

LIVING TODAY

in Mooroolbark and the Yarra Ranges

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Sixty-Five Not Out

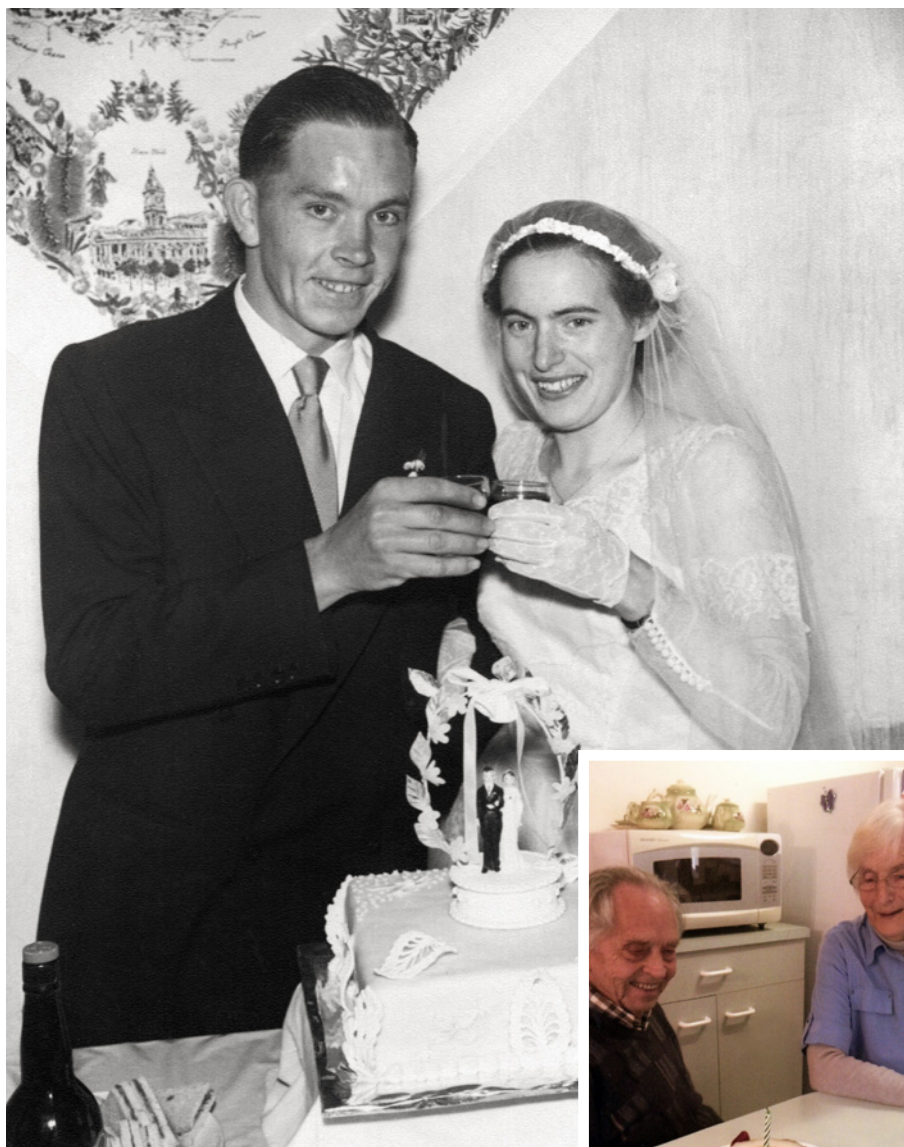
A well-known Mooroolbark character and his wife recently celebrated a very significant milestone—their 65th wedding anniversary!

The precious stone associated with this particular anniversary is the blue sapphire, the same colour as Frits Van Reymersdael's striking blue eyes. Frits and Anna celebrated their wedding anniversary—COVID-19 style—in August this year. In September Frits turned 88, and in October Anna celebrated her 87th birthday.

I'd like to share a little of Frits and Anna's story, as told to me by their daughter Maria.

Frits and Anna were born in the mid-1930s and grew up in the Netherlands. Their childhood experiences included living through the German occupation during the Second World War. Frits' Mum was taken to a concentration camp, and he was looked after by helpful neighbours until his mother was able to return to the family. Anna remembers being woken by sirens during the night and her large family sheltering in their basement. Both experienced the kind of childhood anxieties you'd expect as they witnessed the presence of armed troops and other distressing events during the war years.

In 1954 Anna migrated to Australia with her parents and twelve siblings, while Frits migrated in 1955 on his own. The couple met when one of Anna's brothers invited Frits home for a meal. The young couple subsequently enjoyed picnicking along the Yarra River at Warrandyte, and they married in 1956 at Our Lady's Catholic Church Ringwood. At first they lived in Kew, but not long after moved to Horsham where Frits worked as a farmhand. Their son John was born in 1959, daughter Maria in 1961, and Patricia was born in 1964.



Frits and Anna Van Reymersdael at their wedding in the Netherlands in 1956. Sixty-five years later, they are still living life side by side.



Frits and Anna during their school days in the Netherlands

Frits arrived in Australia in 1955; Anna arrived with her parents and twelve siblings the previous year. The family is pictured above on their arrival, with Anna on the right-hand side, fifth from the bottom.

The family moved to Stratford in East Gippsland before Maria was born, for Frits to take up a new farmhand position. Maria has memories of family life and her hardworking parents on the sheep-farming Stratford property. She and her siblings would be up early to feed animals as well as prepare for school. She remembers Frits heading off on horseback early on cold mid-winter mornings, checking sheep during lambing season. He'd bring back any abandoned lambs in a hessian sack, and Anna would keep them near the wood-stove—or in the oven—to keep them warm, and would bottle-feed them until they gained sufficient strength to be outside again.

The work was so constant that the family rarely travelled, apart from regular day trips to Melbourne to visit Anna's large family. Maria always enjoyed the company of the many cousins, uncles and aunts in the extended, bustling family. She told me that because Frits' family had remained in the Netherlands, Anna's family embraced Frits with great warmth, and that he adopted the family very much as his own.

Maria told me of two other family trips. One was a round trip to Sydney from Stratford to pick up Frits' father and stepmother, who for some reason had booked to fly into Sydney rather than Melbourne, when they came to visit. She told me that it was a long, somewhat uncomfortable journey in her dad's station wagon back in the days before mandatory seat belts.

The other road trip, the following year, was different! Accompanied by one of their uncles with his family, the four adults and six cousins thoroughly enjoyed a memorable, relaxed camping holiday to Queensland. It was a time Maria values—a leisurely time unencumbered by the day-to-day demands of the diligent hard work that her parents had found so necessary in establishing themselves in a new country.

In 1972 the family moved from the farm to Kilsyth, largely due to Frits and Anna being concerned about future employment opportunities for their children. At first Frits worked for the Home Pride bakery in Kilsyth, making early-morning bread deliveries. Later on, he worked for the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, the city's public water authority, digging trenches for the laying of pipes. Sometime later, he was employed by Croydon City Council. In 1983, Frits and Anna purchased the Mooroolbark house in which they now live.

Maria describes her mother as a hardworking, behind-the-scenes person—a homebody who was a fabulous mother to her children as they grew up. She made some of their clothing, cleaned and washed, provided healthy home-cooked meals and turned the house into a home. "Mum keeps things together," Maria said. Anna was devoted to doing all she could to complement and support Frits as they raised

the family. After their youngest child was well established in primary school, she worked in the kitchen of an Italian restaurant to help with the family finances. Later, she took on some cleaning and domestic work. And when she retired from employed work many years later, she volunteered at the St Vinnies op shop in Croydon.

About 40 years ago, Frits was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and had to stop working. It was a frustrating time for Frits, not being able to do the things that he was used to doing. To his credit, he came to accept that "this is life" and adopted a line that many of us have heard him say over the years: "There's always someone worse off than me."



The Van Reyersdaels in 2006, celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary

The Van Reyersdaels continue to support each other so that they can remain independent and in their Mooroolbark home, with Anna looking after the house as she always has. "Mum makes Dad's breakfasts, prepares all his meals, and does all the little things that a keep a house running," said Maria.

Frits was already using a motorised scooter when I first met him about 15 years ago. He was the president of a delightful mutual support group that met weekly in the exhibition space of the Mooroolbark Community Centre. Conversations with Frits were always lively, laced with good humour. He's an extrovert, while Anna prefers to be out of the limelight.

I began by describing Frits as "a well-known Mooroolbark character". Most days see him scooting through Mooroolbark to buy a few things that Anna needs from the shops. Whenever he spots someone he knows, there's always time for a chat, a catch-up, exchanges of humour.

In 2011, I wrote a few words about Frits in this magazine when reporting on those receiving a Quiet Achiever award from the Mooroolbark Umbrella Group. I wrote:

Frits Van Reyersdael¹ is the long-serving president of the Disabled People's Company... The group has a 20-year history and provides members with the chance to meet together regularly to encourage and support one another. Frits is a man with a sharp mind and a keen

sense of humour. I can't remember a time when his face hasn't lit up when he greets others. He works with MetroAccess in Maroondah on projects that improve the physical environment for people using a wheelchair or electric scooter, and we frequently see him zooming around Mooroolbark and stopping regularly for a chat with many who know him. Over the years, Frits has actively approached all businesses in Mooroolbark, looking for ways to help improve physical access to their premises. I for one always enjoy a few words—and invariably a laugh—with this beautifully compassionate, personable man.²

Living Today congratulates the Van Reyersdaels on this wonderful achievement! Maria characterises both as honest, hardworking, family oriented and humble. Anna does everything she can to support and care for Frits, while taking delight in their ten grandchildren, eight great-great-grandchildren, and her garden. And Frits continues to enjoy the family and the neighbourhood, finding humour in many things.

Maria said, "They've lived out their marriage vows in sickness and in health—in whatever came their way—and they give each other space. That's marriage at its best."



Randall Bourchier

² Bourchier, R. (2011, December). "Mooroolbark Umbrella Group Presents Quiet Achiever Awards". *Living Today in Mooroolbark and the Yarra Ranges*, p.3. <http://livingtoday.org.au/uploads/LivingTodayIssue38.pdf>

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¹ Spelling corrected from "Fritz" in original article to "Frits"

celebrate mooroolbark²⁰²² festival reconnect



A New Era

Next year's Celebrate Mooroolbark festival on 19-20 March will be two days of fun for the whole family! With the theme of RECONNECT, the 2022 festival will celebrate the positive implications of our suburb's five-kilometre radius. We will be celebrating support for small businesses, encouraging more engagement, and enjoying the simplicity of meeting and reconnecting with our neighbours and local groups in person. Our aim is to help everyone appreciate being back together, become re-energised post lockdown, and find something to enjoy and participate in as a community.

As a two-day festival, the event will look different this year—different from last year's eight-day event, and certainly different from previous years, when most of the action took place on just one day. And certainly different from its predecessor, the Red Earth Festival.

No, we are not the same festival.

The Celebrate Mooroolbark festival started from humble origins in 2002. In 2001 the Red Earth Festival was abandoned after a combination of bad press, excessive permit costs and volunteer burnout. There are numerous stories about why and how the festival ended, depending on who you talk to. However, if you are interested in doing your own research, the Mooroolbark History Group is an excellent place to start.

Celebrate Mooroolbark was born not out of a desire to replace the pre-existing Red Earth

Festival, but to celebrate the local Mooroolbark community. It began with a small fair coinciding with Mooroolbark Community Centre's 23rd anniversary. There were no carnival rides or parades, but there were activities and displays from local tutors and teachers, who ran their programs within the MCC. Several local businesses, non-profit groups and schools were

present, all coming together to showcase local talent and all that is good about Mooroolbark.

Due to the huge size of the Yarra Ranges shire, the council is no longer able to fully fund any local community events—whereas in neighbouring shires, councils have huge budgets and event management teams to run large festivals. It can be tempting to compare the different festivals, but comparison can be the thief of joy. Unlike larger festivals, every year Celebrate Mooroolbark depends entirely on sponsorship, local business, and volunteers.

That's not to say our little community festival isn't growing at a phenomenal rate. There is real diversity in volunteering nowadays, and this year there are more people involved than ever. What the Celebrate Mooroolbark festival does well is nurture connections. We now have the perfect combination of knowledge, experience, and exciting fresh ideas.

The fact that the Celebrate Mooroolbark festival has evolved over the years is a timely reminder that although things don't always stay the same, they offer us exciting new opportunities and the chance to grow.

So get ready to be a part of history, and an entirely new event metamorphosis!



PHOTO: JANE WILKINSON

Bec Gilbert
Marketing & Social Media
Celebrate Mooroolbark Committee

A Tough Act to Follow



Barbara, right, at the 2021 festival with fellow committee member Sandy McElroy.

In 2022 we said goodbye to one of our longest-serving festival volunteers, Barbara Austin, who is taking time to focus on her health and family this year. Barbara began her volunteer journey through the gentle persuasion of the team at Mooroolbark Christian Fellowship, who have been huge supporters of the festival from day one. A retired nurse with no specific event management experience, Barbara threw herself into an immediate stage programmer role in 2010, and excelled at it. Her legacy is one of local rapport, logic, kindness, and the joy of new experiences. In her ten years at Celebrate Mooroolbark she became one of the most active committee and executive committee members to date. Over the years,

her roles included—but were not limited to—secretary, volunteer coordinator, sponsorship, chairperson, minute taker, support giver, trolley pusher, First Aider, friend, comrade, and unofficial team cheerleader.

Beloved by all, Barbara will be leaving big shoes to fill at the Celebrate Mooroolbark Committee, being impossible to replace. However, she leaves us with the knowledge that a little bit of kindness goes a long way, and that the joy of selflessly giving and supporting the community is worth its weight in gold.

Bec Gilbert
Marketing & Social Media
Celebrate Mooroolbark Committee

For parents, there can be no pain greater than that of losing a child. Even when the life of that treasured child has been fleeting, the profound sorrow caused by the loss is an enormous burden for grieving parents.

A small group of ladies in Mooroolbark, assisted by volunteers around the country, help ease the burden of grief by providing a compassionate service for parents. The Treasured Babies Program provides gift packs of beautiful handmade clothing and other items to parents who have lost their precious babies prior to full term, giving them comfort and one less thing to think about in the immediacy of their loss.

The Treasured Babies Program began more than 20 years ago with the aim of supporting bereaved parents and honouring the lives of babies who have died. The program is run by national charity Red Nose, which supports families who have suffered the loss of a baby or child. However, the program would not exist without the tireless efforts of the volunteers, led by Cindy Furby. Cindy has been involved with Treasured Babies from the beginning, and since 2002 has been the coordinator of the program's volunteer centre, located in the Mooroolbark Terrace shopping centre.

Every Tuesday and Friday, up to ten local volunteers—all senior citizens—meet at the centre, where they coordinate the packing of gift sets for bereaved parents. Supporting them from a distance are volunteers who knit, sew and crochet tiny outfits and blankets and send them to Mooroolbark for distribution around Australia. "We have volunteers working from home all around Mooroolbark and the Yarra Valley," said Cindy.



Keren Ludski of Red Nose with Cindy

In fact, there are hundreds of volunteers from all over Australia supporting the program, sending in items they have made. The tiny clothes, together with other items such as Angel Boxes, memory keepsake boxes, naming certificates, and information about support services, are made available to comfort and support bereaved parents.

The white Angel Boxes, which are for the burial of babies of up to 22 weeks gestation, are made by the Croydon Men's Shed. "We put in the inserts that consist of a pillow, a mattress, doona cover and head liner," said Cindy. "We also have a memory box which is suitable for any memorabilia—maybe the baby's hospital wristband or a lock of hair. For the very early losses we also have tiny organza remembrance bags that hold a tiny little hat and booties, that can be given to the parents to



Treasured Babies

remember their child by." Naming certificates acknowledge babies born at less than 22 weeks gestation and who therefore do not have an official birth certificate. "These things give parents a sort of silent permission to be a mum and a dad," said Cindy.

According to Cindy, days at the volunteer centre are very busy, as the small group of volunteers process donations and prepare them to be included in the gift packages. "We have one lady who paints—she embellishes the angel boxes and memory boxes. A couple of other volunteers do bits of hand sewing, like sewing buttons on garments that have come in, or threading ribbon through booties." Volunteers also put together cellophane-wrapped gift sets of clothing and blankets. Because the contents are visible, parents are able to select which set of clothes they would like for their baby, which can be very empowering for parents at a time when so much else is uncertain. Dressing the baby also helps parents to process their grief, and provides memories to treasure.

The gift sets are distributed upon request to hospitals, counsellors and funeral directors, who are on hand at the time of a family's loss. The gifts are provided free of charge, funded by Red Nose through donations from individuals and by business sponsorships.

Cindy appreciates the support of groups like Croydon Men's Shed for the making and painting of the Angel Boxes, and the Rotary Club of Croydon and Montrose, which supplies soft pastel acrylic yarn in 3 ply and 4 ply. The volunteer centre also welcomes donations of suitable fabrics from community members. "We're very frugal with the materials that we get—we try to use everything and waste nothing, if we can," Cindy said. "But we do have particular specifications for what we need." Useful donations are baby knitting wool, flannelette, and polar fleece, but only in white or soft pastel colours. White fabrics such as satin or pre-loved wedding dresses are also handy for making the bedding for the Angel Boxes. To ensure that donations of material don't go to waste, the Red Nose website lists what items are needed. The website also provides information for people wanting to support the

program from their homes or communities by volunteering their time.¹

The dedication of the Treasured Babies volunteers is appreciated by Lois Clarke and her husband Brett from Terrace Jewellers, who see firsthand the hard work that is involved. "These ladies are unsung heroes that most people in Mooroolbark wouldn't even know about," said Lois. "They all work very long hours. Cindy works day and night, seven days a week."

Cindy, who is a mother and grandmother, understands the tragedy of child loss and premature birth, having grown up knowing that her own mother had lost two babies. Cindy's remaining sister, the twin of one of the babies who died, has had lifelong struggles as result of her premature birth. The lasting effects of these events on Cindy's family has led her to want to help others in similar situations. "I do this to try to help parents have something less to worry about when it comes to clothing their baby and making them feel special," she said. "I love doing what I do, because I know that it helps people at such a sad time."

"We are so proud of Cindy and the volunteers of the Treasured Babies program," said Keren Ludski, Co-CEO of Red Nose. "The delicate and often tiny baby clothes and keepsakes they provide to bereaved families have helped many parents honour their little ones—no matter their gestational age. We often hear from families, years after their loss, about how much this gesture meant to them."

Janet Van Dijk

To donate fabric or be involved as a Treasured Babies volunteer, drop into Shop 28 at the Terrace on a Tuesday or Friday morning, or email Cindy at treasuredbabies@rednose.com.au. To contribute to Red Nose fundraising, visit donate.rednose.org.au.

If you need bereavement support after the loss of a baby or child, please phone 1300 308 307 or visit rednosegriefandloss.com.au.

¹ rednose.org.au/page/treasured-babies

Back on Track

When pandemic restrictions began easing in September, Melburnians breathed a collective sigh of relief and began planning to resume life as they remembered it. By October, people were ready to release some pent-up energy—and after nearly nine months of stay-at-home restrictions, the city and suburbs of Melbourne came out of what was hoped to be its final lockdown.

However, the much-anticipated opening of retail outlets and entertainment venues in late October got off to a slow start due to fierce thunderstorms and wild winds. As rain and powerful winds lashed southern Victoria, bringing down trees and power lines and leaving hundreds of thousands of properties without power, people were surely reflecting that this wasn't the "Freedom Day" that they had been expecting! In Mooroolbark, some were frustrated, with grocery stores low on stock and many homes and businesses without power. However, that didn't dampen the determination of others, who worked together to make the best of the situation.

Mooroolbark local Fiona McFarlane was impressed with the resourcefulness and dedication of the staff at A Great Place in Brice Avenue, where she bought a delicious Chinese takeaway meal. "Bless their cotton socks," said Fiona. "They were doing the best they could despite the power outage, working by candlelight to keep their business going and not disappoint their customers!"

Another business operating in low light that weekend was florist and giftware store Blooms on Brice. Despite having no electricity, they were open for business, serving customers from the front door and working in the dim interior by the glow of battery-operated Christmas lights.

Fiona thought that local businesses were "extraordinary" as they sought to meet the needs of their customers despite the havoc caused by the storms. "During these difficult times it just makes you realise the lengths people go to, to keep serving our incredible community," she said.

Although some places were still without power by Cup Day long weekend, the weather had improved, with sunny days and temperatures heading toward a Cup Day of 30 degrees. That Sunday, Mooroolbark mum Jessica Stanley took advantage of the good weather to walk through her neighbourhood with her two young children. "We enjoyed seeing and checking in with our neighbours," said Jessica. The following day, after dropping her children at school and daycare, Jessica took some "me time" to visit some of the Mooroolbark places that she had been missing. Her first stop was for a delicious breakfast at Manna Lane, where she enjoyed catching up with the owner, Susan. After that, Jessica had some "retail therapy" at Sadie & Co, appreciating the chance to browse and try on clothes in person.

Like many people who had been stuck at home with too many "bad hair days" and at the mercy of their own hairdressing efforts, Jessica couldn't wait to have her hair professionally cut and coloured. Jessica's appointment was with Lee-Anne at Shapers Hair and Beauty, where she has been a customer for 13 years. "Lee-Anne is such a wonderful hairdresser," said Jessica. "It was so nice to walk out of her salon looking fresh again."

Jessica also bought flowers from Blooms on Brice, which is a popular store with local residents. Fiona McFarlane was just one of many who praised the way staff members respond to customers, commenting that they are always happy to help, and that she found it very easy to order



A GREAT PLACE



BLOOMS ON BRICE



MANNA LANE



MOOROOLBARK FRESH

flowers over the phone. "When I picked them up, they were exactly as they explained," said Fiona.

Even though retailers and their customers were excited for all retail stores to open once more, the shopping experience during lockdown hadn't necessarily been a negative one. Linda Williams found a "perfect" treat when she began shopping at the local fruit and vegetable store during lockdown: "amazing choc-coated licorice". But more than that, she discovered a new shopping experience. "Stepping into Mooroolbark Fresh to stock up on great fruit and veggies instilled a feeling of community and belonging every time I shopped there," Linda said.

Marketing Coordinator for Mooroolbark Traders & Community Group (MTCG), Yolande Pickett, also loves the chocolate licorice at Mooroolbark Fresh. "I don't even try to resist it when I do my fruit and veg shop," she said.

Yolande has noticed and appreciated the way that customers have supported the efforts of Mooroolbark businesses as they comply with new COVID-19 regulations. "I am incredibly grateful to the majority of our locals who are supporting Mooroolbark's small businesses, happily offering their vaccination certificate before even being asked for it," said Yolande. "Thank you, Mooroolbark, and keep it up!" Struggling businesses rely on the good will and purchasing power of customers now more than ever. "That happy dance that businesses do with every purchase is very real," said Yolande.

Access to parking, retail and dining will continue to improve for residents. MTCG President Geoff Earney is looking forward to the opening of the multi-level carpark in May next year, commenting, "How good will it be when it is open!" With the upgraded train station now open, and construction works winding down, traffic delays are becoming less of a problem.

"But we've got a few months of finishing touches and landscaping to go," Yolande said. "It's a really exciting moment in time for Mooroolbark."

There's an optimism among the people of Melbourne, knowing that we're on track to enjoy life as we used to. In the city, many restaurants and entertainment venues are operating at capacity, and trams filled with eager shoppers and sightseers once more rumble through the city streets. In the Mooroolbark shopping precinct, it's a more relaxed, slower-paced vibe, but there's no doubt about it—we're back!

Janet Van Dijk



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Solicitor Kristy Burrows acknowledges that for some people, seeking legal advice can be confronting. “Depending on what type of legal matters people are dealing with, there can be a lot of emotion there,” she said. With this in mind, Kristy aims to make her legal practice, Yarra Ranges Lawyers, a relaxed place to be. “There are a lot of reasons why people might come to us, but we try to make it as easy for them as we can. We’re really focused on the relationships and trying to minimise the stress and the legal costs as best we can.”

Kristy had been working in Mooroolbark for almost 25 years when she decided to branch out and start her own business. “I wanted to stay in the Mooroolbark area, having worked there so long and having built up relationships with businesses, the sporting community, and community groups. And my family has a longstanding connection with the Yarra Valley.”



Kristy and her partner Mark at the official launch of the business in 2016

Kristy was born in Launching Place, where her father’s family has been part of community life for generations, with Kristy’s great-grandmother having been the station mistress at the former Launching Place train station. At 16, Kristy began work experience at Methven Professionals Real Estate in Mooroolbark, and remained working there over the next six years, as she finished secondary school and gained her law degree. After qualifying as a lawyer, Kristy worked for Leddra Westmore & Co, which later became Beaumont Lawyers.

In order to eventually have increased flexibility and spend more time with her two young sons, Kristy started her own business in 2015, after having worked as a lawyer for more than ten years. In the beginning, as she built up the business with the support of her partner Mark and her family, it wasn’t always easy. “I wouldn’t have been able to do this without that support,” said Kristy.

The new business was named Yarra Ranges Lawyers, indicating Kristy’s goal to look after the needs of both Mooroolbark residents, where she has worked for so long, and the people of the rest of the Yarra Ranges, where she also has long-established relationships.

From small beginnings with just three staff, Yarra Ranges Lawyers is now a thriving practice with more than a dozen staff members, handling general legal matters such as business and commercial law, property, retirement planning, and wills and estates. By chance rather than design, the practice happens to have an all-female staff, which many customers find appealing. “It’s not the usual stuffy office environment—we’re all friendly and approachable and try to make the experience as comfortable as we can, especially for those who are dealing with difficult issues,” said Kristy.

Kristy fosters her relationships with the wider Mooroolbark community through her roles as the honorary solicitor for the Mooroolbark Bowls Club and secretary for the Mooroolbark Traders & Community Group.

Yarra Ranges Lawyers is open from 9-5 on weekdays, and to better serve the needs of every client, the practice can also arrange after-hours meetings or home visits. Kristy said she and her team understand the importance of something that was instilled in her by her mentors over the years: “We know the importance of client-focused relationships.”

Janet Van Dijk



PHOTO: JASON DICKSON

Creatures in the Park

After fierce storms wreaked havoc in Melbourne in June this year, Jason Dickson noticed that Park Drive Reserve, not far from his home in Mooroolbark, had taken a beating. “There were trees down and branches everywhere—it was a total mess,” Jason said.

When Jason contacted the council to discuss the condition of the reserve, he found that because of the extensive storm damage across the large Yarra Ranges shire, it might be as long as three months before the council would be able to remove the fallen trees and clean up the mess. Since he wasn’t working due to coronavirus restrictions, Jason decided to tackle the job himself. In fact, he had already been contributing to the upkeep of the reserve for a little while, spreading mulch and tidying up, in consultation with the council’s bushland team manager.

Jason, who is a panel beater by trade, has always been good with working with his hands—in fact, he started out his working life as a landscape gardener. As the reserve began to take shape, Jason saw the opportunity to add a creative touch to the area. “The reserve was looking dull and boring and hadn’t had much done in years to make it look more appealing and more usable,” he said.

Jason had taken up chainsaw carving and pyrographic wood burning—the art of burning a decorative design into wood with a heated metal point—as a hobby to help with the boredom during the 2020 lockdown. He set up a Facebook page, Timberland Signs and Designs, where he displays his custom signs and gift items that are available for purchase. He decided that the fitting place for some of his wood carvings, though, would be Park Drive Reserve. “I thought the kids would enjoy them,” said Jason, who has two children of his own.

So now, visitors to the reserve will find touches of whimsy around the park—an ant, a dragonfly, a puppy, or a wooden house suitable for a fairy or other tiny inhabitant.

Jason intends to keep maintaining the park, which is at the end of Wills Court in Mooroolbark. Now that it is no longer overgrown, he feels that other people may like to volunteer to help with its upkeep as well, as some have done over the years. “There’s a tyre swing that somebody put up, and cubby house platform in a pine tree,” said Jason.

Many local people know that Jason is the artist behind the work, as they often see him working in the reserve. “The input I’ve had from the local community has been amazing,” said Jason. Rita Thomas, who often walks her dog in the area, stopped to thank Jason for the tidying up he had done, and to congratulate him on the carvings. “They make me smile every time I see them,” said Rita.

Janet Van Dijk



WHY DO CHILDREN LIE?

We all know children who are amazing fabricators. We also know children who fib their way out of trouble. But is that all there is to the phenomenon? Is it just a matter of childish imagination and avoiding punishment?

Research tells us how children master the techniques used when lying, and has shown that things aren't quite the way we often assume, challenging our assumptions as to when and why children lie.

Most of us, parents or not, would guess that kids start lying to avoid the consequences of something they know or assume to be wrong. Just putting it that way confronts us with how complex a skill lying is.

Not only does it involve an awareness of guilt and its connection to punishment, but also the difference between truth and falsehood, and the difference between effective and ineffective falsehood.

So who provides children with the practice and instruction in lying (if anybody)? Do they work it out all by themselves? When and where does practice in getting it right take place? Well, in brief, we know that:

The smarter the child, the sooner, more likely, and better they are at employing deception.

- Most children are practising lying by the time they turn four.
- Children lie for all sorts of reasons, not just to avoid punishment.
- We—the parents—are the main educators in how to lie.
- Most parents aren't good at detecting their children's lies.
- Virtually all kids know when they are lying, and that it is the wrong thing to do.
- Children don't inevitably "grow out of" lying. In fact, they become more and more adept at it, continuing to develop the skill well into their teens.
- Children in an environment where lying is consistently punished don't tell fewer lies—in fact, they learn to lie sooner and more skilfully, to avoid getting caught.

Lying is indeed a more complicated skill than truth telling. To lie, a child must recognise the truth, think of a reasonable alternative, and sell the idea to another, usually an adult. So if your child is a good liar by age four—

Parents are the main educators in teaching children how to lie



some start as early as two or three—it's a kind of backhanded compliment, because it shows that the child is smart and intellectually advanced. The advantage these children have is that their parents assume they're too young to understand what lying is, or to realise that it's wrong.

By four

Observational studies found that four year olds are lying about every two hours. At six they're lying about every hour and a half—and not just to avoid getting trouble; they've worked out more reasons to lie. They lie to tease classmates, to brag to their peers, or to get into the good books of parents or other adults. It is part of a strategy of coping with more challenging social environments as they reach school age.

And parents?

Children don't just use lying as a strategy for coping with school. First and foremost, they practise on their parents. But if parents follow up closely, with punishment, it doesn't prevent lying. Instead, children become extra alert to the punishment and less aware of the impact of their lying on others. They are driven towards better lying to avoid the consequences.

Unwittingly, parents also encourage lying in their children, by example and instruction. Unwittingly, because most of us don't recognise many of our own lies, downplaying their significance by calling them "white lies"—like telling someone who's baked a special

cake it's terrific, when it is anything but. Or that a new hairstyle is stunning when you really think it's awful. Children hear not only the white lies, but also the candid comments in private.

Parents also teach their children to tell white lies, with lines like, "Don't you dare say anything about Aunt Flo's size!" So when the child instead says, "I really like your new dress, Auntie," (when in fact they don't), they are then praised and congratulated for being polite.

"Encouraged to tell so many white lies and hearing so many others, children get comfortable with being disingenuous. ... They learn that honesty only creates conflict, and dishonesty is often an easy way to avoid conflict. And while they don't confuse white-lie situations with lying to cover their misdeeds, they bring this emotional groundwork from one circumstance to the other. It becomes easier, psychologically, to lie to a parent."¹

Children quickly learn that honesty is not the best policy

Dobbing

Researchers have also spent a lot of time looking at kids playing. They noticed that when children report some wrong to an adult, nine times out of ten it is quite true. To adults it

often seems kids are always telling tales, but the researchers noted that they suffer wrong 14 times without asking for help, for each time that they do ask for help. So when we respond, "Don't tell tales!" or "Don't dob!" they soon learn that dobbing (truth-telling) is only done by little kids who don't know better. This is quite apart from the consequences they reap from their peers. Children quickly learn honesty is *not* the best policy.

¹ Bronson, P. (2008, February 8). Learning to Lie. *New York Magazine*.

Thus begins the art of withholding information from parents and other adults, which feeds into the teen years, when parents wonder why they are no longer privy to the details of their children's lives and relationships. This couples with the children's growing desire for independence and the desire to assert self autonomy. Again, interestingly, the research shows us this peaks at age 14-15, then tails off so that at 18 it is less strong than at 11.

Unfortunately, most parents handle this by taking a more permissive position, lessening the rules. The result? Teens read this as a sign their parents no longer care, that they aren't interested in parenting. The domineering, rule-enforcing parent is a rarity. But those few who are this way don't tend to provoke rebellion as one would expect. Instead, their teens turn out to be submissive—and depressed. Parents who have a few rules, but explain and enforce them, have the best relationships and communication with their teens. Their kids lie to them the least of all.

This doesn't mean there aren't arguments. Teenagers will often test the boundaries to see if they're real. However, the researchers found that the resultant arguments gave them the opportunity to communicate truthfully with their parents. Teens saw this as healthy and not diminishing their respect for their parents. Parents, however, especially mums, often saw such arguments as negative—stressful and destructive. So it helps to see both sides of the fence!

What does work?

What then is the best way to cultivate honesty in our children? By honesty, we're not talking about a naivety characterised by social blunders and unawareness of the way others seek to manipulate and take advantage by playing with the truth. Rather we are talking about humility, readiness to admit mistakes, and the ability to give and receive confidences: to be a person whose word is good.

One researcher set up a situation that gave young children both an opportunity and an incentive to lie. For some children, the researcher read a story before conducting the experiment. She read some of the children *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*, which ends with the boy and the sheep being eaten because he kept telling lies. For others she read *George Washington and the Cherry Tree*, which ends, after George confesses to chopping the tree down, with his father telling him he would

rather have lost a thousand cherry trees than hear him tell a lie.

A survey of adults showed that 75% thought the first story would be more effective in reducing lying. In fact, the children who had that story read to them lied a bit more than the average. On the other hand, the George Washington story reduced lying by 43%. Using positive examples proved to be far more effective than the threat of punishment—so parents need to consciously teach young children the value of honesty as well as declaring that lying is wrong.

We also need to be alert to situations where we set children up for lying. Po Bronson, in his article on the subject, related how his young son came home from school having learned to say "I don't care" to just about everything. When his father asked if he'd learned that

phrase from someone at school, his son hesitated. Po realised he had set his son up to either lie to his dad or do in a friend. He quickly reassured him that if he had picked it up at school, he didn't have to say who'd taught him. His son admitted he'd heard it at school, gave his dad a hug, and no longer repeated the phrase.

On the other hand, Po found himself doing the opposite with his little daughter. He noticed she'd scribbled on the table with her marker, so he asked her if she'd done it—in a voice that indicated trouble (realising too late that his disapproving tone might have been counterproductive). "No, I didn't," the three year old replied.

Her first lie!

Terry Villiers

Parents need to consciously teach young children the value of honesty



Reference:

Much of the information for this article was drawn from "Why Kids Lie", by Po Bronson © with additional reporting by Ashley Merryman, which appeared in the Weekend Australian Magazine May 3-4, 2008. It previously appeared in New York Magazine. The original can be accessed at nymag.com/news/features/43893/.

Further reading:

Bronson, P., & Merryman, A. (2011). *NatureShock: New Thinking About Children* (1st ed.). Van Haren Publishing.

Interrupted—Again!

Have you ever been interrupted? We all have! Kids especially have a gift for knowing the worst time to burst in the door and throw off the whole trajectory. Every one of us has some story of the kid who yelled in the middle of an audience or loudly announced his bathroom needs during a quiet moment.

Mark 7 records one of the oddest interactions Jesus has—and it's the story of an interruption. Jesus had just had a fiery confrontation with the Pharisees not long after John the Baptist was executed. He was also organising His mission, going through Israel and from there out to the world. At this point, He was laying low for a little while, as Mark says: "He entered a house there where He didn't think He would be found, but He couldn't escape notice."

Even before He can find some respite, a worried mum interrupts Him. A Greek Syro-Phoenician woman begs Him to heal her daughter—right at that moment when He's trying to not draw attention to Himself. He then enters into a verbal exchange with her that may leave us scratching our heads:

"She asked Him to cure her daughter. He said, 'Stand in line and take your turn. The children get fed first. If there's any left over, the dogs get it.' She said, 'Of course, Master. But don't dogs under the table get scraps dropped by the children?'"

Huh?! On the surface it looks like Jesus is insulting this woman, even likening her to a "dog"—a common slur for Gentile people. Perhaps it could be understandable if He were upset with her interruption.

But let's look at it more closely. The word He reportedly uses is actually more a gentle term of affection like "puppy." He's hinting toward a change, a softening of the division between people. Look again and you can see, by her sharp response, that she's engaging with this line of thought, responding to Him.

True, He wants to lay low at that moment. True, He is focused on addressing the people of Israel first to fulfil His role and message. But this determined, headstrong woman in need has captured His heart at that moment.



PHOTO: JENNY/ADAM PRODUCTIONS

"Jesus was impressed. 'You're right! On your way! Your daughter is no longer disturbed. The ...affliction is gone.'"

This is Jesus, interrupted. But the great theme of this particular story of interruption is generosity—God's overflowing love that doesn't always go "according to plan."

How are we being interrupted today? Are the kids ruining our concentration? Is a difficult person calling us outside "office hours"? These moments are often uncomfortable and never predictable, but they are special moments and Jesus is there in them. Perhaps they are part of the plot of your life with Him.

Greg Williams

Adapted from "Speaking of Life," a public resource video on the Grace Communion International (GCI) website (gci.org/videos/media-speaking-of-life/). This magazine is sponsored by Mooroolbark Christian Fellowship, a congregation of GCI. If you would like more information or pastoral support, our local congregational contact is Matthew Gudze on (03) 9737 0126.

Loving Relationships

To love others fully, we must give of ourselves.

Our love can be a bit "thin" or half-hearted when we don't give part of ourself with the action. We could come home one day and casually toss a gift to our partner, or one of our children. However, both the giver and the receiver would get much more value from the gesture if the gift were to be wrapped, a card attached and given with eye contact that says, "I love you, I care about you, and I really want you to enjoy this gift I've chosen for you".

We all need to think about the best value love we can give—good value for us, best value for them! Our focus needs to be not only on our giving, but also on the way we give and the way it is received.

We all know that to give love at all can be a real effort for us at times. When things are going well, we can find it easy to think of others, but

when the going gets tough, the love we need to offer is not always there. The missing ingredient is not readily found within ourselves, but it is available through a connection to the source of real, endless love—the love that never fails. God enables us to love, even when we simply feel unable, of ourselves, to love any more. He loves us no matter how undeserving we may be. His love is unconditional. We can look to Him to offer that same love in our relationships. This is the love that only God can give and that He wants each of us to have, through Him. So "let us love one another, for love is of God", and "if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."¹

All we need to do is ask, because He wants to express His love through each of us.

Steve Steel



PHOTO: CANVA

¹ John 4:7,11 (NKJV)

The Mustard Tree

Op Shop and Café, 3/28 John Street Lilydale

It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of all the garden plants; it grows long branches and birds can make a nest in its shade.

Like the mustard seed in Mark 4:30-32, the Mustard Tree Op Shop and Café in Lilydale has grown from small beginnings to an expansive network of branches, connecting with and serving the people around it.

The Mustard Tree (TMT) is a ministry of Lilydale Baptist Church and is a way for the church to demonstrate God's love by providing for the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of those who visit the shop. "The branches of the mustard tree are very symbolic—they're all the sub-ministries that grow from the mustard tree, reaching out into the community," said Lisa Vincent, who oversees operations at The Mustard Tree.

Even if they are unaware of the purpose behind The Mustard Tree, customers know that they have entered a unique place as soon as they step through the door. The café has a fun 1950s vibe, with Laminex tables and chrome and vinyl chairs, and a vintage-inspired black and white chequered floor. The retro atmosphere is underscored by the 'golden oldies' background music and the selection of quirky vintage items on display in the shop.

The café is open every weekday, with a changing menu according to season, and gives customers a chance to enjoy a coffee or a light meal before or after browsing through the items for sale.

Most of the proceeds from the café and shop go into feeding the community, through The Mustard Tree's main ministry, the foodbank, which is open by appointment during shop hours Monday to Friday. "Supporting our foodbank operation was the initial reason for the café, as well as to create a community space for service," said Lisa. "If someone is in need of emergency food relief, they can call us, and we will provide their household with three or four days of food." While the op shop and café had to close during recent lockdowns, the food bank was able to remain open, which was especially important at a time when many were finding things tough.

The café and op shop are now open and returning to their usual operations, but some of the Mustard Tree's outreach programs are still getting back up to speed, as staff work out how to incorporate government requirements and deal with a shortage of volunteers. Prior to disruptions caused by the pandemic, TMT proceeds supported services such as free haircuts, computer courses, creative workshops, and a weekly "community table"—a

free two-course hot meal for people who need a meal, or who are lonely and looking for connection with others. Mustard Tree staff are hoping that it won't be too long before all the programs are operating as they once did.

The op shop is a treasure trove for bargain hunters, with many customers describing it as their all-time favourite op shop. Prices are the cheapest around, according to Lisa. "We've tried to keep it at a grass-roots level to keep those items affordable for low-income earners in the community."

In keeping with its quirky vibe and in order to make the best use of all donations, TMT recycles or upcycles many of the donations it receives for the op shop. If donated items are unsuitable for sale in their current condition, the team at TMT creatively repurposes them, turning them into fun, one-of-a-kind items such as planters, lamps, and furniture. "Our upcycled items are aimed at a different client," said Lisa. These unique pieces appeal to customers who seek out trendy or unusual finds in op shops, and they are sold at higher prices, bringing in extra revenue for the outreach programs. Valuable items that have been donated—for example vintage or collectable items—are also priced accordingly. "We keep them in the shop for a little while so that people can see them," Lisa said. "There's that 'ooh, ahh' moment—but if they don't sell, we move them online, where they sell really quickly."

"Initially we began the upcycling for environmental reasons, trying to think of ways to re-use, repurpose, and recycle, to avoid too many things being thrown away," said Lisa. "But we also want to show a creative flair—and that's where Kathy comes in."

Kathy Vincent (no relation to Lisa) is TMT's Community and Creative Programs Coordinator. In that role, she oversees the upcycling projects, the foodbank department, and creative workshops held for customers or for those volunteering in the shop. She also provides pastoral care to TMT staff and volunteers.

There are dozens of Mustard Tree volunteers,



Lisa at the front counter of The Mustard Tree, underneath a light fixture made from world globes

ranging in age from 15 to 90, filling a variety of roles to support the small core of regular staff. Unfortunately, the personal situation of many volunteers has changed since the beginning of the pandemic, leading to the loss of almost half of the volunteer workforce. "We are really struggling for volunteers at the moment, so much so that we might have to look at reducing opening hours or closing for an extra day," said Lisa. "But we've stepped out in faith and we're opening the doors as usual."

Lisa knows that volunteers, like the customers, come to The Mustard Tree for all sorts of reasons. "For some of them it's about passing the time; for some of them it's about supporting a ministry. Some of them come just because they're lonely. There are lots and lots of people coming for lots of different reasons."

And because people flock to the Mustard Tree, the outreach programs continue, bringing hope and comfort to those who need it. "I arrived back in Australia almost destitute," said one man who received assistance. "Without their help I don't think I would have survived. May the Lord bless all the staff that work there."

The Mustard Tree is open from 10 am-3 pm Monday to Friday, and 10 am-1 pm Saturday, with the café open until 2:30 pm on weekdays. If you need emergency food assistance or would like to donate or volunteer, please phone 9735 3500 during shop hours, or check TMT's Facebook page:

facebook.com/mustardtree.opshop.



One of my daughters recently observed that many people had rediscovered some of the simple, yet profound joys in “ordinary life” during recent periods of COVID-19 lockdown.

As I chatted with Felix Tabone recently, I was struck by his cheerful gratitude and enjoyment of life and how it unfolded for him.

American author Robert J. Morgan’s description of happy people aptly describes Felix: “Cheerful people find joy in little things, splendour in the ordinary, elegance in the everyday, and gladness in the greatness and smallness of creation.”

I first met Felix at Mooroolbark Station, where he worked as one of the station assistants. During the decade between 2010 and 2020, I sometimes visited the station in the early mornings—distributing the latest edition of this magazine, or, straddled by a sandwich board, spruiking our community festival, Celebrate Mooroolbark.

As I waited to sign in before moving on to the platform, I enjoyed watching Felix engage with commuters. Whether providing information, selling tickets, or sorting out some difficulty, Felix displayed his trademark steady geniality,



Lilydale Station and level crossing, where Felix worked in the early days of his career



Felix on the platform as the last train departed the old Mooroolbark Station in July

Joy in the Ordinary

affability, warmth and sense of humour. When I reached the front of the queue, Felix would cock his head to one side, grin, and listen to my request. His response would inevitably be humorous.

Felix’s kindness has left a lasting impression on travellers to and from Mooroolbark, with passengers describing him as friendly and helpful, “the face of Mooroolbark station” and “a true gentleman.”¹

Felix was born in Malta, where his family had lived—and still lives—for generations. In the early 1950s, Felix’s father left the Zabbar region of Malta, and migrated to Australia. His wife and children—toddler Emmanuel and baby Felix—later followed, travelling on the passenger ship Fairsea, with the family reuniting in Melbourne.

As they settled into life in Australia, Felix’s father worked very hard, as a builder’s labourer, farm labourer, and on the railway gangs. The family initially lived in Housing Commission



Felix as a baby with his mother and brother Emmanuel

houses in Preston and Collingwood. Felix remembers that life was hard, but good.

In 1956, two years after their arrival in Melbourne, the family bought a farm at Wandin, and Felix remembers the hard work of clearing land and preparing it for cropping, barrowing cement, carting weatherboards. All that work

went into establishing the family farm, where Felix lived until he was married. The family experienced natural disasters—Felix remembers evacuating from bushfires when he was six or seven years old, and there were also floods. During heavy flooding the strawberry patch began to look like a beaver dam due to the accumulation of flood-borne debris, but the floods never quite reached the house.

Felix’s brother Emmanuel, on the recommendation of his Uncle John, joined the railways in 1970, and Felix followed a year later. His first position, after an initial fortnight at Glenferrie, was as a station assistant at Lilydale Station, and he worked on the Lilydale line—at Croydon, Mooroolbark and Lilydale stations—for the rest of his career.

When Felix first began working, his father would sometimes drop him off at the station: at other times, he’d walk the several kilometres to work. Years later he bought himself a bicycle, and some years later still, he progressed to a step-through scooter. One morning as he rode

¹ facebook.com/LilydaleLeader/posts/4306172619473723



Felix has twice returned to his birthplace of Malta, where he enjoyed reuniting with relatives.

to work in the wee hours, the scooter flipped. As Felix hit the road surface, his helmet flew off and his head bounced against the hard bitumen. However, Felix took it in stride. He remembers thinking, "I'd better get off the road", and he continued on to work, where colleagues bandaged his head and at 4 a.m. Felix pronounced himself ready to "swing gates".

Felix told me he was lucky to escape serious injury while working in the shunting yards at Lilydale. On one occasion a bag of briquettes fell on his head from a truck, and in another accident, he slipped and fell into an open pit. And there were extra challenges in keeping the trains running during freak weather events—hailstorms, driving rain, and strong winds uprooting trees.

Sometimes, Felix said, conditions were so bad he couldn't see more than a metre in front of him. "Once we were moving a train to the yards during an electrical storm, and lightning hit the wires overhead. I watched the sparkles run down the wires and hit the train. No one was hurt, but we had to tow it away to be repaired."²

Felix has very fond memories of his 50-year career at the railways, which concluded with his retirement as a station officer earlier this year, soon after the final train left the former, historic and iconic Mooroolbark station. He enjoyed spending time with his workmates over the years—the collegial atmosphere as stories, humour and lives were shared. Together they celebrated birthday meals and



At the Wandin farm—Felix's mother, and his father (on the left) harvesting strawberries with his cousin Salvatore

took part in regular railway activities: Christmas celebrations, fishing trips, and golf days.

Felix also enjoyed his relationship with the commuters, even when the usual routine was disrupted. Occasionally he'd have to respond to people who'd had a drink or two too many. If they were agitated or aggressive, he'd work with them to calm them down: "You don't need this; no-one wants to get hurt..." At times he would buy them a soft drink and provide a safe place for them to rest or sleep for a while. Sometimes he administered basic first aid, and when necessary, he'd phone the police.

There were also occasions when Felix had to think and act very quickly. One time a passenger in her motorised scooter rolled off the platform onto the tracks. Responding rapidly, other commuters helped Felix lift the passenger back onto the platform to a safe place, and Felix was able to move the scooter off the tracks and inform Metro Trains that the track was all clear. He said, "She was very fortunate."

During Felix's career the railways went through various name changes. The Victorian Railways was re-branded as VicRail in 1974, with subsequent separate entities for country and suburban services. Suburban services were later run by franchised operators, with the current operator, Metro Trains Melbourne, operating the service since 2009.³

But many other things have changed, too. The original kerosene signal lamps required a lot of time-consuming maintenance. Some of the more distant signals were a one or two kilometre walk away, and all the lamps required cleaning and refuelling every two days. They were eventually replaced by electric lamps. Hand-operated road crossing gates gave way to boom gates.

In addition, mechanical, hand-operated track controls became automated. *The Lilydale and Yarra Valley Leader* reported Felix as saying, "Back then when we wanted to move a train from one track to another I'd have to go out and physically shunt the points with a lever. It was hard work, and took a bit of muscle, you had to be alert and responsible. These days we have automatic track control, which is much easier."⁴

As technology changed, Felix changed with it, learning to operate the updated equipment and becoming familiar with the Myki smart card ticketing system.

There have been other big changes for Felix since starting work with the railways at age 17. He was married in 1985, to his Filipina wife Alexis. Alexis and Felix had corresponded for two years before he travelled to the Philippines to meet her, and they were married in Manila. In 1986 the couple bought their home in Lilydale, where Felix was able to develop his much-loved garden. It's hard to curb his enthusiasm when he talks about the plants he grows—greens, asparagus, artichokes, prickly pear, pomegranate, feijoas, oranges, vegies of all kinds.

Retirement offers Felix more time to enjoy his home and garden. This cheerful man has relished and savoured his life as it unfolded. He said, "I've always loved life, loved walks, loved my work, loved people, and enjoyed my garden!"

Felix, thank you for sharing your life with the commuters of Mooroolbark, Croydon and Lilydale. Thanks for your cheery friendliness, and for the lesson your life illustrates—the sustained gratitude and contentment we can experience when we enjoy the simple, yet profound joy of "ordinary life."

May you, Alexis, and your garden continue to thrive!

Randall Bourchier



² lilydale.mailcommunity.com.au/2021/08/06/felixs-last-goodbye-to-mooroolbark/

³ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victorian_Railways

⁴ facebook.com/LilydaleLeader/posts/4306172619473723



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Cire Community Hubs A Place to Learn, Connect and Belong

When the global pandemic hit, many technophobes were plunged headlong into the worldwide web. From family Zoom catchups to online grocery orders and telehealth appointments, most of us are now conducting much of our business, both social and professional, over the internet. But for many older Australians, this shift to virtual interactions has been too much, too soon.

With this in mind, not-for-profit organisation Cire Community Hubs (under the auspices of Cire Services¹) set up information sessions to help people aged 50 or over gain more skills and confidence when using communication technology. The sessions were held toward the end of Melbourne's lockdown, and were therefore—somewhat ironically—conducted online, using teleconferencing software Zoom. For those participants who needed it, Cire provided assistance with connecting using Zoom. The sessions, held in the form of bingo and trivia games and offering prizes, taught participants skills such as how to create a MyGov account and link services to it, and how to set up and safely use social media accounts. There was also discussion about scam communications, and participants were taught how to block phone numbers and delete text messages.

“The feedback has all been really positive,” said Amanda Stokes, customer service officer at Cire's Chirnside Park Community Hub, who facilitated the online sessions. Remote communication was a convenient option when meeting in person wasn't possible, but when lockdown was over, Amanda was happy to see the increased foot traffic at the physical hubs, located at Chirnside Park and Yarra Junction. Through these hubs, Cire (pronounced “Siri”, like Apple Inc's virtual assistant) offers a wide range of free or low-cost services and activities for people of all ages. Amanda and her counterpart Nicole, at the Yarra Junction Community Hub, have a diverse role which includes greeting visitors to the hub. “We are the first faces that people see when they come in; we're the ones they talk to, and it's really important for us to be involved with our locals to find out what they need,” said Amanda. She summed up her position at the hub in simple terms: “My role is to make sure that everyone who steps into the hub is stepping into somewhere they feel they belong.”

The Cire hubs are somewhere for community members to connect: to meet and engage with each other, and gain support from their peers. “A lot of people come to the hub just to participate in those age-old social activities like getting together for a coffee—some of them come to the hub three or four times a week to socialise,” Amanda said. “It's like talking over the back fence.”

The hub also offers an extensive range of services, education courses,

and programs. For children, there are school holiday programs, dance classes, and a council-run story time program. Each week, a LEGO and video game afternoon called Level Up is held for children aged 8-13. Level Up is run by a qualified youth worker, with the help of volunteers.

Among the programs for adults, there is a regular Fit 4 Life exercise program for those aged over 55, and a seniors Be Connected drop-in space.² For a small fee, the weekly Tech Hub program allows people to bring in their phones and other tech devices for help. “It's fantastic for those who are already part of technological world but need a bit of help,” said Amanda. “Tech Hub can help with things like computer errors, doing a virus scan, help with checking your emails, or downloading something onto your phone. We've even had people get help with setting up dating profiles.”

Cire is now urgently looking for business sponsorship to enable some of the programs to keep running, particularly the 2022 Fit 4 Life program. Participants are charged a nominal fee for each session, but with class numbers lowered due to COVID-19 restrictions, the fees don't cover the cost of hiring a clinical exercise physiologist who specialises in group-based training for older people. Amanda is disappointed that funding has run out for the program this term. “It's not only fantastic for physical strength but also for mental health,” she said.

The hub also has a range of community welfare programs, assisted by the generous support of the wider community. “We have a lot of people who donate to our community pantry, and to our clothing drives,” said Amanda. “We also rely on hiring out our spaces to local businesses and to the community for private functions. All of that money goes back into the community—to our community lunches, into our food hampers and pantry items, and into supporting the community through our free programs.”

Amanda, who describes herself as an extrovert, loves the hub and what it offers for the community. “I get my energy from being at the hub, from seeing the crafters every week, seeing the little ballerinas come through in their tutus, and connecting with people in our community,” she said. “It's a safe space for people to come and spend time, or get assistance if they need to, and to feel confident that there's a place they can rely on.”

Janet Van Dijk

Chirnside Park Community Hub is located at 33 Kimberley Drive, Chirnside and is open weekdays from 9 am to 5 pm. For more information: cire.org.au/chirnside-park-community-hub.

¹ Cire Community Hubs are just one branch of Cire Services, which is one of the largest Adult and Community Education (ACE) and not-for-profit organisations in eastern Melbourne. Cire Services provides a wide range of educational programs for all ages, including accredited training courses, a three-campus community school for students in Years 5 to 12, early learning centres, playgroups, preschools, vacation care, Outside School Hours Care, and First Impressions Clothing Exchange (FICE). FICE provides training and good quality pre-loved clothing to women who are seeking to re-enter the workforce, and now operates from two locations, the original store in Mooroolbark's Terrace Shopping Centre, and a new store at Yarra Junction. www.cire.org.au

² beconnected.esafety.gov.au



Japara Neighbourhood House, the recipient of one of the grants, is currently running its term 4 program of classes, social groups and events. japarahouse.com.au



Council Grants Provide Funding for Community Initiatives

Japara Neighbourhood House is just one of 68 projects to receive funding through the Yarra Ranges Council's 2022 Grants for Community program. Using the funding, Japara Neighbourhood House will run a community workshop to assist mobility scooter or powered wheelchair users to practice skills and develop confidence in navigating through our community's pathways.

Other projects funded by the grants include

- a range of carer workshops hosted by Mount Evelyn Community House, including positive mental health, self-care, resilience and leisure workshops.
- a series of cultural awareness and mental health initiatives being run by the Belgrave South Junior Football Club for the club and the wider community.
- a LGBTIQ+ peer-focused support group for young people in the Yarra Ranges, run by the Rotary Club of Upper Yarra.
- a mural to celebrate the centenary of the Belgrave CFA, which will occur in 2023.
- funding for several exhibitions, workshops and art events, such as exhibitions at Burrinja, the Yarra Valley Open Studios and sessions at the Dandenong Ranges Music Council.
- support for festivals including the Warburton Film Festival, the Lantern and Light International Children's Film Festival, the Blacksmiths and Artisans Festival, the Yarra Ranges Downhill Festival, the Hills Regrowth Festival, River Folk Festival and Selbyfest, among others.

Ryrie Ward Councillor, Fiona McAllister, congratulated the 2022 grant recipients.

"Every year, our Grants for Community program encourages, supports and sustains cultural, social and community projects," said Cr McAllister. "This year, our teams sought to inspire creative and innovative ways for our community to adapt to the challenges of COVID-19 and respond to the impacts of the June storms."

The annual grants program provides almost \$500,000 in funding for festivals, events and community projects. Local not-for-profit community groups and artists may apply for funding of up to \$10,000, for projects across three key focus areas:

- community development
- arts and heritage development
- festivals and events

"Community projects provide countless opportunities for connection between our residents, groups and visitors; they give us a chance to enjoy world-class art, to dive deeper on issues or to become more resilient together. Arguably, there's no time in recent memory where that's been more crucial," said Cr McAllister. "Supporting these projects through grants gives groups certainty that they can bring their ideas to life and have support and guidance from council along the way."

Yarra Ranges Council also provides funding of up to \$1000 for projects run by not-for-profit business associations and community groups through its monthly Small Grants Program.

For more information about the council's grants programs—including a full list of 2022 funded Grants for Community projects—visit yarraranges.vic.gov.au/grants.

Yarra Ranges Council

Summer Culture Tracks

This summer, the council's arts program gives residents and visitors to the Yarra Ranges the opportunity to enjoy some diverse creative experiences, including:

Art Quilt Australia 2021

Great news—after two lockdowns we can finally open our Yarra Ranges Regional Museum doors and welcome you in to see Art Quilt Australia 2021. Ozquilt Network's biennial juried exhibition features the very best in art quilts from Australia, New Zealand and worldwide. Returning to Yarra Ranges for the third time, this exhibition showcases 25 extraordinary pieces created by incredibly skilful artists who are at the forefront of textile art. This collection of bold, intricate and colourful art quilts combines modern designs and traditional methods to create exquisite landscapes and abstract imaginings. The exhibition includes the winners of Ozquilt Network's Award for Excellence and the acquisitive Expressions: The Wool Quilt Prize. This free exhibition is presented in conjunction with Ozquilt Network Inc and the National Wool Museum, and we have extended the closing date until 22 February 2022.



'Absurd Birds' (detail) by Zara Zannettino

Authority Exhibition

Authority, an exhibition by Oliver Gooding, displays a variety of works surrounding the connotations and figures that relate to the word 'authority' in some way. Gooding has created the series of work on a plethora of different mediums in the vein of rule-breaker Jean-Michel Basquiat. Following a week of working in a strict design job and degree, Gooding finds that art acts as his creative outlet by experimenting without the obligation of rules or other criteria. For this exhibition, Oliver portrays a more strongly developed style and direction than the previous year's COVID-19 cancelled exhibition. The free exhibition runs until 6 February at Arts Centre, Warburton.

Yarra Ranges Council

Community Events Calendar

First Sunday of each month	Craft and Produce Market: 9-2 pm Bellbird Park, Swansea Road, next to Lillydale Lake. Rotary Club of Lilydale. All proceeds to local and overseas projects. Contact Rotary Club Lilydale: 0423 558 833.
Monday evenings March to November	Scottish Country Dancing: Mondays 8:00 pm (except public holidays). Beginners and experienced. Minimal charges. Croydon Senior Citizens Hall, cnr Mt Dandenong Rd & Civic Square. 9725 9074.
Second Monday of each month	Mooroolbark Country Women's Association: 1 pm at St Margaret's Uniting Church, Hull Road. New members always welcome. Contact Helen Linnie: 9726 0477.
Tuesdays & Thursdays	Mooroolbark Men's Shed: 9 am–2 pm. Cnr Ellen Road & Croydonale Drive, Mooroolbark. For more information please contact President John Lowry on 9726 9970 or 0419 366 939.
Tuesdays	Home League: 10:00 am–11:30 am. A fun, inspiring and educational time where women fellowship with other women. Salvation Army, 305 Manchester Rd, Chirnside Park. Enquiries 9727 4777
Tuesdays - Thursdays during school term	GymbarOO: Formative Sensory Perceptual Motor Program for babies, toddlers, and pre-schoolers. Mooroolbark Community Centre. More info: mooroolbark@gymbaroo.com.au or Facebook.
Monday mornings Wednesday evenings	Free English Classes: at St Peter Julian's Church, 240 Hull Road, Mooroolbark. Call Jan Reilly on 0414 763 801 for bookings.
Thursdays during school term	Music for Kids: 0-5 years. St Margaret's Uniting Church hall. 9:45 am. Morning tea and playtime included. \$10 per session per family. Contact Nancy on 0413 389 441.
Thursday evenings each week	Maroondah TOWN Club: (Take Off Weight Naturally). Weekly, starting at 6:30 pm. St Margaret's Uniting Church. Hull Road. For more information call Kaye: 0414 984 062.
Friday nights during school term	Fridays@Kids Domain: Activities for primary school age kids. 4-6 pm. Oxley College stadium. Details: phone 9726 8111 or lmc.org.au
Every second Friday	People's Pantry: Three-course takeaway meal for the homeless and lonely, hosted by Mooroolbark Christian Fellowship. 6-6:20 pm at St Margaret's Uniting Church, Hull Rd. Contact Barbara: 0417 381 542.
Thursday 9 December	Santa: 6-7 pm. Santa will be in Hookey Park for you to take your own Santa photos. BYO picnic and make an evening of it. For more information: Mooroolbark Community Facebook page.
11 December 8 January 12 February	Urban Harvest: Backyard fruit and vegetable growers—swap your excess produce. Red Earth Community Park, second Saturday each month, 10-11:30 am. Enquiries: Claire Coutts, 0425 700 280
December	Community Carols by Candlelight: Unfortunately, the event won't be going ahead this year, but we are looking forward to December 2022.
25 December	Christmas Worship Service: 10 am St Margaret's Uniting Church, Hull Road, Mooroolbark.
2022	
6 February	Blessing of the lunchboxes: Our 10 am service will include this special way to prepare for the start of the school year for students and teachers. St Margaret's Uniting Church, Hull Road.
17 February to 5 March	A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder: An Edwardian style, operatic farce. Evening and matinee shows. Lilydale Athenaeum Theatre Company. Tickets and info: 9735 1777 or lilydaleatc.com.
19 – 20 March	Celebrate Mooroolbark Festival: We can't wait to reconnect with our community—follow us on Instagram for updates! For full program visit our website: celebratemooroolbark.com.

Our Community Events Calendar offers a free service to local clubs and organisations.
To include entries for your group's community events in future issues please contact
Janet Van Dijk on 0407 110 051 or email calendar@livingtoday.org.au

Note: Living Today is distributed quarterly—in the first week of March, June, September and December. Calendar entries need to be submitted one month prior to the distribution date.

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LIVING TODAY in Mooroolbark



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Like to contribute?

If you have a good news story about people
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to editor@livingtoday.org.au

MISSION STATEMENT

To contribute towards and to help to foster
a **growing community spirit** within our
neighbourhood.

We seek to achieve this by:

- highlighting the many positives within our community
- encouraging partnership in community initiatives
- contributing to the process of identifying and addressing community needs and concerns

OUR SPONSORS

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