

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all! It is tempting to jump straight to the punchline this year, given that the world looked very different 12 months ago. We are thankful that after our seemingly endless winter lockdown here in Melbourne that we seem to have recovered pretty well, and while things are not back to normal, there are not a lot of effects on our daily life. That of course was not the case for very much of this year...



Perhaps the biggest change for us was the addition of another canine member. **Rosie**, a female cavoodle (cross between a King Charles cavalier and a poodle) came our way in April, and can be described as a pandemic puppy. We were lucky to get her just as the demand for puppies tended to exceed supply! Her arrival has certainly smartened up **Beau's** footwork, and after some initial wariness they have settled down into a firm friendship, which is sometimes tested by Rosie literally walking up to him and smacking him in the mouth, as if to say 'Come on!'. What usually results is some rather noisy chasing each other around the yard until Beau has had enough (Rosie never seems to!). Rosie loves company, and always seems to want to be in the thick of the action, which can get quite amusing when she doesn't really know where that is!

**Jeremy's** year didn't go to plan (like many others!). He was all set to commence his Performing Arts degree at Monash when the pandemic closed down all face-to-face classes. Faced with the prospect of participating in ensembles and other group interactions over Zoom rather than live, he decided to defer for the year. In the meantime, the course he was enrolled in was shut down as part of the pandemic-induced budget cuts. This resulted in him accepting a place in the Performing Arts program at Federation University in Ballarat (along with his best mate Josh). This means he will be moving up there early in 2021, once he finishes various summer commitments. I think Aunty Wendy and Uncle Dick will be getting a few visits! Another aspect that didn't go to plan was the Pipes and Drums. He had arranged to join the Moorabbin group, which rehearse near our place, as their bass drummer, and the first couple of events of the season in February went very well. Shortly after that, he ended up buying a car, and more specifically one that was suited to carrying a bass drum all over the place. At Haileybury, we had got used to the routine in which the bass drum would stay at school for all but a handful of occasions per year. Now it seems the person who plays the bass drum is entirely responsible for its transport, including to regular rehearsals, which meant something roomier than any of three cars at our place was needed. So we now have a Honda SUV competing for parking space in our street! As it turned out, it was purchased in March, about a week before everything got shut down, so it has yet to carry the bass drum anywhere! Roll on 2021 ...

**Emily** had always planned to have a year away from study, both to focus more on working and potentially doing some travelling. Again, that didn't quite go to plan! She has continued to work at Boost, lockdowns willing, and is now a Team Leader (which means she often gets home late). She will be returning to her studies of History at Monash in 2021, with this year being very much put down to 'life experience'. She has also become very experienced in the rental real estate market, and from early January will be moving into a shared house in Huntingdale with a good friend of hers from work. This is only two train stations further out, and is more or less between our place and Monash, making her commute even simpler. So come the New Year, things will seem a lot quieter around our place!

**Timothy** and **Joshua** don't seem to be in any rush to emulate their younger siblings! Both are still very much on the same trajectory as previous years, and will no doubt appreciate a household that from February will be "down" to 4 adults (at least temporarily 😊). How things will generally work out in the post-pandemic world is yet to be seen.

**Linda** has continued to teach, in a combination of both face-to-face and the ubiquitous Zoom lessons. We certainly tested our home bandwidth for much of the winter, with 6 people more or less fulltime online for around three months. Being a Year 12 teacher, she was often one of the first back in the classroom after a school closure, and unless there is a dreaded third wave here, those are likely to be a thing of the past (at least as far as taking lessons from home is concerned). It now seems that China is off the agenda, only to be replaced by Vietnam. So there is at least one person looking forward to the borders opening up again!

**James**, like just about all RMIT academics, hasn't been into his office in the city since March, with all work being online since then. This included some online conferences taking place at "North Atlantic friendly" times, which means ungodly ones Down Under! Next year will see a partial return to campus, but working from home will continue for at least a couple of days a week. This will make it an unusual way to start a new role as the Director of a Centre for Digital Innovation. Rosie has already established her own corner next to the desk in the study, so that will be getting more use as well.

With best wishes from all of us for a refreshing Christmas and a prosperous New Year,  
James, Linda, Joshua, Timothy, Emily & Jeremy Harland