

MACKILLOP WARD UPDATE

Cr Stephen Jolly | Mayor and Councillor

Stephen.Jolly@yarracity.vic.gov.au | 0437 856 713



Making Rose Street safer

Keeping up our cohealth fight

Smith Reserve drainage upgrade

MACKILLOP WARD UPDATE | Fitzroy

One of the things I value most about Yarra is the strength of our community. Time and again, we see people come together to support each other, stand up for what matters, and help shape the future of our neighbourhoods. That's what happened when cohealth faced closure earlier this year — the community came out in droves to defend its vital service. It is still in danger of closing after it was offered temporary funding.

We were lucky to catch up with a nurse who dedicated most of her life to cohealth in Collingwood. Helen Chakman, who recently retired after 46 years at cohealth, cared for generations of local families, built trusted relationships across the community and witnessed firsthand the vital role cohealth played in supporting some of our most vulnerable residents. I hope Helen's story inspires you to join us in our fight to save cohealth.

In MacKillop Ward, we are looking to the future of Rose Street in Fitzroy. Following the success of the shared zone trial, Council is funding a new study to explore a permanent design that builds on what has worked while addressing ongoing challenges. Rose Street is home to local businesses, the popular Rose Street Artists' Market and countless community connections. We want to ensure it remains a welcoming, vibrant and functional place that continues to reflect Fitzroy's unique character.

You'll also find updates on practical improvements underway across the area, including footpath renewal works in George Street and drainage upgrades along Brunswick Street.

Thank you to everyone who contributes to making Yarra such a creative, caring and connected community.

Cr Stephen Jolly | MacKillop Ward

Rose Street Safety Study

Council is now funding a study to explore a permanent shared zone design for Rose Street.

The study will look at practical ways to manage traffic, including options such as one-way arrangements, and identify streetscape improvements that support a safe, accessible and attractive shared zone.

The aim of the study is to develop a preferred set of treatments that respond to community feedback, address the limitations of the temporary trial and create a more welcoming and functional space for everyone who uses Rose Street.



Helen Chakman: 46 years of caring for Collingwood

After the cohealth board said it would stop offering GP services at its Collingwood and Fitzroy cohealth clinics last year, Yarra residents gathered to save the heart of their community. While the pharmacy closed, the Federal Government has thrown the health service a temporary lifeline to continue its free GP service. Yarra Council is fighting for permanent funding.

One of the centre's biggest advocates is nurse Helen Chakman. Yarra Life spoke with Helen before her retirement, after 46 years of service to Collingwood cohealth.

Helen Chakman has one message for decision makers:

"They need to listen to the people on the ground — they can come and sit in the centre and see the work that's done, the people who walk in the door — they are the most vulnerable ... and the people who work there do it because they really care."

She remembers the shock when the closure was announced. "It was a gut-wrenching notice that came to us all," she said. But she was buoyed by the community response. Just three days later, more than 300 people attended a meeting at Fitzroy Town Hall. "It was terrific to see people cared that much and they were willing to fight — and hopefully they will go on fighting."

When Helen first walked into the Collingwood Community Health Centre, now known as cohealth, she had no idea she was about to begin a 46-year chapter of her life.



Helen has cared for up to four generations of Collingwood families. Children she once immunised have returned with children of their own. She has spotted life-threatening illnesses in time, attended clients' funerals and shared honest conversations about their lives.

For Helen, nursing has always been more than just treating an illness. Patients have brought her concerns ranging from family difficulties to paying bills, and she has helped connect them with other services. "Trust is at the heart of community nursing," she said. "Everybody deserves to be seen, to be heard, to be treated well."

Helen recalled the days of women of the community watching Collingwood play at Victoria Park — after the game they would take home the players' shorts to wash them. Over the decades, Helen has watched Collingwood change. She remembers football as part of the area's social fabric and has seen Greek, Vietnamese, African and Arab-speaking communities make the area their home.

She believes Collingwood still has a heart — and that cohealth has long been part of it, a 'one-stop shop' for medical, social and practical support.

After 46 years at Collingwood cohealth, Helen is proud of the relationships she has built with staff and the community.

Working for You

Local projects in your area



Footpath renewal works George Street, Fitzroy

Footpath renewal works have been undertaken in George Street, Fitzroy. These works responded to trip hazards caused by tree roots. Bluestone kerbing was also renewed to improve the stormwater performance locally. The cost of works was \$27,000.



Brunswick Street, Fitzroy drainage improvement

Council has completed drainage improvement works along Brunswick Street between King and Moor Streets, delivering a more reliable and better-performing drainage system for the area. The project involved installing new drainage pipes and pits and undertaking associated civil works to support long-term function and reduce the risk of localised flooding during heavy rain. These upgrades strengthen important underground infrastructure and help keep the surrounding streets safer, cleaner and more resilient for the community.



Smith Reserve drainage upgrade

We have invested in improvements at Smith Reserve, with funding allocated in the 2026/27 capital works program to upgrade drainage and lay new instant turf. This \$25,000 project will help keep the reserve greener, more resilient and better able to cope with heavy use and wet weather. Works will begin once conditions warm up later in 2026, ensuring the new turf establishes well, and the reserve remains a welcoming space for local sport, play and community activity.



The Rose Street Artists' Market

Every weekend, the Rose Street Artists' Market brings Fitzroy to life with colour, creativity and the work of more than 120 local makers. Through winter and spring, the market fills Rose Street with original art, handmade goods and clever design pieces — all created by independent artists who call Yarra home.

It's a place where you can meet the makers, hear the stories behind their work, and find something truly unique. From ceramics and jewellery to illustration, textiles and small-batch design, the market has become a much-loved part of Fitzroy's creative identity and a regular stop-in for locals and visitors alike.