

Portland Observer

AND GUARDIAN



TUESDAY, 23 DECEMBER, 2025

PortlandObserver.com.au | \$4.00



Spreading Christmas cheer

Catching up at the Portland Community Christmas Meal were Carol and Graham Logan (sitting) and Beryl Austin (from left standing) and Beverley English. See more pics on PAGE 32. (Karen Hodge: 525670)

Cash registers ring

By Charlie Sawyer-Bassett

THE run into Christmas has been busy in Portland's retail sector with owners reporting an excellent year for sales.

Business owners this week said they have definitely seen an increase in locals buying their Christmas presents in Portland, as opposed to online or in other cities, and the smiles on their faces say they couldn't be more pleased.

At SportsPower Portland, long-time retailer Bruce Elijah said they had a reasonably soft start to Christmas trade which has now picked up rapidly.

"You normally see a turnover about the 14th of December and then it starts to pick up pace, and it's coming along rather strongly," Mr Elijah said.

Customers have been buying the usual presents, as seen in previous years, basketballs

and backboards, he said.

However, there's been a particular interest in tennis tables this year, as well as clothes and shoes.

Besides the flow of sales, Mr Elijah has also seen a lot of tourists come through his doors this December, who are always up for a chat.

"I've had more than half a dozen people I've just been talking to that have started their holiday and are travelling around.

"Just interesting people that are coming into Portland, and quite a lot of them are commenting on how nice a place it is."

Just next door at one of the newer businesses on Bentinck Street, Lizzy's Garden owner Betty Sawyer said sales doubled when the Christmas period began, with the end of November and December really busy.

CONTINUED PAGE 2

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Oceanside Pride a delight

By Nick Moseley

PORTLAND'S inaugural Oceanside Pride festival proved regional cities like ours can be just as fabulous as their metropolitan counterparts, with two weeks of workshops and shows that brought the LGBTQIA+ community to centre stage.

Photographer Nicole Cleary was at Portland's Foreshore to capture the glitz and glam of the festival's Shine Bright at Sunset Closing Spectacular.



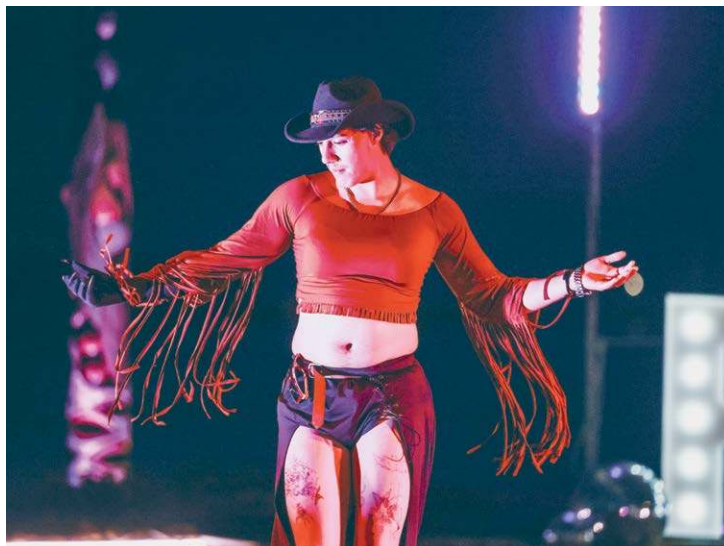
Local Talent Harper, aka Ophelia Diamond, was a crowd favourite. (524582)



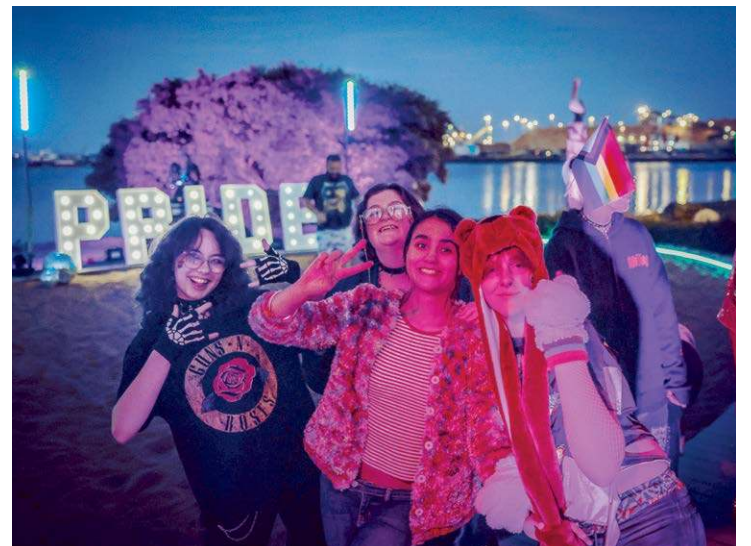
Miss First Nations Supreme, Cerulean, wows the crowd. (Nicole Cleary: 524582)



Samuel Gaskin and Thomas Bevan, aka 2JOOCEE, share the stage at the Shine Bright at Sunset Closing Spectacular. (524582)



Dante, aka Thunder Thicky Thighs, was another local star who took to the stage on the Saturday night. (524582)



Local community members delighted in the Oceanside Pride fun, taking to the foreshore for the closing night. (524582)

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SCAN ME!



Portland's Pride a party

By Nick Moseley

PORTLAND'S first-ever Oceanside Pride festival has brought our town's LGBTQIA+ community to the forefront to start summer in style, with an evening filled with colour and delight capping off the fun at the festival's Shine Bright at Sunset Closing Spectacular.

The free variety show featured a diverse mix of local performers and some of Australia's most awarded and exciting queer talent, as attendees were wowed by the display at Portland Foreshore on the evening of Saturday 13 December.

Produced by Portland Arts Centre in partnership with BEAT Entertainment and supported by Midsumma Festival, the closing spectacular finale followed two weeks of workshops, shows and more.

BEAT Entertainment CEO and managing director Samuel Gaskin said "it was an honour and a privilege being entrusted with delivering Portland's very first pride festival."

"This was something that feels so special to me, and it's something you don't ever take lightly when we're entrusted with such a big and important thing to bring to your community - it's just an honour really," he said.

"Regional communities deserve to have pride celebrations, teaching the workshops I got to connect with the community's queer youth in Portland, and they are the most beautiful, talented, magical beings, who were so grateful to have a bit of representation in town.

"The way it was done, so we could include them in the Pride event on Saturday night and they could perform, it allowed them to let their hair down and be centred, and really for me, that reinforces why I do what I do.

"We love it down in Portland, Virginia [Winter] is a darling and is doing so much beautiful work for the community it was kind of a no-



Singer Milo Hartill belts out an anthem in front of a crowd waving pride flags. (Nicole Cleary: 524582)

brainer when called to make the proposal.

"When you're beginning something that is embracing communities who are used to being marginalized, whether it's indigenous mob or queer mob, I think it's really important to be

fostering strong relationships as the foundation.

"I feel like we've really begun to build a meaningful relationship with the community down there."

Portland Arts Centre performing arts program coordinator Virginia Winter said the "event has brought overwhelming joy, with laughter, dancing, and enjoyment shared by all involved."

"The Rainbow population here is bigger than most people would know, but is disconnected and therefore largely invisible," she said.

"The last two weeks have helped change that, connecting people through laughter, creativity, and honesty.

"It was wonderful to see all the allies who came out to show broader community support as well - this is such a vital part of creating safe communities."

Ms Winter thanked the many groups and organisations who came together to bring the festival to life.

"Council would like to acknowledge the support of the Traditional Owners throughout the planning and implementation of the festival with the final celebration event being held at the Kardermudelar Karweeyn Mirring (Portland Bay Dance Ground)," she said.

"The mutual respect between the LGBTQIA+ community and Guditjmarra people was apparent and having Elders available to attend workshops and events, welcoming participants and the visiting artists to Country increased the safe environment and inclusivity of the festival.

"Council would like to extend thanks to Yvette Turnbull and Midsumma Festival. The funding from Midsumma's Victoria's Pride Regional Activation Program saw the realisation of this important event and their commitment to regional communities is highly valued.

"Thanks also go to our other funding partners Amplify and the VicHealth VLGP program."

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