

SOUTHBANK NEWS

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Music for anyone who will listen
Photo by John Tadigiri

With the normally bustling streets and footpaths of Southbank almost silenced, *Southbank News* photographer John Tadigiri captured the moment busker Narada Chamberlain decided to take to an empty King Street Bridge last month to share his music with the world around him.

How the virus has hit Southbank

The Southbank community and economy are, like the rest of the world, wading through an unprecedented experience.

WORDS BY Meg Hill
ECONOMY

Southbank jobs have been lost, meaning Southbank workers are unemployed. Foot traffic is down, and sales are plummeting. On Sunday, March 22, Premier Daniel Andrews announced all non-essential services would be shut down in the following 48 hours, for an indefinite period.

Here's how events and impacts unfolded in Southbank.

Government and business

Amid announcements of federal and state government stimulus packages, the City of Melbourne passed its own stimulus valued at more than \$10 million on March 17.

The package focused on small businesses in the municipality and included:

- A virtual business support summit at Melbourne Town Hall;
- Suspending fees for *Food Act (1984)* registrations and street trading permits for three months;
- Halving rent for eligible tenants in Council-owned buildings for three months;
- Opportunities to deploy casual and part-time staff to enhance city cleanliness and amenity; and
- Developing a Rates Hardship Policy.

The business support summit, proposed by Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood, is a partnership with the state and federal governments, Victoria's Chief Health Officer and the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In fast tracking its rates hardship policies at a special council meeting on Wednesday, March 25, councillors

unanimously endorsed an economic package that included 14 initiatives to support businesses.

"As the closest level of government to the people, we are acutely aware of how devastating this virus is for our residential and business community," Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood said.

"We want to send a message that we know you are going through hard times. If you are worried about your ability to pay your rates on time, please get in touch with our support hotline."

"We will soon announce details of a virtual summit for business leaders. We need to help our business community survive this shock so they can power our economy for decades to come."

Yearly rates notices are issued in August. For ratepayers who pay via instalment, the fourth installation due date is May 31, 2020. Businesses that fall behind on rates and charges can request that interest be waived if they are unable to pay their next instalment.

In the case of hardship, a request of assistance from Council must be made in writing, including the details of the circumstances preventing the ratepayer from meeting their financial obligation to Council.

The City of Melbourne said that it would advise of its decision in writing within 14 days for a person, or within 21 days for a body (small business), after receiving an application for financial hardship consideration, once all relevant information has been provided.

The City of Melbourne also announced that it would temporarily suspend fees such as street trading and outdoor dining area permits.

"We have fast-tracked our policy to provide options to defer, reduce or

Council extends construction hours

WORDS BY Sean Car
BUILDING & PLANNING

The City of Melbourne has temporarily adjusted the management of construction activity in "certain cases" in the municipality in a bid to fast-track construction projects, save jobs and help limit the economic impact of coronavirus (COVID-19).

It comes after a construction worker from the Melbourne Square project on Kavanagh St contracted the virus last month, leading to the development's temporary closure for precautionary cleaning. The site reopened days later, sparking widespread debate as to whether the industry was equipped to be dealing with government's new safety measures around social distancing.

Lord Mayor Sally Capp said the council's temporary measures would allow extensions of working hours on some building sites for commercial, large residential and mixed-use developments.

"The changes will allow the construction industry to work safely and remain viable during these challenging times but they will not allow construction activity around the clock," the Lord Mayor said.

"We understand these changes may affect residents with a potential increase in noise, however we are attempting to strike a balance between the needs of residents and the need to keep people in jobs. We recognise these extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures."

"The necessary health and safety measures, such as social distancing, are impacting the productivity of the construction industry. We're responding by adjusting the hours available for construction work on a case-by-case basis."

"We are doing our best to support industry and residents during these uncertain and stressful times."

Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood said the temporary

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The deadline for the May edition is April 30, 2020.

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We're still publishing

WORDS BY *Sean Car*
EDITORIAL

The uncertainty currently confronting our world is well understood and, like everyone, *Southbank News* is not immune to it.

"Unprecedented", "extraordinary" and "bizarre" are words we've all become sadly too familiar with in recent times as the devastating effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) continue to wreak havoc in our community.

But while the fear of the unknown is always a natural cause for anxiety, we should not allow panic to become a more powerful contagion than the virus itself. Calmness, compassion and care are some of the best cures we currently have in grappling with the fresh realities of this pandemic each day.

And as so many of you will feel isolated at home and cut off from your own communities during this period, there has never been a more important time for us to try and do our bit to help you feel that little bit more connected.

But with so many businesses shutting their doors and doing their best to weather this storm, we will be doing our very best to keep bringing you your local news while things return to normal, which they will.

In the meantime, if you're a resident or business, please don't hesitate to reach out, share your story with us and let us know how we can support you through this in any way.

To stay in touch with your community, you can also join our recently launched Southbank Community Hub Facebook page: facebook.com/groups/southbankcommunityhub ●



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Council extends construction hours

Continued from page 1.
arrangements would be reviewed on a monthly basis to ensure the needs of both the construction industry and local residents were met.

"We're working to balance the need to save jobs in the construction sector by allowing different ways of working and still protecting public safety and amenity," the Deputy Lord Mayor said.

"I want to stress that these changes are temporary."

"More officers will be out monitoring building sites to ensure compliance with the regulations. We reserve the right to issue fines or revoke construction permits for sites that don't follow the rules outlined in their construction permit."

"In turn, we seek commitment from the industry to ensure that everything possible will be done to preserve residential amenity and protect workers."

In response to COVID-19, federal and state governments have acknowledged the construction industry as an essential service and determined that it should remain in operation for the time being.

Construction sites are subject to increased health and safety precautions including limiting the number of workers on site, adhering to social distancing requirements, following personal hygiene guidelines and regular cleaning of equipment.

The city's local law currently allows for construction activity to occur between the hours of 7am and 7pm on weekdays and between 8am and 3pm on Saturdays. Approval is required from council to work outside these standard hours.

The council said the temporary measures would not apply as a "blanket approval" and would be administered on a case-by-case basis under the existing local law via "out of hours" permits.

The City of Melbourne will consider the following extensions as a general guideline:

- Weekdays: 6am to 8pm (and up to 10pm for some internal fit out works that aren't externally audible e.g. plastering, painting, etc.)
- Saturdays: 7am to 5pm (and up to 10pm for some internal fit out works)
- Sundays: 10am until 4pm for limited activities related to crane works that are unable to be completed during standard hours ●

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Southbank on pause amid uncertainty

WORDS BY *David Schout*
 PHOTOGRAPHY BY *John Tadigiri*
 LOCAL NEWS

As businesses close, workers clear and events cease, Southbank is bracing for an acutely uncertain 2020 amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

In the space of just two weeks in March, almost all Southbank-based businesses and events, including the highly anticipated Southbank Community Day and Boyd Park opening on March 21, were forced to close or cancel after increasingly stringent government measures forced people indoors.

Many local residents now face the prospect of isolation inside apartment buildings, making the months ahead particularly challenging.

With less room to move (and practice social distancing) in these living arrangements, owners' corporations (OCs) throughout Southbank face important decisions about common areas and procedures to deal with residents who may contract the virus.

The local area, via its numerous hotels, may also host return travelers who are forcibly quarantined under federal government directives.

At the time of publishing, Crown Promenade and Crown Metropolis were the only local hotels offering quarantine accommodation for returned travellers, according to the state government.

The impact on many businesses has been swift.

An area defined by a large working and tourism population, Southbank has seen a rapid downturn in foot traffic that rendered some streets to ghost towns in a short space of time.

The City of Melbourne's pedestrian counting system indicated that foot traffic at usually busy locations at Queensbridge Square and Arts Centre Melbourne were down by 70 per cent in early April from usual averages.

Those numbers continue to decline as cafes, restaurants and other businesses in Southbank shut their doors last month, with some closing for good.

Lord Mayor Sally Capp said the health and economic impacts on the city were profound.

"Of course, the priority has to be health and the way we respond to our challenge around slowing the spread of this virus," she said in a social media address.

"It has been devastating to see the impact on the number people (present) and what that means for our retailers and hospitality businesses in particular."

Cr Capp said that people were "firmly at the centre" of the council's approach in the coming weeks and months.

"It's really important that we're all taking a caring approach at this time. For us we're particularly looking at our most vulnerable,



▲ A masked couple outside Crown Casino.

"It's really important that we're all taking a caring approach at this time. For us we're particularly looking at our most vulnerable, being our elderly and rough sleepers" - Lord Mayor Sally Capp



For City of Melbourne COVID-19 updates:
melbourne.vic.gov.au

being our elderly and rough sleepers. So please, whatever you're doing, look out for the people around you whilst taking the necessary precautions for all of us to slow the advancement of this virus."

All the city's libraries, aquatic/recreation centres, arts and cultural centres, community hubs (including the Boyd Community Hub) and visitor centres have been closed until further notice.

While parks remain open, playground equipment has been ruled off-limits at the likes of Boyd Park and Grant Street Reserve.

As part of a partnership with Spotless Services, council's cleaning services have been ramped up across the city, with a focus on sanitisation, cleaning surfaces that are touched often, removing litter and increasing street sweeping.

Some examples of additional cleaning activities include increased frequency of high pressure cleans of street furniture, installation of new soap dispensers in toilet blocks in Melbourne's busiest parks, increased frequency of cleaning of public toilets and deep cleaning of priority park assets.

Childcare facilities and in-home services such as domestic assistance, home maintenance, meals, personal care, respite, and individual social support would continue, as council staff were ordered to ask COVID-19 screening questions.

While the state and federal government's response would best determine the health and economic impact of COVID-19 on locals, the council has made a number of moves to soften the blow. You can read more about its stimulus measures on pages 1 and 5 of this edition ●



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Promenade works pushed back

WORDS BY *Sean Car*
 COUNCIL AFFAIRS

The City of Melbourne is delaying the start of upgrades to Southbank Promenade to ease disruption with nearby projects and prioritise the completion of Southbank Boulevard.

Lord Mayor Sally Capp said on March 16 that an upgrade to the 300 metres of Southbank Promenade between the Evan Walker Bridge and Princes Bridge was originally planned to begin in early 2020, but will start in 2021.

"We know that Melbourne is experiencing an unprecedented period of construction, and we need to manage disruption appropriately," Cr Capp said.

"The feedback we've heard from local businesses and residents is that they are feeling the effects of multiple projects in the area, including delays to Southbank Boulevard, and now is not the right time to commence a new project that would result in further disruption."

"We understand there are a number of upcoming projects that could impact works on Southbank Promenade, so it's sensible to allow these works to be completed first to minimise disruption and reduce unnecessary expense."

The reduced disruption caused by the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) is understood to have helped pave the way for works on the \$50 million Southbank Boulevard transformation to be accelerated.

As reported in previous editions of *Southbank News*, the project has been riddled with delays since it began in 2018 and, under current timeframes, is expected to be completed by the end of 2021.

Speaking in early March, Lord Mayor Sally Capp said the City of Melbourne apologised to local residents and businesses for the ongoing delays.

"We know this project has taken too long and has been a disruption to locals, businesses and visitors to the area. We are sorry that there have been delays to this project but we know it will be worth the wait," Cr Capp said.

"We have also learned a lot doing this project and these lessons will be used to ensure that future infrastructure projects are delivered in a more timely fashion."

"We thank everyone who has been affected by these delays for their patience."

"This project will create a new central boulevard for Southbank and the Arts Precinct and is a key part of delivering a greener Melbourne with new parks and open spaces."

With roadway and tramline works along Southbank Boulevard now complete, construction is focused on creating five new open space areas between Dodds St and City Rd, with stone paving and landscaping out the front of Melbourne Recital Centre also finished.

The area in front of the ABC studios is the next major space to be upgraded this month.

"The works for the new park outside the ABC will include demolition of the disused roadway to make way for 2200 sqm of open space including lawn areas, seating, gardens and trees. This is the largest of the open space areas to be delivered as part of this project. These works will continue until December 2020," the Lord Mayor said ●



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PROPERTY

How the virus has hit Southbank

Continued from page 1.

waive rates and charges levied on a property – depending on the severity of the financial impact,” Lord Mayor Sally Capp said.

“If you are facing genuine financial hardship in paying your rates, fees or charges we urge you to contact council to discuss your individual circumstances. Our phone lines are open and we have staff available to support you.”

“In partnership with Spotless Services, we will also provide cross training and employment for approximately 200 affected casual staff to be redeployed to work on improving city cleanliness and presentation.”

President of the Yarra River Business Association (YRBA) John Forman said while the situation was dire, there was reason for Southbank to be hopeful.

“While cashflow and job losses are uppermost in our minds at the moment, it’s some comfort to remember that the Yarra River Precinct’s enviable mix of international and interstate tourism, business events, recreational opportunities for Melburnians and a strong local business base will mean that we bounce back very quickly when we get through all the current turmoil,” he said.

He also urged Southbankers to take care of themselves.

“Quite apart from the economic question, please take great care to look after your mental health. While the autumn weather is still pleasant, make sure to get outdoors every day to enjoy our promenades, riverside views and gardens. The combination of exercise, routine and positivity are key ingredients to a healthy future.”

Rate hardship applications opened on March 30 and ratepayers seeking support can contact 9658 9658. Small businesses should press 1 to speak to the COVID-19 Business Concierge Hotline.

Parks Victoria (PV) has also provided rent relief to its tenant passenger boat operators along the lower Yarra River, who can now apply for support by contacting PV on 8427 3793.

Eligible businesses and organisations can

now also apply for City of Melbourne grants via melbourne.smartygrants.com.au

The state and federal governments have also announced a range of stimulus measures to support businesses. On March 30, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced an unprecedented \$130 billion package providing businesses with wage subsidies for up to six months.

For more information on both state and federal economic support packages visit business.vic.gov.au and treasury.gov.au/coronavirus.

Community

Southbank’s community groups are in good stead to weather the crisis. Southbank Residents’ Association (SRA) president Tony Penna said the sense of community was important.

“From my interaction with the various buildings around Southbank and their residents, it would seem the community has really come together,” he said.

“I am seeing many offers of support and assistance throughout many building Facebook pages. While it is still early days, I certainly hope this sense of community is not lost as this forced isolation starts to take hold.”

“I hope we all are taking a moment to check on our neighbours and reaching out to the wider community in our buildings. We have heard many times that we are all in this together, and working together is the only way we are going to get out of this.”

Key organiser of the Southbank Sustainability Group Artemis Pattichi said the virus had definitely impacted the way the community interacted.

“One of the greatest attributes of the Southbank Sustainability Group is that sense of community we all feel when we meet to chat sustainability initiatives over coffee every two weeks,” she said.

“With the latest measures in place, we’re of course missing that close contact. While at the same time, this pandemic strangely brought people closer together, and created a sense of comradeship on a global level.”

Ms Pattichi said it was as a result that we

“

Quite apart from the economic question, please take great care to look after your mental health.

”

were beginning to see the “flattening of the curve” in Australia.

“This virus brought out our humanity and a global sense of community. Both important elements that we will need to overcome the challenges the next two decades will bring on an economic, employment, commercial, wellbeing and environmental level.”

Montague Community Alliance convener Trisha Avery was also forced to postpone the group’s regular Montague Working Group meeting with the Fishermans Bend taskforce, which was scheduled to be held at the Golden Fleece Hotel on March 26.

“The Fishermans Bend Taskforce and I have had a conversation regarding how we might move forward using video conferencing,” Ms Avery said. “Development and construction is currently still going ahead in Montague as most of you are experiencing so we do need to ensure that we continue to be fully involved in the development of our precinct.”

Arts

In the early days of the shutdown, on March 17, Cr Rohan Leppert, chair of the City of Melbourne’s Arts, Culture and Heritage portfolio, said some of the most immediate impacts were felt in the arts sector.

“One after the other creative directors and

CEOs are calling me and saying we’re about to cancel or defer our upcoming festival,” he said.

“The arts ecosystem is very deep and very broad, and like other sectors the City of Melbourne is overexposed to there’s a lot of independent contractors and casual workers.”

Southbank – home to Melbourne’s Arts Precinct – has been hit hard. From early in the crisis, since around March 15, the precinct has been shut down.

On that day, Arts Centre Melbourne – like most other galleries and institutions – announced the cancellation of all scheduled performances and events and closure of its buildings to the public. Like many other creative institutions, it will remain closed until June 30.

CEO of Arts Centre Melbourne Claire Spencer said the decision, although deeply upsetting, was necessary.

“To say this decision is counterintuitive and deeply upsetting is a gross understatement,” she said.

“However, based on the rapidly unfolding events, the gut-wrenching decision made today to cancel all performances and close our buildings to the public was made as a precautionary measure to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community, protect our staff, performers and patrons, and to play our role in Australia’s response to limiting transmission.” ●

For more on the Arts Precinct, head to page 10.

For updates and information:
dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus



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explore your own backyard (maritime trail – 60 mins plus stops)

So, you’re cooped-up at home and bored with Netflix! Don’t let self-isolation jelly your brain as well as your legs.

Exercise and intellectual stimulation are important to get us through this period. Grab the dog lead, your partner or friend, and explore your neighbourhood.

There’s a fascinating precinct right at your door – full of maritime history, city views, lush gardens and art.

The Yarra River Business Association presents this first in a series of local walks to get you moving and to help you feel more in love with our Yarra River Precinct.

1 **Enterprize Park** is the site of the 1834 European landing in Melbourne and was the heart of Melbourne’s 19th century river trade. The indented section of river is known as ‘The Turning Basin’, where sailing ships could turn around to return to the bay. The reconstructed wharf and five figureheads known as ‘Constellation’ evoke the spirit of the early sailing ships.

2 **Former Customs House** (1876) is where goods entering the colony were assessed for their value and where customs duty was paid. It is now the Immigration Museum.

3 **Scar Poles.** An art installation created by eight indigenous artists, depicting the significance of the river bank and the water to the original inhabitants, the Wurrundjeri people.

4 **Yarra Falls.** This section of the river used to mark the demarcation between the salt water of the bay and the fresh water of the river. Aboriginal people were able to walk across the cascading falls on a rocky ledge until it was blasted away in the 1880s for the construction of Queens Bridge and to alleviate flooding.

Walk past SEA LIFE aquarium, over King Street at the traffic lights, then through Batman Park, which commemorates John Batman, one of the founding fathers of Melbourne.

5 **Spencer Street Bridge.** Until opened in 1930, motorists had to use a punt to cross the river to enter South Melbourne.

6 **WTC North Wharf** is the water edge of the massive World Trade Centre complex (built 1983). Enter the **Wharf Hotel** to admire the photographic wall murals depicting the early days of maritime trading on Australia Wharf, at this site.

7 **Mission to Seafarers Building.** The organisation has served the maritime community since 1857, but this distinctive Arts & Crafts style building dates from 1917. Don’t miss the charming St Peter the Mariner chapel and the domed seafarers’ gymnasium.

8 **North Wharf cargo sheds and historic crane** (under refurbishment; no entry). The wharf dates from 1855 and is the last intact example of an integrated wharf-shed-crane berth in the Port of Melbourne.

Cross the Seafarers Bridge (2009) to enter South Wharf Precinct, famous for the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, DFO shopping and an intimate promenade of riverside restaurants and cafes.

9 **South Wharf.** Between 2005 and 2011 a group of leading Australian heritage architects and designers rebuilt and raised the dilapidated wharf. The former cargo sheds date from 1884, but have been restored to what they looked like during South Wharf’s boom maritime years of 1920-1940. Wander the Promenade and Dukes Walk to experience the variety of quality dining and hospitality venues. Some of them display original artefacts and fittings from that era.

Wander under the Charles Grimes Bridge to discover Melbourne’s inner city marine village...

10 **Yarra’s Edge Marina** and Webb Bridge, which depicts the eel nets used by the river’s earliest inhabitants. This area was once the Interstate Swinging Basin for the Port of Melbourne. Great views of the CBD skyline.

Retrace your steps back along the Promenade to...

11 **Tall Ship Polly Woodside** (1885) and Melbourne’s Maritime Heritage Museum. The Polly sailed the world’s oceans from the 1880s to the 1960s, before it underwent a full restoration for the National Trust by volunteers. Hop aboard to experience life under sail.

12 **Pump House display.** The cut-away building and equipment from South Wharf’s early days is open for external inspection all hours.

13 **The Boatbuilders Yard.** The location of this heritage cargo shed and outdoor hospitality area was the bustling scene of ship repair at the Duke and Orr dry dock between 1876 and 1975.

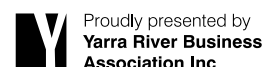
Conclude your journey by walking along the wooden promenade on the southern bank, admiring the views of modern Melbourne, but reflecting on the toughness of life for maritime workers in this area during the 19th and 20th centuries. As you cross over Clarendon Street to Crown, look right to view...

14 **The Tea House.** This beautiful six storey brick building was built in the 1880s to store chests of tea from around the world.

Crown Promenade was also once part of the cargo facilities and maritime activity that stretched for five kilometres along the riverbank downstream of Queens Bridge.

Continue to Queensbridge Street, where you can cross over the bridge to catch a tram back into the city, or continue your stroll along Southbank to Princes Bridge (1888).

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A MESSAGE TO OUR COMMUNITY



As we face into the biggest public health challenge we've ever experienced, the City of Melbourne is here to reassure you that the health and wellbeing of our community is at the heart of all our decision making.

This is an unprecedented time and we are committed to supporting all residents and businesses by delivering essential services and helping combat the spread of COVID-19.

We are urging everyone to adhere to the advice from health authorities to help keep our community as safe as possible.

You can count on us to continue to deliver services such as waste and recycling; support for the elderly, isolated and at risk; children's services; homelessness services and animal management. It's what we're here to do, and we won't let you down.

To the businesses within the City of Melbourne, we have established a Business Concierge service to provide information and advise you about available support - call **9658 9568** and press 1 to access this service.

For the latest on how we're supporting you and the community in these fast-changing times, visit **melbourne.vic.gov.au**

Take care, stay healthy, and look out for each other.

Melbourne City Council



(From left) Councillor Susan Riley, Councillor Kevin Louey, Councillor Beverley Pinder, Councillor Nicolas Frances Gilley MBE, Lord Mayor Sally Capp, Councillor Nicholas Reece, Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood, Councillor Rohan Leppert, Councillor Cathy Oke, Councillor Philip Le Liu, Councillor Jackie Watts.

Council well placed to support battling businesses

WORDS BY *Stephen Mayne*
COUNCIL AFFAIRS

At a time when small business is getting wiped out by the coronavirus, it was good to see City of Melbourne councillors nimbly come up with a \$10 million support package at the committee meeting held on March 17.

City of Melbourne has the second strongest balance sheet of any Australian council after City of Sydney. The latest quarterly update showed a cash balance of \$144.5 million as of December 31 and no debt.

Some of the stimulus detail is still to be worked out but offering 500 grants of \$4000 to artists and small organisations was a great start. Similarly, offering 600-plus Queen Victoria Market (QVM) traders rent relief, including a 50 per cent 3-month discount for non-food stalls and 25 per cent off for food-related traders, was terrific. However, it may need to be a complete rent holiday if parts of the market are closed.

Councils across Australia are well placed to provide support to their communities and City of Melbourne was one of the first to act. As the federal government deluges cash on individuals and businesses, it should also think about giving money direct to councils for locally managed stimulus programs.

Should council add to its property holdings?

One thing that councils can do during a crisis is use its balance sheet to pick up additional property holdings, particularly if there are distressed sellers of strategic assets.

Over the years City of Melbourne has bought into a variety of property assets including The Regent Theatre (held in a 50-50 joint venture with the state), the Kathleen Syme centre in Carlton, the Boyd Community Hub in Southbank and the Munro site next to QVM.

In hindsight, council should have swooped

on the Palace Theatre at the top of Bourke St when it was sold for \$11.2 million in 2012. One of Melbourne's biggest and best live music venues was then sadly closed in April 2014 and internal demolition started a few weeks ago. What a shame!

If other theatres become available during this crisis after being forced to close, council should be ready to step in.

Similarly, the AFL is reportedly asking the state government for a \$250 million interest free loan to help it through a cash crisis.

Perhaps it should consider selling its biggest asset – Marvel Stadium at Docklands – to City of Melbourne or the state government.

Most stadiums around the world are owned by governments and having long term control of Marvel Stadium would be a great strategic move for City of Melbourne in terms of managing the future development of Docklands.

With net assets of more than \$4.4 billion and no debt, such a move is within the capability of council.

Councillors disagree with officers over new Dexus office tower

The Reserve Bank building at 60 Collins is an iconic location at the Paris End of Collins St, so it is exciting that property giant Dexus is proposing to build a new high quality \$140 million office tower on the site, although this will probably be delayed by the COVID-19 crisis.

Sydney-based Dexus is close to finishing its \$1.4 billion twin towers across the road at 80 Collins St – a project it bought from the Queensland government in 2019.

An unusual element of council's involvement in the Reserve Bank tower proposal was that the council officers recommended Minister for Planning Richard Wynn refuse it, partly because it would overshadow the food court at AMP's Collins Place across the road.

The councillors unanimously overturned this advice at the March 17 committee meeting, instead passing a resolution saying that it didn't



Most stadiums around the world are owned by governments and having long term control of Marvel Stadium would be a great strategic move for City of Melbourne in terms of managing the future development of Docklands.



object to the proposal provided the overshadowing was limited to less than 30 per cent of the Collins Place food court between 11am and 2pm on September 30.

This will be an interesting test for the Minister. Just how high is too high at this iconic site and should a privately-owned enclosed food court be protected from shadowing?

Maximum transparency on CEO pay

As promised in last month's columns, there are some important disclosures to be made about the remuneration arrangements of former City of Melbourne CEO Ben Rimmer, who departed from Town Hall in January 2019.

Rimmer, who is now the state government's director of housing, is believed to have received a six figure ex gratia exit payment over and above his contractual entitlements.

The detail hasn't been disclosed in the 2018-19 City of Melbourne annual report which explicitly disclosed the pay arrangements for the new CEO Justin Hanney but not his predecessor.

This was the second ex gratia payment to Rimmer by the council, who also received sick leave payments over and above his contractual and statutory entitlements in 2016.

As one of the councillors who agreed to the sick leave top-up payments at the time, I think it was the right and compassionate thing to do in terms of retaining a talented new CEO battling an unexpected illness. However, the details should have been disclosed at the time, rather than kept confidential.

The same principle applies to any exit payment. CEO contracts are typically generous at the City of Melbourne and if additional payments are going to be approved, at the very least this should be disclosed and explained to the public.

Farewell for now

Finally, this will be my final *Docklands News* column for a while. While not certain, there is a possibility that I'll be a candidate in the City of Melbourne elections come October and in those circumstances it is appropriate to head to the exits.

Keep supporting your wonderful local monthly newspaper in the period ahead as they provide the best coverage of all things City of Melbourne ●



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Fed Square and City Library could converge

WORDS BY *Meg Hill*
COUNCIL AFFAIRS

Before all of our lives, and all of the news, became dominated by coronavirus (COVID-19) there was news regarding a longstanding debate in the city – the status of Federation Square.

The deadline for a state government decision about the future of Federation Square is still set to "early 2020", but early in March, the City of Melbourne made a bold intervention.

It asked the state government to alter the square's management structure to appoint the Council as manager – in return for a \$22 million investment that could include the relocation of the City Library and a revamped Koorie Heritage Trust.

The square is currently managed through its own board. It is not government-run or-funded.

Lord Mayor Sally Capp said the City of Melbourne wanted to partner with the state government and stakeholders to enhance and invigorate Federation Square.

"The state government's recent review of Federation Square has galvanised ideas for this civic space and the opportunity for the City of



Melbourne to step up as manager," the Lord Mayor said.

"We have a proven track record of delivering major events – Moomba, New Year celebrations, Melbourne Music Week, Melbourne Fashion Week – to name just a few. We have the talent and experience to bring Melburnians back to Fed Square."

If appointed manager, the City of Melbourne would "consider" investing \$15 million to relocate the City Library to the square, with another \$7 million dedicated to a revamp of the Koorie Heritage Trust.

The City Library is due to move out of its Flinders Lane address by the end of this year

when its lease expires.

"This much needed investment would preserve the cultural and civic value of this iconic Melbourne space and attract hundreds of thousands of visitors," the Lord Mayor said.

"Making Fed Square the home of Melbourne's most popular lending library would provide Melburnians with free access to event spaces, creative technologies and world-class resources."

The funding is contingent on Council being given management responsibilities for the site – including tenancies, maintenance and activation.

Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood said the proposal would cement Federation Square as a community meeting place and cultural hub.

"Melburnians have been loud and clear about what they want for Federation Square – they want this iconic site to be about people, civic and cultural engagement and for it to be a true 'people's square'," the Deputy Lord Mayor said.

"Investing \$15 million to relocate our City Library will attract one million more visitors to the square per year, bringing life and economic activity to the square. That foot traffic will

be critical to the existing small businesses in Federation Square."

"The Koorie Heritage Trust does an amazing job of teaching Australians about our Aboriginal history. This \$7 million funding boost will ensure the stories the Trust tells and the experiences it offers reach even more people."

The City of Melbourne said it had made a comprehensive submission to the state government's Federation Square Review.

Our City, Our Square, a group that campaigned against the unsuccessful bid for an Apple store in the square last year, signaled they would support the proposal, but kept other options open.

"While Our City, Our Square is yet to endorse the idea - and that's all it is for now - we recognise that it aims to protect the iconic Square as our most important civic space," the campaign stated on its website.

Federation Square management had not publicly responded to the City of Melbourne's proposal by the time events and attention – including at the square – became dominated by COVID-19 ●



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A different crisis for the worse off

WORDS BY *Meg Hill*
 PHOTOGRAPHY BY *John Tadigiri*
 HOMELESSNESS

When society grinds to a halt, events are cancelled, businesses shut and most of us head indoors to self-isolate, but what happens to our vulnerable?

The city's homeless and those organisations that care for them are bracing for the dire impacts that may soon be felt. Everything from food, medical resources and buildings are being sourced to care for the pre-existing homeless community plus a potential influx of individuals thrown onto the streets during the crisis.

Major Brendan Nottle from the Salvation Army said the charity was working frantically.

"We've had our café we operate for people that are homeless deemed an essential service by the Chief Medical Officer and we're doing everything we can to stay open and remain safe," Major Nottle said.

"Yesterday we had a forensic clean of the building that took about eight hours. The cleaners are back again this afternoon for another eight hours."

He said the café had replaced all cutlery with disposable utensils, and that he was having additional freezers delivered for storage, while also working with the City of Melbourne to source buildings to get the homeless off the streets to isolate and quarantine.

All of this was in the goal to avoid a chilling worst case scenario.

"We are preparing for a day that may come where we have to close the café and deliver those meals onto the street," Major Nottle said.

"In the worst-case scenario, we've purchased face masks and are trying to source hazmat suits to deliver so people don't go hungry and remain in social contact."

As everyone increases what has come to be known as social distancing, Major Nottle said we should be mindful of what that meant for the homeless and vulnerable.

"Social isolation for the people we work with is one of the biggest issues they have to deal with," he said.

"We will need to be checking in on people's mental and physical health on the street."

"We're trying to access really quite large volumes of food in an environment that is inviting and not threatening."

"Presumably there will be lots of people who have never approached us before."

Major Nottle said the Salvation Army was also working on technological communication capabilities to check in on mental health and keep social communication open – even while social distancing.

He also thanked the Victorian Government and Premier Daniel Andrews for homelessness and public housing support announced on March 18.

The state government will provide almost \$6 million to homelessness organisations to help them deal with the crisis.

It will help with the search for temporary housing for the homeless and private rental brokerage for those at risk of falling into homelessness.

Minister for Housing Richard Wynne said the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic would have wide-ranging impacts across our community but would hit the homeless particularly hard.

"This funding will help to get a roof over the head of more Victorians, helping to reduce

"We are preparing for a day that may come where we have to close the café and deliver those meals onto the street," Major Brendan Nottle said.



transmission amongst the community and provide those who are unwell with a safe place to recover," Minister Wynne said.

"We're also making sure our public housing tenants have the information, advice and support they need to look after themselves during this pandemic."

The Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) also welcomed the announcement from the state government.

CHP CEO Jenny Smith said the crisis highlighted the vulnerability of the homeless.

"This pandemic has highlighted the increased vulnerability that decades of inadequate provision of social housing has created for our community during a health crisis," Ms Smith said.

"Governments need to be planning now to ensure that longer term there is enough social housing to meet the need in our community from people who cannot afford private rental."

On March 26 the Victorian Government announced the kitchens at Parliament House would be used to prepare meals for vulnerable community members.

"The Speaker and I have decided that we must put Parliament's commercial-sized kitchens to good use in response to the Coronavirus emergency," Legislative Council president Shaun Leane said.

"We will be working with organisations such as The Salvation Army, The Lazarus Centre, St Peter's Eastern Hill Anglican Church, the Father Bob Maguire Foundation and Melbourne City Mission to help them get nutritious meals to people in need," Mr Leane said.

"Our own catering staff and the agency staff we regularly use can continue to get work as a result of this initiative, and we will be using Victorian food producers and suppliers," he said.

More than 400 meals were provided in the first days of this initiative. The state government said this would increase to around 2000 meals a day that will be distributed through the community programs run by the charitable organisations ●

Green tower endorsed for "Cloudbank"

WORDS BY *Meg Hill and Rhonda Dredge*
 PLANNING

City of Melbourne councillors officially gave their unanimous endorsement of what will become Australia's tallest mixed-use tower at the corner of City Rd and Southbank Boulevard last month.

While developer Beulah International's 365-metre proposal will now go to Minister for Planning Richard Wynne for final approval, councillors gave their tick of approval at Future Melbourne Committee (FMC) meeting on March 3.

However, not all councillors were thrilled by the proposal, which includes a mix of retail, residential, office and hotel space across two towers at 102 and 49 levels.

Although the motion was passed unanimously with all agreeing that the plans were "iconic", Cr Nicolas Frances Gilley put on the record his dismay at the overall trajectory of Melbourne's built form.

He said the work was "inspiring" but "you could find it anywhere in the world – in Singapore, in Hong Kong, anywhere".

"I've only been in this country 20 years, I've always been in Melbourne and I think its personality and why it's one of the most liveable cities in the world – I'm not sure we will hold on," Cr Frances Gilley said.

"I'm not sure what we're saying yes to and I was to say it's a beautiful building, but I also just want to put on record I don't know what we're creating."

"If we want to think about cities that hold centres where people connect and build things that are seen as the most liveable places in the world I'm not sure that really big buildings with lots of people in them are actually going to define us and I don't think they'll ever make us exceptional, although the building is iconic."

The motion was moved by planning chair Cr Nicholas Reece and seconded by Cr Rohan Leppert.

Cr Reece said, "Melbourne has never seen anything like what we're considering".

"It's not just the height, it's not just the size, it's to do with the degree of thought and so many of the design aspects and other features of this proposal," Cr Reece said.

Cr Leppert said he had no hesitation in supporting the motion.

"I think the thought that's gone into the ground plane and the multi-story activation with the public access not just to the ground floor but further up the fragmented podium is brilliantly thought through," Cr Leppert said.

"This is a fantastic application and if, and when, built it is going to instantly change the presentation of Southbank."

Lord Mayor Sally Capp said Southbank should be renamed "Cloudbank" as there were now so many aspiring towers being built there.

The tallest of the twin tower project is almost 40 metres taller than the nearby record-holder Australia 108, which is still under construction.

And 108, in turn, will surpass nearby Eureka Tower.

The new proposed 102-storey tower will be so tall it breaches the aviation air traffic control height by 11 metres.

While querying the height of this latest tower, Cr Leppert said the vote was unanimously



▲ A render of the proposal.

in favour of the project because of its "environmentally sustainable design".

The pending approval of the \$395 million project by Beulah comes at a time when mayors around the world have been considering the future of the "glass tower".

Last year the mayor of New York Bill de Blasio said he was putting a ban on glass towers because of their contribution to carbon emissions, arguing that they were difficult to heat and cool having been built in the heyday of unlimited energy resources.

Mr de Blasio later retracted the ban but said he would make glass towers so difficult to approve no developers would be willing.

Glass wasn't meant to be a cladding material, some architects say, but RMIT building physicist Dr Mary Andamon said there was nothing wrong with glass, depending on how it was used in the overall design.

She said the Australian Building Code required that the thermal properties of materials be specified, but that architects were not doing simulations of building performance.

"Architects tend to view buildings as a façade," she said. "They need to look at the entire building envelope, the external walls, roof and slab."

She said that one system being developed in Singapore was to put the structure of the building on the outside to shade the windows.

The design endorsed by the City of Melbourne includes a twisted green spine that will help cool the towers, a roof garden and a public space on the ninth floor with an external staircase to promote active walking.

Some councillors expressed doubt about the performance of the green infrastructure, questioning what plant species would grow in the windy conditions experienced at the top of the building.

Consultant Jack Gammon of Junglery said one million plants and insects would be involved in the green fit-out, particularly plants with waxy leaves and those growing by the seaside. He said residents liked to be close to nature even though they wouldn't have access to the planter boxes.

Architect Philip Rowe of Cox Architecture explained that, if water became unavailable, the verandah would act as open green space and still be relevant.

The City of Melbourne has one of the highest carbon footprints in the world. Seventy per cent comes from electricity use and 62 per cent is produced by commerce ●



▲ Building physicist Dr Mary Andamon questions the performance of glass towers.



▲ Mareno Pachello keeps up a brave face at D.O.C.

Keeping up morale at Riverside Quay

WORDS BY Rhonda Dredge
PHOTOGRAPHY BY Rhonda Dredge
LOCAL NEWS

People are anxious about the COVID-19 outbreak, making it difficult to get a true picture of how it is affecting those living and working in Southbank.

Architects, stockbrokers and professional workers have left the office towers to work at home.

And those left behind in the hospitality industries are forced to be creative.

Café managers are designing new services, such as selling bread and milk, and using home delivery apps to suit the changing demographic of customers.

The square at Riverside Quay, once the hang-out of Melbourne's well-dressed design community, has become more casual and local since the lockdown.

Even the guilty pleasure of coffee has taken on new meaning as regulars, some in thongs, slip into their favourite places to help local businesses stay alive.

"I try and get two coffees a day to keep them going," said a customer of Workshop Brothers, who quickly vanished with his takeaway into an office above.

Many workers are afraid to go on the record about their new working conditions.

James, an architect at a nearby office, was working from home in his pyjamas.

"When he is having a meeting, he pops on a 'show shirt' as I've been calling it so he looks professional from the waist up," his partner

Lizzie said.

The smiling face of Mareno Pachello, the manager of D.O.C Pizza & Mozzarella Bar, is a welcome sight at Riverside Quay.

He has been greeting coffee drinkers through a small window open to a laneway. Sometimes he's the only human contact residents are having.

Mareno is willing to crack a joke at his own expense about his new roster during the crisis, basically everything front of house.

"There's just myself and the guy in the kitchen here," Mareno said. "I'm actually mad because I'm still working."

D.O.C has been open for takeaway pizzas but business has been slow since the corporates left so they've gone onto a delivery platform, Doordash, which can be downloaded as an app.

ASADO-to-go is also popular, one of the few businesses adapted to the new conditions. A few well-behaved locals were queuing for their takeaway empanadas when *Southbank News* visited.

This little square at Riverside Quay was once the coolest lunch place in Southbank but it is now mostly a dot on a map as people from the surrounding apartments clock up their kilometres to keep fit.

The mood in the back streets around Southbank Boulevard has become more sombre. There is no need to push the walk button on the crossing since there isn't any traffic.

COVID-19 guidelines are being displayed prominently on food shops at Freshwater Place and outside on the lawn seems the best choice for a hassle-free lunch ●

Council slams state, federal inaction on housing crisis

WORDS BY David Schout
HOUSING

City of Melbourne councillors have slammed upper tiers of government for a "disgraceful" response to the housing crisis and said "business as usual" would no longer cut it for the city.

In passing a new draft affordable housing strategy, a piece of policy some conceded would not have the power to enact real change, councillors pleaded for urgent action on the pressing issue.

Cr Nicolas Frances Gilley, a former CEO of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, said the lack of affordable housing was an issue that had significantly worsened in recent years.

"It's been a big issue in this country and started lots of organisations," he said at the March 3 Future Melbourne Committee meeting.

"We really had a response to it when the state took on building public housing. But something changed. We stopped, and it's gone backwards. And not only that, we've replaced it with nothing ... I would say to the state government, you have not acted for some time and you have been in the position where you could."

The council revealed there is a current shortfall of at least 5500 affordable rental homes for people on very low to moderate incomes, a number that would quadruple to around 23,200 by 2036 if no action was taken.

"Affordable" rent is generally defined as below 30 per cent of a household's income.

When rental repayments exceed this, tenants are forced to sacrifice necessities of daily life such as food, healthcare or education.

The council's draft strategy pledged to lobby the state government for "inclusionary zoning" in Victoria, a move that would force developers to include some affordable housing in new developments.

On council-owned land (a small amount in the municipality), it aimed to deliver up to 25 per cent of residential development as affordable housing.

Cr Rohan Leppert said that the upcoming public consultation period, followed by the final strategy, was "one of the most important" things councillors would do this term.

But he admitted that their role was still small when compared with the state and federal

governments.

"Even if all of the actions that we're discussing and proposing in this strategy come to life and can be acted on, we're still tinkering at the edges; we're not re-writing market economics here," he said

"We don't dictate what the state planning provisions are going to be. We can advocate for something, but it doesn't necessarily mean we will get it."

Cr Leppert said he was now looking for "the strongest possible leadership" from the state government, despite the lack of national vision.

"We still have no national housing strategy and that is an absolute disgrace," he said.

Lord Mayor Sally Capp agreed that the strategy was "momentous", but argued the council's impact was not insignificant.

"I actually disagree with comments about the fact that we can't play a major role in this. We can, just by changing our own thinking and policy response to this; we are creating ripples that can have a major impact," Cr Capp said.

Earlier in the evening Michael Lennon, the managing director of not-for-profit housing provider Housing Choices Australia, said Melbourne's reputation was dented by the housing crisis.

"Lewis Mumford, the American urban theorist, said the test of any city was the life it made possible for its citizens. On that definition, we are failing a significant number of people," Mr Lennon said.

The council's planning chair Nicolas Reece agreed, and said Melbourne's proud "liveability" claim should be put under the microscope.

"What is very, very inescapably clear is that 'business as usual' is not going to cut it for Melbourne if we want to see ourselves as a truly fair, equitable and liveable city ... we like to say we're the world's most liveable city, but you can't be [that] if people can't afford to live here," Cr Reece said.

"There is no silver bullet to solving affordable housing. The truth is, it's something the City of Melbourne can't do alone. We need to collaborate and work with other tiers of government."

Submissions to the City of Melbourne's Affordable Housing Strategy closed to the public on April 5. For more information visit participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au ●

Gig economy grey area

WORDS BY Meg Hill
PHOTOGRAPHY BY John Tadigiri
ECONOMY

In November last year, food delivery drivers working for platforms like UberEats in the CBD were targeted in a Victoria Police traffic operation. Two hundred infringement notices were issued, with at least a quarter of offences relating to delivery bike users.

A state government report into Victoria's "gig economy" workforce is due by March 31. As a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic it will likely be delayed.

But social distancing and self-isolation has already made us even more reliant on gig-workers. As we go out less, and businesses begin to close public areas, there may still be many delivery riders out on our streets bringing us our food.

In 2018, when the state government commissioned an inquiry into the workforce, its background report estimated that about 80,000 people in Australia earned income through "peer-to-peer" platforms like Uber, UberEats and Deliveroo.

But there is a lack of certainty from legal professionals and government regarding the status and rights of workers across the "gig economy".

Associate professor at the University of Melbourne Alysia Blackham said Australia needed to ensure our laws were protecting those workers.

"The issues relate to how well our laws extend to people who don't fit our traditional idea



▲ A food delivery rider on Clarendon St, Southbank last month.

of an employee," she said.

"The way many platforms have been set up is to say the relationship is not between the platform and the Deliveroo rider, but between the consumer and the rider."

"Platforms are trying to take themselves out of the equation and limit their responsibility."

This potentially means if a rider causes an accident, they would be held personally responsible, even if it's caused by poor training and conditions. Conversely, if a rider has a problem with their employment, it is hard for them to

prove they have a relationship with the platform, not the consumer.

When booked for infringements, riders are held responsible as individuals. Riders that were issued infringements in last year's police operation told *The Age* their fine amounted to their entire day's wage.

The government's 2018 report said it was difficult for these workers to earn "sufficient and fair remuneration" – many earning under the minimum wage.

"On-demand platforms allow employers to

select at will from a pool of workers who often rely on positive ratings for continued work," the report stated.

The report went on to state those factors contributed to "workers accepting low wages and inferior conditions".

Furthermore, vulnerable workers from a range of demographics were overrepresented in these precarious forms of work, including many young workers, visa holders and women.

Many of the pressures felt by delivery riders, on top of their precarious and vulnerable starting point, may push them to sacrifice safety and road rules. They are often rated on the speed of their deliveries and need to use their mobiles to accept new jobs quickly.

And it is unclear whether or not there is proper training and information given to riders, who often use electric driven bikes or scooters.

Associate professor Blackham said the issue was about a safe system of work.

"It all comes back to the question of safe systems of work and if there is a way to do the job safely while meeting the platform requirements. We need greater transparency around how these platforms are operating," she said.

"There are a lot of incentives built into these jobs that don't encourage safe behaviour, and employers have a duty to not only their employees and contractors, but to other people in the community."

"And the question comes back to enforcement, too. How do you make sure platforms are meeting their requirements, and how do you make sure workers are able to pursue their rights?" ●

The Arts Precinct

Dark times for our Arts Precinct

Southbank's Arts Precinct, and Victoria's creative industries more broadly, have been some of the hardest hit by COVID-19.

By March 22, when Premier Dan Andrews announced an immediate shutdown of all non-essential services and mass gatherings, every theatre, gallery and performance space in Southbank had announced indefinite shutdowns.

The creative industries contribute \$23 billion to Victoria's economy annually and employs more than 220,000 workers, many of whom are independent contractors and casual employees.

While some have been able to translate their creative practices to comply with new social distancing measures, the loss of venues means the loss of a livelihoods for so many. And for the thousands who attend some of the more than 3000 arts performances in Southbank every year, which is more than visit Melbourne's Sports Precinct annually, it means engaging with the arts community in new and innovative ways online.

While with great loss comes new opportunities to recalibrate, the impacts of COVID-19 on the sector is expected to be felt for years to come and we, as a community, can only do our best to continue supporting them through these unprecedented times.

Below are just a few statements released from some of our creative institutions last month in the wake of venue closures:

Arts Centre Melbourne:

"Every ounce of our beings as arts workers is to raise the curtain on the next spectacular performance; 'the show must go on' is our battle cry as an industry," CEO Claire Spencer said.



"To say this decision is counterintuitive and deeply upsetting is a gross understatement. But this unprecedented situation demands an unprecedented response."

"We know this is a difficult time for our community and we extend our solidarity to all of those who are impacted, especially artists, performers, and staff whose livelihood depends on a vibrant and fully functioning Arts Centre Melbourne. The wellbeing and support of our staff is paramount."

"We know that the arts play a critical role in uplifting and supporting our communities and we'll continue to explore ways to bring the wonder of the performing arts to Victorians during this time."

Arts Centre Melbourne will remain closed until June 30.

The National Gallery of Victoria (NGV):

"Despite the gallery temporarily closing its doors, I want to thank the NGV community for your continued generosity and support," NGV director Tony Ellwood AM said.

"We have been pleased to be able to welcome you into new gallery spaces with #NGVEveryDay and NGV Channel, and we thank you for your overwhelmingly positive feedback."

"From our team here at NGV, we'd like to express our very best wishes to our community at this time. Due to the evolving nature of COVID-19 and after closely following the state and federal

governments' advice, we have extended the NGV's temporary closure until June 30."

Melbourne Theatre Company (MTC):

"Hours of hard work and dedication go into every one of our shows and provide jobs for hundreds of creative professionals who rely on MTC to make a living. This unprecedented situation will drastically impact our industry," an MTC spokesperson said.

"We deeply apologise for the disappointment that these cancellations will cause to our audiences. If you have a ticket for *Torch the Place* or *Emerald City*, it may be exchanged for another show later in the year or refunded. But we would also greatly appreciate your consideration of the option to donate your tickets to MTC, which will help support the Company, particularly our casual staff and our creative artists at this challenging time."

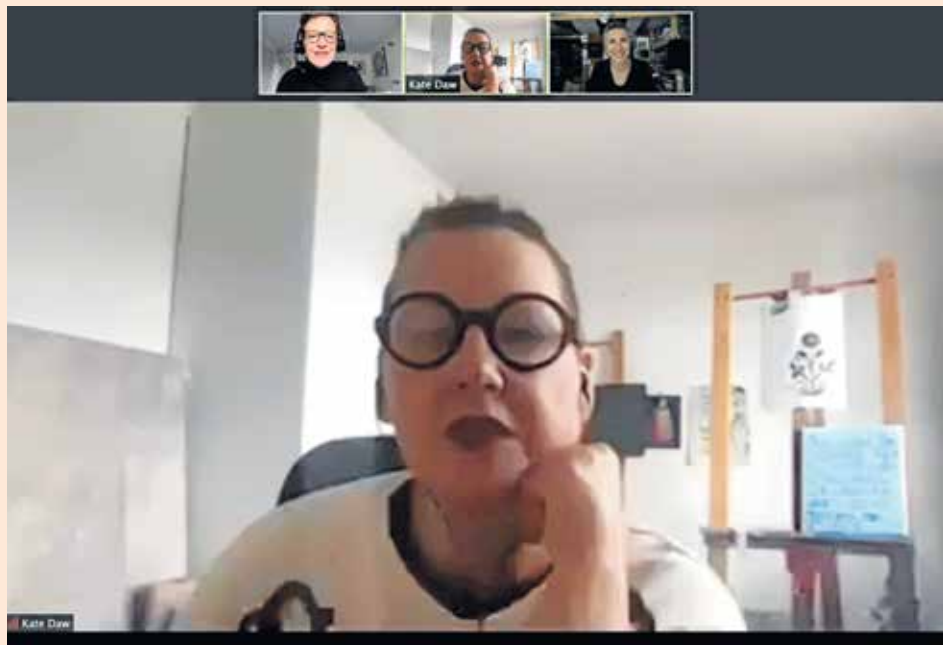
The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), Melbourne Recital Centre, Margaret Lawrence Gallery, Chunky Move, Buxton Contemporary, Testing Grounds, Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO), MPavilion and ACMI-X are among numerous other organisations to temporarily shut their doors.

Major festivals including the Comedy Festival, Jazz Festival, Melbourne Fringe, Next Wave, Melbourne Art Fair and the new Melbourne Winter Arts Festival have been cancelled or postponed.

However, the likes of Arts Centre Melbourne, NGV, MSO and Australian Ballet have been adapting to the changing environment by releasing a number of performances, podcasts and resources online. You can head to their websites, and follow all of our creative institutions on social media to support and find out more.

The City of Melbourne has also offered \$2 million in grants to artists and creatives to invest in new works and digital presentations of works and performances. Grants include \$4000 for individual artists and smalls arts organisations and applications open on April 14 here:

melbourne.vic.gov.au/arts-and-culture/strategies-support/funding/Pages/assistance-creatives-covid-19.aspx



▲ Kate Daw demonstrates the art of working remotely.

Adapting to rapid change

While Southbank's Arts Precinct has been shut down to the world, the next generation of students aspiring to fill these spaces from the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) have too had their creative pursuits disrupted by COVID-19.

Former VCA student and now *Southbank News* journalist Rhonda Dredge conducted a Q and A with the VCA's head of art associate professor Kate Daw on April 2 to gain an insight into how students and teachers were adapting.

Rhonda Dredge (RD): Where are all the art students?

Kate Daw (KD): At home, like the rest of us. We closed VCA Art last week. There were tears and an enormous sense of uncertainty. It was awful to say goodbye to staff, students and the studios, not to mention our beloved workshops, labs and offices.

RD: Have you changed the curriculum?

KD: We have! We have written a brand new curriculum in the past three weeks. We have moved our entire programs online, and all teaching and research is being delivered in the virtual realm, via Zoom, Skype, Instagram, telephone and other online apps and tools.

RD: How can a sculptor work without a studio or equipment?

KD: They can use anything to hand – look at Duchamp's urinal for instance, one of the most famous objects of the 20th century. This is a great time for new forms to emerge, ideas to flourish and deep contemplation to take place. Our students are brilliantly imaginative and we have already seen new performances take place, for instance, in live time on Instagram.

RD: Will artworks get smaller as a result of the isolation?

KD: I don't think we will see a new dawn of miniaturism as a result of COVID-19, although you never know. At its best, art is always surprising. I think there could be new conversations about the value of art, what art can be, how it can exist and what is really important subject matter right now.

We know our students want to stay connected and are valuing the moments where they can still come together. We had Brook Andrew, the artistic director of the Biennale of Sydney, present a lecture at our art forum today, and over 300 staff and students attended on Zoom!

RD: When we first met, you encouraged students to think big - to design billboards! Can you still have a large vision while confined to a small house or flat?

KD: Definitely! Think about how many artists today conceive an idea and hand the specs over to someone else to make. It's a time for rich research, reading, thinking, dreaming ... when we are back we expect our workshops and studios to be pumping! All those ideas will be turned into artworks.

RD: What are you working on? Have you got a studio at home?

KD: I do have a studio at home, and I am hoping, now I am in it all week, to finish a new series of paintings. However, I seem to have spent most of my week on emails and Zoom organising things at VCA Art. I am hoping it will settle down a bit and I will get some studio work underway.

RD: The last show I saw was at the Margaret Lawrence - lovely little still lives and whimsical text. I love your little narratives. Have you got one for the crisis? Is this the blue hour you predicted?

KD: I am still working with similar subject matter. Much of the new painting is based on a design of a vintage Gucci scarf, and I am pulling in texts, other patterns and motifs and fragments too. There is a blue flower, closely related to the concept of the blue hour – let's see how it all pans out ... ●

PSC stays ahead of the curve

Photography Studies College Melbourne (PSC) has adapted to the rapidly changing educational landscape by introducing new ways of creating an engaging live face-to-face learning experience for students off-campus.

Despite having recently switched from its former City Rd, Southbank home to new state-of-the-art facilities at 37-47 Thistlethwaite St in the Montague Precinct of South Melbourne, the tertiary institution has been working tirelessly to bring its school community, students and staff closer together, all the while still ensuring social distancing.

In just a matter of days, PSC has broken down the new world of isolation by optimising technology to facilitate real-time group communication and transformed its more than 40 years of face-to-face on-campus education into synchronous off-campus learning.

By keeping their class schedules and all their individual student support sessions the same as before the pandemic, the changes have given students a sense of normality and continuity to help balance the disruption caused by the pandemic.

“My deepest hope is that we can all survive together through these incredibly testing times, both personally and economically. Keeping our students engaged and our staff employed are

intertwined and a priority of the College,” managing director of PSC Julie Moss said.

In the face of ever-increasing fears in the community and in anticipation of a state-wide lockdown, PSC has in the past week successfully completed a learning from home trial for both students and staff. It has adopted video communication software to enable classes and keep communication between teachers and students open to assist with social distancing.

All staff are working in new clusters, using Microsoft Teams, to communicate on a daily basis to support and connect with each other during these unprecedented times.

“The speed and enthusiasm with which our teachers and support staff have embraced the use of technology for education this week is inspirational and has enabled us to do everything we can to be responsive to students and keep them engaged with us,” Julie Moss said.

PSC has also successfully created a virtual learning model for practical photography studio classes, which is a core part of the curriculum. Providing a Bachelor of Photography and a Mas-

▼ The reception area and library inside PSC's brand new facilities at 37-47 Thistlethwaite St, South Melbourne.



ter of Arts – photography degree, certificate IV and a range of short courses, each class has an average of 20 students or less. PSC is renowned for its award-winning teachers who are all working in the industry, and for its tight-knit community with international and national networks.

Not only can students watch their classes online, but they can interact with teachers and also discuss their assignments with each other.

PSC student Clare Jellie said, “After the trial, I found it so easy to use and now I know that I won't be missing out on anything by completing my course in this way, I am excited to think that even in isolation, I will be still be able to complete my Bachelor. I also feel thankful that I don't have to go into the College and can continue to keep myself and others safe.”

PSC also has a dedicated wellness officer who facilitates appointments between doctors and counsellors, which has been found to be an effective way to support the physical and mental health of students. Should the lockdown happen, this interaction and support will continue online.

Until further advice from the state government, PSC remains open. It is offering these temporary measures to students and staff in preparation of a state-wide lock down and for those who wish to self-isolate, but want to continue/start with their education.

PSC has set up a dedicated COVID-19 website page to keep its students and staff updated:

psc.edu.au/covid19

CRITIC



Something to think about at the Guild

WORDS BY Rhonda Dredge

As flat-dwellers seek out new routes for their daily walks, there's a small public space by the Guild building opposite the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) on Sturt St.

You can slip through to Moore St, past Café Godot, which was still open for takeaways when *Southbank News* wandered through on April 2.

Along the north wall of the pedestrian walkway are four vitrines.

In them is the only art exhibition that can safely be visited in person in the arts precinct.

While most other artists have left the precinct to work on their visions, Mark Radosavljevic and Mayed Fayad have theirs on display in an exhibition called *Cannonade*.

Presence is everything for a viewer who likes

to look rather than listen to what might have been or what might occur in the future.

Visibility is the key factor.

Ironically, this is the theme of the exhibition, which looks at the way history fades and is reinterpreted from the present.

The artists have cleverly used the glass at the front of the vitrines to represent our graphic present and the back of the vitrines to represent the slowly fading past.

Sometimes we wipe out the past from the present with a few cross lines. Other times we wow it and make a fuss. Finally, we blow it up with a BANG!

What remains in this fight between the past and the present are the contours of a few, old colonial buildings that we still romance.

According to the artists, “recorded history requires similar digestion to works of fiction yet it is accorded a different status.”

This message is a constant one from the art community, accusing us – the viewing public – of thinking of the canon as a singular idea when

really history is complex and fragmented.

There would be few people alive today who still believe in the old method of recording history in terms of dates and facts.

The art, like always, is more powerful than the message because it deals with images that have mood, tone, edges and a host of other material qualities that have to be simulated in language.


The artists have juxtaposed dreamy, romantic drawings of settlement in Melbourne against dark, aggressive tools that suggest how it was achieved.

Early Melbourne was beautiful. People rowed along the river, built a tent city, erected churches and public buildings. The landscape was as conducive to settlement as anywhere in the world.

What has happened to that vision? Has our canon become a cannon? What remains?

A few contemporary photographs give us clues. Do we glorify our achievements in art yet build expendable towers for economic greed?

At least you'll have something to think about at the Guild ●



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The virtual world of Montague

Well, dear readers, how are you all fairing? It certainly is a strange and peculiar time and our precinct has little or no foot traffic and all the car parking spots are full in the residential areas like Gladstone and Boundary streets.

Kirrip Park is vibrant with dog walkers being respectfully socially distanced, and the locals are walking through to get to the tram stops.

Most of the businesses are still operating, both working virtually and in house for those who can't work from home. Our precinct has a number of psychologists, counsellors, architects, builders and technology companies as well as all manner of creative industries. It is for the most part, socially distanced, business as usual.

Some of our iconic pubs have remained open for the moment, pivoting their business to match the times. For example, The Golden Fleece on Montague St, one of our favourites, has become a wholesale bottle shop but still providing great takeaway food for local residents and businesses.

Unfortunately, however, construction continues apace and the feedback from those residents who are normally not here during the day, is one of shock at the noise and dust and of course NO social distancing. It is ironic that those now living in apartment blocks that caused existing residents and businesses noise and dust challenges, are now enduring the very same thing. I am sure it will be the same with those properties being constructed right now.

“

There is nowhere else in Melbourne that is undergoing this level of construction and we do wonder why, again, no one is considering how the constant noise and dust adds to the anxiety and feelings of isolation during this time of virtual contact.

”

So, here are some tips on how to make that better:

1. Approach the site politely (they are just doing their jobs) and ask what their work schedule is so you can plan your day around the noise levels. Try not to complain, they can't stop work if it's their job.
2. If you are working from home, let your colleagues know that there is construction noise and that will sometimes be distracting.
3. If you have small children that need to nap, most sites will have periods of less noise; again ask the site manager for their schedule.
4. If sites are working out of hours, please call either the City of Port Philip or City of Melbourne depending which municipality the construction is in. Construction times are: work times - 7am - 6pm weekdays, 9am - 3pm Saturdays, Sundays and no work on Public Holidays unless they have applied for a permit.
5. Most importantly, stay connected with your work colleagues and friends through whichever platform works best for you and know that it is very likely they have their own challenges in working from home.

So, what will the next few months bring? We can only speculate but we do need to remain engaged with each other. Please don't despair if you are struggling, be mindful that you can search online services that exist via the state government and City of Port Philip websites. There are a number of people who have offered help in the municipality and the Montague Community Alliance is also here if you need help, you can contact us through our Facebook page @MontaguePrecinct or on Twitter @MontComAlliance.

I wish you well and leave you with this thought ... why do workers on building sites have such odd taste in music? ●



Trisha Avery

TRISHA AVERY IS THE CONVENER OF THE MONTAGUE COMMUNITY ALLIANCE.

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ST JOHNS SOUTHGATE

I know that you are scared

“

A couple of months ago, before one thing and another changed all of our lives, my six-year-old son, Theodore, was excitedly preparing to attend a friend's birthday party.

”

As you do, we had Theodore make a card for his little friend, and predictably, as he embarked on that arty and crafty adventure, his three-year-old sister insisted she wanted to join in – the result being that she also was making a card, but for a child she'd never even met! When it came time to write the message, we asked the younger child, Genevieve, what she'd like to say in the card to child X. Without skipping a beat, she said, “Dear X, I know that you are scared. From Genevieve.” Naturally, for a dark humoured bunch, a chorus of laughs went around the table, with Genevieve even joining in. But it got me thinking, why can't we greet people in such a fashion?

We're all sick of hearing people say it, but we are living through extraordinary times. And so, we're all anxious in our own ways, or grieving the loss – if not of a loved one – of our former ways of living and being. So, perhaps it isn't such a bad idea to cut to the chase with our family members, friends and neighbours. Instead of asking the, “How are you going?” question

– which is invariably responded to with, “Yeah, fine” – perhaps one could start a conversation with something not dissimilar to, “I know that you are scared.”

In the 12th chapter of Luke's gospel we read the words of Jesus stating that, “There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.” I take this not just as an ushering towards honesty before God, but also as an encouragement to openness in our relationships. If you're feeling miserable, why not say so? If you've got a cough and are terrified it might be COVID-19, why not share that fear with someone? If cabin fever is setting in and the kids are driving you up the wall (could this be self-disclosure?), why not say so on the video chat with the other parents rather than painting a falsely flattering picture? Dropping our defences, conceding our concerns, acknowledging our anxieties to the socially distant listening ear, might just hasten the healing of our emotional turmoil.

The words of Jesus that follow directly on from his sayings on concealment and disclosure are these: “I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more.” Here Jesus puts it all into context for us. Our internal lives – our fears and griefs – meet the external reality of mortal strife. As usual, Jesus really hits the truth button. He is saying to us, I know that you are scared, and no, your fears aren't neurotic, this is life and death. But even if COVID-19 takes your body, or the body of someone you love, it cannot take the soul – it cannot take away my eternal promise that “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.” ●



Tom Hoffmann

TOM HOFFMANN IS THE PASTOR AT ST JOHNS SOUTHGATE CHURCH.

STJOHNSOUTHGATE.COM.AU



Search for the **St Johns Southgate** channel on **YouTube** for our 10am Sunday morning live streams

Connect with us on **Facebook** during these challenging times

Stay safe and well and may **God bless you!**



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SOUTHBANKER



From ashes to dreams

WORDS BY *Jack Hayes*

It was May 30, 2019. Kajal Pala's husband Dipesh, an agile capability leader at IBM, was working late into the night when he decided to lock their balcony door and head to bed. Instead of seeing Southbank's cityscape with the Yarra flowing below it, he discovered smoke billowing from their 19-storey apartment on Whiteman St. A fire had broken out in a faulty air conditioning unit, no more than five centimetres from the bed of their sleeping daughter. The quick-thinking couple swiftly grabbed their children, aged 10 and 12, and began to notify their neighbours. "It was absolutely terrifying. Between the fire and my daughter there was only one piece of glass," Mrs Pala said. "Even though the fire started on our balcony, the fire alarms weren't activated for some time. It wasn't until the smoke entered the apartment next door that the sprinklers started to go off." "Our next-door neighbours, who have a toddler, had to scale the stairs from the 19th floor at 1am. It was all pretty horrifying." According to news reports, crews were able to bring the fire under control in 33 minutes and stopped it from spreading to adjoining buildings. Finding a silver lining in such trying times can often be hard, however, Mrs Pala explained her children have learned to become much more resilient. Despite the close call, Amba, 12, and Kanha, 10, both escaped the blaze unharmed. "Between the fire and the fact that we had to move from apartment to apartment before finding a new place to settle, the children were put through a lot," Mrs Pala said. "At no point did they complain about what was going on. They just kept moving forward as young kids do."

After arriving in Southbank from Brisbane in 2015, Mrs Pala received a scholarship to complete an MBA at the La Trobe Business School. During her time research, Mrs Pala noticed that children in Australia were not exposed to high-quality, career-specific, learning until a much later age. This is where the seeds for Dream City were sewn. Opening late last year at DFO South Wharf, Dream City's immersive learning experience pushes the conventions of traditional childhood learning. Coined as Australia's first "edutainment" theme park, Dream City introduces children aged from three to 14 to a career-focused learning, following the science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM) curriculum. "We have worked with educators and industry experts to develop learning experiences such as operating flight simulators, fighting virtual fires, performing surgery and producing podcasts," she said. "Not only are children learning technical skills, but they are also learning soft skills like socialising, co-operating and organising." Mrs Pala said the response to Dream City had been overwhelming, prompting coverage on both Channel 7 News and *Sunrise*. Now settled with her family in their new apartment on Clarendon St, the Pala family are firmly entrenched in the Southbank way of life. "Between my work at DFO, Dipesh's at Southgate, and the kids both taking the tram to school, we don't really have too much reason to leave Southbank," she said. "We have built our entire lives around Southbank, and don't see any reason to move." ●

For more about Dream City:
dreamcity.com.au

METRO TUNNEL



▲ The ANZAC station worksite at St Kilda Rd.



▲ Tunnel Boring Machines underneath St Kilda Rd.

ANZAC Station construction update

One of the first visible signs of major construction for the new Anzac Station on St Kilda Rd was the bright yellow silos installed in 2018.

After nearly two years of construction, the silos – ranging in height from eight metres to 12 metres and used to produce a liquid clay called bentonite to support construction – are being decommissioned and removed as the project completed the final section of diaphragm wall (D-wall). Completing the last part of the D-wall, which forms the underground walls of the station, is a major milestone that means the entire perimeter of Anzac Station is now constructed

underneath St Kilda Rd, an incredible feat considering the work was done while trams and traffic continued to flow. Construction has now begun on the final section of the station roof, which will be finished just in time for the launch of the tunnel boring machines (TBMs) later this year. The TBMs will start their journey underneath the acoustic shed, along the length of the station box before continuing to the eastern tunnel entrance in South Yarra.

The completion of the D-walls and the removal of the bentonite plant will also allow construction to begin on the station entrance adjacent to the Shrine of Remembrance grounds. The first of the station entrances to be built at Anzac Station, it will allow pedestrians direct, un-ticketed access underneath St Kilda Rd through the station to Albert Rd. All Metro Tunnel work sites are strictly adhering to safety guidelines regarding coronavirus. Rail Projects Victoria CEO Evan Tattersall said, "Rail Projects Victoria and its contractors have comprehensive health and safety policies in place to protect the health and safety of all team members, including social distancing and other measures where appropriate for specific construction tasks to be undertaken safely." **Tunnel boring machine (TBM) commissioning underway** With TBMs Joan and Meg having recently completed the first 1.2km section of tunnel from Arden to Kensington, the Metro Tunnel Project is preparing for the start of tunnelling in the east.

Two more TBMs – Millie and Alice – are currently being assembled and tested 20 metres below St Kilda Rd in the Anzac Station box. Assembly of TBM Millie, with its yellow cutterhead, is now complete with the tunnelling team focused on testing the electrical, hydraulic and mechanical systems prior to launch. Assembly continues on TBM Alice, which features a bright green cutterhead. Following testing and commissioning, the TBMs will be launched approximately four weeks apart and start tunnelling towards the eastern tunnel entrance in South Yarra mid-year. **Metro Tunnel HQ** Metro Tunnel HQ in Swanston St has been temporarily closed as a precautionary response to the coronavirus situation. The Metro Tunnel education program activities are also on hold during this time ●

For more information visit:
metrotunnel.vic.gov.au



PAULINE, PERSONAL ASSISTANT

Very good. My family's in France. I already work from home. I write personal assistant reports from a distance. I work from my apartment but usually I go to work at the library, sitting over coffee. I'm not very paranoid. Maybe not enough!



STEFFAN, WINDOW CLEANER

Pretty good at the moment. We haven't been affected. We're still keeping on going.



ROBIN, POSTMAN

There's been an Australia Post-wide increase. Work's pretty much the same. We might get the odd one who's vigilant about the distance rule. There's probably more that aren't. Our overtime's been cut. The bottom line is that I'm thankful I've got a job.



MORENO, CAFÉ MANAGER

It's a really bad time. We pretty much work with offices around here. Because everyone is working from home business doesn't go well. We weren't on a delivery platform. We started on Tuesday and applied a couple of weeks ago. I'm now doing a bit of everything. There's just myself and the guy in the kitchen.

Faces of Southbank

Question:

How are you coping with the COVID crisis?



Lunch break

“Don't bite off more than you can chew.”

*Lunch meeting
Zoom*

Southbank Sudoku

Last month's Sudoku solution

S	T	U	H	K	N	O	B	A
O	N	A	S	U	B	H	T	K
B	K	H	A	O	T	N	U	S
A	H	T	U	S	O	B	K	N
U	B	N	T	H	K	A	S	O
K	O	S	B	N	A	T	H	U
T	S	K	O	A	H	U	N	B
H	U	O	N	B	S	K	A	T
N	A	B	K	T	U	S	O	H

A variation of Sudoku, with the letters SOUTH BANK replacing numbers.

The rules are the same as regular Sudoku, each line must contain the letters "SOUTH BANK" as must each 9-square box. This Sudoku is VERY HARD, good luck!

H	S		T					A
								H
		U		O		B		
				T				U
		N	K		A	T		
B				N				
		K		B		N		
O								
A					U		H	K

Change and adaptability

COVID-19 has certainly impacted our lives and the community on every level. With self-isolation and physical distancing in place, it challenges our everyday life and more.

However, even though we physically distance ourselves, it's beautiful to see the global comradery it has bred and the humanity it is bringing out in all of us.

Community is a big part of our group. Catching up and getting to know each other's point of view over coffee, is what makes our group a community. It's what brought on so many successes for our group, a driving force. While we can't physically meet right now, it's great to see the group's spirit and sense of community stronger than ever! While we miss seeing each other, we're chatting online, calling, texting, emailing, checking in with each other and getting on with whatever work we can do in the background.

While all our activities - like educational days or our Melbourne Knowledge Week session - are postponed, there's still plenty of work to do behind the scenes organising the garden and for the new community composting hub we're

creating. If you're at home, with a bit of an interest in the environment, looking for something productive to do while giving back to the community, message us on email or Facebook to learn how you can help. Help is always welcome and no particular experience is required.

We also need watering and gardening volunteers for the next two to three months. Since we can't maintain our popular gardening meetups, there will be more garden work to split between more people, done a little at a time. As council confirmed, gardening is considered an exercise activity, being outdoors with lots of space for two people to work in different garden beds more than 1.5 metres apart. It's a good opportunity to exercise while keeping safe and getting to interact with nature. We have a sign-up roster to ensure we don't exceed the two people limit, that safety measures are taken. No gardening experience needed, if you are interested in getting involved.

While we all spend more quality time at home over the next few months, we hopefully all get to appreciate the down time, nurturing ourselves, taking care of our physical and mental wellbeing, catching up on things that bring us pleasure but which daily routine usually pushes aside. If one of your wish list projects is to create or expand your home herb garden and are looking for a couple of seedlings to get you started while wanting to keep social distancing, get in touch. We can leave a couple out for you to pick up.

About the group: A solutions-focused group of Southbank residents working to bring positive change in sustainability practices and education to our neighbourhood, while building a wonderful community of like-minded people. 2019 Environment Melbourne Award winner ●

Reach us at:
southbanksustainability@gmail.com or [facebook.com/SouthbankSustainabilityGroup](https://www.facebook.com/SouthbankSustainabilityGroup)



Artemis Pattichi
 SOUTHBANK SUSTAINABILITY GROUP
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HEALTH & WELLBEING

Staying productive while working at home

It's suffice to say that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way that the majority of businesses are asking their employees to work. Namely, from home.

Working from home is a very different environment to most people's normal routine, with more opportunities for distractions, while businesses are still figuring out how to orient themselves in the new environment.

Thankfully, that doesn't mean you have to lose your productivity at home. Below are five things you can do to maintain, and maybe even improve, your work productivity at this time.

Five things to improve your work productivity:

1. Make a scheduled routine: Time sometimes seems to fly by and if you don't have a schedule to keep up with, progress will

quickly slow down. You'll forget to make that important phone call, or realise you've run out of time to organise yourself for the Zoom presentation. By making a time for everything - when it's due, and when you should start - it's much easier to organise your day around your work. Some people find it better to have every single item planned out, others find it better to just have a checklist. Try out a couple of things and see which ones work better for you.

2. Restrict social media distractions: Social media is made to be easy to access. Prevent this by removing any social media links on your bookmarks, logging out of accounts or even working in an incognito browser window so that it doesn't distract you. Another good thing about an incognito browser window is that it won't remind you about things you've searched up already. Set a reminder to check your emails three times a day; at the beginning of the day, just before lunch, and once more before you finish your work for the day.

3. Make your "workspace" clear: Be sure to let yourself and everyone else in the house know where you work. By defining your workspace (and when you are working) everyone knows that you shouldn't be disturbed. Putting your laptop on the kitchen table may not be the best solution, either. Try to find a comfortable desk and chair in a room where you can have some privacy and be involved with whatever you're doing. Don't be afraid to give some attention to the details also! Many studies have found various positive outcomes as a result of having a plant on the table.

4. Plan your breaks: Working from home is completely new to most of us, so be sure to give your brain a rest and walk around, talk your house mates and enjoy the sun. The power of working from home is that whenever you feel as though it is a lot, you can stand up, walk around freely and breathe for a bit. A good way for splitting up your time is the Pomodoro technique, which uses 25 minutes of scheduled work, then a five-minute break. After every four breaks, have a 15-minute rest.

5. Be socially involved: Given that your social exposure is minimal, be sure to make up for it by keeping up to date with friends and family. Plan video calls and online games with each other. The stress of being restricted in your house is real for many people, and dealing with it with laughs and catching up with others will increase your overall happiness as well as your productivity.

Stay safe, happy, and productive! ●



Rajna Bogdanovic
 CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST
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OWNERS' CORPORATION LAW

Social distancing in apartment blocks is hard to do, but necessary right now



Right now, for the good of all persons' health and wellbeing, we are socially distancing ourselves from each other. For those of us living in apartment blocks though, it is more difficult to completely self-isolate due to the close proximity of our neighbours.



The committee needs to spring into action here and take certain steps to communicate to owners and residents about what it is doing in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

My recommendation is that notices should be put up on the common property, setting out the following matters (at minimum):

- The cleaners have been instructed to use special antibacterial products on all common property doors, gates, front entry buttons, elevator surfaces and all other parts of the building where people touch with their hands;
- The cleaners have been allocated extra hours to do additional cleaning;
- Any person living in the block who has been tested positive to COVID-19 should contact the strata committee to inform them, so that additional cleaning procedures can be deployed on that floor, and so that support with buying groceries, etc can be arranged;
- If the building has a pool or gym and if the Committee determines it should remain open, then procedures should be put in place

to limit the number of persons using at any one time. Anyone using the gym should wear gloves and a mask and use hand sanitiser after using each machine.

In addition, the strata committee should consider the mental health and anxiety of owners and residents in their complex and see if there are any ways to bring a little positivity and cheer, while respecting the social distancing rules. There may be persons living your block who are having a very hard time (out of work, anxiety, small kids/cabin fever, etc) and those persons should feel encouraged to reach out to contact the strata committee if they are not feeling great. After all, we are all in this together.

From a legal perspective, the *Owners' Corporation Act (2006)* is very well set up with a mechanism for the executive committee to meet remotely via email and teleconference, Skype, etc.

Any special general meetings or annual general meetings that are required to be convened can be performed by written ballot. Your owners' corporation (OC) manager can facilitate this process very easily under Section 83 of the *Owners' Corporation Act (2006)*.

My recommendation is that an FAQ or explanatory note to all motions should be sent out to accompany the ballot. Some of my buildings are offering to host a teleconference hook-up or Skype/Zoom session so that owners can ask questions about the motions on the agenda and get answers before making their decisions.

This will be the new normal for OCs over the next few months. Victoria is well ahead of other states in moving to this type of flexibility in their legislation to hold meetings electronically. The rest of Australia is not so lucky and is often just having to defer their important meetings. I would encourage us all to take advantage of these flexible arrangements and try to keep "business as normal" as much as possible. So much within a building depends on the executive committee, OC manager and building management team keeping up with the workload ●



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Pet's Corner

A break from home studies



Paige Lambert is in lockdown with Wally the whippet and her boyfriend Cal.



▲ Paige and her whippet Wally.

She was using the dog as an excuse to get a break from her uni studies when *Southbank News* met them both at Grant St Reserve.

"I needed to get outside. We're just down here in a little apartment," she said.

Paige is a designer. She nicked out of a four-hour video class to get some fresh air.

"I knew Wally would enjoy it. I'm glad this park is here."

She's wearing a new outfit for lounging around.

"I bought it to stock up in comfy wear. I bought it online." ●

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Don't forget to shop locally

I live in the city with my partner. For days, we had been trying to buy our normal groceries with no luck. By Monday, shopping had become an incredibly anxious event.

The palpable stress of the city began seeping into our skin from the moment we stepped onto the street. It clung even heavier inside Aldi, and when we realised we couldn't get what we needed there, we found the same thing inside Woolworths and Coles. The sense of fear was amplified by seeing other people standing frozen in front of empty shelves, being passed by people rushing around frantic with mostly empty baskets. On Tuesday night, my partner went out to Coles Spencer St. He returned with a small bag of carrot sticks and a bar of Toblerone as consolation, instead of the meal ingredients that comprised our overly hopeful shopping list.

On Wednesday, with trepidation for what I wouldn't be able to find and worried about how to avoid contagion, I ventured through the city with a backpack to seek an alternative.

On the corner of Elizabeth and Bourke streets, I stopped for a loaf of bread from Woodfrog Bakery's street kiosk. From there I took the 96 tram to South Melbourne Market. Inside were people in lines 20 or 30 people long for some butchers, but they were laughing and chatting while they waited their turn. The rest of the deli aisle felt like another other, pre-COVID-19 day. There was a short wait for seafood, pantry goods, ready-made meals, pasta, quiche, pies, bread and sweets. I passed fully-stocked shops that were selling soap and toiletries. Tension left my shoulders completely when I turned a corner to see the abundance of vegetables stacked up in beautiful rows. There were no crowds. It was a relaxed environment to shop in. I did not see a single person cough or sneeze. Everyone was courteous and friendly, no one with more than their normal share in their baskets.

Cristen Smith



SEND YOUR LETTERS TO:
NEWS@SOUTHBANKLOCALNEWS.COM.AU

WE LIVE HERE

We need a clear cladding policy – now!

We are still waiting for a coherent government policy on combustible cladding that can provide clarity for owners' corporations (OCs) facing massive bills for rectification.



More and more buildings are getting caught up in the nightmare, receiving building orders with no appropriate follow-up, and no end in sight.

In 2018, the government's ill-fated attempt to introduce a loan scheme ended barely 12 months later. The government itself deemed the scheme unworkable, something which We Live Here had pointed out to them, long before the scheme was introduced into Parliament.

In July 2019, Cladding Safety Victoria (CSV) was established by the Premier of Victoria and the Minister for Planning. CSV was tasked with the responsibility for rectifying higher risk buildings identified by the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) through a state-wide cladding audit.

Audits? Nothing to see here, move along

Would you like to know the outcome of the audits? Sorry, it seems we residents do not have that privilege. Nowhere can we find any information on the outcome of the audits.

A map on the VBA website shows the number of audits carried out within each municipality and we can see that more than 2200 audits have been conducted in Melbourne.

And that's about all you can glean from the VBA cladding webpage.

The government needs to communicate much better than this.

For a start we want the Premier and the Minister for Planning to answer these questions:

- What criteria are used to deem a building to be high, moderate or low risk?
- What was the determining factor for the 15 buildings selected for government funding?
- What happens to the owners in the other 1054 cladding-affected buildings identified by the VBA as being a danger to life? Are these buildings suddenly no longer a danger to life?
- Why the secrecy – can we please have some honesty?

We apartment owners inherited the problem created by dodgy construction and reckless government oversight.

The cladding lottery – 15 lucky winners!

Congratulations! Of the 1069 buildings in Victoria identified with cladding that is a "danger to life" – 15 will benefit from the government's meagre munificence.

To the other 1054 buildings who played the

game, thanks for investing your life savings in your residence - and good luck with that!

This outcome proves what we have been saying for many months – the state government has not been able to raise enough money to make any meaningful impact on the massive extent of the cladding scandal.

And it proves our oft-repeated allegations that the real budget figure has always been: \$150 million – not the risible \$600 million figure that made a really great sound bite, swallowed whole by the mainstream media last year.

You can find evidence of the government's figure of \$150 million in the State's Treasury papers and the same figure is confirmed by the Baillieu-Thwaites report – albeit in small print. The figure of \$600 million is as fake and as meaningless as the 1069 certificates of occupancy that the government authorised for buildings with flammable cladding.

\$400,000 fines for Building Orders?

Failure to comply with a Building Order to undertake rectification works, is an offence pursuant to section 118(1) of the *Building Act (1993)*. For a body corporate, the maximum penalty is just over \$400,000. If your OC is charged with an offence under the Act, the matter would be heard in the Magistrates Court.

It is a no-win situation and frankly a disgrace that the government should yet again ignore the thousands of owner-occupiers who live in high-rise strata communities.

This is a scandal of monumental proportions. And the culpable parties - the government and the building industry - are trying to get away with it.

Tell us about your cladding issues

We Live Here would like to hear from buildings that have been caught up in the combustible cladding issue and how you have dealt with it, or are currently dealing with it. Please head over to our website at welfarehere.net and go to the "Cladding Survey" page. Alternatively, you can email us at campaign@welfarehere.net.

We need facts. Facts are ammunition to take to the government to demonstrate the impact their feeble legislation is having on OCs having to manage the consequences of combustible cladding.

Thank you in anticipation - we look forward to hearing from you.

Your resident stories

Thank you to all those who have contributed to date, we will publish more throughout the year, so keep your cards and letters coming in!

Campaign donations

As a not-for-profit organisation, donations from individuals and buildings keep our campaigns going. To register as a supporter of We Live Here or to donate please visit our website at welfarehere.net.

We Live Here does not accept donations from commercial tourism interests ●

Barbara Francis & Rus Littleton

EMAIL: CAMPAIGN@WELIVEHERE.NET

LEARN MORE AT WELIVEHERE.NET



Southbank and the PMG

These days it is hard to imagine how one government department could be responsible for postal delivery, telephone and telegraph services, and radio and television networks (including issuing of viewer licenses, at £5 each).

But that was the all-pervasive role of the PMG (Post-Master General's department), created by the federation of the Australian colonies in 1901.

Postal and communication services were the responsibility of the states prior to federation and a major facility was established in Sturt St in 1895. The new PMG then became the centre of a massive government building program to create a unified communication service across the country.

Southbank played a major role in these operations, centred on a large site bounded by Sturt, Grant and Dodds streets. Across a number of buildings, PMG workers built and repaired just about everything related to their role. They stored materials such as cables, and established workshops for carpenters, joiners, painters, polishers, installers, saddlers and coach builders. They also maintained a garage, established in 1923. Although the major emphasis was on looking after horses used for mail pickup and delivery (with blacksmith's facilities and stables) motorised services were gradually taking over and there was an increased emphasis on telephone services. One local recalls her father travelling all over Melbourne to repair telephone boxes. With such a variety of facilities and roles, there were numerous opportunities for employment of many locals.

A mid-air collision in 1927 between two RAAF planes above the garage and stables caused destruction and mayhem among postal workers and their horses, and a new garage was proposed in 1928 with room to accommodate growth and consolidate PMG services from across Melbourne. Designed by architects of the Commonwealth Government, the simply-designed concrete structure of two storeys was built in 1930 and was followed by other



buildings in the next few years, including a new motor garage and repair shop in 1936.

The buildings were mostly redbrick with some patterning and cement bands and extensive use of metal-framed windows, pitched and sawtooth roofing – a standard approach by the Commonwealth for utilitarian buildings. A few decorative elements remain, such as the striking corner entrance corner of Dodds and Grant streets that displays the date of 1930, and a symbol of the PMG on the Sturt St frontage. A number of the buildings have been re-cycled by the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) for studio spaces, as has the former Mounted Police building on the opposite eastern corner.

This corner of Southbank was home to incredibly important functions for communication in the development of Melbourne, and PMG manhole covers can still be found across



the city. The PMG exhibited a major influence on the lives of Victorians and by the 1960s, about 60 per cent of commonwealth workers were under its control. But the writing was on the red-brick wall and it was broken up and its operations privatised in the mid-1970s ●



Robin Grow

PRESIDENT - AUSTRALIAN ART DECO AND MODERNISM SOCIETY
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SOUTHBANK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Trying to stay positive

Sadly, this month has been a real struggle to try to think of something positive and uplifting to write about. It's certainly not a month where I have been looking forward to having to write my column.

I don't need to talk about COVID-19. I know, in the most part, that Southbank is complying with the government's request to STAY AT HOME (except for a few that I noted the Police had words to on the basketball court at Boyd Park). I have observed that this home isolation is really starting to bring our community closer together, particularly in individual buildings, as I see offers of support from fellow residents to their wider building community. If you need some assistance, please let someone know in your building as I am certain there will be many willing residents to lend a helping hand.

The Lord Mayor Sally Capp has also kept Southbank front of mind. I have had several conversations with the Lord Mayor over the last two weeks specifically about the welfare of Southbank residents. Since becoming Lord Mayor, Sally has always taken an interest in Southbank, and I am humbled that with knowing the likely demands of her office with dealing with this pandemic, that she was still able to find the time to give me a call to ask about Southbank. In our most recent conversation, Sally informed me of the need for the city to allow construction sites to be able to extend their working hours. A compromise was made between the unions, developers and the City of Melbourne. While the worksites were requesting 24-hour work ability, the city has



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offered them to work until 8pm Monday to Friday, 5pm on Saturdays and 4pm on Sundays. They are also permitted to work until 10pm Monday to Saturday when it is internal works (therefore supposedly no or minimal noise to be heard externally). Apparently, these extended hours were requested owing to the decrease in productivity because of social distancing requirements. However, if you do have any noise complaints the City of Melbourne would like to know about them by calling 9658 9658.

The Southbank Residents' Association (SRA) committee has still managed to hold our monthly committee meeting utilising the Zoom meeting platform. I understand this is now a must-have platform to be able to keep connected with group meetings whether it be between family and friends or work meetings. By all accounts it was relatively simple to use, and we had a very effective meeting with 10 of our committee members. But sadly, the number one agenda item for this meeting was discussing the community day which we were forced to postpone. It was an extremely difficult decision to choose to postpone after all the work that our committee had put into finally make this day happen. However, we think you will agree that it was the right decision. We have every intention to hold a community day, and probably a belated park opening, later in the year. Maybe we can also make it an excuse for an end of lockdown community party and enjoy the freedoms of not needing to social distance. Gee, just thinking about such a day seems so far away. I think it will be quite some time before we are back to any sense of normality.

If you are not a member of the SRA, we would love to hear from you. We are a volunteer run organisation made up of residents in Southbank. You can sign up on our website southbankresidents.org.au or our Facebook page – Southbank Residents.

Please try your best to keep yourself entertained and mentally sound during these difficult times. Try to get in a bit of exercise here and there and most importantly, say hi to your neighbours and check-in on them from time to time ●

More information:
southbankresidents.org.au



Tony Penna

TONY PENNA IS THE PRESIDENT OF SOUTHBANK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION





零工经济的灰色区域

撰稿 Meg Hill

去年11月，维多利亚警方在中央商务区的一次交通行动中，对类似UberEats的快递员发出了200张罚款单，其中至少四分之一的违法罚款是与快递员有关。

州政府将在3月31日前公布一份“零工经济”劳动力调查报告。由于冠状病毒(COVID-19)大流行，这个报告可能会延迟出台。

但是目前的社交距离和自我隔离已经让我们更加依赖这些零工快递员。随着我们外出越来越少，企业开始关闭公共区域，可能仍然会有许多送货员在我们的街道上，给我们送来食物。

2018年，州政府委托对劳动力进行调查时，当时的背景报告估计，澳大利亚约有8万人通过Uber, UberEats和Deliveroo等“点对点”快递平台获得收入。

但是，法律专业人士和政府对整个“零工经济”中工人的地位和权益缺乏确定性。

墨尔本大学的阿丽西亚·布莱克汉姆副教授(Alysia Blackham)说，澳大利亚需要有法律来保护这些工人。

布莱克汉姆副教授说：“问题在于我们的法律在多大程度上能适用于这些不符合我们传统雇员观念的人。”

“对于许多平台来说，这种工作关系不是平台和快递员(Deliveroo)驾驶员之间的关系，而是消费者和快递员之间的关系。”

“各种平台正试图摆脱其责任，或者缩小其责任。”

这可能意味着，如果快递员出了事故，即使是由于培训和条件不佳造成的，他们也要承担个人责任。相反，如果这些骑手遇到就业问题，他们很难证明自己与平台(而不是消费者)有关系。

在收到罚款单时，快递员则要承担个人责任。在去年的那次警察行动中收到罚款的骑手们告诉《时代报》，那次的罚款等于他们一整天的工资。

弱势群体的不同危机

当社会陷入停顿，活动被取消，企业关闭，并且我们大多数人都准备居家隔离时，我们的弱势群体又会怎样呢？

撰稿 Meg Hill

中央商务区的无家可归者和那些关心他们的组织正准备应对可能很快就会感受到的可怕影响。食物、医疗资源和建筑物的所有资源都将用于照顾先前存在的无家可归群体，以及在危机期间可能涌入街头的人群。

救世军少校布伦丹·诺特尔(Brendan Nottle)表示，慈善机构正在拼命工作。

诺特尔少校说：“我们已经在自己经营的咖啡馆为无家可归的人提供服务，首席医疗官认为这是一项必要服务，我们正在竭尽所能保持营业并维持安全。”

“昨天，我们用了约八个小时对大楼进行了法医清洁。然而清洁工今天下午又回来了再用了八个小时。”

他说，咖啡厅已经用一次性用具代替了所有餐具，正在运送更多的冰柜进行存储。我们正在与墨尔本市政合作寻找楼房，让无家可归者离开街道，并且能够独处和隔离。

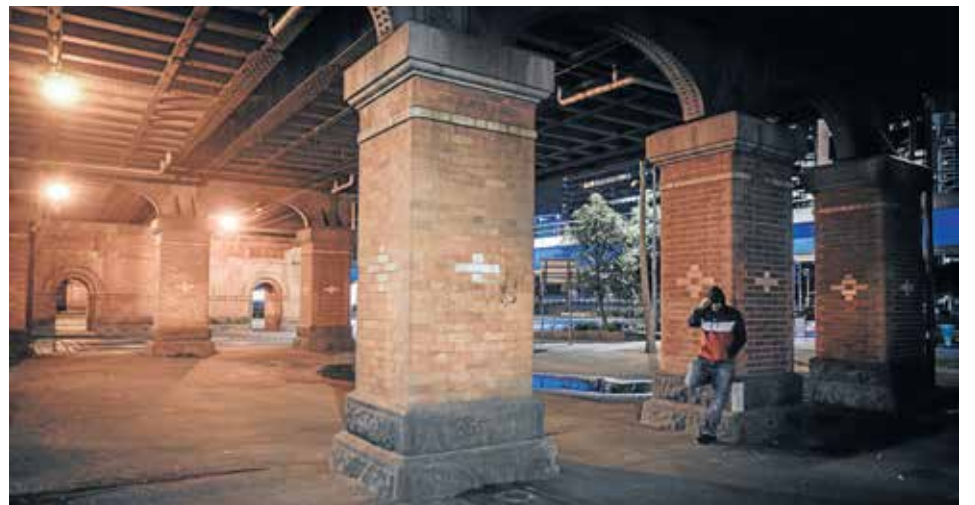
所有这些都是为了避免出现最糟糕的情况。

诺特尔少校说：“我们正在为可能要关闭咖啡馆并送餐到街上的这一天做准备。”

“在最坏的情况下，我们已经购买了口罩，并正在设法购买防护服用于运送人员，使那些人不会挨饿并保持其社会联系。”

随着对每个人的社交距离要求，诺特尔少校说，我们更应该意识到这对无家可归者和弱势群体意味着什么。

他说：“对于我们工作对象的社会隔离是我们必须面对的最大问题。”



“我们将需要在大街上检查人们的身心健康。”

“我们正在尝试在一个安全可靠的环境中获取大量食物。”

“大概会有很多以前从未接触过我们的人。”

诺特少校说，救世军也在研究技术交流

能力，以检查心理健康，保持社会交流的开放性——即使是在保持一定社交距离的情况下。

他还感谢维多利亚州政府和州长丹尼尔·安德鲁斯(Daniel Andrews)在3月18日宣布的对无家可归和公共住房的支持。

病毒笼罩这座城市

正如全国乃至全球大多数地区一样，墨尔本市当地社区和当地经济正面临着一个前所未有的困难时期。

中央商务区(CBD)的工作岗位已经流失，这意味着在CBD的上班者失业了。客流量减少，销售额直线下降。在联邦和州政府宣布刺激计划的同时，墨尔本市政宣布了自己价值超过1000万澳元的刺激计划。

该一揽子计划主要针对市区的小型企

业，其中包括：
在墨尔本市政厅举行虚拟的商业支持峰会；

有关食物提供的注册以及街面商铺交易许可审批暂停三个月；

为在市政拥有的物业中符合条件的租户减半租金三个月；

提供及部署临时工和非全日工作的机会，以加强城市的整洁和舒适；

在3月底之前制定一份困难时期的市政费政策供考虑。

市政议员强调刺激计划只是一个开始，更多措施可能将在“未来几周”内宣布。

副市长阿伦·伍德(Arron Wood)说：“我们认识到，在未来几周和几个月内，现金流管理将成为小型企业的紧迫问题。”

“我们正在开发一项投资计划，为企业提供直接支持。其中将包括高达100万澳元的研究和支持费用，以及高达50万澳元

的拨款，以支持企业发展电子商务和在线服务。”

“我们还将实施礼宾式商务服务，为这次受疫情影响大的墨尔本企业提供一对一的建议和支持。”

由副市长阿伦·伍德提议的商业支持峰会也是一次与州政府和联邦政府，维多利亚州首席卫生官以及维多利亚州工商会的合作。

市长萨利·卡普(Sally Capp)表示，该计划将为受周一宣布的全州紧急措施影响的企业提供支持，这些措施包括实施社交距离，以优先考虑健康和

安全。
市长说：“这种病毒对经济影响将是巨大的，我们鼓励所有人尽其所能支持本地企业。”

她说：“在与Spotless服务公司合作中，我们还将为大约200名受影响的临时员工提供交叉培训和就业机会，这些员工将被重新部署，致力于改善城市的清洁和形象。”

市政还将与维多利亚女王市场管理部门合作，为商家提供适当的支持。

市长说：“我们正在尽一切努力帮助企业保持营业，让墨尔本人继续工作。”

3月17日市政会议上，艺术界和文化界的代表也概述了他们在当地和全国范围内已经感受到的影响。

住房危机 上级政府无所作为

墨尔本市议员抨击上级政府对住房危机做出的“丢脸”回应，并表示“一切照旧”不会再给这座城市带来好处。

撰稿 David Schout

在通过一项新的经济适用房战略草案时，一些被认可的政策将无权实施真正的改变，市议员们呼吁就紧迫的问题采取紧急行动。

圣劳伦斯兄弟会(Brotherhood of St Laurence)的前首席执行官尼古拉斯·弗朗西斯·吉利(Nicolas Frances Gilley)议员表示，经济适用房不足的问题在最近几年已大大恶化。

他在3月3日的未来墨尔本委员会会议上说：“这是这个国家的一个大问题，并已经成立了许多相关组织。”

“当州政府开始建造公共住房时，我们也确实作出了回应。但是事情变了，我们停下来了，整个倒退了。不仅如此，我们没有任何东西取而代之……，我想对州政府说，你们对此已经有一段时间没有作为了，你们已经处于可以有所作为的位置了。”

市政透露，目前至少有5500套中低收入

人群负担得起的出租房短缺，如果不采取措施，到2036年，这个数字将翻两番，达到23200套左右。

所谓“负担得起的”租金通常被定义为家庭收入的30%以下。

当租金的支付额超过这一水平时，租户被迫牺牲其日常生活必需品，如食物、医疗保健或教育。

市政的战略草案承诺，要游说维多利亚州政府进行“包容性分区”，此举将迫使开发商在新开发项目中纳入一些经济适用房。

它的目标是在市政府拥有的土地上(在市中心很少的一部分土地)，以提供高达25%的住宅开发作为经济适用房。

市议员罗汉·勒珀特(Rohan Leppert)说，即将到来的公众咨询，以及随后的最终决策，是本届议员要做的“最重要的事情之一”。

但他也承认，与州和联邦政府相比，市政府的作用仍然很小。

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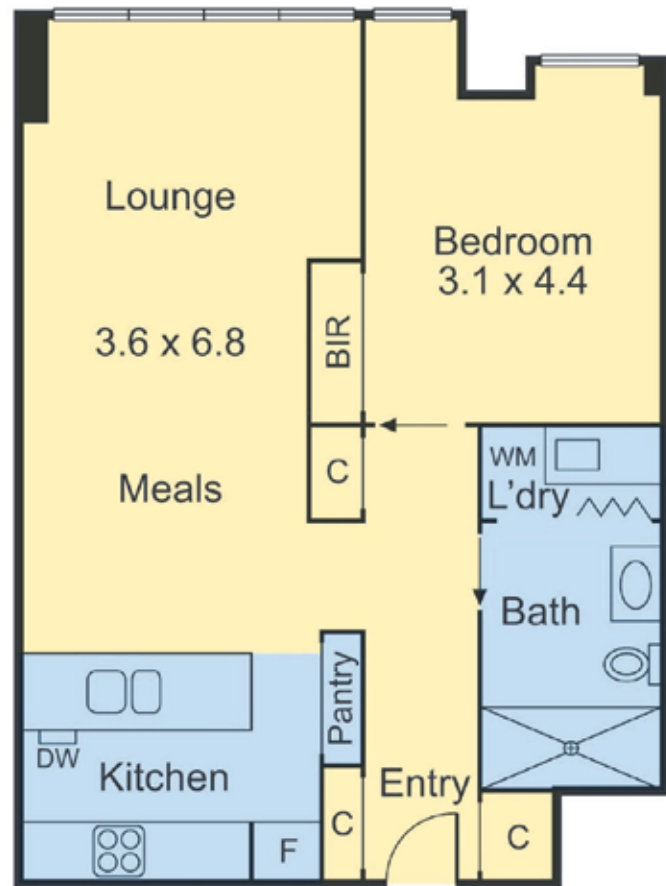
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