



# FIRST IMPRESSIONS CLOTHING EXCHANGE

Friends of F.I.C.E Newsletter ~ Aug-Sept 2020

## Welcome!

Thank you for becoming a Friend of FICE, we hope you are enjoying the benefits of becoming a member! We are very grateful for your ongoing support.

We have also received amazing support from the Commonwealth Bank with a CommBank Staff Foundation Community Grant of \$10,000! This grant will help cover the operating costs of our store for 12 months which will give the FICE Team more time and less stress to focus on our mission of empowering women.

'The grant helps validate what we are doing for women and also recognises all the hard work that has gone into getting FICE off the ground since it was launched almost 12 months ago.' said Renee Cooke, one of the FICE coordinators and trainers. 'It reaffirms that FICE has a real purpose and place to help meet the pressing need in the community to make a positive difference for women in so many aspects of their lives. The support we offer through the FICE experience is needed more than ever given the far-reaching impact of the pandemic.'

FICE was nominated for the grant by Janine Haag, Savings Specialist at Commonwealth Bank Mooroolbark, who has become one of FICE's greatest advocates. "I love what FICE is doing to empower and support disadvantaged women, giving them the confidence they need to take the next important step in their lives. It's great to be able to support FICE...our Mooroolbark branch team is so excited about the grant success, particularly during this difficult time."

FICE was initially set up to provide affordable quality clothing suitable for job interviews and other important occasions, and an opportunity for long term unemployed women to upskill within an operating retail space to increase their employability. About 40 women have upskilled through the shop as volunteers or through a work-for-the-dole partnership with the Salvation Army's Employment Plus while hundreds more have walked away with new additions to their wardrobe. However, the FICE experience goes far deeper than affordable quality clothing and is constantly evolving and diversifying to meet the needs identified by the women themselves.

Under the umbrella of Cire Services, FICE is unique to the region with its innovative and bold approach to empowering women and fostering meaningful community engagement. It emerged from Cire Training's Women's Warehouse Program, for women and by women. Since opening in mid-2019

FICE's reach has extended to domestic violence affected women, homeless women, lonely and socially isolated women - and engaged enormous support and interaction with the more affluent women of the area. Drawing on Cire's overall expertise, resources and infrastructure across its services, FICE helps provide access to a myriad of flexible learning opportunities, education and training, community programs and services and referrals to external agencies where needed.

The broader community has enthusiastically embraced the project with volunteer mentors assisting the women on their journeys and regularly donating good quality clothing to the shop. First Impressions participants have been touched by the random acts of kindness and help from strangers, seldom experienced before. This community connectedness has allowed many women of the Yarra Ranges and surrounds to work together as a joint collective in order to improve the financial, emotional and wellness of hundreds of women. As the initiative gains greater momentum, it is anticipated that thousands of women will benefit from FICE in some way.

Through the Employment Plus partnership, FICE has welcomed its first group of women from the local Chin community who will use the work-for-the-dole program at FICE to improve their English skills and also to interact with other members of the Chin community who visit the shop daily, and other women.



Sue, Janine and Renee

We also made the Mt Evelyn mail, page 13 - check out the online edition from the 7th of July - by clicking this link <https://moutevelyn.mailcommunity.com.au/digital-editions/>

## Funding for women in need

By Rosy Stephens

Long-term unemployed and vulnerable women are set to receive the benefits of funding towards a local clothing exchange business.

First Impressions Clothing Exchange is part of Cire Services' small business grants that help women develop skills to enhance their employment opportunities.

The initiative has recently been awarded a \$10,000 grant by the Commonwealth Bank Foundation.

Cire teams and one of the driving forces behind FICE, Sue West said the clothing exchange had been vital for women to gain essential workplace skills.

"FICE was established about a year ago as a pathway for unemployed women, mainly long-term unemployed, to have a work space where they could learn on the spot retail skills," she said.

"Not only has the shop been here to support women with their skills, it's shown women who have probably had a rough time that many people care for them."

FICE essentially is operated as a small business by women, for women.

For customers, it offers quality and affordable women's clothing and accessories suitable for interviews or more formal occasions.

Meanwhile, volunteer staff use the opportunity to develop their workplace skills and enhance their employment opportunities.

"It's connecting women of different groups together when they normally wouldn't be together," she said. "It's been enlightening."

"It's giving women who have low socio-economic status the ability to dress well and buy clothing at a very cheap price."

Ms West said staff were "blown out of the water" when they found out FICE had received the funding.

"I can't thank the Community Bank enough for believing in what we're doing," she said.

"With Covid-19 we had to shut. So it's going to help to get through that cash flow crisis, but

it will also help us get some more equipment."

Janine Haag is a savings specialist at Commonwealth Bank Mooroolbark and she nominated FICE for the grant.

Ms Haag said she was very pleased that the clothing exchange received a Commonwealth Community Grant.

"Our team at Mooroolbark branch could not be more excited to have that they were successful and will receive \$10,000 in support, particularly during this difficult time," she said.

"I love the work of First Impressions Clothing Exchange as they empower and support

disadvantaged women, giving them the confidence they need to take the next important step in their lives. It's great to be able to support them."

Ms West said the funding would also help FICE build on the partnerships it already has to support vulnerable women and plan for the future.

She said one major long-term goal for the business was to go mobile so it can reach the outer edges of the Yarra Ranges.

First Impressions Clothing Exchange is based in Mooroolbark, but services women through the Yarra Ranges and surrounds.

For more information, head to the store in Mooroolbark Terrace (Wednesday-Friday 10am-3pm), visit [www.cire.org.au/first-impressions-clothing-exchange/](http://www.cire.org.au/first-impressions-clothing-exchange/) or call 1300 855 235.

Personal assistant Kevon looks through clothes at FICE. 22/06/20

Cire trainers and driving forces behind FICE, Sue and Janine. 22/06/20. Picture: STEWART CHAMBERS

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## We are Open

FICE's Mooroolbark shop is currently open under Victoria's Stage 3 COVID restrictions.

**Wednesdays to Fridays, 10 am - 3pm**

We are adhering to the government's guidelines at all times and have sanitiser available and social distancing in place.

**We are now taking payment via EFTPOS,** making purchases seamless and hassle-free.

One of the many improvements made possible by the CommBank Foundation donation we received.

Min spend \$5, 50c surcharge for purchases under \$5



## Our First Member!



We were delighted to present Ambassador Donna Fairweather with the first official Friends of FICE membership card.

We were so excited when Donna Fairweather agreed to be our first ever Ambassador.

For those who do not know Donna (and there can't be that many in the Yarra Ranges who don't) she is the Business Development Officer at Yarra Ranges Council. In this role she enjoys assisting and connecting people who are thinking about starting a business, right through to growth and expansion.

Donna is also one of the best net-workers and connectors of people you will ever find and is well known throughout the community for her work with the annual Women on the Go expo.

Donna has a wonderful dress sense and it is this, and her work with women throughout the region that makes her the perfect choice to be First Impressions Ambassador and Number one ticket holder of a Friends of FICE membership.

We cannot thank Donna enough for her support of our shop.



## Member's Birthdays

We would like to wish our Friends of FICE all the best for their birthdays in the near future:

Sue West on the 18th of Aug

Helen Plunkett on the 3rd of Sept

A member of our FICE Team will contact you regarding your \$10 voucher for your birthday!

### Your Friends of FICE Voucher

Thank you for your support!

We would like to offer all our Friends of FICE members a Buy 1 Get 1 Free Voucher



T&C's apply. Free item must be equal or lesser value. Voucher is valid for 6 months from August 2020. One use per voucher. One voucher per customer.



We understand that it is a challenging period for all however, some may need to seek legal advice to assist them through these uncertain times.

Johnstone and Reimer Lawyers are based in Lilydale and are able to help you with a whole range of legal issues.

Specialising in family law, workplace injuries including transport accidents, Will and estate planning, they handle many types of claims and seek the best possible results to get you back on your feet again as quickly as possible or give you peace of mind.

**For all your legal needs, please call Johnstone and Reimer Lawyers to set up a free initial consultation in-person, telephone, or video appointments on (03) 8658-0040**

## PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY





*Thank You  
Good360!*



FICE has become the fairy godmother of fashion thanks to Good360 Australia and Yarra Trail!

At a time when women are doing it tougher than ever, FICE is bringing smiles to many faces and a smart new look with items from the extremely generous donation.

### *Our Supporters*

First Impressions supporters include Yarra Ranges Shire Council, Voices of Women (VoW), a not-for-profit organisation based in the Yarra Valley that provides advocacy for women in the region, the Australian Women Donors Network, Selby and Seville Community Houses, Healesville Living and Learning Centre, the Rotary Club of Wandin and Good360 and its network of partners including L'Oreal, Big W and Yarra Trail.

### *Do you need help with your Resume, Cover Letters or Job Application?*

We are here to help you with advice on resumes, cover letters and careers or assistance with job applications.

It is still available over zoom if needed.

Prices are:  
\$50 non concession and \$25 for concession.

This includes:

- Resume
- Cover Letter
- Assistance with Applications
- Interview Tips and
- Readiness.

### *Did you know you can make a face mask from a scarf or bandana?*

Our wide range are perfect for these winter days but did you know you can make a quick and easy no-sew face-mask using a scarf or bandana and some hair ties?



**FICE have  
Scarves & bandanas  
3 for \$5  
or \$2 each**

Visit the link below  
for your tutorial.

<https://bit.ly/2WMNYhK>

**Stay safe everyone!**

### *Would you like to become a sponsor of FICE?*

By purchasing a sponsorship package you will directly contribute to the success and longevity of the First Impression Clothing Exchange.



#### **Our exclusive Gold Sponsorship Package includes:**

- Recognition and advertisement across our Facebook and Instagram profiles 3 times/year.
- Recognition on in store sponsorship board.
- Display of goods in store, business cards or other promotional material in store.
- 2 x sessions for the use of our in-store training space to promote services and products.



#### **Our exclusive Silver Sponsorship Package includes:**

- Recognition and advertisement across our Facebook and Instagram profiles.
- Recognition on in store sponsorship board.
- Display of business cards in store.



#### **Our exclusive Bronze Sponsorship Package includes:**

- Recognition and advertisement across our Facebook and Instagram profiles.
- Recognition on in store sponsorship board.

**PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY**



*We are still taking donations!*



*Thank you to our wonderful community for passing on your donations. Karon and Fiona are happily sorting to put out for sale.*

**Do you know that we are still taking clothing donations?**

Our mission is to help empower women in our community to look and feel great.

We need your generous donations to make this possible!

We accept good-quality, clean and free-from-damage, women's clothing and accessories.

Please get in touch to arrange a contactless drop-off or pick-up or drop in to the shop during trading hours



*Lots of donations being sorted today by Noushig, one of our volunteers.*

**FRIENDS OF FICE**

Memberships now available!

We were so excited to launch our Friends of FICE annual membership in June.

We now have 10 members! Help us reach our goal of 25 by the end of September, please tell your friends about us!

The Friends of F.I.C.E membership has been created for our loyal customers, so you can receive information on our promotions, special discounts and our newsletter to keep you up to date with our work.

Those who join today will receive a \$5 gift voucher.

**What's included?**

- A Bi-monthly newsletter
- First access to all sales, promotions and events
- Member-only sales
- \$10 Birthday voucher
- 10% off all purchases on presentation of your membership card

Membership annual fee (Tax deductible)  
\$25 or \$15 for concession cardholders

**To register:**

email us at [firstImpressions@cire.org.au](mailto:firstImpressions@cire.org.au) or call the FICE line on 0499 221 150 or Pop in to the store: Wed - Fri 10am - 3pm

**Donations WELCOME AND GREATLY APPRECIATED**

**ASK US ABOUT OUR HOME PICK-UPS. CONDITIONS APPLY. LIMITED TIME ONLY.**

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## Testimonial from one of our volunteers

*I was referred to FICE as a jobseeker after the school I was working at couldn't afford to keep me. 'Work for the Dole' is such a shameful title, so I wasn't looking forward to my first day. I had only an address, and a time to arrive, my morale was very low. Little did I know that I would leave the program a couple of months later with boosted confidence, genuine friends and with gratitude for having been part of something so progressive and inspiring.*

*As a working single mother, I was able to experience real support with both facilitators, Renee and Sue. From the first moment, I was inducted into and trained in the business side of the 'not for profit' retail program. Even though retail was not my area of employment, the customer service side of the work was still complementary to my work. During my time there I was able to be part of an 'official opening', for which my input was openly valued. The nature of the leadership that Sue and Renee practise is diplomatic, non-judgemental and empowering. It lays a foundation for women to recognise their own strengths and therefore become better mothers, partners and ultimately, employees. I mixed with a lot of women in my short time, local immigrants, women who run their own businesses, vulnerable women – recovering from illness, women caring for sick family members, prominent members of the community and I even met and chatted with the mayor. Such a tiny shop but with enormous community reach, the efforts to put the program together and grow it week by week are admirable.*

*When the lockdown began, the presence of FICE on social media was a welcome connection. The short courses and workshops that were set to go ahead this term, supporting women back into the workforce, continued to be offered, but online. I was even emailed with offers of supplies that were being generously distributed by Renee and Sue.*

*I have referred many friends and family members to the service, and hope to remain connected and involved with FICE as they grow. I hope this model is recognised and utilised by other communities around our state and country.*

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## Would you like to Volunteer with us?

## Contact Us

Open: Wed - Fri 10am - 3pm

Shop 7  
Mooroolbark Terrace Shopping Centre  
66/74 Brice Avenue, Mooroolbark

Call Cire 1300 835 235

Email: [firstimpressions@cire.org.au](mailto:firstimpressions@cire.org.au)

### Stay connected:

On Instagram: [@firstimpressionsclothes](https://www.instagram.com/firstimpressionsclothes)

On Facebook: [@cirefirstimpressions](https://www.facebook.com/cirefirstimpressions)

Cire Website: [www.cire.org.au](http://www.cire.org.au)

The FICE team are currently seeking volunteers, Volunteering with FICE will help you learn new skills in retail that will assist you into the future.

Do you know that volunteering can give someone a sense of achievement and purpose, help them feel part of a community and better about themselves. It can help them share skills, learn new skills and create a better work-life balance. It can help reduce stress and social isolation and help them meet new people and feel more connected.

And for Cire, volunteers add a wealth of diverse experience to the Cire team, support the critical work being done to deliver programs to the community, and help build that all-important community connection.

Please contact us or come to the shop to discuss the opportunities that are available.

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