

Claiming the stairway to haven



STEPS: Melbourne's March Studio conceived the design.

If one had to nominate the Seven Man-Made Wonders of Canberra then the Grand Stair just installed in the environmentally gentle Nishi building in New Acton would jostle for a place.

Not quite finished (it leads from the Nishi's downstairs foyer up to the unfinished foyer of an unfinished hotel), it is a hard-to-describe creation made of thousands of horizontally arranged pieces of reclaimed timber. Startled by the look of it in online pictures, we asked the Nishi supremos, the Molonglo Group, for a tour and explanation. We had as our tour guide Nectar Ekarpidis, one of the group's three directors.

The idea of him as "director" of a Group will summon a mental picture of a suited person of mature years, but he is startlingly young and was informally dressed, and tousled, and might have been an ANU post-grad.

He sounds truly earnest about Nishi's planet-kindly mission and for the first time in my writing life (because clichés are not in my toolbox) I find myself able to describe someone, him, as softly-spoken.

He explains that the design is by March Studio of Melbourne and that, in Nishi's spirit of sustainability, they've used reclaimed timber from a dismembered house, from a demolished basketball court, from about the Nishi site itself and

offcuts from the building's own distinctive blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*) façade.

No two fragments of wood are the same. There are polished ones and rough ones, painted and unpainted ones, unblemished ones and others characterfully scarred by nails.

Above the staircase, but echoing it, there's a ceiling space, a ceiling feature, made from 2150 more pieces of wood and then at the foot of the stairs there's a continuing feature in the wall space. It is all indescribable but did feel, standing on the stairs and surrounded by thousands of horizontally "flying" pieces of wood (the pieces are held together by hundreds of steel rods) as if one was in the middle of the frozen explosion of something wooden (a Spanish galleon perhaps) that has just been powerfully blown up with its smithereens flying away.

It's all an alternative, Ekarpidis says, to "having sterile, white, clean, fabricated materials brought in from China".

"It was very much about having craftspeople paying respect to carpentry as a skill set. The intention of the building was always about 'how do you create foyers and spaces, public spaces, that (a) are of genuine interest but also make a place?' We want people to occupy this building.

"For us this ground-floor area, what we call the ground-floor plains, we see as public spaces, despite the fact that this is the



COMPELLING: The Grand Stair itself is not only of reclaimed timbers, but so too is the ceiling void. Photos: GRAHAM TIDY

building for [various clients]. We've always wanted the public spaces to be used not only by the tenants but by the entire community.

"It's about welcoming, say, ANU students who might want to just sit here with a laptop."

In time ANU students and others grazing there will get used to it, and be able to stop looking all about them in wonder and to concentrate on their laptops. But for the moment the "flying" wooden pieces make the space feel excitingly crazy.

One of the designers says, acutely, "I think you'll agree the word 'beautiful' doesn't cut it – the effect is so full of thought and expressive of so many stories, as well as being real nice to look at."

Cods alive, hold the chips a mo' or two

From tiny things enormous things may grow, in the mysterious, Loch Nessy waters of Gungahlin Pond in Canberra's north.

On Tuesday 6000 excited Murray cod fingerlings were liberated there by officers of the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate.

The fingerlings are only four to seven centimetres long now, but if they are ambitious they may have as their role models some of the shark-size cod which their species famously swells to. Cod of 15 to 20 kilograms are commonplace (albeit perhaps not in relatively small habitats like the pond) while the



PROMISE: 15-20-kilogram Murray cod are commonplace ... later

biggest cod officially recorded, a cod that passeth all understanding, was a leviathan of 113 kilograms. It was

183 centimetres long. It's a jungle out there, in the pond, but Ben Ponton, acting director of the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate, says four to seven centimetres is the "optimal size", because its means they are "past the high mortality of larval-stage fish" eaten by everything.

And so, enough of the cod should survive to spruce up and effervesce the carp-spoiled biodiversity of our local waterways (and those waterways will be receiving 100,000 golden perch in the next few weeks).

They will take about four years to reach their legal angling size.

ON THIS DAY

100 years ago January 10, 1913

One hundred years ago this week – in 1913 – suspense was building over what name the nation's capital would be given. Several truly ghastly names were rumoured to be in the reckoning. With fewer than a couple of months to go until the naming ceremony *The Goulburn Evening Penny Post* was very agitated. It had little faith in federal cabinet making a sound choice, especially since it, cabinet, had just approved the design of the world's ugliest postage stamp.

"In casting about for a name wherewith to christen the Federal Capital city the Commonwealth Cabinet has showed a poverty of imagination that is almost ludicrous. According to Mr O'Malley [King O'Malley the minister for Home Affairs] the choice now lies between 'Pacifica,' 'Myola' and 'Fisher.' Fisher! Great Jehoshaphat! We would almost as soon have 'O'Malleyville' or to give a more regal ring to the sound 'King O'Malleyville.' 'Pacifica' is mincing and suggests the names doting mothers give to their daughters out of penny novelettes. 'Myola' is musical and phonetically it reminds one of myall, a beautifully fragrant specimen of West Australian timber. Why select a Latin word? What's amiss with the latter half of the present name [Yass/Canberra] of the site? By dropping the prefix Yass we are left with 'Canberra', a title not too long and with the accent on the first syllable. Very melodious. But spare us such an outrage as 'Fisher.' The prime minister must be suffering from a chronic swelled head in its most aggravated form to permit his own name to appear in the list of possibilities. The selection of a name for our future capital should be made with judgment and with some regard to the fitness of things; but the three mentioned by Mr O'Malley are proof that the imaginative faculties of the Cabinet are very stodgy and commonplace. That atrocity, the new penny stamp, shows that very clearly. It is, we should say, positively the ugliest in the whole of the world."

WHAT'S ON

Lots of us would love to be able to take our own familiar, reliable vehicles with us when we travel overseas and that's exactly what Australians George and Janet Ranken did. Leaving Sydney for Scotland in 1838 they took their horsedrawn coach with them and then brought it home in 1841. The National Museum of Australia, where the Rankens' coach is in the Big Objects display in the entrance hall, estimates this was a round trip of 54,400 kilometres for a coach that had already come from Scotland with the Rankens when they emigrated in 1821. The National Museum is open every day from 10am to 5pm.

Weather



Today
Mostly sunny.
Max 31°



Tomorrow
Cloud clearing.
Min 14° Max 36°



Saturday
Partly cloudy.
Min 19° Max 37°



Sunday
Possible shower.
Min 16° Max 30°

Monday Possible shower. Min 12 Max 30
Tuesday Sunny. Min 11 Max 34
Wednesday Partly cloudy. Min 14 Max 35

TODAY

Warnings: were current at 5pm yesterday. Latest information at www.bom.gov.au/weather NSW 1300 659 218 (local call cost)

ACT Fire Danger: high

Canberra: Mostly sunny. Light winds becoming easterly 15 to 20 km/h in the late evening.

Illawarra: Partly cloudy. Winds northeasterly and light increasing to 15 to 25 km/h in the middle of the day. Dangerous surf conditions.

South Coast: Partly cloudy. Light winds becoming northeasterly 15 to 25 km/h in the middle of the day. Dangerous surf conditions.

Southern Tablelands: Mostly sunny. Winds east to northeasterly 15 to 20 km/h becoming light before dawn then increasing to 15 to 25 km/h in the evening.

Southwest Slopes: Sunny. Winds east to northeasterly 15 to 20 km/h becoming light in the morning then becoming northeast to southeasterly 15 to 20 km/h in the late evening.

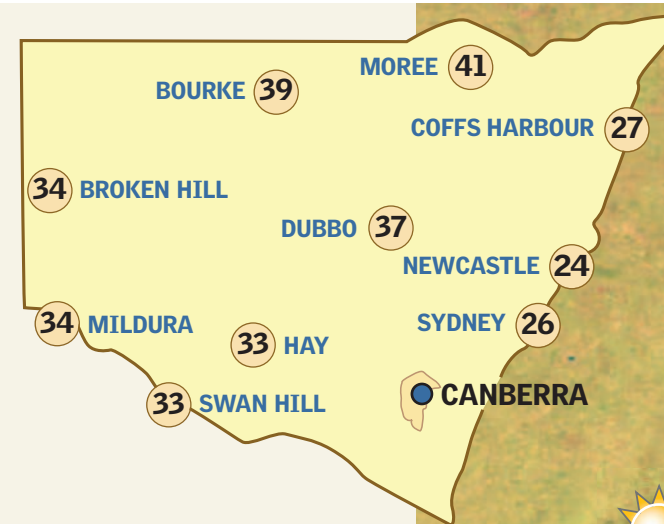
Snowy Mountains: Mostly sunny. Light winds becoming east to northeasterly 15 to 25 km/h in the late afternoon then tending north to northeasterly 15 to 20 km/h in the late evening.

TOMORROW

Canberra: Cloud clearing. Light winds becoming west to northwesterly 20 to 25 km/h in the middle of the day then becoming light in the evening.

Illawarra: Partly cloudy. Winds northerly 15 to 25 km/h tending northeasterly 20 to 30 km/h in the late afternoon then becoming light in the late evening. Dangerous surf conditions.

South Coast: Partly cloudy. Winds north to northeasterly 15 to 25 km/h tending north to northwesterly 15 to 20 km/h in the late evening.



CAPITAL CITY FORECAST

Adelaide	Sunny	33
Brisbane	Mostly fine, shower	33
Darwin	Showers or storms	33
Hobart	Chance light late rain	24
Melbourne	Mostly sunny	26
Perth	Partly cloudy	29
Sydney	Cloudy	26

Southern Tablelands: Mostly sunny. Winds northeasterly 15 to 20 km/h becoming light before dawn then becoming west to northwesterly 15 to 25 km/h in the middle of the day.

Southwest Slopes: Mostly sunny. Winds east to northeasterly 15 to 20 km/h becoming light early in the morning then becoming west to northwesterly 15 to 20 km/h in the middle of the day.

Snowy Mountains: Partly cloudy. Winds northerly 15 to 25 km/h turning northwesterly 25 to 40 km/h in the morning.

YESTERDAY

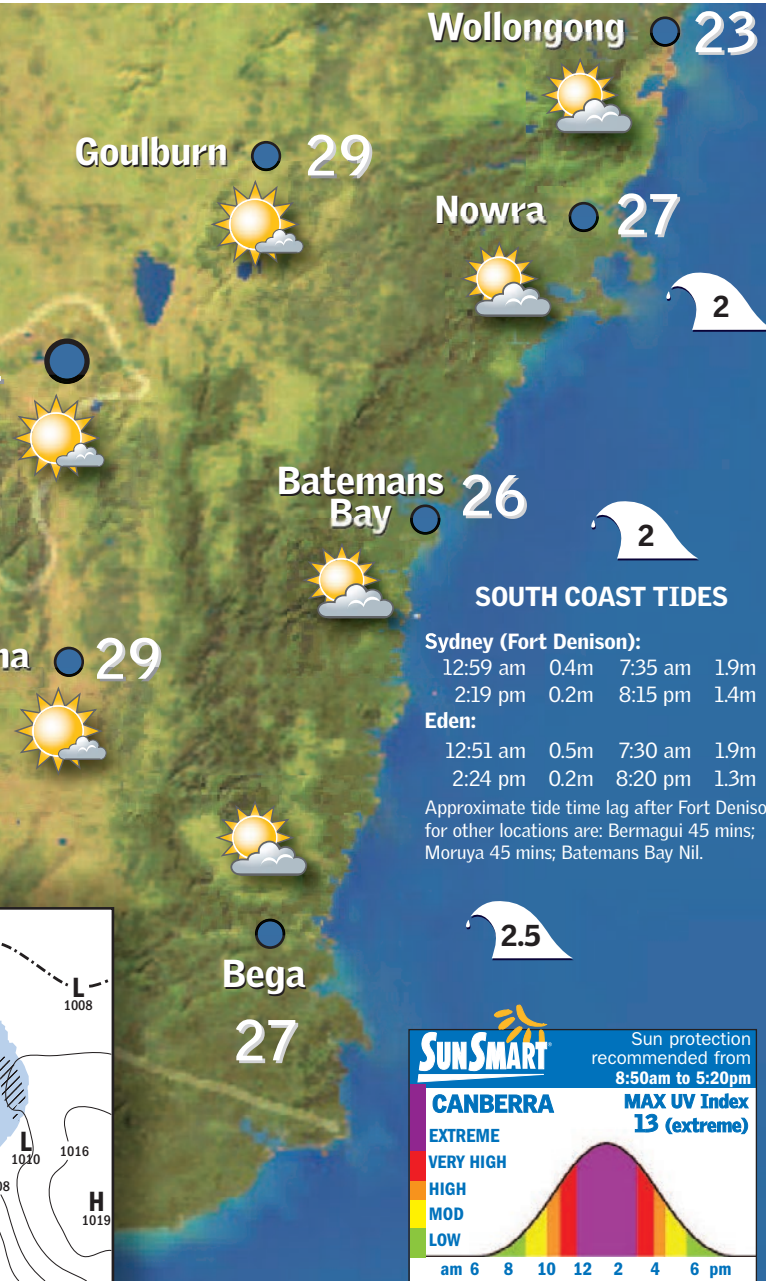
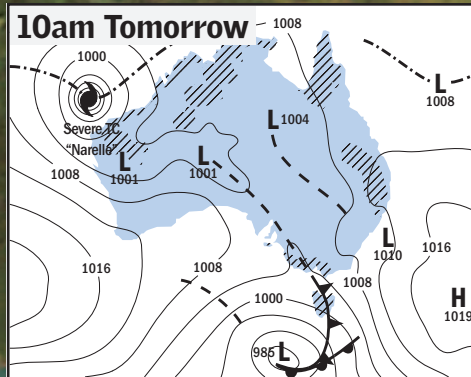
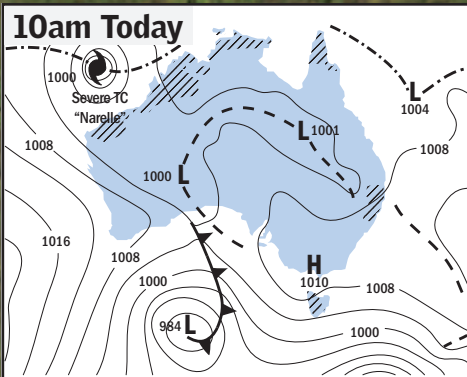
CAPITAL CITIES

City	**9am rain	3pm rain	**Min	**Max
Adelaide	0	0	15	25
Brisbane	0	0	22	33
Darwin	3	0.2	27	33
Hobart	0	0	9	18
Melbourne	0.2	0.2	13	21
Perth	0	0	22	26
Sydney	0	0	21	25

Australian Government
Bureau of Meteorology

CANBERRA FACTS & FIGURES

Temp	Hum	Bar	Wind	Rainfall (mm):
(°C)	(%)	(Hpa)	(kmh)	24 hours to 9am:
3AM 23.4	25	992	WNW/20	0.0
9AM 17.2	45	998	S/17	0.0
3PM 24.1	28	999	N/19	0.0
5PM 24.2	24	999	N/30	0.0
Yesterday's extremes*				
Minimum 16.2	at	07:30am		0.0
Maximum 25.8	at	04:49pm		0.0
*Midnight to 5pm yesterday.				

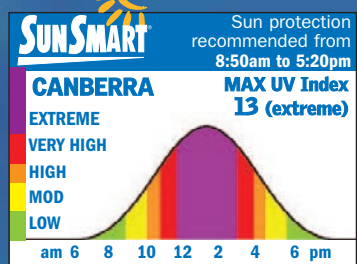


SOUTH COAST TIDES

Sydney (Fort Denison):
12:59 am 0.4m 7:35 am 1.9m
2:19 pm 0.2m 8:15 pm 1.4m

Eden:
12:51 am 0.5m 7:30 am 1.9m
2:24 pm 0.2m 8:20 pm 1.3m

Approximate tide time lag after Fort Denison for other locations are: Bermagui 45 mins; Moruya 45 mins; Batemans Bay Nil.



SUN, MOON & PLANETS

	Rises	Sets
Sun	6:00 am	8:22 pm
Moon	4:02 am	6:41 pm
Mercury	5:31 am	8:08 pm
Venus	4:34 am	7:04 pm
Mars	7:45 am	9:42 pm
Jupiter	5:06 pm	3:10 am
Saturn	1:42 am	3:03 pm

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SURF REPORT

ILLAWARRA COAST: PORT HACKING TO ULLADULLA

Winds: Variable about 10 knots becoming east to north-easterly 15 to 20 knots in the early afternoon. **Seas:** Below 1m. **Swell:** Southerly 2m. **Swell:** North-easterly 1m. Large swells breaking dangerously close inshore.

BATEMANS COAST: ULLADULLA TO MONTAGUE ISLAND

Winds: Variable about 10 knots becoming north-easterly 15-20 knots in the middle of the day. **Seas:** Below 1m increasing to 1-1.5m by early evening. **Swell:** Southerly 2-3m decreasing to 1-2m in the afternoon and evening. **Swell:** North-easterly about 1m. Large swells breaking dangerously close inshore.

THE WORLD

24 hours to 10am yesterday

Amsterdam	windy	6	9
Apia	rain	25	30
Athens	fine	2	7
Auckland	clear	15	21
Bangkok	fine	24	33
Barbados	rain	24	29
Barcelona	fine	6	15
Beijing	fine	-10	-1
Belgrade	fine	-5	0
Berlin	rain	2	7
Brussels	fine	5	7
Bucharest	fine	-10	0
Budapest	snow	-8	-2
Buenos Aires	fine	-16	29
Cairo	rain	10	17
Chicago	fine	-2	5
Christchurch	windy	12	23
Colombo	showers	25	29
Copenhagen	rain	4	6
Denpasar	rain	26	28
Dhahran	fine	15	23
Dublin	fine	2	12
Frankfurt	fine	4	6
Geneva	fine	0	3
Harare	storm	15	25
Helsinki	rain	-1	0
Hong Kong	fine	14	18
Honiara	haze	24	30
Islamabad	haze	3	12
Istanbul	snow	-3	-1
Jakarta	rain	24	29
Johannesburg	haze	16	28
Kiev	fine	-7	-5
Kiribati	rain	26	29
Kuala Lumpur	lightning	26	32
Lisbon	fine	10	16
London	windy	9	11
Los Angeles	fine	6	21
Madrid	mist	0	2
Manama	fine	20	22
Manila	fine	25	29
Mawson Base	fine	1	2
Mecca	fine	16	28
Mexico City	fine	7	20
Miami	fine	22	28
Montevideo	fine	22	26
Montreal	fine	-10	-1
Moscow	snow	-9	-3
Mumbai	haze	16	32
Nassau	fine	23	28
New Delhi	mist	4	14
New York	fine	2	9
Nicosia	fine	4	10
Noumea	windy	23	27
Oslo	fine	-5	0
Paris	fine	3	5
Port Vila	fine	20	29
Rome	mist	3	12
San Francisco	haze	6	12
Santiago	fine	15	31
Seoul	fine	-9	0
Singapore	rain	25	32
Sofia	fine	-6	-4
Stockholm	rain	-1	1
Suva	fine	23	31
Taipei	rain	14	17
Tehran	fine	5	9
Tel Aviv	rain	9	13
Tokyo	fine	5	10
Toronto	fine	-1	1
Valetta	fine	10	17
Vancouver	rain	2	5
Vienna	rain	-2	-1
Warsaw	snow	-4	-2
Washington	fine	-3	12
Wellington	windy	16	20