

# Work experience leads to a life of advocacy

NATALEE KERR

FOR 33 years, Point Lonsdale's Jacqui Pierce has empowered thousands of people with a disability and their families.

After completing work experience at a disability service while at high school, Ms Pierce knew working in special education would be the pathway for her.

Her desire to try to close the gap for people with a disability

has led to more than three decades in the sector.

"The reason I'm still here doing what I do is because there's that fire in the belly," she said.

"I'll keep going until people with a disability and their families get to experience and enjoy the same human rights as I do. It's not going to happen overnight, but I hope it can happen in my lifetime."

The disability advocate has campaigned on a variety of

issues including the need for funding certainty and access to services.

Ms Pierce also helps young people who are in, or facing, admission to residential aged care.

"I often say to people I can't change the outcome of the journey, but we can make that journey easier," she said.

"If their goal is to stay home, I'll do whatever it takes for them to stay at home."

Ms Pierce played a key role

in the Every Australian Counts campaign, which successfully lobbied for the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Geelong's inclusion as a pilot area.

"I grabbed that opportunity with both hands," she said.

"It was the first time in my career that I felt like we could shift the power balance.

"I spend a lot of time helping people with disability and their families sort out issues with the NDIS, I see the prob-

lems daily, but the NDIS scheme is absolutely transforming lives."

Ms Pierce is also the current chair of the Bellarine Community Health Advisory Group and has been involved with several not-for-profit organisations, advisory and civic committees.

**Jacqui Pierce is one of several inspiring women featured as part of the Geelong Advertiser's Women of the Year awards. Winners will be announced on May 8.**



Disability advocate Jacqui Pierce.



## Raising a glass as we call time on our column



CHEERS: Erena and Richard Crowley from Barwon Heads Winestore.

WELL, it's not every day you get to contribute a column to a final edition of a newspaper. For over 50 years, the *Echo* has been supporting small businesses like ours, getting the word out about local successes, supporting them.

After nearly six years of contributing to the legendary *Echo*, we'd like to say thank you to our readers who, in turn, have cut out our column in search of the wines and tastings, disagreed with us about elements of our reviews and generally mentioned Wine Time in passing, just so we knew they had read it.

Thank you all, even the critics.

One of the first Wine Time columns we submitted contained a review for sparkling, and honestly I can't think of a better drink to imbibe this week.

Yes, we're isolated, but there is no reason why we can't raise a glass to the Easter bunny and have a chocolate or two chatting to your mates on House Party.

I'd probably grab an Oakdene NV Sparkling Brut. A hint of blush pink in the glass and overwhelmingly festive, this fizz is delicious, dry and great value. There are gentle citrus notes on the palate that, combined with a firm acidity, create a delightful freshness.

Every year on the June long weekend, gin lovers unite for World Gin Day. We've often had a bit to say about gin, an elixir that our customers love. And when I say love, we mean it.

They collect interesting versions of gin, show us pictures of their drinks trolley and give us feedback on the best garnishes. Sometimes I feel like I'm surplus to requirements.

If you're in need of a new gin and wanting something local, we cannot get enough of the fabulous Flowstate Gin. The brand is based in Torquay, has plenty of oomph and flavour and was founded by brothers Leigh and Shaun.

A background in brewing led them to distilling and their small batch gin is an ex-

pression of their coastal home and lifestyle — relaxed and mindful of the landscape. Lovely depth, with spice and citrus, this has warm floral notes too.

Perfect for an excellent weekend (or weekday) G&T.

On a final note, I'd again like to thank you for reading our words and supporting Barwon Heads Winestore.

A small business is a labour of love — for the most part — and its success isn't just measured by the numbers alone, it's ensuring we are part of our community and spreading the word about our incredible local producers.

In these uncertain times, can I encourage you to support our local makers, brewers and distillers so that we can all thrive and continue to create our diverse range of drinks for you all.

May wine time continue for us all.

**Please keep up with us by joining our Wine List at [barwonheadswinestore.com.au](http://barwonheadswinestore.com.au) and following us at [@barwonheadswine](https://www.instagram.com/barwonheadswine)**

# Crooks target businesses as city goes quiet

OLIVIA SHYING

MOTORISTS and home and business owners are being urged to be vigilant in securing their property amid unprecedented times.

Geelong Criminal Investigation Unit Acting Inspector Mark Guthrie said police had recorded a spike in break-ins across closed businesses as offenders took advantage of empty streets and decreased foot traffic amid strict social distancing regulations.

But police say a recent spike in car break-ins and theft from motor vehicles has dropped following several arrests and swift action from police.

The most recent Crime Statistics Agency data shows that there were more than 2000 thefts from cars in Greater Geelong last year, with an average of two vehicles stolen and more than five cars broken into every day.

VACC chief executive Geoff Gwilym said about 6000 home break-ins across the state involved vehicle theft,

**“WE HAVE SEEN A SLIGHT INCREASE IN OFFENDERS BREAKING INTO PREMISES BECAUSE PEOPLE ARE AWAY FROM BUSINESS AREAS.”**

ACTING INSPECTOR MARK GUTHRIE

while seven out of 10 post-2001 cars were stolen with the owner's keys and 45 per cent were stolen from homes.

"An often-overlooked problem is that stolen vehicles are used in other crimes, sometimes very serious ones," he said. "Stolen cars could also be driven on toll roads and be involved in accidents — both of which could leave owners seriously out of pocket."

Meanwhile, police Deputy Commissioner Shane Patton announced strike teams of Protective Services Officers, led by a police sergeant, would be moved from their usual transport duties to commercial areas.

Under powers to be granted by Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton, the PSOs will be able to issue fines of \$1652 for individuals and \$9913 to business owners found breaching social distancing laws.

"In those key commercial areas across the metropolitan area and Geelong we will ensure they focus on security and preventing crime," Mr Patton said.

Police Minister Lisa Neville said the redeployment would ensure vulnerable businesses would be less likely to be broken into and targeted.

Insp Guthrie said car owners should store car keys out of view and away from doors and windows, while business owners should ensure they had up-to-date security systems.

"We have seen a slight increase in offenders breaking into premises because people are away from business areas," Insp Guthrie said.

"We are asking people to be more vigilant, ensure their security is up to date and that goods are not in clear view."

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