

Mission to help those in need

Joey Rebakis

Hotham Mission provides community outreach and support to some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups in North Melbourne and neighbouring suburbs.

The mission organises a weekly food program that usually helps local young people by making sure they have enough to eat while they continue their education.

The program was expanded during the COVID-19 lockdown to help the many people doing it tough. They included rough sleepers, the elderly stuck at home, those on a low income, asylum seekers (often without any income) and people forced to self-isolate.

Hotham Mission provided households in need with a reusable supermarket bag that contained mostly non-perishable goods such as rice, pasta, sauce,

cereal, tinned food and milk.

Our aim was simple – to help people get through the week by providing them with basic items for a few meals.

We soon found there was a huge demand for our assistance. In fact, we struggled for some weeks to get enough non-perishables to fill the bags we distributed. At that stage, panic buying had stripped supermarket shelves of many essentials.

At the peak, we were providing more than 100 coloured carrybags – red, blue and green – stocked with food. We did so with the help of Foodbank and generous donations from Scalzo Food in West Melbourne, the City of Melbourne, LIFE Church and the RACV.

Unison Housing’s Deb Wilson told us that disadvantaged residents in high-rise public housing appreciated receiving



Hotham Mission’s Neysa Charlton filling the food bags. Photograph: Joey Rebakis

a food bag. “For many, the extra support proved a real life saver,” she said. “We took a targeted approach. We sought to help people in social housing who were under financial stress after losing work or who had underlying health issues that caused them to be isolated and fearful of going out to shop.”

Hotham Mission’s support also

enabled Wombat Housing to help people who became homeless.

“We got meals to them in emergency accommodation such as hotels and motels,” Wombat program manager Carmelo Maccarrone said.

At Hotham Mission, we know that food alone won’t break the poverty cycle. However, it’s a basic

right and with our help, the lives of those in need can be made a little better.

Joey Rebakis is Hotham Mission’s community development coordinator.

Want to know more?
Find out about Hotham Mission’s work at hothammission.org.au

Unexpected silver lining in the sounds of silence in the street

John H. Smith

Martin Welch has just celebrated a full year at The Violineri at 309 Victoria Street, West Melbourne, where he repairs and restores violins, violas and cellos.

Relocating his business from Box Hill brought many challenges but none to equal those that arose during COVID-19 restrictions. With people mainly housebound, Martin faced a significant reduction in turnover.

However, the lockdown brought some unexpected silver linings. “There was one woman who took up playing her violin again because with the reduced traffic noise she started to hear a lot of music being played in her street,” he says.

Martin was also pleasantly surprised to find



Martin Welch repairing a violin. Photograph: John H. Smith

that more people were contacting the shop. “Several found social isolation reignited their interest in playing, or it gave them more time to practise. Many brought their instruments in for me to service.”

He is grateful for their support. “They were kind enough to come to a local shop. Their instruments usually needed more than the dust rubbed off. I would refresh them, adjust the settings, fit new strings, and sometimes supply a new bow.”

Many people in lockdown suddenly had the time to search the net for instrument repairs. “I publicise my work through the website, social media, and post on Instagram. Most people enquire before they come in, as purchasing a new instrument is a considered decision,” Martin smiles.

One unfortunate downer of COVID-19 was that it prevented the occasional presence in the workshop of Brenton Fyfield, Martin’s elderly mentor, who was forced to stay at home. But not all contact was lost. “We have a drop-off system in place so we can

exchange work that we do for each other,” he says.

In quiet times, he tackled long overdue jobs, such as renovating the workbench and working on his instruments. But even here, the lockdown brought problems. “New bows made in China are now in short supply and this required some lateral thinking about producing items in my workshop.”

Martin’s positive attitude has never wavered. “COVID-19 has both constrained us and forced us to think about what we can do. And what we can do for each other,” he says.

John H. Smith writes regularly for the News.

Want to know more?
Drop in at The Violineri, 309 Victoria Street, West Melbourne. Web: www.theviolineri.com
Email: workshop@theviolineri.com

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OUR LOCKED DOWN LIFE – VIEWS FROM THE INSIDE

The time to savour the chance to change pace

Nicole Pereira

I habitually complain about not having enough time in a day to do all the things I would like to. I bet you do, too.

We all thought that life in lockdown would be a dream come true. After all, when faced with the prospect of not being allowed to go anywhere, we imagined we would have all the time in the world to attend to the many things we had to do.

For me, it seemed as if time would stretch out forever and I'd have all the time I needed to catch up on study. I had those six chapters of readings for law school tagged as my first task in lockdown.

Everyone had similar thoughts. It all looked so easy. We'd have oodles of time every day to knock over everything on our to-do list. But I soon learnt the inescapable and bitter truth. I found there was a

difference between choosing to work from home and the global pandemic forcing us to work from home.

The main lesson I learnt from the COVID-19 restrictions was the importance of mental health. The first week of lockdown wasn't too bad, to be honest. I didn't have to go into the office, I finally cleaned up everything on my desk and I had extra time each morning for a sleep in.

Every day would start with a hot cuppa, breakfast and the daily Zoom meetings with the team. I would split every day with an afternoon walk along the beach and then I'd start to cook lunch. All good, so far.

However, it soon got lonely working in isolation. I found it hard being restricted to the same working environment every day and not being able to meet new people. Then came the grim realisation that this would last for weeks.

I was able to survive by savouring each moment, by focusing on the 'now' and on what I was able to control. Finally, I found I had the precious time for self-care, to focus on my own hobbies and to spend more time with the family.

Looking back, those eight weeks weren't all that bad. I think I must have saved about \$1,000 on food, \$400 on coffees and another \$400 on transport. I managed to finish one new online course a week and to pick up skills in web development, app development and psychology.

I also had the rare opportunity to spend afternoons in the kitchen, cooking all my favourite dishes. Lockdown sure made me realise that I should start appreciating my freedom, my family and the endless choices I have in my life.

Nicole Pereira writes regularly for the News.

Smartphone quarantine

Ansh Verma

Things were simpler many years ago. Perhaps that is an illusion but at least that's how I remember it.

I used to own a Nokia. I had to use a computer to access my email. I only had one account. Snapchat didn't exist, I didn't have Facebook and Mark Zuckerberg was still a student at Harvard.

My phone plan allotted me a limited number of text messages and phone-call minutes. I didn't have internet access on my phone. I had to make a phone call to a friend to keep in touch.

Largely, our beloved smartphones have made our life easier. They certainly made it more bearable for me during this pandemic, and for all those many others who had to work from home.

My guess is that many others felt exactly the same way. I still can't imagine life without my magic iPhone.

Curiously, even as I say this, I also wonder if the pandemic has challenged all of us to think about the way we use our time. Perhaps, much as we love our phones, we might have got too attached to them.

Perhaps we should be rethinking the attention we give to them, the time we spend looking at them, and the slavish way we react to them.

Do we really need to keep up with the Kardashians? Is the constant connection to our friends actually bringing us any closer? Or worse, is it driving us apart?

Perhaps this quarantine period has served as a good time to revisit the amount of attention we pay to our smartphones.

Perhaps this is the unexpected gift the COVID-19 lockdown has given us. We might have thought we couldn't survive the inconvenience of being stuck at home, and felt the only way to endure it was by depending on our devices.

We might actually have emerged from lockdown with a new awareness that we can survive without them. Even I, for so long almost totally dependent on my phone, have learnt that.

Ansh Verma writes regularly for the News.

Prepare for future action during this hibernation

Flora Sciarra

I don't think that time should have been called a 'lockdown'. It makes me feel like I was being imprisoned.

Rather, how about 'hibernation'? An extended period of remaining inactive or indoors sounds better to me. In fact, I prefer Ralph Ellison's more philosophical view: "Hibernation is a covert preparation for a more overt action".

Yes, I may have been stuck indoors, but I was far from inactive. I worked three days a week and that kept me busy. Once a week I collected my shopping from my local supermarket.

Every two to three weeks I made a quick trip to the pharmacy to stock up on a few necessities. In an average week, I ended up spending at least half of it at home. For me, there wasn't much chance of going stir crazy.

I think I was ready to move into a state of suspended reality. I don't need Ellison this time. I'll just borrow the quote from that well-known writer, Anon, who said: "I am physically, mentally and emotionally ready to enter a new phase in my life – hibernation".

For my physical health – and if Melbourne's weather permitted – I went for a walk around my local area each day. If not, I spent lots of time dancing at home. For six years, from 1999 to 2005, I had taken lessons in Latin American dancing. I still knew all the steps, so I combined them with a bit of freestyling.

My parents have a spare room upstairs. I suppose you could call it an attic. There's plenty of space for me to strut my stuff. I was able to dance like no-one was watching. Indeed, it was fortunate that no-one was watching. It was good for both my mental and emotional health.

I continued my regular writing during those long weeks I was at home. I wrote in my diary daily and I worked on my memoir. When I felt suitably inspired I put pen to paper and just wrote, wrote and wrote. That was my way of keeping my mind active.

On a more spiritual level, I meditated every day. I used a mindfulness technique by focusing solely on my breathing. When my mind wandered (and it did), I took it back to each breath.

I did visualisations. What did I visualise? Simply, what I wanted to bring into my life. I stopped worrying about how things might come about. I just trusted that they would.

When sitting down, I grounded myself by imagining roots going down my legs, then down through the soles of my feet and then into the ground below me.

Flora Sciarra writes regularly for the News.

Kia Kaha: Kiwis heard and heeded the message to 'stay strong'

Michelle Brett

Being locked inside wasn't quite how I planned on spending 2020. After a short trip back to New Zealand for New Year, I suddenly found myself in lockdown. Even worse, at 29, I was again living with my parents.

New Zealand went hard early and adopted a strict level system. We soon moved from level 2 to 3 then 4. Complete lockdown!

In my family, lockdown started with a bang – literally. My newly licensed sister crashed her car into the side of our house. She was fine. The wall, not so much.

Life in lockdown meant we could only leave home to go to the supermarket, pharmacy or out for exercise. It all became about our 'bubbles'. Whoever you were with and wherever you were on the night before lockdown began, that became your bubble.

Like it or lump it, there weren't any trades. The weekly grocery trip became an adventure. Shops operated on a one-out, one-in system, which resulted in lines that seemed to stretch forever. Basic items were restricted to two per shop, mainly to prevent the spate of panic buying that quickly stripped supermarket shelves.

Lockdown made life harder for households like ours that also shopped for elderly relatives.

One unexpected problem turned out to be getting out of the supermarket car park. Flat batteries everywhere and road-side assistance was kept pretty busy.

Most online shopping was also shut down, apart from the essentials. Though, as you can imagine, what was considered essential was a bit dubious. Everything else was simply removed from sale.

This made shopping for a Mother's Day present a challenge, unless your mother was hoping for a new jug or some winter sheets.

We were kept well informed. Daily at 1pm, PM Jacinda Ardern and Ashley Bloomfield, head of the Ministry of Health, came on TV. He gave us the latest case stats and Ardern – who became affectionately known by some as Aunt Cindy – told naughty people to stop misbehaving.

These daily updates became a big part of lockdown. Bloomfield, especially, developed quite a fan club with many bored Kiwis devoting their abundant spare time to writing love songs to him. Soon, T-shirts and bags were on sale with his face printed on them. We Kiwis are like that.

While lockdown was difficult for some, I'm proud of how New Zealanders took it in their stride. We were told 'Kia Kaha' – to stay strong – and to look out for one another. And we did.

Life has now opened up here, across the ditch, and we're getting back to normal. Speaking of opening up, we're planning to repair that hole in our wall.

Michelle Brett writes regularly for the News.



Lockdown started with a hole in the wall, but now it's time for repairs.

Lort Smith keeps up its services during lockdown

Suzanne Kundevska

The coronavirus pandemic took many by surprise, but Lort Smith Animal Hospital had begun planning in early February for the real possibility of changes to services.

When it became clear only essential services could remain open, we switched our focus to accident, emergency and critical care.

Within days, all non-essential appointments were placed on hold, triages were done in the carpark in clients' cars, vet consultations were limited to pets only, and people took all the animals in our adoption hub.

On-site volunteers put their work on ice until it was deemed safe for them to return and some staff members began to work remotely.

However, our vets, vet nurses, animal welfare officers and customer services personnel kept coming in daily to help animals in need.

Nurse Leah Buckland, a 10-year veteran this month, was one of the front-line heroes who braved all the dangers to help save animals' lives.

Leah's face-to-face client time changed dramatically due to social distancing. "I used to enjoy spending time chatting with

clients. I quickly had to change to phone chats," she says.

"Inside the building, staff practised social distancing and took staggered breaks. We definitely all missed seeing our volunteers' friendly faces."

Her post-shift cleaning routine reminded her of the dangers she faced daily from COVID-19.

"I was mindful of any surface I touched and I had to distance myself from my family. They were quite worried," Leah says.

At Lort Smith, we found our complex cases, including palliative care, skyrocketed and often strained the mental health and wellbeing of our teams.

However, Leah's commitment to quality vet care didn't waver. "It's good to know we were helping people, especially those who were a bit stuck financially," she says.

Lort Smith continues to offer emergency, urgent and essential care to animals, including online and phone consultations that enable clients to speak with a vet.

Suzanne Kundevska is PR manager at Lort Smith.

Want to know more?
Lort Smith provides urgent medical care for your pet and is open daily from 8:30am to 10:00pm. Visit www.lortsmith.com.



Nurse Leah triages Kelpie Charlie before he sees the vet (above) and books in a Lort Smith client (below).



Community Comment

Andrew Kearton asked family members what they enjoyed doing when the lockdown eased



Lachlan (13), twin No. 1, Altona
I'd been playing video games in my bedroom for weeks. I had the best time. I then decided to start playing in the lounge room so I could annoy everyone.



Annette (54), wife, Altona
First thing I did was to bundle the twins up and send them to stay with their grandparents for a week. It was such a relief. (Sorry, kids. Just joking!)



Bella (2), Kavoodle, Altona
I raced outside to visit the next-door neighbours. I didn't get any treats so I decided to chase their cat. He crashed through their screen door. What a scream!



Lily (13), twin No. 2, Altona
I stopped Zooming my bff's every five minutes and I organised a real catch-up reunion with everyone. And to celebrate, I made an 'I survived the lockdown' Tik Tok.

Pandemic brings back memories of polio

Laura Misale

The frightening coronavirus has swept the world this year, but it wasn't the first time our nation has been exposed to a frightening pandemic.

We shouldn't forget the polio outbreaks of the late 1930s and the early 1950s in which there were up to 40,000 victims of paralytic polio.

Polio, more accurately known as poliomyelitis or infantile paralysis, was a terrifying scourge in Australia for two decades. It is an infectious disease caused by the poliovirus.

It is transmitted person-to-person, mainly affecting children, and multiplies in the intestine where it can invade the nervous system and cause paralysis.

Local identity Bill Liddy, now on the board at The Centre, recalls an encounter with polio in 1947, when, aged 11, he was at Sunday school at the West Melbourne Baptist Church.

"There was a boy there who had callipers on his legs. In those days, young boys didn't wear long pants, instead they all wore short pants, so you could see it. He was the first one I saw who had been affected by it," he says.

It was an era when disabled people were treated less sensitively, and often cruelly. Bill recalls vividly that while the crippled boy was treated well by some of the group, others were much less generous.

"When I went to Sunday school, they used to put some lemonade and sandwiches out for us. When we went outside, he would sit with anybody and he was just one of the boys," he recalls.

"However, a lot of kids picked on the ones who were a bit different and called them names. I remember big kids from older grades picking on that boy and



Bill Liddy as a teenager in the early 1950s.

that was wrong. Mind you, if you wore glasses back in those days, you soon got called 'Four eyes'."

Children might have accepted the rough-and-tumble of the schoolyard but their parents, fearful of the poliovirus, were more apprehensive. "I can't remember my parents saying it much, but the reaction was 'keep away from that kid! That's what we used to hear, 'keep away from him,'" Bill says sadly.

Lorna Hannan OAM is chair of the Hotham History Project and has her own memories of the late 1930s' polio outbreak.

"I do remember that everybody was very scared of getting polio, and we were glad that we lived in the country in Numurkah. We felt that we probably wouldn't get it," she says.

Even then, Lorna recalls St Joseph's, her local Catholic primary school, closing its doors. "I recall schools were closed down completely during that 1930s' polio outbreak," she says.

Lorna also remembers her school sports carnivals and how they would give the boy with polio a head start. "I remember when he part-recovered he was put right out in front near the finishing line so that he would have the same chance of winning as anyone else."

During the schools' closure, children heard radio lessons at home – perhaps a forerunner of today's Zoom online classes and video conference calls.

In the 1930s, people had much less access to information. "There was only occasional newspapers and some radio programs, certainly no TV or social media," Bill says. The papers released daily totals, reported on school fumigations and told grim stories of polio victims having to live in an iron lung.

In those simpler times, fear of disease was widespread and Lorna recalls the power of oral history. "In our family there were stories of earlier epidemics, especially the awful Spanish Flu. The memory of that epidemic remained strong in our community."



Lorna Hannan, aged 3, at home in Numurkah.

Lorna recalls a time when families were more self-sufficient. "Then, households were used to being strong and independent and coping. They had coped with the Great War, the Spanish Flu, the Depression. Families then just had to deal with stuff and I think that's an important thing for people to remember right now."

Another outbreak of polio in the early 1950s caused more fear and suffering until, in 1955,

Dr Jonas Salk developed an effective vaccine. In 1961, Dr Albert Sabin developed an oral vaccine that was used around the world.

"There was a general feeling of rejoicing and parents everywhere were relieved," Lorna says.

One local North Melbourne monument recalls a much earlier epidemic. Next time you walk down Errol Street, be sure to stop by the ornate Henderson drinking fountain, outside the town hall in Queensberry Street. Lorna says it was a gift from Councillor Henderson to the municipality in 1877 following the typhoid fever outbreaks of that decade.

"In full view of North Melbourne is a monument that was a community response to an epidemic," she explains.

It seems epidemics have always fostered a strong sense of community spirit.

Lorna says things are tough now, but she adds, "We've been there before. As a community we will come out just as strong on the other side."

Laura Misale writes regularly for the News.



King Street State School, West Melbourne, 1947. Bill Liddy is second from the right in the back row.

A long road to recovery for young polio patient



In the 1930s, there were strict rules about who could visit hospitals and who could not. The rules were very strict for children, the reason being that visitors only upset them and made them difficult patients.

When Rae's young relative George got polio in the 1930s, he was taken to Fairfield Hospital and for some weeks was allowed no visitors and later, only his parents.

On the road to recovery, he was transferred to a hospital in Royal Park. The family remembered the building as the Old Men's Home

and it was later named Mount Royal. He was there for some months. During this time, his mother went every day to learn how to put splints on his limbs.

George's recovery depended on a regime where twice a day the splints on his legs and arms were removed while he was bathed in hot salty water. The splints were then reapplied. This procedure was to go on twice a day for four years. Once home, George was kept in a pram and taken out twice a day to be bathed in hot salty water.

The household revolved around

this procedure: first, light the copper that was in the outside laundry; next, get out the big tub that was kept under the bed to keep it hygienic; next, get buckets and carry hot water in from the yard. That done, take off the splints and put the boy in the bath, take him out and dry him, put the splints back on, empty the tub, put it back under the bed, check the supply of salt and do what could be done until the next bath was due.

Masseur Helen Murdock carried out treatments very similar to those a physiotherapist would

do today. Crucial to George's recovery, they involved regular visits, supervised exercises and bandaging of his limbs, all in addition to the daily salt-water treatment at home.

Over the same period, Mr Price, a senior surgeon at the hospital, made visits to the home. The complete treatment was a team effort carried on for some years. George recovered and lived into his 70s. Placid as a child, he grew into a patient adult who was very aware of the team effort that had given him an active life.

While recovering, he did

not have the use of his thumb. The doctors suggested amputation. His mother replied that it was George's thumb and, as a 10-year-old, it was up to him to decide. He did not agree to the amputation. What followed instead was an operation that adjusted his thumb, and he retained the use of it for the rest of his life.

Road to Recovery was written by Rae Nicholls as part of Arts House 'Refuge' project in 2018.

Virus rewrites plans for a new arrival

Annette McQuarrie

Dr Catherine Brumby spends her days hard at work on the frontline in the ongoing battle with the coronavirus.

When not caring for women with medically complicated pregnancies, she usually enjoys getting home to her apartment in North Melbourne. However, when Catherine spoke to the News last month, her situation was very different. At 37 weeks pregnant, she was just days away from the birth of her first child.

Like any first-time parents, she and partner Beau were both excited and anxious. However, their situation was far from typical. As Catherine prepared for the imminent birth, she had to do so alone. She was here in Melbourne, but Beau was on the other side of the world, in lockdown in the US.

In those fraught days, Catherine's situation was especially trying. While an expectant mother would usually have her friends and family on hand to assist in her final days, COVID-19 restrictions meant Catherine was completely on her own.

She couldn't even receive a supermarket delivery as she had been told she "didn't fit the criteria". To compound the problem, her block had no lift to get her up to her unit on the fourth floor.

Catherine coped remarkably well in those incredibly difficult circumstances. "When times get tough, we always seem able to find a way," she cheerfully told the News.

Her resilience was extraordinary. Her professional expertise is as a kidney specialist who helps women with high-risk



Catherine in the garden of her North Melbourne unit. Photograph: John H. Smith

pregnancies, and she somehow kept up her important medical work. Even as she juggled the emotional and physical needs of her own pregnancy, she continued consulting with her patients through the new tele-health system.

"I'm thankful that mine has been a relatively 'easy' pregnancy," she smiled. However, this writer knows all too well the solace of a rub for feet and an aching back during pregnancy. Back rubs become mandatory. Foot rubs, too, because there's no way you can think about touching your toes, let alone massaging those sore insteps.

Catherine met Beau in Canada. Her story reads like a movie script. She was on an International Fellowship, adding to her already impressive medical qualifications, when she met a charming young American, a creator of visual effects for Hollywood movies and virtual reality games.

They soon fell in love and lived together for a year in Canada before Catherine had to come home to Australia. Once Beau realised he couldn't live without her, he followed her to Melbourne and they happily set up home.

Soon after, he flew to Canada on what was to be a brief work-related trip, confident he'd be home for the birth of their first child.

Then COVID-19 arrived out of the blue and things went dramatically pear-shaped.

As Catherine's time got closer,

they found themselves stranded half a world apart. Modern technology eased the pain slightly. They started to WhatsApp up to 60 times a day and arranged a weekly 'date' where they Skyped to watch Netflix together.

It soon became even more like a movie script, perhaps like the online romancing of Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks in the rom-com *You've Got Mail*. In fact, Catherine and Beau made plans to use video-calling during her labour. He promised he'd use his creative talents to include some special effects.

Annette McQuarrie writes regularly for the News.

Want to know more?

Of course you do! This story was submitted to the News when Catherine was just days from giving birth. Readers will be delighted to know that North Melbourne's newest resident, Violet Maeve Teora, arrived safely.



Catherine with one-day-old Violet Maeve Teora.

An artist in waiting

John H. Smith

Local artist Eric Henshall had been excited that his paintings were to be exhibited at the Brunswick Gallery last month.

Unfortunately, they became a victim of COVID-19 when the gallery had to shut its doors.

"Postponing was a really big thing," Eric says. "I had been working towards it for years. For seven weeks I had painted non-stop to prepare for the show. Then suddenly everything stopped."

The proposed new date for the exhibition – 10 July – will depend on the virus not returning. "Had this been the original date, I could have added a few more paintings," he says with a wry grin.

Eric is realistic about the future. "My openings normally draw about 200 people and we celebrate with a big party. But if social distancing continues in July the crowd will be limited and the celebration won't be the same."

While he retains high hopes for the coming exhibition, he is under no illusions. He knows that some people will be doing it tough. "With significant financial stress in the community, how successful will my exhibition be? After all, art is a luxury product."

He lamented the way lockdown had reduced his life. Eric has

always drawn inspiration from his walks in Melbourne's urban landscapes. "It was a real blow to my heart to walk around a city where there were no people. I missed the daily contacts from my walks," he says sadly.

Usually comfortable living alone, Eric was surprised by the shock of loneliness. "I never realised how much of an active social life I have. With travel restrictions in place and dependence on online teaching, I had fewer students in my ESL classes. I never thought I would so miss a handshake or a hug."

"It is hard to be creative if you are missing something important in your life," he smiles. But the creative streak that runs deep in Eric still finds other outlets.

"I make my own clothes, as I have a penchant for waistcoats and very high waistlines. I've never really grown out of my nerdy youth. I still like to dance and I have not spun anybody off a balcony in quite a few years now," he laughs.

John H. Smith writes regularly for the News.

Want to know more?

Eric Henshall's recent work will be featured next month at the Brunswick Street Gallery, Level 1 and 2/322 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy. Check the gallery website: www.brunswickstgallery.com.au for confirmation and dates.



Eric Henshall at home. Photograph: John H. Smith



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A new face at the Baptist Community Centre

Pauline Griffiths

Some of us struggle to find our place in life. We jump from job to job, sector to sector in search of a good fit. This has been the case for me as I've moved from school leader, to musician, to academic.

My restlessness has finally led me to community work, which is a welcoming professional space, full of collaboration and action.

Back in March, in my first week as manager of the West Melbourne Baptist Community Centre, COVID-19 had an impact immediately.

Working from home is not easy for community workers; we are highly engaged types responding to the needs of others and we thrive on interpersonal contact. But, like everyone else, I found myself at home using Zoom to build new relationships and programs.

During the lockdown, two dire needs surfaced locally. First, the need for food. Agencies like LIFE Church arranged 'hope hampers' of non-perishable food, shared widely with locals in need. RACV food-packs were delivered to Hotham Mission, a group called Dignity Meals made delicious home-cooked meals, and Kara Barnett from the City of Melbourne arranged food drop-offs.



Pauline playing the electric violin.

A second urgent need was the 'digital divide'; a vast gulf between citizens who have abundant access to digital technology, digital literacy, and wi-fi data, and those who have little or none.

In response to this, a new form-filling assistance program has been launched. I expect this kind of fast collaborative action will need to continue for quite a while as people keep dealing with unemployment and underemployment.

Like anyone in a new job, it's taking me time to learn the ropes, but first impressions are heartening. There's a strong humanitarian vibe, a can-do attitude in the neighbourhood, and no shortage of stories of kindness, of food sharing, and of generosity.

Pauline Griffiths is the new community centre manager at the West Melbourne Baptist Community Centre, 4 Miller Street, West Melbourne.

Want to know more?
Pop in and meet Pauline when you're next passing our community centre, email her at eighthdaycommunity@gmail.com or phone 0402 019 209.

Memories of life in North Melbourne since 1929

Mary Kehoe

Long-time North Melbourne identity Nancy McIntosh passed away recently at the grand age of 98. The last issue of the News published a moving obituary written by her daughter June.

Nancy was about eight when she arrived in North Melbourne with her family around 1929. They moved into Provost Street, the small street parallel to Queensberry and between Curzon and Abbotsford.

The area was very different then. It was like a village and the many small shops met most of the local residents' needs.

In January 1996, Nancy shared her memories with the Hotham History Project. In a two-hour interview she gave a vivid picture of a vibrant and supportive community. Here are some of her stories.

All along Queensberry and Abbotsford streets were little shops. Martins had the hairdresser on the corner of Queensberry and Abbotsford streets, and next door in Queensberry Street was Hannafords, a ham and beef shop.

Nancy's mum would send her out to Hannafords for a quarter-pound of butter. Nancy never knew if that small amount was all that her mother could afford or because she couldn't keep food cold without an ice chest or fridge. All they had was a Coolgardie safe.

All those little shops are now gone. When Nancy was small, she probably wouldn't have been allowed to go up Errol Street. On a Friday night you couldn't get onto the

footpaths and they would overflow onto the road.

When Nancy and her siblings were young, everyone would come out into the street after tea in summer, and the kids thought it was lovely. They would play rounders and the adults would join in.

In summer, when the kids were told to finish their street games and were then brought inside and sent to bed, the mums would often stay outside chatting. Some would bring out chairs and some nights they would stay out there until midnight.

Mrs Evans from the dairy in Provost Street was very friendly. She organised the numerous picnics the children went on. For a couple of shillings, they would all go in the horse-drawn Handley's furniture van to Port Melbourne.

It must have looked funny with 30 or 40 people squashed into the van. Later they travelled in the motorised furniture van and would go down as far as Brighton. The kids would sit on trestles down each side with one in the middle. You could fit a lot in like that. There would be singalongs on the way down and also coming back.

Nancy recalls the cable trams running. The family, including her brothers Bob and Jack, would go and visit her uncles – one in South Melbourne and one in Port Melbourne. One day Bob lost his shoe when the tram was going up Abbotsford Street. Jack jumped off, ran back, got the shoe and caught up with the tram at Victoria Street.

Mary Kehoe is secretary of the Hotham History Project.

Need help filling in a form?

Filling in forms can be challenging at the best of times, but the isolation, hardship and the need to fill in many forms during the COVID-19 period has increased the need for assistance.

A new free service, supported by the City of Melbourne in collaboration with the North Melbourne Language and Learning Centre and the West Melbourne Baptist Community Centre, is now available.

If English is not your first language, if computer technology terrifies you, or if you are overwhelmed by the challenge of making an online application for Job Seeker or another essential service, you do not have to do it alone.

Assistance is now available on Thursdays, by appointment, at the West Melbourne Baptist Community Centre, 4 Miller Street, West Melbourne.

As this service grows, we hope to gain more volunteers who can assist people in various languages.

Phone Pauline on 0467 814 054.

Errol Street north of Queensberry Street in the 1920s. Photograph: North Melbourne Library

Want to know more?
Hotham History Project researches and records the history of our surroundings and runs regular events – walks, talks and workshops. A number of books it has published can be purchased through the website. The Project is keen to attract new members and encourage people to participate in whatever way they can. Details: www.hothamhistory.org.au

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Students and teachers Zoom into class

Erin Jenkins

St Michael's Primary faced many unexpected challenges when COVID-19 forced our schools to close its doors. We are proud to report we were able to run an excellent learning-from-home program while also ensuring the wellbeing of our students. Our staff quickly got on top of the skills

required to run a Zoom meeting or to view a Loom video. Claire Mathieson, our e-learning leader, was delighted with the teachers' creative responses. "I was utterly gobsmacked with how they all got on top of learning and teaching via numerous online platforms," she said. However, the contact with the children went way beyond class lessons. Perhaps

more important was the personal contact we maintained. Each day our 'morning greeting' enabled teachers to check in with their classes, play a game or two, then outline what activities the day would hold. We ran Zoom 'play dates' for the older students. Facilitated by educational psychologists, these were wellbeing sessions that enabled children to connect, chat and spend time together. They helped make up for the loss of normal social contact at school. Fiona Dunne, Grade 3/4 teacher, put together a Tik Tok of staff dancing to James Brown's 'I Feel Good.' "We wanted to show the children that we were up for the challenge of home learning, and to connect with their families as everyone tried to work and learn from home," she said. We even conducted our Easter raffle on Zoom. Principal Denise Hussey drew out the lucky winner before an audience of more than 100. "We wanted to stay connected so we used Zoom for assemblies, staff meetings, teaching and even staff social events," Denise said. Most importantly, the children blossomed in those difficult days. The Preps definitely got right into it as they danced up a storm during a class disco and pyjama day. The



Principal Denise Hussey draws Easter raffle via Zoom. Photograph: Erin Jenkins



Prep children enjoy their pyjama day. Photograph: Claire Mathieson

session's success thrilled teacher Chris Moloney. "It allowed children to let loose, to have fun together and to laugh with one another. It let them feel safe when the outside world was a little scary," he said.

Erin Jenkins is wellbeing leader at St Michael's.

Bans delay Rotary water project plans

Internationally, our North Melbourne branch has for years been involved in a project, primarily in Central and South America, converting dirty water to clean drinkable water. Even during the lockdown, we were able to contribute extra funds to continue this work in Colombia. However, our major international project for the year fell victim, at least in part, to COVID-19. We had assembled a container full of medical and hospital supplies to be sent to the poor rural Gedo region in Somalia.

It was sent off and arrived in Mogadishu in early March. Then the problems started. We had planned for branch member Sainab Sheikh to travel to Somalia and to manage all details. However, when travel bans began in early March, she was unable to leave Australia. We dealt with that setback by transferring the necessary funds to a local contact who was then able to have the goods cleared from the port and put in storage. They are now waiting to be transported. Unfortunately, this will involve a trip of a few

hundred kilometres on rough dirt roads and, as it is now the wet season, we will just have to be patient. Neville Page is secretary of North Melbourne Rotary. **Want to know more?** Learn more about Rotary and the Rotary Club of North Melbourne by checking out the website rotarynorthmelbourne.org.au/ or contact Neville Page on 0414673611 or page@ghp.biz



Rotary's Neville Page presents resources to Ozanam House's Louise Augustinus to help keep its residents entertained during the lockdown.

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The blessing of a right Royal Park

The 180 hectares of Royal Park saved my sanity in this upside-down world. Every day, Juno (starring in the photograph at the bottom of the page) and I headed across Flemington Road for a long walk in the park. The 'regulars' have always known that it's a peaceful haven of bush and grassland, full of birdsong and blossom. In recent months, more and more locals have discovered the joy of the place. Kids on scooters, parents

pushing prams, joggers, serious runners, skateboarders, rollerskaters, cyclists and dog owners have shared the space – keeping a suitable distance between them. Everyone nods a greeting, comments on the weather, asks how you're doing. With the easing of restrictions, we're in no hurry to rush off into shopping centres. We know the value of serenity and space.

– Anne Burgi



Meg and Joan become our new neighbours

Felicity Jack

As you read this in June, it's likely that two boring machines named Meg and Joan will be tunnelling their way under my house. One tunnel will carry trains travelling east, towards the hospital precinct; the other will carry trains travelling west.

The machines will be grinding away for an hour, pausing for 30 minutes to line the tunnel with preconstructed concrete rings, then moving on, and repeating this pattern until they reach their destination.

With plenty of time on our hands, three generations of my family – me (old), son (middle-aged) and grandson (primary school) – have been fascinated by the Metro tunnel website. We've learnt a lot. I've been impressed by the huge logistical and engineering challenges required and the intricate skills involved in the project's planning and implementation.

Joan and Meg are two of the four tunnel boring machines. The other two are Millie and Alice. I knew about Joan Kirner (our only female premier) and Meg Lanning (women's cricketer), but not Alice Appleford (decorated nurse in both world wars) or Lady (Millie) Peacock (first Victorian female MP).

All up, 59 properties between Parkville and Arden stations will be affected. Locals were offered surveys to identify existing cracks with compensation on offer if damage or loss of property value is proved. Also, the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority promised that any cries for help due to late-night vibrations or noise will be listened to and we'll be relocated if necessary.

Solicitors first alerted us to the tunnel's possible route over three years ago, well before it had been finalised. However, eager to capture business, they were unnecessarily alarmist and their promises were exaggerated. As a result, we have experienced three long years of rumour

and anxious waiting.

Community reaction has been varied. Some people hoped for compensation for having the tunnel built beneath their properties, others were anxious about a loss of property values, while some saw the tunnel as a potential benefit to the neighbourhood and community.

Many people complained about increased traffic and disruption due to streets being blocked off. In fact, lockdowns – at least temporarily – returned the streets to pedestrians and led to much safer road crossings.

Once plans for the route were determined, the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority has excelled in providing information through briefings, letter-boxing and its availability to answer questions. Recent information sessions have been held on Zoom and have worked well.

Locals who live between Arden and Parkville stations had the advantage of learning about the experiences of residents who were affected by the tunnelling between Arden and Kensington. It was reassuring to know that only three residents were offered relocation and it was taken up by only two.

In their case, the ground was very hard and didn't conform to the general geological conformation. But what the boring machines under our homes will encounter is, to a great degree, unknown.

Interestingly, the solicitors we engaged established that my title extends to the centre of the earth! Apparently, that is unusual, with most titles extending down to about 15 metres. In moments of tranquillity, I try to visualise the tiny speck at the earth's centre where my property ends. It's a useful form of meditation!

Felicity Jack is a member of Hotham History Project.



Boring machine ready to start tunnelling.



Errol's Angels sing along via Zoom. Photograph: Rosie Greenfield

Sounds like a virtual melody

Rosie Greenfield

Like all of us, Errol's Angels community choir had to come to terms with those depressing lockdown restrictions.

Pre COVID-19, every Thursday I would jump in the car and zoom off to our weekly practice and rehearsals with Maryanne and the gang. That came to a screeching halt in mid-March when lockdown meant that first term was over for the Angels.

As everyone started lamenting the cancellation, a faint glimmer of hope emerged. Could we go virtual? Many of us had already been hearing about, and finding, choirs online. Could we do something like that?

Maryanne began investigating and soon hatched a plan to offer four one-hour sessions using virtual platform Zoom. All we had to do was follow her link into the room using our respective devices and we would again be singing on Thursday nights.

So, in early April, a small group 'gathered' online in Maryanne's room to participate in our usual session. We started off by checking on each other then we did some breathing and voice warmups before launching into our repertoire.

The challenge of this platform was that communal singing couldn't be synced. We learnt we had to sing our part with our mike off while we heard Maryanne sing along with us. When it came to putting the parts together, we had to hold our own part while singing 'against' her lead.

This exercise reinforced the value of having a community of singers to sing with, rather than just singing by yourself. For me, recording my vocal response was quite an experience. There is much to be learned and gained from hearing yourself sing!

Our Zoom experience was great fun and an opportunity to focus on our individual singing in the privacy of our own space.

From our four sessions, we all learnt how much we enjoy singing together and how much we look forward to our Thursday night practice.

Now that things are back to some sort of normal, we are looking forward to reconnecting and singing in a group. Just like the old days!

We all know group singing releases 'happy hormones' and is a natural antidote to feeling lonely and isolated. Singing together on Zoom enabled us to stay connected during that grim lockdown period.

Rosie Greenfield is a member of Errol's Angels.

Want to know more?
We would love you to join us. Get in touch with The Centre to find out when we are returning to our usual practice at North Melbourne Maternal Child Health Centre at 7pm on Thursdays.

Do you have something to share?

Do you have a skill, talent or expertise to share?

Would you like to start a club or discussion group?

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Call in or drop us a line at admin@centre.org.au.

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Running into more people not always a good thing

Yes, I know, the world is crazy. I don't feel the need to touch on things that we all know. Let's face it, the coronavirus has been the only topic in town for months.

So, let's get straight into it. If you're a runner, and have been during this whole coronavirus time, I think we'll be on the same page.

Being cooped up indoors and with too much free time on their hands inspired many beginners to start their running journey. Whether people were driven to get fit or simply to pass the time, the footpaths were more packed than I can remember.

While I commend people on their healthy choices during that stressful

time, we 'older' runners started to feel a bit peeved. We found it harder to go for a quiet run in solitude unless we left about four in the morning or around ten at night.

I'll admit it, I took to wearing some old event t-shirts to prove I'm an original. Even that didn't help me being constantly edged to the side of the footpath, even pushed onto the road, as I tried to maintain an acceptable social distance. No-one likes a sweating runner huffing and puffing all over them.

All the scheduled running events had to be cancelled and my heart ached at their loss. Run for the Kids, Mother's Day Classic, everything gone. Only virtual events were on tap and no genuine runner took them seriously. None could spark the adrenaline rush of lining up with thousands of fellow runners.

The classic Melbourne Marathon is still tagged for the first Sunday in October. I'm still hoping against hope and I'm aiming to be there, but who knows what lies ahead? I'm just glad that I dedicated

so much time and effort to participate in that wonderful event last year.

I can't believe I'm saying this, but even I admit that my motivation is ebbing away as each day passes. With no events to train for and no running groups for support, it all seems rather boring and pointless.

I've even stopped turning on my Garmin activity tracker when I do head off for a run. This is not good. After all, if it's not on your Garmin you have to ask if it really happened.

But, no, I won't give up hope. I'll keep dreaming of the day a race volunteer places a shining medal around my neck.

Thea Oakes writes a regular running column for the News.

MARATHON GIRL Thea Oakes



Looking for love? There's definitely an app for that!

Looking for love has never been easy – or should that be easier? Today's dating landscape is unrecognisable from the early era of internet dating, circa 2010.

Back then you could choose from a buffet of dating websites when searching for Mr or Ms Right. Each had their own entry criteria, whether it be filling out a detailed questionnaire, buying contact vouchers or simply signing up, writing a profile and putting it out there along with a flattering photo. Simple?

Well, success in dating can depend on a lot of things, luck being front and centre. Scrolling through profiles and going on dates can get old pretty quickly when the disappointments come hurtling in apace.

When your date ends up looking nothing like their photo, when they

come on too strong or too needy, when they're on the rebound, or all they want is sex without strings when you were thinking of something more long term, there are a million reasons why two people who have been matched by a computer or agreed to meet can come away feeling dazed and confused.

But success can come at any time, and when it does, gone are the days when meeting online was considered slightly shady or shameful, only to be disclosed to the closest of friends.

As with social media, the technology to connect is at our fingertips, and the options are now legion.

The miracle of GPS opened a brave new world of location-based apps, and in the dating world Tinder was at the forefront, ushering in a new dating milieu. Feeling a bit bored and want to meet someone right here, right now?

Just log on to Tinder to see who's around, find someone you like the look of (no need for wordy profiles, a raunchy photo will do), swipe right, and in next to no time you're hooking up. Kinda like ordering Uber Eats, but instead of food you're choosing from a never-ending menu of photos, ranging from headshots to the more risqué below

the belt images, getting straight to the selling point.

Hooking up seemed to be the motive of most Tinder users, at least in the early days. Now the market has diversified to the point where Tinder, boasting 50 million users globally, has become mainstream, and there is an app for every market segment you can think of, including income, occupation, religion, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation.

Some of the more idiosyncratic niches include Star Trek fans, dog lovers, vampire enthusiasts, cheaters, swingers and even Trump voters. Never has the phrase 'there's an app for that' been more fitting, and if there isn't one, you can bet there soon will be!

Suzie Luddon will share her insights into dating in each issue of the News.

LET'S MAKE A DATE Suzie Luddon





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Locals kept in the know about the action below

New teleconferencing technology has been a huge help in keeping the North and West Melbourne Association and the groups it belongs to up-to-date during the COVID-19 restrictions.

Community leaders' meetings

The NWMA participated in the City of Melbourne's first internet-driven online community leaders' meeting on Friday 24 April. Lord Mayor Sally Capp chaired the Zoom meeting of about 20 people who represent or chair community organisations.

Each person was able to give a short presentation on the issues that concern their respective organisation. The Lord Mayor first presented some issues of concern to her, including homelessness. She then invited each community representative to present their ideas. There were a number of common themes.

John Widmer deputised for NWMA chair Kevin Chamberlin. John showed some photographs that illustrated issues about rubbish and graffiti management of Moonee Ponds Creek.

The Lord Mayor's report to NWMA after the meeting included:

"We have made our officers aware of the increase in dumped hard rubbish in our city streets, and as a reminder, you can report dumped rubbish by calling our customer service line or contacting us online at www.melbourne.vic.gov.au.

"Following discussion about maintaining compliance within permitted construction times, we can confirm that there are now 20 extra compliance officers to support our building team's work. We would like to ask you to remind your members that they should call our customer service helpline, 9658 9658."

All participants hoped the council would hold further online meetings.

Melbourne Metro tunnelling information session

Fifteen residents of North and West Melbourne took part in a Tunnelling Information Session via Zoom on 30 April. It was organised by Kim Norton from Cross



North and West Melbourne Association

Yarra Partnership (CYP), the construction group building the new Melbourne Metro.

The presentations focused on the likely impacts on residents living above the train tunnels being built between the new Arden and Parkville metro stations.

Two tunnel boring machines (TBMs), named Joan (for the late premier Joan Kirner) and Meg (Lanning, captain of Australia's women's cricket team), have already bored twin tunnels from Arden to the western entrance portal in South Kensington. The TBMs are being reassembled at Arden, and from mid-May will start boring new tunnels from Arden to Parkville.

The tunnels' depths will range from 18 metres to 14 metres below the surface, being shallowest under the intersection of Errol and O'Shanassy streets.

The CYP presentation included the COVID-19 management protocols to be used when visiting properties above the tunnels for property surveys. CYP's communication program for affected residents has included online information sessions, one-to-one phone/video briefings as requested, and four weeks' and one week's advance notice by letter of TBM arrivals.

CYP has provided a 24/7 phone number, 1800 105 105, for information and complaints, as well as an email address, CYP@metrotunnelcyp-dc.com.au.

Noise and vibration targets for the tunnelling were explained. Both are likely to be evident only to those residents above the tunnels, for a maximum of two



The twin railway tunnels between Arden and Kensington under construction.

days each, when the TBMs are passing underneath.

Anecdotal evidence from Kensington residents much closer to the TBMs' noise, as their tunnels were built much shallower, has been that the noise was quite disconcerting. CYP will offer up to two nights' free accommodation at Quest Apartment Hotels for potentially affected residents above the tunnels seeking relocation during the tunnelling.

The session finished with an update on the Legacy Art Program. A major artwork will be commissioned for each new metro station, with the one for the Arden station likely to occupy the station's entire eastern facade.

In addition, Maree Clarke, one of Australia's pre-eminent multidisciplinary artists, has been commissioned to provide line-wide artwork with Indigenous and travel themes, expected to feature on the platforms of all five new metro stations.

Five artists have been short-listed for the Arden station commission. NWMA was thanked for contributing useful text and photos on the historical legacy of the former Arden industrial complex. The winning artist(s) will be announced later this year.

Note: Due to a production error, The North and West Melbourne Association column in the Autumn issue of the News was accompanied by the wrong logo.



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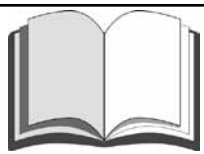
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BETWEEN THE COVERS

Chris Saliba



The Better Half: On the Genetic Superiority of Women

Sharon Moalem
(Allen Lane, RRP: \$29.99)

It's well known that women outlive men. Look at the statistics for any country and women live longer. This is generally put down to the riskier behaviour men are more likely to indulge in. Doctor and scientist Sharon Moalem says this is not the case.

Even when comparing nuns and monks living in cloistered circumstances, with little to no environmental risks, it's the nuns who live longer.

What can be going on? According to Dr Moalem, it's all in the chromosomes. Men have XY chromosomes, whereas women have XX chromosomes. Having the two X chromosomes gives women greater immunity to disease. Moalem writes that "the genetic advantage that women possess results from every cell within a female having the option of using one of their two X chromosomes, each of which contains around a thousand genes". Also, women have greater resilience, stamina, cognitive advantages and even better visual sensitivity.

The Better Half draws on much of the author's professional research and scientific interests. Compelling case histories are used throughout the text to show how women have the genetic advantage over men in fighting disease and physical adversity. This is popular science at its best: lively, always interesting and a pleasure to read.



Exciting Times

Naoise Dolan
(Weidenfeld & Nicholson, RRP: \$32.99)

Ava is a 22-year-old Irish foreign worker teaching English to children in Hong Kong. When she meets Julian, a smart yet obnoxious banker, she moves into his apartment and starts a casual relationship with him. The two often spar on economic and political issues, Ava playing the deadpan socialist and Julian smug with his capitalist assertions.

She knows she's somewhat of a hypocrite, living rent free off her banker friend, but she ploughs ahead nonetheless.

An emotional spanner is thrown in the works when Ava meets Edith, a young Hong Kong lawyer, and the two start a relationship. Things become increasingly complicated as Ava keeps the true nature of her relationship with Julian secret. When Julian arrives back in Hong Kong after a work jaunt, the manipulative Ava must do some explaining.

Naoise Dolan is a young Irish writer and *Exciting Times* is her debut. Apart from being a compelling portrait of modern-day relationships, the novel also provides a razor-sharp analysis of money, power and class. Dolan's narrative shimmers brilliantly due to its fierce intelligence, sly humour and ability to illuminate the hidden ways in which power is entrenched. A new voice to watch out for.

Chris Saliba is co-owner of North Melbourne Books, 546 Queensberry Street. He writes regular reviews for the News. North Melbourne Books has remained open to serve local readers. Phone 9041 4216; email northmelbournebooks@gmail.com; or visit northmelbournebooks.weebly.com



Tippy and Jellybean

Sophie Cunningham. Illustrated by Anil Tortop
(Albert Street Books, RRP: \$19.99)

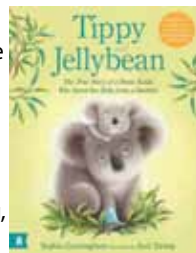
Tippy and Jellybean live in the forest. They love to eat gum leaves. But one morning, they wake up to find their home is on fire. They climb up high in the trees and Tippy curls her arms around her young Jellybean. When the fire has passed, Tippy checks to see if Jellybean is burnt. Luckily, a firefighter finds them, and they are taken for a plane trip to safety.

A caring vet named Kami looks after Tippy and Jellybean. They are given smoothies full of gum leaves and added vitamins. Once Tippy and Jellybean are better, they are taken to an animal sanctuary where they can get back to their old ways of eating gum leaves and climbing trees. Eventually, six months later, they are taken to their home in the forest. The leaves are growing back and the animals are returning. It's a happy ending for Tippy and Jellybean.

One dollar from every sale of this book – based on a true story of two koalas from Gelantipy, East Gippsland – will be donated to the Bushfire Emergency Wildlife Fund.

Gorgeously illustrated by Anil Tortop and with text by Sophie Cunningham, this is a bitter-sweet story sure to touch many Australians.

3+ years old



THE LIFE OF THE PARTY

Ellen Sandell

If you'd told me in January that I'd spend months bunkered down at home with my three-year-old and one-year-old, unable to see family and friends, with playgrounds, cafes and schools closed, I wouldn't have believed it. This year has dealt us some tough blows, especially for those affected by the bushfires who have also had to deal with unemployment, home-schooling, anxiety and everything else that has come with COVID-19.

While it's been tough, this pandemic has also brought out some of the best in us.

While physically apart, communities like ours have come together in the most incredible ways. I've heard countless stories of people who reached out to neighbours and offered support to complete strangers. I've heard from Clare who coordinated weekly 'balcony drinks' in her apartment building in an effort to fight loneliness in isolation. In my street, we started a neighbours' WhatsApp group where people offered to buy groceries for neighbours and looked out for each other.

Similarly, while small businesses suffered under COVID-19 restrictions, they also showed a remarkable ability to adapt, and the community stepped up to support them. A great example was SGD Body and Beauty in North Melbourne, who took their yoga and meditation classes online – but that's just one example of many. My family just loved all the takeaway treats that the local cafes and restaurants had on offer!

In some ways, being apart brought us closer together. When I visited my local park, it was full of families making time to simply be outside together. I noticed people were more willing to smile at each



Ellen and her daughter Ada (3) enjoy lunch al fresco.

other and to say hello as they passed by – at an appropriate distance, of course. And the rainbow became a lasting symbol of this pandemic as adults and kids around the world shared colourful messages of hope in their windows.

At a government level, we saw some big changes put in place to help out our vulnerable community members, including increases to JobSeeker, JobKeeper, free childcare, and additional support for people who were sleeping rough on our streets.

Despite the undeniable suffering it caused, this pandemic reminded us of what is most important in this life: each other. As we now look towards life after COVID-19, we ask what kind of society we want to return to. Are there things we want to do differently, now that we have been reminded of what is truly important?

Ellen Sandell is the Greens state MP for Melbourne.

Want to know more?

If you want to chat about a local (or state-wide) issue, call 9328 4637 or email Ellen's electorate at office@ellensandell.com.

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Abbotsford Street has a link to the Scottish Borders

Stephen Hatcher

Abbotsford Street runs like a spine through North and West Melbourne. Its unusual name springs from a connection with famous Scottish novelist Sir Walter Scott and his home in the Scottish Borders.

In about 1811, Scott bought his 100-acre Cartley Hole Farm on the river Tweed. The site had a personal significance for him as it was close to the site of a final clan battle involving his forebears in 1526.

In 1824, he built a new home on the farm, which he called Abbotsford House. The name was inspired by a nearby abbot's ford across the shallows of the Tweed, used by Cistercian monks from the neighbouring Melrose Abbey, as they moved their cattle safely across the river.

The Abbotsford Street we know today has its own rich history far removed from its namesake in Scotland. It was, like the rest of Melbourne, in an area of open bushland occupied by the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nation.

Some of the earliest homes

RIGHT UP OUR STREET
Stephen Hatcher

in Abbotsford Street went up as early as 1859. Number 86 was built by Robert Bentley, an Englishman from Staffordshire, where he married Martha Redfern in 1841. They were both about 23 when they decided to seek a better life in the developing colony of Port Phillip.

After a three-month voyage on the *England* as assisted migrants, they arrived in Melbourne in

July 1841. Robert was a master carpenter and built homes in North and West Melbourne. Martha was to give birth to 11 children, her last at the age of 43.

Next door to the Bentleys, at number 88, Margaret O'Reilly ran a boarding house.

A wonderful photo from about 1900 shows her out the front with grandchildren Mary, Dennis, Jack, Ann and Norah, and their mother

Margaret O'Reilly Sheehan.

Nowadays, Abbotsford Street is a significant link between North and West Melbourne. It begins at number one on the western corner of its first cross street at Railway Place and runs northwards towards Royal Park where it ends at number 525.

Stephen Hatcher writes regularly about local street names for the News.



Abbotsford Street, looking south from the corner of Queensberry Street. Photograph: Stephen Hatcher

IPCS takes a different tack to stay in touch

John H. Smith

The Institute of Postcolonial Studies in Curzon Street, North Melbourne, usually encourages community development by hosting stimulating public seminars exploring scholarship and politics.

However, recent social distancing requirements due to COVID-19 caused some planned IPCS sessions to be cancelled. They included discussions with Margaret Simons on her *Cry Me A River* Quarterly Essay on the future

of water in the Murray-Darling Basin, and one with celebrity chef and social entrepreneur Stefano de Pieri on the future of food.

Unable to cater for the many people who regularly attend its scheduled lively talks and discussions, the institute decided to take a new tack. Rather than try to connect with members by Zoom, it invited them to stay positively involved by emailing their thoughts on the current crisis.

Some lively comments and reflections were submitted.

Stefano de Pieri wrote: "The pandemic will have devastating effects in regional Victoria. The government's refusal to take care of temporary visa holders – students and workers – is cruel and sends a bad signal."

Lauren Rickards saw the crisis as providing an opportunity for us to face up to the environmental injustices it has exposed.

"What's the silver lining in this situation? As with many disasters, it lies in our ability to recognise and act on the realities now painfully revealed."

Mammad Aidani noted the painful isolation of marginalised groups.

"I have been approached by many asylum seekers and refugees who have sought my advice. They feel confused and are experiencing profound rejection, abandonment and helplessness," Mammad said.

Fiona Jenkins found her home became far less pleasant. "Normally, working from home for me is the luxury of a quiet and studious day, alone in the house. Now it holds my partner's office, a

home school and a self-isolating student. It feels crowded. The internet is jumpy and overloaded, and we are all anxious."

John H. Smith writes regularly for the News.

Want to know more?
If you would like to read other responses or to share your own observations about social distancing's negative effects, join the 'Against Social Distancing' conversation by emailing your thoughts to info@ipcs.org.au



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The Centre takes a step into the future – carefully!

While this issue of the *News* has certainly been affected by COVID-19, the autumn issue was also a victim of the pandemic.

Only after the file had been sent to the printer did it become apparent that the Spanish Language Fiesta, featured on that issue's centre spread, would have to be cancelled.

We initially wondered whether a printed issue was even going to be practical for winter. I'm very glad that editor Maurice Gaul, the *News*' team of writers, our community contributors, production manager Anne Burgi and our delivery team are bringing you this pandemic issue as we start (we hope!) to resume something closer to 'normal' life.

The Centre, and our pop-up neighbourhood house in Docklands, had to close to the public in March.

Centre staff, like so many others, worked from home and we all became masters of the video conference.

FROM THE DIRECTOR Tom Seddon



While The Centre programs largely had to be suspended, we sought ways to continue them where practical, whether that was video pilates or tutoring remotely instead of our usual homework club.

The closure also gave us the opportunity to completely strip out and deep clean a couple of our offices. Not so much for virus protection but because it really was time!

There were many victims of COVID-19 other than our Spanish Fiesta. These included Bollywood-style dancing during Cultural Diversity Week, Neighbour Day in Docklands, and the Anzac Day commemoration.

We hope for a big turnout (if allowed)

in August when, with the Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women, we commemorate the 75th anniversary of VP Day at the North Melbourne cenotaph.

This issue contains a variety of different stories and responses to the pandemic lockdown as we record the past few very strange months. It also includes some local recollections of the polio epidemic of the 1930s. There are many other stories too.

Last, but hardly least, we are sorry to farewell Carolynne Venn who, since 2016, has been The Centre's community development coordinator. She has made a tree change and is now the manager of the Riddell's Creek neighbourhood house.

Carolynne was a great contributor to almost every part of The Centre these past four years. She started up our Boomerang Bags group, opened the Docklands pop-up, and mentored our local and international student interns. Good luck, Carolynne!

After a virus-interrupted search for a worthy replacement, I'm pleased to introduce Stacey Halls (right) as The Centre's new community development coordinator.



On course with the Centre in Term 3

The Centre is running a limited program of courses and activities at present due to COVID-19 and the need to practice safe distancing and hygiene.

COURSE	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	TIME	START DATE	VENUE	COST
COMMUNITY PROGRAMS									
Errol's Angels Community Choir						Suspended due to COVID-19			
HOME AWAY FROM HOMEWORK CLUB									
Grades 4–10			✓			3.30pm–5.00pm	22 July	West Melbourne Baptist Community Hall, 4 Miller Street, West Melbourne	Free
Grades 4–10			✓			4.30pm–6.00pm	22 July	North Melbourne Language & Learning	Free
Grades 4–12				✓		3.30pm–5.00pm	23 July	Altona North Community Library	Free to City of Hobsons Bay residents
VIVA LA SENIORS – ACTIVITIES FOR OLDER ADULTS									
Community Morning Tea		✓				10am – noon	4 Aug, 1 Sept	North Melbourne Library	\$5
Older Adults Exercise Class <i>Limit of 10 per class to permit safe distancing</i>			✓			10.15am – 11.15am	15 July	The Legion (behind North Melbourne Library)	\$197 per term or \$144 Health Care Card concession
Older Adults Exercise Class <i>Limit of 10 per class to permit safe distancing</i>					✓	12.15pm – 1.15pm	17 July	The Legion (behind North Melbourne Library)	\$197 per term or \$144 Health Care Card concession
HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM									
Tuesday Pilates		✓				5.30pm–6.30pm: Beginners 6.30pm–7.30pm: Intermediate Plus 7.30pm–8.30pm: Intermediate	14 July	The Meat Market	\$197 per term or \$144 Health Care Card concession
Wednesday Pilates <i>Limit of 10 per class to permit safe distancing</i>			✓			9.15am–10.15am: General	15 July	The Legion (behind North Melbourne Library)	\$197 per term or \$144 Health Care Card concession
Thursday Pilates				✓		5.30pm–6.30pm: Beginners 6.30pm–7.30pm: Intermediate Plus 7.30pm–8.30pm: Intermediate	16 July	The Meat Market	\$197 per term or \$144 Health Care Card concession
COURSES									
Introduction to Technology		✓				10.00am–12.30pm Eight weekly 2½-hour sessions	14 July	Classroom venues to be confirmed. Students may also attend remotely via video.	Cost: \$50 / \$35 concession*#
iGadgets				✓		10.00am – noon Four weekly 2-hour sessions	16 July		\$25 / \$20 concession*
Introduction to Accounting/ Basic Bookkeeping					✓	Eight 3-hour sessions 10.00am–1.00pm	17 July		\$75 / \$55 concession*#
One on One IT Tutoring							Times to suit you		\$65 per hour

The Centre has tutors able to deliver workshops, short courses or one-on-one training on a variety of subjects. Minimum and maximum numbers may apply; fees (if any) will vary. If you are interested in Art Therapy, Photoshop, Teacher's Aide Training, Spanish Conversation, Job Interview Practice or Résumé Writing get in touch!

To book, contact The Centre on 9328 1126, at admin@centre.org.au or call into 58 Errol Street. Check www.centre.org.au

* subject to conditions
subject to staff–student ratios
Classes follow school term dates unless otherwise stated.
No classes on Public Holidays

The Centre: Connecting Community in North & West Melbourne Inc
58 Errol Street, North Melbourne, Vic 3051 Tel: (03) 9328 1126
Office hours: Monday 10.00am to 6.00pm
Tuesday to Friday 10.00am to 3.00pm





The *North and West Melbourne News* is a quarterly publication produced by volunteers from North and West Melbourne and the inner city. It is now in its 42nd year of production. Readers' contributions and letters are welcomed. Where relevant the *News* may seek alternative opinions in the interests of balance. Contributors' opinions are their own, however, and the *News* takes no responsibility for them. We reserve the right to edit or omit articles considered unsuitable or when space is limited.

Articles should be submitted by email to editorial@centre.org.au. Please use minimal formatting and do not embed graphics in documents. Photographs of suitable resolution for reproduction should be sent as graphic files attached with the article.

Finance

The *News* is a program of The Centre: Connecting Community in North & West Melbourne Inc, a registered charity. Costs of producing the *News* are met through advertising, sponsorships, subscriptions and donations. Donations of more than \$20 are tax deductible through the ANHCA Public Fund for DGR.

News subscriptions

Subscriptions are available at the rate of \$20 per year (four issues) sent anywhere in Australia. The *News* is distributed free throughout North and West Melbourne. Further copies are available from The Centre and the North Melbourne Library.

Volunteers

The *News* welcomes new volunteers. If you have skills in writing, drawing, photography, archiving, subediting and proofreading, computer technology, social media or design and layout, please consider joining the team.

Editor: Maurice Gaul
Production: Anne Burgi
Proofreading: Margaret Langdon
Advertising: Janet Graham
Distribution: Rahul Velumani
Writers: Michelle Brett, Deana Eddington, Stephen Hatcher, Andrew Kearton, Nancy Lane, Suzie Luddon, Annette McQuarrie, Laura Misale, Thea Oakes, Nicole Pereira, Flora Sciarra, John H. Smith, Ansh Verma

Publisher: Tom Seddon

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5 Jones Road, Morwell 3844



Husband Grant models one of Deana's gowns.
Photograph: Deana Eddington

Gowns stitched up

Deana Eddington

My husband, Grant, and I arrived in North Melbourne from Canberra in December. I was looking to get involved in the community and was fortunate to meet Tom Seddon and Ragn Hannah at a morning tea at The Centre. Soon after lockdown, Ragn contacted me to ask if I could help out by making masks and gowns. I love crafting and had lots of time on my hands so I happily agreed. Soon, I was stitching away at the rate of knots and many other community volunteers were doing the same. Grant is usually up for a laugh so he agreed to model my gowns. All my allocated 25 were made from fabric and templates provided by Western Health and will be used over the top of scrubs worn by medical staff at the Sunshine and Footscray hospitals. I'm sure they will be put to good use.

Deana Eddington is a new volunteer at The Centre.

Letter to the Editor

I come from the distant suburb of Mount Waverley. Some time ago, while visiting my family in Roden Street, West Melbourne, I came upon a copy of the *News*. I found a local newspaper that was full of informative and entertaining stories about your community. I'm now a regular reader of the *News*. Not many suburbs can boast of 'owning' a community newspaper like this. Such a pity!
— Virginia Barnett, Mount Waverley

A new life for used stamps

Gather up your used postage stamps and drop them into the Centre at 58 Errol Street. This is another way to recycle and also provides much-needed funds for charities. If you don't have time to tear them off the envelopes, just bag them up and I'll tear them off.
— Marian Mooney

WIRE support continues during COVID-19

The Women's Information Referral Exchange (WIRE) is a local service that provides free support, referral and information for women and non-binary and gender-diverse people across Victoria. The walk-in centre in West Melbourne is currently closed because of COVID-19, so they encourage people who want a support conversation to contact them by phone, email or online between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday. Reports of domestic violence have increased during COVID-19, and WIRE's support workers are hearing more complex stories from people experiencing family violence and financial hardship. Family and domestic violence services such as theirs are still running during these difficult times. "Many people contacting WIRE have been relieved and surprised to be able to get through to one of our support workers," WIRE CEO Julie Kun said. WIRE can help individuals as well as



employers or services whose staff or clients are experiencing family violence, homelessness and other challenges exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. "We understand that your problems don't always fit into a neat box. If it's important to you, it's important to us," Julie said. "Women and non-binary and gender-diverse people can speak to a support worker about any issue." Services are also open to women with disabilities and young people experiencing abuse in the family or within relationships. Advice is available about legal protection and mediation. Julie highlights the following services:

Financial resources during COVID-19: WIRE's financial resources web page includes information on support with rent, bills, loans, debt, work and payments and FAQs.
Separation and Property Clinic (Friday, weekly): Get help with your separation and property settlement arrangements with a free one-on-one appointment with a lawyer.
Financial Guidance Clinic (first Thursday of every month): Get support starting your financial plan and exploring your options with a one-on-one appointment.
WIRE web chat open Monday-Friday: Click the orange 'need support' button on the bottom left of the website. Support workers are also available by email and telephone.
Want to know more?
Website: www.wire.org.au; Phone: 1300 134 130; email: support@wire.org.au; address: 372 Spencer Street, West Melbourne 3003.

Please deliver contributions, letters and feedback to:

North and West Melbourne News
58 Errol Street, North Melbourne 3051
Email: editorial@centre.org.au
Telephone: 9328 1126

Provisional dates for rest of 2020
Copy deadline for Spring issue:
Friday 14 August
Publication date: Friday 11 September
Copy deadline for Summer 2020–2021 issue:
Friday 6 November
Publication date: Friday 4 December

North and West Melbourne News is available online at The Centre's website: www.centre.org.au

Take a walk with a purpose

If you enjoy walking around North and West Melbourne, a great way to explore areas you may not usually visit is to help deliver the *North & West Melbourne News* to homes and businesses. Please email admin@centre.org.au.

Advertisement sizes and rates for 2020

Size	Colour	Mono
Full page (24 cm wide x 34 cm high)	\$1732.50	\$1457.50
Half page (24 cm wide x 17 cm high or 12 cm wide x 34 cm high)	\$841.50	\$731.50
One-third page (24 cm wide x 12 cm high)	\$610.50	\$533.50
One-quarter page (24 cm wide x 8.5 cm high or 12 cm wide x 17 cm high)	\$451.00	\$390.50
One-eighth page (12 cm wide x 8.5 cm high)	\$225.50	\$198.00
One-16th page (12 cm wide x 4 cm high)	\$121.00	\$104.50
Business card (in Services Directory) (9 cm wide x 5.5 cm high)	\$104.50	\$88.00
• Prices inclusive of GST		
• Book a repeat advertisement for four issues for a 20% discount, total amount payable at time of booking.		
• All previous introductory offers, transitional rates and discounts ceased with publication of Summer 2019–2020 issue.		
• Prices are for supplied artwork (high-resolution PDF). Layout services are available — talk to us about how we can help.		
• The <i>News</i> reserves the right to reject advertising bookings that are outside the standards for a community-based publication.		
• Email Advertising.NWMN@outlook.com for info and bookings.		



Bicycle protectors (Molesworth Street)



Osmacote guard (Erskine Street)



Possum patrol (O'Shanassy Street)



Letterbox sentry (Victoria Street)



Suave dresser (Erskine Street)

Bears and their buddies on the map

Story and photographs, Nancy Lane

For every bear that ever there was / Will gather there for certain because / Today's the day the Teddy Bears have their picnic

The teddy bears recently gathered in North Melbourne, but not for a picnic because of the coronavirus lockdown. These bears were not hiding in the woods but were sitting in suburban front windows.

Children out walking with their families were able to spot the bears while also maintaining social distance. The idea came from the children's book *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by British author Michael Rosen.

The impetus for our local bear hunts may have been imported from New Zealand. When Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern declared the Kiwis' coronavirus lockdown, she said that her Wellington neighbours might just spot a teddy bear in her window.

New Zealand company Traverse supported this grassroots movement by developing an online map so everyone could pinpoint the location of their bears. I tracked down Steve Bushby, the Australian representative of New Zealand Bear Hunt. "There are already more than 27,000 bears on the global map," Steve said.

He added that North and West Melbourne residents were most welcome to 'pin' their local bears to the map. My friends and I took up the challenge and combed North and West Melbourne streets looking for teddy bears in windows.

We listed on www.bearhunt.co.nz more than 25 bears and their soft toy mates in local streets. Because we gave them names, you might find your bear on display under a pseudonym.

Many of the teddies and their friends are shown here. But my favourite, trying very hard to disguise herself as a stuffed bear while watching the world from her window cushion, isn't a bear at all.

If you look long enough and hard enough, you may see Phoenix's ears occasionally twitch.

Nancy Lane writes regularly for the News.



Phoenix the cat joined in the fun.

Want to know more?

Check out the *Let's Go on a Bear Hunt Melbourne* Facebook group at www.facebook.com/pages/category/Community/Were-Going-on-a-Bear-Hunt-Melbourne-110383937267500/.



Phalanx of fur (Queensberry Street)



Behind lace curtains (Carroll Street)



Double-masked (Queensberry Street)



Wistful watcher (Curran Street)



Doorway dangle (Purcell Street)



Flights of fancy (Gardiner Street)



Mrs Pig's brood (Queensberry Street)

Silica dust can be toxic from the first cut.

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suppression



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a fit for purpose
respirator



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