

my good neighbours
(a summary in English)
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Yet another rainy Autumn day goes by. Fitzroy is now much quieter due to the reduced traffic following the COVID-19 lockdown.

I am an optimistic person yet I find myself now feeling a little stressed. The town looks a bit strange. Everyone is staying home.

The shops have sufficient supplies of food, medicine and sanitizer. Nevertheless, I cannot find face masks, which were very easy to buy just a few weeks ago. I recall memories from decades ago when I had to queue up for daily necessities. I didn't think this would ever happen in Australia.

One morning I was so surprised to find a pack of four new masks in my letter box. Did someone read through my mind and know what I wanted? I contacted all of my friends but found no clues.

I've been living at Fitzroy Brooks with my wife for more than seventeen years. There are six houses in the street. We have beautiful neighbourhood relationships in this small and quiet area. We help each other regardless of our race, age or culture.

The neighbours who are living at number 2 are a newly-moved-in family. We helped them unload the truck when we saw them move in. Two days later, we discovered some pots of fresh flowers in each of our front gardens. My guess is that the masks were dropped by these neighbours as they like to do things quietly.

The neighbours who are living at number 4 are a migrant family from Africa. The husband is a driver and works hard every day. He came to give me a hand when he saw my flat tires and smiled to me humbly. He often helps me as if I were his brother. Recently he smiled to me when we met. It is also possible that the masks were given by him.

The neighbour who is living at number 6 is an American man who drives to work very early in the morning. One day, after a stormy night he drove past my front gate and saw my sun shading board had fallen over. He worked hard and fixed it quietly while we were still asleep. I discovered his kindness later from next door's CCTV.

The neighbour who is living at number 8 is an Italian man who owns a clothing company - a polite and well dressed guy. He treats me as if I were his valued client. Perhaps because I am the oldest in the street. He likes to give samples away for free to the neighbours, but I always decline as I don't need those fancy clothes. But one day he gave me an oriental style senior suit. He is a cunning man and may have been the one helped me anonymously.

The neighbours who are living at number 10, next door to me, are a group of young working people in their twenties. A few days ago, Allen, one of these young people, dropped a note in my letter box. It read: "we are setting up a neighbourhood group on WhatsApp and would like to invite you to join us. It's aim is to build a strong neighbourhood during the COVID-19 lockdown. Please let us know if you need any help. Below are my contact details ..." I was very touched, as were my children who live far away from me. I think the masks may have also been dropped off by our young neighbours.

The puzzle has not yet been solved. I received a call from Linda, the leader of Fitzroy senior residents Association. She was distributing a few masks to the most vulnerable members and asked if we need any. Yet more clues, but we cannot find this mysterious person.

It is enough for me and my wife - there is no need to peruse the answer. I really appreciate the warm, caring support around us. There is an old saying: "a good neighbour is better than a relative far off." I'm so lucky to live in Fitzroy Brookes. It is a luxurious gift to have such nice neighbours in my life, especially during this lockdown period. I believe we will beat the virus.