NEIGHBOURHOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD



GIFTING ARTS & CULTURE THIS SEASON

Unwrap this Season's Show-stopping Delights

By Chris Kabay, Red Brick Cafe

With the end of the year approaching and gift giving season upon us, how about giving a ticket or two to something fabulous that Melbourne, the events capital of Australia, has to

If you are looking for an early Christmas present, A Christmas Carol, which played a successful run at The Comedy Theatre last year, is returning for a limited season until the end of December. And Then There Were None, based on Agatha Christie's famous novel, will take over from February.

Over at Her Majesty's Theatre, Disney's Beauty and the Beast is continuing its long run while down the road at the Regent Theatre, Sister Act the Musical (starring Casey Donovan) is pleasing punters. Iconic musical Jesus Christ Superstar then moves into the Regent for a limited run in February. Talking about musical icons, Tina, the five-star rated Tina Turner musical, is currently showing at The Princess Theatre. I have heard nothing but amazing things about this production so feel it would be a great gift.

In April, The Melbourne International Comedy Festival hits town. With generic gift vouchers available, your lucky loved one has the chance to choose whether they see a major comedian or discover some of the

future stars of the comedy world during this three-week festival.

Next year sees two standout productions arriving in Melbourne. The first, Dear Evan Hansen, was written by the team behind *The* Greatest Showman, which starred Hugh Jackman. This musical is a moving and inspiring story of a socially anxious student, who is suddenly thrust into the spotlight when he places himself at the centre of a tragedy. The second is Hadestown. Opening in May 2025, this is the retelling of the legend of Orpheus set to a jazzy New Orleans' score. Both shows have won countless awards and tickets will be hard to come by so snap some up before they sell out.

Over at NGV, their Friday night events continue – the perfect occasion to meet friends for that exciting pre-Xmas get together. Tickets include after-hours entry to the colourful and interactive Yayoi Kusama exhibition, from late December; this is bound to put you in the festive spirit. There are also DJs playing tunes, themed drinks and tasty food. Meanwhile The Royal Exhibition Building has reopened access to its beautiful dome which shows Melbourne's skyline at its most impressive. Tickets to this experience are limited and sure to impress the receiver.

In May, Les Misérables the Arena Spectacular hits Melbourne. In what is going to be a very busy year for her, Melbourne's own Marina Prior takes on the role of Madame Thénardier. This perennial juggernaut will also be a highlight of the 2025 season and, if Santa is listening, I'd love a ticket!







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HUMANS OF SURREY HILLS

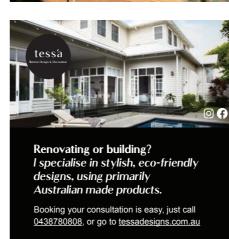
A Budding Entrepreneur

Nine-year-old Jenson is fast becoming known for his Botanicals by Jenson business, which sells gorgeous bunches of native and wildflowers from the family property on the Mornington Peninsula.

When the family holiday house garden is in bloom, Jenson picks the flowers and puts together the posies, with a little help from his Mum and Nana. He brings these back to town to sell locally. Advertised mainly on the Surrey Hills, Mont Albert and Surrounds Facebook page, along with a slew of regular returning customers, his stock sells out very quickly and he's amassed quite a following.

Pictured here (bottom right) with long-term customer Maria, who popped into Jenson's Surrey Hills home to collect her order, you'd be surprised to know what a pocket rocket this little chap is.





Given Scott Pape's 'how to' invest book Barefoot for Kids by his parents for Christmas in 2022, Jenson, who is just finishing Grade 3 at a local primary school, read the book cover to cover. He completed all the exercises contained within it and developed a business plan that saw Botanicals by Jenson come into being when he was only seven Two years down the track and he has done over 25 posts on the local Facebook page and sold out each time. For 'leaner' times, when the garden is not producing flowers he can sell, Jenson has created dried organic lavender bags from the lavender on the Peninsula property.

On top of all this, Jenson creates the content for his lovely Instagram page, which Mum manages and can be found @botanicals_by_jenson. He also fits in 10 ½ hours of gymnastics a week. He recently came third in the under 9's at the Victorian Championships and hopes to make it to the Olympics one day.

Asked what he's most looking forward to about Christmas, he replied "EATING"!! He's going to make a meringue pie with ice cream for the family, enjoy a two week break from his gymnastics training and looks forward to having some quality time with the family.

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ON WURUNDJERI COUNTRY

The December Change of Season

December is kangaroo apple season with fruits appearing on these native bushes. Days are long, nights are short and the weather is changeable and thundery. Bunjil - wedge-tailed eagles - are breeding. Bunjil, revered as the Creation Being, is also referred to as the eaglehawk. Dhuling (goannas) are active, Buliyong (bats) are catching insects in flight and Bali (cherry ballart) is fruiting.

"Usually when a storm's coming, rain birds, black cockatoos, yellow crested, they come down from the mountains. And you can bet on it within two or three days it rains. Never fails. Two days and it rains. And they make a racket" said Brian Paterson in 1999.' 1

Kangaroo apple for your garden?



Photo source: https://www.selfsufficientculture.com/attachments/solanum-aviculareripe-fruit-mt-annan-20230102_150144-smlwebp.8764/

Kangaroo apple is native to our southeast coast. Solanum aviculare is the subspecies identified in the Kulin Calendar for Victoria and described here. 2

This perennial, frost tolerant, soft wooded shrub is hardy in most soil types except salt spray. The plant produces two types of foliage, one type resembles kangaroo paws. During spring and summer, it produces purple-blue blooms with yellow anthers. The plant is good for screen planting, as an understorey wind break or to offset bank erosion.



After flowering, kangaroo apple plants produce egg-shaped berries that turn bright orange-yellow when ripe, a great food source for birds. Humans can eat the ripe berries raw or cooked. When the fruit is unripe it is bitter and poisonous.

When cultivated, kangaroo apple plants are relatively short-lived, with a life expectancy of five or six years. Older plants may split at the base, which allows wood rot fungi to take hold. This splitting can be prevented by corrective pruning from an early

In our climate, it is recommended to sow in spring. Sow seeds direct, or after raising seedlings, at a depth of 2cm in well-drained soil, in full sun to part shade. Space plants 50cm apart. Germination occurs in two to



three weeks when the temperature is between 15-21 degrees C. The plants grow from one to four metres tall.

¹ https://museumsvictoria.com.au/bunjilaka/ about-us/eastern-kulin-seasonal-calendar/ 2 https://seedstreet.com.au/products/tasmanian-kangaroo-apple.

³ https://resources.austplants.com.au/plant/ solanum-aviculare/



CHRISTMAS WELLBEING

Coping with the Silly Season

By Victoria Moller

Christmas isn't always the most wonderful time of the year for everyone. Expectations are often set high and outside pressures can feel overwhelming. Family differences, financial worries, the loss of a loved one and a culmination of end-ofyear stress at whatever life may have thrown at you during the last 12 months can spark a powder keg of emotions.

Much of the pressure comes from within ourselves - wanting to put on the best Christmas possible for our family and friends – while also not missing out on all the end-of-theyear events that we try to squeeze in. Setting boundaries and expectations early on can really help so you don't over-schedule yourself or end up spending exhausting amounts of time travelling to multiple locations. Pinpointing your anticipated stress points and thinking of ways to work around or minimise them - be they emotional, financial or practical – is also wise. If you need a break from a Christmas gathering, go for a walk or call someone you enjoy talking to.

It's tempting to overeat and then feel guilty - moderation with holiday treats and alcohol is key, as well as drinking lots of water to stay hydrated. If you choose to give

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gifts, bigger is not necessarily better. No-one is obliged to spend beyond their means and a small gift shows just as much thought as a large one - perhaps more so if you opt for a handmade item.

The reality may not be able to live up to your dream, but try to remember it's just one day out of 365 other days and it's truly OK to take it at your own pace.

My 5 Top Tips to Reduce Holiday

- 1. Don't over-schedule yourself
- 2. Set a budget for food and gifts
- 3. Be responsible about food and alcohol consumption
- 4. Spend time with family and friends on your terms
- 5. Take time for yourself doing something you enjoy

I wish you a very Merry Christmas!



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To book a workshop, class or activity scan the QR code or visit our website at www.surreyhillsnc.org.au



Course Highlights

Get ready for an exciting lineup of events at Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre! We invite you to join us for a diverse range of programs designed to inspire, connect, and engage our community. Whether you're looking to kickstart your fitness journey, explore creative pursuits, or participate in enriching workshops, there's something for everyone. Embrace the warmth of summer and the spirit of renewal in the new year with activities that foster connection and growth. Stay tuned for our full schedule and mark your calendars for a season filled with fun, learning, and community spirit!

Community

FREE Falls Prevention Session Presented by Bolton Clarke

One third of people over 65 fall at least once per year. In this session (facilitated by a registered nurse), learn why we fall and how you can reduce your risk of falling.

Thursday 5 December 2pm – 3pm FREE (bookings essential)

Women's Retreat Day

Are you in need of a day to focus on self-care and relaxation? Join us for a Women's Retreat Day on Saturday 15 February. It's the perfect opportunity to unwind in a supportive environment, connect with likeminded women, and explore your inner creativity. The day will feature a range of activities, from learning about and exploring aspects of personal intuition to a relaxed meditative art session.

Set aside distractions, centre your intentions for 2025, and embrace a day of self-discovery.

No experience is needed, and all materials are provided.

Saturday 15 February 10.15am – 3.30pm \$75 (lunch included)

Fitness and Wellbeing

NEW! Dance & Delight

Join us for a joyful, free-flow movement and dance class designed to express, expand, and explore through dance! In this welcoming space, you can let go of the "shoulds" and "right steps," leaving your to-do lists behind.

Rediscover your centre and reconnect with yourself in a fun, nurturing environment alongside a community of supportive women. No experience needed — just bring your curiosity and willingness to move!

Mondays from 3 February, 6pm-7pm \$176 (8 sessions)



Qi Gong

Discover the soothing practice of Qi Gong! This gentle form of exercise combines slow, flowing movements, breath control, and mindfulness to promote relaxation, balance, and overall well-being. Perfect for all ages and fitness levels, our Qi Gong class offers a peaceful environment to cultivate energy and enhance your physical and mental health. Join us to nurture your body and mind, connect with others, and experience the transformative benefits of this ancient practice. No prior experience is required — just come as you are and embrace the journey to wellness!

Mondays 11.30am – 12.30pm from 3 February \$136 (8 sessions)

Wednesdays 10.30am – 11.30am from 29 January \$170 (10 sessions)

NEW! Pre-Christmas and Summer Strength Training Casual Series

Finish off the year or kickstart 2025 with one or both of our Casual Strength Training series! These invigorating sessions are designed to help you maintain the momentum or ease back into fitness before Term 1 begins. Join us for two energising classes focused on building strength, flexibility, and balance in a friendly, relaxed environment. Whether you're a beginner or returning to fitness, you'll feel welcome and supported. Book your spot now and feel refreshed and rejuvenated!

Monday 9 December 8am – 9am and Monday 16 December 8am – 9am \$25

Tuesday 21 January 9.30am – 10.30am and Thursday 23 January 9.30am – 10.30am \$25

Languages

NEW! Spanish Beginners

¡Hola! Ready to dive into Spanish? Join our Beginners Spanish class and learn the basics in a fun, relaxed setting. Perfect for travellers, language lovers, or anyone wanting to explore something new. Let's get talking—register today and say "¡Hola!" to a new skill!

Mondays 7pm – 8:30pm from 3 February \$192 (8 sessions)

Arts and Creativity

Sip and Paint

Unleash your inner artist at our Sip & Paint evening! Enjoy a relaxed, laughter-filled night of creativity and wine, perfect for all skill levels — no experience needed. All art supplies are provided; just bring yourself (and some friends) for a fun night of artistic expression. Our friendly instructor will guide you step-by-step to create your own masterpiece. Reserve your spot today for an unforgettable evening of art and great company!

Friday 28 February 7pm - 9pm - \$80







Diary Dates

Term 4 concludes Friday, 6 December

Christmas Vibes Community Day, 11am – 2pm Saturday, 7 December

Term 1 commences Tuesday, 28 January

Surrey Hills Music Festival Saturday 22 February 12.30pm – 10pm



Host your event at SHNC!

Did you know that you can book a space at Surrey Hills Neighbourhood Centre for your next event? Whether you're looking for a space that can accommodate 2 people or 60 people, the Centre has a range of rooms that can accommodate your room hire needs.

For further information and to book, please visit our website (**www.surreyhillsnc.org.au**) and refer to the 'venue hire' menu tab.

LOCAL SCHOOL NEWS

Exploring the wild side

It was busy in the Surrey Hills Primary School playground over the spring school holidays with work to create a nature trail for the children to enjoy.

The new trail has been installed along the previously unused area north of the oval. This includes some lovely space for open-ended nature play with elements such as:

- Insect hotels and indigenous plants
- An information board to educate the students about aspects of the nature trail
- A timber bridge built from recycled railway sleepers
- Balance beams and upright logs
- A yarning circle and shaded seating areas



Yarning Circle

An irrigation system was installed at the same time to water the new plants using rainwater collected from the stadium roof.

Students have been enjoying the area since returning to school for Term 4.

"The introduction of the nature trail has provided a place of respite for our students during recess and lunch times," says school principal Travis Paterson. "Students are making their way to the nature trail to find a quiet place of solace and calm, in an otherwise busy school playground.

We are looking forward to extending the trail as a second stage of the project."

Bringing the nature trail to fruition would not have been possible without the efforts of the entire school community. It has been a collaborative community effort towards creating a new natural play space for the students to enjoy for years to come.



Nature Trail track







3127 HAS STYLE!

Christmas Styling on a Budget

By Allison Guerrieri

The festive season is here and it's time to start decorating your home. With a few simple items, you can create a number of stunning Christmas styling looks without going to great expense.

Candles, Christmas baubles and nature, can all provide inspiration when decorating your home.

Natural Selection

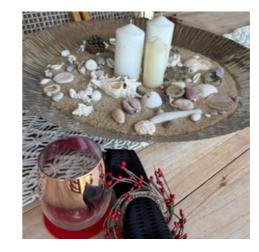
Pinecones, foliage or seashells can each be used to create a festive centrepiece for your Christmas table.



Arrange pinecones around a pillar candle on a cake stand for a simple yet effective table centrepiece. If you're feeling creative, add some glitter paint to the edges of the pinecones for added sparkle.



Add a splash of colour to your table with natives from your garden in vibrant hues of red and green.



For a relaxed beachside Christmas vibe, fill a large flat platter with sand, shells and candles to create the perfect outdoor table centrepiece.

First Impressions

Add some Christmas cheer to your entry with candles and Christmas baubles.

Group 3 candles of varying heights in a hurricane lamp with coloured Christmas baubles.



For a more traditional look, try using a tall red candle with red baubles with a contrasting swag for a touch of gold.



Ring in the Cheer

Christmas decorations make great festive napkin rings. Simply fold a napkin in thirds and thread through the string of the decoration. Gifting the decoration to your guest is a lovely way to say Merry Christmas.



Thank you for your support in 2024. Have a wonderful Christmas.



HEALTH

Heart Health Awareness

by Dr Gareth Cooze

Heart Disease is the leading cause of death in Australia. People should be aware of the risk factors and focus on preventative measures.

The best place to start, is to attend a 'Heart Health Check' with your GP.

What is a Heart Health Check?

- a 20-minute appointment with your GP, to assess your risk of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 5-10 years
- discussion surrounding strategies for prevention of heart disease
- a blood pressure check
- an electrocardiogram
- blood tests including diabetes, cholesterol, and possibly a lipoprotein A test

• an assessment possible treatments (e.g. blood pressure medication/ cholesterol-lowering medication etc.)

Risk factors for heart disease:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- A family history
- Smoking
- Obesity
- High cholesterol

What is Angina?

 Angina is chest pain/discomfort which often spreads to the left arm, neck, jaw and shoulders caused by blockages in the arteries supplying blood to the heart.

- · Chest pain caused by heart disease usually occurs with exertion and is relieved with rest. This is called 'stable angina'.
- Stable angina usually develops over years and can be investigated with outpatient tests such as **Exercise Stress Test (Stress** Echocardiogram), CT Coronary Angiogram & Calcium Score, or Angiography.
- Unstable angina is when pain occurs at rest and is usually a medical emergency. Immediate transfer to the Emergency Department is required to out rule a heart attack.

For further information, please ensure you book an appointment with your healthcare provider.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Book Review - 'Orbital' by Samantha Harvey

By Chris Young

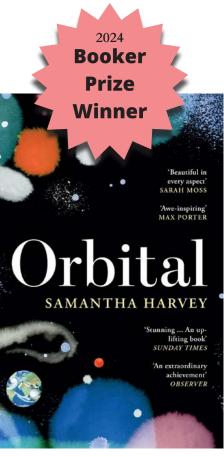
Six astronauts - one American, one Italian, one Japanese, one Brit, and two Russian cosmonauts - man the international space station, for between six and nine months, orbiting the Earth sixteen times per

This slim (136 pages), deeply evocative novel quickly takes the reader into their shoes, waking and sleeping, orbit by orbit, on a typical day. We see them going about their duties - maintaining experiments, or maintaining the station itself. We see them living in, and adjusting to, their weightless environment; we accompany two on a spacewalk. Orbiting sixteen times per day gives the astronauts sixteen sunrises each day. Mission base on Earth sets up routines to keep the astronauts 'grounded' in Earth time.

We get to know something of each astronaut, of their families, of their lives on Earth, and of how much they miss each other. We see our planet from above as the space station passes over it. And we watch a typhoon as it forms, intensifies, and then makes its way down East Asia.

Samantha Harvey absorbs us into her 'floating family' in the Space Station, giving us a beautiful perspective on her astronauts and our world

'Orbital' (ISBN 978-1-529-92293-6) is published by **Penguin (Vintage)**.



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Poetry as Mindfulness

By Raphael Love

A 2023 Victorian Health review found that at least 1 in 5 Boroondara residents suffers from psychological distress, with social isolation and loneliness being the primary factors for older community members. Some of us have great support networks for socialisation, however there are still plenty of residents in Surrey Hills who don't have those connections.

While poetry itself can't take us out to a café, it can help us release thoughts, indulge in good memories and create something out of nothing - much like a good friend.

Mindfulness poetry can wipe the page clean for us. Soto Zen monks in feudal Japan spoke of how our thoughts, emotions, fears and observations act as a sentence in ink on the blank page of our mind. Over time, our page fills, far quicker

than it fades - especially if we have no social outlet for sharing these thoughts. If our page is full, so too are our minds. Mindfulness poetry can wipe the page clean for us.

The key to mindfulness poetry is letting go. If you prefer writing with rhyme and meter, write the way you love – though in mindfulness poetry, it's best to allow your stream of consciousness to lead the way. The first step is to sit in silence with your mind for a moment and listen. You might only hear the world around you at first. Let that fade, until a thought arrives. It might be a memory, happy or sad; it might be a question; it might be a worry; it might be a hope; it might even be something you heard last week. Whatever it may be, take that moment from your mind, put the first line down onto the page and allow the rest to follow. Let this writing be formless, and free of

rhyme and grammar. This is your stream of consciousness letting go.

Ultimately, the poem you create can be as long or as short as you feel. One line can even suffice, if that piece has translated your emotion into language. Each time you practice, the process will become easier, and you will feel the load begin to lift. Treat mindfulness poetry as that good friend and let yourself express. Not only can it help clear your page and aid your mental health, you also come away with an original piece of written art that didn't exist a moment ago. All from your hand and your mind.

Raphael Love is an award-winning songwriter, author, poet and one half of the acclaimed local Surrey Hills two-piece band 'Love From'

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