

Myrtleford and District U3A Team Wins Community Innovation Award!

At an on-line ceremony broadcast from the Immigration Museum, Melbourne on Wednesday 16 December 2020, our branch of the Victorian U3A Network was named winner of the Community Innovation category at the 2020 Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence. The award is in recognition of the production of the newly released book - *For a Better Life* that documents the story of Italian migration to Myrtleford and surrounding areas.



The Victorian Multicultural Commission sponsors the Victorian Multicultural Awards of which there are 15 categories. The Multicultural Award for Excellence in Community Innovation recognises projects or programs that have been established in the last 18 months that use outside-the-box thinking to address a problem facing a diverse community and that shares knowledge about a culture with a wider audience.

At the outset and before enlisting the aid of another 11 local volunteers, team leader Jan Mock had a solid plan in place that involved outside-the-box thinking. Significantly, all creative and support work was done by the U3A volunteer project team who worked as interviewers, fact checkers, writers, editors, marketers and in community liaison roles. The project was supported by a \$10,000 CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) Seniors Program grant, which enabled the team to have the book professionally designed and printed.

The 'book project' as it became known, was a result of U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. reaching out to and expanding social participation for those socially isolated seniors in the community from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. The 'book project' team interviewed 29 Italian migrant families whose stories of harsh and happy times are respectfully and compassionately presented by authors Chris McCracken, Joy Phillips and Roy Ward. The project culminated in the publication of a 344-page book, *For a Better Life* the first part of which is set out in chapters that include "Leaving", Arriving, "Enterprise" and "Home" with a foreword by linguistic expert Professor Emeritus, Joe Lo Bianco. The family stories, departure/arrival details and a glossary form the second part of the book.

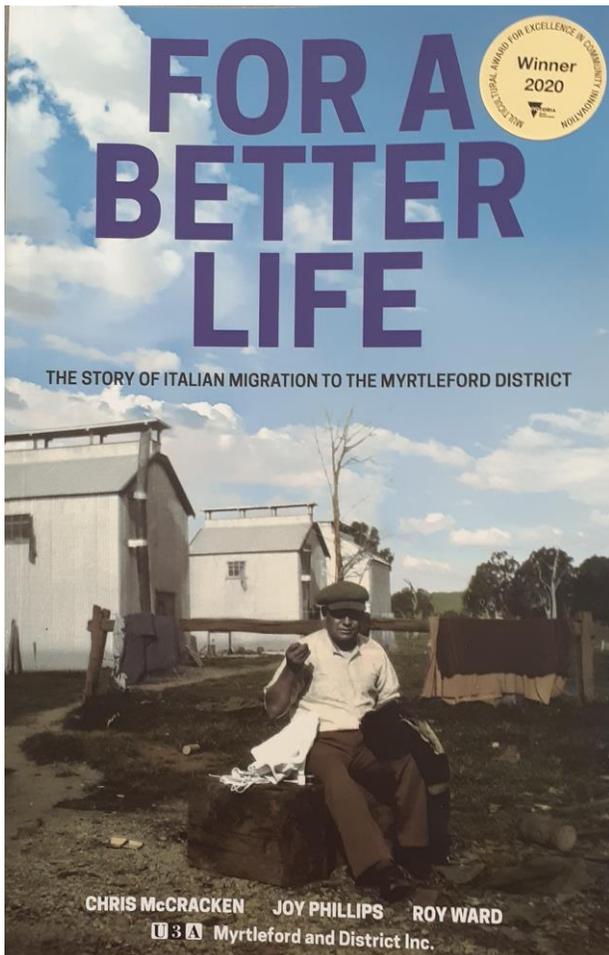
This book has been described as a comprehensive, thoughtful, lesson-filled, inspiring and respectful narrative that was well-planned, superbly written, professionally edited and project-managed by the team of volunteers.

The Myrtleford and surrounding communities can be justly proud of the seemingly tireless project team comprising:

Philippa Cartwright, Coral Love, Nino Mautone, Chris McCracken, Jan Mock, Alan Phillips, Joy Phillips, Judy Pitts, Caroline Pizzey, Yvonne Tabalotny, John Twyford, and Roy Ward.

In undertaking the 'book project', the U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. acknowledges the support and assistance it received from local organisations including the Myrtleford Times, the Myrtleford Newsagency, the Alpine Shire Council, and Myrtleford Historical Society.

Outgoing President Nino Mautone and incoming President John Twyford who both had involvement in the book's production, jointly announced their appreciation to the Victorian Multicultural Commission and Multicultural Awards staff for making available and managing the awards in challenging circumstances. They also stated that - on behalf of the 'book project' team and the many members of the 29-featured migrant families, U3A Myrtleford and District Inc. is immensely proud to have received this Community Innovation award. They said "This is a most appropriate form of recognising the excellent, passionate and committed team effort as the project addressed a problem facing our diverse community and that shares knowledge about our local culture with a much wider audience."



For a Better Life has been very well received by the Australian and international readership as it permeates family trees - with sales far exceeding expectations. A second reprint was undertaken after the first month after release with minimal publicity.

"This is a fantastic outcome for the Myrtleford Community, and we have received many acknowledgements from readers who say that we have "hit the mark" in telling their family's story", Jan Mock said.

For a Better Life can be purchased at the following outlets:

- u3amyrtleford@gmail.com
- Jan Mock 0401 064 030
- Myrtleford Newsagency (03) 5752 1250 admin@myrtlefordnewsagency.com.au
- Edgars Newsagency (Wangaratta) (03) 5721 3758 edgars@edgarsbooksandnews.com.au
- Myrtleford Visitor Information Centre (03) 5755 0514
- Alpine Visitor Information Centre (Bright) (03) 5755 0584
- Mount Beauty Visitor Information Centre (03) 5755 0596