

# THE ROTUNDA



NORTH FITZROY'S COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

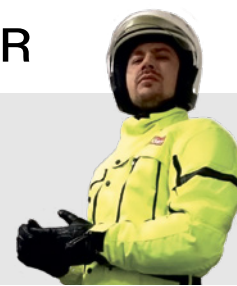
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## KONSTANTINES SHROUDED IN MYSTERY

## EDITORIAL

**Breathe a sigh of relief. The Rotunda is here**

We're all well-acquainted with Melbourne's specific kind of wintry gloom – muddy football ovals, heavy grey skies and moping faces. Edinburgh Gardens keeps its head down, patiently waiting for win back its utopian quality come summertime. For now, one can imagine exhausted, weather-beaten possums huddling in tree-cubbies; hooded conjurers meeting near the Rotunda at midnight to whisper sun-beckoning incantations; flower bushes rendered monochrome; oak trees hunched over in misery.

One can get carried away. Come on, winter isn't that bad. It's true, we are constantly wading through Instagram stories of friends who have cheated the seasonal clock – stunning Sicilian vistas, warm Parisian nights – but perhaps its best to cast our jealousy aside. Where are we? We're in North Fitzroy. What's the weather like? It's raining. Fine. We're going to make the most of it.

***"Don't hesitate to get in touch if you'd like to contribute or advertise."***

After all, there's plenty happening here. That's why New Yorkers call North Fitzroy "the neighbourhood that never sleeps" and Romans call it "the eternal suburb". Residents continue to speculate on the status of the Konstantines building. Two curious women scrutinize the local dating scene at our neighbourhood's trendiest bar (page 3). An artist dreams of what North Fitzroy would look like in snow (page 7). Fitzroy Football Club is on the march towards a historic achievement (page 6). Prospective drivers are becoming frustrated with VicRoads for sabotaging their drive tests (page 5).

As always: thank you to our devoted deliverers for braving the bracing air. They are as efficient as they are, no doubt, cold.

Though really, I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. Those Europe-roaming deserters can have their tranquil mornings in old museums and sun-drenched, wine-drunk afternoons on pretty beaches. We'll keep our cosy evenings on comfy couches and snug nights in warm beds with the rain pattering gently and the newspaper in our lap.

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

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By Charlie Gill

Every North Fitzroy resident knows it. They've seen it sitting deathly silent beside St Georges Road, the closest thing we've got to a black hole – some unknowable realm void of sound, movement and activity in an otherwise lively suburb. What lurks inside? A passageway to another universe? A secret society? Harold Holt?

It's a beautiful piece of architecture: three storefronts united by a cream-coloured exterior with sandy-yellow highlights, ornate windows with the curtains drawn back (except, mysteriously, for the one on the far right), thin-slatted wooden shutters and an impressive sign bearing that oft-whispered name in striking Hellenic font: Konstantines. What on Earth is happening with Konstantines?

Numerous readers have contacted this newspaper to request a formal

investigation: "We've lived in the neighbourhood about 12 years and this site has always been boarded up." When the call was put out via social networks, residents responded in droves: "North Fitzroy needs the scoop on this" – "it's always been a mystery" – "I so want to know what the story is of this building!"

It was built in 1888 according to the City of Yarra's heritage database, but feels like its been there for eternity. Indeed, the large drawing on the window in the style of Ancient Greek pottery hints at old-world origins, while graffiti strewn across its windows is evidence of slow deterioration over time – a vandalised ruin. And as each year passes, rumours abound at greater speed.

"Apparently the owner lives there upstairs and creeps around the hood at night like a hermit ghost," suggested one resident.

"They're a swingers club," another stated assertively. "We go in via the back alleyway." In the interest of journalistic integrity, the resident may have said "they" rather than "we" – but it was stated a little too confidently.

Most believably, someone said it was "part of some building plans for units that kept getting knocked back". So, what is the story behind this haunted building?

Before Konstantines, it was home to other businesses. "My parents had their 25th wedding anniversary celebration upstairs when it was Cafe Peppe in 1992," said Lucy Macali. According to another local, it housed a shopping complex in the mid to late nineties, though "it was unsuccessful and lasted for a very short amount of time".

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# STREET STYLE

Your Street Style correspondent was roaming Edinburgh Gardens on a recent overcast morning; the air filled with the mighty roar of spectators watching the Roys kick another goal on Brunswick St Oval. Looking out at the bright green vista, one stunningly stylish gentleman stood out with an army of small dogs in tow. I like dogs, but it was Abraham's outfit that dazzled me. In North Fitzroy it was grey skies overhead, but he would not have looked out of place in Mayfair on a sunny day, or on a large yacht in the Mediterranean. Just the possibility of a sight like this is what makes this neighbourhood unbeatable.

## WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

Abraham Moniri.

## WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

Iran. I've been here eleven years.

## THREE WORDS TO DESCRIBE NORTH FITZROY?

Coffee shops. Friendly. Enthusiastic.

## WHAT DO YOU DO?

I'm painting houses. My business is Painting CRDC.

## HOW MANY DOGS DO YOU HAVE?

Four, three Pomeranians and one French Bulldog.

## DO YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE?

NO! I love every animal. They are like angels. They just love people. Some humans think bad and do bad but animals never do bad to you.

## WHAT ARE THEIR NAMES?

Chelsea, Roxy, Daisy and Cassie.

## WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR COFFEE?

Picante is the best coffee.

## WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

I was living in Brunswick but now I'm living in Reservoir. I'd like to live in North Fitzroy

but I couldn't afford it. After Covid, all the rents went up.

## WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE DOGS WHEN YOU'RE HOUSE PAINTING?

Sometimes I take them if the job is a long way away. But if it's in this area, I leave them inside. I have a camera in the house, a dog camera so I can watch them when I'm working.

## WOW! THAT'S SERIOUS!

They are my kids. I'm working for them. Daisy snores when she sleeps. My ex-girlfriend, she said "I can't sleep. You have to sell Daisy. It's Daisy or me." So of course I said: "Daisy."

## WELL, DOGS MIGHT SNORE BUT THEY DON'T ANSWER BACK.

Yes. It's better this way.

## YOU DRESS VERY WELL.

Thank you. When I was in my country in 2008 to 2010, I worked in fashion.

## DO YOU PREFER PARTICULAR BRANDS?

Louis Vuitton and Versace.

## IS THERE SOMEONE YOU ADMIRE IN PARTICULAR FOR THEIR STYLE?

Brad Pitt.

## WHAT WAS THE LAST ITEM YOU BOUGHT YOURSELF?

I bought a watch in my country, because it was cheaper there. A Rolex with just one gram of gold. I wear it every day, even if I'm working.

## WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THE DOGS WHEN YOU'RE TRAVELLING?

One friend when he goes overseas, he brings his dog to me and next time I give my dogs to him. But I'm very busy now so I don't think I'm travelling soon.

## WHAT IS THE BEST THING ABOUT LIVING IN AUSTRALIA?

Best thing is the many different people from different cultures.



## WHAT IS THE HARDEST THING?

Sometimes when I see racist people I'm getting sad, because when I was in my country I loved everyone. Life is too short for anger between people. We have to do good to people. I like kids... kids have a big heart.

## WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON?

I bought an old school bus and I fixed it up so I could go camping with the dogs.

## IF YOU COULD BE ANYWHERE ONE YEAR FROM NOW, WHERE WOULD YOU BE?

When I finish fixing my motorhome I want to put every country's flag on my bus and go all over Australia with the dogs. On one side of the bus I want to write "Love Each Other. Life is too short."

# FAREWELL, BELOVED POSTIE

By Luana Chieppo

Many residents of Fitzroy North were shocked and saddened recently by the passing away of our very friendly, helpful and popular postman, Dean Engert. Dean was only 43 years old and the father of two little girls, Lucinda and Leora, whom he adored. Dean passed away peacefully on his couch from heart failure on the morning of Sunday the 19th of March, 2023.

My husband Anthony and I would often sit with him here and chat – he adored our doggie, Chu Chi, as he did his own. We became good friends and got to know him very well.

Dean was a devoted father, a loving son, a good husband and a true friend. Dean loved his two little girls, his parents, his friends, all dogs, the beach and life. He had a marvellous sense of humour, he loved to share stories and have a joke, and he was a good listener too – he helped us keep sane during lockdown, and earlier helped me endure my long recovery from complicated surgery, when I would spend many mornings in the park with Chu Chi. He would always stop for a cheerful chat and listen to my recovery woes.

Indeed, many people in our community would sit and chat with him when he was on his lunch break, and he always took time to stop and chat with folks on his round. Dean was well-regarded by our whole community, and he certainly was an integral part of life in Fitzroy North.

Dean started with Australia Post in March 2013 and had the Fitzroy North post round for nine and a half years – this is a very lengthy period of time, which meant he became a loved and valued part of our community.

Here are just a few quotes from our community members:

*"A plaque in remembrance of Dean, our postie, our friend who sat here to enjoy a break during his daily rounds is highly warranted. His service and presence are missed."*

– Wendy Ritchie and Bill Barryman

*"Dean would always go out of his way to make sure packages arrived safely. We had to give him special instructions once,*

*due to renovations to our front yard, which might have hindered delivery. No problems – and when Dean realised the package was due to arrive on his day off, he made sure to phone and pass on the info to the postie replacing him that day – that was just how dedicated he was. He followed up with us to make sure the package arrived safely."*

– Ellen and Trish Quinn

*"Dean's cheery greeting and smile each morning as we had coffee on our front verandah during the long days of lockdown helped us stay sane. At a time when routine and connection was so precious, he was a saviour and it was always a joy to see him."*

– Janet & David Nichols

Words and phrases like "saviour", "dedicated" and "our friend" are indications of Dean's huge positive impact on our community over the years.



# One night at Monty's

Two local beauties investigate the Inner Northern dating scene at North Fitzroy's trendiest bar

By Julia Banks

It was while walking away from a twelve-minute first date conducted entirely on a Canning Street park bench that I became officially despondent about dating. After he insisted that I "do all the talking" because he had "not much to say", I cut my losses and met a girlfriend for a wine at The Evelyn to whinge about the comically terrible luck I'd had dating since moving back to the Inner North. When I see North Fitzroy streets teeming with couples well into the wintry evening, I can't believe that anyone is securing dates that surpass the twelve-minute mark – let alone dates that interest them enough to brave Melbourne's icy winds.

So on a recent Friday night, my friend Abbey and I hit the streets of North Fitzroy to get some on-the-ground intel – but ended up spending four hours at Monty's bar on St Georges Road. I imagine it's a similar arc most couples follow on date night in Fitzroy – one of the bartenders told us Monty's had recently been dragged on TikTok for being the most clichéd date spot in the Inner North. So, where are our Inner Northies



Monty's bar.  
Photo: Misha Dutkova.

meeting their new beaus? And, more importantly, are they having a good time?

We met Rachel, 24, and Caelum, 27 (who were brave enough to use their real names) on the first date we intercepted. Caelum, a self-described "serial monogamist", said the pair met last week at the Great Northern – "the pub of champions". Rachel was struck by his smile and cooed to her friends that she'd "just fallen in love at the bar!" It made my heart sing that the pair had met in real life, and had made it to their third date still making googly-eyes at one another. I asked the pair about their experiences on the apps. Rachel reported she'd only been on one Hinge date – which ended up in her being ghosted. "There's less accountability on the apps. Getting ghosted put more weight on the date than there originally was. It made me feel so shit." Caelum swore he hadn't ghosted anyone since his late-teens. Good man.

**"It made my heart sing that they'd met in real life."**

This anti-dating app sentiment was echoed by many others spending their night at Monty's. I quizzed people at the bar regarding their business on the piss to determine if they were mid-date and had something to say. When I explained my quest – to better understand the Inner Northern dating scene – I got repeated iterations of: "Ugh, do NOT get me started on the apps!"



Jules and Abbey debriefed at Danny's Burgers up the road.

Online dating was not popular. I met a particularly downcast-looking gentleman at the bar, and found out he was currently on a Hinge date. "Yep, but man, I wish I was here with my mates judging other people's dates," he told me. I offered him an interview, along with his date, just to make their evening a bit more interesting. He shook his head with gusto.

"I've been gone for a suspicious amount of time," he whispered urgently. "I have to get back!" Aah, comrade. I hope his night improved.

Another couple we approached in the courtyard were on a Hinge date, and when we suggested an interview, the man narrowed his eyes, cringed, and asked, "how long will it take?" I don't know about you, dear reader, but if I was on a date and got offered a fun interview for a Very-Trendy-Inner North-Newspaper, and my date reacted like that, I'd be scooting very soon – after dusting off my pint.

The last couple with whom we inquired was Zoro, 23, and Sage, 22. Sage said she let her "weird friends" set her up with Zoro, who she had rekindled a primary school friendship with at a headwear-themed house party in Abbotsford. Picture Zoro with a Lime scooter helmet fastened under his chin catching Sage's eyes (and her headwear – a lobster hat) from across the room. They planned their first date at House of Plants in Abbotsford. When we asked them what the best part of their current date was, they said, in unison, "this interview!" Gorgeous! Take that, hinge-date-man-from-the-courtyard.

We finished the night by tucking into a feed at Danny's Burgers and reflecting on our findings. It was a relief to find the community was turning in the dating apps – sore thumbs and bruised egos – for some good old-fashioned IRL meet cutes. During the course of the night I'd been inspired, and by its end had received two numbers myself. One's already texted me: "Seriously, let's go on a date. You can document it, real name and everything."

## KONSTANTINES MYSTERY

From page 1

Finally, it became Konstantines, and once upon a time it sung with the bustle and hum that any good restaurant does. So what was it like in full swing? Former regular Debbie Ng was able to provide *The Rotunda* with a glimpse into that bygone era.

"I patronised it between 2002 to 2004," Debbie said. "The interior was very decorative, probably akin to 'Franco Cozzo' style. It wasn't very busy during the week, but rather busy on weekends."

"I'm from Malaysia, and I have many nephews and nieces studying here as foreign students. It was a go-to place for 18th and 21st birthday dinners with them. Even years later, many of them still ask if we could go back there whenever they visit Melbourne!"

"They used the best ingredients for their food."

So – who owned it? Who owns it now?

"It was owned by two brothers, brought up locally, whose family owned the premises," Debbie said. "I think one of the brothers was a physician and the other a pharmacist. They used to have many pharmaceutical, medical, and hospital related functions there. My first dinner there was one of these."

"I believe the owners had been trying to

get building approval for a residential development," she told *The Rotunda*.

Indeed, City of Yarra confirmed to *The Rotunda* a planning permit for the land was issued in 2008 for: "Demolition of parts of existing building, alterations and additions to the existing building; use the land for purpose of dwellings; reduction of the standard car parking requirement for dwellings and shops; and waiving of the requirement for the loading bay in accordance with the endorsed plans." That eventually expired, and there have been no planning applications made since.

*The Rotunda* contacted the Brunswick pharmacy owned by one of the brothers, but he didn't respond to the request for comment prior to this edition going to print.

Certainly, it would seem those rumours referencing sexual deviancy and phantom spirits are nothing but make-believe. All that can be said confidently is that a development was planned for the site but due to reasons currently unknown was never able to get off the ground. *The Rotunda* will continue to search for answers. Of course, there may be a simple explanation – but as long as Konstantines rests there in dormancy and gloom like the wreck of the Titanic, people will surely continue to associate it with conspiracy and, perhaps, disaster.

## THE QUEEN OF NEWRY STREET

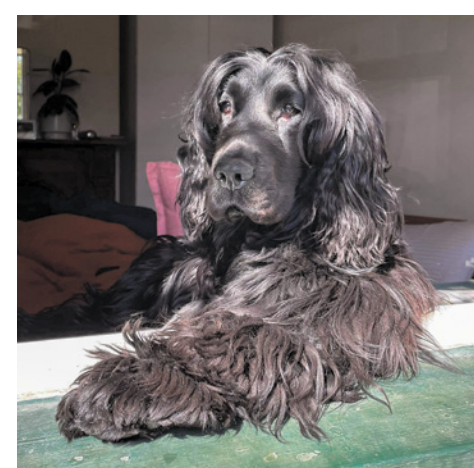
By Thomas Smedley

You will see her on sunny days. Minnie. A bold, continental cocker spaniel, laying resplendent on her Inner North terrace house window sill. Black curly locks frame her face, much like Winona Ryder. Passers-by see her and coo softly, hoping she'll hop down to lick their outstretched hands. Minnie simply nods and sniffs in their direction. It's just another languorous day for the Queen of Newry Street.

Minnie looks into the bedroom. Frustratedly, she waits for her mother, "Jo", to take her to Edinburgh Gardens, a morning routine she cherishes. Nibbling on her red lead impatiently, she can almost taste the wet dewy grass!

After a walk, Jo leaves for work and Minnie lies on her bathrobe. This recharges her after a rigorous park session chasing birds and sniffing trees. At noon, Minnie pads to the courtyard and slips through a cracked wooden paling into the neighbour's house, where Ada – the local sausage-kelpie cross – waits for her. The two friends spend most of the afternoon exploring the backyard, chewing on old bones and digging up compost.

Uncle Hugo stops by to say hello. Suddenly Minnie jumps onto Hugo, who picks her up



as she frantically licks his face. Soon, the pair scoot off to Yarra Bend. They cruise along forest trails and spend the late afternoon catching sticks in the brown water!

Later, Minnie is lying on the couch, drying her curls. She hears keys rattling and hops down curiously. Uncle Tommo walks in and cuddles her. In the twilight, they sit on the front step while Minnie tells him about her day (by licking his face). Tommo smells her coat and sends her straight to the bath to soak in coconut wash. A six o'clock dinner follows shortly thereafter.

Covered in a warm woollen blanket, with her head resting on Jo's forearm, Minnie falls asleep on the couch. Another full day for the Queen. She thinks she might accompany Jo to the Lord Newry for a night cap – but her eyes soon start to close.

# ANDY'S DOGGY DAY CARE

## WHERE EVERY DOG HAS ITS DAY



By Charlie Gill

**B**ob. Bowie. Caramello. Preston. Anyone entering the front office of Andy's Doggy Day Care will immediately be presented with the full-scope of Inner-Northern dog-naming tendencies: spread across two walls is a massive polaroid picture collage of every dog whose ever come in, with their names written beneath.

While many local dog-owners go for classical options such as Bailey or Teddy, a select few go for the downright absurd – I mean, Bahn Mi? Really? Also, who the hell names their dog Judas? Talk about setting them up for failure!

Gladly, I think we can be sure Judas the French Bulldog is enjoying a better fate than his biblical namesake, because every dog who attends Andy's Doggy Day Care seems to love it to bits. That's why there's 1000 pictures for 1000 hounds stuck on one wall alone – it seems that amongst the local dog community, a day at Andy's is the hottest ticket in town.

Let's rewind a little bit. Longtime readers of *The Rotunda* will recall when Andy's Doggy

Day Care was featured in an earlier issue, but others late-to-the-party may not be familiar with its story.

When owner and manager Shane Donoghue moved from Tasmania to North Fitzroy in 2006, he was forced to leave behind his family dog Andy. An open-fields kind of dog, Andy wasn't suited to a small backyard in the concrete jungle – but when Shane's parents moved, Andy had to come live with Shane.

"I had to find a job where I could bring him to work every day," Shane told *The Rotunda*.

Three months before the day care was set to open, Andy died suddenly.

"I thought, why don't I name it after him?"

Kelpies, cavaliers, dalmatians, whippets – all kinds of breeds spend their day at Andy's whilst their owners tirelessly work their backsides off to support them. (God, dogs get a good deal, don't they?)

A typical day will include a play in the outdoors adventure playground, a walk at

Fleming Park and even a full groom and wash. When it's time to relax, classical music resounds from the speakers and the dogs quickly enter a state of zen. Previously, their preference was Tchaikovsky or Beethoven. These days it's Brahms or Schubert – particularly his Impromptu #3 in G flat.

Since we last spoke, Andy's has moved to the building next door with more space – 500 square metres.

"That gives us more natural sunlight, a bigger play area and more space to separate the dogs into small, medium and large. We've also got a bigger doggy washroom."

"We even have a puppy crèche."

**T**he tendency humans have to categorise themselves according to which animal they most identify with is a strange one – indeed, it's almost surprising the census doesn't allow us to declare ourselves either dog people or cat people.

I'd been mulling it over recently – what it actually means to be a dog person – but

when I recently visited Andy's Doggy Day Care to write this article, the answer suddenly became obvious.

To be a dog person is to be someone with the same unconditional love for dogs that dogs have for them. To be someone that matches dogs' unbridled enthusiasm, friendly nature, excitable demeanour and instinct for fun. In short, to be someone like Shane and his staff.

They laugh quick, banter incessantly, smile broadly and welcome you eagerly. They're dog people, and the dogs know it too. They know they're being taken care of by people who love them – maybe not as much as their owners do, but pretty close.

That's why there are thousands of those polaroid pictures lining the walls of the reception like football cards – and why there'll be many more to come.



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# HIGHWAY TO HELL

My journey to obtain a driver's licence was a traumatic one – and I'm blaming VicRoads

By Charlie Gill

Turn the key, feel the kick, let it purr, glance back, move off, roll the window down and speed off into the sunset. Glide through the night. Join the incandescent blur. For aspiring drivers yet to receive their licence, the prospect of it dangles in front of them tauntingly.

My experience getting my driver's licence was fraught with misery. Was that partly my fault? I guess so. Was it primarily the fault of that rancid swamp of bureaucratic incompetence going by the name VicRoads? Definitely. I know that sounds harsh – but you have to understand where I'm coming from.

By early last year, all my friends had their Ps and I didn't. I lectured them: "I'm pretty conscious of my carbon footprint – but you do you!" Privately, I was desperate to drive. I was about to embark on my big European tour and had entertained visions of me inside a little Fiat zipping through the Tuscan countryside.

It was time I got my licence. I'd heard Carlton has the worst pass rate of any VicRoads centre, so me and Dad drove out to the one in Coolaroo, where I met my new teacher: a conman masquerading as a driving instructor going by the name Craig. I liked him at first – he had a big, bushy handlebar moustache, so I felt like I was being taught to park by a *Guess Who?* character, or the star of a Bollywood adaptation of *Chopper*.

D-Day arrived. In our lesson before the test, Craig told me I wasn't driving well. "Great, thanks mate," I responded. At VicRoads I did some paperwork and met my examiner, Sarah, who informed me she'd be joined by a trainee examiner. Because I was using Craig's car (ours didn't have a handbrake, which is required), he had to come along with us. There would be four of us inside the vehicle. It would feel like I was taking the family down to the beach. We all squashed in – "who wants to play twenty questions?", I joked. But soon the joke was on me: five

seconds after I moved off, Sarah asked me to pull over to another spot in the carpark. I had failed.

Craig groaned. Sarah sighed. The young trainee examiner looked into her lap. I realised what happened: I hadn't put the bloody handbrake down. Then I began to break down, swearing repeatedly whilst Sarah consoled me: "It's OK, you can book another one soon." I was leaving for Florence the next day. (I've since been told VicRoads often allows you to put it down and continue, but because the trainee examiner was present, an example had to be set.)

Overseas, I tried to claw back my dignity. On a small Sicilian island, I rented a motorbike from a kindly old lady, but couldn't start it. A passing dwarf saw I was struggling, so kicked out the stand and showed me how. After Googling to confirm which side of the road Italians drive on, I was off – zipping from village to village, climbing up and zooming down the island's verdant humpback. Off the coast of the Italian Riviera, I commandeered a little boat, threading my way through an archipelago of uninhabited islets with my friends. But I wasn't satisfied. And while I sat next to my gruff Egyptian cab driver speeding through the stretch of vacant, neon-lit highway that links Alexandria to Cairo, I realised a sad truth: I would trade all of these life-affirming experiences for the ability to drive up to Piedimonte's when we've run out of milk.

**"The bitumen spread out like some divine pathway to a better version of myself."**

Once I got home, I resolved to try again in Carlton. Thankfully Sonny, my new teacher,



*This is all I wanted.*

didn't have any outrageous facial that made me suspect he was a disguised fugitive war criminal. Soon, the big day arrived. My examiner's name was Janet.

Now, I'm aware what I'm about to say is potentially libellous, but this is my newspaper and anyway, all names have been changed: speaking of war criminals, Janet would've made a brilliant SS officer. She was rigorous. During the test, a young guy suddenly backed out from a park and I stopped. Sonny threw up his hands in surprise. Janet cried "intervention!" She thought Sonny had touched me. He hadn't. They began screaming at each other. Back at VicRoads, I told an employee who my examiner was and they said: "You poor, poor man." Meanwhile, Sonny and Janet kept shouting in the middle of the centre. The manager got involved. I left.

It happened in a blur. I hadn't done anything wrong. It turned out Janet and Sonny had been on tests together before – I was just a pawn in a wider game between the two of them.

I found myself in a dark place. The road was beckoning me. The bitumen stretched out like some divine pathway to a better version of myself. Janet's face was imprinted onto the back of my eyelids – I couldn't stop picturing her piercing hawk eyes. I considered giving up on all of it and becoming a Pedestrian's Rights Activist. Eventually, I forced myself to book another test.

On a recent Thursday morning, I called up VicRoads to confirm my test was the next day. "No," they said. "It's in two hours." I didn't have a car, so I called my friend at university – I'd have to come get his keys. A strange sense of calm spread through me as I sped through the streets of Carlton on a Lime Scooter towards RMIT. I pictured everyone: Craig, Janet, Sonny – all the characters within the larger cinematic universe I had unwillingly created through my repeated failure – and realised that this time, I would pass.

I brought the keys back to his share-house and got his housemate to drive me to VicRoads in a beat-up Honda Jazz, which was pretty much a dodgem car. We got to VicRoads and walked inside, where I met my examiner.

Guess who?

Not Janet, thank God. The Russians had probably recruited her to oversee a counteroffensive at the border of Donetsk. Instead, some bored-looking bloke who jumped in the car without a word. I did the test and passed. My friends came and picked me up; we got celebratory ice cream at Brunetti's.

It seemed my contempt towards VicRoads – growing inside me like acid build-up for months – was wiped clean instantaneously. And as I cruised through North Fitzroy with my dog in the passenger seat, my feelings softened towards Janet and co. – after all, they're just ensuring road safety. And I should have had the handbrake down, right?

But driving is becoming prosaic. And as I impatiently sit at the lights of a busy intersection, I find myself quietly seething, still. I'm hardly a Libertarian, but I remain furious at this frustrating government organisation – with its politics, its devilry, its bullshit. VicRoads inflicted moments of trauma upon me that echo unceasingly throughout my daily life. Now, when I jump into the car to go get milk, I briefly close my eyes and see the same thing: a nightmarish kaleidoscopic vision of handlebar moustaches and dwarves and islands and handbrakes and trainee examiners. The past latches onto me like a leech.

So I collect myself. It's OK, I've got my licence now. It's all good, Charlie. Breathe. And I relax – I move off – I indicate. I check the rear vision mirror. And there's Janet, staring still, watchful gaze fixed on me and not going anywhere.



*My bike in Sicily.*

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# FITZROY LOOKING TO MAKE HISTORY

By Marshall Toohey

The pre-season forecast for Fitzroy's senior men's side was optimistic. Heavy recruiting and solid retention created a surge in numbers at training sessions. On the back of a first ever B Grade VFAA finals appearance, the men's seniors team was confidently looking forward to more September action.

After 12 rounds, the senior boys sit second on the ladder with a 10-2 record. (The reserves are at 11-1, the Premier Thirds at 8-3 and Division 1 Thirds third at 7-3.) At this point of the season, finals action looms – and for the seniors, the prospect of promotion to A Grade is a reality. If they make it, they'll be in the highest level of competition that Fitzroy's men have competed in since they left the VFL in 1996.

The early rounds proved the Roys seniors have healthy big-man stocks, a mean-spirited defence and a midfield group as good as anyone's. They comfortably accounted for Monash and Williamstown and grabbed a one-point victory over Old Geelong – then beat Old Trinity, De La Salle and Ajax. Their first big test was against highly-touted Beaumaris in Round 7.

After a seven goal victory ensued, a much anticipated top-of-the-table clash loomed between undefeated, second-placed Fitzroy and similarly undefeated St Bernard's, who had come down from A Grade in 2022.

The Roys were sternly reminded what it takes to succeed at the top level. St Bernard's won by 67 points. But a reminder in Round 8 is better than one in the middle of August.

Who are Fitzroy's guns? Tom McKenzie, Heath Ramshaw and Harrison Grace are all involved with VFL clubs, though only Harrison has played for the Roys this year. Seventeen-year old Laird – Heath's little brother – shows great promise. Midfield bulls Ted Clayton and Donovan Toohey have continued to excel, both now training with the VFAA Big V Representative squad.

Meanwhile, Rhys Seakins is blossoming, either on the wing or in defence.

Speaking of defence, backmen Jock Green, Nathan Ligris and Darcy Lowrie have been outstanding. Charlie Faubel is a shooting star up forward, combining goal-kicking acumen with rockstar looks; the grandstand at Brunswick Street Oval is always particularly interested when Charlie nears the ball.

**“The prospect of promotion to A Grade is a reality.”**

Since the St Bernard's loss, the Roys have easily accounted for St Bede's Mentone and Monash – but then went down to Old Geelong, with injuries and unavailability mounting a toll. It's easy to think of The Clash's 'London Calling', with many players being lured by the prospect of a European summer.

Most recently, the boys defeated mid-table Trinity by 31 points – but two thirds of the way through the season, they're in a strong position to contend for much higher honours. The resolve of the entire group under the canny direction of Senior Coach Luke Mahoney will hopefully deliver on this promise.

## Women aim to stay in top-rung

By Gabrielle Murphy

With the Roys senior women making it to last season's grand final – but falling agonisingly short against Old Scotch – it was always going to be hard entering and prevailing in the VFAA's premier competition.

But hopes for success were high when assistant Nathan Jumeau took over from the retiring Michael Harper and became the Fitzroy-ACU Senior Women's Coach for 2023.



‘Furious George’ Pyers gathers the ball against Williamstown.

A life member of the club, Jumeau is pretty much Fitzroy royalty. In thirteen years the big forward was part of three premierships sides. He was also the sole Fitzroy representative in the VFAA Premier B Big V team in 2019.

But coaching is a different game and Jumeau was always realistic about the team's prospects in his inaugural year, which has been as tough as anticipated. Numerous injuries – many season-ending – certainly haven't helped, but Jumeau has continued to blood as many talented young women coming through from the Juniors as possible.

These young players such as Simone Mooney (a VFAA Rising Star nominee) are supported by a strong vein of long-term veterans – the likes of Alexa Madden, Luci Murphy and Liz Olney – who became the first woman to play 100 games for the Roys.

Meanwhile, the senior squad has been buoyed by some really impressive recruits from outside the club, such as Sunday Brisbane and Robyn Rendell.

While the win/loss stats make for challenging reading – Seniors 1/9 and the Resses 2/8 – numbers don't always tell the whole story.

“Yeah, it's been a tough run,” says Jumeau. “But, overall, I'm pretty happy with how we're going.”

“The story of the season so far has been some passages of great play, but with us repeatedly falling short of translating effort and skill to the scoreboard. And the spirit and enthusiasm against the odds has never wavered.”

“Our overall aim is to stay in the top grade and with that experience continue to improve, hone our game plan and cement our spot as a Premier side in the VFAA.”



Photos: Phyllis Quealey.

## A WRITER'S GUIDE TO NORTH FITZROY

By Louise Bassett

North Fitzroy provides beauty, sustenance and many bookish delights to inspire, comfort and fuel writers. Here are some of my favourites.

### The Pinnacle Hotel

I've always loved The Pinnacle's Flatiron Building-inspired architecture and relaxed vibe. One wintry afternoon I took the first draft of what would become my debut novel, *The Hidden Girl*, to this late Victorian pub. Back then I had no idea if the story I'd slaved over was rubbish or not. As sunlight streamed through the windows, I sat down with a glass of red and felt fortified.

And that first draft? It was a mess, but I could see I had a story in there.

**Perfect for: silencing inner critics, playing board games, an afternoon drink and music in the beer garden.**

### Bargoonga Nganjin, North Fitzroy Library

Not many suburbs can boast such a beautiful library. It's a fantastic place to browse the shelves for inspiration. The library hosts a calendar of entertaining literary events, and the staff are unfailingly helpful.

**Great for: getting the work done, being inspired by other authors.**

### Rushall Garden, Thomas Kidney Reserve

Just outside the Rushall Garden is a gorgeous arbour. It's a great spot to read a book or admire the thriving community gardens. Spending time in this hidden oasis helped me survive successive lockdowns and book drafts.

**Best for: lifting your mood.**

### Merri Creek Trail

Walking along the trail towards Dights Falls is particularly special during duckling season and features a magnificent arched brick bridge at High Street. The suspension bridge near Rushall Station is a great spot to watch the creek raging after heavy rain.

**Recommended for: procrastination, walking to fix plot holes, random witty graffiti.**

### The Little Bookroom

This gorgeous bookstore specialises in children's books but also has offerings for adult readers. One day I saw them hosting a junior book club and the kids' excitement was off the charts.

**Best for: imagining your own book on the shelf, indulging your bibliophilia.**

### North Fitzroy Hidden History Tour

In 2021 I joined a North Fitzroy Hidden History Tour. This fascinating tour introduced me to historical sites hidden in North Fitzroy streets, such as ballrooms from the 1880s, former cinemas and hotels, the defunct Inner Circle Railway line and sites where notorious murders occurred. It made me look at familiar streets in new ways and imagine the lives of people who lived there during different periods in history.

**Best for: discovering new stories about North Fitzroy, inspiration and research.**

### Caffeine fix

It's hard to remove caffeine from the writing process. I like the coffee at Toast on St Georges Road, which is always strong and flavourful with friendly service. Sometimes I'll step into Taiyo Sun – the Japanese café inside a concrete bunker-like space that overlooks the Merri Creek parklands. Occasionally I'll head to the upstairs café at Piedimonte's for my fix of coffee, highlighters and index cards. Meanwhile, Growers

Espresso is the place for spotting local literary celebrities.

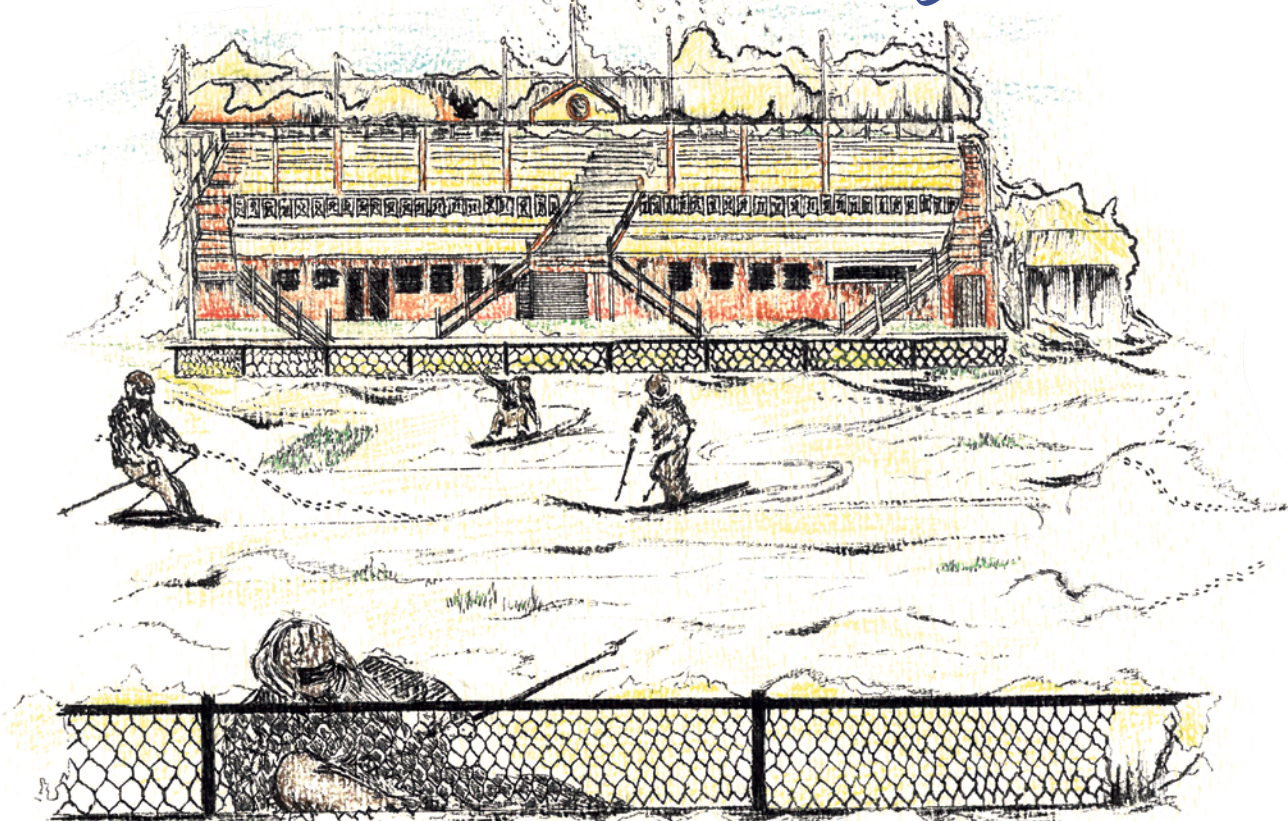
### Something harder

When I need something stronger than caffeine, I like the Railway Hotel for its 1950s décor and home-style Italian food, or the charming Village Vineyard or Secco Bar. These are great spots for meeting up with writer friends to brainstorm, commiserate or celebrate. Or to chat with non-writer friends who innocently ask you about your latest project: “Haven't you finished yet?”

### About Louise

Louise Bassett's debut crime novel *The Hidden Girl* (Walker Books) was shortlisted for the Ampersand Prize and included in Readings' best young adult books for 2022. Her award-winning short fiction has been published internationally. Louise combines her writing with work in community justice in Melbourne. Her day job gives her a deep understanding of the impact of crime and vulnerability; issues she explores in her writing. She lives in North Fitzroy with her partner and too many books. Louise can be contacted at [louisebassettauthor.com](mailto:louisebassettauthor.com).

*A white winter in North Fitzroy*



*Cross-country skiers at Brunswick Street Oval*



*Ice-skaters gliding across Fitzroy Pool*

Illustrations by Marnie Florence-McNeil

CROSSWORD by LR

#10

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ACROSS

- 1 According to Difford's Guide, the delectable 'Fitzroy' is composed of two kinds of whisky, sweet vermouth and a dash of WHAT? (7)
- 5 \* Hold down ¾ of large beer (3)
- 7 Paddle (3)
- 8 Fitzroy Island is a continental island offshore from Cape WHAT? (7)
- 9 Could (3)
- 10 Sneaker company (6)
- 12 Due in part to an inability to deliver orders clearly, Lord FitzRoy became a very unsuccessful commander of the British troops during which war in 1854? (6)
- 14 US intelligence agency (1.11)
- 16 Fitzroy is an English surname originally given to the illegitimate sons of a WHAT? (7)
- 18 Pen filler (3)
- 19 \* Attempt to pinch ring from UK conservative (3)
- 20 The Fitzroy London hotel is situated on WHAT square? (7)

DOWN

- 1 Fitzroy Crossing is a small town in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, 400 kilometres east of WHERE? (6)
- 2 \* Late sailor on empty dinghy (5)
- 3 Breakfast item (3)
- 4 Endurance (7)
- 5 Ancient city in Jordan (5)
- 6 Prefix meaning "one billionth" (4)
- 10 Fan (7)
- 11 African wild dog (6)
- 13 How some people like their 3-downs (5)
- 14 Mount Fitz Roy is a mountain in Patagonia, on the border between Argentina and WHAT? (5)
- 15 \* Skip second song and upset rock singer Rogers (4)
- 17 Belonging to him (3)

Solution: [northfitzroyrotunda.com/cheat](http://northfitzroyrotunda.com/cheat)

Note: Asterisked clues are cryptic

# Are 10,000 steps enough?

**All Australians should incorporate strength training into their weekly routine, but it is especially important for those over 40.**

The recommendation of 10,000 steps a day is well known as the key to staying fit and healthy, however walking and aerobic activities are only part of the story.

The Australian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend at least 2.5 hours of moderate intensity physical activity per week as well as muscle strengthening activities at least 2 days per week. While many Australian adults participate in the recommended amount of physical activity, only 1/3 complete the recommended amount of muscle strengthening activities. This number gets even lower as we age, with only 11% of those aged over 55 participating in strength training twice per week.

“These numbers are hard to understand when we know the incredible benefits that strength training can have on an individual, especially as they age”, says physiotherapist Jess Hiew. Jess is the Clinic Leader of Kieser in Fitzroy, which welcomes clients of all ages to their strength training programs and has seen first-hand the benefits strength

training can have on those aged over 40.

“We see clients everyday with back pain, knee pain and chronic conditions such as osteoporosis and arthritis which are currently on the rise in those aged over 40. Clients are surprised to hear that many of these conditions can not necessarily be managed with aerobic exercise alone.”

Muscle mass decreases approximately 3–8% per decade after the age of 30 and this rate of decline is even

**“Many conditions can not necessarily be managed with aerobic exercise alone.”**

higher after the age of 60. This involuntary loss of muscle mass, strength, and function is a fundamental cause of and contributor to pain and injury as we age. However, these changes in muscle mass can be counteracted by strength training, which increases muscle protein synthesis in both younger and older adults.



Strength training at Kieser

A common myth for those with osteoporosis is that strength training is unsafe and can lead to fractures. However, numerous studies have shown that progressive resistance training is actually one of the most effective forms of exercise for clients with osteoporosis due to the dynamic and rapid loading of bones which induces bone strains.

Kieser is a unique physiotherapy and exercise facility, which changes the paradigm of the traditional fitness facility to welcome clients of all ages and provide older clients with a safe and supportive environment in which to improve their strength and

physical function. Our training facility is designed to support our clients, with a quiet, non-invasive environment that has a focus on physical performance, rather than physical aesthetics. With an average client age of 55, our members are able to train in a safe and supported environment surrounded by their peers.

**Kieser has a clinic on Brunswick Street in Fitzroy North and new clients are eligible for 50% off for their initial assessment. To learn more about Kieser, call 9445 7900 or visit [kieser.com.au](http://kieser.com.au).**



Fitzroy team with Freddie



Kieser Fitzroy