



1 Avoca Cres, Pascoe Vale  
Victoria, 3044  
December 2021

Hello everyone,

This time last year, as I pondered the state of the world, I had hopes that the worst of the covid pandemic was now behind us. We were tentatively opening up and infection rates in Australia were low. Wow, were we wrong!

2021 has been another very challenging year for us here in Australia and in the wider world. Melbourne took the badge as the most locked down city in the world, with over 200 days in total during the 2020/2021 period. Our schoolkids studied from home and many people lost their jobs, either temporarily or permanently. And to top it off, we were blessed with a Federal Government which lurched from one disaster to another, its inability to manage the climate crisis, the bushfire season, the economy, covid, our submarines, etc, etc, etc, all showcasing world's worst practice.

But we remain a resilient mob down under and life continues on, albeit with more hiccups than usual.

My year started with a drive to Adelaide to attend the funeral of old racewalking mate Peter Fullager. 2020 had seen the passing of many, many friends and Peter's funeral boded ominously for 2021. Thankfully, the trend was broken and the year since then has been thankfully free of such trauma.

Of course, I did manage to wipe myself out in January in a cycling accident that saw me in hospital getting facial stitches, followed by subsequent operations for a detached retina and then a lens replacement in the right eye. But all good now, except for the fact that the eyesight is a bit lopsided! I was quickly back on the bike (they say you can't keep a good man down) and have managed to stay upright since then!

Lois has never been far from our thoughts this year. In February, a sign was unveiled in her honour at the St Linus Kindergarten, in recognition of her many years on the kinder committee. On Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May, we finally found a window of opportunity, covid wise, to inter Lois's ashes at the St Linus Church memorial garden, with around 100 close friends in attendance. We also unveiled two new seats in the church gardens, with a lovely plaque dedicating them in Lois's memory. This was the very kind gift of Martin and Debra Roberts, hand made over many weeks by Marty. We had planned to have a large family gathering on the first anniversary of Lois's death in August but yet another covid lockdown prevented that and the boys and I had to be content with a small informal gathering at home to remember her. On Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October, a new stained glass window at the St Linus Church was installed, in remembrance of Lois and of the Rev. Jo-Anne Wells, our vicar, who passed only a month or so after Lois. We are now planning a function in the Feb/March period to formally bless the window, and this will hopefully be another chance to gather together and celebrate Lois's life.

It has been a very quiet year here at 1 Avoca Cres, Pascoe Vale, as Matt and I have pottered away in our respective lives, without the usual flurry of visitors. My brother Terry and his wife Diana did manage a trip down from Darwin in February, staying for around 4 weeks. We had a wonderful time that included a number of trips around Victoria and a 6 day driving tour of Tasmania. We had lived in Queenstown for a year during our childhood days so we concentrated on the west coast of Tassie, visiting the small mining towns around Queenstown, many of them now only memories, some managing to survive, but few managing to prosper.

My Christmas letter would not be complete if I did not fill everyone in on our activities.

I continue my extremely active retirement (13 years now), finding the time to do lots of bike riding, reading, the occasional bushwalk, lots of gardening on the home, church and other fronts, and a small amount of racewalking. After many many years of active administration on the racewalking front, I finally stepped back this year from most of my responsibilities, handing over the various tasks to new people who will no doubt put their own stamp to the activities. I will still potter around the edges and do a bit of interclub racing but I am already enjoying the new found freedom. My big commitment for the year continues to be organising the Coburg 24 Hour Carnival which is held each April. Yes, there are still lots of people willing to challenge themselves with a 24 Hour walk or run around an athletics track. As they say, it takes all types!

I am also keeping myself busy on the Parish Council of St Linus Anglican Church and on the Parents Advisory Committee of the St Linus Kindergarten, two activities which Lois undertook for many years and which I am continuing in her absence. There is always something to be done, whether it be odd jobs or gardening or such like, but it is enjoyable and satisfying work.

And of course, there is always the wide circle of family and friends, many of whom have been out of physical range this year, what with our covid lockdowns.

David is now into his ninth year working with the State Revenue Office, the Victorian government's main taxation agency. He continues in his IT testing role and he is kept busy with various projects. He continues house sharing with Chris in Essendon, only a stone's throw from the family home in Pascoe Vale. It has been wonderful having the two boys so close, especially since Chris is looking after Ollie and Annie every second week. David has worked from home for most of 2020 and most of 2021, with his stints back in the office in the city cut short on each occasion because of covid lockdowns. Ollie and Annie love sharing house with 'Uncle Dave' and many are the laughs and pranks that liven things up on the home front.

Chris is just coming to the end of his second year as a fireman with Fire Rescue Victoria (the new amalgam of the MFB and CFA). He was originally based at the Tullamarine Fire Station in NW Melbourne but is now at the Niddrie Fire Station. As per the fireman's life, he works 2 day shifts, followed by 2 night shifts, then has 4 days off. Suffice to say he has had his share of fires and call outs. He looks after Ollie and Annie every second week, so I come to the fore when his workdays clash with his family days, and on those occasions I take the kids to and from school and supervised home schooling (during the covid lockdowns), give them dinner and often have them sleeping over here at Avoca Crescent. These are wonderful times and I feel so lucky to have such an active role in their formative years – Ollie is now 10 and Annie is now 8. In exciting news, Chris and Annie have just signed the papers to purchase a house together. It is in Pascoe Vale South, only 2-3 km from here, and is situated in a quiet area close to parkland and bike tracks. They will take possession of the property in January.

Paul continues with his role as the National Secretary of the Australian Labor Party and is still living in Canberra. It is a demanding role, especially with the sort of year we are just finishing, but he handles well the cut and thrust of political life and seems able to balance the many conflicting pushes and pulls. See the great photo at <https://www.alp.org.au/about/organisation/paul-erickson/>. He was down in May for Lois's interment and down again for a couple of months in the July/August period. With a Federal election likely in the new year, he will be very busy from now on as Labor makes its pitch for power but is planning some time off during December and will be down for Christmas – great news! Those of us who are true blue Labor are holding our breath and crossing our fingers and toes as we wait for the election date to be set!

Matt's many musical endeavours have been hard hit by covid again this year, with schools closed down for at least half of the year and with the live music industry completely sidelined. He was teaching via zoom for most of the time and it was only in October was he able to start attending his schools in person and start preparing for some live gigs. Of all the boys, he is the one who has been hit hardest by the covid lockdown. He would have had a big year playing and touring with his various bands, but he still featured on a number of newly released albums this year (with Ajak Kwai where he plays bass and with Ben Power where he plays lead guitar) and live work doesn't look too far off. On a personal note, it is wonderful to have Matt still sharing the house with me.

I have searched the computer and put together my usual Christmas webpage with a selection of family related photos (see <http://www.erickson.id.au/erickson/2021.shtml>). As you can see, we are still here and kicking against whatever life throws at us.

To all our friends, local and remote, we wish you a Christmas filled with peace and joy and hope that 2022 will be a year where the world moves closer together in unity, tolerance and mutual love and acceptance.

Tim