

Retro meets whimsy



‘Whistleblower’ by Ben Sanders.
[Image: www.bensanders.com.au]

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[/dropcap]ENNINGTON is a little town that punches above its weight in terms of growing serious talent – think **Shane Howard** (Goanna) and **Val Bertrand** (champion rower and netballer) – and it is where talented author and illustrator **Ben Sanders** was born.

Michaelie Clark, from Warrnambool Books, has chosen Ben’s new children’s book as her selection for the week and what a fine choice it is.

[We love children’s books – even though we don’t have any children – because they can take you to another place, a bit like a Disney movie, or the wonderful stuff from Pixar. Who can resist Dr Seuss, Shaun Tan, Mem Fox, Pamela Allen...no matter how old you are. If you are having a bad day, try reading a kid’s book: we promise it will improve your mood.]

Meanwhile, here is what Michaelie has to say about Ben’s book:

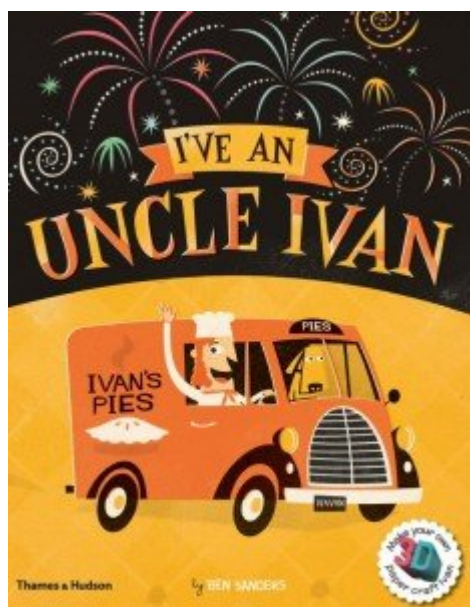
“Written and illustrated by award-winning artist Ben Sanders, ***I’ve an Uncle Ivan*** is a delightfully whimsical

picture story book that has been a stand-out over the last few months for its cruising rhythm and retro style.

Following Uncle Ivan in his pie van is his entire extended family on various modes of transport, including Kate on a single roller skate and Michael on a unicycle. Through a romp of rhyme and nostalgia, they form a capering convoy all the way to their ultimate destination – the circus.

The book also includes a make-your-own 3D paper craft van.

Check out Warrnambool Books on [Facebook](#) for more updates on new releases by local authors.



[box] Ben Sanders has a sensational website. You can check it out at www.bensanders.com.au [/box]



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Success is purely organic



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

By Carol Altmann

When 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.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"] 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 purply 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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