

a cut above

Meet the barber who has kept Adelaide gents clean-shaven for over half a century

Barber Frank Vaiana is more than just an icon of the East End, he's "the heritage-listed face" of it, according to developer and friend Theo Maras. The happy hairdresser has been serving up short back and sides in the precinct for 52 years, since immigrating from Sicily at 17.

Frank has been operating Frank Gents Hairdresser six days a week since 1966. "How long do you think you can go without a holiday?" he asks proudly. "I didn't have a holiday for 23 years after arriving in Australia. I just didn't think about it."

Judging by the customers lining up in his shop, business is booming, with one customer revealing he's been a regular since 1967. For Frank, who charges \$15 a cut, this longevity is a result of keeping it simple.

"The secret is to be fair to the people, don't overcharge and give them good service," he says. It also helps that Frank has a passion for snipping, styling and shaving his mostly male clientele. "I love it because I'm always in contact with people, there's always conversation and jokes," he smiles. Frank, 69, first picked up the scissors at the age of nine, when a cousin offered to teach him the trade. "I would do school work until noon, then I'd go to the barber shop and work until late," he recalls.

When he's not cutting hair, the father-of-two spends time with wife Mary and indulges his other passion, photography. A few of his favourite shots take pride of place in the barber shop. So, is retirement around the corner? "As long as I've got my health and I can lift my arms and move my feet, I'll keep going. I love it." ■
Frank Gents Hairdresser, 12-16 Vardon Ave, city, 8223 5580.