

Well while the northern hemisphere has been enjoying a super-hot summer we have been through our first winter in Eastbourne. We moved over here from Paremata almost a year ago and of course enjoyed cycling and catching the boat to work through the summer. Come the winter it was a bit more of a struggle. Its semi-dark at both ends of the day and I have to say that sometimes we wimped and drove to the ferry.

Winter apparently is the time the whales move around. There was much consternation here in Wellington when a Southern Right Whale turned up in the harbour. I ended up at work when people started gathering at the windows, we



all rushed as high as we could, the 14<sup>th</sup> floor to look down into the harbour and watch the whale playing around. Our little ferry was stopped so people could look at it. I did think it was reasonably brave of them, or at least the skipper was brave for them, as the whale was almost the same size of the boat. But the whale was happy to play and they were



happy to watch – so all good. In the end the Whale spent almost a week causing disruption to shipping and road transport alike as people stopped to gawk.

Having said that – our new rental is at least partially insulated so that we are not quite as frozen. In the other house we ended up in one room trying to keep it warm. In this house it does keep its heat and generally feels a lot warmer, we do close a few doors and use an electric blanket but

it's a lot more liveable. The other place felt like living in the UK in the 1970's. Yes insulation and carpets are a good thing but it still seems like a long time ago we had all the doors and windows open in the summer.

The winter hasn't been that harsh, they aren't really like that here however there have been many infectious, and we spent almost 2 months where someone in the office was ill. I had the cold first and then Steph and then I got it back again, it's nice to share. The cold was particularly severe, I felt like a real wimp when I needed to have a week off work and slept most of the time, but apparently this was not uncommon with other people. I do remember when we moved here reading somewhere that we might suffer worse colds as the local strains of infections are likely to be different from what we grew up with and our immune system wasn't used to dealing with them. I have to say in the last five years I have seen no evidence of this and even with this year's cold it seems to have affected both us and Kiwis so I am not completely convinced.

This is the time to huddle inside and play cards. We have started playing bridge at the local club – which is very nice and welcoming and bizarrely we even managed to win one week. We are also playing with our next door neighbour, Fleur. She moved in after we did but we seem to get along quite well and we are teaching her and anoth-



er friend, Beverly, once a week. It's not very serious but it is fun.

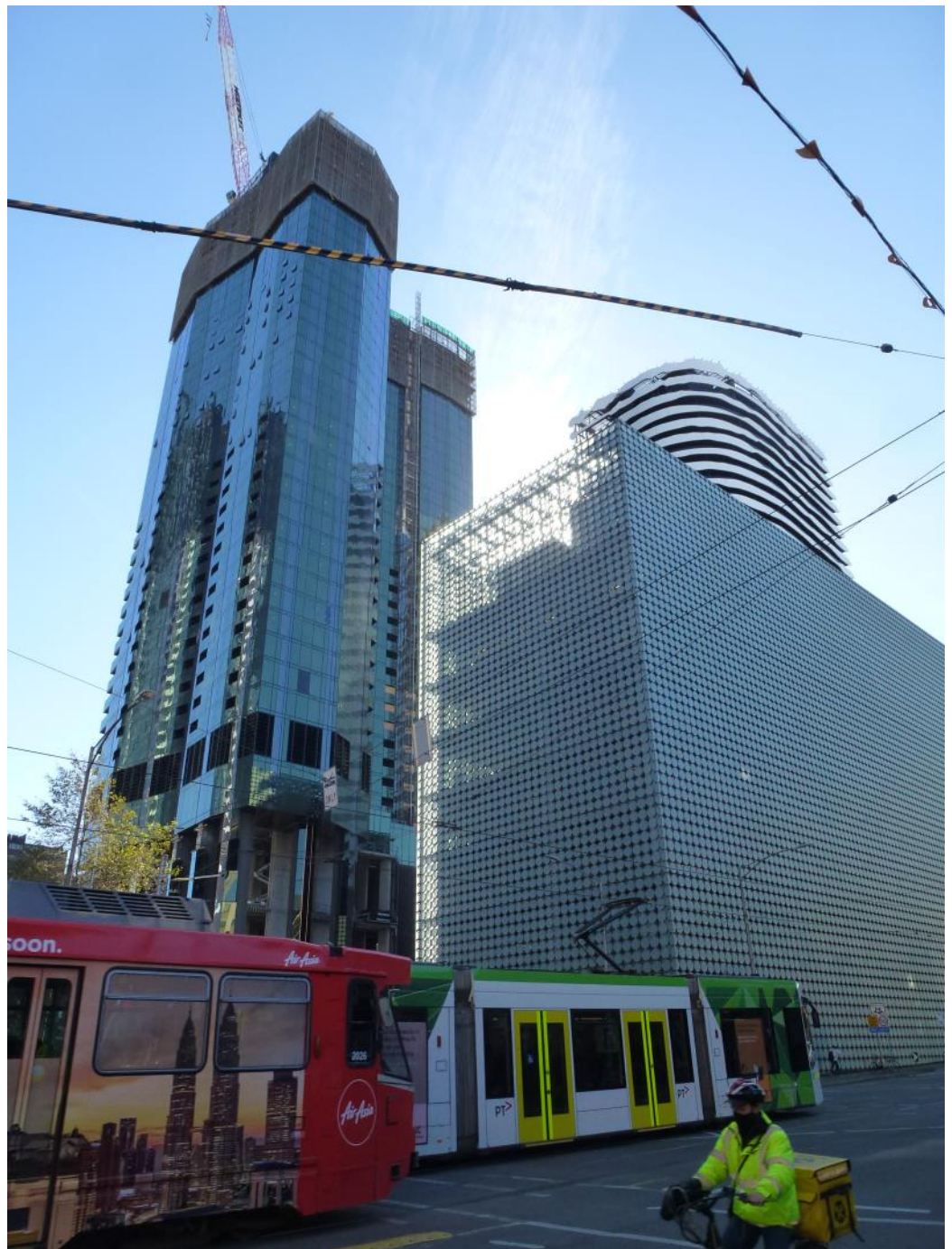
Work chugs along. It's nice to be working on mobile phones again and we do have lots of innovation days. Before the last one we had a big group wide presentation in the parliament building. Our

group is so big that it's one of the few places we all fit in.

In the past we have escaped for some winter sun to the Gold Coast, mid-twenties centigrade in the middle of winter. This year we went to Melbourne and Canberra. It turns out that they have a similar temperature to us, so not so much with the sun but even so the break was much ap-



preciated. When we arrived Steph had wanted to try out an Uber for the first time, but the expected pickup time was nearly an hour. So instead we did what we usually did and tried to work out how to do it ourselves using public transport. We bought a transit card and if we could complete the trip in less than two hours it would cost under \$5, rather than more than \$50 in the Uber. Also, it was fun to try and work out how things worked. I remember getting off a plane in Moscow and trying something similar and having a conversation with a cabbie as he tried to understand why we would try and do such a thing. Mind you in Moscow it was harder with everything in

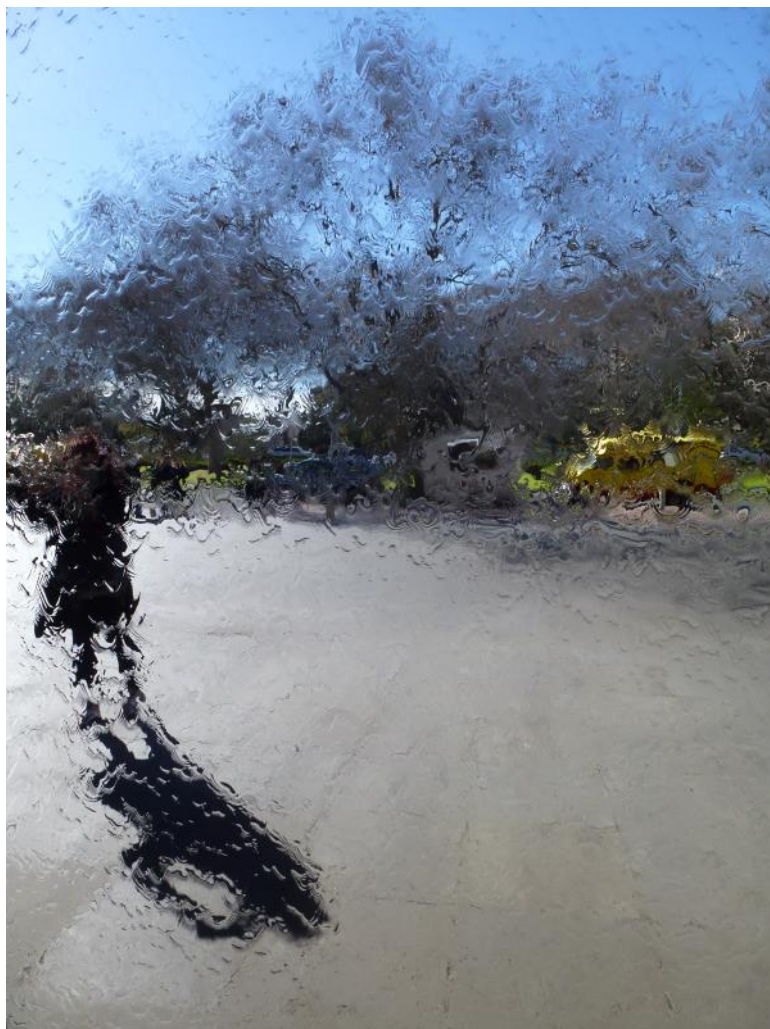




Cyrillic, no such problems in Melbourne and smartphones meant that we had maps and timetables at our fingertips – easy.

We managed to get to the backpackers, dump our packs and get back into town before the two hour limit. I have to say I grew up in a city with more than a million people in its conurbation and have only lived in Wellington for the last five years but I find I am like a country bumpkin in a big city. We went to the National Gallery and started at the

front window with water running down it and then wandered for hours looking at art. The only thing we had really planned for the day was to go to IMAX, there is only one in New Zealand and it's in Auckland. Wow – we watched Tom Cruise being massive in Mission Impossible





on a 35 meter screen.

The day had started at 4am and by the time we got back to our room it was after 6 so we were more than happy to eat rather good and wholesome food in the pub downstairs. The backpackers was really good, we payed extra and got our own room but most of the other people there were

much younger. I got up at 3am and the kitchen was full of people, we eventually surfaced at about 8am to make tea, there was nobody to be seen anywhere. It was a strange experience, we had bought milk but there were no mugs in the kitchen – how is that possible? We drank some milk and made a B line into the city to eat breakfast in the alleys. We did this years ago with Simon and Katy and it was good to revisit the galleries.





We met up with Scott in the afternoon. I worked with Scott in Xero, but now I had moved along and Scott had moved over to Melbourne as he had met Teresa. Dating in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an internet affair with no geographical boundaries. Anyway it seems to have worked out well as they were getting married the month after our visit. It was nice to meet up again and catch up with Scott and also to meet someone new, we hadn't met Teresa before.

Then we were off to Canberra. A very odd place. Around 1900 when Australia was being formed from its colonies, Victoria said that Melbourne is the largest city it should be the capital, New South Wales said that Sydney is the oldest city it should be the capital. They could not agree so they came up with a compromise. The capital would be in New South Wales, but it had to be at least 100 miles from





Sydney and until such a place could be found and developed Melbourne would be the capital. Well the First World War didn't help but eventually with the incentive



of getting the capital back from Melbourne, New South Wales managed to get Canberra developed and the capital moved there in 1928. UK people will understand when I say that it's the Milton Keynes of Australia. It's like no other Australian city I have been to, but it was fun. The weather was bright and clear, apparently a bit like Calgary there is very little rainfall here, and bright blue skies and sunny often happens in the winter, mind you being off the



coast meant that the temperature at night could drop below zero.

Our Airbnb was lovely. Every conceivable mod con in the kitchen. A Sonos

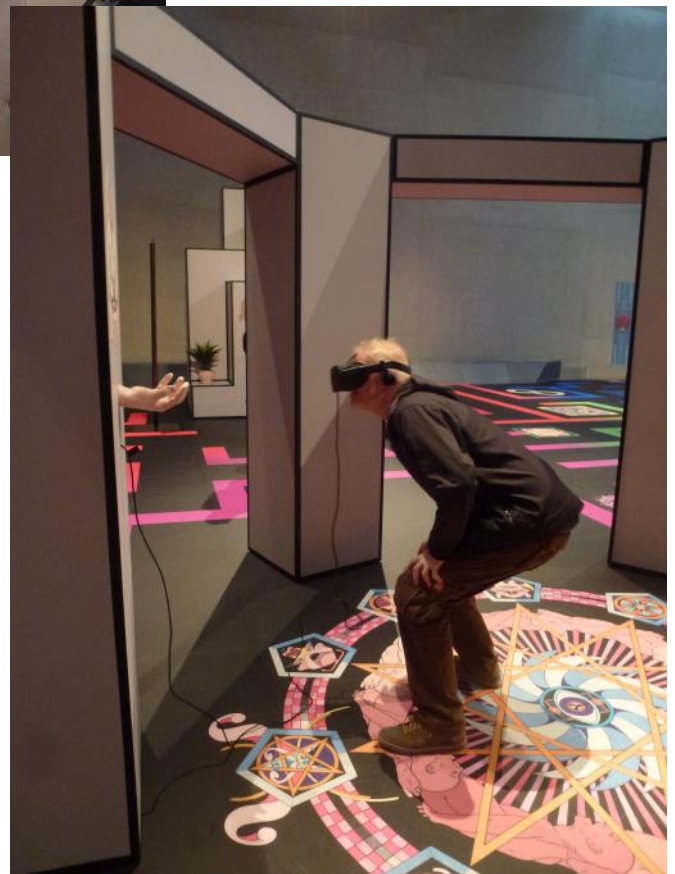


multi-room audio system that spreads music to the outside barbeque area. A giant spa bath and an open fire. It was a delight. We spent our days cycling around in the sun and visiting museums and galleries and then we cycled home in the evening to cook and snuggle



in front of the fire. One day we cycled across to the outlet mall and managed to buy tops and shoes. We got to try some very impressive VR, so realistic that it scared Steph when she first tried it.

At the end of the week parlia-





ment had finished its sessions we got to go on a tour around, that's both parliaments in the space of a month. I had not realised that they had modelled themselves on the UK so much. The two houses are red and green, they have lots of school tours, voting in Australia is compulsory so they feel that they should show the next gen-





eration what they are voting for. It wasn't the winter heat of the Gold Coast but it was a lovely break.

The day we got back I had my second eye operation. I had hoped it was all sorted out the first time round but apparently they needed to go back in and do some tidying up. In many



ways this operation has been harder than the first one. It seems to have taken forever for my eye to clear, hopefully it will be worth it – but it will take another month before I will know for sure. Also as an added bonus the surgeon had a cold and I got yet another one this winter, I seem to have been coughing since June.

We don't have much house news, things are in progress and fingers crossed next time I might have more concrete progress. The only thing we have done is redesign the new Kiwi house we are building. The pole house we were planning was great but the council were not happy and to be honest we could not afford it so we have down-sized, we are now building a small house, its 85 m2 but we think it will suite us perfectly. We will be able to snuggle in



front of our wood burner and look out across the harbour. Fingers crossed that we can get these plans accepted.

Tomorrow we are finally off to new offices. BNZ have been in emergency office accommodation since our last proper earthquake in 2016

broke its new building on the harbour. The view from the new offices are not as good as the stunning ones from the top of the tower we were in, no more whale watching for us, but the office space is much more plush and it's still very convenient for me to rush down the stairs from The Terrace to the boat home. The seasons must be turning as people have started jumping off the quay, mind you it still looks far too cold for that.

