



Nicholas Building celebrates its centenary

The heritage-listed Nicholas Building on the corner of Swanston St and Flinders Lane has a long and interesting history, which it recently celebrated at a big birthday party. City Precinct's Phillip Gao and Anna Prifti were among those who marked the occasion by dressing up in the 1920s theme. More on page 11. Photo: Hanna Komissarova.

ATET legal mess lays bare major questions for the City of Melbourne

“
The \$7 million Supreme Court fight over Docklands floating events space ATET has now reached the point where the City of Melbourne can no longer plausibly present it as just another difficult regulatory dispute.”

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



The council has admitted liability. Its barrister then returned to court two days later trying to narrow what that admission meant. The case is now delayed again, the trial has become part-heard, and ratepayers are left staring at what could be a very large compensation bill, plus years of legal costs, in a saga that should never have been allowed to spiral this far.

That is now the central fact around which all the other questions sit.

How did the council allow this to drag on for so long? Why, having now admitted liability in open court, did it not settle the matter? If the city knew throughout that the venue had been operating within the relevant noise framework, why did it push ahead with steps that have now resulted in an admission of unlawful termination?

And, most importantly for the public, who is accountable for creating a situation in which millions of dollars may now be paid out over the mishandling of one Docklands venue?

Those are not rhetorical questions anymore. They are the understandable questions that now flow from the council's own conduct in court.

The pivotal moment came on April 21, day six of the trial, when legal counsel for the City Jonathan Wilkinson told Justice Matthew Connock: "Council admits liability on the plaintiffs' pleaded claim." He added that further evidence on liability was no longer required and that the case would proceed on the question of quantum only.

That was a profound concession. It meant the City was no longer contesting the heart of the case. The judge immediately pressed for clarity, observing that an admission of liability on the pleaded claims appeared to carry with it the implied good faith allegations, breach and causation of loss, leaving damages as the remaining issue.

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St Augustine's: old church welcomes young crowd

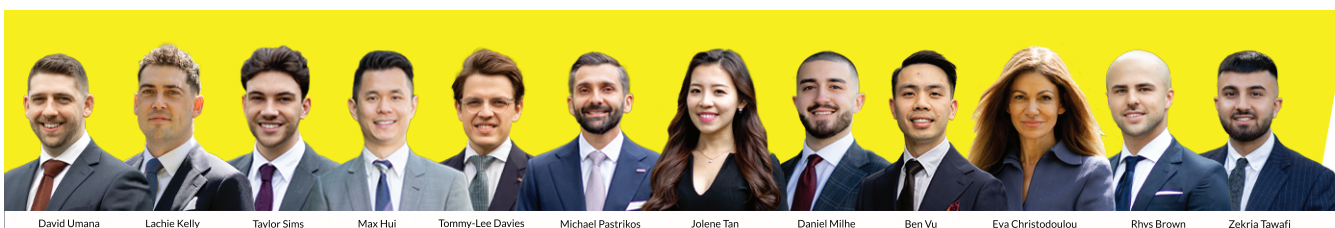
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Waitress to serve up Broadway charm



Market trader John Kikidis keeping it in the family

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CBD shop vacancies fall again as *Walk the CBD* points to stronger city recovery

Melbourne's CBD retail vacancy rate has fallen for a fourth consecutive year, with Fitzroys' latest *Walk the CBD* report showing the city's shopfront recovery continuing to gather pace.

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



The 2026 report found that overall CBD retail vacancies dropped from 6.1 per cent to 4.6 per cent over the past 12 months, the lowest level recorded in recent years and a sharp improvement from the lockdown era, when vacancies rose to above 30 per cent.

The figures suggest the central city's mix of retail, hospitality and entertainment is continuing to stabilise, helped by major project completions, new stores and hotels, and stronger visitor activity around key times of the week. Fitzroys said hospitality, food and beverage and entertainment operators were again the main drivers of demand, with that segment now making up 49.4 per cent of the CBD tenancy mix.

James Lockwood, Fitzroys division director, said the reshaping of the city had translated into long-term vacancy lows and a new sense of buzz in the CBD.

"The reshaping of Melbourne's CBD has translated into long-term lows in vacancies, a new retail landscape, and an unmistakable newfound buzz," he said.

Among the strongest performers was Swanston St, where vacancies tightened further from 2.6 per cent to just 1.9 per cent as retailers moved to be close to the new Town Hall and State Library Metro Tunnel stations. Little Bourke St was even tighter at 1.1 per cent, while La Trobe St between



Photo: Peter Bennetts.

Elizabeth and Russell streets recorded no vacancies at the time of reporting.

Chinatown also improved, with vacancies falling from 6.6 per cent to 3.5 per cent, reflecting strong weekend and evening trade and continued spillover into nearby streets and laneways. Bourke Street Mall held firm at four per cent, supported by major new drawcards including Mecca's flagship store, Melbourne Walk, JD Sports and the two IHG hotels.

Elsewhere, Elizabeth St continued its sharp recovery, improving from 8.1 per cent to 5.3 per cent, while Flinders Lane tightened from 4.2 per cent to 3.2 per cent and Russell St improved from 10.9 per cent to 7.6 per cent. Collins Street West also fell from 9.4 per cent to 7.0 per cent.

Only two of the 17 precincts surveyed recorded a rise in vacancies, with Collins St East increasing to six per cent and Exhibition St to 7.3 per cent.

The report argues that changing visitation

patterns are now shaping the city's retail mix more than the traditional office week. Successful traders, it says, have adapted to stronger midweek, Friday night and weekend visitation, with people increasingly coming into the city for a broader experience combining shopping, dining, culture and events. The City of Melbourne reported a record \$1.2 billion in spending in December 2025, which was cited as further evidence of that shift.

Hotel growth is also playing a role. Fitzroys said Melbourne had added 5000 hotel rooms across 22 buildings since January 2019, with a further 2100 rooms under construction or opening across 2025 and 2026, helping support the city's retail and hospitality recovery.

While the city's office market still faces headwinds, the latest *Walk the CBD* figures suggest that for shopfronts at least, Melbourne's CBD is continuing to move in the right direction. ●

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Melbourne Writers Festival marks 40 years with *Visions & Revisions*

Running from Thursday, May 7 to Monday, May 10, this year's Melbourne Writers Festival (MWF) features a lineup of more than 150 artists from across Australia and around the world brought together under the theme *Visions & Revisions*.

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



Celebrating its 40th anniversary this year MWF 2026 promises events ranging from "intimate conversations in cosy bar corners to blockbuster events at Melbourne Town Hall".

Among the latter, at 8.30pm on May 7, is the conversation between former New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Virginia Trioli about global leadership in times of crisis.

The opening night event at the Athenaeum will feature original readings and performances responding to the festival theme by writers Omar Musa and Don Watson, American poet Ariana Reines and composer Sophia Brous along with the announcement of The Age Book of the Year Awards.

Big-name international guests include Canadian Booker prize-winning Life of Pi author Yann Martel, British 2025 Booker Prize winner David Szalay, feminist Irish-Indian poet Nikita Gill and best-selling North American speculative fiction novelist R. F. Kuang.

Kuang, who has sold out two events, will appear in an extra session on May 10 at the Athenaeum.

Other writers flying in are Ukrainian-Canadian Maria Reva, Scotsman Michael Pedersen, American Susan Choi, Japanese Genki Kawamura and E Mieko Kawakami, Palestinian Tareq Baconi and the UK's Nikita Gill.

Among the many Australians appearing are Anita Heiss, Daniel James and Evelyn Araluen – who are First Nations curators of the festival – Andy Jackson, Maxine Beneba Clarke, Toni Jordan, Alice Pung, Romy Ash, Sam Elkin, Lally Katz and First Dog on the Moon.

Novel or standout events, some of them now sold out, include an assessment of the political moment hosted by former Insiders host Barrie Cassidy; esteemed cook Stephanie Alexander's release of her updated kitchen bible.

Environmentalist Bob Brown, musician Robert Forster and humourist Sean Micallef will be among those sharing their views in various events.

A closing night address will be delivered by activist, historian and author Tony Birch on the ethics of reading and writing, and the responsibility that comes with creative freedom.

For more information: mwf.com.au ●

Immigration Museum begins imagining its next chapter after strong community turnout

The Immigration Museum has taken an early step towards reimagining its future, with more than 650 people attending a recent community open day as Museums Victoria begins work on a new long-term vision for the Flinders St institution.



The free event, held on April 18 under the banner IImagine, invited the public to help shape what the museum could become in the years ahead. Cultural performances, story-sharing stations and creative activities were used to draw people into the conversation, with visitors encouraged to contribute ideas about the museum's next chapter.

According to Museums Victoria, the turnout exceeded expectations and reflected the depth of affection many Melburnians still hold for the museum nearly three decades after it opened.

Tracey Taylor from Museums Victoria said the organisation was still in the early planning stages of the process, but that community involvement needed to start from the beginning.

"It's very early, and that's the reason why we did the open day when we did," she told *CBD News*. "That kind of engagement and welcoming the public to come in and tell us, for us that's really crucial to have that really early on."

Ms Taylor said Museums Victoria was working towards a new strategy and, ultimately, likely a new master plan for the site, but that the current phase was about visioning rather than fixed plans.

"We're just in that early visioning stage of, what do we imagine it might be in the future and how the community imagine that with us," she said.

The process comes as the Immigration Museum approaches a milestone. Opened in 1998, the museum is now nearing its 30th anniversary and, according to Ms Taylor, has reached a natural point for renewal.

"It's just at the point now where it's needing to be reimagined for the next couple of decades," she said.

While no detailed design or operational changes have yet been flagged, Museums Victoria says the early response from the open day points strongly towards a people-focused future for the museum.

Ms Taylor said one of the clearest messages emerging so far was that people wanted the Immigration Museum to remain a place where stories could be shared and communities could see themselves reflected.

That diversity, she said, spoke directly to the museum's continuing relevance in contemporary Melbourne.

Located in the historic Old Customs House on Flinders St, the museum occupies a distinctive but somewhat tucked-away position in the city, close to the market precinct and the Yarra. Ms Taylor said it remained deeply tied to Melbourne's civic fabric and to the lived experiences of migrant communities. ●

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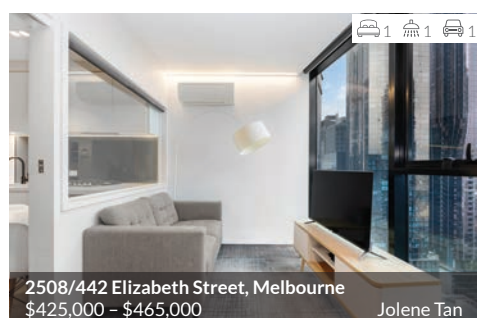


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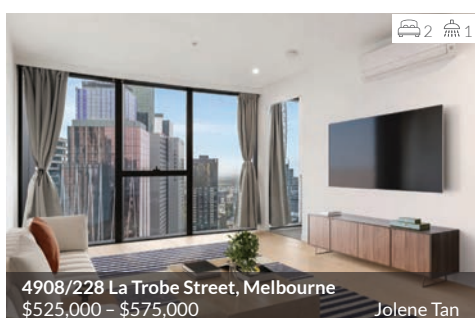
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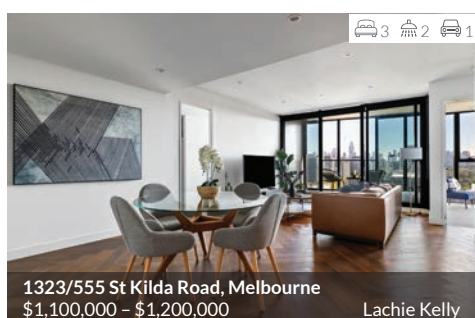
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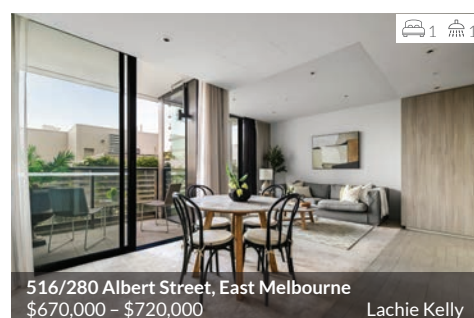
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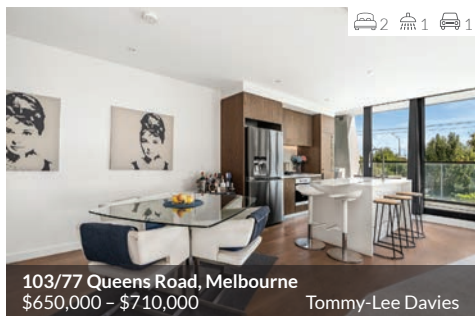
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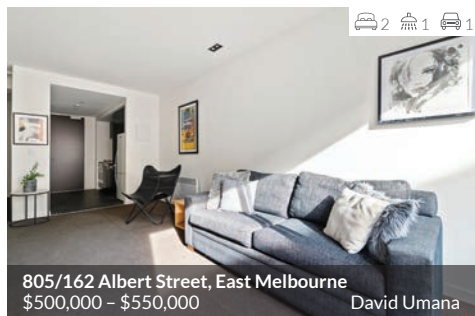
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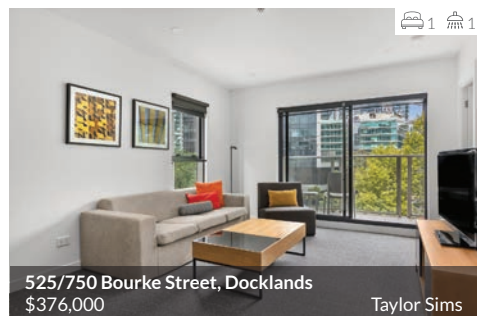
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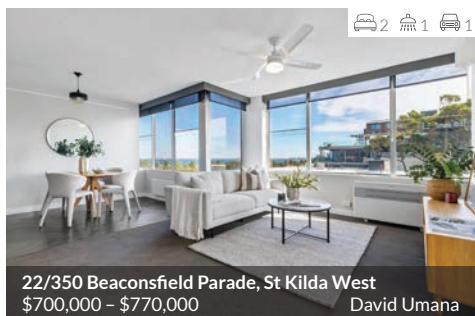
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Walk for Truth sets off from Spring St



Former Yoorrook Justice Commissioner Travis Lovett took the first steps of a 500km *Walk for Truth* from the political heart of Melbourne on April 19. His 39-day journey is aimed at kickstarting a national version of the Yoorrook Commission.



WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



At 9am on a Sunday morning Travis Lovett stood barefoot before a crowd of a thousand people on the steps of the Victorian parliament.

The drone of a didge rang out against the surrounding stone and a few sulphur-crested cockatoos glittered in the sun as they wheeled overhead, getting a good look at what was going on.

"We gather on Kulin lands," he said, "a place of ceremony, of law, of kinship of governance, older than any building standing behind me, a place that has witnessed everything – the first songs, the first disruptions, the first reckonings, a place that remembers what this nation has tried to forget."

A Gunditjmara man from western Victoria

who played a pivotal role in Victoria's Indigenous-led truth-telling process, Travis led a walk from Portland to Melbourne in the leadup to the tabling of the key findings of the the Yoorrook Commission last year.

That walk was an attempt to bring the Victorian public along with him on the unearthing of history and its continuing resonance.

Now, Travis says, he is walking to Canberra "on the back of our mob's long advocacy" to appeal for a national version of that process.

Success, he says, will be realised by bringing people together on the issue.

He wants to "invite everyday Australians on a path of healing," the inclusive leader says.

Also giving a speech, Wurundjeri Elder Uncle Bill Nicholson noted that the parliament had been the destination of more

than a dozen protest walks by his ancestor William Barak, whose journeyings from Corranderrk Mission at Healesville to Melbourne to protest the racist policies of the Aboriginal Protectors Board helped spark a royal commission in the late 1880s.

"The truth we're talking about is not just history; it's the perspectives of Aboriginal people through that history and where that leaves us today," Uncle Bill told the crowd.

"Many of our Elders past ... have fought and fought and fought, and it's really just about equality and self-determination and futures for our community."

That message was echoed by Wurundjeri woman Kathleen Terrick.

"All we really care about is our family," the mother-of-six told the assembled supporters.

"So, when we get up and speak truth, we're doing it for our people, for our family,

because we don't want our children and great grandchildren and the future generations to have to endure the heartache and the pain that's been passed down to us."

After putting on a pair of shoes and stopping to waft cleansing eucalyptus smoke on himself, Travis set off, with the crowd following behind.

Cutting through East Melbourne, Fitzroy and Collingwood to the Yarra – also now known as the Birrarung – the large group followed the river north to Dights Falls on the first leg of the long journey.

Travis, bearing ceremonial message stick and kangaroo skin cloak, is expected to reach Canberra on May 27, the start of National Reconciliation Week, with various people joining him along the way.

He has invited Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to meet him on the road before he reaches the federal parliament. ●

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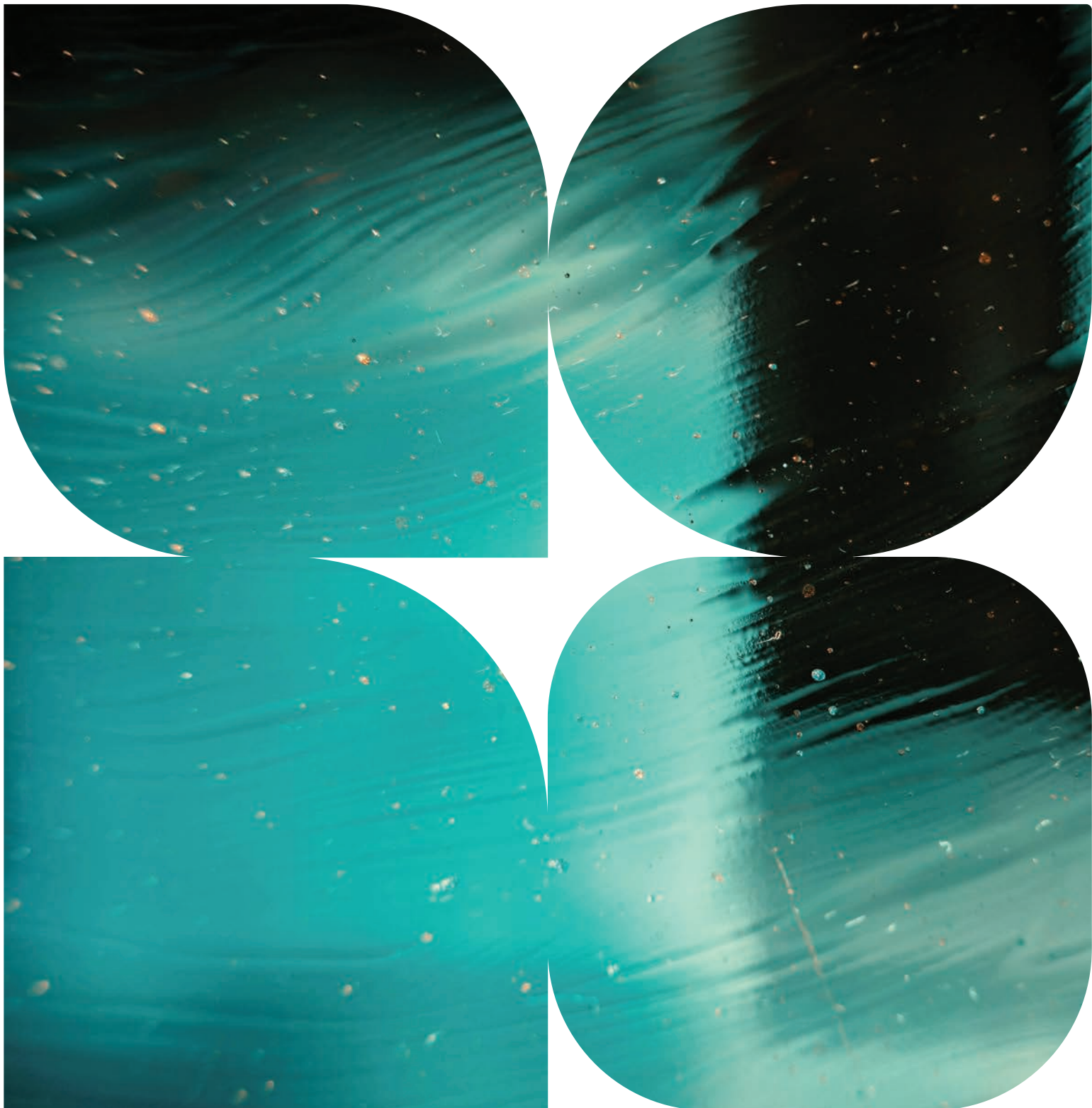
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CITY OF MELBOURNE

ATET legal mess lays bare major questions for the City of Melbourne

Continued from page 1.

In ordinary circumstances, that should have brought the matter to a relatively clear next stage. Instead, it opened a fresh round of uncertainty.

Later that day, the council told *CBD News*: "The City of Melbourne has admitted liability to Floating Spaces due to a procedural issue." It added that, because the matter remained before the court, it would be inappropriate to comment further.

That procedural issue is understood to relate to a revised EPA report that, while not altering the finding of maximum exceedances, should, as a matter of fairness, have been provided to ATET owner Jake Hughes.

When the case resumed on April 23 after a judicial mediation, the parties told the court they had made progress but could not settle. Then a new problem emerged. The City was no longer speaking with the clarity it had shown two days earlier. Its barrister began explaining that while the council maintained admissions in relation to the implied terms of good faith, breach of clause 4.1 (termination) and the background music demands, there remained "some things that we have always denied, and continue to deny".

That set off a visibly uncomfortable and awkward exchange.

An at-times incensed Justice Connock had to walk Mr Wilkinson through the pleadings and point out that the relocation representations the council was now trying to distance itself from formed part of the pleaded breach of good faith case. "Council's position, as stated in open court, was that it admitted liability in respect of the pleaded claims," he said, before asking directly whether the council was now seeking to withdraw some aspect of that admission. The City's answer was telling: it admitted "the termination, the unlawfulness of the termination" but said it did not admit the relocation representations.

In plain English, the City had admitted the main thing, then returned trying to narrow the road into damages.

That may have been a forensic attempt to save money. But in practical terms it looked like a council struggling to hold a coherent position after making a major concession. The judge described the resulting situation as "unsatisfactory" and accepted that council CEO Alison Leighton would now likely need to be cross-examined before expert evidence could proceed. He also directed the parties to clarify admissions and denials in writing and to amend the pleadings again.

That matters enormously because Ms



Leighton appears to sit at the centre of the whole affair.

She was acting CEO from October 22, 2022, until July 1, 2023, the critical period in which ATET opened, complaints escalated, the council issued its default notice, and the venue was ultimately shut down. She then became permanent CEO following the resignation of former chief executive Justin Hanney.

Reading the sequence in court, it is difficult to ignore the possibility that the admission of liability on day six had another strategic purpose: to avoid Ms Leighton having to be cross-examined on liability issues. Earlier that same morning, the judge had already said he expected to address the structure of the remaining evidence "at the end of the evidence today with Ms Leighton, in the event that the matter is proceeding." Then, after the admission, no more liability evidence was said to be needed.

When queried about the day six events,

Mr Hughes told *CBD News*, "they couldn't let her take the stand, because then the truth would have been exposed."

But once the City tried to wind back the breadth of that admission on day seven, the plaintiffs immediately said Ms Leighton would be required to give evidence on the live issues that remained. The council accepted that was "the appropriate course". The case is now due for another directions hearing with the major question as to whether Ms Leighton will be required to take the stand still lingering.

That is a remarkable turn of events. It suggests a council that wanted the benefit of conceding enough to stop the liability fight, while still preserving room to cut down the damages case later. Instead, it ended up reopening the very evidentiary problem it appeared to be trying to avoid.

The broader evidence in the case has only sharpened those questions.

Former Invest Melbourne chief executive

Peter Armstrong, whose agency had helped facilitate the ATET project, told the court that when it was put to him that Ms Leighton would say she encouraged multiple parties to deal directly with Mr Hughes, his response was: "that's a blatant lie." In re-examination he went further, saying: "because they tried to choke it down. We were excluded." He also gave evidence that discussion led by Ms Leighton at one meeting was "around the steps to work towards a breach notice being issued to ATET."

Those are serious claims. They do not, on their own, prove wrongdoing. But they do go to the larger question of how the City's internal processes shifted from facilitation and problem-solving to enforcement and shutdown.

The council's own public response so far has leaned heavily on complaints. It has said it did not take the issue lightly, that ATET generated a record number of complaints, and that it worked extensively with the operator to find solutions. That is part of the story. The trial evidence from council planning officer Julian Edwards certainly supports the proposition that complaint numbers were unusually high at the start. He described at least 130 complaints after opening weekend as "off the charts".

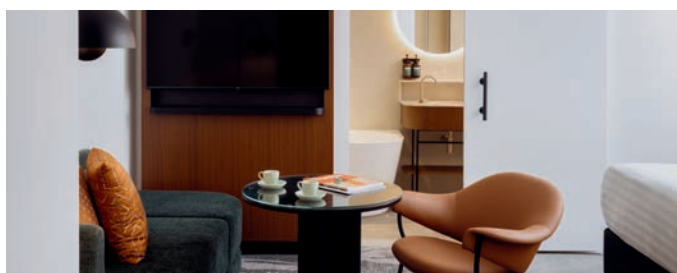
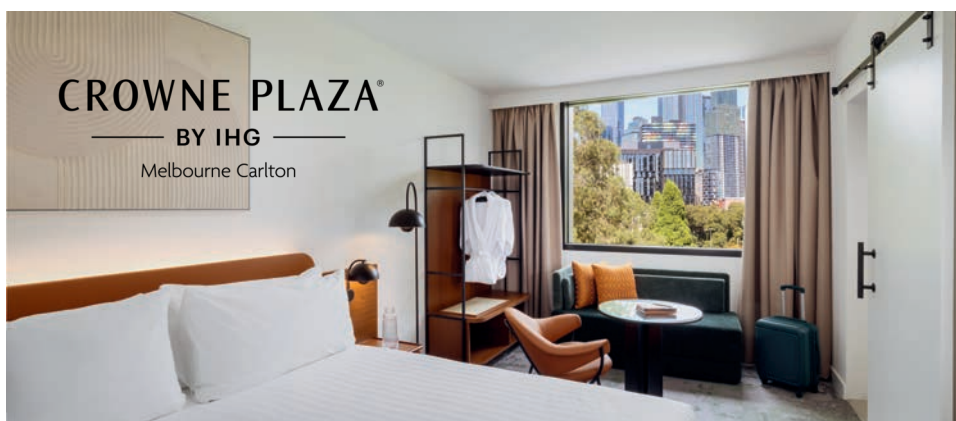
But the case is now plainly about far more than complaints.

The real issue is whether the council unlawfully shut down a business that it had once publicly championed and that, on the evidence aired so far, had continued to put forward options including noise attenuation, relocation and structural changes. If that is where this ends up, then the question ceases to be whether ATET was controversial. The question becomes why the council chose a path that has now led to admitted liability, wasted court time, and a growing exposure that ratepayers will ultimately have to fund.

This is what makes the ATET case more than a dispute about a floating nightclub. It goes to whether the public can have confidence in the way decisions are made at Town Hall, especially when political heat is high and pressure is coming from all sides. Councils are expected to exercise power lawfully, fairly and carefully. They are also expected, once they are clearly in trouble, not to compound the damage.

On that measure, this case is becoming harder and harder for the City of Melbourne to explain away.

The longer it drags on, the higher the legal bill climbs. The more the legal bill climbs, the harder it becomes to avoid the final question. Not just what went wrong, but who, exactly, will wear it. ●



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The proposal would increase the network from 16 areas to more than 70 locations across the municipality, including libraries, community centres, creative spaces and sports venues.

It's the next step in our Smoke-free Melbourne policy to protect the community from second-hand smoke and vape aerosol, reduce smoking rates and create healthier public spaces.

Many of the proposed areas are used daily by families,

young people and vulnerable community members, with consultation to begin later this year before returning to Council for consideration.

Public support is strong, with more than 70 per cent of respondents in favour, including 76 per cent at Queen Victoria Market and 72 per cent at Council administration buildings.

The move is part of Melbourne's work with the Partnership for Healthy Cities - a global network backed by Bloomberg Philanthropies, the World Health Organization and Vital Strategies that helps cities tackle public health challenges.

Melbourne is the only city in Australia and New Zealand in the network.

"The success of a city comes down to the health of its people -

that's why we're proud to be part of the Partnership for Healthy Cities." Community and City Services portfolio head Councillor Gladys Liu said.

Everyone deserves access to food that supports their health and wellbeing, but cost of living and pressures are making this difficult for many. Last year, almost half



Experts say there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke



Eduardo Cavaliere, Mayor of Rio de Janeiro

Earlier this month, representatives from member cities met in Rio de Janeiro to share ideas on tackling public health challenges.

"The summit highlighted how cities like Melbourne are leading the way in tackling complex public health challenges and creating safer, healthier communities," said Dr. Kelly Henning, who leads Public Health programs at Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Smoke-free areas are one focus of Melbourne's work through the Partnership for Healthy Cities network, but they're not the only public health issue on our radar.

of our residents experienced food insecurity, while nearly one in three skipped meals or were worried they would run out of food.

Since July 2024, the City of Melbourne has provided more than 10,000 free healthy meals as part of our FareShare Library Feeds program and supported communities to grow their own food.

"Whether it's clearing the air from harmful smoke or improving access to healthier food, we're making Melbourne healthier and more liveable." Lord Mayor Nick Reece said.

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CITY OF MELBOURNE

Old church welcomes young crowd

“

A Neo-Gothic bluestone church nestled into a pocket of greenery overlooked by skyscrapers, St Augustine's, consecrated in 1869, is one of the CBD's oldest churches. Its original timber building stood on the Bourke St site from 1853.

”

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



Next door to the former West Melbourne Police Station, now a hotel where patrons can drink in the stone cells, St Augustine's parish is a place of calm and quiet with a welcoming, hospitable "personality", according to its priest.

"We try to keep the front gates open during the day for the city workers to come and have lunch or sit there. It's about the only green patch in the area," Monsignor Stuart Hall told *CBD News*.

"It's a great little place."

Its caretakers try also to keep the church building open so that people, whether Catholic or not, can "come in for a quiet five-minute reflection or prayer or a chance just to be still".

"It's a place of refuge, I guess, and quietness," the priest said. "Where people can

centre themselves, whatever's happening in their lives".

He recalled that one of the first times he said Mass in the church, "a feller came down and started talking to the statue of Mary," before complaining about God in colourful language.

Then before leaving, he turned and loudly thanked Him.

"No-one in the congregation batted an eyelid."

People with mental health and homelessness issues are not uncommon at St Augustine's.

Out the back is a washing machine and dryer that occasionally get a run washing visitors' clothes, the priest says.

For the congregants there is usually coffee, tea and biscuits after Mass, and now

and then an espresso cart or sausage sizzle.

Behind the bluestone church is another place of refuge linked to it, the Stella Maris Seafarers' Centre.

A home-away-from-home for seafarers – mainly these days the crews of container ships and tankers – it offers support of all kinds, from transport and money-changing to more serious matters and it still has some accommodation.

As well as attracting seamen, St Augustine's has been something of a magnet for migrants.

The grounds house a monument to the Ukrainian community who "at one point in the history of their immigration, sort of established it as their place of worship," the parish priest says.

Italians had done a similar thing.

"So, the waves of migration coming into Melbourne have often used the church as a point of reference or a place to worship and congregate."

Currently young Indonesian Catholics are using it regularly.

St Augustine's is unique also in offering an 8pm Sunday Mass – the last one of the week in the Melbourne Archdiocese.

Known in Catholic circles as "last chance Mass", it was at one time held as late as 9.30pm to cater for nurses and other shift workers.

While some of them still grace the pews, there are more uni students and new residents, the monsignor says.

"And people who come back early in their lives keep on coming back after they move out to the suburbs."

Overall, the average age of the congregation is 32 to 34, he calculates, compared to "fiftyish" at "the normal parish church" outside the city.

With the small building designed to comfortably hold 150 to 170, it gets pretty cosy.

"In the Sunday Masses, it's full, and people get to know each other, so the person you're standing next to is not just a stranger."

"Even if you're visiting, it's not uncommon for someone to say, hello and welcome or whatever."

As a city church, St Augustine's has "a personality of welcoming and hospitality," its custodian says. ●



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CBD budget doubles down on safety, support and a more walkable city

“The City of Melbourne’s latest budget makes clear that, for the CBD, safety and street-level confidence remain the council’s central political and civic priority.”

WORDS BY SEAN CAR



While decorative laneway lighting remains part of the mix, the bigger story in the 2026-27 budget is a broader push to make the city feel safer, cleaner and easier to move through, with major investment in community safety officers, outreach workers, cameras and the first stage of a pedestrian-focused revamp of Flinders Lane.

Consultation on the draft budget has now closed, with the final budget now due to be considered by councillors on May 26. But the direction of travel for the CBD is already clear.

The most prominent move is the proposed doubling of the council’s Community Safety Officer program, from 11 officers to 22, backed by an extra \$1.7 million. The city says that will mean more officers on the street “supporting vulnerable people and stepping in early to prevent antisocial behaviour”.

That is a notable commitment at a time when Victoria Police has already

significantly increased its own visible presence in the city through Operation Harmony, which has nearly doubled daily police patrol numbers across the CBD and is targeting anti-social behaviour, retail crime, transport hotspots and homelessness-related issues. The council’s decision to expand its own safety presence despite that police surge underlines just how strongly it believes public confidence in the city still needs rebuilding.

The CSO expansion is also landing at a complicated moment. Recent reporting in *The Age* on allegations from a dismissed former officer has raised questions about the program’s internal operation just as the council is trying to enlarge it. Even so,

the city is standing by the initiative, saying its CSOs are “making a real difference on Melbourne’s streets” and pointing to their role in supporting vulnerable people and preventing lower-level problems from escalating.

Victoria Police Melbourne East inspector Dale Huntington also told the Future Melbourne podcast recently that he believed CSOs were playing a valuable role in the response to city safety, arguing they had very much “found their lane”.

The budget also includes a further \$2.3 million to expand the city’s homelessness and outreach response, including for the first time dedicated support for those facing complex mental health challenges.

The funding is intended to strengthen the council’s on-street outreach capacity and explore new safe spaces, alongside broader advocacy to the state government for more mental health and drug rehabilitation services.


Put together, those two streams of funding suggest the council is trying to build a more layered city safety model: one that combines visible enforcement, outreach and support, rather than relying on police alone.


That focus extends into the public realm. Among the most significant CBD projects in the budget is the planned pedestrianisation treatment for Flinders Lane between Swanston and Degraves streets. The proposal would see the footpath continue seamlessly into the roadway at one level, with bluestone paving and added greenery by spring 2026. The council is also allocating \$250,000 to explore similar city-shaping projects in other retail core locations, including the possibility of extending Bourke Street Mall.

That is where the lighting component fits in. While decorative laneway and street lighting remains a visible part of the Lord Mayor’s city activation agenda, the budget positions it less as a standalone beautification exercise and more as part of a wider strategy to improve how the city feels after dark and to support traders, visitation and confidence.


There is also \$34.3 million in the budget for cleaning, graffiti removal and city maintenance, another signal that the council sees safety and amenity as closely linked. Cleaner streets, more visible officers, more outreach and more people-focused public spaces are all being framed as parts of the same effort.

Lord Mayor Nick Reece said the budget was about delivering “record investments to make our city safer, kinder, cleaner and welcoming for everyone”. ●



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ONLINE AND IN-PERSON


Nicholas Building celebrates its centenary

“

The heritage-listed Nicholas Building on the corner of Swanston St and Flinders Lane has a long and interesting history. It recently celebrated a big birthday.

”

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



According to long-term tenant Stephen McLaughlan, “parties of every persuasion are sort of a continuity” of the Nicholas Building.

The gallerist, who has hosted regular openings in his space on the eighth floor since 1994, was the catalyst for a recent centenary celebration of the storied early 20th century skyscraper.

Knowing the history of the Harry Norris-designed building, he posted news clippings about its March 12, 1926, grand opening on social media.



Back then the 10-storey Palazzo-style edifice was hailed as a “milestone ... in the progress of Melbourne towards a city of modern shopping and office buildings”.

Its height of 132 feet (40.23m) was the maximum permitted.

Over the century the Nicholas Building has housed a diverse range of enterprises, from Coles – its “anchor tenant” for many years – to professional women’s discussion group the Austral Salon, established in 1890, and an adult cinema eventually taken over by Club X.

In more recent decades its low rents saw it evolve into an artists’ hub, probably driven by the presence of high-profile bohemian Vali Myers, who set up studio there in the 1990s.

Myers had lived in New York and around the world, making friends wherever she went.

According to McLaughlan, “whenever Bob Dylan or Donovan or Patti Smith was in town they’d visit her in her studio” there.

Following rent rises in the last few years many creative types left the building, but it has maintained an eclectic, interesting mix of tenants.

Among them is artist and gallery owner Anna Prifti, the president of the City Precinct, who was inspired to suggest a celebration.

Under the Precinct’s direction, and with its resources, work got under way on an event that would be worthy of the building’s history.

On the evening of April 10, 120 invitees, many dressed to the 1920s theme, turned up to be treated to Negroni and Bee’s Knees cocktails, canapés from Brunetti’s and a DJ and piano player doing jazz numbers.

The traders’ group had doorknocked the entire building with invitations, and the residents’ association had “sprung to life” to help, McLaughlan said.

Property managers Allard Shelton, who chipped in for the event, were well represented at the party, as was the Precinct.

The Cathedral Arcade was packed with people and the Flinders Lane Gallery had

▼ Claire Harris from Flinders Lane Gallery, City of Melbourne Cr Rafael Camillo, long-term tenant and unofficial historian Stephen McLaughlan.
Photos: Hanna Komissarova.



▲ Maria Yebra from Laneway Learning with Daniel Schrader from Lateral Products and Samantha Schrader from Perfume Playground.

opened its doors.

Providing political punch on the night were federal MP Sarah Witty, state MP David Davis and Residents 3000 president and City of Melbourne Cr Rafael Camillo.

There were few former occupants present, though, and if any members of the consortium of owners were present, they were keeping it quiet.

For McLaughlan, the building’s informal historian, the celebration conjured up memories and imaginings of parties through the years, among them those thrown by Collected Works bookshop and the Melbourne Writers Guild, and annual open days, which used to be “chock-a-block full of people wandering through in full party mode”.

The centenary celebration was a “brilliant” one, he said, and did justice to the occasion.

“It was a vibrant, wonderful, social event that really was a microcosm of the building’s past.” ●

▼ Federal MP Sarah Witty sharing a cocktail with City Precinct’s Phillip Gao.



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Waitress to serve up Broadway charm in the CBD this May



“
A fresh slice of Broadway is heading to the CBD next month, with *Waitress* set to begin its Australian premiere season at Her Majesty's Theatre from May 1.

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



The hit musical, which first found acclaim on Broadway and later in the West End, arrives in Melbourne with a high-profile Australian cast led by Natalie Bassingthwaighte as

Jenna, a pie-making waitress trying to carve out a better life in a small American town.

Inspired by Adrienne Shelly's much-loved 2007 film, *Waitress* tells the story of Jenna, an unhappily married diner worker whose gift for baking becomes tied to the possibility of escape, change and self-determination. With the support of her fellow waitresses Becky and Dawn, and the surprise arrival of a new romance, Jenna begins to imagine a different future.

The production has become well known not only for its warm-hearted story, but also for the creative team behind it. *Waitress* made history on Broadway by having women in the four top creative roles, with a book by Jessie Nelson, music and lyrics by Grammy winner Sara Bareilles, choreography by Lorin Latarro and direction by Diane Paulus.

For Melbourne, the arrival of the musical adds another major title to the city's theatre calendar and gives the CBD a strong early

winter drawcard in one of its most iconic venues.

Bassingthwaighte headlines the cast following recent stage acclaim in *Shirley Valentine* and previous musical theatre roles in *Chicago*, *Jagged Little Pill*, *Grease* and *Chess*. She is joined by Gabriyel Thomas as Becky, Mackenzie Dunn as Dawn, Rob Mills as Dr Pomatter and John Waters as Joe, the diner owner.

The media kit describes the show as “heartwarming and empowering”, with themes of resilience, hope, friendship and second chances running through the story. Its score by Bareilles, best known in the pop world for songs such as *Love Song* and *Brave*, has been one of the production's defining features internationally.

Producer John Frost said the show had become a “must see” musical around the world and described the Australian cast as “sensational”.

Her Majesty's Theatre season will run

ahead of a Sydney transfer in August, with Melbourne performances scheduled from Tuesday to Sunday across a mix of evening and matinee times. Tickets start from \$69.90.

For the CBD, the staging of *Waitress* continues the role of major musicals in drawing audiences into the city not only for the show itself, but for the broader night-out economy around it, from restaurants and bars to accommodation and late trade.

With its mix of humour, heart and a strong central performance role, *Waitress* looks likely to appeal both to seasoned musical theatre audiences and to those simply after an uplifting night in town.

The Australian premiere of *Waitress* begins at Her Majesty's Theatre on May 1.

Pictured above left are Rob Mills, Mackenzie Dunn, Natalie Bassingthwaighte, Gabriyel Thomas and John Waters. Photo: Peter Brew-Bevan. ●

Melbourne singer in new “narcissistic” reading of *The Rake Punished*

A new production of *Don Giovanni* (*The Rake Punished*) that opened at the Athenaeum on April 26 interprets the title character of the classic opera as a sex offender, its director says. CBD-based singer Eddie Muliaumaseali'i is singing in it.

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



Eddie Muliaumaseali'i and his wife Sarah Sweeting bought a place in Collins St last year.

“From our window we can see across to the Arts Centre and the Gardens, and we can look right down to Degraives St,” the opera singer told *CBD News*.

“In the major cities that I've lived in, I've always stayed close to the theatres, where I don't have to commute.”

“Most major companies, whether it be music halls or opera or even ballet, have their bases in the city and it's just a dream to be able to walk to rehearsal, and when you finish a show to be home within 10 minutes.”

To get to and from the Athenaeum Theatre, where he is currently performing in Melbourne Opera's *Don Giovanni* (*The Rake Punished*), is a two-minute walk.

Playing from April 26 until May 3, the production, directed by Suzanne Chaundy, is a “timely” one, the company says, which views



the philandering title character in the same light as contemporary sex offenders like Jeffrey Epstein.

“Justice is coming to Don Giovanni just as it caught up with recent high-profile sex offenders like the former Prince Andrew and Jeffrey Epstein, and as many would picture justice coming to other offenders from the Epstein Files,” the director has said.

Her production features “three of Australia's best sopranos” – Lee Abrahmsen as Donna Anna, Eleanor Greenwood as wife Donna Elvira, and Rebecca Rashleigh as peasant bride Zerlina – who operate as a “powerful and vengeful” trio that brings the “narcissistic” Don Giovanni to justice “on behalf of the many, many women listed in the heinous catalogue of his ‘conquests’”.

Don Giovanni is played by Christopher Tonkin, his servant Leporello by Henry Shaw, Masetto by Stephen Marsh and Don Ottavio by Henry Choo.

Eddie has the important but relatively brief role of the murdered Commendatore “who drags Don Giovanni to the hell that he deserves”.

The current production of the classic opera, which he is appearing in for the sixth time, is “a new take on it” and a very different one, the singer says.

It's interesting to see how the director, music director and designer can “come together with a vision” and “fuse the story to make something new”.

“Suzanne is cooking a nice cake!” he says.

As a bass, Eddie usually got to play the bad guy or some sort of authority figure, he told *CBD News*.

“The guy with the low voice is either the father, the priest, the devil, the ghost, the baddie or the killer.”

In this case, being killed early on and coming back as a ghost gives him time to have a cup of tea between appearances.

“It's a big opera and one of Mozart's best – I would say his opus – but it's one of the longest ones,” he said.

The show has an estimated running time

of three-and-a-half hours.

But Eddie, born to Samoan parents in Auckland, is not short of stamina, having kicked off a career, initially, in rugby.

“Singing wasn't my first thing; I just wanted to play rugby,” he said.

“The equivalent of playing on the MCG is playing for your state, and I got to do that at the age of 20, and I was the captain of my team.”

“But the very next year, my brother, who'd always wanted to be a singer, was auditioning for a professional company, and I went and auditioned with them.

“We both got in, and I've been singing ever since because I love it.”

In 1993 the big bass moved to “Brisvegas” to do an opera course.

Since then, he has been freelancing, with stints as a performer in different parts of the world, including Austria and New York.

Living in Melbourne's CBD reminds him of the lifestyle in Manhattan, he says, where people also live in the theatre district and enjoy the rich range of food and culture on offer.

While the freelance life can be tough, he wouldn't want it any other way.

“I do really love my job,” Eddie said.

“I'm singing, and it's a joy!”

And because he has “been around so long”, Melbourne Opera is “like a family”.

Melbourne Opera's *Don Giovanni* is playing at the Athenaeum from April 26 to May 3.

Eddie Muliaumaseali'i and his wife Sarah Sweeting playing Norse gods in Melbourne Opera's 2021 production of Wagner's *Das Rheingold*. ●

Council's latest "tree-thousand" push



A couple of Melbourne City councillors got their hands in the dirt to help green the CBD recently.

Lord Mayor Nick Reece and Cr Davydd Griffiths posed for photos after planting a young flooded gum on Friday, April 24, as part of a push to get up to 3000 new trees in the ground across the city this financial year.

The 2026-27 target is part of the council's Urban Forest Strategy "to create a resilient, healthy and diverse forest" in the city "for the future".

The *Eucalyptus grandis* has found its home in the 1900 sqm Market Street Park finished in 2021 at the corner of Collins St, where the northern end of Market St was discontinued adjacent to the luxury Collins Arch development.

One of the tallest gums, which reaches

50m or more, the tree when grown has smooth, pale bark which sheds in long ribbons.

Its glossy dark green leaves release a distinct eucalypt smell if crushed, and in summer, the tree produces clusters of small white flowers, which attract pollinators, followed by conical seed capsules.

"We're turning grey spaces green and weaving nature into every corner of the city," the Lord Mayor said of the mission.

"Our annual planting program will help double Melbourne's canopy cover by 2040 – delivering more shade, greener streets and cooler neighbourhoods."

Every new tree helped cool the city, cut carbon and support biodiversity, environment portfolio head Cr Davydd Griffiths said.

"Our Urban Forest Strategy is about planting the right trees in the right places – building a stronger, more resilient environment," he said. ●



Crowne Plaza Melbourne Carlton opens with local-inspired dining at Fico

The newly opened Crowne Plaza Melbourne Carlton has brought fresh life to a prominent corner of Lincoln Square, a site that had sat dormant for several years. In this case, the wait appears to have paid off.

WORDS BY
CHRIS JACKSON



Positioned on the corner of Swanston St, the hotel is a collaboration between IHG Hotels & Resorts and Pelligra, offering a new take on hospitality in Carlton while overlooking the greenery and daily rhythm of Lincoln Square. The setting gives guests a front-row seat to one of Melbourne's more picturesque inner-city parks.

The 107-room hotel features a curated collection of artworks, including Indigenous pieces, helping ground the space in local context and cultural reference. Alongside its accommodation offering, the hotel also includes function and event spaces, a fully equipped gym, and its signature restaurant and bar, Fico.

Named after the Moreton Bay fig trees that frame Lincoln Square, Fico draws directly on Carlton's Italian identity while interpreting the neighbourhood's traditions through a more contemporary lens. Facing onto the park, the venue is filled with natural light and leafy outlooks, creating an open and welcoming dining room.

The menu has been built around locally sourced produce, with ingredients prepared in-house and shaped by seasonal Victorian offerings. From farmers and butchers to

distillers, there is a clear focus on supporting local producers.

Crowne Plaza Melbourne Carlton general manager Anna Marie Lennon said the team had been central to shaping the venue's identity.

"Our colleagues create a vibe, they are essential to creating the overall guest experience," she said.

That values-led approach is evident in the tone of the hotel, with a sense of welcome carrying from reception through to the restaurant floor.

In the kitchen, executive chef Patrick Chung and food and beverage manager Chris McNally have worked closely to bring the concept to life. Open 24 hours a day, the kitchen has been positioned as the heart of the venue.

Attention to detail runs through the menu, from refining the right shoestring fries with truffle oil and parmesan to shaping traditional potato gnocchi with sage burnt butter using techniques drawn from the owners' Italian family heritage.

The broader result is a menu that feels confident without being overly complicated. Dishes range from roasted chicken with plum purée and tarragon jus to barramundi cooked over fire with caponata, pickled green olive and capers.

Fico also leans into a little theatre. A vermouth trolley offers a curated drinks experience, while the scroppino, made tableside with lemon gelato, prosecco and limoncello in large silver bowls, adds a lively finish to the meal.

Looking ahead, a rooftop bar and pool are expected to open in time for summer, adding another layer to the precinct and broadening the appeal of the venue for both hotel guests and locals.

Crowne Plaza Melbourne Carlton is located at 701 Swanston St, Carlton. ●

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QVM TRADER PROFILE

Market trader John Kikidis keeping it in the family

“It was love and family that steered John Kikidis to the Hellenic Deli.”

WORDS BY
JENNY DENTON



And maybe the 30 different varieties of olives.

The groundbreaking business was started by his wife's parents in 1972.

His mother-in-law Eleni, who had come to Australia by herself as a teenager, was still learning English when she invested her savings from market work into the lease on a butter shop in the Dairy Hall.

After she met and married John Xasteroulis, who "pretty much grew up in an olive grove," the pair turned the shop into a specialised Greek deli.

Back then it was a purveyor of rarely found products from home and a meeting place for the community, their son-in-law says.

The couple's three daughters grew up serving Greek migrants on weekends and school holidays.

At the same time their parents prioritised the girls' education, and eventually the eldest went into law while the other two became teachers.

John junior first met the middle sister, Anna, in the 1990s when she started working at his chicken shop at the market while studying education.

After a break of about a year, he found himself working with her again.

"We just got along and started talking, and one thing led to another," he says.

"From there things just got better and better, and that's it, we got married."

While he had qualified as a civil engineer, in the early days making a living at the market was easier, John says.

And when his in-laws put their shop up for sale in 2006 the couple bought it.

"It suited us at that moment of time when we were newly married and starting a family. "One of us could work, and the other one could stay at home and look after the kids."

Now, 20 years later, those kids – two daughters aged 19 and 20 and a 14-year-old son – help out in their spare time, alongside a couple of long-term staff who are "pretty much like family".

Nowadays the store's clientele is "very multicultural" but its stock remains almost

exclusively Greek.

"I'd say 80 per cent of our stuff comes from Greece," John says. "Olive oils, olives, pasta, fetas, Greek teas, honeys, tomato paste, different varieties of Greek biscuits."

Alongside the many marinated and plain olives, the shop stocks are nine kinds stuffed by the family themselves – with feta, sundried tomato, anchovy, pesto, garlic, almond, chilli, saganaki and parmesan.

The deli also sells oil from John's in-laws' groves in Greece.

"We bring it down from Sparta and we sell it by the litre," he says. "You can either bring in your bottle to be filled or buy one off us."

There are also plenty of foods and dishes prepared locally, including dips and antipasto, octopus prepped by the family, pork and orange sausages and sweets such as halva and chocolates.

At Easter and Christmas, the shop sells

the sweet bread Tsoureki.

After two decades behind the counter John still enjoys "mingling" and talking to his customers, especially about football.

And the deli, he notes, has so far put two of his three kids as well as his wife and her sisters through their education.

"It's been a good little shop," he says. "I've enjoyed my time in there.

"And it's been at the core of our family for over 50 years." ●

New \$800 million tower unveiled for Melbourne Square precinct

A major new residential tower has been unveiled for Southbank, with developer OSK Property announcing Aura as the next phase of the \$3.5 billion Melbourne Square precinct.

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



Planned for 7 Hoff Boulevard, Aura will deliver 673 apartments across 67 storeys and continue the transformation of the large mixed-use precinct on the eastern side of Southbank.

The new \$800 million tower is being pitched as a wellness-focused addition to Melbourne Square, with its design drawing on Japanese principles of calm, clarity and simplicity, while also taking cues from Australian natural materials and landscape.

According to the developer, Aura will centre on four key elements: apartment design, social amenity, Japanese-inspired gardens and a broad suite of wellness facilities.

Those facilities will be spread across multiple levels, including the Aura Club on level seven, which is set to feature an indoor pool, cold plunge, spa, gym, Reformer Pilates studio, yoga room, sauna, steam room, library, games and music rooms, golf

simulator, work-from-home spaces and open-air terraces.

Higher in the tower, levels 66 and 67 will house the Cumulus Club, including lounges, private dining, outdoor terrace areas and wellness spaces such as treatment rooms, sauna, meditation and sound therapy rooms. Levels 49 and 50 will feature the Meridian Club, focused more on social uses, with a lounge bar, conservatory and private dining rooms.

Designed by COX Architecture, Aura is intended to complete the eastern end of the Melbourne Square precinct and add another distinctive element to the Southbank skyline.

The building's design has been described as combining influences from both New York high-rises and Tokyo's skyline, while its interiors aim to create a calmer, more reflective living environment.

The ground floor and level one will also include around 1600 sqm of retail space across between five and eight tenancies, adding to the existing mix of public amenities already operating within Melbourne Square, including Kennedy Park, Woolworths, Nido Early School, BWS and nearby cafés and restaurants.

OSK Property chief executive Chong Boon Woon said Aura would build on the strong market response to BLVD, the previous

Melbourne Square release, which is now 80 per cent sold.

"Aura stands tall as an exemplar of holistic wellness," he said.

"Its focus on social, physical and mental health culminate in a building that is calming, restorative and relaxing, where residents will have their own sanctuary within the well-connected and sought-after Southbank."

COX director Paul Curry said the tower would act as a gateway between the broader Melbourne Square precinct and the surrounding city.

Construction of Aura is currently expected to begin in late 2026. ●

An escapee arrested at the Coffee Tavern



Opened in October 1882 on Bourke St between Swanston and Russell streets, the 90-foot-tall Melbourne Coffee Tavern featured 161 bedrooms and was also home to a sewing machine business owned by Hugo Wertheim.

WORDS BY
ASHLEY SMITH

As the name suggests, the Tavern was a hotel that served coffee as an alcohol-free alternative to the pubs and hotels that lured civilians with the temptations of beer, wine and spirits.

But despite its reputation as a place of morality, the hotel would become the site of a dramatic arrest, ending the chapter of one of the most daring prison breaks in Melbourne history.

In 1890, Frenchman Pierre Douar decided to break out of Pentridge Prison in Coburg where he was serving an eight-year sentence for possession of counterfeiting and housebreaking tools. It's possible he feared being sent back to New Caledonia when his sentence was up. Taking advantage of the lax security of the prison's C-Division, he stole materials and tools from a workshop, including sheet metal to create a skeleton key. On the early morning of February 13, 1890, he bored holes in his cell lock, undid the bolt, snuck outside in the rain, scaled a

wall, and used a rope to hoist himself over the boundary wall to meet a waiting accomplice. By the time the guards discovered the empty cell the next morning, Pierre was already a free man.

Two detectives, Detective Sergeant Ward and Detective Macmanamy, received information that the fugitive was likely in Melbourne and searched hotels and restaurants within the CBD. As the clock passed midnight on February 15, they arrived at the Melbourne Coffee Tavern, where a new guest had registered as "Clarence". They lured him out with a request to leave his shoes out for cleaning, and out stepped Pierre, who was immediately apprehended.

They quickly deduced from extra clothes in Pierre's room that there was an accomplice. By morning, a mining manager named Mr Hebbard reported his clothes and money missing. According to *The Age* (February 17, 1890), an overcoat found under his bed suggested the accomplice had been hiding there during the police search, before stealing Hebbard's clothes and fleeing.

Pierre would never get another taste of freedom. Sentenced to an extra two years in irons and placed in solitary confinement, he was found dead in his cell on July 17, 1890, having hanged himself. An inquest deemed he had ended his life "whilst of sound mind" (*Herald*, July 18, 1890).

The Melbourne Coffee Tavern continued serving as a hotel until the 1950s, before becoming a furniture shop, then part of Walton's Department Store, then the Village Cinema, which closed in 2006. Today it serves as a shopping arcade – with a police station located next door. ●

Keeping Melbourne's CBD strong by backing the people who power it

Melbourne's CBD is often described as the engine room of our city: busy, diverse and always evolving. But what has stood out to me most over the past few months is not just the pace of change, but the people and communities working every day to keep that engine running.

WORDS BY
SARAH WITTY – FEDERAL MP



Since the start of the year, I've spent time across the electorate listening to residents, small business owners and frontline service providers. Whether it is a conversation with a café owner navigating rising costs or a visit to a community organisation supporting vulnerable residents, the same themes come up again and again: cost-of-living pressures, housing affordability and the need for practical support that meets people where they are.

One of my first visits this year was to a community housing provider just a few blocks from the CBD. Walking through those buildings and speaking with tenants and staff, it was clear that secure housing is the foundation for everything else: health, employment, education and connection. But it was also clear that demand continues to outstrip supply. That is why I have been focused on advocating for increased investment in social and affordable housing, and on ensuring federal programs translate into real homes here in Melbourne.

I have also spent time with traders and small businesses in the central city, many of whom are still finding their footing after a challenging few years. I met with City Precinct, the business association bringing small businesses together to support one another. Their enthusiasm for the CBD is obvious, and they shared their concerns clearly. Energy costs, rent and workforce shortages are not abstract policy debates, but daily operational challenges. What I hear consistently is the need for stability and certainty: settings that allow businesses to plan, invest and grow.

At the same time, the CBD remains a place of enormous opportunity. I have attended local events such as Chinese Lunar New Year celebrations, spoken with students and young professionals, and met with organisations driving innovation in everything from clean energy to social enterprise. There is a strong sense that Melbourne can

lead, not just economically, but socially, if we get the balance right between growth and inclusion.

That balance is especially important when it comes to the future of our inner-city communities. Development and renewal are essential, but they need to be done in a way that keeps Melbourne liveable and accessible. That means protecting the diversity that makes our city unique and ensuring people from all walks of life can continue to live, work and participate in the CBD.

In Parliament, I have been working with colleagues to progress measures that respond to these local priorities. From cost-of-living relief to housing investment and support for essential services, the focus remains on practical outcomes. But representation does not start or end in Canberra. It is shaped by what I hear on the ground here in Melbourne.

What I have learned over these past months is that people are not looking for grand statements. They are looking for follow-through. They want to know their concerns are understood, their voices are heard and their representative is present, not just during election campaigns, but consistently.

That is something I take seriously. Whether it is visiting a neighbourhood centre, meeting with local traders or simply having a conversation on a street corner, those interactions inform the work I do every day.

Melbourne's CBD will continue to change, and that is part of its strength. But as it does, the challenge for all of us is to ensure growth does not come at the expense of community. Because ultimately, a city is not defined by its skyline, but by the people who call it home.

And from what I have seen so far this year, there is every reason to be optimistic about what we can build together. ●

Sarah
Witty

Member for
Melbourne

Your voice in Canberra

Labor

142 Johnston St, Fitzroy 3065
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Community engagement: a matter long supported by EastEnders

At our February meeting we welcomed Dinuki Scharenguivel, the council’s manager of community engagement and impact when we debated several aspects of the proposed City of Melbourne 2026-2030 Community Engagement Policy.

WORDS BY
DR STAN CAPP – PRESIDENT

This built upon a lengthy meeting we had with the team late in 2025 on our expectations of the new policy and feedback on the current policy.

We then had the benefit at our March meeting of hearing from our Federal Member for the seat of Melbourne Sarah Witty who was keen to hear from us about matters that we thought were important and needed her attention.

Our April meeting was an opportunity to undertake our own version of community engagement and using a focus group approach, we elicited the views of all our members and friends in attendance on contemporary matters of interest in the City of Melbourne and particularly the CBD.

In small groups, attendees considered six key issues, advised their positive and negative thoughts, and then completed a survey to respond to questions under each of the

nominated issues. Some fascinating data have been revealed.

The issues identified were:

1. The City of Melbourne Budget 2026/2027;
2. The proposed external review of the Queen Victoria Market (QVM);
3. Planning in the City of Melbourne and engagement with affected stakeholders;
4. The Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show;
5. Safety and security on our streets; and
6. Health services in the CBD.

We have undertaken detailed analyses of the data collected but to report on each would be far too long an article for this column in *CBD News*.

However, one area that is worthy of reporting is the curiosity about the proposed external review of QVM. The major takeaway is that every person expressed their love for QVM with many regular patrons and a unanimous view that we want it to continue to be one of the great markets of the world with exceptional heritage value.

The participants were aware that QVM is owned by the City of Melbourne and its wholly owned subsidiary, Queen Victoria Market Pty Ltd, which is governed by an independent board of six directors. The board is responsible for managing the day-to-day operations of the market. As owners of the Queen Victoria Market, the City of Melbourne has oversight and responsibility for any capital improvements at the site.

EastEnders has a strong interest in QVM and is aware of criticisms by the Friends of QVM, residents and traders about the current state of QVM. Due to our interactions

with all or some of these groups, we totally empathise with their issues.

It was in this context that the City of Melbourne council on March 31, 2026 approved of an external independent review of the management and governance arrangements of QVM.

EastEnders is an eclectic group and includes several people with strong managerial and professional backgrounds. The group discussion raised questions as to why the independent board was not being made accountable by its shareholder, the City of Melbourne, for the issues that were being experienced. Issues of communication, engagement, finance and transparency in many people’s view ought not be the rationale for an external review of the scope envisaged. Indeed, with appropriate leadership from both the board and the City of Melbourne, many viewed the issues as being far from intractable with good will and a collaborative approach.

The other aspect of concern discussed and implied in the data was the commitment by the council to approve the external review in the absence of detailed terms of reference and a financial estimate. Certainly, the length of time suggested, which includes two substantial reports, suggests that the cost will be a considerable unbudgeted burden on City of Melbourne resources. This stretched the understanding of sound fiscal governance.

Four questions were asked of the group with the following outcomes:

1. Do you agree that QVM is an iconic part of the City of Melbourne? Yes: 100 per cent; No: zero per cent
2. Do you think the owner of the QVM, the City of Melbourne, should seek advice from its Board of Directors on the items

of concern identified prior to moving to an independent external review? Yes: 94 per cent; No: six per cent

3. Do you think it is the right time to have an independent external review of QVM? Yes: 25 per cent; No: 75 per cent
4. Do you agree that the council should approve an external review in the absence of any budget or financial estimate? Yes: 16 per cent; No: 84 per cent

In summary, while every participant expressed great love for QVM, there was a perceived lack of commitment to the existing Board of Directors by its shareholder and questions of fairness and due process were brought into play.

Of course, the caveat for presenting these data is that it is based on a range of engaged people who participated in this focus group. The information that informed the discussion was from the public record and there is no way of knowing the dynamics between all parties and the respective interactions. It is certainly not presented as a scientifically based study.

That said, it is one source of information derived from using one type of community engagement. We have similarly interesting findings from the other five issues discussed.

We are proud that we have been able to share it with you.

Our next meetings, which are usually on the third Tuesday of each month, will be with the executive director of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Steven Cooke; Dana Foenander who will discuss the City of Melbourne’s Heritage Strategy 2026; and our Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor. An interesting few months ahead.

All are welcome to join us as members or visitors. More information at eastendersinc@gmail.com ●

RESIDENTS 3000

FOGO – for high-rise

CBD residents can now improve their recycling by applying for a FOGO bin from the City of Melbourne. What is the secret of success?

If you have lived in the city for quite a while, you may not know that **FOGO = Food Organics and Garden Organics recycling**.

People who live in suburbia are familiar with the term and separate their recycling into the yellow (plastic bottles, cardboard, etc.), red for general waste including plastic bags (a big problem yet to be solved) and green wheelie bins. The green is for all sorts of organic material including garden cuttings.

It is not often that the CBD is behind the suburbs. But not anymore. We can adopt practices that make it easier for people living in high rise, to live more sustainably thus protecting our environment. Aim is to reduce landfill. Recycle valuable organic waste and converting it to fertiliser.

How to adopt FOGO

Start with a wheely bin in the bin room or even in the car park. In most buildings the rubbish chute takes only general waste. Some have two chutes, one for general and one for recycle. In our old building we have a small bin in the chute room for recycle which is emptied daily by the cleaner.

What is the secret?

The magic of the kitchen caddy. For all those high-rise cooks out there, the caddy is so convenient. Put in the kitchen sink as you cut up food, scraps go into the caddy as you go. Flick of the wrist is all it takes.

More importantly, everything organic goes in there. Here is a list.

1. Fruit and vegetable scraps
2. Cooked and raw meat
3. Solid dairy – butter and cheese
4. Bread, cereal, rice and pasta
5. Coffee grounds and loose leaf tea leaves
6. Paper towel

There is a trick here. Line the bin first with a normal small plastic bag. Then add the compostable green bag over the top. This bag is used to house your organic waste and is tied off before placing in your green bin. The plastic bag underneath keeps your caddy nice and clean and dry. The compostable liner is not particularly waterproof. It is called a “compost-a-pak” and is 100 per cent compostable.

But wait. What is amazing is that all those troublesome bits and pieces in your flourishing balcony garden, can also go into the kitchen caddy!

Another bonus is the general waste bag under the kitchen bench is now light and airy as what is going to waste is mainly plastic and non-recyclable cardboard.

FOGO is a GO-GO

The City of Melbourne with are now on board with this concept. Contact them to arrange the supply of a green bin and some kitchen caddies and bags. Then talk to residents. Not all will follow but the ideas will catch on. It is not too difficult to make a journey to the green bin now and then to empty your magic kitchen caddy.

Websites: melbourne.vic.gov.au/food-and-garden-organics-service, sourceparationsystems.com.au.



Next Forum 3000

Thursday, May 7, 2026, 6pm for a 6.30pm start. Kelvin Club, 14-30 Melbourne Place.

Topic: Trivia Night with Artur Hadja

Always popular with our members. Guests welcome. Come ready for a brain teaser night and lots of fun. Prize for the winning team.

Further details will be found on our website: residents3000.org.au ●

Dr Sue Saunders
VICE PRESIDENT





墨尔本CBD商铺空置率再次下降，《Walk the CBD》报告显示城市复苏势头更强劲

墨尔本市中心（CBD）零售空置率已连续第四年下降。Fitzroys最新发布的《Walk the CBD》报告显示，城市商铺的复苏正在持续加速。

Sean Car

2026年报告显示，过去12个月CBD整体零售空置率从6.1%下降至4.6%，为近年来最低水平，也较疫情封锁时期显著改善——当时空置率一度飙升至30%以上。

这些数据表明，市中心零售、餐饮和娱乐业的结构正在逐步稳定，这得益于多个大型项目完工、新店铺和酒店开业，以及关键时段访客活动的增强。Fitzroys表示，餐饮、食品饮料以及娱乐业再次成为需求的主要推动力，目前该类业态占CBD租户结构的49.4%。

Fitzroys部门董事詹姆斯·洛克伍德（James Lockwood）表示，城市形态的重塑已带来长期低空置率，并让CBD重新焕发活力。

“墨尔本CBD的重塑带来了历史性的低空置率、全新的零售格局，以及一种明显回归的活力氛围，”他说。

表现最强的区域之一是Swanston Street。随着商户希望靠近新建的市政厅和州立图书馆地铁隧道站，该街空置率进一步从2.6%降至1.9%。Little Bourke Street更低，仅为1.1%。La Trobe Street (Elizabeth Street至Russell Street之间路段) 在统计时段内甚至没有空置铺位。

唐人街（Chinatown）同样改善明显，空置率从6.6%降至3.5%，反映出周末与夜间消费的强劲增长，并带动周边街道和小巷的客流外溢。Bourke Street Mall则保持稳定，为4%，受益于多个新地标，包括Mecca旗舰店、Melbourne Walk、JD Sports以及两家洲际酒店集团（IHG）酒店。

其他区域方面，Elizabeth Street继续快速复苏，空置率从8.1%降至5.3%；Flinders Lane从4.2%降至3.2%；Russell Street从10.9%降至7.6%；Collins Street West也从9.4%降至7.0%。

在受调查的17个街区中，仅有两个区域空置率上升：Collins Street East升至6%，Exhibition Street升至7.3%。



音乐剧《女招待》（Waitress）将于5月登陆CBD，带来百老汇魅力

一部全新的百老汇音乐剧即将于下月登陆墨尔本CBD——《女招待》（Waitress）将于5月1日在女王陛下剧院（Her Majesty's Theatre）开启其澳大利亚首演季。

Sean Car

这部曾在百老汇和伦敦西区大获成功的热门音乐剧，此次来到墨尔本，由澳大利亚知名演员娜塔莉·巴辛思韦特（Natalie Bassingthwaite）领衔出演女主角珍娜（Jenna），讲述一位擅长烘焙的女服务员在美国小镇努力追求更好生活的故事。

该剧改编自阿德丽安娜·雪莉（Adrienne Shelly）2007年的同名电影，讲述婚姻不幸的餐馆服务员珍娜，如何将天赋与逃离现状、改变命运和追求自我联系在一起。在同事贝姬（Becky）和多恩（Dawn）的支持下，以及一段意外爱情的出现，珍娜开始设想一个不同的未来。

《女招待》不仅以温暖动人的故事著称，也因其创作团队而备受关注。该剧在百老

汇创下历史——由女性担任四个核心创作职位，包括杰西·尼尔森（Jessie Nelson）编剧、格莱美奖得主莎拉·巴雷利斯（Sara Bareilles）负责音乐与歌词、洛林·拉塔罗（Lorin Lattaro）编舞，以及黛安·保卢斯（Diane Paulus）执导。

对于墨尔本而言，这部音乐剧的到来为城市剧院演出季再添重磅作品，也为CBD在初冬带来一大吸引力，演出地点更是城市最具标志性的剧院之一。

巴辛思韦特此前凭借舞台剧《Shirley Valentine》获得好评，并曾出演《Chicago》《Jagged Little Pill》《Grease》和《Chess》等音乐剧，此次将领衔出演。其他演员还包括加布里耶尔·托马斯（Gabriyel Thomas）饰贝姬、麦肯齐·邓恩（Mackenzie Dunn）饰多恩、罗布·米尔斯（Rob Mills）饰庞马特医生（Dr Pomatter），以及约翰·沃特斯（John Waters）饰餐厅老板乔（Joe）。

媒体资料将该剧形容为“温暖人心且充满力量”，贯穿着坚韧、希望、友情和人生重来的主题。由巴雷利斯创作的配乐——她以《Love Song》《Brave》等流行歌曲闻名——也是该剧在国际上成功的重要因素之一。

市议会推出最新“种树三千”计划

近日，墨尔本市议会的几位议员亲自参与植树活动，为CBD增添绿色。

市长尼克·里斯（Nick Reece）与议员戴维德·格里菲斯（Davydd Griffiths）于4月24日（周五）种下一棵幼年的大叶桉树（Eucalyptus grandis），并合影留念。这一行动是市议会本财年计划种植多达3000棵新树的一部分。

2026-27年度目标是市议会“城市森林战略”的一部分，旨在为未来打造一个更具韧性、更健康、更加多样化的城市森林。

这棵大叶桉树被种植在Market Street Park（建于2021年，占地1900平方米），位于Collins Street拐角处，原Market Street北端在毗邻高端开发项目Collins Arch后被改造。

大叶桉是最高的桉树之一，成熟后可高达50米以上。其树皮光滑呈浅色，会以长条状自然剥落。

这种树的深绿色光亮叶片在被揉碎时会散发出独特的桉树香味；夏季会开出成簇的小白花，吸引传粉昆虫，随后结出锥形种荚。

市长表示：“我们正在把灰色空间变为绿色，把自然融入城市的每一个角落。”



“我们的年度植树计划将帮助到2040年使墨尔本的树冠覆盖率翻倍——带来更多阴凉、更绿色的街道以及更凉爽的社区环境。”

负责环境事务的议员戴维德·格里菲斯补充说，每种下一棵新树，都有助于为城市降温、减少碳排放并支持生物多样性。

“我们的城市森林战略重点是在合适的地点种植合适的树种，从而打造更强大、更具韧性的生态环境，”他说。

墨尔本市议会推动让涂鸦破坏者承担费用

墨尔本市议会正加大对涂鸦行为的打击力度，议员们准备支持对被维多利亚警方起诉的涂鸦者发出赔偿令。市议会表示，这是其“你喷涂，你付费”（You Spray, You Pay）政策的下一步措施。

Sean Car

在4月14日的未来墨尔本委员会会议上，议员们审议了一份报告，建议管理层要求维多利亚警方在两起正在进行的涂鸦案件中申请赔偿令。在这些案件中，市议会已提供或将提供证据及受害者影响陈述。

市长尼克·里斯表示，信息非常明确：“我们说过要打击涂鸦破坏行为，现在正在落实。信息再清楚不过——你喷涂，就要付出代价。”

他还指出，市议会正与维多利亚警方合作，追讨清除涂鸦的费用，并在刑事诉讼中通过法院寻求赔偿令。

最新报告称，市议会一直在协助警方处理代号为“YOMP”和“Q Bee”的涂鸦者案件。如果法院发出赔偿令，这些资金将用于弥补



清理涂鸦及修复市议会资产的费用。在可能情况下，市议会也将根据其涂鸦清理合同，向私人物业追讨相关清理费用。

市议会记录显示，“YOMP”涉及34处涂鸦，估计造成约4920澳元的清理成本。

报告还提到另一名高频涂鸦者“Bruege”，被认定为高影响、高成本的违规者。市议会记录将1712处涂鸦归因于“Bruege”，估计清理费用高达177,885澳元。管理层表示，目前正在评估是否对某些高成本涂鸦或破坏案件提起单独的民事诉讼。

安全与清洁事务负责人拉斐尔·卡米洛议员表示，涂鸦的影响不仅限于城市外观。

“它给社区带来巨大的经济成本，也影响人们在城市中的安全感和欢迎感，”他说。

“我们正在划清界线——如果你迫使市议会花费资源清理城市，我们将与警方合作追究你的责任，让你为自己的行为付出代价。”

WHAT'S ON May



There's something for everyone this May in the city.



SHUT UP AND WRITE

The Wheeler Centre's *Shut Up and Write* sessions offer writers a supportive, distraction-free space to write fostering focus, accountability, and community without pressure or critique.

The Wheeler Centre

SUNDAY 10 MAY, 10AM – 3PM



MOTHER'S DAY CLASSIC

The Mother's Day Classic invites participants to walk or run, raising funds for breast and ovarian cancer research while supporting community efforts to end these diseases.

The Tan, Birdwood Ave

SUNDAY 10 MAY, 6.45AM – 2.30PM



MOTHER'S DAY HIGH TEA WITH EMELIA JACKSON

MasterChef Australia winner, pastry chef and author Emelia Jackson hosts a Mother's Day high tea, with new recipes, elegant pastries, drinks, and live music.

Melbourne Town Hall

SUNDAY 10 MAY, 11AM – 4PM



BANFF MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL

Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour showcases award-winning adventure films, featuring exploration, culture, and nature through breathtaking cinematography from remote locations.

The Capitol, 113 Swanston St

FRIDAY 22 MAY, 7PM – 10PM



MUSIC DOCUMENTED: ACMI CINEMAS

Music Documented showcases films exploring music's cultural impact, from subcultures to iconic artists, highlighting movements, identity, and pop culture through powerful documentaries at ACMI.

ACMI Cinemas, Fed Square

UNTIL 31 MAY, 2.30PM – 4.30PM



RISING: THE LAND OF 1000 DANCES

RISING's Land of 1000 Dances revives Flinders Street Station Ballroom, offering diverse dance classes led by experts, welcoming all ages to celebrate movement, culture, & community together.

Level 3, Flinders Street Railway Station

27 MAY – 8 JUNE, 11AM – 6PM



GROOVY TUNES

Kofi Kunkpe leads joyful workshops where children and parents explore West African music, dance, and rhythms through interactive activities, instruments, and songs to enjoy together.

ArtPlay, Russell St Ext

UNTIL 21 JUNE, 10.30AM – 2.45PM

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With deep local insight into Melbourne's CBD, Property Consultant Will is a true area specialist who lives and works locally. He combines practical market knowledge with a people-first approach, shaped by his experience in luxury service and financial management. Reach out to Will for tailored guidance on your property.

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