



# Welcome...

## to our very own alternative newspaper!

As I began to write the welcome message for this issue I started to ponder on what the word 'welcome' actually meant to me personally. I thought about those times in my life when I have been welcomed into new communities and those when I have welcomed others into my neighbourhood and my life. This led me 'down the path' to nostalgia and memories.

The one which holds most significance was when I shifted into my first 'country' home. While I had spent the major part of my childhood in provincial Victoria, I was a 'newly hatched' adult escaping from the city when this occurred. The tiny weatherboard cottage may have been 'ever so humble' but it was my first home in a real country town. With four rooms and a garage as big as the house itself it sat shaded by the obligatory peppercorn tree on a huge block on the outskirts of town.

Not knowing anyone in the street and having been advised that country folk sometimes took time to 'warm' to new people in town I resolved to introduce myself after I had unpacked and settled in. My new neighbours had other ideas. Opening my front door the first morning after the 'big move' I was astonished to see the biggest pumpkin I had ever laid eyes on sitting on the ground outside.

Now when I describe this pumpkin as big – I really mean BIG! I could not have picked it up let alone carried it from wherever it had grown. Even with the aid of a 'country' wheelbarrow it would have been a struggle! You can therefore imagine my astonishment when the owner turned out to be the 84 year old farmer from across the way!

Needless to say that was the beginning of a wonderful friendship with the 'farmer and his wife' with many cups of tea consumed at their kitchen table. So much for the warnings about the reticence of country folk. It was also the beginning of many happy years spent living in rural Victoria as part of a warm and welcoming community.

An Alternative Voice has now become part of a Victoria wide community and this was bought home to me recently when I travelled up to Morwell to attend a local festival. It was a wet, windy and very cold Sunday but, despite the weather, the venue was literally packed with people, some of whom had travelled great distances to attend. It was a fabulous day!

I met many people whom I had previously only spoken to over the phone or via email. However, without exception, I was welcomed as a friend by all. For me this experience reinforced just how similar we all are. No matter where we live or how we live, most of us seek to find a sense of connection within our communities. And in today's world this community can stretch far beyond physical boundaries.

This issue of the paper will see it spreading even further with new distributors in Echuca and just over the border in Moama. Both people contacted me after picking up a copy of An Alternative Voice at the MindBodySpirit Festival last month. Both asked if they could have copies of each issue sent to them and both offered to distribute many more throughout their local communities. We welcome them into our Alternative Voice community.

A warm welcome also to all our regular readers! May you find within these pages inspiration, information and maybe even answers to questions you have long been pondering on. And remember, by extending a welcoming hand to all those who move into our communities and our neighbourhoods, we are not only enriching their lives but our own as well.

*Robyn.*

### an alternative voice

An Alternative Voice is your free, independent, community newspaper.

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