

Why Frankston South is Melbourne's forgotten prestige postcode

SUE GREEN | OCT 16, 2020



A walking track winds through lush bush to a woodland, a timber boardwalk passes melaleuca and wetland, over rockpools and bridges.



There's no sound but birdsong, and a waterfall.



This is Sweetwater Creek Nature Reserve, a hidden treasure just 45 minutes from the CBD. "It's hard to believe you are in suburbia, it's more like a rainforest. The first time I went, I felt like I was in Queensland," local Cazz Muscat says.

Where does she live? Frankston South, 1454 hectares that were once a hilly pastoral holding of open country, bush and beachfront, and are now home to 19,000 people.



Flourish Cafe: locals are drawn to Frankston South for the relaxing atmosphere. Photo: Vince Caligiuri

Large blocks create a density of just 13.28 people per hectare. And it is zoned for some of Melbourne’s most in-demand schools, including Frankston High School.

“People are starting to take notice, I think, and see what it has to offer,” says Muscat, who has lived there with her family for six years and loves its relaxed vibe,

If you’re thinking, “Frankston? Really?” with a slight curl to the lip, think again. “It’s like the ugly cousin at Christmas that no one wants to sit next to,” laughs [Quentin McEwing](#), director of Mount Eliza-based estate agents [McEwing & Partners](#). “It’s become much more accepted now.

“The border [with Mount Eliza] is Humphries Road. You go up the road and on the right you had the haves and on the left you had the have-nots. It’s become a grey line. No one really cares now, they just want the lifestyle.”

Domain data shows the Frankston South median house price is \$818,000, but it also has multimillion-dollar properties with superb bay views. So McEwing has reason to laugh. He just sold a seven-bedroom Yamala Drive home marketed at \$6.6 million.



Sweetwater Creek Reserve is a must for local fitness enthusiasts. Photo: Vince Caligiuri

He lives nearby and during lockdown explored as never before. “It’s absolutely beautiful down here and the beaches are fantastic. I found walks and mountain bike roads I never knew existed. I have really fallen in love with the area.”

McEwing says relatively low entry prices, room for a pool and the unlikelihood of over-capitalising are very attractive. “In a lot of more affluent suburbs, buyers have no funds left to add value because the entry barrier is so high.”

Nicholas Lynch, of **Nicholas Lynch Real Estate**, says there is no difference in prices either side of Humphries Road, even though Frankston South shares Frankston’s 3199 postcode which some residents want changed. His agency shows vendors comparable sales in Mount Eliza. “Frankston South is Mount Eliza.”

Ash Weston, Ray White Frankston principal who has been in Frankston real estate 15 years, thinks the stigma has gone, but notes a 30 to 35 per cent Frankston South and Frankston price difference. His agency sold four \$1 million-plus Frankston South properties during lockdown.

So who is buying? “There’s no doubt 10 or 15 years ago it was a bit of a battler suburb. The demographic has shifted dramatically,” Weston says.

Post-GFC first-time buyers moved in, attracted by affordability. They started families and grandparents followed. “The trend in the past six months has been a lot of people wanting to get further out of the city, they want more space around them, want to be close to the beach.”



Taking in the sensational view at the Olivers Hill lookout in Frankston South. Photo: Vince Caligiuri

Maree Hutchins and husband Bernie have owned Flourish Cafe on Olivers Hill for 11 years. Showbiz personality Graham Kennedy once owned a large block here, with a small cottage where Chamfer House, designed by noted post-war architect Kevin Borland in 1977, now stands.

Olivers Hill is also home to Gumnuts cottage, “the best surviving example of the one-roomed houses designed by architect Walter Burley Griffin. It was constructed in 1922 and is believed to have been used by Griffin and his wife as a seaside retreat,” according to the Victorian Heritage database.

Hutchins says buyers from bayside suburbs such as Brighton are moving in, seeking better value. “It had been an older area, but people have moved on to aged care and a lot of young people are moving in, they have renovated the houses.”

The Hutchins raised three children there. Two still live there and one teaches there. She calls it “a hidden secret”, saying first-time visitors cannot believe the beauty of its parks, Sweetwater Creek, Frankston Reservoir and the nature conservation reserve.

“You can get a little bit of the country as well as the city life. It’s very much a doggy area,” says Hutchins, who is on the waiting list for a border collie pup. “A lot of the houses are on two-thirds of an acre, my daughter has nearly an acre and has chickens.

“If you want to get value for your money, for me I would not live anywhere else. People like to emphasise it is Frankston South. Mount Eliza and Frankston South, there’s not much difference.”

McEwing says second and third-home buyers are seeking space. “Most people have been affected by the coronavirus impact on business and are finding that they are able to work from home and want quality of life. I think having been shackled to the house, it makes you start to reassess and re-evaluate things.”

Muscat agrees: “I grew up in Park Orchards and I wanted that same life for my kids, to run around, and it’s quite free,” she says. “Some people turn up their nose at Frankston. Everyone that drives down our street says, ‘Your street is so pretty’.” It was a Frankston City Council best street awards finalist, thanks to her nomination.