

# The COBURG MEDDLER

EMERGENCY EDITION

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FEBRUARY

*There have been a number of pieces written about Upfield train line developments over the past few months. This is an attempt to highlight the main issues affecting locals in Coburg.*

## GANDOLFO GRIEF

Local individuals and interest groups have spent the last two weeks protesting the tree removal in the Gandolfo Gardens surrounding Moreland Station by the Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP), the state corporation tasked with the redevelopment.

The protesters argue that some of the trees are up to 100 years old, home to precious ecosystems and have local sentimental value - they are calling on the LXRP to shift the location of the new station so that tree removal is minimised. Protesters say that moving the station roughly 50 metres south so that it spans Moreland Road would not only save the trees but improve accessibility from both sides of the road (a design seen on a number of stations across Melbourne's metro). The LXRP have rejected this proposal without communicating a clear reason, leaving many to infer that its main priorities are cost saving and an expedited process. James Conlan from the Upfield Corridor Coalition (UCC) says they want to be sure that the project is done well: "We want to make sure we don't get a cheap and nasty version because we're Moreland and Coburg which are safe Labour and Greens territory now".

The removal of four level crossings on the Upfield line between Bell St and Moreland Rd is part of the State Government's plan to remove 75 level crossings across Melbourne. The Upfield Line project includes elevating Moreland and Coburg stations with the original buildings being preserved underneath the new stations. Other structures of historical significance, such as the old train signaling box at Moreland Station, are being demolished to make way for construction. Done properly, the skyrail can increase road



and foot traffic flow (a benefit to buses as well as cars), create more public spaces and better pedestrian access - as has been achieved in Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs. No doubt rail redevelopment, including elevation, will become a norm and a necessary response to Melbourne's population growth and over-reliance on cars. It's therefore imperative that state and local government learn how to get it right.

*At the time of writing, the majority of trees have been felled in the Gandolfo Gardens as well as on the south-west side of Coburg Station.*

- E.S.

*This newspaper was written and developed on Wurundjeri Land of the Kulin Nation. Sovereignty was never ceded. If possible, people should contribute to the Pay the Rent campaign. This initiative funds groups that advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders: <https://www.invasionday.org/pay-the-rent-campaigns>*

## YOU CALL THAT CONSULTATION?

The level-crossing removal project has been consistently criticised by a number of public interest groups claiming that most of the public consultation for the project has been a sham. The Moreland Council has also been under fire for resting on its laurels while community members while community members have been protesting in the streets.

A confidential Memorandum of Understanding ('MOU') between the Moreland Council and the LXP (then the LXRA) that was signed in 2016 has been the subject of much speculation. It is believed by some members of the community that its contents may answer some questions regarding the council's relative silence on matters surrounding the level crossing project, such as the contentious tree-felling in Gandolfo Gardens last week.

The Council refused to share details of the MOU when asked by members of the community at a council meeting. The Meddler has learned that a Freedom of Information request has been lodged by curious members of the community. As long as the MOU is hidden from view, residents will continue to guess that the Council's silence is connected to a monetary pledge towards its Central Coburg 2020 Activity Centre - which includes the creation of a plaza on the station forecourt. Local community members began to notice that things were awry when faced with Council's lack of advocacy on the part of the community regarding the Upfield Line Project. This has led to questions about the partiality of the Council; of particular concern for some locals is whether the position of Senior Strategic Planner is funded by the LXP. The role of Senior Strategic Planner includes acting as a liaison between Council, LXP, and the community, as well as a Council representative in stakeholder meetings; if it were funded by LXP, it would call into question the Council's ability to adequately advance community interests.

Local frustrations about being disregarded and underrepresented were exacerbated when the LXP held a bicycle stakeholder meeting on 29 January to which they only invited a representative from one cyclist's advocacy group, Bicycle Network. That representative alerted the other local bicycle interest groups (including Mo-

reland Bicycle User Group and UCC) that were campaigning on the issue, believing that it was an oversight of LXP to not have invited them to the stakeholder meeting. Upon attempting to attend the meeting, members of the UCC were told they were not invited to join in and that the meeting would be cancelled if they insisted on attending. Police were called to the meeting to eject UCC members who refused to leave. Six police officers who consequently arrived at the scene were reportedly met with a scene of confused office workers, raising eyebrows over the necessity for the police back-up. Richard Tolliday, the Senior Strategic Planner for the Moreland Council, was the sole representative of the Council in this meeting.

While there is general support for the idea of a well-designed elevated train line and station improvements, community members and local groups believe a genuine consultation process could have prevented what has become a fraught project: "We had heard about this project happening, but we had no details from the government, no one really knew what was happening, the timeline was creeping forward quickly, and still very little details about what was going on." said a UCC spokesperson, "We found out about the plans for the stations through the Age photos released." The government's LXP website states that community suggestions were sought as to how the space around and underneath the new raised railway should be used. These are said to have been gathered from two drop-in sessions and through almost 300 survey responses.

However, a number of individuals and groups have raised serious concerns about the consultation process, with the station designs only being released at the end of the consultation period, and community input seemingly having no influence ahead of the government announcement that the contract was signed and works were going ahead. Controversy over the botched consultation continues as works are underway.

– G. Z.

## LOCALS DEMAND DOUBLE TRACKS

Train frequency has been a long running issue for Upfield commuters. There are currently only three trains per hour during peak hour, while other lines such as Sandringham run up to eight.

Better frequency is not an option until the track is duplicated all the way to Upfield, as only one train can run on the track at any one time. This results in excessively long wait times, particularly for those who live or travel north of Coburg. Local community member and councillor Sue Bolton has been advocating for track duplication for some time, saying that she knows of people who have lost jobs or missed exams and medical appointments due to the single track. "Once a train is running late, it terminates at Coburg, leading to a cancellation for everyone north of Bell St" she says.

There is no plan within the Upfield line developments to duplicate the single track which runs from Gowrie to Upfield stations and causes a bottleneck on the Northern part of the line (see: diagram above), though there has been a long-lasting campaign for track duplication.

The government has claimed that until the Metro tunnel is completed in 2025, frequency on the Upfield Line is still constrained by congestion in the city loop (the track also being shared by the Sunbury and Craigieburn lines). If higher frequency for the remainder of the line is in fact dependent on the Metro tunnel, it seems that now would be the perfect time to build that infrastructure. Upfield line closures are imminent and works are predicted to go on for three months.

The Upfield Transport Alliance points out that "public inconvenience is not included in cost benefit" and states that "if works can be done concurrently, it is a major saving for the community". In light of this, it hardly makes sense to close the line twice in five years for major works.

– G.Z.

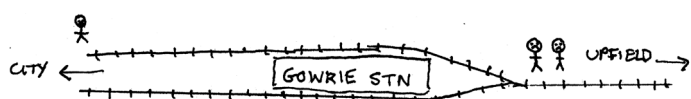


## REMEMBERING THE COBURG COURIER (1935-1995)

Wednesday 27 November 1935 marked the day that the first issue of The Coburg Courier was delivered into local mailboxes, free of charge. Coburgians were met with front-page news of: Wheeler & Woolsey performing their comedy "nit-wits"; a story of thieves bursting into a tailor's shop front window (today, the Coburg Salvos) and escaping on a motorbike with two suits in tow; and news of larrikins on Sydney Road drinking beer and breaking into a car. The creators carved out a section on page two, headed 'We Make Our Bow' where they announced that they had accepted the invitation (from 'some leading businessmen') to 'give Coburg a good newspaper service'.

The new publishers already had 10 years of experience in publishing newspapers under their belt, having conducted three newspapers in Kew, Hawthorn and North Camberwell. Coburg's mayor at the time, N L Martin, endorsed the paper with his good wishes, quoting Marcus Terentius Varro, an ancient roman writer: "nature gave the fields, and human art built the cities". In an homage to newspapers that could massage a heartbeat from the Murdoch empire, Martin went on to say: "included in the category of human art is undoubtedly the production and publishing of an up-to-date newspaper".

Whilst the advert-heavy Coburg Courier might have fallen short of classifying as a work of art, the first issue delivered some memorable local opinions. One local describes the "unusual spectacle each evening where the bicycle brigade takes the road" on Sydney Road. These "sons of toil", she writes, are providing themselves with "exercise and fresh air" which must be a relief from the "vitiated atmosphere of the workshop and factory". She wishes "good luck" to the youthful "Oppermans" (a reference to a famous Australian cyclist) and thanks them for contributing to the cycle manufacturing industry. She would surely be disappointed to see the way that cyclists are treated on the roads – particularly on Sydney Road – almost 90 years later.



## ON YOUR BIKE!

Moreland Bicycle User Group (BUG) are a cyclist advocacy group in the Moreland area. They are organising a community vision session on Saturday the 29th of February, from 1:00-3:00pm at the Coburg Library. The session is for people to come and contribute their ideas about their preferences and ideas for bike routes around Moreland. Join the discussion about increasing mobility options, increasing safety and improving our bike routes.

On Sunday 15 March there will be a big community bike ride down Sydney Rd. Join the brigade of bicycles taking over the road.

On Saturday the 21st of March, Greens MP Tim Reed is hosting a drop-in session in a parking space off Sydney Rd, Brunswick (be-

## LOCAL ARTIST OF THE MONTH: HUGO, *self-portrait*



tween Weston St and Barkly St, near the bouldering wall) to hear from locals about ideas to make Sydney Rd 'greener, cleaner, safer and quieter'. It will be running from 10:00am - 12:00pm.

– P. T.

**For more information, contact the Moreland Bicycle User Group: [committee@morelandbug.org](mailto:committee@morelandbug.org).**



## NEW YEARS CELEBRATIONS

On New Year's Eve a community football (AKA soccer) game kicked off just before midnight in Fleming Park. A number of local residents came down to kick a fluoro orange ball in semi-darkness. Though there was lighting strung from trees, locals still collided at a faster than usual rate. The game was rudely interrupted by someone in the city letting off fireworks, and the players begrudgingly stopped to watch. Attendance wasn't limited to locals, with people coming from Keilor and Doncaster to join in. Many felt enlivened by the game. Local resident, Gary, said that the event inspired him to be more positive.

## GO SEE YOUR DOCTOR, BUT....

*Coburg-living doctor answering your questions and giving unsolicited advice*

I have two pieces of advice and it's inspired by common questions and oversights I see all the time:

Yes, you can mix panadol and ibuprofen!

And please – Moisturise your feet if they're dry! Cracks on the skin can lead to an infection. This can be a big problem if you have diabetes!

– Dr E Bop

Email your questions to: [drebop.meddler@gmail.com](mailto:drebop.meddler@gmail.com)

For anonymous questions: <https://www.suggestionox.com/r/9iddQ6>

## You CAN Handle the Truth

An easy-to-understand explanation of specific law-related issues.

**DISCLAIMER:** *This information does not constitute legal advice; don't get your legal advice from a newsletter, only get legal advice from a practising lawyer!*

### Eviction and The Notice to Vacate ('NTV')

The way the NTV is currently written is misleading and encourages tenants think they legally need to be out of their property by the date listed in the NTV. But this isn't the case! The NTV is more like a request by the landlord to leave that can later be made enforceable by VCAT. The NTV is the first step in the eviction process; not the last; and there are often options available for renters to avoid eviction after being served an NTV.

Thankfully the NTV form is being updated to be less misleading, but until this happens it's important to understand the current NTV.



### The Termination Date

The section of the NTV where the landlord gives a date when they require the tenant to vacate the property is not necessarily the date that you are required to leave. The NTV is only the first step the landlord needs to take if they want to evict the tenant.

Usually the landlord will wait until the termination date of the NTV before they make an application to VCAT for possession of the property or the room (known as a 'possession order') however, they are allowed to apply to VCAT for a possession order straight after they serve the NTV. VCAT will ordinarily hear the application within 14 days of the application being made, and a possession order will be made within 7 days of the hearing. The possession order will give you a new date when you are required to vacate, and it will be no more than 30 days after the order is made. It is important to note that VCAT will always list the matter for the first hearing after the termination date listed in the NTV.

If a possession order has been made by VCAT in favour of the landlord, the landlord may then apply to 'purchase' a warrant of possession from VCAT. If this step is successful, the warrant of possession is given to the local police station, which is then executed by the police. The police usually (but are not legally required to) give the tenant notice about when they plan to execute the warrant.

So, if you've been given an NTV make a note about how and when it was given to you and then contact a CLC or Tenants Victoria for free legal advice about what you can do.

### USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION:

Tenants Victoria: (03) 9416 2577

Darebin Community Legal Centre: (03) 9484 7753

If you're at risk of homelessness, contact Justice Connect Homeless Law: (03) 8636 4408

#### Notice to vacate to tenant/s of rented premises

Tenant's copy

*Residential Tenancies Act 1997 S319; Regulation 28*

##### Tenant details

1. This notice is given to:  
(tenant/s names)

##### Reason for notice to vacate

9. Insert the section number of the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* and the reason for the notice to vacate.

There are a number of reasons why landlords decide to evict tenants. In Victoria, if a landlord decides to evict a tenant, they **MUST** give the tenant a Notice to Vacate (unless the tenant agrees to ending the tenancy agreement, or the tenant abandons the property). This applies whether you're living in a private rental, rooming house, public housing or community housing.

On top of this, the landlord **MUST** include a proper and detailed reason for the NTV. Landlords can't simply cite a section of the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 as their reason for serving the NTV. They must also provide evidence to support their claim.

The NTV must also be 'served' (given to you) in the proper way. It can't be just left in your letterbox or placed under your door. It must be given to you in person, sent in registered mail, or (only if you agree to it first) via email.

If you receive an NTV make sure you contact your local Community Legal Centre or Tenants Victoria for legal advice. Don't just ignore it!

## NOGGIN SCRATCHERS

1. How many justices serve in the High Court of Australia?
2. What is a numbat? a) an arachnid? b) a marsupial? c) a piece of sporting equipment?
3. What is the main ingredient in a latke?
4. What does radar stand for?
5. What is the sum of a roulette wheel?
6. Who was the Australian Prime Minister in 1945?
7. What is the condition hyponatremia a lack of?
8. What is likely to wear a toque?
9. From the Nintendo universe, what is Mario's last name?
10. What does M\*A\*S\*H stand for?
11. What year was Abbey Road by the Beatles released?
12. Which 2 landlocked countries are surrounded only by other landlocked countries?

*Answers on page 4*

## MALL-CONTENTS

*Local shopkeepers share their insights*

This is going into the 6th year we've had this shop (Pictures & Pages) – myself and Sharon. We both live in the area and our kids attend the schools here. We met as primary school parents; our kids started prep together and we were both looking for something to do. Sharon suggested this, and I said 'I'm in'. I've lived in Coburg for maybe 30 years; I'd say that the demographic has changed, but really it just has peaks of young children and then old, and then it starts over again – it hasn't changed for a long time.

There are often lots of plans for changes in the area, and then those plans often fall to the wayside. I think once the train goes up the flow on effect will come across here; they'll develop the carpark and there will be more shops. I like the plans for the train. I look at it like: it's going to go up, it's not just the cheaper option, but I think underneath the ground – without being an expert – there's a lot of infrastructure under there; once you start touching it all, you don't know what might happen. I think the simple solution is to put it up. We just need more shops around here that are beneficial to everyone. There were a lot more fashion shops here, a lot of those have moved on, so it'd be good to have a variety for shoppers so they stick to shopping strips around here and don't go elsewhere. More clothing stores, and in particular shoes; we've gone from three shoe shops to one.

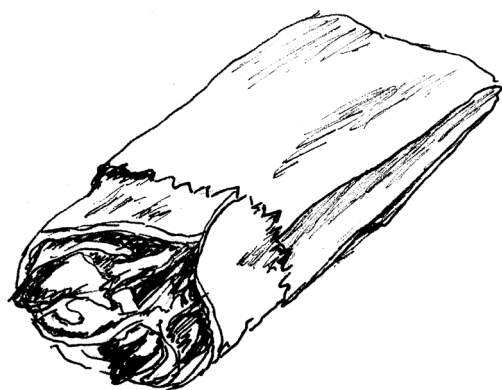
–LeeAnn

About 13 or 14 years ago I started this store (Fairprice). I chose Coburg because it's close to the city and because there are both young and old people, which is good for business. It's hard to say what has changed in Coburg because when I'm here I'm always inside working, but I have noticed it's become cleaner and more organised since I started working here.

I've also noticed it's become more accessible for disabled people; it's much easier for customers to access the shops now. I've also noticed that the customers are getting a little bit older. Coburg is a good area; it's an area that is full of energy. Normal people can do lots of things here. But the prices are getting higher. It would be good to get younger people in the area, and for there to be more local businesses and it would be good for local businesses to grow and to have increased foot traffic.

–Jin





## FLAVOURS OF COBURG

### *Afghan Charcoal Kebab*

By Henry Gardner

If you are fortunate to visit the unassuming Afghan Charcoal Kebab (Sydney Road, Coburg), you will be offered carefully prepared local and traditional meals that will delight and surprise. The décor resembles a homely pizza and kebab place, but do not let appearances deceive; traditional Afghan naan bread is woodfire baked in a tandoor oven and the house speciality, carefully marinated kebab is carefully grilled over lightly smoked coals in order to achieve maximum flavour.

What is to be loved about Afghan Charcoal Kebab is that it embodies the Coburg of the present moment – at once local and understated, yet vibrant with difference and a piquant sense of what it means to be at home here. This small restaurant is at once its own little cosmos – voices in hushed tones, English, Arabic, Hindi and Pashto fill in the background of the cosy eating space. Grilled kebabs are the mainstays of the menu and can be accompanied with rice, dips and salad (\$12 for 2 skewers, \$15 for 3) or alternatively sandwiched by freshly baked bread (\$11). The salads are perhaps better conceived of as a garnish yet are more than made up for by the dips, of which each customer can choose two from a wide range. Given that pricing is more than reasonable even by local standards, a wallet could easily be stretched to cover a spread of dips, rice, fresh breads grilled meat, rice and drink for well under \$20. The biryani and qorma

rices (\$12) are also a particular favourite with the locals and are recommended to complement the meal when served with grilled kebab (\$15).

Perhaps given the number of excellent pizza and falafel options available locally this viewer would recommend sticking to the mixed grill options on Afghan Charcoal Kebab's menu, but if looking for a strictly vegetarian or vegan option, homely specialities like the lentil, bean and home-style soups are heartily recommended and also served with too-generous portions of freshly baked bread. If strictly on a budget there is a popular falafel (\$5) or doner kebab (\$7) special, however if budget or taste permit there is advantage to the culinary adventurous, with great value in the soups and mixed-rice dishes.

Sitting in Afghan Charcoal Kebab eating traditional specialities watching the steady yet eager parade of customers anticipating then enjoying their carefully created meals, one begins to wonder if this cafe has already woven into the memories of the latest waves of migration to the northern suburbs of Melbourne. We can imagine that in the future, second and third generation migrant families will nostalgically reflect on this simple place where the staff behind the counter wore bright blue hairnets and afghan bread was served alongside pizza, yet amidst the smoke of grilled kebab and the chatter of diverse locals, they felt, with their weary yet proud parents, that they were once again at home.

Afghan Charcoal Kebab  
7/457 Sydney Rd, Coburg  
(03) 9354 2425

## MY FIRST CAFE CLOSES DOWN

On 27 January 2020 My First Cafe closed down permanently. We say goodbye to this local business that had been running for 5 years and was well-liked for its Thai food and smoothies. We thank the workers for their warm service, their tasty food and for the cafe's generous table-space.

## SCOTCH FINGER BUSINESS

"It's been two weeks since this scotch finger fiasco started, and I've spent the entire time trying to clear my name. I've brought you all here tonight – yes, I know you're all anxious to get home – to finally put an end to this.

Can I just firstly say that the underhanded tactics used by Library Management to trap me at the last staff meeting - where we first learned of this scotch finger business - were atrocious; I feel vilified. Yes, I did stick to the scotch fingers when presented with the family assorted, but we were having coffee. Coffee!"

"It's not conclusive, but you ate them all very quickly!" came an indignant outburst from the back.

"Unless that's a formal accusation, let me finish! Now, we're jumping ahead – I'm aware that some of you are just back from leave. For context, two weeks ago there was an event held here at the library; the launch of Lenny Lamington's latest mystery – sidenote: *magnifique*. As you're all aware, the two-biscuit snack packs out the back are individually distributed to attendees and are not meant to be eaten by staff members. And I'm a major proponent of this rule; the attendees love these biscuits – most ask for a second packet!

The staff at that time - myself included - noticed that some packets had been opened, and the scotch fingers gone, leaving a single biscuit remaining. Curiously, it's always the scotch finger; the other biscuit is left untouched! Since the event, it was clear this biscuit-transgression was not a one-off; it was happening with alarming frequency! We of course went straight to Management, who then set up that fateful staff meeting where my name was sullied. None of you have looked at me the same way since. I've heard whispers: 'bikkie-pincher', 'finger-binger' and 'Tony Mok-biscuit'."

"You've absolutely lost it! –"

"– I know what I heard! Where was I? Oh, yes: you all think it was me, but my hands are clean! I instead ask you all to look at the grubby hands of our common enemy...

I suspected a rat when I noticed the characteristic way the packets were being broken



into; always leaving an uneven, jagged edge. My suspicions were confirmed upon reading the report I commissioned from the EPA's rodent expert. And I quote: 'two weeks ago, major tunneling works in the vicinity of the building in question, disrupted and agitated local rat populations'. Further down in the report: 'Rats are well-known habitualists; despite other options, they will return to specific food they have deemed safe'. Friends, colleagues – the EPA has been inundated with rat-related complaints.

So, I ask you to consider this evidence. Yes, I have a penchant for scotch fingers, but only because they're the best out of a bad bunch.

And in any case, if it wasn't the rats, it would probably be Amanda; I think I noticed some crumbs when I was looking inside her backpack.

I rest my case."

--Edwina Snagge, Coburg

*Story inspired by the librarian at Coburg Library – thank you!*

Please send in a short story for next edition (500 words or less):

thecoburgmeddler@gmail.com

*If you're a local and you have something you'd like to write on, a short piece of writing you want people to read, a photo or artwork, or anything else you'd like to see in black and white, please email us.*

*Send us any feedback and criticisms (please, yes!) email: thecoburgmeddler@gmail.com*

*For any anonymous messages you'd like to send (for example: overheards, criticism or scoops) please use: <https://www.suggestionox.com/r/9id-dQ6>*