

YUMCHA is our hero of the week

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[/dropcap]ormally we choose a person rather than a group for our quiet hero of the week, but this week we can't go past **YUMCHA**, in Warrnambool.



YUMCHA (Youth United Making Change Against Homophobic Attitudes) has been operating for seven years as a support group for young people (under 25) who identify as straight, gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual or anything else. In other words, it really doesn't matter what your sexuality is, you are welcome.

This important message has cut through to the wider community, where attitudes toward gays, lesbians and transgender people in South-West Victoria have turned 360 degrees from where they were even a decade ago. Diversity makes for a progressive community: one that opens its hearts and minds.

It also makes for a community where ALL young people feel they

belong and that's the sort of community we want to live in.

So we would like to recognise [YUMCHA](#) and its leader **Lyn Eales** for their incredible work. We are going to let them decide who will enjoy the coffee and cake voucher!

Bluestone Magazine is donating a voucher for coffee and cake to each of our quiet heroes. This week it will be at Wyton's Cellars, 127 Kepler St, Warrnambool.

[box] YUMCHA meets each Monday between 4pm-5pm at the Brophy Community & Youth Complex, 210 Timor St, Warrnambool. [/box]

Blue Tunes #4

If you have been following this section, you will know that given we are called Bluestone, we thought it only fitting that each week we dig out a track that has the word 'blue' in its lyrics or title.

What better way to start the working week than with some music?

Upon request from one of our readers (yes, that's you Pat!) we have dug out this 1970s country gem from **Emmylou Harris**, Blue Kentucky Girl.

It even includes genuine 1970s static at the start of the clip.

Great to see Emmylou Harris is still producing fantastic music 30 years later...click on the image to listen.

(We have chosen this version to save you having to watch the

Youtube ads)



River camping is a shoe-in



To find the Fitzroy River turnoff, look for the shoes...

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"] T
[/dropcap]HE MOUTH of the **Fitzroy River**, between Tyrendarra and Portland, is a wonderful spot that is hard to find, so it is best to look for the shoes.

Some kind and obviously quirky people who live in the farmhouse right across from the turnoff to the river on the Princes Highway have very helpfully decorated their front fence with what looks like every pair of shoes they have ever worn.

Or maybe they found them on the roadside.

Either way, the shoes provide a handy visual marker for the gateway to what is a lovely, yet wild, camping spot for those who like to rough it a little...and bring their dogs.

The "shoe turnoff" is in fact Thompsons Rd which winds its way for a short distance to the coast and the river mouth.

The roughly 4km trip takes you through some lovely farmland dotted with abandoned buildings built by the early settlers in

the area.



Remnants of life from another time can be found on the drive to the river mouth.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"] T
[/dropcap]he first stop at the [Fitzroy River campground](#) area is the boat ramp where you can wander out on the wooden jetty and watch the river surging its way to the sea.

Drive a little further on to find the start of the campground area, which is essentially a patch of open grass with several trees for shelter.

This area is quite protected from the southerly winds that can whip through the south-coast with ferocity (there are wind farms in this area for a reason!).

Another 200m along and you come to the riverbank where camping is also permitted, but there is less protection from the elements.

Part of the appeal of Fitzroy River is that it remains bush

camping, with no power or facilities beyond a new, long-drop toilet block, and a basic picnic and barbecue area.

Camping is free, except for peak times, when an onsite caretaker will collect a small fee; so don't expect a Big 4 – or the crowds that come with it.

Instead, in the off-season particularly, you will most likely have the place to yourself.



Barney, the Bluestone cocker spaniel, does the water test in the estuary.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"] I
[/dropcap]t is a wonderful area to explore, with a short walk along the estuary taking you right down to the foreshore of the wild ocean.

Information signs indicate that at least two tall ships came to grief in the area in the 1800s, including the *Julia*, the remains of which are apparently still visible as a dark patch in the surf, visible from the hilltop.

Dogs are welcome, but plovers nest in the area (it is a great spot for bird watching) so remember to bring a leash...



Basic facilities at Fitzroy River mean peace and quiet, particularly, in the off season.



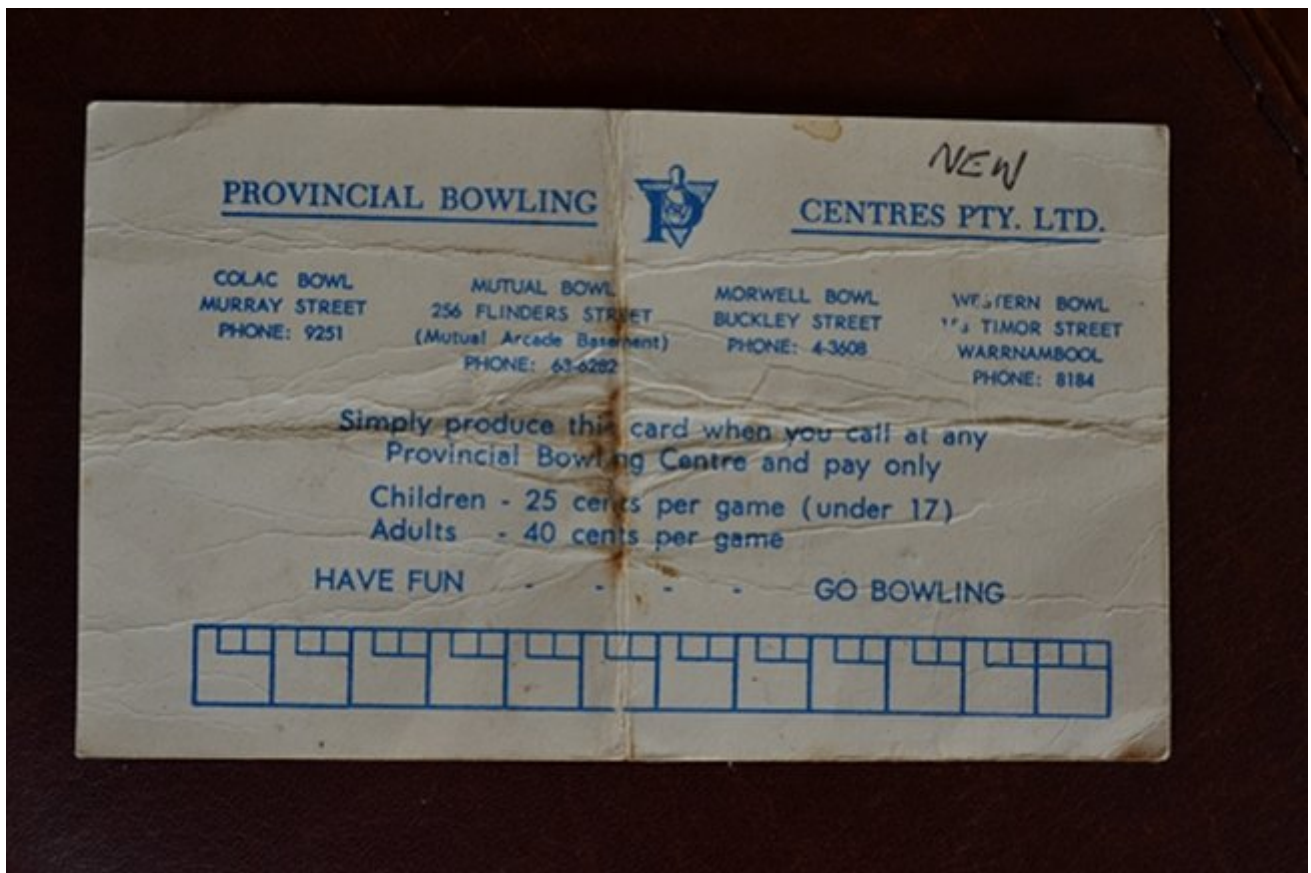
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Bowlin', bowlin', bowlin'...



THE OPENING of the Warrnambool tenpin bowling alley on Christmas Eve, 1963, was cause for great excitement, with the local newspaper declaring that the city was now home to a sport that “has captured the world”.

At that time, the complex was known as the Western Bowl and patrons paid 40 cents a game for adults, or 25 cents for children (under 17 – 17!), to try their hand at knocking down a series of pins with a heavy ball while wearing stylish, soft-souled shoes.

The place was a hit and no doubt early marketing ideas like this one – a patron card sent to potential customers at Christmas time – helped with its success.

Fifty years on, “The Bowl”, as it is affectionately known, is still going strong and has a vibrant league competition that has produced its share of champions.

My mother kept everything – and I mean, everything. Each week we will reveal another item from the collection.

Success is purely organic



Nick Kelson sells organic produce fresh from his uncle's farm at Dennington.

By Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"] W
[/dropcap]hen it comes to clocking up food miles, the 4.9km from Dennington to the Warrnambool Showgrounds is about as short as it gets.

This is how far the fresh produce travels each week from the Kelson family farm to a Sunday stall at the showgrounds, where **Nick Kelson** sells under the name **Merri Banks Organic Produce**.

Nick is the nephew of **Frank Kelson**, who has 16 acres at the back of the Dennington Oval, including 10 acres under production. The farm has been in the family since 1880 and produces potatoes, pumpkin, sweetcorn and garlic on a large scale for the Melbourne fresh food markets.

Fifteen years ago, Frank turned to organic production, making him one of the first in the region to do so.

“My grandfather was horrified,” Nick said, laughing.

“He would say, ‘this house was built on super phosphate!’”

As Nick explains, however, his uncle could see the damage that chemicals were doing to the environment and realised that organic production was not only better for the long-term preservation of the farm, but that the produce tasted more like it should.



A pile of pumpkins was among the seasonal produce on sale last week.

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While the bulk of what Merri Banks produces is sold wholesale, locals are fortunate to have Nick selling a select range each week at the Sunday markets.

It is the only place where people can buy the produce direct.

The stall is the size of a couple of kitchen tables and Nick unloads his stock from the back seat and boot of a car, not a semi-trailer.

Some weeks he will have boxes of fresh dug potatoes in a number of varieties, together with pumpkins, carrots and garlic. Other weeks there will be boxes of heritage tomatoes, sweetcorn and beetroot, alongside bouquets of kale, spinach and silverbeet.

It all depends what it is season.



Going, going, gone. Things move

fast on market day.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"] A
[dropcap]dvertising is by word of mouth – and a trusty A-frame – with Merri Banks nowhere to be found on Facebook, Twitter or even as a website.

It is an old-fashioned, but winning approach, and Nick finds most of his stock is gone by mid-morning.

“We have been here four years now. It took a while to build up, but we are doing well,” Nick said.

Just as he spoke, a man approached to buy a purple bulb of organic garlic. Nick dropped it onto the scale.

“That’ll be \$1.50,” he said.

“Oh! I didn’t realise it would be so cheap. I take another two thanks,” the customer replied.

“No problem,” said Nick, as he placed the bulbs into a brown paper bag and gave it a swing.



Organic garlic: not from China, Argentina or Chile...but Dennington.

[box type="bio"] Merri Banks Organic Produce. Sunday Undercover Markets, Warrnambool Showgrounds. [/box]

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