

# THE ROTUNDA

NORTH FITZROY'S COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER



**Freeman Street's big band**



Page 7

**Roys' magic moment**

Page 5



**North Fitzroy's 10 most powerful**

Pages 2-3



## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the second issue of *The Rotunda*.

Thank you to everyone who read just a single word of our first issue. The community response – as measured by Instagram follows, messages of support and even handwritten letters – has been phenomenal. North Fitzroy clearly has an appetite for its own newspaper.

What's happened since we last spoke? North Fitzroy has continued to assert itself as one of the world's most exciting places. It seemed only appropriate when the plot of a Disney movie came alive with a deer running wildly through Edinburgh Gardens and into Fitzroy's urban jungle, making national headlines.

On the media front, *The Rotunda* was given airtime on ABC Radio Melbourne and Time Out named Smith Street the coolest in the world – their editors seemingly forgetting about the existence of Best Street (Um, hello? It's in the name).

**Thank you to everyone who read just a single word of our first issue. The community response has been phenomenal.**

Some may believe it's a bit of a stretch for us to claim Smith Street, but what is Collingwood if not South East North Fitzroy?

This issue includes a feature on our suburb's most powerful, an account of Fitzroy's goal after the siren victory from the father of the man who kicked it, a feature on some of our charitable local businesses, a crossword and more.

Once again, if you're interested in contributing or advertising, want to write a letter to the editor or cite a resident's recent notable achievement – child or adult – email Charlie at northfitzroyrotunda@gmail.com.

Lastly, thank you so much to anyone who has donated – with your support *The Rotunda* will be able to continue long into the future.

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

northfitzroyrotunda.com  
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## Residents row over 'rat runners'



By Charlie Gill

Road rage, a rat plague, fears of an impassable divide between the north of Holden Street (NoHo) and those living to its south (SoHo), and petitions at ten paces.

These ingredients have coloured a long-running argument among residents living around Brunswick Street North and Holden Street. Now, the argument has escalated with the erection of 'no rat-running' signs that suddenly disappeared in the dead of night.

Members of the Fitzroy North Traffic Action Group (FNTAG) have been advocating for increased traffic calming measures since 2012, highlighting in particular the use of local side streets by 'rat-runners' – drivers who use those streets as shortcuts to avoid traffic on major roads.

In May this year, FNTAG's petition calling for new measures to be introduced – signed by over 350 residents – was presented to Yarra Council. It stated that "the daily upper limit of vehicles on residential streets is 2500" but in October 2018, "the average daily volume of vehicles on Brunswick Street North, for example, was at 3169".

Lisa Byrne, a Brunswick Street North resident and FNTAG member, said heavy traffic on Nicholson Street and St Georges Road has resulted in cars travelling through these side streets at high speeds, posing a safety risk. "There's young families around here... Little kids trying to cross the road."

But FNTAG's lobbying to reduce traffic hasn't been appreciated by all. The 'No Rat Running' signs it put up along

Brunswick Street North were recently removed by unknown persons on 10 July.

An anonymous resident told *The Rotunda* that the existing traffic calming measures make life more difficult for many locals. During peak-hour, drivers aren't allowed to make right-hand turns from Holden Street into Brunswick Street North, complicating their journey to the North Fitzroy village or local primary schools.

They also said "most residents" oppose the placement of a median strip on Holden Street (as was proposed last year) as it will create two suburbs, effectively NoHo and SoHo. In 2019, the Yarra Council approved a trial of the said median strip but a petition with 547 signatures was subsequently tabled at a council meeting in September 2019, opposing the use of right-hand turn bans and/or median islands. Councillors then voted against the median island proposal.

But FNTAG's Glenn Morrison says there is currently no proposal for a median strip and that the peak hour right-hand turn ban is to "disincentivise peak hour rat-runners going through local streets on their way to the freeway or other destinations... often travelling above the speed limit".

Neighbourhood traffic is only set to increase due to apartment constructions, such as the likely development of Piedimonte's supermarket. The development is contingent on the Council itself selling a laneway off Scotchmer Street, a decision that has not been made yet.

Meanwhile, police have begun to randomly fine illegal right-turners from Holden Street to Brunswick Street North, as part of their usual policing of traffic regulations.

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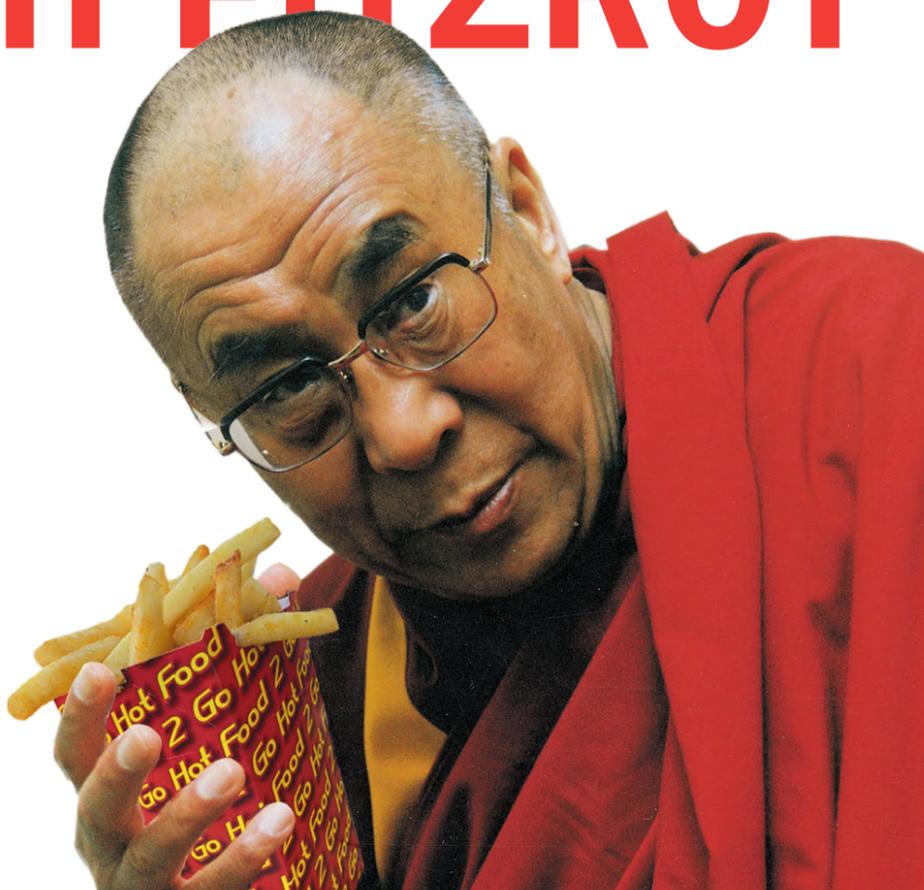
# NORTH FITZROY'S TEN

By Charlie Gill

## THE DALAI LAMA

Yes, you read that right – the world's most eminent spiritual leader is a local. Well, sort of. During his 1982 tour of Australia, he stayed in a house on Alfred Crescent (number withheld). Many have reported walking through the eastern edge of Edinburgh Gardens and feeling at peace, overcome by the residual energy left over from his stay 39 years ago.

So, inscribe it in history books: right next to Helen of Troy, the Dalai Lama of North Fitzroy. And if you happen to see him, don't be surprised and embarrass the rest of us. He's becoming quite withdrawn in his old age, but maybe you'll be lucky enough to spot him mid-kickflip at the Fitzzy Bowl, mid-snag at a 'Roys game or at the North Fitzroy Arms, half-way through a Dalai Parma.



## JIMMY GOUMAS

Wood merchant

The thing that most people love about North Fitzroy is its 'village vibe'. How wonderful it is to stroll from shop to shop then back home for a cuppa; all of us pretending we live in some quaint rural English town.

You know what they say: the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker, the boutique bottle-o, the expensive hairdresser, the vegan shoe shop, the organic grocer. In truth we have more than we need, though there is one essential product that even we would struggle to gentrify: firewood.

Jimmy Goumas' Fitzroy Fuel Supply, situated on Nicholson Street, has been providing North Fitzroy (and surrounding suburbs) with firewood for over 30 years, and there's little doubt that power resides in the man who keeps the neighbourhood warm. Jimmy realised the size of his responsibility during lockdown last year – "I didn't realise how many people only had wood heaters or open fires...they really rely on wood for heating".



"I was doing a lot of 12, 15-hour days during the first lockdown, to keep everyone warm."

What could better sum up this village vibe than the heart-warming image of Jimmy toiling away to keep everyone from freezing? We all have our own role and responsibility. So what are you waiting for – go gather some kindling for you and your neighbours. Crumple up *The Rotunda* immediately.

## ALBERT

Editor of the Bark Street Times

*The Rotunda's* inaugural issue made an incorrect and frankly arrogant claim: *how many newspapers can boast of a dog reporting from the actual field?* The answer: more than one.



*The Bark Street Times*, based out of Mark Street, was a publication run by three-year-old Albert, pioneer of canine literacy and eloquent journalist. His piece *Stick* – "STICK! I just got a big stick at the park. I can run so fast with my big stick. STICK STICK STICK" – won a Walkley award, praised as a "breathtaking investigation into the intricacies of want, desire and possession". (Albert is no doubt the first dog to be more excited by Walkleys than Walkies).

A neighbourhood powerbroker, Albert is the sort of hound to take his owner for a walk. Amazingly, his reputation remains rock-solid despite his involvement in an embezzlement scandal. As reported in *The Times* itself, "the interns became suspicious when they noticed some frivolous purchases, including a 24k gold lead, and a sizable donation to Melbourne Museum's dinosaur exhibition".

Did Albert get those bones? Who knows? When told of his inclusion in this article, he had this to say: "I believe in graciously passing on the torch for fearless, independent journalism. Democracy dies in the barkness."

## NADIA LERK

Maternal and Child Health Nurse at Bargoonga Nganjin (The North Fitzroy Library)

Genghis Khan was an extremely cute baby. 800 years ago, Mongolians dropping in on the Khan household would squeeze the chubby little cheeks of a soon-to-be mass murderer with no idea what he was to become. And how could a pedestrian in 1930s Atlanta know they were passing a pram containing Martin Luther King Junior?

We all know our children are our future, but only a few of us are able to glimpse the probable outcomes. Nadia Lerk is one of them, as the hands-on guardian of our tiny North Fitzrovia (and the mothers who made them). She's been a Maternal and Child Health Nurse for nearly ten years and is currently working at our library, Bargoonga Nganjin.

Most parents have unnecessary anxieties, and indeed Nadia says that "sometimes they worry about things that they really don't need to worry about". Aside from having a proclivity for somewhat unique names, she notes that inner north parents are particularly "career oriented". Thus, these anxieties might not just be 'is my baby's head too large?' but also 'will my baby's ATAR be over 98?'



But with Nadia's care and competency, parents can be assured their children will grow into healthy and responsible adults. Darling little Genghis will be just fine. As Nadia says, "It's nice to be part of people's family, to be part of their journey. It's nice to be able to support them."

## CHARLIE GILL

Editor of *The Rotunda*

Gill's career as a journalist began at age four, when he exposed an illegal dummy-dealing racket at Isabel Henderson Kindergarten. Staff subsequently introduced a pacifier pat down for the pre-schoolers, making Gill wildly unpopular amongst his peers. Wanting to break free of his tattle-tale reputation, he pivoted – modelling himself on Hunter S. Thompson while at North Fitzroy Primary School. He developed a crippling Whizz Fizz addiction and released his satirical memoir – *No Hat, No Play, No School Today* – at the age of 12. It has recently been re-released as a Penguin Classic.

He now heads *The Rotunda*, North Fitzroy's most prestigious source of local news.



## SOPHIE WADE

City of Yarra councillor

While she may live in Collingwood, Greens councillor Sophie Wade's sphere of influence certainly encompasses North Fitzroy – she's part of the nine-person City of Yarra council who will choose whether or not to sell a laneway to Piedimonte's that's crucial to its redevelopment. She may spend her days tabling petitions, making decisions and perusing conditions (as she also works in consumer law), but that doesn't necessarily make her feel powerful. "It depends. Some days I feel like I get to make a real difference, some days I feel like a little kid".

"I do feel a lot of responsibility. People come to you with real issues...and I don't want to let them down."

And how does it feel being outranked by a dog?

"That's the way it should be. It sounds like *The Bark Street Times* is a very important publication and that Albert is doing a very good job."

Sophie was then informed of Albert's embezzlement scandal.

"Now I'm offended."

# MOST POWERFUL 2021

## THE CHIP MAKER

### of Super Tasty Rooster

North Fitzroy's economy runs on chips. They are to North Fitzroy what oil is to Saudi Arabia.

Super Tasty's chips are so good that we have to frequent Jack and Hill Fitness Studio or Healthy Fit to compensate, rebooting at Piccante or Dench for a post-workout coffee to fuel a tedious day at work. When we finally get our paycheque, the first place we go is back to Super Tasty Rooster. The cycle continues.

Is there some ancient, secret recipe hidden under the floorboards? Or perhaps St Mary Mackillop and the Dalai Lama have transcended religious difference to jointly bless those delicious chips?

Or perhaps it's just the work of some anonymous genius, a humble and reliable champion; the chicken salt of the earth. Take down the worm statue in Edinburgh Gardens – replace it with a Tomb for the Unknown Chip Maker. If you're reading this, we love you.



Miracles aside, Mary is celebrated for her education of poor and disadvantaged children and while her birth-address may be slightly south of our borders, Mary's influence inarguably travelled north – right up the Number 11 tram route and continuing on to The Vatican. So the blessed St Mary must have gone through North Fitzroy at some point. That's our tutelary deity sorted.

## JIMMY

### of the North Fitzroy Post Office

LAX. JFK. NFPO. All places where paths cross; journeys begin and end; precious cargo is dropped-off and received. Airports and post offices share many similarities, but no airport can match the status of the North Fitzroy Post Office as not only one of our suburb's seven wonders, but a wonder of the world. All the moments one experiences at the N.F.P.O are treasured and remembered forever, from an early morning parcel pick-up to a long wait during the late-afternoon rush.

But if standing in line can at times feel like being aboard a plane going through significant turbulence, we can be assured the captain at the helm of flight NFPO21 will always guide us to a safe landing. So, who is that captain? It's the effervescent and efficient Jimmy, who never forgets a name, instinctively knows the most cost-effective express envelope for your luggage and always has time to share good vibes. Truly iconic.

## LINDA BULL

### North Fitzroy' Most Powerful Voice

Linda Bull may not possess the legislative power of councillors nor the agenda setting capabilities of newspaper editors. But she can certainly lay claim to having North Fitzroy's most powerful voice. (Along with her sister Vika, also a mainstay of the North Fitzroy community).

Linda ran the two sisters' children's clothes shop, Hoochie Coochie, which was a fixture of the village from 2006 to 2016. As popular as it was, when it comes to being a powerbroker, it's all in the singing.

Linda admits that "I was always quite shy on stage...I've gathered momentum as I grow

older". But when it comes to the mechanics, "that volume and strength in the voice was always there".

This vocal power was on display when she and Vika performed the national anthem at the 2016 AFL Grand Final, a stunningly beautiful rendition with no backing track – "I didn't feel powerful, I felt really lucky, but nervous because the power was in our hands to stuff it up or make it really good."

And in an inspiring coming-together of two local icons, Linda has personally performed for fellow sometime North Fitzrovian, the Dalai Lama. "Honestly it was like sunshine in the room when he walked in."

**And doesn't that just sum-up the way we appreciate power here in North Fitzroy? Judges, CEOs and businesspeople are very important, of course, but they reign supreme in our world's most prosaic and unromantic iteration. If we see the world as something beautiful, poetic and defined by feelings rather than figures, then the power we venerate can't be measured in job-titles or bonuses.**

**Instead, we value the power of working overtime to keep the neighbourhood's hands warm; or to keep its stomachs full; or to keep its children safe and its dogs intellectually satisfied. It's about nurturing the soul. With a dusting of chicken salt.**



Vika and Linda  
Photography: Lisa Businovski

## ST MARY OF THE CROSS (Mary Mackillop)

A tutelary deity is a spirit who is guardian, patron or protector of a particular place – e.g., Athena is the tutelary deity of Athens. Does North Fitzroy have one? A powerful, mystic entity to which its residents can pray?

Enter Mary Mackillop, canonised by the Catholic Church in 2010 and born at 9 Brunswick Street. Mackillop belongs to an extremely rare club – Australian saints recognised for achieving miracles, her only fellow member being Nick Riewoldt (his miracle being a back-with-the-flight mark against Sydney in 2004).

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# FEEDING A NEED

In a time of crisis, two local businesses are doing their bit to help those in hardship

By Charlie Gill

The Flying Zucchini sounds like a vegetarian circus troupe, but intriguing as that may be, the truth is just as interesting – and far more uplifting. In reality it's a quality produce delivery service working in and around Fitzroy run by two women who decided, as Melbourne went back into lockdown in late May, to give back to the community that's embraced them.

Caity Meyer, who runs this inspiring enterprise with her business partner Victoria Weatherall, describes it as a "Covid baby" born of the unique conditions created by a global pandemic. The idea was to take fresh fruit and vegetable boxes to those in lockdown and while at first most clients were in the inner city, the business is now taking boxes from its Preston warehouse and delivering them as far as Hampton and Williamstown.

Caity says the company puts a premium on an intimate connection with customers – "making sure that they feel valued and heard. Creating something that feels a bit more intimate than working with your average business".

"You get to know their families, their pet names. All the fun stuff."

When Melbourne was once again forced to lock down in late May, Caity and Vic created a pay-it-forward program allowing Australians throughout the country to pay for boxes for those in need, particularly women in crisis.

"It was within 24 hours that Vic and I had the conversation together and realised this was something that we could roll out really quickly and the community just picked up and absolutely ran with it."

After posting an announcement on social media, they were flooded.

"We cried so many times that first day, it was unreal."

Boxes delivered to shelters are exactly the same as those that go to regular paying

customers, so the task was simply "about amplifying everything that we do".

The larger scale meant an exceptional responsibility for the duo – "we really just worked ourselves to the bone". In the first week of lockdown they delivered 200 boxes, almost double their usual number.

"In that first 24 hours we just went gangbusters. We were able to reach not only people who were buying boxes but also people who had been impacted by the lockdown and were out of work or struggling to feed a family."

Caity and Vic take pride in being women in the agricultural and food delivery industry. "We're two of the only women that lead a business of this sort in Australia. We're pretty staunch feminists, so to stand in this position is pretty powerful."

Caity believes "lockdown easing doesn't necessarily mean that life is going back to normal for a lot of people that we're delivering to".

"To hear the stories that are coming out from people on our waitlist has been a bit heartbreaking at times. So to be able to take something off their shoulders for just one week of lockdown was a really special experience. It's something that we'd love to continue in the future."

Another woman in the food and philanthropy business is Hana Assafiri, from the famous Moroccan Soup Bar on St Georges Road. Hana has been providing free food to those in need for 24 years.

In the past, like that of the Zucchini's, Hana's support has been directed mainly at women, "yet we find ourselves in this new world, and ultimately this is about speaking to a need wherever it presents itself".

Hana says the pandemic is most acutely felt by "people who yet again fall through the gaps", and that government support has been "hugely inadequate".

"And you know, sadly, they are sometimes young men who are on student visas,



Victoria Weatherall and Caity Meyer (top) – image courtesy of The Flying Zucchini  
Inset: Hana Assafiri Photography: Geoff Kemp

who are driving Ubers, who can't meet their basic obligations because nothing is available to them."

"Our community is our community. We inherit wherever we find ourselves. And I'm of the view that nobody should ever go hungry because they're unable to afford a meal."

"I don't need any onus of proof. If you say you want a feed, you get a feed."

Feeding anyone who shows up is a daunting logistical task, especially with up to a quarter of takeaway meals being free but Hana's kitchen routinely cooks extra and can always put a meal together on the spot.

"We look inwards when we come up with these strategies...there is no roadmap. There is no instruction manual for how to do this."

How lucky we are, then, to live in a community with people who take it upon themselves to help those in need. The Moroccan Soup Bar is a two-decades-old inner north institution that places emphasis on the communal dining experience, while The Flying Zucchini is a burgeoning business created to cater to those in isolation. They may have many differences, but that willingness to extend a helping hand is one thing they have in common.

The name, by the way, does have its origins in acrobatics. The Flying Zucchini were the daredevil puppets that starred on *The Muppet Show* in the 1970s, named after the actual Zachinni Brothers whose human cannonball act stunned onlookers from the 1920s onwards. When the brothers were called up to fight in World War Two, the two Zachinni sisters took over.

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# MIRACLE ON BRUNSWICK ST

## A father recounts his son's goal after the siren for Fitzroy on 22 May

By Marshall Toohey

On this particular Saturday, I was doing what I had done for the last 15 years – going to watch one of my sons play sport. For the last four or five years, Donovan has been at Fitzroy: initially in the Colts and now with the big boys. The seniors play every home game at the beautiful Brunswick St Oval, a torpedo from the rotunda: where we had our wedding photos taken; where we watched the Northcote High School band play some jazz.

There'd been a premiership in the men's ones and twos in 2018, the heroic avoidance of relegation in 2019, and a lost cause for us all last year. Donovan's time at the Roys has seen some riotous celebrations and also some floggings, but all in all it's been a great place to be. This year, the men's seniors have an overwhelmingly young list and a canny, positive coach in Luke Mahoney.

This particular Saturday was unusual: a twilight game – 4.45pm kick off – against St Bede's Mentone. It was a 'must win' game, like almost every other game. A must. The city backdrop, the evening air, the willing crowd (inflated even more by the curtain raiser played by the Under 19's) – all together, it created a spectacular setting. Kind of like 'a spirit in the sky'.

The first three quarters were up and down affairs, ebb and flow, no conclusive stamp put on the game. Though the visitors had an edge, there was no lack of want from our boys. The Roys are a committed lot – and with maturation will soon be a formidable side. There seemed to be a belief in the huddle at the final change. I resumed my seat in the front row of the grandstand next to my wife,

my mate Gerry, my son's girlfriend, and other Fitzroy movers and shakers. We barracked as hard as we could.

The problem was that we slipped to four goals behind around the ten-minute mark of the last quarter. Not looking good, Irene. We kept coming, and didn't concede, but it was going to be hard. By the 26-minute mark we had reduced their lead to 3 points. We had a chance. But the boys from down south seemed to have it parcelled up – we lunged a couple of times, only to be repelled. Around the 31-minute mark, lovely left footer Ligga grabbed the ball at half back, got it to the wing, Rosco Borland marked, and pinpointed a pass straight onto the chest of a Roy Boy on the lead, around fifty out. I thought it was Ted Clayton initially, and immediately thought he would have the distance covered.

Director Gabby then proclaimed: 'It's Donny'. And it was my boy, Donovan. The siren sounded. A thousand thoughts swirled around, we all looked at each other and started hoping for the best. The crowd were yelling as one. There were a hundred teenagers behind the Brunswick St goals. Everything was moving in warped time. So much was happening in less than a minute. I hoped – I don't pray – I wished, I stared, but I knew he would have the distance covered. It was a question of accuracy and nerve. How do you measure nerve?

He went through the routine; wondered what to do with the mouth guard. It was beautiful off the boot – dead centre, with five metres to spare. Automatic eruption. A mass hurdling over the fence, screaming from the stand, and a figure tearing around the ground like Shane Warne after he bowled Strauss for his 700th. A surging pack of players in the



Donovan celebrating the winning goal – image courtesy of Fitzroy Football Club

middle of the ground, spectators launching. Old and young, male and female: in the stand, on the terrace, all jumping up and down. The four of us all hugged. I then walked earnestly to the huddle. I had a fatherly purpose.

I couldn't find him initially, then he emerged. I just grabbed him around the shoulders, I think I kissed his cheek, told him I was proud of him, and left him to be with his mates. Only a parent knows this feeling. I looked towards the Bede's boys. They were all slumped on the ground.

It doesn't always happen like this, believe me. Since this unbelievable win, a two-week lockdown and a couple of floggings at the hands of superior opposition have made the after the siren victory seem a bit more 'in the real world'. But from the 31-minute mark of that final quarter until the second beer in the rooms after the game, it seemed unreal. Sometimes I think only footy will do it.

**After 12 rounds (but only 10 games due to Covid) the senior men's team is currently sitting eighth on the ladder in a ten-team league. While mathematically it can make finals (and indeed there are still six rounds left) its main concern will be the avoidance of relegation.**

**Meanwhile, the women's team is fourth-placed in an eight-team league. With just two rounds left, it can hopefully secure a spot in the finals and make a premiership charge.**

**At 2.00 PM this Saturday the 24th, head down to Brunswick Street Oval to watch the girls take on Old Camberwell – and witness history in the making when the Fitzroy Football Club unveils something very special...**

As it happened – image courtesy of Victorian Amateur Football Association



**“We were looking down the barrel of a loss. And when Donny took the mark, at least 50 out, it was like a dream. It just didn't seem to be the logical conclusion of the day.”**

**Gabrielle Murphy, Director of Volunteers and Community Relations**

**“There was an eerie silence right before he kicked...I was thinking ‘if he misses this, he's not going to get any sleep tonight’.”**

**‘Furious’ George Pyers, Number 37**

**“I was waiting on the goal line, trying to make sure their ruckman couldn't tap it on the line. I remember being so tired but getting a surge of energy and sprinting towards Donny...It was pretty crazy. I haven't been that ecstatic from sport pretty much ever.”**

**Nino Lazzaro, star player, Number 65**

## SURPRISE SURPRISE

Developer wins, community loses

One less customer for Piedimonte's

Paid for by Angela Munro

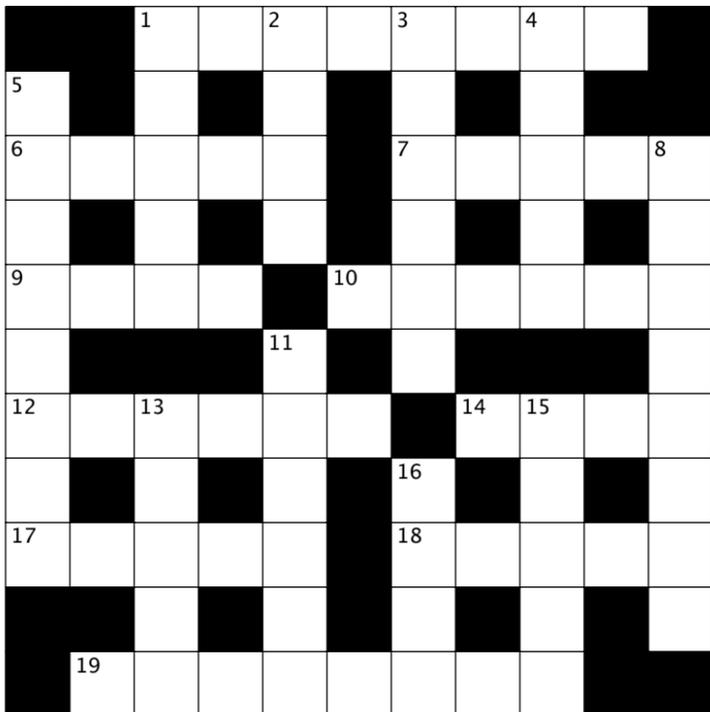
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CROSSWORD by LR

#1



ACROSS

- 1 In June 1994, the City of Yarra was created by combining the Cities of Fitzroy, Collingwood and ... (8)
- 6 Like Machu Picchu (5)
- 7 ? Dirt started getting right in my eye (5)
- 9 Playthings (4)
- 10 More elevated (6)
- 12 Variety of steak (3-3)
- 14 The plinth in Edinburgh Gardens that once held a statue of 5-down now holds a statue of a ... (4)

17 Leg joint (5)

- 18 ? Hygienic family swallowed vitamin (5)
- 19 Iconic Fitzroy sign referenced in a Courtney Barnett song, Aqua ... (8)

DOWN

- 1 Merri Creek was named for the Wurundjeri phrase Merri Merri meaning very ... (5)
- 2 ? Money transferred, we hear (4)
- 3 Warbling bird (6)
- 4 Horse utterance (5)

- 5 Queen who provided the grant of land for the Edinburgh gardens (8)
- 8 The name of the street running behind Piedimonte's (8)
- 11 Yours truly (6)
- 13 Bun producer (5)
- 15 Carmen or Tosca (5)
- 16 ? Hero tossed coin (4)

Note: ? denotes cryptic clue

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

LOCAL ACHIEVEMENT



Max Ogden, of McKean Street, has written a memoir of his 60 years activity within the labour movement - *A Long View from the Left*, published by Bad Apple Press, is in stock at Readings Stores and available online.

DOG OF THE MONTH



Timo, 11 months old

Thank you to Abi for sending in some pictures of Timo, her family dog - a Cirneco dell'Etna. The Cinerco is an Italian breed, and Timo is apparently from the first litter ever born in Australia. As Abi says, "so many people are always asking about him" and "most people have never seen a dog like him before". In the weeks after Abi sent in some cute photos of Timo as a youngster, The Rotunda's editor was lucky enough to bump into him at the dog field and take this picture. He hasn't seen Timo at the dog field since, but thinks he might have spotted him on Lygon Street the morning of the European Championship final.



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# FITZROY COMMUNITY SCHOOL



## In 2023 Fitzroy Community School will launch a Year Seven program

This program is aimed at young people who are ambitious, hardworking, are motivated to grow in academic and social confidence, and like to help things go well. Our Year Seven (and Eight from 2024) program will combine the physical challenges of hiking, bushcraft and sport with community engagement, and a high level of academic rigour. Agency and ability are best gained outside the classroom - these need to be developed in the real world. Our students will be extended in all aspects of their development, building their confidence and capacity to be active citizens.

We believe that these early teenage years are a time when daring adventures should be embraced and young people should have opportunities to thrive and actively contribute. Courage, fun, hard work and agency sum up our junior secondary program.

Please direct queries to: [info@fcs.vic.edu.au](mailto:info@fcs.vic.edu.au)

[www.fcs.vic.edu.au](http://www.fcs.vic.edu.au)

Photography: Yaara Duek

# And All That Baz

Retired psychiatrist Barrie Kenny has hosted big band rehearsals at his Freeman Street home for over a decade

By Charlie Gill

Illustrations by Marnie Florence-McNeil

Warning to residents who often travel through Freeman Street: if, while strolling along on a Thursday night your ears are suddenly arrested by the joyous, old-fashioned jazz music of a bygone era, don't panic. You haven't been transported back in time à la *Midnight in Paris*; your Doc Martens haven't been replaced by spats and your down jacket for a polka-dot dress.

You're in 2021, your mask is still on and you just happen to be passing the residence of Barrie Kenny, patron of the Rathdowne Street Big Band. The band, which began in the mid 1980s, has been rehearsing at his Freeman Street residence for the past 12 years. They used to rehearse at his house on Rathdowne Street, hence the name.

Barrie, a retired psychiatrist, decided to learn the baritone saxophone in his early 40s and started the band as a way to use his new skills.

"I didn't know any music at all before that, I'm not one of the good players. But because I provide the venue, no matter how badly I play, they can't get rid of me. It's a good system."

As modest as Barrie may be, he and his fellow band members are clearly talented: performing at weddings, public events and jazz festivals from Castlemaine to Halls Gap. Their maiden performance "back in '86 or in '87", was at this newspaper's namesake. Saxophones, trombones, trumpets and drums were lugged up the Rotunda's steps

and the band, in those days known as the Rathdowne Street Remnants, played for fans gathered on the grass below.

"Mainly our friends and people like that, not a big crowd. We certainly weren't all that good in those days."

As a concert venue it has pros and cons. While it's certainly a beautiful image – the merry melodies of Glenn Miller and Duke Ellington emanating from the Rotunda and a cheerful current flowing through the Edinburgh Gardens air – the venue has its limitations. "We've only played once in the Rotunda. Because it's not very good for playing in, it's too high. You're cut off from the audience."

A big band must make big sounds and to make those big sounds the big band must be big. (Try saying that five times quickly). Many moving parts are required.

"Usually, we aim at having say, five saxophones – that's two altos, two tenors and a baritone. Three trombones and three or four trumpets. Drums, keyboard, string bass and a band leader. And sometimes a singer."

The band's numbers fluctuate between about 10 and 19. "We generally rehearse with about 14, I would think."

"Sometimes we're down to eight members. But people come and go...the quality of our performance varies considerably. Sometimes I reckon we're pretty good and sometimes we're not."

So, other than Barrie the psychiatrist-saxophonist, what are some of the other band members' former jobs?

"One was a general practitioner. One was an instrument technician, had his own business. One had his own cargo

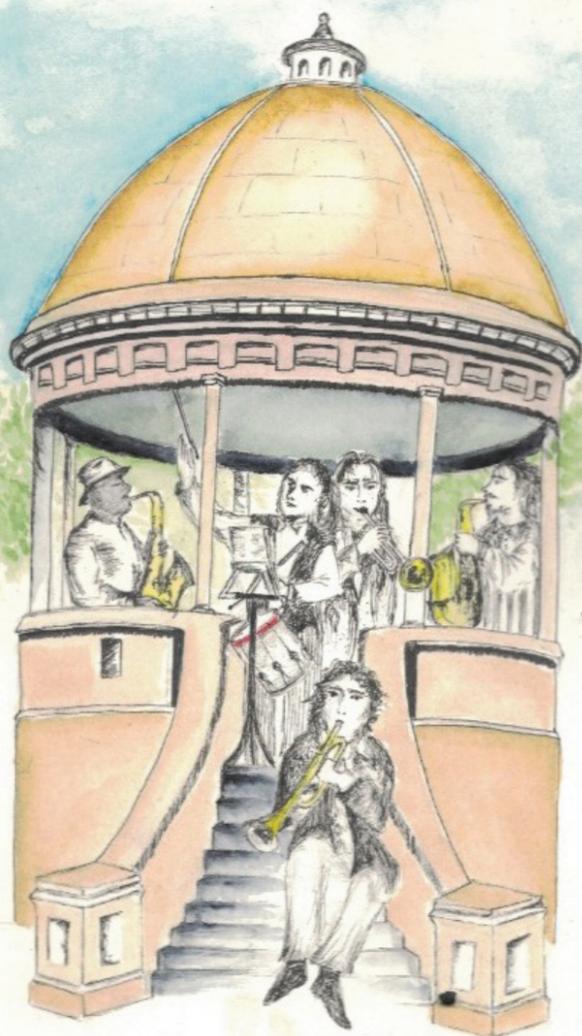
exporting business. We've had a couple of solicitors, couple of other doctors, a dentist at one stage."

However, the band is not comprised entirely of retirees. "Of course, our average age is getting pretty high, probably close to 70. But we have a group of younger people too, from time to time."

The rehearsal space at Barrie's is a converted garage that's been partly sound-proofed so they can practice until 10pm. The other group of which Barrie is a part, the Merri Creek Jazz Band founded about 25 years ago, also rehearses there.

After rehearsals he puts on supper for all band members, some of whom have travelled from as far as Flinders – "and that helps tie it all together, I think".

After a particularly dull day at school or work, locals can hold out hope of turning into Freeman Street to spy a bustling crowd gathered outside a random home. Edge closer. What are they doing? They're jitterbugging. They're jiving. They're moving in time with the exuberant sounds of the Rathdowne Street Big Band.



# Bilingual on Barkly

Did you know there's an opportunity for children to develop a bilingual brain right here in North Fitzroy? *The Rotunda* has a natter with Bernice Ressel, Principal of the Deutsche Schule Melbourne.

Interview by Kat Dilettante

**Tell us a bit about yourself. Where did you teach prior to arriving in Melbourne?**

I've always been a bit of a wandering soul. I grew up in Germany in a city called Gelsenkirchen, not far from the Netherlands and moved for university studies to a town called Flensburg (up North, under Denmark). My studies included a year in Abingdon in England.

Prior to coming to Australia, I was Deputy Principal of the Primary School at the Deutsche Schule Tokyo in Yokohama: the oldest German school outside Germany! It was an invaluable experience to run a German school in such a different cultural context. It was also a unique challenge to rebuild the school after the earthquake and tsunami in 2011.

I arrived in Melbourne in September 2015 and quickly fell in love with the city and the community. Australia is such a vast and incredible country! And the lifestyle here is so relaxed, open and friendly. My happy place is bush camping with my husband and our American Staffordshire Terrier, Barkly. (Bonus points if you noticed that Deutsche Schule Melbourne is on Barkly Street!) I'm also a singer and musician and a bit of a gym junkie.

**Where else in the world are there German Schools like DSM? How would you describe the North Fitzroy flavour of the school?**

There are 140 German Schools Abroad around the world. They all distinctly German in style but each setting gives the school its unique essence. Some are embassy schools, some have a big expat community, while others have more local students than Germans. Some teach exclusively in German while here in Melbourne, we have a bilingual approach.

So it's fair to say that Deutsche Schule Melbourne is a unique offering in Melbourne and in the world. We offer an immersion program (modelled on the Canadian education system) which enables students

to start their studies without prior German knowledge. Over a third of our students would be in this category. Of course, we also enrol expat German families but also families whose first language is neither German nor English. In the end, we are a big blended multilingual family.

I think our location in North Fitzroy offers something extra special. We can enjoy all Melbourne has to offer in terms of the arts, sports and cultural events. We're so close to the beautiful Merri Creek. And we're part of a vibrant, diverse community of people who are socially aware and environmentally conscious... and know where to find the best coffee and pizza!

**What is the Deutsche Schule Melbourne experience like for a new, non-German speaking student?**

Due to the immersion model, it's not like other language learning where you have to memorise endless vocab lists and grammatical rules. It's more like picking up a language as you go, through conversation and play. Our teachers use a lot of gestures and visualisation and they don't mind repeating themselves all day! Our students hardly realise that they are adding to their vocabulary. They just do fun activities in the classroom. We also offer music, sports and arts in German, as well as heaps of social, community and extra-curricular activities.

***"There is a huge body of research on how bilingual brains are more amenable to multitasking, focused attention, problem solving and creativity."***

**What would you say to a family who read all this and thought: "Well, that sounds nice but I don't have any German heritage or plans to holiday in a German-speaking country, so what's the point?"**

I'd say: there is more to bilingualism than



Bernice Ressel Photography: Markus Weber

knowledge of two languages! There is a huge body of research on how bilingual brains are more amenable to multitasking, focused attention, problem solving and creativity.

Importantly, bilingual students have an intuitive feel for language as a gateway to culture. And, as we know, fluency in a second language and culture opens many doors for future study and employment opportunities.

We're a warm and welcoming community and a lovely place to learn. Although our school has doubled in size since I started, we still have a "small school" feel. I believe this will continue at DSM, even when we eventually open our secondary school.

I'd invite anyone who is curious about what Deutsche Schule Melbourne has to offer to visit one of our Open Days or come to our famous Christmas market!

**What's this famous Christmas market?**

The Deutsche Schule Melbourne Weihnachtsmarkt is *the* German Christmas market on the Melbourne cultural calendar. It's such a comprehensive event that some attendees don't even realise that it's a

school fête organised by a small number of volunteer families!

I feel a bit sad describing this to you because we were not able to hold our Weihnachtsmarkt in 2020, due to COVID restrictions. And now, the School Board has had to make the difficult decision not to hold the event in 2021 due to the same. But I will tell you about it in the hope that your readers will be able to enjoy this special offering in years to come.

We always start with a Welcome to Country, offered by Wurundjeri Elder and dear friend Uncle Colin Hunter. We have stalls bursting with traditional German fare: Stollen, home baked biscuits, soft pretzels, sausages, beer and Glühwein. We also sell crafty goodies made by students and a parent-run makers group. And the most impressive gingerbread houses you'll ever see. We have our own cookbook! Our teachers cook up delicious crêpes. It's not unusual to see people dressed in Lederhosen. There are a lot of fun activities for children of all ages. We end the night with our student choir leading us through traditional Christmas carols. And if everyone has been very nice all year, then Saint Nicholas will make an appearance on his donkey!

# WE LOVE THE ROTUNDA

**A wonderful community asset  
Congratulations to the team behind it**

**A group of  
delighted North  
Fitzroy residents  
and traders**