

# House Proud

Newsletter December 2018

## Plans to transplant our tree...

As you may already know our neighbourhood house is being transplanted to a new field (in fact, a 'Park') in 2019. At this stage we do not know an exact timeframe for the move, but the plans are currently in the council and state government 'greenhouses'. As we are advised on specific details we will update our members.



## From Little Things..... Big Things Grow....

The Portarlinton Neighbourhood House has grown from the seeds of humble beginnings, planted in 2009 and rooted in community, to the thriving, living entity of today that now supports over 600 members and is nourished by its coordinator, committee and volunteers. Far from considering PNH as a pot plant constrained by its physical environs, what follows is a 'potted history' of the Neighbourhood House's growth in our community ...

Branching out from initial discussions in 2009, in 2010, funding was received to employ Julie as coordinator for 10 hours per week, and PNH, with a membership of 79, opened its doors for 15 hours per week in the Arlington Lodge building. In 2011, the storage shed/workshop was constructed to allow for extra classes. By 2012, further classes were added, and membership had grown to 350, thanks to associations with the Portarlinton Garden Club and Portarlinton Film Society. Successful grant applications resulted in the stage area development to provide extra meeting and storage space, AV equipment, new chairs, and a five-year lease was signed with Arlington Lodge. The following year, membership had grown to 450 and hours were extended to 40 per week. Amenities had been improved by the installation of heating and cooling, upgraded computers, a big screen television and a remote-controlled movie screen.

Through 2014 and by 2015, the sound base established over the initial five years had been consolidated to allow the House to continue to flourish. The building was in use 52 hours per week with 230 activity hours programmed. Membership stood at the mid-500s and as part of a Community Development Project, a calendar of Art and Culture events was offered to the community, including a Makers' Market and a free Children's School Holiday Film Program with popcorn, soft drink and activities. Following the success of this, Free Soup and Cinema Fridays open to the whole community ran throughout winter, with Free Friday Flicks in warmer months, and for children in the following years, 'The Zoo Comes To You'. In 2016, the Community Project continued to offer free, subsidised or low-cost events to

community members, who, because of cost or lack of available transport, might not usually be able to access such activities or social interaction. Included in these were the Savoy Opera and Navy Band concerts and various bus trips, as well as a community Christmas celebration.

In 2017 membership – now over 600 - saw an increase in those who had recently retired and moved to the area, showing that the residential face of Portarlinton, and thus its needs, was undergoing a change. The literary-minded are catered for by an annual Mid-Winter Words event and local publications of writing efforts. Entertainment organised in 2017 included 'The Dusty Show' performed by Wendy Stapleton, and in 2018, 'Melinda Schneider Does Doris Day'.

Over the past two years, members of the committee of management and the office volunteers have participated in educational tours of other neighbourhood houses in our region – and what great contrasts there are in house models and operations! Because the PNH has a 'total volunteer philosophy', does not operate in a government building and must pay rent, it is hampered in its ability to apply for funding. Training and childcare are not options, these being areas that generate income and funding for other neighbourhood houses. These learning trips have reinforced our fortune in having such a wonderful community, committed to what we continue to work for in Portarlinton. Our tree continues to grow, and the future can only reveal the fruits of our labour. **Inspired by our past... excited by our future!**

*Acknowledgement of the talents of Jo Barnes who drew the Acorn image above.*



*From humble beginnings*

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## Living Well....

As far back as 1893, Campbell's 'Tourists' Guide to Geelong and the South Watering Places', stated that 'Portarlington is rapidly rising into favour as a watering-place within easy reach of Melbourne, and enjoys a more secluded and sheltered position than most of the pleasure haunts in Port Phillip Bay ...



Just like those health seekers of yesteryears, we all want to live well - but 'living well' is a concept that goes beyond physical health and fitness. 'Wellness' is a holistic concept that encompasses a person's physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual components. By living well, those in the older age bracket foster the energy to engage with life in a meaningful and fulfilling way.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The City of Greater Geelong's ageing forecasts show that in 2016, of the total population of 3,674 Portarlington residents, 995 were over the age of 70. The forecast is that by 2026, there will have been a 13% increase in Portarlington's retirement age population.

The face of our retirement population is changing. These days, retirees and older residents have had a great variety of life experiences and their leisure behaviour is very diverse. Because of this, PNH is catering for the needs of the community's changing outlook on living, through planning a range of meaningful leisure activities to promote better health and well-being. Currently, PNH members enjoy a range of exercise classes for the body, including chair yoga, pilates, tai chi, stretching and strength for seniors, and walking group. These exercise classes are extended in movement to music, through dancing in the dark, line dancing and zumba classes.

Exercise for the mind is also highly important, and this is accommodated through our card, chess and puzzle clubs, Italian language conversation, philosophy and 'back to school for seniors' classes. PNH hosts a variety of craft activity groups, not only promoting the use of fine motor skills, but providing an outlet for social activity in the supportive and convivial atmosphere of the Neighbourhood House. In a new initiative, the opportunity to enliven the spirit in bi-monthly sessions using Meditation and Tibetan Health Bowls is being offered. In doing this, PNH continues to cater for the physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs of 'living well' in its community.

(Reference: A. J. Campbell, *Tourists' Guide to Geelong and the South Watering Places*, Henry Thacker, Geelong, 1893, pp.50-52.)

## Writing Well....

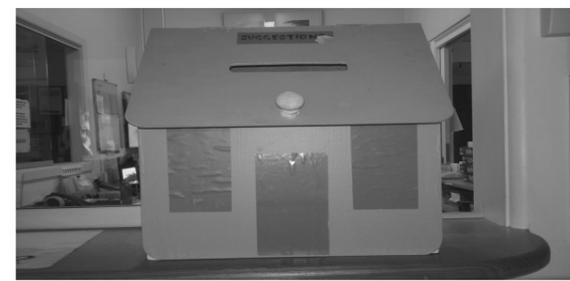
Pearl Wilson, not knowing a soul in Portarlington, presented at PNH about nine years ago. She offered to facilitate a five-week writing workshop. Interest was high, and Jenny Macaulay attended, sharing her knowledge and experience. At the conclusion of the workshops, Pearl and Jenny had become a team and they realised there was enough interest to offer a monthly writing group.

Portarlington's writing community continued to grow, and in 2010, the first Midwinter Words writing weekend was introduced. This popular event has been a sell-out for eight years. Highlights have included guest authors, including Rosalie Ham (*The Dressmaker*), Paddy O'Reilly (*The Fine Colour of Rust*), Lindy Cameron (*Thicker Than Water*), Cate Kennedy (*The World Beneath*) and Dr Lee Kofman (*The Dangerous Bride*). Attendees have been tutored in writing in many different genres, including crime, dialogue, poetry and memoir. Midwinter Words has become very popular, not only because of the expertise of the presenters, but because it is an intimate gathering of no more than 20 participants, not to mention an excellent lunch! Midwinter Words also has follow-up activities on the Sunday, such as open-mic readings of participants' work at Saints & Sailors.

'From little things, big things grow' ...

PNH can now boast three fiction writing groups and a non-fiction group. *The Portal* is a quarterly publication, which showcases the talents of some of these groups. The 150 or so editions are distributed at community venues and are always snapped up by both locals and visitors. PNH's writing groups have also had two anthologies (*Reflections*) professionally published. From modest beginnings, PNH's writing groups have flourished and grown. Write on!

### WHY NOT POST A SUGGESTION or QUESTION IN OUR SUGGESTION BOX?



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## CHRISTMAS WISHES

Dear Santa, it's that time again, to look back on the year,  
It seems that time is moving fast, with Christmas drawing near.  
The festive season's piling high, on supermarket shelf,  
Its early presence makes me scowl, unlike a smiling elf!

I've watched the parking problems, outside of Woolworths here,  
And the thought of Christmas tourists does not bring me any cheer.  
To park outside amidst their throng becomes precision driving,  
Dear Santa, can I make a wish, for more car parks arriving?

And while I'm at it, Santa, I'll propose another wish,  
To ban those noisy jet skis, that frighten all the fish.  
They come in with their owners, who bring their dogs here too,  
So Santa, if it's not too much, can they pick up all the poo?

Along with litter sometimes strewn on beach without a thought ...  
We would love for visitors to behave here, as they really ought!  
We'd like them to enjoy our beach, fresh air and flavoured ices,  
Without using the whole network with their multiple devices!

Don't get me wrong, dear Santa, we love to share this place,  
And welcome those from near and far with smile and pleasant face.  
We are thankful for the blessing to live in such surrounds,  
Where sea meets field in coloured riot, and Nature's gift abounds.

Dear Santa, let us not forget how lucky we've all been,  
To live here in Portarlington, on lovely Bellarine.  
My greatest wish for all of us, is to continue in good cheer,  
And appreciate this special place for yet another year.

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## New groups for 2019 in the process of germinating:

- **Music Matters :** Are you a talented musician/ singer, classical or otherwise, and would like to get together with others and make music? Come and join a group of musicians and singers who want to perform!
- **Bollywood comes to Port... Basic Bollywood Dance:** Come along and have fun and enjoy learning basic Bollywood dance moves.
- **Yoga with Chris:** Designed to refresh both body and mind
- **Resin Jewellery Making Mementos:** Photos, dried flowers, crystals and shells... any little thing.
- **Creating you Family History :** One-on-one tuition at a time that suits you and your teacher.
- **Natural Therapies & Beauty:** A new look on how to keep yourself healthy!

Check out our 2019 program for further details:

[www.portnh.org.au](http://www.portnh.org.au)

# 2019

## MEMBERSHIP

Thank you to all those people who have already updated their membership for 2019.

A friendly reminder that all 2019 memberships will be due in February 2019.

## HOUSE PROUD NEWSLETTER TEAM



### Meet the team that produce House Proud :

*Di Kolomeitz, Anna Agius, Julie Walker,  
Phyllis Perry & Julie Hyslop.*

Quarterly publications of House Proud will be distributed at the end of each term.

Feel free to approach any of our friendly House Proud Team with photos, ideas and stories!

*May Joy and Peace be with you in 2019!*

**HOUSE PROUD TEAM**

## Sustainability... both OLD & NEW

Conversation with Rita Oliver

### Garden Club, Meets every 4th Monday of the Month

The Portarlington Garden Club is one of the oldest clubs in town. Rita remembers the Garden Club celebrating 30 years before the club moved to the PNH. It was established about 40 years ago by a nurse at the Bellarine Community Centre. She wanted people to lead fitter and healthier lives.

Since joining PNH the club has had a new lease of life. The Garden Club still meets monthly on every fourth Monday of the month, followed by a garden visit the next day. There are about 30 members. Their philosophy is get out there and get gardening! The club encourages people with little or no experience to come. It allows residents to meet socially, learn new skills or share their knowledge. The long-time residents, particularly, share knowledge about Portarlington's native plants and climate.

For example, did you know Portarlington is in a 'rain shadow'?

Each meeting is chaired by a different person and covers a different topic. Topics covered included beekeeping, vegetable growing, succulents etc. There is such a wealth of knowledge within the club, so that for any question asked there is someone who can answer it. In fact, the members of the Garden Club welcome any questions! Speaking to Rita, who is a self-sufficient horticulturist, it seems that within the club there are decades of knowledge. Also at the meetings there is a plant and seedlings swapping



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Conversation with Gabrielle May - Portarlington Produce Tree & Food Swaps @ PNH

The Portarlington Produce Tree & Food Swap is a relatively new concept to Portarlington. The swap meets weekly on Saturday mornings in the summer months and fortnightly in the winter months.

*"What inspired you to start Produce Tree?"*

Gabrielle May and Julie along with a core team and a few volunteers wanted to bring the community together around food, to reduce wastage, to share skills, knowledge, education and to share the excess that our gardens produce. The group was so excited about this idea that they approached Julie from PNH for support.

*"How many people visit the Produce Tree?"*

As produce and visitors alike are seasonal it's a hard question to answer – on average minimum 5 up to 10 people on a Saturday morning. However on beautiful morning anything from 20 to 30 people could visit the Tree. Residents, their visitors and holiday makers from all over the state drop by.

*"Do you get a lot of pleasure out of the Produce Tree?"*

Yes we do! We enjoy bringing the people together, sharing ideas, food produce and meeting new people. Without realising it, we have created a safe haven to share stories, both wonderful and sad. Many friendships have been made under the tree at the back of the neighbourhood house. We have had many donations to the Produce Tree from the generous Portarlington community that help with the success of the Produce Tree.

*"Do you think could improve anything?"*

Yes! We have just started such as a seed bank to share with the community. People can drop excess seeds into the seed bank and take what they need to sow into their own gardens.

We are also starting and getting some feedback regarding ShareWaste.

We are always open to new ideas.

From little things...BIG things grow!

Produce Tree is open to the community during daylight hours to drop and take. However you don't have leave anything to take something away.

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## Harps in Port to...



Christine has lived in Portarlington for many years, and over the years has conducted workshops for Aged Care facilities, retreats and festivals, playing therapeutic music in hospitals to patients and staff alike.

In 2016, Julie, co-coordinator of PNH, approached Christine, asking if she would be interested in conducting a Harp program for the Children's Holiday Program. Her first thought was, 'I've always worked with adults!'

But Christine had already written a children's book called *Pelican Pete*. With Julie's encouragement and insightfulness she turned her children's book into an interactive children's activity with the children dressing up, playing harps and acting out Pelican Pete. Thirty children were involved.

**Christine loved it.** The children's enthusiasm, participation and involvement was inspiring to her! (This came through while I was talking to her.) She had not thought of interacting with children and never thought that the children would react as they did to her and her harps!

In 2017, again Julie approached Christine to participate in Children's Week, this time for pre-schoolers. Beatrix Butterfly and her Harp was born! Again the enthusiasm of the children and their willingness to participate, made them absorb everything around them.

Christine realised then that her storytelling and her harp were firing up the children's imaginations. It was at this point that Christine recalled an early

memory from many years ago of watching Patsy Bisco, a children's entertainer on TV. She thought, *I would love to do that!*

### Now She is!

Christine has just returned from travelling around Western Queensland; she conducted Harp workshops in primary schools as well as kindergartens, incorporating storytelling with her music, involving the children. Each school was different from 6 to 40 predominantly aboriginal students.

Christine felt that these workshops were an experiment but little did she know what a reception she would receive. The students loved it as many had never seen a harp; let alone play one!

### **"Harps from Portarlington to the heart of the Out-back"**

Out of all this excitement came an extraordinary invitation from the School of the Air Mt. Isa. The School of the Air Mt Isa had heard about the workshops that Christine was conducting and asked Christine if she would conduct a morning workshop for them. Thirty children were brought in for the yearly face-to-face program at Camooweal. They came from remote stations within a 400km radius. Three workshops (prep to 2, grades 2 to 4, grades 4 to 6) followed by a concert, were all held in one morning!

This was so successful that Christine has now been invited back as an Artist in Residence to travel with School of the Air, Mt Isa for six weeks in August/September 2019! Christine is quite honoured by this invitation as they never have invited a musician before.

Back in Portarlington, Christine has been approached by Anglesea Kindergarten to lead a once-a-week for eight weeks program, ending in a concert involving all the children; they dance, sing, play harp- everyone has a role. It's all hard work but Christine is loving every minute of it!

The current direction of Christine's workshops and programs has never been planned but has opened so many doors and opportunities. Christine wants to say thank you to Julie for the opportunity and her encouragement! **From little things.....**

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## ONE TREE..... MANY BRANCHES...

For the past two years the Portarlington Neighbourhood House has hired a bus and taken Committee of Management and Office volunteers on an educational and training tour to six neighbourhood houses, both in this region and further afield to Newport and Altona. These volunteer development days were made possible by City of Greater Geelong Community Development Funding.

We were able to witness firsthand six very different house models and how they operate and these tours remind us that *"if you have been to one neighbourhood you have only been to one neighbourhood house."*

There were:

- \* centres with amazing facilities but operating only a few programs per week.
- \* centres that operated like exclusive clubs with courses costing hundreds of dollars.
- \* centres with no volunteers.
- \* centres that were very focused on the less fortunate in their area, with much support, provide food and essential relief.
- centres dedicated to providing program-

ming in one discipline only.

- \* centres with children's programs only.
- \* centres with only art activities.

It is amazing how different all the branches are, with different programmes and activities: ones with cafes, vege gardens and even people singing to you.

The great diversity over the neighbourhood house sector is amazing but all houses and centres are playing an important role in their communities. Imagine Portarlington without our neighbourhood house; the friendliest neighbourhood house whose canopy provides the warmth of a friendly smile and shelter from a day alone!

What we brought home from these visits was that, although we lack a dedicated home with kitchens, cafeterias, art rooms etc. we more than make up for this with our wonderful community whose support enables us to provide a house of friendship and laughter, learning and the opportunity of belonging.

In summary, while neighbourhood houses all grew from the same seed, each neighbourhood house branches out to reach the specific needs of its own