

Australia Day awards – did we forget someone?



Vicki Jellie (Image:
Peter's Project)

This time last week, the City of Warrnambool was celebrating the announcement of its annual Australia Day award winners and, incredibly, there was not a single woman among the seven recipients*.

The absence of even one woman considered worthy of note for her contribution to the community is even more astonishing given there is a stand-out contender: **Vicki Jellie**.

If there is anyone in Warrnambool who does not know the name Vicki Jellie, then they have either been out of the city, avoiding all media, or unable to attend any of the dozens of social and sporting events that have raised funds for Vicki's cause, [Peter's Project](#).

Vicki, who used to be Vicki Grayson and grew up in the heart of Warrnambool, has worked for **more than five years** on Peter's Project, which – for our out-of-town readers – is named in memory of her late husband, Peter, and aims to raise \$5 million toward a cancer treatment centre in South-West

Victoria.

Since it began in 2009, Peter's Project has slowly and steadily built its public profile to become a tour de force.

Last year's federal election included a defining moment, at a local level, when the Coalition pledged \$10 million toward building the centre and left the ALP stranded: such is the pulling power of Peter's Project.

And you need only visit its [Facebook page](#) to see the number of events by business, schools, groups, clubs and individuals that are all raising money for Peter's Project.

When we last spoke to Vicki, she was preparing to take a year's leave from her paid job so that she could focus on Peter's Project full-time. She, and her campaign team, are doing a magnificent job and as of December, had raised \$4 million of the \$5 million needed.

With such a high profile, we thought it would be a fait accompli that Vicki Jellie would be included in the [Warrnambool City Council Australia Day Awards](#), and possibly odds-on favourite for Citizen of the Year. To see her missing altogether was a shock.

We can't give Vicki an Australia Day award, but she is our [Quiet Hero](#) for being one of the most inspiring women in Warrnambool.

Vicki will receive a \$20 lunch voucher donated by [Lozzar's Lounge Cafe, Kepler St, Warrnambool](#). Thankyou to Loretta and Phil for your support. Bluestone editors Carol and Louise will also make a \$50 donation to Peter's Project.

(*Sixteen-year-old Olivia Niddrie was named Young Citizen of the Year. The council has since told *Bluestone* it received only two nominations for women across all categories.)



Meet our other Quiet Heroes...

[Saving our wildlife from the heat: Nalini Scarfe](#)

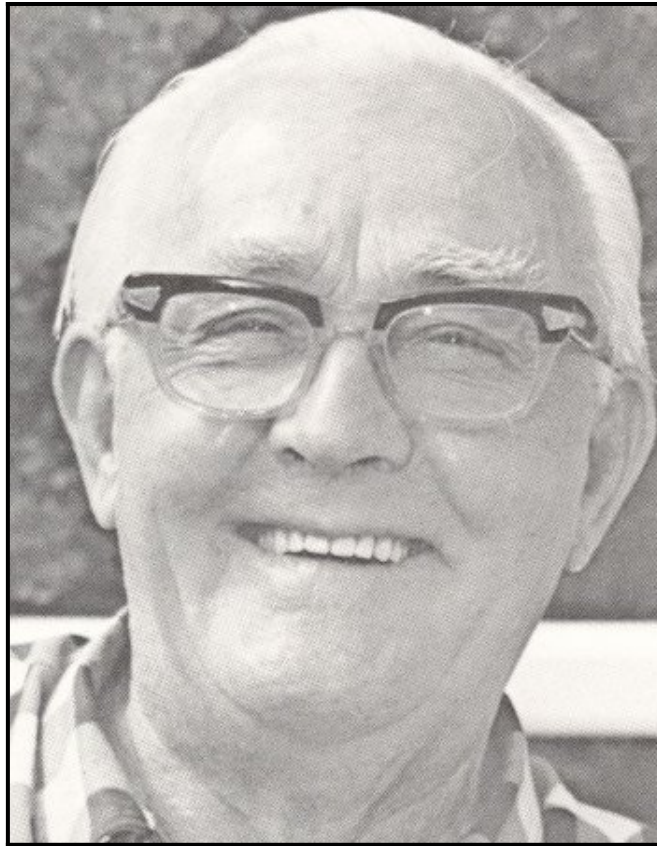
[Walking with strength and purpose: Susie Alexander](#)

[On the road with the Schoolies](#)

[Tackling a hidden terror: Pat McLaren](#)

[A life-changing adventure: Schoolies with a Cause](#)

Who will step up for Fletcher Jones?



Sir Fletcher Jones: a man who helped to put Warrnambool on the map, but whose most visual legacy is being destroyed by neglect.

Analysis – Carol Altmann

In December last year, we first [published an opinion piece](#) about the future of the iconic **Fletcher Jones Pleasant Hill** site in Warrnambool that questions why it is being left to rot as our civic leaders stand by and, it seems, wait for a white knight to show up and make a decision about its future.

At the same time, we also questioned why the [Flagstaff Hill Maritime Village](#) – having been invented as a tourist village in the 1970s – continued to be a priority in terms of concern about its future and its funding, despite its [flagging popularity](#).

We suggested closing Flagstaff Hill and creating a combined Warrnambool Art Gallery and Museum (with a strong maritime

history presence) at Pleasant Hill.

Whether people agreed with this idea or not, the piece has been our most popular story.

It had more than **1600** page views and almost **500** people shared it on Facebook. We received almost **40** comments on our site and the same amount again on [our Facebook page](#). Almost two months after it was first published, it is still attracting attention.

Fletcher Jones matters to Warrnambool and to Warrnambool people. This message is being sent loud and clear, but I doubt that it is being heard by the people that can actually determine its future.



Will Premier and local Member Denis Napthine step up for Fletcher Jones? Has he even been asked? (Image: www.portnews.com.au)

After writing this piece, I sought out a copy of an extensive review into the Fletcher Jones site that was commissioned by the Warrnambool City Council in **2002**: that is 12 years ago.

At that time, the council spent what was no doubt a considerable chunk of your money (\$10,000? \$15,000?) to hire an international consultancy firm [Sinclair, Knight, Metz \(SKM\)](#) to conduct a fulsome investigation into the Pleasant Hill

site. SKM spoke to anyone and everyone. They held focus groups and they set up a steering committee made up of existing and former staff, members of the community and council.

And at the end of all this talking and consulting and investigating, SKM wrote a 100-page report with the not very gripping title of *"Investigation into future economic opportunities for the Fletcher Jones site"* that was presented to the Warrnambool City Council on July 8, 2003.

A copy of this report is now kept under lock and key, literally, at the Warrnambool City Library where a cheerful librarian retrieved it for me and I had the sense that I was the first person to ask for it in a very, very long time.



Will Mayor Michael Neoh or
Councillors Rob Askew,
Kylie Gaston, Jacinta
Ermacora, Peter Sycopoulis,
Peter Hulin or Brian Kelson
step up? Image: ABC.

The report outlines a number of potential recommendations for the future use of the FJ site – for retail, housing, aged care – and also suggested the council, who owned the site at the time, to sell it to a willing private developer. This did not mean, however, that the council simply walk away.

Instead, SKM made a key recommendation that there be **“continuous consultation and communication between the council, developers and the community”** about the site’s future.

The council sold the site in 2005.

And it walked away.

It has been more than a decade since this report was commissioned and the council has done nothing concrete to ensure the preservation of this site. There has certainly been no “continuous communication” about its future.

The council’s apathy is shameful.

All of that time, all of that energy and all of that money – and for what?

Pleasant Hill is recognised by Heritage Victoria as having historical, social and aesthetic significance to *the state*. So perhaps the state should be contributing to its upkeep?

If so, why isn’t the council lobbying **Premier Denis Napthine** for this to happen? **The Premier is our local MP – what better opportunity and access could you ask for?** But has anybody from the council even asked for state support? I don’t think so.



What about the The Standard and its editor Steve Kelly? Will the paper step up? (Image: TheCitizen.org.au)

And what is our local daily newspaper, [The Warrnambool Standard](#), doing to take up the cause? From what I can see, nothing.

In the middle of last year, the editor of The Standard, **Steve Kelly**, [told a forum here in Warrnambool](#) that he believed print was “still king” in the regions and that his paper firmly set the agenda for this city and that other media outlets (the ABC, regional TV) followed.

“Do we have an absolute monopoly on setting the agenda in this district? Well, my answer to that would be ‘Yes’. I think the radio station follows our lead. I think to a large extent [the ABC] follows our lead and I think to a large extent [WIN TV] follows our lead,” Mr Kelly is [quoted as saying](#).

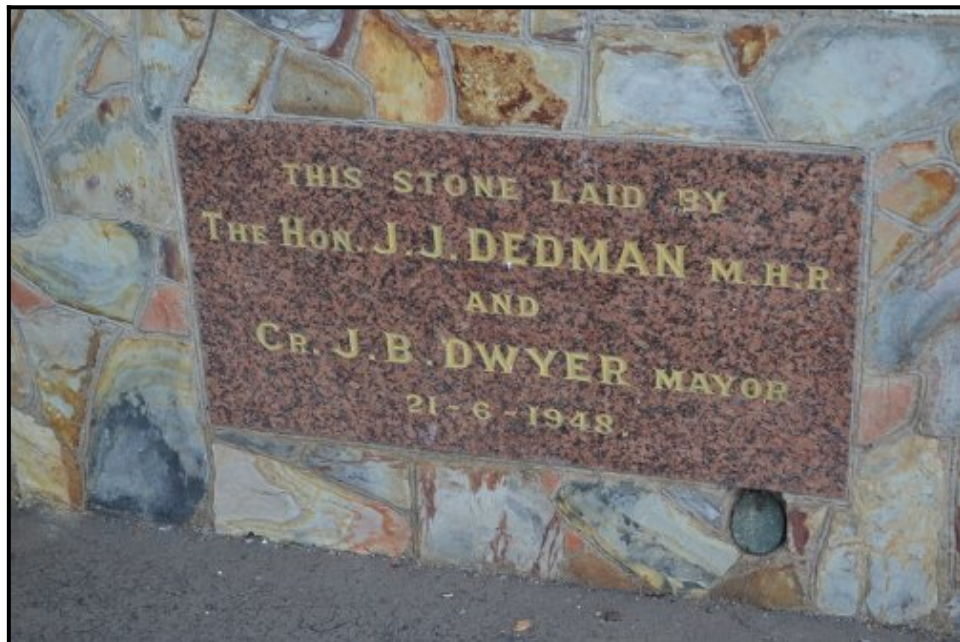
Surely it is time, then, for The Standard to take the lead – to set the agenda – on saving Fletcher Jones.

As a new, still growing forum, *Bluestone Magazine* can only do so much and we are thrilled to have reignited the conversation, but it takes more than conversation: it takes pressure, and it takes action.

Who, I wonder, will step up for Fletcher Jones?

If we care about the Fletcher Jones site, and I believe we do, then we need to make our leaders accountable and ensure it is preserved before all we have are memories, vintage postcards and a dusty report under lock and key to remind us of our failure.

[Since this piece was written, a grassroots supporters group has started to try and save the most important parts of this site. You can join the Save the Silver Ball and Fletcher Jones Gardens group on [Facebook here](#). Read more about the FJ site [here](#).]



Friends in high places: it was a different story of support when Fletcher Jones opened at Pleasant Hill in 1948.

Last Thursday a first priority for book club



Catherine Ryan, left, and Brigid Foard are among the members of The Last Thursday Book Club, in Port Fairy, that provides a place for women to enjoy stimulating conversations about books.

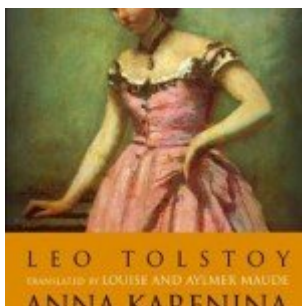
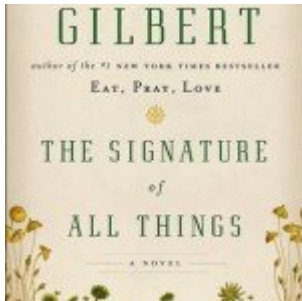
[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] While there are infinite joys about becoming a mother, the loss of stimulating conversation or intellectual discussion can prove challenging for women who enjoyed such things before becoming a parent.

Brigid Foard, who lives in Port Fairy and teaches English at Emmanuel College, Warrnambool, remembers when growing up that her mother, **Sylvia Jones**, was part of a local book club for about 20 years and how it became a “staple of her life”.

When Brigid had the first of her two daughters, she tried to find a similar club to meet other women who enjoyed reading

and talking about books, but without success.

“I remember feeling quite envious of what Mum had, because I was unable to find anything similar,” she said.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] T
[/dropcap]hat changed around September last year when two local women, **Lucy Abbott** and **Meg Higgins**, started **The Last Thursday Book Club** in Port Fairy. The group is aimed at women with or without children who are looking for a place to indulge their love of books.

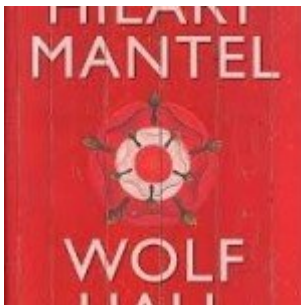
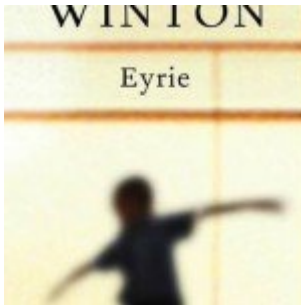
The group now has about seven members who all meet monthly at a local cafe or restaurant and, over coffee, dessert or a glass of wine, spend a couple of hours dissecting the book that has been chosen for that month.

“I had been reading all these fantastic books, but I didn’t really have anyone to communicate my thoughts or frustrations to about what I was reading, now I have met this great group of like-minded women and we share all of our ideas,” said one member, **Kelly Wynne**, who has two young children and works part-time as a heritage consultant.

“It has also really broadened the types of books and authors that I now read,” Kelly added.

Catherine Ryan, who has an infant son and also teaches English at Emmanuel College, agreed and said the group gave her an important social outlet that was not work-related, yet stimulating.

“Teaching English is working, whereas this is relaxing...it’s something I do for myself,” she said.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] A [dropcap]s to how it works, well each member of the club gets to choose a book, which is then either bought, borrowed or shared among the members who have a month to read it.

The books chosen so far have ranged from Tim Winton’s new release, *Eyrie*, to the somewhat more hefty tome by Booker Prize winner Hilary Mantel, *Wolf Hall*. Tolstoy’s classic *Anna Karenina* and the Elizabeth Gilbert’s new book, *The Signature of all Things*, are also on the list.

“We trust each other’s tastes: there hasn’t been a bad choice so far,” laughed Brigid.

And all three women laughed as they described how their monthly Thursday night meetings had become “sacrosanct” and their respective partners – and children – had learned to accommodate the club.

“The regularity of it is really important to me,” said Brigid, “because once you become a mother, it is very easy to be defined only as a mother and to be trapped into talking about teething when, really, you might want to be talking about literature.”

“We are just really fortunate to have something like this in a rural area.”

[box type="bio"] Bluestone Magazine will check in each month with The Last Thursday Book Club to see what they have been reading...and what they thought of it! **[/box]**



You might also enjoy...

[What I am reading: 02 Media director Karen Foster](#)

[Books pave new road for Melbourne](#)

[What I am reading: artist Gareth Colliton](#)

[Biblio-Art prize launched at Blarney Books](#)

[What I am reading: ABC Radio south-west breakfast presenter Jeremy Lee](#)

Oh possum, you are a hero in the heat

The recent heatwave from hell may have lifted, but the work never stops for wildlife carers who are at the frontline when it comes to caring for distressed native animals, like this week's Quiet Hero.

A Chinese coat of many memories

This week in our new section, Treasures, we asked well-known Port Fairy resident Di Clanchy to choose something precious from her visits to China and what a glorious choice she has made...