



Sydney Observer

FEBRUARY 2015 - FREE

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**STATE
ELECTION**
A LIFETIME
OF PROMISES

**STUDENT
TEACHERS
FAIL**
BOARD OF
STUDIES
TAKES ACTION

**ROYAL
NORTH
SHORE**
DIVESTMENT
A NO-GO
FOR LOCALS

**REACH FOR
YOUR GOALS**
GET ORGANISED
FOR 2015

**CHINESE
NEW YEAR**
A FEAST FROM
THE ORIENT

DIETING
WHO NEEDS IT

**ORGANISING
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FROM THE READERS



"The Modern day Menzies gave an insightful history of the second longest serving Prime Minister. I was surprised to learn that Mr. Howard was a supporter to Climate Change".

Phillip Wu

"I liked the *Principle's Voice* article on THS Inside Out project. My son attends the school and I didn't know much about it. I am now enlightened!"

Tina Atwood

"I found the content of *Sydney Observer* relevant to my family, as we live and work on the Upper North Shore of Sydney. The magazine informed me about local businesses that I can relate to and deal with. The layout is easy and logical, plus I found some good ideas to keep my grandchildren busy during December/ January in *What's On*".

John Dear

"I loved the article on the plant discovery. So much flora and fauna is disappearing from the world. A discovery on our doorsteps? Amazing!"

Sheila Bowditch

"Your feature in the [December] issue, with a psychic medium telling us what to watch out for in 2015 was remarkable. Having had reason to consult with a psychic recently, I was somewhat sceptical. That was until I read the first line of Ms Erwin's predictions. Tension in the Middle East? Wow! Well that took me completely by surprise. That was almost as much of a revelation as a prediction that a rap artist would also die in 2015. I shall be watching the news intently over the next 12 months to see if either of these predictions come true".

James Reinhardt



Something catch your eye this issue? Tell us in 25 words or more what you liked in this month's magazine. The best entries will be published* and go in the running for our monthly giveaways in the next issue of the magazine. **PO Box 420, Killara NSW 2071 or email editor@kamdha.com with your name, address, and contact number by the 25th of the month.**

*By sending a letter or e-mail to enter the giveaway the sender authorises any use of it as content by *Sydney Observer*.



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ROYAL NORTH SHORE DIVESTMENT BACKLASH

Steph Nash and Sabrina Muysken

THE STATE GOVERNMENT'S plan to sell-off part of the Royal North Shore Hospital (RNSH) has been criticised by the Labor Party as a 'short-term' and 'short-sighted' economic decision.

NSW Shadow Health Minister, Walt Secord, said that as a matter of principle, the land should not be sold when it was already at a premium.

"When the hospital expands in the future due to population growth, it will cost more to expand the hospital facilities," Mr Secord said.

"The State Liberals and Nationals have taken a very short-sighted and short-term approach to land surrounding Royal North Shore Hospital. In the long run, it will cost the taxpayers more... if the hospital needs to expand. "As a principle, the land should be used for clinical and patient purposes," he added.

AVER, the developers behind the private project, have described their development as 'urban renewal' and 'master planning', potentially seeing thousands of residents flocking to the

North Shore area.

Royal North Shore's Dr Tony Joseph, Director of Trauma, argued that the hospital is already struggling at its current capacity, and that any more urban growth could be disasterous.

"For the hospital to grow, it needs land to grow into. The incumbent government's decision to divest, by sale or long-term lease, almost 1 hectare of prime real estate of the southern part of the RNSH campus to the private sector for commercial purposes, makes no sense," he said.

"No other NSW tertiary referral hospital has been required to sell land so that services essential to the hospital, such as staff child care and accommodation for patient families, can be provided".


So, what do North Shore residents think about these plans? *Sydney Observer* took to the streets of Roseville to find out how the public feel about the government's plans.

Lynne Jackson said: "Ridiculous! Royal North

Shore Hospital is a major hospital with multiple people waiting on rooms. The government would be better supported to build medical teaching facilities on the grounds, as opposed to selling it off for property development".

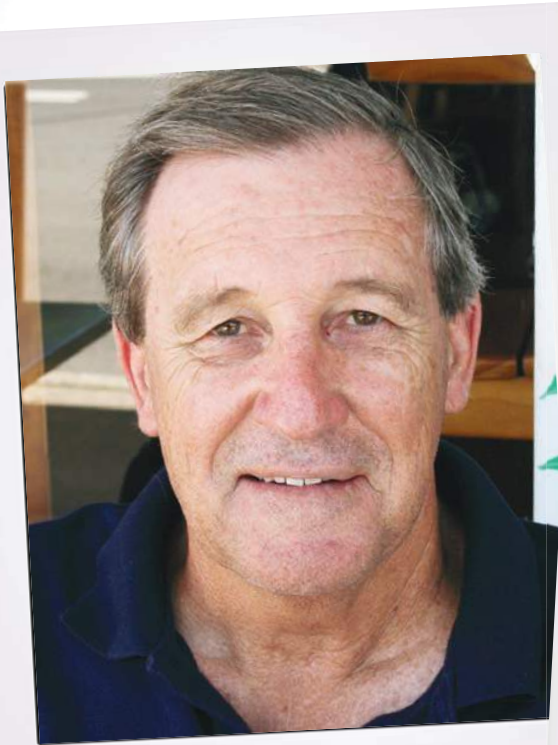
Ms Jackson isn't the only one in Roseville up in arms about the divestment. John McKeon and Bethany Cassie are both disgusted by the sell-off, with McKeon stating that the decision reflects poor government planning.

"I think it's a poor and wrong decision by the state government. Royal North Shore Hospital is a central part of Sydney, and it should remain for public use only" Mr McKeon said.

Ms Cassie, a frequent patient at RNSH, argued that the decision will reduce the North Shore's sense of 'community', and is personally disappointed by the news of the sell-off. "As a person who has been to hospital - including Royal North Shore Hospital - multiple times, I think it will have a significant impact in devaluing the community". 



LOCAL NEWS



"I think it's a poor and wrong decision by the state government"

- John McKeon, Roseville



"...I think it will have a significant impact in devaluing the community"

- Bethany Cassie, Roseville



"The government would be better supported to build medical teaching facilities..."

- Lynne Jackson, Roseville

Hornsby Shire Enraged by Illegal Dumping

RESIDENTS OF HORNSBY SHIRE are being encouraged to report illegal dumping after a record amount of mulch was collected by the Council recently. Hornsby Council has noticed a steep increase in illegal dumping incidents, with 50 tonnes of mulch collected in one day across the Shire in December.

Waste Services employee, Dave Harding, is encouraging residents to record the registration details of any vehicles they see engaging in these activities. According to Dave, "[If] a truck dumping material ... doesn't have the council logo on it, then it is not the Council, and they should report the incident to us to be investigated".

Hornsby Shire Council is using CCTV monitoring in many of the areas that have proven to be popular for illegal dumping, and it has been found that the offenders are often employees from gardening companies. To report an incident, call the Waste Hotline on 9847 4856.

For more information, visit hornsby.nsw.gov.au/waste

Roads are a 'Two-Way' Street



In 2015, Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby Shire Councils are coming together with their 'Two-Way Street' campaign, highlighting the importance of road safety for both motorists and cyclists. Both LGAs boast a large number of recreational and commuter cyclists, which has led to increasing tension between cyclists and drivers, as well as an alarming number of casualties. Therefore, the council wishes to remind road users that roads are a 'two-way street', and mutual respect is required from both motorists and cyclists in order to ensure safety for all.

For tips on road safety for motorists and cyclists alike, visit <http://www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au>

Channel Nine Re-Development Settled

In 2013, Willoughby Council agreed to sell a portion of Scott Street to Channel Nine. After a long process of negotiation and an appeal to the Land and Environment Court, a decision has finally been made.

"We were able to achieve some very important wins for our community, including preventing the proposed increase to 450 dwellings," said Willoughby Mayor Gail Giles-Gibney.

According to Willoughby Council, negotiations have also resulted in additional green space, the retention of a number of significant trees on the land, as well as an absolute maximum of 400 dwellings on the site. The Mayor emphasises that this issue has been of extreme importance to the local community, who played a large role in ensuring that over-development did not occur on the site.

"We will [also] continue to work closely with the community as development applications are lodged for the site" she said.

*Snippets compiled by Stephanie Stefanovic

LOCAL SAFETY WARNING

Stephanie Stefanovic



Don't be a burglary target

Remember: Lock up • Lights on • Keys safe

CHATSWOOD POLICE REPORTED five incidences of theft that had occurred within a four day period in early January. In response to the high level of crime, local officers are urging residents to take basic safety precautions to prevent further robberies from taking place.

According to Senior Constable Paul Cleary, the recent number of break-ins is not unusual for the North Shore area during the school holidays.

"[The] biggest issue at the moment is theft from storage units and letter boxes," Cleary said.

"We're locking a lot of people up for that. Most we've locked up in the past 12 months haven't been from the area, they've been from the outer-west".

Many of the most recent break-ins however, have involved items being stolen from homes and cars, with thieves stealing cash and valuables such as jewellery or handbags. Therefore, police would like to remind all car-owners and residents to lock their doors and windows.

For some thieves, committing a crime in the last few months has been as easy as opening a car door, or entering a house via an open window.

Leaving windows and doors unlocked can lead your property to become known as a *soft target*, which tempts thieves to return or pass on your details to their friends.

Paul Cleary advises residents: "Lock your doors and windows, cars and houses. Don't leave anything outside that can be climbed. Even lock your second story windows – don't leave anything in sight".

"Thieves do tend to only access the downstairs level of multi-storied houses, so don't leave handbags and keys on the kitchen bench".

In other words: "lock it or lose it".

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PROFILE

LAURA ENEVER: NEVER SAY NEVER

Surfs up! Meet the blonde-bombshell from North-Narrabeen who is going to blow everyone out of the water at the upcoming Australian Open. Steph Nash reports.

For a lot of young twenty-somethings, travelling goes hand-in-hand with a string of student loans, large, smelly backpacks, and priceless memories that are tainted with alcohol.

But for Laura, travelling is more than just a pastime. It's a career, an outlet and a way of life.

It took about two weeks for us to get in contact with surfing world champion, Laura Enever. It seems that WIFI is yet to be rolled out in Micronesia, as we struggled to reach the athlete who was on a transnational surfing adventure.

Whilst the rest of us struggle to comprehend the idea of surfing in China, Laura can boast a whole atlas' worth of surfing stories that have been for both work and pleasure.

*Image credit:
Lara Messenger*

Image credit:
Billabong/MacFarlane

I feel like I can sacrifice more, and work harder and train harder, and I'm loving every minute of it - Laura Enever



"I love travelling so much – I think the older I get, the more I get the travel bug," she says.

"I've been travelling and competing since I was 12. Now I'm 23, I can travel independently and just go where I want to go".

Her favourite spots? Brazil, Europe (yes, all of it) and the casual trip to New York City, just to 'mix it up'. Whilst on tour, her travel crew is a mixture of family, friends and competitors. This usually includes a group of surfing greats, such as her famous 'older brothers', Joel Parkinson and Taj Burrows.

Having competed at a professional level for around eleven years, world championships and open titles are just another day at work for Laura. She became the Association of Surfing Professionals' Women's Junior Champion in 2009, and by 2010 she was ranked world no. 2.

But for a while after that, Laura had mysteriously dropped off the radar. After sliding fifty world ranks in under a year, it seemed the pressure of a professional career was becoming too much, and her love for surfing was waning.

"I had competed since I was 12 years old – everything had happened really fast," she says.

"I went on to the pro-junior series, and I was doing so many events . . . I missed out on a lot of school and I was travelling so much. I made it on to the world tour when I was 18 years old, which is what everyone trains all their life for . . . and I

started not really enjoying it".

As a self-described 'happy-go-lucky' type, Laura never thought the pressures of professional sportsmanship would bring her down. But it eventually did, and it came down on her like a tonne of bricks.

"It just caught up with me, and I started not enjoying it anymore. As soon as that started happening, I thought: 'Oh my gosh, I need to take a step back. I can't not love what I'm doing, this is the best job in the world!'"

After a fairly grey period, Laura returned with a vengeance to the surfing scene in 2012, taking out a strong eighth world ranking. The change? A reinvigorated love for her sport.

In an almost existential turn of events, discovering the waves of the world had reignited Laura's passion for surfing. Travelling, it seemed, had really helped Laura to reinvent herself, and realise that the thrill of the waves was the only thing that mattered to her.

"Over the last four years I feel like I've grown, and I've really figured out who I am as a person. I feel like I've put myself in a good place, so I can really start making goals for myself," she says.

"I feel like I can sacrifice more, and work harder and train harder, and I'm loving every minute of it. When I was in Micronesia, we surfed perfect waves for four days, and that was just surfing for the absolute pure love of it. So [I like to] do that in between, and really keep a

good balance of things. That's my key word in life – balance out everything".

Born and bred in North-Narrabeen, the Northern Beaches surfer is too excited to compete in the Australian Open this month. She knows the water, has her own army of supporters, and can even sleep in her own bed.

"I'm so excited for the Australian Open. Everything's going to feel really normal I think. All my family and friends are here, and they're all excited to come down and watch me," she says.

The surfing gene is certainly dominant in the Enever family – and it seems to be the same case for the entire Narabeen community. Laura describes her hometown as the perfect beach-bum suburb, full of surfers, swimmers and supportive families.

"Narrabeen is such a good area for kids to grow up. Everyone surfs together, and there are such fun waves everyday . . . Everyone from North-Narrabeen is like second-family - I have about 100 'older brothers', and they've all taught me, pushed me and pulled me in to line," she laughs.

So, what's next for Laura Enever? Having improved exceptionally to a current ranking of world no. 5, the limits are endless. To supplement her career in surfing, she has a few gigs in modeling, after being scouted by her current sponsor Billabong in 2013.

It's wonderfully reassuring to see women like Laura and her esteemed peers absolutely killing it in what was once such a male-dominated sport. Her drive and passion for her sport is inspiring, and she applauds the women in the industry for their resilience.

"I think surfing is in a really good place right now, I think [women have] found [their] own. We've turned a male-dominated sport in to something that can really be done by both . . . When I go surfing, there are just as many girls or if not more out in the line-up. The ocean is a place for everyone to share and ride waves together. And I think women's surfing has just brought a whole new grace to the sport," she says.

"To any young girls, I'd say enjoy it. To be able to go out on to the ocean every day is just a blessing in itself. That's what I realised. Just enjoy it - enjoy the little things, enjoy riding waves. Anything's possible really". ○



PLANNING FOR PEOPLE



Kim Mullins

THE BETTER PLANNING NETWORK'S latest target is to make 'good planning' an election priority. This follows observations that the government is using the 'back door' to enact some of the more controversial reforms. By making changes to regulations, it allows changes to bypass parliamentary process and avoid public scrutiny.

Likewise, the pre-gateway process allows developers to bypass the Council. By paying a \$20,000 fee, the application is reviewed through the Department of Planning and Environment. This leaves no suburb or town in NSW safe.

Referring to the Premier's appearance at the Property Council of Australia's launch of their NSW election platform, Better Planning Network's current Convenor, Jeanette Brokman said: "It seems the Premier is intent on turbo-charging the planning reforms previously rejected by parliament."

"It's not good enough to tell a highly informed public that their suburb is about to become an urban renewal area, or that their local Crown land will be used for commercial

purposes. Likewise, the practice of industry-led policy and decision making needs to stop. Rather, communities must become an inherent and genuine part of the decision making process" added Ms Brokman.

In response, Better Planning Network has developed a *Planning for People Charter* in collaboration with other peak bodies in NSW. This includes the Heritage Council of NSW, the National Parks Association, and other leading organisations. Designed to ensure that good planning drives state-wide decision making, BPN is now calling on candidates in the upcoming state election to commit to 'good planning' for NSW.

With ICAC exposing political interference of planning in NSW, the Charter highlights the importance of an open, transparent and corruption-free planning system, underpinned by the principles of ecologically sustainable development, heritage conservation and community wellbeing. A 'companion' document accompanies the Charter, outlining mechanisms by which the Charter could be implemented.

Image credit: Michael Mannington

"The Charter is designed to respond to communities who feel marginalised, as developer and business interests increasingly dominate the planning landscape. The Charter provides a positive way forward," continued Ms Brokman.

"It's designed to enable communities to be an integral part of the process and have a genuine say".

With thousands having already signed the Charter, launches are now being rolled out in electorates. Designed to hold local candidates to account and make 'good planning' an important election priority, communities are invited to view and endorse the Charter at <http://thecompanycharter.org>

Kim Mullins is the Deputy Convenor of the Better Planning Network. Created in 2012, Better Planning Network is a powerful coalition of community and environmental groups fighting for a better planning system for NSW. To find out more about a Charter launch, email betterplanningnetwork@gmail.com

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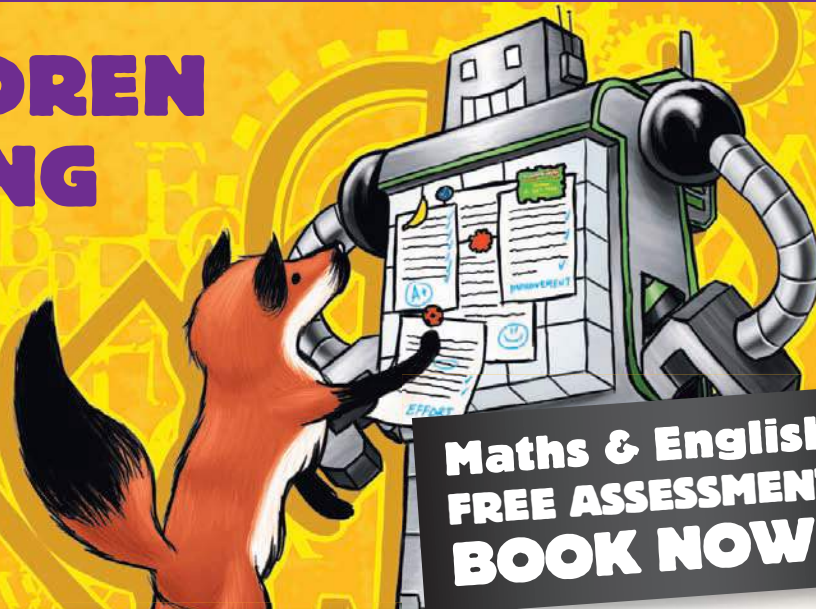
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A LIFETIME OF PROMISES

In the lead up to the state election, *Steph Nash* timelines the political dramas and controversies of the two major parties.

Australian Liberal/National Party

MAKING AN INFORMED decision during any political election is key to upholding the foundations of democracy. Sometimes, the persistent campaigning of political candidates makes it hard to keep track of what's really been happening in parliament. Over the last four years, the state government and opposition have given us a variety of memories – from former Premier, Barry O'Farrell's entanglement with Sydney Water, to the parachute promotion of Shadow Environment Minister, Luke Foley, to leader of the Labor Party.

To help reboot your memory, *Sydney Observer* has put together a timeline of key election promises from both the left and right of politics.



- April 6, 2014: Commercialisation of Royal Botanic Gardens
 - + More tourism and money in the economy
 - Native flora and fauna threatened by development
- July 1, 2014: Electricity market de-regulated
 - + Chance of lower electricity rates from increased market competition
 - Thousands of jobs lost in public sector; could always mean we'd pay more for electricity
- September 10, 2014: \$1 billion Fit for the Future package announced
 - + Create sustainable councils who will lead their communities
 - If councils are already losing \$1 million per day, is this a good investment?
- September 26, 2014: Royal North Shore divestment announced
 - + More money in the economy
 - Rising urban growth will probably lead to bigger hospital capacity problems
- November 20, 2014: \$664 million injection of funds into Goski reforms
 - + Better resources state-wide
 - Controversial reforms; expensive long-term commitment
- January 6, 2015: \$50 million infrastructure boost for regional tourism
 - + Good for residents and tourists; more money in the economy
 - Failures in the past are hard to forget (Newcastle rail, anyone?)
- January 8, 2015: Plans for introducing a container deposit scheme
 - + Environmentally friendly
 - Very costly
- January 18, 2015: Littering fines to be issued from public reports
 - + Crack down on littering
 - How can you police this?
- January 18, 2015: Alcohol interlocks for recurring drink drivers
 - + Better protection on our roads
 - Expensive project
- January 20, 2015: \$1.8 million mental health training programme for personality disorders
 - + Might improve big mental health problem in Australia
 - Risk that services will not be used (many struggle to accept illness)



ON THE AGENDA



Australian Labor Party

September 29, 2014: Sydney Harbour to become Sydney Marine Park

- + Conservation of depleting marine life
- Could have large effects on trades that operate on the harbour

October 17, 2014: \$14 million renewable energy hub for Hunter region

- + Yay, renewable energy!
- Expensive; controversial subject matter

November 3, 2014: Marine conservation policy

- + Will help save our depleting marine life
- Expensive commitment

January 12, 2015: \$300 million upgrade to St George hospital

- + Better health care; better resources
- More costs for rate payers

January 13, 2015: Making NSW the racing capital of Australia

- + More jobs
- Controversy over the welfare of race horses

January 19, 2015: Great Koala National Park built on the North Coast

- + Would save the endangered koalas
- More money for tax payers

January 20, 2015: Newsagency protection laws as primary distribution agents for NSW Lotteries

- + Saves newsagencies from bankruptcy
- Less competitive market for lotteries ○



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State Spin Doctors

The new 'improved' NSW statistics on unemployment might not be as good as we're being told, which could put a dent in the NSW Liberal Party's election campaign.

Steph Nash

Last month, NSW Treasurer Andrew Constance beamingly reported the state's miraculous employment rise.

The new data pull from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) reports a state-wide decrease in unemployment to 5.9 per cent. This figure is 0.1 per cent lower than Western Australia, and 0.2 per cent lower than the national average. "This is an outstanding result that confirms NSW as the number one state economy," Mr Constance said.

"In Labor's last term of government, the NSW unemployment rate was below the national average on seven occasions. Since the 2011 election, it's been below the national average 32 times.

"The NSW Liberals and Nationals have turned this State around. We're back at number one, creating 145, 200 jobs since April 2011 off the back of our investments in the key drivers of the economy" Mr Constance said.

This news, however, does not sit well with

the likes of Australian economist, Professor Steve Keen. Now the Head of Economics, History and Politics at Kingston University, London, Keen spent his early career writing economic reports for Sydney Morning Herald and Forbes Magazine.

In response to the state government's interpretation of the new ABS statistics, Keen said that the Treasurer's comments are misleading, and based on unreliable data.

"ABS' seasonal unemployment data is still weird," he tweeted.

"The rate is down, but it's also the second consecutive fall in aggregate hours worked. It's unreliable data".

Some changes to the ABS survey methods for Labour Force Statistics occurred in October last year, which has changed the national definition of 'unemployment'. To be unemployed by ABS standards, you must have actively searched for employment during the survey attendance week.

The ABS website says: "In accordance with international standards, the ABS includes an 'active' job search criteria to define the unemployed population in the Labour Force Survey (LFS). 'Active' job search steps are those which put a person in contact with prospective employers for work, either directly or through intermediaries, or represent steps towards 'self-employment'".

This surprisingly narrow definition of unemployment sketchily neglects the some 4.6 million people across the country who don't actively seek work because they receive income support or are on a pension.

With the March election so close, we should expect to see more examples of political spin from both major parties. As candidates clash, so too will fact and fiction. The best advice? Stay informed. Read up on both parties' policies, and be the judge yourself. Don't let a political public relations campaign make your decision. ○

Promoting Quality Teaching at Knox Grammar

KNOX GRAMMAR SCHOOL Teacher Mr Matt Stephens has completed a Harvard Graduate School of Education course on 'Instructional Rounds' through the support of the Peter Fitzsimmons (snr) Scholarship.

Mr Glenn McLachlan (Director of Professional Enhancement) and Ms Mel Taylor (Instructional Rounds Co-ordinator) also attended the Harvard course as part of the team-based approach to learning.

One of the key outcomes from their visit is that all prep- and senior school teachers at Knox will conduct 'Instructional Rounds' in 2015, observing and critically reviewing the lessons of other teachers, as part of the School's Professional Learning program.

"We met teachers who faced some amazing challenges in their schools, who were attending the course because teaching and learning progress had become crucial. Instructional rounds is one of the most effective strategies to support whole school improvement," said Matt.

"It was very affirming to hear people respond so positively after hearing what we are doing here at Knox. When we told them every teacher in our school worked with an Instructional Coach and attended professional development sessions with their peers once a fortnight, they were amazed".

The Knox team also visited three like-minded, but very different schools during their visit – Shady Hill School (Cambridge), The Harlem Children's Zone and Promise Academy (New York) and The Avenues School (New York) – to meet with teaching and leadership staff and learn about their efforts to promote quality teaching and improved student outcomes.



Will North, All Rounders Honour List, ATAR 99.95

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Roseville College students, Katrina Hunt (left) and Olivia Arkell (right).

DUAL-DUXES FOR ROSEVILLE COLLEGE

Maggie Rose

FOR MOST YEAR 12 STUDENTS, the HSC and the last year of school can be a stressful time. For some, anxiety isn't an option. Roseville College students, Olivia Arkell and Katrina Hunt, received a Dual-Dux award for 2014 for both achieving impressive results in and out of the classroom.

Arkell, an up-and-comer in the disciplines of arts and science, came seventh overall in biology, and eighth overall in drama. If her multi-talent didn't seem impressive enough, Arkell's extra time was dedicated to her vice-captaincy duties, which included fund-raising and attending events outside of school.

When asked how she managed to fit everything in, Arkell explained that she simply

"didn't want to give anything up". With a passion for music and travel, she found taking a little time out to relax (or play the drums) helped to steer her towards success.

"The HSC isn't your life," she said. "You have to remember that there is definitely life after the HSC".

Katrina Hunt, the second-half of this multi-disciplinary prodigal team, is another excellent example of how passion for extra-curricular commitments can help drive HSC success.

Hunt participated in the 2014 World Junior Athletics Championships in the USA during her HSC year. As unbelievable as that sounds, she managed to take home fifth place overall, showing how brains and brawn can definitely go

hand-in-hand.

As a prefect, sports captain and Senior IGSSA Champion, it's fair to say that Hunt had a lot on her plate during her HSC. Yet, she admits, like Arkell, that she wouldn't have had it any other way.

"It was busy and ongoing. But totally worth it," Hunt said. "I wouldn't have been able to focus on studying without athletics, or vice versa".

So what's next for the dynamic duo? Arkell has her heart set on a bit of overseas travelling, before coming back to Sydney to study a double-degree in arts and science. As for Hunt, she's awaiting to fulfil her dream of helping others, as she's just been enrolled in a Bachelor of Medicine at UNSW.

Stellar Success for Wenona Girls

WENONA GIRLS SCHOOL has celebrated a tremendous success with the latest release of HSC results. The Class of 2014 achieved an outstanding 189 mentions on the Board of Studies Distinguished Achievers' List, with a total of 68 students named. Six Wenona students were listed as Board of Studies All-Round Achievers for attaining marks of 90 and above, whilst five were named as top achievers.

Amongst these high achieving students was Caitlin Lee. Ranking first in the state for her extension history major work, she also picked up an impressive second in legal studies, and ninth in modern history. Caitlin's project provided an analysis of two conflicting historical accounts of the Pinochet's coup in 1973 Chile. Sighting her teacher, Ms Clarke, for her tremendous success, Caitlin and her classmates were instilled with a fervent passion for history.

Grateful to have attended the school since Kindergarten, the successful student praised both staff and students, saying: "The relationship between students and teachers had an interesting dynamic. We could communicate with them on a personal level. It sounds like a cliché, but everyone was really supportive".



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Congratulations to all 2014 graduates and their teachers for the following results:

- Joint Dux: Junior World Athlete, Katrina Hunt, and Vice-Captain, Olivia Arkell
- 12% of graduates named as All-Round Excellence Achievers
- 24% of graduates scored 95+ with 40% of graduates scoring 90+
- Graduates ranked 6th and 8th in NSW for Drama (and OnSTAGE selection), 7th in Biology, and top 15 in German Continuers.

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BOSTES to Shake-Up University Teaching Courses

Steph Nash and Stephanie Stefanovic

IN DECEMBER LAST YEAR, a study published by the Australian Journal of Teacher Education found many secondary teaching students possessed serious literacy skills deficiencies. Around 200 students were assessed in the study, in which two thirds received a result lower than 50 per cent in spelling.

News of the startling report has driven the NSW government into action, prompting Education Minister, Adrian Piccoli to implement some structural changes to university teaching courses. Earlier in the year, the Minister announced that from 2016, all students wishing to study secondary teaching will have to achieve three band-5 results in the HSC as a pre-requisite.

Furthermore, an announcement last month revealed that the Board of Studies for Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) have been commissioned to perform a standards overhaul for secondary teaching courses. A list of BOSTES

recommendations has since been published, including a strict re-structuring of standards for online degrees.

"BOSTES already assesses the content and delivery of teacher education programs against national standards as part of program accreditation, necessary for their graduates to be accredited as NSW teachers," Mr Piccoli said.

"I have now commissioned BOSTES to work with universities and other teacher training institutions on the new, more rigorous approval process and on ways to improve their teaching programs".

President of the NSW Teacher's Federation, Maurie Mulheron, admits that although some institutions have far too low entry levels for teaching courses, the quality of current NSW teachers has not been impacted.

"It's all about supply and demand. Universities such as ACU have been taking

in students with very low ATAR scores because they're attracted to the funding," Mr Mulheron said.

"We don't have a problem with our teachers. Australian teachers are among the most sought-after in the world. This is not about having a problem with our current teachers, it's about supporting them for the future".

Mulheron explained that certain cultural and economic changes have in turn changed the skills required for successful secondary teaching. Innovation in technology has led to new methods of learning, with teachers now needing revised lesson plans to equally engage all students.

"Teaching is becoming a more complex job. With the increased complexity of teaching, it now requires a post-graduate degree as well as an undergraduate degree," he said.

"There ought to be higher standards for initial teacher education. The time to do it is now. This is about the future". ○

Q: What are your hopes for state education in 2015?



Stephanie McConnell, Principal, Turramurra High School

"MY FOCUS IS on providing future focused learning spaces and leveraging these spaces to bring about change in the way we teach students. I would like to see public education really striving to embrace new ways of teaching and learning. This means changing the way parents and students view it, just as much as changing the way teachers think about it. It also means investing in the physical environment of our public schools and doing this in a way that promotes innovation. A big ask, but it is the only way that we will begin to meet the lifelong learning needs of our young people".



Jane Dennett, Principal, Killara High School

"THAT IT CONTINUES to provide an inclusive, challenging and worthwhile education for every student. State education is all about inclusivity, and encouraging every child to be the best that they can be. I hope that the demonstrated and sustained capacity of public education to nurture successful, resilient citizens continues to be recognised. I hope that the provision of contextual funding in public schools makes a difference in the capacity of schools to help young people learn. But most of all, I hope that the young people in our care – every one of them – finds their school a place of encouragement, challenge and respect".



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A Fresh Start for 2015

Linda O'Brien

AS THE YEAR COMMENCES, so too does our desire to start afresh. Many of our resolutions include a revamp of our home, but that first step is often the hardest to make. It is so difficult to know where to start, and the enormity of the task ahead overwhelms before it even begins. But rest assured, even the simplest changes can have enormous impact.

The single most common mistake home decorators make is to decorate in bits and fads. They work diligently on one area, incorporating all that is beautiful and fashionable until complete – and then move enthusiastically to the next space. Sadly, after much effort and expense, the end result is more often than not a mismatch of ideas, with no flow or cohesiveness.

So what is the key to good design? It is simply having a big picture.

1 Start on trend.

There is no point repainting everything in Antique White because your helpful and design savvy friend said that is a great colour! This colour has a fairly yellow hue – not a design trend for 2015! Your new scheme would be starting off a decade too late.

2 Create a design board or folder.

Cut out images from magazines or take photos of things you would like to see in your home. Again, make sure you are following current trends so as not to date your home

before it has even started to evolve. Get samples of flooring, fabrics and colour swatches to add to the overall plan. Make sure it all works together before you spend a cent.

3 Set a budget.

It is so easy to get carried away when redesigning your home. It is important to have a balance of costs within a room. Spend your money on the couch – it is important and needs to last a long time. Ensure it is a timeless and comfortable piece. Cushions get tatty and date. Change these often. Built-in storage is expensive, but looks it, and helps hide everyday clutter. Do it well and it will add value to your home.

4 Streamline.

Now is the time to get rid of all the non-essential items. Take a picture of Great Aunt Lucy's wedding gift and give it to someone who needs it more! Sentimental items in great abundance really do nothing to enhance design schemes.

5 Select one colour scheme that will flow throughout the home.

6 Avoid buying matching items. This leaves a room looking like a show room, and lacks originality.

Linda's design tips:

- Paint your walls in a greyish hue. This becomes your blank canvas and ensures your home will flow smoothly from room to room.
- Paint all woodwork in 5% of the your chosen grey hue. Now the tones are correct.
- Stick to neutral shades for your big-ticket items. Avoid dark bulk items like lounges, especially black, as they are difficult to keep clean and tend to draw your eye. Consider steel grey instead as it softens the area and adds balance.
- Add blasts of colour in geometric patterns for visual impact. These can be used on floor coverings or soft furnishings such as cushions. Wow the world with colour combinations of yellow and grey, duck egg blue and grey, or even red and grey.
- Complete your palette with bold paintings in combinations of blues, greys and yellows that are inspiring and peaceful, or reds, oranges and yellows to add instant warmth.
- Mix up the old with the new. Modern seating paired with an antique table looks sensational. A little bit of animal print goes a long way. Throw in a couple of fur cushions to add a bit of life and design flair.

Linda O'Brien is an interior designer. For more information contact 0409 319 152



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CLASSICALLY MODERN: MONTREAL, CANADA

Steph Nash

SITTING AMONGST THE natural pleasures of the Villeray district in Montreal lies the De Gaspé house. What was once an old duplex, robbed of its characteristics over time, is now a warm family home – modernly styled for practicality, paired with the restored natural grace of its earlier form.

Canadian architects, La Shed Architecture, took on the project and brilliantly managed to combine the new and old styles. It is sustainable living meets rustic antiquity, with a few minimalist and modern twists.

All service areas, including the bathroom and closets, are now positioned near the entrance, which allows for a subtle divide between the vestibule and the living areas. This allows the kitchen to have a more open view of the common areas of the house. Stainless steel in the kitchen helps to add more light to the space, with ceiling rail lights for added flair. The living room itself has double ceiling height for greater spatial awareness. Dark woods and earthy oranges give the space a gentle, inviting touch.

Sliding doors are used around the whole house to help create air circulation. Skylights are used in the bathroom to provide natural lighting, whilst modern white hexagonal tiles give the space a minimalist edge. The free-standing bathtub and large mirror are the heroes of this area, creating a vibe of tranquility and sophistication. Outside, the patio is an artistic muddling of antiquity and modernity, with corrugated steel and woods used to give the space a sense of comfort.

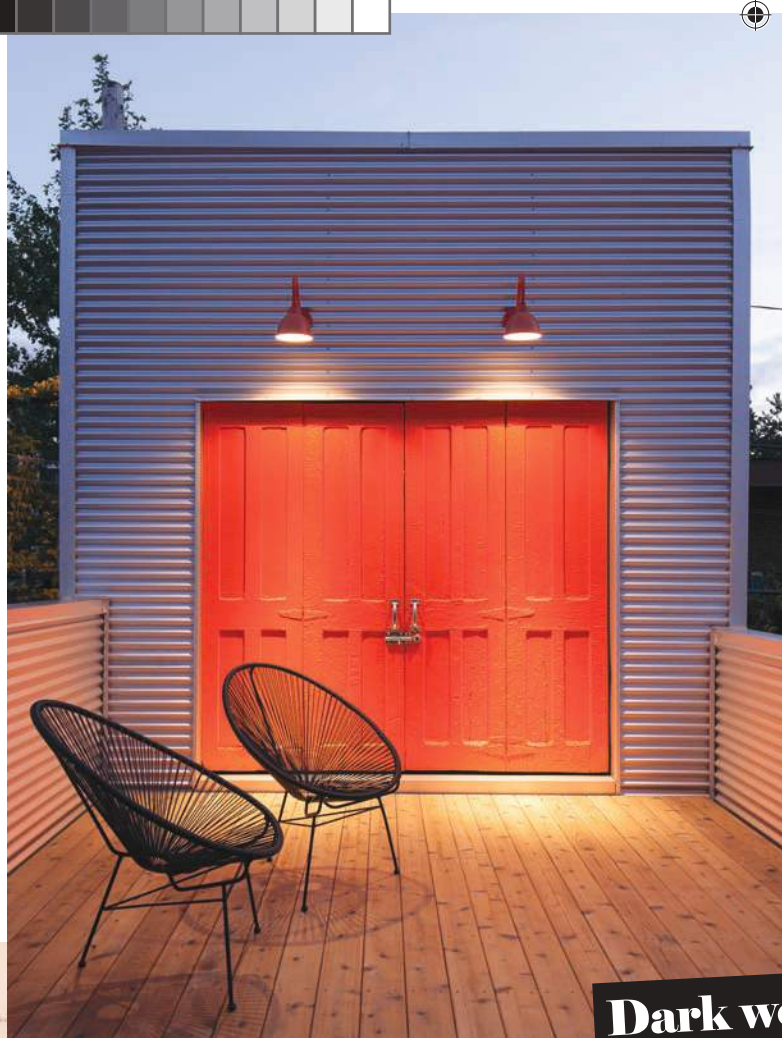
In all, it is the masterful blending of old and new styles that gives this home warmth. From an aged duplex, to a sophisticated and sustainable family home – the De Gaspé house provides us with some inspirational ideas for modern styling.

Images provided by V2 Com Newswire. ○





SYDNEY HOME



Dark woods and earthy oranges give the space a gentle, inviting touch.





Green up your Home and Office with Indoor Plants

Belinda Thackeray

TRANSFORM YOUR INDOOR space into a tranquil and green environment using plants. There are a great range of indoor plants available that not only bring the feeling of the outdoors inside, but also offer positive health benefits by absorbing toxins and providing fresh oxygen.

Carbon dioxide and other chemicals in the air are absorbed through microscopic breathing openings in the plant leaves called stomata. Plants convert this carbon dioxide into oxygen and release it into the air. Plant root microbes absorb volatile chemicals from the air and use them as food. Many studies have also found that greenery in workplaces increases productivity and creates happier, healthier workplaces.

For an office, select small hardy plants that don't need natural light to grow and can tolerate air conditioning. It's a good idea to spray leaves occasionally with a mister if the room is also artificially heated. Try Zanzibar Gem - an attractive palm-like cycad with glossy, dark green leaves that should only be watered occasionally. You could also try Lucky Bamboo with straight, spiral or braided canes. These usually grow in about 10 - 15mm of water and are often stored in clear vases with pebbles or coloured water crystals as support.

At home, most indoor plants thrive in bright spots away from direct sunlight and should occasionally be rotated to avoid lopsided growth towards the light. For a modern look, try structural plants with interesting foliage like Philodendron 'Xanadu', Dracaena 'Tricolour' or Bromeliads - which also have amazing flowers. For a splash of flower, colour you can't go past Cyclamens or the stunning Phalanopsis,

and Cymbidium Orchids. Don't forget indoor classics like Peace Lilies, Maidenhair Ferns and African Violets.

There are a great variety of ceramic, terracotta, timber and lightweight fibreclay pots suitable for use indoors. Check they have a drainage hole and saucer. Coloured pots can be selected to compliment wall colours and furnishings, or be a contrasting colour to create a visual feature. For a simple theme, select a single pot type and repeat the same shape and colour. Position pots in groups of threes or fives; use pot stands or hanging baskets for added height interest; and fill with a selection of lush plants.

Plants grown indoors generally need less water than those outdoors and are often killed by over-watering. Try putting your fingers into the pot and feel if the mix is dry before watering. Water less in winter and remember to remove excess water from the pot saucer to help avoid fungal disease problems and salts building up in the potting mix.

Keep leaves clean using a damp cloth and apply leaf shine to plants with smooth leaves. Only fertilise occasionally - indoor plants grow much slower than outdoors. Use small quantities of control release fertiliser or a weak solution of liquid fertiliser. Invigorate potting mix every couple of years and re-pot as required.

It's easy to use indoor potted plants to add a stylish new dimension to your home or office space.

Belinda is a horticulturist for Eden Gardens. To contact Eden Gardens, please see www.edengardens.com.au



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Sydney Observer Health Corner

Stephanie Stefanovic

Natural Cures Disproved

Increasing numbers of Australians are turning to alternative medicine, but in light of recent findings from the Department of Health, many are questioning whether natural therapies should continue to be subsidised by the government. In a leaked draft report from the department, it was found that of the 17 natural therapies examined, "there was no high quality evidence that any were clinically effective". However, the report adds: "It is important to note that the absence of evidence does not mean that the therapies evaluated do or do not work". Nevertheless, with the rebate soon to cost taxpayers more than \$6 billion a year, the debate continues as to whether or not the benefits of natural therapy are worth the cost.



The Formative Years of Mental Health

Researchers in Victoria strongly believe that the first four years of life are crucial for a person's mental health and wellbeing as an adult. In a long-running Australian study of social and emotional development, researchers have been following the mental health and wellbeing of three generations since 1982. According to the project's scientific director, Deakin University's Professor Craig Olsson, the first four years of life influence who we become as adults and how we cope with anxiety. Professor Olsson has been awarded \$1 million from the National Health and Medical Research Council in order to continue this study with the latest generation. "It would be nice ... to develop interventions [to] grow them in a way that enables them to pass on positive mental health and wellbeing to their own children" said Olsson.

The Top Fitness Trends for 2015

2015 will see some new trends in Australia's fitness regimes. According to the Australian Fitness Academy, high intensity training is set to top the list of fitness trends this year. This form of training involves a high level of effort during relatively brief and infrequent workouts, and is best for people with a reasonable health condition – as opposed to those who are unfit or suffering from health issues. The use of technology to assist exercise is also a 'must' for 2015, with fitness apps and wearable exercise technology constantly improving in order to give consumers detailed information on all aspects of their training. Strength training and yoga have also been listed among the top trends for the year. CrossFit and Pilates both enjoyed popularity in 2014, however experts have not listed them as trends this year, suggesting that perhaps they were merely "fads".



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Dr Ian Sweeney

Back to School Dental Advice

MANY EVERYDAY FOODS in our diet are capable of causing dental decay. When packing a school lunch, it is especially important to remember sweets and lollies are not the only cause of tooth decay.

Most foods including fruits, dried fruit, muesli bars, snack bars, peanut butter, biscuits, crackers, potato chips and popcorn may lead to dental decay. Especially harmful are the sticky fruits and peanut butter that stick to the teeth for long periods of time. Likewise, sipping frozen juice bottles, although refreshing, will also prolong the food source for decay-causing bacteria. Water remains the best option for a refreshing drink.

Many of these foods are hard to avoid, however it is worth reminding children of the importance of having a good drink of water after eating snack foods.

Recent research shows that cheese is one of the healthiest snacks for your child's teeth. In addition to providing large amounts of much-

needed calcium, cheese also does its part to fight cavities. Cheddar, Swiss and Mozzarella all stimulate saliva glands to clear the mouth of debris. Saliva helps to protect teeth by neutralising acid produced after eating sugary snacks. Other good snacks are nuts and fruit (as long as you wash it down with some water straight after you've eaten).

Protecting your children's teeth with a mouth-guard is a relatively easy way to prevent the inevitable pain associated with dental trauma. Mouth-guards can help protect teeth from a wide range of injuries that may occur while playing any form of contact sport. There are many types of mouth-guards, however the best protection is provided by a custom-made mouth-guard from your dentist.

Dentists can make a custom-made mouth-guard from a simple impression or mould that can be taken of the mouth. It usually takes less than a week for one to be manufactured and they are available in all team colours!



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How To: Stick to Your **2015** Resolutions

Jocelyn Harvey

Well, it appears we've galloped into 2015! With the pace of things, how have you been going with keeping your New Year's resolutions? Often creating the time, space and commitment to making change is the challenging part. If in the past you've had trouble keeping resolutions, then 2015 might be the year you can say that you've successfully achieved your goals. Here are seven great tips to ensure you stick to your resolutions, and create real and positive change for yourself.

1. Put it in writing and keep it in sight

There is something very powerful about the process of thinking about your resolutions, and then writing them down on paper. Write down your goals using different colours and symbols to appeal to your creative and intuitive side. Seeing it written in your own handwriting triggers a sense of ownership and accountability to yourself. Once you've created your resolution list or artwork, be sure to place it where you can see it every day. If you read your resolution statements before you go to sleep and when you wake up, you are more likely to retain focus.

2. Keep it simple, realistic and specific

A common mistake when making resolutions is making one broad sweeping statement, which can be difficult to follow. But don't fret! By simplifying your statements and pinpointing specific behaviours and actions, you can make it easier for yourself to reach your goal. For instance, you may say: "I want to be better at my job". This statement may sound good at first, but when you think about it, there are lots of ways to do it. Having too many options in carrying out a resolution be confusing or overwhelming.

3. Break it down

The best way to achieve goals is by breaking them down into stepping-stones, or a series of smaller goals. You are less likely to feel overwhelmed by monitoring your progress against mini-goals, and it's easier to make small adjustments as needed. This also sets you up for success, and you can celebrate the small milestones along the way to help keep you motivated.

4. Set a timeline

A schedule for accomplishing each resolution helps to keep you in check throughout the year. A good way to do this is to set monthly or even weekly goals. Through this, you can be aware of your deadline for each aim, and know just how much effort you'll need to exert in order to reach that goal on time.

5. Be in the company of people who know about your resolutions

A little encouragement from friends and family goes a long way in helping you keep your resolutions. If the people around you know that you are intent on keeping a particular resolution, they can remind you or even help you as you go along. Be sure to ask for support, and be clear about how and when you would like to receive it. If you share the same resolutions, you can do activities together such as attending a personal development course, or eating the same meal together 2-3 nights a week.

6. Politely listen to any fears

If you find that old, limiting beliefs are coming back to haunt you, consciously become an observer and ubiquitously take note of your emotions and behaviour. This helps you to remove yourself from the 'story', and you are more likely to be able to stay in power. Visualise yourself connecting with your higher-self or guardian angels, and ask them for encouragement, support and guidance to help you reconnect with your power and courage. Simply see fear as a precursor to letting go of a part of your identity that no longer serves you.

7. Stay positive, even if you falter

Everyone makes mistakes and has lapses. But blunders along the way shouldn't discourage you from following through on your resolutions. Even if you've failed to reach your goal in the first few months, every single day is a new day and a new beginning. Learn to compromise, and keep each objective as realistic as possible. Remember, you made these resolutions in order to enrich and improve your life, and because they were important to you. Always bear in mind that each small step you take matters.

Jocelyn Harvey is a holistic counsellor and change specialist at Transform Within, North Wahroonga. To contact Jocelyn, see transformwithin.com.au



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Picking the Perfect Picnic

Maggie Rose

The Australian Summer and the outdoors are made for one another. This season, take a greener approach: grab a blanket and a basket, and head out for a picnic or a family fun day at the park. Parks have everything: sun; shade; and all the space to roam, stroll and play. The atmosphere is peaceful, yet still buzzing with families and groups of friends. One of the great things about parks is that there's one on every corner, and with a few essentials, you can make it your own. Planning for any sized event or gathering is easily possible, whether it be a small work lunch, a kids birthday party, or as Valentine's Day approaches, a picnic in the park with that special someone.

Wahroonga Park

Not just for the locals, many from a far have found this little gem in the Hornsby area. Situated right next to the station, this park is great for any sized gathering, whether it's a stroll by yourself, or a wedding or two! One of its great features is the gazebo located in middle of the park, which comes in handy when the weather starts to turn.



Royal Botanic Gardens

You can't go past one of Sydney's main attractions – the Royal Botanic Gardens. With over 30 hectares of luscious greenery and parklands, there are many activities to do, including the rainforest walk, perusing the herb garden, or chilling out at the Palm House Exhibition.



Balmoral

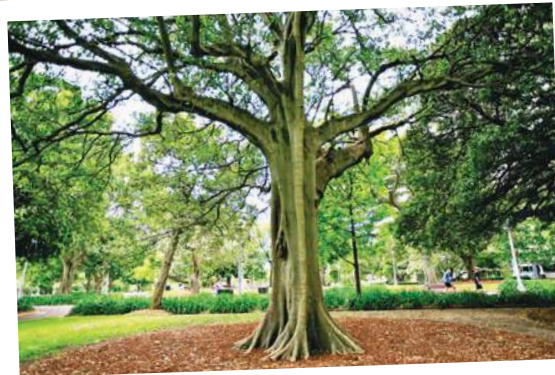
If you can't quite venture away from the beach, but still want to be in arm's length of the parklands, then Balmoral is a great fit!

Located in the heart of Mossman, the park is fitted with fixtures such as barbecues, park benches and tables that lookout to the beach. In a nutshell, Balmoral is the perfect place for outdoor festivities.



Hyde Park

Even though Hyde Park is in the heart of the city, you can almost get lost in it. The vast space is great for lunch breaks, and there's a neat water attraction in the centre for the kids. For those who want some shade, there's plenty of tree coverage, but still enough sun for those who want some added vitamin D.



Centennial Park

Away from the city and suburbia, this scenic Moore Park location is perfect for a camping getaway. The parklands have much to offer, such as bike-hire, tours and the Moonlight Cinema, which runs from December through to March. ○



Picnic Checklist

- Basket
- Blanket/Rug
- Rubbish bags
- Assortment of food
- Utensils
- A great book

Picnic Must-Haves:



Hamper Basket Set (for 2)
\$38.60 AUD
www.thehunt.com



Picnic Rug
\$39.95 AUD
www.bootblankets.com.au



Picnic Glass Holders
\$49.95 AUD
www.petersofkensington.com.au



Picnic Cutlery Set
\$8.00 AUD
www.etsy.com



Sabrina Muysken

Sydney's newest tour company, Sydney OUTback, is more than just another city touring group. Offering an array of rare land- and water-based expeditions into Australia's second oldest National Park, Ku-ring-gai Chase, visitors are treated to a one-of-a-kind wilderness experience.

Founder and owner Paul Pickering says Sydney OUTback endeavors to provide guests with "an immersive exploration of nature, indigenous culture and our golden beaches, whilst being a relaxing day out at the same time". With as many as 1500 recorded and identified indigenous sites across the vast uninhabited National Park, Paul and his wife Kaje want to remind people of the incredible wildlife that exists on Sydney's very doorstep.

After spending his childhood discovering the waterways of the Hawkesbury River and National Park, Paul has collaborated with local authorities and industry experts to create a series of unique tours that best encapsulate Sydney's authentic self.

Offering both full- and half-day tours, as well as a variety of self-drive options, Sydney OUTback ensures visitors with a tranquil yet memorable experience through Sydney's pristine wilderness and commonly forgotten outback.

For more information on Sydney OUTback's half-day and full-day tours, see sydneyoutback.com.au

How many people in your friendship circle constantly talk about their latest diet craze? Or have been on a diet? Or annoyingly push you to go on a diet? The truth is, you don't actually need to diet! *Cue hallelujah chorus* **Stephanie Cachia explains.**



Diet? Pfft



Many well-accepted diets of today focus on restricting your kilojoule intake.

However, studies have shown that this method of dieting may not provide the body with any benefits. Why not? The more you restrict your food intake, the faster your blood sugar levels become depleted. Our brains utilise our blood sugar levels as a primary energy source. Low blood sugar levels only make you feel deprived and tired, which may in turn cause you to over-eat during your next meal, and steer yourself towards poor food choices later in the day.

Dieting also is responsible for altering your hunger and satiety hormones, known as *ghrelin* and *leptin*. These hormones act on a small component of the brain, known as the *hypothalamus*. When your tummy begins to growl and you start to feel hungry, the ghrelin hormone is stimulated from the stomach lining into the blood stream, where it crosses the blood-

brain-barrier to the hypothalamus to stimulate appetite. When you have eaten enough and you start to feel full, leptin is secreted by *adiposetissues* (fat cells), into the bloodstream, across the blood-brain-barrier to the hypothalamus, where leptin signals you to put down the fork and stop eating. This means that the more fat you have in your body, the more leptin you have and the less food you will eat.

You would think that the larger you are, the less likely you would be to eat large portions, and the easier it would be to lose weight. Sadly, this is not the case. Overweight people are more prone to leptin-resistance where the adipose tissues over-produce the leptin hormone. The brain does not register this response, and thinks that you're still starving. Ultimately, increased body fat can make resisting hunger very difficult. If you're trying to lose weight, your body may naturally make you feel more hungry and result in the yo-yo dieting phenomena.

So, how can we maintain our energy levels throughout the day to resist those endless cravings? Forget the crash diets and focus on making healthy food choices that include vegetables, legumes, whole grains, reduced-fat dairy products, fruits and protein sources, such as lean meats, poultry, eggs and nuts. These healthy food choices will enable a slower and more sustained energy release to keep you fuller for longer. You should also eat smaller meals and snacks when you feel hungry, which will increase your metabolism and maintain stable energy levels throughout the day. Drink plenty of water, and avoid drinks with added sugar or alcohol to prevent your body from being prone to cravings.

Next time you have a growling tummy, don't ignore it! Nourish your body with healthy food choices that don't compromise your health and wellbeing. Stay sustained and energised for longer! ○



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McWow

Steph Nash

If I'd asked you to guess where the burger pictured was from, I bet you wouldn't have picked McDonald's.

Only three McDonald's branches in the state are running the Create Your Taste trial, with Waitara the North Shore's closest. Since November 2014, McDonald's Waitara have been serving the new gourmet range, with operator Sam Alvaro proud to admit that it has really taken off.

"The response has been outstanding," Alvaro said.

"It's blowing all expectations out of the water; that's why McDonald's are now looking at rolling this out across the country".

The new menu is self-service with a twist. Customers have around 19 different ingredients to select from on a life-size touch screen menu, including bun choice options, various sauce flavours and even a choice to determine the cut of your chips. Once you've placed your order, you receive a vibrating token to let you know when your food is ready – just like you would at a bistro or pub.

As the dietary habits of Australians change, so too does the popularity of food franchising. At the moment, raw-food and gourmet dining are definitely in, representing a considerable drop in the popularity of convenient take-away foods.

"Customers have been telling us for years that they've wanted something different," Alvaro said.

"Customers are demanding a better quality burger, fresher ingredients, and something that they can have more say about. We listened, and now we're doing it".

The verdict?

Unlike anything you've ever eaten at McDonalds, that's for sure. The size of the burger was considerably larger than usual, giving the eponymous 'Big Mac' a run for its money. There are a few bun choices, including a brioche bun if you're thinking of going fancy, or a lettuce leaf for the gluten-intolerant. The meat is limited to Angus beef for now, with plans to introduce white meats (and possibly pulled-pork) in the future.

There are an impressive amount of toppings and salads on offer, including two different styles of bacon, and around five different types of

cheese. Our pick? An Angus patty with avocado, red onion, lettuce, tomato, beetroot, crispy bacon, caramelised onion sauce and swiss cheese, all on a brioche bun.

Yes, it was pretty sensational.

What sets the new burgers apart is the quality of the ingredients. The meat had a juicy tenderness, which is a nice change for McDonald's. The salads were plentiful and crisp, and the bacon strips had a genuine smokey flavour.

But it seemed it wasn't just us who were impressed.

We bumped in to a couple of high-viz clad scaffolders on their lunch break, who were silently engrossed with their gourmet Classic Cheeseburgers.

Brad Hodges admitted that in the past he had tried to "avoid" eating at McDonald's, but

now he's had the new range, he says it's a rather popular smoko choice.

"[The Classic Cheeseburger] really filled me up, it was delicious. You can really taste the beef in it. I will definitely be back," he said.

Hodges' colleague, Michael Walker, described the change as more wholesome – in both ingredients and in service.

"I liked the fact that it felt like I got it from a burger shop, rather than a takeaway shop," he said.

"It felt like there was more love in it than a normal McDonald's cheeseburger".

But for what you indulge with in quality, you sacrifice with timing and service, right?

Wrong. Sure, it's not going to be as quick as your normal cheeseburger or Happy Meal, but you should have your customized burger within 6-7 minutes. ○





A PLACE TO BE IN **ANY** SEASON

Anand Kumria



On the last Friday before School returns, you would imagine that the North Shore would be dead quiet.

Well, you'd be wrong. You've also probably tried Thai food before, so you'd imagine you'll know what to find on the menu. Wrong again!

Water is at the heart of life, and when entering Season Thai, Gordon, you are treated to the Thai custom of water at your table. Season Thai has been in Gordon for over seven years, and has gradually become a key player in the North Shore dining scene.

Owner Gift (Kunnika Jitpiromsak) is indeed a gift to the culinary delights of Thai cuisine. Her manager Vahn and team do her proud, as they are welcoming, polite, friendly and professional. They treat you like part of the family, making you feel relaxed and ready to dive in to the menu.

The food is modern Thai with real focus on fresh, local produce. The venue is run efficiently and the staff are buzzing in and out of kitchen. That said, nothing seems to be too much trouble for the floor staff and the chefs. The atmosphere

is warm and friendly, and the décor reflects this in texture and in colour palette.

Our group decided to trust Vahn to select our dishes for the night, and we were not disappointed at all. The dishes were aromatic, authentic and full of flavour. All ingredients were fresh, and all portions were of a generous size.

For our entrée, we had curry puffs. These were spicy, and well-accompanied by sweet chilli sauce. We were also privy to seared scallops with Thai chilli salsa, which were delicious. Coriander gave the scallops a peculiar zing and freshened the palate. The presentation of the dish was also delightful, sitting with herbs in round petite glass. We were also treated to Prawn Betel, which was a sauteed prawn layer upon betel nut leaf, with caramelised shredded coconut rounding out the flavour. Mildly spicy, with a whole lot of taste.

Amongst the variety of our mains was a traditional fish curry, made with the freshest Barramundi and lovingly daubed with a spicy coconut sauce. One of the highlights was the Thai Crispy Pork – Prik Khing Crispy. Imagine

pork crackling, accompanied by the smell of the tastiest Thai spices. We also had the traditional Pad Thai, but with a twist. Wontons! And King Prawns! Everything you never thought you'd have, but secretly always wanted.

The attention to detail and the combination of ingredients can only be the result of a master chef in control. Every sliver of a herb had an impact on the dish, and enhanced the natural flavours of the food.

We were privileged to a variety of very tasty and delicious foods, which were combined with perfectly matched Felton Road Riesling.

Beware, no one can refuse the deliciously refreshing mango gelato and mango pudding on the dessert menu. Even after a ten course degustation, you will be surprised at how far your belt will stretch.

Why not try it for yourself, and experience the excellent Thai cuisine and hospitality at Season Thai. ○

To book with Season Thai, call (02) 9499 9093. See seasonthai.com.au for more details.



CHINESE NEW YEAR

Steph Nash

Kick start the New Year with some light and healthy exotic dishes from China. This month, our recipes channel the upcoming celebration of Chinese New Year, which we hope will get your taste buds dancing and your waistline receding.

COCONUT PRAWNS WITH AIOLI (Serves 4)

Image: recipebridge.com

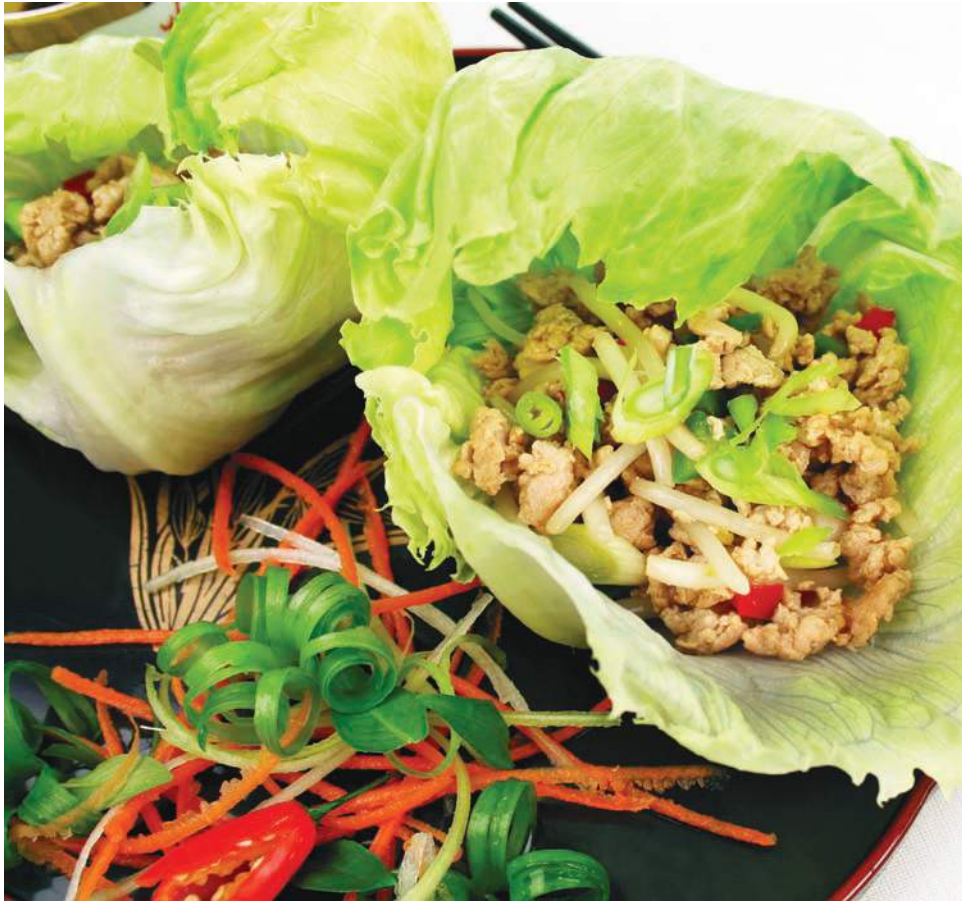
Ingredients

- 1 lime
- 1 cup shredded coconut
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup plain flour
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 1 cup Japanese panko bread crumbs
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 16 green prawns

Steps

1. Combine shredded coconut and breadcrumbs in a small bowl
2. Crack eggs in a large mug, and whisk until liquified
3. Sift flour into a separate small bowl
4. Shell and devein prawns
5. Line a plate with grease-proof paper for prawns to rest on
6. Dip prawns into flour so that the whole surface area is lightly covered
7. Dip floured prawns into egg mixture
8. Dip prawns into coconut and breadcrumb mixture, ensuring to coat most of the surface
9. Shallow fry prawns on a medium/high heat
10. Combine the juice and zest of the lime with the mayonnaise and garlic
11. Serve



**CHICKEN SAN CHOY BOW** (Serves 4)Image: sophiectaylor.com**Ingredients**

- 500g chicken mince
- 1/2 can water chestnuts, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 can bamboo shoots, drained and rinsed
- Soy sauce
- Oyster sauce
- Peanut oil
- Sesame oil
- Sesame seeds
- Cos lettuce
- 1 packet fried noodles
- 3 tbsp grated ginger
- 1/2 bunch spring onion, diced

Steps

1. Add 2 tbsp peanut oil and 2 tbsp of sesame oil to pan
2. Add grated ginger and spring onions to pan
3. Heat chicken in pan on a medium heat
4. When chicken is almost cooked, add chestnuts and bamboo
5. Add 2 tbsp oyster sauce and 2 tbsp soy sauce
6. When chicken is fully cooked, take off heat
7. Add fried noodles to the mixture
8. Serve inside individual lettuce leaves with sesame seeds sprinkled on top

MANGO PUDDINGImage: keeprecipes.com**Ingredients**

- 1 cup hot water
- 1/2 tbsp gelatine
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 cup evaporated milk
- 1 1/2 cups mango puree
- Extra evaporated milk to garnish
- Diced mango pieces to garnish
- 10 shot glasses

Steps

1. Pour hot water into a small bowl and sprinkle with gelatine, making sure to stir and combine
2. Leave to stand for 3 minutes, or until gelatine dissolved
3. Add sugar and stir, ensuring not to produce air bubbles
4. Add evaporated milk and stir
5. Mix in mango puree
6. Pour through a sieve and into the glasses
7. Place cling wrap over the top and refrigerate overnight
8. Garnish with evaporated milk and mango pieces





Doughnuts doing doughnuts

The sugary, all-American doughnut has received more than its fair share of attention lately.

From its humble beginnings as recurring motif on *The Simpsons*, to its unofficial adoption by policemen everywhere - it's safe to say that the doughnut has withstood the test of time, and is now doing better than ever.

Culinary trends of the 21st century have pushed the boundaries of traditional foods and beverages. Heston Blumenthal came in to the public eye in the early 2000s with his scientific approach to cooking. Using a culinary method known as *molecular gastronomy*, Blumenthal completely revolutionised the way we think about food. Anything became possible. Ramen-burger? Sure! A cup of milk made out of a cookie? You got it!

Arguably, the best example of 21st century creativity and innovation in food can be seen in the doughnut. It has shape-shifted more than four times in the last two years, causing surge sales for pastry chefs, and soaring sugar levels for consumers. With the latest doughnut hybrid released just before the new year, it will be interesting to see how the pastry continues to change in 2015.

Tur-whaaten? OMG. Steph Nash explores the modern doughnut evolution.



DECEMBER 2014: THE DOUGHNUT TURDUCKEN

Deep in the Frankenstein labs of American culinary company, Chow, spawned the deadly Doughnut Turducken. Technically, it's an apple fritter, encased in a custard doughnut, glazed with chocolate and coated in sprinkles. It is a masterpiece for gourmet foodies, and a nightmare for diabetics. The term 'turducken' is a grammatical portmanteau, representing a turkey, double-stuffed with duck and chicken. With origins dating back to India in the 1800s, the turducken is now a common feast for families during American Thanksgiving.



APRIL 2014: THE WONUT

American dessert restaurant, Waffles Cafe, created a doughnut and waffle hybrid - another portmanteau cutely known as the wonut. What started as a modest culinary experiment is now a cult sensation, with chef Alex Hernandez currently capitalising on his 11 different flavoured wonuts. The strangest? Peppered bacon with a maple glaze. Sydney-siders can grab a selection of wonuts at Paramount Coffee Project in Surry Hills.

**AUGUST 2013: THE DOUGHSCUIT**

A biscuit or a doughnut? *Porque no los dos?! Chicago* pastry specialists Endgrain mixed their two signature dishes into one, creating a light, creamy and crunchy hybrid. The unique mixture is lightly fried, glazed, sliced in half and delicately filled with crème fraiche. Chefs, Enoch and Caleb Simpson, have a few varieties on sale at their restaurant, including a very popular doughscuit filled with chocolate ganache.

**JANUARY 2013: THE CRONUT**

The inventor of the cronut, Dominique Ansel, is now arguably as popular a chef as Heston Blumenthal. Known by foodies and gluttons alike, Ansel's culinary innovation jet-started his career in the food industry. In the early days, his signature cronuts were scalped on the black market for hundreds of dollars. Essentially, the cronut is a delicate croissant/doughnut hybrid. Plain and simple, but forever a favourite. Cronuts are a hot menu item in Sydney coffee shops, with Brewtown Newtown known to be one of the city's most favoured. ○






1

SYDNEY ROCK 'N' ROLL & ALTERNATIVE MARKET
 10:30am – 5pm
 Cost: \$5.
 Children under 12 free.
 Markets meets music! Dazzle your eyes with the glitz and glamour of the rockabilly era, and peruse a variety of 50s paraphernalia.
Where: Manning Bar & Manning House, Manning Road, University of Sydney, 2006.
Contact: 02 9563 6000



6-15

SHEN YUN
 Matinee from 2pm
 Cost: from \$65
 Renowned classical Chinese dance company, Shen Yun, uses around 400 costumes to bring to light 5000 years of ancient Chinese history. A great way to bring in the Chinese New Year.



14

MAYHEM – ZEIGFELD CLUB'S VALENTINE'S DAY CABARET
 7pm – 10pm
 Cost: \$75. 18+
 Treat your loved one with this risqué evening of Ziegfeld's infamous burlesque.
Where: Justice & Police Muesum, cnr Albert St and Phillip St, Circular Quay 2000.
Contact: 1300 448 849

FEBRUARY



19

MARDI GRAS FILM FESTIVAL 2015
 From 1pm
 Start your Mardi Gras celebrations early by attending Queerscreen's Mardi Gras Film Festival.
Where: George St Cinemas, 505 George St, Sydney 2000.
Contact: 02 9332 4938

WANDERLUST YOGA FESTIVAL
 From 11am
 Channel your inner yogi at Australia's biggest yoga festival. The event promises three days of activities, talks and parties guaranteed to suit persons of any ability.
Where: Cockatoo Island.
Contact: <http://www.cockatooisland.wanderlustfestival.com>

20-22



19-22

CHINESE LANTERN CARNIVAL
 10am – 10pm
 Cost: Free
 Bring the whole family down to Tumbalong Park for Chinese New Year, and enjoy the magical festivities and events in celebration of Chinese customs.
Where: Tumbalong Park, Sydney, 2000.
Contact: (02) 9267 6568



2015

THRILLER LIVE
 From 1pm
 Ticketed Entry
 Reminisce in the former glory of the king of pop for this new Michael Jackson musical at Lyric Theatre. Thriller Live spent six record-breaking years on show in London's West End.
Where: Lyric Theatre, Pirrama Rd, Pyrmont 2009.
Contact: 1300 795 267

Feb 26 – March 15



SOUNDWAVE SYDNEY
 Ticketed Entry
 Get your music fix this year at the annual Soundwave Festival in Sydney. The stellar line up includes alternative rockers Fall Out Boy, and 90s grunge band The Smashing Pumpkins.
Where: Olympic Park, 2127
Contact: soundwavefestival.com

Feb 28 – March 1

GORDON MARKETS
 Cost: 50c for entry
 Operating for over 25 years, Gordon Markets boasts over 100 merchants specialising in items such as clothing, furniture, antiques, stationary, tools, books, plants and food. All funds raised are donated to charitable causes, so come along and see what you can find!

When: 2nd Sunday of every month, 8.30am to 3.00pm
Where: Second floor of the Council car park in Wade Lane, between Gordon railway station and Gordon shops on Pacific Highway



Sydney Observer February Giveaways

Birrung the Secret Friend, Jackie French, HarperCollins
RRP: \$12.99

The first of a new series by Children's Laureate, Jackie French, *The Secret Histories* is set in 1700s colonial Australia, and paints a soft picture of the uneasy relationships between the indigenous and the white settlers. The novel centres around a young indigenous girl, Birrung, who lives in secret with the Chaplain of the Australian colony, Mr Johnson, and his wife. Birrung stumbles upon two young orphans, Barney and Elsie, who are generously taken in by the Johnsons. As Barney becomes all the more infatuated by his new friend, Mrs Johnson warns him that Birrung's culture and existence must remain the family's biggest secret.

A delicate blend of history and fiction, *Birrung the Secret Friend* is a heart warming story about friendship, colonialism, diversity and equality. French's latest is a must-read for primary and secondary students - *Sydney Observer* has 1 copy available for a lucky reader. For your chance to win, simply tell us what your favourite feature has been this month in 50 words or less.



HOW TO ENTER

If you would like to enter any of the giveaway draws, tell us in 50 words or less, what you liked in this month's magazine. The best entries will be published* and go in the running for our monthly giveaway in the next issue of the magazine.

PO Box 420, Killara NSW 2071 or email editor@kamdha.com with your name, address, and contact number by the 20th of the month.

Fifty Shades of Grey Mini Pack, OPI
RRP: \$29.95

With the much anticipated film adaptation of E L James' *Fifty Shades of Grey* set for release on the Valentines Day weekend, luxury nail care brand OPI have unveiled a new range of hues themed ala Christian Grey. The sultry and suggestive new 'shades' are as dark as the book itself: sophisticated chromes and edgy metallics give a powerful, professional look, with a smouldering charcoal and deep red on the side, for shattering dreams and breaking hearts.

OPI's *Fifty Shades of Grey* range explores the passion, luxury, power and sensuality that is represented in the film. *Sydney Observer* have five mini packs on offer for the most bold of writers - simply tell us in 50 words or less about your favourite feature in this months magazine.



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SPIRITUALLY INCLINED?

Sydney Observer's resident psychic, Kerrie Irwin, is on hand for all of your superstitious or otherwise ethereal requests.

If you're interested in getting in contact with a deceased family member, or looking for some spiritual guidance, please email your questions, along with your name, age and place of birth, to editor@kamdha.com

Selected responses will be published in Sydney Observer's March issue.

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