



CITY OF SYDNEY  

I am Sydney

A collection of citizens stories

city of villages

Connect

Cover image: 'I am Sydney' workshop, 9 February 2019.
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The stories written by the 'I am Sydney' participants and any supporting images provided by the participants are documented herein. The views expressed in this booklet are those of the individual participants.

1. Forward

I am Sydney – a collection of stories about you and your city

Over two weekends in February 2019, a small group of people came together to capture the friendship, passion, heartache and humour of Sydney, in writing.

The 'I am Sydney' project was a collaboration between the City of Sydney and the Story Factory and it marked the start of an extensive community consultation program undertaken to support the development of a new plan for Sydney to 2050.

Providing support for a diverse group of citizens with a connection to Sydney to tell their own stories about the City set the scene for an inclusive consultation program where many voices were heard.

Participants ranged in ages from 8 to 80. Some came along with friends and family to work on their creative projects together. Others bravely came as individuals with a passion to share their personal story.

As well as their works in a variety of genres, they also all wrote an 'I am Sydney' poem. These poems capture the day-to-day experiences of Sydney – the smells, sounds, food, frustrations, times, places and passions. For the last line, people were asked for three things they most value about Sydney.

We hope you enjoy these wonderful works written by the people of our city.



2. Tracks to the Still Places

Jennifer Lewis

There is coffee shop work: before work, after work,
or in spaces in a park with a blanket and thermos.

These are places to let my mind wander.

I have tracks to go there: down laneways, quickly
across busy roads, slowly down shady paths;

Past people playing quidditch, practising martial
arts, dancing to cassette music with coloured
drums, practising yoga.

And I arrive.

I settle in.

I settle down.

Waiting at the wharf, I watch light flicker on the
ripples; and vanish in the splash of ferry surge.

I think of Slessor: 'Between the double and the
single bell of a ship's hour...'

But I've lost the words. Can I read 'Five Bells'
somewhere at Circular Quay?



IV/IV MISHA'S FOR BREAKFAST, I "RAMBO" INSTEAD
OF DINNER - EVEN MY CUP HAS MUSCLES! JL



IV/IV "ABC at risk, huh!... What if it is...?" JL



It was late when we brought them back from the west that night. We drove past the place where the cafe used to be, near Central.

We bought tickets.

Waiting for their trains they decided to polish off the rest of the tins in the bus.

Gulping down food, kicking around the empties.

'Hey! Don't let those things go over the edge! There's people down there!'

'No, miss. Sorry, miss. Where's the bin, miss?'

'Over there. Thanks, Jack.'

'Hey, Benny, stop messing around! Come over here and have a look...'

There used to be a cemetery there, and those buildings to the left, they were markets.'

'How d'you know, miss? Can't see nuthin' now.'

Every Anzac Day I go to the parade, and think about my uncles, who fought south of the Philippines;

And my grandfather, who fought earlier, on the western front;

And my mother, marching at night on icy roads in Katoomba, with the Reserve.

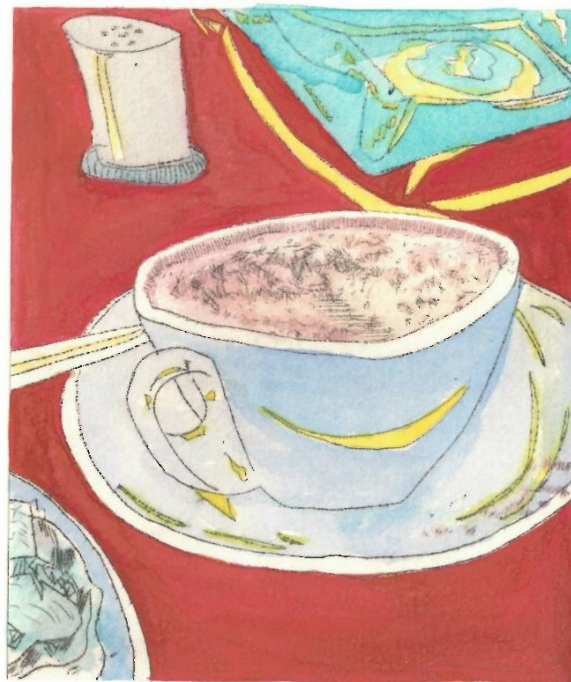
At school one day, we learnt 'Boys of the Old Brigade', and I came home, singing it through the house.

Mum hadn't heard it since her father, shell-shocked, sang it around their house at The Entrance, with his mates.

'Lest We Forget'



III/IV I'M LOOKING FOR WORK
BUT THE AGENCIES ARE FUN JL



I/I "hm, hm, ... yes but with the film industry 22.
SMALL so it is in Australia, ... hm, hm JL

In the Botanical Gardens the trees have been given their Latin names.

In Redfern, in public spaces, the trees have not yet been given their Gadigal names.

It was funny, on the trip up north.

We couldn't pull in to shore: the sea grass caught around our motor.

We waved, but there was no movement. Then, after a while, a couple of people came out.

They wandered to the end of the wharf and looked at us.

Meanwhile, in our boat, Dilly, looking at them looking at us, and started: 'There was a movement at the station, for the word had got around...'. Then Janine picked it up, then Bill and Elly.

And there we all were, back in third class, with sunlight drifting down on the chalk dust.

3. Sydney Park

**We walked to the hill in the park,
looked at the city lights and
kissed forever.**

Belinda Norman

The park on the dump. The park on the kangaroo grounds. So many feet have walked this ground – grass and trees now over the layers of daily lives. Whose stories are told in the collection of discarded objects under our feet? Toys, broken dishes, what vintage dresses made and designed in Australia lay buried? When does the strata of plastic begin?

My ancestors lived in Tempe, Newtown and Enmore – what persists of their lives in these soils?

There are so many windows into my world that can be looked through from this place.

My first ever visit to Sydney Park lay buried deep in memory like the garbage and the Aboriginal narratives of this place, to emerge on our bus trip last week. I was 23 years old and in love for the first time. He came to my door in Stanmore and we walked down King Street to Sydney Park. He wore an army jacket and a number one haircut. We walked to the hill in the park, looked at the city lights and kissed forever.

I love the brick towers and that the clay of Sydney Park lives on in the homes of Sydney. This park has a special ability to reach out and connect us, providing bricks for our homes and swallowing our rubbish, connecting Sydney through generations in ways we don't see.

My friend lives on the edge of Sydney Park and likes to jog there in the mornings. Last year she had

a crisis and one afternoon she messaged me to come to the park quickly with beers. We sat on the side of the hill sipping beers in the shadow of the towers, I cracked dried leaves between my fingers and listened to her broken heart. We've both been here before.

How many tales of broken hearts have been told, or swallowed or exercised clean in this park? What heartbreak did Gadigal women share, and still share on this country? We need these gathering places.

The park offers views into things that trouble me about our city, our nation and our world. The horrors of late modern capitalism are written on this landscape too, WestConnex growling at the edges, devouring trees and precious parkland, embracing the park in traffic snarls and pollution. This is not what our communities want – whose interest does this development serve?

Tent and tarpaulin cities extend out from the doorways and sheltered coves under the brick towers, until their inhabitants are removed and moved on. There are winners and losers in this city. Surely we can work out a way where everyone can get what they need to live well?

4. That night, 2016

**Up here, the dark sky above us,
we're united. We're Sydney.**

George Lancaster

Walking down King Street near midnight. Air still warm, humid. Music pumps from the Marly, the Townie. Finally the Botany Hotel. Passersby have changed since the Kings Cross lockdown. Younger, louder, roaming in packs. Not sensing danger, really, but starting to think twice about this idea.

At the St Peters end the footpath seethes with bodies.

"Mate, watch it!"

I've stepped on the heel of someone ahead, inadvertently yanking off a thong. He's pneumatic; a bulked-up steroid receptacle. There's nothing to do but apologise but his attention is already elsewhere. Safe for now.

Had no idea it'd be like this. Concerned now I'll get there in time. Wait. What is the time?

"Scuse me?"

I ask no one and everyone.

"Scuse me!"

Just want to know the time.

"Yes?" An Indian man responds. A Sikh, his blue turban tightly wound.

"Know the time?"

A look of incredulity. But why? That I don't have a watch? Or a phone? At least for photos? He can't know. May have a camera in my pocket.

But he does answer. "Quarter 'til."

No need for exactness. We all know the 'til.

He's surrounded by family. Boisterous. Hugging and smiling. My contrasting aloneness is made stark. I mean, I know I'm alone, but now I feel it, deep down. A differentiator; everyone else is with others.

My wife demurs this night and has long since retired to bed. Can't abide the crowds. The hyping of unrealistic expectations. The forced joy. And friends had other plans. More elaborate and too far away to be of interest. I preferred something simple. A short walk from home to a view. To miss the teeming throng. Avoid the steamy trains, the long waits, and the sticky heat of jostling too close together.

Halfway up Sydney Park's main hill and it's yet time. Normally sparse, it's packed from bottom to top. Spread blankets and eskies, lanterns and torches, kids and dogs, and skin tones ranging the full spectrum. Mostly young families and singles. Only a few oldsters like me.

Reaching the crest a chorus erupts – "10, 9, 8, 7..." After '1', three kilometres away the sky explodes in incandescence. Across the skyline and beyond colourful lights dance in pinpoint choreography.

From behind, vice-like arms wrap tight around my chest and lift me off my feet. It's the hulking scowl I'd inconvenienced earlier, now laughing, hooting, grabbing strangers, squeezing us.

"All's forgiven, eh mate?"

Too breathless for words, I merely smile in return, hopeful to feel the ground again. He let's go and moves to the next unwitting target.

As he leaps away I feel that familiar stab of loneliness. A flash and it's gone. Always on this night. Usually when I'm in front of the TV and my

wife is in the bedroom sound asleep. She doesn't share my love of pyrotechnics.

Halfway down the hill, thinking of home, I spot the Sikh sitting amongst a large group, larger than the one on the footpath. Bright battery-powered lanterns stationed on blanket corners illuminate their faces and those walking nearby. He sees me and motions. Confused, I point a finger at my chest. He nods and motions again with his hand. For the first time I sense the aromas. Exotic spices. Curries. Fresh naan.

"Come, come," he shouts. "Come join us, we have plenty."

Handing me a paper plate warped by the weight of plenty, he introduces himself and his extended family. I immediately forget their names but it doesn't matter. This place, this night, names don't matter. Language doesn't matter.

Up here, the dark sky above us, we're united. We're Sydney. And it's a visceral inclusiveness that won't fade, one day, one year, fifty years from now.

5. More than the Opera House!

Wherever I go in Sydney and whatever I do, the thing I love and admire most about my new home is the fact that every single day here is a beautiful day!

Ibrahim A. Elbadawi

Thirty-five thousand feet over Singapore, I was about halfway through my 14-hour flight from Dubai to Sydney, and the anticipation was building!

I was only a few hours from landing in Sydney and realising a dream and an essential element in my life blueprint: establishing a life and starting a business in two cities in two different parts of the planet! My planned adventure was a tale of two cities, and Sydney was about to be twinned with Dubai on my personal map of the world.

I'd never been to Australia before. Although I'd visited many of Australia's "neighbours", including China, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and a few other nearby places, I hadn't yet been down under. So I was both excited and intrigued!

I took a quick glance at my list of "top things to see and do" when I landed in my new home!

And of course, at the top of my list was ... the Opera House!

As it turned out, about two and a half years later, I made it to the Opera House! I had enjoyed the famous tour a few weeks after I landed, but that's how long it took me to finally attend a play. I was

celebrating my 42nd birthday, and I wanted to pick a special play. So I got a ticket to Fireside, a play produced by Midnight Feast, which is a theatre company that grants artists with physical, intellectual and emotional challenges the opportunity to participate in the performing arts and celebrates abilities not limitations.

It was nearly midnight when I started walking from the Opera House towards Circular Quay through a light rain that had begun to fall. As I neared the station, I started wondering, why did it take me so long to check off the first item in my list?

I tapped into the time-stamped imaginary map in my mind to revisit all the places and experiences that kept me busy and away from the Opera House during the past two and a half years in Sydney.

Aside from the time I spent Airbnb'ing around Sydney and beyond, a cloud of places, faces and experiences swirled through my mind!

I realised that my initial list was created by me — a tourist anticipating Sydney as seen on Instagram! But the reality is that this vibrant and colourful city has even more to offer than the Opera House!

Wherever I go in Sydney and whatever I do, the thing I love and admire most about my new home is the fact that every single day here is a beautiful day!

A rainy day is a beautiful day because back in Sudan, where I was born, rain is something that's to be enjoyed, welcomed, and celebrated, as well as a blessing to be grateful for. And to me, an Aussie sunny day is a new kind of beauty!



6. The Future of Sydney

It's got five beds, lots of massage chairs, a desk and also plants everywhere... And it runs on vegetable oil so it's organic for the environment.

Imogen Coates and Finn Cowper

IMOGEN AND FINN, TWO COOL YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PRESENTING AT A CONFERENCE

IMOGEN: Imagine a normal city. You're just about to enter the city, but before you do, you're teleported to something that looks very strange.

You think, "it's a time machine".... And you're right! Now you're teleported to the future...

BOTH: To Sydney 2040

IMOGEN: Most buildings have alien looking plants on the outside. They feed the city.

Some buildings are round.

FINN: Some are wavy.

FINN: And they're tall. What is it with that crazy height restriction thing they had in 2019?

IMOGEN: Yes Finn, and some have defences. But first we're going to talk about the Dome Cars. Sorry I'm just super proud of my invention.

FINN: Actually, we're going to talk about transport. You'll talk about Dome Cars and I'll talk about A.V-Speeders.

AV Speed racers are my invention. Instead of wheels, they roll and glide on the surface of the road. They can float over traffic and are very fast. And they run on air.

IMOGEN: They're *very* fast and *very* cool.

But I just may say something that Finn might disagree with.

I have invented something that I would say is a bit cooler. It's called a Dome Car. It's a dome on wheels that can hover.

And it runs on vegetable oil so it's completely organic for the environment.

It's got five beds, lots of massage chairs, a desk and also plants everywhere...

And it's super comfy!

FINN: I love your idea Immy, but here's another set of transport ideas, and you might not know what it is?

IMOGEN: I think I do. Is it....

BOTH: Cityships!

FINN: Yes, you're very right Immy.

FINN: Yes, you're very right Immy. They can hover above buildings, can drop bombs for the army and some are like homes. As you know, sometimes there's not enough space on the ground and there's too much traffic.

IMOGEN: And all the homes in them talk.

Talking homes are in many different places and as soon as you buy it you give it a name. I named mine Mythica. It can work in schools, buildings and hospitals. How it works; if you've just been home from a really long day you could say: "Mythica, I'm home, pour me a glass of water please."

In schools it can help teachers with disabilities.
At work, if you're too hot and weak you could say:
"Mythica, turn on the air con please."

Say you're sad, Mythica would say, "I know you're sad,
here's a tissue"

Or it would say you're hungry, here's some toast. She
can also read your thoughts.

FINN: There are cityships in the water too. They are
powered by plastic and clean up the ocean as they travel

ENTER DAVE

DAVE: Um..... hello? I'm from the past, how do I get
back?

IMOGEN: Oh, hello! What is your name?

DAVE: uh..... Dave.

IMOGEN: Hello Dave, what happened? Why can't you
get back to the past?

DAVE: Because when I landed here, that time machine
broke.

IMOGEN AND FINN: Wait! We can build you a new time
machine. It will only take a week or so.

DAVE: Hang on. I can see that you guys have created
so many amazing machines and inventions that are
really working here in the future! Actually the future is
much better than the past.

.....THE END.....

Anon

I am in the heart of the Waterloo/Redfern community, early morning at training.

I am leading the younger children out of trouble

I am clothes that are all black with the boys. We get looked at differently but that's not how it is.

I am the smell of chlorine as I swim in the pool and try to do flips

I am cheesy tasty delicious homemade lasagne that my mother makes

I am the amazing sound of music as it hits my ear drums

I am the rage when the police always harass me because of their perspective

I am the light of the stars as it hits my face in the dark night

I am the shadow of the trees on a hot day

I am community, history, culture

Imogen Coates

I am the leisure centre with a super cool pool
I am roller blading in the park
I am my jazz performance outfit – sparkly and soft
I am hungry for pizza – anchovies, olives, ham and cheese
I am Reeses peanut butter flavoured cornetto
I am crashing waves on the beach when I'm going to sleep
I am the rage when my friend tells me a lie
I am disco neon lights
I am the shadow of a cactus with little spikes
I am the shadow of my kitten
I am family, friends and education

Vito Radice

I am sitting at Clipper Café on Glebe Point Road in the arvo when it's raining

I am going to "Poetry Night" at Sappho Bar Glebe

I am wearing my Bob Dylan '65 t-shirt

I am the smell of coffee in the morning

I am Massaman curry from Thai Expression

I am the sound of thunder in a storm

I am the rage when told it's time to go at 10:30pm

I am an edison light bulb

I am hiding in building shadows

I am enjoying cafes, markets and live music venues

Joyce Noble

I am the glasshouse library in Green Square, the oasis in the wasteland

I am the little park in Eveleigh with benches for reading in the sun and the shade

I am comfy in blue jeans and a soft, soft blue tee

I am the smell of freesias, the white ones, the only flowers I'd ever buy

I am creamy laksa from Thai Thai with thick coconut milk and spice and morsels of tofu and
crunchy broccoli

I am the koel birds conversing in the grevilleas in the parks

I am the rage when the screams from the kids next door shatter the peace

I am lamplight from my poor man's tiffany lamp with resin roses reflected in the window

I am shadows of dappled light from fast and slow moving clouds

I am wide open spaces, the beauty of architecture and artworks

Pauline Su

I am colourful and festive Newtown on the weekend and festival time

I am full of food dining at small Asian eateries

I am a slip-on dress with maybe a jacket or cardigan

I am the smell of fried garlic and interesting influences from around the world

I am eating local sustainable food – Singapore chilli crab but at a reasonable price

I am birds tweeting in the trees, they're so alive!

I am the rage when drivers honk constantly, and loud cars or motorbikes screech down the street –
Hoons! Petrol-heads!

I am soft early morning light, just as dawn has broken

I am shadows of trees, providing shade on sizzling hot pavements

I am kindness and courtesy, public transport where and when you need it, something for everyone
– affordable food, clothing and housing

Natasha Sitanala

I am the ferry from Circular Quay to Barangaroo in the middle of work hours
I am walking my dog off-leash at Sydney Park
I am my grandma's batik shirt she bought in the year 1962 – it's very soft and airy
I am fresh cut grass especially after a misty morning
I am steamed dumplings from Sydney Noodle House in Chinatown
I am rain hitting my apartment windows
I am the rage when people leave food in the dog park!
I am the morning light on a sunny day
I am the shadow of a lot of people crossing at Town Hall
I am home, family and coffee shops

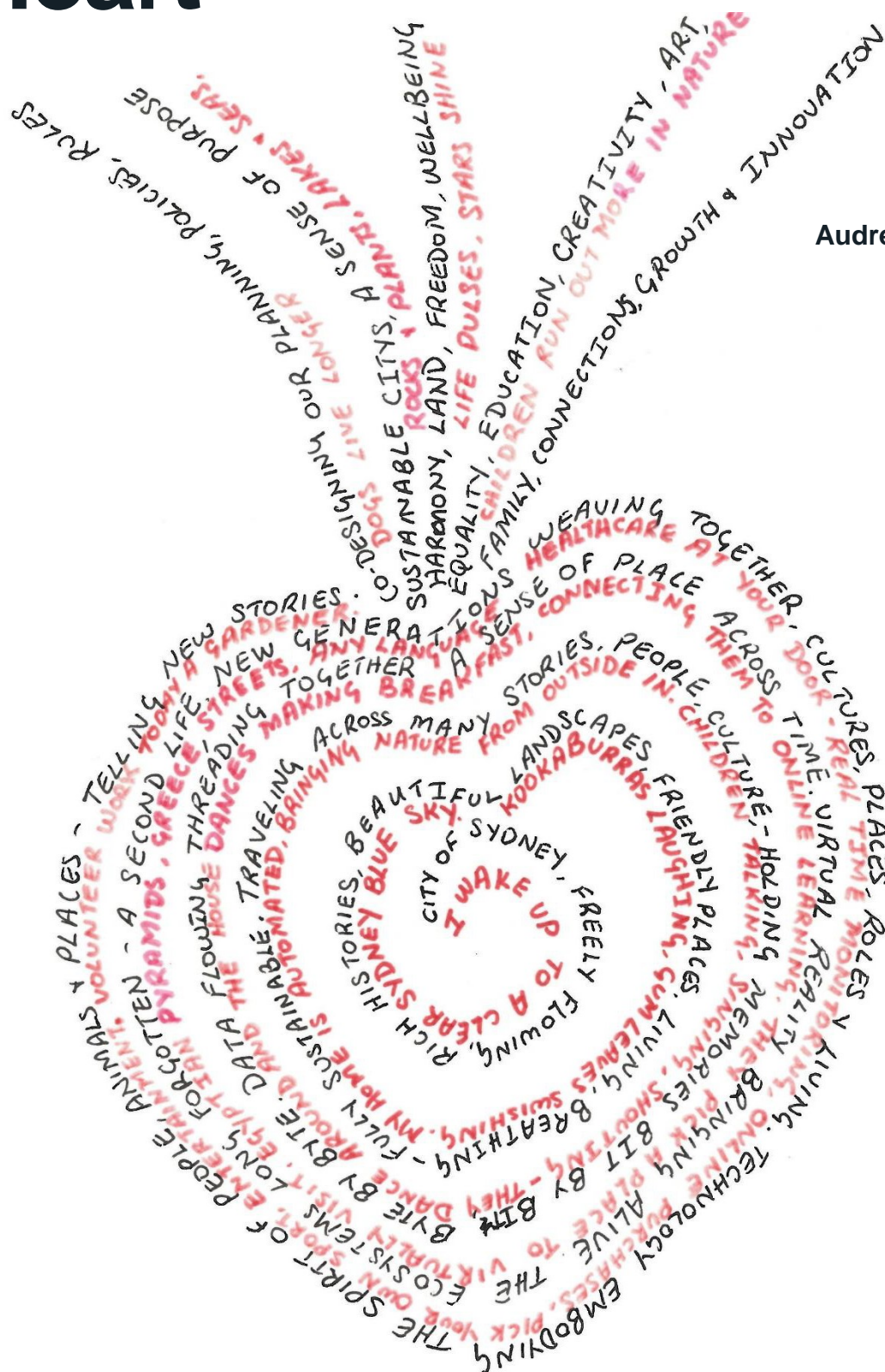
Esther Bailey

I am laughing in the morning at the coffee shop with my team
I am riding bikes under leafy trees
I am freebie t-shirts, hacked up, customised, faded and battered
I am the smell of fresh cut grass
I am steamed greens, almonds, zest of lemon
I am the sounds of children laughing and the melodic pong and thwack of tennis balls
I am the rage when the fun police enter the park
I am candlelight – warm, waving, intimate
I am shifting shadows under the tree canopy
I am fun, peace, inclusion

Janette Frape

I am the buzz of George Street
I am lawn bowls, enjoying the challenge in all kinds of weather
I am tops in bright colours made by a friend who designs and manufactures them
I am freshly brewed coffee which reminds me of waking up in Paris
I am Japanese food at Enya – it is to die for
I am the sounds of a European emergency vehicle with the ee-oo sound
I am the rage when others don't have their opal card ready at the bus stop
I am white light for doing craft and knitting
I am shadows from apartment windows – reflections at night
I am calmness, space, accessibility

Audrey Lobo-Pulo



AUDREY
16/2/1900
TO BO, PUL

8. Hope

She felt both excited and nervous for what life would be like in this new world.

Margaret Yue

17 July 2007. Tuesday. Sunny

After a long and tiring flight, Rita anxiously waited for the exit of the airport arrival. She felt both excited and nervous for what life would be like in this new world.

The airport was much smaller than where Rita came from which surprised her as she thought she was going to live in a world famous big city.

It was a beautiful day with blue sky and lovely white clouds, but a bit cold and quiet as the driver drove along the narrow streets.

Rita got to her first 'home' which was a small red block, not far from her university.

She couldn't wait to see more of the city, so went out for a walk to do some grocery shopping.

Rita enjoyed her walk to the grocery store but nearly got lost on the way back.

A lady came to offer her help and led her home. "What a friendly city!" Rita thought.

17 July 2017. Monday. Sunny

On the bus to her work in the city, Rita opened her Facebook, a selfie jumped into her eyes – it was younger Rita in the mirror of Sydney Airport.

"Oh ten years!!!" Rita thought, "Where did all these years go?"

After finishing her degrees, Rita started her job in the CBD. Feeling the need for personal space after sharing apartments with other people, she moved to the newly developed Green Square to live on her own.

Before she decided where to live, she heard that the City of Sydney is going to invest a lot in this area. She felt super excited about the future as a resident of Green Square.

Moved from old unit buildings to newly constructed apartments, Rita sees changes around her place every day.

She felt much safer now inside the security apartment after her old unit was broken into during daytime.

She also looks forward to seeing the upcoming Green Square Community Centre and enjoying her life here.

9. Memories

I want the past to be remembered...

Lyn Taylor

I am a born and bred Sydney girl.

I used to love the sea breeze which blew up the streets from Sydney Harbour, cooling the city down. Back then, I was more aware of the shadows, the light and dark which surrounded me in the city.

The smells that assaulted you in those days were from the breweries at the south end of town.

My first job was as a comptometrist, with Dairy Farmers in Harris Street. A comptometrist is a business machine. Part of the Dairy Farmers building replaced the glaciorium, a skating rink which was very popular.

At lunchtime we would go to the Marcus Clark and Grace Brothers department stores.

I love my city and wish to see it develop sensitively and to advantage all. I want the past to be remembered and the future to be considered with the past in mind. I want this to be something that is read and taken note of. The city should be for everyone and should be easily accessed.

We were once a wonderful young promising teenager, but we have started to go into middle age badly. My early days in the city were mostly getting a coat or other special item of clothing which was available in town.

When I was of "dating" age, we would go to balls in the Trocadero and Mark Foys Ballroom among others, which were on the top floors of the department stores.

My wedding reception was in the original Wentworth Hotel Ballroom which was so charming but coming towards its end. It was replaced by the Qantas building.

I loved the Royal Easter Show when it was at the original showground and enjoyed attending every year! I haven't been to the new location.

I enjoy going to the Sydney Cricket Ground to watch the cricket these days. There used to be many more events there than there is nowadays. The mighty dollar has its grip on sport.

My mother used to meet her sister every week in town to have lunch and catch up. She once said she was pleased that I had the good grace to walk at nine months of age so that she didn't have to fiddle around with a stroller.

Later, when I was going to school, I would know mum had "been to town" because of the smell of freshly ground coffee and there was fresh fish for tea. Her freshly laundered clothes would be on the line drying before their next outing.

I would hope that with the growing population of seniors, planning for their future is large in the minds of the planners. I know of nowhere that I could move to in my area of Alexandria. So it is essential that transport, medical and general wellbeing support is in place now. We have the possibilities and the opportunities, so let's go for it!

10. Positivity

A sense of accomplishment creeps over my being.

Robert Thaike

"I am Sydney" so the program says. But who am I?

Firstly, I will have to learn more about myself and who I have become. So that I can make a positive contribution to shaping Sydney for the future.

To help me do this today, I am joining the 'I Am Sydney' program.

February 9, 21C morning, bright and sunny! Slowly I pull myself out of bed. I have mixed feelings about joining the program as sometimes I find it hard to mix with other people. But the program will give me a chance to try something different and meet new people.

Here I am at Redfern Community Centre in Hugo Street, Redfern. Forty or so people are here. The City of Sydney and Story Factory staff guide us through the program schedule.

After a photo shoot we board a bus with a guide from the Story Factory. The bus drives through Redfern, Waterloo, St Peters, Alexandria, Surry Hills, Darlinghurst, Kings Cross, Woolloomooloo and back to Redfern.

The guide from the Story Factory was extremely bubbly and entertaining. He shared with us aspects of Aboriginal identity and culture as we passed through each part of Sydney. And we learnt about the history of some of the parks in inner Sydney.

A feeling of oneness with the other members of the group develops. A sense of accomplishment creeps over my being.

So do I want to contribute to a 50 year vision and leave a legacy for future Sydney dwellers – I say why not?

My vision is that in 50 years' time there will be ample social services as well as a liveable environment that will help people to shed their negative blues and encourage them to have positive attitudes.

11. One step back, two steps forward

Will we have help for our struggle? We'll need to take a step back into the past and take two steps into the future.

Anon

A decade ago there was this place called The Block. Most people from outside the community would think it was full of drug addicts as that is what the media portrayed.

I was six at the time and I remember going to my cousin's house in Eveleigh Street and playing tips like any other kid from Australia. The only difference was that we were more "disadvantaged", or that is what other people would say. What would I say, you ask? Well I would say we were "poor".

Every Christmas we would be having fun and as kids we thought life would always be like this. We were wrong! You see growing up I would hate the word "disadvantaged". I thought it sounded like an excuse so instead I would say "troubled".

Four years later, when I was ten and in Year 5 and my younger sister was eight and in Year 3. We were Christians! One day we were at church, I was praising the Lord and when I got home from church I noticed the home phone was ringing. Mum answered. She was shocked. She was crying hysterically. I wanted to know why.

An hour later I heard about what happened. My Dad had passed away. I didn't know how to handle it, I was only ten. This was my first sense of reality.

Not long after The Block was sold. Our home was sold. My Auntie made a tent embassy to fight for it. She "won", so they said. Yet they sold it anyway. Both my parents fought to save The Block, so I felt I had to do something. But how could I, I wasn't even in high school. I had to focus on school. So I did.

The start of Year 7 was rough as standing up for what I believed in to the privileged private school kids led me to fights. After two and a half long years of fighting and not learning I decided to move schools.

It was the start of Year 9, I was soldiering on. Everything from my Dad, The Block to Year 7, I simply soldiered on.

My younger sister wasn't, she got herself caught up in gangs and trouble. I noticed she was stealing cars and thought she was having fun. Until she got shot. She spent months in hospital. She survived. We kept a close eye on her and surprisingly she soldiered on more than me.

My Father told us we were strong and he was right. My sister said sayonara to the gang life and started helping herself.

See most people see Redfern as a place for junkies. A place for alcoholics. A place for "disadvantaged" people. I knew it was much more than that and I wanted to help the youth through the struggle.

The first kid I 'mentored' grew up in Redfern and like me he never touched a drug in his life. Now he is a rapper in Miami. Now I am mentoring kids in Redfern and Waterloo.

I am only 16 and its funny how I have gone from being looked after to looking after. Now I am looking at the future, I feel we'll need the past to help us. Will we have a new home called The Block? Will we have help for our struggle? We'll need to take a step back into the past and take two steps into the future.

12. Reflecting on Inner City Life

A Tale of Chippenham, Erko, Paddock, Surry Hills and Glebe

By a City Dweller

I love living in the inner city:

I love the walkability between villages;

I love 'old Sydney's' lanes and sandstone steps inviting me to explore my neighbourhood;

I love the creativity and diversity of people living here, its small venues and theatres;

I love little gardening initiatives that pop up and guerrilla gardening on the verge; and

I love the landscape, the harbour edge and more.

BUT THAT WAS THEN

In recent decades I have witnessed:

A decline in the diversity of residents and a loss of working people;

A change from working city to commuter city;

A loss of intimate streets and community life to high density living;

A loss of individual expression and sole trader ventures; and,

A decrease in intimate venues for creative art expression.

Turning point

Are we at a turning point where we can foster more vibrant inner city living and regain a sense of belonging and connection?

Can we foster a streetscape:

Where we will be able to have curb-side conversations?

Where our children can chase their shadows in the afternoon light?

Where we can discover the cobble streets where our forebears trod?

OR

Will we live in permanent shadow cast from high density developments?

Will we be high-risers commuting between office and a manicured environment?

Will we be wearing noise cancelling earphones to cancel out the 'roar of traffic in a city by the harbour, a city fractured by traffic arteries?

Custodians:

I want to see us sew the seeds for community, 2050:

Belonging

Community spirit

Landscape and adventure for our children in our local neighbourhoods

Small venues for talking, for sharing ideas, for creativity for local people

Opportunities for collaboration and participation

Through nurturing the walkability, through inviting a sense of curiosity and exploration, creativity, connection and diversity and breathe new life into the streetscapes of Chippo, Erko, Paddo, Surry Hills and Glebe.

13. Someone's idea of a beautiful future!

To me, a city has to be a living organism, pulsating with energy, vibrancy of its people.

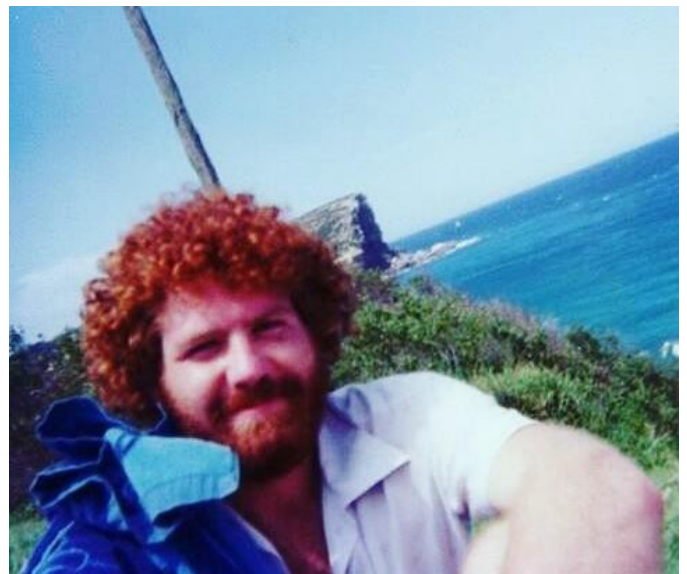
Vito Radice

I was almost 6 years old when I arrived in Sydney on the 24th December 1964. I came with my mother and brother from a small village (called “*San Fele*”) in Italy where I was born.

We came over on an ocean liner called the “*Galileo*” and that’s when I met my father for the very first time. He had been here since 1960.

Sydney was a much more innocent and simpler place in the 1960s. On Saturdays *ALL* shops closed at midday and night shopping...forget about it! Of course, *EVERYTHING* was closed on Sundays! Sunday was reserved for family!

Being a “wog” (a derogatory term for immigrants from southern Europe), I would be forced to go to “*The Fresh Food Markets*” in the city on a Saturday morning at 4:30am with my dad to buy live chickens. (He liked fresh food!)



The markets were located where the old “*Entertainment Centre*” was. The markets were demolished to make way for it and now, it has also been demolished! Who knows what is being built to replace it (apparently more apartments, hahahahaha). Whatever it is, that place has a lot of memories and history but who will remember and tell its story?

The markets were a hive of activity, although I hated getting up at such an ungodly hour.

We took the live chickens back to Five Dock in a box on the bus.

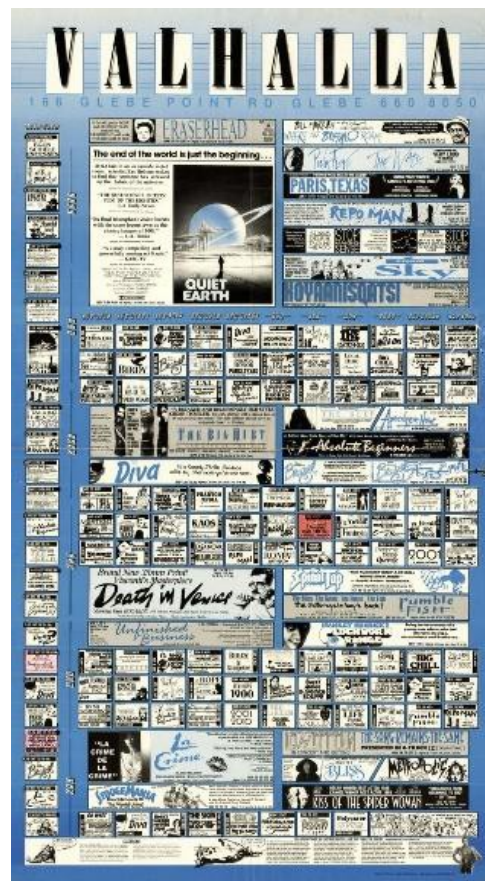
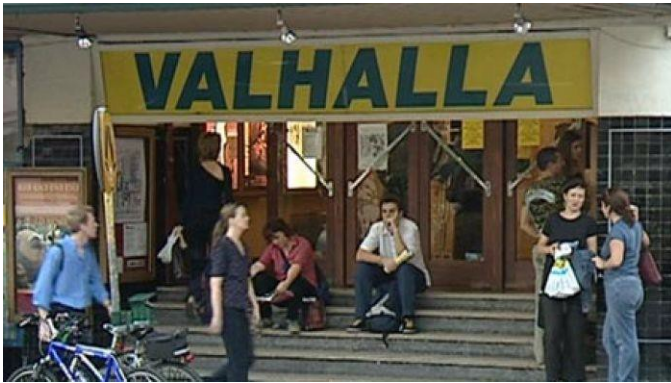
Buses in those days had conductors to collect your fare, so we had to be very careful because it was not allowed to take live animals onto a bus, especially chickens.

When we arrived home, it was time to kill the chickens, but that is another story!



© Max Dupain courtesy of Mossgreen Auction





In the 1980s, it showed 'Art House' films not shown anywhere else. It also had midnight screenings. Many a time was spent with my friends, "stoned out of our heads" watching Fellini, John Waters or Andy Warhol films.

In my late teens, I went to university and started hanging around the inner city, especially Glebe and Newtown. A place that I have extremely fond memories of was "The Valhalla Cinema" in Glebe, which has now been converted into apartments.

The façade is still there though and when I walk past it now, I get very sad that it is no longer there for others to experience the joy and happiness that I enjoyed.





The changing face of Sydney and especially the inner city, has been very sad for me because as Sydney has transformed from a sleepy backwater into an international city, it has lost its innocence and vibrancy. I know and accept that times change and so they should. But in many ways, in the process and rush for change, we have lost many irreplaceable treasures, which are memories to me now.

With the enormous urban development going on and the introduction of the “lock-out” laws, Sydney has lost its vibrancy, culture, venues, it’s LIFE!

Kings Cross is no longer the *Kings Cross* of my youth, in the 1980s and 90s. Now, it has become gentrified and acceptable. But back in my day, it was sleazy and notorious. Some would say that it was bad and needed to change.!

I, on the other hand, loved it. Loved its personality, its characters, its venues and the night life, which now has ALL gone.

One of my favourite places that I used to be a regular at in “*The Cross*” was the “*Manzil Room*”, (it was located at 15 Springfield Avenue and operated until 1990, when the venue changed its name to “*Springfields*”). It no longer exists, like so many places. But it still lives on in my memory. This place was not a place for “lock-out” laws. It didn’t open its doors until 11:00pm. It had live bands playing but they didn’t get on stage till 1:00am or 2:00am. So this was not a place for an early night, more like an early morning! Say 6am or 7am in the morning.

To me, a city has to be a living organism, pulsating with energy, vibrancy of its people. Sydney today is stunted, stifled, strangled, suffocated, not allowed to breathe. Bound and restricted by administrators that control what and when things can be done.

The is someone’s idea of a beautiful future.....but NOT MINE!

My vision for the future of Sydney is for these chains to be removed. For it to be allowed to evolve, without these restrictions placed upon its creativity by politicians.

A place of vibrancy, culture, colour, music and life. What is especially important to me is that it has a personality, a character, whether you like it or not this is what defines LIFE!

Sterility is not LIFE!

Personality is LIFE!

George Lancaster

I am Sydney Park with the dogs, unleashed, chasing sticks
I am walking along inner city streets
I am people watching
I am lightweight shorts with side-pockets to carry everything
I am the scent of wet moss that takes me back in time
I am a large platter of fresh sushi from King Street
I am hard rain on the old tin roof
I am moonbeams through the mist
I am the streetscape, morning swims, inner city living

Finn Cowper

I am Central Park, it's awesome and futuristic
I am building lego – it's creative
I am a black soft robe
I am pizza with hot Hungarian salami
I am the smell of a caramel and hot fudge sundae
I am the whosh of a spaceship lifting up
I am the rage when mum takes stupid photos
I am twinkling water
I am the shadow of clothes hung on the window
I am plants uniting with man-made and something taller than Centrepont Tower.

Sharlene Smith

I am the harbour on a barmy summer evening
I am drinking wine watching the sunset
I am a silky flowing dress for summer
I am the smell of salt filled air from my Sydney Harbour
I am ricotta cheese cake from Bad Manors Café, Glebe
I am the sound of waves against the hull of the Manly Ferry
I am the rage when the government sells us off to overseas investors
I am the lights that flicker on the water in the dark
I am the shadows of buildings as the sun sets on the water
I am community, family and time, for I am Sydney

Lyn Taylor

I am the inner city in autumn when it is crisp
I am visiting the city galleries and museums
I am loose, comfortable, colourful clothing – dresses and trousers
I am the smell of the wet gravel in the mornings on Wynyard Station
I am take-away sushi from the Japanese café in Fountain Street
I am the bird song in the morning
I am the rage when I hear that more local transport is taken from us
I am the light from solar garden lamps
I am a shadow given protection from the sun in the heat
I am community, safety, consideration

*Here is my ditty
I love my City of Sydney
I want to improve
Get in the groove*

Farah Nur Fatimah

I am Sydney Observatory Hill in the afternoon
I am reading a book in a quiet place
I am a black loose shirt and colourful scarf
I am the aroma of fried noodle, it reminds me of home and my country
I am a well done beef ribs with spicy sauce
I am chirping birds in the morning
I am the rage when my friend gives away a spoiler of a movie
I am sun rays that appear in your photo
I am shadow of the city scape from the ferry on my way back home
I am the books, the Opera house, the University of Sydney

Danielle James

I am my garden on a sunny blue sky afternoon
I am lying on the artificial grass, children's heads tickling my arms.
I am scungy, cat-hair-covered, second-hand, lululemon, comfy bootlegs
I am my husband's aftershave
I am frozen berries with yogurt and nuts on the deck
I am the sound of rumbling and the continual hum of a washing machine
I am the rage when emotional and mind-manipulation games are played
I am the light just before a storm
I am my long shadow from the afternoon sun
I am my family and friends, my home, our yoga studio.

Arlo Coleman

I am my house
I am reading in bed, all different kinds of books
I am my school uniform
I am the smell of tofu being cooked
I am sushi from Newtown
I am the bell at the end of the school day
I am the rage when Rosy does anything
I am the light at the end of the tunnel
I am shadow on the sidewalk for shade
I am my friends, pets and animals in general

Belinda Norman

I am book shopping on King Street with Arlo
I am walking around neighbourhoods in Surry Hills
I am my LCD sound system t-shirt that I customised
I am the smell of the Carlton United Brewery on Broadway – reminds me of my undergraduate days
I am health food from Iku in Glebe
I am the sound of magpies and butcher birds
I am the rage when the bus doesn't come
I am sunlight in the early morning or evening or when a storm is brewing
I am the shadow of the photographer in a photo
I am our stories, our heritage, understanding Aboriginal culture

14. My new home

Although Sydney is not perfect, I know there are good people here who want to make it a better home for everyone. And now it is home for me and my family.

Farah Nur Fatimah

11.00 am

"I'm at Wharf Y.
Where are you?"

11.01 am

Me too – Near
Hungry Jacks

11.02 am

Ok got it!

It's been a long time since we met. And now he's here. We are here. Different place, same feelings. This is my story.

"Where are we going now?" he asked. I usually take people to the Opera House on the first day they come here, so they can really feel the Sydney vibes from the start.

"Definitely Opera House. Let's go!" I grabbed his hands and we walked to the Opera House.

We didn't say a word for a while, until he started the conversation. "So how are you doing? What makes you stay here a bit longer?"

"Well...I love this city, the people, the public transport, the beaches, parks, everything. I'm afraid I'll miss them when I leave" I answered.

We arrived at the Opera House. He looked so happy to be there, he took a lot of pictures, asked me to have a selfie with him. Until something unfortunate happened. He accidentally dropped his phone in the gap of the Opera House stairs. It was impossible to save it and we called the security guard for help.

But sadly, they said that his phone couldn't be retrieved because they couldn't remove the blocks until building maintenance was undertaken in three years' time.

"That's okay then. Maybe it's a sign that I should enjoy my holiday without phone distraction" he said and tried to forget what just happened. I left my phone number with the Opera House office just in case they had good news.

I figured out how to make him happy again. I took him to one of my favourite places. "I'll take you to my favourite spot around here. I'm sure you'll love it" I said.

After ten minutes walking, we arrived at Sydney Observatory Hill. "Wow! I love this place. Look the Harbour Bridge looks so close from here" he said excited. The view at this place is always amazing, especially at sunset. Sometimes I can see cotton candy sky with pink streaks from here, or tiger-ish sky with the strong touch of orange colour. But, if I'm unlucky, I'll just see a dark gloomy sky and no sunset.

It was still midday and the sun was shining bright so we sat under a tree facing the Harbour Bridge.

"I know you have many thing to love about this city. But is there anything that bothers you? Something you don't like? He asked while crossing his legs.

"Mmm...nothing bothers me actually. But I'm quite struggling with the rent fee of my house. So expensive. Housing prices in Sydney are more expensive than other states. So yeah. Also, the public transport fares. It is getting more expensive. Sorry, lots of complaints." We laughed, and I continued.

"But I love being here anyway. Friendly people, its diversity, lovely beaches and parks, great libraries, and easy access for anyone and anywhere. We can take bus or train or ferry to any place. They are all reachable in Sydney." I explained the reasons why I loves this city. Sydney, you never fail to amaze me.

We really enjoyed our time on the hill. Sound of chirping birds, sun rays that appear on his picture on my phone, everything. We left after a while and headed to my school, University of Sydney. "Oh my God this building looks like Hogwarts in Harry Potter" he said surprised. He was talking about the Quadrangle building.

"I know right! It's the oldest university in Australia. It's good that they keep these old buildings. Many old artsy buildings in the city are replaced by tall buildings. I was sad when I went to Sydney Tower Eye, I couldn't even see the Opera House because the city is covered by huge modern skyscrapers" I explained to him. Then I took him around the university.

Even though my life is not easy, I want to work hard to make a better life for my children.

Although Sydney is not perfect, I know there are good people here who want to make it a better home for everyone. And now it is home for me and my family.

15. Renewal

Our eldest likes to catch crabs in the mud, and I marvel that in my new city we can engage with so much wildlife.

Jennifer Fletcher

Fire

I didn't know him then, in Glebe of the mid-1970s. He had a fixation, a passion he pursued. It was a secret, for a time, in a suburb of boarding houses peopled by down-and-outers, just 'bourgeoisising' up after the formation of the Glebe Society in 1969. It was a former landholding given to the Anglican Church. I had never heard the word, let alone imagined the place or the boy in it.

A little thin blonde moppet of a boy slips out the back gate of the former boarding house his parents brought cheaply and fixed up to a point, a tow-headed anomaly amidst the black haired Greek boys from migrant families. He eases down Avenue Road, past the tingling, cloying incense wafting over the back wall of the Joss House, and on to Jubilee Park, anchored by Federation era giants, the "Modern Day Figs," as I misheard them called. He fidgeted in his pocket with his treasure, looking for a target.

A slip of a boy in an industrial pocket of the inner city wanders out at dusk. He wonders how far to go today? Take his treasure to the lumber yard? That would get him into serious trouble, like police trouble. Settling onto a metal chained swing, the young child washes over him and he thinks only of

whether he can kick the branch above with his swinging foot.

He throws some stones into Blackwattle Bay at the end of Glebe Point Road. He's as raw as the landscape around him, and ready to act, he spies something black in the distance. It isn't a Holden FJ – his Dad had one of those for about six months. It is a black London taxi, a foreigner in these parts. What a transplant! What luck! He explores it. Runs his fingers down its reflective surface – sees his small, impish face staring back. Windows smashed in, he jumps over the door and sits inside, imagining himself touring the streets of London where his father had gone to university. The upholstery is a bit torn and it makes good kindling along with some dried leaves and twigs with whoosh-scratch, the pile ignites. He leaps out to gather more fodder and finds an *Argus* from 1964.

A small figure walks back up the hill. No sirens chase his addition to his industrial landscape. He goes unnoticed. He can't help but glance back over his shoulder down Glebe Point Road, to his oasis, a campfire, maybe later a star.

The Sun

I know this story. It is 2006. I am one of the 25 percent of Australia "from somewhere else." The former arsonist and I are raising two boys, and we are back in Glebe, transplanted from New York. Jubilee Park is pretty. I love it. It beats the East River. It still has wild edges, bamboo groves by the water's edge where I've heard some pretty bad snakes hang out. Its forecast to be 45 degrees today, a heat I cannot conceive of.

I am responsible for two tow-headed boys, potential future arsonists, and I don't want them to burn today.

We head out if the basement apartment we're living in, underneath his mother's house. I've been disabused of my misunderstanding of "Modern Day Figs," and I've learned a little about the city, but the mysteries of this continent are still many and fresh. I am out of my element, and I know it. Armed with bottles of cool water, fruit and cookies (not 'biscuits'), we stroll our babies in their double carriage down Avenue Road to the deep shade of Moreton bay Figs, so majestic and such a relief already at 8 a.m. and 30 degrees.

The boys tear out of their enclosure and we push them in adjoining baby swings. The arsonist is now the picture of paternal perfection. The Redheads have been replaced by Percy, Thomas and Henry.

Yes, as you would expect, it's perfect. The sun glints off Blackwattle Bay. I hear a Kookaburra, which I mistake for a monkey. So many misunderstandings. We stroll toward the Fish Markets. A few intrepid souls are out for their morning runs. This is a city of possibility and potential where people are undeterred by a "little heat". I can do this! Tightening the hat ties under my sons' chins, and velcroing the sunshade, we head on.

Our eldest likes to catch crabs in the mud, and I marvel that in my new city we can engage with so much wildlife. We feel a searing miasma, and creep like the blacksnake into the cool refuge of the bamboo grove. I feel like a mouse.

Fearing vaporisation, we emerge and walk back to the playground. The heat is already oppressive.

One last swing at 11 is all we can manage before the stultifying presence engulfs us, and bakes my babies.

No cars in sight, we walk wearily up the hill to our cave-like sanctuary. The arsonist seems at peace with who he's become after engaging with the wide world. Like his city, he's left a dodgy past behind and has settled into a purposeful repurposing of a place, a life.

Heart

This is only a guess. We might come back to Jubilee Park. I see a warm day, but nothing much different to 2006. The Tramsheds are established. A new Moreton Bay Fig planted in 2015 is its own giant, rubbing arms with his grandpa. I'm pleased by the continuity.

Blackwattle Bay has a city beach, with waterway conservancy yielding some safe, much needed aquatic recreation in this Harbour City, on this side of the Bridge. It's even netted to prevent comingling with the bull sharks that frequent the clean bay.

We creak down Avenue Road, at 80. One of our sons has taken over the old family home on Toxteth Road, where he lives with his pregnant Japanese-Australian wife, probably a love engendered by the 800 episodes of "Naruto" he watched at eleven. I am looking forward to adding to our multicultural family—Australian, Armenian, American, English, Irish, French-Canadian, German and now Japanese.

We all spread across Edward Lane – twelve of us – in the fug of Joss House incense. The children fan out across the sixteen swings that now service a booming inner city population that we have added to with our four sons and six grandchildren. My husband and I retire to a cool bench while our sons swing their children. The cool shade created by the safe arms of the Moreton Bay Figs is welcoming.

Out of his pockets he spills old metal toy cars and hands them to John who has come toddling to me for a biscuit. John takes the black London taxi in miniature and runs it through the dirt. The car is too small to reflect back his small face under a mop of brown hair. He vrooms and keeps it by the knee of the former arsonist, the embodiment of renewal.

16. Past - Present - Future

Julia Martin

My initial response to each village was visceral. At first, I thought of all the areas as one Sydney. Slowly, I began to realise that each “village” had its own unique personality. I finally understood the value of the concept: “CITY OF SYDNEY City of Villages”.

During the rest of the weekend, I found my thoughts became more analytical until last night when I woke after midnight with a flood of florid thoughts about Green Square. I gave in, switched on the light and wrote them down.

In the morning, I realised that the three villages to which I responded the most were from my PAST, PRESENT and what I saw as representing a FUTURE village of Sydney.

Past - Ultimo, Pyrmont & Glebe

Glebe

After WWII, all refugees had to agree to labour for two years before they could begin their life as citizens of Australia. (Thus the derogatory expression was born: WOG - Workers of the Government).

Dad shovelled coal at White Bay power station. The local workers told him not to work so hard, but he was a POW in Auschwitz during the war and this work was easy by comparison (although certainly lacking the prestige of a Civil Engineer which he was before the war).

As soon as he was able, dad rented a small attic-sized space with a large deck on the top floor of 14 Lombard Street, Glebe. It was not an easy task. There were so many refugees looking for rental properties and ones with small children were even less popular.

This was where my brother and I met Gary. He was the same age as I was (i.e. three) and was an only child. He was my first Australian friend. His mother owned the enormous house where we rented. We quickly learned English from Gary and became interpreters for our parents. We formed a gang of three and would play together in the huge, empty, paved garden. I remember tall sunflowers towering over me and amazingly blue skies.

Mr Croft was a local who would pass by each day with his gigantic cart horse, hauling wooden barrels.

I was delighted to see that Glebe had retained many of the varied townhouses and grand mansions with beautifully kept grounds. The many cafés and local shops added to the village feel.

Ultimo

As the bus drove down Wattle Street, Ultimo, I noticed that my next home was now a Service Station with petrol bowsers marking where I lived until I was about ten. The little terraced houses no longer existed and the junk yard full of metal bits that was directly behind our home, was also long gone. My brother and I had discovered a loose board in the back fence which led to the interesting treasures where we could build a world of our own imagination. What child could ask for more?

The Technological Museum was just a block away in Harris Street where my brother and I could walk on Saturdays while our parents caught up with housework and prepared for friends who would arrive for lunch on Sundays. We would lose ourselves in the amazing museum displays: magnificent, elaborate mechanical or clockwork pieces; glass cases full of rocks; a room with a domed ceiling which would suddenly become the night sky, full of stars and planets. We stood in awe.

Saturday afternoons, we could walk to the cinema in Broadway and watch a movie with the obligatory Saturday serial: The Phantom, Hopalong Cassidy, Superman and my favourite, "I am The Shadow".

Occasionally we would all go to Paddy's Markets, in Haymarket, and buy live "chooks" which would

be killed and then taken home where mum would scald them in hot water to make the feathers easier to pluck. There were flowers, fruit and vegetables and my favourite: puppies, kittens, bunnies, ducklings and chicks.

Many of the children at Ultimo Primary School were either Australian-born Chinese or English kids from East End, London, who came with their parents just before, or just after, the war - very few European-Australians and only one Indigenous-Australian boy. Naturally there were also little British-Australian children who were born here, but not as many as one would expect.

The headmaster, Mr. Tracy, was a wise man with a vision for his pupils. He was my mentor. He would organise excursions to the Art Gallery of NSW and to symphony concerts at the Town Hall. He introduced "Star Pupil" to recognise and encourage the children to be the best they could be. I remember him - as a Principal - coaching a student who had difficulties in reading. Kudos, Mr. Tracy!

We would often walk down George Street with our parents in the evenings. It was a European custom which we all enjoyed.

It was here that I was first aware of bedraggled men with empty eyes in long khaki coats, sitting on the footpaths, drinking out of bottles or staggering along the street shouting at people. Their anger sometimes turned on our family. "Bloody New Australians! Why don't you go back to your own country?" or "Bloody refos! Why don't you speak English?" (It was usually in that form: a comment followed by a question - a bit like a test at school.)

Mum and dad certainly tried to speak English, but although they spoke several languages, English was unlike most other European languages so it took some time to learn.

Further up George Street there was a shop with prosthetic limbs displayed in its window. My brother and I would stand fascinated, looking at these pieces. Mum and dad would become impatient and move us on. Now I understand why.

The house in Wattle Street was on a hundred year lease and by the time we moved there the lease was almost up. So after a few short years, we had to move out into the suburbs.

The bus trip with 'I Am Sydney' somehow triggered the memory of the smell of the wool stores and tanneries that we walked past on the way to school.

Pymont

CSR (Colonial Sugar Refineries) had a large laboratory complex in Harris Street, Pymont. Most of the labs were for quality control using various sugar analyses. They were mainly manned by females and headed by males. But they had a Special Analyses Lab which developed methods for mineral analysis. (CSR also owned mining companies). In my early twenties I worked here.

CSR was also a company that encouraged relationships between the males and females so that they could breed good Colonial Sugar families. Although there was a lot of harmless flirting, it didn't feel like sexual harassment. It was

playful and light hearted. At that age, although we worked hard, we also had lots of fun.

I asked an old friend about that period; he said: "There were quite a few CSR activities in the area, including a rum distillery and bone char factory as well as a refinery, workshops, a laboratory and hostel where [he] stayed. CSR also had Engineering workshops on the corner of Harris and Bowman Streets. They made 'engineering stuff' for mills and refineries there. There was also a sugar refinery on the water and a Cane-ite factory." He didn't "think asbestos board was ever made at Pymont, but it was elsewhere. However, a lot of asbestos lagging was used in the refinery".

So the trip through Glebe, Ultimo and Pymont triggered memories of some of the happiest years of my life.

Present - My Redfern

Lean lycra bodies
cycle past -
full uniformed -
on carbon fibre rims.

Amid the traffic
Porsches pass
between buses plumped
with multi-accents.

Homeless sit on footpaths
shrunk and bent -
in sottovoce -
they ask for spare coins.

Others stagger along streets
spewing rage
at invisible gods' attempts
to restrain them.

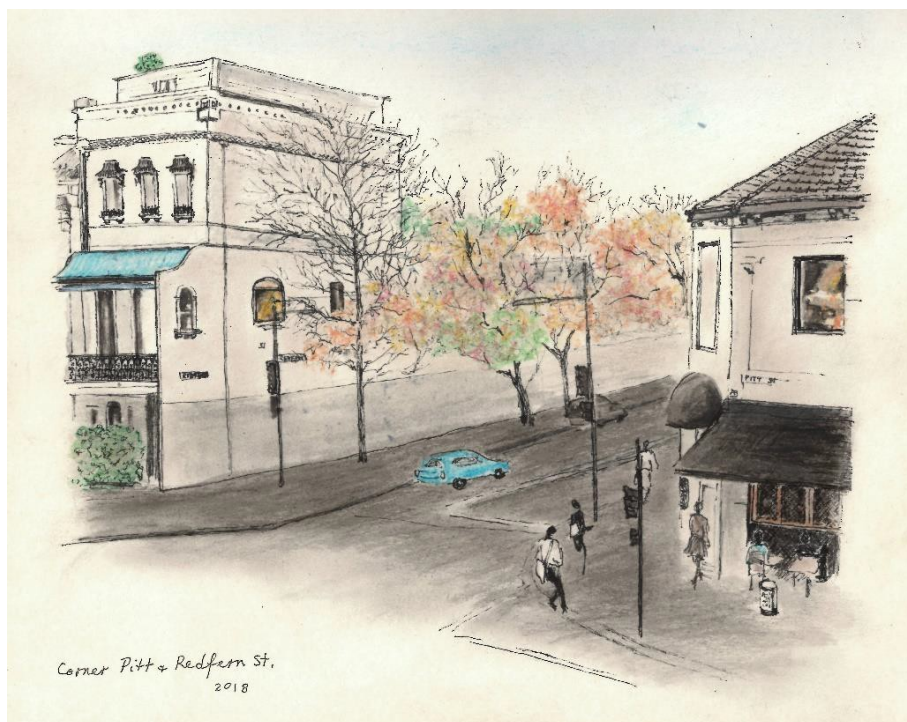
Hipsters sit laughing
in animated conversation
at boutique cafés.
They spill out to tables
under dappled light
of planted liquid amber.

Louboutins flash their red
on youthful, long extended legs
cascading down high-glam stools
at plush designer wine bars.

Artists' studios hide
between high rise
or in alley ways
frescoed with graffiti.

Carriageworks Farmer's Market
tempts with local produce.
Amid Omar Kayyam's bread and wine,
perfume from blossoms
underscores
the heady notes of chocolate.

Australian Technology Park
cradles the Innovation Centre.
Lateral thinkers create & test
diverse future technologies.



While all around -
in silent tribute -
visions of Sydney's
industrial history.

Once furnaces forged metal,
and steam drove machines
to build locomotives
that now stand -
like "Simon Said..."
non-kinetic.

Carriageworks constructed
and hand decorated carriages,
with artisans'
long lost skills.

Now catwalks, craft and art shows,
are crowned with brilliant light
and shadows move like stage sets
throughout the theatre of daylight.

Each stands alone -
yet when joined together -
form an all-embracing village,
MY REDFERN.

Future – Green Square

Green Square was like standing in front of a gargantuan, 3-D Jeffrey Smart painting – surreal.

Three elongated silhouettes, dressed in black - on their skateboards - flip and turn in random jerks in the plaza below the towering buildings.

A baobab tree's bulbous trunk balances the straight, vertical lines of the architects' aesthetic imaginings - so visually appealing and varied in textures and colours with gashes of cerulean blue occasionally visible in the skyline between. Certainly the variety is there; the external surfaces seem beautifully sculpted, but somehow it has lost its human scale.

Water trickles down a long sandstone trough. The stone is natural and soothing to the eye. But where are the people in the village? It's a Saturday afternoon and yet I only see these three young skateboarders.

Cellist, Clancy Newman's composition, 'Trance Music' (2004), mimics Green Square. It captures the hauntingly lonely soul and even includes the "plunks" of dripping water. I'm glad I saw Green Square before I heard this piece. Each brought greater meaning to the other.

How long will the buildings survive before they show construction flaws? Is the inside of these buildings as substantial as the outer surface appears to be? Or will the residents be woken by a sonic crack followed by stones crumbling? Will the outside look as glamorous in five or ten years? And what of the scale? (a de-

humanising sensation overwhelms me). The natural textures are enticing, but in some way they exaggerate the contrast of the towers.

What can be added further to give a sense of humanity? Are the parks, plantings and a pool enough to make a difference?

Will the occupants feel a part of a community or will they feel isolated? Buildings under six storeys tall encourage interaction between occupants. These were all far greater than six storeys and they were cheek by jowl. Would the residents greet each other or brush past with heads bent to their palms or mumble and laugh into their chins? It's easy to become anonymous in a city of high rise. Humans need to feel part of a social group, not banished into gangs like young male chimps.

A thirteen year old boy in the group said he liked the area very much. Perhaps this is the playground of the future.

An older woman questioned the lack of parking space for such a high population. As we learn to "share" bicycles and cars perhaps this will not be a problem. Hopefully, we might become a different community where we will not think of ourselves owning individual toys, but simply learning to use - and let others use - what is necessary, when needed, rather than having them sit idle. (Read: The Third Industrial Revolution by Jeremy Rifkin.)

Perhaps Green Square is the village of the future and I am of the past.

17. Time to stop and listen

Let us be the generation that changes this cycle and ensures the community and all level of governments plan a beautiful future.

Sharlene Smith

We have been asked to embrace a growing metropolis. To look ahead and ensure our communities are still connected and have our culture intact as we head for 2050. I fear there will be a repeat of mistakes already made.

That we do not stop long enough to listen to what the land is telling us, before we silent its protests with layers of concrete, rubbish and token art works. It's a numbers game – 61,000, a figure thrown out by politicians so removed from the everyday traffic jams and lack of public transport they do not hear what the people of this land are saying.

As we walk around community areas empty of people covered with cleverly designed architecture, I have to wonder if the hospital that once stood on this ground was not a better idea for this growing population.

As government's change, we pull down, replace and rebuild in a continual cycle of wasted resources. There seems to be no projection into the future past the three year political term.

We have a beautiful city but the cost of living has paralysed a whole generation into silence. The energy to

make ends meet leaves little left to ensure their voices are heard as plans are made for the future.

It's time to stop.

We just need to stop.

The local members representing our communities need to remember they are here for the people. It is time to plan together. Councils have always allowed public conversation, but when foundations stones are laid community input is so often overlooked for developers with long pockets and big bank accounts.

So let's stop it.

Let us be the generation that changes this cycle and ensures the community and all level of governments plan a beautiful future. Let's tell developer what we want and lets not accept anything less for our future Sydneysiders.

18. What Happened?

Sydney in 2050 is a 24/7 city with a magnificent skyline of architectural buildings...

Jodie Hill

Sydney in 2019 was on the verge of change. Lock out laws prevented revellers from bar hopping and causing havoc on the streets but they also were the demise of many long standing establishments. Bulldozers were flattening anything that was in their path while property developers rubbed their hands together.

Residents resisted where they could, the redevelopment of their neighbourhoods, by protesting and standing up to politicians. Oxford Street was a mere shell of its former self. A sad and sorry sight of long standing family businesses gone overnight. Bars once filled with tourists were filled with silence and a lonely bar tender. What happened?

Surry Hills was my favourite haunt of the city. Once a breeding ground for Sydney gangs and fraught with crime it is now a place to "be seen". The well-heeled frequent the glistening Beresford Hotel on a Friday and Saturday night. If you're up with the who's who you'd recognise many of the patrons. The Beresford was once a bar only for gay men. Wow! Imagine being so segregated that you were only accepted in a limited few places.

As I walk the streets of Sydney today in 2050, I imagine how it was 100 years ago in 1950 compared with how it is now, the tallest building Sydney Tower has been dwarfed by magnificent skyscrapers, Sydney's magnificent harbour is home to a world class marina. Oxford Street is home to beautiful designer stores where window shopping for "mere Mortals" has become the thing to do. There are restaurants open until late filled with tourists and laughter. Nightclubs co-exist with

restaurants and bars. 2050 is filled with tolerance and acceptance and also disbelief. Disbelief in how people were segregated depending on their sexuality, disbelief in why anyone wanted to knock down and rebuild Sydney's history, disbelief that there was a curfew in which business owners could operate.

Sydney in 2050 is a 24/7 city with a magnificent skyline of architectural buildings that their architects are proud of. It is a city where family businesses thrive amongst the franchises. The city parks will remain as beautiful as they have always been, filled with young families and grandparents. Sydney in 2050 will still be home to the homeless and as many troubles, this is only human. Sydney in 2050 will be recognised as a forward thinking city where change is embraced and heritage protected, where people are proud to live and where the rest want to live.

19. The Buzz of George Street

Memories flood back of days past riding the old green trams and the infamous non-air conditioned 'red rattlers'...

Janette Frape

Have you ever sat and listened to George Street?

It is the main thoroughfare since settlement on Gadigal land, connecting the constant hum of Circular Quay with the myriad comings and goings of ferries, large cruise ships, small sightseeing cruisers, day trippers luncheon and dinner cruises, noisy buses and trains.

The smell of diesel from all those vessels permeate the salt air, whilst Ibis peck their way through smelly garbage and seagulls swoop on any scrap of food they spy, right through to historic Central Railway you can listen to George Street's heartbeat (BUZZ).

Memories flood back of days past riding the old green trams and the infamous non-air conditioned 'red rattlers' and my first job in 1960 for The Railway Department under the large clock at Central Station.

Have you walked down this usually throbbing street without the sound of traffic, a street that has so many iconic buildings such as the imposing Town Hall with pride of place, which has always been the 'meeting' spot and past a once fully functioning magnificent 'General Post Office'?

Have you reflected as you pass Martin Place, not a siren, quiet ticking of traffic lights or the loud hum of a bus diesel engine, but instead the joyful anticipation filling the air along this artery through Sydney's heart?



Did you ever in all your wildest dreams growing up in the 'burbs' of Sydney imagine doing this?

At the conclusion of the 2000 Olympic Games there was a celebratory ticker tape parade for the athletes, including volunteers along George Street from Circular Quay, culminating at Town Hall.

What a dream come true to actually do this one bright 'sunshiny' day in October 2000. I took part, how amazing was that - as a volunteer working with Telstra. Green and gold was in abundance.



It was a day filled with anticipation, excitement and jubilation mixing and mingling with our extremely successful athletes from the games– electric, Sydney you owned it. Aussie Aussie Aussie Oi Oi Oi!

Sydney's personality changed during those few weeks – you were welcoming, happy, vibrant and energetic – the only place to be.

2019 and again you are able to walk without traffic along George Street whilst the long awaited and highly anticipated light rail is being installed – the same feel as 2000 but very different.

2050 what will you look like – maybe plaques recording the history of your past life embedded in wide walkways, cool tree lined streets, preserved original shopfronts, silent movement of light rail, workers going about their business, shoppers and tourists exploring - all enjoying the BUZZ of YOU?

Ibrahim Elbadawi

I am the MCA roof top café in the afternoon
I am a walk across the harbour bridge on a rainy day
I am a grey polo shirt with blue and red lines on the collar
I am the smell of wet grass – reminds me of autumn in Sudan
I am Turkish Lokum from a street stall in the Rocks
I am the bellowing horn of a big cruise ship in the harbour
I am the rage when the train is late on the weekend at Green Square Station
I am the full moon light
I am my shadow at the beach
I am nature, diversity of people, art

Robert Thaike

I am Crown Street when I wake up
I am day dreaming
I am a cotton t-shirt, light and bright
I am perfume from a flower that take me back to fields of jasmine
I am the taste of Indian Sweets from Elizabeth Street restaurants
I am birds chirping
I am the rage when people talk loudly and aggressively
I am moon light in the park at night
I am the shadow of trees
I am laughter, smiles and singing

Audrey Lobo-Pulo

I am nature, trees, grass in autumn, gum leaves, birds calling
I am relaxing, reading, eating, drinking, walking, strolling
I am a white shirt soft cotton, comfy jeans, favourite shoes
I am gum leaves, smell of rain in the air, eucalyptus, jasmine
I am slow cooked chicken on a barbeque, crispy yet soft, smokey
I am kookaburras laughing, birds chirping, wind blowing, rain falling
I am the rage when I'm told what to do and how
I am sunset, golden and rose hues
I shadows of trees and leaves shaking, moving
I am people, relationships, harmony

Jodie Hill

I am walking the streets of Surry Hills early in the morning
I am stopping at the French bakery to buy a baguette and coffee on my way home
I am strolling in a cotton dress on a hot summer's day
I am taken away by the scent of the murraya blossoms
I am crunchy fresh red capsicum, it's a delight to bite into
I am the sound of a restaurant full of laughter, it makes me smile – the chorus of laughter from
gatherings is as good as the finest music
I am feeling rage when I see people who get annoyed by silly little things
I am walking in the morning light, as time ticks by, the light increases
I am focussed on the long afternoon shadows
I am acceptance, tolerance, education

Jofy Dolev

I am happy for the pastizzi in Newtown for a celebration
I am lucky to do art at home with my mum
I am a T-Shirt with a good message on it
I am cookies baking in the oven, they remind me of my friend Lara
I am margarita pizza from Dust in Glebe
I am my cat's purring
I am the rage when my brother annoys me
I am natural light at sunset
I am the shadow of me at sunset that makes me look really long
I am my family, friends and food

Jennifer Lewis

I am The Rocks down beside the Harbour
I am swimming at Prince Alfred Park Pool while the kookaburras sing
I am big blue baggy shorts with big pockets and long legs
I am the smell of lavender in the hanky sachets in my sweater draw
I am a mango – a big round one that's soft and yellow
I am the sound of rainbow lorikeets outside the window in the early morning
I am the rage when neighbours dump rubbish on the nature strip
I am the light on white puffy clouds moving across the sky
I am the shadow of the tree in Prince Alfred Park where the masked lapwings stand on a hot day
I am calm and space, pleasant architecture, rustling trees

Margaret Yue

I am Coogee beach before sunrise
I am dancing on stage in a theatre
I am my red dress with flowers
I am the forest in the rain
I am enjoying pork ribs from Pancake On The Rocks
I am birds singing in the park
I am the rage when the fire alarm turns on after midnight
I am the spot of light in the centre of a stage
I am my shadow on the beach with long legs
I am having fun on the beach, in the park, with multi culture

Jennifer Fletcher

I am the Powerhouse Museum – a refuge of cool on a 40 degree day
I am eating biscuits and drinking free tea
I am a skort – a practical mix for childminding
I am the sanitised scent of a well-kept institution
I am a special day which means hot chips from the overpriced café
I am Waltzing Matilda emanating from kids' feet on the floor keyboard
I am the rage when perfect blonde twins take over that keyboard
I am the enclosed dusk which answers blinding blue out the big windows
I am walking in the the rectangular shadows of black that cools
I am my family, curiosity, this new place

20. The Plant Tube

They slapped their hands back and forth in a secret handshake, they both laughed and headed to school with a half skip, half walk.

Yofy Dolev (daughter)

Setting: Erskineville 2050

When walking she walks her 10 year old girl E.P.S to school in the plant tube to avoid pollution. Her mum is a scientist studying allergies. Jess sat up in bed and brushed her sandy blonde hair out of her face. She had a very strange dream. The first sound to her ears every morning was the trickle of water.

"Morning Des" she said touching his large green leaf. Des was her favourite plant. It was time to get ready for school. Her school uniform was emerald green bearing a green lead on her jumper.

Before heading off, Jess checked the pollutant monitor. *Beep beep.* >45. When levels were low there was no need for the plant tube.

Jess just needed to text Lou, her best friend. Lou had severe allergies and needed to walk the plant tube most days.

The plant tube is a pipe for humans. It's above all the pollution. It has loads of plants dangling above it and a sustainable watering system throughout the tube. Plants, water and fresh air spreads to the house.

Danielle James (mother)

Jess woke from a strange dream. She brushed back her sandy blonde hair from her face. The

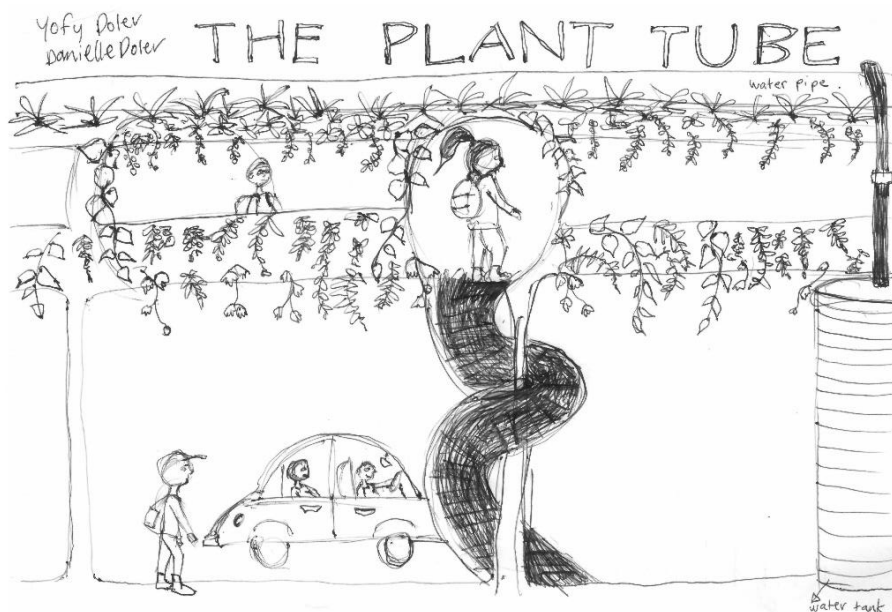
trickle of water was the first sound she heard every morning. A sound of comfort and security. It was the water running through the pipes. She opened her eyes "Good morning Des," she said whilst reaching her hand up to pat the heart shaped leaf of her favourite plant. Jess sat up in bed and stretched forward for a moment before doing her breathing exercises. Every morning she did 10 cycles of alternate nostril breathing, various retention patterns and vacuum breath. After completing her breathing exercises Jess pressed the button on the pollution monitor, "beep, beep, beep"..."seven hundred and thirty five," revealed an automated voice.

Levels were rather low today. Jess smiled and slipped on her bamboo green school shirt with a brown leaf emblem on the pocket symbolising Erskineville Public School, the most evolved school in the inner west of Sydney. Three generations of Jess's family had attended Erskineville Public School.

After a quick text to Lou, her best friend, to see where they would meet, Jess slid down the vine that was central to her house, into the kitchen. Jess grabbed her anaph satchel and pulled out her content analyser.

Jess's mum was stirring porridge on the stove "morning my sweet girl, how were your dreams?". "Strange," replied Jess. Jess's mum looked at her wide eyed "please record them Jess before they vanish from your mind, it's very important." "Yeeees mum, please don't harass me." said Jess.

"Where's your content analyser?" asked Jess's mum. Jess handed her mum a small grey box. Jesse's mum held it next to the porridge and



pressed the round green button. Within one second a robotic voice came from the box, “nuts negative, sesame negative.” This meant the porridge was safe for Jess to eat.

Jess scoffed her breakfast down quickly, partly from hunger, partly from being in a hurry to see Lou. She checked for messages. Lou had replied, she was feeling good and was satisfied with the low pollution level. Jess grinned, they could meet on the corner and walk the footpath together. It had been 3 months since they had walked the footpath to school.

Lou’s allergies were worse than Jess’s and most days they would walk along the plant tube to school. Exhaust fumes and minor outdoor pollutants could trigger an allergic reaction. All except three of the students in Jess’s class had severe allergies. Most students walked the plant tube to school.

Most people had sensitivities and allergies to various air pollutants and reactions could be as extreme as anaphylaxis.

The plant tube is a large pipeline existing on stilts above the footpath. It is covered in plants that filter pollutants. It is an amazing vision of green leaves and vines and flowers. Every 50 metres is a water tank that pumps water through small pipelines and irrigates the entire plant system of the plant tube. Any excess water is distributed to households.

Jess’s father was involved in the design and installation of the plant tube and also gave his life,

some would say, in order to complete the plant tube. Inside the plant tube the same sound that Jess woke to in the morning, that trickle of water, could be heard. This was part of the soundtrack to Jess’s life. For those with extreme allergies the plant tube went straight to the office door of Erskineville public school.

Otherwise there existed a 400 metre vehicle free zone around the school, making it safe for many of the students to walk outside in this area.

“Where are you meeting Lou?” asked Jess’s mum. “On the corner,” mumbled Jess. “Well if you are not waling the plant tube please wear a mask,” said Jess’s mum. “No,” replied Jess defiantly and left the house straight away.

Jess took her first steps beyond the trees that created a thin but effective barrier between her house and the footpath. City life had changed in the last 31 years. The importance of trees and plants was relevant more than ever with the influx of allergies. Jesse’s house is only 2 metres from the road at the front. There is no front yard but a strip of trees exists. Plants and trees create a barrier to Jess’s house wherever possible. Her house is camouflaged, it is difficult to see one brick. Jess was sure the birds didn’t realise it was a house for humans. There were a couple of nests amongst the branches a little higher up. All of the houses in Jess’s street were similar, it was hard to see a door or a window, the houses were unrecognisable. Jess stepped out from behind the line of trees a little nervous but excited.

Straight away she spotted Lou on the corner. Lou has long straight brown hair, she wears glasses and reminds Jess of a mouse or a squirrel. Lou was waving with excitement at Jess. Jess ran to greet her. They slapped their hands back and forth in a secret handshake, they both laughed and headed to school with a half skip, half walk. They were on the opposite side of the street to the plant tube and through the windows of the plant tube they could see students walking. The students were looking down at Jess and Lou in amazement and with envious eyes. Jess and Lou enjoyed being the envy of the other students and revelled in their freedom for the morning.

On the way to school Jess and Lou had to take a detour. They needed to avoid the Westconnex vents. Underneath the streets of Erskineville and Newtown exists a motorway and in peak hour there is an increased release of exhaust fumes through the vents. Even though there are more electric cars than ever as well as solar and hydrogen cars, the problem is with the evolution of allergies through the generations. Not only does a majority of the population have allergies but the sensitivities are more extreme. It does not take much exposure for a serious allergic reaction to occur. Everybody even people who are known to be allergy free avoids the WestConnex vents.

This day on their way to school Jess and Lou were enjoying, kicking at stones, picking flowers and watching lorikeets feast on their favourite red berries. It was the beginning of the school year and they were happily chatting about their new class.

They had scored big time, it was their last year of primary school and the four of them, the fabulous four, were all in a class together. Cath and Adrien

were the other half of the fabulous four. The four of them had been "best friends forever" for the last three years that is since grade three.

Jess and Lou absent-mindedly walked round a corner and a dog ran past yapping loudly. Then Jess saw it first, but it wasn't until she heard the low grumbling sound that Lou become aware as well. A big yellow garbage truck was chugging along the road loud and clear like a monster unaware of the damage it can create. Jess looked at Lou and saw the expression on her face change in an instant. Jess's heart started to beat a little faster, so she consciously slowed her breath in order to calm her heart. Panic increased the possibility of a reaction.

Jess put a hand on Lou's shoulder and straight away said "It's ok, stay calm, cover your mouth and turn away." As the truck came closer the two girls held hands covered their mouths and turned their backs to the road. "Keep breathing," said Jess, "you still need to breathe." It seemed to take forever for the truck to pass, by the time it had passed Jess and Lou were still breathing and had no signs of a reaction.

Simultaneously they took out their face protection masks and slipped them over their mouth and nose. They walked on quickly without talking. They had not walked far when another sound set their hearts racing again. Although the new airport was outside the city, it could not manage the full capacity of aeroplane traffic. There is a minority group fighting to keep flights coming and going from the mascot airport. Both Jess and Lou's Grandma's are a part of this group. They were comrades camping out in Sydney Park to protest against the WestConnex 30 years ago and were still activists for various

causes today. The two girls knew between the truck and the plane overhead there was a much higher chance of a reaction. Straight away they decided to leave their detour and head for the nearest entrance to the plant tube.

As Jess and Lou arrived to the base of the stairs leading to a plant tube entrance Jess caught sight of a slumped figure ahead. Jess tugged on Lou's shoulder. "What?" said Lou. Jess pointed to the figure further down the footpath. Jess recognised the backpack, "it's Robin". "He doesn't have any allergies," said Lou. "Maybe it's his first reaction, it does happen you know, in which case he may not have an anaph satchel on him. We have to go and help." Lou expressed reluctance in her eyes but Jess knew Lou's heart and with faith that Lou would follow Jess left to help Robin. Jesse's throat started to tickle, she could not only smell but feel the residual fallout from the plane as if it was seeping into her body. She ignored the sensation as she had been trained to do, she knew Lou would be going through the same internal process too.

Every morning, first class at school was first aid and emergency training. As she had been taught Jess switched on the emergency button in her brain, one word came to her mind, "FOCUS". All sensation and sound receded, any faltering fluctuations in her mind and emotional state ceased. The only thing that motivated both Jess and Lou now was the task at hand. The safety of Robin and themselves. By the time they reached Robin he was still conscious but was obviously having trouble breathing and was starting to clutch at his throat.

Straight away Jess got out her epi-pen. She positioned herself to hold Robin's leg still. Lou calmed Robin and told him everything was going to be ok whilst also trying to keep him still. It was going to hurt, it always does, this was no small needle. After pulling off the blue tab Jess pressed firm and strong with the epi-pen straight into Robin's thigh. They waited and within seconds Robin's breathing was getting better. Then with some degree of difficulty they managed to get him to the plant tube. Instantly a crowd of people surrounded them. Everyone had their phones out and were calling emergency.

A mother of 2 children said it looked like he may need a second epi-pen. Robin's breathing had recovered for only a few minutes. He was starting to struggle with his breath again. "Here take mine" said Jess. The mother recognised Jess and instantly took it from her. Jess could get epi-pens for free. For everyone else the first epi-pen was subsidised by the government and cost \$90 out of pocket, the second epi-pen was a full \$500.

Jesse's mum was one of the leading scientists researching allergies and anaphylaxis. Her name was especially well known in this area, Dr Fredricka Munro. Jess reached for Lou's hand and lay back on the curve of the plant tube. She took off her mask, gave herself a dose of anti-histamine and offered some to Lou.

They both put their heads down and together breathed. Jess closed her eyes and listened for the sound, there it was, the trickle of water through the pipes. This was the sound of comfort, security, of her father and home. Peace set in.

21. All's Changed 'Cept the Sky

Leaning back against the tiller, I stare up at the sky. It's the same deep blue; it hasn't changed.

George Lancaster

Jocund. That's the word. Takes a while to think of 'em these days. Not dementia, knock on wood. Just slower blood flow, I reckon. Can remember breakfast last Monday. Names of my children, their children, and their children. And my husband's face, in every detail, God rest his soul. Jocund. Apt description of those humpbacks swimming by the tip of the old tourist tower.

Past ninety and still kicking this January, 2050, breathing without effort out here in the open air with my great-granddaughter Jess. She loves riding with her great-grandma, bless her eight-year old heart. Seeing the world through her eyes is a reversing-of-age miracle. I feel a lightness all over, as if I could run a marathon before lunch and scale a peak before dinner.

A rough chuckle escapes my lips.

"What's funny, Gran?"

"Nothing, dear. No. Make that everything. So happy to be out here with you."

Jess smiles and turns straight ahead and the wind catches her braids like kite tails. We've been on the water since early morning and only now is traffic building up. The boat's not much more than a short-masted dinghy. Astern is a small outboard motor powered by the sun. When on, it barely makes a sound, the lapping waves against

the gunwales drowning it out. There's wind enough for the sail today and we're making good time.

Leaning back against the tiller I stare up at the sky. It's the same deep blue; it hasn't changed. A scream startles me awake. Jess is scrambling back towards me, horror etched across her face.

"A croc! Right there!" She points to calm water. "Its eyes! They were staring at me!"

"There, there." I reach out to grab her, bring her close, smother her fear. "Don't you worry, Jess. More afraid of us, I promise." A pause. "As long we're in the boat!" I make as if to pick her up. Then tickle her. Her peeling laughter peels back another year.

Funny how my joy is ever present now. With the change. The Great Riddance. Maybe it's the satisfaction.

The right of it.

"Tell me again, Gran." Jess never tires asking the question. "Tell me what it was like."

When asked, I go way back. Before the first wave. Long before I was born.

"People like us was all there was. Proud peoples, hundreds of languages, living as they wished across this great land."

"Great land?" Jess always stumbles at these words.

"Yes, dear, land as far as you can see. Even here." I point to the bottom of the boat. "Ocean wasn't for miles yet, and between our mountain home and that bit over there," I point to the far off aerial, pretty much all that's left visible of the once tall tower, "was land, unspoiled land."

"And?"

"Trees. So many trees. Huge, beautiful trees. And animals you can't count. Lush. Green. A paradise like no other." Though I wasn't there at the time, I'd grown up with the stories, the suggested images as real as anything seen with my own eyes.

Further questioning is cut short; we've reached Jess's favourite spot. I slacken the sail.

"C'mon Gran, it's time!" Jess lifts the lid of a small bin and takes out two sets of face masks and snorkels. "Here you are!" She shouts she's so excited, handing me the larger one, one better suited for an adult shape.

I help strap hers on before affixing mine. We can't help but giggle when we look at each other through glass. What I see is innocence magnified and eyes too large for her face. What does she see? A mass of wrinkles shoved together, like a Shar Pei puppy. How can we not laugh?

She grabs my hand and pulls me to the side of the boat. Before leaning down we place the snorkels in our mouths. Dentures shift but hold.

"Down, Gran!"

Her hand is on my back, urging me forward, into the drink. A quick glance assures me the sea croc is nowhere near. Nor any other threat. Sea snakes and box jellyfish are deadlier, now ever present in the warmer water. A flotilla of sailing boats slides by, respecting our right to stop, giving us a wide berth, sailors calling "Hallo!" as they pass. Wakes won't be a problem. Together we blow hard into our mouthpieces and plunge our faces into the tepid water.

As my sight adjusts the scene below clears to eye-popping clarity. Brilliant, live coral are

everywhere, festooned thickly upon wide, curving concrete. Reds and blues and yellows, fans and clumps and appendages, the sheer fecundity a marvel of regeneration. Abundant fish of every description swim undisturbed, some singly, more in mass groupings, darting as one. The concrete ribbon splits in two, re-joins into one, swoops and dips in and around a tunnel, the dark entrance a beaconing maw. Can't help but imagine some frightful sea beast lies await inside, just out of sight. Staring doesn't provoke; nothing emerges but bubbles, the remnants of an ancient air pocket, or a cracked gas pipe that's been bleeding for years. Every time we visit, the tiny bubbles are there, floating up in a steady stream. Soon we're past it, moving east with the tide, the crumbling rooftops too far down to see.

"So beautiful! Could watch that for hours!" Jess, her head held high, still has the mask on her face. "Can we turn around? See it again? Please, Gran?"

"Sorry honey. Got to keep moving." I massage my face, trying to rid it quickly of the red circle I know is there. "But don't you worry. St. Peters Interchange, and everything connected to it, isn't going anywhere. The billions they poured into that folly? It'll stand for eons."

22. Our Place

The old in the city is what attracts me. If you go down a side street, you might see a row of wrought-iron'd terraces, or an old, red-brick house with a feature-tile motif...

Joyce Noble

I watched my father die part-time. He'd left the city years before—for a tree change. When he was dying of cancer, I'd commute up the M1 on the weekends and witness his decline. Now, I wonder if I'm witnessing the city's decline.

I'm a commuter. I've always lived on the outskirts of the city. For me, Sydney—the city—mostly consisted of the inside and the fringes of the city circle: Central Station, Town Hall, Wynyard, Circular Quay, St James and Museum. My working week was the CBD, the shopping precinct, the cinema district, the quay and the gardens—a landscape studded with old sandstone buildings.

A little Greek restaurant in Pitt Street, anywhere in Chinatown, the bars beneath Wynyard, old pubs—places I'd hang out with colleagues through the week.

Ethnic restaurants in Surry Hills, Glebe, Leichhardt; theatres around the city; loud pubs with bands, bars up the cross—places I'd hang out with friends on weekends. Community colleges from Bondi to the burbs—places I'd go to learn.

Markets, movies, beaches, the show—places I'd go to explore.

Libraries—places I'd go to plan my escape.

The parks at lunchtime, to walk or read. Wandering the paths in the Botanic Gardens, eyes on the harbour, eyes on the horizon. Sitting in the sun or in tree-shade, birds chatting, flitting in, out, about. Sitting on a bench in Hyde Park near St James, water flowing in the fountain, watching tourists pose in front of it, then noticing the statues, gods with tridents and sculpted horses, rampant. The park, up near the museum end, the Oxford Street end, exhaust fumes and not-so-dulcet tones of traffic on the outside, but benches on the inside, where I'd sit with my library book—still and always a hard copy—maybe borrowed from Sydney Library at the QVB, Town Hall, Circular Quay or now, the Green Square branch—an oasis in the wasteland. Reluctantly retreating to the postage-stamp park behind Wynyard, bounded by busses, but still a patch of green. The Domain, because you got a little walk in, not because of any redeeming features. But never Belmore Park, where the homeless men hung out, though you didn't call them 'homeless men' back then.

I'd read too on the commute to and from the city.

The red rattlers are gone now, from my line at least, though I still have memories of being packed in on summer days, holding onto a pole in the vestibule, swaying, and almost passing out from heat and nausea. Living further out now gives me an advantage of being able to get a seat in the morning, though I still have to climb over people sitting on the stairs or wait for blue-uniformed school boys with bulging backpacks at their feet to

get out before I can. The tunicked girls in the opposite corner stay put.

Much of my commuter's view remains the same. But that's changing now.

I can't cry about the lost views; nothing of any note backed onto the train lines—bare backyards, graffitied brick buildings, old factories, rail yards and eventually, the approaching city skyline.

Now it's some of the same, plus boarded up lots, waiting for development or blocks with cranes and constant activity. Or the high rises at Hurstville or Wolli Creek—cancers, well established, with secondaries creeping along the rail corridor.

When you think you'll be better off travelling by car and you're psychologically prepared to keep a cap on your road rage, you might venture out, behind the wheel, into the streets. You can watch anxious commuters, standing waiting for the bus, making sure they won't be hidden by a truck and left behind by the bus driver. While you wait at the lights, your engine thrumming, listening to the tick-tick, tick-tick of the indicator, and seeing the orange flash from the corner of your eye, you can watch drivers in the lane beside you: the Asian guy in the white 4WD with a purple-ghost bobble-man on his dashboard; or, in his black sedan, the handsome, western European guy with short, dark, wavy hair, curling at the collar of his midnight-blue shirt, toying with his wedding ring. Or you can watch the homes you drive by.

The old in the city is what attracts me.

If you go down a side street, you might see a row of wrought-iron'd terraces, or an old, red-brick house with a feature-tile motif, or if you're very lucky—you might see a house called Edna. If you're lucky, you

might also see a solitary new structure with a bit of soul or a single, redeeming architectural feature.

If you get out of your car in the new developments, near Green Square say, you'll see the cancer up close. Empty blocks still waiting for development, heat blasting up from the concrete, alleys between high rise apartments, where a balcony with a bicycle or an old pot-plant-studded drop-leaf table might indicate human habitation. The new horizon.

My old city was never all that big. But its skyline seems to be shrinking now. Its character seem to be shrivelling. Its possibilities seem to be more elusive. But maybe that's just my view.

Still, I want to see more—more skyline, more artistic, more surprises. I want to see more Sydney bursting from the streets, not just pockets of it.

I want to see our past. I want to see our promise. I want to see our place.

23. Sydney through the eyes of a taxi driver

I like driving around Glebe and Newtown, which is a vibrant and diverse area where people are generally friendly and happy.

Pauline Su

As a migrant/refugee newly arrived from Manus Island, my qualifications as an engineer are not recognised in Australia.

So I drive taxis to survive, to look after my wife and children.

We have to live far out west in Fairfield, I have to wake up very early to start my shift and don't get home till late so I don't even get to see my children.

Through driving taxis all over Sydney, I see people and things of all kinds.

Lucky for me, public transport in Sydney is so unreliable, people have to take a taxi to get somewhere on time.

Although I cannot guarantee that, as traffic congestion can mean I am stuck in a jam, and then my passengers might get angry and frustrated.

People can be so rude, some are even racist, telling me to "go back to where you come from". And some people are dishonest and run away without paying their fare. Still, that is better than being robbed and beaten up by drunks. Or having drunks throw up in my taxi, because I have to clean it up and miss out on my fares.

Driving taxis is very challenging - on one hand I am being squeezed by the taxi owner who is being

squeezed by another company – on the other hand, we are being 'disrupted' by ride share companies.

You can understand why taxi drivers are grumpy and whinge to each other in our own language on our mobiles while we are driving.

I wonder how some people can get so rich in Sydney, when I drive around the harbour side and blue-ribbon suburbs of Vaucluse, Bellevue Hill, Rose Bay Darling Point and Point Piper. I am told you need to have good connections and grease palms. Look at some of the councils which permit high rise development, the developers have the politicians in their pockets.

At least, I feel hopeful I will soon be able to vote and I have an interim Medicare card so I can get some health services.

But private doctors in Australia are so expensive and the public hospitals have a very long waiting list. My family's English is also not so good, but we want to learn.

I encourage my children to study hard, it is the best way to have a better life, get a good job and maybe you could get a house.

But everyone is in a rat-race, so competition is very stiff.

Sometimes it is a 'jungle out there' and people can be very rude, forget their manners. In Sydney everyone seems to be stressed and forget to smile, they smile for their selfies but not for others. I am told it wasn't always like this.

Since young people now believe they may never be able to afford to buy their own homes, they have decided to spend their money enjoying life.

I like driving around Glebe and Newtown, which is a vibrant and diverse area where people are generally friendly and happy. I think it may be because there are 'university' suburbs. I think a civil

society starts with a good education, not just at school but at home. Because children take on their parents values and attributes, don't they?

I want my children to grow up and be good citizens of this country which has taken us in. When I have any free time, I take my family to Sydney Olympic Park. Sydney has a few parks with trees and flowers. They are nice places where families can relax with their friends, relatives, and pets. They are happy places where I can hear birds tweeting and I can forget my worries for a while.

Even though my life is not easy, I want to work hard to make a better life for my children.

Although Sydney is not perfect, I know there are good people here who want to make it a better home for everyone and now it is home for me and my family.

24. Bronx the Redfern Dog

They always stop to give me a scratch on my back.

Natasha Sitanala

Oh! Mum is back! She took my harness! Oh my God it's time for walkies! So excited! I ran to the lift. Mum will take me to this small park across the road from the apartment it's called Gibbons Street Reserve.

She took this black thing which she put my poop in. Haha I always think it's funny when she picks up my poop. Why would she? Mum told me that it's the rule to live in Sydney to pick up my poop. Oh, suit yourself mum. You picked them up for me, so I don't have to work hard at burying it.

She took me off the leash! And...yes! Run free...Ooooh...hold on what's this great smell? Oooh...I'm following it. I think it's something yummy. I wonder if I can eat it? Let me see what Mum's doing.

Well, she's busy with the square! Yes! She won't see me eat this then. I ran so quick and grabbed the delicious thing. Oh my...so good. And then here comes mum. She pulled me away from the food! Why? It's free food! Mum stop! I'm gonna growl at her.

What? She put the leash back on and she picked up my food. Oh no she put it in the poo bag! Mum that's not my poop! Oh no how dare she bin it. Mum talked to the square again and said she was sick of people leaving food in dog parks. She sounds really angry. I hope I won't get a time out at home because I ate food in the park. This is my worst fight with mum so far. I hope she still loves me.

I am confused. Everyone else is taller than me and they have two legs. I used to have some friends at my height with 4 legs but since I have a new home, I am the only one with 4 legs.

My human friend really tried to put this thing on me. It goes over my body and has a really long thing she's holding on to. It makes me attached to her. It's called a harness. Oh no, I really want to run free on my own! But boy, she feeds me well. If I sit and stare, I get yummy things! I'll do it so often then. Oh, her name is Mum.

My Mum took me to her work. What is work? Where there are so many desks and cables! Oh I love cables! But Mum always scream at me when I get closer to the cables. This place has doors but they're always open. Maybe I should try to go out and pee on my own. Oops that didn't go well. I get in trouble. Mum put me in a naughty corner. After Mum finished with this work thing, Mum took me out to this place called Alexandria Park. Lots of four legged friends and they are my size too! I have more friends now. She took me here every afternoon. It's my favourite time of the day, after treat time!

I now go to work with Mum every day. I get to meet so many people who are my neighbours. I met them when I go with Mum to the place she buys flowers, fruit and vegetables on Regent Street, I met them at other fun parks like Redfern Park, Waterloo Green. But Mum doesn't let me off leash because there are so many people around. I know most of them. They come to me and Mum's work often. They always stop to give me a scratch on my back. Wonder if they have some yum treats in their pocket.

I overheard Mum talk to the square thing that makes so much noise and it vibrates, scares the hell out of me when it does. Mum loves that square

thing. I can tell. She always holds it and looks at it. And she even tries to make me look at it while posing for her. Weird! Mum said to square that she doesn't want to go to the city because she can't take me with her. She wants to go to the Tudor Hotel around the corner in Redfern instead because it's dog friendly.

What? Mum? Stop! Why are you putting shoes on but not my harness? Where are you going Mum? Am I not invited? Was I a bad boy today? Mum, look let's play fetch instead. Take your shoes off! Or I'll help you take them off! No! I am not biting your shoes Mum! I only want you to stay with me. So Mum said she's going to the city. And she can't take me along. What is the city? And why can't I come?

Mum said I can't go on a train or bus with her so she has to go alone. This makes me sad. I will have to stay home alone. I hope Mum will be back soon. She always said she doesn't really like the city anyway. She said it's so hectic!

25. There is an Elephant beneath our city

Sharlene Smith

The Elephant has a long memory,
lying beneath the rubble

He hopes the new age will bring some common sense,
to ensure that there is green space to roam and clear the air

The Elephant knows he should not be here,
placed with little care or thought

Like many of us left behind,
now the keepers of the fort.

The Elephant is not alone,
he is blessed to share the ground with the local kangaroos.

He values their knowledge and input,
learning how to manage this complicated soil.

The Elephant is waiting to be heard,
as he lies patiently beneath our city park.

His bones a reminder of our failings,
his memory a gift to future generations.

26. Time to let go

Sharlene Smith

Holding on is stifling the future.
letting go hurts.

Craving times long past,
a modern day curse.

Needing to create a memory for the children
a gift to give the universe.

Building a new community for tomorrow,
a responsibility not the worst.

Working together so important,
diversity, not the purse.

Creating our identity,
I am Sydney must be first.

27. Friday Night

Esther Bailey

Aaaah
I sit
On my balcony
The sun sets
I breathe in. breathe out
The city skyline twinkles in the distance.
The first lights coming on in the spiralling towers
Cable cars thrum as they ferry the high rise workers out to transit hubs
Sailing down from the sky into the tree canopy of the city below.
I close my eyes.
The swish and swash of the ghost gums on the levels above
Play shadows across my ears and eyelids.
Fragrant, cool, transpired oxygen swirls in eddies
Cooling the heat of the day
Soothing the soul.
Laughter bubbles up from the children playing below
At ground level
And below
Making dens and tunnels through the fun forest
Playing chase
Roaming free
In and out of the tower blocks
The clack and hum of skateboard wheels and go-smart-go-carts
Looping endlessly around the bike lanes
Terrorising old ladies with their tartan magno-shopping trollies
Weaving. Wheeling.

Their parents flick and flap their laundry
On their balconies
In their pants
The intimacy and collusive, collective blindness of high density living
They check the screen of the kid safe app
Comforted by the circling on-screen blip
Telling them their child is safe, included and still hydrated.
Soon the alarm will remind the kids to come in for tea.

A little flutter of wings
A chirrup and squawk
A family of cheeky lorikeets
Drive a warbling maggie from her perch
On the roof-top bird-box mini-city.

The tiny buzz of electronic bees
and my iridescent E1000 hummingbird
Finish their days work, pollinating my wall garden.
Great yield this month.
If you like tomatoes anyway!

I'll have to make up with Mrs Patel
If I want to trade avocados with her this week.

The smell of ripening neighbourhood fruit hangs heavier
The air becomes still.
The bats will arrive soon.

In the middle distance, a siren wails
The sound first sharp then dull
Moves left to right
Near to far
Comforting

Ferrying the days heat stroke victims
To the medi-cool centre.
I wouldn't want to be an outdoor worker nowadays.

Closer, women laugh
And the sound of music ripples in.
It's Friday night
I hear them joking, dancing.
Suddenly, the sound of breaking glass.
Abrupt Silence
"Sky taxi!" someone shouts
Then more laughing erupts. Louder. Bolder.
I love this track
Oh god
I hate this one.
I check myself. Let it go. They've having a good time. Chill out
I turn my head and the noise washes back.

Later, if the party noise gets too much
I'll retreat inside
Pull up the noise-cancelling screens
Activate the Faraday cage.
Float in the stillness
Or
Crank up my own tracks
Turn on Skype immersive party mode
And hang with the London crew. They'll still be up!

Life is good.

The Sydney I love has
Space to be together and Space to be alone
Joy in casual neighbourly interactions
Places to hang with friends
Great breakfasts
Food picked on site and freely shared
A barista who knows your name
Splash play in every park
Shady trees
Jogging and Tai Chi
People from many places, speaking many languages
Chess in the park
Leathery old dudes strolling
with their pants high and their tops off
Comfortable in their skin
Quirky. Diverse. Welcome
Enveloped in their community.
Clean air
Streets for people
Efficient transport
Fulfilling employment
Equality of opportunity
Peace
Respect
Prosperity
Fun
.

(and if you want a manifesto, read bottom to top!)





Thank you