

JUNE 2026 EDITION #230

FOREVER FREE



A green boost for Harbour Esplanade

An award-winning show garden – *We the Wild* by Matt York of Ratio Consultants (pictured) – from this year’s Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show has found a permanent new home in Docklands, bringing a burst of native planting, colour and biodiversity to Yanong Quay on Harbour Esplanade. More on page 11.

Little India precinct debate puts Docklands’ future in sharper focus

“The City of Melbourne’s proposal to establish a Little India precinct in Docklands has emerged as one of the most debated issues of this year’s council budget, prompting strong support from Melbourne’s Indian diaspora, significant concern from local residents, and a renewed council focus on Docklands’ public realm.”

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



community consultation that revealed deep unease among many Docklands residents.

While there is broad support for recognising and celebrating Melbourne’s Indian community in the same way the city has embraced Chinatown and, more recently, Koreatown, the question of how and where to do that in Docklands remains far from resolved.

Council officers have confirmed that no exact location has been chosen, and *Docklands News* understands there remains uncertainty within Town Hall about how to find a neat solution in a suburb that does not yet have a concentrated cluster of Indian restaurants, retailers or businesses.

In its final budget papers, the council said feedback had confirmed the need for a “thoughtfully designed and located precinct”, adding that any future Little India would have a “small footprint” in a whole-of-Docklands context and would be shaped with residents and Indian communities.

Early ideas under consideration include outdoor cooking and dining facilities, recreation spaces, sporting courts, public art, family-friendly initiatives, cultural events and stronger links to existing services and activities.

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COURTS, PAGE 05

ATET case circles back as council's amended defence revives old admissions

ARTS & CULTURE, PAGE 15

Fractal Studios brings new creative energy



Waterfront Farmers' Market draws big crowd

The new Docklands Waterfront Farmers' Market has made a strong first impression, drawing more than 3500 people to Harbour Esplanade for its launch despite difficult weather conditions on May 17.

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DOCKLANDS

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MELBOURNE'S ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

MORE INFO



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New street food and entertainment series to boost Docklands this winter

“

Docklands' waterfront will receive another welcome boost this June with the launch of The Street Social, a new seasonal event series bringing food, entertainment, sport and family-friendly activities to Harbour Esplanade.

”

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



The free community event will launch with its first instalment, Waterfront Sessions, across Saturday, June 13 and Sunday, June 14 at Yanonung Quay, running from 12pm to 7pm each day.

The new event comes off the back of the recent success of the newly launched Docklands Waterfront Farmers' Market, also held along Harbour Esplanade, adding to growing momentum around the precinct's waterfront activation.

Supported by Development Victoria, The Street Social will run across three themed weekends between June and September,



The launch is another positive sign for Docklands, which has continued to rebuild its identity as a waterfront destination through community events, public programming and new reasons for people to visit the precinct outside of the traditional working week.

Harbour Esplanade has increasingly become a focal point for this renewed energy, with the farmers' market bringing fresh food, local produce and strong weekend foot traffic to the area.

The Street Social is expected to build on that momentum by adding night-life, sport and entertainment elements to the waterfront experience, while remaining accessible through free entry and all-ages programming.

The initiative also supports a broader push to reconnect Melburnians with Docklands' public spaces and encourage more people to see the precinct as a place to spend time, rather than simply pass through.

The Street Social presents Waterfront Sessions at Harbour Esplanade, Yanonung Quay, Docklands, on Saturday, June 13 and Sunday, June 14 from 12pm to 7pm daily.

Entry is free. ●

transforming the harbour into a winter destination for locals, visitors and families.

The first weekend will feature a line-up of Melbourne food favourites, DJs, silent disco sessions, AFL live screenings and family-friendly entertainment, encouraging people to gather, graze and spend time by the water during the colder months.

The broader series will continue with Winter Warmer on August 22 and 23, followed by September of Sport on September 5 and 6. Each weekend will have a different theme, giving audiences a reason to return across the season.

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ATET case circles back as City of Melbourne's amended defence revives old admissions

The City of Melbourne's latest pleadings in the \$7 million Supreme Court battle over Docklands venue ATET suggest the case has come almost full circle, raising fresh questions about why so much court time was burned in April on a position the council now appears to have largely abandoned.

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



Filed and sealed on April 28, the council's further amended defence responds to ATET's third further amended statement of claim and again contains substantial admissions around the venue's termination.

That is significant because it was precisely this issue that sent the trial into confusion in April.

As previously reported by *Docklands News*, the council's barrister told Justice Matthew Connock on April 21 that the City admitted liability on the plaintiffs' pleaded claim. Two days later, after a failed mediation, the council returned to court trying to explain that the admission was narrower than it had sounded, insisting that while it accepted the unlawfulness of the termination, there remained important matters it still denied.

That led to a visibly strained exchange with the judge, who described the situation as "unsatisfactory" and directed the parties to clarify their admissions and denials in

writing.

The amended defence now filed appears to do what many suspected the council should have done earlier: substantially revert to its original position, while still preserving room to fight over damages and some surrounding factual disputes.

Among the most important concessions, the City again admits it terminated the licence by relying on alleged exceedances of EPA noise protocols. It admits receipt of the plaintiffs' mitigation proposals on June 22, 2023. And, most strikingly, it now admits that the purported termination was invalid, while continuing to deny the plaintiffs' claims as to loss and damage.

That is a major point. If the termination was invalid, then the central issue is no longer whether ATET merely had a grievance about how it was treated. It becomes whether the council unlawfully shut down a business and is now trying to limit the financial consequences.

The city still resists other parts of the

claim, particularly around the alleged compliance confirmations, the relocation representations, and whether it failed to give ATET a reasonable opportunity to be heard. But the broader direction is hard to miss. The council is now much closer to the wide-ranging admission it made on April 21 than to the narrower position it awkwardly tried to advance two days later.

If so, the obvious question is why the case was not effectively narrowed then and there.

Instead, the court was forced through a messy, part-heard detour that appears to have achieved little other than delay, and added legal cost and further reputational damage to the council.

That question becomes sharper in light of the role of City of Melbourne CEO Alison Leighton.

As noted in April, Ms Leighton sat at the centre of the key decision-making period as acting CEO and then permanent chief executive. She signed the critical June 23, 2023

termination letter, and it was increasingly apparent during the trial that the plaintiffs wanted to cross-examine her on the council's conduct, including what it knew, when it knew it, and why the licence was terminated when it was.

As reported elsewhere in this edition, councillors unanimously endorsed the City's general infrastructure and amenity manager Rick Kwasek to act as CEO at the May 26 council meeting while Ms Leighton takes leave from June 26 to August 7. The ATET case is due back in court in August.

Ratepayers now face not just the risk of a large compensation bill, but the possibility that the City prolonged a case that should have been substantially narrowed weeks ago. The amended defence does not end the litigation. Quantum remains live, and so do some contested factual issues. But it does reinforce the central impression left by the last court hearing: the council spent valuable time trying to dance around an admission it was always going to have to wear.

That is what makes this latest development so politically awkward.

The council appears to have landed back near where it began, only after the Supreme Court was forced through an avoidable procedural mess and after public confidence in its handling of the matter was further eroded. If the key admission was always going to be made, then the wasted time in April becomes harder to justify.

The longer the matter drags on, the harder it becomes for the City to explain why it has taken this route. The August return to court may yet clarify whether Ms Leighton is finally required to give evidence, and whether the case can at last move cleanly to damages. ●



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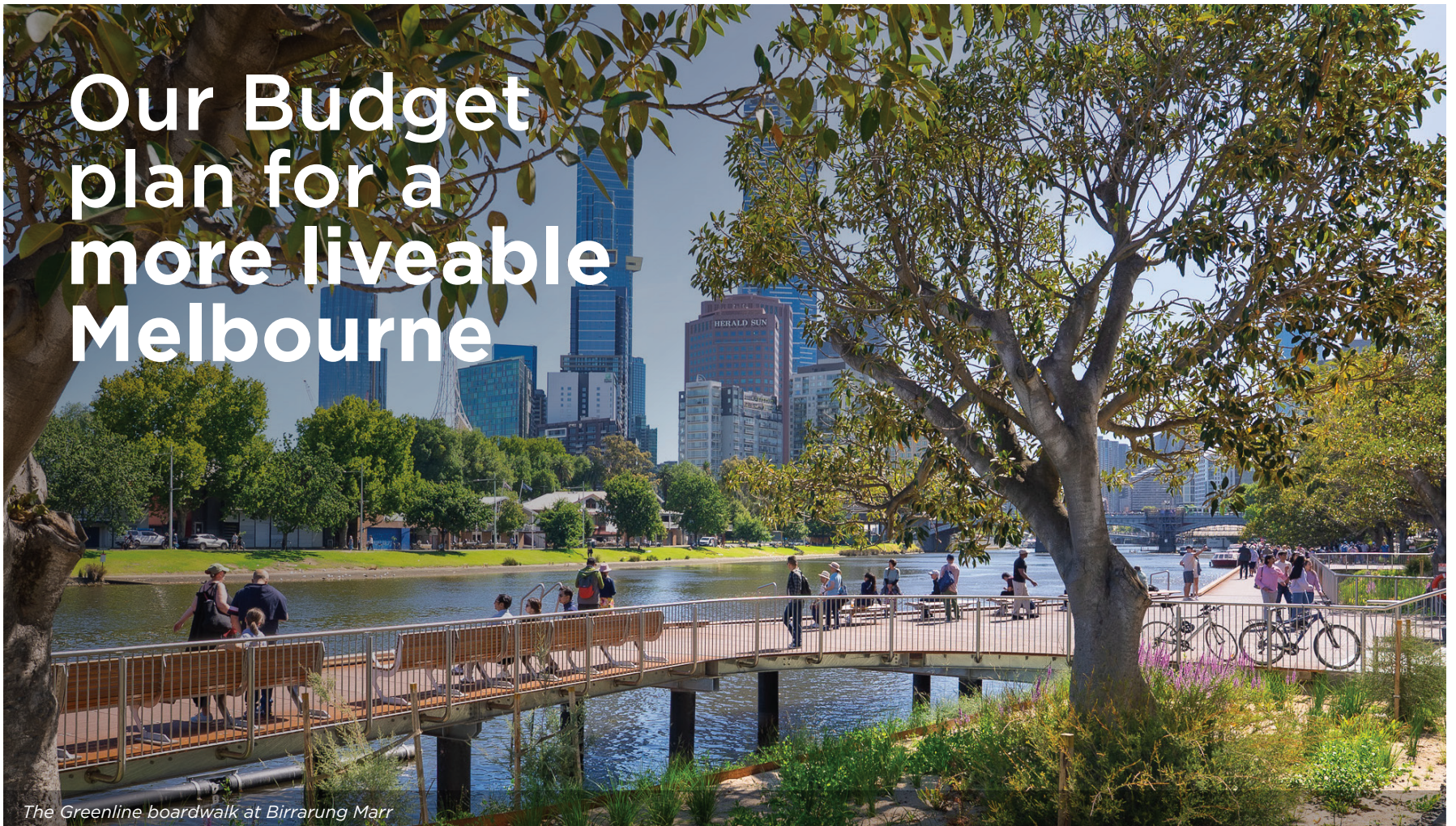
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The Greenline boardwalk at Birrarung Marr

THE CITY OF MELBOURNE'S BUDGET 2026-27 IS HERE

- Total budget: \$804.8 million
- Surplus: \$1.2 million
- Capital works program: \$175.1 million
- Safety and cleaning: \$73.2 million
- Events, arts, culture and activation: \$41.4 million
- Garden City: \$26.4 million

We know budgets aren't the most exciting thing to wrap your head around - but this year's Budget really matters, because it sets out a plan to support a more liveable Melbourne.

Here are some of the ways you'll see the difference:

WE'LL BRING OUR STREETS TO LIFE

- Streets and laneways will become safer with \$2 million for new lighting and the upgrade of existing fixtures in hotspots like Hosier Lane, Collins Street and Hardware Lane.
- Major events including New Year's Eve, Moomba and Christmas Festival will get a \$26 million boost - driving visitation and supporting local businesses.

WE'LL PROVIDE RESPONSIBLE RATES AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT

- While we delivered a full rebate on the Victorian Government's 3% rate rise last year, ratepayers will see an average of 2.75% increase on their rates notice - an increase that ensures we can continue providing reliable core services.
- Free fitness classes in the park, \$2 weekday summer pool entry and free summer swim lessons will continue - keeping people active and connected.

WE'LL KEEP THE CITY CLEAN, SAFE AND EASY TO GET AROUND

- The number of Community Safety Officers on the street will double from 11 to 22, with a focus on providing compassionate support to vulnerable people.
- People will be able to move through the city more easily, as we explore extending the iconic Bourke Street Mall and improving pedestrian access on Flinders Lane.

WE'LL GROW THE GARDEN CITY

- Thirteen new or upgraded parks and green open spaces will be fast-tracked, including Chapman Street pocket park in North Melbourne and Miles and Dodds Street reserve in Southbank.
- Works will progress on Market Square at Queen Victoria Market - the city's biggest new park in more

than 50 years - and a greener, more pedestrian-friendly Franklin Street, connecting the State Library Station to the market.

WE'LL GIVE EVERY NEIGHBOURHOOD A FAIR GO

- People experiencing homelessness with complex mental health challenges will receive more support to access housing, healthcare and social services with a \$2.3 million boost.
- Early childhood programs will get an additional \$500,000 - improving literacy, promoting healthy living, and supporting more families through early intervention and domestic violence prevention.



Scan the QR code for more information on the Budget 2026-27.

If you're feeling the pinch with the return of rates, financial support is available - including through payment plans and interest-free extensions.



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Carlton Gardens is one of Melbourne's world-class green spaces

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CITY OF MELBOURNE

State approves major Docklands build-to-rent tower near Marvel Stadium



The Victorian Government has approved a major new build-to-rent tower in Docklands, giving the green light to a 554-home rental project at 699 La Trobe St in another sign of the precinct's growing role in Melbourne's expanding BTR market.



As previously reported by *Docklands News*, the proposal by Salta Properties was backed by the City of Melbourne last year, with councillors praising the overall quality of the Fender Katsalidis-designed scheme while also seeking tighter conditions around wind, overshadowing and ground-floor activation.

The approved tower was described at the time as helping fill a "missing tooth" in the Docklands streetscape, with the development team emphasising that it would avoid creating a continuous wall of built form along Harbour Esplanade and instead present a more refined skyline outcome.

The project also reflects a much broader trend. Docklands has increasingly become one of Melbourne's strongest locations for build-to-rent, with several major BTR schemes now either approved, under way or recently completed, even as traditional build-to-sell apartment projects have slowed sharply.

When the Docklands tower came before the City of Melbourne in October 2025, Deputy Lord Mayor Roshena Campbell used the debate to warn that "the great Australian dream in Melbourne is dead", pointing to the lack of for-sale apartment proposals coming through the system and the growing dominance of BTR and student housing in the inner city.

Still, the Salta proposal itself was strongly welcomed, particularly given the need for more rental supply.

The Docklands approval forms part of the government's continuing effort to position Victoria as the national leader in build-to-rent. Under current policy, eligible BTR developments completed and operational between January 2022 and December 2031 receive a 50 per cent land tax concession for up to 30 years, along with a full exemption from the Absentee Owner Surcharge.

The government says those incentives, along with the use of the Development

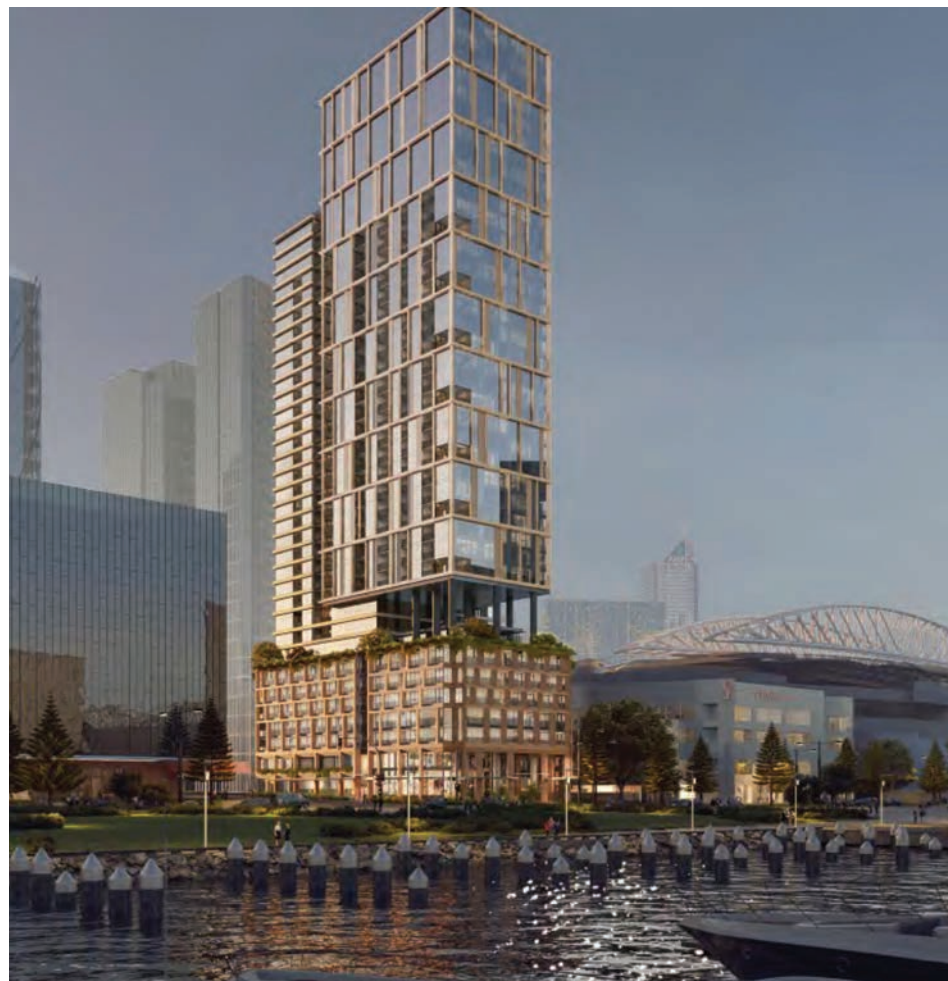
WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



Planning Minister Sonya Kilkenny announced the approval on May 8 as part of a broader state government push to accelerate rental housing, with the Docklands project and a second BTR development in Fitzroy together delivering almost 800 new homes.

The Docklands scheme, to be delivered on the prominent corner of Harbour Esplanade and La Trobe St next to Marvel Stadium, will include a mix of studio, one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments and is intended to capitalise on the site's close proximity to the CBD, public transport, jobs and services.

For Docklands, the approval is significant not only because of the scale of housing it will bring, but because it activates a long-vacant site at one of the precinct's key gateway corners.



Facilitation Program to fast-track approvals, have helped Victoria become home to around two-thirds of the nation's operational BTR projects, with more than 70 per cent of all BTR homes completed in Australia last year located in Victoria.

Minister Kilkenny said the latest approvals would help deliver more housing choice

close to jobs, transport and services.

"Victoria is proudly the build-to-rent capital because we've backed this model from the start," she said.

"We've approved hundreds more homes in the inner-city to give renters more choice to live close to the things that matter to them." ●

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Why Melbourne Matters



Events like New Year's Eve are major economic drivers for Victoria

Ahead of November's state election, Melbourne is back in the political spotlight – and we want to make the most of it.

We've launched a new advocacy campaign: Melbourne Matters. Because when Melbourne does well, Victoria does too.

Many of the decisions that will shape Melbourne's future sit outside Town Hall – including housing, schools, transport and other essential infrastructure needed to support growing communities.

Our campaign focuses on 3 priorities: supporting Victoria's growth, creating safe and healthy communities, and protecting Melbourne's place as Australia's cultural capital.

MELBOURNE MATTERS FOR VICTORIA'S GROWTH

Melbourne is one of Victoria's fastest-growing areas and generates 22% of the state's economic output, but we need the right investment and policy support to help that growth succeed.

- We're calling on the Victorian Government to give Melbourne the same level of support and policy attention as other major growth areas as our population continues to grow.
- We also want to work with the Victorian Government to unlock public land and create more green space for our growing community. The Moonee Ponds Creek corridor is one example: 1.3 hectares of locked-up land unable to be accessed by 60,000 nearby residents.

MELBOURNE MATTERS FOR SAFE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

We know that people in our community are currently under pressure to make ends meet, and we're seeing crime and antisocial behaviour escalating in our public places.

Melbourne must remain a city that feels safe, welcoming and accessible for everyone, including the most vulnerable members of our community.

- We need continued support from the Victorian Government

to help keep Melbourne's streets safe, including a more visible and consistent safety presence in busy areas and known hotspots.

- Many people experiencing homelessness are also living with complex mental health challenges. Too often, when someone reaches crisis point, there are only 2 places for them to go: hospital or jail. We're calling for greater investment in crisis accommodation and proven programs like Street to Home that help break the cycle.

MELBOURNE MATTERS AS AUSTRALIA'S CULTURAL CAPITAL

Melbourne's arts, music and events scene is a huge part of what makes this city special – and with the creative economy contributing more than \$41 billion to Victoria each year, it's also a major economic driver.

- Major events like our New Year's Eve celebrations play a huge role in bringing the city to life and attracting visitors from around Australia and beyond. An extra \$1 million in state funding

would support the expansion of programming and offerings.

- We're calling on the Victorian Government to restore funding to organisations like Creative Victoria and Visit Victoria. Creative Victoria's funding has fallen by almost one third since 2022, with cuts starting to take a real toll on Melbourne's creative sector.

As we approach the state election, Melburnians should expect ambition from all sides of politics – and politicians should expect to hear directly from the people they represent.

Call your local MP. Visit their office. Ask them what their vision is for Melbourne and whether they are prepared to fight for it.

That matters, because Melbourne matters.



Scan the QR code for more information.



Southbank at sunset, courtesy of Visit Victoria

Good Cycles departs Docklands bike hub after decade on Harbour Esplanade

The Good Cycles bike hub on Harbour Esplanade has closed after almost a decade in Docklands, opening up a new opportunity for the City of Melbourne and Development Victoria to rethink one of the waterfront's most visible small-scale activation sites.



WORDS BY SEAN CAR



The not-for-profit social enterprise, which uses bikes to create employment and training pathways for young people, recently submitted notice to vacate the semi-permanent container facility in line with its lease agreement.

Good Cycles had operated in Docklands for just short of 10 years, after the hub was established near the NAB forecourt in 2016 with support from the public and the then Places Victoria.

At the time, the organisation described Docklands as a natural location for the facility due to its high visibility, waterfront setting and connection to the Capital City Trail.

Good Cycles announced in March that both its Docklands and Geelong stores would close, with the last day of trading on March 6.

In a statement to customers, the organisation said the locations had been "more than

just shops", describing them as community hubs, starting points for thousands of rides and spaces where meaningful connections were made.

"This was not a decision we arrived at easily," Good Cycles said.

"Unfortunately, a combination of challenging factors has made it no longer sustainable for us to keep these stores open. Among these was our limited capacity to continue creating employment opportunities for young people and to generate the sustainable income needed to keep both locations running."

The organisation thanked its staff and customers, and said it hoped to continue serving the community from its CBD location in Goldsbrough Lane.

While the Harbour Esplanade hub provided a useful service for cyclists and contributed to the social enterprise mission of Good Cycles, the container facility was not without controversy when first introduced.

Its arrival came amid broader ambitions

for Harbour Esplanade, with surrounding landscaping intended to offer a glimpse of the waterfront boulevard's future. However, the larger Harbour Esplanade master plan was never fully realised, and the facility was at times underutilised, with limited opening hours.

The vacancy now creates a fresh opportunity to consider how the site could better serve Docklands' changing needs.

A City of Melbourne spokesperson said Good Cycles' departure was a tenant-based decision and that the council was "excited to continue working with Good Cycles".

The council is now working with its Creative Spaces events team and Development Victoria to explore new opportunities to activate the area.

The process comes as the council prepares to finalise a new Docklands Public Realm Improvements Plan, announced as part of this year's budget, which will focus on improving the quality, function and experience of public spaces across the precinct. ●

City of Melbourne chief Alison Leighton to take leave as acting CEO appointed

City of Melbourne councillors have endorsed the council's general manager of infrastructure and amenity, Rick Kwasek, as acting chief executive officer for a six-week period from June 26 to August 7 while CEO Alison Leighton is on leave.

WORDS BY JENNY DENTON



Under the *Local Government Act* and the terms of a committee that oversees the CEO's employment, the council is required to formally move to appoint a member of staff to the acting role if the CEO will be absent for more than 28 days.

A motion on the interim appointment moved by Lord Mayor Nick Reece and seconded by portfolio head on finance, governance and risk Cr Owen Guest, was unanimously supported at the May 26 meeting.

Cr Guest described Mr Kwasek as "a technocrat", who had previously acted in a similar role for nine months.

"I have every faith in his ability to do Alison's role while she's away," he said.

The City of Melbourne did not respond to a request for information about the nature of Ms Leighton's leave, saying only that the leave was planned. ●

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Melbourne farewells iconic upside-down tram artwork on Spencer St

One of Melbourne's quirkier and most recognisable public artworks is set to disappear from the edge of Docklands, with the City of Melbourne confirming it will remove *Raising the Rattler Pole* from the corner of Flinders and Spencer streets this month.

Better known to many as the upside-down W-Class tram sculpture outside the Grand Hotel, the artwork has been a distinctive feature of the western end of the CBD since 2013.

In a statement, the City of Melbourne said the decision had been made after concerns emerged about the condition of the piece.

"After careful consideration, the City of Melbourne has made the decision to retire the artwork on Spencer St," a spokesperson said.

"In collaboration with the artist, we have agreed the artwork is showing signs of deterioration and poses potential safety risks."

The removal was scheduled to take place overnight on May 16 and 17 after 10pm to minimise disruption. Once the sculpture is gone, the site will be reinstated with grass.

The work, created by artist David Michael Bell, was installed in 2013 through the City of Melbourne's Public Art Program and was originally intended to have a lifespan of around five years. Instead, it has remained in place for more than 12 years, becoming an unexpected but enduring visual landmark at one of the city's busiest gateway corners.

When first unveiled, the sculpture was described as a tribute to Melbourne's deep affection for the W-Class tram, particularly the 1040 model, the last W-Class "rattler" built in 1956. Rising 10 metres into the air at a 10-degree angle, the tram appeared to balance improbably on its pole, giving passers-by a playful and unmistakably Melbourne image.

At the time, Bell told *Docklands News* he wanted to honour an object rather than a person.

"There are huge stone statues and plinths all over the world as tribute to people, but I wanted to pay tribute to an object," he said in 2013.

"*Raising the Rattler Pole* is a piece that everyone can identify with, while remembering their own stories."

The sculpture quickly became one of those artworks that locals and visitors alike seemed to absorb into the mental map of the city, particularly at the western edge of the CBD where Docklands, Spencer St and Flinders St converge. ●

Little India precinct debate puts Docklands' future in sharper focus

Continued from page 1.

At the May 12 budget submissions hearing, council management said the first stages would include trial activations "to ensure we get the balance right", while acknowledging the need to protect resident amenity and ensure local community benefit.

The council has also repositioned Little India under its "Vibrant and creative Melbourne" priority, rather than treating it simply as a Docklands infrastructure project.

But the debate has exposed a broader tension. Many Docklanders argue the suburb's urgent needs are not branding, signage or events, but greening, shade, wind mitigation, public realm upgrades, harbour maintenance, family infrastructure, cleanliness and better open space.

The council's own budget consultation summary noted that while a minority of submissions supported Little India in Docklands and saw the opportunities it offered, the majority expressed caution about a single-theme precinct, citing risks around multicultural identity, top-down delivery, service diversion, and social and economic impacts.

The same summary said feedback raised a desire for Docklands to be treated as a residential neighbourhood with family and community amenity, rather than primarily as an events precinct.

One opposing submission argued that while multicultural recognition was important, the proposed allocation risked diverting money from more pressing liveability issues.

The submitter said Docklands continued to face "severe wind tunnel conditions, poor pedestrian comfort, a lack of greenery and shade, wide roads, and inactive streetscapes", and argued that cultural precincts should emerge organically through community engagement, small businesses and lived experience.

That sentiment has been echoed by many residents, who remain frustrated that \$1.2 million has been set aside to keep progressing Little India while Docklands still waits for long-promised public realm improvements.

In response, the council has now added a new key activity to "address infrastructure and amenity opportunities at Docklands" under its "Building a city for people" priority.

It has also committed to finalising the Docklands Public Realm Improvements Plan, which will review streets, promenades, lighting, wayfinding, parks and open spaces; identify future upgrade opportunities; present ideas for creative place activation, and guide future investment, partnerships and

capital works.

The council has further pointed to ongoing maintenance works, including \$2 million in the budget to rehabilitate piles along sections of NewQuay Promenade.

A City of Melbourne spokesperson said the council was "currently undertaking work to investigate and rehabilitate piles along sections of NewQuay Promenade in Docklands".

"These works will help keep this prized waterfront asset safe, functional and accessible for businesses, residents and Melbourne's boating community," the spokesperson said.

For supporters of Little India, however, the project remains an overdue opportunity to give one of Melbourne's largest and fastest-growing communities a visible civic home.

At the May 12 hearing, Federation of Indian Associations of Victoria president Vasanth Srinivasan described the \$1.2 million allocation as a "positive and historic beginning", but said a world-class precinct would ultimately require a far larger investment of between \$5 million and \$10 million.

"This is not simply signage, declarations or festivals," he said. "This is about creating a permanent cultural, tourism, business and community destination that will benefit all Victorians and Australians."

Australian India Business Council representative Prakash Gupta also backed the proposal, saying a dedicated Little India would create a vibrant economic hub, strengthen cultural ties between Australia and India, and give the next generation of Indian Australians "a place to be seen, celebrated and at home".

But since the funding announcement, the public debate has also taken an ugly turn, with some members of the Indian community subjected to racist commentary over the proposal.

That racism has added another layer of sensitivity to an already complex discussion. The challenge for the council now is to ensure legitimate concerns about planning, spending and local amenity are not allowed to become cover for hostility towards Melbourne's Indian community.

The Little India idea is not dead, but nor is it straightforward.

For Docklands, the debate has forced a much larger conversation about what kind of place the suburb is becoming, who gets to shape its identity, and whether cultural activation can succeed without first fixing the public spaces around it.

The council's staged approach may give it time to answer those questions. But with both residents and the Indian community watching closely, the next phase will need more than a budget line. It will need trust, detail and a location that makes sense. ●

Docklands brews up support for Cancer Council

Docklands locals have once again provided strong support for Cancer Council through a series of Australia's Biggest Morning Tea events across the suburb.

At Berth Restaurant's annual event on NewQuay, organisers raised an impressive \$49,000. Melbourne Football Club captain Max Gawn and Cancer Council Victoria's Natalie Gibbs joined the event, helping mark a memorable day for residents and supporters.

Yarra's Edge also delivered a strong result, raising \$8671 through a community morning tea, raffle, auction items and a locally themed Yarra's Edge quiz. The event was supported by sponsors, Yarra's Edge residents and helpers, who supplied a generous morning tea. Andrea Schmidtke also attended and spoke on behalf of Cancer Council Victoria. ●



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Award-winning garden finds new life on Docklands waterfront

“
An award-winning show garden from this year’s Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show has found a permanent new home in Docklands, bringing a burst of native planting, colour and biodiversity to Yanonung Quay on Harbour Esplanade.

Known as *We the Wild*, the garden was designed by Matt York of Ratio Consultants and was one of the standout attractions at the 2026 flower show, where it received the City of Melbourne Award of Excellence for Best in Show, a Gold Medal and the Horticultural Media Association Award for Best Use of Plant Life.

Now reimaged for the Docklands waterfront, the installation is helping activate another piece of public space in a precinct that continues to search for more greenery, softness and day-to-day vibrancy.

Originally conceived as a temporary showpiece, the garden has been adapted into a longer-lasting public realm project with support from Development Victoria and the City of Melbourne.

In doing so, it has also given a second life to plant stock and materials from the flower show, turning what could have been

a short-lived display into something the broader community can continue to enjoy.

The design draws inspiration from Victoria’s southern coastline and explores how small, carefully designed landscapes can do much more than look good. The garden has been created to support biodiversity, encourage pollination, contribute to urban cooling and offer a stronger everyday connection to nature in the middle of the city.

That makes it particularly relevant in Docklands, where the challenge has long been how to make public spaces feel more inviting, more memorable and lived in.

Ratio delivered the project in collaboration with To Good Use and Studio Perspective, with plant supply led by Kuranga Native Nursery and Proven Winners.

Mr York, Ratio’s director of landscape

architecture, said the installation was already helping shape the way people experienced the waterfront.

“Through these garden activations, Ratio is bringing a touch of the Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show to Docklands, creating pockets of colour and joy across our Garden City that can be enjoyed during a ferry wait, a lunch break, and as a backyard for residents or a community event,” he said.

That idea of small but strategic activation was echoed by placemaking specialist and To Good Use director Bec McHenry, who said there was something powerful about giving a garden designed for a moment in time an ongoing role in the public realm.

“Its new home on the Docklands waterfront creates an ongoing opportunity for biodiversity, habitat and everyday connection with nature,” she said. ●

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AFL to make temporary move to Melbourne Quarter as Marvel waterfront redevelopment nears

The AFL will temporarily relocate its Melbourne headquarters to Lendlease's Melbourne Quarter Tower later this year, in a major office move that clears an important path for the long-anticipated redevelopment of Marvel Stadium's waterfront edge at Docklands.

The league confirmed on May 11 that AFL House would shift from its current base on Harbour Esplanade to Melbourne Quarter Tower, with staff expected to move into the new premises in late 2026.

The AFL stressed, however, that the relocation is temporary and tied directly to the redevelopment of the existing AFL House precinct at Marvel Stadium. It is understood the league intends to move its headquarters back to the waterfront site once that redevelopment is complete.

AFL chief executive Andrew Dillon said the move was necessary to allow the next stage of works at Marvel to proceed.

"AFL House at Marvel Stadium has served the game incredibly well for many years, however the planned redevelopment of the precinct requires us to secure an alternative home that supports immediate operations," he said.

"To deliver that redevelopment effectively, we need to temporarily relocate our office operations, and Melbourne Quarter Tower provides the right solution to support our people and our operations during that period."

The AFL's move is significant not just for the league, but for Docklands more broadly.

As *Docklands News* reported last year, the Victorian Government opened expressions of interest in October 2025 for the

redevelopment of the two prime waterfront sites flanking Marvel Stadium at 140 and 160 Harbour Esplanade, currently home to AFL House and the former Channel 7 broadcast centre.

That process marked the formal beginning of the next major chapter in the renewal of Docklands' waterfront, with the state and the AFL seeking development partners for a mixed-use transformation that could include housing, offices, hospitality and entertainment uses.

The temporary relocation to Melbourne Quarter is therefore a practical and symbolic milestone: it confirms the AFL is now preparing to vacate the site so the long-foreshadowed Marvel waterfront redevelopment can move ahead.

Dillon said Melbourne Quarter would give the AFL a strong interim base while keeping it close to the stadium.

"The Melbourne Quarter Tower offers a centrally located workplace that reflects the importance of our people, our partners, our clubs and our connection to the city," he said.

"It will be a base for all our clubs and stakeholders to be able to visit and work, all while remaining in close proximity to Marvel Stadium."

For Melbourne Quarter, the AFL's commitment is another major leasing win for Lendlease's \$3 billion precinct opposite Southern Cross Station. The development already houses major tenants including Medibank, Seven Network, Google, EnergyAustralia and Arup.

Lendlease executive director of development Adam Williams said the move reflected continued demand for high-quality, connected workplaces in central Melbourne. "We are pleased to welcome the AFL as part of a growing community of leading organisations choosing Melbourne Quarter as their long-term workplace destination," he said. ●



New Docklands law firm ASKY opens with community focus and global outlook

Docklands has welcomed a new legal practice to the precinct, with ASKY International Lawyers opening its doors and positioning itself as a firm focused on accessibility, multicultural understanding and long-term community connection.

WORDS BY
SEAN CAR



Founded by principals Sumitra Yerramilli and Rajiv Dalal, ASKY says it was created with a clear vision: to make legal services more approachable, transparent and effective for the people who need them.

The firm's founders say the idea grew from years of working with clients from diverse backgrounds and seeing just how overwhelming the legal system can feel for individuals and families facing major life decisions, disputes or uncertainty.

"ASKY Lawyers was founded with a clear vision, to make legal services more approachable, transparent and effective," the firm said.

"We recognised that many people feel overwhelmed by the legal system, and we wanted to create a firm that bridges that gap, offering not only strong legal expertise but also clarity, empathy and practical guidance."

"At our core, we believe justice should be accessible to everyone, regardless of background or circumstance."

The decision to base the new office in



Docklands was a deliberate one.

According to the firm, the precinct's diversity, connectivity and growing professional profile made it a natural home for a modern legal practice with both local ambitions and an international outlook.

"Docklands stood out to us as a vibrant, growing and diverse community," the principals said.

"Its energy, connectivity and forward-looking character made it a natural home for a modern law firm like ours."

The location also happens to be a practical midpoint for the firm's two principals, with Ms Yerramilli based in Melbourne's south-east and Mr Dalal in the northern suburbs.

But ASKY says the choice of Docklands is about more than convenience. The firm

sees the area as a place where it can build meaningful ties with residents, local businesses and the broader multicultural community while remaining well-positioned within Melbourne's professional landscape.

"Our ambition is to build a firm that is both locally grounded and globally connected," the firm said.

That international perspective is also central to ASKY's identity.

The principals say their Indian heritage and wider global experience have helped shape the way they practise, particularly in understanding that legal issues often intersect with family, culture and personal identity.

That, they say, allows them to offer advice that is not only legally sound, but also culturally sensitive and tailored to the realities

of each client's circumstances.

For a city such as Melbourne, where many clients may have family, business or legal issues that cross borders, that kind of perspective can be especially valuable.

ASKY says it hopes to become known not just as a legal practice, but as a trusted and approachable part of the Docklands community.

"We hope to build genuine, long-term relationships based on trust, respect and accessibility," the firm said.

"We want to be seen not just as legal practitioners, but as approachable members of the community who are here to support individuals, families and local businesses."

The firm has also flagged an interest in local collaborations, events and educational initiatives as it settles into the precinct, saying it hopes to contribute to Docklands in ways that go beyond legal services alone.

Success, the principals say, will be measured not only by growth, but by impact: the trust they earn, the outcomes they achieve and the difference they make in clients' lives.

The story has also been supported locally by John Dall'Amico, Alexandra Rodrigues and the team from CBD Facilities Management, a building management company with a strong footprint in Docklands, who helped bring ASKY's story to *Docklands News* and conducted the interview for publication.

For ASKY, that kind of support is fitting. The firm says it wants its practice to reflect the people and communities it serves.

"At ASKY, we don't just practise law," the principals said. "We partner with people and stand with them through life's important moments."

askylaw.com ●



Docklands Waterfront Farmers' Market launch draws big crowd despite rough weather

“
The new Docklands Waterfront Farmers' Market has made a strong first impression, drawing more than 3500 people to Harbour Esplanade for its launch despite difficult weather conditions on May 17.

WORDS BY SEAN CAR

”



Led by the Docklands Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the City of Melbourne, Development Victoria and the Victorian Farmers' Market Association, the

event marked the new home of the market and the start of what is now planned to become a monthly fixture on the waterfront.

According to the Docklands Chamber of Commerce, the day brought a “long awaited and exciting atmosphere” to Harbour Esplanade, with strong attendance from local residents, businesses, stakeholders and visitors from further afield.

That turnout was especially encouraging given the less-than-ideal conditions, and will be seen as a major vote of confidence in efforts to activate Docklands with more regular, family-friendly events.

The market featured more than 40 vendors offering fresh seafood, Victorian produce, artisan goods and ready-to-eat food, helping create the kind of bustling street life many in the precinct have long hoped to see more often.

Live music and sea shanties added to the atmosphere, while a range of free activities helped make the event feel like more than just a produce market.

One of the standout features was the Victorian Fisheries Authority's kids' fishing clinic and education stand, which attracted

more than 100 attendees. City of Melbourne also offered free pet registrations, while a string of giveaways from participating partners added to the festive mood.

Lord Mayor Nick Reece attended the opening day to welcome the market, underlining its importance as part of the city's broader efforts to improve activity and visitation across Docklands.

There were also some clever touches that strengthened the waterfront setting, including the *Calypso Lady* bar boat docked at the ferry terminal, Port Phillip Ferries' involvement in the day, and a passenger ferry service from Yarra's Edge to Harbour Esplanade delivered by Mirvac, which carried more than 100 people across the water.

Other activations included market-branded cooler bags sponsored by Development Victoria, free tote bags from ANZ, a Quest Docklands accommodation giveaway and Boost Juice smoothie vouchers.

The Chamber said the launch had laid a strong foundation for what comes next, with the market now set to continue as a monthly event aimed at bringing fresh



produce to Docklands while driving visitation, supporting local business and building stronger community connections along the waterfront.

The next Docklands Waterfront Farmers' Market will be held on Sunday, June 21 from 10am to 3pm, with organisers saying they are already looking at ways to build on the success of the first event and encourage even more local participation.

Note: there will be no market in July due to the annual Run Melbourne event. ●

ELLEN SANDELL

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Docklands needs a budget that plans for the community we are becoming

Docklands is no longer a future suburb. It is a living, growing and maturing community.

WORDS BY
JAMAL HAKIM



Every year, more residents, families, workers, visitors and small businesses make Docklands their home. The suburb continues to carry enormous potential for the City of Melbourne, not just as a residential neighbourhood, but as one of the city's most distinctive waterfront precincts.

That is why the City of Melbourne's 2026-27 budget matters. For Community 3008, the question is simple: will this budget help Docklands grow with purpose, or will it allow the suburb to keep developing through disconnected, ad hoc decisions?

Our submission to the draft budget focuses on four priorities that have consistently emerged through community engagement: enhancing family liveability, taking a strategic approach to our waterways and Harbour Esplanade, creating a pet-friendly community, and greening Docklands.

At the heart of this is Harbour Esplanade and Victoria Harbour. Harbour Esplanade is the natural meeting point between the CBD and the water. It should be one of Melbourne's great civic places. With the right planning, it could support tourism, hospitality, retail, culture, recreation and community life.



Community 3008 has called for the immediate commencement of a Harbour Esplanade Master Plan, alongside a broader Victoria Harbour Master Plan. These plans must be developed with the City of Melbourne, Development Victoria and the Docklands community, and consider the full waterfront experience, including Victoria Harbour Promenade and NewQuay Promenade.

This is especially important given current conversations about the future of Central Pier and other harbour infrastructure. Docklands' water is not empty space waiting to be filled. It is the defining feature that makes Docklands different.

Docklands also needs a more deliberate

approach to parks, recreation and open space. Our population is growing, and with it comes a greater need for places where children can play, families can gather, residents can exercise and dog owners can responsibly enjoy public space.

Areas that are currently underused or unavailable for practical public use, such as parts of North Wharf and land near Moonee Ponds Creek, should be planned with imagination and care. They could become nature trails, Indigenous history pathways, informal recreation spaces or community activity areas.

We also need to look honestly at whether Docklands has enough accessible play areas for younger children. Ron Barassi Senior

Reserve is important, but it does not solve every need. Smaller interventions, such as flexible play spaces, moveable cricket nets or better use of low-traffic areas near existing parks, could make a meaningful difference.

Greening Docklands is another essential priority. In a suburb dominated by high-rise apartments, commercial buildings, hard surfaces and exposed waterfront spaces, greening is not decorative. It is infrastructure for liveability.

More trees, canopy cover, native gardens, understory planting, pocket parks, green promenades, rooftop and balcony greening, and improved seating can all help reduce heat, improve biodiversity and create a stronger sense of place.

The current floating wetlands trial in the Yarra River and Victoria Harbour is a good example of the kind of practical, nature-based intervention that should be made permanent and expanded if successful.

There are also basic maintenance issues that cannot be ignored. Many Docklands streets and footpaths are affected by subsidence, creating uneven surfaces, tripping hazards and poor visual amenity. The city needs to fund a proper audit and commit to repairs.

Following our written and verbal submission, the Lord Mayor amended the final budget to include a commitment to the completion and delivery of the Docklands Public Realm Improvement Plan in the 2026-27 financial year. This is a good start.

It's time we started treating Docklands as a community worth planning for.

Our next public meeting is on the evening of July 8. Register via our website to confirm the location. ●

Preventing litter from entering Victoria Harbour

Incremental steps have been achieved since my May update, although the results have again not been as prompt as I would have liked.

WORDS BY
HARVEY CLEGGETT



The questions regarding litter and the proposed floating boom have now been submitted to Environment Minister Enver Erdogan in parliament by Shadow Environment Minister Nick McGowan. Minister Erdogan has until June 11 to respond, and I will include his answers in my July update.

Mr McGowan was also asked for a brief comment, but due to his current workload he advised he would not be able to provide one for this edition. I will recontact him before the July publication.

I continue to appreciate the written support for this litter initiative from senior representatives of The Gurner Group, the AFL, Lendlease and MAB. Their letters were addressed personally to the environment minister. I also received an email on May 5 from Robert Clark, chief development officer of The Gurner Group, who stated: "We're happy to continue to support this initiative and prosecute the case. I will make direct contact with the minister."

I have also asked Mr Clark whether he might encourage the other executives to personally raise the importance of this matter with the minister. He indicated he



would discuss the issue with them as opportunities arose.

I am also getting closer to securing an interview with either Tom Elliott or Tony Moclair on 3AW. Should that occur, I will urge the host to seek comment from both the environment minister and the shadow minister. I will report any outcome in July.

It remains clear to me that money is not the limiting factor in progressing the proof-of-concept proposal. Development Victoria, Heritage Victoria, Parks Victoria and the City of Melbourne have all approved the installation of 145 floating "Echo" lights in Victoria Harbour for six months, reportedly costing \$150,000. That figure represents about 75 per cent of the cost of a permanent rock wall at the Bolte Bridge yet is more than six times the amount required to purchase one complete floating boom.

Even taking a conservative view and assuming each boom lasts only five years rather than the manufacturer's stated 10-year life span, that same \$150,000 could deliver around 30 years of protection from rubbish entering the harbour.

The recommended boom at the Bolte Bridge is more than adequate to capture litter that would otherwise enter Victoria Harbour. Ninety-nine per cent of the rubbish in the Yarra can be classified as light litter. Parks Victoria's maritime and waterways director Sarah Auld has stated in writing that staff time spent dealing with rubbish captured by the boom would reduce availability for environmental works, asset maintenance and public safety activities.

To me, that is effectively an admission that the boom would work. It would capture the litter and stop it entering the harbour.

I can only reiterate that this objection is unacceptable, particularly given that collecting litter in the Yarra is already a task Parks Victoria is required to perform under the *Parks Victoria Act 2018*.

Once the proof of concept is demonstrated, a further submission will be made for a permanent solution, likely in the form of a rock wall that would complement the existing rocks lining the Yarra. At that stage, the boom could be repurposed elsewhere along the Yarra or nearby creeks.

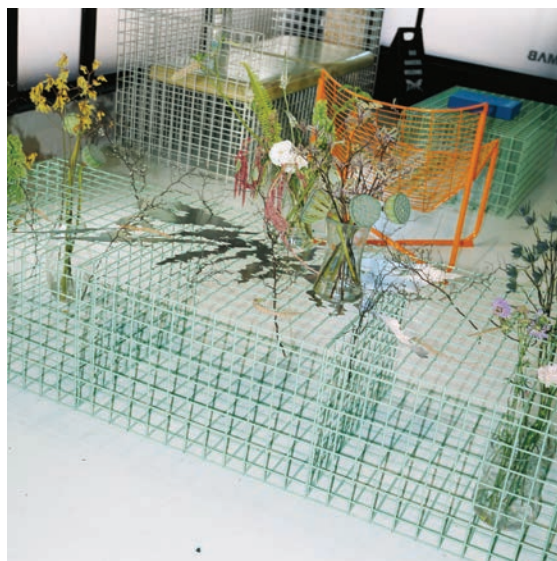
I have still been unable to secure direct contact with the minister, despite repeated emails and calls to his office. No clarification has been volunteered, even with parliamentary questions now on notice and significant doubts raised about the advice Parks Victoria has provided.

I remain convinced that bureaucratic roadblocks from Parks Victoria and the environment minister are stalling this project. Until a positive outcome is achieved, I will continue to pursue it.

Your support for the petition remains vital and greatly appreciated. Its purpose is simple: to demonstrate to the minister that Docklands residents care deeply about their precious harbour. Politicians should care too. ●

Sign the petition here:





DV doesn't Echo Docklands

Docklands News comments by Jackie Watts are spot on.

The pathetic plastic temporary lights and waste of funds is taking up the entire footprint of the demolished pier preventing taxis and other boats from using this heritage listed precious waterway.

Melbourne Water, City of Melbourne and Development Victoria (DV) go on about the wheel, a fish market, green spaces for high-rise families to use, a short-sighted plan for a school extension but no land yet, and anything else that pops into their heads in order to placate people who actually care.

This is a beautiful place that is simply used without obligation by powers and has nothing to do with the easy task of making the area excel.

Di Wood

Fractal Studios brings new creative energy to Docklands



A new artist-led studio in Docklands is aiming to help unlock the precinct's creative potential through workshops, installations, gatherings and experimental public-facing art.



WORDS BY DANIEL GAWNE



Fractal Studios, based at 377 Docklands Drive, has been founded by Aaron Zhang, Charlie Xiao and Nicholas Gao, who also work together under the creative collective PLANAR.

The trio describe Fractal as a small, flexible art and event space designed to bring together artists, makers and curious locals through immersive, participatory experiences across music, fashion, art and technology.

For Docklands, a suburb still working to define its creative identity, the arrival of Fractal Studios represents a welcome addition.

While the Docklands Public Art Trail has brought notable works to the precinct, including the well-known *Cow Up A Tree*, the area has not always been recognised as a major hub for grassroots creativity. Fractal's founders hope to explore what more is possible.

"Right now, we're interested in what it means to activate Docklands through art," Aaron said.

"Not in an obvious way, but something quieter, more sensory. Smaller formats, closer proximity, more exchange, engaging all senses."

That idea sits at the heart of Fractal's mission. Rather than operating as a conventional gallery or fixed event venue, the studio is intended to be a living program, moving between creating, curating and collaborating.

Its early offerings include *TEACH WITH US*, an ongoing peer-led program that shifts away from traditional instruction and towards participation. The program invites artists, creatives and free thinkers to co-produce workshops, talks and classes, allowing participants to move between learning, contributing and sharing knowledge.

Another program, *BOTANICA-001*, offers an ultra-contemporary take on ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arrangement. The workshop reworks the traditional form into spatial composition, approaching flowers

and natural materials through a sculptural lens.

The founders are also inviting artists and organisers to pitch their own ideas for the space, with Fractal able to move quickly from concept to delivery. According to the team, most events can be developed and launched within about two weeks, with profits generally split evenly between Fractal and the organiser.

The studio itself is around 130sqm, with high ceilings, a minimalist layout and capacity for up to 50 people. Its simple design is deliberate, allowing different artists and facilitators to transform the space for photo shoots, pop-ups, workshops, markets, exhibitions and intimate gatherings.

A large glass window facing the street also gives passers-by a glimpse inside, creating a more open and inviting connection between the studio and the neighbourhood.

Charlie, Aaron and Nicholas all have long-standing connections to Docklands and said they chose the area because they had "good memories" associated with it and believed there was "a lot of opportunity here".

They also point to the closure of Testing Grounds in early 2025 as leaving a gap in Melbourne's network of accessible creative spaces. Fractal Studios, they hope, can help fill that void in its own way.

Charlie's earlier project, *Spread Art Not Viruses*, also informs the studio's thinking. Created during COVID, the campaign invited creatives to contribute work online and through augmented reality, turning isolation into a distributed collective art experience.

At its core, Fractal is about bringing people together through art and testing new formats for creative exchange.

For Docklands, where identity has often been shaped through development, events and waterfront planning, spaces like Fractal offer another possibility: a more local, experimental and artist-led future. ●

Suggestions for improvements

Hello, I'm a Docklands resident. I would like to give some ideas, how to make Docklands a more enjoyable place.

Right now, after Costco had left, it is a quiet and boring neighbourhood for us. What we need ...

Coles and ALDI Supermarkets
IKEA Furniture Store, KMART and Big W Stores (they should have brought the above stores to replace Costco, instead of a boring pathology lab!)

Several ATMS at the shopping centre, including near the last tram stop. Sometimes, we do really need it for emergency cash withdrawals.

Commonwealth/ Westpac/ANZ Banks. Especially for the elderly residents.

Small cafés and burger and chips shops near the tram stop! We don't have to walk far away inside to buy coffee and sandwiches, while waiting for the trams. Including ATMs. It would make our lives easier, if those amenities are operating by the last tram stop area.

Medical centres at The District. Like dentists and emergencies! We don't have to travel far away to go to doctors. Please bring them to our neighbourhood.

Operate the Wheel again to make Docklands Drive neighbourhood alive!

Open Community Centre to do short courses like arts and crafts, computer/IT training classes for the community.

Elizabeth ●

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Schools in Docklands

After a regrettably long delay, we are delighted to welcome news of a new campus for Docklands Primary School. But we say, this is not enough! Now is the time to ramp up pressure on the state government for a Docklands Secondary School.

A local secondary school is an essential public asset – one the state government provides to all comparable growing communities. Docklands is no different; the community needs and is entitled to one.

Development Victoria (DV) is the state agency responsible for providing Docklands community infrastructure. Sadly, both the state government and DV have a seemingly myopic focus on building housing – the result has been a primary school in a shopping mall and still no mention of a Docklands Secondary School – a facility that is essential to stabilising and servicing the precinct's population.

Action on a Docklands Secondary School is needed now. But where?

A legacy of poor planning means few sites remain for new buildings in central Docklands, which brings us to Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network's (MMHN's) solution, which bypasses new construction completely.

In our view the Education Department can and should repurpose one of the many vacant commercial premises and transform it into a secondary school – a fast, cost-effective model successfully adopted all over the world. In the CBD, Haileybury's city campus is located in a repurposed commercial building on King St, providing an excellent example. See: haileybury.com.au/our-schools/city

MMHN strongly believes that the Docklands Precinct Secondary School has a rare opportunity to capitalise on its unique location by offering a curriculum connected to the surrounding maritime environment, including pre-vocational electives linked to the diverse maritime industry sector – freight and logistics, engineering, information technology and related fields.

Australia is an island nation; our ports are the lifeblood of trade, and an understanding of that industry offers students a genuine career advantage. Such a school would not only satisfy an urgent community need but also satisfy federal maritime sector skills objectives.

Combining this secondary school offering with the growing number of higher education groups represented across Docklands, provides the opportunity to cultivate an education ecosystem which when you boil it down, is a pretty exciting opportunity.

See the MMHN vision:



Ferries past, present and future

MMHN offers a sincere thank you to our ferry operators – Port Phillip and Searoad Ferries. We are grateful to Jamie Ruscoe from Port Phillip Ferries who hosted the event at Docklands Ferry Terminal and Matt McDonald from Searoad Ferries who spoke about the present and hopefully expanding future of ferry services on Melbourne's waters.

MMHN member Bruce Gooley, well known as the convener of the Maritime

Heritage lectures at Hawthorn U3A, entertained us with images and stories of the 19th century vessels that travelled the bustling waterways of Melbourne, Port Phillip Bay and Bass Strait. Remarkably, despite the river's heavy traffic – and the countless collisions and sinkings involving thousands of sober and intoxicated passengers alike – only one recorded death from a ferry accident is known to have occurred.

Sadly, these colourful excursion ferries, punts and rowing boats – powered by muscle, cable and steam – have gradually disappeared from our waterways. Perhaps a new generation of vessels and services will once again offer a unique and enjoyable way to travel around our state's waterways.

A re-cap: "The tiny colonial riverport of Melbourne evolved on the Birrarung/Yarra River. The discovery of gold in the 1850s rapidly drew immigrants from afar. As a result, the economy boomed and the growing population spread across the river and around Port Phillip Bay. The demand for water transportation for people, livestock, commerce and pleasure became essential. Privately-run ferry services flourished in the burgeoning port city. By the late 19th century, public investment in bridges, railways and roads, led to a decline in public demand for ferries."

MV Steve Irwin aka Ship4Good

Having lost the Heritage Fleet from Victoria Harbour, MMHN is delighted to welcome the freshly painted and refurbished MV Steve Irwin back to Docklands. After several years – and a great deal of dedicated work in Newcastle – the vessel is once again berthed at the City of Melbourne marina at NewQuay.

We encourage all in Docklands to visit the vessel for their exciting programs. From June 6, each Saturday tickets are available for Victor Holder's *Seating is Believing* multimedia exhibition about the MV Steve Irwin and the lives saved. Or be inspired to



join their fundraiser on June 8 to celebrate World Ocean Day and bring family and friends every Sunday from June 21 to tour the ship and enjoy the immersive experience of what life at sea is really like.

This ship has a remarkable history of adventure and environmental activism, much of it involving bold but non-violent direct action. It served as a frontline vessel in 18 campaigns against illegal whaling in the Australian Marine Sanctuary and Antarctic waters. Over the course of a decade, the ship and its volunteer crew fought valiantly to help save more than 6000 whales – efforts documented in the acclaimed television series *Whale Wars*.

Originally built in 1975 as the Scottish Patrol Fisheries vessel *Westra* then renamed in 2006 after the founder of Greenpeace, Robert Hunter, then renamed again as the MV Steve Irwin in honour of the Australian naturalist.

While it is in your neighbourhood – don't miss it! Check the events page ship4good.com.au to see what is on offer. ●

Jackie Watts

CHAIR

INFO@MMHN.ORG.AU



HEALTH & WELLBEING

Australia's silent back pain burden impacts mental health and the economy

National Spinal Health Month: a healthy spine supports a healthy mind.

June is National Spinal Health Month, an initiative of the Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA), encouraging Australians to join the "spinal health movement" and help prevent back pain disorders.

Back pain remains one of the leading causes of disability in Australia and is increasingly linked to mental health complications for sufferers.

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the World Health Organisation, musculoskeletal disorders, including back pain, account for the greatest proportion of persistent pain conditions, which are often associated with depression and psychological distress.

ACA president Dr Billy Chow said the coexistence of back pain and mental health conditions was associated with impaired quality



of life, while the increased risk of developing chronic back pain also posed a significant financial burden on sufferers and the economy.

"Encouraging Australians to address musculoskeletal disorders by managing their spinal health not only helps inhibit chronic back pain but can also mitigate negative secondary implications on sufferers' mental health and

overall wellbeing," Dr Chow said.

Dr Eunise Yeo of Docklands Health said chronic back pain could lead to psychological and social problems, while depressive symptoms could worsen back pain and increase disability associated with the condition.

"By underscoring the significance of improving our spinal health and addressing symptoms promptly, we can prevent chronic back pain that negatively impacts mental health and overall wellbeing," Dr Yeo said.

Research by Monash University's School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine has projected that if common back pain is not tackled through advice to stay active and receive appropriate care, 3.2 million working-age Australians will be living with chronic back pain by 2033.

The same research projects that chronic back disorders could cost the Australian economy an estimated \$638 billion in lost productivity over the next decade.

Already, 6.1 million Australians, or almost one in three, are

impacted by musculoskeletal disorders, with 58 per cent of those affected being of working age.

Annually, musculoskeletal disorders cost the Australian economy around \$55.1 billion in direct health costs, lost productivity and reduced quality of life, while limiting mobility and increasing the risk of isolation.

Psychological distress in the form of anxiety or depression is common among acute back pain sufferers. Without appropriate early treatment, acute back pain can develop into chronic back pain, increasing both physical and mental health risks.

Risk factors include avoiding movement or activity due to fear of pain or further injury. While rest may be recommended for some acute injuries, long-term avoidance can increase pain and disability.

Dr Yeo said treatment should move away from reliance on medication and towards integrated, holistic healthcare, including lifestyle support, advice to remain active and working, and tools to

self-manage pain.

"By taking an informed, proactive approach through preventative measures, making healthy lifestyle changes, remaining active and seeking early intervention when back problems do occur, back pain treatment can be effective," Dr Yeo said.

During National Spinal Health Month, Docklands Health is encouraging the community to maintain a healthy spine to support a healthy mind.

People experiencing back pain can contact Docklands Health on **9088 3228** for a spinal health assessment or visit spinalhealth.org.au for free information. ●

Dr Mike Edgley

CHIROPRACTOR

DOCKLANDS HEALTH



A win for Docklands families, but we need answers

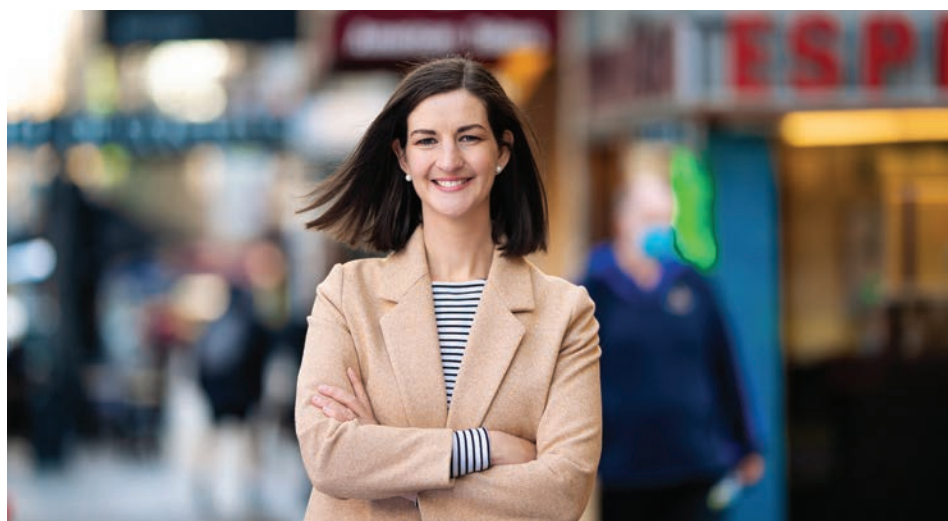
Our local schools are at the heart of our community. They're where our kids learn, grow, make friends, and build their futures.

For years Docklands families have been waiting for action from the State Government to ease over-crowding and build new capacity for Docklands Primary School. As your local MP, I have been proud to campaign for action alongside parents and the school community.

That's why I'm pleased to see the state government include funding to buy land for a new Docklands Primary campus in this year's State Budget. This is how we get change, by working together with families, to ask for what we need, and refusing to let governments off the hook.

Docklands Primary, still a relatively new school, has been a huge success story. It's grown, achieved wonderful results, and has amazing teachers and school staff. But it's bursting at the seams. The state government has had to lease space at a nearby shopping centre just to cope with enrolments, a short-term fix that was never going to be enough.

A new campus is genuinely needed and I am glad the budget has finally recognised that.



But here's the problem: the budget only gives us scant details. Where will the new campus be located? How big will it be? How many students will it serve, and will it actually meet the needs of our growing community for the long-term? These are basic questions that families deserve answers to – and the government has so far not provided them.

The Greens will be asking these questions in the Parliamentary Budget Estimate

Committee this week and when we return to Parliament in June. Our community deserves details, not just a flashy announcement.

There is also a broader picture that cannot be ignored. Even with a new campus on the way, Victoria's public schools are still the lowest-funded in the country, and the Labor State Government quietly cut \$2.4 billion from school funding recently. This leaves our kids behind other states. A new building is welcome, but it means little if

the people inside aren't properly supported.

The state government has also failed to plan properly for growing communities, and we'd like to see this change. Instead of building schools in anticipation of population growth, the state government waits until schools are already overcrowded and then scrambles to respond. It's reactive, short-sighted, and unfair on families.

The state government needs to stop repeating the same mistakes of the past.

A great local public school should be guaranteed, not left to chance or the whims of election cycles.

I'll keep working alongside our community to make sure Docklands families have the schools we need and the answers they deserve.

As always, if you have any questions or ideas please don't hesitate to get in touch ellen.sandell@parliament.vic.gov.au ●

Ellen Sandell

STATE MP FOR MELBOURNE

OFFICE@ELLENSANDELL.COM



OWNERS' CORPORATION LAW

Delay in the release of new draft owners' corporation legislation now cause for concern

It has now been six months since the private consultancy acting on behalf of Consumer Affairs Victoria and the Expert Panel leading an inquiry into the owners' corporation legislation delivered its final report and recommendations to Parliament.

And the silence is deafening.

It seems that no-one in the industry has the foggiest clue as to what is contained within it. Usually there is at least a little gossip that flutters here and there, to reassure those in the industry that there are big changes coming.

The fact that the usual suspects (those who are usually "in the know") do not in fact know anything about it, is cause for concern.

Those who have followed the subject are keenly aware that the legislation in Victoria for owners' corporations (OCs) trails the other states and territories.

The current legislation is an outdated mishmash, amended and re-written and re-drafted by too many different legislators with too many different pens. Judges in the State's courts have remarked that to embark on a judicial interpretation of the OC is to embark on a course of utter frustration, such is its inconsistencies.

OC managers, committee members and lot owners alike, are united that the legislation needs to be completely blown up and redrafted, to bring Victoria into the 21st century with simple, clear and concise legislation.

Consumer Affairs Victoria certainly

does have form for causing delays in prior legislative amendments to the *Owners' Corporations Act*.

After lengthy public consultation and enquiry in 2015 and 2016 which culminated in a confidential report, Parliament did not get around to enacting much-needed amendments for five years, until 2021. By the time they were passed into law and became operative, the legislative amendments were by then already out of date and were in desperate need of being re-drawn.

The fact that we are still waiting five years later, for the fixes to the 2021 legislation does not give us hope at all.

Much stock has been placed on the upcoming Victoria elections later this year. Some commentators suggest that Labour is just waiting until "election mode" begins before it unveils its large reforms to the strata sector. I'm not so sure.

The longer this delay continues, the more inclined I am to the view that the Victorian Parliament doesn't know what to do with the OC sector and would rather stick the report in the "too hard" basket for another year or two, and hope that someone else will do it instead of them.

It's hard to argue against that logic. Why else would the Victorian Parliament not just pick up the report, and table it in Parliament for all to see? ●

Tom Bacon

STRATA TITLE LAWYERS

TOM@STRATATITELAWYERS.COM.AU



DOCKLANDS REPRESENTATIVE GROUP

Option A or B – calls for Docklanders' opinions

Apartment living seems finally on the radar of governments, planners and researchers alike.

Evidenced by the steady stream of consultations, discussion papers and surveys – *asking what life in apartments is really like* – Docklanders are finding themselves in demand as contributors.

This is reflected in two current survey invitations.

At the big-picture end of the scale, the Victorian Government's Department of Transport and Planning is seeking feedback on the proposed Inner Melbourne Train and Tram Zone Activity Centres – a plan that could significantly reshape parts of inner Melbourne over coming decades.

This initiative looks at how already well-connected neighbourhoods in inner-city Melbourne could accommodate more housing, jobs, shops and services, while improving walkability and liveability. Working with the City of Melbourne and City of Yarra, the department is developing new planning controls to support population growth in areas already close to employment and education.

For inner-city residents, the themes are familiar: more housing, more demand on infrastructure, and the ongoing challenge of balancing growth with liveability, open space, transport access and neighbourhood character.

For Docklanders in particular, this is not abstract policy. It reflects the daily reality of high-density living in one of Melbourne's largest apartment communities.

Community consultation is open until June 14, with residents able to complete a survey here: engage.vic.gov.au/inner-melbourne-train-and-tram-zone

Another survey for Docklanders – and one closer to our everyday experience of apartment life – is focused on noise.

Researchers at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) are running a national study into apartment noise, looking at how sound travels in modern buildings and how it affects residents. From traffic and neighbours to lifts and late-night activity, the project aims to better understand the acoustic reality of apartment living.

The survey is open to adults living in apartments across Australia until **September 30**:



And as a sweetener, participants can enter a draw to win a \$300 supermarket gift card.

While these surveys are at opposite ends of the spectrum – one focused on how governments can grow the apartment sector and the other on improving apartment liveability – both topics matter. And these conversations are best strengthened when apartment residents take part. ●

Janette Corcoran

MEMBER

JCORCORAN@DOCKLANDS.ORG.AU



WHAT'S ON June



From workshops to markets and festivals, you'll find something to float your boat this June in Docklands.



COMMUNITY SOCIAL CRAFTING
Have you been looking for an inclusive, supportive, creative community crafting group? The Cauldron is a fabulous creative community space in Docklands hosting weekly social crafting sessions.
The Cauldron, The District Docklands
EVERY WEDNESDAY, 5PM – 7PM



WATERFRONT SESSIONS
Waterfront Sessions brings food trucks, live music, a silent DJ, AFL screenings and waterfront relaxation to Harbour Esplanade, offering an elevated weekend experience for all.
Harbour Esplanade, Docklands
13 – 14 JUNE, 12PM – 7PM



AFTER THE GOLD RUSH: VICTORIAN LANDSCAPE
After the Gold Rush: Victorian Landscape examines Victoria's altered bush through photography, exploring memory, environmental change & enduring beauty.
XYZ Photo Gallery, Docklands
UNTIL 21 JUNE, 1PM – 5PM



HYPERWORLDS: UNREAL CARTOGRAPHY
Allanah Sarafian's exhibition uses sculptural textiles to explore memory, diaspora and imagination, reimagining maps as emotional landscapes.
Library at The Dock, Docklands
UNTIL 21 JUNE, 10AM – 7PM



CLOTHING SWAP WITH RATTLE STYLE
Refresh your wardrobe sustainably by swapping five pre-loved items, then enjoy drinks, DJ sets, style discoveries and Yarra-side socialising.
1 Hotel Melbourne, Docklands
SATURDAY 20 JUNE, 11AM – 2PM



DOCKLANDS WATERFRONT FARMERS' MARKET
Docklands Farmers' Market will run monthly at Harbour Esplanade, featuring Victorian produce, artisan goods, seafood, entertainment, and direct farmer sales.
Harbour Esplanade, Docklands
SUNDAY 21 JUNE, 10AM – 3PM



SONGBIRDS
Interactive songs, rhymes, and stories engage newborns to 18-month-olds, introducing language, rhythm, and early literacy. Programs run during school terms only.
Library at The Dock
UNTIL 9 DECEMBER, 10.30AM – 11AM


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