SUMMER 2021–2022 • ISSUE 141

INNER SYDNEY VOICE

CLOVER WINS RECORD FIFTH TERM

AUSTRALIA MUST AVOID EMISSIONS AS A FIRST PRIORITY, WITH OFFSETTING HELPING BUT NOT REPLACING THE NEED FOR EMISSIONS REDUCTION EFFORT.

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INNER SYDNEY VOICE

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Inner Sydney Voice is the journal of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Inc. We are a non-profit organisation committed to the idea of information as a tool for community development. Inner Sydney is defined as the LGAs of City of Sydney, Bayside, Randwick, Waverley, Woollahra, and Inner West.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY
We acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional custodians of the lands across the areas we service, particularly the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, traditional custodians of the land on which our office is located. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present.

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EDITORIAL

The number of non-religious Australians has accelerated over recent years. In the 2016 Census, 30 percent, a third of the population, reported having no religion at all — that's 2.2 million more Australians ticking the no religion box than in 2011. No doubt the results of this year's Census will also record a further increase of non-religionists. And yet religion is front and centre of political life in Australia. Most of the nation's parliaments — federal, state and territory — open with a reciting of the Lord's Prayer.

Then there's our Pentecostal prime minister, whose open devotion to a supernatural wizard in the sky has long been a source of unease. Ever since Scott Morrison was pictured hand aloft at an evangelical church service, questions have rightly been raised as to whether his religious affiliation influences his political thinking — an affiliation with a movement that believes God is ever-present and intervenes in everyday events (although — much like Morrison — the Almighty was awol during the Black Summer bushfires). Our happy-clappy PM — who believes he has been "called to do God's work" — did just that by personally introducing the religious freedom bill to federal parliament. If it becomes law, the legislation threatens to override existing protections for minority groups, such as trans students. By allowing faith-based schools and other institutions to positively discriminate, the bill — zealously supported by Morrison — is a mandate to hate.

And what of NSW premier Dominic Perrottet (see page 10)? Perrottet has links to a fringe wing of the Catholic Church — the ultra-secretive, ultra-conservative Opus Dei. But no worry. Perrottet and his defenders insist he "doesn't wear his religion on his sleeve, and certainly not politically". Which is about as believable as, well, a supernatural wizard in the sky. Perrottet has in the past voted against same-sex marriage and the decriminalisation of abortion. Both of which are high on the sin list. Perrottet also strongly opposes assisted dying. Opening the debate on the euthanasia legislation, Perrottet said: "Once we accept the principle of this bill, we cross a line . . . as we will have started to define the value of a life." Which, of course, is God's call. He and He alone gets to decide which kid dies of cancer. In a new poll, almost two-thirds of NSW voters said they support voluntary assisted dying. Despite this, Perrottet chooses to ignore the people he's supposed to represent and instead lip syncs Catholic dogma. How can Australia possibly be considered a secular democracy when our political leaders' religious doctrines dictate their decisions?

I could go on and denounce Christmas. As a devout atheist I can't help but resent being compelled to take a religious holiday. But I'll spare you that rant. After all, 'tis the season to be jolly . . .

Neighbours, everybody needs good neighbours

Oozing community spirit, the volunteers at Inner West Neighbour Aid offer their time and skills to make a positive difference to residents' lives.

Inner West Neighbour Aid has been supporting the local community since 1992. It provides services to help older people, people with disability and their carers stay independent, healthy and connected. A small team of staff work with up to 200 volunteers to support around 700 clients living in Sydney's inner west.

Aid is provided in many different ways. A team of gardening volunteers, for example, helps residents who are unable to maintain their garden or afford professional gardening services. "I volunteer to help others and contribute to the local community," says Julie. "We deliver great results for our clients, which makes their day. It's physical, fun and extremely rewarding." The gardening team, say clients Roger and Soraya, are "incredible". "They love gardening and helping people like us — and it shows in their work. They are like family."

With the aim of helping older residents stay independent and mobile, Inner West Neighbour Aid also provide exercise classes — for the mind and body. These include gentle exercise classes, hydrotherapy, laughter yoga, creative art classes, and brain training. "I get out of the house and make new friends," says client Max. "I talk with people and enjoy their company . . . and the exercises are good too!" Professional, practical healthy ageing talks are also given on topics such as stroke recovery, anxiety and depression, nutrition, pet therapy, and personal safety.

Corporate gardening volunteers

One of the most popular services provided by Inner West Neighbour Aid are the group outings. The outings — in and around Sydney — help people gain confidence, make new friends, and remain active and visible in the community. "I love the outings," says Heather. "Getting out amongst people is the best thing — you make wonderful friends." Among the outings offered are picnics, movies, ferry rides, gardens, galleries, fish-and-chips by the sea, exhibitions, parks, shows, clubs, and more. "I love helping others and seeing their enjoyment at experiencing places they've never been before," says volunteer Diane. "It's great to see Sydney with new people. We have many interesting conversations."

For residents who find it difficult to get out of the house, Inner West Neighbour Aid runs a home-visiting program. Volunteers are carefully matched with clients based on interests, experiences and their outlook on life. Visits are relaxed and social — you might chat, reminisce, listen to music, read the paper or play card games. The informal fortnightly visits often lead to strong, lasting friendships. There is also a dog-walking program. "I like to be busy!" says dog-walker Joe. "I want to contribute something to the community and the personal satisfaction I get from volunteering is self-reinforcing."

Inner West Neighbour Aid

If you are over 18 and interested in volunteering with Inner West Neighbour Aid, they would love to hear from you. Call 9799 5099. You can also call that number if you are in need of any of the services mentioned above.

Sydney's summer of freedom

As the NSW government and the City of Sydney make efforts to resuscitate the hospitality industry, the planning rule book has been thrown out the window.

NSW customer service minister Victor Dominello, who led last year's calls to reduce red tape to allow hospitality venues to create alfresco spaces, said: "The sweet life in Sydney is all about the outdoors. The time is coming to embrace our summer of freedom." The further expansion of reforms means that streets, bowling greens — even carparks — can become potential outdoor settings for restaurants and beer gardens.

NSW planning minister Rob Stokes said the government will do all it can to make it easy for venues to expand their businesses outside. "We're blessed with a beautiful climate, and spectacular places and open spaces. Let's move indoors outdoors, raise a glass and enjoy summer after a rough winter."

> "DONE RIGHT, WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD A NEW CULTURE OF OUTDOOR DINING ACROSS SYDNEY."
> COMMITTEE FOR SYDNEY

Meanwhile, urban think tank Committee for Sydney is lobbying for local councils to pedestrianise their high streets. "As the weather gets warmer, we call on councils and state government to work with local businesses to temporarily close certain streets and to roll out parklets across the city," read a statement. "Done right, we have an opportunity to build a new culture of outdoor dining across Sydney."

Lengthy light rail shutdown

After cracks appeared in inner west trams, all services were immediately suspended along the L1 light rail line and replaced with buses.

Shorty after, transport minister Rob Stokes revealed the extent of the damage was "more significant than first thought". "The inner west light rail fleet will be decommissioned for up to 18 months while the issues identified are rectified," Stokes announced.

The cracks — found on all 12 trams running from Dulwich Hill to Central Station — were discovered during routine maintenance. Following a detailed inspection of the Spanish-built vehicles, Transport for NSW chief operations officer Howard Collins said cracks in their base were clearly visible. "We drove up and down the line, and you could see the cracks opening and closing on a normal straight bit of track with no bumps or twists as the car body is stressing itself because there are cracks in this suspension area," Collins told the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

For Inner Westies, the extended shut down of the 12.8km light rail line will cause major disruption — especially as people emerge from their home offices to return to their CBD work stations. With the replacement bus journeys considerably slower and longer, Stokes announced passengers would receive 50 percent discounts on their fares to and from the city. "I understand regular passengers on the inner west light rail are really frustrated by this situation," Stokes said.

Speaking to the *Inner West Review*, inner west mayor Rochelle Porteous called the situation "deplorable". "The inner west is paying the price of foolish decisions made by the government that has been more focused on privatising the route than delivering a safe, integrated and reliable light rail service."

Meanwhile, NSW Labor was quick to seize on the latest of a litany of problems with the government's overseas-procured transport vehicles. Shadow minister for transport and member for Summer Hill Jo Haylen said: "The government's transport procurement policies are now in tatters. They bought trains that don't fit the tracks, ferries that can't fit under bridges or operate at night, and an entire fleet of trams that simply don't work."

Restoring the strip

Oxford Street is loved for its rich and varied cultural history. It is a sacred walking track of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. For decades, it was an iconic destination for Sydney's queer revellers and home to the annual Mardi Gras parade.

However, over recent years, Oxford Street (aka the Golden Mile) has lost its shine. But City of Sydney has a plan to revitalise the strip, including allowing for two extra storeys on top of every building in Oxford Street's Darlinghurst precinct and up to four extra floors on Taylor Square, attracting hundreds of millions of dollars of development.

Council estimates the proposed changes to Oxford Street's planning rules will unlock more than 42,500 square metres of employment floor space and 11,000 square metres of new creative and cultural space.

"We're breathing new life into the fabulous strip with innovative controls to support growth and diversity, protect heritage and character, and promote both day and night-time economies," said Sydney lord mayor, Clover Moore.

Council held a public consultation last year on ways to resuscitate the strip, which has long been characterised by shuttered shops and flaking facades. Moore acknowledges that Oxford Street has suffered "significant troubles in the recent past". These included draconian lockout laws, the state government's clearway, and the Westfield shopping centres in Bondi Junction and the CBD.

Yet despite the setbacks, Moore said the strip remains "one of our greatest and best-known streets". She added that the proposed changes would build on Oxford Street's global reputation as the heart of Sydney's LGBTQ+ community as the city gears up to host the World Pride festival in 2023.
(See page 20.)

Easing social housing shortage

Calls have been made to convert vacant student accommodation into social housing. The significant reduction of international students in Sydney due to COVID has created an opportunity to house the city's vulnerable.

Both Canterbury-Bankstown and Inner West councils have made submissions to a NSW parliamentary inquiry into social housing about how they could open up empty student rooms to people without a place to stay. Hotels, motels, boarding houses and backpacker accommodation could also be considered being made available to those in need.

While supportive of "creative ways to utilise otherwise empty buildings to provide temporary housing", in its submission to the inquiry, Shelter NSW said there was "no substitute for dramatically increasing the stock of social and affordable rental dwellings across NSW". Shelter then called on the government to "dramatically increase the stock of social housing across NSW (build or acquire 5,000 additional social housing dwellings per year for 10 years)".

Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) also called for an investment in the construction of 5,000 social housing properties every year over the next decade. DVNSW went on to stress that older women are the fastest-growing cohort of homeless in Australia: "This is often as a result of DFV [domestic and family violence], pay inequity, little to no superannuation or savings, divorce, and time taken as unpaid carers."

Meanwhile, in its submission to the social housing inquiry, the peak body for councils — Local Government NSW — called for minimum targets of 5 to 10 percent social and affordable housing across the state, and 25 percent for government-owned land which is developed. More than 50,000 people are currently on the NSW social housing waiting list, with wait times of up to a decade.

Hands off Callan Park!

A draft bill proposing an easing of commercial restrictions at Callan Park has drawn ire from MPs and local community groups. If passed, the legislation will allow food and drink providers and other businesses to operate at the 61-hectare Lilyfield park.

Greens MP for Balmain Jamie Parker is among those fighting to stop the bill from passing parliament. "This is a backdoor way to raise revenue from the site. It is pure profit seeking," Parker told the *Sydney Morning Herald*. "It is opening the door to the exploitation of Callan Park by ripping up all existing protections."

The bill would also allow businesses to obtain 50-year leases for the park's heritage-listed buildings such as the Kirkbride complex. Such a proposal, say advocates, could see Kirkbride become a commercial space. Currently, only not-for-profit community facilities are permissible at Callan Park.

Describing the current regulations as "overly restrictive", planning and public spaces minister Rob Stokes said: "Having a coffee cart or a community concert at this beautiful park by the water's edge seems reasonable to me."

The former site of a psychiatric hospital, Callan Park is home to a number of crumbling, abandoned buildings. Buildings, said Stokes, that could be utilised as bars, galleries and cafes. "A long-term tenant could breathe new life into them," he said. In response, Parker said: "Cafes are a Trojan Horse that will crack the door open to big business and large-scale commercialisation."

Meanwhile, inner west mayor Rochelle Porteous called the proposal "privatisation by stealth". "This is what the inner west has been fearing for years — that the NSW government will sell off Callan Park to the highest bidder. How many times do we have to say this: 'Callan Park is not for sale — hands off!'" (See page 26.)

Sydney Park superblock appeal

Plans to build a 'superblock' within Sydney Park are being further considered by the Land and Environment Court after the City of Sydney's Central Sydney Planning Committee rejected an application to build 389 apartments earlier this year.

Maxida International — which owns the site of the One Sydney Park development — is appealing to the court to approve scaled-back plans for 356 units in eight six-storey buildings (shown in white at right) along Euston Road at a cost of $234 million.

Potential buyers of One Sydney Park have been promised "resort-style facilities" and use of Sydney Park as their own "personal playground", with most apartments enjoying vista views of one of the city's largest green spaces.

Sydney Park — once a former landfill site — has been transformed over the last three decades into an inner-city oasis made up of wetlands, gardens, a sports oval and a children's playground. Its location — sitting along the borders of Alexandria, Newtown and Erskineville — was always going to attract the interest of developers and, in 2017, a plan was rubber-stamped to develop the park — despite a vigorous campaign by community group, the Friends of Erskineville (FoE).

President of FoE Andrew Chuter said a large residential block would put "unacceptable pressure" on the park. "The location of the proposed apartments, adjacent to the sensitive wetlands, would place unacceptable pressure on the wildlife, from the much-loved baby swans to migratory birds from Japan to Siberia," said Chuter.

FoE is calling on planning minister Rob Stokes to intervene and return the land to the public. "We would prefer the state government to buy up the land and convert it into parkland and thereby fulfil the original vision for Sydney Park," Chuter told the *Sydney Morning Herald*. "A property developer . . . shouldn't be allowed to run roughshod over the community's wishes."

NSW leads on sexual consent

In a major step forward for reform, the NSW parliament has mandated affirmative sexual consent during any sexual activity. Shortly after the vote, Greens MP Jenny Leong took to Twitter to say that members had voted "an enthusiastic yes".

> "NO ONE SHOULD ASSUME THAT SOMEONE IS SAYING YES JUST BECAUSE THEY DON'T SAY NO OR DON'T RESIST PHYSICALLY.
> MARK SPEAKMAN, NSW ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Under the affirmative consent bill — proposed by NSW attorney-general and minister for prevention and sexual violence Mark Speakman — a person only gives consent if "at the time of the sexual activity, they freely and voluntarily agree to the sexual activity".

Furthermore, the consent must be clearly communicated. "No one should assume that someone is saying yes just because they don't say no or don't resist physically," Speakman said in parliament in October. "People are entitled to expect that if someone wants to have sex with them then the other person will ask. If the first person hasn't said something, or done something, to communicate consent, then that other person will take further steps to ascertain consent — this is just a basic matter of respect."

The bill will help clarify alleged offenders' claims they had "reasonable grounds" to believe that they were given consent by their sexual partner. Also, the bill will give legal protection to victims of sexual violence who were unable to clearly communicate they no longer consented to something mid-act.

Inspired by victims' stories of rape and sexual violence, the reforms — said survivor and advocate Saxon Mullins — will mean so much to so many survivors "who understand firsthand the difference this bill can make".

"It has been three years since I came forward to share my own story, and while progress can feel slow, I know this bill is a huge leap forward and will see NSW leading the way in consent law around the world." The affirmative sexual consent bill is expected to become law mid-next year.

Plan of action for Waterloo

Through consultation with agencies and residents, the Waterloo Human Services Collaborative has drawn up an action plan to address the current and future needs of the Waterloo community.

"While we will still face social challenges locally, the plan should go a long way toward addressing the issues residents have raised," said Counterpoint Community Services EO Michael Shreenan. "Like all good plans, it will evolve through implementation, with regular review and ongoing community input."

The 13-page document identifies six priority areas for agencies and community group action: improved

safety; improved health and wellbeing; improved communication, consultation and community participation; improved customer service; improved service integration and service accessibility for all service users; and improved responses to systemic issues on an ongoing basis.

"The community rightly expects cohesive, timely, accessible, responsive, respectful, holistic services," said Shreenan. "These can only be achieved through resident involvement in decision-making, and well-planned, co-designed responses and implementation where everyone works hard to lift their game." Shreenan added: "For the plan to succeed we need all government and non-government agencies, residents and community groups to become involved."

A draft document is being circulated to local groups and agencies for feedback, so the final plan can be endorsed and then implemented in early 2022.

NEWS FEATURE

The regressive state

With Gladys gone, NSW has the most conservative premier since World War II. Christopher Kelly reports.

The writing, apparently, had been on the wall for some time. At least on the walls of the NSW parliament. When the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) decided to expand its investigation into former Wagga Wagga MP Daryl Maguire and set its sights on premier Gladys Berejiklian, it was a matter of, not if she'd stand aside, but when.

The when eventually came on Friday 1 October, shortly after ICAC announced it would be examining whether Berejiklian breached the ministerial code of conduct when, as treasurer, she facilitated the approval of multimillion-dollar grants to her ex-partner's electorate — the allegation being that Berejiklian used her position to bestow financial favours upon her secret boyfriend and his "dodgy" associates. Throughout the 11-day public inquiry, Berejiklian steadfastly maintained her innocence. Nothing to see here. It will be months — maybe longer — before the outcome of ICAC's deliberations will be known.

Following Berejiklian's resignation — during which she stated she had "always acted with the highest level of integrity" — her allies in the press paid tribute to and expressed sympathy for the soon-to-be former-premier. Gladys, it seemed, had been "fouled". The fact that she was being scrutinised by the state's integrity body was nothing but a blip in an otherwise glorious parliamentary career. The PM, meanwhile, lauded Berejiklian's "heroic" qualities, while the frontrunner to replace her, treasurer

"People should judge people on who they are and what they say — not on what they believe," says Perrottet. Unfortunately, we know all too well who Perrottet is, what he says, and what he believes.

Dominic Perrottet, said: "Today is an incredibly sad day for NSW."

As it turned out, it was an incredibly happy day for Mr Perrottet who won the leadership ballot "emphatically".

Others weren't as thrilled with the result. Even before the party vote, the very idea of a premier Perrottet was met with dismay by some.

NSW Greens MP Jenny Leong tweeted that the former treasurer's appointment would be "horrifying for so many women, members of diverse communities and those who fear the rise of religious conservatism infecting our democracy and politics". Writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the Reverend Dr Stephanie Dowrick warned that "rights to full social inclusion for marginalised groups remain vulnerable . . . threatened by an authoritarian perspective". Another Greens MP, Cate Faehrmann, described Perrottet's nomination as "a step backwards" for NSW.

Dominic Perrottet's views are certainly at odds with many residing in what is considered to be Australia's most progressive state. The 39-year-old is, after all, a vigorous acolyte of the Libs' far-right faction and a rigidly conservative Catholic whose deeply held religious beliefs help forge his political ideology.

No surprise, then, that the member for Epping has voted against abortion rights and marriage equality. Perrottet has also opposed laws forcing priests to disclose confessions of child abuse, saying "the confessional seal is sacrosanct for every priest in every penitent no matter what sins are confessed". A climate change sceptic, Perrottet called action to save the planet a "gratuitous waste". As for welfare, Perrottet is quoted as saying that government should stop "throwing money" at the vulnerable as it encourages divorce.

Upon winning the premiership, Perrottet — a father of six (with another on the way) — declared himself a premier for families. Whether that includes rainbow families is unclear. Although previous statements suggest not. Ahead of the 2017 marriage equality referendum, Perrottet said: "marriage is about every child's fundamental right to grow up with their own mum and dad".

On the day of his election as the state's youngest premier, Perrottet said: "People should judge people on who they are and what they say — not on what they believe." Unfortunately, we know all too well who Perrottet is, what he says, and what he believes.

The Coalition's copout

Scott Morrison made Australia even more of a climate pariah at the United Nations' climate change conference in Glasgow. Sarah Hathway reports.

The media may claim the biggest outrage at COP26 was Morrison's leak of texts between him and French president Emmanuel Macron around the cancellation of the submarine deal, but that is far from the truth.

The disaster is the Coalition's refusal to join a global pledge to cut methane emissions. (Russia, India and Iran also refused to sign up.) The Global Methane Pledge was one of the key actions to come from COP26.

The pledge was announced at a UN General Assembly meeting in September. Over the course of COP26 the number of signatories rose from 60 nations to more than 100. They include the United States, the European Union and Brazil — key methane-producing countries.

Energy minister Angus Taylor said the government had a "whole of economy" approach and it would not be "setting sector-specific targets". Taylor's spurious response stems from his government's overwhelming focus on the exploration, mining and export of gas. This was very apparent at COP26: the oil and gas company Santos was a prominent feature of the Australian pavilion apparently at the insistence of Taylor.

The government's "plan" for net-zero emissions by 2050 includes no specific gas or industry targets and no new policies. It relies on untested carbon capture and storage technology, all the while continuing to allow a rise in fossil fuel emissions.

Worse than a fringe dweller, Morrison was actively involved in undermining the G20 climate goals at the Rome summit before COP26. As well as leading the opposition to the 2030 methane emission reduction pledge, he also successfully opposed plans to phase out coal power in advanced economies by 2030. Further, Morrison used his final comments to the summit to oppose the abolition of fossil fuels, demanding the focus be on "adaptation" and "empowerment".

The G20 summit did not adopt a firm goal for net zero by 2050. Instead, it agreed to end public financing for coal power plants, but without exact dates and with words implying the importance of reaching net zero by or around the middle of the century.

Despite finally signing on to the 2050 net-zero target, the government's target of a 26–28 percent reduction in carbon emissions compared to 2005 levels by 2030, lags behind other capitalist countries. The US is aiming to reduce emissions by at least 50 percent and Britain is aiming for more than 60 percent.

There is a widespread understanding, and growing proof, that renewable energies are reliable and cheaper than fossil fuels and would create more jobs. However, their solution to the climate emergency will not come by waiting for the market to catch up. As climate activist Bill McKibben told the ABC's *7.30* on 4 November, the market will "ultimately" force a change away from fossil fuels. However, he said, "ultimately is not good enough for the crisis we're facing".

Emissions from fossil fuel use in industry, transport and mining have continued to rise, despite a temporary reduction at the start of the pandemic. Even if we could all change from gas-powered energy to solar rooftops, this does not change what McKibben described as the carbon and emissions "deeply embedded in the guts of the system".

Rather than focusing on lifestyle change, the real job of individuals he said "is to join together to force basic political and economic change that will rip carbon out of the guts of these systems".

The lesson from the G20 and COP26 is that it is not enough to just change an extreme climate foot-dragging government into a seemingly climate friendly, big talking, but small action alternative. We need an alternative that puts people and planet before profits. (See page 14.)

HEAR THEIR VOICES

A **Mission Australia** survey reveals the unique experiences and challenges faced by young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. **Dominic Brookes** reports.

Indigenous young people are custodians of one of the oldest living cultures in the world and future leaders of their families, communities and Country. They are strongly connected to family, community and culture, are engaged in education and have high levels of confidence in their ability to achieve their goals.

However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people face unique challenges due to Australia's history of colonisation and its aftermath, including intergenerational trauma, racism, social exclusion and disconnection from culture and identity. These have a destructive impact on the social and emotional wellbeing and resilience of young people and ultimately can manifest in higher rates of psychological distress, self-harm and mortality.

As a report from Mission Australia shows, young ATSI people face other difficulties such as unacceptably high levels of bullying linked to racial discrimination, as well as poor mental health, homelessness and insecure housing. Far too many young ATSI people experience distress, feel negative about their future and are facing barriers to achieving their aspirations.

They also experience a range of personal concerns in much higher proportions than non-Indigenous young people. For example, respondents to Mission Australia's annual Youth Survey recorded substantially higher levels of concern about domestic/family violence (16.9 percent compared with 8.6 percent), drugs (14.5 percent compared with 7.0 percent), alcohol (11.7 percent compared with 4.9 percent) and suicide (20.5 percent compared with 13.9 percent).

"While there are many positive experiences and hopes voiced by young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our report, the concerns expressed really drive home that we must do more to improve the wellbeing and properly support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in need, so they can thrive," said Mission Australia CEO, James Toomey.

Regarding wellbeing, the report found that while over half (51.4 percent) of ATSI respondents felt happy/very happy overall with their lives (compared with 61.4 percent of non-Indigenous young people), and more than half (52.1 percent) of ATSI respondents felt very positive or positive about the future (compared with 58.7 percent of non-Indigenous respondents), more than three in ten (31.7 percent) ATSI respondents indicated some form of distress (compared with 26.7 percent of non-Indigenous respondents).

Racial discrimination continues to be a source of poor mental health for Indigenous young people. Racial discrimination against young ATSI people in Australia is a complex, intersectional, intergenerational phenomenon that has been supported by a lengthy history of racist policies and practices.

Such policies and practices have resulted in social marginalisation, poverty, lack of fair access to education, employment, healthcare, human rights, housing and food security, and historic and intergenerational trauma for ATSI children and young people. As the report's authors note: "The experience of racial discrimination is a major life stressor, which is found to have significant mental and physical effects, including intergenerational family impacts."

Close to three in ten (29.9 percent) ATSI respondents reported that they have been bullied in the past year

(compared with 20.3 percent of non-Indigenous respondents). Almost one in seven (16.8 percent) of young ATSI people identified discrimination as a personal concern (compared with 9.9 percent of non-Indigenous young people). Around a quarter also identified equity and discrimination as an important issue for Australia (24.3 percent), similar to the rate of non-Indigenous respondents (24.9 percent).

"Every young ATSI person must be protected from harm caused by bullying and racial discrimination, with a strong focus on supporting schools to enhance student knowledge, understanding and compassion about ATSI languages, cultures and histories," said Professor Tom Calma, co-chair of the Indigenous Voice to Government advisory group.

The consequences of racial discrimination and bullying on the social determinants of the health, wellbeing and life chances of young ATSI people are serious and ongoing. "Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be protected from racial discrimination and bullying at school, at work and in their community," write the report's authors.

Housing and homelessness is another topic highlighted in the Mission Australia report. While the vast majority of young ATSI people who responded to the survey lived with their parents (83.3 percent) and indicated that their housing situation was adequate and stable, nearly three times the proportion of ATSI respondents indicated they have experienced a time when they had no fixed address when compared with non-Indigenous respondents (16.2 percent vs 5.9 percent). Meanwhile, more than double the proportion of young ATSI people reported a couch-surfing experience (28.9 percent compared with 12.0 percent of non-Indigenous young people).

"Our report confirms that young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to face unacceptably high levels of housing instability and homelessness, which can be detrimental in a young person's experiences of life, and their future," said Toomey.

As the report's authors note: "A supportive and stable home is important for young people's physical and psychological wellbeing. When young people have early experiences of homelessness, this has both immediate and long-lasting negative impacts on their education, physical and mental health, employment and housing outcomes."

The authors call for a range of policy and service responses to homelessness, including the development of a national plan to end homelessness, early intervention and prevention measures, effective and targeted supports for those who do enter homelessness, and an adequate supply of affordable and social housing.

Touching upon education, the report found that a large majority of young ATSI people were engaged in either full-time (83.1 percent) or part-time (5.8 percent) study. A significant minority, however, were not engaged in study at all (11.0 percent compared with 3.5 percent of non-Indigenous respondents).

"Supporting young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to remain engaged with education is a key strategy for improving educational outcomes," write the report's authors. "Challenges to attendance and retention can be magnified by schools' lack of knowledge of local ATSI community cultures and histories, and their failure to develop culturally appropriate relationships with the children, young people and their families."

As for job opportunities, the employment profile of respondents to the survey indicates that over one third of young ATSI people were employed — the majority in part-time roles.

They were, however, more likely than non-Indigenous students to be not in paid employment but looking for work (43.0 percent compared with 33.8 percent).

Whether employment, education, homelessness, mental health or discrimination, "Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be central to the co-design and co-implementation of the services that they need," said Toomey. "It's also vital and logical that ATSI people have greater influence over the policies, programs and services that affect them."

Recommendations include establishing programs which are driven by demand, flexible in scope, and provide intensive person-centred mentoring, while also being culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Most importantly, conclude the authors: "Young people should have their voices heard and be actively involved in decisions affecting their lives."

Professor Calma agrees and urges politicians and bureaucrats to listen to young ATSI people so as to understand their needs and concerns. Only by listening, said Calma, can "we build a better future for every young ATSI person, so they have the support, connection, stability and opportunities they need to flourish."

■ Source Mission Australia

IN PURSUIT OF NET ZERO

As a new report reveals, offsetting carbon emissions will be an essential part of Australia's quest for net zero but must not become an excuse to delay cutting emissions.

Governments around the world are moving to 'net zero', to limit the impacts of climate change. All Australian state and territory governments have the goal of reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest, and the prime minister has committed Australia to net zero by 2050.

Australian governments can and should act now to create momentum towards the net-zero goal. Strong policies are required to reach net zero, but some sectors and individuals may be able to do more than others at different times. By offsetting over-achievement in one sector against under-achievement in another, effort can be shared across the economy and the goal achieved at lower cost.

Offsetting is a difficult part of the net-zero conversation. Some see it as an excuse to delay reductions, others as bringing about unacceptable social change, particularly in rural areas. It has been plagued by integrity problems, and there is understandable cynicism about its potential.

None of this changes the reality: in pursuit of net zero, offsetting will be required because there will be emissions we cannot eliminate, and some where we will not be willing to pay the price to do so. The only option to deal with these emissions is to deliberately remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to offset them.

Processes to permanently remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere are uncertain or expensive — or both. Emitting is certain: we know that every tonne of emissions in the atmosphere contributes to global temperature rise. For this reason, offsetting is not a direct substitute for avoiding or reducing emissions in other ways.

Australia has the structures in place to support offsetting. Our governments should be clear about the role of offsetting in each policy they implement in pursuit of net zero. They should also make sure certification for offsetting units maintains high integrity. Otherwise, companies and individuals will bear costs with no corresponding drop in emissions.

As policies begin to drive demand for offsetting units, governments should step back from being the major buyers, and focus on underwriting the development of technologies and practices to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This includes acting more as a buyer of last resort for

high-quality Australian offsetting units; or buying units to offset government emissions.

There is still considerable uncertainty about the costs, permanence, and measurement of many offsetting activities. These are barriers to scaling up the offsetting market. Government should support research and development and early-stage deployment to help lower these barriers.

Imports and exports of offsetting units will become more important as all countries move towards net zero. There is no need to assume Australia must be self-sufficient in offsetting units, but local supply requires our governments to implement strong policies to drive emissions reduction coupled with policies to encourage removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The federal government should introduce rules to support international trade in offsetting units, both for exports and imports.

So what is net zero?

Net zero means balancing sources of emissions going into the atmosphere with sinks that take them out, with the aim of staying within a carbon budget and limiting global temperature rise. Because there are some emissions that cannot be eliminated (or that we do not want to eliminate), achieving this balance requires 'offsetting': deliberately removing a tonne of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere for each tonne of emissions.

There are many ways to do this, and certifying each offsetting activity makes accounting for sources and sinks easier. Offsetting is not an excuse to delay emissions reduction; rather, it is a necessary part of sharing emissions reduction efforts across sectors, and dealing with emissions that remain once all such opportunities have been adopted.

Before the industrial revolution, natural sources of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases were balanced by natural sinks. This kept the amount of greenhouse gas in the atmosphere fairly constant, which maintained global average temperatures within a narrow band and created a stable climate.

The industrial revolution accelerated the use of fossil fuels. Burning these fuels (and other human activity) releases large amounts of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. But because there is no corresponding sink, those gases persist in the atmosphere and cause global average temperatures to rise, disrupting the global climate system. All climate change policy is ultimately concerned with restoring the balance between sources and sinks, in order to hold global average temperature rises to well below 2°C and ideally below 1.5°C.

To achieve this, there needs to be a limit to how much carbon pollution the world can emit — a 'carbon budget'. Every tonne of carbon pollution that is 'spent' from the budget this year (by putting it into the atmosphere) is one that cannot be spent next year.

Continuing to release emissions at the current rate until 2049 — or even until 2035 — will blow the budget. For countries such as Australia where emissions have been falling slowly, the budget is still likely to be exhausted well before 2050. If we spend our emissions budget at the current rate for the next decade, reaching net zero while staying within the budget will require a very rapid and disruptive change, which will be costly if not technically infeasible.

The carbon budget to limit global temperature rise is premised on a stable level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Given there is a stock of gases in the atmosphere already, a stable level means either zero human-induced emissions going into the atmosphere, or net zero — a balance between what goes in and what comes out.

The Paris Agreement aims to achieve this by committing signatories to achieving "a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century". In practice, this commitment has been interpreted by individual countries as a goal of "net-zero emissions by 2050 or 2060".

By 2050 or 2060, each country with a net-zero goal will have to account for permanently removing one tonne of greenhouse gas from the atmosphere for every tonne that goes in. This means actual emissions may be above zero, but they will be balanced by removals, so that the 'net' position is zero.

Achieving net-zero emissions by about 2050 is the bare minimum to have a decent chance of limiting global warming to 1.5°C. A commitment to 'net zero' is a commitment to deliberate removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The alternative — absolute zero — would require giving up all activities and consumption where emissions cannot be eliminated.

The pathway to net zero is as important as the goal itself. If we achieve a balance between sources and sinks in 2050, but overspend our carbon budget on the way there, we will be left with a 'carbon deficit' and will have to remove additional carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in the following decades to balance the carbon budget and stabilise the global climate. The risk of this approach is that the world experiences greater warming in the meantime, overshooting temperature goals and potentially locking in irreversible changes to the climate.

Carbon neutral vs net zero

The terms 'carbon neutral' and 'net zero' are often used interchangeably, but they are different. To be carbon neutral, an organisation need only refrain from increasing its emissions, and find sinks to balance out its current emissions. To achieve net zero, an organisation needs to first reduce its emissions wherever it can, and only use sinks to balance the remainder.

Every nation that has ratified the Paris Agreement — including Australia — keeps a national emissions inventory. This is the ledger for the carbon budget. Over the course of a

year, there will be entries on the debit side, as the carbon budget gets spent through economic activity; and on the credit side, where greenhouse gases are removed from the atmosphere through natural processes or human activity. Combining the credit and the debit sides tells us how much of our national carbon budget we have left.

When an emissions constraint is introduced — either through government policy or voluntary action — this restrains the debit side of the ledger. In essence, it restricts how much of the carbon budget can be spent in a given period of time. Staying within that constraint, and continuing to remove emissions at the same pace, leaves more of the carbon budget left to spend in future years.

Sometimes, spending more than the yearly carbon budget can't be avoided. But overspending the budget every year quickly exhausts it. To avoid this, the overspend can be 'offset' in two ways: by finding someone who emitted less than they expected and offsetting this 'underspend' against the 'overspend'; or by deliberately removing emissions from the atmosphere and offsetting those against the overspend.

Offsetting can take place within a company or entity; between entities in one sector; between entities in different sectors; or between countries.

Any entity facing an emissions constraint needs to choose how much of its emissions it wants to reduce, and how much it wants to offset. This choice will be driven by the relative cost of reductions and offsetting activities, as well as the entity's view of the future value of both activities.

In a net-zero world, every tonne of emissions that goes into the atmosphere would be balanced out by immediate equivalent removals. These remaining emissions would come from sources where no viable technological solution, practice, or alternative has been found.

The only way to offset them would be to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and store it permanently. This would keep the global concentration of atmospheric greenhouse gases stable, which in turn would stabilise global average temperatures, and limit climate change.

By 2050 or 2060, each country with a net-zero goal will have to account for permanently removing one tonne of greenhouse gas from the atmosphere for every tonne that goes in.

Avoiding the tipping point

But emitting now and removing later will not help mitigate climate change. While a tonne of greenhouse gas is in the atmosphere, it is contributing to global temperature rise, and may push the global climate system past a 'tipping point' — a sudden and irreversible change in climate. Removing greenhouse gases after a tipping point has been passed will not return the climate to its previous state. For this reason, offsetting is not a substitute for avoiding emissions in the first place.

Relying heavily on offsetting slows the rate of adoption of new lower-emissions technologies, because there is no signal to develop and deploy them. This stymies the development of sectors in areas of low-emissions competitive advantage, and slows structural changes in the economy towards low-emissions activities.

Many activities that remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and/or avoid emissions have considerable uncertainties around measurement and verification, and others have technical and economic challenges to overcome.

As well, there will be a physical limit to the amount of offsetting activities that can be done. Delaying emissions reductions on the assumption that these activities will be effective, cheap, and widely available risks overspending the carbon budget and passing a tipping point. Therefore, Australia must avoid emissions as a first priority, with offsetting helping but not replacing the need for emissions reduction effort.

■ Courtesy Grattan Institute

A CALL FOR REGULATION

A new report reveals important new insights into how Australians access, consume and experience drugs today. **Jake Kendall** scours the document.

Presenting survey findings from people from across every state and territory in Australia, the Unharm 2021 survey found the overwhelming majority of respondents — 83 percent — had recently used prohibited drugs.

The drug reform advocacy group's survey also generated unique insights into people's experiences with drugs, their thoughts on legalisation, and the impact of COVID on drug use.

As with previous surveys, the results disrupt the conventional narrative that only people on the fringes of mainstream society or risk-taking young people use drugs.

Indeed, more than two-thirds of survey participants were over the age of 30, and more than a third were over the age of 45. More than a quarter of respondents earned more than $100,000 per annum. "Drug use happens in all parts of society — certainly including the well off," said Unharm's Dr Will Tregoning. "If we could have a more realistic response to drug use, we could make people safer, including young people who decide to try drugs for the first time."

Unharm's survey results also found that people's lifetime experiences with most drugs was overwhelmingly positive, with drugs including MDMA, cannabis and cocaine ranking above alcohol for overall positive experiences.

And statistics show that people continue to use recreational drugs in spite of the punitive penalties. Indeed, during a 10-year period when the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission recorded a 96 percent increase in drug arrests, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimated that the number of people using drugs in Australia increased from 2.7 million to 3.4 million.

"Unharm's survey results show that fear-mongering tactics and the abstinence approach — used to highlight the worst harms of drug use — do not reflect the majority of people's experiences," said Dr Tregoning.

All too often, it is those people in the lowest income bracket who are much more likely to report being stopped and searched for drugs and charged with a drug-related offence. This suggests a relationship between income inequality and criminalisation in Australia.

"More people are being arrested than ever for using drugs, but it's poorer people who are most likely to end up with a criminal charge," said Dr Tregoning. "Not only is this system failing to keep people safe, it's also deeply unfair."

Additional findings from Unharm's survey include:

- Tobacco and alcohol ranked lower for overall positive experience than drugs which under the law are illegal to buy and use.
- A majority of people supported a legal, regulated market for all drug types.
- For drugs other than heroin, people who recently consumed prohibited drugs mostly said those drugs were easy to obtain.
- Cannabis, alcohol, heroin and tobacco were the drugs that people said they had increased their use of during COVD-19.
- Most people who had consumed prohibited drugs in the previous 12 months thought it would be very unlikely they would be caught by police.

The report also confirms that the majority of people who use drugs care strongly about harm minimisation. Almost 80 percent of respondents said they would feel much safer if they could access illegal drugs via a pharmacy or some other regulated outlet.

"There is clear demand for a better regulated market as part of a realistic response to drug use," said Dr Tregoning. "A market that gives people the agency and information they need to make good choices." (See page 34.)

THE QUEEN O
GEORGE STRE

Clover Moore wins an historic fifth term as Sydney lord mayor. Political analyst **Ben Raue** crunches th

Voters across New South Wales went to the polls at the start of December for the long-delayed local government elections. The vote had first been due in September 2020, and was delayed by the first wave of COVID-19, and then delayed again by the Sydney lockdown of winter 2021.

While the lockdown has ended, restrictions continued to haunt the election. Parties and candidates were banned from handing out how-to-vote cards within 100m of the polling place, and there was a surge in pre-poll, postal and online voting, leading to the online voting website crashing on election day under extreme demand.

The council elections in central and eastern Sydney produced positive outcomes for parties of the left, with the Liberal party and conservative independents withdrawing from some councils and losing ground elsewhere. A Liberal majority council in the eastern suburbs may be opening up more, while progressive majorities are being strengthened in other areas.

In the City of Sydney, lord mayor Clover Moore was re-elected despite a 14 percent swing against her. She lost votes to candidates of the centre and left, with Labor and the Greens gaining swings and Yvonne Weldon polling 15 percent.

For council, Weldon takes over the seat of Kerryn Phelps, a Clover Moore breakaway who founded the team Weldon now leads. Moore held all her other seats, while the Greens returned to council after a five-year break. The Liberal party has lost its second seat,

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he inner-city numbers.

and at the time of writing conservative independent Angela Vithoulkas is trailing the second Labor candidate. That would be a net gain of two seats for the left from the right.

Moore has definitely lost support with the rise of Yvonne Weldon's Unite for Sydney ticket, but she is still in a dominant position. The Moore team holds five out of 10 council seats, can use her casting vote to achieve a majority, and has options both to her left and right to build alliances. Moore won the same number of seats in 2004 and 2012, and has had these numbers on the council since 2017.

Heading east, in Woollahra the Liberal party is defending its slim eight-seat majority. The Liberal party suffered a small swing while the vote for Residents First has surged. The Liberal party is holding at least seven of its seats, is in danger of losing one other to Residents First, and is in with a chance of grabbing a seat held by the Greens. So they may lose their council majority, but could also increase their council majority if close races go their way.

There has been no change in Waverley. No significant independents contested the election, leaving the three main parties as options for voters. The Liberal party maintained five seats but they remain in minority with four Labor councillors and three Greens in control.

An alliance of Labor and the Greens currently run Randwick council and they have boosted their numbers, electing a fourth Green in the Central ward, giving the two parties nine out of 15 seats. Two independents look set to lose their seats, with the other likely losing to a Liberal in the South ward.

The Greens and Labor have long been in conflict in Randwick, a situation that has seen Greens support Liberal mayoral candidates in the past, but since the last election the Liberals have been locked out of power, along with three conservative independents. I doubt we will see any change this time, with the Labor-Greens alliance now holding one more seat than needed for a majority.

The Liberal party decided to withdraw from seven councils in Greater Sydney where they normally run. Most of these councils are further west, stretching as far as Blacktown and Fairfield, but closer to the city they also withdrew from the elections for Bayside and Inner West. While some Liberal councillors ran as independents and there were some other options for conservative voters, conservatives have generally been set back in many of these councils.

Labor currently holds seven out of 15 seats in Bayside and are in with a chance of winning a majority. Two independent Liberals have been elected, along with other independents.

Even if Labor doesn't win a majority, the left will be a clear majority in Bayside. The Greens are in with a good shot of winning their first seats in Bayside (although they have previously been represented on the former Rockdale council), with two Greens candidates in with a shot.

The Liberal party plays a smaller role in the Inner West, although two Liberal councillors were crucial to the Labor-led majority that ran the council for three years until September, when conservative councillors abstained from the mayoral vote and allowed the Greens to win without a majority of votes.

Labor relied on three conservatives to govern, but is now in with a chance of replacing all three of those councillors with Labor members. This would make life easier for Labor, as deals with the Liberal party are not popular in the progressive Inner West.

The Liberal party withdrew from the Inner West election, and it's possible neither incumbent Liberal will be re-elected. Controversial former deputy mayor Julie Passas is a long way away from the lead in Ashfield-Djarrawunang, while her colleague Vittoria Raciti is leading for the final seat in Leichhardt-Gulgadya but could be vulnerable to Labor overtaking her on Greens preferences.

In Marrickville-Midjuburi ward, Labor's second candidate is neck-and-neck with incumbent conservative Victor Macri. If the Greens are to have a chance of forming a Greens-led majority on the council, that path would have to run through Ashfield-Djarrawunang. The second Labor candidate is leading in the race for the second seat, with the Greens not far behind.

If Labor wins a second seat at the expense of its former conservative allies in Ashfield, Leichhardt and Marrickville they will hold a majority in their own right. But if the Greens can wrest one of those seats away, they will likely be able to form a majority with independents, or come to some new arrangement sharing power with Labor.

Vote counting is still taking place at the time of writing. The election was held on 4 December, but most seats won't be finally decided until the week before Christmas, with most new councils set to kick off in the new year.

■ For more on the local election results visit tallyroom.com.au

The
last

Remembering THE GOLDEN MILE

With plans afoot to transform Oxford Street, **Scott McKinnon** traces the strip's queer history.

In London, there is Soho; in New York, Chelsea and Greenwich Village; and in San Francisco, there is the Castro. In Sydney there is Darlinghurst and, more specifically, Oxford Street. These are neighbourhoods of large cities that have, since at least the 1950s and often earlier, developed a reputation as queer spaces.

In more recent years, those reputations have begun to fade and the enduring meanings of the 'gaybourhood' have come into question. But what each of these places represents is the centrality of urban space to the emergence of visible, "out and proud" lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer identities and communities.

The peak years of Oxford Street's queer life extended from the mid-1970s until the mid-1990s. In the years after the second world war, many gay men in Sydney socialised in CBD hotels, including the Hotel Australia.

The first LGBTQ+ clubs on Oxford Street were Ivy's Birdcage and Capriccio's, which both opened in 1969. By the beginning of the 1980s, Oxford Street was home to a string of bars, clubs, saunas and cafes and had become known as Sydney's gay "Golden Mile".

The emergence of this gay heartland represents extraordinary social change. Male homosexuality remained illegal in NSW until 1984. The homosexual men socialising in 1950s CBD hotels were required to do so with discretion — the consequences of discovery could be devastating.

In contrast, the queerness of a venue like Capriccio's was defiantly visible and undeniable. As more venues were opened along the Golden Mile, the street itself became a gay space, as did the surrounding neighbourhoods where LGBTQ+ people — particularly gay men — made homes in the terraces

Midnight Shift's
night, 2017

and apartments of Darlinghurst and Paddington. A simple walk along the street became an act of participation in an emerging community.

Members of a marginalised social group were thus using urban space to resist oppression and build a community. For some, this produced a kind of utopia. In an interview with Sydney's Pride History Group, DJ Stephen Allkins described his first visit to the Oxford Street disco Patch's as a teenager in 1976. He remembers: "I was home. That was it. It was the most fabulous place I'd ever been in my life . . . It's full of gay people and they're all dressed to the nines. They're not hiding under a rock . . . They're expressing and happy."

But these feelings of joy at having found such a space can be complicated by a range of factors. The gay community was certainly not free from sexism, racism and transphobia, meaning that some within the LGBTQ+ community were granted far easier access to these spaces than others.

Indeed, although Golden Mile-era Oxford Street included venues popular with lesbians, including the women-only bar Ruby Reds, the surrounding neighbourhood was more identifiably gay than lesbian.

Into the new millennium, Oxford Street's place as the gay heart of Sydney became less certain. As LGBTQ+ businesses failed and venues closed, questions emerged as to whether a community now more a part of the mainstream still needed its own spaces. Changes to licensing laws further produced significant challenges for queer socialising in the neighbourhood.

Mardi Gras

Sydney's first Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras took place on the night of 24 June 1978. The original plan was to parade down Oxford Street from Taylor Square towards Hyde Park. A truck driven by Lance Gowland led revellers along the route.

When Gowland parked the truck on College Street, police shut the event down. Rather than dispersing, parade participants made their way up William Street to Kings Cross; 53 people were subsequently arrested during an ensuing riot on Darlinghurst Road.

In the early 1980s, the date of the Mardi Gras parade was moved from winter to autumn and the route was reversed and extended. Thousands of spectators flock to see the Mardi Gras parade along Oxford Street every year.

Taylor Square

In 1907, the first stage in the widening of Oxford Street took place. The Victoria Hotel at the juncture of Bourke, Flinders and Oxford streets was demolished and a new civic space was created and named Taylor Square in 1908, after alderman Allen Taylor, lord mayor of Sydney 1905–06 and 1909–12.

Allen Taylor was the driving force behind an ambitious civic beautification scheme for central Sydney that included slum clearance, road widening and parks. By World War I Oxford Street had morphed into a boulevard that joined the city to the suburbs to its east.

The Burdekin

The Burdekin Hotel is an important visual landmark at the western end of Oxford Street. It marks the beginning of the street. This corner site has historical significance as it has been occupied almost continuously by a hotel since the 1840s. The existing building is an extensive art deco refurbishment of an earlier Edwardian-era building, carried out in the late 1930s.

The Oxford

The Oxford Hotel has a long history of supporting the LGBTQ+ community. The hotel was also at the centre of the alternative music scene in Sydney. They say that in 1976, Australia's first punk band, Radio Birdman, approached the owners of the hotel. They proposed to take over the venue on the weekends "on the basis that the hotel keep the bar takings and the bands keep the proceeds of the door entry".

Radio Birdman named the Oxford Tavern venue the Funhouse — with a name inspired by Iggy Pop. This venue became a place for anti-establishment bands to play. The hotel is opposite another famous venue, The Courthouse, aptly named for its proximity to the Darlinghurst Courthouse.

The Albury

The Albury Hotel became a gay pub in 1980. Shirtless, muscled bartenders and outrageous drag shows made it an extremely popular venue with gay men well into the 1990s. The Albury's closure in 2000 and the conversion of the building into shops and offices was seen by many as a sign that the glory days of the 'Golden Mile' were over.

■ Courtesy City of Sydney

VÉLO CULTURE

For **Dallas Rogers**, cycling is about more than active travel — it's the way he engages with the world.

My dad was fast on his bike. So fast, in fact, that his friends called him Rocket Rod. He was 48 when he was hit by a car whilst riding in Castlereagh on the western edge of Sydney. It was 1994 and I had just turned 20.

All rockets come crashing back to Earth at some point. Rocket Rod was a strong and fast cyclist, but the car that hit him was stronger and faster, and the laws of physics are absolute.

Dad suffered brain injuries, a broken spinal cord, broken ribs and organ damage. He died on the side of the road that day. His friends gave him CPR at the scene until a medical team arrived. They manually pumped his heart through his chest and forced air back into his broken body with mouth-to-mouth. They saved his life, for a time.

I've been thinking about my dad lately. I ride my bike around Sydney every day; to and from work, to drop the kids off at childcare, to collect the groceries from the shops. The memory of Dad is an unsettling reminder of the dangers of the road.

On my birthday this year my sister, Erin, texted me about our dad. I was turning 47 and my daughter, Nissa, had just turned 20. I look back at this text every now and then. Erin says, 'I didn't realise how young Dad was. How much he missed out on. How young we were. We didn't cope too well. It took years to deal with it.' I grew up in the western suburbs of Sydney, so my response was short, working-class and blokeish. 'Yep, it was fucked up.'

Rocket Rod eventually passed away in hospital.

That day in 1994 is a rupture, a tear in the fabric of my life. There is a before and after to the day of Dad's car crash, but there is no way through. You're probably familiar with a day like this from your own life.

My earliest memories of my dad are associated with cycling in Sydney. When I was young, my dad would wake my sister and me up early for Nepean District Amateur Cycling Club races at Shanes Park, a small suburb in the Blacktown area. In winter, Dad would stuff newspaper sheets up the front of our shirts in what always felt like a futile attempt to combat the icy winter wind hitting our chests as we freewheeled down the hills.

In 1960, the federal government purchased the eastern section of Shanes Park to build a small air navigation facility. Few people lived in the suburb and there was very little traffic, making it ideal for road cycling in the mid-1980s when I was racing out there. It's still a sleepy site today, with one of the largest intact remnant woodlands in the Cumberland Plain.

I had my first run-in with a dog on my bike on a lonely Shanes Park road. It was a big, heavy-set breed that was full of anger that morning. It knocked me clean off my bike. You never really forget your first skid across the surface of the road. Skin on blue metal held together with tar. The sting of a gravel graze in the shower at night.

I got my first taste of riding in the city in 1996. I finished an electrical apprenticeship in 1995, the year after my dad's accident. The happier days of road races at Shanes Park had all come to an end. So too had the desire to be a tradie. I didn't know what to do, so I got on my bike.

I'd moved out of home and was living with a bike courier. He got me a job

running parcels across Sydney on my old racing bike. My time as a bike courier was short-lived, but I did it long enough to fall in love with riding in the city and the buzz of urban cycling culture. At the unsanctioned alleycat races they organised around the city after work, the bike couriers called it 'vélo culture'.

Riding in the city felt dangerous in the mid-90s. Actually, it was dangerous in the days before dedicated bike lanes. People would occasionally ask me why I was still riding bikes after a bike accident had taken my dad from me. Shouldn't I stop? My bike mates never asked me this question. They already knew the answer: 'Bike riding didn't take my dad from me, a car did.' I've always felt closest to my dad when I'm on my bike. I'd never let a car take that away from me. And so, I rolled on.

One cold morning in 2019 I was riding to work when an oncoming car turned into my lane. I was freewheeling down a hill when the car collected me head on. I hit the windscreen, flew over the roof of the car, and landed on the road at the back of the car. It was a serious crash, and my bike was completely smashed. I was injured, and I should have been more injured, but I was alive. As I lay on the road I thought about my mum. My mum couldn't cope with losing someone else to a car, not like this.

The young man who hit me that cold morning in 2019, who turned out to be a P-plater on his way to school, could have seriously injured me that day. When the ambulance arrived at the scene they loaded me into the side of the van, but they also loaded this young man in the ambulance too; to treat him for shock. The young man was at fault, but I don't blame him for what happened to us that day. It's easy to blame a person or event for the structural problems with our cities and transport infrastructure, but it's not the way forward.

Twice a year City of Sydney researchers stand on street corners in Sydney with clipboards to count the number of cyclists at around 100 locations on a weekday. These data provide a picture of cycling trends across the Sydney local government area. They only have data for 11 years, but it shows a good uptake of cycling in our city where we are providing dedicated bike lanes. Data collected at the intersection of King and Kent streets, right in the middle of the CBD, show an average daily cycling increase from 654 bikes in 2010 to 2,000 in 2021. If we build cycling infrastructure people will ride on it and our cities will be cleaner and safer.

We know cycling is good for cities and the people who live in them. We know if you ride to work, drop the kids to school on a cargo bike, or get the groceries on your fixie you'll be fitter and healthier. But we need to provide dedicated cycling infrastructure in our cities to drive an increase in active commuting. There is good evidence that the provision of dedicated bike lanes is a solid public health and environmental investment for our cities.

I've never stopped riding, and I continue to ride to work every day on my cargo bike. Cycling is about more than active travel for me, it's the way I engage with the world. I've cycled around Japan with my 5-year-old daughter, I've travelled to Canada to go mountain biking, and I've taken side-trips from academic conferences to cycle across Germany. Gosh, I even rode a fixie from Canberra to Sydney in a couple of days when I was younger and fitter.

When I was a cycle courier in Sydney back in the 90s the roads were dangerous, there were few dedicated bike lanes and cars were an ever-present danger. I love riding through the city today on the dedicated cycling infrastructure, and other people do too. Let's build more of it!

■ An edited extract courtesy of Sydney Review of Books

THE AEROSO ACTIVIST

While you may not recognise the name, you will no doubt be familiar with Scott Marsh's controversial street art. **Christopher Kelly** reports.

You have to be quick to view Scott Marsh's murals in the flesh as the guerrilla graffitist is arguably one of the most censored street artists in Australia.

All too often, not long after the paint has dried, Marsh's politically-charged inner-Sydney artworks are removed by local authorities or defaced by testy residents. "When you're working in a public space that's what tends to happen, especially when you're doing stuff that dances on that line of politically correct stuff or that could be deemed offensive by some people," Marsh said.

Marsh's 2019 Chippendale mural of Scott Morrison is a case in point. Standing before a wall of flames, wearing a Santa hat and Hawaiian shirt, the PM was pictured saying "Merry Crisis". The mural was a reference to Morrison's supposed indifference to the raging bushfires. A couple of days after it had been completed, the mural was painted over. "It's a shame they did that because I think a lot of people were enjoying it," said Marsh at the time.

Another of Marsh's murals suffered a similar fate. *Saint George* appeared on the side of a house in Erskineville in 2017. Depicting George Michael in a priest's vestment and rainbow stole with a joint in hand, the 20-foot artwork was soon vandalised by evangelical Christians who seemingly objected to the gay icon's beatification.

"You can't get too bummed out about it and I think if you did, you'd kind of be losing the battle," Marsh said. "The only thing that I get upset about is the guys who lived there got so much grief from assholes attacking their house." Besides, added Marsh, painting over murals is counterproductive."Every time someone does it, it just fucking blows up, becomes a shitstorm, and just amplifies what I'm painting about. Whatever the message is just gets amplified by a fucking tonne."

Meanwhile, a Black Lives Matter mural created last June in Redfern — showing a police car on fire with the name TJ Hickey written on the side — was removed within a day after requests from NSW Police to the City of Sydney. Questioning whether legal artworks created on private property can be destroyed, Marsh said: "If the police had left the mural alone, it would not have received national attention back then and we wouldn't be speaking about it now."

One of Marsh's most contentious murals, however, has somehow managed to escape defacement. Also situated in Redfern, *Tony on Tony* depicts Tony Abbott marrying a wedding-gowned Tony Abbott. Inspired by the marriage equality debate, Marsh decided to install the mural following a statement from the former PM urging Australians to "protect the family".

"I was hoping to find a wall in Manly to do [the mural] in his electorate. But unfortunately that was a lot harder to find," said Marsh. Instead, Marsh ended up painting the mural on the wall of a Redfern Street cafe — "I was just listening to people laugh and screech all day". And for Marsh, rather than the actual act of painting, that's the most satisfying part of street art: "seeing people's reaction, reading people's commentary, getting people to think about something".

■ Follow Scott Marsh on Instagram @scottie.marsh


#VOTEYES


MERRY CRISIS!!

THE GHOSTS OF

The heritage-listed foreshore site once housed a noto

Like any good haunting, chances are you'll hear the legend of Callan Park before you go there. The former site of an insane asylum, more than 1,000 corpses of ex-inmates are buried in an unmarked lot on the grounds. Not only that, the asylum was supposedly built on top of 100 anonymous graves. No wonder then, that Callan Park is regarded as one of the most supernatural sites in Sydney.

What astounds most when walking through the grounds of Callan Park is some of its buildings unabashed dilapidation. The beauty of Callan Park's degradation hints at its haunting past.

Much of the mythos permeating its grounds is due to its history as the site of a psychiatric hospital. Consisting of a cluster of sandstone buildings known as the Kirkbride complex, it was initially labelled Callan Park Hospital for the Insane. Although today, the use of the term 'insane' is no longer considered apt, in the late 1800s this was the more politically correct term.

Callan Park was originally built to alleviate overcrowding from the nearby Gladesville Hospital for the Insane — a name the medical superintendent Dr Frederic Norton Manning bestowed on it to help eliminate public prejudice and indifference towards the patients. Its previous moniker was Tarban Creek Lunatic Asylum.

Manning's resuscitation of these institutions was not just limited to changing their name. Part of the reason he was lured to Sydney for his role as superintendent was his proposal to tour England, France, Germany and the USA so he could study a range of international techniques in treating patients and the construction of the establishments that housed them.

Facilitating what he learned in Europe in Sydney, Manning transformed Gladesville and Callan Park into places where patients could come to receive treatment rather than merely being held captive in "a cemetery of diseased intellects".

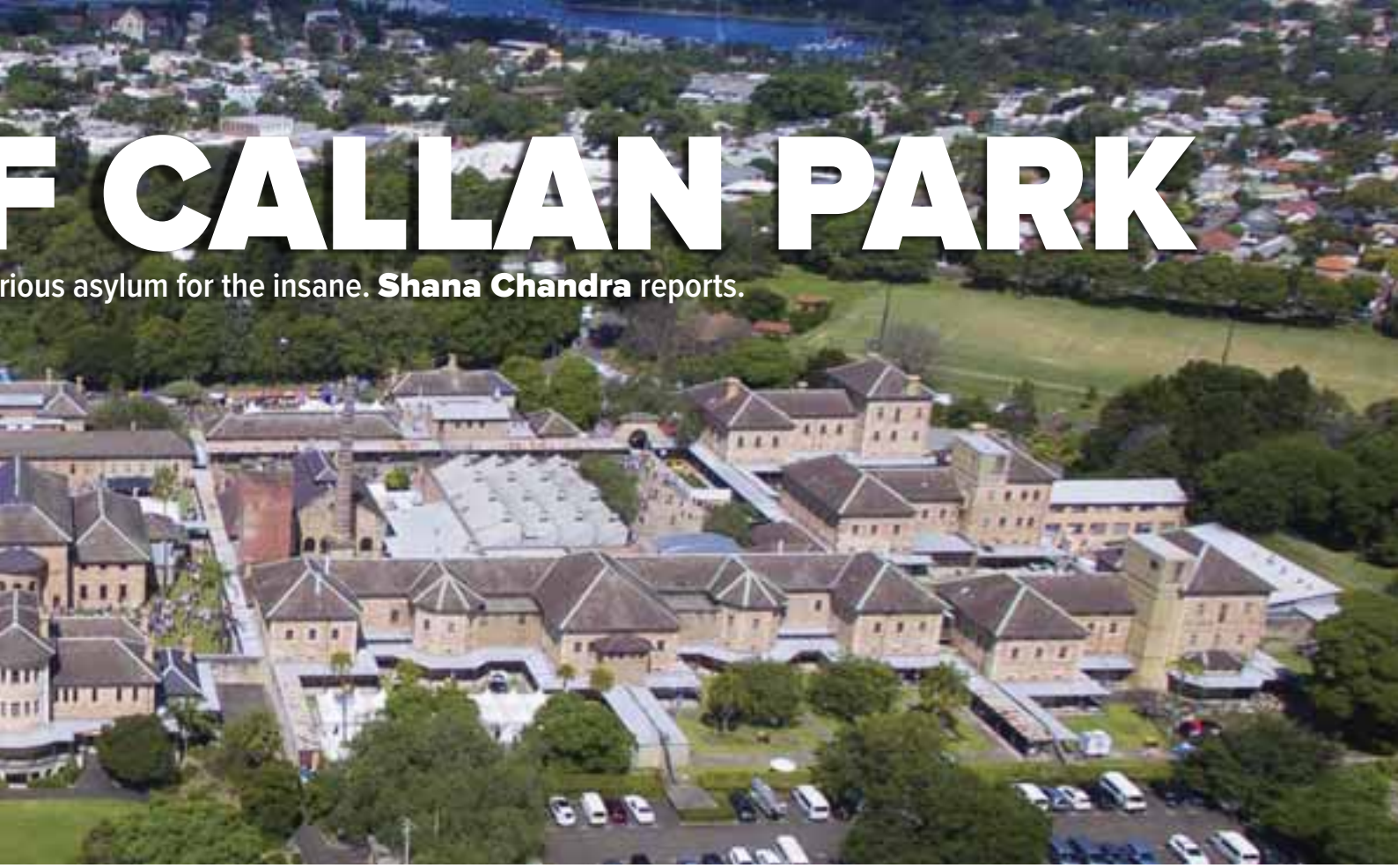
Manning's revolutionary treatment was based on moral therapy, which saw 'insanity' as a disease of the mind, rather than of the body. Key to patient care was the layout of the building the patients resided in, and together with the architect James Barnet, the two created wards symmetrically arranged along the main cross axis of the official buildings. Each spacious ward had courtyards overlooking the grounds of Callan Park — the greenery and fresh air seen as a suitable tonic to aid patients in their rehabilitation.

After Manning's establishment of Callan Park, the facility continued to be a forerunner in mental healthcare. Along with Gladesville, it was the first in New South Wales to allow admission without committal, and the first hospital to have a laboratory, where studying pathology of mental diseases in NSW began.

Despite the hospital's initial success, overcrowding would soon become a problem, one that occurred as early as 1923, and became exacerbated by the influx of patients during (and in the aftermath of) the Depression and World War II. It was a problem that further

F CALLAN PARK

rious asylum for the insane. **Shana Chandra** reports.



construction to the site could not compete with, and would eventually contribute to the stories of trauma that would escape from its halls.

Over this period, hasty additions of basic facilities to Manning and Barnet's wards not only obscured the original elegance of them, it encroached on patients' space, and was the exact antithesis of Manning's moral therapy.

The surrounding lawns of the park, however, were still places patients could go to coalesce through gardening, as it was thought the patients' ills could be cured by an "improved environment" and "good honest work". And so many of the park's gardens were kept and cultivated by the patients of the Kirkbride complex — from the planting of trees to the laying of its uneven cobblestones.

The grounds also house a couple of war memorials. One — with rough white walls, terracotta roofs and turquoise arches — is reminiscent of a Mediterranean abode and contributes to the park's hotchpotch charm. The two plaques that sit above the once functioning water fountain have a more Australian feel — concrete wreaths of Australian gumnuts, leaves and flowers pay homage to WWI veterans.

The other monument commemorating WWI — a replica of the Sydney Harbour Bridge straddling a circular wishing well — was erected by patients of Callan Park's B ward and designed by a WWI veteran himself. Douglas Grant, an Indigenous draughtsman and soldier, was captured at the first battle of Bullecourt and became a German prisoner of war for two years. His ethnicity made him of interest to German anthropologists, and yet he survived the trauma to come back to Sydney and pay homage to his fellow countrymen who had died serving.

Despite this, there are no monuments that commemorate the original inhabitants of Callan Park — the Wangal who were part of the Eora or Dharug tribes. They lived on the site now known as Callan Point, a site which extends along the Parramatta River to Petersham. They, too, experienced mass trauma: during a period of one year, between 1789 to 1790, a small pox epidemic wiped the majority of their population out. As did subsequent European land development, which meant that by 1900 there were only 50 people from Dharug families still living.

After decades of overcrowding, of stench, straightjackets and investigations resulting in little-to-no improvement, in 1976, Callan Park eventually closed its doors and amalgamated with the Broughton Hall Psychiatric Clinic to become Rozelle Hospital.

But, after a renovation in 1996, the Kirkbride complex sandstone structure transmuted into Sydney University's Sydney College of the Arts, providing budding artists a unique setting to capture their inner muse. But now the art students have vanished too — relocated last year to a smaller space at the Old Teachers' College in Camperdown.

Today, although some of the buildings at Callan Park are still in use, most remain abandoned and continue to degrade — fertile grounds for ghosts to wander.

People would be shocked to hear me quoting Menzies but in his time as [Liberal] prime minister he took home ownership from 25 percent for people over 20 to 75 percent when he retired as PM — and he did that all through social housing.

A MAN OF THE STREET

Social activist Lanz Priestley — who died in November — was a passionate crusader for Sydney's homeless.

A ROUGH SLEEPER HIMSELF, PRIESTLEY HELD SOME UNIQUE INSIGHTS INTO HOMELESSNESS.

Advocate for the homeless, Lanz Priestley — aka the Mayor of Martin Place — died last month of a brain bleed.

His death was announced on Facebook on 2 November by his family who remembered him as a "selfless being". "His work has helped, inspired, and united so many people throughout the world," the statement read.

Priestley was the leader of the homeless occupation of Martin Place in Sydney's CBD in 2017. The eight-month standoff — and the Tent City occupants' eventual eviction — forced a public dialogue about homelessness in Australia and elevated the issue to global headlines. As Priestley told the *New York Times*, the Martin Place site was carefully chosen for the protest. "The decision makers who cause all forms of marginalisation and exploitation, Australia-wide, make those decisions here."

"In eight months we had over 800 people through Tent City. There was food, shelter, somewhere they could leave their things in safety. They had all those things in one place, which frees them up to go and get themselves out of the shit. The reality is without Tent City, or a replacement, people simply don't have anywhere to get these resources and help themselves.

With homelessness, I've looked aghast for the last couple of decades and said, well, for as long as they deal with homelessness after people become homeless, they will never solve homelessness. What we're doing is dealing with [homelessness] after the fact. In order to stop it, we actually have to reach behind and turn off the tap. I could show you entire streets of empty houses that are owned by the state government. There's all this social housing and no explanation as to why we can't use it.

I want to know what's working from the point of view of the guys on the streets — because they've had absolutely no say in the programs that are run to help them. The programs run today by NGOs and the government are very much about maintaining self-interest. The organisations involved are too endemically attached to the problem. Their vested interest is to grow their businesses.

We need to hit the existing methodologies on the head. We need to say:

> **'If the problem's getting bigger, if we're not looking for a zero problem solution, then your solutions aren't working'.**

If we want to fix the things that society finds problematic then we need to do it as a community. We need to get over the idea that getting government to do anything will ever work."

A BATTLER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Hall Greenland pays tribute to an old comrade.

Jack Carnegie, who died in September, will be forever immortalised as the leader of the campaign that led to Green Bans Park in Erskineville. His role in that battle is recognised with a plaque at the entrance to the park (at right).

Another successful battle was the preservation of the public housing in Erskineville when it was threatened with a private/public makeover. Of course, he wasn't always successful — the Erskineville Post Office was sold, for instance, despite local opposition in which Jack played a key role.

But, whatever the outcome, you could always depend on Jack Carnegie whenever it was an issue of social justice or protecting the environment.

Jack was born and raised in Rozelle — his father worked as a wharfie, his mother as cleaner. After the death of his mother when he was 15 he ran away to sea. His spell in the navy came to a relatively quick end when he was de-rated for bringing alcohol on to the base in Western Australia.

After a series of odd jobs in Sydney Jack travelled to London in 1973. He returned to Sydney in the fateful November of 1975 determined to live a radical life. He gravitated to Annandale, living in shared or 'communal' houses as they were called then, and joined the Annandale branch of the Labor party — then arguably the most left-wing and activist branch in Australia.

He met me, Margaret Eliot and Tony Harris who introduced him to the legendary Balmain councillors Nick Origlass and Issy Wyner. He was inspired by their ideas of participatory democracy and quickly became a practitioner of their style of community and direct-action campaigning.

Expelled from the Labor party in 1984 for his support of Origlass and Wyner and opposition to uranium mining, Jack was part of the trio who organised the public meeting in Glebe Town Hall in August 1984 that launched the Greens in Australia as a registered political party.

Jack's great gift was that he always managed to combine his critical support for the Greens with an ability to work with people from across the centre-left spectrum in community and industrial campaigns. Some of those people were notoriously difficult to work with, but Jack's un-sectarian charm and democratic instincts worked a treat.

Almost all his jobs were with community organisations — including a comms and organiser job with his union, the Australian Services Union.

"Jack Carnegie is a legend of the ASU and much-loved part of our ASU family," Natalie Lang, the current NSW secretary, said on learning of his death. "Jack's commitment to fighting for justice was unwavering, as a member, as a staff member, as a life member — and as a troublemaker."

Jack's politics may have been based in the inner city but his concerns were global. He was a strong supporter of the rights of Palestinians and democratic insurgencies wherever they arose — Hong Kong, Bangkok, Minneapolis, Chile, Kashmir or Kurdistan.

As a founder of the Greens he was naturally a climate justice activist. He often went to Newcastle to participate in the coal blockades and help the Bulga community in the Hunter resist the extension of the open-cut coal mine that threatens their valley. Despite a certain pessimism about whether humanity can rise to the challenge of curbing climate change, Jack drew much hope from Greta Thunberg and the school student climate strikes of the past two years.

In his last months, suffering from an advanced case of cancer, it was typical of Jack that he proposed travelling to Glasgow to join the protests around the COP26 climate change conference in November. Right to the end, his life was a political one, in the best sense of the word, in the service of fellow human beings and the planet.

The Goward's punch

In an article for the *AFR*, Pru Goward discussed her "lifelong fascination with the underclass". Oh, do tell, Pru, writes **Joel Jenkins**.

After decades of dismantling the job security of Australians in John Howard's retinue, Pru Goward pens an article blaming the people that deliver packages to her door, who brush cut her irrigated lawns, those who feign interest in all the unreasonable demands of her and the class she represents.

There is no dignity afforded to the casualised chattel packing the trucks that fill the shelves at Bunnings and Coles, that shunt around packages from far away distribution centres, the people that make the cheese, slice the eye fillets and pack the asparagus that supplies the caloric intake and subsequent energy of slack-minded elites like Pru Goward.

Then, somewhere between *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Soylent Green*, she observes the incredible strain these people place on her society. Pru says the underclasses are viewed by government agencies "as huge cost centres" that are "over-represented in their use of government crisis services". She sums up the people that prop up her tuffet as citizens who "are always the last to give up smoking, get their shots and eat two servings of vegetables a day". Horrible and despicable people.

After talking about social workers, the tired and overworked, the underpaid and understaffed — all factors to blame on the proles, of course — she starts cosying up to hardcore eugenics.

Pru speaks from the heart: "Oh yes, and they don't vote often." The proles don't really like contributing to democracy, she begins the sub-human observation. "Despite the billions of dollars governments invest in changing the lives of proles, their number increases." (Proles again?) As the first of my spinning eyeballs gained focus,

What Pru Goward has written represents the beating heart of an agenda — a fortuitously conceived idea that is arbitrated by the aristocratic heart of this incestuous backwater.

slap, ". . . birth rates far outstrip those of professional couples". Then she tells us how badly we treat our children.

Goward has let us in on something she probably shouldn't as she reveals a glinting treasure dropped from the firmament that sits above the crucible of power in this country — she tells us how they really feel about us. She repeats a message that is usually muttered in the safety of cucumber sandwiches and lunchtime gin, sending it out to her golf buddies that read the *AFR*.

I wouldn't normally dare cast sweeping aspersions on the machinations of the rich and delirious but feel compelled to aim one at Pru Goward and the *Financial Review*. What she has written represents the beating heart of an agenda — a fortuitously conceived idea that is arbitrated by the aristocratic heart of this incestuous backwater.

Goward's article is a disgraceful insight into the heartless nature of the elite in this country, with all their levers of power, and made all the more insulting given it comes from a former equal opportunities commissioner. Unfortunately for Pru, for better or worse, the future of this country will be determined by the underclass and however those like Pru wish to treat it, it's the underclass that will choose how we proceed.

There are Pru Gowards in every safe seat in this country, in our public institutions and academia — their cloistered minds write our articles and their think tanks shape our military and strategic future. Pru's people lobby against the public interest and hoard wealth off the backs of the very people she has just king hit. In lieu of the major parties, meaningful support from educated liberal elites and non-partisan analysis in the press, it's time the proles started owning the discussion on class in Australia.

■ This is an edited extract. You can read the full version as well as other articles from Joel on Bogan Intelligentsia and follow him on Twitter @boganintel

The pronoun lowdown

By respecting someone's pronouns, writes transgender rights activist **Nevo Zisin**, you're validating their gender identity.

My pronouns are not the result of a deep connection with the words they/them, but rather an absence of (or less) discomfort than other pronouns I've had. Sometimes that's how it feels to be trans — you don't always know what you want, but usually you know what you really don't want.

People who are indifferent to their own pronouns often don't understand why it matters so much. Especially when speaking in English, which, structurally, isn't a heavily gendered language. It's easy enough to maintain conversation without gendering someone you're chatting to. It's only when someone else comes along, and you start speaking in the third person, that pronouns enter the equation.

Having your pronouns in email signatures and on nametags is becoming a common practice. As a non-binary person this is a great thing to see, as I experience dysphoria from being seen or read as cisgender. But, if you don't follow through and use someone's correct pronouns, or at least try, then what's the point? If I had a dollar for every time I've heard: "Oh, he uses they/them pronouns," or "She's a they/them," I'd still be pissed off — but at least I'd be rich.

When you start respecting someone's pronouns, you're also expanding the way you view that person. The more you validate their gender identity in your mind — thinking of them as they are — the more naturally their pronouns will come to you in conversation. I had family who still referred to me using she/her pronouns years after my transition. As in, after I'd grown a beard. I truly believe that's because they never actually did any work to change the way they saw me inside their own minds.

Whether it's intentional or not, misgendering happens when someone sees another person as different from their actual gender. Mistakes happen, of course, no matter how hard you're trying or how good your intentions are. But — even if you mean incredibly well — the impact of your actions can still create harm.

Oh, and FYI: the term "preferred pronouns" is outdated now. These pronouns aren't our preferred ones. They just are our pronouns. So just ask for someone's pronouns, not for their preference. I have made a practice now of introducing myself with my pronouns. *(Clears throat.)* "Hi, I'm Nevo. I use they/ them pronouns. What about you?" Yes, I mostly do this with cisgender people. But that's because they may have never had that kind of interaction before.

I want to normalise this, and have cis folk be just as explicit about their own pronouns. It sure would make things a lot easier for trans and gender-diverse people if this salutation became a standard. Whether it's intentional or not, misgendering happens when someone sees another person as different from their actual gender. Mistakes happen, of course, no matter how hard you're trying or how good your intentions are. But — even if you mean incredibly well — the impact of your actions can still create harm.

Being misgendered can feel like a death by a thousand papercuts. The first cut is annoying and stings a little, but it's manageable. But it happens again and again. Perhaps you've misgendered someone and they've seemingly flown off the handle. Their rage isn't really directed at you. It was just their 1,001st papercut. So, if someone gets angry with you, just be empathetic. Understand how this may be something they deal with constantly. Try your best to be a plaster for the wound, rather than just another paper cut.

■ An extract from *The Pronoun Lowdown* by Nevo Zisin, out now from Smith Street Books, RRP$19.99

A still from 'Holding The Man' (2015), based on the lives of two gay men living through the early days of HIV/AIDS in Australia

IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

2022 marks the 40th anniversary of the first Australian AIDS diagnosis. A new book explores the crucial role volunteers played at a time of disaster.

David recalls the uncertainty in his circle of gay friends when "AIDS hit Sydney" and how the individual responses to this uncertainty differed "before we actually knew that it was the HIV virus and the discussion and negotiation around what constitutes safe sex". As he looks back on those early, uncertain days of the epidemic, David suspects that "there was probably a lot of fear".

Gay men had good reason to be scared. Don Baxter — a leading political figure in Sydney gay life — recently recalled the fear and anxiety of those days: "There was the prospect that the whole community would be decimated." To prepare for the worst, the Sydney-based NSW Gay Counselling Service established an AIDS Support Group in mid-1983 with a brief to provide emotional support for the ill.

In 1984, following discussions with the Gay Counselling Service and the Metropolitan Community Church, nurse Peter McCarthy set about establishing a network of volunteers to offer home care for those with AIDS. The group called itself the Community Support Network (CSN) and its first training course ran over ten weeks in late 1984.

Spruiking the network, McCarthy declared: "We need people who can be good listeners and non-judgemental, as well as face up to the reality of death and dying." As writer Nick Cook outlined in his history of NSW AIDS organisations — *Fighting for Our Lives* — the level of home care varied depending on need. It could range from "an occasional pop-in to cook dinner . . . through to 24-hour care for somebody who was bed-ridden and wanted to die at home".

David joined CSN after attending the community forum on AIDS and hearing the call for volunteers: "I was probably one of the early volunteers." Held in inner-city Sydney, the CSN course was an intense experience, both in the accelerated training and the emotions it evoked. "Obviously, you go through a whole pile of practical stuff on how to deal with people who are dying. You go through a lot of emotional stuff about doing it. But that sort of stuff happens on the job."

In many ways, volunteering for CSN did become a job for David. As Dennis Altman observed of individuals who became involved in the HIV/AIDS crisis during the 1980s, a short-term intensive commitment often became an ongoing one. Self-employed, David had flexible hours, his own transport and,

When asked about the main challenges he faced as a volunteer, David returns to the stresses of caring. "I guess, on reflection, maintaining some sort of emotional equilibrium, psychologically, was something you didn't really think about, but obviously it had an impact on you."

perhaps most importantly, a deep and steadfast commitment to caring for those who were dying of AIDS. "Once I started caring it pretty much became my life for a couple of years."

Free during much of the day, David remembers that in the early years of CSN, as the organisation struggled to manage the growing case load of sick gay men, he became "pretty much a full-time carer because I had the business at night and had a car. So I was useful. I could pick people up and take them to hospital and doctors' appointments, therapy and so forth." The word that recurs as David describes these hectic years of full-time caring is "confronting". He explains the detail:

"People who had HIV in those days, the time from infection to death was minuscule. When I first started caring, it was horrific. People's average life span was under 12 months. Kaposi's sarcoma was rampant. Going to the clinic at St Vincent's was just a horror story. They would have certain days where people with HIV would present and there would be 20 or 30 people there with various forms of Kaposi's sitting in wheelchairs. It was a very different disease in those days to what it became. It was very confronting.

Perhaps it is no surprise that David can easily recall the first man — or 'client' as they were described in CSN terminology — that he was assigned. "I can remember where he lived. I remember going there; it was a night shift. I actually walked past it the other day. He had an amazing apartment in Kings Cross. It was an olde art deco theatre. He was pretty sick. He didn't last much longer; he was in the final stages. There were quite a few like that."

David recalls of this client and others: "A surprising number of people chose to die at home. I think in those early days there was so much stigma. Even hospitals were not particularly welcoming places in those very early days. It took them a while to set up the AIDS wards and for the hospices to kick in and become a viable alternative. I think a lot of those early people died at home because that was the only safe place for them."

For the best part of ten years, David cared for dying men in Sydney. As the epidemic in Sydney worsened, David began caring for friends as well as clients allocated by CSN: "When my friends started getting sick, I was the person they turned to."

The blurring between formal and informal volunteering was not uncommon as more gay men became ill with AIDS. Men and women deeply embedded in Sydney gay life during the epidemic might move from caring for friends to formal volunteer groups and back again, or in David's case, concurrent forms of care.

David muses on the deaths he witnessed during the epidemic, he says flatly: "Clearly there are good deaths and there are bad deaths." From his experience during the AIDS crisis, what is a bad death? "It's such a messy business. People assume the pain can be managed. Often it can't. Often it can be extremely distressing and ugly."

David became accustomed to caring for the dying and providing unobtrusively for them as they failed. He has his own philosophy of what the dying need from those around them. "You need to know what the boundaries are and the fact that there is often nothing that you can do. You just have to accept the situation . . . You need somebody who is not going to talk all the time. You need somebody who can just be there with them in the moment. People expect that [the dying] are going to ask you profound questions about the meaning of life, but that doesn't come up when you're dying, very rarely. What you can be is practical — that is the core of caring. It is being that practical person who cleans up the shit and does the feeding and all that kind of stuff."

When I question David about the main challenges he faced as a volunteer, he returns to the stresses of caring. "I guess, on reflection, maintaining some sort of emotional equilibrium, psychologically, was something you didn't really think about, but obviously it had an impact on you."

However, there were, David maintains, rich and profound benefits to caring for the ill and dying. "It is the old cliche that you get far more out of it than what you can ever put in. That is absolutely true. It is such a privilege to be with people at that point in their lives and to be with their families. People open themselves up to you, put their trust in you; it is an extraordinary privilege. It is incredibly rewarding. I cannot think of a greater reward than being able to help somebody and be there for them."

■ An edited extract from *In the Eye of the Storm* by Robert Reynolds, Shirleene Robinson and Paul Sendziuk. Published by UNSW Press

‘THIS HUSH-HUSH ATMOSPHERE HAS TO END’

Here, advocates and policy experts speak out about illicit drug use.

Catharine Lumby

Like most of my cohort, I have occasionally used illicit recreational drugs. And like most of them, I have never developed an addiction to illicit drugs. Alcohol has caused many people I know far more trouble than cocaine or cannabis. Yet many of our politicians ignore the evidence on drug use and like to pretend it can be policed out of existence, even while drug markets continue to expand. At the moment, all we are doing is criminalising and harming already marginalised communities.

Obviously, some lives are damaged by drug use, whether the drugs are legal or illegal. Funding treatment services and compassionate, evidence-based care is critical. But let’s be honest about recreational drugs: lots of professional, educated and socially privileged people do them at some point.

Nat Gombos

I’m missing from the narrative. Like many who take recreational drugs, I have good experiences and lead a normal life. I’m hoping someone privileged and middle class like myself, with two degrees, will challenge the views of those with the ‘tough on drugs’ mentality. Those most affected by punitive drug laws are disadvantaged people.

This hush-hush atmosphere has to end. Then we can divert funding to rehab where needed, and redeploy police resources to other, more

desperate areas. But nothing happens without people agitating for change. By not speaking up, I contribute to the wall of silence harming people.

Ernie Hamilton

The negative media stereotype you see of drug users is almost the opposite of reality. Often they’re people performing high-level tasks, they’re very responsible and community minded.

At sports events, I’ve seen violent, alcohol-fuelled outbreaks and yet police are often cordial. Contrast that with dance festivals: police are standoffish and aggressive, yet I’ve never seen violence there.

Alex Wodak

If legalisation means ‘all drugs available in unlimited quantities to whoever wants them for a fee’, the community would never agree to this. Regulating as much of the market as possible is more achievable.

It’s now clear that the effect of less punitive drug policies on drug consumption is minimal while there is a clear benefit: harsh drug policies cause great damage to young people. Most people who know something about drug policy are well aware of this. We can’t just keep on kicking this can down the road.

Gino Vumbaca

Police can make enormous busts — data later shows there’s minimal impact. The current approach defies logic. The level of harm for criminalising small amounts of possession far outweighs any benefit to the community.

Daniel Raffell

The biggest harm we see at Smart Recovery Australia is alcohol, and that’s legal. So a case [for legalisation] can be argued both ways. But prohibition didn’t go so well. It isn’t the substance that’s the issue — it’s the brokenness: lack of connection, purpose or opportunity.

Chris Gough

People who use drugs . . . they punish themselves more than anything — we call it self-stigma. They’re socially isolated, they fall away from their family and their friends and all of this comes from that very simple point that drugs are illegal and that you’re doing something wrong that society punishes you for. We need to rethink that, we need to be supporting people, we need to think of it as a health problem.

Urban photographer, Tim Ritchie, takes to his bicycle every morning scouting out Sydney's hidden delights @timritchie

city glimpses

Rose Terrace is a little private road off South Dowling St. It is technically in Paddington, but the good folk of Darlo claim it is theirs. The cottages are heritage-listed and were built before 1875 by Edward French, a bookmaker turned speculative builder.

FROM THE VAULT SUMMER 2011

Fresh from COP26, Australia has been ranked last of 60 countries for its policy response to the climate crisis. Ten years ago — as **Alice McCredie-Dando** *reported — the Coalition was just as apathetic on climate.*

Since details of the government's new carbon tax were released in July this year, our political leaders have been barnstorming across the country, engaging in a level of campaigning usually reserved for election years.

While Julia Gillard doggedly puts forward her case for a tax that she ruled out in the lead-up to last year's election, opposition leader Tony Abbott continues to call out the prime minister's "lie" — tapping into a public unrest that the Coalition clearly hopes will lead to federal victory in 2013 (editor's note: it did).

The vehemence of this unrest in some quarters has threatened to dominate the tone of the debate (editor's note: it did). The revolutionary zeal in some quarters has served to focus debate over the tax almost exclusively on one concern: "How much is this going to cost me?"

The only alternative on offer is the opposition's direct-action policy, which essentially gambles on the non-existence of global warming. Under this scheme, business faces no restriction on emissions, with climate-change action instead subsidised by the taxpayer in the form of governmental direct action — such as the planting of additional trees in public areas.

The government's carbon tax, by contrast, starts in the right place: with the polluters. It may not go far enough, but it does begin to provide the incentives necessary to bring about the behavioural change that our climate requires.

INNER SYDNEY VOICE

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A Black Lives Matter mural created last June in Redfern — showing a police car on fire with the name TJ Hickey written on the side — was removed within a day after requests from NSW Police to the City of Sydney. Questioning whether legal artworks created on private property can be destroyed, street artist Scott Marsh said: "If the police had left the mural alone, it would not have received national attention back then and we wouldn't be speaking about it now."