

YOUR CITY OF MELBOURNE MAGAZINE

MELBOURNE

SPRING 2025



FROM SURVIVOR TO SYSTEM SHAPER

CHAMPION FOR
DISABILITY PRIDE

**SWIM AND GET FIT
IN KENSINGTON**

RECREATION CENTRE
AND POOL COMEBACK

**MELBOURNE
FASHION WEEK**

STYLE RETURNS
20 TO 26 OCTOBER

[MELBOURNE.VIC.GOV.AU](https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au)



CITY OF MELBOURNE

MESSAGE FROM THE LORD MAYOR



Lord Mayor Nick Reece at a citizenship ceremony earlier this year

With orchids and wattles now in bloom, this issue of *Melbourne Magazine* is like a fresh bouquet, blossoming with good news and ideas.

This edition arrives just in time for the City of Melbourne's official plan to be a garden city, with our Budget making a major investment in our gorgeous green spaces. Discover how we keep Melbourne looking its freshest on page 15.

Here's another sunny delight for our city: cupcakes. Head to page 8 to meet Thin Neu, whose cupcake wonderland makes a sweet return with support from our friendly Business Concierge team. If you're an entrepreneur like Thin, now is the perfect time to get in touch. Business is back, our hotels are full to bursting and our shopping strips are teeming.

As new life invigorates the city, there are even more ways to limber up as we prepare to open the rejuvenated Kensington Community Aquatic and Recreation Centre. On page 3, find out how Kensington locals helped reimagine this beloved sports facility.

One of the joys of my job is meeting people from many backgrounds, particularly at citizenship ceremonies. In a heartwarming feature on page 16, immigrant families describe how they've found conversation and connection by attending playgroups.

From 20 to 26 October, we'll celebrate our show-off festival, Melbourne Fashion Week. On the cover of this edition is Akii Ngo, who has graced past runways for M/FW. On page 12, discover how Akii combines fashion, advocacy and activism as a champion for disability pride.

Meanwhile, a host of other fantastic events awaits on page 10.

Speaking of events, one of my favourites this year was the M2050 Summit – the greatest gathering Town Hall has ever seen. Turn to page 5 to hear how the big, bold ideas discussed at the summit will help to shape our vision for Melbourne's future.

I hope you like this inspiring issue of *Melbourne Magazine* as much as I do.

Nick Reece
Lord Mayor

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we govern, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin and pays respect to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and honour the unbroken spiritual, cultural and political connection they have maintained to this unique place for more than 2000 generations. We accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart and are committed to walking together to build a better future.

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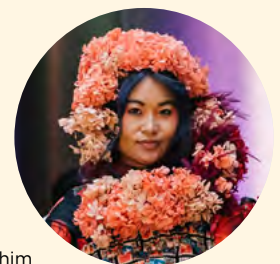
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Disability champion and model Akii Ngo at Melbourne Fashion Week in 2021. Read their story on page 12. Photo: Naomi Rahim



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Kensington Community Aquatic and Recreation Centre manager Nathan Prosser

Get fit and swim local in Kensington

A beloved aquatic and recreation centre is set to open in Kensington this spring. And it's bigger and better than ever.

Go for a swim, hit the gym and create healthy habits close to home, as centre manager Nathan Prosser gives us a preview of Kensington's modern new aquatic and recreation facility.

"Community wellbeing is what we want to promote in the area. We've heard there's an interest in a range of wellness activities including reformer pilates, mat pilates, yoga and dance," Nathan said.

"We've been out visiting local community groups and getting to know their needs and wants," Nathan said.

"The vibe in Kensington is that there are lots of families now in the area. Parents are keen to go to the gym or get back into fitness classes. Children and young people want to learn to swim."

"We've noticed a clear need for adult swim classes and water safety in the area too, so we've put a focus on that in the dedicated learn-to-swim pool."

Amid a nationwide shortage of swim teachers, the centre is thinking laterally to create a dream team teaching squad with a strong connection to the local area.

"We're looking for people from all walks of life who are keen to equip the next generation of swimmers with skills that can be a life-saver."

Community feedback has helped shape the centre to suit the neighbourhood, and inspired architects to make sure the building connects with adjacent parkland and sports grounds.

"The new cafe features outdoor seating that looks over JJ Holland Park, so people can grab a coffee and a healthy snack, or get something to go, and head out for a walk or back to the game," Nathan said.



Kensington locals Nabat and Aisha are keen to swim in the new pool

Many local sports groups are keen to make Kensington their new training hub. Three multipurpose courts in the stadium have been scoped for a range of sports, from competition to social games.

We're also working with local young people from nearby venues such as The Venny to find times for casual games and indoor sports.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT kensington.ymca.org.au

GET ACTIVE AT NEW AQUATIC AND RECREATION CENTRE

Swim in the eight-lane 25 m pool, or sign up for classes in the learn-to-swim pool.

Work out in the new gym space, which is now four times larger than the old gym space, and open 24 hours.

Try group fitness classes like cardio, yoga, reformer or mat pilates and more.

Play or train in the stadium, featuring three full-sized multipurpose courts.

Meet friends for coffee at the cafe with a view of JJ Holland Park.

Kensington Community Aquatic and Recreation Centre re-opens in spring. Find it on the corner of Kensington Road and Altona Street, Kensington.

CITY FLASHBACK



Detail from Miles Howard-Wilks' *Flinders Street*. This 2015 artwork imagines the Melbourne Metro Tunnel passing beneath the city. It's one of more than 13,000 eclectic pieces preserved in our City Collection.

Browse more images and artefacts at citycollection.melbourne.vic.gov.au

And book now for a free guided tour of the Art and Heritage Collection at Melbourne Town Hall. Visit whatson.melbourne.vic.gov.au to find out more.

PRINCES BRIDGE

We're restoring Princes Bridge to ensure this iconic river crossing looks its best for people travelling across the river. Conservators are replacing, resetting, cleaning and consolidating weathered bluestone blocks, while artisans are repainting the iron facades, including crests, lampposts and balustrades. The bridge will be back to its former glory by late next year.

melbourne.vic.gov.au/princes-bridge-restoration



PRACTICAL SAVINGS FOR RESIDENTS IN 2025-26

To help households with the cost of living, our Budget 2025-26 includes initiatives that put money back in your pocket. Here's how you can save:

- free pet registration for 12 months
- free summer swimming lessons and \$2 pool entry on weekdays at selected pools
- no increase in on-street parking fees

- support for food security programs
- residential waste charge reduced by 3 per cent
- full rebate on the Victorian Government's 3 per cent rate rise
- further rates discount for pensioners.

melbourne.vic.gov.au/annual-plan-and-budget

LIBRARY LOCATIONS

Visit Melbourne Libraries to explore our expansive collections, makerspaces and more. With free wi-fi, no fees for overdue books, many study spaces and longer opening hours, our libraries are accessible for everyone.

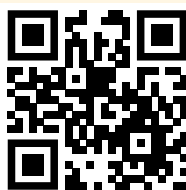
We're also expanding and relocating Southbank Library to better serve a rapidly growing and diverse community.

melbourne.vic.gov.au/libraries

SEAFARERS REST PARK

A riverside park honouring our rich maritime history is now open to the public. Seafarers Rest Park features 3,500 m² of green lawns, a riverside promenade and open spaces for residents and visitors to enjoy. Find it between the Mission to Seafarers heritage building and Seafarers Bridge beside the Yarra River – Birrarung.

melbourne.vic.gov.au/seafarers-rest-park



MELBOURNE NEWS, YOUR WAY

Read the latest city-shaping news and celebrate community champions online at melbourne.vic.gov.au/news and subscribe to receive updates direct to your inbox. You can also subscribe using this QR code. This print magazine can be found at local libraries, community hubs and cafes. If you'd like to receive a copy in the post, please email melbournemag@melbourne.vic.gov.au

We'd love to hear your feedback about *Melbourne Magazine*. To share your thoughts with us, write to melbournemag@melbourne.vic.gov.au



More than 700 Melburnians shared their hopes for the city at the M2050 Summit

What do you love most about Melbourne? Is it the buzzing laneways, the world-class universities, our celebrated multiculturalism, or our vibrant arts scene?

For millions of us, Melbourne is more than just a city; it's a home, a workplace and a playground. Whether you've been here your whole life or just arrived, Melbourne means something different to each of us.

As our city grows, we want to take stock of exactly what makes it great and ensure it never loses that Melbourne vibe. That's why we're creating the Melbourne 2050 Vision with our community.

The draft M2050 Vision is our ambition for our city's future, reflecting the community's values, hopes and goals for what we want life in Melbourne to look like by 2050 and beyond.

To make sure as many Melburnians as possible could share their biggest and boldest ideas for our city, we ran a series of events and roundtables earlier this year, including the M2050 Summit.

What we heard has informed our draft M2050 Vision and the key strategic documents that will help us realise the vision, including the draft Council Plan 2025–29.

Now we want to know what you think of them. Here are some of the key takeaways:

- A city where we share opportunity, back ambition and create prosperity with purpose.
- A place where we grow together, and champion innovation and growth for everyone.
- A people-first city that is proudly diverse, creative and grounded in First Nations knowledge and culture.
- A green city that's alive with experiences, driven by regeneration and bold leadership.

What we've heard from the community so far is at the heart of this plan, and we want to know what resonates with you.

This isn't just about big ideas for the city's future – it's about making these ideas a reality.

Our new draft Council Plan 2025–29 sets out the first steps we will take over the next four years to bring the vision to life. It's our plan to make Melbourne the best and fairest city it can be.

IT'S YOUR TURN TO HAVE A SAY

Your voice is a crucial part of this conversation. We want all Melburnians to share their feedback on the draft M2050 Vision and draft Council Plan 2025–29 by Sunday 21 September, before Council adopts the final documents in October.



SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK
participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au/m2050-vision

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

We connected with thousands of community members across the city to help us create the draft M2050 Vision and draft Council Plan 2025–29. Highlights included:

- **M2050 Summit:** 700+ attendees at an all-day event at Melbourne Town Hall.
- **Youth Roundtable:** 25 young people, plus 80 young people at the M2050 Summit.
- **First Nations Roundtable:** 16 people representing First Nations organisations and communities.
- **People's Panel:** 48 members spent 35 hours deliberating over city challenges and opportunities.
- **Online survey:** 849 respondents.



Lord Mayor Nick Reece at the Youth Roundtable

GET TO KNOW OUR COUNCILLORS

The City of Melbourne is the local government body responsible for the municipality of Melbourne. The Council consists of a Lord Mayor, a Deputy Lord Mayor and nine councillors.

We'll introduce you to a few of the members in each edition of *Melbourne Magazine*. To read full articles about each councillor, search for their names at melbourne.vic.gov.au/news



COUNCILLOR
PHILIP LE LIU

Portfolio Head, Creative and Arts. Portfolio Deputy, Planning.

Councillor Le Liu has big ambitions for this city of arts.

Re-elected for a third term in 2024, he previously headed portfolios focused on international students, and finance and governance.

"I want us to think globally as well as locally and create opportunities for artistic exchanges, and also strengthen our Melbourne brand," Cr Le Liu said.

"It's our role to support artists not only from Melbourne but also Australia because we're such a global gateway."

Cr Le Liu is proud that City of Melbourne's year-round program of events and grants creates a pipeline for the creative community.

"We play a big role in supporting emerging artists and organisations, to have our own ecosystem."

"Our arts venues – such as ArtPlay, Signal, Meat Market and Arts House at North Melbourne Town Hall – are very important to this city, for all age groups."



COUNCILLOR
OWEN GUEST

Portfolio Head, Finance, Governance and Risk. Portfolio Deputy, Education and Innovation.

Councillor Guest has been a funds manager, academic and business analyst.

"Someone with my way of thinking brings accountability, transparency and financial acumen to the City of Melbourne," he said.

"I'm interested in the culture of government at all levels, and I want to ensure at the City of Melbourne that we're on a pathway to reducing debt."

Listening to the community and being open about decision-making are among his highest priorities.

"Those who pay the bills deserve to be listened to and respected, and if we can lower the burden on them, we should. People understand that we can't do everything all at once."

Cr Guest acknowledges that small businesses still face challenges.

"We need to make it easier for small business operators because that's how you have activity in the city."



COUNCILLOR
DR OLIVIA BALL

Portfolio Head, Aboriginal Melbourne. Portfolio Deputy, Environment.

A former psychologist, Councillor Ball is now a human rights advocate. She says there are many opportunities to defend these rights in local government.

Aboriginal self-determination, climate action and affordable housing are high priorities.

Cr Ball wants to see City of Melbourne's submission to the Yoorrook Justice Commission published as a short history and believes the creation of a Stolen Generations marker in the city will be a high point of this Council term.

"Being a capital city council, it's only right that our Stolen Generations marker should be a focal point for the whole city."

Re-elected to a second term in 2024, Cr Ball has seen the completion of many major projects.

"I'm incredibly proud of Make Room, an extraordinary and unique model of transitional housing."

She also advocates for more protected bike lanes and the expansion of public open space.



Learn more about all councillors and their portfolios at melbourne.vic.gov.au/about-council



DISHING UP A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Sebastian from Kiki's Crepes

Change is on the menu at the Queen Victoria Market Circular Economy Precinct, and sustainability is baked into everyday experiences.

The initiative is simple but powerful: reduce single-use packaging and food waste at one of Melbourne's most iconic places.

At a charming creperie in the market's bustling foodie precinct, a small but meaningful shift is happening – one plate at a time.

As part of the new Queen Victoria Market Circular Economy Precinct, Kiki's Crepes has traded disposable dishes for real crockery – turning a quick bite into something that feels lasting, for customers and the planet.

“Compared to paper plates, the sturdy reusable plates give the product a more premium feel,” owner Sebastian Chamaillard said.

“Real plates also allow for easier carrying around the market, and a hard surface to cut the crepes on. And feeling like part of change.”

Instead of tossing containers in bins destined for landfill, diners place their used dishes into return stations.

That's when the ‘bin fairies’ step in, according to Joshua Davies, Festival and Events Manager from social enterprise B-Alternative, based in the Purpose Precinct for this pilot.

“We have an amazing and dedicated team of environmentalists and ‘professional dishwashers’ rolling up their sleeves to wash and redistribute dishes,” Joshua said.

“We can wash up to 200 dishes an hour. The uptake from vendors and visitors has been great to witness. I can't wait to see this become the norm around town.”

Each plate is washed, sanitised, dried and returned to vendors, and the environmental savings are stacking up: daily landfill waste from participating vendors has dropped by 50 per cent.

This is City of Melbourne's second circular economy precinct, following the success of the initiative in Kensington in 2024.

With 10 million visitors every year, Queen Victoria Market presents a unique opportunity for visitors to rethink their habits.

That's where STREAT comes in. A co-founder of the Purpose Precinct, this social enterprise hopes to transform unspoiled, leftover produce – such as 300 kg of sweet potatoes – into new food products. Think shoyu, miso, XO sauce and vegan ‘chicken’ salt.



“Around 97 per cent of this produce is still edible, so we're focused on finding solutions to use this produce at its highest value – as delicious food,” Llawela Forrest said. She is STREAT's General Manager of the Purpose Precinct.

STREAT is also running cooking classes and workshops, and gearing up to distribute meals to university students. A lack of access to affordable, nutritious food affects nearly half of all students in the CBD.

“We are keen to connect this surplus, great-eating food with students who really need it, in the most dignified and accessible way we can,” Llawela said.

Visit the Purpose Precinct in September to book a class or try tasty treats from one of the 20 participating food outlets in the market's E and F sheds, where your dishes will be collected and washed on site.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT melbourne.vic.gov.au/queen-victoria-market-circular-economy-precinct

COMMUNITY FOOD GUIDE

The Community Food Guide provides information on how to access low-cost and free food programs, services and resources within the City of Melbourne and surrounding suburbs.

melbourne.vic.gov.au/community-food-guide



MAKING LIFE SWEETER IN THE CBD

Cupcake Central received a Small Business Grant in 2025

When entrepreneur Thin Neu saw the pink terrazzo tiles in an empty shopfront on Little Bourke Street, he knew it was time to bring his business back to the CBD.

For years he had been planning a city comeback for his cult dessert bar Cupcake Central, tracking shopfront and office vacancy rates and crunching pedestrian traffic data in various city precincts.

And yet it was also instinct that told this self-described “baker of businesses” that the city was ready to receive the aroma of fresh-baked cupcakes.

“I started walking around my favourite areas of the CBD, looking for the right empty shopfront. When I walked past this place on Little Bourke Street, the floors spoke to me,” Thin said.

“I have this love for design and aesthetics, and I just stopped out the front of this vacant shop and went, wow, that is actually beautiful.”

To transform the empty shopfront into a cupcake-ready wonderland, Thin applied for a Small Business Grant from the City of Melbourne. Cupcake Central was one of four small businesses to receive a grant through the shopfront occupancy stream in 2025.

Designed to add good vibes at street level, these grants of up to \$25,000 support small businesses moving into ground-floor, street-facing commercial shopfronts that have been vacant for more than four months.



Cupcake Central founder Thin Neu

“When you open a shop, you need to make it warm and welcoming and friendly. The grant really gave us that extra room to do the little things to make the space a bit more special.”

HOW TO BAKE A BUSINESS

Starting out with a big idea and a small loan from his mother 15 years earlier, Thin grew his business from a single shopfront to seven venues across the city.

“When I went to my mum and said I wanted to make cupcakes, she was like ‘Are you crazy? Who is going to pay \$4 for a cupcake?’

“She didn’t necessarily believe in the idea, but she believed in her son,” Thin said.

“Borrowing money from my parents was no small thing. They came as refugees from Cambodia in the 1980s with nothing and worked every odd job from picking fruit to sewing clothes in factories,” Thin said.

“You do what you need to do to make good on that loan. You get up at 4am, you finish late in the evenings,” Thin said.

“It took a long time for my mum to be proud. The turning point was when I opened the first city store 13 years ago.



There's a level of prestige when you open in the CBD. Then she was on board, telling everyone 'Oh, my son has a cupcake store in the city!'"

After a decade of growth, the pandemic forced Cupcake Central to move mostly online. And yet Thin held out hope that he would be back in the CBD one day.

"I'm not a baker, but I know how to bake a business. Just like real-life baking, you learn to bake a business through trial and error. Making a lot of mistakes and learning from them," Thin said.

"We listened to our customers. I knew we still had lots of CBD customers from our online orders. I knew the demographics of this part of the city and I'd been watching the precinct around Hardware Lane. I felt like it could do with another dessert offering."

"We need more places to make life a little bit sweeter for the CBD."

GET TO KNOW THE REGULARS

It took four months to bring Cupcake Central back to the CBD from concept to launch, according to area manager and aspiring pastry chef Trisha Tolentino.

"We weren't sure if we'd be remembered. We weren't sure if we'd still have our regular customers, or people would still want a sweet treat throughout the day."

Old regulars and online customers have followed their noses to the new city shopfront. And the new neighbours are fast becoming regulars too.

"The hairdresser across the street comes in daily for her oat cappuccino and a sweet treat," Trisha said.

"Sometimes her clients come over with their hair still in foils, and get a coffee and a cupcake."

"It's these interactions we have every day. It's really nice. You never know who's going to walk through the door."

"We're a little store, but a little quirky store to match the vibes for the CBD," Trisha said.

 [READ THE FULL STORY AT melbourne.vic.gov.au/news](https://melbourne.vic.gov.au/news)



GROW YOUR BUSINESS

Contact our Business Concierge team for support to start or grow your business. Ask about the latest Shopfront Audit, which delivers great news for business and visitors alike: the shopfront vacancy rate in the CBD retail core around Cupcake Central is now at 5.5 per cent, the best it has been since 2020.

melbourne.vic.gov.au/business-concierge



Cupcake Central on Little Bourke Street

EVENTS CALENDAR

WHAT'S ON ONLY IN THE CITY



Event dates and details may change. For updates, visit @WhatsOnMelb or whatson.melbourne.vic.gov.au



SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER

ARTS HOUSE

Enjoy bold contemporary art and performance at Arts House this spring, featuring talks, dance, communal dining, experimental theatre and more. View the program at artshouse.com.au



Guewel premieres at Arts House

6 SEPTEMBER

ZERO WASTE FESTIVAL

Get tips for zero-waste living from sustainability leaders at this free community event at Fed Square, featuring discussions, workshops and advocacy.

20 TO 21 SEPTEMBER

CHINESE TRADITIONAL CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Experience timeless Chinese heritage at this vibrant traditional cultural festival at Fed Square. Enjoy food, live performances, music, themed market stalls and stunning photo spots.



Chinese Traditional Cultural Festival

22 SEPTEMBER TO 3 OCTOBER

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS AT ARTPLAY AND SIGNAL

Get creative with two weeks of arts programs by kids for kids at ArtPlay, including theatrical performances and a sonic exhibition. Creative young people can join painting, ceramics and street art workshops at SIGNAL. Look out for the Young Creatives Lab showcase, and events in October to celebrate 15 years of SIGNAL. See melbourne.vic.gov.au/artplay and melbourne.vic.gov.au/signal for more.

24 TO 27 SEPTEMBER

AFL FOOTY FEST

Get in on the fun of the 2025 Toyota AFL Finals Series and Footy Fest in Yarra Park. Enjoy food and drink, family friendly fun and free entry.



AFL Finals Series and Footy Fest

27 TO 28 SEPTEMBER

MOON FESTIVAL

The Moon Festival at Queen Victoria Market brings together diverse communities to celebrate the rich traditions of Mid-Autumn Festival. Features traditional performances, food stalls with delicious Asian cuisines, children's activities and fun.

1 TO 31 OCTOBER

VICTORIAN SENIORS FESTIVAL

Celebrate positive ageing at events across the municipality, including Celebration Day at Fed Square and the Melbourne Town Hall Dance. Explore free and low-cost events in the online event calendar.

3 TO 5 OCTOBER

CARDIGAN STREET PARTY

Urban play, food, music and fashion come together in Carlton as Cardigan Street transforms into a civic square. The whole neighbourhood is invited to discover what a regenerative future might look, feel and taste like in narm.

8 TO 11 OCTOBER

DIWALI

Enjoy the festival of lights with music, dance, food and art from India and beyond during Diwali. Fed Square from 8 to 11 October and at Marvel Stadium on 11 October.

9 TO 12 OCTOBER

NIKE MELBOURNE MARATHON FESTIVAL

Take to the streets, run past local landmarks and finish at the iconic MCG as the crowd roars at the Nike Melbourne Marathon Festival. Elite and amateur runners can choose from five distances, including the new Bupa Healthy Cities Mini Marathon, or join spectators at Yarra Park and the MCG.

18 OCTOBER

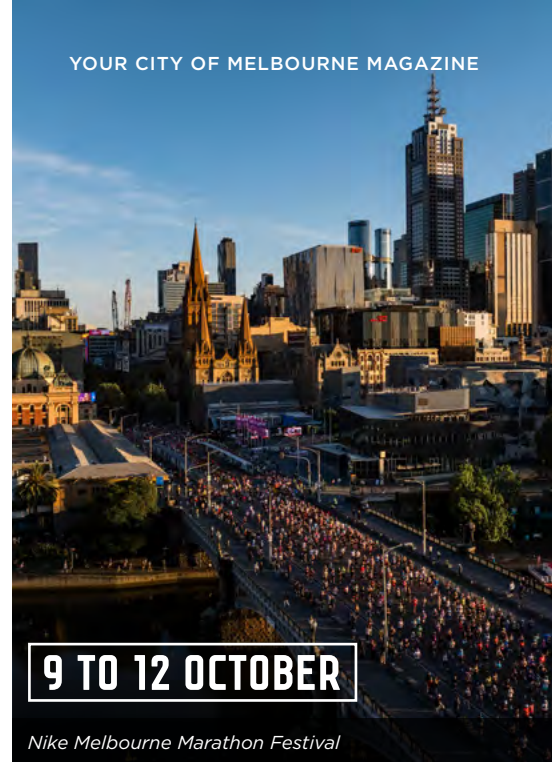
QUEENSBERRY CUP

Race down the hill in a DIY billycart or cheer from the sidelines at this joyful street festival in North Melbourne. Enjoy live music, multicultural food and family friendly fun.



18 OCTOBER

Queensberry Cup



9 TO 12 OCTOBER

Nike Melbourne Marathon Festival



Melbourne Fashion Week

20 TO 26 OCTOBER

MELBOURNE FASHION WEEK

Style takes over when M/FW returns with a bold, city-wide program celebrating a dynamic fashion community. Expect fashion experiences in incredible locations and unexpected spaces.

Program launches 17 September.

mfw.melbourne.vic.gov.au



Kensington Fresh Food Market

CBD

RAINBOW ALLEY

Visit Rainbow Alley in spring to enjoy buskers, outdoor dining and more. This city laneway is reimagining public space to create an inclusive neighbourhood where people can get creative and connect with community.

DOCKLANDS

DOCKLANDS FARMERS MARKET

Shop for fresh and seasonal produce from more than 40 stallholders. Plus fun free activities and entertainment. First Sunday of the month from 8am to 12.30pm.

EAST MELBOURNE

COMMUNITY GARDENING

Learn to sow and grow edible plants in your own garden with The Garden Club at East Melbourne Library Community Garden. First Tuesday of the month.

KENSINGTON

COMMUNITY FRESH FOOD MARKET

Bring locally grown food to swap, share or sell, and browse for fresh veggies, fruit and herbs. First Saturday of the month from 10am to midday at Skinny Park on Bellair Street.

18 TO 19 OCTOBER

ITALIAN FESTA

Immerse yourself in Italian culture with food, wine, music, stalls and family fun in Carlton. The Italian Festa and Exhibition brings together the energy of a street festival with the richness of a cultural expo.



Italian Festa

16 NOVEMBER

POLISH FESTIVAL

Embrace the Polish spirit with live music and dance at Fed Square. Savour Polish food, browse the artisan market, join a craft workshop and find activities for kids.



African Music and Cultural Festival

21 TO 23 NOVEMBER

AFRICAN MUSIC AND CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Experience the rhythms of Africa through live music, fashion, dance, food and cultural showcases at this free family friendly celebration of African heritage and creativity at Fed Square.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT whatson.melbourne.vic.gov.au

SURVIVOR TO SYSTEM SHAPER: A CHAMPION FOR DISABILITY PRIDE

Akii Ngo at Melbourne Fashion Week in 2021. Photo: Mackenzie Sweetnam

Meet the multitalented Akii Ngo from our Disability Advisory Committee.

On a quest to live their best and most authentic life, Akii Ngo has had to fight harder than most.

“I was told I was ‘too young’ to be so sick. Then I was too young to be disabled, then too young to be a wheelchair user. I was also ‘too pretty’, which makes no sense.

“The world made zero sense to me, growing up with so many challenges and barriers,” Akii said.

In the 15 years since escaping family violence and intergenerational trauma at home, Akii has learned to name and reclaim the overlapping levels of oppression that were so confusing to them as a child.

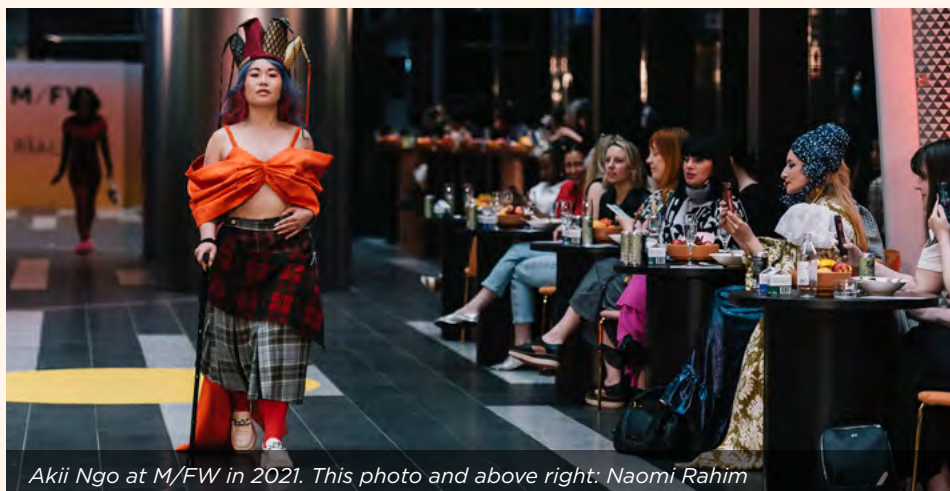
They now find pride and power in belonging to many communities as a young(ish), multiply disabled, multiply neurodivergent, transgender, non-binary and LGBTIQA+ / Queer person of colour from a refugee background.

.....
“We all deserve to live our authentic lives without being berated and abused.”

Along the way, Akii has overcome lifelong experiences of complex chronic illnesses and debilitating pain, violence and discrimination to become a champion for disability inclusion, access and gender equity,



Akii Ngo at M/FW 2021



Akii Ngo at M/FW in 2021. This photo and above right: Naomi Rahim

“Our stories matter. There is immense power in sharing our experiences and perspectives,” Akii said.

INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

Akii’s passion for inclusion and their advocacy for more diverse representation has opened the door to a glamorous world of media, fashion and beauty.

In front of the camera and on the runway, they work to uplift the profile of people with disability, especially those with intersecting and marginalised identities. People who have been told their bodies don’t belong and are ‘broken’.



“Modelling for me is about improving representation in the mainstream fashion, beauty and media industry. Especially for the less common, less ‘palatable’ members of the disability community.”

They have taken to the runway as a model at major fashion festivals including Melbourne Fashion Week and Australian Fashion Week, and have worked with numerous brands including Sportsgirl, NAB and Public Transport Victoria, to name a few.

“Growing up, I didn’t experience the representation I needed, so I became that representation for myself and anyone like me, as well as the next generations of people like me who will have to live with additional life challenges and barriers.”

PUSH FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Across the world, 16 per cent of the population lives with a disability, while in Australia more than 20 per cent of people live with some sort of disability.

“Accessibility is not a luxury. It is not an inconvenience. It’s everyone’s responsibility to meet access needs.”

“Systemic change is important for the people who currently live with disabilities and also for anyone that happens to join the club, early or late in life,” Akii said.

As a member of the City of Melbourne’s Disability Advisory Committee, Akii helps shape the city by making sure the most marginalised and disadvantaged members of the disability community are valued.

“No changes, decisions or reforms that affect us should be put in place without us. Nothing about us without us!”

“It really encourages all relevant council departments to consult with us to do what we can to ensure our community is considered, included and not an afterthought.”

“We cannot assume what people want. The more diverse and intersectional the co-design and feedback is, the better and more representative of the community the solution will be,” Akii said.

 [READ THE FULL STORY AT melbourne.vic.gov.au/news](https://melbourne.vic.gov.au/news)

MELBOURNE FASHION WEEK
Melbourne Fashion Week returns from 20 to 26 October 2025. Program released 17 September.
mfw.melbourne.vic.gov.au



Photo: Micaela Chutrau

OUR DISABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE, SINCE 1999

Our Disability Advisory Committee brings together people with different lived experiences of disability. They provide strategic advice and help make the City of Melbourne more inclusive for all.

melbourne.vic.gov.au/disability-advisory-committee



Parking officers Maria and Wayne

Kindness at the kerb: parking officers keep the city moving

With more than 150,000 vehicles entering the city every day, keeping Melbourne’s car park musical chairs running smoothly is a finely tuned balancing act.

Veteran parking officer Wayne has been on patrol in the city for more than 20 years and says it’s about more than just issuing fines.

“It’s about everybody having a fair crack at getting a space,” Wayne said.

He’s been on patrol in the city for more than 20 years, making sure the traffic turns over smoothly.

Every day, he teams up with colleague Maria, who started as a parking officer in 1997 after answering a job ad in the newspaper.



Wayne on patrol

“When I first started it was all payment in coins. Now everything is through apps and smartphones,” Maria said.

The pair clocks up more than 20,000 daily steps as they walk the city, ensuring loading zones are clear for deliveries, rideshare pick-up points stay open, and bike lanes are free of cars.

They patrol school zones and busy streets to keep children safe, prevent cars from blocking driveways and ensure disabled parking spaces are free for those who need them.

Sometimes conditions can be tough, especially when drivers lose their temper.

“I understand that a fine isn’t pleasant, but there’s no need to behave poorly,” Wayne said.

For anyone considering the job, he has some simple advice.

“Be stoic and thick-skinned. Most times, you can talk people around. And remember, it’s about keeping the city moving.”

“There’s a lot of freedom. You’re out walking around, meeting some interesting people,” Wayne said.

Maria is always on the lookout for celebrity encounters.

“Once, I asked a driver to wind down the window and on the passenger side was Kylie Minogue!” Maria said.

To make parking simpler and more accessible, we’re reviewing on-street parking across all neighbourhoods.



READ THE FULL STORY AT melbourne.vic.gov.au/news

TOP TIPS FOR AVOIDING A FINE

Read the signs: Even if you’ve parked there before, check the time limits and restrictions.

Don’t overstay: A 2P zone means a two-hour maximum. “You have to move after the limit, no matter how much you’ve paid,” Wayne said.

Loading zones are for commercial vehicles: If you need to duck into a shop, use the 15-minute free parking through the EasyPark app.

Take photos: “If a meter’s broken, or there’s confusion, take a photo and explain it in a review,” Maria said.

Find more ways to report issues when you see them in the city on page 15.

SIMPLE WAYS TO HELP KEEP MELBOURNE SAFE AND CLEAN

Clean Team in action

Help us keep the city safer and clean by reporting issues when you see them.

There's always more we can do to make sure our city sparkles – and our Clean Teams are on patrol and ready to spring into action when we hear from you.

Over the past year we:

- whisked away than 6,000 tonnes of litter and dumped rubbish from public places
- painted over more than 142,500 m² of graffiti from city buildings
- scooped 60 tonnes of litter from our waterways
- pressure-washed over 314,000 m² of footpaths.

Here are some of the issues you can report in the City of Melbourne.

UNWANTED GRAFFITI

Melbourne is renowned for its beautiful street art, but when it comes to tagging and vandalism our Rapid Response Clean Team is quick to act.

We remove unwanted street-facing graffiti from both Council and privately owned buildings. If the graffiti is obscene or offensive, call us on 9658 9658 and we'll fast-track the job.



LITTER AND WASTE

You'll find around 450 solar smart bins, 230 public recycling bins, 2,000 public litter bins and 500 cigarette butt bins in the City of Melbourne.

If you see an issue with a bin in a public space or in a park, let us know and we'll send a crew to sort it out.

If you notice dumped rubbish on the street, please report it so we can keep the footpaths clean and safer for our community.

And when it's time to spring clean, remember that City of Melbourne residents can book one free hard waste collection each financial year.

STREETS, PARKS AND WATERWAYS

Our Clean Team is on patrol to keep our street furniture and playground equipment looking good, but if something is grubby, tell us and we'll give it some extra care.

You can report anything from broken glass on the street to stains on the footpath and litter in a waterway. You can also report potholes, cracks and uneven surfaces on roads, footpaths and bike paths.

BAD SMELLS AND PESTS

Help to protect public health by reporting signs of pest infestations, as well as bad smells coming from a blocked drain, fumes, compost or rubbish.

OUT-OF-HOURS HAZARDS

We can arrange after-hours service for various issues, including overflowing bins, biological hazards and noise complaints from building sites. Call 9658 9658.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
melbourne.vic.gov.au/reporting-concerns

For emergency responses requiring police attendance, including noise complaints from venues or homes please dial 000.

To report a crime confidentially visit Crime Stoppers or call 1800 333 000.

CLEANAWAY TO TRANSFORM CITY WASTE AND RECYCLING

Waste and recycling services for residents are set to improve at the Dynon Road waste transfer station, following the sale of City of Melbourne's wholly-owned subsidiary Citywide.

Cleanaway will redevelop the West Melbourne site to better accept and consolidate waste, including general household rubbish, organics, glass and electronics.

Surplus proceeds from the \$110 million sale will be invested in a future fund for projects that benefit the community for decades to come.





PLAYGROUPS HELP FAMILIES FEEL AT HOME

Families gather every week for a supported cultural playgroup in Docklands

Come to a City of Melbourne playgroup and find out how these regular meet-ups have become a lifeline for many families in Melbourne.

Like many immigrant parents of young children, Sudipta felt a loneliness she wasn't expecting when she moved to Australia. Back home in eastern India, Sudipta's toddler was outgoing and playful, their days filled with extended family and friends, surrounded by the hum of a familiar language.

In Melbourne, however, while her husband settled into his new job, Sudipta and her daughter found themselves alone and suddenly shy whenever they ventured out of their apartment.

"I took her to the playground, but she couldn't understand the other children as she only spoke Bengali. My daughter felt very sad because no one came to play with her," Sudipta said.

After a lonely six months, a chance encounter at a local library changed everything.

Sudipta's daughter struck up a conversation with Jayeeta, one of our parenting group facilitators.

This team runs 65 free, weekly playgroups in 7 locations across the City of Melbourne, including community playgroups, supported playgroups and cultural playgroups.

Jayeeta encouraged Sudipta and her daughter to join a supported playgroup for families from Indian cultural backgrounds who live around Docklands.

"When I came to this playgroup, my daughter finds she can speak with other children, and she feels free," Sudipta said.

Bearing freshly packed snacks for their children, around 20 families come along to this playgroup each week. Everyone is hungry for conversation and connection.

"The families at this playgroup come from many different cultures in India. We are all learning about different cultures when we share our stories. It's now like a big family," Sudipta said.

Fellow parent, regular playgroup participant and new friend Sara agrees.

"We share our fears and experiences with other parents in the playgroup. It feels like what is happening with our children is normal," Sara said.

Originally from Hyderabad in southern India, Sara moved to Docklands three years ago when her husband was offered a job in Melbourne. She heard about the Indian cultural playgroup at a visit to her local maternal and child health nurse.

"This playgroup supports us through this state of transition."

Another parent, Mithu, started bringing her four-year-old to playgroup to prepare him for the transition to school.

"He needed the socialisation, he didn't go to kindergarten. My son can learn how to share with other kids, he learns playing together. It's a very helpful group," Mithu said.



Story time at playgroup



Sudipta and Sara at playgroup with their children

She moved to Docklands from eastern India two years ago.

“When I came to Melbourne I didn’t know anybody. I have started making friends. That sense of community I feel here has helped me start to build connections beyond playgroup,” Mithu said.

For first-time parent Ackshaya, playgroup has become a place to share the highs and lows of early parenting.

“This is my first kid, so I had lots of doubts. She was underweight for a long time and waking up quite a lot in the night. I wasn’t sure if I was doing the wrong thing,” Ackshaya said.

“The reassurance I got from other parents at this playgroup gave me a lot of confidence.”

“I found out that nothing is wrong, everything is normal. Everything is good. I just think that I was overthinking it maybe,” Ackshaya said.

GATHERING FOR EVENTS

This playgroup is a balm for homesickness and a way to make sure children stay connected to Indian culture.

The group also make an effort to celebrate all sorts of religious events and traditions, from Holi and Diwali to Iftar and Eid.

Everyone brings a plate of food to share, and stories to tell, and the room is filled with song and dance, arts and crafts, face-painting and smiles.

“As immigrants the only thing we miss here is our people. This playgroup is the closest we can get to feeling like home,” Ackshaya said.

 **READ THE FULL STORY AT melbourne.vic.gov.au/news**



Supported playgroup in Docklands

FIND A FREE PLAYGROUP



Playgroup is a regular way for children under 6 years old and their parents and carers to play together and socialise, share experiences and build a local support network.

Different playgroups include:

- Community playgroups where you can meet other families in your neighbourhood.
- Supported playgroups for families that want help with big life transitions.
- Cultural playgroups for different languages groups, fathers and LGBTIQ+ families.

Our purpose-built playrooms are fully stocked with all the toys and tools you need to find your place in a healthy, connected community.

City of Melbourne is committed to being a child-safe organisation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT melbourne.vic.gov.au/playgroups

YOUR COUNCIL



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Deputy Lord Mayor Roshena Campbell

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 Deputy portfolio head for Tourism and Events
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Postal address for all councillors

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IN BRIEF



Victorian Seniors Festival

FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Discover free and low-cost activities that promote healthy ageing, including tai chi, line dancing and a sensory garden. Get help with your mobile phone or computer, drop in at Chatty Cafe, and enjoy local events during Victorian Seniors Festival. Browse activities on our website, or phone 9658 9190.

melbourne.vic.gov.au/olderpeople

MELBOURNE ADVANTAGE

Our new Economic Development Strategy 2030 proposes a bold ambition: to make Melbourne the Asia-Pacific's city of choice for innovation, talent and liveability. Our economic growth will reflect global trends as well as being inclusive and community-focused, so everyone can share in the city's prosperity.

melbourne.vic.gov.au/the-melbourne-advantage

ABORIGINAL ARTS GRANTS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and creative organisations can apply for funding of up to \$20,000 through our Aboriginal Arts Grants. Share your stories and talent in all art forms, including dance, theatre, music, writing and visual art. Applications close 28 September.

melbourne.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-arts-grants

SPRING INTO WELLBEING

Get affordable access to modern gyms, pools and group fitness classes at our popular recreation centres in the CBD, Carlton, North Melbourne and Kensington this spring. Or browse our Active Melbourne directory to find ways to move it your way, from skating to tai chi, and everything in between.

melbourne.vic.gov.au/activemelbourne

COUNCIL MEETINGS

SEPTEMBER

Future Melbourne Committee	Tuesday 2 September	5.30pm	Melbourne Town Hall
Future Melbourne Committee	Tuesday 16 September	5.30pm	Melbourne Town Hall
Council	Tuesday 30 September	5.30pm	Melbourne Town Hall



View all meeting dates and locations at melbourne.vic.gov.au/aboutcouncil

PEOPLE WE MEET IN MELBOURNE



OLIVIA MOEDT

Film permits specialist

“You give them space to do their jobs – you don’t want to be that person interrupting a scene.”

Olivia helps to make the city a dream set for filmmakers from around the world, arranging permits for everything from blockbuster movies to high-octane stunts and music videos.



NIKKI BLANCH

Social enterprise founder

“I’m passionate about the work I do with women from migrant and refugee backgrounds – it’s rewarding to see the impact on people’s lives that can be made through employment.”

At Meals With Impact, Nikki sees every day how meaningful work can lift women up, and address skills shortages. This grant-winning organisation runs a cafe, catering and food relief service in the City of Melbourne.



**LUCY VODOLA
AND OGUZ KILIC**

Environmental health officers

“At the forefront of everything is public health and safety. We’re not just there to enforce – we’re there to educate and work with people.”

Behind every great event in Melbourne, you’ll find Lucy and Oguz making sure everything runs safely, so that businesses thrive and everyone has a wonderful time.



To learn more about Olivia, Nikki, Lucy and Oguz, search for their names at melbourne.vic.gov.au/news

CONTACT

melbourne.vic.gov.au/contactus
03 9658 9658

NATIONAL RELAY SERVICE

Teletypewriter (TTY) users phone
13 36 77 then ask for 03 9658 9658
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IN PERSON

Melbourne Town Hall, Administration Building
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Business hours, Monday to Friday

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ONLY IN THIS CITY OF OURS



Metropolis



NGV International



Fed Square



Queen Victoria Market



Yakimono



Shrine of Remembrance



SCAN TO SEE
WHAT'S ON
MELBOURNE

