

Hunt on for ex-staff of Lady Bay Hotel



The black tie bouncers at Warrnambool's former Lady Bay hotel in the early 1990s. Nicole Lane (the only woman pictured!) is organising a staff reunion. Image courtesy of Nicole Lane.

If you ever lived in Warrnambool at any time up until around 2001, then these three words will mean something to you: **Lady Bay Hotel**.

The former Lady Bay Hotel, as opposed to the multi-storey resort that now stands in its place at the end of Pertobe Road, was one of the city's most famous – and infamous – watering holes until it was demolished in 2001.

Moves are afoot to bring former workers at the Lady Bay Hotel back together for a reunion, including bar staff, kitchen staff, cleaners, managers and the unforgettable bouncers who at one point dressed in black tie.

The hotel was originally called the Bay View Hotel from 1890 until 1954, when it was refurbished, enlarged and renamed the Lady Bay Hotel, but quickly became known simply as "The Bay".

While the original hotel no doubt had its share of wild times, the arrival of rock and roll in the 1960s and 70s saw The Bay transformed into a place for serious partying to some of Australia's best bands: Cold Chisel, Midnight Oil, The Angels, Paul Kelly and the Coloured Girls, Icehouse, Australian Crawl, Hoodoo Gurus...and many more.



The Bay, as it used to be known, became one of Warrnambool's most infamous watering holes.

An attached disco was also one of the most popular in town, where people would flock in the 1980s to drink fluffy ducks and tequila sunrises and dance to the Bee Gees until the small hours.

No wonder the staff who kept all of this unbridled energy, sexual tension and youthful exuberance under control shared a special bond.

One of the Bay's few female bouncers, **Nicole Lane**, of Warrnambool, is the driving force behind the idea of a reunion and said she was inspired to try and pull together an event after one of the hotel's most well-loved bouncers, **Bob Kelly**, passed away recently.

"When Bob passed away it made me think about how we are all getting older and how it would be great to try and get some of the old crew together to talk about old times," Nicole said.

Nicole was 22 when she started "bouncing" at the hotel. She was given a chance to try her skills after the partner of another famous Lady Bay bouncer, **Big Mal**, left the job and the bouncing staff needed another woman.

"I ended up working as a bouncer at lots of places, but everyone has a memory of the Lady Bay," Nicole said.

"Years later I was bouncing in a bar in Killarney, Ireland, and this woman points at me and says, 'Oh no! It's the bouncer from the Lady Bay!'" she laughed.



A group shot in the maritime themed room at the Lady Bay hotel with former managers Jim and Denise Ryan. Image courtesy of Nicole Lane.

A “Back to the Bay” celebration was held shortly before the original Lady Bay Hotel was pulled down, but that was mainly for former patrons. This reunion is specifically aimed at former staff.

“It is really in its first stages and I am not sure how much interest we will get,” Nicole said.

“We could end up with only a few and catch up over a cup of tea,” she laughed.

Some how, that seems unlikely.



Looking back at the Lady Bay Hotel from Pickering Point. The FJ silver ball can be seen on the skyline. Image courtesy of Nicole Lane.

[box] If you would like to know more about the Lady Bay Hotel staff reunion, contact Nicole at nic.nax@live.com or [join the Facebook group](#).[/box]



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