

No close shaves here: Paul Howlett



What do you get when you cross a big beard and a slide trombone? The answer is Paul Howlett, accountant, musician and proud owner of a substantial length of chin hair.

By Carol Altmann

The beard is back and there is no more lustrous, free-flowing, eye-catching example than Paul Howlett's in full flight as he strides down Koroit St.

I first saw Paul's beard before I saw Paul, its full form divided directly down the middle, two halves happily united at the chin, but separating at the chest as they momentarily caught the breeze.

"It tends to do that," Paul tells me later.

The whole, heart-warming spectacle was enhanced by the fact that Paul, 33, has very little hair on his head, as if the beard, in its sheer bulk, was making fun of the follicles that occupy the top floor.

[Donate](#)

There was also something delightfully defiant about the fact that when I spotted Paul, he was walking into the conservatively decked out establishment of Coffey Hunt, chartered accountants and tax specialists.

(I find out later that Paul works as an accountant for the opposition, Sinclair & Wilson, and that this was merely a visit.)

Even when he is wearing the muted professional uniform of a crisp white shirt and dark pants, Paul's beard gives the game away: there is more to this guy than meets the eye.

And I was right. He also plays the slide trombone.



Paul works his slide trombone with the Warrnambool City Band, of which he has been a member for 20 years.
Image: Bethany Gillie.

[dropcap style="font-size: 35px; color: #8cc7d0;"] B
[/dropcap]

ut let's stick with the beard for the moment.

"I really didn't think I could actually grow a beard this long," Paul says, "but I really like the length now and I really like the feel of it".

The beard began as a bit of teenage bum-fluff that Paul grew for a high school production of *Peter Pan* ("I was playing a pirate...") when he was a year 12 student at Warrnambool College.

From there it morphed into a goatee that extended itself occasionally for Movember, but it wasn't until December 2013 when Paul had three weeks holiday from his job at Sinclair & Wilson that he let it grow...and grow...and grow.

"The guys at work were a little surprised when I came back, but (my bosses) are okay with it," he laughs.

"A few people have suggested I should trim it right up, but I'm happy with it."



Paul Howlett, sporting his trombone tie, with his gorgeous golden slide trombone that he found on ebay.

So how does Paul manage a beard that falls to his heart line when playing a slide trombone?

Surely it is a recipe for a painful pinch during a performance with the Warrnambool City Band, of which Paul has been a member for 20 years.

"Actually it's not too bad," he says, "except for when it occasionally catches in the trigger".

A trigger, I learn, is a little device at the top of the trombone that can be pressed to help push the sliding arm, making it less strenuous for the musician.

“It can be a bit painful when you realise the trigger is also pulling the hair on your face,” Paul says with a slight wince at the memory.

But Paul is not about to give up his favourite instrument, which he was encouraged to learn while at high school and has played pretty much ever since.

“The trombone I have at the moment, I actually found it on ebay,” he says, proving that it really is possible to buy just about anything online.

Aside from regular performances with the City Band in both its concert band and jazz band ensembles, Paul also plays with a Hamilton-based big band, Trax, together with some blues work and the occasional trip into the orchestra pit for live theatre productions.

It is clear that talented trombonists stand out from the crowd in the south-west.

“There are not many of us in town, that is true,” says Paul, before rattling off the names of two others and a young man who is still learning.

I think it is also fair to assume that, among this group of four, Paul is the only one with such a distinctive appearance.

“Um, yeah, I think so,” he laughs.

Midfield Merrivale milk factory off the boil



How the proposed milk processing factory at Merrivale would have appeared on the skyline near the Warrnambool Showgrounds. Image: Warrnambool City Council.

The Terrier – Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 35px; color: #8cc7d0;"] T
wo of the most controversial projects to be approved in Warrnambool in recent times – the milk processing factory in Merrivale and a nine-storey apartment block on Merri St – have been put on the backburner by their developer, the Midfield Group.

It is now two years since both projects received planning approval, but not much has happened at either site since.

The milk factory was expected to be up and running within 12

to 18 months of being given the green light from an independent planning panel in May 2015.

[Donate](#)

It is a similar story with the proposed nine-storey apartment block on the corner of Merri and Gillies streets, which – despite arguments to save it – saw the 1940s Madden's/Sandilands building demolished within weeks after the development was approved in early 2015.

When the planning application was lodged by Tract Consultants, acting on behalf of Baybern Developments/Midfield, it urged the Warrnambool City Council to approve the project as quickly as possible because its client was keen to get started.

The prominent corner block remains vacant and wire fenced, joining the Criterion Hotel site, the former Caltex petrol station on Raglan Parade, and the former Warrnambool gas works near Harris Reserve as “frozen” projects that have sat untouched.



The proposed nine-storey apartment block on the corner of Gilles and Merri streets, Warrnambool. While approved in early 2015, little has happened.

[dropcap style="font-size: 35px; color: #8cc7d0;"] T
[/dropcap]

he Midfield Group and Baybern Developments are owned by one of Warrnambool's most successful businessmen, Colin McKenna.

A spokesman for Midfield and Baybern, Daniel Aarons, said today that the company's priorities had changed for both projects since it bought a former potato processing plant in Penola, South Australia, that it is now converting into a \$60 million milk processing plant.

On the Merrivale milk processing plant:

"Our intention is to still build in Warrnambool, but works have commenced in Penola and that is our priority at the moment," he said.

The South Australian Government gave Midfield a \$2 million grant toward the \$60 million Penola project, which is close to completion.

"Penola needs to be completed, commissioned, bedded down and we need to learn how to run the plant and that is all going to come on line in the next couple of months," Mr Aarons said.

"Penola takes precedence and then we will focus on Warrnambool," he said.

When asked if a start on the Warrnambool plant was at least two years away, Mr Aarons said it was more likely to be 12 months.



A fenced, vacant block is what remains after the original 1940s building was demolished to make way for the apartment complex.

On the Merri St apartments:

"There is not much to say, but it is still our intention to proceed," Mr Aarons said.

"Things are moving, things are progressing, admittedly they are progressing slowly, but they are moving".

While potential buyers can still lodge expressions of interest with Wilson Real Estate, Mr Aarons said it was not known when construction would actually begin.

I know of at least one potential investor who lodged an expression of interest, but then heard nothing more. They have since invested elsewhere in Warrnambool.

"We haven't confirmed a start date, but we are moving along gently, gently. It is not something we need to push quickly, but it is progressing," Mr Aarons said.

"We have our hands full with multiple projects at the moment

and we have to get a couple of key priorities out of the way.”



The former Madden's building, once the Sandilands guest house, was demolished within weeks of the planning approval being granted for a nine-storey apartment block.

[dropcap style="font-size: 35px; color: #8cc7d0;"] T
[/dropcap]

he slow-down on the Merrivale milk plant, if it goes ahead at all, will be a sigh of relief to those who fought passionately to stop a project that would be 35m in height and operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Scott St plant, unlike the Penola plant which is several miles out of town, is in the heart of Merrivale and would be less than 100m from houses.

At the time of the approval process, the Midfield Group said the processing plant and an adjacent cold storage facility would create up to 200 jobs, but this was later wound back to 22 full time jobs.

The \$70 million project received a \$1.5 million grant from the

former Naphthine State Government and the Warrnambool City Council also sold a portion of its depot land to Midfield for the expansion.

One question I did not get time to ask the council today is how long planning permits are valid for before they need to be updated or expire?

I will let you know the answer as soon as I do.

**[box]I work as a freelance journalist, without advertising or grants, which allows me to write freely. If you would like to support this site, please make a donation by [clicking here](#).
[/box]**

How we get from topless bars to abuse



By Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 35px; color: #8cc7d0;"] A
[[/dropcap]fter I [published this piece](#), a reader wrote to me,
asking how I “joined the dots” between a strip show and
domestic violence.

I was really glad she emailed me, because not only did it mean that she was thinking and talking about this critical issue – along with her work colleagues who, she said, had talked about it in the tearoom – but it also made me write down, for the first time really, what has been swirling around my head.

This was my (slightly edited) response:

“The bottom line to my thinking is that it comes from the perspective of tackling domestic violence well before the first punch, rape or other act of violence occurs.

Lots has been written about this, by much greater feminist writers (and researchers) than myself.

But in this sense, it is all about how women/girls are perceived and how they come from an entirely different position (ie. far less powerful) than men/boys, simply by being born girls in the first place.

This is why so much emphasis in the battle to end domestic violence is on empowering women/girls and, at the same time, educating boys/men to respect women.

So, to the strippers.

I have no problem with women choosing to strip for whatever reasons they may decide to strip, which I would argue are mainly economic reasons and there is another whole discussion around that. (Indeed the woman who wrote this piece that I just published said she applied to work in a men's club in Melbourne, purely for the money when she was a struggling student, but in retrospect she was so glad that she never got the job.)

I certainly didn't judge the women at Last Break for what they were doing, but was angry at the fact that there remains a market for that kind of "entertainment" which I thought had been left behind in the 80s.

The issue is that stripping, topless work, private dancing all reinforce the entrenched power imbalance between genders and, in so doing, reinforce women as something to be objectified, oggled, highly sexualised and valued for their ability to appeal to men.

This is why male strippers are not on the same scale.

They don't start from the same place as women in terms of power and, even when taking their clothes off in a strip show, they retain that power as part of the dominant gender.

(To use a really simple analogy about how they retain this power in the real world, would a male stripper ever feel

afraid if he was confronted, alone, by a group of women? Would a female stripper ever feel afraid if she was confronted, alone, by a group of men?)

I don't think that every man who goes to a strip show is going to beat his partner – of course not – but these shows do not empower women and girls and negates the message that we hope to educate the next generation with: that women/girls are not simply sexualised objects.

It is this devaluing of women that is the hardest thing to turn around in our culture and I am really dismayed that at a time when we are working to turn this thinking around, that we still have this form of “entertainment” on offer in Warrnambool.

My thinking around this has taken time to develop and there are times when I am still not sure how I can best explain that in no way do I want to shame/patronise the women involved in stripping/topless barwork/private dancing, while at the same time hating the industry in which they work.

I had a conversation with an escort the other day about this very thing: she once ran a brothel. I asked her how she felt about strip clubs and she summarised my thoughts so much better than me.

She explained the difference between how it felt to be involved in a private, quiet, one-on-one business transaction between a sex worker and a client, and women stripping or shaking their breasts, or lap dancing in front of “the mob” (as she termed it).

I certainly don't come at this argument from a place of superiority – I am the last person to judge a woman on how she chooses or has to make a living – but I am saddened, truly saddened, that at a time when our domestic violence rates are astronomical, women are still valued for their ability to strip for men.

Again, these are not my thoughts alone, but based on years of trying to make sense of it all by reading and thinking and talking to others.

One of the best pieces on “false empowerment” I have read recently was by the feminist writer Clementine Ford, you may enjoy it too: [here is the link](#).

I am sure you will have your own views on what I have written, and perhaps disagree with most of it, but I appreciate you asking and hopefully at least something I have written here helps to flesh out the connections.”

– Carol

Tourism? We are missing out big time



Moyjil/Point Richie is one of three rich cultural and environmental sites in the south-west that could be maximised to form a major tourist attraction at the end of the Great Ocean Road.

The Terrier

A little statistic popped out of Parks Victoria about six weeks ago that should have had us all gasping and wondering what we are doing wrong in Warrnambool.

[Here it is:](#)

“A record daily peak of 11,000 national and international visitors made the trip to the Twelve Apostles during Chinese New Year celebrations”.

Please read that again, because it took me at least three reads to believe what I was reading: a record **daily** peak of **11,000** national and international visitors visited the Twelve Apostles during Chinese New Year (between January 28 and February 15) this year.

This was a 30% increase on last year. Thirty per cent!

And this is all happening less than an hour from Warrnambool – 72.7km down the road – yet we are seeing so little of the action here.

Why??

This is not a new question.

Over the years there has been much head-scratching, hours of discussion and piles of reports on how to encourage this lucrative market of cashed-up, eager travellers to travel just one more hour down the road to Warrnambool where, we would hope, they stay for more than 24 hours rather than passing through on their way to somewhere else, or turning around and travelling back to Melbourne.

To me, the answer starts here: give them something irresistible, something that they haven't already seen or heard during their trek down the most popular coastal road in Australia.

And what might that be?

To me, the answer starts here: our incredible indigenous story.

I don't know about you, but whenever I travel overseas, I can't wait to immerse myself in the indigenous history, to read about it, see it and experience it through a tour, a trek, a talk, a meal or a spontaneous, random encounter.

Here in the south-west, and right here in Warrnambool, we are sitting on some of the richest indigenous stories in Australia, creating a natural 'trail' from **Moyjil/Point Richie**, to **Tower Hill** and out to **Budj Bim** (Mt Eccles/Lake Condah) near Heywood.

Budj Bim is on the cusp of a UNESCO World Heritage listing partly because of its stone eel traps that are 1500 years older than the Pyramids or Stonehenge.

And Moyjil, apart from being a geological wonder, has been [a site of human occupation for at least 35,000 years](#) and, pending the results of ongoing tests, could also be the oldest site of human habitation *anywhere on the planet*, dating back 80,000 years.

Why are we not celebrating and promoting this far and wide?



December 2016: The western walkway from Moyjil down to the beach.

Tower Hill, meanwhile, is where Great Ocean Roaders can see a koala, emu or a kangaroo while also learning about indigenous culture, but its full potential as a tourist attraction is far from realised, starting with the poorly signposted, pot-holed and dangerous entrance that must be the worst of any tourism attraction in Victoria.

To be fair, progress is being made at each of these sites to promote its significance (especially Budj Bim) and plans have been drawn up to manage their futures, but I cannot find any coordinated effort to promote the three locations as a **not-to-be-missed tourism experience** that would, in turn, create jobs and boost our local economy.

There is no single, one-stop-shop to find out about what should be a cultural and environmental gem of a self-guided tour: there is no one map, brochure, website, or app.

Try it yourself: visit the [Visit Warrnambool website](#), click on “what to see and do” and see [what you find](#).

The top listings alternate, but when I clicked, the first item was mini golf.

But back to Moyjil for a moment.

A 24-page [conservation and management plan for this area](#) was published in 2013, setting out how it should be cared for by the State Government (which owns it) and Warrnambool City Council (which manages it) but, four years on, there are worrying signs about the financial commitment needed to look after this precious piece of coast.

The western walkway from the carpark fell apart in early December last year, just before the start of the peak tourism season, and access to the beach was blocked.

It is now late April and the walkway is still busted although now, of course, there has been five months’ of people making their own path down the side of the walkway, as we do, and the erosion is obvious.

When it will be fixed, nobody knows.



April 2017: The western walkway from Moyjil down to the beach.

I contacted the state Environment Minister Lily D'Ambrosio and her spokesman said the council had applied last year for a slice of \$730,000 in funding to fix the walkway as one of several work projects it had planned for the site.

It was not successful. (The \$730,000 fund received applications totalling more than \$3.1 million).

"DELWP is willing to look at how it can support Warrnambool City Council in fixing this walkway, and will discuss with Council how the department can assist," he wrote.

I asked the council for its take on the situation and its spokesman said: "We will continue to seek funding from the

State Government for maintenance. It will also be part of Council's upcoming budget deliberations."

And that was it. No passion. No prioritising. No real sense of urgency.

I can only wonder when a wooden walkway – a walkway – can't be fixed (Triton woodworkers + youth unemployment project?), what the long-term future really holds for this magnificent site.

And in the meantime, the vast majority of the tens of thousands of tourists who are travelling to the Twelve Apostles each summer just turn around – or keep driving...

In full voice: the irrepressible Lyn Eales



The irrepressible Lyn Eales enjoying some down time in her 'girl shed' at the back of her Warrnambool home.

By Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 35px; color: #8cc7d0;"] L
[/dropcap]yn **Eales** is a performer, a pacifist, an activist and an organiser; a leader, a doer, a mentor and a singer; a lover, a friend, a sister and a daughter; a mother, a grandmother and a mate – no wonder she is hard to pin down.

It takes days – no, weeks – for us to finally find a mutually agreeable time to sit and talk for a couple of hours, tucked away in Lyn's "girl shed" behind her Warrnambool home where she retreats at the end of the day to savour a glass of champagne, a cigarette and some down time.

It is raining, but the shed has a pot belly stove, some comfy chairs and is made cosy with feathers, ephemera and an eclectic array of artwork that mirror Lyn's gregarious personality. This is a woman who is not afraid to be seen, who is comfortable in her skin and who oozes that undefinable mix of qualities that add up to charisma.

"I am the daughter of publicans. People and music have always been a part of my life," Lyn says, and it explains so much.

Her parents, Val and Lyal, ran the Hawkesdale Hotel for many years. Like so many country pubs, the place was a catch-all for those in need of a laugh, a drink, a listening ear, or maybe a bit of each.

[Donate](#)

"There was always music in the dining room, always," Lyn says. "Something was always going on: people playing guitar, playing piano, dropping in and playing an impromptu concert."

The little Lyn couldn't wait to be part of it.

"I remember singing for the CWA ladies luncheon when I was about 12 or 13. I had plaits and wore a long, seersucker pinafore that I thought looked quite good," she recalls with a laugh.

"The song was '*Take Me Home, Country Roads*' and it must have been okay, because the women didn't complain."



In the zone: Lyn Eales performing on stage with drummer Jon Emery. Image supplied.

[dropcap style="font-size: 35px; color: #8cc7d0;"] L
[/dropcap]yn hasn't stopped singing since and even though she hasn't had a single lesson, her voice has found its own way from the peppy John Denver to the silky, sultry blues of Billie Holiday and beyond.

As Lyn describes it, there is singing that people *hear*, and then there is singing that people *feel*.

"As a singer, you are telling a story and you want people to not only hear that story, but to really *feel* it, to connect

with you and the music and the words," she explains, her fingers splayed as if grasping for the right words.

"Summertime, and the livin' is easy...Fish are jumpin' and the cotton is high..."

You only need to hear Lyn sing the opening line of this Ella Fitzgerald classic to know she is a *feeler*. By the end of the song, you are broken hearted and elevated all at once. That's how it works.



Flashback: Lyn, far right, sharing the stage with Wendy Goyen and John Hudson at the Royal Hotel, Warrnambool, in 1999. The Royal was one of many local pubs that once hosted live music. Image supplied.

[dropcap style="font-size: 35px; color: #8cc7d0;"] L
[/dropcap]yn is now part of Warrnambool's musical royalty: she has been around long enough to know everybody, to have played in bands with great local musicians who are still making great music – John Hudson, Richard Tankard, Barry Galbraith, Wendy Goyen, Gavin Franklin, Lee Morgan...the list goes on – and to inspire others to find their voices, figuratively and literally.

In the past that has involved teaching young people how to

develop their music, from start to finish, through an Australian Music course offered at TAFE. This later incorporated a Koori music course – *Songlines* – with Richard Franklin and Wal Saunders, and gave Lyn an entree into the rich, local indigenous community which she still cherishes.

She also leads the Red Tent Singers, a local women's choir that welcomes all women regardless of experience or age, where she signed up "to do six weeks". That was 16 years ago, give or take a few breaks.

"Red Tents is about singing, but it is also so much more than that," Lyn says.

"It is an incredibly nurturing, caring, grounding environment. To see women arrive with low self confidence and watch them blossom through this slightly whacky group is wonderful."

Lyn works in a similar vein in her "day job" as a project coordinator with Brophy Family and Youth Services, where, in particular, her work to empower young LGBTI people has been transformative.



Lyn is choir leader for the Red Tent Singers, a women's choir

that formed in Warrnambool 16 years ago and has since encouraged dozens of women to find their voice. Here they are performing at St Brigid's Fifteen Minutes of Fame. Image supplied.

[dropcap style="font-size: 35px; color: #8cc7d0;"] I [/dropcap] am starting to see a thread here.

When it comes to standing up for the marginalised or minorities – women, LGBTI, kooris, refugees, asylum seekers – Lyn is the sort of person who will march, who will turn up to protests, who isn't afraid to stand at the front in full voice.

It is a strong sense of social justice that began in her parents' pub and has shaped her ever since.

"I can get tingles 10 times a day from doing the various things that I do, and that is my gauge.

"That tells me I am on the right track."



Lyn chilling out with the sunflowers that form part of her

“very random but enjoyable” garden.

[box]**Lyn is leading a vocal workshop by the Red Tent Singers at St Brigid’s Crossley on Sunday April 30 from 10.30am to 1pm. All welcome and no experience necessary. Cost is \$15/\$10 and includes catering. Call 0407 917 774 for bookings and more details. [Find the event on Facebook here](#). Lyn also performs regularly at the Warrnambool Hotel: keep an eye out for dates and times.**[/box]