

THE ROTUNDA

NORTH FITZROY'S COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER



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NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET



By Charlie Gill

Down they go. After over six years of lobbying, planning, politicking and protest, the three 140-year-old elm trees behind the tennis courts in Edinburgh Gardens have finally met their end. On the morning of May 5, workmen entered the site to chainsaw through each tree's base and send them crashing to the ground while onlookers watched from behind metal fencing.

The removal of the trees dramatically announces the commencement of the construction of the long-delayed \$16.5 million Brunswick Street Oval sporting

precinct redevelopment project. In 2018, local sports clubs Edinburgh Cricket Club, Fitzroy Football Club, Fitzroy Junior Football Club and Fitzroy Tennis Club secured state government funding to build a two-storey pavilion on Brunswick Street Oval's north-west corner, upgrade the existing grandstand, construct a new tennis clubhouse and add two new courts.

The tennis club's expansion was contingent on the removal of three of the elm trees and the adjacent footpath on its northern side. This proved to be a point of contention amongst many. Some have argued that

new courts are necessary—Fitzroy Tennis Club currently has a three-year-long wait time to become a member—while others have decried the loss of public land and destruction of the trees.

"I was horrified that it was even being considered," Chris Goodman of the 3068 Group, a local heritage protection group with around 200 members, told *The Rotunda*. "I just couldn't imagine how things could go so wrong that someone could seriously come up with a plan that said we're going to chop three elms."

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EDITORIAL

We're back for 2026

On a recent Friday night, I found myself amongst a crowd of young drinkers gathered outside the Tramway Hotel. Suddenly, a bright pink light spread across the otherwise black sky. Was it the culmination of a biblical prophecy, the first sign of nuclear Armageddon or an unlikely cosmic phenomenon? The next day, we got an answer. It wasn't *Aurora Fitzroyalis*, nor some kind of chemical warfare, but rather the reflected glow from LED lights being used to grow grass at one of Melbourne's many sports stadiums. Pretty boring.

For a second there, though, it felt like the end was nigh. Eventually, the light died down (along with our hysteria), but it had already supercharged the night with life-affirming energy. Inside, punters were playing dramatic pool games, knocking back endless pints and listening to live music on the little stage in the corner. It felt good to be alive, and it felt great to be alive in North Fitzroy.

And so we're back with a new edition to keep you informed about what's been happening inside this wonderful little kingdom of ours. We've got updates on the famous Konstantines building, the 100-year-old nonnas who've been kicked out of their club headquarters and the terrifying flood that swept through St Georges Road. Meanwhile, our centre-spread feature is a detailed investigation into North Fitzroy's pool tables.

On page six, we present our survey and analysis of the Inner North's literary tastes. On page four, a local woman examines the park benches in Edinburgh Gardens that honour the lives of our neighbours, and on page eight we go deep on the area's most important street art. The classics are all here as well: Street Style, the crossword, Poet's Corner, a controversial article from Ludo and, for the first time, a horoscope (page 11).

If you'd like to see your article in the next edition of *The Rotunda*, or advertise your business in the best way possible, contact us at northfitzroyrotunda@gmail.com. Anyway, that's enough from me. Please enjoy our May edition!

Charlie Gill

We respect and acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

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Konstantines finally moves on as village changes



By Peter Barrett

For more than 15 years it has sat empty and silent. What is hiding behind the shuttered timber Venetians staring vacantly across St Georges Road? As *The Rotunda* reported in 2023, the Konstantines Greek Restaurant has become a bona fide local mystery. Is it the site of an impending residential development? A haunted house? Even a swingers club? We can now report that the site—built in 1888

and having previously operated as a cafe, function space and (briefly) shopping complex—has finally been sold to an undisclosed buyer for an undisclosed amount of money. According to Gross Waddell ICR, the real estate firm that brokered the deal in late March, the buyer (described only as a “WA group”) is now searching for a long-term hospitality tenant, after which the site will be refurbished accordingly.

Elsewhere, the Piedimonte’s site remains in a holding pattern (we reached out again and the family declined to make any further comment), but there have been a bunch of new businesses finding their feet in North Fitzroy. Here are a few of them.

The Pinnacle, 251 St Georges Road

The Pinny is dead! Long live the Pinny! Since shutting its doors on January 31 and reopening as a gastropub three weeks later under the ownership of Michael Bascetta (Bar Liberty) and chef Scott Eddington, The Pinnacle is getting reacquainted with locals and vice versa. The front stage is gone (live music now happens in the courtyard) but there are Monday \$25 pot and parmas, \$28 steak nights and Carlton Draft remains on tap. Even better, there’s also Guinness (your correspondent’s thing).

Bernie’s, 111 Scotchmer Street

Since opening in October last year, North Fitzroy’s newest FLINTA bar (female, lesbian, intersex, non-binary, transgender and agender) has been quietly (and no doubt sometimes raucously) kicking goals with its \$15 Monday martinis, Wednesday trivia nights and relaxed BYO takeaway food vibe. Owner Liv Flanagan fitted the bar out with family and friends and named it after her mum, who, for reasons unknown, found her own name kind of embarrassing. Happily, *The Rotunda* can reveal that since the bar opened Liv’s mum has reclaimed her nomenclative mojo and now regularly uses “Bernie” when ordering takeaway coffees.

Bar Gloria, 181 St Georges Road

Since taking over the Underwood site (next to Public Wine Shop) in 2024, WA organic natural winemaker Sam Vinciullo has stealthily been impressing sources with the bar’s honest, pre-social media vibes. No cliquey influencer hype, just good wine and Thursday night trivia.

And Bodega, 340 St Georges Road

Readers in Far North Fitzroy are used to businesses coming and going along the strip of shops anchored by Danny’s Hamburgers. The latest to try their luck are husband and wife team Manali Purohit and Ashish Sharma, who are opening an all-plant-based patisserie

and cafe sometime in May. Manali hails from Bombay where she plied her pastry cheffing until more recently at Smith + Deli. Think cheesecakes, croissants, donuts and that buttery Breton treat, Kouign Amann. Next door, another new business calling itself “Big Bosses” is promising a “high end convenience store” selling premium American brand chips and chocolate—and possibly a hairdresser thrown in. Watch this space. Over the road, the absence of Toast still hurts.

FINO, 222 St Georges Road

Back in the heart of the village, FINO—an abbreviation of Fitzroy North—is a new bookstore preparing to open by the end of May in the site of the old barbers, opposite Piedie’s. Tessa Dwyer, a former film and television studies lecturer turned bookseller, is planning to fill the shelves with literary fiction, art, culture, film studies and a smattering of history and politics. There’ll be curated shelves where guest recommenders—maybe an author, an architect—pick their top 10. Pre-loved books will sit on racks outside or in the long narrow garden out back, which Tessa hopes to turn into a reading space (and possibly a cafe down the track). In a nice touch, FINO is partnering with Northside Records to offer a small selection of vinyl curated by DJ and 3RRR host Chris Gill. If there’s a title or magazine you’d like them to stock, Tessa invites you to write it on a slip of paper and post it through the front door.

Let’s Take Two, 165 St Georges Road

Rent-a-rack fashion has come to St Georges Road, with husband and wife team Carman Lee and Phil Hayes opening Let’s Take Two, next door to Horn Please. The couple—who cut their teeth at Quiksilver and lived in Hong Kong for 15 years—started the business three years ago on Brunswick Street and have now outgrown the original store. The concept is simple: people rent a rack and sell their own clothes, whether vintage, designer or homespun. There’s room for about 20 racks downstairs and 35 more upstairs as the business grows. Both are North Fitzroy residents and are looking forward to walking through Edinburgh Gardens to work every day. “It feels like the perfect time to be moving here,” says Phil, “with so many new cafes, bars and other stores recently opening for business.”

NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET

From Page 1

“It is unfortunate that three elm trees will need to be removed for the project,” Fitzroy Tennis Club said in a statement to *The Rotunda* in early April. “We also enjoy the shade the trees bring. However, Council have advised by completion of this project, 35 young/semi-mature Oaks, Kurrajongs and Jacarandas will be added to replace the trees lost in the project.”

“We have presented the evidence that there is overwhelming community demand and support for more courts, and three successive councils and the state government have agreed.”

Initially, the trees were expected to come down in April. As their trunks had posters pinned to them calling to ‘stop the chop’ alongside the council’s notice of upcoming works, furious debate continued to play out in Facebook comment sections. Voices in favour of the project, frustrated by the continual delays, put pressure on Yarra City Council to finally begin. Mayor

of Yarra Stephen Jolly passionately defended the council, asserting they were waiting on final approval from the state government. In the Facebook group Protect Fitzroy North, addressing those opposing the development, he defended the project itself: “For me, the Council has to make the park better for all users and that’s what we are doing now.”

Greens councillors Sophie Wade and Edward Crossland were the only two councillors advocating to explore options to retain the elms and the path.

The 3068 Group, meanwhile, has gone through various avenues in their effort to save the trees. Last year, it engaged an independent arborist to assess the elms, who said they could last for another 50 years. Yarra City Council’s official line was that the trees were “diseased and had come to the end of their life”. The heritage group also engaged the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, who wrote a letter of support stating that

“no direct archaeological assessment of the sites had been undertaken” and that the project had not considered the proximity of Edinburgh Gardens to the culturally significant Merri Creek.

As April dragged on with the trees still standing, it was unclear to the community whether or not this was an indication they might be retained. But as the petition to the Parliament of Victoria started by the 3068 Group continued to amass signatures, the City of Yarra finally completed the full set of permissions it required from the Department of Transport & Planning, Heritage Victoria and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action. In a last gasp effort, Greens MP Tim Read, who’d sponsored the petition, tabled a question to Sonya Kilkeny, the Minister for Planning, asking if a heritage impact statement on the impact on Edinburgh Gardens had been considered. She confirmed it had.

“That’s when we knew it was inevitable,” Chris told *The Rotunda*.

And so on May 4, extensive fencing was put up in Edinburgh Gardens, ready for workers in hi-vis to arrive the next morning. As Chris and others watched on with sadness from behind the fencing, the first tree was severed from its base by chainsaw just after 10.00 am. Fascinated passers-by filmed with their phones as it came crashing to the ground like a big wooden Godzilla. The logs were then cut up and fed into a woodchipper.

For some, the destruction of the elm trees is the sad consequence of a government refusing to listen to an outraged community. For others, it’s the unfortunate but necessary first step in creating the kind of sports facilities the community requires. Either way, the politics is far from over. Chris says the 3068 Group will continue to fight to save the adjacent path, which would make the tennis court expansion impossible. But given the works have begun in earnest and the trees are dead and gone, it’s difficult to see their removal as anything other than the dramatic first step in transforming that section of Edinburgh Gardens.

NONNAS' CLUB FORCED TO FIND NEW HOME

100-year-old Concetta Marinelli, matriarch of McKean Street, is a longtime member of North Fitzroy's Italian Pensioners Club. For the first time in four decades, the club has to move

By Charlie Gill

Recently, longtime North Fitzroy local Tony Marinelli was told he might be able to get the lane beside his McKean Street home named after his family.

"I called up the council and said: 'Look, why don't you call the lane McKean Lane, and rename the street Marinelli Street.'"

Fair enough. In inner-city Melbourne, Anglos have a monopoly on place names, and the Marinellis have a legitimate claim. Since Tony's father Giuseppe moved here in 1951, their family has lived or owned in seven properties along McKean Street.

Their legacy was celebrated, however, when Concetta Marinelli—Tony's mother, who followed her husband over here with baby Tony in 1953—turned 100 years old earlier this year. In February, Concetta and her friend Nunzia, also a 100-year-old from McKean Street, were honoured in a ceremony held by the Circolo Pensionati di North Fitzroy: the Italian pensioners club that has met in the Edinburgh Gardens Community Room for over four decades.

The Rotunda visited Concetta and Tony at their current McKean Street address. This reporter was treated to a wonderfully Italian-Australian afternoon tea of espresso and Tim Tams. Adorning the walls were individual portraits of Tony and his two brothers, which were zoomed-in versions of a larger full family portrait in the living room. As Concetta presented the centenarian certificate she received from 'Il Papa' (a.k.a. Pope Leo XIV), Tony discussed Concetta's future prospects.

"She has the genes to live to 105, 106."

"She has the genes to live to 105, 106. She had two aunties, and my mother's just like them. Same constitution, same hard work ethic. One died at 104 and the other at 106.

So we're estimating my Mum could quite easily live to that age."

"Because I am 100 years old, everybody at the club respects me," Concetta told *The Rotunda*.

The club has only ever met at the Edinburgh Gardens Community Room, which in its all-encompassing drabness has assumed a real degree of character over the years. It has hosted club meetings, Irish social dancing workshops, football best and fairest presentations and awards nights for trendy local barber shops. The planned Brunswick Street Oval redevelopment is set to destroy it and replace it with a new room. The works, however, will take 18 months—so where are the nonnas, many of whom live close by, going to go instead?

"We've been there since 1982. Sempre lo stesso posto."

"They (the council) wanted them to move to Alphington," said Tony. "I mean, come on."

"We've been there since 1982," said Concetta. "Sempre lo stesso posto". (Always the same place.)

In Concetta's living room, the three of us sipped our espresso and brainstormed. *The Rotunda* suggested the Aeolian Hall on Lygon Street, while Tony proposed the room beneath the actual Rotunda—but the entrance has recently been boarded up, and it's not very nice in there anyway. Concetta, meanwhile, mentioned there were whispers about a place on Mark Street, then made a lamentation in Italian that Tony promptly translated.

"The Greeks have got it."

The Rotunda contacted Pina, who organises the club's meetings, via her landline. Apparently, someone from the council came to a recent meeting and explained the situation.



Tony and Concetta present her certificate from Pope Leo XIV.

"They said: 'We're going to find a place for you, we know you like it here.' But it's going to be 18 months. It's a very long time."

"I hope it's going to be resolved. They're all alone, most of the people are widows, put it this way. They come to have a good time, to play bingo. Once a month we have lunch with dancing, everybody's having a good time. They enjoy themselves, at least for one day a month."

For a while, the situation was in flux, but recently the City of Yarra responded to *The*

Rotunda's request for comment. It turns out the nonnas will be moving to the Mark Street Hall. Being a short distance from the current room, it's a happy result and great decision by the council. Hopefully, their next move is to dismantle the current sign that says McKean Street and put one up saying Marinelli Street instead. In the meantime, Tony is writing his memoir: a story that starts with Concetta boarding a converted Italian battleship in Rome and arriving with her baby boy in a little place called North Fitzroy—the land of opportunity.

THE GREAT FLOOD OF ST GEORGES ROAD



Firefighters rushed to the scene as trams were forced to halt.

On March 6, residents along 'the elbow'—the stretch of road opposite Fitzroy Bowls Club that sees St Georges Road turn into Brunswick Street—woke up to both good news and bad news. On the bright side, their homes suddenly all seemed to have waterfront views, increasing the value of their respective properties. On the other hand, the value of their cars was in serious jeopardy, because that water was rising quickly.

Opposite Brunswick Street Oval, the tram tracks used by Route 11 had become an island between each side of the road, over which water was powerfully surging south in the direction of Fitzroy. Some residents quickly drove their cars to safety while others investigated the source of the flooding.

A large 600 mm water main had burst beneath the garden bed median strip in between the bowls club and St Luke's church. Water was erupting through a flower bush and onto the road. Firefighters stood around chatting while tram drivers, whose trams were forced to halt and empty of passengers, leaned outside their doors to observe the drama.

Maintenance of the pipe is the responsibility of water utility company Greater Western Water. It told *The Rotunda* the burst was first brought to its attention at

10.30 am. Over the next few days and nights, it set to work on repairing it. As a result, Route 11 temporarily stopped running.

"Our teams worked as quickly and safely as possible until repairs were completed on Monday 9 March... We thank the local community for their patience and cooperation while we undertook repairs."

On Instagram, *The Rotunda* attempted to pressure the City of Yarra into intervening. Could it not ask the company to redirect the water into Edinburgh Gardens, creating an infinity pool on Hipster Hill and waterslide on the steps of the Rotunda?

But Greater Western Water had already begun its repair job. First, the main had to be drained so the exact location of the burst could be identified and repaired. Power to the nearby tram line needed to be isolated to allow a large excavator to safely access the site, remove the damaged section of the main and install a replacement section.

But why had the burst occurred? Because it was a particularly emotionally intense Pisces season (a water sign)? Had someone jumped into Fitzroy Pool with a little too much force? *The Rotunda* asked Greater Western Water, but it didn't have an answer.

"We are investigating the cause of the burst."

The benches that honour our dearly departed

The park benches of Edinburgh Gardens are monuments to the varied lives of locals no longer with us

By Meg Mappin

Have you noticed the plaques on our benches in Edinburgh Gardens? I hadn't. Well, I hadn't paid them much attention—until two years ago when we were lurching out of COVID. Walking my dog, I passed a bench adorned with flowers like a coffin. I stopped and took a closer look. On the back of the bench was a plaque. It was for Taran, known as Taz, who had died at only 19. I read that Taz often walked past this bench with his dog Bowie, just as I was doing.

Later, when the flowers were gone, I visited Taz's bench and sat in the dappled shade, taking in the verdant view. Skaters swooped and glided in the skate park. A child on a tiny bike shot down a path. A young woman picked up the rug she'd been lying on and, holding it behind her, walked towards me like a superhero, orange cape flowing out. Everyday people doing their thing, like Taz walking Bowie.

How many other plaques around here beckon me to sit and listen to quietly whispered stories? I asked the council but they had no record. Nor could they provide the total number of benches. And so my hunt began.

The oldest person honoured by a plaque in our gardens is Dennis Lorenzo Elms, 81, beloved ambassador of Fitzroy Football Club. Dennis's bench sits atop the hill overlooking the footy oval. A second unofficial plaque on the bench provides a warning from one Darcy Grigg to all who sit here to 'respect the bench'.

A bench beside the basketball court has a plaque for Eli who, like Taz, died at the too young age of 19. Eli is kept company by the thud of a basketball as guys his age play a game of half-court. Nearby, Chantelle's

bench provides a chance to contemplate the countdown clock on the art plinth. Chantelle died aged 29 and is one of three women remembered with a plaque.

One of these women is Samantha, 49, beloved of Capability and David. Wondering who Capability might be, I sit on Samantha's bench facing the magical circle of trees. Shadows of the great elms stretch closer as a black and tan chihuahua watches me, tail alert, keeping tiny guard over two women as they sit talking in the deep grass.

“Walking my dog, I passed a bench adorned with flowers like a coffin.”

The other three benches in this row all have plaques. Bart died at 35, and next to him is Michael, 38, superhero to his wife who reminds me that her beloved 'got a pizza my heart'. I smile and move to Henry's bench. Henry, 61, died over a decade ago but here beside me is a small bouquet of rosemary sprigs tied with white string. Did his 'soulmate' sit smelling the sticky tang of rosemary here today, thinking of the 'soft rain falling' right here where 'it all began'? I wander back towards the Rotunda, pausing on the way at a plaque for 32-year-old Alex.

Another Henry, much younger, has a bench facing the Rotunda, looking north. This Henry died just two years ago in his early twenties, leaving his loved ones to walk through 'forests of winter' without him. With sad optimism they assure me that together they will carry forward 'the burning gift' of his young life. Opposite Henry is a plaque to Ayra from Andy. There's no dates on this plaque but, young or old, Ayra had



the opportunity to live a full life packed with 'silliness' and adventure, tantalisingly spiced with a whiff of 'illegal behaviour'.

Also facing the Rotunda is a bench for Sam, a 30-year-old young poet and hip-hop artist who was known as Chap One. I sit on the bench facing the setting sun. Sam's words, etched on his plaque, call me to pay attention to the cycle of life that I'm still part of: 'As sun rise and the moon falls/ And the tide change in the blue fog ...'.

“The council no longer considers requests from everyday people.”

There is one more bench with a plaque in the Gardens, but this one has no name. The words, etched in tiny print into this small rusty bit of metal, are blurred by time. I lean in, pay attention. Sitting, the writer enthuses, is neither standing nor running around. It is, simply, 'a wonderful thing to do'. Sitting here on this bench I can only agree.

While the council could not tell me the number of plaques in Edinburgh Gardens, it could tell me that it no longer considers requests from everyday people like the families of Taz and the others remembered here. Only 'significant contributors' to the City of Yarra need apply. I'd rather we continued to remember the diverse and creative voices and lives of those who have been part of what makes these gardens so great: all of us.



STREET STYLE

Your Street Style correspondent was going on an autumnal park stroll when I caught a faint cackle and whiff of peroxide drifting on the wind. I turned around and saw none other than conservative firebrand Belinda Gread, a candidate for 'Northern Metro' in the upcoming Victorian state election. Belinda is promising to put 'Jacinta in the bin' as well as introduce life sentences for all street crime (which might be how some people would describe her dress).

YOU LOOK STUNNING. WHAT BRINGS YOU TO NORTH FITZROY? Thank you, darling! I've just been meeting with some key stakeholders on the Brunswick Street Oval redevelopment project. I'm really happy that it is finally going ahead after years wrapped up in red tape.

WHO ARE YOU WEARING? The dress is from my go-to designer Gorton and Primley, and I picked up the boots from Dolci Firme on High Street in Armadale. My style philosophy is conservative-chic. As my mother used to say, "a well-bred woman is modestly clad".

YOUR STYLE ICONS? I love a woman who oozes confidence and class like Jacqui Felgate, Jane Hume and of course the two bishops... Bronwyn and Julie!

IS THERE ANY TREND YOU HATE IN FASHION? I can't stand those tight little leggings the girls are wearing these days. I find them horrifically offensive. Leaves nothing to the imagination!

PAULINE HANSON WORE A BURQA IN THE SENATE. WHAT'S THE BIGGEST FASHION RISK YOU'VE TAKEN? I would hardly consider anything that woman has done as fashionable. She can keep her cheap gimmicks.

THE POLITICAL VIEWS OF LOCALS HERE DON'T SEEM TO ALIGN WITH YOURS. DO YOU LIKE ANYTHING ABOUT NORTH FITZROY? I don't think that's entirely true, darling. I've got some very good friends on Alfred Crescent that will be voting the right way come November! And I like the Victorian era homes in North Fitzroy. They've always had a grandeur that I've admired.

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION ON THE ELM TREES? This has been going on for far too long. Just another example of how the greenies in this area continue to stymie progress. There's about a thousand other trees in this park, but it's never enough for them is it!

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE NOT OUT ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL? I'm an entrepreneur and project manager, so most of my days are taken up on the phone closing deals, but when I do get the chance I love to escape down to my holiday home in Mount Martha.

WHEN AND WHERE WERE YOU HAPPIEST? I can still remember election night 2001, when Howard secured his third term. I was volunteering for the Libs on Con Frantzeskos's campaign in Melbourne. Funnily enough, Stephen Jolly was running as an 'Independent Socialist' in the same seat that year. Frantzeskos didn't win, but we beat out Jolly. What a result it was!

WHAT IS THE INNER NORTH'S FAVOURITE BOOK?

Citizens of the Inner North are surely the most self-conscious readers on Planet Earth. *The Rotunda* ventured into Helen Garner Land to discover our true literary tastes

By Maya Honey-Holmes

In a video with *Vogue* last year, Hailey Bieber shared the contents of her bag, including a copy of *The Portable Nietzsche*, of which she was on her “fourth or fifth read”, along with her second copy of Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. (If you’d like her review of Nietzsche, it’s “so good”.)

The celebrity book club landscape is teeming with new life. Pop star Dua Lipa was recently announced as the curator of this year’s London Literature Festival. In 2025 alone, she interviewed Booker Prize winner David Szalay, highly acclaimed author Margaret Atwood and our very own literary darling, Helen Garner.

But how are things tracking in Helen’s homeland? In a world now dominated by celebrity recommendations and apps like Goodreads, reading has become something of a competitive sport (apparently, a local swimmer has been spotted picking up a book between sets at the Collingwood Leisure Centre). It seems like more people than ever are talking about reading, so *The Rotunda* decided to check in on local literature lovers via an online survey. It was eagerly completed by a great many respondents. Their answers may surprise you.

Curiously enough, it was Millennial and Gen Z readers who accounted for 100% of the Helen Garner hysteria, rather than those of a similar age to the author, who might have related more closely to the experiences of *Monkey Grip*’s protagonist, Nora. Could it be that the modern world has left young folk wistful for the golden days of bohemian Melbourne; a time before terms like ‘ghosting’ and backbreaking rental stress?

Meanwhile, this reporter has never seen so many colourful spellings of Christos Tsiolkas, the local author whose work seems loved and loathed in equal measure. Other divisive literary figures of the Inner North include popular novelists Dolly Alderton, Sally Rooney, Haruki Murakami and Anthony Bourdain. A theme might be brewing, with the most overrated books apparently being bestselling titles of the past decade-or-so, like *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, *Yellowface*, *Intermezzo* and *A Little Life*. Do these works share a common thread? Do local readers take umbrage at the nature of modern literary fiction? Is there a collective disinterest in—or higher expectation of—character-driven stories like these?

Perhaps people around here have some authority on the matter, given we read enough fiction to know: 76% of respondents reported they prefer fiction over non-fiction genres. In fact, we seem to be such experts that many respondents took the liberty of inventing their own new and exciting genres, perhaps believing the catch-all term ‘literary fiction’ to be working too hard. Next time you’re at your local bookstore, be sure to check out sections like ‘Journalistic Stuff Like Deep Dive Into War On Drugs Shit’ and ‘Mid-20th Century Lit Fic By Alcoholic Lesbians’.

In recent years, many have deemed it performative to read in public. While we’re sure Hailey Bieber would have some choice words for the naysayers, we wanted your take. Where in the Inner North is the most performative place to read? It’s not looking good for anyone who hoped to venture beyond their local library or the confines of their home—even their front porch. The top picks for most performative spot were Standing Room, Tin Pot, Monty’s (both the beer garden and front bar), the Fitzroy Pool steps, literally anywhere in Edinburgh Gardens and various other local cafes. With seemingly every square-metre of the City of Yarra ruled out, it’s hard to know how lovelorn locals will be able to project their superior taste to passing cuties.

We also asked what books would be most alarming to see in the bedroom of a romantic flame. Female respondents were skeptical of prospects who read Colleen Hoover, Carl Jung and *Infinite Jest* by



Apparently, Fitzroy Pool steps is one of the most performative places a person can read.

David Foster Wallace. Male respondents were equally repelled by readers of ex-PM turned memoirists like John Howard and Scott Morrison; they were also wary of Harry Potter heads. Overall, the most widely shared cause for concern was a bedside table strewn with works by Jordan Peterson or Adolf Hitler.

respondents were familiar with the pre-existing film adaptation or just wanted to see a version of the local story that was actually shot in Melbourne (the 1982 version was filmed in Sydney). Meanwhile, next time you’re making eyes with a stranger in the Baillieu Library, pay no attention to the busy notetaking of the film student sitting beside you—it seems a few locals have their hearts set on Melbourne Uni adaptations of campus-based stories like *The Secret History* and *Normal People*.

So, local tastes vary, but here’s what the data says: 1. We’re overwhelmingly in favour of fiction, 2. We particularly like older works and older writers, 3. We have a penchant for Russian and Irish literature despite drowning in a sea of Great American Novels, and 4. We vastly prefer physical books to modern technologies. What are we trying to say with our taste in literature? Do local readers actually tend to go against the grain, or do we just want to? If any of these questions have inspired any kind of identity crisis in you, dear reader, do not worry. You can always just read *The Rotunda*.

“Millennial and Gen Z readers accounted for 100% of Helen Garner hysteria.”

Finally, we asked which book you’d choose to adapt into a film and set in the Inner North. Local cinephiles did not disappoint. The North and South divide was a running theme, with *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Romeo and Juliet* being optioned for screen. *A Christmas Carol* was pitched, starring [REDACTED] as Christmas-loathing antagonist Ebenezer Scrooge. Of course, Garner’s *Monkey Grip* received special mention, but it’s unclear whether

“Seemingly every square-metre of the City of Yarra has been deemed a performative place to read.”

So, who are the Inner North’s favourite authors? Aside from our Helen—who, as expected, ranked very highly—the community’s go-to writers were literary icons like Sylvia Plath and Joan Didion, while rockstar Patti Smith’s *Just Kids* ranked in the Inner North’s top four favourite books. The other three were established titles *Crime and Punishment*, *Wuthering Heights* and *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*. These old school sensibilities are reflected in 85% of readers preferring physical copies of books, while 10% read on a Kindle and 5% opt for audiobooks.



FITZROY NORTH: PEOPLE PLACE PROTEST

Dr Judith Buckrich’s new hard-cover book explores the rich history of Fitzroy North including chapters on settlement, immigration, architecture, sport, culture, gentrification and expansion, championing the diverse people who have called Fitzroy North home.



Use our exclusive coupon code on checkout for 10% discount: **Rotunda**

<https://melbournebooks.com.au/products/fitzroy-north-people-place-protest>

WHICH LOCAL PUB HAS

There is no Inner Northern pastime purer than playing pool at your local watering hole. If you're looking for a game in North Fitzroy, which pub should you head to?

Words by Dr Ed Young

Illustrations by Marnie Florence

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a suburb in possession of good pubs must be in want of a proper pool table assessment. Yet, despite North Fitzroy's rich heritage of corner hotels, wine bars and establishments where one can sink a quiet Pinot Noir while contemplating the trajectory of the black ball, no such evaluation has ever been undertaken. Until now.

Armed with a Gold Barracuda three-quarter cue (for standardised assessment purposes), a notebook, and a crack team of fellow researchers—Chrissy, Brian From Next Door and Kiwi Stu—I set out to answer the question that has surely been keeping the neighbourhood awake at night: *Where in North Fitzroy can you find a genuinely decent game of pool?*

Where exactly is North Fitzroy, anyway?

Before we could assess the tables, we had to establish boundaries. North Fitzroy (or 'Fitzroy North' if you're the sort of person who calls it that) occupies the territory bounded by Alexandra Parade to the south, Queens Parade and the old Inner Circle Railway line to the north, Merri Creek to the east and St Georges Road to the west. We deliberately excluded Fitzroy proper partly for methodological purity but mostly because there are simply too many pubs down there and we'd never finish.

How we did it (and why it matters)

Our assessments followed the International 8-Ball rules adopted by the Metropolitan Melbourne Pool League (MMPL) since Winter 2023. For the uninitiated, this means ball-in-hand after a foul, an open table after the break, and none of that 'can't shoot back' business that seems to persist in certain establishments. If a pub had laminated house rules stuck to the wall that deviated from international standards, we judged them accordingly. Which is to say: harshly.

To ensure scientific rigour (or at least the appearance of it), all table assessments were conducted using the same cue: a Gold Barracuda three-quarter. This eliminated the variable of 'house cue wobble'—that phenomenon where every cue on the rack appears to have been used primarily for stirring concrete.

A word on chalk

Chalk matters more than most people realise. Blue chalk, the standard stuff you'll find in most pubs, is frankly rubbish. It doesn't grip properly and leaves your cue tip looking like it's been dipped in a Smurf. Green chalk, by contrast, is the good stuff: better adhesion, cleaner application and a sign that the venue actually cares about their table. If you see green chalk, you're in good hands. If you see worn-down blue nubs rattling around in a tray or on the end of a stubborn Slinky attached to the table, adjust your expectations accordingly.



The contenders

We identified eight venues within our boundaries claiming to have pool tables. Here's what we found in alphabetical order:

- Empress Hotel** (714 Nicholson Street)
- Fitzroy Victoria Bowling & Sports Club** (578 Brunswick Street)
- Lord Newry Hotel** (543 Brunswick Street)
- North Fitzroy Arms Hotel** (296 Rae Street)
- The Pinnacle** (251 St Georges Road)
- Railway Hotel** (800 Nicholson Street)
- Secco & Co** (414 Nicholson Street)
- Tramway Hotel** (165 Rae Street)

How we scored them

Each venue was assessed across five categories worth a combined 100 points: Table Quality (25 points), Equipment (20 points), Playing Environment (20 points), Venue Amenities (20 points), and Intangibles (15 points). We then applied a 'Heritage Modifier'—an extra 2% per decade the venue has been operating—because old pubs deserve credit for surviving this long.

For table quality, we rolled balls across the felt looking for deviation, tested cushion bounce (Barney Rubble), consistency (Douglas Bader), and counted suspicious stains. For equipment, we inspected every house cue (tip condition, straightness, general sadness) and audited the chalk situation. For environment, we measured clearance around the table—*Can you actually complete a backswing without elbowing a stranger? Do you need to use 'George' the tiny cue all the time? Are you constantly in the way of food service?*—and assessed the lighting. For amenities, we noted distance to the bar, cost per game, vegetarian food options and whether dogs were permitted to watch and judge your performance. For intangibles, we simply asked: *Does it feel good to play pool here?*

The results

1st

Secco & Co (1 x \$2)
83/100



A wine bar has won the North Fitzroy Pool Table Census and we stand by it completely. Secco's table is in exceptional condition—pristine felt, lively cushions, perfect lighting and generous clearance. The detail that clinched it was the cloth skirt fitted around the base to protect the woodwork when you rack up (please learn to use it, people). Someone here genuinely cares about this table, but they should get red and yellow balls. The management are lovely and the wine list is worth sticking around for. Come for the pool, stay for everything else.

Special prize: Best Table You Weren't Expecting

2nd

The Railway Hotel (FREE)
80/100



Railway is what a pool pub should look like. Perfect lighting, full clearance, a level table, a wooden triangle and free to play. If you're serious about your game, this is your venue. Zosia from Monty's confirmed the table 'plays true', which is the highest praise available in this methodology from independent Quality Assurance.

Special prize: Best Venue For When You Actually Mean Business

3rd

Empress Hotel (2 x \$1)
79/100

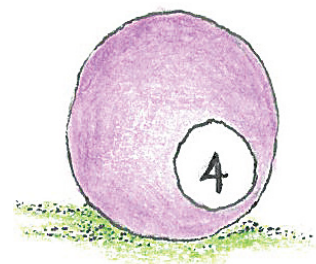


Operating since 1873, the Empress has the genuine article: a great table (although vintage burgundy), lovely staff and a pub atmosphere that feels earned rather than curated. The ball set is full and matching, the cushions are consistent and dogs are very much welcome. Clearance is a little tight in places—George will be required for many shots—but the overall experience is okay. One of the great North Fitzroy pubs, full stop.

Special prize: Best Atmosphere Per Decade

4th

Fitzroy Victoria Bowling & Sports Club (3 x \$1)
72/100



Walk straight in, no membership required, and the staff are genuinely welcoming. The table is outstanding: level, clean, excellent cushions and a full ball set. This is a serious sporting venue for serious sporting people and the pool table reflects that ethos entirely. The room is functional rather than atmospheric, but the quality of the playing surface is undeniable.

Special prize: Best Table In A Tracksuit

THE BEST POOL TABLE?

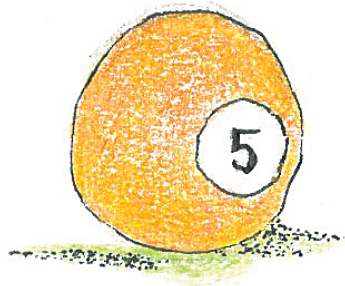
5th

The Pinnacle (FREE)

69/100

The Pinnacle has recently reopened (February 18, 2026) and we are giving Michael a chance to establish himself before rendering any final verdicts. The green chalk was the only perfect score in the entire census for that criterion and the vibe scored strongly. There is work to do on the table and the room, but the bones are good and the intent is clearly there. Watch this space.

Special prize: Only Pub With Green Chalk (And Don't Think We Didn't Notice)



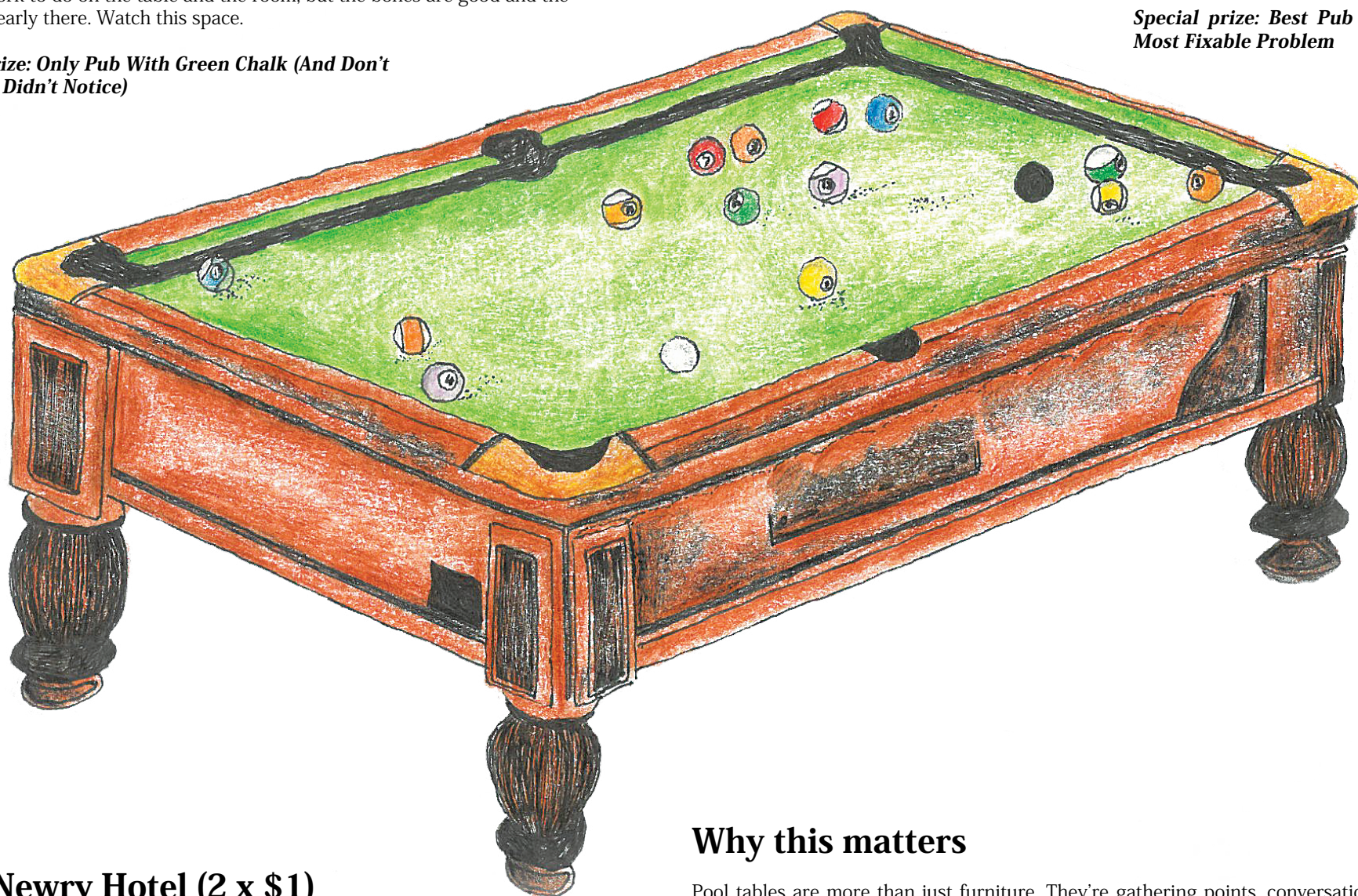
8th

North Fitzroy Arms Hotel (1 x \$2)

58/100

NFA is a progressive pub—great food, great atmosphere—that happens to have some challenges on the pool front. The red cloth makes reading the table genuinely difficult, the room is snug enough that George the small cue becomes a frequent companion, and the noise reflects the venue's well-deserved popularity. None of this is unfixable. Retire the bright red cloth.

Special prize: Best Pub With The Most Fixable Problem



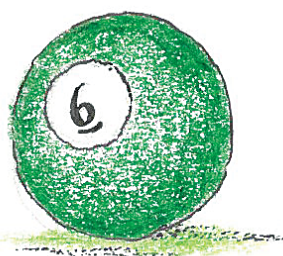
6th

Lord Newry Hotel (2 x \$1)

65/100

The table itself is solid—great lighting, excellent clearance and clean felt. The equipment, however, is another matter. The cue rack is presided over by Ned: a cue so extensively repaired with tape that it now shoots around corners. Ned is a lord of chaos. Bring your own cue, enjoy the Galaga machine and the fireplace, and Lord Newry is a genuinely good time.

Special prize: Most Charismatic Cue (Ned, Undefeated)



Why this matters

Pool tables are more than just furniture. They're gathering points, conversation starters, places where strangers become friends over a badly-misjudged safety shot. In a world of screens and isolation, there's something beautifully analogue about standing around a rectangle of green felt, arguing about whether that ball was touching the cushion.

North Fitzroy is blessed with options. Not every suburb can claim eight potential pool venues within walking distance of a single tram line. We owe it to ourselves—and to the publicans who maintain these tables—to know which ones are worth our time.

So next time you're weighing up where to waste an evening, perhaps this guide will help. And if you see an earnest research team of four adults arguing over whether something is 'characterfully worn' or just 'badly maintained', please give us space and keep your drink strictly off the table. Science is happening.

Ed is a North Fitzroy local holding a PhD in Mathematics and briefly a Premier MMPL player with Fitzroyalty back in the day. He has no particular excuse for this article. Chrissy, Brian From Next Door and Kiwi Stu contributed field research and healthy scepticism. The Gold Barracuda cue remains undefeated (mostly because it's not the cue that's the problem).

7th

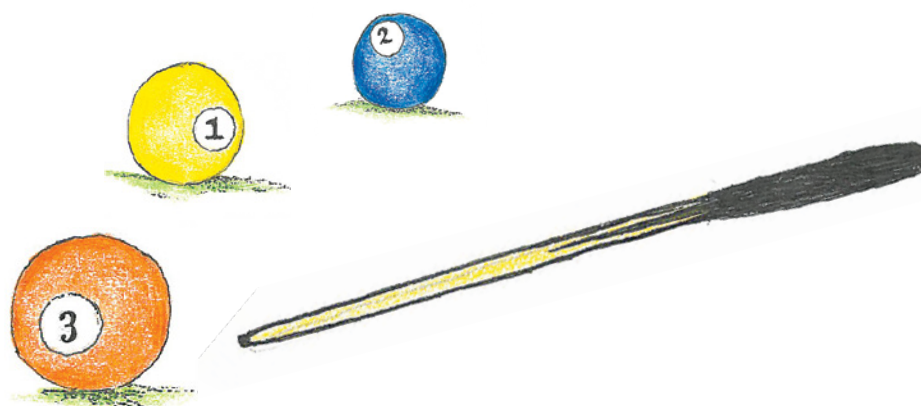
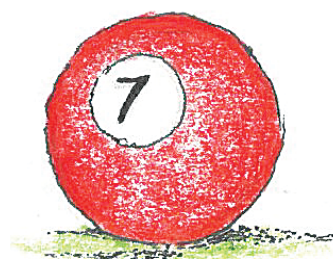
Tramway Hotel (FREE)

62/100

The Tramway's table is by some margin the wonkiest in the census—it plays more like something rescued from a lounge room than a pub fixture, without even a coin door to give it dignity. The cushions have a creative relationship with physics. But the Tramway is free to play, the food is good, the welcome is warm and when

The Piggetails are performing in the corner, precise pool is not really the point. Nobody loses badly at the Tramway. They just lose differently.

Special prize: Best Venue To Lose Badly And Not Mind



Street Art of North Fitzroy, from Holden St up

Banksy's identity was recently unveiled and the press went crazy. Here in North Fitzroy, we've got plenty of our own Banksys, and it's time they got their due

By Dana Kabaila

When I need a sensory, creative, emotional boost, I go foraging for street art. I love the surprise discoveries, shapes that emerge up close and at a distance, the layers of paint. Recently, I've noticed new pictures and puzzles emerge in works I have seen before. I can't always distinguish the image at a glance. Sometimes I need to turn my head to the side.

There is street art that is no longer there that I actively miss. Like the late Be Free's (@befreeart) little girl sitting with lace doilies and a plant on the side of Growers cafe. Someone once put a teapot and cake slice beside her. And the portrait of Djab Wurrung writer, runner and activist Sissy Austin by Amanda Newman (@amandanewmanart), done underneath the bridge between Merri and Rushall train stations during The Voice to Parliament referendum. The City of Yarra has actively supported many of her murals, did not buff this work and were disappointed to see it gone. The wall in question may belong to Metro Trains.

The ephemeral nature of street art makes it even more special. I'm drawn to the ethic of it being free to view, not for sale and allowed to be political, experimental and rebellious. Recently, I've been thinking about my bobute (Lithuanian for grandmother), who studied art at Augsburg University during the Soviet Occupation. There was no paper for students, so they were each given a section of the wall to paint a fresco.

Where possible, I have contacted the following artists, but some of the information is my own interpretation or best guess.

Shadow Tree Mural

Corner of St Georges Road/Holden Street
Nathalie Brewer (@nathaliebrewer)

Street art echoing a companion tree out front. The silhouette was painted with the 12.42 pm winter shadow of the tree in 2025. The artist needed to call in two friends to help as the shadow moved five centimetres every 10 minutes.

Alleyway behind Danny's Burgers

Unconfirmed artists
This alleyway often smells like burnt pop tarts (I don't know why) and is stressful to view by car, but if you walk it's a group

exhibition. Starting at the southern end you will find eight masculine faces (which could be by renowned local street artist VM), Batman, an alien-like figure that looks like one of Abyss's ancient seers (dark but never evil), and fish above and below the water's surface with a tag that seems to read @jacklesdouglas. On the corrugated iron fence is a geometric design and 3D shapes. On the ground are cosmic glyphs likely by Astral Nadir (@astral_nadir), whose name translates "as above so below".

Robot Geisha and toy mural

Corner of St Georges Road/Barkly Street
Jaz Mishap (@jazzmishap) and Angus White (angus_white_)
My guess is that Jaz Mishap's robot geisha is inspired by the 2017 live action film *Ghost in the Shell*. The film had terrifying robot geishas with doll-like faces that blossomed open to reveal machinery beneath.

Opposite this work is a mural of toys that reflects the history of the building as a toy workshop from 1960 (in 1941 it hosted the words "Gone to Berlin" above the entrance). Angus describes playing with scale by making some toys (including his childhood obsessions of a bear and a robot) huge compared to the human figures, while the kite is to scale. This was an intentional move to draw viewers into an embodied remembering and an invitation to continue in curious exploration.

Alleyway across from Deutsche Schule, Dean Street

This jungle scene employs strong lines and bright colours to create magical earthly creatures. It looks reminiscent of the work of Aber (@aber.artist), who it seems now lives in Hamburg, Germany.

Corner between Willowbank Road/May Street

Jack Rowland (@jackrowlandart)
Psychedelic illustrations of the Grampians wrap around the two sides of a wooden shed. It seems to draw on the artist's oil on canvas painting titled *Natural Order*.

Fisher Reserve Playground

Alex Sugar (@alex_sugar_)
Alex paints native birds, mammals and insects that extend from the surrounding walls to the sides of the table tennis table. In gaps between this work there



The Robot Geisha on the corner of St Georges Road and Barkly Street.

is an ultramarine abstract pattern that balances sharp, intersecting lines with fluid forms. While not confirmed, this work looks reminiscent of Urshtay's (@urshtay) style. Across the road a roller door is adorned with a tawny frogmouth and flying bats set against the Aboriginal flag.

Corner Miller Street/Nicholson Street

Manda Lane (@mandalanart)
Hand painted botanical art inspired by native flora and urban weeds. Manda's style involves blending traditional illustration

with contemporary tattoo aesthetics. Previous work includes being one of the artists commissioned to apply the first layer of paint to the stunning *Temple of Boom* (2022) in the backyard of the NGV.

I hope you visit these works and witness their future evolutions. Happy exploring! Feel free to send me a message via *The Rotunda* (northfitzroyrotunda@gmail.com) if you spot a work I've missed. My next article will explore the Fitzroy North works between Holden Street and Scotchmer/Michael Street.

POET'S CORNER

Dear poets,

Small poems must work hard. They can say more than pages of text, an entire novel. In this edition of Poet's Corner, I'm drawn to the work of writer, poet and Fitzroy North local Valerie Grierson Kirwan. I love how small details within each poem hold so many layers: a red dressing gown, golden wattle, a new hunting jacket, a stranger at another table.

If you'd like your work featured in Poet's Corner, please email: poetscornerrotunda@gmail.com

Love and poetry,

Steph

@theatticpoet



TOM WAITS SANG A SONG

Tom Waits sang a song –
"I don't want to grow up,"
Scattering stardust from his pocket.
I don't want to grow up, I told my mother.
She was angry.
She was wearing a red dressing gown.

SYMPHONY

It was time to meet.
You were waiting beneath the golden wattle tree
In your new hunting jacket.
I couldn't see your face.
It was hidden by golden wattle,

Valerie Grierson Kirwan has six books of fiction published and 14 of her plays have been staged in Melbourne. Her first novel *The Will to Fall*, published by Penguin, was a bestseller in its first year of publication. Her short stories have appeared in various anthologies, including *Island*, *New England Review*, *Imago* (QUP) and others. She has received three literary awards.

But all-around you birds sang
In sweet chirping harmony –
An endless interchanging melody.
A glorious birdsong that still echoes and unfurls
In the heights and depths of my mind.

OLD BLACK AND WHITE

I sat alone drinking coffee
In the best coffee bar in town.
An old black and white comedy
Flickered on the wall.
A stranger at another table smiled.
I had laughed out loud
All alone.

LUDO CALLS FOR REGIME CHANGE IN HIS OWNERS' HOME

As the Inner North comes to terms with war in the Middle East, Ludo says dogs' needs are being neglected

By Ludo

I want to make my position on Iran clear. The United States and Israel's attack on Tehran has its justifications, but the war on Iraq had its justifications too, and those turned out to be flimsy. The Iranian people deserve freedom from repressive religious fundamentalists, but the West's trigger-happy approach means innocent lives are being sacrificed for its own pursuit of regional power. I've been monitoring the situation. It's complex.

This kind of prototypical left-liberal take is what has made me a darling of North Fitzroy. Before beginning my column for *The Rotunda*, I needed to formulate my own worldview vis-à-vis human politics; this was difficult without access to Instagram, because I couldn't find out what everybody else thought. I decided my views ought to be representative of dogs everywhere, and happily we're pretty similar to well-meaning people in Melbourne's Inner North. Like you guys, we just want everyone to be happy and equal, and think humans should eat less meat (give it to us instead).

As such, my analysis of local election results, my measured criticism of the Lost Dogs Home and my assessment of the hunt for Desi Freeman were all received well. My opinion is often the only thing both NIMBYs and YIMBYs can agree upon. This is why I have the only vaguely political column in a newspaper that primarily concerns itself with pool tables. As such, I offered up a fairly room-temperature opinion on the war in Iran so you could parrot it at your next dinner party. Hopefully, you'll get distracted arguing with both your anti-interventionist and war hawk friends, and your dog can swipe some goodies from the kitchen counter.



I only say this because there's a good chance it is extremely hungry. It's wonderful that owners around here are so switched-on to global affairs, but the flipside is you don't pay attention to local issues, like taking care of your dog. And when we complain too much, you get annoyed: Obamaphiles acting like Ayatollahs behind closed doors. So, yes, at times I wish Trump would redirect his focus to overthrowing the government of a certain terrace house in North Fitzroy.

Other dogs have been driven to different extremes. Given owners seem so distracted reading about climate, Trump, wretched billionaires, Iran, etc, certain hounds have suddenly become climate-denying, anti-interventionist Epstein apologists. Obviously this seems like an incoherent set of politics, but they just want the entire news cycle to stop in order to get their chicken kibble at the end of the day. The other option they've been taking is to redirect news onto dogs themselves.

"The fight for global justice begins in your own backyard. Specifically, the kennel."

This might seem far-fetched, but my evidence is an article recently published in *The New York Times* titled *Is That Dog Actually a ... Human?* It reports on a recent phenomenon in which internet-users "are now joking that dogs—particularly goldendoodles, a designer breed that is a cross between a golden retriever and a poodle—may actually be people trapped in dogs' bodies". *Lots to unpack there*. Immediately my mind went to that famous World War 2 poem *First They Came*: "Then they came for the Groodles...and I did not speak up because I was not a Groodle." Then I realised: hold on, *I am* a Groodle,



moreover, I am *exactly the kind of Groodle they are talking about*, and if the global conspiracy industry has decided to pin the world's problems on 'humans in Groodle bodies' (the same way Hillary Clinton is apparently a lizard), then I am in an absolutely awful position.

Then I looked at the TikToks themselves: Groodles walking on their two hind legs, making expressive eyes at their owners, looking out the window and contemplating the world. Suddenly I got it, and realised that humans were so close to getting it too. These Groodles were acting like humans purely so they'd pay attention to us canines again. Clearly, it worked, but then it backfired, because now I'm getting

weird eyes in the street from people as if they're scared I can see into their soul. I can, of course, but that's just because I'm an incredibly smart dog, not because I'm human. God, you guys can be egomaniacs!

Anyway, guys. Please do not think I am asking you to stop being concerned citizens. In a world like ours, paying attention is the bare minimum. I love belonging to an empathetic and engaged community. It would be really difficult getting pats in the park if I knew the people giving them out were arseholes. But you're not. You're great. I just want you to remember that the fight for global justice begins in your own backyard. Specifically, the kennel in the corner.

NEW SERVO TO OPEN ON ST GEORGES ROAD

Recently, *The Rotunda* has fielded questions from curious locals regarding the works taking place opposite The Pinnacle on St Georges Road. Behind fencing with signs on it that say 'DO NOT ENTER' and 'DEEP EXCAVATION', a huge pit has been dug into the earth with a strange structure built beside it. It all looks quite ominous, but should we actually be alarmed? If you ask the many electric vehicle owners who call North Fitzroy home, the answer is yes, because it's going to be a service station.

The triangular site, which backs on to the 'Chambers' building, has sat empty for a

while. Recently, it's been subject to calls for it to house North Fitzroy's answer to New York City's iconic Flatiron Building. But zoning regulations stipulate it can only be used for commercial purposes, and given a servo used to sit there until relatively recently—they contaminate the ground beneath them, making it difficult for prospective developers to build anything else—it was probably only ever going to be home to another one. This time, it'll belong to a South Australian company named OTR.

"It's good," one local told *The Rotunda*. "We need a servo on the eastern side of the road."

In community Facebook group Protect Fitzroy North, a resident unhappy with the development pointed to the example set by architect Willys Keeble in 2003. Before it became home to Bargoonga Njanjin—North Fitzroy's beloved library—the triangular site opposite Fitzroy North Primary School was at one point going to be a 24-hour car wash. Many in the community objected, and Keeble successfully argued the car wash would demean the "cultural and aesthetic value" of the garden. Consequently, in 2026, Tesla-owning school parents who can charge their EVs in the Piedimonte's car park have to drive out of the suburb if they want to get their cars shiny, too.

The Rotunda contacted Viva Energy, who own OTR, to learn when the servo would be completed and what locals could expect from it. We didn't get a response. But if it's anything like the one they recently built in Alphington, it will be a 24-hour service station that doubles as a convenience store, offering freshly squeezed orange juice (which Wild Things does, too, so they've now got some competition), New York-style hot dogs (which Wild Things definitely does not do), a wide range of groceries and, yes, even barista-made coffee. Community opinion will be split about whether we need the servo or not, but it sounds like it knows its audience.



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NEW BOOK EXPLORES HISTORY OF NORTH FITZROY

The field of North Fitzroyology has been reinvigorated by a new book telling the story of our suburb's journey to the present

By Charlie Gill

Most people who come across North Fitzroy are immediately impressed. They are not in Kansas anymore. They have arrived in the kindest, coolest and most special suburb in Australia. As such, this newspaper was very pleased to hear that historian Dr Judith Buckrich is finally chronicling our story in a new book entitled *Fitzroy North: People Place Protest*.

"People who are from a certain suburb, oh my god, they think it's the centre of the universe," Judith told *The Rotunda*. "You don't get a kind of objective point of view."

Oh. Well, fair enough, that's probably the perspective-shifter we needed. Still, as someone who has written histories of other Melbourne locales such as Collins Street and Ripponlea village, Judith—who is not from the area—does agree North Fitzroy is a fairly unique place with an unpredictable past.

"Fitzroy is Melbourne's oldest suburb, so it's just strange that nothing happened here until the 1860s... It wasn't until Melbourne really started filling up, after the gold rush, that they decided they were going to develop North Fitzroy."

"It wasn't a very pleasant environment. When they established the primary school, it must have just been shocking for the kids to go there, because there were no made roads, there were no lights. When it was wet, the roads were a quagmire, and when it was really hot it was just dust."

"When it was wet, the roads were a quagmire, and when it was hot it was just dust."

The Wurundjeri people, alongside other tribes like the Boonwurrung, lived in the Merri Creek and Yarra Bend area. As they were trying to find ways to minimise the effects of invasion, they came into communication with a man named William Thomas. He was the 'Assistant Protector of Aborigines in the Port Phillip, Westernport and Gippsland districts', and he built his home on land between Holden Street and Barkly Street in the early 1860s. Judith describes him as "the only



'protector' with any real feeling for the people he was charged with protecting".

Later in the 19th century, North Fitzroy started to evolve.

"When the boom started to happen, in the 1870s and 1880s, there were a whole lot of people who, for the first time in their lives, could build or buy a house...then the mansions were built around Alfred Crescent."

And then it changed again.

"Then we had the bust in the 1890s, and only a few of those mansions were still occupied by one family or one person.

Many of them became boarding houses and institutions."

Current residents are probably more familiar with North Fitzroy's development during the 20th century. After World War 2, Italian and Greek migrants arrived in this strange world of factories and mansions, and according to Judith around 60% of students at the primary school during the 1950s and 1960s couldn't speak English (or were learning).

In the 1960s and 1970s, respective fights to save Brunswick Street Oval and homes along Brooks Crescent created a legacy of community activism honoured by the waves of yuppies who moved in over the

next few decades. This culminated in the campaign to save Fitzroy Pool in the 1990s.

"I think it's really that thing of people moving in who were politically aware, and having a big influence on how they live in the suburb... It's very community minded, there are so many wonderful shops and restaurants that people love. I think the combination of that, with how it began, is really interesting. So I think it's unique."

The definitive history of North Fitzroy, however, cannot be covered in a single article. For those who'd like to learn more about its story, *Fitzroy North: People Place Protest* is set to come out after launching at Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy library, on June 25.





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INNER NORTH HOUSE PARTY SUBJECT TO 'CLEANSE'

By Charlie Gill

According to MyAstroDiary.com, a full moon in Scorpio is best interpreted as a time to “embrace regenerative change”. This, perhaps, was the impetus driving the actions of party-planners at a recent all-nighter thrown at a local share house.

The Rotunda understands that on the first Saturday of May, on a brisk night lit up by a Scorpio moon, a raging party was halted halfway so crashers could be identified. Stunned partygoers with legitimate claims to attendance were forcibly removed as the powers-that-be, desperate to reduce numbers, embarked on a ruthless campaign of search-and-capture.

This publication has spoken to eyewitnesses in order to put together a picture of what happened that night.

By 12.30 am, the heaving crowd of twentysomethings was approaching critical mass. Cigarette-rolling had become theoretically impossible. The party's governing body—whose presence could be felt, if not seen or heard—turned the lights on and stopped the music. New attendees were still flooding through the main door and side-gate. Eventually, the lights were turned back off and the music resumed.

But by 1.30 am the dense crowd was close to hitting six piercings per cubic metre. Meanwhile, some unusually broad-backed men—rumoured to be halfway through a bucks' night—had annexed sections of the dance floor. Channelling mid-career Stalin, party leaders reasoned that tough problems require tough solutions. They flicked the overheads on and cut the speakers while a crew of henchmen, henchwomen and henchpeople hunted down anyone who was not invited or did not know any of the housemates.

“Partygoers with legitimate claims to attendance were forcibly removed.”

A good party requires strong leadership. In this case, its leaders simply wanted to maintain the party's quality and ensure its survival. But it was the ferocity with which they laid down the law—and confusion over what the law actually was—that turned the situation into the canonical event now known as ‘the Cleanse’.

Between 1.30 am and 2.00 am, attendees put their heads down and prayed. The term ‘papers’ no longer referred to the material

within which you roll tobacco, but rather the documentation required when your right to be there was questioned. One partygoer quickly brought up a digital flyer, while another brought up their Facebook friends list. Rumours spread that knowing one of the housemates was no longer enough to guarantee your safety—you needed to know two.

A whistleblower, who was friends with one of the housemates, told *The Rotunda* that an official mistakenly identified her as an undesirable, grabbed her by the wrist and moved her towards the exit. The housemate in question witnessed this from afar and later apologised. Elsewhere, a henchperson directly asked a housemate whether they knew the civilian in front of them, to which the housemate replied: “Yeah, obviously.”

So, if the housemates themselves were relaxed about everything, who exactly were the true architects of the Cleanse? One attendee told *The Rotunda* that when he provided the full name of a housemate he knew to a henchwoman, she said: “Who?”



It's possible that opportunistic crashers went on the front foot after alarm bells were first raised. By asking people who they knew, they could obtain a name to say themselves.

But while the Cleanse was messily executed—invited patrons were subject to confrontations bordering on stop-and-frisks—it was also undoubtedly effective. The diaspora of those forced out either went home or found safer environments at other Inner Northern house parties. Witnesses say this was only around twenty to thirty people—just enough to allow for some movement—and that the party kept kicking until at least 10.00 am, as the mysterious Scorpio moon faded into the pale blue sky.

HOROSCOPE

By Piper Crothers and Tamsyn Turner

Pluto, the shadow planet, forces us to shine a light on things we don't want to. Currently, Pluto is moving into Aquarius, home of community. A problem shared is a problem halved. You may not know everyone else in North Fitzroy, but we must be soft with each other. Put on some layers and take off your armour.

♈ ARIES

With the change of seasons comes a change of pace. Relish in the joy of your past dedication but honour your new direction. A fresh outfit could bring perspective. Try some retail therapy at Bruce or SWOP.

♉ TAURUS

We know you like your cosy indulgences, but what are you avoiding feeling? Move through your grief. Let out some of the angst with a dance class at Melbourne Salsa.

♊ GEMINI

Gemini, you are being pulled in every direction. When things are spinning out of control, remember you can create your

own reality. You're dividing your energy between gallery openings, brand pop-ups and friends' birthdays. There is nothing to gain from spreading yourself thin. Ground yourself with a pint at the Brandon.

♋ CANCER

We know you love to tend to everyone around you, but this Taurus season it's time to tend to yourself too. Enjoy the sun on your face. Trust the momentum. Lean into openness. Break free on the dance floor at a local house party.

♌ LEO

There might be clouds around you, Leo, but don't forget you are the sun. Stop looking outside yourself for validation and keep your inner fire burning with a run along Merri Creek. Stop at Fairfield boathouse for a coffee while you enjoy the view.

♍ VIRGO

Beware of the way rigidity blocks creativity, especially in the way you think about yourself. Think outside the box, loosen your

grip and remember that this feeling too will pass. Seek reverence in the small moments at your local yoga studio, Shared Space.

♎ LIBRA

Your relationships may feel out of harmony but they will balance with time. Don't underestimate the power of the written word. Put pen to paper at a local cafe; the Tin Pot is a cosy pick. Trust that the universe may have something exciting arriving at your doorstep, express postage to 3068.

♏ SCORPIO

Gratitude is the backbone of abundance and vulnerable discussions are the gateway to connection. Be wary of your assumptions about others. The people around you make you who you are. Meet with a friend at Loafer for some coffee and a cryptic crossword.

♐ SAGITTARIUS

Find comfort in discomfort. You're calm amongst chaos, but where do you want to focus your energy? Welcome longer sleeps during

winter. Take an evening sauna at Fitzroy Pool and pay attention to your dreams tonight.

♑ CAPRICORN

Capricorn, your resilience is carrying others through difficult moments, but stay true to yourself with rest, retreat and creation. Ride your bike to CERES, pick up some seedlings and tend to your own garden.

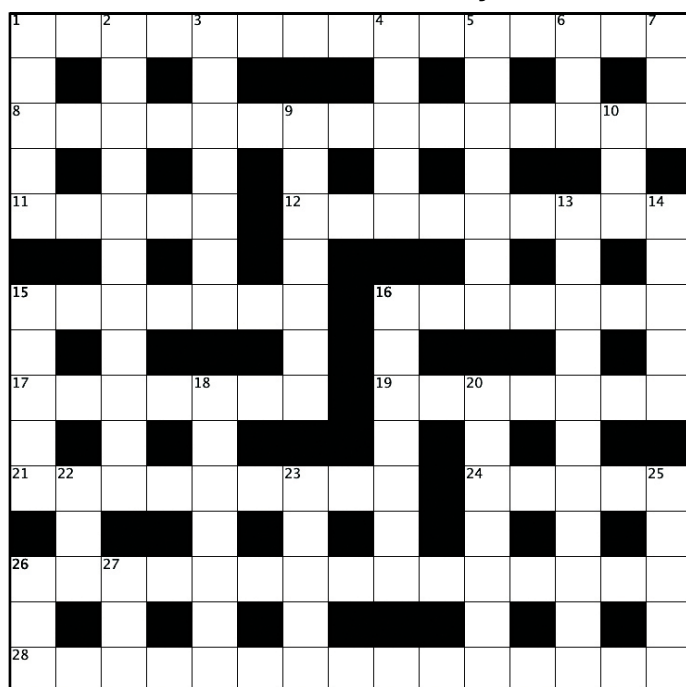
♒ AQUARIUS

As Pluto transits through your sign, you are the guide. But remember: it's about the journey, not the destination. Start small and let discomfort direct you somewhere new. Your creativity is a gift you can use to come home to yourself. Life drawing at Loose Ends could help.

♓ PISCES

What have you outgrown? A lover, a job, or a home? Take a chance. Let your intuition guide you and trust the unknown path ahead. Bring a colleague, lover or friend to a fresh spot, instead of running into your ex at the North Fitzroy Arms again.

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD by CN #19



ACROSS

- 1 Uses action, strives to boycott US, creates expensive fuel outlets (7,8)
- 8 Abridged radio call by suffragist Greer (7,8)
- 11 Wilbur stayed, hiding the water 24-across on St Georges Rd (5)
- 12 Renee's gadabout rebels! (9)
- 15 Wrap the blanket tight so you take small steps like a penguin (7)
- 16 For a cuppa opposite Nan? Done (3,4)
- 17 Is it scrambled egg Sean uses? (7)
- 19 Most of it dripped (about a litre) and caused waves (7)
- 21 Ana left apple crumble in the rice dish (6,3)
- 24 Are pinstripes extreme tubes? (5)
- 26 At first people everywhere are crying. Every family upset. Lost. Then, demonstrate to oppose war (8,7)
- 28 Nessie (8,7)

DOWN

- 1 Clean undergrowth (5)
- 2 Darren legit played snooker there on Argyle St! (3,8)
- 3 Provoked noisy insight by journalist (7)
- 4 Beheaded between 9-12 (5)

- 5 Concluding, first and foremost, that Yarra is now giving us permission (5,2)
- 6 Louie without the French, yeah? (3)
- 7 In position on park benches (3)
- 9 Large orders clear out the middle pantries (7)
- 10 Observe date (3)
- 13 Growth mostly tripled in the end, building on movement without leadership (11)
- 14 A sliver of quiet claret (5)
- 15 Use the broom to flip eastern worshipper's seats (5)
- 16 Root vegetable served with parsley and turnip trimmings (7)
- 18 Swirling, a gull drops you on English sailing ship (7)
- 20 A movie snack of cereal after Snap and Crackle? (7)
- 22 Circa Gen-Z captures your lifetime (3)
- 23 Slump over fruit (5)
- 25 I enrol in Arts to play guitar (5)
- 26 Friend curtailed undefeated team in the FIBA Women's Basketball World Cup qualifiers (3)
- 27 It's as easy as our broadcaster with striking staff (1,1,1)

Solution: northfitzroyrotunda.com/cheat

'WE NEED TO LEARN HOW TO WIN AGAIN', SAYS ROYS' NEW COACH



Jack Dalton, longtime Fitzroy player, has become its new Senior Men's Coach. Photo: Phyllis Quealy.

By Marshall Toohey

My first acquaintance with the newly-appointed Fitzroy Football Club Senior Men's coach, Jack Dalton, was as part of the C-Grade Premiership team in 2018. It was a great side with a potent mix of die-hard veterans and emerging adolescents. Jack was a hard-nosed,

footy-smart small forward/midfielder, combative and creative. He took the young blokes with him, a great mentor.

Jack stayed when others left post-premiership. This often happens. He played until the legs gave out, threw his

hand into the coaching ring, and is now the Senior Men's coach for the 2026 season. He has Fitzroy blood flowing through his veins.

Jack now faces a challenge that is double-edged. Winning promotion to the prestigious A-Grade division in 2023—the highest level of amateur football in Victoria—the club has negligently allowed itself to be demoted two divisions in two years. His immediate challenge is to take the club back to B-Grade.

"We need to learn how to win again. Our Senior team has had eight wins in two years, we need to recruit players who have experienced winning, as well as bringing in young talent to add to our skill set," remarked Jack recently.

As a result, 17 Senior players have been recruited to the list. Player retention has been significant, with only three having left to pursue experience at higher levels. Importantly, VFL tyros Donovan Toohey, Heath Ramshaw, Laird Ramshaw and Charlie Faubel have recommitted to the Roys and will play when available, a sign of connection to the club and respect for Jack. Club champion Ted Clayton, having returned

from overseas work and study, will add grunt and class to the midfield.

Jack's coaching philosophy is based on four pillars: "Defence first, contest all over the ground, improved ball movement, and a pressure-based turnover game." The pre-season emphasis has been built on competing with each other in "everything we do", so that this approach can be replicated on game day. From my experience, that's how Jack played. He will coach with the same mantra.

As Jack walked out my front door after our chat to return to the joys of lesson preparation in his teaching role at Thornbury High School, he was still using words like, "excited", "competitive" and "healthy". As he waved goodbye, I knew the club was in good hands.

My prediction is a return to B-Grade for the Roys in September. A playing list motivated by a Fitzroy legend is sure to bring joy to the enthusiastic crowds drawn to Fitzroy's Brunswick Street Oval and beyond. Get on board if you haven't already.

As of Round Four, the Roys are undefeated having played Marcellin, St Bede's, Parkdale and Hampton Rovers. At time of publication, they sit first on the ladder in a ten-team league.

ROYGIRLS AIMING FOR FINALS

By Gabrielle Murphy

In oppressively hot and horribly humid conditions, on an afternoon this past March, it wasn't the heat that was striking. Rather, it was the amazing standard of Fitzroy women's footy. Now 10 years to the good, the Roygirls—like women's football teams from the AFL down to the Under 9s at the Fitzroy Junior Football Club—are displaying an awe-inspiring upskilling of the seminal skills of kicking, marking, handballing and tackling.

That all happened on the pristine back oval at La Trobe University, when the Fitzroy Women's teams—Seniors, Reserves and Thirds—took on one another in an intraclub match. Since then, they've also had solid practice match hit outs against Old Melburnians, St Marys and North Ringwood.

Nathan Jumeau, Fitzroy's Senior Women's coach since 2023, agrees that the entire squad has improved again this year. They've also managed to keep pretty much every player from last year's Seniors team.

"We've got a great mix of experienced VFLW players, some locals and a few international players combining with a large group coming from the Fitzroy Juniors," says Nathan. "And many new faces to footy, all of whom bring their own energy to Fitzroy."

"Some names to look out for joining the club are Belinda Woolcock, Meg Orr, Beth Wilson and Milla Lappin, as well as a couple of fan favourites coming back in Simone Mooney and Teresa 'Razor' Zampaglione."

In 2024, the Roys earned promotion to the Premier Division of the Victorian Amateur Football Association. As the name implies, this is the highest standard of women's community football in the state. In 2025, their first year in the league, they finished sixth out of nine teams. This year, Nathan's aim is to take the jump from the middle of the pack to become one of the big teams of the competition. Looking to the opposition, Nathan rates Caulfield Grammarians and Old Scotch, who both have strong and deep squads.



The Roygirls link arms at La Trobe. Photo: Gabrielle Murphy.

"Ultimately playing and winning some finals is where we want to be," Nathan says. "The improvement this group has made over my years at the club is amazing...The whole squad is doing something special here and we want the local community to be a part of it."

Grab a seat in the grandstand or lay back on Hipster Hill. Nothing better.

As of Round Four, the Roygirls have defeated Williamstown and St Kevins and lost to Brighton and West Brunswick. At time of publication, they sit fifth on the ladder in a ten-team league.



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