

**Girls are strong.**

A classic children's cake receives a modern makeover.

**PAGE 6**

**Studies in impermanence.**

Learn how a death doula can assist you with living.

**PAGE 36**

**Blame Bridget Jones.**

Why dorky Christmas jumpers are everywhere again.

**PAGE 45**

**Electrifying flora & fauna.**

Artist Aidan Weichard uses bold colour to bring canvas to life.

**PAGE 48**

# Gippslandia®

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*Summer 2019 — Issue 13*

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## Reason to celebrate.

There has always been plenty to cheer about here.

**PAGE 25**

# GIPPS Central Wonder LAND

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# GIPPS wonder LAND

## Contents

### FEATURES

- 4 Party poppers or party pooper?
- 6 From a *Flicker* to a flame?
- 13 Nom nom.
- 16 Water, stories.
- 19 \*Film stars.
- 21 You've got to hear this!
- 23 Joy, and the thousand other emotions you feel when spending time with family.
- 43 Christmas class.
- 45 High on colour.

### DEPARTMENTS

- 4 **EDITORIAL**  
Wahoo!
- 9 **LIST**  
A Festivus for the rest of us.
- 10 **COMMUNITY**  
The Art of Rehabilitation.
- 15 **REVIEW**  
Welcoming more people around the table.
- 28 **FASHION**  
Heart inked into your sleeve.
- 31 **FOOD**  
Our 'Coota Christmas.
- 32 **PEOPLE**  
Robyn Bull.
- 34 Nigel Beck.
- 36 Annie Whitlocke.
- 39 **SPORT**  
Celebrate the process.
- 41 **OH, FOR ARTS SAKE**  
Lumping it.
- 44 **HOME**  
Going natural.
- 46 **EVENTS**  
Meeniyar Marty Gras: Celebrating rural diversity.
- 61 **GIPPSLAND PANTHER**  
Resurgence.
- 62 **PUBLISHER'S COMMENT**  
Relax.

## Credits

**GIPPSLANDIA**  
PO Box 1431  
Traralgon VIC 3844  
info@gippslandia.com.au  
www.gippslandia.com.au  
instagram: @gippslandia  
facebook.com/gippslandia

**CO-FOUNDERS**  
John Calabro, Michael Duncan & Tim Leeson

**PUBLISHER**  
John Calabro / [jc@gippslandia.com.au](mailto:jc@gippslandia.com.au)

**GENERAL MANAGER**  
Michael Duncan / [md@gippslandia.com.au](mailto:md@gippslandia.com.au)

**EDITOR**  
Tim Leeson / [tl@gippslandia.com.au](mailto:tl@gippslandia.com.au)

**EDITORIAL ASSISTANT**  
Asheda Weekes / [aw@gippslandia.com.au](mailto:aw@gippslandia.com.au)

**DESIGN**  
The View From Here / [tvfh.com.au](http://tvfh.com.au)

**PROOFREADER**  
Rebecca Fletcher

**GIPPSLANDIA IS A PROJECT BY THE VIEW FROM HERE & FRIENDS**  
John Calabro, Michael Duncan, Shane Gavin, Si Billam, Andrew Northover, Georgia Suckling, Rachel Smith, Tim Leeson, Brian Vella and Asheda Weekes.

**CONTRIBUTORS**  
Kate Adkins, Bonnie Pix & Flix, Karen Casey, Morgane Cazaubon of Petite Visuals, Ian Christensen, Mim Cook, Samantha Georgiadis, Louise Hill-Coleman, Lynda Hoare, Phoebe Honey, Andrea Kinsmith, Ron Lancaster, Andrea Lane, Emma Livesey, Brenton Marriott, Rebecca McEwan, Andrew McEwen, Jane McGuinness, Gerald Molphy, Lauren Murphy Photography, PollyannaR, Michelle Prezioso, Phoebe Rich,

Jen Sheridan, Eda Sofia C.B, Jess Speteri, Marty Thomas, Bec Vandyk and Aidan Weichard.

**COVER IMAGERY**  
This, our 13th issue officially marks Gippslandia's 3rd Birthday! To celebrate this milestone, we're honing in on the theme of Celebrations itself! Our anniversary cover features photographer Lauren Murphy's hugely enjoyable exploration of knitted Christmas jumpers, backed by an explosion of celebratory colour from local artist Aidan Weichard. Hip hip, hooray Gippsland!

Lauren Murphy Photography (inner photo)  
Aidan Weichard (outer photo)

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## Thanks to Gippslandia's Premier Partners

Phew! Bringing a newspaper to life is hard work.

Here we'd like to make special mention of a group of local businesses that support *Gippslandia*, businesses that similarly believe in the value of sharing real optimistic tales from our great region. To everyone listed — many thanks for your ongoing support of *Gippslandia*.

We encourage all our readers to support them in return and give them a proper pat on the back for getting behind our cause.



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### Millar | Merrigan

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2/126 Merrindale Drive  
Croydon & 156 Commercial Road, Morwell  
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03 5956 7200  
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16 Hotham Street Traralgon  
03 5175 7800  
[wgcm.vic.gov.au](http://wgcm.vic.gov.au)

# Wahoo!

TEXT BY TIM LEESON

## “I think I should head into the bush.”

It definitely didn't sound like a bad way for him to commemorate his upcoming 40th birthday, spending a handful of days relishing in the tranquility of the South Gippsland wilderness. There'd be moments of circumspection, some future-gazing and maybe a bit weirdness — depending on how far he wanted to push his birthday escape.

Overall, I was behind the idea. Stripping back some of modernity's comforts to celebrate 40 laps around the sun was a cool ritual to acknowledge the milestone.

The conversation also triggered recollections of another recent chat, this time with a mate who wanted to do something different to acknowledge his son becoming a teenager. We discussed the many rites that he'd gone through as a young man that weren't available to his son. This wasn't necessarily entirely negative though, as several of the past rituals involved excessive booze consumption and promoted the wrong types of behaviour from our young men. Modern rituals evolve too.

(One ancient ritual that popped up in researching this edition was male circumcision, an act that features in several major religions. It's believed to have begun around 15,000 years ago. Now,

who was the clever person to first go, “Hey, how about we cut this bit of skin off our perfectly good genitalia, without any anaesthetic or proper antiseptic solution, and everything will be okay!?”. We humans are a wild bunch.)

Thankfully, all the celebrations presented in *Gippslandia* #13 keep their appendages on.

While singing 'Happy Birthday' with a punk Barbie, writer Mim Cook shares some of the challenges of modern children's birthday parties (p. 6-7). The Baw Baw Food Hub takes a moment to reflect on their team's achievements over the past five years (p. 16-17), while artist Rebecca McEwan enjoys the reflections on board the FLOAT artist residency on Lake Tyers (p. 19). We hear about the successes of new local filmmakers as they undertake the Latrobe Youth Film Festival (p. 21) and learn the tricks of hosting a large music and food shindig from Sounds of Summer director Kate Adkins (p. 23).

This edition, our People Department will hopefully trigger contemplation as we present stories of love, a life in music and death. We learn the history of the gaudy Christmas sweater (p. 45) and Emma Livesey shares a marvellous night celebrating inclusivity with the entire Meeniyan community (p. 46).

It's our birthday issue, and we've tried to stuff it to the brim for you.

In fact, a lot about *Gippslandia* has been jam-packed lately. We've featured on a national television program, local news, created our first cookbook (a 160-page, hardcover tome, no less) and launched our pop-up store, which is open for three weeks in the lead-up to Christmas. We've learnt a lot in filling our year with as many projects as we could handle (maybe too many?), and *Gippslandia* is better for it. As a not-for-profit, we've now strengthened our foundations to deliver improved community projects in 2020. Exciting times ahead.

As we've challenged ourselves in pursuing more opportunities, we're increasingly realising just how freakin' supportive the Gippslandian community really is. Legends.

To everyone that has helped us over the past six months — thank you! To all of you that have assisted this entire project in making it to three years — thank you! Research has shown that the vast majority of publications barely survive two-and-a-half years, yet here we are going strong. To our partners, supporters, team members, contributors, cheerleaders and readers — many thanks to you all.

Now that *Gippslandia*'s third birthday edition is wrapped up, I can embark on my own post-print ritual — sleep.

Have a wonderful and safe festive season, Tim



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# Party poppers or party pooper?



TEXT BY MIM COOK  
ILLUSTRATION BY PHOEBE RICH

## Throwing a kid's birthday party in 2019... Woooooo-man! It's rife with modern guilt.

—  
Can we start with the party bling? I love party poppers. Seriously, first you have the suspense and then that BANG! with their teeny-tiny streamers exploding out. Could you get any more fun?!

And then there are those ear-chortling party-blower 'ga-zings! You know the ones? Where you pour your breath into a plastic whistle and a sparkly blower bursts out the other end — whoooooop!

Balloons! Who doesn't have a fond memory of these malleable plastic joys? They come in any colour you want, too. Okay, okay. I'm very suddenly archaic. And, I get it, I love our planet too... **we are the generation that's between decadence and decay**... balloons kill birds and shit. How did party paraphernalia become so deadbeat all of a sudden? And how the hell do I throw a kid's party when I have to let go of novelty straws?

It's not just single-use plastic that's threatening our birthday institutions: it's the concept of gender, healthy eating and also our parental time constraints. When did I sleep last? When was the last moment I wasn't parenting or working?

For my own sixth birthday, in the late '80s, Mum organised a ballerina party. Everyone dressed up and I was allowed to wear nail polish for the first time. There was fairy floss and fairy bread, which was cut into love heart shapes. There was a delicate homemade ballerina cake with a Barbie Doll sticking out the top, waving like a queen to us little ballerinas as we excitedly bobbed on our toes around it. We played 'Put the ballet shoes on the ballerina' and danced to Tchaikovsky. There are lots of photos of Mum and Dad gazing at me lovingly. I was given the doll I'd wished for — it was wrapped beautifully with ribbons and bows. The birthday party was a hoot and everyone went home with a party bag full of loot.

For my son's sixth birthday, at the Paynesville foreshore, I ran out of time to make a cake and was going through this guilty 'my-kids-

eat-too-much-sugar' phase, so I bought half a watermelon and stuck candles in it. Two kids actually cried when they realised there was no cake. I was a single mum at the time, and the budget was tight. Also, we live in a time where we're reflecting on how much crap is in the world — why add to it?

I had worked a 5am breakfast radio shift beforehand. I admit to being a pretty shit parent this day, time-poor and indecisive. I hadn't yet gotten around to getting a birthday present yet. I couldn't think of anything Felix really needed, and had watched *War On Waste* recently. So... things were going badly... 'Mum guilt' was raging at an all-time high. Also, if I sat down, I started dozing off.

A kid asked when the games were starting and I said that they could use their imaginations and make up their own games. I'm pretty sure it was that very kid who secretly filled my bag with dirt and sticks. And when the kids realised there were no party bags... well, the party slid to a new all-time low. I even heard one kid say, "This isn't even a *real* birthday".

My son, Felix, has never forgiven me.

A child's birthday party says a lot about where a family is at and where we are as a society. They're an unwavering event in our calendars. They've never lost their importance. My three-year-old daughter, Dotti, has already learnt that saying, "Well, you can't come to my birthday party", is a powerful social tool in a child's world.

Let's revisit Dot's birthday next... It was the latest one, her third birthday... my ex's mother-in-law made the cake, and it was beautiful. It really was. It was an exact replica of the Barbie ballerina cake featured at my sixth birthday celebrations (it's from the 1980 *Women's Weekly* birthday cake cookbook). Luckily, my lovely former mother-in-law wasn't attending Dot's party because the following happened:

I was a tad worried about how pink and traditionally girly the cake was. I suggested to Felix and Dot that we could trim the doll's hair a touch and draw some patterns on her pink dress. Just to, like, jazz her up a bit.

But it got out of hand. The kids got so into making the girl look braver, that we kind of went too far. Her hair became short, spiked and green. Felix covered her arms in tattoos

that had slogans like, "Girls are strong" (my heart was glowing with pride).

This was all well and good, but after I left the kitchen for a moment, I returned to see that not only was our craft box tipped out all over the floor, but that the cake girl was naked with pins sticking out of her. Her face had scribbles on it. The actual pink cake had pipe cleaners coming out of it, and the whole effect was kind of echidna-esque and insane. It had gone from being a subtle feminist comment (perfect for a mums-from-playgroup and toddler audience) to a wild and unclear representation of the punk era. But it was too late. The party had started and we had to roll with it.

As I wanted Dot to be invited to other kids' birthday parties, I took the path of over-explaining the cake situation in a long, apologetic way to each individual at the party, one at a time, and came across as kind of manic.

So it seems apparent I haven't mastered the art of throwing a kid's birthday yet. Even though I grew up in a golden age of birthday perfection, thanks to the *Women's Weekly* and devil-may-care frivolity, this beautiful birthday past doesn't resonate in our current climate. Today, it appears that children's birthday parties can be a tangled ethical and social web that I may never navigate successfully.

If that's the case, may I present the following apology in print:

*Dear Felix and Dot,*

*I am most definitely sincerely sorry in advance for the shemozzling experiences I will almost certainly provide for you after each rotation around the sun. I hope that through the ups and downs of failed cakes and homemade birthday presents (when my only crafting talent is sticking googly eyes on things), you will know that I love you with every cell of my being at every age you are.*

*Love, Mum*



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# A Festivus for the rest of us.

TEXT BY GIPPSLANDIA

With another year drawing to a close, you'll likely begin receiving the odd query on 'What's on the cards for 2020?' or 'Do you have any New Year's resolutions?' Don't reply with a bland 'The usual', the non-committal 'We'll see', or the evasive 'I haven't

given it a second of thought'. Thanks to our list of global festivities below, you can respond with, 'In February, I'm off to dodge fireworks in Taiwan for Feng Pao'. Pause, then enjoy their startled reaction as they realise, damn, you're exciting!

## 1

### Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival

January 5 (Open for one month)  
Harbin, China

With the icy wilds of Siberia just next door, dropping average winter temperatures down to -17°C, you probably need a cold weather activity. The industrious and creative people in Harbin cut metre-thick blocks of ice out of the Songhua River to construct buildings and sculptures. Apparently, in 2019 the Ice and Snow World section of the festival took up over 600,000 square metres and included more than 100 global landmarks. It was made from 110,000 cubic metres of ice and 120,000 cubic metres of snow. Enough for snow angels for days!

## 2

### Feng Pao or Yanshuei Beehive Fireworks Festival

February, 15 days after the start of the Chinese Lunar New Year  
Yanshuei District, Taiwan

Ever wanted to stare down thousands of fireworks as they come flying at you? Then Feng Pao, one of the world's most dangerous festivals, is for you.

Apparently, in the late 1800s, a cholera epidemic had broken out in the area. It is said that to drive out the evil spirits and ward off the disease, survivors invited the spirit of the Chinese god of war. The god has a thing for firecrackers, so everyone fired off masses of them and the epidemic soon receded. The region has celebrated their gratitude ever since.

The main attractions are the so-called 'beehives' fireworks, essentially multiple bottle rocket launchers. Thousands of bottle rockets are arranged in rows atop an iron-and-wooden framework — a beehive full of gunpowder. When the contraption is ignited, rockets shoot out rapidly in all directions. Locals believe that being hit by a rocket is an indication of good luck in the year to come, and the greater the number of hits, the greater the luck. Get that protective gear on, you lucky fish.

## 3

### Nyepi

March 25–26  
Bali, Indonesia

A 'Day of Silence', Nyepi is a day reserved for self-reflection.

The normally bustling island of Bali becomes a ghost town as restrictions are placed on lighting fires (and lights, generally, must be kept low). There is no working, no entertainment or pleasure, no travelling and, for some, no talking or eating at all.

Although Nyepi is primarily a Hindu holiday, non-Hindu

residents and tourists must conform to the restrictions (and the traditional Pecalang police it). You are free to do as you wish inside the hotels, but no one is allowed onto the beaches or streets, and Bali's only airport remains closed for the day.

The day following Nyepi is Ngembak Geni, 'Relighting the Fire', and social activity picks up again quickly.

## 4

### Songkran

April 13  
Thailand (particularly Chiang Mai)

The term 'songkran' relates to movement in Sanskrit. The period that Thai people celebrate nationally is referred to as Songkran and happens when the sun moves from Pisces to Aries in the zodiac, signifying the solar new year in Southeast Asia.

Thai people perform water pouring on Buddha statues, and the young and elderly, as a traditional ritual on the Songkran holiday. It represents purification and the washing away of one's sins and bad luck. This has escalated into huge water battles, especially in the northern city of Chiang Mai, where the main traffic intersections and the region adjacent to the Old Town moat are filled with people of all ages going nuts with water pistols, water balloons and buckets.

## 5

### Hari Raya Aidilfitri

May 23–24  
Worldwide

*Hari Raya Aidilfitri* or *Eid al-Fitr*, 'The Festival of the breaking of the Fast', is a religious holiday celebrated by Muslims that marks the end of Ramadan. The joyful celebrations are loud, raucous, and — after a month of abstinence — well-deserved.

It's important that families celebrate the festival together. People tend to dress up in traditional attire, and then there is the food! In Malaysia, people invite friends and family to their home to enjoy traditional delicacies like the ketupat (rice dumpling cooked in palm leaf), rendang (meat stewed in spices) and dodol (sticky, soft, toffee-like sweet).

## 6

### São Paulo LGBTQ Pride Parade

June 14  
São Paulo, Brazil

Three-to-five million people join in the annual celebrations of the São Paulo parade every year, making it the Guinness World Record holder for the biggest pride parade in the world. It draws as many people, and frequently more than, the Rio Carnival.

It has consistently grown since its inception in 1997 where 2,000 people were involved, to cracking the one million people milestone in 2003, to the immense numbers now. Apparently, the influx of tourism generated by the parade brings in over \$60 million to the region. The city's coffers must be happy that the LGBTQ app Grindr declared the parade the best in the world.

## 7

### Paucartambo Festival

July 16  
Paucartambo, Peru

Initially, you may be out of breath due to the high altitude of the Andes, but as the vibrant Fiesta de la Virgen del Carmen (Our Lady of Mount Carmel) kicks into high gear, we feel the dazzling costumes, masks and dancing whirling around you will be leaving you breathless too.

Tradition has it that the roots of the festival stem from when a wealthy young woman, while on her way to Paucartambo to trade a silver dish, found a beautiful

(if bodiless) head that spoke to her once she'd placed it on the dish. Arriving in the town, people gathered around her and witnessed rays of light shining from the head, and henceforth it was honoured with prayer, incense and a wooden body for it to sit on.

A perfect reason for wearing elaborate masks and enjoying mouthwatering Peruvian feasts.

## 8

### La Tomatina

August 26  
Buñol, Spain

The La Tomatina legend begins with an angry music performer in 1945. The performer's mask fell off, triggering his tanty, which escalated in people throwing vegetables from a market stall at each other.

Some young people thought it was so much fun that they started throwing tomatoes again the next year. Even though they were eventually arrested, they managed to launch a tradition that has become the world's largest food fight, as around 40,000 people throw close to 150,000 kg of tomatoes at each other.

It's said that the citric acid in the tomatoes leads to the washed surfaces in the town becoming very clean...

## 9

### National Braai Day

September 24  
South Africa

In Zulu culture, September 24 was a time to commemorate King Shaka Zulu. Then, with the advent of democracy in the mid-90s, it was suggested that the date become Heritage Day, which celebrates South Africa as a 'rainbow nation' of many cultures.

Then some guy named Jan, who really loves braais (BBQs), came along and suggested that as all South African cultures relish in cooking delicious feasts over fire, Heritage Day should be National Braai Day. That Jan loves braais so much that he now goes by the moniker Jan Braai. Lekker, boet!

## 10

### Halloween

October 31  
Worldwide

It's widely believed that many Halloween traditions originated from ancient Celtic harvest festivals, particularly the Gaelic festival Samhain, which also marks the arrival of winter and the 'darker half' of the year in the northern hemisphere.

'All Hallows Eve', which morphed into 'Halloween', was a time in the Christian calendar dedicated to remembering the dead, including saints (hallows), martyrs, and all the faithful departed. Note that the Mexican celebration, Día de los Muertos or Day of the Dead, occurs on November 1.

## 11

### Diwali

November 14  
India

Diwali is the popular Hindu festival of lights. Typically lasting five days, Diwali symbolises the spiritual 'victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance'. The festival is widely associated with Lakshmi, goddess of prosperity and wealth.

Leading up to Diwali, celebrants will prepare by cleaning, renovating and decorating their homes and workplaces. During the climax, revellers adorn themselves in their finest clothes, illuminate the interior and exterior of their homes with diyas (oil lamps or candles), offer puja (worship) to Lakshmi, light fireworks, and enjoy family feasts.

## 12

### Hogmanay

December 31  
Scotland

You've got to finish off the year with a bang, and Hogmanay celebrations in Edinburgh are billed as one of the world's greatest New Year's parties.

The roots of Hogmanay perhaps reach back to the celebration of the winter solstice among the Norse, as well as incorporating customs from Samhain (see Halloween). So, it may come as little surprise that Hogmanay frequently involves fire (like burning a Viking boat), eating rich food and drinking whiskey, making for a very happy New Year!

# The Art of



# Rehabilitation.

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHY BY POLLYANNAR AKA MADAM COAL HOLE

**As I bob in my unicorn floatie on a lake at the bottom of a coal mine, I couldn't help but wonder how the hell did a crazy art project get me and my gang of femo artists here...**

—

Behind me, to the right, is a giant power station that's puffing those ominous white fluffy clouds into the sky; these have become symbols of everything that is killing our planet. To my left, an old powerline stands half submerged, along with the history of the river that flowed backwards as it fell into the mine. To my side, shrubs and trees had almost fought their way to the top of the sheer coalface, trying to reclaim the space, only to be suddenly wiped clean by fire and then transformed into a giant checkerboard, the white squares formed by clay capping applied like gauze on a third-degree burn.

It could be mistaken as just giant piles of dirt, if it didn't have the predisposition to spontaneously combust. For all the talk of a ginormous Garden of Eden park rehabilitation strategy, it's strange to think we already have it right here, right now and it's kinda awesome, until the calming silence is sliced open by the cracking and shifting of the mine walls, heaving under their own weight. Random rocks break free all of sudden and tumble to the mine floor below.

Long white pipes poke out of the coalface, like the legs of a half-buried prehistoric spider, water gushing out of them, pooling and then trickling past acid pools, before, I guess, eventually flowing into the lake I'm bobbing in. In front of me is a beautiful rolling hill, bright green and covered in daisies, where two miners pretend to fish. Rhonda Hastie, the technician from the Mine Rehabilitation Commission, lounges in her grandma's vintage 1930s deckchair, Esther Lloyd and Bec Vandyk are snapping photos and Grace Ware livestreams the whole thing. Everyone is in hi-vis. How did we get here? What is this crazy ass art project? And, will any of it really matter in the end?

If you asked me what the Coal Hole was 12 months ago, I'd have told you it's a multimillion-dollar sculpture project to understand mine rehabilitation for the next 70 years. If you asked the Mine Commissioner what the Coal Hole was, he'd probably tell you it's a high-risk communication engagement strategy, a last-ditch effort to connect to the ever elusive "younger audience". If you ask Melburnians what the Coal Hole was, they'd probably tell you it's a really cool arts project they saw on Facebook. If you asked an artist working on the Coal Hole, they'd probably tell you it's a kinda interesting and important art gig that's confusing.

I started Coal Hole with artists Mark Hooper, Esther Lloyd and Grace Ware. We wanted to make art about the mine rehabilitation and to create awesome employment opportunities for young artists who could play a part in trying to solve problems surrounding mine rehabilitation. In June, 2019, Coal Hole became a concept for a radical community engagement strategy, one that could cut through the fear of using so much water in a drying climate, or the trauma caused by the 2014 mine fires. It was a project on the facts and basic mechanics of mine rehabilitation that would be accessible to the whole community, not just scientists and engineers. We wanted to be paid as we developed art that aims to empower the community — to have a stronger base to advocate and negotiate for a 'just transition'.

Over the last five months, we have employed local artists to facilitate art-based workshops and events to explore the critical elements in the mine rehabilitation, all the while questioning whether filling the three coal holes with 3000 billion litres of water (the equivalent volume of 5.5 Sydney Harbours) over our lifetime is really the best deal, or are the mine companies just wanting to get out as quickly and as cheaply as possible?

**Via Cole Hole, we have explored:**

Safety and invisibility through hi-vis wearable art;

The power of voice and narrative through zine making;

The unseen effects of growing up next to the power stations through experimental sounds;

An opportunity to give that rehabilitated land back to the Gunaikurnai traditional landowners by learning how to weld and create a recycled metal kangaroo sculpture;

Identity and rebranding coal through image making;

Mine construction and collapse through model making;

Finally, the water rights and proposed water allocation by crocheting 1000 eco-friendly water balloons for a whole town water fight!

Our contract with the commission ends in December and we are now trying to find more

finances to rehabilitate the community, not just the holes. We're hoping the mines can allocate additional budget for a continuing project.

Large-scale public art has been a critical element to mine rehabilitation in Germany, which is what our model is based off. Artists in the Valley have the skills and space to build their own ambitious works, creating employment opportunities that otherwise would not exist. Regional artists and creative types are commonly unemployed or underemployed, which can lead to or exacerbate other issues, such as higher instances of drug or alcohol dependency. But with resources and upskilling, we can take advantage of making art on an already global platform, reframe our story and lay more foundations for a booming tourism industry in Gippsland.

Did Coal Hole work? I know the numbers stack up well, as we pretty much had part-time employment for six months to explore, learn, create and communicate. Only artists who really cared about the community were invested, but every month more and more artists came out of the woodwork. One by one we had conversations about mine rehabilitation and about the mediums to apply when exploring different concepts. Even though there was money potentially available for artists, the fact that the project was too political meant that lots of local artists didn't want to get involved. I didn't understand this at the start, but I do now. Sometimes, it's just super bloody nice to make work about whatever you want.

I have to say, we started this project having a stance against a pit lake, but it became clear two months into the project that people in higher positions had a preference for this solution. Fatigue hit us as we ran two creative workshops per week and prepared our third event, so we had to decide a point of focus for the Coal Hole project. Rather than trying to find alternative solutions, we decided to accept that as the solution and then try to understand the implications in more detail. Still, we were completely torn on whether we should be publicising or protesting the pit lake solution.

Now, at the end of the project, we can say that what got us through was trust. Trust that what the scientists and engineers were saying is true, knowing that it would be very hard to check their calculations without going back to uni. Trust that Rae (Mackay), the Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner, and his team had given us as much access and transparency as they could. Trust that the community will find the strength to hope again. Trust that the local council will use this opportunity to move to a new identity. Finally, we must trust that the next generation can solve this problem even better than we can now, and not hate us for giving it to them.

# From a *Flicker* to a flame?

TEXT BY ASHEDA WEEKES  
POSTER FROM LEFT TO RIGHT; JULIAN DODS AND OSCAR GRANT

Oscar Grant runs his own show. He literally wrote, directed, produced and performed his own show. With that passion for theatre, Oscar, an alumnus of Class Act Productions and creator of *Flicker*, sheds light on Gippsland's "fantastic musical scene" and the life lessons he's learnt from the stage.



—

**Please provide us with some details on growing up in Gippsland?**

I've lived my whole life in Traralgon. I went to primary school at St Michael's, and then went to high school at Lavalla Catholic College, before transferring to St Paul's Anglican Grammar School. When I was about fifteen, I got involved with Class Act Productions and started doing everything they had on offer: from kids' shows and adult productions, to trips and dance classes.

**What was the catalyst that led you to explore the theatre?**

I received a drama scholarship to attend St Paul's, and I think [that] when that happened, I sort of realised that I could actually do this and it could be more than a hobby.

[Before that], I never really saw myself as particularly talented. I wasn't usually picked to play the lead roles, [instead] I mostly played villains or character parts, which was so much fun. It always made me work that little bit harder because I knew I had only so much time on stage, so I would just milk the hell out of it.

**What led you to start performing professionally?**

I started actually trying to do it as a career when I was sixteen because that's when people start asking you, "What you wanna do with the rest of your life?". All I had really worked hard on up to that point was trying to get lead roles in local musicals, so I figured that it could be a career for me, and here we are!

**Did you have any great teachers or programs that encouraged your creativity?**

Mandie Black, David Williams and Michael Mendez run Class Act, and they were just always so excellent with me. They gave me so many opportunities to perform and grow as a performer. Chris Staben, Kylie Sinclair, Casey Hall and Prudence Scholtes were also amazing teachers, who were absolute angels when it came to encouraging me to pursue performing as a career, too.

**Are there any skills or techniques from theatre that you apply to everyday life?**

The biggest rule in improvisation is 'to go with it'. No matter what anyone says, if it's not as funny as you'd hoped or if it's something you don't quite get, just go with it.

I find that a person's ability to take whatever comes at them, to be willing to play and work with what they have, is something that is valued by everyone you meet.

**Can you describe how vulnerability and your sense of self plays into your art?**

For me, vulnerability is all that there is to art. No one wants to see someone get up on stage and risk nothing. You have to risk that people might hate it. You have to risk that what you're trying to show the world isn't what the world wants to see. Funnily enough, that really only happens when you're not vulnerable. People say no, audiences don't laugh at your jokes or cry in the sad songs, but I believe that if you truly risk everything you have just for a laugh,

if you can honestly show the world just how messed up you are for a reaction, then people cannot help but be moved by your vulnerability and the strength that comes with it.

**What steps do you take to get into character?**

I try and figure out what a character's objective is within a scene or play. Then, I decide what action (to grab, to push, to pull) to play on each line, so that every word and line I say is in pursuit of that objective and, therefore, it creates a character that is relatable, that can react to things going on around them, because they wonder how that will affect them and their objective.

**What are your proudest accomplishments so far?**

My Fringe Festival show, *Flicker*, by far. It was truly an incredible experience to create a show [that was] so personal and send it out into the world, and then for it to yield such brilliant responses.

**Can you tell us a little bit about the Fringe Festival?**

It's a fantastic festival. There's no auditioning, you simply pay your entry fee and you're part of the festival. The Fringe team are so supportive of you and work so hard to make sure your show goes smoothly. There's meetings and support for literally anything that you could possibly worry about. All they want is to encourage new art.

If you're lucky to have partnered with a big venue, like The Butterfly Club as I did, then they have so much experience in putting on shows that they can help you with next to anything. No matter what your show or your talent, Fringe is a great way to get yourself out there as a performer.

**What could be done in Gippsland to better promote creative and artistic careers?**

Interestingly, Gippsland has a fantastic musical theatre scene. There are so many companies operating, all of which are doing truly incredible things. However, I think the more time and energy that schools are willing to put into making their musicals and performance opportunities (choirs, drama classes, etc.), the more students this will inspire to being involved in the art itself [beyond school], and then they can find the local [arts] company that suit them.

**What kind of project or showcase would you like to see in Gippsland?**

I would love to see some sort of 'homegrown' style event, where artists from Gippsland of all mediums can present their original work together: i.e. music, dance, visual art, comedy, film, circus. It could be anything to showcase the incredible talent that's been grown in Gippsland.

—  
*Theatre is for everyone! Find out about Class Act Productions - A Gippsland-based, dedicated Youth Theatre Company here: [classactproductions.com.au](http://classactproductions.com.au)*

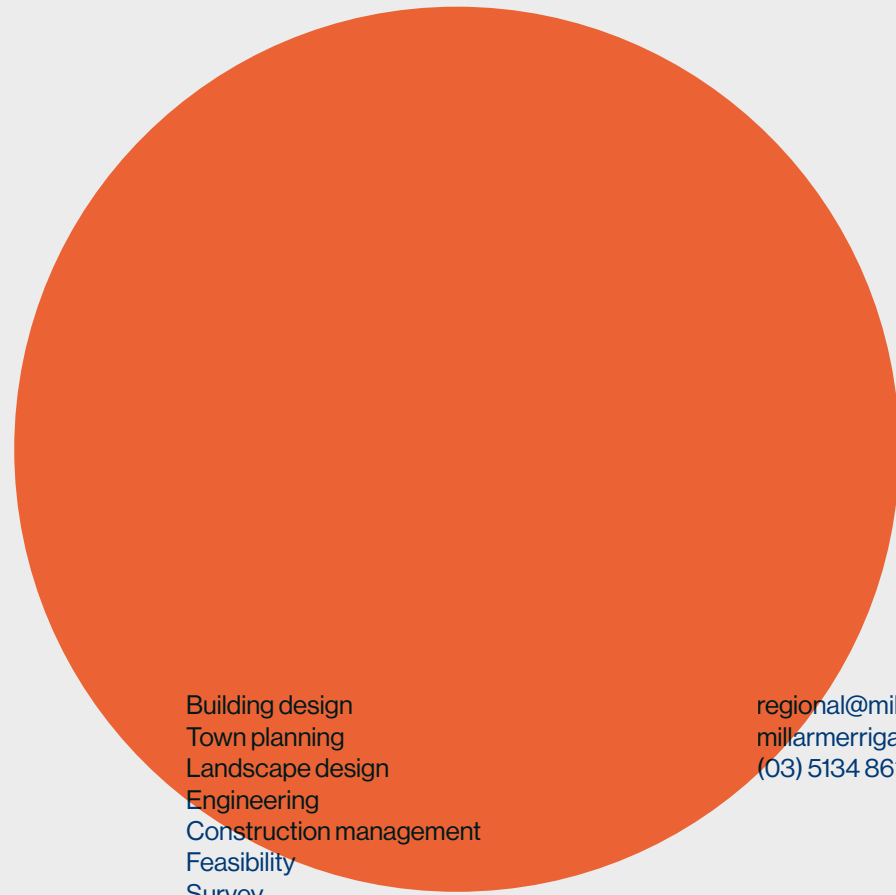
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However, wherever, from our family to yours; our wishes for a safe and Happy Christmas season and a wonderful New Year in 2020.



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BOOK REVIEW  
Everyday Grain-Free Baking

## Welcoming more people around the table.



TEXT BY ANDREA KINSMITH / READER'S EMPORIUM, TRARALGON  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY THE VIEW FROM HERE

### **Everyday Grain-Free Baking** by Kelly Smith

#### **What celebration is there that doesn't include food?**

**The beautiful presentation and delicious aromas tempt our taste buds while also encouraging conversation to flow, and together they make us feel a part of something special.**

—  
Kelly Smith's "heartfelt mission [was to write a] book [that] provided... a whole host of deliciously comforting... recipes, while also inspiring [us] to rediscover the joy of sharing delightful creations with those [we] love" and Everyday Grain-Free Baking does just that.

Sharing food helps people to connect, that's why it is so important to have beautiful, delicious food that everyone can enjoy. This is something that we really noticed when our family found it necessary to move our diet away from the usual wheat, sugar and dairy ingredients that are in just about everything, and the corn, soy, potato and sugar alternatives in everything else.

Not sharing the same food as everyone else at a gathering really does make you feel disconnected. And when other people don't want to share what you prepare because they are afraid or think the food is weird, it creates another form of disconnection.

Finding *Everyday Grain-Free Baking* by Kelly Smith really helped to close that gap and allow us to connect with family and friends again.

We love Kelly's book because the food is easy to prepare, looks and smells delicious and everyone can enjoy it. If we don't tell anyone, most people don't even notice that the breads, muffins, cakes, biscuits and pies are made from healthy alternative ingredients.

The reason why *Everyday Grain-Free Baking* works so well is because Kelly has come to understand how to use the ingredients to get the right flavour and texture. I have found her recipes stand up so well that we can replace some of the recipe elements when we need to. For example: we often replace the coconut oil component in a recipe with a good olive oil, and find that the finished product is just as good.

We have already made more than half the items presented in this book and have loved every one. Since we regularly get asked for the recipes by our friends and family, I really believe that this demonstrates this cookbook's ability to win over those without such diet restrictions too — not always an easy task.

—  
*To share Kelly's rapidly growing knowledge, experience and passion for healthy, grain-free baking (including meals), you can visit her blog, [TheNourishingHome.com](http://TheNourishingHome.com), or invest in a copy of her beautifully presented book, *Everyday Grain-Free Baking*.*



# Norm norm.



TEXT BY LYNDA HOARE, JEN SHERIDAN & JESSIE SPITERI  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAMANTHA GEORGIADIS & MORGANE CAZAUBON  
OF PETITE VISUALS (HANDS)

## This year, Baw Baw Food Hub celebrates five years of connecting the Gippsland community with the farmers who grow their food.

The Hub is a response to the current food system that is failing the health and wellbeing of its people and planet. It exists to promote, support and enable a thriving local food economy, based on ecological farming and healthy eating.

A community of dedicated weekly subscribers, food growers and workers underpin its growth. They share a vision of establishing a better way to produce, value and consume food through a 'solidarity economy'.

While the community gains access to a superior quality produce, their purchases create a stable marketplace, which enables farmers to grow food in an ecological way. Neither customer nor farmer can be without the other.

The Hub offers a unique touch not many stores can claim: the name, and sometimes a warm "hello" from the real-life producer who provided the shop's certified organic products. Let Graeme provide your seafood, Lynton your citrus, or Toby, freshly laid eggs produced just 10 minutes down the road. This is the place where most of the food doesn't need to travel farther than the region, where it's practical, ecological and as local as possible.

This is the place that welcomes BYO packaging — be it jar, tub or reusable bag. Stock up on your oats and crackers, rice and oil, or maybe dried fruit and nuts. And when it comes to milk? There's Butterfly Factory's delicious dairy, from just over in Poowong, in glass jars and bottles that can be returned for reuse.

Customers unwilling to risk missing out on their favourites can pre-order online through the Hub's shop on the Open Food Network, and arrive in-store to a packed box, ready and waiting.

Everything for your weekly shop, available for pick-up or delivery, from the producer who grew and nurtured them. It's from this simple sentiment — connecting farmer to community — that the Hub originally began.

The Hub grew from the combined produce of two small organic farms, who traded together as Baw Baw Organics. The first 20 veggie boxes were packed in 2014, when locals asked to be able to access the same fresh organic produce that Baw Baw Organics sold at Melbourne Farmers' Markets each Saturday.

It started small — picking, then packing boxes on the farm, followed by a 3pm drop-off/pick-up at a car park in central Warragul. Staples like lettuce, tomato and cucumber were picked in the morning, and on local dinner tables that same night. People loved it, and word spread quickly.

Within a few months, Baw Baw Organics found a local packing space, and organic milk, bread, fruit and eggs joined the weekly offerings, extending the reach and support for even more farmers.

From the start, the highest volume of vegetables has been supplied by two outstanding growers — Cafresco Organics and Peninsula Fresh Organics. Now, dozens of other growers and food makers help fill seasonal gaps, supplying hundreds of products all year round. Although this allows continuous supply, the long-term goal remains: increase the volume and variety of local, organic produce, and steadily build a thriving local food economy.

The Hub grew, and has now moved to a bigger warehouse, welcoming a broader range of produce, becoming a central point to an ever-expanding community of farmers and food makers.

There is now a children's area, coolroom and community kitchen, and the Hub hosts workshops, film nights and farmer meetings. Empowering the community is vital to the Hub's overall cause, as they aim to teach the community about food production and food justice, and host cooking and gardening classes.

All decisions and initiatives stem back to the Hub's two main principles: support ecological farming practices and make produce accessible.

Globally, industrial agriculture results in degradation of soils, water supplies and biodiversity. It produces greenhouse gas emissions, causes animal suffering and relies on the widespread exploitation of workers, including farmers.

The current industrialised food system is failing. People struggle to access nourishing produce, with readily available, affordable, low-value, processed food becoming increasingly responsible for disease.

The Hub is a local expression of the resistance and change gaining momentum around the world. Communities are taking control of their food supply, and working together to encourage positive transformation.

But what makes the Hub any different to the average grocer, or organic market?

First is the support for farmers who explicitly focus on ecological practices. All Hub farmers adopt organic or biodynamic farming practices, and 95% of the produce available is certified organic.

These farmers — thanks to the economic stability enabled by community support — can lead the way in innovative farming practices. There is ecological consideration from start to end.

Many use compost and green manures (crops grown specifically to nourish soil), and

maintain crop health, fertility and high-levels of biodiversity, encouraging natural predators to help control pests. No chemicals required.

Their practices are skillful, adaptive and based on ongoing experimentation, and an intent to gain an even deeper understanding of their farms and the surrounding ecology.

And so, it's Hub policy to pay these growers a price that values their important work, their significant innovations, their environmental stewardship and the good food they bring to our community. A fair trade off for significant input.

This leads into the second principle — that healthy and clean food should be accessible to all.

Paying farmers well while keeping prices affordable is a challenging business proposition, so the Hub operates as a not-for-profit. It's a different way to source the weekly household shop, but more and more people embrace and praise the difference, and are happy to support it.

That's an important factor in the Hub's success — being able to operate within a community of people who are excited by these principles. The biggest sign of support is their purchasing power, from the 200 households subscribed to the model, to the person who walks in off the street. Margins are kept as low as feasibly possible and the Hub offers a 'volunteer for produce' option for those who need it. It's the 'Hubsters' who empower the model.

Deepening the connection with the community starts with the people, but it gains momentum when businesses jump on board. Like-minded cafes and restaurants, like Hogget Kitchen, honour their strong emphasis on local and seasonal eating by sourcing their produce from the Hub. Chef Trevor Perkins and his team also hosts the annual 'Growers' Dinner', at which the Hub farmers and community share a meal and celebrate another happy year of working together.

The relationship is mutually supportive, and fundamental in what represents a 'solidarity economy'. Rather than cheap food and profits to shareholders, exchanges support the local economy and are based on shared values, ecological farming, and the ethical treatment of animals and the community. Direct relationships with growers, most of whom personally deliver to the Hub, means packaging like spud bags or broccoli boxes can be returned and reused, reducing waste and packaging.

Hubsters value the produce, but even more so the intrinsic connection between food, community and self. Connections are made, stories are shared and a sense of belonging permeates from soil to table.

The Hub continues to increase the market for farmers and broaden access for shoppers. Recent initiatives include opening up to small batch processors and encouraging new, backyard gardeners to join the Hub to increase supply. With more products available, the Hub are able to serve more locals, whether through subscriptions or a weekly shop.

The Baw Baw Food Hub is flexible and adaptive, responding to customer preferences and providing alternative ways to subscribe, earn discounts or support the Hub's other activities.

From a constantly growing range of produce and bulk buy dry goods, to extended opening hours, the Hub offers convenience — without costing the environment.

The growth is contagious. Their newly registered commercial kitchen is now available to hire, and fosters learning, development and new food enterprises.

For those keen to hear more, the weekly newsletter continues to provide insights into farming and discussions of sustainability and health issues, as well as recipes and pictures celebrating food and farming in Gippsland.

It's often at significant milestones that we pause for a moment to reflect.

In these five years, the Baw Baw Food Hub has established a system and an unusual, but viable, model that pays farmers well and makes healthy produce accessible for all. It has been created by and for a community committed to ecological, value-led practices being used to build a new economy. And it's because of the community that it will continue on.

We can't know what innovations and local initiatives the Hub will help foster over the next five years, but there are some exciting possibilities and big dreams, and the Hub team welcomes engagement in a number of ways, inviting people to:

"Come and shop at the Hub, sign up to our newsletter to connect with the region's food, share the produce you grow with the community, sell your farm's produce, use the community kitchen to develop new products, or come to one of our events. Come and be a part of the next five years of creating our local food economy."

For more information, please visit:

[bawbawfoodhub.org.au](http://bawbawfoodhub.org.au)  
[openfoodnetwork.org.au/bawbawfoodhub/shop](http://openfoodnetwork.org.au/bawbawfoodhub/shop)

Visit the Hub at 4/133 North Road, Warragul (Behind the Pet Emporium)

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Main photo courtesy of Immerse Photography

FEATURE  
Water stories

# Water, water.



TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHY BY REBECCA MCEWAN

**Four years ago, I became the custodian of a beehive. I was soon mesmerised by these ancient creatures. The stories of bees, through mythology and folklore, described the arc of a devastating change in our relationship with them.**

Stories of bees as messengers from the heavens, and of honey's place, once central to ancient ceremonies, rituals and celebrations, were diminished. We lost sight of their role of keeping balance in our ecosystem. Through neglect of ritual, celebration and ceremony, we lost the reverence they deserved.

And it's mucking everything up.

My recent studio work has drifted from bees ... to water. The experience of immersion in water has been proven to slow the heart rate, reduce blood pressure and calm the mind. But it's the unquantifiable responses elicited by water that have a profound effect on our state of being. We are drawn to it. It cleanses, calms, purifies and rejuvenates. It appeals to all our senses and gives us life. It's an essential element in ritual and ceremony.

I live in South Australia, the driest state in the driest inhabited continent. I have grown up understanding the preciousness of water. I have lived through serious water restrictions and serious drought.

Now, I am spending my days on FLOAT, a purpose-built, off-grid artist's residency that floats on Lake Tyers in East Gippsland. My motivation for joining the project was to deepen my experience of engaging with water, and to spend time in a community for whom the Lake is of central importance. Here on the Lake. Lake Tyers. Bung Yarnda.

Learning from the stories of the Gunaikurnai about a place of gathering, a common ground to fish at times of abundance. The 'glory days' of Lake Tyers House and the boats that toed and froed with adventurous guests. The rituals of family holidays. And these days, the fascination for waterbird surveys and the ever-hopeful measuring of salinity, and lake levels.

Here it seems water is celebrated. Everyone is constantly aware of the lake and how it behaves. The water unites us. FLOAT is working hard to make that happen.

To spend time in a community so deeply connected with a body of water has resonated with my work. How do we celebrate this gift? How many rituals do we embed in our daily lives that reconnect us with our natural world? I have been forced to reconsider.

To spend a week celebrating the stories of water while Australia burns is a jarring reality. It makes the time spent floating on Lake Tyers all the more precious, if a little disconcerting.

The wind has howled at times. FLOAT's wind-driven drawing machine — engineered by MONA-fave Cameron Robbins — has screeched and scratched in protest. Reminding me. Reminding me.

As an artist the feeling of vulnerability is a common experience. It tends to feed self-doubt, allowing the insidious and mostly unhelpful inner critic to creep in and challenge creative flow.

FLOAT has reinforced to me that vulnerability can be much more valuable than the unnecessary evil it's made out to be. Away from family, friends and daily habits, floating on a self-contained, off-grid vessel on a lake in a regional area was a process of stripping back, clearing the mind of clutter and opening myself to the elements.

The first few nights were a little daunting: new sounds to understand and adjust to, and the seemingly long days ahead of isolation with none of the usual distractions and not being committed to being anywhere in particular.

But this experience of vulnerability and rawness allowed for the creation of space, space in which to observe, absorb and process.

I became acutely aware of my surroundings, attuned to the dawn chorus that gently woke me at 5am, attuned to the subtle changes in wind direction and its hypnotic effect on the water's surface, the change in weather and the rhythm and patterns which began to emerge as I settled into my time on Lake Tyers.

All this sensory input has filled my cup and I leave with a clarity and expanded sensorial library from which I can draw for a very long time.

Here at FLOAT we are being inundated with artists who care deeply about our sneaky mission — to make art great again, and to make sure it's part of every conversation and every Gippsland experience.

Sometimes the art we make is very gentle. You could almost miss it. There's no gallery here to shout about it. But it is permeating our lives. Creating rituals. Connecting the unconnected. Word of mouth travels. Ephemeral work in algae. Sticks on the water. Not shouting. Waving. Getting somewhere now. — Andrea Lane @ FLOAT.

### FLOAT NOTES:

On February 15, 2020 at Lake Tyers House, FLOAT will celebrate a year of ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE.

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FEATURE  
LYFF

# \*Film stars.

TEXT BY GIPPSLANDIA

**“I had been isolated for years, I saw the Latrobe Youth Film Festival program and I love movies, so I took a chance and came along. Now, I come every week to the Movie Drama Club!” – Dean, Latrobe Youth Film Festival (LYFF) participant.**

Wow. After hearing such a hearty endorsement of the LYFF program and seeing photos of the very classy limousines rolling up to the red carpet entrance for the gala evening, we were eager to hear more about these talented young filmmakers.

Thankfully, we had the guidance of Latrobe Youth Space (LYS) youth worker Brenton Marriott and engagement coordinator, Michelle Prezioso, as they help us shine a spotlight on the new enterprise and the stars of the LYFF show.

The LYS is a youth-led, adult-guided initiative that endeavours to empower the young people of the Latrobe Valley. The work that the LYS undertakes is informed and developed by a Youth Governance Committee, which comprises of 15 young people aged between 14 and 24.

A formidable team has been assembled in creating the LYS, as it is led by the YMCA as part of a consortium of amazing organisations which includes Berry Street, Baw Baw Latrobe Local Learning and Employment Network, Scouts Victoria, Quantum Support Services, Latrobe Youth Choices, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, The Gathering Place, AGL Loy Yang, Centre for Multicultural Youth, National Disability Coordination Officer Program and GippSports.

Brenton and Michelle explain that the Latrobe Youth Space is a fun, inclusive, safe space where young people's voices can be heard. They provide opportunities, events and services that would not usually be available in the Valley for young people, or that would be difficult to access. Some of the programs they've offered over their first year of operation have included LYFF and training in podcasting, budgeting, first aid and job skills, as well as public speaking workshops. They've also run social groups for young people, such as the Rainbow Club, Young Parents Group and Movie Drama Club.

Film stars and Oscar-winning directors all need their first big break, and the LYFF project began with the joint vision of the Latrobe Health Innovation Zone, We Are Latrobe and LYS providing our youth with the opportunity to create some short films that reflected the health concerns they face in their daily lives. The vision of the project was to empower young people with the skills,

resources and opportunities to create their own film projects.

As Scott Quilty shared, “LYFF has given me the opportunity to finally have the chance to experience my passion for acting in front of the camera. It was so much fun and the people were great!”

With so many people and moving parts, LYFF has been a huge process! With support from their studio heads and the Nanoo Nanoo production company, the young people involved have taken control of every aspect of the filming process.

This process began with training workshops, giving participants the relevant tools and skills to create films. These workshops focussed on editing, scriptwriting, camera operation, shot exploration, directing and acting. Participants then created a pitch for their film, which they presented in front of a selection panel. Once the films were confirmed by the panel, the film makers began storyboarding, scriptwriting, shot designing, scheduling and location scouting. After this, it was finally time to start recording, and participants acted in, directed, filmed and edited their films. And, if they were more interested in the behind the scenes aspects of film creation, they could also get involved as makeup artists and crew members.

The themes examined through the films are all linked to an aspect of health. The six films that premiered during the festival explored the following:

**Isolation, individualism and loneliness;**

**Inclusiveness, dealing with bullying, friends getting help;**

**A place where health isn't a problem, but how does that affect mental health?**

**Palliative care;**

**Loneliness, phone addiction, social media;**

**Love being timeless; romance, time travel and relationships.**

It's empowering for the young people involved that they were able to take control of their topic and tell the story they wanted to tell. Megan Canon added that, “The LYFF gave me the opportunity to meet and collaborate with like-minded creative people to bring stories to life while having lots of fun”.

Brenton and Michelle revealed that the most surprising aspect of the project was the creative talent showcased by the LYFF participants throughout the entire process, from storyboarding right through to filming, acting and post-production. The young people have continually impressed the program staff with their talent, commitment and vigour. Encouragingly, LYFF proved to the LYS community that youth-led, adult-guided programs are not only impressive in theory, but incredibly successful when applied in practice.

## Please stand and take a bow

Congratulations to all involved. The immense dedication and effort that you have put into creating your films leapt off the screen at the film festival. A huge round of applause to the following film makers:

<b>Adeline Close</b>	<b>Brenton Marriott</b>	<b>Deanne Bird</b>	<b>Jay Doorty</b>	<b>Riley Day</b>
<b>Alana, Lucas and Allourah Beasley</b>	<b>Britney Noonan</b>	<b>Elizabeth Ralph</b>	<b>Jordyn Bryce</b>	<b>Scott Quilty</b>
<b>Alicia Hooimeyer</b>	<b>Catherine Webb</b>	<b>Emerson Arthur</b>	<b>Kenzie Gartlan</b>	<b>Sean McLoughlin</b>
<b>Andrea Stanlake</b>	<b>Connor Brown</b>	<b>Gabe Losi</b>	<b>Kimberley Prosser</b>	<b>Taylah Kilpatrick</b>
<b>Angus Russell</b>	<b>Dancey Armstrong</b>	<b>Grady Just</b>	<b>Madeline Russell</b>	<b>Yumna Ahmed</b>
<b>Asleigh Duncan</b>	<b>Danica Di Ciero</b>	<b>Harry Poole</b>	<b>Megan Cannon</b>	
<b>Ashton Smith</b>	<b>Danni Frantz</b>	<b>Hollie Edwards</b>	<b>Nabihah Ahmed</b>	
<b>Brad Graham</b>	<b>Daved Penfold</b>	<b>Jacob Fraser</b>	<b>Paige Horn</b>	
	<b>Dean Coffey</b>	<b>Jason Lee</b>	<b>Quinn Edwards</b>	



TEACHER ANDREA SAVAGE AND STUDENTS FROM NAGLE COLLEGE AT THEIR RAINFOREST PROJECT SITE

# RAINFOREST PROJECT PROVIDES ENDLESS FLOW ON EFFECTS FOR LOCAL STUDENTS

Tucked away behind Nagle College's Bairnsdale Campus at the bottom of a steep, meandering path you will find a hidden treasure, in the form of Nagle College Landcare Rainforest Project.

Broken into three separate areas, this unique project is the brainchild of Nagle College Science Teacher and Landcare Coordinator, Andrea Savage, who has spent many years developing the project with help from her self-made Landcare group and the students of the school.

"I really don't think there is any other school in Victoria doing anything like this. We work so closely with our funding bodies and the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority to maintain the area," she said.

The project grew wings in 2012 when Andrea came up with a plan to revegetate the area, which runs right along the bank of the Mitchell River. At this time it was fenced and being used for grazing cattle and was overgrown with weeds.

"I was lucky the principal at the time took a leap of faith and we started the project as part of the school's Stewardship Program. It ticked several boxes, mainly exposing students to nature and allowing them to make that connection between their natural

environment and how it impacts the rest of the world," she said.

The project has been heavily funded by various bodies and would not be operational without the support of funding provided by the Victorian State Government through the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee.

"The most recent grant is being used to target the restoration of the gully area that flows directly into the Mitchell River.

"We have used some of our funding to have willow trees removed, however there is one large stump in the centre of the gully that we can't remove until we rock the area to assist with bank stabilisation."

Without the support of state government funding, external contractors could not be employed to help with the gully project and also assist with weed eradication and general clean up.

Students in year nine at Nagle College are given the opportunity to choose the Mitchell River Eco Warriors subject, which gives them the chance to be directly involved with the restoration of the rainforest area.

"It's a great subject, a fun way of learning. They are hands on as far as collecting seed from our other established trees, they work on site in our hot house to pot their own seed and care for it. Once it's ready to plant they get their hands dirty in the rainforest area by planting and putting up their own tree guards."

"Thanks to ongoing funding this project will hopefully continue long into the future as we now have all the foundations in place," Andrea said.

Nagle College is now the only East Gippsland school offering Environmental Science as a VCE subject and thanks to the rainforest, students completing this subject can conduct research and get a real life feel for what they are studying.

Follow [Love our Lakes](#) on Facebook for regular updates about environmental initiatives and events around the Gippsland Lakes.

THIS PROJECT IS FUNDED BY THE VICTORIAN STATE GOVERNMENT FOR THE HEALTH OF THE GIPPSLAND LAKES.



# You've got to hear this!

INTERVIEW BY GIPPSLANDIA  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHOEBE HONEY

## Can you imagine the quality set list that multi-award winning artist Kate Ceberano can put together?

Kate's stunningly versatile yet unique voice has been gracing acclaimed records since the mid-80s and she's still winning ARIAs in 2019. Gratefully, the Sounds of Summer team is bringing Kate, international singer/songwriter Daniel Shaw (from The Voice, 2019), Bustamanto, Elly Poletti and Alana Wilkinson to Thompson Reserve, Inverloch for one more fun-filled evening!

Events By Kate director, Kate Adkins, the driving force behind the Sounds of Summer (SOS), excitedly shared more details on this cool, family-friendly festival of music, food and wine with Gippslandia recently.

She revealed that what she loves most about SOS is seeing the joy, fun and relaxed happiness of all the festival-goers, but that this year's SOS will also be their final one, so there is some sadness around that. However, Kate's team have some very exciting opportunities planned for 2020.

## This isn't your first Sounds of Summer rodeo. How has the festival evolved for you?

Wow. Thinking back to our first SOS in 2017, we went into it very green and we literally hit the ground running! As we're passionate about the local region, our idea was to host a celebration, a festival that brings together high calibre acts, great food and sensational wine to Inverloch. The festival has always been a community event, with a high level of involvement from our wonderful local people and businesses — this is very important to us.

We learnt a lot on the fly in our first year. I think the biggest takeaway over the three years has been that we cannot control the weather and that no matter what, attendees have an amazing time: rain, hail or shine.

## What are some of the joys and challenges you face in preparing a music festival?

There are so many joys and rewards that we take out of presenting a festival, the number one being the sea of happy faces — from small children through to grandparents — all singing, dancing and laughing together. Also, the appreciation and support from the community is truly inspiring. Championing SOS as an event for all, our locals really get behind it, which is wonderful. Simply, it's a festival that's good for the soul.

As for challenges, yes, there are many, but none that are impossible to overcome! I think the chance of rain is perhaps our largest threat. However, it hasn't stopped the crowds from coming along and enjoying the festivities, which we're very grateful for.

## How does SOS benefit Inverloch and the surrounding region?

It provides an opportunity for local businesses in the area to connect with the greater community, as well as visitors who are holidaying in Inverloch. It's a lot of fun for the town, as the festival creates such a great vibe! We have also supported a number of local community groups and service clubs in their fundraising effort, some of these include Inverloch Kongwak Football Netball Club, Inverloch Cricket Club and Leongatha Lions Club.

## Kate, you create and manage a number of excellent events. How does preparing SOS differ from the others?

We do create a broad range of events: private, corporate and large scale. SOS fits the 'large scale' category and we usually begin planning

for the next one as soon as it's done. As a community event, we need to tick a lot of boxes in having the right permits and infrastructure to hold the festival. Hosting SOS is different to planning private and corporate events due to the community impact, the audience size and demographic, and the procedures and speciality staff we need to have in place.

## What are your tips to punters, so they can enjoy the best SOS experience?

1 — Sort your transport to and from SOS prior to the day. There is limited off-street parking around the venue, but we do have a complimentary shuttle bus running within Inverloch, with three pick-up and drop-off points:

*Inverloch Surfside Holiday Retreat, 19-41 Goroke St*

*V/Line Stop, Opposite Police Station/Inverloch Recreation Reserve, Sandymount Ave (you are welcome to drive and park cars here)*

*V/Line Stop, The Esplanade.*

Harley's Buslines will also be operating between Korumburra and Leongatha.

2 — This is not an event that you can bring your own alcohol to. You can bring food in, however, and we do have some amazing vendors offering delicious and affordable food options on-site.

3 — Prepare for four seasons in one day! Layer up and/or bring warmer clothes, as it can get quite cool at night, being so close to the ocean.

4 — Bring cash with you, as not all our food vendors have EFT available. In saying this, we will have ATMs at the event.

5 — Stay comfortable. Base yourself in a marquee with your friends and family.

## How do you feel when you nail an event? Then, how much sleep/holiday time do you need afterwards?

We have a strong sense of pride and achievement after each event. We're also overcome with gratitude for our beautiful community and the region that we live in. Of course, there is also a sense of relief!

After the event, we'd love to rest (sleep) for three months, however, we're usually back and organising the next event within one week. It's what we love doing!

## Final words?

I'd love to thank all the sponsors that have come on board with Sounds of Summer over the four years, as without their support it would be impossible to run the event.

Also, this year we'll have a VIP Marquee with its own bar. Guests will enjoy a complimentary drink upon arrival and can spend the night in this beautiful space with friends — dancing, singing and socialising. Plus they'll have the opportunity to meet some of our artists.

*Don't wait any longer, buy your tickets to Sounds of Summer online today! Simply visit [inverlochsoundsofsummer.com.au/tickets.html](http://inverlochsoundsofsummer.com.au/tickets.html)*

*Remember, the festivities kick off from 4pm on Saturday, December 28, Thompson Reserve, Inverloch.*



Grow Master Traralgon is a fun experience for all ages and here's why.



A journey through Grow Master Traralgon is like an expedition of discovery where you set out in search of one thing, only to be quietly thrilled with all else that you discover along the way.

If you've ever been travelling down the highways of Gippsland whilst tuned into one of the many fine local radio stations, you'll no doubt know the famous 'Grow Master' jingle...

You'll hear it in your head as you read this — 'Can't go past a, can't go past a, Grow Master!' Marketing genius right?

Hear it once and without fail, the iconic Gippsland nursery and giftware store's joyful tune will be firmly planted in your head (pun intended). Singing along really is somewhat of a guilty pleasure, as is perusing (and purchasing) the bountiful stock they keep on hand in their immaculately presented Traralgon showroom.

The truth is, once you set foot in Grow Master Traralgon for the first time, you will literally be blown away by the immense quality and sheer range of gifts, clothing, home and garden wares on offer — proving that whether shopping for yourself, your garden, or your (very lucky) friends, you just can't go past a Grow Master. Don't believe us? Seeing, is believing.

Earlier this year we snuck along to their Christmas extravaganza sales event to snap some shots and share just a small preview of what the well-earned fuss is all about. All we have left to say is this; if you're heading up, or down the Traralgon section of the Princes Highway this summer season, be sure to drop into see the huge range of wares available for your own eyes — both in their showroom and outside amongst their beautifully tended grounds.

Rest assured, you will not forget your first Grow Master Traralgon experience, nor will it be your last...



# “We tell ourselves stories in order to live...” — American essayist and novelist, Joan Didion.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY MORGANE CAZABON OF PETITE VISUALS

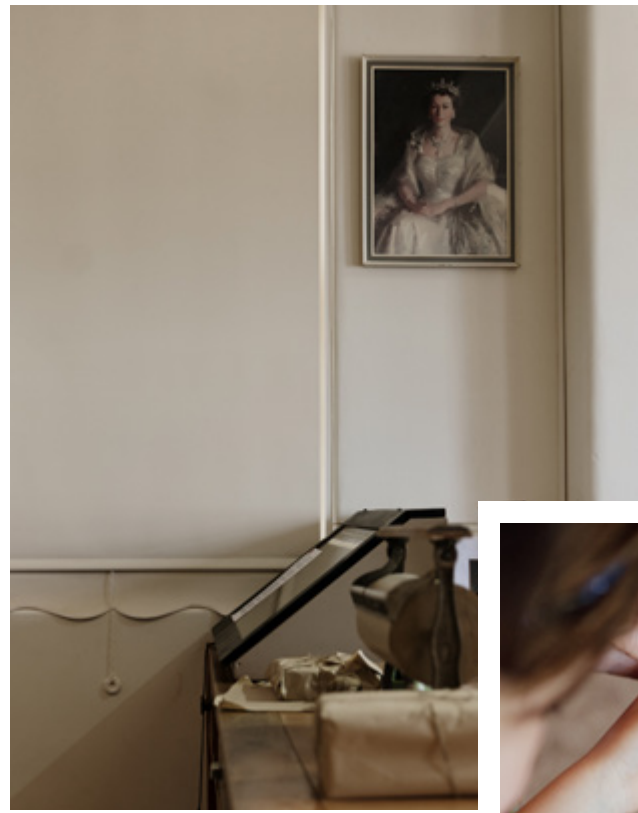
Joan declares as she opens her essay, *The White Album*, before declaring that our narrative is linked to the images, memories or records of our experiences that we keep - the mementos we hold dearly.

Photographer Morgane Cazabon was kindly welcomed into the Heyfield and Districts Museum, and family homes, to document the milestones and revelry that her community values fondly. Very quickly, she unravelled a story that is filled with festivities throughout the area's history. Given Gippsland's many unique towns across the entire region, it's safe to say, our current tale is built on celebrations.



Search 'Grow Master Traralgon' on Google, Facebook & Instagram

62 Argyle Street  
Traralgon 3844  
T—03 5174 2861



# Heart inked into your sleeve.

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHY BY IAN CHRISTENSEN

**Growing up in Traralgon, tattooing was pretty far from any aspect of my life. But it crept a bit closer with the music I grew up on... heavy metal! Tattoos and metal just went hand-in-hand, and so I began tattooing in 2001.**

I started off with some luck, a lot of passion and no real idea where it would take me. Tattooing was still a bit frowned upon back then, pretty underground and just for ratbags, really. I feel pretty blessed to have been able to make a living from tattooing during a time where it shifted from being pretty lowbrow and not really considered artwork, to the heights it's reaching now.

Tattooing has taken me all over the world. I originally learned to tattoo in St Kilda, but after three years the road called me. I've tattooed in Belfast, London, Milan, Eastern Europe and all across America: from Washington DC to Alaska and everywhere in-between. I even did a stint in South Korea (where tattooing is still illegal!).

Over the years, tattooing has brought me in contact with the most exciting people and put me in amazing situations. It's given me everything I have. I have more stories than I can remember and plenty I can't repeat. I will never be able to pay back what it has done for me but I have tried, through dedication and hard work, as well as self-publishing two books on tattooing. Both books have sold out and copies are stored in the National Library of Australia as they're considered culturally significant.

After years on the road, I now call Legacy Studios in Phillip Island my home. Nearing 20 years into this career, I don't feel like slowing down but I'm loving being in a slower town (although, summer is pretty wild) and being able to really focus on each tattoo and paint more. I also enjoy getting into my garden when I'm not working — I'm turning into my Dad!

Tattoos have been used to literally mark key moments in our lives for as long as we could first permanently mark our skin. That's a pretty long time! People get tattooed for so many different reasons, but it's nearly always important, and it's often to celebrate. A tattoo can represent something as serious as life or death, or as trivial as a football match (life and death for some). It can be to remember a holiday, celebrate a divorce or for any number of milestones. Tattooing over self-

harm scars can be a celebration of life, of beating your demons. Tattoos are about owning your body, loving your friends, remembering your pets or your connection with nature. It could just be a celebration of tattooing itself!

I saw tattoos as part of my journey. They were integral to my growth as I learnt the craft and developed as an artist. Photos get lost and files get corrupted, but tattoos are very hard to lose. Similar to photography, tattoos hold so much more meaning than just what they visually impart.

The most asked question for me has always been, how many tattoos do you have?

The second most is, what's the weirdest tattoo you have done?

It's a hard question to answer because nothing seems that weird once you build a bit of a rapport with the client. So when I tattooed little scissors and cut dashes, like when a box says "cut here", on the webbed toes of a young man, it wasn't weird. Instead, he was embracing something that made him unique.

There are childlike tattoos that pop up every now and then. Ones that make you think, "I could draw that" or "That looks like a kid drew it". A kid did draw it. It was their kid that drew it, and if that's not a celebration of life, then what is?

Tattoos are trivial and meaningful. They are serious and they can be the complete opposite. They are a celebration — a very permanent one. To quote legendary tattooer, Lyle Tuttle, "Tattoos aren't for everybody and they're too damn good for some people". All I know is they are pretty bloody special, if you ask me.

To answer the first question... I have lots of tattoos. Or maybe just one, as they have all joined together!

*You can see more work by the talented Ian Christensen at @bugsybuggy on Instagram and Legacy Studios in Cowes, Phillip Island — [legacystudios.tattoo.com](http://legacystudios.tattoo.com).*



# Our 'Coota Christmas.



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TEXT, PHOTOGRAPHY &  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY PHOEBE RICH

For many of us, 'Christmas Lunch' evokes a familiar feeling of a perfectly prepared roast and Nan's celebratory plum pudding. However, my personal experience can be a little to the contrary, as the only non-negotiable part of our Christmas is not the traditional meal, but the location (and perhaps the bread and cheese platter).

Every Christmas morning, after a long year, my family begins the four-to-five hour endeavour from Traralgon to the easternmost point of Victoria, Mallacoota, without fail. It's a road trip through Sale, Rosedale, Bairnsdale, then to a Maccas, heading past Lakes Entrance, over Bemm River, through Cann River with a quick stop for the toilet, and then car-sick-central Genoa Road, before finally arriving to the serenity, sunshine, blissful beachside and the spirit of a 'Coota Christmas.

This is where we set up camp and stay until our cheeks are sun-kissed, our freckles become exaggerated and the hot road burns our bare feet each and every day. It's the corner of the Earth where we live simply; we eat when we're hungry, drink when we're thirsty, and relax.

Arrival is usually followed by a stretch of the legs, then slipping into our theme dependant dress-up (a different costume concept each year) before taking a boat ride across the lake and the inevitable Aussie BBQ, complemented by a platter stacked to the nines with every variety of dip, crackers and cheese you can imagine. It's a very merry Christmas indeed.

To me, Christmas lunch means family, too much food to eat all at once, bonbons and some complaining that you are too full, only to continue to enjoy some more incredible food.

Although we often exchange gifts prior to eating, Christmas lunch in our family is a gift all in itself. It's a gift of inner peace, utter contentment and reciprocated love. Christmas lunch is not just about the food, but also pointless conversations, bad dad jokes, too much noise, too many photos and drawing too much attention to our eccentric campsites.

Whether the year's theme is tribal, boho, nautical or white, it only seems appropriate for some elaborate costuming and mood-setting decorations to accentuate

our camp. Fairy lights, Christmas trees, shells, sand and driftwood have been found spread from caravan to caravan across our foreshore strip, creating our favourite kind of atmosphere, a merry one!

After lunch we then face the struggle of getting the dogs to cooperate long enough to quickly take a group photo. As the perfect photograph disappears into shouts of this is 'good enough', we then find any excuse for some beach cricket, 'pin the anchor on the ship', a dive

off the jetty or a standing-on-one-leg competition, before heading back to the caravans for some well-deserved Christmas bevies and a casual card game or 10.

The sun tends to sink into the sky just in time to stack some extra Chrissy dinner on top of our BBQ-filled tummies. If it's not freshly caught flathead and chippies from the Mallacoota Pizza Shop, it's probably leftovers from our extraordinary lunch. Truly, Christmas lunch means 'food for the next three days' to me.

Although Christmas is really only one day, it truly is the season to be jolly. A season filled with food, presents, decorations and anticipation. Our Christmas celebrations even carry into the new year — starting the year off the right way, the Mallacoota way.



# Robyn



# Bull.

INTERVIEW BY GIPPSLANDIA  
PORTRAIT BY BONNIE PIX & FLIX

**It was love that led Robyn Bull to Gippsland, and it was love that motivated her career change into publishing. I do I do Gippsland, Robyn's magazine, showcases couples' love-filled wedding days. Maybe Johnny Lennon was right? All you need is love!**

*Gippslandia* chatted with Robyn to learn more about the celebrations of love that are blooming all over our region.

**Can you please share your tale of coming to Gippsland? What led you to kick off *I do I do Gippsland*?**

I was living in Bendigo and followed my own 'love story': deciding to relocate, so that I could be with my beautiful partner. I moved to Traralgon in September, 2016, and by October that year, I had started *I do I do Gippsland*.

This was a pertinent turning point in my life, and career, as I had been working for approximately 15 years in private practice as a psychotherapist, and business and life coach. At that time, the amazing work I was doing with clients was very hardcore trauma work. My speciality was around depression and anxiety, and when I look back to three years ago, I guess I was looking for something that allowed me to bring my wisdom, healing work, creativity and passion to a bolder medium that was more loving and kind. I feel now that I am exactly where I am meant to be: sharing love, paying it forward and making a difference in a softer way. I am inspired every day and feel incredibly blessed doing what I love.

Also, I would often hear how many brides and grooms would travel to Melbourne to seek out their vendors. My intention and vision for *I do I do Gippsland* is to provide a beautiful and inspiring resource for brides and grooms. We showcase how amazing Gippsland is, so that brides and grooms know the quality and creativity of the many vendors here and to encourage them to shop locally. My other inspiration is to bring more brides and grooms to Gippsland.

**Please provide some background on *I do I do Gippsland*? How do you celebrate weddings?**

We celebrate all kinds of love. Our theme is that we are a 'Magazine and Wedding Fair of Intimate Love,

Courage + Togetherness'. I look for real weddings that showcase the many pockets of Gippsland. We aim to inspire the bride and groom that are on a tighter budget, so that they can create a beautiful wedding too. My purpose is to bring Gippsland together, to stand as a leader through the magazine and to continually provide inspiration.

**Since starting the magazine, how do you feel the wedding industry has evolved in Gippsland?**

In the past three years, I have seen the fruition of many changes; notably, what was once predominantly traditional is now the couple's creative choice. I see how brides and grooms are stepping away from the tradition of a 'sit down' wedding and enjoying personal and creative freedom. There is a desire to create 'spaces of love', e.g. DIY, marquee weddings in the backyard; tipis; the sourcing of amazing stylists, planners and coordinators; the first look; the rise of smaller, intimate weddings, surprise weddings, as well as elopements; the seemingly stunning creativity of our photographers; not to mention the growth of quirky and varied food trucks with fun names that offer great backdrops and joy for wedding photos that step away from the norm.

Now, I see that a wedding can be created or formed in anyway that you want. These dynamic changes have also made our vendors change as well, and it has created more incredible businesses. This has really given an outlet for more people with entrepreneurial spirits.

Also, I am truly in love with, and in awe of, the legislation around same-sex marriage and I love, love, love that equality has a stronger voice. We proudly feature same-sex weddings.

**What are some of the many different ways that Gippslandians celebrate their love for each other?**

I often hear how couples connect with their values, what is important to them and what inspires them, and they then find their ceremony location and theme for their wedding based on their connection to an area or memory. Then they gather the vendors that align with their vision and budgets, making weddings that have more meaning and heart.

In our fourth edition, we are featuring a wedding of a couple who have two little girls and the groom has a terminal illness. I truly can't wait to share this incredible love story. It isn't just about the couple's journey, but to provide a gift to their daughters of their Mum and Dad's love story in the form of printed piece that will last for years to come.

I have heard about how heartfelt and heart-connecting this wedding was, with many tears falling. The girls will have a beautiful and sacred keepsake that will help them as they journey through life without their Dad.

This is what *I do I do Gippsland* is about — sharing love stories with so much 'love'.

**Why do you think that celebrations of love are important?**

In a world that is often challenged by what I call 'life', love is the essence. I think we are all seeking love. Who doesn't love a great 'love story'? Love brings us together and love is our healer.

**How can we celebrate love better in Gippsland?**

Be love.

Be more kind.

Be inspired by our elders.

Be present.

Follow your heart.

Come back to what is meaningful and real (social media is great, but don't compare yourself to what is online, as we know this is often not the truth).

**How has social media and the Internet influenced weddings?**

Social media shares 'love' in such a profound way. It inspires and plants seeds for more beauty. For example, Pinterest is an exciting and influential tool that makes us all want to deserve more. For me, it creates so much inspiration and passion. It is a medium that gives brides and grooms the opportunity to create a wedding that is true to them and I believe it brings out more creativity.

Conversely, Pinterest makes it look easy, and not everything you see on Pinterest can be created, e.g. your wedding floral displays — we may not grow that particular flower or it may not be available at certain times of the year

**Since covering weddings in Gippsland, what has surprised you the most?**

When I first moved to Gippsland, I had never been here before. It was such an amazing time. I would just drive to every area of Gippsland, often not knowing where I was going and I would get lost. But I found pockets of Gippsland that are simply breathtaking. I found people that are so passionate and inspiring, who are doing what they love in the most amazing way. The

biggest thing I noticed was people's creativity. I absolutely love creativity!

When I first chatted with people I would say, 'You have some of the finest, most sought after, inspiring and creative people I have ever met!'. From florists to caterers, makeup and hair artists, to the quirky names of caravan bars — I have been constantly surprised and delighted. There is a true artistry here in Gippsland and it is great to be part of it.

**Does spending a large portion of your time hearing about weddings and working with the wedding industry ever affect your outlook on this celebration?**

I am continually inspired and truly feel my role as the editor of *I do I do Gippsland* is to share love stories with honesty, beauty and heart. Every now and again, I hear a story about a 'bridezilla' (and do feel sad for this person's journey, as this isn't the essence of love) or someone that doesn't come from a place of acceptance around same-sex marriage, and this makes me feel sad. I value love in its entirety and whether you are black, white, gay, lesbian, pink or purple, to me 'love is love'. This just creates a stronger determination to plant bolder seeds for change. When I see a gap or come across 'fear' in its finest form, it is an opportunity to be better, and I will write an article for the next issue that is a new seed that brings more tolerance and acceptance, as well as kindness.

**Finally, Robyn, could you please provide some tips for those getting married?**

Listen to your heart.

Definitely have a budget.

Source the incredible vendors of Gippsland and shop locally as much as you can.

Ask questions.

Be inspired by Pinterest, but don't let it rule you.

Create a vision board for your own 'love story' and wedding.

Write your own vows.

Honour your celebrant and know the importance of your celebrant.

Make sure you create your wedding exactly as you want.

# Nigel



# Beck.

INTERVIEW BY GIPPSLANDIA  
PORTRAIT BY LAUREN MURPHY PHOTOGRAPHY

**He may have been named Nigel Beck, but in these parts he's 'DJ Nige', a Warragul-based party-starter who brought disco to town in the 70s and is still keeping the dance floor jam-packed wherever he plays.**

DJ Nige explains that he was very fortunate to grow up in a home where there was always music, as his mum played piano and his father sang.

"I have a clear memory of my parents buying a TEAC reel-to-reel tape player and we could buy recordings on the reels, just as you buy CDs or vinyl now."

While we're not sure if many people are purchasing CDs anymore, record sales are still increasing as the vinyl revival continues to grow.

His first public gigs applied an entrepreneurial, do-it-yourself approach as DJ Nige brought his home turntable, amplifier and speakers to Warragul's Club Hotel in 1975 and entertained the punters.

"I then approached the Railway Hotel and asked if they had heard of this thing called 'disco'. They agreed to put me in their lounge on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. This was in the days of Saturday Night Fever, and so in 1977, the Railway was hosting Warragul's first disco."

Just as he is now with his beloved Deirdre (a 1970s VW Kombi), or Audrey (a Vespa), DJ Nige was already mobile in those original days: ready and eager to head out on the road to light up parties and events with his mixes.

When quizzed on why music accompanies celebratory moments

and festivities across the world's cultures, DJ Nige states that, "Music sets the scene. Music massages our emotions. It can gently take you to a place that feels good. The lyrics, melody and tempo are all so powerful. What's a celebration without music?"

DJ Nige shares his idea of a dream set.

"My fave style of gig is just providing a vibe — essentially background tunes. Whether it's at the Boho Luxe Markets (Federation Square/Exhibition Buildings) or the Warragul Farmers' Market, I just people-watch and play to whoever is there. There is nothing better than the positive comments I receive when I'm in these types of environments.

"[The upcoming festival is] my fourth year with Beyond The Valley at Lardner Park. I just love working there, playing 80s and 90s hits from Deirdre. Beyond The Valley is such a friendly, happy festival. Much love for the team that puts this on in Gippsland."

Adam and Julia Vardy of Mewburn Park Homestead, Tinamba, are regular hosts of DJ Nige's musical exploits, and they supported his ability to pick the mood.

"DJ Nige reads the crowd and has the dance floor full every time. Driving his Kombi into our marquee at reception time is always a highlight!"

Before hitting DJ Nige for some track recommendations, we couldn't help but ask: when does he feel the music must stop?

"I'll be playing music 'til I die."

**Name your top three tracks for filling up a deserted dance floor?**

'Man! I Feel Like A Woman' by Shania Twain.

'Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!' by ABBA has just got very popular again.

'Pony' by Ginuwine.

## DJ Nige's recommendations on the best song to...

**Walk down the aisle to:**  
**'Let's Stay Together' by Al Green.**

**Trigger a sing-along at a summer BBQ:**  
**'Horses' by Daryl Braithwaite.**

**Action-dance to:**  
**'Bohemian Rhapsody' by Queen.**

**Woo your future partner with:**  
**'Hold Me In Your Arms' by Southern Sons.**

**Wallow in self-pity:**  
**'Alone Again' by Gilbert O'Sullivan.**

**Play as the lights come on in a nightclub:**  
**My fave is 'Dilemma' by Nelly or there's 'Closing Time' by Semisonic.**

**Throw on as you leave work on a Friday afternoon:**  
**'Love On The Weekend' by John Mayer. I'm a big fan of love ;)**

# Annie



# Whitlocke.

TEXT BY GIPPSLANDIA  
PORTRAIT BY LAUREN MURPHY PHOTOGRAPHY

**In the early afternoon sun, I was sitting in a single hospital room with a gorgeous woman who was dying.**

As she was drifting in and out of consciousness, I noted a spider on the outside of the huge glass window facing me. It was gradually making its way towards an unsuspecting insect.

The lady softly called my name. I held her hand and said, "I'm here". Before she became this weak, we had spent a few weeks in her space, talking about her fear of dying, her past, her intimate thoughts and her truth.

She drifted back to sleep. I turned my head slightly to see what had happened to the spider and the insect. I watched as the spider crept towards it and quickly wrapped it in its web.

-

Life and death.

-

I am a death doula. I've done many training courses in this area; some of these have been on being death walker, midwifing death and becoming an end-of-life advocate. Currently, I wear a few hats. I'm a lay Buddhist Chaplain in acute hospitals in Victoria, as well as an advance care directive facilitator and palliative care liaison coordinator for the Buddhist Council of Victoria.

After witnessing and being close to several deaths in my own life, I saw there was confusion, lack of understanding, and not enough clear, informative communication available for people during this period.

My first death experience was with my darling grandfather who chose to fast to death, and my eight-year-old son was present. My grandfather died at home; it was a peaceful and pain-free death. Then my husband was killed in a car accident when I was 30. Years later, my fiancé killed himself. My three-day-old baby nephew died in my arms, his

poor weary mother had been told of his inability to live. My baby granddaughter died unexpectedly. I cared for my mother who had Alzheimer's and she died with me present. These were just some. Life was letting me know that there is no certainty. Forty years ago, I became a Buddhist and began studying the teachings of impermanence, cause and effect, and death.

I am still studying.

In my role, I see people from all walks of life: some are secular, some of faith or different cultures, and I am there to help make their living to the end of their life as good as it can be.

I am not medical. I am more grassroots, more community. I see myself as a 'death elder'.

I assist with getting affairs in order, such as wills, advance care directives, medical treatment decision maker, power of attorney and palliative care. I can help them to get community assistance, counsel, assistance with aged care or preparing the house so it is easy to get around and that the carer (that mighty carer!) is getting the support they need. I attend medical practitioner's appointments with the person and we go through possible questions; I usually record and take notes during the consultation. At this time, it is not uncommon for people to forget what was said.

That's my job. I write the biography of the person and give it to them and their loved ones. I mediate between family members. I sit in vigil with the person or child during their dying. I wash the body and dress them. I help to care for their body while they are at home. In Victoria, a deceased person can stay at home for as long as is required. A family I was with kept their loved one home for five days until they were ready to truly say goodbye.

For the last 100 years, dying, and birth, has been directed to a hospital. It became medicalised.

Yet death is about community, patience, presence and being of service.

I truly believe that each of us has this ancient knowledge within us. Though at times we may dismiss it, it remains there. We know how to hold our dying, just as a mother and father instinctively know how to hold their baby.

Grief is a natural, normal way of living. It can take us to depths we would not normally experience. Grief has had a bad rap: it's not the enemy, just as death is not the enemy. The following quote from Dr Colin Murray Parkes explains it beautifully:

"The pain of grief is just as much a part of life as the joy of love: it is perhaps the price we pay for love, the cost of commitment. To ignore this fact, or to pretend that it is not so, is to put on emotional blinkers, which leave us unprepared for the losses that will inevitably occur in our own lives and unprepared to help others cope with losses in theirs."

As a community, there is much we can all do to assist people. Rituals and ceremonies, secular and non-secular, can be a soothing, even a healing action, for the person near the end of their life and their loved ones. I have some simple rituals that I use and often give printouts to those who may want to use them. Together with the people at the ceremony, we may create their own ritual — one that echoes their beliefs, their ancestors and their wishes.

There is a lot of creativity in being a death doula. The arts can play a huge and important part in the stages of healing. I never say or use that word 'closure'.

When a baby or child has died, this is tough and sad. Very sad. Which is why the person assisting the loved ones and the dying child would ideally be kind, patient, compassionate and wanting to engage all involved in creating something that gives them the sacred space to be present in a loving and connected way.

We meet superb human beings in this field. I met Lauren Murphy, who is a skilled photographer and is creating a service called My Living Funerals. I have previously assisted in two living funerals,

sometimes called living wakes. It's not as weird or creepy as it may sound. We are all interconnected in so many ways. Our connections, stories and shared memories can be a most powerful way to show respect and love for someone who is nearing the end of their life.

Both living funerals I assisted with were magnificent. How many times have we attended a funeral and thought, 'Gosh how lovely if the person who died could listen to these stories?' Undertaken with great sensitivity and creativity, a living funeral can leave a powerful legacy. Lauren is eager to create these for people, and she has the perfect personality for this work.

People have asked me, 'What happens after we die?'. I cannot truly say that I know, and I say that. People will often talk about what they believe happens; we can then rest in that together.

I often give examples of things that highlight that there are forever beginnings and endings throughout our lives. For example, when we are inside our mother's womb, we think that is our home. We don't know it is our home, but only for a certain amount of time. We rest in that warm, safe place where we receive food and comfort. Then, when we are born, we experience another reality. Perhaps death is another doorway to a new reality.



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SPORT  
Dean Vickerman

# Celebrate the process.



TEXT BY MICHAEL DUNCAN  
ILLUSTRATION BY THE VIEW FROM HERE

Even though I had the joy of watching the New York Knicks at the Garden when 'Linsanity' was taking the world by storm in 2011-12, it doesn't top a recent experience that went down on a more local court.

As I watched my 6-year-old, Ryder, score his first basket then triumphantly pump his fists in the air, just before a sense of uncertainty over what he'd just achieved spread across his face, I knew I'd just witnessed one of my all-time favourite sporting moments.

But in the professional sporting world, not all milestones are as massive as that. To keep their squads motivated, different teams partake in various celebrations for accomplishments that are occurring at varying scales – say, a player's personal milestone to the team winning the whole shebang.

The following gent would be well within his rights to have actually trademarked his own celebratory routine already.

Once you begin speaking with championship-winning Melbourne United coach, Dean Vickerman, you realise just how important recognising celebrations are to him, and it may be one of the more inspiring ways I've heard anyone talk about winning.

For Dean, it's about celebrating the process and all that comes with it. From personal milestones to team breakthroughs, it's about looking for the small things during the journey and recognising them. It's these small celebrations that cultivates a strong, positive culture, which eventually makes winning championships possible.

The Vickerman name is synonymous with basketball in Warragul, where his parents Pam and John still reside, and where they've played a significant role in the lives of many young basketballers.

Dean had an impressive playing career himself, and similar to WNBL player

Hannah Kaser (*Gippslandia* #12), Dean attributes much of his success to the hard work, passion and dedication of his junior coaches – all of whom he can name, right back to his under-12 teams.

As a player, Dean had a stint with the Melbourne Tigers. In his first year with the NBL club, he signed a contract for \$5000 and a pair of shoes. It may seem odd, but it was at that point he realised he could make a life from basketball and that it was a dream worth chasing.

It was Brett Brown, his under-20s coach at the Tigers, who ignited Dean's passion for coaching (it's funny how good coaches can do that. Revisit *Gippslandia* #8 for my story on Harmit Singh). "Brett was a real 'players' coach'. He would work the skills to a different level, constantly finding different ways [to improve our skills]. One day, he made us train in gardening gloves, which when we took them off, really improved our ball handling".

We're not sure if Brett, now the Head Coach of the Philadelphia 76ers in the NBA, is employing the same tactics with the Australian 76ers superstar, Ben Simmons, but it's an amusing thought.

Staying positive and chasing the dream isn't always a linear path, as Dean explains, "There were many hard times. In '98, I landed my first NBL assistant [coaching] role with the Melbourne Giants, but then they folded. I ended up landing a job with the Rockhampton Rockets and just took the opportunity up there, before moving back to Melbourne and joining the Melbourne Tigers, as a volunteer at the time."

It's clear that for Dean, the dream was worth the sacrifice. He'd take whatever opportunity came his way, which led to roles in Sydney under Andrew Gaze, then in Wellington, before heading to coach the Melbourne University team, all with a singular goal – to better himself. As a previous interviewee sports podcaster Mark Howard shared in *Gippslandia* #11, "When an opportunity presents itself, say yes and figure the rest out later".

An extra dose of courage saw Dean take a leap of faith, becoming involved in the launch of the Singapore Slingers franchise, about which he remarks, "When you're faced with a fork in the road, take the path you haven't been

down". Following his run at the Slingers, Dean landed himself a coaching role with the New Zealand Breakers. It's with the Breakers, as an assistant and then as head coach, that Dean would spend the next very fruitful nine years as the club chalked up four NBL Grand Final wins.

The New Zealand side was coming off three championship wins when Dean took over as head coach. They won their first game of the season before going on to lose four in a row. Such a brutal stretch forces a coach to ask hard questions of themselves.

"I told myself I was failing. I asked if I was good enough? Am I ready?" Vickerman recalls.

"It's through the hard times that you learn what's important, I learned to be clear on whose feedback was important to me and to block out that which wasn't, I learned to take care of myself physically, staying fit helps to remove the weight off your shoulders. I had a mentor from another sport that was great to bounce off and I built networks with coaches like Craig Bellamy – the correlations are similar regardless of the sport".

After a losing record in 2013-14, Dean led the Breakers back to championship glory in 2014-15 and their fifth NBL Grand Final series in six years in 2015-16, but unfortunately, it was the Perth Wildcats that prevailed in the three-game series that year.

In 2016, Dean was named an assistant coach of the Sydney Kings, and joined former Melbourne Tigers royalty Lanard Copeland, and Andrew Gaze, who was appointed head coach. The following year, Dean returned to his home state and became the head coach of Melbourne United.

When asked if he has a guiding principle to his coaching, Dean explains that there is one thing that gets him through the tougher days and it harks back his time with Andrej Lemanis, who was the head coach with the New Zealand Breakers before Dean took on the role. "Andrej put a sign on all of our desks, it was everywhere to see and it simply read 'Did we get better today?'. When I get up in the morning I decide what I want to achieve and get better at today.

How can I make my players better players, better people and more connected to each other?"

With a mindset like this, it's no wonder that in his first season with Melbourne United, Dean took them to a Grand Final series win and was named the 2018 Victorian Coach of the Year.

But this man from Warragul isn't done yet – having now coached against four NBA sides and coached at Los Angeles' famous Staples Center, he's set his sights on one day coaching the Australian side to Olympic glory (maybe he'll bump into #2 star, Aislin Jones, there).

With his sister Malia living in Buln Buln, Dean loves to get back and see his family whenever he can. "Our kids just love my sister's land, we love the scenery, it's such a great escape for us". As a product of Warragul's St Paul's Anglican Grammar School, he's very much hoping to be able to get back for his upcoming 30-year high school reunion and see some old friends.

Dean's now in his dream job, coaching a championship-winning franchise in his beloved city of Melbourne. He's worked tirelessly, taken every opportunity, and travelled far and wide to learn as many kernels of coaching wisdom that he can. All coaches strive to elevate their team to become more than the sum of their talents, but Dean is one of the few who has consistently succeeded in this goal, and now it's delivering more wins for the United fans.

For a man with a personal philosophy that celebrates the smaller steps that pave the way along your bigger journey, we're sure Dean's career has many joyous milestones left in it, and we've got a hunch that they'll hopefully include a World Championship and Olympic medal or two.

As I close my column for this issue, the third birthday edition of *Gippslandia*, I can't help but feel a little contemplative. Listening to Dean share his story draws parallels as to why we began this publication in the first place; we decided that our region could be viewed differently and be celebrated. Taking this approach often requires far more work, a series of many small victories, but the rewards make it all worthwhile.

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ART  
Lovely little lumps

# Lumping it.

INTRODUCTION & WORK BY BEC VANDYK, POLLYANNAR AND COAL HOLE CONTRIBUTORS



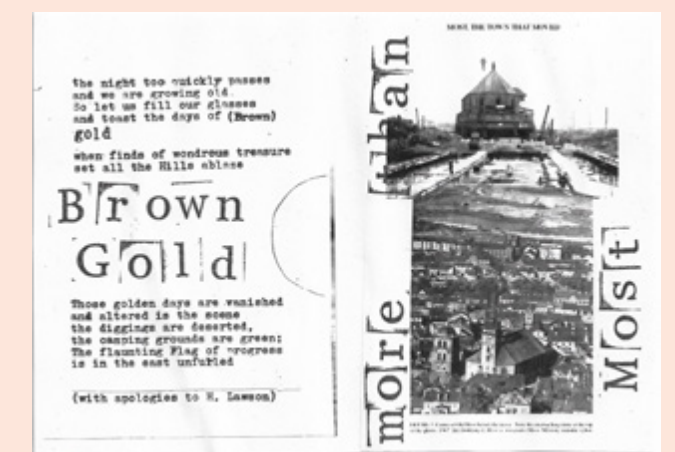
*Lumping it* zine is a monthly project facilitated by artist Bec Vandyk, and is designed to create a printed space for dialogue regarding the rehabilitation of the open-cut mining landforms of Hazelwood and other mines in the region.

Pages are created by individuals and represent their ideas about various aspects of brown coal mining in the Latrobe Valley. *Lumping it* is not intended to be a factual publication, and readers are urged to research rehabilitation facts and concepts according to their interest and curiosity.

**The Latrobe Valley Mine Rehabilitation Commissioner can be contacted at:**

Suite 5, 55 Grey St, Traralgon  
1800 571 966  
commissioner@lvmmc.vic.gov.au

*Obviously, Gippslandia loves more independent publications being created in our region. In releasing three editions of Lumping it, Bec and PollyannaR have prompted community discourse on the rehabilitation of the Hazelwood mine while staying true to a medium we love. Print is not dead.*



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Lot 217	1119m <sup>2</sup>	\$195,000	Lot 209	950m <sup>2</sup>	\$180,000	Lot 201	950m <sup>2</sup>	\$183,000
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Lot 215	1098m <sup>2</sup>	\$179,000	Lot 207	1097m <sup>2</sup>	\$190,000			

# Joy, and the thousand other emotions you feel when spending time with family.

FEATURE  
Celebrations spent with family

TEXT BY EDA SOFÍA C.B

**“If you think you’re enlightened, go spend a week with your family.” – spiritual teacher and clinical psychologist, Ram Dass.**

#### Family

“Family”, I whisper to myself as I sit here back home, eight metres away from them, as they fit in something to eat in-between boisterous laughter. There are my four cousins, my aunties and their girlfriends; Mumma is somewhere washing dishes and I’m waiting for the coffee to brew. I wonder if on this visit they’ll raise embarrassing childhood stories? Earnestly ask about my new home, or just make fun of me?”

My family is Latin and this may explain part of the reason why we have (not always want, but have) to spend so much time together. If we don’t, it’s just weird. How can you come together for one celebration and not spend the week leading up to it, and the week after it, together? We will be preparing, gossiping, laughing, fighting, hugging and discussing everything together. Yes, we Latins aren’t exactly the cliché that we’re made out to be, but we’re quite close. We’re more complex than, and yet still similar to, the stereotypes. And, because this is my reality, it is the only place from which I can write — biased despite my desire to be impartial.

And I sit here, my usual weird self, eight metres away from them, enjoying their laughter almost as much as this tropical rain that parts us, the distance allowing me to write and be here in the moment by myself. I love my family, but oh I adore my alone time. So when I can have a bit of both, that is when holidays work out perfectly for me. Maybe I kind of embody the Pareto Principle, the 80/20 rule — but for me, 80% of my time needs to be spent alone: books, writing, walks, podcasts and black coffee.

It is hard coming back home and suddenly feeling like a teenager again. A period that for many of us is our

worst, and probably most insecure, years. Since then, you’ve changed and reshaped your life at least twenty times over, but, nonetheless, everything here at home seems to be stuck in time. So, of course, you are the one who is different, ungrateful and changed. But aren’t we all changing? Isn’t change good? It is obviously scary.

As time passes, I’ve come to understand that this feeling is not inherently mine. I’ve come to learn how every one of us has a complicated, eccentric, unique family relationship. Each of us has found different ways to cope, love, be present and also allow alone time, rest and recharge time. Family, if we were a bit wiser and more eloquent, should be a concept with a thousand different words to explain it. Each definition could express a nuance in the meaning of family, similar to Inuits having so many words to describe snow. Maybe this idea could free us from fitting into a single familial arrangement or from feeling odd, left out and alone. We could choose a word to mean ‘helicopter-family’, ‘dysfunctional-family’, ‘happy-but-with-tendencies-to-depression-family’ or ‘overachieving-family’.

Maybe ‘family’ is a powerful word because it has no defined meaning, but is instead a moveable concept that depends on thousands of tiny circumstances that start shaping us from before we are born.

“Family”, I repeat to myself as I turn around to look at them. They’re all so different. I hold back from walking over to hug them. I can already feel a tumultuous array of emotions surging from deep within my body, crawling up and trying to get out. To say it all — to compress in a couple of words all the love I’ve ever felt for my family, but also all the fear, sadness and frustration that accompanies the love. It’s almost overwhelming.

Family celebrations and relationships are a tricky subject to write about because each experience is so different. There must be an awesome language in the world that has a word that means simultaneously loving and hating your family — longing to be with them, while dreading being there — in the same

minute. Especially when you’re back for a major celebration and haven’t seen them in a while. A word for when you can look at everything you miss about them, but also what you’ve moved away from in order to become who you are now. If that concept existed, it would have been the title of this piece.

#### Celebrations with family

Family celebrations are more than a double-edged sword. They’re like ninja stars: sleek and beautiful, but also incredibly sharp and deadly.

I’ve always marvelled at the power the people closest to us exert upon us. They give us so much by shaping us, but they can also leave wounds that are difficult to heal.

I’ve grown surrounded by family celebrations — Sunday lunch with my grandparents and cousins, and summers spent in a full house 24/7. Now, I live 17000 km away from them and often I wonder about the meaning of the oceans I’ve decided to put between us. I’ve been lucky and privileged to grow up in a ‘normal’ household, full of laughter, hugs, hard work and discipline (so much of it). And I can say, without having to lie, that I love my family deeply.

So here I am, back home for my parents’ 60th birthday and to visit most of my cousins. I’m here to enjoy being surrounded by them, but also show them who I have become (maybe you understand this too), to answer questions and try to clear their doubts. I am back as a self-assured, happy woman, and yet there can be hints of the same insecure girl that left those years ago. I am trying to prove myself, feeling an indecent need to convince everyone, especially myself, that I’m enough, that what I do is valid and that the life I’ve chosen is okay.

Between our conversations I can truly feel their care, but also their doubts. They remember my embarrassing childhood moments, but they don’t adhere to my current views of the world, nor do they want to sit down and discuss them.

It’s about being together. In trying to get closer to me, they might recommend new diets or new ways to approach my work. We are all trying to connect in our own awkward ways, the only ways we know. Trying to say “I love you” but utilising a million unnecessary words, we focus on things that are not even important. The fact that we are here, still enjoying being together, that we have a shared history and things that connect us in deeper ways than our jobs, hairstyles, gender preferences or any other visual superficialities that people can put so much weighting on, is paramount. Maybe that is the dream: that family is a place of solace, safety, love and acceptance. A dream that will start when someone decides to rise above and truly see the humans they have grown standing strong in their truths, having worked and discovered who they are and who they are becoming.

So maybe the gist to family celebrations, and family life in general, lies in us, the individual. In spending time with ourselves, truly nurturing the eighty per cent that we treasure so much. This allows us to get to know who we are. The time spent with ourselves, reaffirming our values, may allow us to come back to these people who saw us when we were at our worst — when we’re younger, but also full of compassion. It allows us to be soft enough to let everything that doesn’t serve us fall away, but compassionate enough to truly listen, and give them all that they have provided us (and more).

Family can be a tool for personal growth and deeper understanding. Maybe our family is a type of school for difference, acceptance and peace? Maybe, as it’s where everything starts, it is also where we can go back to learn, challenge ourselves and actually check how enlightened we have become... one family celebration at a time.

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# Going natural.

TEXT BY KAREN CASEY

“Hey. Hey! Check out my water feature.”

The Ideas Man rips back the bedroom blinds and I'm smashed awake by the sun. Toast in hand, he grins out at the water.

“Look. Look. Check it out.”

This awakening is the tail end of the five-year project that is The Ideas Man's most epic idea to date: a 15m x 15m natural swimming pool that has been plumbed and pimped within an inch of its life.

It began as a fleeting desire to install a pool, a desire that quickly waned as summer passed. Living in the unpredictable Victorian climate, we decided not to invest in a pool that would sit green and untouchable for the best part of the year. We settled on a natural swimming pool, a no-maintenance splash-about that would please the senses all year round with its delightful appearance and acoustics. And, given that project costs were upwards of \$60,000, The Ideas Man would build it himself.

As with anything The Idea Man attempts, this pool was to be no amateur puddle. He sent away for a 'Build Your Own Natural Swimming Pool' DVD in which an Englishman walked him through the construction of a plunge pool. He also consulted a friend, a hydrologist, which in layman's terms means a person who knows stuff about cleaning waterways. Research done, The Ideas Man got to work digging a crater five times the size of the one in the DVD, with a concrete lap pool in the centre highlighted by bubbles and redgum capping. Understandably, this process took time, sweat and tears.

“I'm going to start a gym.” Year three of the project. The bulk of the pool had been dug by machine, but The Ideas Man is sweating profusely, shaping the half-baked crater around the lap pool by hand. “I've moved that many barrows of dirt. I'm sweating. It hurts. That's a workout, right?”

Yes. But I don't think you can pass the crater off as a gym.

The Ideas Man disagreed. He has a plan. He waves his phone in my face. It is a Gumtree ad fronted by Mr T dripping in gold chains, jamming a finger at me. The words “We Want You” are plastered underneath him. Then this:

“Sick of your man boobs? Don't want to pay ridiculous gym fees? Want to learn

new skills? This is for you. I will teach you how to swing a pick and use a shovel. I will work alongside you, mentoring you on how to push a wheelbarrow full of dirt. These are basic life skills you need and guess what? You get fit while doing it. All of this is free of charge. Class is filling fast so give me a call and I will see if I can fit you in.”

“No way. You actually posted it?”

The Ideas Man nods, impressed with himself.

The next morning someone has responded “Legend”, then the phone proceeds to ding non-stop with notifications that the ad is getting a high number of views. The Ideas Man has the high-pitched giggles. His finger and thumb are jammed in his eyes, having brought himself to tears.

The pool hole is dug and shaped over the next six months, then, because our soil is exceptionally porous, is lined with geofabric plastic liner, sand and pebbles. A raised rain garden is built and layered with gravel, sand, soil, rocks and plants, through which the pool water is pumped and filtered.

There are more than 150 plants in the rain garden and surrounds of the pool, using up the nutrients that might otherwise cause algal blooms. The plants also create prime conditions for microorganisms to flourish

and process pollutants. Coupled with aeration, our water will eventually be clear.

While we wait for that to happen, The Ideas Man continues to pimp the pool. From the beginning, the project has been a live game of dominoes with one idea triggering another.

“Hey. Hey. Look at this.”

The Ideas Man dumps an ancient clawfoot bath on the verandah. After two years of shifting it from one place to the other, the bath is finally installed beside the pool. The rain garden water is plumbed into a copper coil running through a wood heater and into the bath. You can either sit in it and gloat, or pull the plug and duck under the drainage pipe overhanging the lap pool to let it run over your weary shoulders. It's amazing. So amazing that I thought we were finally done. But alas, this is an Ideas Man project. Last weekend, there was a knock at the door. The Ideas Man answers it, then waves us all over.

“Hey. Hey kids! The turtle's here!”

—  
*Karen Casey is a Ripplebrook resident, journalist and author of 'The Misadventures of The Travelling Quirkus and The Extraordinary Gum Tree children's book series, which supports farmers through the Aussie Helpers charity.*



## Christmas class.

TEXT BY GIPPSLANDIA  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAUREN MURPHY PHOTOGRAPHY

Like all good Christmas stories, this one begins in the waters of Scotland and involves dead seaman...

—

The distant relatives of today's iconic, and ironic, Christmas sweaters was the Fair Isle woollen sweater, which originated on a small island of the same name near Scotland. Worn by fisherman, the Fair Isle sweater was knitted in a similar style to today's shape, and would typically feature between two and five alternating colours. To buoy your Christmas spirits, each coastal town would knit specific geometric shapes into their jumpers to assist with identifying the bodies of fishermen who had been lost overboard.

If woollen sweaters were suitable for the freezing conditions of northern Scotland, then they were good enough for the icy climes of Norway and Iceland too, especially when you're tearing down the ski slopes.

The Mariusgenser (Norway) and Lopapeysa (Iceland) were sweaters that incorporated jazzy geometric patterns in multiple colours of wool, and in the 1950s, as Hollywood stars like Ingrid Bergman, Clark Gable

and Gary Cooper embraced exotic vacations in the mountains, they brought these European styles to North America, transforming the comfy sweater into a surprisingly chic fashion choice.

This coincided with the mass commercialisation of Christmas, which took off thanks to the post-War economic boom. No longer were kids getting a piece of fruit in their stockings, but toys instead! More relaxed knitwear was replacing suiting as the Christmas attire of choice, and this led to the 'Jingle Bell Sweaters', which featured discreet Christmas-themed decorations.

Welcome to the first Christmas sweaters.

As we know, fashion is cyclical, and in the 1980s several TV comedy characters began wearing vibrant knitted jumpers, and bold, heavily patterned knitwear was used by designers to inject the energy of the decade into their creations. It's rumoured that there was a lot of 'snow' about the catwalks of the 80s too, but it was less suited for skiing.

Comedic star Chevy Chase showcases some quality Christmas sweaters in the late-80s *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*. They cameo again in 1990 classic *Home Alone*, then all goes quiet.

Boom! Bridget Jones's *Diary* is released in 2001 and Mark Darcey is rocking his giant Rudolph knit. *Love Actually* hits cinemas in 2003, and Christmas sweaters begin to get on a bit of a roll again. They're still largely seen as a laugh, an ironic Christmas gift to trigger a few giggles, but then in 2011 online retailer Amazon reported an increase in Christmas jumper sales of 600%. Another increase was seen in 2012, as newspapers and magazines called them 'the season's must have'. Even the metal band Slayer has released a Christmas sweater.

The Chrissy jumper is popular again.

Famous designer labels like Burberry, Givenchy and Dolce & Gabbana have created ranges of Christmas jumpers. Famous photographers, like Warragul's Lauren Murphy, love capturing local Gippslandian families in some classic Christmas sweaters too. And, when combined with quality posing, they bring an extra dash of festive cheer to us all!



# Meeniyan Marty Gras: Celebrating rural diversity.

TEXT BY EMMA LIVESEY

**On a cold, rainy November day in South Gippsland, you could be forgiven for thinking that the best way to spend the coming evening would be curled up in the warmth of one's home rather than heading out. Driving into the small town of Meeniyan, however, the sight of dozens of bright, boldly dressed people standing outside the town hall confirms that you made the right choice.**

As the rain begins to come down hard once more, the anticipation in the crowd grows. Then, suddenly, a cheer erupts upon seeing a camo-painted vehicle that's as flamboyantly decorated as the waiting throng. Riding in the tray of the vehicle, multiple individuals smile and wave at the crowd as they approach. One of these individuals is Marty Thomas, a local business owner and proud community member. It is his arrival that marks the official beginning of the First Annual Meeniyan Marty Gras.

Though this is the first official year of Marty Gras, the event actually traces its origins way back to 1998. This is when close friends Kym and Marty decided to celebrate their 30th birthday together, two hours away from the rolling hills of South Gippsland in the suburb of South Melbourne, with a party they dubbed 'Kym & Marty Gras'.

Exactly 20 years later, in 2018, 'Kim & Marty Gras' was revived when the friends, now celebrating their 50th birthday, decided to have a second themed event in Meeniyan.

"So much fun was had last year, that we were asked to make it a yearly event!", Marty happily explains, reflecting on last year's birthday celebration.

And so it came to pass that on November 9, 2019, with the glorious arrival of Marty, the revellers filed into Meeniyan Town Hall to begin celebrations once more. Some were dressed for a night on the town, others in costume. Even a young Freddie Mercury was in attendance! It was clear that everyone who had turned up to the event was ready for another epic night of revelry. Once in the hall, cheers erupted again as the music was cranked up and the festivities began in earnest.

Marty Gras is more than just another big party, it's an outlet to celebrate the diversity of the community. Hence, it was decided that the event would dedicate itself to raising

money for charity. In the end, two charities were chosen to benefit:

**South Coast Inclusion Network (SCIN)** was chosen as the local recipient. This group helps advocate for the LGBTIQ community in the Bass Coast, South Gippsland and Baw Baw Shires. They offer inclusivity workshops and guest speaker opportunities, as well as information and support for LGBTIQ individuals and families. The money raised will go towards putting on an SCIN 'inclusion film' community screening.

**Opportunities of Development thru Art (ODA)** were chosen as the international recipient. As a cause close to Marty's heart, this charity runs eight schools in the villages surrounding Siem Reap, Cambodia. Marty himself often does local fundraising for the group, and volunteers at least every two years or so in one of the schools. Their donation will go towards funding wages for the teachers of School Six.

The motivation of giving to those who need it most is on clear display throughout the event, from pamphlets at the entrances promoting the work of both charities, to posters on the walls.

Following opening speeches, drag queen Krystal Ring appears on stage to entertain the crowd. Strutting, as only Krystal can, she launches into a performance with her unique blend of humour, dance and song.

After highlighting the charities once more, the night's fun kicks on.

On top of the entry fee guests have paid, a raffle and silent auction are held to raise additional funds. Impressively, and perhaps a testament to the passion of the wider Meeniyan community, every local business donated a prize for the event.

The way that businesses across the community supported the event was a proud moment for Marty:

*"This is an amazing town. It grabs every opportunity to do good and have fun, and I so want to thank our sponsors and local volunteers who helped us make such a great event."*

By the end of the evening, over \$6,000 had been raised to be split evenly between SCIN and ODA. Adding to the night's generous spirit, the Red Cross catered the event and themselves raised an additional \$2,000.

*"An event like Marty Gras showcases the diverse rural community in which we live", enthuses Marty. "We can all join together for a night, forget about our differences and have great, no-judgement fun!"*

Marty hopes that the event will become an annual staple in Meeniyan, helping to spread joy and inclusion, and support those from all walks of life for years to come.



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# High on



TEXT BY ASHEDA WEEKES  
PHOTOGRAPHY SUPPLIED BY AIDAN WEICHARD

# mojo



**Step aside Monstera and Agaves; Australian wildlife is making a comeback as the main source of nature on our walls. West Gippsland-based painter Aidan Weichard's effervescent works offer an ode to our beautiful flora and fauna, as well giving you extra pep with their lush, lively colours.**

Tucked away in Garfield is a small 'fixer-upper' that Aidan calls home. When he's not working long hours in the studio out back, he's spending time with his wife, Jen, either undertaking their renovations, tending to the garden beds or hanging out with their two horses, two Aussie Shepherds, some friendly chooks and a cat named, Flower. Garfield ticked all the right boxes for them — it's on the cusp of Gippsland and feels wedged between the city and the bush. It isn't where he's from, but it feels right to call it home. Aidan adds, "In this space, I'm surrounded by what constantly inspires me — my beautiful animals and Gippsland's region."

It's not only native wildlife that features in Aidan's work, but also our industrious farm animals. Livestock and working dogs draw Aidan in time and time again for their stoic, hardworking and loyal nature. Initially, you may not believe that a painting of a bull could look amazing on your living room wall, but Aidan's vibrant paintings fill his subjects with vitality and vigour. His biggest inspirations though are his two Aussie Shepherds — Disney and Faloo. As Aidan explains, "Their affection and loyalty amazes me every day. I find brilliance like this in all animals and have such an admiration for the unique markings and unmistakable characteristics of every species that I paint. Just being in the presence of animals has a dramatic proven positive physiological and psychological effect on us and my art tries to explore this using colour and texture".

This love for wildlife's incredible energy is something that's been unconsciously ticking away in Aidan's mind since he was young. When constantly drawing throughout his teenage years, Aidan's works always came out in the form of animals.

This passion never went away, despite the career path he initially started out on.

For almost five years, Aidan worked in hospital science research centres that were focussing on paediatric sleep research. It wasn't a dramatic shift away from research to art, but rather a slow burn that continually built his confidence that he could make a living out painting. Originally, Aidan began with a few commissions that he would chip away during the evening, he then began moving away from full-time work to give himself more space to create, before increasing demand set him on a new career path as a full-time artist.

During his career transition, Aidan discovered the artistic style he felt did his subject matter justice and provided joy to those admiring the works.

"Once I started getting back into [painting], I went to the Manyung Gallery in Sorrento and saw John Giese's work. He was painting a lot of animals, and I was overwhelmed with how he captured them in abstract and high colour. It hit home and I thought, 'This is something I would love to attempt.'"

Much like his style, his subject matter has also been refined over time. Aidan began by featuring a lot of exotic animals, as he honed his process and technique. At the same time, his subject matter felt slightly off. They were big, powerful and majestic animals, but Aidan realised that we have majestic animals here too.

"I needed to bring it back home, and bring it back to native animals, Australians and things that I genuinely love — things that I grew up being surrounded by. Once I made that transition, the light switch went on".

Overidentifying with style is a challenge Aidan still wrestles with, but in a way it's only to refine his techniques and become more a versatile artist. From using oil paint (frequently considered the superior paint) on canvas, Aidan is now playing with mixed media, such as spray paint, enamel on wood and painting on cardboard. It's about having fun, flexibility and fluidity with his style, and by doing so he believes it, "Dramatises and accentuates elements unique to the subject matter". The core concept that guides Aidan's work is simple — they are mindful reflections of this amazing place and the wonderful things within it.

When looking at Aidan's work, you feel a brightness and levity in the subject matter. It can heighten the playfulness found in a cockatoo, the power of a bull or the vibrancy of fresh gum leaves. High colour is purposeful in emphasising character, persona or emotion.

"Keeping the majority of my artworks fluid and abstracted, contrasted against hints of detail in crucial

components such as the eyes, forces the imaginative reconstruction to see a piece in its entirety."

It may sound cool, painting all day in a studio, but that's not only what Aidan does. We possibly forget that a lot of artists are technically small business owners, and that requires customer service, admin, networking and more. Digital platforms have helped with some of these tasks. Art marketplaces, like Blue Thumb, offer a huge opportunity to increase your reach as an artist and possibly tap into the international market. But these still require a lot of time (much like posting on the Facebook marketplace!) to write up, style, photograph and upload the artwork. But for Aidan, it's absolutely worthwhile as spaces such as these, as well as Instagram, make connecting with fans and customers easier, as well as providing a means to build networks with other artists: "The art community is really vibrant. People are willing to help get connected and create spaces to showcase art".

Aidan admires the strong art communities found across Gippsland. He appreciates the opportunities our local galleries provide and particularly values artist residencies, such as the FLOAT residency perched on Lake Tyers.

"There are so many great artists that live down here and are doing fantastic things. It would be great to set up places where artists can go in the highlands of the mountains that speak no end to the beautiful bush and being surrounded by Australians."

Aidan's kicking off 2020 with a few exciting projects. First off, the biggest project he's got ahead of him is fatherhood, which he's absolutely stoked for. In March, he'll be doing a solo exhibition at an Armadale gallery. The show will feature works that have him branching a little further in his fluid style, but keeping to his beloved subject matter. It'll be showcasing his experimentation with different mediums and the exploring of memoryscapes — definitely a collection to check out!

Aidan approaches his work with thoughtfulness, intention and the desire to continue bettering his craft, as he respectfully celebrates our wildlife and, in turn, the joy he has for them. We've all heard before that we need to get closer to nature. Lucky Aidan gets to do that every day!

—  
Browse Aidan's paintings and prints via the links provided below. Also, Aidan undertakes commissions of your fur babies too. [www.aidanweichard.com.au/](http://www.aidanweichard.com.au/) Instagram: @aidan\_weichard\_art / Blue Thumb: [bluetumb.com.au/aidan-weichard](http://bluetumb.com.au/aidan-weichard)





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# Resurgence.

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHY ANDREW NORTHOVER

**There comes a time in every hunter's life where self-discovery plays a role in their path to success. The pursuit of a target, especially one as cunning as a panther, expands beyond one's physical actions, and progresses into that of a mental game — a psychological test of patience and sanity, forcing those who engage with it to isolate themselves from humanity and civilisation.**

A panther is not a domestic house cat. They're an alpha predator wrapped in an enigma. Not only do they not want their location known, they stay perpetually aware of their surroundings, and that which occupies their territory. A panther is essentially a master of anonymity and stealth, making its entire existence a game of remaining hidden. It's for this reason alone

that the Gippsland Panther has divided the region into a group of non-believers and investigators alike.

Arnald Olsen's commitment to the cause has seen the man transform his life to provide closure on the argument and determine a definitive answer to the question — does it *really* exist? Originally residing in his sophisticated Scandinavian homeland, Arnald's decision to relocate to a more primitive jurisdiction has meant he can focus his energies more acutely on tracking an animal in uncharted terrain, away from the noise and deterrents of human traffic.

Three years he's spent on our shores, scouring the land from as far south as the Cape Liptrap coast, to the mountains of Howitt Plains and beyond. Tracking large groups of animals is one thing. Trends, habits and patterns can be observed when you're given a broader footprint of existence. But chasing a lone cat, cunning, distant, with no herd, no mating partners, the game suddenly becomes much harder. It's a 'needle in a haystack' scenario.

Arnald's journey has led him close. Visual contact has been made from afar, and our most recent check-in

with the hunter revealed that he has spotted what he's certain is the trophy he has been chasing since the birth of this publication — The Gippsland Panther.

Naturally, the location must remain quiet for the time being, as Arnald's next few weeks will be spent strategically placing traps, bait, and trail cameras in an effort to finally provide confirmation of the star of this local fable, one which has driven the local community into the forests in search of the cat for decades, but with close to no plausible evidence to date. Blurry photos and distant reflections of eyes connected to an indistinguishable figure have left the story in a state of conspiracy.

*During this time, we ask any reader who has had recent encounters with the Gippsland Panther to contact [findthepanther@gippslandia.com.au](mailto:findthepanther@gippslandia.com.au) with any information they have about its location, or, alternatively, any instances where sightings may have occurred, to help Arnald narrow his focus to a specific location.*

# Finding something to celebrate, every day.



TEXT BY JOHN CALABRO  
ORIGINAL IMAGE BY ALESSANDRA OLANOW

**You know those times when life seems to conspiratorially pool together a series of events that present you with a theme you just can't ignore? Like, when you're considering buying a car and you then see the exact model you're considering at every turn? I had the same sensation while developing this article on our theme of 'celebrations'.**

The result for you, dear reader, is that if you're wired to be on the lookout for things to celebrate, it turns out there's quite a bit! And, that's got to be good news, right? It's a nice frame of mind to be in, and I'd recommend more people give it a try.

The penny dropped this morning while listening to a Tim Ferris podcast on a drive to Melbourne. Tim is the famed author of the work/life balance bible *The 4-Hour Workweek*, and on the episode he talked about this exact phenomenon — when you're considering something and then begin seeing it everywhere.

In his context as a motivational speaker, some call it 'the growth mindset'. In particular, the theory that if you put a thought out there, say, something you want to happen, the mystical cosmos will somehow cooperate to make it happen. Various cultural manifestations of this mindset are familiar to us all: prayer is one, meditating on something is another, and goal setting is another again. The seminal book *Think and Grow Rich* by Ben Holden-Crowther

and Napoleon Hill espoused a similar concept regarding visualisation. One of my personal favorites is Wayne's mental projection of The Door's lead singer, Jim Morrison, in *Wayne's World 2*, "Book them and they will come".

Before I continue, let me set the record straight. I'm no Tim Ferris fanboy, unlike many out there. I don't read all of his books. I don't prescribe to the four-hour workweek mentality of modern life hacks, but I do believe there's gold to collect from every pan (that's optimism) and Tim's podcast is a good source for more positive insights.

The podcast in question was a Q&A on topics such as how to stay motivated, how to deal with depression, ideas for parenting and even how to cope with balding. Whilst Ferris-fandom can get tiresome and trite, the guy himself is a straight-up dude with a refreshingly real perspective on challenges that we all have to go through at some point in our life.

As I listened, I was reminded of a few things pertinent to this edition.

An optimistic mindset continually enables us to see opportunity where others see problems or roadblocks. Dale Carnegie's book *Stop Worrying and Start Living* is another iconic tome that even Tim cites as an inspiration. Bringing an optimistic mindset to your morning is a nice way to start the day. You should give it a go.

The morning prior to hearing that podcast, I'd seen the picture above in my Instagram feed, care of my friend Sara Davey, a local entrepreneur whose business Kapowder provides health and lifestyle products to a global audience — she'd posted this image from *The New York Times* and it's a poignant reminder. Keep your head up! At the 50,000 foot level, we have things pretty good

compared to so many others in countries and regions less fortunate than ours.

I had been planning to write this article as a celebration of all my favourite moments and articles during Gippslandia's three-year history (I think interviewing my kids in issue 11 might take the cake — so much cuteness jammed into one page). Instead, as this article came together, the world continued to conspire by collecting thoughts of celebration.

I'd been watching the biopic film *First Man*, which chronicles Neil Armstrong on his journey to the moon. Film review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes declares an 87% rating for the movie, but I was taking more than film-making techniques from it. Many themes circled around my consciousness as I watched the story unfold: sacrifices, technology, the brittle nature of life, an appreciation for what we have, and for precious time with our loved ones.

As the dramatisation tells it, grave misfortune serendipitously led to Neil Armstrong being selected as the man to command the first lunar module. With my celebratory lens strongly in focus, I was reminded how opportunity sometimes appears from the worst of situations. Life can still give us an opening, even when you feel like it has done nothing but shit on your face.

After all, this paper is built on a foundation of optimism! The excerpt below from issue two reminds us of why we're doing it:

*"Feedback for issue one was overwhelmingly positive, save for the healthy debate about using an attractive female on the cover and the size of the article text. We get that you can't please everyone, nor will we try. As we were challenged by another local publisher, who berated us for selling subscriptions to a free magazine, expat Gippslanders as far as*

*Melbourne, Sydney, Western Australia, London and Stockholm are asking how they can get a copy. 'You'll have a lot of competition' came one remark, to which we say, 'to the contrary: we are on the same team'.*

*"Rather than position ourselves as a news service, we at Gippslandia see our role to bring big ideas about future possibility and opportunity to the table, and to start that longer term dialogue. Despite the troubles we face around our region, if we can rise above and see these as mere bumps in the road, we may find ourselves on a long highway to greatness.*

*Engagement in blame gaming and fear mongering is possibly more damaging long term than any of problems themselves. A strong Gippsland media is one with many outlets pushing the same message: we are great, we are worthy, we are intelligent, and we are serious. We encourage all local media, politicians, local leaders, opinionated social media types, school mums and taxi drivers, to join the team. Get this right, and our next visit by SBS Insight will ensure a very different edit on the national stage."*

So, what are the takeaways?

Happiness may only be a decision away. Appreciation is the first step towards happiness. Patience enables appreciation. Casting an optimistic lens on all of our problems feeds you up the chain. Let's remember the importance of optimism for human progress. We Gippslanders living, working and playing in the eastern pockets of Victoria have a lot to be thankful for — and this is indeed all worthy of celebration.

Have a great summer, Gippsland!



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