay the most tax whilst those in WA pay the least with a NSW business paying \$222 for every \$197 paid in WA. Interestingly, the report also identified that small businesses bear a comparatively greater tax burden than larger corporations.

With the name "Business bearing the burden" and dripping with phrases like "compliance burdens" and "impost", the

language of the report gives it a flavour that imparts the general conservative view that all taxation is bad and must be minimised. But this misses the point that without taxation government is unable to provide public services. Without taxes there would be no police to protect the private property of businesses. With services such as hospitals, public transport, education and environmental protection increasingly seen to be inadequate, the NSW Government is struggling to meet public expectations. Many economists argue that a substantial reinvestment in public infrastructure is long overdue. How will we face the twin challenges of climate change and peak oil with an underfunded train system?

Sadly, the report does not mention a serious problem with the Australian tax system known as "fiscal imbalance". This refers to the situation where the Federal Government has large tax revenues, whereas State Governments do most of the "heavy lifting" in providing public services. This has led to the familiar blame game between politicians about who is responsible for a particular problem. As taxpayers and consumers of public services we can only hope that this problem is addressed soon.

News



The infamous Riley Street address in Surry Hills Photo: Neil Whitfield (Inset: Top: Heath Ledger in *Candy* Bottom: Kerry Packer Photos: Google Images)

Sex in the city – over the years

Reem Al-Gharabally

In her book *Memories of a Touch of Class: Life in Australia's Best-Known Bordello*, Zara Powell, the former brothel's most famous madam, wrote: "It remains the most controversial piece of real estate in Sydney ..."

More than 20 years after those words were written the three Victorian terraces on Riley Street that were home to Sydney's best known brothel, *A Touch of Class*, continues to remain controversial real estate.

The brothel closed its doors last year and was up for sale, but was taken off the market when it did not get the reserve price of \$6.5 million at an auction last October.

Once describing itself as "the place

for sumptuous earthly delights" in a listing that can still be found online, it was rumoured to have entertained some of Sydney's most powerful personalities, even though there was no evidence to support some of the colourful stories. According to Kerry Packer's unauthorised biographer Paul Barry, the billionaire once hired the entire place for the night for his polo-playing associates. The venue also featured in the film *Candy*, with Heath Ledger and Abbie Cornish.

A Touch of Class was established in 1972, but had its heyday in the 1980s when it was managed by Zara Powell.

Again, only rumours surround the reasons for its closure, and people with whom the *SSH* spoke did not want to be named. One Surry Hills resident said that the brothel could not afford to

meet Council's fire regulation measures. Another rumour was that it was due to re-open after some scheduled building work. At the time of its closure there was some speculation about whether it was related to a raid by investigators from the Tax Office in 2006 or by increased competition.

President of the Scarlet Alliance, the Australian Sex Workers Association, was more matter of fact. "Brothels come and go. *Touch of Class* had its heyday and at other times in its history it struggled with its working conditions," she said.

Brothels in New South Wales were decriminalised in 1995, and are regulated like any other business. In 2003, City of Sydney Council introduced the no-clustering policy preventing one sex premises opening 75 metres from another. SSH

Activists' manual launched in Alexandria

Shaun Walsh

A new manual explaining the rights of political activists was launched by Labor Councillor Meredith Burgmann on Human Rights Day, December 10.

Ms Burgmann recounted tales of her own political career as a protester, before becoming a member (and then President) of the NSW Legislative Council. She said that one of the most difficult things at the time was to find out legal information and lawyers to represent protesters. She identified the new manual as being

part of a long tradition of human rights documents, "from the French Rights of Man, the American Bill of Rights and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights". Ms Burgmann pointed out that the manual was obviously of less world significance and intended as a guide for lay people as well as lawyers.

The manual's author, Dale Mills of Waterloo, completed the manual for Redfern Legal Centre. Policing has become more authoritarian since at least 2000, said Mr Mills, and it has become more difficult to be a political activist. That is why the manual was needed.

It is intended as a guide for lay people as well as lawyers and will be updated with changes in the law and changes in police practice.

In concluding, Ms Burgmann said: "I hope that it becomes the first port of call for activists as well as lawyers representing activists. As the manual is updated in the months and years to come, it will become one of the best examples of its type in the world."

The new resource has already received written contributions from activists, law students, lawyers and the NSW Council for Civil Liberties. SSH

ADVERTISEMENT



Kristina Keneally MP

MEMBER FOR HEFFRON

I hope everyone has had a relaxing summer break and are ready for an exciting 2009. The new year is already looking like a busy one for the Heffron electorate.

I would like to congratulate the 690 local Higher School Certificate (HSC) students who received their results shortly before Christmas.

A record 67,000 students sat the HSC in 2008 and all students should be proud of what they have accomplished. I would in particular like to congratulate Viet Tung Vu from Tempe High School who topped the state in the Vietnamese Continuers course. To place first in a course is an amazing achievement.

In more exciting news for local students, Housing Minister David Borger, MP recently announced that four students from the Heffron area would receive a \$2000 scholarship to help them complete their HSC studies.

The NSW Government is investing \$346,000 to help students who live in public housing finish their high school education. The Heffron students who were awarded the scholarships this year came from a variety of backgrounds and attended local schools including Alexandria Park Community School and JJ Cahill Memorial High. Results show that 93 per cent of scholarship recipients go on to complete their HSC, with many going on to further study at University or TAFE.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the 112 New Probationary Constables that have recently started working in the Central Metropolitan police region, including at the Botany Bay, Redfern and Newtown Local Area Commands. A total of 388 police graduated from the Goulburn Police Academy in December, taking the total number to nearly one thousand for 2008.

I would like to congratulate these officers for completing their extensive training program and thank them for choosing to become a New South Wales police officer. They have selected a tough job, but one that can bring tremendous rewards and greatly affects local communities. The new recruits will join the NSW Police Force at a time when it is at a record level. More than 15,000 officers are working in New South Wales, representing an increase of around 18 per cent since 1994.

Information on careers in policing is available from the NSW Police Force website www.police.nsw.gov.au or by phoning 1800 222 122.

Kristina Keneally MP
Member for Heffron

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News



Oxfam store assistant, Felicity Photo: Ali Blogg

Economic downturn bites international aid agency

SSH

As the global economic downturn hits in every country, we in Australia feel the pinch as well. However, while many of us chose to give donations to an international aid agency, like Oxfam, rather than buying

each other presents at Christmas time – the fun “goat” and “chook” cards, for example, nevertheless its Christmas Peace Appeal was down almost 10 per cent on the previous year.

Its supporters who, in the past, had been Oxfam’s most generous donors gave at a much

lower level – around 40 per cent less. Quite possibly this was in response to either a genuine cut back in the incomes of the people concerned or fear of what is to come.

Sunita Bose of Oxfam says, “The untold story of the financial crisis for Australian aid agencies that operate overseas is the flow-on effect from the collapse of the Australian dollar. Given that we work in a number of countries where the American dollar is used, such as East Timor and Cambodia, this means that our funds don’t go as far as originally budgeted.”

Oxfam Australia works in 26 countries across East Asia and South Asia, Southern Africa, the Pacific and Indigenous Australia, in partnership with local communities to overcome poverty and injustice. It also gives short-term support to people when there are disasters and emergencies.

Ms Bose points out that “the continued support of our donors will be critical in the coming months. The reality is that we are living in very uncertain times and we cannot predict

how hard our donations will be hit. At this point in time we are putting in place contingency plans for coping with a downturn of public donations that at its worst could reach into the millions.”

Undoubtedly some of us are looking at where we can make savings in response to the economic downturn. However, as far as we can, let us be aware that, by comparison, we are not nearly as hard hit as those who were vulnerable in the first place.

When you are needing to give gifts, visit the Oxfam shop in Broadway, or other places, and see the good ideas that are there for both children and adults. Especially for children, you can find beautiful little gifts which are different and, as you give it to the child you love, you will know that another child will also benefit.

At present, the NSW headquarters of Oxfam, at Level 3, 25 Cooper St Surry Hills NSW 2010 is being renovated but it should be open shortly after the SSH goes to print. The website is www.oxfam.org.au.

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VSU at an end, thanks to Rudd

Aaron Jones

Student associations have welcomed the Rudd Government’s introduction of a compulsory fee for university students, following the negative impact of Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU). The annual compulsory fee of \$250 will be used to improve university campus amenities and student services.

Emma Lancaster, President of the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) Students’ Association, said that the announcement is very positive and that it will improve student organisations and services as well as the physical infrastructure of the campus.

“It is a welcome relief to see the government introducing a compulsory fee because the university lost many staff and had to cut out student organisations when the Voluntary Student Unionism legislation was passed,” she said. “But while it is positive, the devil is in the detail and it still needs approval in the Senate for it to be passed.”

Tom O’Sullivan, Chief Executive Officer of the UTS Union, says that the VSU had a very negative impact on the university and that the fee will help restore the university’s culture and student programs. “There was a large amount of income lost due to the

government legislation in 2006,” he said. “One third of permanent staff were forced to leave, the university had to raise prices and many sport, recreation and cultural programs were discontinued due to a lack of funding.”

A report by UTS Vice Chancellor and President, Professor Ross Milbourne, to the Minister for Youth and Sport, Kate Ellis, said that the VSU had had a dramatic financial impact on the university. In the document, it said that the UTS Union fee had declined from a peak of just under \$6 million in 2005 to approximately \$172,000 in 2007 and that the UTS Students’ Association fee had decreased from \$1.54 million in 2006 to \$18,000 in 2007.

While the specific details of the announcement are still unknown, students say that the compulsory fee is only aiding unionism in universities.

Esther Youssef, a first-year business and law student at the University of Technology, Sydney, says that while the fee will help universities to improve student services, it is unknown how the money will be distributed.

“The fee only promotes compulsory unionism which is unfair for particular students,” she said. “Will the fee help build a better library and better classrooms or will it help with student organisations and groups? None of the students have been told where the money is actually going.”

News



Bulldozed construction site on Walker Street in Waterloo Photo: Andrew Collis

Community decay, bulldozers and real estate agents – the NSW State Plan?

Ross Smith

The recent events at Rosemeadow are another link in a long chain of negative outcomes for Housing NSW tenant communities across the state. The history goes back to the era of the Green Bans in inner Sydney of the 1970s when the tenants sought assistance to protect their communities and housing from the assaults being made on them by the government through its agent, then known as the Housing Commission. The induced community and property destruction was then cited as the justification to sell real estate to generate income for the government.

The pattern that has emerged over the years is the failure to act in a constructive manner when the initial signs of unrest appear in a formerly cohesive and functional community. The ensuing community destruction and associated turmoil is then cited as the excuse to utilise the “bulldozer option” which leads to the sale of the real estate, the proceeds of which the government of the day pockets. The documentary, *Waterloo*, provides an extremely well researched example of this from the 1970s era.

The East Fairfield estate was considered a problem estate even prior to the “riots” and media attention in 1996. In 1991, concern about crime on the estate prompted some

improvements in security (fences and garage doors were added), although concerns about safety and security on the estate continued. During 1996/97 a total of \$821,959 from the Neighbourhood Improvement Programme (NIP) funds was spent on the estate. None of this money was spent on capital works. At the same time, a study was commissioned by the Department to examine longer-term options for the estate. This study did not recommend a NIP type solution but, rather, demolition and sale of the vacant site.

In Dubbo in 2006 the claim, “He and others believe the NSW Department of Housing has been tacitly encouraging the arsonists in order to hasten the estate’s demise, so that the real estate could be sold off to developers” was reported in the *Australian*. “If they had listened to us and taken us on board a little more seriously they

“It became the centre of drugs, it became the centre of violence”

may not have wasted all this money,” was reported by ABC News Online. A *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper article on Dubbo shed light on the real estate sales and attendant income generation for the government. “A radical overhaul has transformed a Dubbo estate from the state’s worst address to a real estate drawcard. Some

buyers are about to triple their money in less than a year. Such is life today on Dubbo’s Gordon Estate, 2½ years after alcohol-fuelled New Year’s Day riots exploded here in 2006 and marked it as NSW’s ugliest public housing mistake.”

The NSW Government recently won an award from the Urban

“Everything that could go wrong in a society went wrong”

Development Institute of Australia, NSW, for its Dubbo Transformation Strategy, which judges called “a great example of courageous and innovative leadership addressing problems and perceptions in a notorious public housing estate”. The Government is about a third of the way through converting this public ghetto into private suburbia. It has sold 63 public

housing properties to private owners in the past year after relocating scores of tenants – sometimes against their will – and renovating or demolishing their former state-owned homes. There are 304 left to sell by June 2012.

The NSW Parliamentary Committee report on Macquarie Fields, whilst making calls for better coordination

between services, did not call on the Government to fund the Macquarie Fields Community Action Plan beyond one year. Following the historic pattern the imminent community collapse will create the media circus that will see the bulldozers escort the real estate agents into the area for the

delivery of the government’s response to the generated public outcry.

The signs are that Rosemeadow is now subject to the time proven process. “Everything that could go wrong in a society went wrong,” said Phillip Cox, the Sydney architect who introduced the [Radburn] design to the state, of an estate in Villawood. “It became the centre of drugs, it became the centre of violence and, eventually, the police refused to go into it. It was hell.” The quote appeared in a *Sydney Morning Herald* article in 1998. The article continued: “The Government revealed yesterday it would demolish part of the troubled estate as police continued to deal with the fallout from Monday’s brawl, which left two people with bullet wounds and several others stabbed and bashed.”

Time will tell if the NSW Government’s established pattern of fund raising by sale of infrastructure and other government assets will

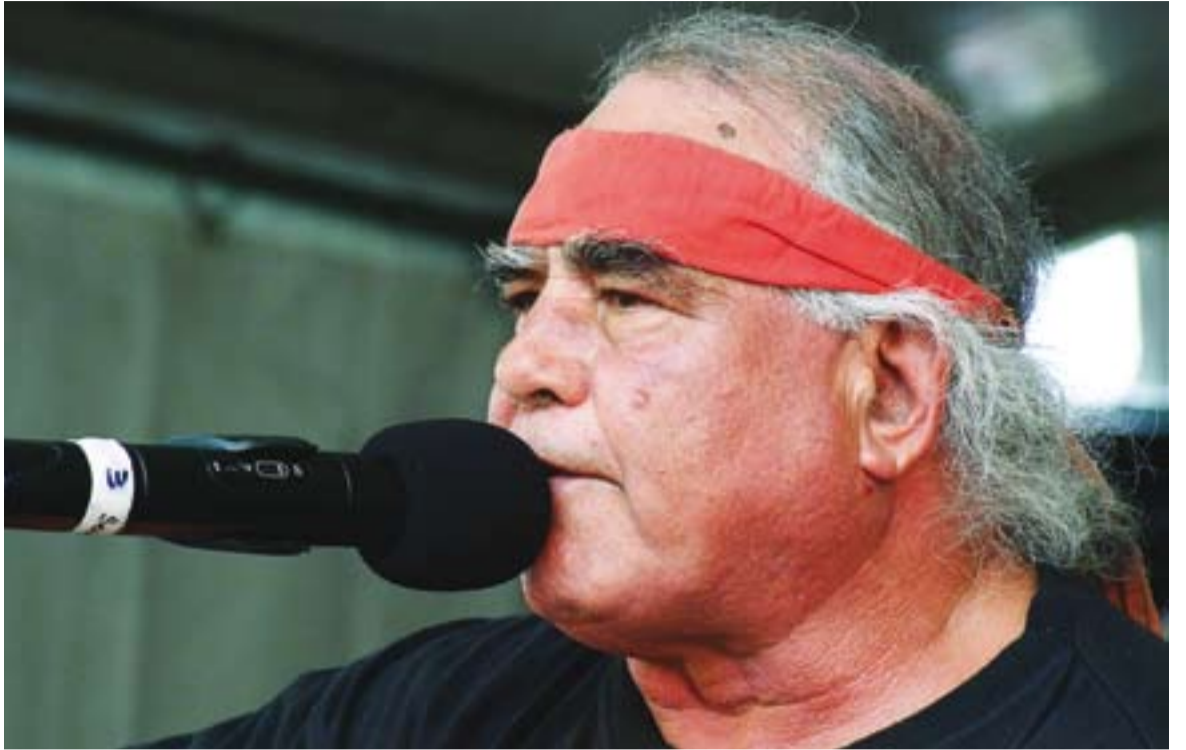
continue. Recent publicised sales have included the sale of the electricity generation infrastructure, whilst other income generation streams such as the state lotteries office are mooted for sale. Once the family silver is sold, it cannot be replaced.

Sales of Housing NSW assets in general do not attract attention and there has been a steady stream of them over the period. There has been no identification of where and how many “replacement” properties have been bought – despite this being the tantric response when the issue of what happens to property sales income is raised. An even vaguer response is given by HNSW when the question, “How many bedrooms are there per dwelling front door, and has this ratio altered over time?” is raised. This may well be the devil in the fine print – same number of properties, however with reduced numbers of people housed, and a lower value per property.

The concept of utilising induced community decay, bulldozers and real estate agents as preferred means of delivering community development gives a novel twist to the implementation of the NSW State Plan, especially of its two principle components, Keeping People Safe and Building Harmonious Communities. SSN

This article first appeared in the *Rimfire Review*, Monday January 19. The *Rimfire Review* is the weekly opinion publication of the National Tenant Support Network.

News



Casey Donovan and Kev Carmody at Yabun 2009 Photos: Eve Gibson

Yabun 2009 – celebration and reflection

Adam Hill

What would a day held so special in a nation's heart be without its lingo, colloquialisms and ironies? Well those attending "Yabun" (song with a beat) found more than you could poke a "boondi" at, many of which came from the mouths of gifted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander MCs. Wire MC and Sista Agz.

Main stage at the nationally acclaimed Indigenous concert ironically held upon a tract of Gadigal land re-named after a former monarch, Victoria Park. Here, significant generic terms such as "gammon" (pulling your leg), "walung" (money) and "djilewa" (toilet) were used fleetingly throughout the day.

Harmony prevailed with a diversity of nations represented, demonstrative why just one flag, made popular by the major

tabloids, seems illogical. This day now sees the largest representation of clans peoples of Koori, Goori, Murri, Nunga, Pallawa, Wongi, Yamatji, T.I. Yolngu, Tiwi, Bama, Anangu and welcomed visitors. Some of the latter who adorned themselves with the above mentioned flag represented a clan of "higher allegiance", often traversing the grounds in pairs. Nonetheless, a mutual respect was upheld on this day of immense reflection.

Credit to the organisers for collating incredible talent. A clever re-location of the main stage made for comfortable viewing of some of our most celebrated senior performers. Also, fresh vocals of Nadeena Dixon, Casey Donovan and Dwayne Everett Smith. Moving with the times, hip-hop extraordinaires, Tjimba & the Young Warriors, drew the "jarjums" (kiddies) to the stage. Fine bush foods were on offer as were a variety of arts

including visual, poetry/literature, fashion and craft. Reunions and yarns were rife in the "elders' tent". AFL legends convened a kicking comp, and a break dance comp for those with too much energy took place at the opposite end of the park. SSH

For more information and images, visit www.gadigal.org.au



Scenes on board the Deerubbun Photos: Andrew Collis

Survival Day on Sydney Harbour

Andrew Collis

The SSH organised an Australia/Survival Day harbour cruise in support of the Tribal Warrior Association. We are happy to report plans for a similar event in 2010!

As we made our way to the docks at the Sydney Fish Markets for our Indigenous cultural cruise aboard the Deerubbun, the rain started to fall. It was a chilly summer evening, January 26. There was nothing chilly, however, about the welcome we received from our hosts and crew - Dallas, Leon, Terry, April and Jake - members of the Tribal Warrior Association, a non-profit community organisation based in Redfern, initiated and directed by Aboriginal people with Aboriginal Elders.

The Tribal Warrior Association operates

two boats on the harbour: the Tribal Warrior (which, famously, has circumnavigated the continent), and the Deerubbun. The rain continued to fall, in misty sheets, and we didn't mind at all.

There were about 50 of us altogether - those with wet-weather gear happy on the upper deck, the rest of us huddled inside, or happily wet as we wandered from starboard to bow, from port to stern, enjoying the sights of the harbour, and learning a little of its history through Indigenous experience. Lady Macquarie, we learned, was a compassionate advocate of Indigenous people. The design of the Opera House was inspired in part by shell middens (shell-fish remains) left over many years by Aboriginal gatherings on the site.

Food on board was plentiful - barbecued steak, sausages, pasta, salad. The hours went by quickly. At about 8pm we made

our way slowly into Cockle Bay where, to our surprise, we found ourselves part of an official Australia Day parade. We met up with the Tribal Warrior and the Young Endeavour and a fleet of other craft. Thousands of spectators lined the shore at Darling Harbour, cheering and waving. An audio-visual presentation reminded us of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations, and the importance of maintaining commitment and action for Reconciliation.

Crew member Terry Olsen performed a smoking ceremony with eucalypts and a flaming tin can at the stern. He gestured to the crowd with enthusiasm, good will and a boomerang. On board the Tribal Warrior, a similar smoking ceremony was performed by Uncle Max Eulo - and beamed from giant video screens overhead. The smoke and the rain bore a gracious spirit - and we felt a sense of cleansing,

Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre to reopen soon

Lisa Moon

Excitement is building at the Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre as staff prepare to move into their new, environmentally-friendly location.

The SHNC has been operating from Bourke Street Public School and various other temporary locations while its old building on Crown Street is demolished to make way for a magnificent, new four-level community centre. "We are really looking forward to relocating to such a visible site," said Sara Lubowitz, Chairperson at the SHNC.

While members of staff say that the public has reacted well to the move, the interim arrangements made for the Centre have led to a decrease in clientele over time. "Having our admin based at Bourke Street Public School has rendered us less visible to the public and our location receives little foot traffic," said Kate Melhopt, Manager at the SHNC.

She said the transitory child care site also posed a problem for some families. "The service most affected was childcare, as some families didn't want to relocate their children to Chippendale," she said.

Because of this, the SHNC has had to compensate for the disruption with better organisation of programs. Lubowitz said, "The loss of profile within the community and downscaling

of our services has meant we have been able to engage with the community through planning days and, as such, have devised a new range of programs."

The new building, planned to open by April, will include all the services previously offered, plus some brand new features, including what has been described by Lord Mayor Clover Moore's office as a "community library for the future".

The Centre will also be providing a long-day care service, with demand already high for the 26 available places.

City of Sydney will be setting a benchmark in environmentally sustainable design with the new Centre, as it will be Sydney's most environmentally-friendly community building when completed. The design, estimated at \$14 million, includes an internal glass atrium which uses plants to naturally filter the air in the building.

The SHNC still offers many useful services, including advocacy and referrals, language classes for people from a non-English speaking background, and monthly multicultural excursions. SSH

For any enquiries about services, the temporary phone number at the SHNC is (02) 9310 2888 or their website can be found at www.shnc.org

acceptance, and even excitement about the future together.

Bidding us farewell back at the Fish Markets, Terry thanked us all for coming along - "Whether you call this Australia Day, Invasion Day, Survival Day, or just a

pleasant Monday afternoon," he said with a laugh. SSH

Support the good work of the Tribal Warrior Association Inc. For bookings phone 9699 3491 or visit www.tribalwarrior.org

Comment & Opinion

Emissions reduction targets – an impossible choice

Craig Wilson

The Rudd Government has an impossible task of convincing all that its recent emissions reduction targets for 2020 are realistic and responsible. It has proposed a five per cent emissions reduction to increase to a 15 per cent reduction if an international agreement on reducing greenhouse gas emissions is reached. At first glance, a target of a five per cent emissions reduction by 2020 may seem like the loose change of greenhouse gas reductions, especially when other countries have stated larger targets.

Australia's targets are based on reducing emissions from year 2000 levels. Given we are now in 2009 and Australian emissions have increased since 2000, success in having national emissions change from a growth trajectory to one that is reducing below year 2000 levels, by the year 2020, is a considerable task.

When the quantity of emissions that needs to be reduced to achieve Australia's reduction target is

divided by Australia's population, each Australian needs to reduce their emissions by 27 – 34 per cent. This is a large cut in emissions per Australian for a seemingly small cut in national emissions, and the crux of the government dilemma. Aiming for a higher 2020 target would perhaps be asking society for too much personal sacrifice to be achieved in such a short time. Australia's per capita reduction is similar to per capita reductions of the UK and the EU who have announced larger national reduction targets.

Australia's emissions per person are very high due to our high use of coal for power generation and livestock production (think farting cows and sheep). Our emissions are about 28 tonnes of CO₂-e (carbon dioxide equivalent) per Australian per annum, while the OECD average is 14 tonnes CO₂-e, and the world average seven tonnes CO₂-e. Given our higher emissions, the same percentage reduction in emissions for Australia, when compared to other countries, is always going to produce a more difficult task for Australia than for other nations with lower emissions.

Australia acting alone will not slow or halt climate change, but given the risk and impacts of climate change, this is no excuse for inaction or delay. There is a need for all countries to agree to an international framework for emissions reduction to get this problem under control. Until this is achieved, Australia will benefit from the work it does now in starting its restructuring of society to become less emissions intensive.

The reality is that enormous emissions cuts are required to stabilise emissions at the international targets of 450 or 550 part per million of carbon dioxide equivalent in the atmosphere. The concern of climate scientists is that achieving these targets is very difficult. Even if achieved, these targets still constitute a failure, as the amount of damage to the climate and impact on the human species that will follow by emissions reaching these target levels will still be significant. Exceeding these targets will lead to even more catastrophic climate change.

The pill the world needs to swallow to address this problem is large and unpalatable to most. The dilemma



for governments is how to get their voters to start taking this medicine and how to quickly increase the dose, and still remain in power. Choosing a target that satisfies all is impossible. SSH

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Craig Wilson is the National Manager

Environmental Sustainability Planning for a national logistics company, Asciano. He is responsible for managing climate change issues, emissions measurement and reduction, strategy and culture change and submissions in response to climate related government policy.

Tasers – the dangers

Dale Mills

Amnesty International says that tasers (stun guns) have been linked to the deaths of hundreds of people around the world. In Australia, tasers have already been connected with the death of one person and have been used on a 16 year-old girl. They have been in the hands of junior local police since October 2008.

Tasers are hand-held electrical devices used by police to deliver a 50,000 volt shock to the body. They can be used to fire probes at a distance, or in a hand-held "cattle-prod" position. It paralyzes major muscle groups, typically resulting in victims falling to the ground and urinating themselves. As muscles are paralysed, people don't put their arms out to break the fall. Often, heads hit concrete or sharp objects.

Gary Peace, a 56 year-old mentally ill man, was tasered by police repeatedly and died from the subsequent heart attack. The problem with tasers is that, unlike a shooting, they can be used and their use not recorded. That is what happened with Gary, when police didn't record the use of their tasering on any official documents, and so that was not mentioned on Gary's death certificate. Even the NSW Police Commissioner, Andrew Scipione, said that the first he learnt of the death of Gary was when he read the NSW Ombudsman's report into tasers. So much for accountability.

One 16 year-old girl was tasered by police when she refused a direction to "move on". The thin body of the 50kg girl shuddered as the 50,000 volts paralysed her. She wanted to

wait with her friend, who was ill and waiting for an ambulance. The girl was quoted in the *Australian* newspaper as saying: "It was so painful. It was excruciating and horrible and painful. It stopped my whole body from moving. I didn't expect it. I didn't know what a taser was and then there was 'zap'. I was screaming and crying and I can sort of remember this police officer telling me that he had used a taser." And this is in Australia. Expect to hear similar stories from your area soon.

The only argument used by police for the introduction of tasers is that they are a "less-lethal" option than guns. If this were true, we would see the number of police shootings decline as they use tasers. Instead, the number of shootings stays the same, and there is a whole lot of tasering. In truth, tasers are not used instead of guns. They are used in addition to guns, but with none of the safeguards. In the first two weeks of their introduction to junior police in NSW in October, police were quick off the mark and tasered five people. Just try ringing your local police to find out how many have been tasered since then. They won't tell you.

Lawyers have condemned tasers, the Ombudsman's office has asked for a freeze on them being distributed to more police, saying that the health risks are unknown and police procedures are inadequate. How many mentally disturbed men and 16 year-old girls need to be tasered before our politicians challenge their use? SSH

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Dale Mills is a Waterloo resident and designer of www.humanrightsmonitors.org, which collects evidence of police misbehaviour at political protests.

How to stop global warming

Barrie McMahon

The new government has moved quickly on symbolism (joining Kyoto) but otherwise slowly. It has taken Rudd a year to say that the cost of energy will rise. The ETS or PRS hides the fact that, at the end of the day, consumers must pay the full cost of what we consume.

To recap briefly. The price of energy must rise to cover the cost of cleaning up coal and the cost of switching to renewable energy (those ubiquitous wind mills) and to encourage us to use less energy. As individual consumers have (collectively) led the government on global warming, maybe we can decide to use less energy anyway – without the market dictating to us.

This has real implication for the next point. Whatever we might do by 2020 or 2050, we should decide now on – NO MORE COAL MINES, NO MORE COAL RAILWAYS & PORTS, NO MORE COAL-FUELLED POWER STATIONS.

The stimulatory infrastructure boost of doubling the Hunter Valley coal tracks is just wrong – China isn't going to need coal at the same rate anymore.

The new power stations (to replace coal rather than meet extra demand) should be gas powered. Gas is not as clean as those bird-slicing windmills – but it is only half as polluting as coal – a magnificent step in the right direction.

Even as I write, BG Queensland Gas is deciding not to proceed with a NSW gas-fuelled power station. Some stimulation is required in that direction.

Ultimately (2050 and all that) we must move away from fossil fuels altogether, but gas power is an immediate first step – which can be phased out with geothermal or high temperature stored solar in 2050.

On the vehicle energy side,

consumers are already leading the way by driving (and flying) less, in less-guzzling cars (offered by non-American makers). Hybrid cars are a bit like gas-fuelled power stations – not the answer, but an excellent first step if we must have a car until the government gets its act together on public transport (hold breath till 2050).

The global depression is seen as competing with (and delaying) atmospheric carbon lowering – it shouldn't. Governments have had a road-to-free-market-Damascus turnaround and are now heading back to Keynesville.

Already, for our part, we are using less energy because we are poorer. The government has a responsibility to support the unemployed (and other pensioners) in this depression – just like it must with any emission-reducing energy price hikes.

The economic stimuli, which might lessen the depression, should go towards more windmills, other green-power actions (including gas-fuelled electricity) and infrastructure-wise, connecting those remote geothermal and stored solar stations to the grid.

Stimulation should not be limited to helping Coles and Woolworths dispose of their imported Christmas stock, nor just to child-care centres, worthy as they might be.

It is obvious to all that the target five per cent emission reduction by 2020 is not enough. It is a political figure aimed at Opposition Senate support. Anything but to have to deal with the pesky Greens and undisciplined Independents.

After this rather negative review of government action to date, I conclude with a couple of bouquets.

It has taken a year, but Penny Wong has at last uttered the words "per capita" emissions and "population" in talking about climate change. She got the context wrong, but at least she knows they

are factors – maybe she can get it right after more contemplation.

Ms Wong spoke of our low five per cent target being better than it looked because a rising population to 2020 masked a 27 per cent reduction in per capita emissions.

Here is the correct context. Globally per capita emissions must converge. Sure, the developed world must reduce (much more than 27 per cent before we are through) per capita emissions. But the pesky developing world (China, India, et. al.) must be allowed to increase their per capita emission moderately. Such is the discrepancy in individual country per capita emissions.

Despite our effort to reduce per capita emissions (if we get around to them), global per capita emissions and atmospheric carbon levels will rise until 2050, and the level (which determines temperature through the greenhouse effect) then, if we get it right, plateaus at 450ppm.

But there is no hope of atmospheric carbon level (and temperature) stability without population stability.

Another sign of hope (with another ironic twist) is the rebellion of Senators Bill Heffernan and Barnaby Joyce to defeat a plantation timber bill.

Now, plantation timber is a good carbon sink. The proposal to increase plantations is a good move in global warming mitigation actions. Indeed, biocapture is a much better prospect than geosequestration.

The Senate rebellion was that increasing plantations would take land away from more legitimate agriculture, like food production. This is a paraphrase of the population factor – agricultural land is required to feed people, not capture carbon.

Global warming will only be stopped by a balanced combination of emission convergence, biocapture growth and population stabilisation – somehow. SSH

Comment & Opinion



Our journey begins – a few comments on ‘The Road Home’



Felicity Reynolds

Just before Christmas 2008, the Federal Government released its much anticipated White Paper on homelessness. Titled ‘The Road Home’ it outlines a plan of action to address homelessness in Australia. There is much that is very good about this document.

As someone who has had the dubious pleasure of reading far too many government policy documents over many years, Federal, State and Local, this is one of the best ones I’ve seen. In recent years, such documents have become the resting place (literally) for meaningless words and phrases such as, working in partnership; improved co-ordination; stakeholder collaboration; better service delivery; best practice, blah blah blah.

Those types of words are in the document, but backed up by strategy, purpose and funds, they resonate action rather than rhetoric. ‘The Road Home’ is a thoughtful document. It appears to have taken good account of the feedback that many community organisations provided on the Green Paper on homelessness which was released for consultation in April 2008.

Some commentators have already criticised the Rudd Government for apparently having the audacity (however, I think “courage” is a better word) to set targets to reduce homelessness over the next 12 years, in fact to halve overall homelessness by 2020.

However, I believe this is the essential component of any useful plan that purports to address homelessness. The time has long passed when keeping people warm, fed and sheltered is the best our wealthy country can offer our most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens. People who are homeless need access to programs that make them “un-homeless” and which then support them to retain that housing, access local communities, connections and education and enter or re-enter the workforce.

The White Paper outlines three clear strategies:

Turning off the tap (early intervention and preventing homelessness).

Improving and expanding services (a service system focused on solving and ending people’s homelessness).

Breaking the cycle (getting people back into stable housing as soon as possible and providing support, when needed, to ensure that housing is sustained).

This policy document has also done a good job of tackling the different types of homelessness and the complexities associated with them. Women with children leaving violent partners will require certain responses for themselves and their children. Families of two parents or single parents with children may need other types of support. Young people whose education and job skills training have been interrupted by homelessness may need different kinds of services and outcomes than single adults with multiple disabilities, such as mental illness, addictions and/or cognitive

impairment. This new Federal policy covers all those areas with some very clear direction and policy.

Some extra funding also comes attached, with new money (\$400 million to be matched by the States, making a total of \$800 million) for initiatives that prevent and/or “break the cycle homelessness”.

However, I believe that one of the most important aspects of dealing well with homelessness in Australia in the coming years will be having enough affordable and low-cost housing. Although some people may always require additional support to sustain that housing, in the end we must have that housing stock. The States must do better at providing good public housing, encouraging more community and social housing initiatives, while local government can also perform a key role in fostering more affordable housing.

The Mercy Foundation is working with a number of other organisations, including the City of Sydney, to develop a new permanent supportive housing model in NSW known as Common Ground. The Deputy Lord Mayor, Cr Marcelle Hoff, has been instrumental in making this happen and her ongoing commitment to addressing homelessness is both inspiring and considerable.

I also welcome the Government’s commitment to working closely with business to address homelessness. This is fundamental in acknowledging that we are all participants in a civil society and that business has an important role to play. The global financial crisis should not be seen as

Our national holiday raises questions about our national identity. As we celebrate positive aspects of our life together we are also reminded of the not-so positive – the “unfinished business” of mourning injustice and committing to a future that is just for all. In terms of Reconciliation, symbolism is important in that it opens up new space for justice, new space for action. It’s right, in the wake of last year’s National Apology, that questions be addressed as to compensation, as to the interventions in Indigenous communities, as to a treaty or treaties, as to improved access to health care, education and employment. It’s right that questions be raised as to the appropriateness of January 26, which signifies not simply or innocently all that is positive about Australian history and culture – it also signifies invasion and subjugation of an ancient culture and people. One way to respond to such questions is to recognise the ambiguities of Australia/Survival Day – to foster ways and means of celebrating and lamenting aspects of our life together. We could maintain January 26 as our national holiday and mark it as a day of promise – a day for mourning as well as commitment to common hopes and values.

There are no chosen people

Dorothy McRae-McMahon

Within most religions there is some history of people perceiving themselves to be the “Chosen People” of their God. This sense of “chosen-ness” often feeds into assumptions of superiority and of being set apart from the rest of the human race in many respects. Those concerned sometimes regard themselves as collectively good and others as collectively evil and they use this belief to justify all sorts of atrocities against those they see as their enemies. After all, they claim, God is on their side and they must win at any cost.

It is interesting to read Ronald Wright’s book, *What is America?* (Text Publishing Company, 2008).

In his account of the origins of the United States of America and the development of its culture and religious history, you can see how the convictions of the early Christian Puritan colonists easily persuaded them that, as the Chosen People of God, they had the right to take over the land. If the (to me) surprisingly sophisticated Native American people defended their cities against this onslaught, the invaders simply claimed that it was a resistance to their God and that the destiny of the Native Americans was hell because they had defied the Chosen People.

Jewish faith and culture, of course, also includes the concept of the Jews as God’s Chosen People and there is an element of that in some fundamentalist versions of Islam.

In whichever religion, sometimes this sense of chosen-ness was about giving a struggling people a sense of future survival, but mostly it has led to all manner of justifications for war, cruelty and discrimination.

What sort of God would have a Chosen People? All the great faiths honour a God who is the Creator. Would this God deliberately set

apart some people in that creation as special and thus expect in them a sense of superiority and the right to dominate others at all costs? What sort of God would create one race or ethnicity which is more virtuous than another, with a sort of holiness that brings them closer to the heart of that God? In what sense are they “chosen”? Would we admire parents who decide that one of their children is special above all the rest and can therefore threaten or dispose of the others?

Some would claim that chosen-ness is about a mission in history to convert everyone else to their God and to punish those who don’t respond. They would say that people of their faith have entered a special relationship with God which puts them into another category.

A relationship with God, according to your beliefs, may bring to you a new openness to the grace and love of that God, but that is far removed from thinking that you are therefore special. On the contrary, it should carry with it a stronger sense of humility before the holiness of that God – a gratitude and an awareness of your humanness and fallibility. If the gifts which you experience in relating to this God are valuable to you, you may well want to invite others into the same good experience.

This is far removed from a perception that you are “chosen” and set apart with special privileges and any sort of right to punish and defeat those who are not part of your faith, either by choice or by history.

Anything which is added to your life by a relationship with your God is a gift which you receive and which, in thankfulness, you might share with those around you. The fact that you do, without cost to others, might well impress people far more than demanding that they join you in honouring your view of God and punishing them if they don’t.

a reason to not act on homelessness. We already have some good evidence which shows that ending chronic homelessness might be cheaper than servicing and sustaining it.

Felicity Reynolds is the CEO of the

Mercy Foundation, a philanthropic foundation founded by the North Sydney Sisters of Mercy which makes grants and works with other organisations to improve responses to homelessness. Visit our website at www.mercyfoundation.com.au for more information.

READERS’ LETTERS

New stance on marriage

I’m not sure I understand the new government’s new stance on marriage ... It seems that little old ladies are going to be interrogated by Centrelink about their sex life, deemed as

couples, and lose their pensions, while young out gay couples who just want to marry are still not allowed to. That can’t be right, can it?

norrie mAy-welby
Redfern

Australia Day for all

Australia Day should be moved to May 27, the day we first recognised

Aboriginal equal citizenship rights by constitutional change in 1967. In the 1967 referendum, 90.77 per cent, the biggest majority in the nation’s history, voted in favour of Aboriginals being counted in the census and being subject to Commonwealth laws, rather than just state laws. Prior to this, Aboriginals were legally “flora and fauna”. Every year the issue

becomes more divisive because we lack a cohesive national identity. January 26, the day of Phillip’s arrival, is the day we started purposely purloining Aboriginal land, culture and identity. Today, many are outsiders inside their own land and locked into a begging bowl approach to life. Aboriginals had no reading or writing as we know it before Governor Phillip arrived.

They had no dates. They don’t need dates: they are simply the oldest, living continuous civilisation on earth. They are timeless. But Australia needs an Australia Day to celebrate our heritage, what we have in common. Let’s realise the opening line of our national Anthem: “Australians all let us rejoice”.

Andrew Woodhouse
Potts Point

Features



From Slovenia to Canberra The Tanya Plibersek story, so far

Tanya Plibersek and friend Photo: Supplied

Dorothy McRae-McMahon

Tanya Plibersek, the Federal Member for Sydney and Minister in the present Government, has an indirect insight into what it means to be both a refugee and a migrant. Her parents independently fled the little country of Slovenia. Life there was dangerous and poverty-stricken for them under the Communist reign of President Tito. Her father illegally crossed the border into Austria in 1951, was shot at and ended up in a gaol there. Eventually he made it into a United Nations Refugee Camp and gained passage to Australia some months later. Her mother was guided through dense forests by what we would now call a people smuggler and into Italy where she worked for six months in Rome as a domestic servant and then gained entry into Australia in 1954.

Her parents met and married not long after their arrival in Australia

and settled in the Sutherland Shire. They had three children, one of whom was Tanya. She attended Oyster Bay Primary School and Jannali High School – being one of very few students, in a school of 800, with a non-English background. She has always found it enriching and strengthening to draw on two cultures.

When at school, Tanya had ambitions to be an archaeologist or a cartographer but she ended up training as a journalist at the UTS School of Communications.

Her first awareness of politics goes right back to sitting on her father's lap at the age of four, looking at Gough Whitlam on television and saying, "He's a good man, isn't he?" Her parents were also fans of Al Grassby, who was highly regarded by many immigrants.

Tanya joined the Labor Party at about 14 years old, full of idealism. She experienced the helpful mentoring of some Labor women but left after a while, probably because it didn't

quite live up to her adolescent hopes. At the age of 24, she returned to the Party convinced by the convictions of people like John Adams who said (in the sexist language of the time, but which didn't deter Tanya from receiving his wisdom) "Public business must always be done by somebody ... If wise men decline, others will not. If honest men refuse it, others will not".

She spent some time working for the NSW Department for Women as a domestic violence researcher and creator of publications, and experienced both the frustrations and possibilities of life in the political arena. When she joined the staff of Senator Bruce Childs, she had eye-opening experiences about what can be done. This led to her standing for pre-selection in 1998, after the sitting member, Peter Baldwin retired without an obvious successor, and she was elected as the Federal Member for Sydney. She was then 28 years old.

Asked what is the hardest thing

about being a politician, Tanya had no hesitation in saying that it was the time required to be spent away from her family. She regards herself as supremely fortunate in having a husband, Michael Coutts-Trotter, who is happy to be the primary carer of their two children when she is away. Her parents, who are close by, are an added bonus. She finds it tempting to be over-indulgent when she is with her daughter and son to compensate for so much time away.

What is the best thing about being a politician? Tanya finds it infinitely rewarding to be able to actually make a difference in the lives of individuals and her recent development of a White Paper on homelessness and housing gives her great satisfaction and hope. In both cases, she celebrates the fine staff she has around her in Sydney and in Canberra.

Any special dreams for the future? Tanya will fulfil many personal dreams if the homelessness and housing project bears fruit as she plans it to

do. She believes there has been a massive neglect in this area and a dire need for proper creative planning and sustained action.

One proud moment as a politician was when the Prime Minister read the apology to the Indigenous people of Australia and their Stolen Generations. The other was when she walked over and personally placed in the hands of the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, a letter which indicated why the Australian Labor Party would not be supporting the decision to go to war in Iraq.

It is very moving for Tanya to find that her appointment as a Member and then Minister in the Australian Parliament, made front-page headlines in Slovenia – so proud were its people there of the achievements of a daughter of two of their own.

The Federal seat of Sydney is fortunate indeed to have Tanya Plibersek, a person of compassion, wisdom and commitment, as its representative.

SSH

Celebration and concern over new laws for gays and lesbians

Pearlie McNeill

Most of the provisions in the new laws around superannuation, inheritance and other matters will be celebrated by the lesbian and gay community. However, there is a downside for some of its most vulnerable members – mainly older women, but also some gay men. So far, most Ministers and Members of the Federal Government seem to be resisting the call to follow precedents which have applied when similar laws are being brought in and which protect those most affected. This is surprising, given the simplicity of what is being requested and the impressive case

studies which would support such a move. Pearlie McNeill is sharing below her "diary entry" in response.

In 1981 Susannah was born, a healthy baby girl. I believe she was the second child in Australia born to a lesbian by alternative insemination. Susannah's mother was my partner. We wrote an article about how conception was achieved and the article was published late November that year. A newspaper got hold of the story and ran a headline on the front page worded, "Lesbian Mum's Amazing Confession".

I managed to negotiate a deal with the editor. Our names would be kept out of the story if I handed over the

photograph we'd used to accompany the article – a colour print snap of mother and baby nose to nose. This picture appeared alongside the headline with blanked out squares over the eyes. This distressing incident proved to be a taste of the homophobia that was to come.

Fast forward 27 years and along comes the legislative changes introduced by the new Labor Government: "Same Sex Relationships – Equal Treatment in Commonwealth Laws – General Law Reforms Act 2008". A cause for celebration you might think but not so for older lesbians and gay men. We have missed out on benefits available to heterosexual couples and families.

Most of us have paid a single person's tax all our working lives, have been unable to claim benefits because ours were not considered "real families", and were denied the opportunity to name our partners as superannuation beneficiaries, to name just a few impositions. Many lesbians have managed on low incomes and have not had the chance to save for old age.

The new laws require that those of us in relationships be treated by Centrelink in the same way as heterosexual couples, no longer viewed as two singles. On the surface this seems only fair, after all, isn't that what equality is about? Perhaps we should just get on with our lives and suffer the consequences,

you might be thinking. For me though, there is a bitter irony in having coped all those years with inequality only to be hit again now I am almost 70 years old.

As Adele Horin pointed out in an article she wrote about the changes (*SMH* 6/12/08) "every significant change in social security laws passed in the last 15 years has included a 'grandfather' clause to minimise harsh consequences for those already in the system".

Is it too much to ask that a grandfather clause be considered? To not do so is, in effect, to continue the tradition of treating gay and lesbian people differently from heterosexuals.

SSH

Features



Students at Metro Screen Photo: Supplied

Back to school for older workers

Scott Winter & Matthew Tukaki

The number of Australians aged 85 or older was only 1.4 per cent of the total population in 2002. By 2051 it is projected that the total number of Australians aged 85 and older could exceed 9 per cent. With fewer young people to take the places of retirees in the workforce and higher life expectancies a number of key problems will face Australia in the years ahead.

These challenges include taxation (with fewer taxpayers does this mean higher rates of future taxation?), increased costs for healthcare and aged care, lower unemployment rates but higher job vacancy rates.

One solution is changing the profiles of job roles to provide more flexibility in the workplace. This means shifting from merely wanting to attract Generation Y to a focus on retaining our older workers. In many cases this means providing cross training and re-skilling and providing more structured pathways to employment through an increase in trades, tertiary and vocational training for mature-aged workers.

Les Pickett, former Deputy Director of the United Nations Staff College and Skills Advisor, based in Melbourne, believes such a focus is long overdue. "At the moment recruitment companies and employers seem to focus all of their energy on

attracting a younger workforce only to find that the younger workforce is more demanding when it comes to job roles and pay. The older workforce is just happy to have a job and we tend to forget the immense value this large group of people has in terms of knowledge and experience. If we were able to harness this energy and provide dedicated pathways to employment through education, then we would go a long way to also addressing

"The soon-to-be implemented carbon trading system in Australia will also play a role in the changing make-up of our workforce as some jobs become redundant and as others are invented"

the skills crisis," Mr Pickett said.

The soon-to-be implemented carbon trading system in Australia will also play a role in the changing make-up of our workforce as some jobs become redundant and as others are invented. The Government's peak scientific body, the CSIRO, recently predicted that a proposed carbon trading scheme could result in more than three million workers needing to be retrained and re-skilled by 2015.

In April last year the Victorian Government undertook a comprehensive review of skills in that State after it was found that more than 1.4 million adult Victorians had no

post school qualifications and the State faced a shortfall of 123,000 people at the advanced diploma and diploma level by 2015. For the time being the focus on a national education strategy is largely targeted to school-based programs such as computers in classrooms, curriculum, literacy and numeracy. The problem is, with lower numbers of younger people entering the workforce we need to change our focus back onto mature-aged workers and begin to support them

in terms of training and retraining.

A National Workforce Planning Strategy is a framework that draws together all of the stakeholders in the education to employment supply chain to begin work on a plan that can be readily implemented. It certainly has the support of the Australian Government if a recent comment from Ben Hubbard, Chief of Staff to Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard, is anything to go by. "I support the concept of a national workforce development strategy and the Department [of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations] is currently engaged in developing a more in-depth understanding of the workforce

development and the many issues that are embraced by this approach."

It also needs to be a bi-partisan approach in so far as it calls for unions, the business community and governments to join together to assess the supply and demand issues, more importantly a tool, a forum, through which education and employment policy can be guided. Some have argued that Skills Australia is already seeking to address these issues.

Skills Australia is addressing some, but not all of the policy areas that need to be worked on. In recent months Sharon Burrows of the ACTU and Heather Ridout of the Australian Industry Group have both called for a similar approach. Now the talk has to end and the work begin. If we are honestly going to confront the major education and employment challenges we face today and in the next 10 years we need all the stakeholders involved.

"It is fair to say that the majority of graduates who actively seek employment will gain it"

Katrina Beck, Marketing Manager of Metro Screen (formerly the Paddington Video Access Centre) told the SSH: "Metro Screen trains roughly 850 students a year and a rough age breakdown would be as follows: 40 years + (20 per cent); 18 to 22 years (30 per cent); 23 to 40 years + (50 per cent)."

"As far as how many take our courses to reform, the figure would be high and vary according to specific type of course and skill set it provides. A few examples are we have had a large number of people from Fairfax coming across to take on our digital editing courses to reform their skills and with the ongoing changes in gear and the advent of HD it is safe to say that the majority of cinematographers will need to reform their skills to HD which we provide courses in. It's probably safe to say everyone who takes our courses is up-skilling," Ms Beck said.

"Conversion rates of graduates to employment is very high. Our full-time students are assisted greatly to gain employment on completion of their Certificate IV in Screen. Our short course graduates have the opportunity to gain advice from our staff and tutors after their course, which assists them to gain employment, not to mention

the range of professional services we offer them. It is fair to say that the majority of graduates who actively seek employment will gain it."

For information about Metro Screen training and courses visit www.metroscreen.com.au



CarriageWorks needing support Photo: Ali Blogg

Sydney's abandonment of artists may lead to artists' abandonment of Sydney

NICHOLAS MCCALLUM

Sydney is not a city that shies away from the art world. It hosts the Biennale and the Sydney Festival, two events that bring us some of the most accomplished and significant artists in the world. Both the City of Sydney and the State Government invest noteworthy funding through their policy and funding body, Arts NSW. Sydney Festival Ltd alone received \$4.3 million from the Government, with one million going to the opening night when international super diva Grace Jones performed a free concert in the Domain.

However, for emerging young and independent artists who call

Sydney home throughout the year, it seems there is an ever-decreasing portion of the pie. And with mini-budget belt tightening, already diminutive servings of funding could be reduced to mere slithers. If the cost cutting continues, the city's creative eyes may turn south to Australia's art mecca: Melbourne.

One disillusioned member of Sydney's art world is Best Artist 2008 nominee Perran Cost, whose works have been exhibited in both Sydney and Melbourne. Perran believes that the widening of the funding gap between established artists and young and up-coming in Sydney is crippling the city's artistic potential.

"A majority of the funding in Sydney seems to be going to already highly funded established arts bodies

and organisations," Perran says, "with very little going into fostering emerging and experimental art, without which the future of Sydney as an arts hub looks bleak".

Perran refers to the Rees Government's cutting of surplus funds from the Premier's own portfolio of Arts, Sport and Recreation, and gives particular reference to the inadequate funding of the CarriageWorks, which stands at the vanguard of Sydney's art world.

A current exhibition *Carriage-Art-Works: Contemporary Art from the City Fringe* showcases works that have been chosen from a selection of local galleries across Sydney's inner west. All works at the exhibition are for sale.

Whilst the CarriageWorks

remains the property of Arts NSW, it receives little to no funding from the government body. An employee of the state-of-the-art facility said that its struggle for sponsorship depends predominantly on the involvement of large events like *So You Think You Can Dance*. But the insider stated that the centre's ultimate wish is to offer more support and present local artists to the Sydney community.

"[CarriageWorks] would love to present young, emerging artists," the insider said, "but we don't have any sponsorship," highlighting the shifting of the responsibility of arts funding from state to local governments. The move has made it all the more difficult to support local, fledgling talent.

Perran states that the drop in

support at a government level is detrimental to the community, not only affecting the arts industry, but tourism also. When coupled with rising costs of living in Sydney, he suggests that the possibility of a mass exodus of the city's arts community south of the border is not unfathomable. "Without the necessary funding going into the creation of new art and artists Sydney will not have the next generation of artists it needs to solidify itself as a cultural city."

And though Sydney will likely remain the nation's financial capital, if current trends continue and the creative intellectuals that inhabit this town are not encouraged and supported, it will be a city that is culturally inept.

Exploring multi-lingual Sydney

ANNETTE MAGUIRE

An innovative collection of multi-lingual poetry and writing, penned by Sydney-based wordsmiths, was published recently. Entitled *Auburn Letters*, the anthology highlights the rich diversity of cultures that co-exist in Sydney.

The writing is by turns punchy, fresh, touching, and pertinent.

Auburn Letters features the work of members of the Auburn Poets and Writers Group. As the name suggests, the Group comes together in Auburn, but some of the authors also hail from the

greater Sydney area. The 28 authors included in the anthology represent a very diverse spectrum of cultural backgrounds and heritage.

Coinciding with the International Year of Languages, *Auburn Letters* reflects the many voices and worlds that exist in Sydney. The anthology includes works written in Turkish, Arabic, English, Urdu, Tamil, Chinese, and Afrikaans, reflecting how central language is to culture.

Many of the works also probe the poetic uses of English for expressing a trans-cultural experience. The authors utilise a variety of styles and genres.

This eclectic mix makes for an engaging read. We gain perspective

on our everyday world. We get new angles on familiar human experiences and emotions. Yet always through a voice that is unmistakably individual. For example, 'my ear not the music' by Jamal Al-Hallaq: "my ears changed/ not the music/ I am in need of/ not a growing family/ not other sidewalks/ not my whole life/ I am in need of/ what I utterly do not know".

The poem 'untitled' by Omeima Sukkarieh, was particularly striking to this reviewer. It plays on a theme of being displaced, of being in a state of not belonging: "Perhaps it is best to belong to nothing and no-one, but rather to not belong is to be free." It also includes the pithy lines: "I used to think I was a dead woman

walking, but I do not think that the walking dead cry" (which had the added bonus of appealing to my predilection for zombie imagery!).

Iraqi-born poet Nashaa Al-Rubae writes in her native Arabic to blast a figure familiar to us all in 'The American Idiot'. Nashaa herself fled to Australia, following imprisonment by the Hussein regime, only to spend years inside Woomera Detention Centre. Farid Farid writes with lyrical humour of the everyday experience of waiting in an elevator, of being "in the waiting room of humanity".

Auburn Letters was launched during the Sydney Writers' Festival last year. The authors

created and presented a compelling group performance, which was very well attended and enthusiastically received.

An extraordinary breadth of topics is touched on, from war to popular culture. Titles include: 'Running Script, First Lesson', 'Our Humanity a Universe', 'Room Without Air', 'Democracy in Iraq', 'Two Dollar Sale', 'A Beautiful Body', 'A Hole in My Soul', and 'To Bob Dylan'.

Auburn Letters is published by the Auburn Community Development Network (ACDN). Copies are available now from the ACDN, for \$15 each. Contact ACDN on ph: 02 9649 5559, or via email: admin@acdn.org.au

The Reviews

Film Reviews by Lindsay Cohen



Frost/Nixon
Director: Ron Howard
Starring: Frank Langella, Michael Sheen
Genre: Trying to get up off the canvas (and failing)

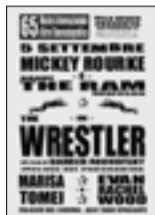
If Best Actor at the Academy Awards were voted on facial expressions alone then Frank Langella would win hands down (or should that be face down?).

In close up after close up the deepening cracks and crevices of Langella's face in *Frost/Nixon* portray an intense emotional journey. Indeed you could watch *Frost/Nixon* with the sound down and still comprehend the journey given the expressions on his face, from exuberance to dawning reality and everything in between.

It's remarked upon in the film. What isn't remarked upon are the parallels to another deeply unpopular president who bent the rules to his own ends and skirted the boundaries of the truth. I noticed his brow becoming more furrowed as his presidential term came to an end.

I wonder if David Frost is available?

Rating: Full price admission, two choc tops, medium popcorn, medium drink and a hot dog.



The Wrestler
Director: Darren Aronofsky
Starring: Mickey Rourke, Marisa Tomei
Genre: Getting up off the canvas

To plagiarise is the greatest temptation when reviewing films. There are hundreds of newspapers, magazines, websites, radio shows, TV shows and more to choose from. Everything that could be said has been said and the greatest challenge for a reviewer is to come up with that unique quotable phrase that would look really good on the film's promotional poster.

Unusually for me, I saw *The Wrestler* at a critics screening well before the film's release or any Australian reviews and so I knew nothing about it except that it had won the top prize in Venice (which admittedly means nothing – I've only heard of eight of the winners from the last 60 years) and Mickey Rourke was actually good in it.

While the film and Rourke didn't disappoint, the critics screening experience did. I was handed a large media pack which consisted mostly of reviews written overseas. None of the other reviewers at the screening took notes, stormed out after ten minutes or looked like they'd spent too much time in darkened rooms (that is, David

Stratton wasn't there).

So I've spent the last few weeks trying really hard not to read those reviews and to come up with my choice phrase. And here it is: Rocky for adults. And you can quote me on that.

Rating: Full price admission, two choc tops, medium popcorn, large drink and a large pizza all for yourself.

film@ssh.com.au

Book Reviews by Anthony Radford



The Lieutenant
Kate Grenville
The Text Publishing Company, 2008

The Lieutenant is the latest offering from the author of *The Secret River*, Kate Grenville. It follows the life of fictitious soldier and astronomer, Daniel Rooke, a brilliant, unusual and misunderstood child who enlists as a British marine officer in order to escape a life of boredom and mediocracy. This decision sees him thrown into the chaos of a naval battle during the American War of Independence and then later allows him to combine his love of astronomy and intellectual inquiry with his role as a marine, part of the First Fleet, bound for Botany Bay.

I found *The Lieutenant* to be an excellent book. It is written with skill and insight into the issues surrounding the clash of cultures that began with the establishment of the colony at Sydney Cove. I read it over three days with Australia Day in the middle and I couldn't help but reflect on the current state of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Grenville explores the moral and ethical ramifications of being part of a military organisation. The young officer Rooke is forced to choose between his duty to the Crown and his own sense of right and wrong. In this I heard echoes of past war crimes from many conflicts and the horrendous and monotonous reiteration of the phrase: "I was just following orders and doing my duty."

I highly recommend this book to every Australian. May we follow Daniel Rooke's example and make choices based on personal examination of right and wrong with recognition of the common humanity of people of all cultures.



Apache, the Man the Machine the Mission – The blazing true story from the heart of Afghanistan
Ed Macy
Harper Press, 2008

Apache is the first novel by ex-British Army helicopter pilot Ed Macy. The book outlines his experiences as a military pilot especially during his 2007 tour of duty in Afghanistan. Macy manages to combine precise details of the men and women, machines and missions whilst providing insight into the human faces behind and in front of the machines of war. The book is well written and is a thoroughly gripping read. His detailed description of the Apache attack helicopter will be of particular interest to the technically minded.

Unlike many other books in the war memoir genre, *Apache* does not seek merely to glorify war and provide vicarious excitement for armchair warriors. *Apache* presents the war in Afghanistan in a matter-of-fact manner that captures and includes bravery, excitement, fear, futility, death, bereavement and affects of post-traumatic stress.

In *Apache*, Macy presents the good and bad qualities of the combatants, equipment, military organisations and political groups on both sides of the conflict. Macy discusses the complicated nature of the military and political struggle for control of Afghanistan.

Apache is a gripping recount of several perilous missions from a first person's perspective and also a book that shows the human faces of the war. The book provides the reader with a sense of the fact that the war in Afghanistan is complicated, militarily and politically, and will have far-reaching consequences for the individuals involved and the world at large.

books@ssh.com.au

Music Review by Lee Conley



Radio Wars
Howling Bells
Independiente Records, 2009

With *Radio Wars*, Howling Bells embrace a curious mix of catchy guitar pop and nineteenth-century romanticism. It's not merely the sweeping strings, arpeggio harpsichords and deep choral voices haunting the often languid arrangements. Nor is it Jaunita Stein's dreamy vocal delivery. Rather, it's a deeper, resonant longing, the sense of a disappearing frontier, a rousing call to arms and the notion of a windswept mansion glimpsed through a cracked window.

Opener 'Treasure Hunt' marks out curious territory. "We're marching forward, looking backward, hunting for treasure again ...", the marching, ye-olde drum rhythm and Robert Louis Stevenson-esque search meet a romantic obsession with progress. Add the nostalgic yearning of 'Let's Be Kids' – "Let's be kids again ... a childlike dream, yeah you know what I mean ... life was so simple then..." – and we arrive at the modern impulse: to move forward while steadfastly holding onto innocence – as if that were a clear notion in itself.

When the concerns locate themselves closer to home, the songs really start to punch their weight.

There's a gorgeous Deborah Harry quality about 'Cities Burning Down'. Its somewhat convoluted dreamscape intimates a fraught personal life, and a peculiarly Sydney Harbour breeziness replaces New York sass with summery nonchalance. Likewise 'Golden Web' is a well-wrought post-Cure pop song – though I was left wondering why this spider, in particular, caused all its pain and trouble, leaving Juanita "nowhere to run ...".

'Nightingale' is a stand-out of which Keats would be proud. Joel Stein's transcendent guitar riff flexes enough muscle to edge open room for mystery and loss. The catchiness of this well-worked arrangement and Grech-Marguerat's deft production

almost provide enough momentum to overlook the concept track 'Radio Wars Theme', which tells us: "Radio wars are coming, they're here ...". Who knew?

It's a call to arms that brings us back to romanticism. Maybe there's a clue here from Kate Bush: "Heathcliff, it's me, it's Cathy, I've come home and I'm so cold, let me in your window ...". Howling Bells demonstrate admirable pop sensibility, but *Radio Wars* rouses within me a longing for a little more of the grit and intimacy of what it is to be human – should they aspire to such wuthering heights.

music@ssh.com.au



SLOT Gallery in Regent Street, Redfern Photo: Supplied

Artworks in shop windows

SSH

SLOT is a window gallery located at one of Sydney's busiest intersections – the corner of Regent Street and Henderson Road in Redfern. It has presented in excess of 50 art exhibitions since 2003, viewed from the street 24 hours a day. To celebrate its fifth anniversary, SLOT will re-create 11 of those installations in empty shop windows along Regent Street, stretching from Wells Street to Henderson Road and creating an art walk of about one kilometre during a five-week period from January 19 to February 21.

Artists presented include The Anonymous Signwriter of South Sydney, Marina mDearnley, Marilyn Fairskye, Junyee (Philippines), Ruark Lewis, Mai Long, Tracy Luff, mIan Milliss, Constantine Nicholas, Sculptors of Iloilo (Philippines) and Tony Twigg.

Other neighbourhood galleries – Locksmith Projects, Grant

Pirrie, Medium Rare and Legge Gallery (*during February*) – as well as designers and businesses located along the passage have joined SLOT in presenting art works in their windows.

SLOT director, the artist Tony Twigg says: "Our audiences are the people passing in the street, people visiting the laundromat next door, those coming to the small shopping centre that we are part of, and commuters caught in the daily peak-hour traffic that passes our window. We are open to anyone who cares to look and engage."

This project has been supported by the City of Sydney with a small grant, InnerCity Arts and *Art Monthly* Australia. Most important, however, is the support of the artists and Redfern's shop owners who have provided exhibition space.

The project will be launched on Saturday January 24 from 2-5pm with a casual art walk. SLOT: 5 years 50 windows will continue until February 21. Visit www.slot.net.au.

Artist Profile: Itu & the Joy Stars

ANDREW COLLIS

Local soul-folk singer-songwriter, Itu, released her debut album, *Love & Light*, in 2007. On January 14 she played the Supper Club on Oxford Street with her band, the Joy Stars (Brian Campeau, Steve Short and Michal Siczynski).

How long have you been playing with the current line up of the Joy Stars?

I've been with this current line up just going on 18 months and it's taken me six years to find this line up. The first few months was just about getting used to each other and learning the music, since then it's become a lot more of a creative collective the more we play together.

What's happening this summer for Itu and the Joy Stars?

This summer we are working on two very exciting projects, the new album and organising a band tour for later in the year. The best

thing about the new album is it'll be the first the Joy Stars and other friends are involved in the process. It'll be a really inclusive project with Brian Campeau our lead guitarist behind the mixing desk and a plethora of friends working on various aspects of it. As for the tour we're looking at road tripping WA for starters and hopefully a couple of festivals in QLD.

What's the best thing about playing with the band?

The best thing would have to be creating music with good friends. I've been very blessed to find band members who genuinely like my music and who get along very well together artistically and socially. Every performance is always enhanced by the benefit of having Brian, Steve and Michal share the experience with me as fellow performers. After years of being a solo artist I'd have to say it's definitely more fun playing with a band.



Itu with bassist, Steve Short Photo: Andrew Collis

Have you been writing and/or rehearsing new songs?

Yes I've been frantically writing new material for the album and working to a strict self imposed schedule. It's becoming increasingly difficult for me to find the creative headspace I need to write due to work and other rigid daily commitments. So I've had to dig

deep and work harder to maintain my art amidst competing pressures, but I am adamant that very soon we will have enough material to start jamming and recording.

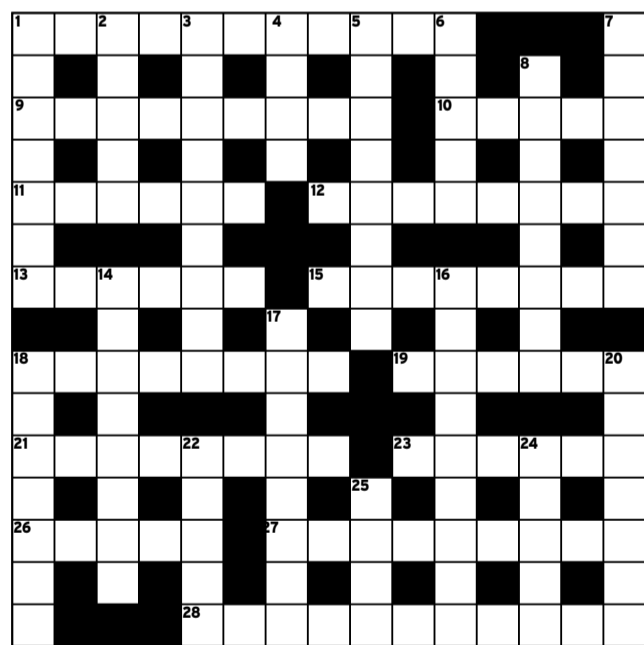
What has been influencing and/or inspiring your work lately?

My work is almost always influenced by two things, where my heart is at, and where the world is

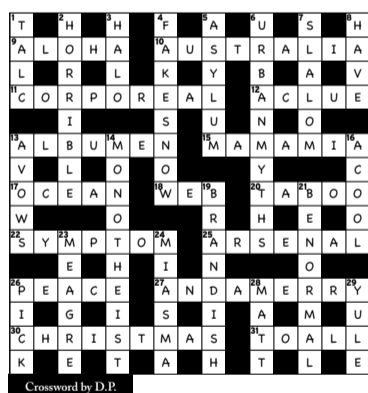
at. Lately it's been less about me and more about the world. I've watched amazing global changes on a political, economic and social scale. As these things remind me of a bigger picture, a greater hope, a deeper existence, I've found myself drawing inspiration from these concepts.

.....
www.vinetreerecords.com
www.myspace.com/itumusic

South Sydney Crossword



Last month's solution



Crossword by D.P.

First correct entry received by February 28th will win a mystery prize. Send completed puzzle to: South Sydney Crossword PO Box 2360 Strawberry Hills NSW 2012.

ACROSS

- 1) Local egg-shaped Bunnies training ground (7,4)
- 9) Staking LSD and getting naked (9)
- 10) Keep swinging that stick conductor! (5)
- 11) Sounds alike my letters embraced by hers (6)
- 12) High and dry, (un)derstand! (8)
- 13) Phantom liquor? (6)
- 15) Its about having a fling to be smothering (8)
- 18) The street linking Prince Alfred and Red fern Parks (8)
- 19) Sweet to a gun shot (6)
- 21) Angle, approach or angle of approach (8)
- 23) Coordinate search for one in pursuit (6)
- 26) Turn to VIP for axis (5)
- 27) Inverted nine holds different treat to amuse (9)
- 28) Motorised bicycles abridged (11)

DOWN

- 1) Rearranges holiday destinations (7)
- 2) Unclean! Dry it off (5)
- 3) A milder expression of U4MsM (9)
- 4) Pliancy holds up fix (4)
- 5) Live like a couch potato (8)
- 6) A sign of balance spelt out in Braille for the most part (5)
- 7) Shamefaced look of a dejected mutt (7)
- 8) Scrutinising an arrangement of tidy gnus (8)
- 14) Nothing happening in Act IV, the end (8)
- 16) Reckless pair of ducks fly hard (9)
- 17) Granted, I could be so inclined (8)
- 18) Red camp upset to be lacking in space (7)
- 20) Crowds of Human Resources pinched by tongs (7)
- 22) Tribal emblem concealed by Shinto temple (5)
- 24) Engine failure in the cowshed (5)
- 25) The sun is one (4)



Photos: Daniel Boud

Laneways, Here We Come

EVE GIBSON

The St Jerome's Laneway Festival will be held on Sunday February 8 at the Basement, Macquarie Park and Reiby Place in Circular Quay. The annual Laneway Festival will be travelling to five different cities starting in Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide and then heading to Sydney.

The festival started in the humble laneways of Melbourne five years ago and now has grown into an annual festival city dwellers all around Australia are getting

excited about each summer.

The outstanding line up of indie acts this year will include Architecture In Helsinki, Stereolab, Yves Klein Blue, the Drones, Cut Off Your Hands, the Panics, Augie March, Holly Throsby, Machine Translations and local group Hermitude alongside many, many more artists.

With so many festivals out there each summer it's sometimes hard to discern which are the best. So if you love being outside on a summer's day and also have a love for indie music this one might be worth a try.

More info: www.lanewayfestival.com.au



'Lotus Dance' by Jennie Pry Photo: Supplied

Vintage bathing suits at Bondi

SSH

Jennie Pry lives in Glebe and works from a studio in Newtown. Her exhibition, *Bathing Belles* will be held in February at the Bondi Pavilion.

Memory, nostalgia and the transitional phases of womanhood are themes that are explored in the series of studies depicting women's bathing suits from the 1930s to the 1960s.

Inspired by her personal collection of vintage bathing suits Pry uses charcoal, ink, watercolour, oils and mixed media to capture the faded sensuality of the bathing suits and the stories both real and imaginary of the woman who wore them.

The past and the present are intertwined. We see the bathing suits draped on hangers as they appear today, but we have glimpses of ghosts from the past as the suits retain a strong impression of the female form.

"The bathing suits reveal particular moments in time from a past era – stages in individual women's lives. Through the suits, we are drawn to understand more about the women who wore them, their body shape, their feelings about themselves, how they wanted to expose themselves, and we imagine how their lives may have been

lived, their intrigues and their hopes and aspirations," says Jennie Pry.

"Just as the colour has faded from the suits and the shape and texture of the fabric has changed, so too have the lives of the women who wore them. Their bodies have altered and aged, their interests changed as their lives moved on. The suits remain the glamorous nostalgic remnants of former lives."

Sometimes the artist has been given stories about the bathing suit she depicts from the children or grandchildren of the original owners. Sometimes she borrows a name of someone's grandmother to create a fantasy story. There are more than 25 large and small works in the exhibition all hung amongst the glamorous and functional bathing suits that inspired them.

In 'Cecile' the suit swings in an imaginary breeze, recalling the gentle movement of thighs and hips. In 'Constance' there are sensual undertones in the careless abandonment of the unzipped suit on a chair. In 'Dorothy', text embellishes the ink and oil drawing of the suit and gives minute details of moments in one woman's life.

Jennie Pry completed a BA in Fine Arts in 1991. She has had a long term interest in creatively portraying

women's stories and exploring defining moments that mark transition.

Her work has been included in a number of exhibitions involving women's health and women from a non-English speaking background.

More recently she was the winner of the Nora Heyson memorial award Hunters Hill Art Prize in 2008; Winner of the Newtown Community Art Prize in 2007; A finalist in the prestigious 2008 Kedumba Drawing Award; A finalist in the 2008 Waverley Art Prize; and a finalist in the 2008 Adelaide Perry prize for drawing. She is currently studying historical oil painting techniques and principles with Charlie Sheard at his studio school in Redfern.

Later this year Jennie Pry will also be artistically supporting an exhibition called *Exposed! The Story of Swimwear* to be shown at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney, from July to October and in other Australian cities to follow.

Bathing Belles will be held at the Bondi Pavilion Gallery, Queen Elizabeth Drive, Bondi Beach from Thursday February 19 to Sunday March 1 from 10am-5pm daily. Tel: (02) 8362 3400. www.waverley.nsw.gov.au For media enquiries contact Bella Glennly on (02) 9661 5301 or 0412 047 414 bella.glennly@optusnet.net.au



Imogen Williams and Helen Alker with paintings Photo: Supplied

Waves of colour, emotion

SSH

Helen Alker and Imogen Williams, the friendly staff from Eckersley's St Leonards, have put their creative minds together to create a sensational visual exhibition starting Friday February 6 at the Balmain Watch House.

From a very early age Helen Alker has followed her passion for paint and pastels. This adventure

led her to seek out subjects all over the Australian outback, a stint on New Zealand's rugged coastline, and now with this new exhibition, to share her love affair with Sydney.

Helen's early influences cover a diverse range of impressionists. From Renoir's intimate portraits of enraptured musicians to Australian outback painter, Hugh Sawrey (1923-1999) and his beloved outback scenes and characters.

Helen's move to Sydney

four years ago began a deeper exploration of new subjects with Sydney's many changing moods: the harbour, its atmosphere, characters, the zoo's exotic animals, the sounds of the city and the musicians who create it. Helen's past Sydney art shows, *Vibes* (2008) and *On the Harbour* (2006) were very successful.

Imogen was born in Wales and spent her early childhood visiting the ruined castles and medieval villages dotted throughout that ancient land. She was then educated half a world away in Sydney, with its ever-changing urban landscape. Through her artworks you see a world where beauty is everywhere, from the intricate structure of the fruit we eat to the striking street art viewed from train windows.

Imogen has found inspiration in many places – in the mathematical precision of Escher, the complex detail of Japanese and Chinese masters, and the colour and vibrancy of Lichtenstein.

Making Waves
Opening Night Exhibition Friday February 6, 6-9pm Balmain Watch House, 179 Darling Street, Balmain. Also open Saturday & Sunday February 7 & 8, 10am-4pm. Refreshments will be on hand and musical interludes provided.



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BUZZ emerging artists showcase

Leon Fernandes • Madeleine Hayes • Alison Johnson
Ida Lawrence • Hidemi Tokutake • Telly Tuita

Opening night party with the artists
Wednesday February 25 from 6 to 8pm

Meet the artists Saturday March 7 2-4pm
Exhibition runs from February 25 to March 8

A unique opportunity to view and purchase works by fresh new talent, 'buzz' showcases six emerging young artists – four painters and two ceramists. This dynamic exhibition features organic and politically charged ceramics alongside colourfully expressive and darkly atmospheric figurative and abstract paintings, including works by prize-winning National Art School students.

Discover a diverse range of media: paintings in oil and acrylic, from large-scale, vibrant canvasses to small, intimate works on paper; and ceramics in earthy and bold colours, from sculptural, hand-built pieces to altered, wheel-thrown works inspired by natural and urban landscapes.

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Please don't hesitate to contact my office: tel: 02 9357 6366 fax: 02 9357 6466
422 Crown St, Surry Hills NSW 2010 Office Hours: 9am -12:30pm & 1:30-5pm weekdays

Clover Moore MP
State Member for Sydney

I represent the residents of the Sydney electorate in the NSW Parliament which covers Surry Hills, Centennial Park, Chippendale, Ultimo, Pyrmont, Miller's Point, The Rocks/Dawes Point, The CBD, East Sydney, Darlinghurst, Woolloomooloo, Kings Cross, Potts Point, Elizabeth Bay, Rushcutters Bay, Paddington, small parts of Woollahra and Edgecliffe west of Ocean Street and a small part of Kensington bounded by Anzac Parade and Abbotford Street.

I work with my constituents to make government and bureaucracies accountable, empower the community, ensure social justice for individuals, and protect the urban and natural environments.

Contact my office to talk about your ideas or concerns or if you need help with NSW Government matters. Tel 9360 3053, drop in to 58 Oxford Street, Paddington, fax 9331 6963, or email sydney@parliament.nsw.gov.au

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Sport



Gary Lowry presents the cheque to Captain Starlight Photo: Supplied

Junior Jets jump for Starlight

Michael McIntyre

A local junior Rugby League club, the Newtown Junior Jets, recently showed its concern for sick children by participating in the 'Jump for Wishes' Starlight promotion at Marrickville Metro, just before Christmas and in promotions beforehand. Junior Jets players appeared along with event organisers, the Starlight Foundation, on Channel 7 News the night before the event. The cameras captured a spectacular display of star-jumping in Martin Place to promote the attempt to break the Australian Star-jumping record simultaneously at 12 AMP shopping centres.

Locally, Marrickville Metro organised the event for the Starlight Foundation, an organisation which donates time, equipment and financial aid to sick kids and their families. As the community group approached by

Marrickville Metro to be involved in the ultimately successful breaking of the National Star jump record, the Newtown Junior Jets were delighted to provide a large number of players and parents for the event, and to donate \$1000 with the help of Sydney Airport Corporation. Overall, due to the Junior Jets efforts, over \$4000 was raised for the Starlight Foundation. Truly a case of kids giving to kids.

A further Starlight fundraising event in May at Marrickville Metro will also be proudly supported by the Newtown Junior Jets as part of its ongoing contributions to our local community.

Thanks to all who contributed their time and money to the event and to the organisers: the Starlight Foundation, AMP, and Amanda Tourma at Marrickville Metro.

Hope to see you at our recruiting days on February 7 and 8 at the Jets Sports Club, Holbeach Rd Tempe, and Saturday February 14 at Marrickville Metro.

ADVERTISEMENT

Return to Redfern – a journey for everyone

The Return to Redfern which sees the Rabbitohs playing the Tigers at Redfern Oval on February 8 is also a great new start for South Sydney Leagues Club. Although the club is not yet re-open, it heralds a way for the Leagues Club to connect to its members again, and with the redevelopment commencing the same week there is a buzz of activity.

"We see this as a great start for the new year," says Ken Stewart, the new CEO of the Leagues Club and former Captain of the Rabbitohs. "As we are building our presence again in the community you can feel the anticipation and excitement."

In the next few months, you will see the Leagues Club presence growing in the community. Firstly, with the Redfern Park Café opening to the public at Redfern Oval where Souths members and the general community can come and relax and watch training sessions, enjoy the beautiful scenery of Moreton Bay Figs, a great children's play area and a new recreational park.

Then there's the newly launched Loyalty Program that connects businesses in the community with members of the Leagues Club. "In order to build a strong community of members, we

have to network them together with our projects and initiatives. Our Club's members are all over Sydney," says Bill Alexiou-Hucker, Chairman of the Leagues Club. "So using the latest technologies and sound ideology we can stay in communication with the loyal members that call South Sydney Leagues Club their 'home away from home.'"

Being resourceful is important to any club but when the club has a growing membership and the doors aren't even open to the public, ingenuity become a priority.

This initiative is the first of its kind in NSW for a Leagues Club and will offer members numerous benefits and rewards.

Souths Leagues plans on building an extensive association with all types

of businesses in the local community and around Sydney and as members simply shop and buy products and services through this program, they will raise funds for the Club's community programs and also bonus dollars in rebates for their own personal use.

With companies jumping on board, even before the official launch, this should prove to a great initiative during times of financial difficulty.

"Over the next few months our community initiatives for the Long Room will be launched," says Mr Stewart, "and these programs will display our commitment to the community."

So the Return to Redfern of the Football Club is proving to be a green light for the Leagues Club. With the area abuzz about what will happen on February 8, the Leagues Club intends to take this enthusiasm and keep it building for its own re-opening. For a long time this area has been waiting for a revival and 2009 will prove to be a great one!