

# Sydney **Observer**

MAY 2013 - FREE

## Julie Goodwin

Shares her secrets for cooking at gatherings

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**6**

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**FROM THE TEAM**

We're now in the last month of autumn, and as the weather starts to cool down people start thinking about how they will fill the colder months. The best thing about winter is the snow and the skiing that comes with it. We take a look at Australian and New Zealand ski destinations to determine where you get the best value for your money (p. 42).

Statistics show more Australians are heading overseas at the moment because of the strong Aussie dollar. If you're planning on doing the same, make sure you read our story on the importance of travel insurance (p. 14).

Stuck for ideas about what to do on Mother's Day? Take some inspiration from our interview with Julie Goodwin (p. 16) and cook a meal at home, or consider one of our Mother's Day brunch picks for something extra special (p. 40).

Don't forget to enter the competition to win our special giveaways for your mum! (p. 49)



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## DEVELOPMENT IN KU-RING-GAI

What I particularly liked about this month's magazine was the balanced set of articles by Elaine Malicki and Dugald Mackenzie (April 2013, pp. 8-9) who wrote about the issue of development in the Ku-ring-gai area. This was an in-depth analysis rather than the flighty, quick news grabs approach one finds in other local papers. It is good to read intelligent articles that take a point of view and allow the reader to think critically about big picture issues that are important to them. It sure beats the mindless reporting of someone's lost dog or unimportant luncheon meeting.

Syd Smith, Turramurra

## PRAISE FOR ARCHIBALD PRIZE WINNER

Rose Moloney's article on Guy Morgan's work (April 2013, p. 12) was insightful and timely. The article revealed the strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity, as Rose Moloney has outlined how Guy Morgan continued to paint, in spite of having suffered a retinal detachment. Such determination is particularly noteworthy; consequently a visit to the Kaleidoscope Gallery, Paddington where this painting (as part of a series), is being displayed, would be a most rewarding experience. Thank you, Rose for highlighting this artist's self portrait, complete with the Peter Pan motif.

Helen Kensity, Turramurra



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Sally Rose Lee, Epping

## EDUCATION IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR NEW FATHER

Pragmatic, pensive and probative stories. The articles about autism and the right time for kids to start learning their ABC's (April 2013, pp. 20-21) had relevance to me as a new father.

Frank Krstic, West Ryde



If you would like to enter any of the giveaway draws, 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 giveaway in the next issue of the magazine. **PO Box 420, Killara NSW 2071 or email [editor@kamdha.com](mailto: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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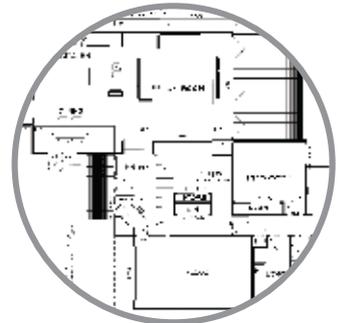


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by Steve Russell\*

# THE PROSPECT OF COUNCIL MERGERS

**WITHIN THREE YEARS** almost half of the councils in NSW will not be financially sustainable. This is the alarming conclusion of a recent NSW Treasury report into the state of local government, making it clear that reform is urgently needed. While Hornsby Shire Council, which I represent, is doing quite well compared to many other councils, it is not immune to the effects of the \$7.2 billion infrastructure backlog that currently exists throughout the state.

An even more significant report was released in April, from the Independent Local Government Review Panel, which was charged with the task of finding ways to give ratepayers value for their hard-earned money. Among its recommendations was a readjustment of borders that would, for instance, see Hornsby Council give the

suburb of Epping to an expanded Parramatta Council, then join forces with Ku-ring-gai Council.

Merging councils is an obvious option when trying to streamline the way services are delivered to local communities. Hornsby Shire is one of the biggest in the Sydney basin with a large budget. Yet still we find our strategic capacity is limited when delivering large infrastructure like the Hornsby Aquatic Centre. That project is moving forward very successfully, but it's worth pondering how much better it could have been if we had greater resources at our disposal. Local government needs to learn to stand on its own feet without relying upon grants from state and federal governments.

That's why I embrace the Panel's recommendations and I especially welcome panel chairman Professor Graham Samson's comments that we need a better calibre of representation on councils. How-

ever, I also believe that the government should look at even greater opportunities than those flagged by the Panel. For example, a combined Hornsby, The Hills and Ku-ring-gai Council would bring strategic capacity not seen before in local government in NSW.

There are some councils that are eagerly eyeing off the territory of their neighbours and others that are manning the barricades against any suggestion of amalgamation. Neither attitude is helpful. What's needed is a calm and rational conversation, weighing the pros and cons of all proposals as we look for the best way to deliver value to the people who have elected us to represent them.

\*Steve Russell is the Mayor of Hornsby Shire. He has lived in and around the Hornsby area for over 30 years.

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by Dugald Mackenzie\*

# AMALGAMATION IN KU-RING-GAI?

**FEAR IS A DRIVING** factor in people's lives. Fear of failure, fear of the unknown and fear of change. In fact fear is used by many people and groups to control people and to stop change or progress. The Not So High group used this effectively during the last local council election to create in people's minds, the fear that our area was about to be taken over by evil developers and that the leafy suburbs were going to form a huge urban ghetto. The reality though is far different from this perception.

The government is talking about local council amalgamation. If you look at what is being proposed, then it seems like Hunters Hill, Lane Cove, Willoughby, North Sydney and Mosman would be joined together and Manly, Warringah and Pittwater joined together. This would leave Hornsby and

Ku-ring-gai together, possibly with Baulkham Hills Shire council.

In Queensland this sort of super council has been in place for a while and has not been without its teething problems.

The real issue though is a consideration of the advantages and disadvantages. In Queensland, the local councillors are remunerated in such a way that they can make their role full-time. Thus the positions attract people with more expertise and time to work for their particular area. They are available, knowledgeable and more active in local affairs. In contrast to previous part-time workers, they spend more time on local issues and can fight for those issues.

In regards to road works, under the current system in NSW, councils are put into areas and they coordinate and cost their road works over that area in order to reduce individual council costs. If this was

done over all the council services, then it would amount to significant cost savings and reduce duplication. Also, the internal pollicising of various departments within council, where empires are built and maintained, would be exposed and that too would result in cost savings.

Reduce beauracracy, reduce red tape, streamline the process, that's what we all want. However we really need to look at the detail and fully understand the implications. I can't imagine staff or local councillors being in favour of this, but sometimes we need to stand back and look at the big picture and tackle our fears head on.

\* Dugald Mackenzie is the director of Mackenzie Architects, Castlecrag.



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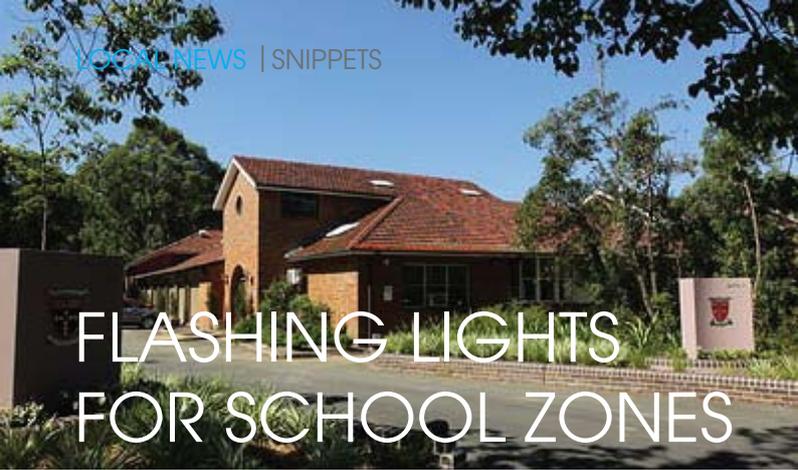
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# FLASHING LIGHTS FOR SCHOOL ZONES

by Kate Lilly

**THE NSW GOVERNMENT** will accelerate the rollout of flashing school zone lights, with 101 new sets due to be installed by July this year. As part of this initiative new lights will be installed at Brigidine College in St Ives.

“The flashing lights program is central to ensuring the safety of our students in and around school environments,” said Jonathan O’Dea, Member for Davidson. “They’ve been proven to be effective in slowing drivers down and potentially saving young lives.”

Studies have shown drivers reduce their speed by around 7km per hour when they enter a school zone marked by flashing lights. If all goes to plan, the government will have installed 280 flashing lights this financial year – the largest number to date. Installation will cost \$2.5 million from within the road safety budget.

Sites are chosen using the School Pedestrian Risk model, which considers factors like traffic volume, approaching speed, pedestrian volume and road visibility. By July, flashing lights will be in place at 1,340 school zones across the state

“Each school in turn will receive the school zone flashing lights and that’s done largely on the basis of an assessment of risk and need,” Mr O’Dea said. “My understanding is there’s about 2,000 schools across NSW, so there’s a little way to go but it’s great news to see that Brigidine will see those flashing lights in the near future.”



**ANZAC DAY** - On April 25 people gathered at the Wahroonga War Memorial in remembrance of war veterans. Barry O’Farrell attended the ceremony.



## NORTH SHORE BROTHEL OWNER CONVICTED OF ENSLAVING STUDENTS

**A SYDNEY MADAM** has been found guilty of forcing young immigrant students into sexual servitude, at the Diamonds brothel in Willoughby.

Chee Mei Wong, 39, forced a group of female students recruited in Malaysia to perform sexual acts against their will, as payment for the \$5,000 cost of their airfares, visa and education.

The students spoke little or no English, and were forced to work 17 hour days, and be fined \$10 every time they were late. Wong pleaded not guilty, and will be sentenced on May 31.



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# DIVISION OVER PLANNING LAWS

PROPOSED STATE PLANING LAWS SET TO FAST TRACK DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION DECISIONS FACE COMMUNITY CRITICISM.

by Kieran Gair

**THE STATE GOVERNMENT** is hoping to transform planning by boosting investment, fast-tracking development application decisions and bringing community consultation to the heart of planning under new laws set to be introduced later this year.

The NSW government will introduce new regulations that force local councils to approve 80 per cent of compliant development proposals within 25 days over five years, compared to the current average of 71 days.

The NSW minister for planning and infrastructure, Brad Hazzard, said the ambitious new planning laws will “depoliticise” the complex and slow planning system which he feels is in desperate need of an overhaul.

“Many of these changes are groundbreaking and in some instances an Australian first, it turns the current planning sys-

tem on its head by ensuring communities create long-term plans for suburbs and regions,” Mr Hazzard said.

“Within five years, we are aiming for 80 per cent of applications to go through a faster code assessment process, which has the potential to save the community and businesses around \$174 million a year.”

However the opposition and some community groups are accusing the government of taking a top down approach, that will benefit developers at the expense of local councils and communities.

Under the new system the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure will have the power to amend local plans made by councils, a decision that opponents say threatens community rights.

Convenor of the Better Planning Network, an affiliation of over 350 community groups, Corinne Fisher, said that while planning reforms are needed, the proposals are developer driven and will work from the top down.

“The government is proposing to remove community consultation on the majority of development applications in exchange for increasing community participation at the strategic planning level,” she said. “Decisions will be made higher up and they will greatly limit the scope of community engagement at the local level. The evidence base for strategic planning is incomplete, it poses a danger to local democracy.”

The new set of laws are the most comprehensive revamp of planning laws in NSW for over 30 years. They are designed to promote economic growth and investment through consolidating housing, jobs and infrastructure through strategic planning.

The government has proposed that NSW planning policies will shape statewide objectives and policy directions, which will be filtered down through regional growth plans, subregional growth plans and lastly through local planning.



# MODERN DAY CHOIRS

TECH SAVVY A CAPPELLA SINGING GROUPS POPPING UP OVER THE NORTH SHORE.

by Rose Moloney

**IF YOU THOUGHT** a cappella singing groups only existed in American comedies and reality shows then think again. It turns out a cappella groups exist in the north shore's backyard.

In Gordon, all female a cappella choir, Senisuara, has gained 72 members since it was founded by director Anna Humberstone at the beginning of last year.

Anna attributes many of the hit films and singing focused television shows, like Pitch Perfect and The Voice to the interest in her choir.

"They have blown out of the water the old fashioned idea of singing in a choir. Previously you would change the name of your group so it didn't have the word 'choir' in it as it had connotations of being frigid, whereas now it's much more hip and modern," says Anna.

But what is so different about an a cappella choir? There is no backing music which means group members are responsible for making all of the music themselves. As Anna puts it "voices do all the work".

This is one reason Pymble resident Jus-

tine Whiting loves being part of the Gordon choir, Senisuara. "It really increases the challenge level because there's no music to fall

*"I give everyone recordings of their parts on MP3 files so they can put it on in the car, and learn the music when they are on the move."*

back on," she says.

The ladies of Senisuara only meet to practise one night a week, which could prove challenging considering there are 72 women with parts to learn. However Anna has implemented a modern way of rehearsing to ensure everyone is prepared before practice.

"I give everyone recordings of their parts on MP3 files so they can put it on in the car, and learn the music when they are on

the move."

Justine says she listens to the recordings and practises in the kitchen while she is cooking dinner. Doing so speeds up rehearsals, as it means the ladies can get straight into singing instead of going through the process of teaching everybody their individual parts.

The group has kept its appeal by welcoming everybody regardless of skill level. It doesn't compete in competitions which Anna says allows it to keep the "inclusive community feel". While there are ten music teachers within Senisuara, there are also people like Justine who have joined simply because they love to sing and meet new people.

Along with Senisuara, Anna also directs an a cappella choir in Mosman, and has just started a new group in Mona Vale to keep up with demand. The first rehearsal for Mona Vale was on April 29, however it's not too late to join now and be part of the mid-year concert.

All of the funds raised by the group will go towards helping Delvena, a women's and children's refuge in Lane Cove.

# 80 YEARS ON, STILL GROWING STRONG

KU-RING-GAI HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY CELEBRATES 80TH ANNIVERSARY THIS MAY.

by Kate Lilly

**A LOT CAN** change in 80 years. In 1933, monthly meetings of the 'Wahroonga Horticultural Society' featured a musical item. In 1959, there were over 500 members. Today, the Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society is a smaller gathering, but members still display their best plants and flowers and compete for prizes. The Society has also embraced modern technology with its website, and more efficient transport has enabled members to venture farther afield in their visits to country gardens.

According to Hugh Myers, a member of the Society, the important things have stayed the same. "The aims and objectives of the Society have remained constant," he says. "We continue to provide opportuni-

ties for friends to meet, for the exchange of knowledge and advice for beginners on all things horticultural, and for exposure of members to new experiences."

The Society has seen its share of challenges over the years. In 1939, war brought activities to a grinding halt. During this time, the efforts of a small but dedicated group known as 'the Ladies of Roseville' kept the Society going. It also faced troubling times in 1970, when a drop in membership led to talk of closing the Society down. It was the stern resistance of four lady members that ensured the Society would continue.

Today the Society faces another challenge –its ageing membership. It hopes to attract new members to ensure the Society will continue for many years to come.

Mr Myers remains optimistic. He says

dedicated volunteers with a strong common interest keep the Society going.

"[The Society] has been fortunate in that it has been able to find keen gardeners who were willing to manage the affairs of the Society . . . With a current membership of 150, many of whom are very active gardeners, the future looks bright."

## Anniversary meeting:

The Society's 80th anniversary meeting will be held at 7:30pm on May 7 at the St Ives Village Hall on Memorial Ave. The night will feature Professor David Mabberley, executive director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney as a special guest speaker as well as a showcase of the Society's north shore gardens and a celebratory supper.

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# THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN EXODUS

WITH YOUNG AUSTRALIANS HEADING OVERSEAS IN RECORD NUMBERS, IT'S NO SURPRISE SOME ARE RUNNING INTO TROUBLE.

by Kate Lilly

**AFTER GOING OUT** to celebrate a friend's birthday, Rachael White woke up in a South American hospital bed – alone. Attached to an oxygen tank, she struggled to remember how she got there. In fact, she couldn't remember anything beyond arriving at a Cuzco bar the night before, not far from the village where she volunteered with other Australian gap year students. When her doctor finally appeared, he told her she'd been drugged with an unknown substance. She'd also contracted salmonella – an infection almost unavoidable in Peru.

"Apparently I was whacking my head on



Rachael woke up alone in hospital. the toilet seat, I was really violent," she said. "I was vomiting blood. When the doctor came and found me – I was struggling to breathe, I was shaking uncontrollably, and was in a re-

ally, really bad state. The first thing the doctor said to me when I woke up was 'You almost had a heart attack.'"

Rachael, 19, is among a tide of young Australians heading overseas. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the number of travellers under the age of 25 has doubled in the past decade. In that time, the number of Australians arrested, hospitalised or killed overseas has also doubled. In 2011-2012, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade DFAT dealt with over 14,500 cases – including 1,250 hospitalisations and 1,138 deaths overseas.

"The first thing the doctor said to me when I woke up was 'You almost had a heart attack.'"

Alex Oliver, a research fellow at the Lowey Institute for International Policy, said the proportion of Australians seeking consular assistance remains small. But with the number of travellers rapidly increasing, the burden on DFAT could become unmanageable.

"The cost of international travel combined with the strength of the Australian dollar has meant that international travel is accessible to a much broader range of Australians than it was a couple of decades ago," she said. "What we don't want to happen is, as the num-

bers increase, for the Department to be put under more and more pressure to provide services to more and more people . . . in more and more types of strife."



Rachael recovers in Peru.

Ms Oliver said young Australians must be aware of what the Department can and can't do for them overseas. As a starting point, travellers should register their travel plans and contact details on Smartraveller, now available as an iPhone app. "I think some Australians are becoming a little bit more reliant on government in tandem with an increasing reliance on social welfare services generally," she said. "Take advantage of all the services the department offers in terms of information – inform yourself, insure yourself and let us know

what you're doing so that we can help you if you get into trouble."

Australians are also visiting increasingly 'adventurous' locations - with India, Thailand, and Vietnam among the fastest growing destinations. Despite this, travel insurance is reasonably low in Australia compared with other countries, like the UK.

"Younger Australians tend to be travelling to different destinations," said Dr David Beirman, associate fellow at the Australian Institute of Travel & Tourism. "Because we do have direct flights between say, Sydney and Santiago in Chile, places people didn't used to go to are now more accessible than they used to be." He said young, budget travellers can't expect the government to foot their hospital bills. "It's a simple fact if you can't afford travel insurance then you really can't afford to travel," he said. "If you're going to less developed countries... where medical assistance might be difficult to get or costly - that's really where travel insurance comes into its own."

According to the World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation (WYSETC), young travellers represent one of the fastest growing sectors in the industry worldwide.

Seventy per cent of 16-29 year olds travel in order to study, learn a language, or work and volunteer abroad.

"Young people are less likely to be deterred from travelling by terrorism, political and civil unrest, disease or natural disasters," said Laura Daly, special advisor to the WYSETC director general. "[They] see travel as an essential part of their everyday lives, rather than just a brief escape from reality."

Rachael suspects her drink was spiked by the bartender. Fortunately, her friends stayed with her the entire night and she had access to a private medical clinic organised by her program. Home safe and well, she said the incident was a minor part of the experience.

"We were prepared for it and it's just part of living over there," she said. "I'm not at all turned off by South America now - I just fell in love with the place." Now studying at Macquarie University, she's already planning to spend a semester abroad. "I gained so much independence, so much maturity," she said. "Even though I didn't go to uni, I think I learned a lot more that year than I would have at university."



In 2012 Rachael spent six months in South America.



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# Good one, Goodwin



**J**ulie Goodwin won Australia's first season of MasterChef in 2009. Now four years on she has three of her own cookbooks sitting in her kitchen. Despite her success she remains as down to earth as ever. This month *Sydney Observer* caught up with our favourite chef to find out about her latest cookbook 'Gather'.

### What kind of recipes can we find in 'Gather'?

It's a collection of recipes for all different occasions. The idea behind it is to encourage people just to get together over a great meal and to demonstrate how easy it is to do that. It doesn't have to be a wedding or a special occasion; it can just be a picnic or a potluck dinner.

### What are some of the standout dishes in the book?

Well that's difficult as each chapter is about a different kind of gathering. So there's a chapter about picnics, then there's a chapter about high teas with all the pretty little cakes. Then you have potluck dinners and street parties, which are all about cooking for substantial amounts of people. Buffalo wings, some beautiful salads, Mexican beef and slow braises are some of my favourites.





**The recipes in the book are so varied. How did you find inspiration?**

They are all things that I love to cook for my family and friends that have been received really well at parties and gatherings.

**What would you say are some important things to remember when you are cooking for a gathering?**

Just bear in mind that it doesn't have to be difficult, it's a really straightforward thing to do. It should be joyful, so just be mindful of the people you are cooking for.

**What do you do when you don't have time to make a big meal for the kids?**

Quick pastas are always the answer. I call them fridge shaker meals. You shake the fridge, see what falls out and you turn it into a pasta. Stir-fries, salads and grills are also really fast and tasty options.

**Do you have anything special planned for Mother's Day?**

Mother's Day is just my favourite day of the year. I'll have breakfast in bed, I'll hopefully get spoilt by my boys and I'll probably spend the afternoon on a picnic or I'll sit out on my back deck with a book and a glass of champagne.

**Speaking of breakfast, how do you like your eggs?**

That's too hard! I love eggs; I've got chickens so my eggs are so beautifully fresh - they're to die for. But one of my favourite things is a soft-boiled egg. I love it - just pure unadulterated 'eggyness'.

**You always appear to be composed in the kitchen, but have you ever had a big kitchen disaster?**

I've had many kitchen disasters. I only set my hair on fire the other day! Probably my worst was many years ago when the kids were very little. We were having visitors over and I roasted a whole chicken. I ducked into the bedroom to freshen up and when I came out my dog had climbed onto the table and had the entire chicken in his mouth. By the time I chased him and got it back it was completely mangled.

**How has your life changed since winning MasterChef?**

My family has had so many beautiful opportunities that we didn't have before. We've been able to do a lot of travel and meet some really cool people. We're just having an absolute ball with it. But at its heart my life hasn't changed really. I've still got the same friends,



and we still do the same stuff and live in the same house. My favourite thing is still to get together with a bunch of my friends on the weekend and share a meal.

**What are your plans now that 'Gather' has been released?**

Well today I'm off to Canberra to start my book tour. After that, I've still got plenty more books in me. There are always so many recipes to write. I'm doing a little bit of travel this year and I'm still a columnist for Women's Weekly and on the Today Show - I love those jobs, they're really special, so I've got plenty going on.

**Would you ever consider opening your own restaurant?**

Opening a restaurant is something I would love to do in the future. At the moment I've got three teenage boys who are growing up very quickly. So I'm very much focused on them and getting them through high school right now. But it's definitely something I would look into at some point in the future.

# SOLVING A SILENT PROBLEM

A UNIQUE HEARING PROBLEM LEAVES CHILDREN STRUGGLING IN CLASS.

by Kate Lilly

**IF YOU SUSPECT** your child is having hearing difficulties, they can undergo a series of aural tests. If their responses fall outside the normal range, they can be diagnosed with an Auditory Processing Disorder (APD) and receive treatment. But a significant proportion of the children who are tested respond normally.

"Audiologists and the GPs don't have anything they can say to these parents other than 'there doesn't seem to be anything wrong with them,'" said Simon Carlile, associate professor in Physiology at Sydney University. "But of course, the parents and teachers and the children themselves know there is a problem. It's just there wasn't a test available that could discriminate what that problem might be."

In a joint project from Sydney University's Auditory Neuroscience Laboratory and

Macquarie University's Audiology Section, researchers have discovered a group of children who are unable to rapidly switch their attention from one source of sound to another. These children have otherwise normal hearing sensitivity, but struggle to listen in environments where many people are talking at once – for example, in a classroom.

**"After failing to do that for a bit they basically drop out and stop trying to listen."**

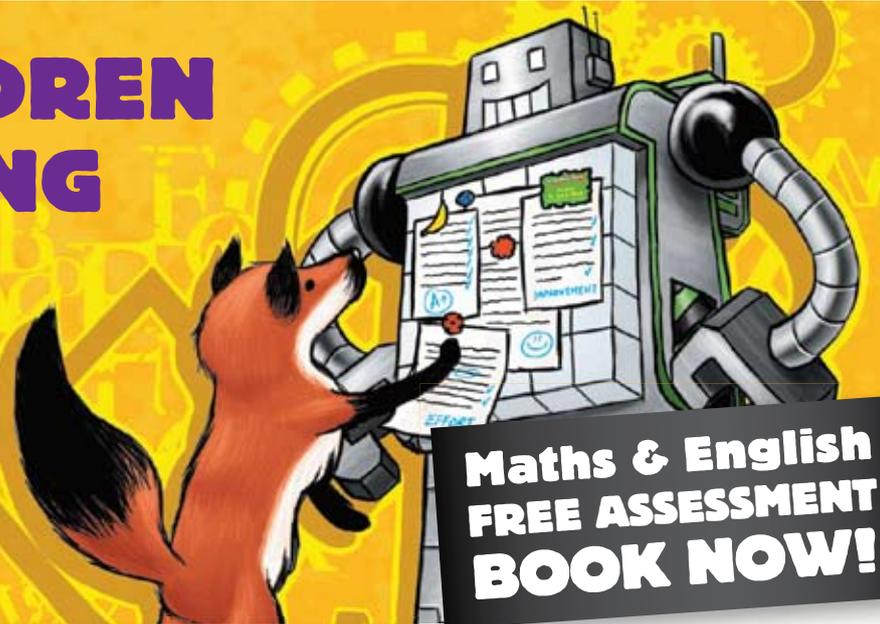
"When people are having an active conversation . . . kids with this inability to rapidly switch their attention are missing the first bit of what the next person is saying," Professor Carlile said. "It makes it really hard for them to follow the conversation. After failing to do that

for a bit they basically drop out and stop trying to listen."

Currently, two thirds of the children presenting at Macquarie University's audiology clinic are not diagnosed with an APD. Researchers are now working to develop a test that audiologists and GPs can use to diagnose children who struggle to switch their aural attention. From there, research will focus on determining how the disorder can be treated effectively. In the meantime, Professor Carlile is encouraging parents to get their child assessed at the Macquarie University clinic.

"Dealing with communication issues early on in the child's school life is really important," he said. "You can have some pretty negative downstream effects if the kid is missing out on fundamental learning in language and basic schooling because they have a hearing problem."

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# STUDENTS 'CRUNCH & SIP' THEIR WAY TO GOOD HEALTH

A NORTHERN BEACHES PRIMARY SCHOOL MOVES IN A HEALTHIER DIRECTION.

by Monique Penning

**MARIA REGINA CATHOLIC** Primary School at Avalon plans to implement the 'Crunch & Sip,' initiative, as part of the Department of Education and Communities' and NSW Health's Live Life Well @ School Program.

'Crunch & Sip' involves primary school classes participating in a set break during the day, during which the children are encouraged by teachers to eat a serving of fruit or vegetables and drink water.

Jenna Bilton, health promotion officer at Northern Sydney Health Promotion and advocate of the 'Crunch & Sip' program, says: "We want the kids to meet their daily requirements of two fruits and five vegetables, as well as drinking more water."

Ms Bilton says that children who regularly drink soft drink and other drinks high in sugar are not adequately hydrated and are more likely to put on excess weight.

The years five and six teacher bringing 'Crunch & Sip' to Maria Regina, Grant Colquhoun, believes a collaborative approach between the school community,

teachers and parents will be important to achieve success.

"Our approach is split into three parts: culture, curriculum and community," he says, "these three things working in collaboration will help it to be a success".

Ms Bilton says 'Crunch & Sip' has been a successful program in schools across NSW. "We have definitely seen positive results from 'Crunch & Sip' during follow up visits to schools which have implemented the Live Life Well at School program."

"The program has also been implemented by schools for children with special needs and teachers have reported that it has been positive for their students' fruit and veg intake, as well as good behaviour and concentration during class."

Kath McKenzie, who has three children at Maria Regina, anticipates the beneficial effects that 'Crunch & Sip' will have for her son, Asher Mclean, 9, who has hypoglycemia.

"His body needs regular snacking, so being able to munch on carrot sticks or pieces of fruit would be fantastic," she says.

"It's great the school can be more flex-

ible for kids who need a little bit more attention and reinforce the messages about nutrition that are being talked about at home."

While Maria Regina already participates in a range of nutritional education programs, Mr Colquhoun hopes that 'Crunch & Sip,' will further improve healthy eating habits in the school.

"Initially these programs started from the statistics of increasing childhood obesity rates, and now it's about education and putting some money into it," he says.

"We will receive significant funding from Northern Sydney Health Promotion to help implement 'Crunch & Sip' within the school.

It's about consolidating what we already do, while incorporating more variety in terms of fruit and vegetables."

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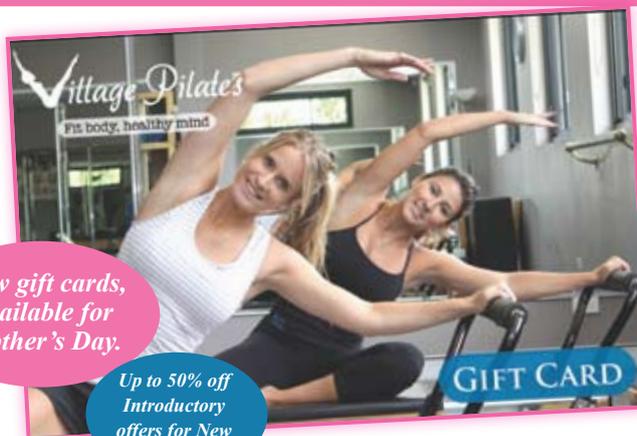
Live Life Well @ School workshops are open to all primary schools with up to \$4,400 funding available. The term 2 workshops will be held on June 3 and 4 in North Sydney.

**Contact:** Jenna Bilton  
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# CREATIVE THINKING SOLVES REAL WORLD PROBLEMS

by Elizabeth Diprose \*

**THE MELBOURNE DECLARATION** on *Educational Goals for Young Australians* (2008) agreed to by State, Territory and Commonwealth Education Ministers states:

Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence.

All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and informed citizens.

With the recent agreement between the NSW and Federal Governments on the implementation of the 'Gonski reforms' the goal of equity is assured. The second goal is in the hands of teachers and school leaders. With the implementation of the new Australian curriculum syllabuses in 2014, the time is ripe for us to focus on this second and important goal.

These new syllabuses, in addition to developing students' knowledge and skills, provide some exciting opportunities for students to develop capabilities necessary for them to contribute in an increasingly complex world. It allows students to become creative, informed citizens who are confident in solving problems. While encouraging them to embrace ICT for working collaboratively and communicating ideas effectively and to develop intercultural understanding and an appreciation of the knowledge we can gain from

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

One of the key capabilities included in all new syllabuses is critical and creative thinking, an essential skill to equip students to navigate and evaluate the usefulness of information, which is increasing at unfathomable rates. Thinking creatively and critically occurs in collaborative learning contexts, where students share ideas and possibilities, where preconceived ideas are challenged in a supportive atmosphere, and where taking learning risks is encouraged.

One lunch time last term I wandered into our school library and was overwhelmed by a very crowded and lively space. Some students were sitting on the floor between bookshelves reading quietly; others were grouped around desktop computers while others still sat in larger groups working together on assignments, using coloured pens and large sheets of paper, laptops and lots of lively discussion. While the students' abilities to use the library space to suit their different purposes appeared natural to them, the configuration of the space did not mirror this. Similarly, the bell signalling the end of lunch also signalled the end their lively discussions.

The challenge for educators is to think creatively of new ways to provide time and space for students to think, talk and learn together, to explore new ideas and develop new

skills. Critical and creative thinking requires time for new ideas to germinate and grow, to be tested and argued. We must value divergent thinking in order for students to solve complex, real world problems as part of the everyday curriculum and learning process.

When Henry Ford was challenged on his idea for the motor car, he said: "If I had asked my customers what they wanted they would have said a faster horse."

While the pressures of NAPLAN and the HSC might suggest we need a faster horse, our students are better served by schools choosing a more imaginative and flexible mode of transport.

The time is now for educators to think creatively and critically about what we do and how we do it. The Australian Curriculum and the Gonski reforms to education funding in NSW have provided the road along which we can now travel with our students in order to provide them with real opportunities to become thinking problem-solvers who value the sharing of knowledge and the willingness to take genuine risks in their learning journeys. We welcome this divergent road to ensuring a real difference to our students' and our society's future.

\* Liz Diprose is Principal of Willoughby Girls High. Prior to this she was Deputy Principal at Killara High School.

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# EDUCATION FUNDING UNCERTAIN

by Paul Fletcher\*

**THREE YEARS AGO** the Gillard government established the Gonski Review into school funding – its final report was released last year. The review found that in 2009 state schools had an average income per student from government (state and federal) of \$10,000, catholic schools \$7,700 and independent schools \$12,200.

How funds will be allocated in future has been quite uncertain, as we have awaited the government's response to the Gonski Review.

The government has been delaying a decision: implementing the Gonski recommendations will be expensive and the Gillard government is seriously short of money following several years of budgetary mismanagement. But with an election looming it has been under growing pressure to announce its position.

This finally came in April, with the Gillard government announcing a package, which it claimed offered \$14.5 billion of extra funding for schools. However, the states and territories were expected to come up with \$5.1 billion of this.

As for the Commonwealth's \$1.4 billion, it turned out that at the same time there was to be a \$2.8 billion cut to university funding – as part of total cuts, funding deferrals and changes to education programs totalling \$11 billion.

The package depended on agreement being reached with the states and territories; but although the Prime Minister sought this at her COAG meeting with Premiers and Chief Ministers on April 19, she did not secure it.

The states and territories raised important concerns at that meeting, including increased red tape for both teachers and schools; states and territories being short

of money; and concerns that the proposal is not a good deal for some of them.

Whether agreement will ultimately be reached is not clear. However, what is clear is that this proposal falls well short of the big promises Labor has made on education for several years. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this is not an education strategy from the Gillard Labor government – this is an election strategy.

The Liberal National Coalition has a plan for education. We believe we need to focus on the areas which are linked to improved student outcomes, such as reforms to improve teacher quality, implementing a robust national curriculum, principal and school autonomy, and encouraging more parental engagement. Simply spending more money is not the answer.

\*Paul Fletcher is the Federal Member for Bradfield.



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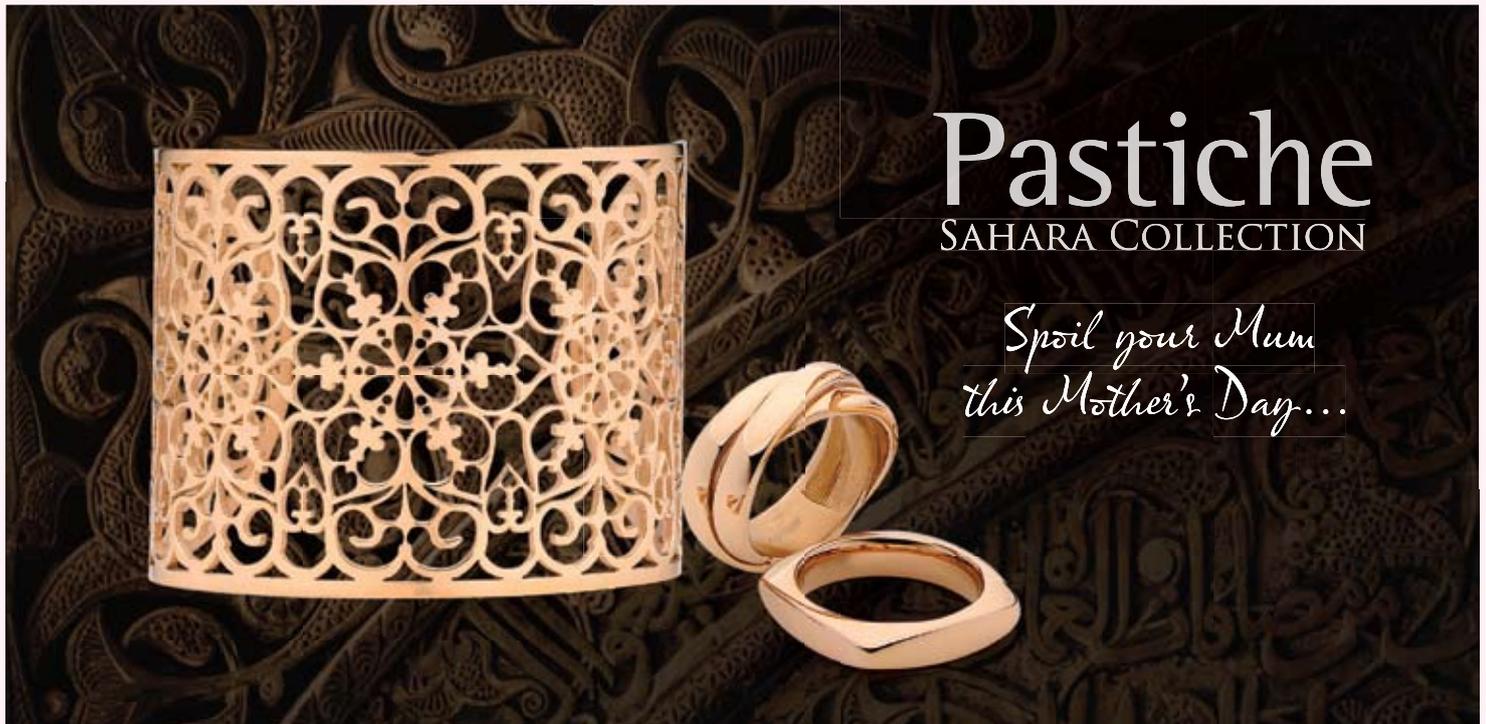
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# Vintage Retro & Antiques

This month *Sydney Observer* put together a vintage special to help you deck your homes and your wardrobe with quirky items from the past. We've found the hottest shops for you, so now all you have to do is hunt for those treasures. Next time someone asks where your new leather jacket is from, you get to reply smoothly "Oh this? Sorry, it's vintage."



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Through her store Liz hopes to inspire people to appreciate interesting items from other eras. Whether that be a fifties headpiece, a tie-dye shirt from the seventies or a cute pair of nineties sunnies.

**Address:** Mitchell Rd Antique and Design Centre, UPSTAIRS 7 Mitchell Rd, Alexandria 2015.

**Website:** [www.downtoearthvintage.com](http://www.downtoearthvintage.com)

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# WARNING BELLS FOR WOMEN

NEW STATISTICS SHOW OLDER WOMEN ARE MOST AT RISK OF DYING FROM ASTHMA.

by Kate Lilly

**WOMEN ARE TWICE** more likely to die from asthma than men, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Within this group, older women are most at risk, with 44 per cent of the deaths in 2011 occurring in women over 75.

Professor Guy Marks, a respiratory expert at the Australian Centre for Asthma Monitoring, said it's unclear why women are the worst affected. "In children, the prevalence of asthma is higher in boys," he said. "But after puberty there's a change, and the prevalence is higher in women and the deaths are higher . . . Presumably, it's related to sex hormones, but beyond that it's not clear."

Overall, the asthma mortality rate is falling, from 4 deaths in 1 8 to 378 in 2011. However, the reduction is most significant in young asthmatics under the age of 35.

Dr Jonathan Burdon, director of the National Asthma Council, said older Australians should be careful not to dismiss breathlessness as a normal part of ageing. "When you're 5 or 70 there's no reason why you should be breathless with regular physical activity," he said. "People who say, 'I'm starting to get short of breath walking up one flight of stairs' that's not a figment of getting older, that's a figment of getting less fit or some other underlying disease."

While older people are naturally

more at risk, Professor Marks believes there is still room for improvement. "It may be that asthma is being better managed now," he said. "That people are using drugs more effectively, that people are using asthma management plans more effectively. But we do also know that they're not being used as well as they could be."

The National Asthma Council believes most asthma deaths are preventable. "It's really all about educating people who've got asthma about asthma – letting them know that it's not curable but that it can be managed," Dr Burdon said. "There's no reason why a person with asthma can't, for the most part, do whatever they want to do."

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# WANTED: GRANDPARENTS

WEBSITE PROVIDES FAMILIES WITH SURROGATE GRANDPARENTS.

by Rose Moloney

**NOT EVERYONE IS** lucky enough to have a grandparent living around the corner.

While 27 per cent of Australians use grandparents as child-minders, many families don't have this luxury.

When Cate Kloos, moved from Germany to Sydney, she struggled without the support of grandparents for her children. "I have two kids in Australia, and it felt quite lonely not having anybody to share anything special with," says Ms Kloos.

Taking inspiration from services in Germany, Ms Kloos set up an Australian Find a Grandparent website, allowing families to find surrogate grandparents. Through the site families and 'grandparents' register their details and are then

contacted when a match becomes available in their local area.

Ms Kloos can testify to the website's success from her own experiences. Her family found their 'grandmother' when the site started a year ago, and plan to continue to see her "forever", describing her as "part of the family".

Dr Julie Green, executive director of the Raising Children Network, says it is important for children to have positive older role models in their lives. "It can be an additional person for a child to be able to experience outings with, which has positive benefits for the child in terms of developing self-esteem and building on independence skills."

While a grandparent or surrogate grandparent can both fill this role, she says a close family friend; aunt or uncle

can also fill the gap.

Speaking of advice for new grandparents, Dr Green says the most important thing is that they be themselves and show an interest in the child. She recommends creating opportunities for the surrogate grandparent and child to share special one-on-one time together.

"These interactions needn't cost money, it's very affordable to go for walk or go to the park, read a story, or do some cooking or projects around the home together."

At the moment Find a Grandparent has a lot more families registered than grandparents. Ms Kloos encourages older citizens to register for free online and find a new family. The only requirement is that they have an up to date National Police Check.

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# EIGHTY NEW GENETIC CANCER MARKERS DISCOVERED

STUDY DOUBLES OUR KNOWLEDGE OF PROSTATE, OVARIAN AND BREAST CANCER.

by Kieran Gair

**AN INTERNATIONAL EFFORT** involving more than 200 research groups and over 1,000 scientists has led to the discovery of 80 new genetic markers that lead to cancer, more than doubling the knowledge of the number of genes linked to these diseases.

The research, funded mainly by Cancer Research UK, the European Union and US National Institute of Health, investigated the role of mutations in different DNA strands and the genetic markers that can cause the hormone related diseases: breast, prostate and ovarian cancer.

The CEO of Cancer Council Australia, Professor Ian Olver, said that the study had identified the tip of the iceberg. "Cancer needs to be triggered by several genetic mutations. The hope is that these findings will help us use these genetic markers for early detection and eventually develop genetic tests that could screen for risk."

"Over time we could develop genetic tests to look at the pattern of genes to determine how aggressive the cancer could be, which would open up the potential for better screening and more effective treatment."

The report, the *Collaborative Oncological Gene-Environment Study*, involved the Queensland Institute of Medical Research,

the University of Melbourne and the Cancer Council of Victoria.

The University of Melbourne and the Cancer Council of Victoria provided 7,500 DNA samples, around two-thirds of the Australian contribution to the study. Over 100,000 cancer patients and 100,000 members from the general population participated in the study, providing an extensive collection of test subjects.

The discovery of 80 new genetic markers significantly increases the number of mistakes in a person's DNA that doctors and scientists could soon be able to recognise, leading to the identification of more genetic markers that may increase the risk of disease.

The genetic makeup of 25,000 prostate cancer patients was compared to a similar number of unaffected men. Scientists were able to pinpoint 23 new faults in DNA that heighten the chance of developing prostate cancer, while 16 of these genetic markers can actually lead to the most life-threatening and aggressive forms of the disease.

While one in nine Australian men will develop prostate cancer, the study revealed that of the one per cent of men who had the most genetic faults, one in two would develop prostate cancer. This is more than five times the national average.

Research fellow at the Victorian Can-

cer Council's Cancer Epidemiology Centre, Dr Liesel Fitzgerald, said that it was an exciting time for international and Australian scientists. "We can now explain about 30 per cent of genetic markers that lead to prostate cancer. With the 23 newly discovered genetic faults and the 55 that we already knew about, we can now identify specific genetic variants and can see what these changes in DNA mean, allowing us to attribute a function to these genetic faults."

Researchers more than doubled the number of genetic markers for breast cancer to 49. Women who were found to have most of these genetic markers had a 30 per cent risk of developing breast cancer, which is three times the national average. The research revealed that women who have a mutation in the BRCA gene, already facing a risk of 65 per cent, are 80 per cent more likely to develop breast cancer if they carry some of the newly discovered genetic faults.

Possibly the least known type of cancer, ovarian cancer, formed the last part of the study. Although uncommon compared to prostate and breast cancer, ovarian cancer is still the sixth leading cause of cancer related death among Australian women. The study found eight new genetic markers for ovarian cancer, adding to the previous four.



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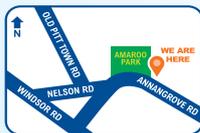
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# SAY GOODBYE TO READING GLASSES

OVERNIGHT CONTACT LENSES CAN FIX DAYTIME VISION PROBLEMS.

by Rose Moloney

**PEOPLE CAN REPLACE** their need to use reading glasses during the day by using a specific type of overnight contact lens, a new study reveals.

As part of the University of NSW (UNSW) study, 1 people suffering from a loss of near vision wore hyperopic orthokeratology (OK) lenses overnight, a special type of rigid contact lens designed to reshape the cornea.

Professor Helen Swarbrick, from the School of Optometry and Vision Science at UNSW, said: "Our study shows that hyperopic orthokeratology lenses can correct presbyopia."

Presbyopia, more commonly known as farsightedness, commonly occurs in middle and old age. It is caused by a loss of elasticity in the lens of the eye, which makes simple close up tasks like reading difficult.

After wearing the overnight OK lenses, each patient in the study reported improved close up vision. "The improvement was apparent on the first day after overnight wear, and increased during the treatment week," said Professor Swarbrick.

Professor Swarbrick said that it is important to remember the lenses do not cure long-term vision problems and the effects are "fully reversible".

"Essentially it's the same effect as wearing contact lenses or spectacles for near reading. Once you take the device off the problem still exists."

"The lenses are an alternative so that people do not need to wear anything during the day."

The study targeted middle-aged people, however Professor Swarbrick said there are no reasons older people can't wear them as long as they have healthy corneas.

"The main decider is that the eyes are healthy enough to tolerate the lens wear." This means people with front surface corneal diseases or who suffer with a lot of astigmatism cannot benefit from the lenses.

Although it is not widely practised, using OK lenses to restore vision is not a completely new technique. Professor Swarbrick said: "There are certainly optometrists out there who have already been using this approach, we just did the science to prove that it really is effective."

Dr Gavin Boneham, the president of the Orthokeratology Society of Oceania, offers OK lenses as an alternative to glasses in his practice in Sydney's CBD. Dr Boneham said they are an option for people suffering from a loss of near vision that have never worn glasses, and want to continue as they did before.

Although the price varies from practice to practice, he said it costs on average \$1,700 for the lenses and the first year of treatment.

As for the risks of wearing overnight lenses, Dr Boneham said: "Like wearing any contact lenses there's an increased risk of eye infection."

While the number of optometrists who prescribe the lenses has grown in recent years it still remains relatively low. "We have 200 out of 3000 who are qualified to do this," said Dr Boneham. He accredits the low numbers to time, money and the "steep learning curve" within orthokeratology.

However he is hopeful that the amount of people using OK lenses will increase. "It's a very exciting thing to be involved in and the practitioners really do have a passion for it."

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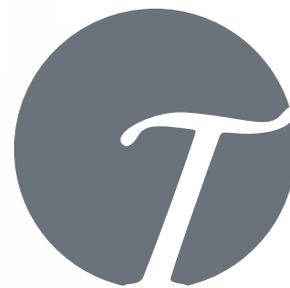
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# THE SWEETEST NOTHINGS

ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS SEEM LIKE A GREAT LOW CALORIE OPTION, BUT ARE THEY REALLY BETTER FOR YOUR HEALTH?

by Kaitlin Coleman

**FOR THOSE WANTING** to shed a few extra kilos, cutting down on sugar is fast becoming a popular option. Many people are instead getting their sugar fix from artificial sweeteners such as Equal and NutraSweet.

Made primarily from a chemical substance called 'aspartame', artificial sweeteners are intense sweeteners which offer virtually zero calories, and which don't elevate blood sugar levels like regular sugar does.

However many have started to question the nutritional value of these products, with a great deal of hoax claims over the years promoting that aspartame causes seizures, or even cancer. These have been discounted, and Food Standards Australia and New Zealand recognise artificial sweeteners as safe.

But are they really the better option with regards to your health? Is regular sugar really the poison that some health practitioners claim it to be?

Kate Gudorf, accredited dietitian and spokesperson for the Dietitians Association of Australia, doesn't believe so, thinking instead that eaten in moderation, sug-

ar is fine.

"So in the grand scheme of things is sugar poison? No, but are there better choices? Absolutely," she said.

Ms Gudorf believes that neither artificial sweeteners nor sugar offers better nutritional value, as overall diet has a much greater impact on health and weight-loss. She thinks it's entirely possible for someone to only use artificial sweeteners which are zero calories, but to be ingesting a huge amount of calories from other food sources.

"It's a case of calories in versus calories out, and if somebody is accounting for the calories that they're getting from sugar but not from other sources, they'll be missing a great deal."

Ms Gudorf instead believes moderation is the real key to good health and weight loss.

"Unfortunately moderation is not sexy and it doesn't sell, but when people can take a moderate approach to their diet that's when they're most successful."

Low sugar or entirely sugar-free diets have become increasingly popular in the last year, and Ms Gudorf poses caution with extreme diets such as these.

"I think people are more successful when they're given something realistic, and realistic would be yes a little bit of sugar in an everyday healthy diet," she said.

"I think any fad diet is offering a quick fix, and I think slow and steady wins the race. A moderate approach to diet is going to be more sustainable, and at the end of the day consistency is the key when it comes to long term weight loss"

## TOP TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR SUGAR INTAKE ON TRACK:

- **Learning to read** food labels is key to avoiding excess sugar.
- **Consulting a dietitian or GP** is the best way to educate yourself on how to read food labels, but also to know what is the best course of action for your health and lifestyle – whether that be using artificial sweeteners or not.
- **Counting calories** is a good foundation for losing weight, as weight loss mostly comes down to calories in versus calories out.

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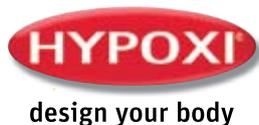
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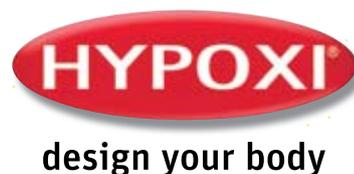
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by Dr Ian Sweeney\*

# ACHIEVING INTRODUCTORY DENTAL PRACTICE ACCREDITATION

## CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

within the dental profession is the aim of the Australian Dental Association. Quality benchmarking is aimed at providing a practice environment that is committed to safety and the delivery of quality care.

To achieve accreditation, Dr Sweeney and his team have had to demonstrate commitment to providing a recognised level of safety in practice and quality in care for the community.

Accreditation of the practice was achieved by submitting evidence which was independently assessed by Quality in Practice (QIP) against the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards.

The accreditation process has been a valuable tool in assisting Dr Sweeney to

adapt and define existing practice systems, procedures and protocols in line with the new national NSQHS Standards.

Dr Sweeney's team have willingly contributed to the formalisation of policies and processes which can now be regularly and easily monitored to ensure consistency and transparency.

Patient care has always been paramount at Northside Dental & Implant Centre. The importance of maintaining systems that will ensure the ongoing quality of care is critical in today's environment.

Today's practice management decisions are governed by feedback obtained from patients. A recent survey of patients within the practice reported an overall satisfaction rate of 99 per cent. Patients reported satisfaction across the board: Staff courtesy 99 per cent, cleanliness

99 per cent, explanation of procedure 99 per cent, happy with the service provided 99 per cent, and overall satisfaction 99 per cent.

Pleasing results such as these encourage the team at Northside Dental and Implant Centre, as they show the expectations of the community are being met by a local business. These results will also aid Northside Dental & Implant Centre in their decisions for ongoing patient care in the future.

\*Dr Ian Sweeney holds qualifications in Dental Implant Surgery and Conscious Sedation and Pain Management, and is a dentist at **Northside Dental and Implant Centre in Turrumurra**. Ph: 9144 4522.

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# PLANTS FOR THOUGHT

START ACTING NOW TO ENSURE YOUR GARDEN SURVIVES THE COLDER MONTHS.

by Hugh Myers\*



**Lilacs:** Have you ever admired a lilac in full bloom and thought “I would like one of those?” If so, now is the time to think about planting them.

- For big flowers lilacs need about six hours of sunlight a day.
- Young shrubs can be top heavy for the first few years so a couple of stakes for support will be needed.
- Lilacs need good drainage and they don't like wet feet.
- Planting a grafted lilac is a bit different to planting a normal grafted plant. The hole needs to be fairly deep with a mound in the middle to spread the roots over. When putting the plant into the hole, the grafted joint must be under the ground unlike the usual above-ground graft.



**Cyclamens:** Cyclamen love those clear cold nights and will happily go on producing flowers for you throughout the autumn and winter months.

- Cyclamen do not like warm air from the air conditioner or heater so keep them outside at night.
- They can be brought back inside during the day for enjoyment but don't forget to put them back outside again.
- Avoid making the soil too wet as they will rot if left with wet feet.



**Camellias:** Sasanqua camellias are in full bloom now, so it's important to pay them particular attention over the next couple of months.

- Single blooms only last a couple of days so regularly dead head to get more flowers.
- As they are shallow rooted, keep an eye on the moisture available in the soil. Don't rely on rainfall, instead check the soil everyday or two.

**Weeds:** Certain weeds don't mind the colder weather at all and readily produce seeds during the winter months.

- As a routine preventative maintenance job, make a regular check and remove any weeds you find.
- Don't forget to look in those out of the way places like behind a big shrub.

**Fruit trees:** Deciduous fruit trees will have lost most of their leaves by now and gone dormant so you can take a close look at them.

- Cut out any dead branches and twigs. If a particular branch has decided to go off and do its own thing, now is the time to get rid of it.
- Clear out any accumulated rubbish both from inside the tree and under it.
- Check for any signs of disease or rot and use a screwdriver to have a poke at any suspicious looking spots.
- Borers give themselves away by leaving a trail of 'frass' or sawdust. A piece of flexible wire pushed up into the hole will often kill the grub. Another way is to squirt some methylated spirits into the hole. If the metho does not reach the borer, the fumes will. Plug the hole with some silicone gel or even soap to prevent any other pest making a home inside.



\*Hugh Myers is a member of the Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society inc. The society meets on the first Tuesday of the month at St Ives Village Hall, Memorial Rd, St Ives (opposite Woolworths) at 7:30 pm. Visitors are welcome. Phone 9449 6245.



# HOW TO: RENOVATE EFFECTIVELY

## THE DOS AND DON'TS OF REMODELLING A HOUSE FOR PROFIT.

by Rose Moloney

**IF DIY SHOWS** like The Block have inspired you to get your hands dirty and delve into the world of home renovation then there are two things you need to do before you start picking out kitchen tiles. Research and plan. These steps will help you avoid falling into common renovation pitfalls, and the stresses that come with them. Ian Agnew, the general manager of Archicentre, gave us some pointers on how to minimise the stress and financial burdens of home renovating.

### What renovations add the most value to a house?

#### Bedrooms

Adding an extra bedroom is the most cost effective, irrefutable way of adding value. An extra bedroom increases the sales capacity as it means a house can be used or rented by more people. This is particularly effective in family areas like Sydney's north shore, where converting an office into a third bedroom is recommended. If possible add the extra bedroom under the pre-existing roof, as this will minimise costs.

#### Outdoor spaces

Creating extra outdoor living spaces can be a cheap way to maximise the space within a house compared to other renovations. Add bi-fold doors to open up the

back of the house and put in a large deck and outdoor living area that can be used for entertaining.

Interestingly pools are not the way to go if you are looking to add value. When buying a house people will take into consideration the ongoing maintenance costs of a pool. So unless you really want a pool for yourself, consider keeping that grassy area.

#### Service areas

Updating kitchens and bathrooms can also add value. Trends within kitchens in particular are changing. People are moving away from wanting separate rooms, and often prefer to have open plan living spaces that allow for a more social, relaxed style of living. However show caution when it comes to renovating these areas, as there is no guarantee you will make the money back. It is impossible to predict what kind of kitchen a particular buyer will like. Whereas bedrooms can be changed to fit personal taste with a coat of paint, renovating a kitchen is much more expensive. So sometimes buyers prefer to spend less money on a house and renovate service areas themselves.

### How can people ensure they remain within budget?

Planning is the key to staying on budget. From the very beginning have the renovation planned out by an expert. Work with

an architect who can help you go from a design concept to a fully developed design. Once this has been approved by council get it costed. The more detail contained in the plan the more accurate the final cost will be.

### What are the main pitfalls people fall into when renovating?

#### Over specifying

Are those bathroom tiles shipped in from Morocco necessary? Will that European piece of marble add value? Probably not. Although in some geographical areas adding fancy finishes might make a difference to the price of a house, a lot of these finishes don't warrant that kind of expenditure. If you're renovating for profit then don't over specify, chances are you will never make the money back.

#### Not getting the house checked out

It's important to get your house checked out thoroughly for structural problems at the point of purchase or prior to any renovations being started. A lot of people plan a renovation and organise a loan from the bank, only to realise there is a major structural issue. The house might need to be restumped, there could be drainage or wiring issues, or the roof may not be strong enough. Fixing these issues can cost time and money so they need to be factored in from the beginning of a renovation.

# Out To Brunch With Mum

by Rose Moloney

ONE OF THE best things about Mother's Day is that it's the perfect excuse to head out for a daytime meal. If breakfast in bed isn't your mum's thing, consider taking her out to brunch – the mixture of breakfast and lunch foods makes it an all round winner. To make life easier *Sydney Observer* has picked some of our favourite local brunch joints, as well as a few places a little out of the way for the more adventurous families.

## The Bogey Hole Cafe

473 Bronte Rd, Bronte

Up for a Mother's Day adventure? Pass on the local haunts and head over to the eastern suburbs for a beachside brekkie. There's certainly no shortage of choice on Bronte Road. Our pick is Bogey Hole, as you can't go wrong with spicy homemade baked beans and poached eggs on toast. Burn off the calories afterwards by completing the Bronte to Bondi walk, or just lounge on the beach if the weather permits.



## Coonanbarra Cafe

64 Coonanbarra Road, Wahroonga

Situated on a quaint street in Wahroonga, this delightful little cafe looks like it has been pulled right out of a rural town. Known amongst the locals for its crunchy corn fritters and buttermilk pancakes, it's the perfect place to spend Mother's Day morning. This year it is offering special breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea options for mums.



## The Boathouse, Palm Beach

Governor Phillip Park, Palm Beach

It's a little bit further out, but once you see the waterfront views that surround this restaurant you will understand why people take the drive out to Palm Beach. Treat yourself and order the Aussie burger with thick cut chips. You won't be disappointed. Warning: If you're brave enough to check out The Boathouse on Mother's Day be prepared for a long wait in line, and potentially a fight for a table.



## Pablo and Rusty's, Gordon

1 St Johns Ave, Gordon

Gordon's all time favourite cafe. Although the food menu is limited you can't beat Pablo's coffee. Team it with a bowl of their bircher muesli or banana bread and you'll be set for the day.

## Cafe Mirabelle

277 Mona Vale Rd, Terrey Hills

Located in Flower Power, known by many as Bond's Nursery, this cafe offers some delicious sweet treats in the midst of picturesque greenery. Their hummingbird cake is the perfect companion for your latte. Don't have a sweet tooth? Opt for one of their savoury muffins - the fetta, pumpkin and sundried tomato muffin is our favourite.



mustangnepalese.com.au



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# SKI TRIPS: AUSTRALIA VS NEW ZEALAND

DON'T LET EXPENSIVE TRAVEL COSTS WHITEOUT YOUR HOLIDAY.

by Kaitlin Coleman

**THE WEATHER HAS** cooled down and all signs are starting to point to winter, which means ski season is just around the corner. With Australia and New Zealand both offering great ski destinations, it can be difficult to know which to choose without breaking the bank.

There's no doubt that ski holidays can be expensive, and Australia is renowned for its costly accommodation. New Zealand is no exception, as overseas flights can easily rack up a hefty bill. *Sydney Observer* has explored both locations to find out which will provide the best ski holiday for you this winter.

## AUSTRALIA

There is a veritable smorgasbord of ski locations right at our doorstep, most of which can be reached by car or short plane ride. The gorgeous snowfields of Thredbo and Perisher are only a days drive from Sydney, and both offer fantastic ski runs. Close location is just one of the many benefits of staying within Australia to ski, as most of

the runs also provide great skiing experiences, regardless of skill level.

Perisher in particular has a whole range of runs, and their abundance of snow cannons mean skiing is a possibility even if snow is sparse.

Robert Kirk from Harvey World Travel says: "Perisher is just more user friendly, there are more terrains, it's physically bigger than Thredbo and has a whole range of places for kids to ski as well."

"...keep your costs relatively low, and enjoy your holiday with family and friends."

However, the pricey accommodation of Australia stops many short, and with good reason. Some locations charge over \$1000 a night. This, plus the rest of the necessary

expenses, and many families are over budget. The solution here is not to stay on the mountain, and instead opt to stay at a location nearby. Jindabyne is the best example here, as it is only 30 minutes drive from Perisher and Thredbo. Other great places include Lake Crackenback, Selwyn Snowfields and Charlotte's Pass.

Another solution to keep your staying costs low, is to hire an apartment or a house, and share the cost among a few people. By finding another family to stay with and cooking your own meals, you can keep your costs relatively low, and enjoy your holiday with family and friends.

## NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand is world renowned for its spectacular mountains and ski fields, from Mt Ruapehu on the North Island, to Queenstown and Canterbury near Christchurch in the South. New Zealand has a much longer ski period than Australia, beginning in June and finishing up around October.

Colin Bowman from Flight Centre says "You're more likely to get better snow cover for a longer period than in Australia."



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The ski fields on offer are excellent, and can satisfy both the most dangerous thrill seekers and those tackling the snow for the first time. Queenstown is the most popular choice, as its skiing conditions and upbeat nightlife offer a great all round holiday experience. If you're after something less touristy then head to locations like Lake Taupo on the North Island, or Temple Basin in Arthur's Pass on the South Island.

Unlike Australia, many of the ski fields in New Zealand are located near other attractions to keep the whole family entertained. Queenstown, for example, has a huge variety of adventure sports like bungee jumping, bike riding, sky diving, white water rafting and more. You are also able to trade in your ski pass for an activity like this, should the weather not permit skiing on the day.

New Zealand also offers better value for money if you consider the current exchange rate. One Australian dollar will usually buy just over one New Zealand dollar, which makes expenses like eating out, hiring ski gear and extra activities that little

bit gentler on your purse strings.

However New Zealand's biggest flaw as a destination is the cost of overseas flights. The minimum cost for a return flight to Queenstown from Sydney for a family of four is around \$2000, then there are all of the other skiing expenses to think about. If you want to go to New Zealand, the key is to plan early and look for package deals. There are huge amounts of ski holiday packages on offer, which include cheap flights, accommodation and ski costs.

#### THE VERDICT?

Neither one is cheaper than the other, or better value for money, as both destinations can be quite expensive, and both offer stellar skiing experiences.

For those wanting a true holiday away from home, New Zealand is the way to go. The beautiful views, fantastic snow and range of activities you can participate in make it an all round adventure destination. Plan for at least one week away to allow yourself the opportunity to properly soak in the magnificent culture, sights,

and people.

If you're only looking for a short, convenient getaway then stick within Australia. Take a long weekend and enjoy the best of family friendly skiing, convenient snow field locations, and delicious local produce.

#### TOP TIPS

**Look for package deals:** Flights to New Zealand are significantly cheaper through holiday packages, and Australian destinations often offer great deals like free meals for children.

**Book early:** Avoid the stress of last minute planning or extra fees and organise your holiday as early as possible, including pre-booking ski passes.

**Go with a group:** Splitting accommodation costs between more people can really help to keep costs down.

**Research all your options:** Websites like TripAdvisor and advice from travel agents are vital in finding the best holiday options for your family. Spend the time looking around for the best deals, and keep the money you save for the slopes.

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# LESS IS DEFINITELY MORE

HOW TO AVOID THE EXTRA COSTS AND STRESSES THAT COME WITH OVER PACKING.

by Linda OBrien

**TRAVELLING IS UNDOUBTEDLY** one of life's great joys. Unfortunately, the benefits of travel can often be overshadowed by the human propensity to pack for every contingency. The "just in case I might need it" attitude has definitely been the undoing of many a stressed, irritated and irrational traveller.

At airports, I often see singles, couples and families alike lugging massive suitcases around airports. Many times at check-in counters, I have had the same discussion with the staff – what holiday could possibly require items weighing up to 32kgs? As a frequent traveller, there are many tips I have learnt from fellow travellers and my own mistakes that may help lighten the load of your next adventure.

## **STEP ONE: Write a realistic list.**

Regardless of the purpose of the journey or the destination, a key means to travelling light is making a list before packing. Every destination differs marginally and this list will ensure that you have everything you need and nothing you don't.

## **STEP TWO: Be smart about choosing clothes.**

When creating your list consider clothing that layers for warmth, is multipurpose, lightweight and tonal in colour. Remember you can wear the same items of clothing repeatedly. No-one knows you or cares what you are wearing.

I personally only pack black and white clothing. I always accessorise with jewellery or scarves. Ensure that underwear and socks are light and easy to wash.

Lay all your travelling items out on the bed and ensure that you can mix and match for multitudes of purposes. Warm clothing is essential for the plane trip and as the heaviest items, this will free up space in your suitcase. Now put a couple of things back into the cupboard!

## **STEP THREE: Cut down your liquids.**

Purchase a travel kit to decant liquids into 100ml bottles. You will need to obtain small toiletry items for on the plane such as toothpaste and deodorant. And, remember, at worst, you can always buy it at your destination. A small bag of washing detergent has always been one of my best travelling companions.

## **TOP TIP**

My single greatest purchase to date is undoubtedly 'the world's lightest suitcase'. Empty, this carry-on bag weighs only 1.2kgs. It is soft and adheres to the carry-on policy of all airlines.



By packing this single bag, I have avoided a myriad of travel dilemmas. It saves time and the annoyance of queuing and waiting for bags, it ensures I can pack up in a matter of moments and avoids backaches. It even saves money as many budget Australian airlines hit you with additional fees for checking bags.

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# TRACK AND FIELD SUCCESS

by Rose Moloney

**FOUR ROSEVILLE COLLEGE** athletes represented NSW at the Australian Junior Athletics Championships in Perth recently.

Emily Augustine, Phoebe Carter, Katrina Hunt and Rochelle Sharpe each ranked among the top in their respective events in the Championships.

Year 11 student, Katrina Hunt competed strongly in her three track events. She reached the finals and won medals for each event – a bronze in the Under 18 years 100m hurdles,

a bronze in the Under 18 years 100m sprint, and a gold for the Under 18 years 4 x 100m relay.

Katrina was proud of her achievements and praised the work of her coaches. “My coaches have encouraged and prepared me to do my best, and it’s satisfying to come away knowing that you’ve done that.”

Her younger school mate, year 10 student, Emily Augustine, specialises in the endurance events. In an extremely close finish, Emily won a silver medal in the 3000m after accelerating from third place in the race’s final

seconds. She also won a bronze in the 1500m where less than a second separated the first three athletes over the finish line.

“I love longer races – the distance and the time – because it allows me to fall into a rhythm and work out my strategy for the event I’m in,” said Emily.

The Roseville girls succeeded in field events as well. Year 12 student, Rochelle Sharpe, competed in the Under 18 years javelin to rank eighth overall in a competitive field, while year 11 student Phoebe Carter, finished fifth overall in Under 18 years hammer.



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...TO TALK ABOUT by Patrick McAuley

## FINAL'S DAY



**ATTENDING THE GRAND** final game between the Western Sydney Wanderers and the Central Coast Mariners will be a long remembered and favoured memory for me. Rarely has a game been so exciting both off-field and on-field. Originally I'd planned to attend the match with my nephew and brother, but such had been the demand for tickets, we only managed to get two.

Luckily enough I swindled my way into being one of the lucky two and attended the game alongside my nephew, Cameron. However upon arriving at the game, I quickly realised why my brother had so generously relinquished his grasp on the tickets. Both seats were smack bang in the Mariners section!

Driving to the game, Cameron and I had managed to build quite a level of enthusiasm towards the fixture. Both of us splurged on Wanderers gear at the gift shop, and were wearing ear to ear smiles until we saw our seats. As we quietly positioned ourselves, we were immediately greeted with friendly heckling from the bayous Mariners section.

The section was packed to the rim, bursting with yellow and blue. In fact, so rowdy and happy were the fans in yellow and blue, the boys in blue had to twice remind them the seats were for sitting upon. Not even this blue approach from the fuzz could spoil the day for the Mariners though, as the lads from the Coast came up trumps against the Wanderers.

Leaving the game, it was hard to be annoyed at the Mariners for spoiling the party. Such a likeable team, who on many occasions had been victims of the football gods' vicious humour. I fully expect the Wanderers to be at many more grand finals, so why not let the Mariners enjoy their well-earned time in the sun.

## CYCLE RAISES AWARENESS OF VISION PROBLEM

by Rose Moloney

**ON MAY 1** blind cyclist Jen Nickols, will arrive in Hornsby as part of her five month cycle around Australia.

Nickols will be the first blind person to ride around Australia, and is doing so in order to raise awareness for the Lions International Eye Health programs.

She travels on a tandem bike with a sighted pilot rider and is backed up

by a motorhome and her dog, Zelda.

She left Hobart on April 14, so she still has a long way to go. If she sticks to schedule she will finish her cycle in Melbourne on September 30.

The members of Berowra, Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Lions Clubs have arranged accommodation for her and her team in Hornsby and plan to join her for dinner on May 1, before she sets out for Gosford the next day.

## PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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## WHAT'S ON | APRIL



### Every Saturday Organic Food and Farmers Market

9am – 2pm

Enjoy organic fruit, vegetables, Asian food, deli and bakery goods, meat and more.

**Where:** Chatswood Public School, Pacific Highway, Chatswood

**Contact:** 9999 2226

### May 5 Fernwood Fitness Seniors Open Week

6am – 1pm (Free)

Fernwood Hornsby is offering seniors free entry and fitness classes in their Seniors Open Week. Special talks will also be held on the importance of staying fit and healthy as we age.

**Where:** Shop R4, Westfield Hornsby

**Contact:** Phone 94774177

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### May 19 Kids Proms: Musical Safari

4pm – 8pm (\$5)

Embark on a musical safari where you'll go hunting for animals and creatures through orchestral music for young children. Children are encouraged to dress up as their favourite animal!

**Where:** St Ives High School, Yarrabung Road, St Ives

**Contact:** Nicholas Comino on 0413181331 or at [nicholas.comino@gmail.com](mailto:nicholas.comino@gmail.com)

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**Contact:** 9252 7729 or visit [www.swf.org.au](http://www.swf.org.au)



### April 4 – May 26 'Wallace and Gromit's World of Invention' at the Powerhouse Museum

4pm – 8pm (\$5)

Get hands-on with Wallace and Gromit's inventions! In this exhibition, kids can explore interactive gadgets and models and learn about inventing in everyday life.

**Where:** The Powerhouse Museum, 500 Harris Street Ultimo

**Contact:** 9217 0111, [ticketek.com.au](http://ticketek.com.au)



### May 11 Northbridge Centenary Rotary Fireworks

4pm – 8pm (\$5)

The Northbridge Rotary Club is celebrating Northbridge's centenary with a special fireworks display and stalls at Northbridge Oval. All funds raised will go to charity.

**Where:** Northbridge Oval, Sailors Bay Road, Northbridge

**Contact:** Rotary Club of Northbridge 0415 242 628

### May 24 – 10 June Sydney Vivid Light Festival

4pm – 8pm (\$5)

This month Sydney will transform into a spectacular explosion of light and colour. The Sydney Vivid Festival features light installations and projections around Circular Quay, musical performances at the Opera House, design showcases and much more.

**For the full schedule of events, visit**

[www.vividsydney.com/about-vivid-sydney](http://www.vividsydney.com/about-vivid-sydney)

**Where:** Circular Quay and Darling Harbour

**Contact:** (02) 8114 2400

or email: [info.events@dns.com.au](mailto:info.events@dns.com.au)



### May 5 Festival on the Green

10am – 4pm

The annual Festival on the Green will be an exciting day out for the whole family, with plenty of free entertainment, rides and activities to enjoy.

**Where:** St Ives Village Green

**Contact:** 9424 0868

### May 12 Mother's Day Classic (Adults \$50, children \$25, students \$30)

Get active with mum this Mother's Day and sign up for the Sydney Domain 4km walk or 8km run.

**Where:** The Domain, Sydney

**Contact:** [www.mothersdayclassic.com.au](http://www.mothersdayclassic.com.au)

### May 15 'You're the driver!' Road Safety Workshop

4pm – 8pm (\$5)

No matter how long you've had your license, this workshop will get you up to speed. Make sure you're up to date with the road rules and you understand how to use your vehicle's safety features in the event of a crash.

**Where:** Dougherty Community Centre, 7 Victor Street, Chatswood

**Contact:** Fiona Frost on 9777 7723 or email [roadsafety@willoughby.nsw.gov.au](mailto:roadsafety@willoughby.nsw.gov.au)



### 30 May Aboriginal Culture Walk in the Wildflower Garden

10:30am-11:40am (Free)

Join Karen Smith from the Aboriginal Heritage Office for a walk and talk through Ku-ring-gai's beautiful Wildflower Garden.

**Where:** Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden 420 Mona Vale Rd, St Ives

**Contact:** David Wilks on 9424 0844 or [drwilks@kmc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:drwilks@kmc.nsw.gov.au)

# Spoil Mum With Our Giveaways This Month



## Double Pass to Coco Chocolate 3-Hour Chocolate Making & Tasting Workshop.

Ever wondered how that chocolate bar you're eating is made? Now you have the opportunity to learn. As part of the Coco Chocolate three-hour course you will prepare chocolate treats using the traditional French technique of hand tempering on marble. A chocolate slab, chocolate stars and flaked hot chocolate are among the treats you will make and taste. Plus at the end of the day you walk away with a goody bag and a Level One Chocolate Making Certificate to impress your friends. This prize will be too delicious to turn down.



## Urban Spa Mummy and Me Pamper Packages x 2

It can be easy forget to take the time out of our busy lifestyles to just sit back, relax and enjoy life. If you fall into this category then the Mummy and Me Pamper Package is just what you need. Two readers this month have the opportunity to win one of these packages. As part of the deal, a mother or "Princess", will receive a one hour Heavenly Spa Facial along with an express manicure and pedicure. But she won't have to indulge alone; a mini Prince or Princess get to accompany her and receive the same treatments. The vouchers can be used in the St Ives or Gladesville locations. If you're an Urban Spa fan, like Urban Spa St Ives on Facebook as well and you can win more monthly giveaways.



## Monthly Gym Passes and Induction Sessions at Body Shape Gordon x 2

We're almost halfway through the year, and if you are yet to get cracking on your 2013 weight loss resolution then a free gym pass might be just the thing you need to get you on track. The gym is always more fun with a friend, so this month we are giving one mum and daughter duo the chance to win a free months trial and three induction sessions each to the all female gym Body Shape, Gordon. In between the induction sessions you can do your own thing, or throw yourself into their class timetable: Zumba, indoor cycle, pilates and body attack are just a few on offer.



## Julie Goodwin's 'Gather'

If our chat with Julie inspired you to get creative in the kitchen then winning Julie's latest book is the first step in that direction. In 'Gather' Julie focuses on cooking fast and fresh recipes for gatherings of families and friends. Whether you want to cook for an outdoor picnic, an intimate cocktail party or an elegant high tea, there will be something among Julie's 100 recipes for every occasion.



## Tickets for Four to See Disney on Ice Princesses and Heroes x 2

Eight lucky readers will have the opportunity to see their favourite Disney characters take to the ice this July. Disney's latest ice production features 40 world class skaters performing magical choreography, 50 elaborate costume pieces, stunning special effects and Cinderella's famous 2000 light carriage. Snow White, Ariel, Belle, Cinderella, Rapunzel, Tiana, Jasmine and their princes will come together in the midst of the breathtaking set to embark on their romantic quests. Audiences will journey with Ariel as she explores the world above the waves, with Jasmine as she discovers a whole new world and with Prince Philip as he defeats the evil Maleficent to rescue his one true love, Sleeping Beauty's Aurora. Disney on Ice presents Princesses and Heroes will ensure both reader's and princesses' dreams come true. A show not to be missed, it will officially tour in Australia from June and play at the Allphones Arena, Sydney from July 10-14. [www.disneyonice.com.au](http://www.disneyonice.com.au)



## Double Pass to Planet Cake Beginners Cupcake Course

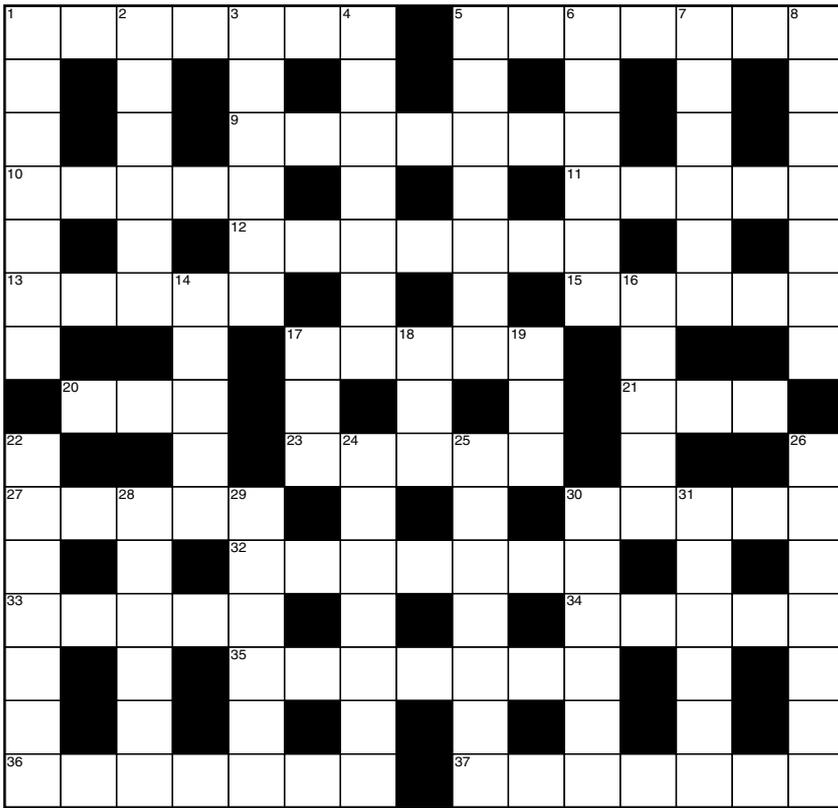
Planet Cake started as a novelty and wedding cake baking company, but in the last eight years it has developed in Australia's largest cake decorating school. In the three hour Beginner Cupcakes workshop you will learn to create six different pretty cupcake designs using fondant icing, which you then get a take home and share with family (or keep and eat them all yourself). This is the perfect way to hone your baking skills, so you can impress friends at the next party.



To enter; **nominate your top two prizes** and tell us in 25 words or more, what you liked in this month's magazine. The best entries will go in the running to win and could be published in the next issue of the magazine. Send your entries to **PO Box 420, Killara NSW 2071** or email [editor@kamdha.com](mailto:editor@kamdha.com) with your **name, address, and contact number** by the 25th of the month.

**Crosswords**

HANDY 3318 (UNAIDED)



**Across**

- 1. Without help
- 5. Flowing up (of tears)
- 9. Radioactive element
- 10. Gives green light to
- 11. Made mistakes
- 12. Small embroidery holes
- 13. Dashboard displays
- 15. Child's toy, ... bear
- 17. Hoard
- 20. Altercation
- 21. By that route
- 23. Takes images of bones (1-4)
- 27. Portion out equally
- 30. Tiny landmasses
- 32. Cattle stealer
- 33. South Asian republic
- 34. Should, ... to
- 35. Dusk
- 36. Removes from country
- 37. The S of RSPCA

**Down**

- 1. Maintains (law)
- 2. Spanish fleet
- 3. Extinguishes
- 4. Regional speech
- 5. Bleaches
- 6. Poorest (excuse)
- 7. Innate
- 8. Adieu
- 14. Further down
- 16. Roof overhangs
- 17. Gender
- 18. Also titled (1,1,1)
- 19. Possesses
- 22. Hoped (to)
- 24. Feels bitter about
- 25. Daffodil shades
- 26. Smoker's receptacle
- 28. Totals, ... to (4,2)
- 29. Pencil-mark remover
- 30. Sardonic
- 31. Bean or pea

**Wordsearch**

WHLN0081 - AMPHIBIANS



**FIND ALL THE WORDS** listed hidden in the grid of letters. They can be found in straight lines up, down, forwards, backwards or even diagonally. The leftover letters will reveal the mystery answer.

- |               |            |             |
|---------------|------------|-------------|
| AIR-BREATHING | LARVAE     | TERRESTRIAL |
| AMPHIBIA      | LIFE CYCLE | TROPICS     |
| ANURA         | LIMBLESS   | URODELA     |
| AQUATIC LARVA | POND       | VERTEBRATE  |
| CAECILIANS    | RAINFOREST | WEBBED      |
| COLD-BLOODED  | SALIENTA   |             |
| EVOLUTION     | TADPOLE    |             |

**SUDOKU**

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Rating: ★☆☆☆☆

5	7	3		4				
			3				5	1
		4			6			3
2		8	7				4	
4			8	9	5			2
	9				3	6		7
7			9				3	
3	2				8			
				3		5	1	6

Novice 0534

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