

## Wagga Wagga/Wollongong

**By Rachel Loveday**

When you read the information about the new “My Town” section of *Positive Words* magazine, on their website, you are given the chance to write about the town you live in and/or your home town. As you can see from my headline, I am writing about two towns. The reason for this is that I was born and raised in Wagga Wagga however I currently study at the University of Wollongong. I am in both towns (well Wollongong is more of a city) for six months per year, coming home to Wagga Wagga in early June until late July and back again from mid-November until late February for the winter and summer holidays respectively. So rather than try to write about one and incorporating the other and trying to maintain a balance between the two, like I do with both towns in everyday life, I decided to write about both.

When I think of Wagga, an expression pops up in my mind: “You can never go home again.” I don’t believe that expression is simplistic or entirely true. I think that expression means different things to everyone. To me it means that once you leave home, you are never the same and it’s when you do come home after leaving that you realise this. Every time I come back to Wagga it’s expanded even more than the last time, there’s always a new business, new construction and new roadwork. Currently, a ten-pin bowling alley is being built near the Forum 6 cinemas and Sam’s Warehouse in Trail Street after ten years without one and years of protests for one. The old one was torn down and a Centrelink replaced it. Although I love ten-pin bowling, I’m uncertain of whether this ten-pin bowling alley will survive. Yes, the old one was in business for many years; however it closed down because it wasn’t as popular due to the increase of video games. Now there are more video games and technology than ever. Nevertheless, I do hope for the best.

Another thing that I forget about Wagga is the weather. I forget that summer is dry heat and constantly 30+ degrees. Which I appreciate and prefer over the humidity and the four-seasons-in-a-day characteristics that come with the coastal weather of Wollongong. Just the same, when I am home in winter, I always forget that without fail there is fog and ice on the

car every morning which I have to remove with at least two bucket loads of water. This is when I appreciate the coastal weather, in which it is rarely below 10 degrees in winter with no frost or ice.

Wagga is always a great place to drive in, although I am slightly biased as it is the only place where I've learnt to drive and constantly drive today, as I do not own a car and therefore do not drive in Wollongong. Which, considering the traffic and my, what I prefer to call my "overly enthusiastic" driving abilities and spirit on the road, is probably best for everyone (by the way, as optimistic as I try to be, most people use the word "erratic" to describe my driving). Wagga's roads also aren't as complex as Wollongong's and I know most of the roads like the back of my hand.

I also think that the expression "you can never go home again" works both ways. Like me, Wagga is no longer the same since I left, nevertheless, I will always love Wagga because it is my home and always will be no matter where I go.

When I think of Wollongong, this expression pops up in my mind: "home is where the heart is". As I mentioned earlier, Wagga will always be my home, however Wollongong is also my home, at least at this point in time, because it is where my life is. I have been studying at the University of Wollongong since 2010 and next year, I will be completing my fourth year. I will be graduating in December 2014. I had travelled to Wollongong twice before making my life there. I've always loved it, especially since it had beaches and the ocean. However it is because of these natural and beautiful qualities that make the weather so unpredictable.

Wollongong is as loving to me as Wagga is. It has helped me morph into an adult. I have learnt to live on my own and with other people with its huge accommodation; Campus East in my first two years of uni. It is here that I made friends with lots of wonderful people. There is one friend of mine, I would like to mention in this article. His name was George, he was one of the first friends I made, in fact I met him on my first day in Wollongong, sadly he passed away in March 2011. Most of the Campus East community went to his funeral in his home town and made a trench in the sand on Puckey's beach on the day that he passed and also on the one year anniversary. Last year as well as next year, I am living at Marketview,

which was formally the IBIS Motel in Wollongong's centre. I love being metropolitan and close to everything, ironically it is a lot quieter at Marketview than Campus East. I've also learnt how to get around with public transport, luckily there is the Free Gong Shuttle, which saves me a fortune on my limited fortune.

I can't write about Wollongong without mentioning its university. For the last three years, the University of Wollongong has provided me an education, creative and intellectual soul mates and ultimately the best times of my life. I predict that graduating and eventually leaving will be incredibly bittersweet.

There are so many wonderful things I can say about Wagga and Wollongong that I can't fit into this article, so I will end by stating my pride of being a resident of both towns.