



## The 5 lands Walk - What it means to me

Over its twelve-year history, the 5 Lands Walk, a 10 km coastal trek from MacMaster's Beach to Terrigal via Copacabana, Avoca Beach and North Avoca, has attracted up to 20,000 participants annually.

"For me and Gavi Duncan, the 5 Lands Walk is a platform for reconciliation. It is an opportunity for us as Aboriginal people to create a space at North Avoca in which we are able to gather and express ourselves culturally and spiritually - and we can share our culture and spirituality with others through song, dance, music, art and story-telling. The Gathering and The Awakening are intimate ceremonies leading up to the 5 Lands Walk event, making the event culturally and spiritually safe for everyone. The Message Stick and Messenger provide a thread that goes through the 5 Lands Walk - the Messenger reads the 5 Lands Walk message at each community on the day."

Phil Bligh  
Indigenous Community Leader

"As a staff member, I am amazed at the wonderful experience the 5 Lands Walk offers our students as volunteers."

Christian Gregory  
Deputy Head of Senior College Central Coast Grammar

"In 2007, I was invited to participate in Ephemera, the outdoor exhibition of 5 Lands Walk, visiting this beautiful part of the world for the first time. The local artists and others in the community welcomed us with open arms at a time we were considering leaving the city. Now we love living in Avoca. Being involved in the 5 Lands Walk has proven to be extremely satisfying."

Willimena Villari  
Participating Artist

"The 5 Lands Walk is a fantastic way to enjoy our beautiful coastline and engage with other people. The atmosphere is fabulous and the walk accessible for anyone with a reasonable level of fitness. The 5 Lands Walk is a beautiful way to spend time with family or friends, doing something active, whilst embracing the diversity of people and nature."

Julie Fitzsimmons  
Regular Participant

"Learning about the ongoing connection Indigenous people share with the land through this event has encouraged me to develop a greater appreciation of nature and reminded me to be constantly grateful for where we live. I also love the community spirit you feel because of the 5 Lands Walk"

Indigo Neville  
Student Volunteer

"A totally free, fun, family day for locals and visitors alike, the 5 Lands Walk has a mantra of connecting people with people and people with place with the help of over 700 volunteers, supporter and sponsors, who've made this event a major annual highlight of the Central Coast calendar.

For those who are tired or with disabilities, free courtesy buses link the route highlights throughout the day. So we encourage everyone to take part on June 23."

For registration and further details visit:  
[5landswalk.com.au](http://5landswalk.com.au)

Con Ryan  
5 Lands Walk Organising Committee President

# Little club – big results



Established only four years ago, the Avoca Kayak Club has certainly made its mark on the international kayak scene in quick time.

This young club boasts two Rio Olympians, Riley Fitzsimmons and bronze medallist Lachlan Tame, as well as Paralympian in Dylan Littlehales. Add to this mix fifteen individual paddlers across various divisions having represented Australia in Sprint Canoeing, a couple of Wild Water National Reps and multiple Surf Ski Aussie medallists. It's no wonder Avoca kayak Club is being hailed as the model club by Australian canoeing.

How did it all begin? "I guess you could blame Lachlan Tame for what Avoca Kayak Club is today" said Club President Paul Hutchinson. Lachlan had been training for a couple of years in a kayak down at Avoca Lagoon by himself and was starting to show some success. This encouraged a few of the local surf paddlers and when Lorry managed to secure some kayaks from Australia Canoeing for these kids to use the squad was born.

With all successful clubs, a capable administration is the cornerstone of success and the founding committee members have delivered. Paul Hutchinson, President, Scott Cunningham, Vice President, Peter McIntyre, Treasurer and Secretary Karen Hutchison have, in conjunction with a bunch of enthusiastic committee members and outstanding coaches, provided a solid and effective structure. Peter McIntyre says its aim was; "to ensure our local youth had a place where they could feel a sense a of belonging and essentially just have some fun with their mates".

What happens when you grow so quickly? As the club grew in numbers many members were having difficulties in transporting and storing boats away from the lake, particularly our paddlers with disabilities. The committee saw the need for a storage facility. Dave Birt, a long time Avoca local and club coach has driven this project, coupled with Tony Tuxworth, a fellow coach. The local community is also behind our push to build this facility with great support from local MP's Adam Crouch, Lucy Wicks and Taylor Martin, the Central Coast Council, RDA, Friends of Avoca and the Avoca Rugby Club. We hope to have an announcement on this soon.

Where does the money come from? Secretary Karen Hutchinson, a great organizer, has now delivered three annual events (club trivia night, band night and presentation evening) that have become part of the Avoca community's calendar. She and her willing team of helpers have raised over \$15K in funds in three short years. These funds have all been used to purchase new boats for kids to paddle or assist athletes in their travels to State and National competitions.

What about the future? The recruitment and retention strategy for the club is important says Scott Cunningham: "With our primary goal to ensure we continue to cater toward the youth of the Central Coast, a number of initiatives have been run with the most successful being our "Beginners' Program" and "Surf to Kayak" program with over fifty athletes between the ages of 14-24 participating." Future programs are on the club website: <https://www.avocakayakclub.com/>

Club coaches, Paul Hutchinson, Rob Armstrong and Scott Cunningham have worked hard to create an environment that caters to the needs of all our paddlers and are currently being assisted by World Champion Sprint Kayaker Luke Morrison. "The level of knowledge and experience Luke brings to the table is helping the entire squad; he has taken our coaching to a new level. We have some great plans for the new season from beginners all the way through to our elite paddlers" says coach Rob Armstrong.

A final word from the club's website: Champion athletes aren't just born - they're selected, trained, molded and tested. Since 2014, Avoca Kayak Club has been developing home grown paddlers to reach their full potential. We hone raw talent to maturity with quality coaching, smart training programs and a true love of the sport. Teamwork, sportsmanship, determination and bringing your "A" game - those are the values that make up Avoca Kayak Club.

Information courtesy of Scott Cunningham.

# ABCA President's Report – June 2018



Winter at Avoca Beach can be a special time. Uncrowded beach walks, no waiting for seats at your favourite coffee shop and the winter ground swells pumping through for the surfers. Once a month it comes to life with the Beachside Markets and for one weekend in June we welcome thousands to show off our beautiful coastline and fantastic beaches with the 5 Lands Walk.

What's not to love about Avoca Beach?

Well, many have recently pointed to the rock pool, questionable developments, the plague of rabbits, the lack of progress in Bob Pickett's quest to generously donate land for recreational use and the concrete pathway through Winney Bay as areas of concern.

Protecting what is precious is something many in the ABCA are keen to do, and for good reason. Overdevelopment can ruin any good community, and many feel the proposal to put in 80 townhouses on the old Bowtell's Caravan Park site with inadequate infrastructure seems to be a classic example. Hopefully the CC Council will make well-considered, sensible decisions on this.

The ABCA does not oppose modern, progressive development and is putting in to Council what we feel is a desired character statement of Avoca Beach. Height limits, block size and provision of parking onsite are at the centre of this submission. Please send us your thoughts on this work in progress. We will circulate our draft before submission. What sort of place do you want Avoca to be for your children?

On the subject of protecting what is precious, there has been some opposition to the new walkway under construction through Winney Bay. A well-intentioned Council has embarked on an ambitious plan to provide a safer, more substantial and accessible walkway with better viewing for the thousands who participate in the 5 Lands Walk. But has Council gone too far and been guilty of environmental vandalism by ploughing a two-metre wide concrete path through the natural bushland? We have included an article expressing this viewpoint. We have had a response to some of this criticism by the mayor, Jane Smith, and I quote: "Council has put in an application to the State Government for a further \$4.5 million upgrade to the Winney Bay walk and has promised we will consult with the community on the next phase of this important project." It is encouraging to hear such a response.

Engineers have been happy with the progress on the re-construction of the rock pool and the workers say they have never been the subject of such intense observation. It's too early to get a feel for the final product and we can only wait in hope that it will do our beautiful beach justice. We have so far unanswered questions about a suitable surface on the walkways or any plans for a fence.

A footnote: The dawn service on ANZAC Day has become a significant community event and all thanks should go to Gary Hore, who initiated this moving, low key ceremony and is responsible for its growth.



# What's With All The Feral Rabbits In Town?



While feral rabbits have been in Avoca for many years, numbers seem to have increased in the last couple of years. It's hard to know why but the answer is likely to be a combination of factors. One of the more likely hypotheses is that the lack of rain is bringing the rabbits closer to us. Suburban backyards are typically watered and therefore more attractive to rabbits when native bushland areas are dry. The juiciest patch of grass, herbs, roots and seeds are irresistible to them. They can be seen along most of our streets day or night, however night time is best for spotting while they are out and about grazing.

Let's start with some background info. European Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* arrived in Australia with the first fleet and spread rapidly. The Western Australian Government constructed a 1700-kilometre rabbit proof fence between 1901-1907 but by 1910, rabbits had spread across most of Australia (with the exception of the far north). The feral European rabbit is now one of the most widely distributed and abundant mammals in Australia. Rabbits can breed from the age of four months and in favourable conditions can produce five or more litters in a year, with four or five young in each litter – now that's a lot of bunnies!

Don't be fooled by these cute cottontails as they can be devastating in large numbers. Feral rabbits compete with native wildlife, damage vegetation by ringbarking trees and shrubs and prevent regeneration by eating seeds and seedlings. Their diggings and burrows can

also exacerbate erosion. In some landscapes, such as bushland areas, islands or agricultural lands, they are a huge problem. "Competition and grazing by the feral European rabbit" is listed by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage as one of the key threatening processes in NSW. In urban areas like Avoca, however, humans have already caused most of the irreversible environmental damage but rabbits can still cause problems. For example, rabbits can have a negative impact on remnant patches of bushland which provide important refuge for native animals. Rabbits can also cause a lot of despair to backyard gardeners or bush regenerators as they favour fresh new shoots.

Rabbits are preyed upon mainly by foxes, wild dogs and feral cats, none of which are particularly prolific in Avoca. Control of feral rabbits requires a co-ordinated approach which often includes several government agencies. However, control is complicated because of safety issues, welfare issues, and because both native and introduced predators feed on feral rabbits in many parts of Australia. Control of rabbits can get often hamstrung in certain areas. A local example of this was an attempted rabbit cull at Terrigal Haven a few years ago which had to be scrapped due to opposition from animal rights activists.

Across Australia, a number of control techniques are used, including biological control (calicivirus and myxomatosis), mechanical methods such as warren-ripping and rabbit-proof fences, poisoning, trapping and shooting. In Avoca, on a backyard scale, if you are plagued by rabbits and are supportive of rabbit control your only option is to cage trap but it requires patience. Rabbits won't enter a cage straight up so feed them a mix of oats and carrots over a few weeks, then gradually put the mix closer to the cage and eventually in it. Any captured rabbits should be euthanised humanely, preferably by the local vet. And please, if you bought your kids a pet rabbit and are now sick of cleaning the cage, don't just 'free' it! That's a big no no peoples!

So whether you are for or against rabbit culling, get used to living with them as they will be around for some time to come as they really do "breed like rabbits".  
Kristy McQueen

# People don't know what to expect



If you have an appointment with Reg Davis you may already be feeling better by the time you've walked down through their beautiful garden to his cosy little office below the house. The garden is the creation of Reg's partner, Lou Whiting. It's a very inviting setting.

Reg is a clinical psychologist with forty years experience who's been practising in Avoca at home now for over ten years. His clientele is primarily male. He tells me that only 25% of psychologists are blokes and since blokes often like to talk to other blokes, he has a busy practice. He usually sees men after they've had some significant crisis in their lives. Maybe overindulging in alcohol, a relationship break-up and a frequent cause of anxiety these days, retiring and not knowing what to do with oneself.

"How does a session go?" I ask? "Well, people are often wary because they may be doing this for the first time and don't know what to expect." "Are they lying on a couch?" "No, my way of working is more interactive, more talk therapy. Another big difference is that psychiatrists, being medically qualified, can prescribe psychotropic drugs which I can't do."

"Do you bulk bill people?" "Yes. Mainly disadvantaged clients. Because I have my office at home and I have no staff, my costs are low and I am able to bulk bill which I do on a needs basis. A person can get up to ten visits per year on Medicare. So people come and they talk. Of course I often have some prehistory about them from their GP."

"Then in the first session I start off by doing what's called a geno gram. It's rather like a family tree. I want to find out who they're related to and also details about what's happened to other members of their family. There may have been a suicide in the family or some other tragedy. That can come out doing the geno gram. And then I'll ask questions based on what the geno gram tells me."

"It's interesting that in the first session you can ask a whole lot of questions that might be more difficult later on. It's part of the history taking. In later sessions, they may start to wonder why you are asking about some personal thing and so the first session is a golden opportunity to set a lot of information in place."

"I'm a big believer in trans generational trauma and so I want to know what's happened in the past. War experiences of a grandfather can impact down through the generations, for example."

"Related to that, many problems start early in the life of the person I'm seeing. For many, school has been a safe place from what's happening in the family but where it wasn't, it's a double burden. Bullying at school has a big impact, more than people realise. The impact of bullying can carry on forty years later through traumatic memories."

"People often come to a counsellor as a last resort, with some degree of desperation but also sometimes very eager to tell their story. For many people, to be listened to respectfully for an hour, for someone to take a real interest in their lives, that's a new and precious experience in itself."

"I try to make it a very non-threatening experience. The office is unimposing. I make jokes. Sometimes I take the piss but one has to be very careful that piss taking suits the situation. I swear quite a bit." "Really?" "Yes, I find that with young people who themselves are swearing a lot, it comes across as me not being full of myself or pompous."

"How do you know whether you've been successful?" "People tell me. I also believe in what is called assertive follow-up. That means I'll often phone somebody if I haven't heard from them and ask them how they're going. Good signs will be that they've picked up activities that they dropped, they're getting on better with a partner, taking up interests again, perhaps, indicators that the therapy has worked."

I walk up the pretty path, well informed about an interesting career. Mike Rubbo.

# Look for the big green foot



I had heard that Maria Murray, the podiatrist on the round Drive with a big green foot outside, was a good talker but I didn't expect her to be so candid.

"How did you start on feet", I asked? Maria was a schoolteacher but deafness began to creep up on her. "One day I was teaching a year 11 class in Grafton and I noticed something going on at the back of the room. After class, I went up to the desk of the boy involved and found he'd written in perfect English, "Mrs Murray's a deaf bitch."

That was a wake-up call for her. She shifted to being a librarian but her hearing deteriorated further and she had to give that up too. Now she's the queen of her cheerful consulting room where, backed up by her Cochlear implant, hearing is no problem. Indeed, a lot of laughter comes out of that room according to her assistant. That's no surprise. She's open and fun.

"Many people ask why I chose podiatry. I was 48 when I started the four-year university degree and I tell them that podiatry chose me, not the other way round. And it was not because, as is often the case, I had personal foot problems. I have two of the most boring feet in the world. But we found ourselves south of Sydney with a University nearby and at an open day I got introduced to the head of the Podiatry by a technician friend and pretty soon I'm filling out the forms. I do come from a nursing family and so helping people has always been appealing."

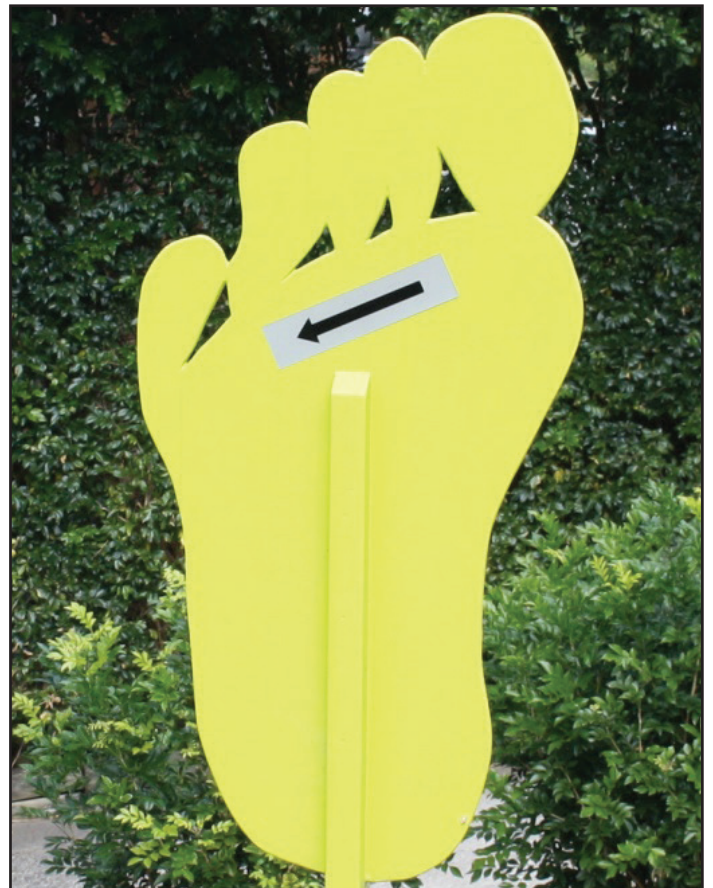
We take our feet for granted don't we? "Yes and we shouldn't. We have millions of little nerve endings in our feet which when we used to walk barefoot as did indigenous people, fed information to our brains about temperature, the terrain, et cetera. Now, we take in none of that and we have to compensate for having cut ourselves off from the earth."

"When I was doing my training the Professor said, 'Hands up those who'd like to work in aged care.'" Very few went up. 'Well you better get used to the idea,' added the Prof. 'Most of your customers will be in their 80's and 90's.' That suited me fine. I've always believed that the best class in the world is at the foot of an elder."

"I hate the word elderly, by the way. I want to eradicate it from the dictionary. The word elder, on the other hand, connotes wisdom. We should value old people who've lived at all ages. They were once nine, nineteen and twenty-nine.... And so I love working on their experienced feet."

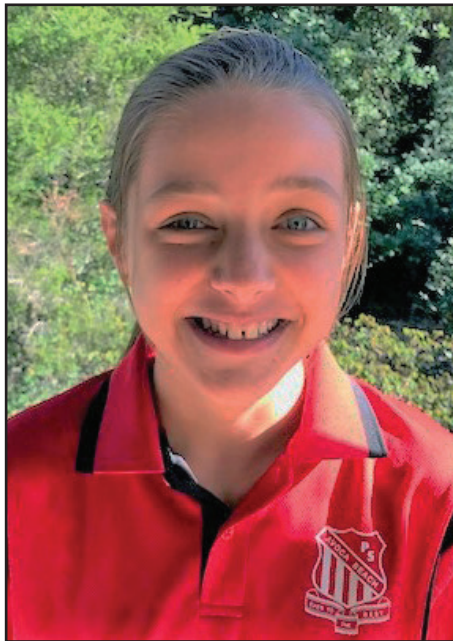
How do patients come to you? "I'd say 50% of my patients are word-of-mouth, 30% are Doctors' referrals and 20%, discover me through the lectures I give to the Red Cross and Seniors' Associations, etc. So I still do what I once loved, that is teach, whilst podiatry and my Cochlear implant have allowed me to keep on working and for that I'm very grateful." (Smile your on candid foot!)

Mike Rubbo





Natasha



Coral-lee



Pearl

## Stories from our local School

**Natasha and Coral-Lee write:** “We are year 6 students at Avoca Beach Public School . The best thing in year 6 at Avoca Beach Public school is all the opportunities we have in our sporting teams. So far this year the teams have been a great success.

Another highlight for many year 6 students is school camp full of delights and surprises. Students in stage three get to visit Bathurst or Canberra. It is a great way for all students to socialize whilst enjoying learning history. In year 6 we can also join activities such as debating, the school choir, band, the media team and public speaking.

Another fun part of being a year 6 student at our school is...having a buddy. Each year 6 student is matched with a kindergarten buddy. Each fortnight we get together with our buddies. We do things like outside play, arts and craft and S.T.E.M (Science, Technology, English and Math) activities. At first it takes a while for everyone, especially the kindergartens, to get used to their buddies but at the end of the year hugs and cuddles are everywhere! Our buddies are in year 12 now and we see them working at shops such as K-Mart and Coles and hanging around Avoca. We hope to see our little buddies in future years and we hope that they will remember us.”

**Pearl writes:** “I’m a nipper at Avoca Beach Surf Club and I love running down to the beach every Sunday morning, ready to have fun with my friends. There is nothing more exhilarating than standing on the start line, excited, waiting to hear the gun go off and then to run through the waves to start the race. I love our community and how we can all come together every Sunday to learn about surf lifesaving, have fun and keep fit.

You may have seen nipper kids on their boards in the afternoons, training together. This is my favourite event and I train with some other kids in the older age group. I board train twice a week, swim train twice a week and do iron man training every Saturday. When we’re frozen to the bone, all we can think about is the hot showers.

One of my favourite things about carnivals is the bond me and my friends have with the other clubs. In the marshalling area, I usually catch up with my friends from Umina. For us it’s not always about the competition - more about the fun we have singing and driving the officials mad. As much as you’re loving the empty beaches on Sundays, I’m eager to get back in the waves.

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# Your outdoor workout

Do you use the outdoor exercise machines behind the surf club? If you do, you've probably noticed that they've changed over the years.

I found that they've got less user-friendly and I'm wondering what you think. Previously you were working against your own weight. For example, on the rowing machine you pulled against yourself and the action was very smooth. True, you couldn't vary the resistance but you created the workout you wanted by the number of repetitions.



Other favourites of mine were the cross-country ski trainer and the pendulum, a fabulous action for the hips seen here.



A Google search finds that this type of equipment is in use all over the world and is the type favoured. But for some reason Council has changed to devices based on resistance. You dial in the difficulty you want which sounds like a plus. But according to mums in our little park behind the Surf Club, few people use the small number of devices now installed.

The reasons seem to be 1. a more jerky action and 2. less choice. Here's the elliptical trainer at Kincumber which works on resistance like that at Avoca.



Here's a hand winder at Avoca on which the resistance is presently jammed.



The equipment looks very upmarket but what's the point of it taking up space in our parks if it's not being used? I've written to Council asking why they switched types and will feature their response in the next issue. What's your opinion, especially if you are familiar with the two different systems. Here's another piece you may remember, the butterfly. That really gave you a good chest workout. Mike Rubbo





# What's happening at Winney Bay Reserve?

When Gosford Council 5 Lands Coastal Walkway Master plan was published in 2012 there was no indication that the Winney Bay section would be upgraded, except perhaps minimally for safety reasons.

Winney Bay Reserve was the 5 Lands Walk walker's only bushland encounter and the Master Plan acknowledged that, talking about the pleasure of feeling 'uneven surfaces under one's feet'. Yes, bushwalks are supposed to be challenges and worldwide best practice recommends minimum human intervention for the construction of bushland tracks. Where formal tracking is required, the use of natural materials rather than concrete paving is preferred.

Central Coast bushwalks largely follow best practice, as evidenced by the many walks in Brisbane Water and Bouddi National Parks but there are signs of change.

In New Zealand, the great walks like the Milford and the Abel Tasman, seen below, follow the same principles of maintaining natural beauty to enhance human enjoyment with minimum construction.



As the 5 Lands Walk has grown, the goal also appears to have changed to that of paving or concreting the walk for 'all-weather' walking 360 days a year, thus deviating from the original vision of the Walk which was that of connecting people to the environment.

Many Copacabana locals are very upset that Winney Bay Reserve is being developed excessively to accommodate an annual event. Council held a meeting on 12 April 2018 in response to community concerns, to provide information to the community but as yet there has been no satisfactory outcome from this meeting. Copacabana residents have formed an action group to challenge the decision to develop Winney Bay and established a Facebook page to get the word out about what can happen to our precious local bushland environments when we are not looking and are not appropriately consulted.

Here's what Winney Bay used to look like prior to January 2018 as walkers pushed through the colourful and aromatic bush.



Here's what you will see today from the same spot as work proceeds on the \$875,000 stairs while there is already an existing staircase hidden in the bush.



Unfortunately this appears to be 'a done deal' but the cliff top part of the proposed new track, stage 2, is still awaiting a grant of \$4.5 million to install further paving three meters wide with an area for market stalls and weddings on the flatter area from the Captain Cook Lookout leading to these stairs. Responding to public concern, Mayor Jane Smith has promised a review and more consultation in the future.

What's at stake is our concept of bush walking itself, whether we want our feet on the ground, rocks, roots and all or on paving. Will future generations come to think to think the only safe bush walk is one on concrete?

The 5 Lands Walk website expresses the plan to extend the walk to Maitland Bay, to the Putty Beach track. Are those unspoiled walks in Bouddi National Park going to be subjected to a similar makeover; concrete steps installed for the once a year crowd? How do you feel about this, Avoca? Heather Graham, Copacabana resident. <https://www.facebook.com/SaveWinneyBay/>

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