

EX-ROSSMOYNE STUDENT TO ROCK THE 50TH!



Rowan Stokes (second from left), his father, Ray (left) with the Subdividers

While the Subdividers are performing on the stage by the school oval at the 50th anniversary celebrations, the group's vocalist and lead guitarist, Rowan Stokes, may find a moment to reflect briefly on his interesting life journey since he first ventured onto the oval as a student in 1979.

Through the ensuing 35 years he has combined a successful career as a structural engineer, performing with a number of bands, pursuing a strong interest in military history, travelling extensively and raising with his wife, Shelley, sons Tom, Jack and Scott, the two oldest of whom are now also at Rossmoyne Primary.

Playing alongside him at the 50th will be his father, Ray Stokes, the Subdividers' rhythm guitarist. Some of the 60s music they play that night will take Ray back to the start of his musical career in Manchester. At the age of 15 he joined his first band in what was an extraordinary period for British rock bands and soloists dominating the international charts, names like the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Kinks, Shadows, Georgie Fame and Chuck Berry. He brought his family out from the UK in 1979 and settled in Shelley, later moving to Rossmoyne.

Rowan started at Rossmoyne Primary in grade 2 and has many happy memories of his years at the school including camps at a farm near Tammin and another near Mr Magnet where local indigenous people showed the students how to make spears. Among the teachers he particularly remembers is Kay Cunnold in year 7. And he must have impressed his teachers because they gave him the Citizen of the Year award in 1985, his final year. His commitment to the broader community continues today; he is a member of the School Board and is the P&C Treasurer.

Rowan's interest in music was fostered by his father's influence and he began playing the drums when he was 6. He continued with the drums in bands at Rossmoyne High School but three events forged his unwavering passion for the guitar: attending a performance by Texan blues musician, Albert Collins; meeting renowned virtuoso guitarist and songwriter, Tommy Emmanuel; and hearing for the first time the debut album, *Texas Flood*, by American blues guitarist, Stevie Ray Vaughan. Rowan taught himself the guitar and began playing in bands while studying civil engineering at Curtin University. In the mid-1990s he joined the engineering firm, Wood and Grieve, of which he is now a director, and started up the country rock band, Renegade.

The Subdividers formed in 2003 with an initial performance at a country conference of the Urban Development Institute of Australia at Karri Valley Resort near Pemberton. The band members were attending the event in their professional capacities as planners, engineers, environmental scientists and developers. It was so enjoyable and well received that they determined to keep the band going, calling themselves the Subdividers because of the land development connection. The band has played over 100 gigs in the ensuing 12 years to a variety of audiences and in a range of settings from backyards to ballrooms. Every year, they stage an annual "shed gig" in Mount Claremont for friends of the band to raise funds for charities. The band is three-time winners of Kosmic's Battle of the Rockers Competition.



Rowan beside the Citizen of the Year honour board