



Boomerang board member helping rebuild Northcote

Niki Cowie is a board member who came back to rejoin the Northcote Town Centre's governing body, bringing fresh ideas and boundless energy to the role.

Niki, pictured above outside the Northcote Baptist Opportunity Shop which she manages, reluctantly left the formerly dysfunctional board a few years ago.

The long-time community volunteer remained at the heart of the town centre however and, following changes in the management of the BID programme, Niki was encouraged to put her name forward for the new committee.

"I was delighted to return last April (2017) and find that things were very different," says Niki who is part of a new, 11-member board.

"It's great to be part of a team that shares ideas, listens to each other and gets things done."

"The past is the past and we're getting on with looking after the current and future interests of the 90 or so businesses in the town centre."

Council-controlled organisation Panuku is leading the [Unlock Northcote](#) programme to revitalise the multicultural precinct, located 4km northwest of the CBD.

"Panuku has a representative (Connie Clarkson) on our board and she brings a working knowledge of the project that will transform our town centre.

"There's huge change coming and I'm really excited about it.



The 1960s town centre has 13,800m² of retail space & approx. 90 retail outlets.



“Being on the board gives you a great opportunity to hear the plans first-hand and play a small part in influencing the outcome,” says Niki modestly.

“We’ve been very impressed by the (Panuku) engagement. We know what’s going on and feel that we’ve been listened to and are helping to make the town centre a better place.”

Developed in the early 1960s by the former Northcote Borough Council, the dated shopping and community hub has been in dire need of upgrading for many years.

Niki acknowledges there will be pain before gain, with machinery noise, demolition, dust and traffic diversions an inevitable part of the change process.

“However we are very excited about the changes this will all bring when we eventually end up with a modernised and well thought-out new town centre which is well placed for further population growth.”

That population is increasingly multi-cultural, with growing numbers of Chinese and Korean migrants adding to the established Maori, Pasifika and European communities.

Reflecting this ethnic diversity, the Northcote Town Centre board is co-chaired by New Zealand-born Anthony Yee (*pictured, below left with Jennifer Lian*) and Hong Kong-born Raymond Tang.

Niki also leads a well-travelled group of fellow volunteers at the Op Shop, *pictured below right*.

“We have a team of over 60 from many different cultural backgrounds, reflecting the diverse community of the Northcote area. We have seen many changes over the years but the most noticeable would be the large increase in Chinese residents,” she says.

“The recent Chinese and Korean New Year celebrations were a huge success despite terrible weather. There were lots of people out and about enjoying the food, entertainment and atmosphere. We find that as a local business, the weekend of Chinese New Year celebrations always see an increase in sales and let new customers know of our existence.”

Niki has recently learned how to hold a basic conversation in Chinese, a small but significant step in bridging the communication gap and, once again, show leadership in her cosmopolitan community.

