

# THE Senior VICTORIA



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## LIFE

# Ella's well-rounded, sunny dance career

BY SIMON GARNER

SUNNYSIDE Rounds in Heatherton is one of only two round dancing clubs in the world that has been running continuously for 60 years or more. The other is Merry Rounders in Bettendorf, Iowa, in the US.

But Sunnyside is unique in that it has been run by the same person the whole time: Ella Whyte, now 87.

Ella started dancing when she was four - and hasn't stopped. She has danced, and taught dance, for decades. She began cueing and teaching on her own during the 1980s.

Round dancing is choreographed cued ballroom dancing. It involves a caller and couples dancing in a circle, performing a range of modified ballroom dance moves.

"It looks lovely when everyone is in a circle doing the same thing," Ella said.

"Some ballroom dancers don't take to it because there's not enough freedom; they prefer doing their own moves. But if you tried that in round dancing, people would be bumping into each other."

Ella and her late husband Ron started the first round dancing club in Victoria.

"I actually taught him. I always said he was my star pupil," she said.

"Before he died 27 years ago he said I should keep the club going. I wasn't sure, but the dancers told me I was their life-



**SUNNY SIDE UP:** Ella Whyte founded Sunnyside Rounds with her late husband Ron in 1958. She's still at the helm 60 years later.

line and I suppose I loved it too much to stop anyway.

"You don't realise where the time goes. People say it's amazing to have gone this long, but I just get in and do the job, and I love the people."

The couple formed the Australian Round Dance Association in 1983, and it continues today as round dancing's national body. The Round Dancing Association of Victoria began in 2000 and Ella has served on the committee in various capacities.



"As the years have gone on we now have a lot more seniors - we lack young people," she said.

Ron and Ella lived for many years in Moorabbin where they converted an area of their house into a ballroom for Ella to run weekly classes.

In 1999, Ella moved to Heatherton and converted a shed into a dance room, which is used almost every night of the week for dances and meetings.

■ [rounddanceassociationvictoria.org.au](http://rounddanceassociationvictoria.org.au)