



THE RAILWAY EXPRESS #16

A SPECIAL NEWSLETTER TO HELP US STAY CONNECTED

AROUND THE HOUSE

Hello everyone,

Spring is definitely in the air - what a difference blue skies and blossoming trees can make! I hope you have been able to get out and enjoy the loveliness. The arrival of September and the warmer weather always gives me a boost, with lots to look forward to between now and the end of the year, including both of my children's birthdays. Speaking of birthdays, three members of our choir are celebrating theirs this month - happy birthday wishes to you **Janet**, **Shirley** and **Paul**! Another thing that gave me a boost this week was this message to staff that I found written on the veranda on Monday morning.



Beautiful chalk message for RH staff!

Despite being closed, we are very fortunate to be able to remain connected to our community, both via Zoom and in person. It's great to chat with people visiting our mini market and with those who meet at the House to go for a walk or bike ride with someone from their Railway House group. Local children are frequent visitors as well, and staff are lucky enough to be rewarded with their laughter and smiles which brighten our office days.



Taking a break from remote learning.

We also see a few garden volunteers - many thanks to them for looking after our garden! There was a big harvest this week to get the beds ready for Spring planting, and our new compost system was installed. Check it out on your walk past! Don't forget, we have seeds and seed raising mix out on the veranda at Railway House (Monday - Thursday 10am - 4pm) if you would like to pick some up and start growing some things for the garden from home.



As mentioned in our last newsletter, **Wear It Purple Day** - an annual LGBTIQ+ awareness day especially for young people - was on Friday 27th August. Thanks to everyone who showed support by wearing purple and sending in a photo!

L to R in photo from top row:

Paul (cycling), **Megan** (RH chairperson), **Bunny** (VCAL student), **Luca** (VCAL student), **Sue** (VCAL coordinator), **Lisa G.** (staff), **Alison** (staff), **Joe** (VCAL student), **Di** (cycling & cooking), **Shreyash** (VCAL student), **Carolyn** (choir), **Lisa C.** (staff).

Finally, I saw this delightful Facebook post from the **Friends of Public Housing (Victoria)** group last week. Seven-year-old **Dagi** is a regular at the House and attends our Monday afternoon Kids' Club.

"Public Housing is good. Lots of nice people live here. It's very beautiful where we live. We have lots of sunshine. We live near the zoo. My favourite animals are the lions and tigers. Fiona takes me to the park and to the Railway Neighbourhood House. I like going there. We read books. We garden and we paint and make hot chocolate with marshmallows. I go to gymnastics and dancing classes every week. This is me doing the splits!"

Don't forget that we are still planning on running our **Hello Neighbour** community makers markets in November and December. If you or anyone you know might be interested in having a stall, please complete this form <https://forms.gle/bngREyShBzgj5Qe78>.



Dagi doing the splits

Stay well.

Alison



WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?

Janice from the knitting group has been working on this great purple jumper – can't wait to see the finished product, Janice!



Janice's jumper

Mara from the VCAL program has been experimenting with tie-dyeing. She says, "There is no expected way to tie-dye – it's really just about experimenting and having fun with colours. I tie-dyed these grey tracksuit pants using neon pink, yellow and orange using no particular technique other than mixing different colours together. I also tried a different way of tie dyeing using a plain white t-shirt. This time I used elastic bands to separate different sections of the t-shirt to give a different effect rather than just place colour straight onto the clothing."

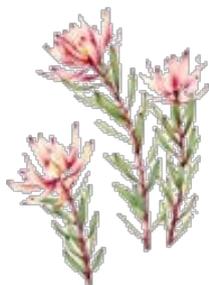


Mara's tie-dye projects

Lisa C. from the office has been perfecting her wholemeal bagel recipe. Did you know that bagels are boiled before they're baked? They're pretty fiddly but she's happy to report that she's nearly there.



Lisa's bagels ready to boil





GETTING TO KNOW YOU

This week we meet Andy Lewis, who runs the “Comedy Skool” program at Railway House.

I have many names. Andrew. Andy. Lewis. Well, that’s pretty much it. I’m a comedian and I teach comedy at Railway House, that is, when the evil comedy goblin that is lockdown isn’t keeping us in our homes. I grew up in Mount Eliza which is an outer Melbourne suburb nestled neatly in between Frankston’s bogan chic and Mornington’s soy chai lattes.

Our high school uniform was all brown. The school buildings were brown and the town clock was a different time on each side. I started doing stand up when I was 7 as a way of dealing with a sick parent. I’d do Robin Williams routines for my friends and by the end of primary school I was performing in front of 150 kids before school started. By the time high school started I’d experienced my first mental illness episode and spent most of my late teens in and out of hospital. I’d say to the staff on admission “when my jokes are good I’m ready to go home”. The Robin Williams material had stopped and my own material came in.



I can get a laugh from anyone in any situation and my main goals in life are performing and effecting change in mental health through comedy. If I can change the minds of 100 people doing stand up then I can change more lives in a single joke than I can talking to one person at a time. If you think you’re not funny remember everyone reading this has done a funny thing in their lives. Planned or unplanned. The trick is remembering it, figuring out why it was funny and using the same style again.

Railway House has been an absolute lifesaver for me. When I first paid a visit to Railway House my own mental health was the worst it had been in years. Through connecting with everyone there and mentioning I’m a comedian very quickly I was teaching my first comedy class. While I focus on people who’ve experienced some form of mental illness I see it as a two-way street. While I help others find the funny, my own mental health has improved with each lesson or “episode” as I like to call it.

It’s all perfect timing for me and the local community. I’ve survived some epic struggles in my life but even in a pandemic I’m happy because of the people I have around me. Also Professor Tabitha “T-Bag” Jones is the best little puppy a comedian could wish for but in order to fully describe her epic loveliness I’d have to break the entire internet and the dark web.

Toodles!



R U OK? Day – Thursday, 9th September (Today!)

R U OK?™

A conversation could change a life.

What is R U OK? R U OK? is a harm-prevention charity that promotes awareness of mental health and suicide and encourages Australians to reach out, via conversations, to those at risk in their community.

R U OK? contributes to suicide-prevention efforts by encouraging people to invest more time in their personal relationships and building their informal support networks - friends, family, colleagues – to be alert to those around them, have a conversation if they identify signs of distress or difficulty, and connect someone to support services, long before they're in crisis.



How about R U OK Day? The aim of R U OK? Day is to engage Australians to connect with people in the community they may have concerns about, encouraging them to seek further help and to follow up to ensure support is being provided.

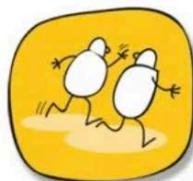
So what can I do? Got a feeling that somebody you know or care about isn't behaving as they normally would? Perhaps they seem out of sorts? More agitated or withdrawn? Trust your gut instinct and act on it. By starting a conversation and commenting on the changes you've noticed, you could help that person open up. If they say they aren't ok, you can show them they're supported and help them find strategies to better manage the load.



1. Ask



2. Listen



**3. Encourage
action**



4. Check in

More information at: www.ruok.org.au



SPRINGTIME SHEARING

by Paul Mayfield

In the Railway House choir last Wednesday, Flip asked if anyone had a 'spring song' suggestion for a zoom concert next week. I immediately thought of 'Oh! the springtime it brings on the Shearing'.

We sang it at the one-teacher primary school I attended (Bulart No 3698) in Western Victoria. It was my favourite then, because it brought to mind the district's industry ...of all hands ...mustering sheep, droving to the shed, shearing, wool rolling, pressing and trucking bales to Portland. As children, we accompanied our grandfather (as he neared retirement), opening gates, and droving mobs of sheep five miles between properties to the shearing shed.

The heady scent of pasture grass and wool grease followed the mob along a one chain road with us following in a Falcon utility. Sheep dogs, almost tripping over their tongues, followed the mob, zig zagging from left to right.



Mixed Flock by Jason Roberts

The excitement escalated when the road (wider now) reached a descent to a narrow single vehicle bridge crossing the Wannon River. The sheep were reluctant to be driven downhill, and balked at being forced onto the wooden planks which rattled and creaked. There, my father or our workman Harry would meet us. They would cut out approximately twenty leading wethers and drive them across so the rest would follow. The good news was that the return journey with shorn sheep was much easier. By now they knew the way. They were 10-12 pounds lighter and thundered across the bridge and up the hill.

The words of the folk song bring to mind how purposeful and fun much of our childhood was. A memory not quite so nostalgic was the sudden death of a large wether (probably a leader of the mob). My grandfather noticed the frothy mouth and decided it probably died of snake bite. Tiger snakes are at their most aggressive when coming out of hibernation in early spring. The lead sheep were being pushed through long grass on the road side. They were without the usual caution they would have had when feeding in the paddock. This event culminated with my father (wool classer and boss of the board) shearing the dead sheep at smoko, not an easy or pleasant task with all the shearing team looking on.

A phrase from a song or poem can bring to mind an early experience. I relish these precious memories. And feel a little sad, that, now I am my grandfather's age when we drove sheep to and from shearing, I cannot offer my grandchildren a similar experience of rural industry. I feel further removed from my roots by lockdown.



However my nostalgia is screened through a greater awareness of earlier grandchildren experiencing joy with their elders, people of the Buandig clan...before introduced livestock displaced wildlife and forever altered relationship to the land. Perhaps they crossed the Wannan (and fished) in canoes (that scar trees bear testimony to)?

I now wear my grandfather's watch. It is manually wound and has no luminescence, but keeps good time. It is comforting to recall good times and carry a moment in the march of the wool industry with a deeper appreciation of its cost and sacrifices. Perhaps I can leave my grandchildren songs that acknowledge country and an extended family's journey over countless generations in spring time made eternal?

I am grateful for the fun we have in Wednesday choir and encouragement of my friends there to record memories arising from 'Oh! the springtime it brings on the Shearing.'



TOP PICK



Lisa G. highly recommends the ABC series "Back to Nature". In this 8-part, visually stunning series, hosts Aaron Pedersen and Holly Ringland guide viewers through the wonder and awe of the Australian landscape, exploring stories that reconnect the audience with the natural world and with Country.¹

Lisa says, "I love this series, of which I have viewed two episodes so far because it instantly transports me 'back' to nature in with a very real and meditative quality. This is gold for moments you may need a pick-up or are feeling restricted to your immediate surrounds. It even finishes with a small but comforting cook; ricotta and honey pancakes or damper and hot chocolate.



I can recommend Episode 4 for a very local and heartfelt trip to Wurundjeri lands around Melbourne! These are not exotic, far away locales, these are places that are part of us."

Tuesdays from August 10th at 8:00 PM on ABC Television or streaming on ABC iView.

¹ Source: <https://help.abc.net.au/hc/en-us/articles/4403629954319-Take-a-trip-Back-to-Nature-on-ABC-TV-and-ABC-iView-from-August-10>



LET'S TALK FOOD

Charles from our gardening program – who is revealing himself as a superb cook - has sent in this delicious-sounding recipe for bread & butter pudding. If you're walking past Railway House on a Tuesday or a Wednesday, grab a loaf of day-old bread from Sugardough bakery – perfect for this dish!

SOURDOUGH BREAD 'N' BUTTER PUDDING

Ingredients:

- 1 loaf of sourdough bread
- 4 eggs plus 2 egg yolks
- 2 cups of milk
- 1 cup stewed rhubarb
- 2 cups cherries (pitted, please!)
- ½ cup maple syrup
- 1 tablespoon vanilla bean paste
- Dash (or three) of cinnamon



Instructions:

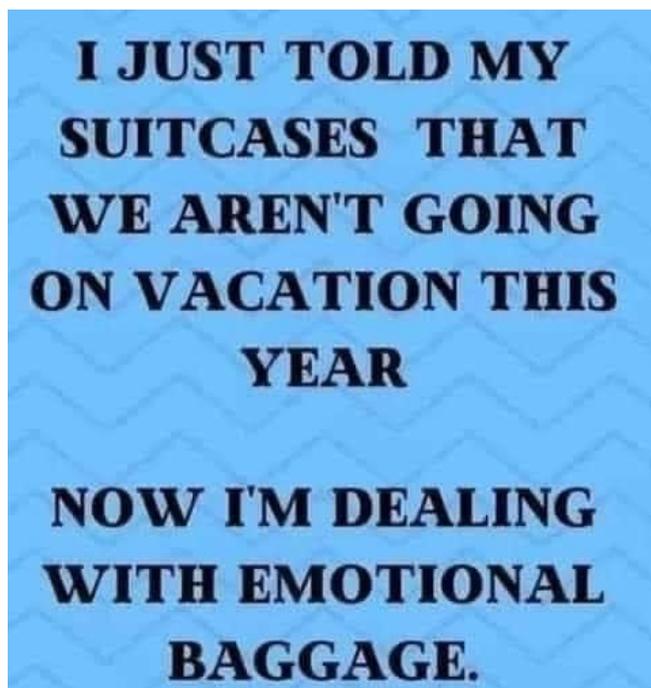
1. Cut the loaf of sourdough in half
2. Cut two slices of bread from the centre of the loaf, make toast
3. Eat toast with one slice slathered in peanut butter and Promite and the other slice slathered with apple butter
4. Leave sourdough on your kitchen bench until it's a bit stale
5. Once sourdough is stale, chop into bite-sized chunks
6. In large-ish bowl, mix eggs until well blended, add milk, mix again until well blended
7. Add stewed rhubarb and vanilla bean paste to large-ish bowl, mix again until well blended
8. Put bread chunks into mixture and get your hands into the bowl to ensure the bread is properly coated
9. Heat oven to 180°C (160° if fan forced)
10. Once bread is properly coated, leave bowl to set on bench for half an hour to be sure to get all those flavours soaked through
11. Slather bottom and sides of 20 cm x 20 cm dish with a bit of butter
12. Place the goopy bread concoction into your baking dish



13. Poke the cherries into the goopy bread concoction, submerging completely about half of them and leaving a few floating on top
14. Sprinkle cinnamon on top of the goopy bread concoction
15. Place the baking dish into your oven, bake for 30 minutes
16. At 30 minutes, check the puddin'. If it's browned up a little bit on top, it's ready. If it hasn't, give it another five minutes. Repeat until you get a slightly browned up top.
17. Once top is browned up a wee bit, remove from oven
18. Poke a few holes into your puddin' and carefully pour the maple syrup all over the top.
19. Leave your puddin' in a warm place to sit for half an hour, allowing the concoction to congeal and the maple syrup to soak in.
20. Serve with cream or yoghurt and, if you're really adventurous, add more maple syrup.



LOCKDOWN LAUGHS





AND FINALLY...

Students at Deakin University are currently recruiting **adults aged 65 years and over** to take part in a survey about optimal park design for encouraging active and social use of parks.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary and all the responses will be kept confidential. After completing the survey, participants will get a chance to go into a draw to win **one of five \$100 gift vouchers**.

Here is the link to the online survey: <https://parkstudy.com>.

If you have any questions, please contact Chahana Paudel at cpaudel@deakin.edu.au



What do you have to do?

Complete an online survey by visiting this link:

parkstudy.com

The survey works better on an iPad or a computer

Complete an online survey to be in a draw for 1 of 5 \$100 gift vouchers

About this study

This study aims to identify what design characteristics of walking paths and outdoor fitness equipment you prefer. This will help to create a park that is safe and appealing for you!

Who can take part?

Adults aged **65 years and over** living in Australia. You can take part even if you don't visit parks or are not very active. We would love to hear from you! Please feel free to share this with your friends, family or colleagues who might be interested and are aged 65+

For more information:

Chahana Paudel

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Survey link: parkstudy.com

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This study has received Deakin University ethics approval (HEAG-H 110_2021)

