


Clive James's Sunbeam Ave idyll in Sydney's Kogarah lives on

By **ELIAS VISONTAY**, REPORTER

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The old red-brick cottage is long gone, replaced by the kind of cookie-cutter mansion endemic to Sydney's unrelenting suburban renewal — but some enduring truths remain.

Under a “sky the texture of powdered sapphires” so aptly recalled by Clive James, there is little reminder of the literary giant's childhood home at 6 Margaret Street, Kogarah, in Sydney's south.

The roars of crudely constructed billycarts — that once created “a shock-wave of sound” — have also faded with time. But the Kogarah kids of a new era share an intimate secret with the neighbourhood's noted former resident: the hill around the corner on Sunbeam Avenue is one of the best in the suburb.

“I could not build billycarts very well,” James, who died in London this week, recalled in *Unreliable Memoirs*. “The best I could manage was a sawn-off fruit box mounted on a fence-paling spine frame, with drearily solid wheels taken off an old pram. In such a creation I could go at a reasonable clip down our street and twice as fast down Sunbeam Avenue, which was much steeper at the top.”

It is a universal truth Ruben Caceres knows from experience — though nowadays it is for bicycles rather than billycarts.

“It's just better here (on Sunbeam Avenue),” said the six-year-old, who removed his training wheels earlier this week.

“I like the hill at the top, 'cause I can ride fast.”

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