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• A good turnout at Mission Australia's Christmas Lunch meant bad news for Perth's housing situation. Photo supplied by Mission Australia WA

Festive wake-up call

by DAVID BELL

A GRIM record was set over the holidays with the highest ever number of people attending Mission Australia's Christmas Lunch for homeless people in Wellington Square.

It was a turnout that

organisers see as a dire sign of the housing and cost-of-living crisis.

2023 marked the 48th lunch run on Christmas day by Mission Australia WA for those in need, with more than 1500 people attending the three-course meal organised by 300 volunteers.

MAWA state director Sue Budalich said the huge

turnout reflected the severe housing and cost of living crisis.

"This event is nearly 50 years old, and our team have never seen such a turn-out before," Ms Budalich said in a post-event statement.

"People who have never been homeless, including people in paid employment,

people with mortgages, are struggling to make ends meet and they're asking Mission Australia for help."

She said urgent government action was needed to avert higher numbers becoming homeless.

"Our staff on the frontline say the housing situation is the worst they've seen,

and too many people are having to make hard choices - between putting food on the table, paying the power bill or paying the rent," and those financial pressures rose over Christmas, Ms Budalich said.

"As rents and interest rates rise and the social housing wait list grows, the number of people pushed

into homelessness will only go up."

Several large housing initiatives from the state government have been in the pipeline but progress is slow, with delays plaguing a range of projects from East Perth's Common Ground to the long-empty Stirling Towers.

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and Thanks

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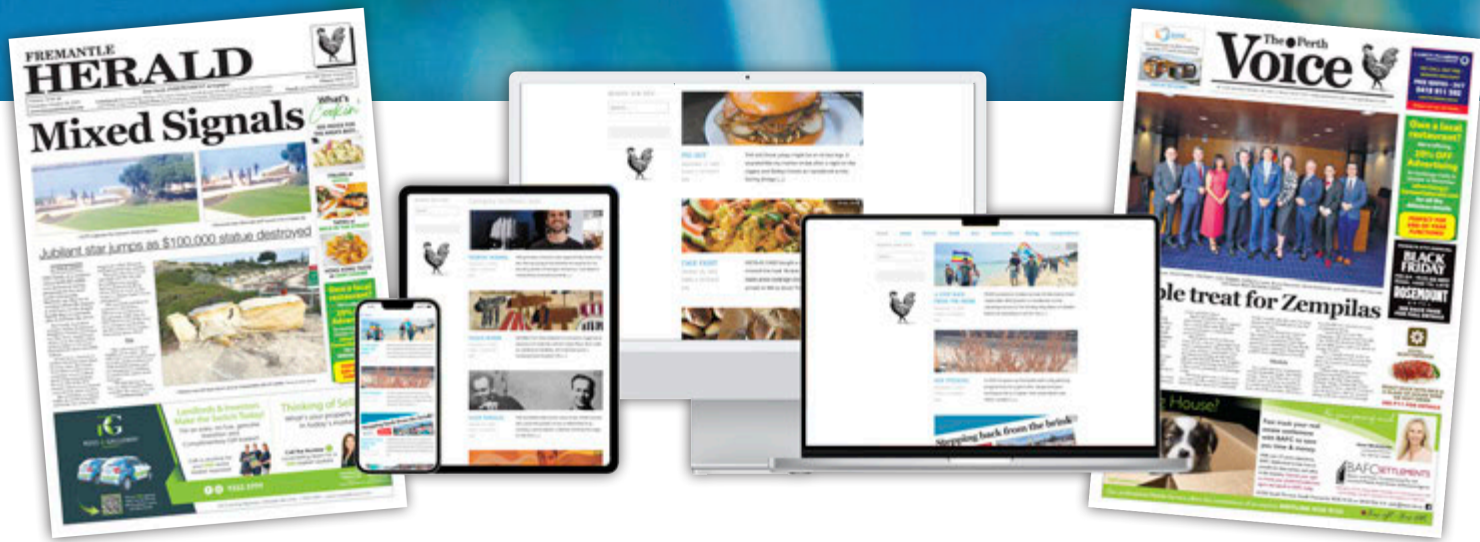
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• Writer Vivienne Glance (above) reads from the 2018 IPCC report at XRWA's 2020 protest; one of the many demonstrations that precipitated the severance between Fringe and fossil fuels. Photo by Miles Tweedie

Fossil free

by DAVID BELL

THE divorce has been finalised between Fringe World Festival and their former fossil fuel funder Woodside.

It follows a years-long campaign by artists and climate activists who pressured Fringe organisers to sever the relationship.

In recent years activists have staged impromptu performances, collected petitions, held protests, and even conducted a 50-hour long reading of the entire 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report ('Protesters rock fringe', Perth Voice, January 25, 2020).

They accuse Woodside of using the festival to present itself as a responsible corporate citizen while pumping out greenhouse gas emissions from

its LNG projects. Woodside describes LNG as a "lower-emissions alternative" to oil. The activists had their first big win in 2021 when Fringe dropped the naming rights deal with Woodside, but the company continued to sponsor the festival through Fringe organiser Artrage instead.

Greenhouse gas

This week campaigners from Fossil Free Arts announced the final ties had been cut, with the statue-felling moment marked by the removal of Woodside as a listed partner on Artrage's website. It follows Perth Festival likewise cutting ties with its major sponsor Chevron in 2023, making 2024 the first fossil free festival season.

"When we all first sat in a room together five years ago

to set this goal of kicking these huge companies out of our biggest festivals, I'm not sure how many of us thought we would actually achieve this," campaigner Anthony Collins said in the FFA announcement.

"It is a credit to the WA arts scene that festival season is no longer promoting the destruction being caused by the state's two biggest polluters."

While it's taken a multi-year campaign to get the Perth Festival and Fringe to drop Chevron and Woodside, another major Perth arts festival has long eschewed such funding: Revelation Film Fest has had a longstanding policy against taking cash from fossil fuel companies and "others that pose a threat to the environment, social equity and respect for cultural traditions", according to its ethical partnership policy.



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Gag stays put

by DAVID BELL

AN inquisitive Stirling resident will spend another year on the "Restricted Customer" list, limiting contact with Stirling council staff after his queries were deemed "unreasonable" back in 2016.

Resident Robert Mitchell attends almost every council meeting to pose queries at public question time, and he's been critical on a plethora of issues ranging from Stirling's management of its properties and its confidential expenditure on contracts, to traffic management and tree planting.

But as for what got him on the restricted customer list, Mr Mitchell says via email: "I am at a loss to know what the trigger was".

He says it may relate to what he describes as his "admonishing" of a manager back in 2016, but he also recalls getting an "adverse reaction" when he queried how much the council spent on volunteers.

Being on the restricted customer list doesn't prevent Mr Mitchell from quizzing the council at public question time, where all communication with staff is mediated through the meeting's chairperson (typically mayor Mark Irwin).

But he's been told not to call staff or make any in-person inquiries, instead being directed to mail in letters or use an online customer enquiry form.

The restriction is reviewed every 12 months, and on December 22 Mr Mitchell received

an email advising that it would endure through 2024.

"The City acknowledges your right to ask questions, request information and express opinions about the City's services and its officers," the review email states, "however, upon review of your recent interactions with the City it has been determined that your behaviour constitutes unreasonable complainant conduct in accordance with the City's Complaints Policy.

"Therefore, your communication restriction will remain in place for a further 12 months with another review to be conducted in December 2024."

We asked Stirling about the restricted customer list, and a written response states their complaints policy "determines the appropriate course of action in balancing the right of the customer to ask questions, express their views and make complaints while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the City's employees.

"The City has a responsibility to respond and communicate appropriately.

"It is expected that customers behave in a reasonable manner according to the City's Customer Charter.

"In circumstances where it is identified that the customer is demonstrating unreasonable behaviour the City may request that the customer cease or adjust their behaviour."

If they don't they can be restricted to communicating under specific terms, like only submitting queries in writing so they can be handled by staff with special training.

The response says "Out of



• The Christmas crowds were dubbed 'record breaking' with thousands coming out for the Christmas lights trail this year. Photo via City of Perth

Bumper holiday crowds

PERTH city has seen "the biggest New Years Eve in a decade" with Perth council crowding over a turnout of up to 50,000 people in the city on December 31.

It follows a record-breaking spend in the lead up to Christmas, with figures showing city spending was up 25 per cent in November 2023 compared to 2022.

Big city turnouts have

more than 235,000 residents, less than 10 customers are captured by this policy.

"In this specific case, the behaviours that remain at issue for the City include but

proved a persistent point of pride for lord mayor Basil Zempilas, who called for the city's revivification following the covid-induced quietness of 2020 and 2021.

In a post-NYE media statement he said "Elizabeth Quay was absolutely pumping, with thousands coming together to celebrate - it was quite the sight.

"Thank you to those huge crowds for being so well

behaved and respectful, making it the perfect family-friendly event."

But the event did attract a few online grumbles on social media the next day: While Elizabeth Quay had hosted the 8pm fireworks at a family-friendly time, the midnight fireworks were in Northbridge.

But many people remained at the Quay, assuming a second round of waterfront fireworks would take place at midnight.

continue making queries in the remaining format available to him, and when council meetings recommence for 2024 he says "rest assured I will be asking questions".



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• Fremantle's Finn Alexander (front) and the Forever Party play thought-provoking alt-rock.



Featuring a bitter-sweet melody and gorgeous chord progression, it never outstays its welcome and is at times uplifting and at others melancholic.

Alt heaven

 arts
STEPHEN POLLOCK

AN anthropologist working with Aboriginal groups in WA, it's no surprise that Finn Alexander's music is deep, multi-layered and says a lot about the human condition.

When he's not out in the field deciphering civilisation, you'll find the 26-year-old tinkering on

his guitar and writing songs in his share-house in Fremantle.

Alexander's been playing guitar since the age of 10 and got a first class music education from his cool parents who were into Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds, Leonard Cohen and PJ Harvey.

After a songwriting hiatus, Alexander realised he needed music back in his life, so in 2022 he formed a new alt-rock band – The Forever Party.

"The group came together late last year after I fell deeply back in love with songwriting after a long

break," he says.

"I'd been so totally immersed in studies and work and remember feeling a bit lost, and envious of people around me making beautiful things.

"At some point I realised that there was this colossal, music shaped hole in my life."

Alexander got in touch with his old drummer Rory Lowe-McLoughlin from Western Kinsmen of the Sun, and it wasn't long before they had enlisted fiddler Elise Hiatt from Jack Davies and the Bush Chooks, Patrick Nielsen on bass and lead guitarist Finn Pearson, whose played with Siobhan Cotchin.

Their upcoming single *God is Murdered* is a dreamy, spiritual epic that winds its way through the ups and downs of modern life.

consequences.

"There's this beautiful irony to that which makes me laugh. We yearn for rapid social evolution but we're still profoundly tribal animals, so we get snared again and again by black and white thinking, moral dogmas, and ideas like excommunication. Whatever our views are, we all find a way to carve an altar out of something."

Alexander says he's inspired to write about things that fascinate or bewilder him; mostly acts committed by dumb humans.

"There's a song on our upcoming EP called *Reflections of the Revolution* about a fictional revolution where humanity devolves into a sort of euphoric anarchy," Alexander says.

"There's this human inclination to view ourselves as the archetype of the saviour.

"When shit hits the fan most of us would like to believe that we would 'rise to the occasion' but that doesn't often play out in reality. I think that's an interesting thing to write a song about.

"We're an alt-rock band with a lyrical tendency towards the honest and the absurd. Imagine that Nick Cave had a drink with Father John Misty and then Matt Berninger walked into the bar but he was a little bit intoxicated (or something equally as ear catching)."

Alexander is currently in Romania, but he'll be back on home soil to play with the Forever Party at Bunbury Fringe on January 12 and the band's latest single *God is Murdered* will be released on January 11. To find out more about Finn Alexander and the Forever Party see facebook.com/finnalexanderandtheforeverparty.



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by DANNY

Let's set the scene:

DANNY and **HELEN** to be Married 23.3.74 at 10.45am in St Jerome's Church, Spearwood

Assisted by:
Best Man: D'Arcy (Darc)
Maid of Honour: Wendy
Groomsman: Alan (Cero)
Bridesmaid: Carol
Priest: Fr Tomich(Tomo)

What follows is a truthful series of events on that day without expletives.

*You got the ring NOOooooooooo
Still on dressing table NOOooooooooo*

A morning wedding ceremony can only mean - guess if you're cluey.

A visit to the early opener Newmarket Pub - The Newy Precise times and deadline targets are noted.

Darc and Cero arrive early as calculated.

Jump in the ute enjoy few beers games of pool Schedule! we're off; institution of marriage beckons how cool.

We hit the bend on Mayor Rd; someone drops a human hydrogen bomb which fouls the air.

I hit the skids we jump out like idiots we run around jump back in with lungs full of fresh air.

Once home even though we insist we're on time the old man says you will be late.

Adding you boys are stewpeed a name I have been so familiar with to date.

*You got the ring NOOooooooooo
Still on dressing table NOOooooooooo*



Wedding Day Clouds

For the schedule we now have shower shave with speed.

Folks off mum says lock up don't be late as though to plead.

Smooth smooth as silk as we prepare until a nick.

On the neck from a new blade makes me feel like a dick.

It's the 70's no box of tissues just hankies and cigarette paper.

We rise to the occasion patch up and hankie in jacket pocket maybe needed later.

White suits shoes bow ties with fancy blue shirts shit we look dapper.

We're ready and on time to get hitched what could be better.

It's the old days exit front door folks have only key home secure.

A leisurely 5min drive with Cero at the wheel how easy to endure.



*You got the ring NOOooooooooo
Still on dressing table NOOooooooooo*

We head to a meeting with Tomo unlike our previous meet.

Helen RC Faith education at Tomo's home but bring 2 King Brown beers hard to beat.

In sight of the church and the gathering you beauty on time with

minutes to spare. Lean in back to Darc you got the ring NOOooooooooo not the time to be funny don't dare. Still on dressing table. NOOooooooooo a bombardment of expletives from all resonate.

Instant agreement as a U turn is performed my only redemption but Helen to wait.

Now that leisurely drive has transformed akin a police pursuit without the police.

Cero in his element now with justification passing on the inside outside all will suffice.

Mobiles would have been handy as we arrive back home in half the time.

Then stark realisation comes over me shit house locked no key hell of a time.

*You got the ring NOOooooooooo
Still on dressing table NOOooooooooo*



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Hopefully Clearing

No need to panic I have on many occasions broken in after late nights lockout.

Fav method stashed wire with hook push key through hole wire under door drag key out. However on this occasion for speed have chosen sister Lil's bedroom window.

Darc and I throw jackets on front seat and off we go. Flyscreen off window up the old heave up and I'm in.

Ring in hand out front door it's like we again begin.

Jackets on Darc firm grip on the ring Cero waiting we off Cero assumes he's driving the getaway car and needs to escape and literally takes off.

Wow I've never seen Spearwood flash by like this before We arrive make our entrance to an amused packed church take our spots Tomo to the fore.

*You got the ring NOOOOOOOOOO
Still on dressing table NOOOOOOOOOO*

Meanwhile Helen unaware of the situation has been doing circuits of the church.

With cousin Grgo in his flashy Chrysler with Wendy Carol totally in the lurch. The music sounds Helen makes her entrance I think check the nick on the neck.

Hand in pocket for hankie nothing there what the heck.

Mind in overdrive check with Darc yes hankie in his pocket. You have my jacket must swap we stand as though shot out like a rocket.

As we change jackets

accompanied by immense laughter Tomo is waiting and beside himself waiting for the next disaster.

In the background I hear stewpeed as Helen makes her way down the aisle. She draws alongside we hold hands Mate if I said what beauty no one would be in denial.

*You got the ring NOOOOOOOOOO
Still on dressing table NOOOOOOOOOO*

The 10.45 is now 11.15 to begin nuptials please nothing else no one even say boo. Tomo decides to keep the crazy going by performing ceremony in Croatian and English then I do. Kissed signed sealed confettied congratulated you beauty Grgo's Chrysler off to the Phoenix Pub. In foyer a beer for all no agonising wait for speeches let's get them over with then grog and grub. Speeches few short and sweet actually only Darc and I thanking lovely bridesmaids and everyone.

Now we can all enjoy the festivities before we all depart as one.

The Holden Station Wagon is adorned with cans toilet paper sticky tape and Just Married lipstick.

For Helen's family an education in the Spearwood way different but hopefully approval with a big tick We're off down North Lake Rd right into Canning Hwy out the front of Kentucky and bang.

Front left tyre flat head left pull up dang.

Not today in my finery will I change a tyre. So hale down the first car that

comes along and explain please my need of you help is dire.

*You got the ring NOOOOOOOOOO
Still on dressing table NOOOOOOOOOO*

So obliging as he begins until cousin George comes along and offers and takes over. All done thanks as George adds mate with today's goings on wouldn't be surprised if Helen runs for cover.

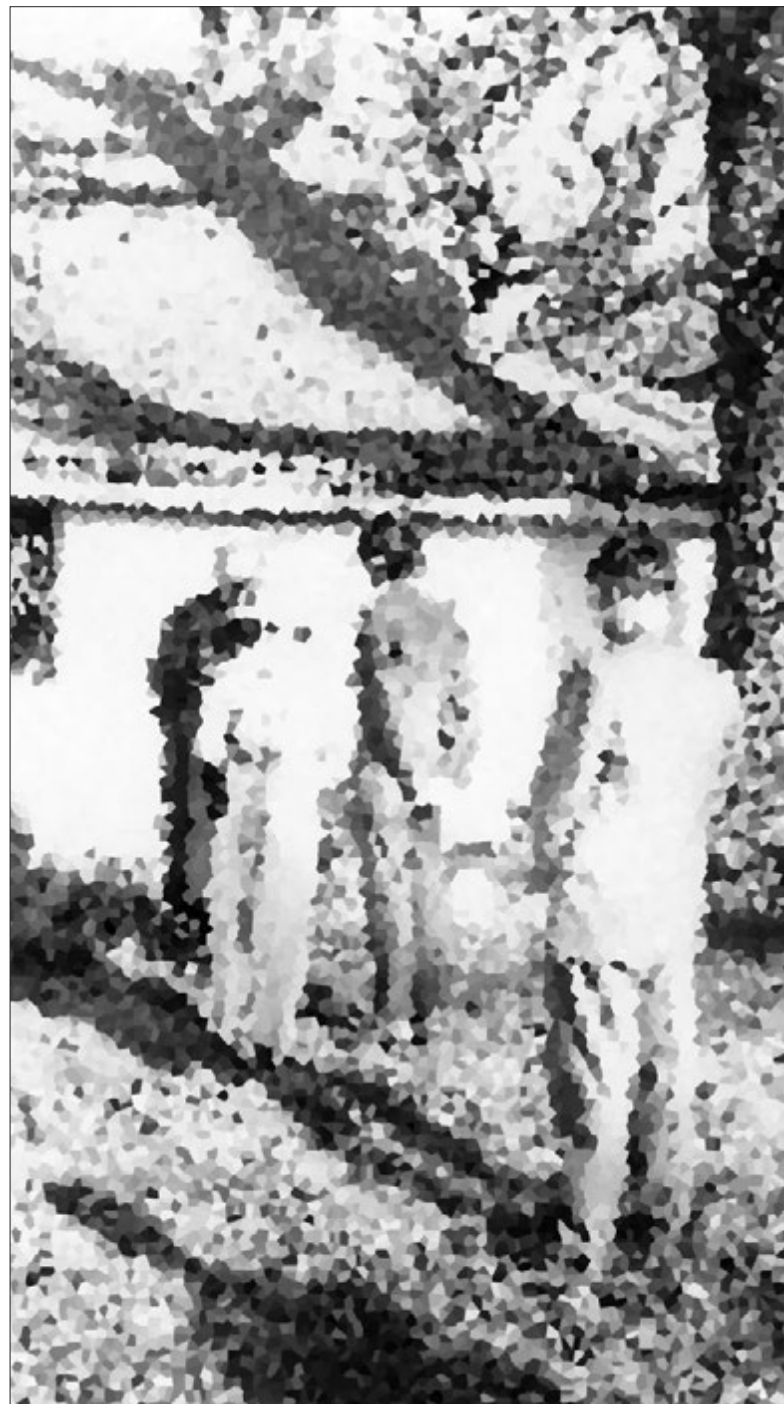
Again we're off heading for the secret destination I suggest we're heading for the Nullabor. Only to turn left at the Causeway and head down the Terrace and eventually to our front door. It's the new ritzy Parmelia Hotel as we are greeted and welcomed with celebrity status.

Ushered through and to our room it is finally only us. We agree a romantic evening with room service as we recalled the day we both laughed. Emphasis on the romantic we order a dinner of burgers chips and two bottles of Swan Draught. What a day full of mixed emotions frantic fun happy all heaven sent.

It's late into the night and about those clouds well at present.

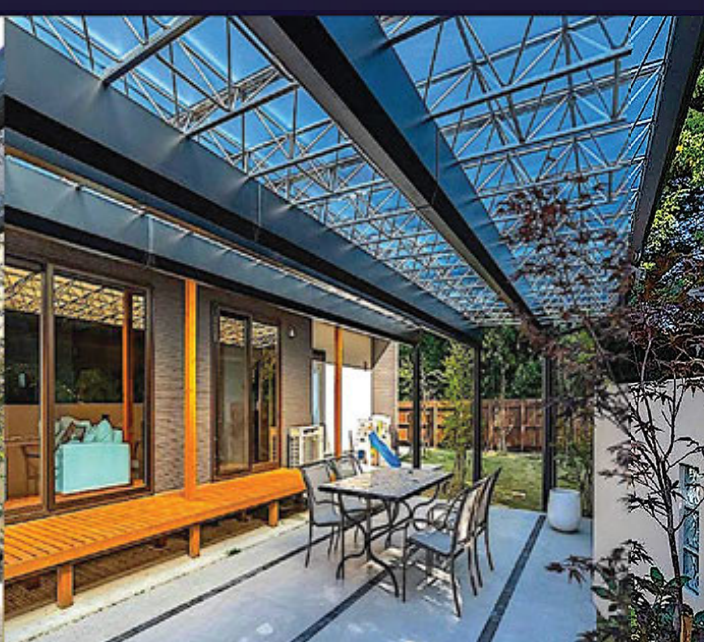
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Food ahoy

 food
STEPHEN POLLOCK

MOST folk associate Fremantle Fishing Boat Harbour with fish and chips, but in recent years there has been a wider variety of eateries at the waterfront precinct.

Bathers Beach House's modern Australian cuisine and the Char Char steakhouse have given punters slightly more choice, but one of the most recent additions, Ostro Italian, could be a game changer.

Opened in November last year, the restaurant/wine bar is situated directly behind Bathers Beach House and is the only dedicated Italian restaurant at the harbour.

It's in a gorgeous spot – the alfresco has glorious views of the Indian Ocean, Rottne Island and

vessels going in and out of the bustling Freo port.

It also benefits from being slightly setback from the front, so you have a nice breeze, but aren't buffeted by the sometimes over-zealous Freo doctor.

My family and I got there about 7pm and we decided to sit inside, near the front of the restaurant, where you could still glimpse the ocean and watch people coming and going from the beach.

The contemporary dining room was uncluttered and had a casual seaside air, while still being professional and giving off the air of a premium venue.

There was a lovely mural of Freo on the wall, showcasing the rainbow entry statement, cranes at the port, and even a bohemian woman on a vespa.

There were some nice design touches including the woven basket lampshades and the swish bar, creating a stylish yet relaxed

vibe. The service was fantastic with the waiting staff, in trendy Geppetto-style overalls, sporting beaming smiles and welcoming you to the venue.

They all seemed to have thick Italian accents, adding to the authenticity.

The menu had a range of classic Italian entree dishes, pasta/risotto, mains, pizza, salads and desserts.

Highlights included the scallopini al vino Bianco, swordfish steak, fettuccine beef

cheeks ragu and the scallops and prawn tortellini. The menu was a nice size – enough choice without being overwhelming.

It's taken me a while, but I've finally adjusted to most quality main and pasta dishes now being in the high \$20s and \$30 range.

But credit to Ostro, they had \$20 pasta nights on Tuesdays and \$20 pizzas on Wednesdays, making it somewhere you could visit on a regular basis without busting the bank. I went for the Pesce Al Mare

from the special boards (\$37) and it was a cracker.

The star of the dish was the beautiful seafood medley of barramundi, calamari and prawns, served with a delicious lemon butter dill sauce.

The sauce was creamy and indulgent without ever becoming sickly and went perfectly with the seafood. The calamari were some of the most tender I've ever tasted, and the large fillet of barramundi was perfectly cooked.

It was accompanied by a lovely rocket salad with balsamic dressing and cherry tomatoes, and a serve of crispy fries with a fragrant rosemary twist. A beautifully executed dish with top quality produce.

Across the table, my wife "Special K" was savouring her truffle ravioli (\$30).

"The freshly made pasta is incredibly light and has a creamy decadent filling," she said.

"I'm loving the luxurious truffle flavour – it's perfectly balanced and not overpowering."

There was a kids menu with a nice range of pasta dishes including tagliatelle meatballs and beef ragu, but Bamm-Bamm and Pebbles wanted to share an adult Margherita pizza.

It was big and the kids couldn't finish it, so my wife and I got a sneaky taste.

It was top quality and had a beautiful tomato sauce and mozzarella topping.

I couldn't really fault Ostro Italian – the ambience, service and food were all top notch – and it's a high quality addition to the Fishing Boat Harbour.

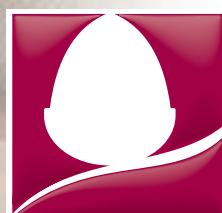
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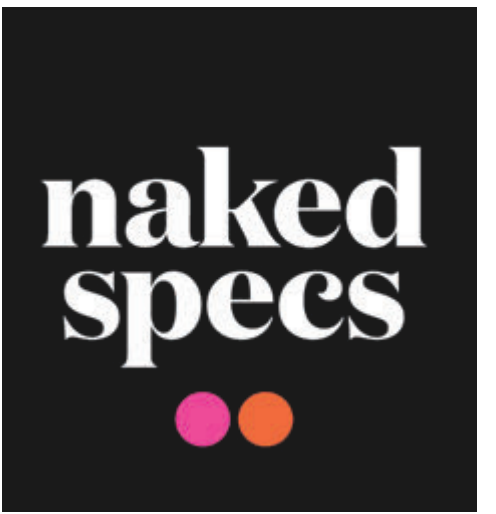
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Astrology with Sudhir

January 6 – January 13, 2024



ARIES (Mar 21 – Apr 20)

As you seek nourishment and respite, so Mercury, lying low in Sagittarius, offers you clarity as to where to go and where to find it. The more authentic you are, the more clarity will come easily. Mars is now in Capricorn, insisting that you keep things as simple and practical as possible.



TAURUS (Apr 21 – May 20)

Mars in Capricorn is giving you the energy you need to keep your agenda expansive and generous, as per Jupiter's wishes. The Scorpio Moon at the start of the week will throw a few waves of emotion to the surface that may need attending to. The Capricorn Sun reinforces your wishes.



GEMINI (May 21 – June 21)

Mercury remains in Sagittarius, focussing you on the future. Look ahead with optimism and honesty. It's time to come into your own, to find your own voice and your own path ahead. The Capricorn Sun is leaning on you to be alert, aware and surefooted. Show off your new skills.



CANCER (June 22 – July 22)

The Moon begins her week in Scorpio. This sets the tone for you. She affirms the rightness of your feelings, no matter how misunderstood they might be when you bring them out of their hiding place. Pour your feelings into your primary relationships, and into your many creative outlets.



LEO (July 23 – Aug 22)

The Capricorn Sun will have you sifting all that's real and fun in your being, from any conditioning you may have received to be serious at all costs. Don't trust anyone who lacks a sense of humour. In fact, don't trust anything in yourself that lacks humour. Share your love and watch it grow.



VIRGO (Aug 23 – Sept 22)

How we see the world has a major effect on our health and well-being. A shift in philosophy can be as powerful, if not more so, than a shift in our psychology. It is time to renew and review your perspective. Are you seeing through a lens that satisfies your heart? Recalibrate if you have to.



LIBRA (Sept 23 – Oct 23)

When we are placed in a position of authority it's not unusual for parts of our being to come to the fore that we didn't know existed. They may even be traits we react to in others when they play the leadership role. Life is presenting you with plenty of food for reflection. Be open to change.



SCORPIO (Oct 24 – Nov 21)

The Moon begins her week in Scorpio. This boosts your sense that your feelings are intuitively correct. Don't let anybody rush you, or push you to expand before you are ready to. Take all that you do, slowly and carefully. Saturn, and the Capricorn Sun, will both help you to do this.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov 22 – Dec 21)

Try not to get hooked in age-old controversies. Venus is in your sign and she is nudging you in the direction of expansion and growth. This time round her magic and beauty will flourish if you remain grounded. Keep your journey of love simple. Nourish your body and your environment.



CAPRICORN (Dec 22 – Jan 19)

Mars has entered Capricorn, joining the Sun and Pluto. Mars represents, at best, our passion for adventure. At worst, he becomes our frustration and our anger. To keep this energy healthy, give yourself plenty of satisfying things to do. Expression is certainly the way for our warrior spirit.



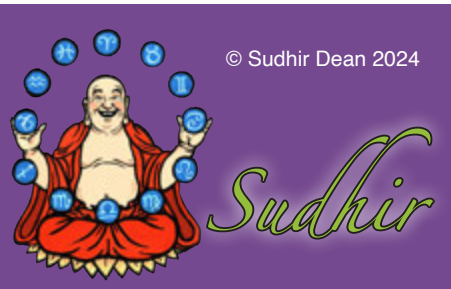
AQUARIUS (Jan 20 – Feb 18)

There's a smooth link between your ruling planet Uranus, in Taurus, and the Sun in Capricorn. Both are in earth signs, meaning that practicality, sensuality and groundedness are the order of the day. This is a time in which to bring your ideas and ideals to a successful practical realisation.



PISCES (Feb 19 – Mar 20)

The Scorpio Moon reinforces all that is good in your imagination and your intuition. Saturn is well-aspected, meaning that by keeping some sort of order and rhythm in your life, good things will evolve. Neptune is not so well-aspected, meaning that it's not a good time to be too nebulous.



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