

# The Yea Chronicle

Wednesday 19 August 2026

editorial@alexandranewspapers.com.au

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\$2.50 inc GST



## Outdoor recreation reforms

Page 7



## Teacher pay and conditions

Page 7



## Challenges of recovery

Page 8



**END POLIO NOW**

Rotarians Penny Paxman and Yea President Ann Drysdale with Big Ted to raise money to stop polio.

**MORE ON PAGE 4**

## RSPCA targeting animal cruelty in your backyard

RSPCA Victoria's annual *Animal Cruelty Report*, released last week, shows its inspectorate responded to nearly 9000 cruelty reports involving almost 60,000 animals in the last 12 months, with more than 2200 animals seized by, or surrendered to, RSPCA Victoria's Inspectors due to animal welfare concerns.

The data shows five local government areas (LGAs) each with over 300 reports of animal cruelty and 15 LGAs where more than 50 animals were removed.

For the Murrindindi LGA, there were 38 total reports in 2025-26, with fewer than five animals seized or surrendered.

RSPCA Victoria Chief Inspector Michelle Green said this year's data showed conditions are not improving for Victoria's animals.

"Despite the number of cruelty reports reducing, we've seen a nearly 19 per cent increase in the number of animals seized by or surrendered to our inspectorate, including an 80 per cent increase in the number of reports related to hoarding compared to two years ago," Chief Inspector Green said.

"Many of Victoria's pet owners are facing financial hardship and mental health challenges, as well as drought in some areas, and this has directly affected their pets.

"Our inspectors are spending more time working with rural animal owners, especially horse owners, with a more than 10 per cent increase in horses seized or surrendered this year including a significant number of thoroughbreds."

Chief Inspector Green pointed to new data in this year's report highlighting the complex drivers behind animal cruelty in Victoria.

"For the first time ever, we can report on the underlying causes behind animal cruelty in Victoria," Chief Inspector Green said.

"There has been a significant increase in animal cruelty cases affected by drug use and hospitalisation, while mental health concerns have remained concerningly high.

"We know when people suffer, their animals do too, and this year's report shows the breadth and complexity of the cases RSPCA Victoria Inspectors investigate and the challenges they face while doing this incredible work.

"With a quarter of all animal cruelty reports having a violent person of interest flagged, increasing the safety of our inspectors enforcing the law is critical.

"This job is hard enough and we're incredibly grateful to everyone who has reported animal cruelty this year."

Anyone with concerns about the welfare of animals is urged to make a report to RSPCA Victoria at [rspcavic.org/who-to-call](https://rspcavic.org/who-to-call) or by calling 9224 2222.

Go to [rspcavic.org/interactive-cruelty-data-map](https://rspcavic.org/interactive-cruelty-data-map) to view Victoria's cruelty hot-spots and download the full financial year 2026 dataset.

# Upcoming by-election for Kinglake Ward

MURRINDINDI Shire Council has received the resignation of Kinglake Ward Councillor Jodi Adams, effective August 12.

Cr Adams was elected to represent the Kinglake Ward in October 2024 and held council's Community Wellbeing portfolio during her term.

Cr Adams has been on personal leave from her councillor duties prior to her resignation.

Mayor Cr Damien Gallagher thanked Cr Adams for her service to council and the Kinglake community.

"On behalf of council, I would like to thank Jodi for her service to

## Cr Jodi Adams resigns from council

the Kinglake Ward and the broader Murrindindi Shire community," Cr Gallagher said.

"Serving as a councillor is a significant commitment, and we acknowledge the contribution she has made during her time on council.

"We wish Jodi and her family all the very best for the future."

Cr Adams said it had been an honour to serve the Kinglake community and work alongside fellow councillors and council staff during her time on council.

The resignation creates an extraordinary vacancy in Kinglake

Ward. As Kinglake Ward is a single-councillor ward, the vacancy will be filled through a by-election conducted by the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC).

Council will work with the VEC to facilitate the election process. Information regarding key dates, candidate nominations and voting arrangements will be published once confirmed.

Council recognises the importance of ensuring Kinglake Ward residents continue to have avenues to raise local issues and seek assistance during this period.

While the by-election is underway, residents can continue to contact council regarding council services and local matters on 5772 0333.

"We want Kinglake residents to know that council remains accessible and engaged throughout this transition," Cr Gallagher said.

"We will continue to work with the community and keep residents informed as the process to elect their new Ward Councillor progresses."

Further information regarding the by-election will be provided by the Victorian Electoral Commission and published by council as details become available.



THE ALEXANDRA · EILDON · MARYSVILLE

Standard

The Yea Chronicle

NEM

NORTH EAST MEDIA

LOCAL NEWS AND MEDIA

WEATHER

TEMPERATURES:

Alexandra

Yea

Wednesday

11 - 13

10 - 13

Thursday

7 - 14

7 - 15

Friday

7 - 14

7 - 15

Saturday

6 - 15

6 - 15

Sunday

6 - 15

7 - 15

Monday

7 - 15

7 - 16

Tuesday

9 - 15

10 - 15

RAINFALL:

7 days from 9am Monday

Alexandra

41mm

Buxton

41mm

Eildon (AWS)

47mm

Flowerdale

50mm

Jamieson

77mm

Kinglake

52mm

Lake Eildon

54mm

Mansfield

45mm

Taggerty

61mm

Yarck

49mm

Yea

42mm

LAKE EILDON

Height above sea level

275.60m

Capacity as at 9am Sunday

55.5%

Metres below full supply

13.30m

Daily inflow

10,000ML

Release

130ML

Eildon Pondage

85%

DEADLINES

Advertising

Wednesday 2pm

Classifieds

Monday 12noon

Editorial

Monday 9am

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Submitted via email to

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or by mail to Alexandra Newspapers

PO Box 5, Alexandra 3714.

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not publish defamatory letters, or content

which is offensive, threatening or containing

personal attacks. Submitted letters may be

edited before going to print.

All letters must contain writers name, address

and contact number. (not necessarily for

publication). Letters without these details

supplied cannot not be published.

Deadline for Letters to the Editor is

9am Monday.

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**HISTORIC PHOTO:** Ian Newman and Joy Burchell thank Ivette Miglis (nee Kidd), grand-daughter of Len Kidd, for sharing this historical photo with the community. The image shows the departure of the first mail train from Alexandra on October 25, 1909.

# Opposition says pothole review is too little too late

SHADOW Minister for Roads and Road Safety Danny O'Brien said that the Victorian Government's announcement of a review into the state's pothole compensation scheme is a token gesture of a government desperately trying to avoid accountability.

The announcement came after media reports saying that the government was rejecting 98 per cent of Victorian motorists seeking compensation for damage caused by potholes.

Shadow Minister for Roads and Road Safety Danny O'Brien said the review would not uncover any new information and was unlikely to be completed before the election this November.

"No one should believe that this government is actually interested. This is a review that they'll never have to worry about or that they'll never have to deliver," Mr O'Brien said.

"Victorian motorists will see through exactly what this government is doing.

"We're in a cost-of-living crisis, people are blowing tyres, cracking

rims, damaging their vehicles and they're not even getting compensation for it. They shouldn't be needing compensation, they should have their roads fixed."

Mr O'Brien said "Ben Carroll cut the roads maintenance budget by \$214 million over two years when he was Minister for Roads, starting the rot that has now led to the appalling state of our roads."

Mr O'Brien grilled the Premier in Parliament on Tuesday, pointing to his history in overseeing the disintegration of Victoria's road network, asking why Victorians should have any confidence he will now do anything to fix the roads given his past record of maintenance cuts.

The Premier gave a 22 word report but no assurance that he will do anything to fix our roads.

"The Premier has now followed his colleagues in blaming the weather and trucks for the state of the roads, not successive Labor budget cuts and mismanagement," Mr O'Brien said.

If elected, the Liberals and Nationals have pledged \$5 billion

properly maintain our roads and fix a million potholes.

"As well as investing \$5 billion in road maintenance, we will establish Better Roads Victoria as a standalone division within the Department of Transport and Planning, boost roadside maintenance such as grass slashing, graffiti removal and drain clearance and lift departmental and contractor accountability through a review of construction standards and maintenance contracts," Mr O'Brien said.

"We will make sure that Victorians are not needing compensation because they won't actually have the damage if the roads are maintained in the first place."

A Victorian Government spokesperson said, "The Carroll Labor Government will look at the current legislation, and we'll consider if we have the balance right. But our firm focus is on fixing the roads.

"That's why we have funded a record-breaking \$1.04 billion road maintenance blitz to rebuild, repair, and resurface roads right across the state to get Victorians home sooner and safer."

## Alexandra and District Senior Citizens report

**By MIKE JENNINGS HON SEC**

UNFORTUNATELY, with the flood warnings around the area, the trip to Healesville RSL for Morning Melodies on Tuesday, August 11 was called off. The Alexandra and District Senior Citizens club now plans to have another excursion in a few weeks' time. Watch this space.

The bridge players were in action on Wednesday and a social meeting was held on Friday. Formalities were over quickly and the members retired to the tearoom for refreshment before games of UNO and 500. The lucky winners in the Chocolate Raffle were Mary, Colin and Mike.

An extraordinary committee meeting was held to approve and welcome Elvie Thompson into the club. The club welcomes new members so come along and join their happy faces on a Friday afternoon in the Bayley Street club-room. Meanwhile, stay safe and keep smiling.

## Alexandra misses out this time

VICTORIA'S Top Tourism Town Gold winners have been revealed with Echuca winning Top Tourism Town Winner, Portarlington winning Top Small Tourism Town and Portsea winning Top Tiny Tourism Town.

Alexandra was a finalist in the Small Tourist Town category and put in a great effort, but unfortunately Portarlington won the category.

Presented by the Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC), the awards recognise towns that deliver outstanding visitor experiences.

The winners were announced on Wednesday evening, August 12, during the Victorian Tourism Conference at the Morwell Convention and Reception Centre in Gippsland.

This year's entries attracted a combined 30,000 public votes.

## RIVER HEIGHTS FOR THE GOULBURN CATCHMENT

| Station Name                    | TIME       | HEIGHT | TENDENCY | FLOOD CLASS       |
|---------------------------------|------------|--------|----------|-------------------|
| Goulburn R at Lake Eildon (TW)  | 8.00AM Mon | 0.71   | steady   | below flood level |
| Rubicon River at Rubicon        | 8.00AM Mon | 0.77   | steady   |                   |
| Acheron River at Taggerty       | 8.00AM Mon | 1.28   | steady   | below flood level |
| Home Creek at Yarck             | 7.27AM Mon | 0.47   | steady   |                   |
| Yea River at Devlins Bridge     | 8.40AM Mon | 0.76   | steady   | below flood level |
| Yea R at Old Killingworth Rd    | 8.00AM Mon | 1.77   | steady   |                   |
| Goulburn River at Ghin Ghin     | 8.00AM Mon | 3.81   | steady   |                   |
| King Parrot Creek at Flowerdale | 8.00AM Mon | 0.88   | steady   | below flood level |
| Goulburn River at Trawool       | 8.00AM Mon | 1.62   | steady   | below flood level |
| Sunday Creek at Tallarook       | 8.00AM Mon | 0.43   | steady   | below flood level |
| Goulburn River at Seymour       | 8.00AM Mon | N/A    | steady   | below flood level |
| Whiteheads Creek at Seymour     | 8.00AM Mon | 1.45   | steady   |                   |

\*ISSUED AT 9.09 AM AEDT MONDAY 17 AUGUST 2026



# Update on fire-damaged road bridges in shire

MURRINDINDI Shire Council was asked for an update regarding the shire’s road bridges damaged during the Longwood fire.

Kim O’Connor, Director Sustainability and Infrastructure at council responded, “Council understands the community is keen to see fire-damaged bridges repaired as quickly as possible, particularly where closures are affecting access, farming operations and day-to-day travel.

“Several council-managed road bridges were damaged during the January 2026 bushfire, along with a number of bridges on the Great Victorian Rail Trail.

“The affected road bridges are located throughout the fire-affected areas in the north and east of the shire, including around Highlands, Ruffy, Terip Terip, Caveat, Fawcett, Gobur, Koriella,

Yarck and surrounding localities.

“Since the fire, council has completed engineering inspections and site assessments to understand the extent of the damage and identify the most appropriate treatment for each structure. In some cases, this may involve repairs, while others are likely to require major reconstruction or replacement.

“Council is now progressing detailed investigations, design work and cost estimates so projects are ready to move forward as funding approvals are finalised.

“The reality is that reconstructing damaged bridges is a significant undertaking. The cost of replacing multiple bridges is well beyond the financial capacity of a rural council and these projects rely on support through the jointly funded Commonwealth and State Disaster Re-

covery Funding Arrangements.

“As with many disaster recovery projects across Victoria, there are also a range of approval processes that need to be worked through, including environmental and cultural heritage considerations where applicable. These requirements are important, but they do add time and complexity to delivery.

“The challenge is not only restoring what was lost, but ensuring infrastructure is safe, fit for purpose and resilient into the future.

“Bridge reconstruction must meet current engineering and safety standards, which can differ significantly from the standards that applied when many of these structures were originally built.

“Like the recently publicised Breakaway Bridge project, some sites may also raise questions

around building back more resilient infrastructure, or betterment, to recognise that simply rebuilding an asset exactly as it existed before a disaster may not always provide the best long-term outcome for communities. In some circumstances there may be opportunities to improve resilience, functionality or safety, particularly where lessons have been learned from the disaster itself.

“Council will continue working closely with the Victorian and Australian Governments to secure the funding approvals needed and to achieve the best possible outcomes for affected communities.

“Our focus remains on restoring these important connections as quickly as possible while ensuring the solutions delivered are safe, durable and capable of serving communities well into the future.”

## Alexandra Poultry Show ducks in

THE Alexandra Poultry Show was held on Sunday, August 9 at the Alexandra Showgrounds. The show manager was Brett Batchelor and the judges were Philip Pickles and Stephen Chalmers.

The participants had a good day despite the inclement weather. About 60 birds were withdrawn prior to the event for a variety of reasons. Ultimately, there were about 170 birds on display.

Local man John Hunt was Reserve Champion of the Show with his magnificent black and white Muscovy male.

## Single-vehicle crash at Granton

POLICE are investigating a single vehicle crash in Granton on Wednesday, August 12.

Emergency services responded to reports of a car leaving the road and crashing into a tree on Marysville Road at about 1.40pm.

The driver and single occupant of the vehicle was taken to hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.

The investigation into the circumstances surrounding the crash remains ongoing.

Anyone who witnessed the incident or with dashcam is urged to contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or submit an online confidential report at [crimestoppersvic.com.au](https://crimestoppersvic.com.au)

## Community recovery grant

EMERGENCY Management Victoria (EMV) has announced a Community Recovery Grant scheme for recovery from the January 2026 fires. The not-for-profit groups can apply for up to \$75,000. It provides money for projects that support priority, locally-led recovery. Applications close on August 31.

Our community hubs in the fire impacted areas have been exemplary in providing supports for their local communities, however only one of these hubs is GST registered, which is one of the requirements for applying for the grant.

EMV was asked whether an exception be made regarding the community hubs, so they can apply for the grant.

They replied that the applicants must be registered for GST, however organisations which are not GST-registered may still be eligible if they are supported by an eligible auspice organisation which is registered for GST, for example a council or another community organisation.

Emergency Management Victoria can provide potential applicants with advice about how they can apply with the support of an eligible auspice organisation.

For more information, visit [vic.gov.au/community-recovery-grants-2026-bushfires](https://vic.gov.au/community-recovery-grants-2026-bushfires)

### YARCK-GOBUR ROAD PETITION HOPING TO MAKE STEEP SECTION SAFER

CREATOR of the petition to the Victorian Government calling for the Yarck-Gobur Road to be fixed and made safer, Jonathon Tofts, addressed what he hopes will come from the petition.

He is trying to garner state or federal government funding on behalf of local residents for Murrindindi Shire Council to put up barriers along the Yarck-Gobur Road where it swiftly rises in elevation between Gobur and Terip Terip and generally enhance the safety of the road for all users.

Lots of trucks and trades utilise the road to access Terip Terip, Ruffy, Caveat and surrounding districts, as well as a throughway to Euroa. This is on top of the locals who drive the road frequently and emergency services accessing the north of Murrindindi Shire.

The section of road that Jonathon hopes could receive some form of metal railing is called the ‘Gobur Cutting’, where drivers travel up or down the hill along a winding narrow road with a steep drop on one side.

Trucks often swing into the opposite lane around corners, making the section dangerous.

The condition of the road has deteriorated further in the aftermath of the fires.

The petition can be viewed and signed at [parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/petitions/upgrade-of-yarckgobur-road](https://parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/petitions/upgrade-of-yarckgobur-road)



ROAD SAFETY THE PRIORITY: The ‘Gobur Cutting’ on Yarck-Gobur Road after the Longwood fire, when the trees were still smouldering. The petition is calling for funding to make this section of road safer. PHOTO: Bailey Dixon

# McLeish calls for more funding for bushfire families

MEMBER for Eildon Cindy McLeish said that the Victorian Government can find \$1.6 million for pot plants and \$600,000 for coffee machines, but apparently cannot spare bushfire victims thousands of dollars in planning fees to rebuild their homes.

Ms McLeish said revelations in Parliament last week about extraordinary government spending were a slap in the face to families struggling to rebuild after the devastating summer fires.

More than 200 homes were lost in Murrindindi Shire in the Longwood

fires, along with hundreds of sheds and other buildings.

In June, Ms McLeish asked the Planning Minister to waive planning application fees after residents reported being charged around \$1500 to rebuild a home and \$600 for a shed.

Ms McLeish said her response just passed the buck to already financially strapped councils.

“This week we discovered Labor can blow \$1.6 million on pot plants and another \$600,000 on coffee machines, yet when a family who has lost their home asks for help with

a planning fee, suddenly there’s no money,” Ms McLeish said.

“These people didn’t choose to rebuild. Their homes, sheds and livelihoods were destroyed by fire. They have already been through enough without government bureaucracy adding another bill.

“I asked the Planning Minister in June to waive these fees. She passed the buck to councils already struggling with the financial burden of disaster recovery.

“Millions can disappear on bureaucratic extravagances in Mel-

bourne, while bushfire survivors in regional Victoria are told to pay up.”

Ms McLeish called on the government to cover planning and permit costs for rebuilding homes and essential buildings destroyed in the fires, without leaving councils out of pocket.

“If Labor can afford \$2.2 million for pot plants and coffee machines, it can afford to help families rebuild after a natural disaster,” she said.

“Bushfire survivors need practical help, not sympathy followed by an invoice,” she said.



COMMUNITY DIARY

LOCAL RADIO FREQUENCY

- **UGFM 106.9** Alexandra / Lake Eildon
- **UGFM 98.5** Marysville / Lake Mountain
- **UGFM 88.9** Yea / Highlands
- **UGFM 98.9** Flowerdale / Hazeldene
- **UGFM 94.5** Kinglake Ranges

COMMUNITY GROUPS WEEKLY

- **Tue** Women's Walk @ 7am @Embassy of Ideas
- **Wed** Oasis Church, free coffee connection Ph 0408 123 581
- **Thu** Town Club, RSL Hall, 6-8pm. Ph 5797 2179
- **Fri** Man Walk @ 7am meet at RSL Hall
- **Fri** Communita 10am-12pm @ Embassy of Ideas Ph 0422 225 801
- **Sun** Alex & Dist Dog Obedience, training. Ph 0456 583 611
- **Sun** ALANON meeting; 5.30pm St Johns Hall. Ph 0402 428 086
- **Sun** AA meeting; 7pm St Johns Hall. Ph 1300 22 22 22.

MONTHLY

- **1st Mon** St Luke's Seniors, St Lukes Hall, Ph Jenny 0407 972 099
- **1st Wed** Alexandra Lions dinner meet, Corner Hotel 0427 595 318
- **1st Thu** Yea Hospital/Rosebank Aux 2pm. Ph 5797 3057
- **1st Sun** Crop/Produce swap 10.30am--noon @ Embassy of Ideas
- **2nd Tue** Alexandra District Garden Society Meeting Ph 5772 2285
- **2nd Wed** Molesworth Patchwork & Craft, Molesworth Hall 10am-4pm.
- **2nd Wed** Murrindindi Men 6-8pm@ Embassy of Ideas 0422 225 801
- **2nd Thu** Yea Garden Club Yea RSL Hall 1.30pm Ph 0439 870 315
- **2nd Sat** Alex Repair Café 1-3pm @ Embassy of Ideas 0422 225 801
- **3rd Wed** Alex Lions business meeting, rear RSL hall 0427 595 318
- **3rd Thu** Alexandra Ladies Probus 10am RSL Ph 0428 976 252
- **3rd Thu** Community Potluck dinner 6-8pm @ Embassy of Ideas
- **3rd Sun** Alexandra RSL Ph 0409 950 913
- **4th Wed** Molesworth Patchwork & Craft, Molesworth Hall 10am-4pm.
- **4th Thu** Alexandra Redgate CWA Meeting 1pm, Ph 0402 804 517
- **4th Thu** Yea CWA Yea RSL Hall, 1.30pm Ph 0400 424 888
- **Last Fri** Yea-Kinglake RSL, 11.30am RSL Hall, Ph 0409 819 040

Contact Alexandra Standard and Yea Chronicle to add your event on 5772 1002 or email reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au. For a \$10 annual fee for one line, your club or organisation's regular meeting dates will be listed each week. Not only is this a reminder to your regular members but also a good source of what groups are available in the community, when they meet and a contact phone number.

THUMBS UP

THUMBS DOWN

THUMBS DOWN

To Murrindindi Shire Council for removing the waste bins from the recovery hubs.

Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down is a reader's contribution section of Alexandra Newspapers. Send your Thumbs Up or Thumbs Down to editorial@alexandranewspapers.com.au

Contributions will be edited and/or published at the Editor's discretion. We request that this section not be used as a slander attack on persons, businesses or property

A CLASSIC CAUSE: Ken Maxfield drove the End Polio baton and Big Ted to Alexandra in his vintage Jaguar.

# Rotary's End Polio baton crosses District 9790

By PENNY PAXMAN and DAVID ANDERSON

SOME observant locals may have seen a group of Rotarians in red tee shirts having fun and raising money for the End Polio campaign in Yea on Sunday, August 9. They were part of the End Polio Baton Relay.

Locals may ask what Polio has to do with us. The answer is simple. As long as Polio exists in the world, one tourist on one plane can introduce it back into Australia.

In fact, that is what End Polio is mainly about. Letting you know that Polio still exists and although the number of cases of Polio has been reduced to 18 in the world (as of August 5, 2026), we must keep vaccinating our children and that means raising money.

Like many successful Rotary programs, projects and events, which began from a simple idea discussed at a table and often helped with a bottle of good red, so it was for the End Polio Now baton relay now crossing District 9790.

With the baton relay idea adopted, District Governor Paul Miegel put the baton in the hands of the Group Club Mentors to keep the clubs motivated, enthused and creative in their planning for the baton to be in their community.

The aim of the relay was not only to raise funds for Rotary's number one humanitarian project from the general public but also to create awareness that the disease is still around and closer than we think given the appearance of the virus in wastewater

END POLIO NOW: Ann Drysdale and Glenn Milliken with the End Polio baton.

testing in Perth earlier in the year and the onset of paralysis in a child in Papua New Guinea last year.

Having commenced its journey with the Albury/Wodonga Clubs and surrounds (Tallangatta, Corryong and Holbrook) the baton reached Seymour in early August. There, at the end of his joint Club visit, District Governor Paul Miegel passed the baton to Yea Rotary President, Ann Drysdale.

Sunday is always a busy day in Yea as people, families and other groups stop in the town on their way to Mt Buller or on other venues and outings. The weather forced the event to go from the

central plantation to 'under cover' on the pavement outside the local hardware.

Some of the planned activities had to be curtailed but a sausage sizzle continued. Big Ted, resplendent in his End Polio Now T-shirt, was there. Pinkies were painted purple and the local angling shop provided a fly-fishing experience for anyone who wanted to try fly-fishing for the first time and catch a velcro fish.

The Plus in PolioPlus was added by the support of the Yea and District Memorial Hospital with a range of health-related information further developing a partnership between the hospital, Yea Ro-

tary and the community.

From Yea the baton, and Big Ted, were driven to Alexandra Rotary by Rotarian Ken Maxfield in his vintage Jaguar on the next leg of its journey.

Once the baton has travelled around the 62 Clubs in District 9790, it will be presented at the March 2027 District Conference in Corowa at the end of its journey.

The Rotary Club of Yea raised \$360 on Sunday, August 9 and would like to thank Country Tech, Yea and District Memorial Hospital, all the Rotarians and participants who joined in the fun and made such generous donations.



# An analysis of the Longwood fire fight

By ANNE RICHEY

DISTRICT 12 Commander Stephen Keating spoke about the Longwood fire at length in a wide-ranging interview, including some of the local concerns.

Given the depth of the interview, the article will be run across three editions of this newspaper, covering each of the three days of the fire individually.

He pointed out that in addition to the Inquiry into the 2026 Summer Fires, there is another report being developed by fire scientists which will be focused on a reconstruction of the events of the Longwood fire, including looking at “why the fire grew the size it did and moved the way it did.”

Stephen said that he hoped that it would help people to understand the fire better, particularly in its early stages.

## Day 1

Stephen pointed out that when the Longwood fire started there had been 18 months of drought and associated livestock de-stockings. Livestock were therefore not eating the grass.

Stephen said, “Some of the grassland measurements that have been taken in the unburned area since show fuel loads of about 10 tonnes per hectare. The average fuel load across through northern Victoria through the fire danger period is normally four tonnes per hectare.”

On the day that fire started in Longwood, on the side of the Hume Freeway, there was another fire at nearby Tabilk which started slightly earlier.

The fire at Tabilk drew on the resources of the local area, asking for 20 tankers. The Longwood fire then started, asking for 20 tankers as well.

Stephen said that “Just after the fire started it was 40 degrees, 13 per cent relative humidity and the wind was a northerly at 20km/h, gusting to 25km/h.”

During the high fire danger period and depending on the weather, automatic air support is triggered when the brigades are paged. This occurred on January 7. Stephen said, “There was one given air support for an area, and that was already off to the Tabilk fire, which meant it had to be the next machine to come in, which was coming from a further distance.”

He was unsure of the source of the additional aircraft, but believes that it was out of Mansfield or

Shepparton. The aircraft which went to the Tabilk fire was from Mangalore Airport, near Avenel. He estimated that the aircraft bound for the Longwood fire, a firefighting aircraft rather than an observing one, would have been onsite within about 20 minutes.

According to a query response from Emergency Management Victoria, “January 2026, Victoria’s core fleet of 54 aircraft were strategically located across the state to respond daily to fire outbreaks.” Victoria also has a call-when-needed capacity of up to 100 aircraft that can supplement the Victorian core fleet and can also request additional aircraft from the National fleet.

Stephen said that the core fleet are spread out over the whole state, and that the helicopter paged to attend the Longwood fire was just the first one, with others on standby nearby.

“We ended up with 14 aircraft on the Wednesday afternoon on the fire,” he said, “Including the two large air tankers. One of those is a Victorian aircraft and I think the others are New South Wales aircraft. They’re the big jets. We put a lot of aircraft onto the job.”

As the Longwood Fire Brigade had been paged to the Tabilk fire, they were already at their fire station when they were redirected to the Longwood fire, saving some time.

They weren’t the only ones of course. Stephen said that on the first afternoon there were 25 individual tankers and four strike teams. Strike teams are five trucks with a person in charge as a strike team leader. There were therefore 45 trucks and 14 aircraft on the first afternoon, plus Forest Fire

Management resources, bulldozers, excavators and other heavy machinery.

Stephen said that once the fire got past the trees into the paddocks and ran up the long gully, it really started to consume.

While the wind speed wasn’t too bad, Stephen pointed out that the amount and dryness of the fuel needed to be factored in, and said that on the first day, the fire was travelling up a slope, and “every five degrees in slope, it doubles in forward rate of spread.”

On the first afternoon, the maximum rate of fire spread up to 16 hectares per minute. “That’s four MCGs a minute,” Stephen said.

“We tried to put some containment lines around it from the start, and the first evening, once the fire behaviour started to reduce a little bit, there was an effort to put some bulldozer lines around it. It’s really hard country, it’s rocky and steep. The other problem we’ve got there is that the fuel was so dry and there was so much of it,” Stephen said.

The fire behaviour was so intense that the bulldozers weren’t able to put in firebreaks right on the edge of the fire, so they had to go a step back, and the fires still jumped the containment lines.

Stephen said, “It certainly was identified on Wednesday, mid-afternoon, that this was going to be significantly problematic for the Thursday and Friday.”

He added, “The fire behaviour index was just under 50, I think it was 48 on Thursday. So any fire starting on those days, it’s marginal whether we’ll get it or not. A good example is the other fire at Tabilk. The first effort, the fire trucks got on top of it. Longwood, the first effort

of fire trucks didn’t. It’s not because they had more or less. It’s because of exactly how dry the grass is, how exposed it is to the wind, and all those things. For a period of time, you throw as much gear out as you can, and there’s a fair bit of work to make sure that your first effort’s the best effort.”

He said, “Even in the first night, it was still, let’s lock this thing up and let’s try to pull it up. But it kept moving through the night and there was no getting around it then.”

At the ignition location by the side of the Hume Freeway, there was an armco railing which prevented fire truck access to the paddock, but this was not the only issue. As Stephen explained, “There was also a spoon drain and the trees were like jail bars.”

As a result, the trucks had to follow the road network to get on the road behind the highway and along Berry’s Lane, and the access the properties from behind.

Asked how much time this

added, Stephen commented that time was already saved as the firefighters were already at the station, and he doesn’t think that the time delay was significant.

He said of firefighting, “Seeing the smoke’s the easy bit, it’s working out how to get to the fire... It takes a bit of time to locate [the source of the smoke]. That’s why the aircraft are really good when they’re first on scene because the aircraft can tell the ground crews how to get in, and the aircraft can also start putting some water on it before the ground crews get into it. The fact that the, we call it predetermined dispatch, the predetermined dispatch aircraft was already at the Tabilk job. It’s just there for luck of the draw, unfortunately.”

There were some concerns expressed locally about the first aircraft being ‘locked in’ to the Tabilk fire instead of redeploying to Longwood.

Stephen responded,

“What is true is that both fires drew a lot of aircraft and once a machine starts on a fire it would continue to work on that fire unless there was an increased priority. For example, we’ve got two fires staying in the landscape, everything goes to one. And then the other one says I’ve got houses and lives under threat right now. If we think of the state control priorities, the first one is the protection of life and then giving warnings to the community and then critical infrastructure is the third. So if we had one fire that had those risks and the other didn’t, we would move not just the aircraft, we move fire trucks as well. We change our response based on the competing priorities. If you imagine across the state when you’ve got a busy day and we’ve got all these fires on, the fire that’s out in the back of the landscape versus the one that’s on the edge of a town, the one on the edge of the town will get the resources.”

PHOTO: Andy Wilson

CFA DISTRICT 12 COMMANDER: STEPHEN KEATING.

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CHURCH SERVICES  
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9am Eucharist each Sunday  
Children welcome.  
Rev Mario Hendricks -  
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Parish Administrator Fr Jose Mathew.  
Presbytery 0468 810 871  
St Matthews Eildon, Saturday 4.30pm  
Alexandra, Sunday 8.45am  
Sacred Heart Yea, Sunday 10.45am

UNITING CHURCH In Australia

St Andrews, Downey Street,  
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Worshipping, Welcoming  
Sharing the transforming love of  
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Loving God, Loving People,  
Loving Life  
118 Grant Street, Alexandra  
0408 123 581  
Meeting every Sunday @ 10am

MOUNT CATHEDRAL  
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37 Grant Street , Alexandra  
Pastor Daniel Kriss  
Services 10am every Sunday  
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A Christian community part of the Baptist  
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Sunday 4.30pm service  
Kids program during school term  
Meets at St Andrew's, 37 Downey Street,  
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Contact - 0438 642 559

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- YEA

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Prayerful Reflection - held each Tuesday,  
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Immaculate Conception Parish  
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Sacred Heart Yea, Sunday 10.45am

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# Folks flaunt flanno for farmer fundraising

LAST Friday was the official 2026 Flanno for a Farmer Day, with the main street of Alexandra coming alive to promote farmer mental health and fundraise for Farm Angels.

Alexandra Events hosted a barbecue in the Grant Street rotunda and sold raffle tickets to raise money. Murrindindi Shire Council's recovery team attended, the Murrindindi Mobile Health Van attended, as well as the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF). Both the ABC's Country Hour and UGFM broadcast live from the main street.

Since Flanno for a Farmer launched, Australians have helped Farm Angels raise more than \$1.269 million for practical assistance to farming families including emergency financial relief, food hampers, care packs, financial assistance and ongoing mental health and wellbeing support when they need it most.

Every 10 days, Australia loses a farmer to suicide. Behind that number are families, communities and generations forever impacted. As many farming families continue recovering from drought, floods, bushfires and other natural disasters while navigating increasing financial pressures, the need for support has never been greater.



**SUPPORTING THE CAUSE:** Locals wandered through, enjoying the barbecue and buying raffle tickets to support Farm Angels. PHOTOS: Bailey Dixon

CEO of Farm Angels, Jason Law, said Australians can make a real difference through one simple act.

"Farming families are facing enormous challenges right now, and many are carrying those burdens quietly. Throwing on a flanno is a simple way to show they're not alone, but it's the donations behind it that allow us to provide practical support when families need it most," Mr Law said.

"Every registration, every donation and every person who throws on a flanno helps us continue supporting farming families through some of the toughest times of their lives. Together, we can remind them that someone cares."

Farm Angels provides tailored support to farming families across Australia, helping them stay on the land through financial assistance, food and essen-

tial supplies, care packages and mental health and wellbeing support during times of crisis.

This year's Flanno for a Farmer campaign is proudly being powered by Australian brands committed to standing alongside farming families and our rural communities.

A small act of support can have a lasting impact, because no farming family should have to face hardship alone.



**LOCAL TALENT:** Josie Blakeney performed a song that she had written about the Longwood fire on the Country Hour.



**SHOWING SUPPORT:** Attendees wore flanno in support of Farm Angels and the ABC's Country Hour broadcast live from the Alexandra rotunda.

# TIO calls on government to act on telco inequality in regions

THE Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) is calling on the Australian Government to overhaul the telco regulatory framework to ensure it is fit for purpose in an increasingly digital and mobile-first Australia, and that people in regional, rural and remote communities are not left behind. The review could also benefit telcos by reducing regulatory complexity in a system long overdue for reform.

The latest report from the TIO, *Left behind: Experiences of telco consumers living in regional, rural and remote Australia*, reveals a bleak picture of experiences and inequity for the seven million people living outside our major cities.

Analysis of 26,972 phone and internet complaints from consumers in regional, rural and remote Australia over the last two financial years reveals place-based barriers to getting help and limited options are taking a toll.

The report identifies four major challenges facing regional consumers: Remoteness makes everyday telco issues harder to resolve, with consumers often facing lengthy delays for technician appointments, repeated cancellations and difficulties accessing in-store support; Mobile connectivity remains unreliable, with poor coverage continuing to be a common source of complaints and creating significant safety and productivity concerns; Limited choice and low awareness of available technologies can leave consumers without suitable or affordable alternatives when services fail; and outages and unreliable services create significant safety risks and business disruption, particularly where consumers rely on telecommunications to contact emergency services, run businesses or stay connected to their communities.

The report makes 12 recommen-

dations for telcos, the ACMA and government, including: A comprehensive review of the telco regulatory framework including a focus on addressing place-based disadvantages; Compensation payable directly to consumers where standards for internet broadband services aren't met; Remedies for significant mobile access delays where standards aren't met; Investment in tailored digital literacy programs; and better community education about emergency communications and preparing for scheduled outages.

Ombudsman Cynthia Gebert said, "Regional, rural and remote Australians help feed the nation, power industries and keep our diversity thriving, and this is integral part of what makes Australia great. Reliable telecommunications are not a luxury for these communities, they're essential infrastructure for safety, economic

participation and everyday life.

"People in the regions are practical, resilient, they can accept services don't always work perfectly. What makes them feel left behind is being asked to accept less; fewer choices, less support and more uncertainty around access to affordable and reliable phone and internet."

She added, "If your phone or internet isn't working the way it should, if you can't get answers, or if you're not satisfied with your telco's response, you can come to the TIO... When bushfires and other emergencies strike, people need reliable connectivity to communicate and get information.

"We're calling for stronger community education on Triple Zero and emergency communications. Communities need support to understand what coverage limitations mean for emergency calling and how to stay connected when networks are disrupted," she said.



# Outdoor Recreation reforms passed

THE Outdoor Recreation Victoria Bill delivers reforms that will bring together fishing, hunting and outdoor recreation functions under a single body titled Fishing, Hunting and Outdoor Victoria.

The Game Management Authority and Victorian Fisheries Authority will be part of the new entity.

The Victorian Government said, “The bill seeks to promote greater participation in activities like fishing, hunting, camping and fourwheel driving, improve access to public land and waterways (including through a new Land Access Panel), and provide a more streamlined, centralised system for managing and support-

ing these activities while boosting regional economies and encouraging more Victorians to enjoy the outdoors.”

They also said, “Recreational fishing and boating contributed \$5.82 billion to the Victorian economy in 2019 and supported 56,000 jobs, while game hunting contributed \$356 million and supported 3,138 jobs.”

The Australian Deer Association said via ADA News that their preference was for the entity to be called Outdoor Recreation Victoria, as “We believed that name captured the ambition of bringing people together under a shared outdoor recreation identity, with

hunting recognised confidently alongside fishing, camping, four-wheel driving, bushwalking, trail-bike riding, horse riding and the many other ways Victorians enjoy the outdoors.”

They said however, “The intent is clear: hunting and fishing are to remain visible and important parts of the new authority as its responsibilities extend across the wider outdoor recreation community.”

Shadow Minister for Outdoor Recreation Melina Bath said “The Liberals and Nationals supported practical changes to make this legislation stronger, fairer and more accountable for the people who rely on access to Victoria’s

public land and waterways.

“Our amendments ensured greater recognition for hunting and fishing, strengthened stakeholder representation, improved transparency and protected access.”

Ms Bath said the new structure would play a vital role in better supporting recreational fishing, hunting, outdoor recreation and regional communities, while protecting sustainable industries and longstanding traditions.

“We want more Victorians enjoying recreational fishing and the proud tradition of hunting, not more land locked up and access restricted.”



**GET OUTDOORS:** The Outdoor Recreation reforms will merge Game Management Authority (GMA) and Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) and will maintain opportunities for outdoors recreational activities.

PHOTO: Bailey Dixon



**PAY INCREASE:** Teachers across Victoria's public school network have endorsed the latest pay and conditions offer after over 12 months of negotiating.

## Teachers accept pay and conditions offer

VICTORIAN public school teachers, principals, and education support staff have overwhelmingly endorsed the latest pay and conditions offer after more than 12 months of negotiations and campaigning.

Seventy-nine per cent of Australian Education Union members working in Victorian public schools have voted to accept the government's offer of pay rises between 28.3 per cent and 32.4 per cent over four years, and a lump sum payment of \$2000 at the start of the agreement.

The offer also includes improvements to working conditions including reduced meetings and four professional practice days each year.

AEU Victorian Branch President Justin Mullaly said the outcome was thanks to the powerful campaign of tens of thousands of public school staff.

“This outcome has been won through the direct efforts of AEU members, who demanded pay and conditions that reflect the value and importance of their work in Victorian public schools,” Mr Mullaly said.

Under the agreement, an experienced teacher's pay will increase from the current \$118,063 to \$151,419 by 2029, including a \$15,393 boost this year to take them ahead of NSW teachers.

An early career teacher would have a pay increase of \$12,343 by October 2026, bringing them into line with their counterparts in NSW.

In 2026 all teachers will receive a minimum 13.04 per cent increase with further increases ranging between four per cent and 4.9 per cent in subsequent years through to 2029.

Education support staff in schools, which includes classroom support, business managers, administrative staff, and those supporting students with disability, would receive a minimum pay increase of 28.3 per cent over four years.

Principals and assistant principals will receive a 28.3 per cent pay boost over the same period.

The outcome of the vote means the stop-work scheduled for today, Wednesday, August 19 will not go ahead.

The agreement will now proceed to a vote of all employees as required under the Fair Work Act.

Complete your Census now. It's not too late.

Census night was Tuesday 11 August.

It's compulsory for each household to complete the Census to help plan for Australia's future. For help, visit [census.abs.gov.au](https://census.abs.gov.au) or call 1800 181 227.

Every answer matters.



Census



## HIGHLANDS RELIEF HUB

# The challenges of recovery

By ANNE RICHEY

ANDREA Bauer is the coordinator of the Highlands Relief Hub. She was asked by a long term local to undertake this role as she has a background as Community Fire Guard and more recently as the Highlands CFA Brigade Community Safety Coordinator.

She began the interview with a prepared statement. She said, "Recovery is the period that follows the initial emergency response. For the Longwood fire, that transition occurred on February 13 when the shire took responsibility from the Incident Control Centre.

"The whole period of emergency and recovery has been extremely difficult and incredibly taxing. The lack of coordination and support from the various levels of government has been marked. The Murrindindi Shire has had an enormous job and consideration needs to be given to the fact that approximately 50 per cent of their staff were fire affected, and despite having 48 per cent of the impact they only received eight per cent of the funding.

"Having said that, we have waited patiently for a recovery manager and two recovery officers, but have found that they have provided very little assistance. We have been very fortunate in Highlands to also be supported by the Mitchell Shire recovery team who have been engaging with us on the ground from the word go by providing office equipment, internet service, a dedicated mobile phone and emotional support for managing events and dedicated input into our recovery sub-committee," she said.

"From day one, the coordination of providing basic needs to service the community has not been a streamlined process. In fact, it was so frustrating that it was easier to do things for ourselves. In the early months, we had a strong team coordinating water, hay, food, fuel, kitchen and volunteer rosters.

"Since the first few weeks of the emergency, I have requested administration support. Not only are my team dealing with people face to face with everyday needs and coordinating the services, there is also a considerable amount of administration to be done behind the scenes. There's a considerable load of communication to the community, the *Granite News* that initially had a daily bulletin and is now weekly, Facebook and WhatsApp updates, production of flyers, reference and updated information.

"In late February we became incorporated as the Highlands Relief Hub which enabled the foundations of the hub to be established such as a bank account, ABN registration and consequently the ability to apply for funding," she said. She later added that they have also recently become GST registered in order to apply for grants.

She continued, "In late May we formed the Community Recovery Subcommittee with the development of working groups around communication, events and wellbeing, dangerous roadside trees and temporary housing and associated structures. This has had significant impact on our ability to assist the community. Both councils attend our fortnightly meetings.

"The capacity to apply for grants



**MUCH-NEEDED SUPPLIES: THE HALL BECAME A CENTRAL LOCATION FOR DONATED GOODS.**



**A RESTING PLACE: MEMBERS OF THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE AT THE HIGHLANDS COMMUNITY HALL.**



**FIRE RECOVERY: ANDREA BAUER (RIGHT).**

is limited due to the level of workload on the existing team and organisational deadlines at the moment. We are very grateful to Yea Football and Netball Club, Foundation Murrindindi, the Lions and Rotary Clubs, along with many others who have generously donated to enable the hub to service the community," she said.

"I keep asking where is the government funding that should have been in place from the very beginning for us volunteers to do what we do. In addition to the administration support we have requested grant writing support from the very early days. Minimal support, and mostly privately provided, has been available to date.

"Without various people stepping up to assist us with the Recovery Subcommittee we would not be where we are. Namely Red Cross Disaster Recovery mentor, Steve Pascoe, 16 members of the subcommittee and several other community-based participants.

"More recently we have changed the incorporation name to Highlands and District Community Recovery Association and will hold the inaugural AGM on August 29, where all positions will be declared vacant and a new committee elected after assessing the given votes.

"We are calling for people to become members of the association to provide a voice to the activities of the association, providing us with information, needs, support and direction. Anyone can join and they will receive dedicated communications. People can join via [highlands-hub.com.au](http://highlands-hub.com.au). Once they have become a member, they are eligible to be part of the recovery working groups and can also nominate themselves to become a member of the management committee which will have five to seven members. Nomination forms are available on the website.

"The Highlands Hub will continue to operate with access to support services, meals, groceries, laundry facilities, internet support, and mental health support on Wednesdays from 10 to 2pm. Events will continue at the hub as scheduled.

"The Yea hospital is coordinating clinics at the hub at regular intervals for mental health support and we have engaged outreach worker Ivan Lister to contact people indi-

vidually. The need for this support is continuing to increase as life's challenges are very heavy at the moment.

"Other ways of assisting the Highlands Recovery journey is through giving donations via GIVIT or directly to the association. Account details will be available on the website shortly. If anyone would like to volunteer or has good ideas of projects that can be undertaken to support the community, please reach out." Their email address is [thehighlandshub2026@gmail.com](mailto:thehighlandshub2026@gmail.com)

Speaking after the prepared statement, Andrea commented on how long it takes to do all of the administration for the recovery club, including financial matters, grant writing and communications, and said that it's often "a stretch outside their capacity." She wondered whether in future disasters there might be a way for the management of these matters to be taken on by someone else.

The volunteers at the hubs expected that governments would step in during the early recovery stage to take the weight off the volunteers, "But that never happened," Andrea said. "I believe it needs to be community-led because you know your community and you know your environment. You need that local knowledge to coordinate it. And it still needs to continue, but what is happening is that the volunteers are burnt out and can't keep continuing and we're hearing that this next six months is actually probably more important than the first six months for mental health support and to be available for people. I feel quite anxious in reducing our hours all the time because then we're not connecting on that one-to-one daily basis, just dropping in for a cuppa. But just don't have the capacity to support it."

The only money they have received from any level of government during the entire recovery is the \$9000 from the Victorian Government via Murrindindi Shire Council, intended to cover the cost of utilities and rent. The funding was to cover the costs of the hub in the early stages of the recovery. To access the funding, the hub needed to have an ABN and bank account, so this added an additional challenge. At the time the hub started, they had no preexisting funds to call upon.

Material aid readily supplied via the distribution centres in Yea and Seymour.

When Andrea was first asked to set up the Highlands Recovery Hub, they asked what she needed and she said, "I've never done this before."

She said in retrospect, "There should be a package of basics, toilets, showers, bins, water, food" and said that as time moved on, different hubs were receiving different donations. A couple of the hubs received waters tanks for example and others weren't asked and didn't receive them.

Perhaps in the early stages, there could be a list of suggested supplies for hubs and someone could contact each hub for a check box exercise, with council then arranging via the state government for the items to be delivered, such as generators, satellite internet and water tanks, as well as daily staples such as food and water.

One of the challenges in the early stage was the mass closure of fire-affected roads. While many were travelling through, such as residents and hay suppliers, many organisations were not allowing their staff to travel through, including essential services.

The Highlands Hub had to lobby Testra for a generator as they had no communications. Until then, they used a local resident's StarLink service. There was also no power until Ausnet put a generator on the pole outside the hall. Most was established before the time the road officially opened.

They have had semi-trailers of toilets and showers arrive, as well as grain, and new roads for the building behind the hall so they could put things in. "That all just happened locally. It was absolutely remarkable," she said.

She also pointed out that recovery is a long process. She said, "With our dedicated outreach work, we're finding that there are more significant mental health needs than we realise. That one-on-one contact is really important."

Equally important is ensuring that the people who have moved away or are in temporary accommodation away from the area are gaining support.

The hub has at times had to ring up and actively seek support ser-

vices being offered to other hubs, instead of them being provided automatically.

She said, "We have experienced quite a bit of feeling that we didn't exist because we're right on the periphery of the shire and got left off quite a few things."

Gaining the support services has made a huge difference with how the community has been supported. A lot of people who weren't engaging with support workers were seeing somebody face to face and were able to be registered and picked up that way. There was a big uptake in people enrolled for case management after that. "You need that face-to-face, that's really important," she said, adding that there was confusion when everything was being done on the phone or online, due to skill levels, connectivity and the challenges of making decisions in extreme circumstance.

She also noted that each of the people in communication with the hub have their own particular requirements, some needing significant time inputs.

She said, "We were very fortunate to have been involved with Services Australia who in those early weeks supported people with all the online forms. We did have some of the recovery roadshow, as they were calling it." Kate McAlpin was a huge help with this.

In the Highlands area, there are still a large number of people living in makeshift temporary accommodation such as sheds and caravans, but to the best of Andrea's knowledge, no-one living in tents.

She said, "It's been extremely slow for temporary housing. We probably in the last three weeks have seen the caravans come in and now they've just started to build the temporary houses. It's too late." It's now seven months after the fire.

Accessing burnable firewood has also been a challenge in the area, with heating being a big issue. Fortunately, two subcommittee members have land in Tallarook and had trees come down a couple of years ago, so this is being put to good use, with working bees on Wednesdays and Sundays, chopping and splitting wood so that people can collect it or have it delivered if they don't have the capacity.

"It didn't feel like the shire had a plan," Andrea said. "It just didn't feel like those foundations were there... I know incident control was responsible for the first period, but are they the ones that need to have that fundamental stuff for the emergency relief, bringing in the basics, toilets, water, food."

Andrea agreed that in addition to people having an individual caseworker, the hubs should have an individual caseworker as well.

She also suggested that there needs to be more support for preparation, making halls more emergency resilient. She suggested items such as a generator, sprinklers for the hall and connectivity solutions.

She finished by saying, "Recovery is a long and individual journey, and everybody will go through it in different ways and in different stages. And there's no right or wrong. Your experience is your experience. We are here to support you as best that we can, always.

She said of government, "Where are you?"





**VOLUNTEERING:** Just some of the many Blaze Aid volunteers that have worked across the Murrindindi Shire helping with fire recovery. **INSET: BLACKENED LANDSCAPE:** Blaze Aid have been rolling into properties to fix fire damaged fences since just after the Longwood bushfire ended.

# Alexandra Blaze Aid camp showing no signs of giving up

By BAILEY DIXON

THE Alexandra Blaze Aid camp has been supporting farmers by clearing and repairing fencing throughout Murrindindi Shire for around six months now, rolling into town in the immediate aftermath of the Longwood bushfire in January.

They started with their base of operations at the Alexandra Football Netball Club, before moving to the Alexandra Showgrounds and then the Merton Recreation Reserve, to make sure their camp setup was fit for purpose.

Alexandra Blaze Aid Camp Coordinator Cheryle Foster has a background in the not-for-profit sector as well as emergency recovery work. She initially came to the Alexandra camp to assist with administration, before becoming volunteer coordinator and then overall coordinator.

She provided an update on how recovery operations are proceeding in the area and what work volunteers have been undertaking.

"In just over six months, we've had a total of 539 unique volunteers. It doesn't matter how many times they come back, they're registered as one of those 539," Cheryle said.

"Our focus is on assisting the farmers. I have my little catch cry that Blaze Aid doesn't just rebuild fences, we help to rebuild people's lives. For me, it's about the connection with the farmers and how we help them recover."

The camp is running low on volunteers currently due to the wintry conditions, with around 15 in camp at the moment. Many of those are international backpackers doing their 88 days working for visa time.

The wet and muddy conditions make it challenging to access properties, and Cheryle hopes that warmer spring weather will lead to an influx of more volunteers.

"I'm hoping once the spring hits,

we'll get more people coming in. What quite often happens is we get grey nomads coming in or people who are retired, but they go off up to the sun for the wintertime. Hopefully they'll have had enough sun by September and they might be back," Cheryle said.

At the beginning of the recovery process, Blaze Aid had 314 properties listed for fencing work. Some of these dropped off the list because they were either able to do the work themselves or two properties registered with the same boundary fence, meaning the initial work didn't need doing.

"We've done around 200 kilometres of clearing and another 170 kilometres of fencing. And then I've still got about 228 kilometres of clearing and fencing to be done," Cheryle said.

Across the Longwood fireground, with both the Longwood and Alexandra Blaze Aid camps, Blaze Aid head office estimated the value of the fencing work undertaken by volunteers to be around \$7.74 million as of July 7, 2026.

"We're at about the 60 per cent mark, I'd say, in terms of what we've got to do. A fair chunk of that is based up in the Highlands and Caveat area," Cheryle added.

Blaze Aid Alexandra initially had a smaller camp operating out of a loaned property in the Highlands, but they closed it over the winter period due to the extreme cold weather up in the hills. They will look into possibly reopening that satellite camp or working in with the Longwood camp, which is moving to Creightons Creek in the future, come springtime.

Cheryle added that Blaze Aid Alexandra is trying to assist as many fire-affected people as possible.

"What I'm trying to do is making sure that everybody gets something. We may not be able to complete absolutely everything for everyone, but we will make sure that the pri-

ority work is done," she said.

"For people who don't have stock containment or don't need stock containment, we're looking at least giving them what their priority is to get done so that everybody can get something and that we can share the love around to everyone.

"There's a lot of people that aren't ready for work to be done on their properties for a number of different reasons. Some people may just not be ready for it emotionally or in terms of whether they still live here or they don't want to take down what they've got until they can get new fencing done.

"We don't want to push so it's a matter of people letting us know when they want us to come in and we'll then get that into our schedule and get out to them as soon as we can from that point."

Cheryle hopes that if the Alexandra Blaze Aid camp can get enough volunteers back in spring, coupled with some warmer weather, they might be able to wrap up all the fencing work by mid-November. That is just an estimate, however.

She also praised the support of the local community in keeping the Blaze Aid camp operational.

"We're a completely volunteer based organisation. We have two employees for the whole of Blaze Aid. And the rest is donated basically," Cheryle said.

"We had a generator come down from New South Wales from a camp that was closing. I had to get that off the truck and into a trailer. The guys down at Browns Fertilizers, they helped me out, they got it off the truck and then into the trailer.

"Yea Towing helped us out. I had to get our workshop container brought up from Alexandra. Rang up Paul [at Yea Towing] and he said, 'when do you need it?' I said, whenever you can do it. And he said, 'right, well, I've got such and such. He's out on the road doing this and that. He'll meet you in two hours'.

"And then while I was in Alexandra, Sasha from Foundation Murrindindi filled my car up with food. That's the support that if we don't have that kind of support in the community, it makes it harder to do what we're doing because we don't have the money to spend hundreds of dollars in getting things carted around.

"We're more than happy to pay for what we need. But if people put their hand up to help, it's nice. I said to Paul at Yea Towing, I said, give me a quote, let me know how much that's going to cost. And he said, 'oh, it's my donation'. So they're really lovely things that the community has done for us and that's what enables us to keep doing what we're doing."

The Giddy Goat Café in Yarck also has a fund that people can donate to, and when Blaze Aid volunteers are travelling to and from properties they are working on, they can stop in and get a coffee or a bite to eat using the funds. It's a sort of give and take process.

When it comes to what support Blaze Aid needs moving forward, the main priority is more volunteers. Anyone can put their hand up, regardless of whether they have experience in fencing or not.

"I'd love some more volunteers. I don't care whether they have [fencing] skills or not. We have people that come in who know absolutely nothing about fencing and they can be here for a week and by the time they're finished they know exactly what they're doing," Cheryle said.

"But if you are skilled [in fencing], then you're just as important because we need team leaders. We need people to go out and lead those teams."

Christine Clayton from Bairnsdale is a volunteer at the Alexandra Blaze Aid camp, doing the hard work of cooking for the troops. This camp is her 12th Blaze Aid setup, and she has enjoyed all her

time with the organisation.

"I started at Bunyip in 2019 and I did fencing and then in 2020 I did both cooking and fencing. Since then I've just done cooking at the rest," Christine said.

"I've been at Grafton, Cobargo twice. They've had three separate Blaze Aid camps. I've been to Seymour, Buchan, Bruthen, Omeo. It's really enjoyable.

"You meet some amazing people and I've made a lot of friends. People come and stay with me. I visit them all over the place. And there are lots of little communities. I see the same people, not all of them, I keep seeing new people as well, but some I've seen before."

Christine carries around a massive ring-binder folder that contains her printed recipes, which she playfully calls her bible.

"I need it printed, because sometimes Blaze Aid camps don't have internet access," she said.

"We get quite a bit of donated food, and so I'll try and build the menu around the donations. I try to vary the diet and put in lots of fruit and vegetables, to keep them all healthy. It's very strenuous work, so they need a reasonable amount of protein."

The Alexandra Blaze Aid camp will remain until the work has been completed, which coordinator Cheryle made very clear.

"It's just getting the message out to people that we're still here, that we're still going and that we intend to continue going.

"We will try to make sure that everybody gets something and that we won't leave until that happens and that we're here to support the community in any way we can. We will be here until we don't need to be here," Cheryle finished.

To find out more information about volunteering or the organisation's operations, visit the Blaze Aid website at [blazeaid.com.au](http://blazeaid.com.au) or follow them on Facebook.



# When the bridge is gone, a rural community pays the price

By SAM HICKS, a Fawcett resident and President of Fawcett Hall.

SEVEN months after the January bushfires, our communities are rebuilding homes, farms, fences and businesses. But increasingly, damaged bridge infrastructure is becoming another barrier to recovery.

In the immediate Fawcett area alone, three bridges, Fawcett Hall Bridge, Newmans Bridge and Mullaroo Bridge were catastrophically impacted by the fire.

They are part of a much bigger problem across Murrindindi, where nine bridges were identified as catastrophically impacted.

We only need to look at the ongoing issues surrounding the Breakaway Bridge in Acheron to understand how the loss or restriction of one piece of infrastructure can affect community access, farming, businesses, and everyday life.

At Fawcett Hall Bridge, a temporary ford/culvert provides an alternative crossing. But after more than 50mm of rain recently, that crossing was underwater again.

This isn't simply inconvenient as families face significant additional travel to get children to school. People struggled to get to work or medical appointments. Farmers need access to livestock, machinery and properties, while agricultural contractors and heavy vehicles need roads and bridges capable of carrying them.

With our bridges sometimes only a small number of residents may live beyond the bridge, but they are still primary producers and landowners. When the dry-creek crossings floods, there is no access in or out.

The importance of rural infrastructure cannot simply be measured by counting the number of letterboxes beyond a bridge.

Agriculture is a major economic driver for our region. Farmers and primary producers have already endured drought, storms, flooding and now a devastating bushfire.

How can we seriously ask them to rebuild while leaving them without reliable infrastructure to do it?

There is also a bigger policy question.

Disaster recovery funding can assist with restoring essential public assets, but the pathway towards betterment, rebuilding infrastructure to a safer, more resilient, and appropriate standard, is far more difficult.

That leaves communities like Fawcett in an extraordinary position.

Do we spend public money repairing ageing timber bridges and potentially recreate infrastructure that isn't suitable for the next several decades?

Or do state and federal governments work together with local government to find a funding pathway that allows proper rebuilding?

It's understood that Murrindindi has 33 timber bridges. This problem isn't going away as floods will come again, as well as bushfires. We know that because our communities have repeatedly lived through both.

Better disaster recovery should therefore be an opportunity to improve resilience, particularly for critical rural infrastructure.

We aren't asking for gold-plated bridges. We are asking for bridges that are safe, fit for purpose and capable of carrying families, emergency services, agricultural machinery, contractors and heavy vehicles.

We need state and federal governments working with Murrindindi Shire Council to cut through the red tape and find a pathway forward, because rebuilding communities requires more than replacing what was lost.

It means making sure we don't rebuild the same vulnerabilities along with it, and it means we don't have to purchase and resell 160,000 sausages to fund it ourselves as that is what it would take.



HELPING THE WILDLIFE: Kinglake Landcare members undertaking bird box building at Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House.

# Upcoming community Bird Box Building Day

KINGLAKE Landcare and Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House invite the community to join them for a Bird Box Building Day to support wildlife in the Longwood fireaffected areas.

The Longwood fires earlier this year tore through large areas of mature forest, destroying fences, farmland, and countless old hollowbearing trees, the homes of native wildlife. These ancient trees take 80 to 120 years to form hollows, and without them, species like gliders, phascogales, parrots, owls, kookaburras, and microbats have nowhere to shelter or raise their young.

Now the timing is critical. Breeding season has begun, and there are no hollows left.

As spring approaches, birds

and mammals are already searching for nesting hollows. In many fireaffected areas, there are simply none left. Without immediate replacement habitat, breeding fails, populations crash, and recovery stalls.

Every box built on this day is an immediate lifeline; a safe nesting site that replaces what the fires destroyed.

Community is stepping up but more volunteers are needed. Thanks to generous sponsorship from Community Bank Hurstbridge (Bendigo Bank), all materials have been supplied, and a light lunch will be provided. Volunteer Colin Parton will be precutting and flatpacking the box components, allowing attendees to assemble far more

boxes, but they need more hands to put them together.

Kinglake is stepping up to assist Upper Goulburn Landcare Network's Chris Cobern, Roger Cook, and John Stewart and all from the Kinglake area, who have been leading the Longwood recovery effort through fencing crews and onground support. Their work has inspired Kinglake Landcare to contribute in a meaningful, practical way.

With fencing crews already rebuilding properties, bird boxes are the next critical step, helping wildlife return to the landholders who have lost so much.

Kinglake Landcare Secretary Tim Connell emphasises that this project is about neighbours helping neighbours, even across shire

boundaries. Kinglake knows what fire recovery feels like, and now it's their turn to give back.

How you can help:

- Attend the Bird Box Building Day
- Donate materials or tools
- Volunteer with Fencers Without Boundaries
- Spread the word to others who may want to help

If you possess a power drill, consider taking it along to the building day to help with assembly.

The Bird Box Building Day will take place at the Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House on Saturday, September 5, 2026, from 10.30am to 12.30pm. RSVP is essential, contact: kathryndickie2@gmail.com



## SWEET TREATS TO RAISE MONEY FOR SCHOOL BEES

THE school leaders at Sacred Heart Primary School in Yea have been cooking up sweet treats to raise money for the school's kitchen garden projects.

They are hoping to get bees in the next term, with their delicious cinnamon scrolls and cheesymite scrolls for sale at a stall they are holding every two weeks to fundraise.

FOR BEES MONEY PLEASE: The Sacred Heart Primary School students with their fundraising stall.



DELICIOUS TREATS: The cinnamon scrolls that the students cooked up.

## Live music and artists

THE Victorian Government is backing Victorian businesses, with grants for live music venues and local musicians in Northern Victoria.

Member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes announced the latest round of 10,000 Gigs: The Victorian Gig Fund, helping venues host paid performances by talented Victorian artists.

The 2026 program is open for applications and will be delivered through Music Victoria.

Licensed live music venues and other spaces are eligible to apply for funding of up to \$11,000 to stage up to 20 gigs from December 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027.

Since the Fund launched in 2024, more than 7600 gigs by local artists have been supported statewide.

These latest grants are part of a \$35.4 million package announced in the Victorian Budget 2023/24 to support Victoria's live music industry at all levels across the state.

Only Labor supports the businesses and venues integral to the state's thriving music industry.

Applications for the 2026 round of 10,000 Gigs: The Victorian Gig Fund are open until September 2. To apply, visit musicvictoria.com.au

Member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes said, "Labor has a proud history of supporting Victoria's music scene, and we're serious about supporting artists, businesses and venues that turn up the music... The fund helps the regional music community host live music gigs, offering more paid performance opportunities for artists and more choice for music lovers."



# 140 workers from other shires provided post-fire

IN the days, weeks and months following the Longwood blaze, Murrindindi Shire Council received significant support from local government colleagues across Victoria through the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) Resource Sharing Protocol, as well as direct arrangements with individual councils including Whittlesea City Council.

Council's records show the support provided equated to many hundreds of person-days of assistance. While individual deployments varied in duration and many personnel contributed additional effort beyond their rostered hours, person-days provides the most meaningful measure of the scale of support provided.

Eligible costs are reimbursed through the Victorian Government under the jointly funded Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

Worker expenses included salary and wage costs associated with staff deployments, together with any approved travel, accommodation and related deployment costs incurred in supporting emergency response and recovery activities.

Eligible costs are managed through established emergency management and disaster recovery funding arrangements. Council maintains detailed records of deployments and associated expenditure as part of this process.

Michael Chesworth, Director People and Corporate Performance at Murrindindi Shire Council said, "The response demonstrated the strength of the local government sector, with staff from councils across the state stepping forward to help communities affected by the fires. These personnel supported a wide range of emergency response, relief, recovery and business continuity functions, enabling council to continue providing critical services while supporting impacted residents and communities.

"While individual staff deployments varied in length, more than 140 personnel from councils across Victoria supported Murrindindi through the emergency response and recovery effort. Collectively, this assistance equated to many hundreds of person-days of support, providing critical surge capacity at a time when local resources were under extraordinary pressure.

"The MAV Resource Sharing Protocol is an important mechanism that enables councils to help one another during emergencies by rapidly deploying experienced staff where they are most needed. The January bushfires highlighted the value of these arrangements and the professionalism, flexibility and generosity of local government employees across Victoria.

"The experience also reinforces Murrindindi Shire Council's advocacy for a dedicated local government emergency management surge workforce that could be rapidly deployed to support councils during major and prolonged emergencies.

"While mutual aid arrangements work well, increasingly frequent and complex disasters are placing growing pressure on local government resources across the state. A standing surge capability would strengthen Victoria's emergency management system and complement the existing MAV resource-sharing arrangements.

"Emergency staffing support was provided through established local government and emergency management arrangements, with eligible costs managed through existing disaster recovery funding processes. Murrindindi benefited enormously from this arrangement during the January bushfires and remains grateful to the many councils and individual staff members who contributed their time, skills and expertise to assist our community," he said.

# Sad closure to 1974 search

IN May 2026, Coroner Simon McGregor handed down his findings into the disappearance of Cobden schoolboy, Damien McKenzie, last seen at Steavenson Falls in Marysville in September 1974.

As stated in the report, "The role of a coroner is to independently investigate reportable deaths to establish, if possible, identity, medical cause of death, and surrounding circumstances. Surrounding circumstances are limited to events which are sufficiently proximate and causally related to the death. The purpose of a coronial investigation is to establish the facts, not to cast blame or determine criminal or civil liability."

Victoria Police assigned Senior Constable Bridget Bohlmann to be the Coronial Investigator for the investigation of Damien's death. SC Bohlmann conducted inquiries on behalf of the coroner and took statements from witnesses, such as family, the forensic pathologist, treating clinicians and investigating officers, and submitted a coronial brief of evidence. A statement was also obtained from Senior Sergeant Gregory Paul, formerly of the Police Search and Rescue Squad (SAR).

As Damien was never found, "the coronial investigation must first endeavour to establish, on the balance of probabilities, whether the person suspected to be deceased, is deceased," the report said.

In early August 1975, Damien returned home from school and asked his parents and expressed interest in participating in an upcoming Young Australia League (YAL) camp which was operating at the end of August/start of September that year. Damien's mother had also attended a YAL camp as a child. Damien attended the camp with two male school friends of the same age, Chris and Glen.

The base camp was located by the Acheron River in Taggerty, in dormitory-style accommodation. From the base camp, the participants were transported to various locations for outdoor activities. One such activity was a daytime visit to Steavenson Falls near Marysville on September 4, where the group walked to the top of the waterfall. This was the second visit to the falls as the lights had not been working on their earlier visit on the evening of September 2.

Chris stated that it was his belief that the group leader conducted regular head counts when everyone was on the bus.

Chris said that at around 11.30am, while on the track to the top of the falls, Damien was behind him and walked off to the side of the track, either onto another track or onto some side steps to go to the toilet. He couldn't recall whether Damien had said anything about where he was going, but did remember other participants saying this. He recalled that Damien was wearing a distinctive purple jumper.

The weather at the time was dark, cold and sleety, so Chris was unable to see where Damien went. Chris waited for Damien for a while before moving to the bottom of the falls, thinking that Damien might have left without him. Chris then met with another group of children from the camp before getting on the bus. When there was mention that Damien may have run up the track, Chris replied, "Yeah, hmm, well he didn't, I yelled out and I thought he's left me behind, so I just sort of then went out and did my own thing with my camera and stuff, taking photos and talking to some of the other kids."

When the participants got on the bus, Chris noticed that Damien wasn't next to him but thought that he must have been in another seat on the bus. When a headcount was performed by the supervisors, they identified that one child was missing. Chris then alerted the supervisors that Damien wasn't there. Chris and Charlie got off the bus and conducted a short search for Damien calling out his name. Chris wondered whether Damien was playing hide and seek and thought he may have been holding up the bus as a joke.

The adult chaperones were notified of Damien's disappearance and initially searched the area before contacting police at around 3pm. They arrived at the site at approximately 4pm to coordinate the search effort. Damien's parents were notified at around the same time and began the drive to Marysville, stopping at the Geelong Station for an update.

The search, involving around 300 searchers, was led by Senior Sergeant John Maccaskill, now retired. The searchers included "Victoria Police personnel, including members' of the Search and Rescue Squad, Dog Squad, Airwing, Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs Search and Rescue Section, St Johns Ambulance, Civil Defence (now known as the SES), Forestry Commission of Victoria (DEECA), Red Cross, local volunteers and local Cobden residents who travelled to Marysville to assist the search efforts," the report said.

Senior Constable Raymond Mathieson from Alexandra Police was the first police member on the scene at Steavenson Falls. His recollection was that the boys were playing hide and seek and that there was no indication that he had been kidnapped.

Searchers reported that the established track at the falls petered out and then there were seemingly random small tracks beyond where the track up to the falls ended.

The search for Damien covered 31 square kilometres in difficult terrain and challenging weather conditions including snow. The official search for Damien concluded on September 8, 1974, with those in charge of the search holding out little hope for Damien's survival.

In March 1975, the river was dammed upstream of the falls so Police Search and Rescue could conduct a search of the river, but they did not locate anything.

The report also stated, "The area of Damien's disappearance was also heavily impacted by the Black Saturday Bushfires in 2009, although no unidentified bodies were reported in the search area after the fires. After the fires, the owner of a local sawmill sent out a number of employees who thoroughly searched mine shafts in the area but did not locate anything of value."

Senior Sergeant McCaskill said that the line searches were not done as thoroughly by the volunteers as would have been done by professionals and noted that helicopters and dogs could not be used due to the weather, and for the dogs due to contamination at the site.

He said, "The area covered intensely was a large area owing to the nature of the terrain, this area was covered with the intention of perhaps being able to find the boy if he was injured or perhaps able to call back in some way, most probable areas were selected for this saturation. Although some areas were crossed several times, it would not be unreasonable for the boy if he was deceased at the time, to be laying within inches of searchers and go undetected."

The report states, "On November 19, 2024, a familial DNA sample was taken from Damien's full sibling, Stephen. Thus far, no match has been made with this sample across any of the available DNA databases." They also confirmed with the Department of Home Affairs that there were no records of Damien leaving the country or applying for a passport.

Senior Sergeant Paul also spoke about the conditions during the search, and the geography and flora.

The coroner noted that "in 1974 as they did not have the same resourcing and capabilities that are now routinely used in modern missing person searches in bushland including, real time information of location search teams, GPS navigation systems, accurate track-log recording, superior imaging options such as thermal cameras, wild life cameras, helicopters, drones and fixed wing aircraft specifically equipped to conduct specialised search and rescue, these limitations were explicable in these circumstances, and I find that the search was conducted earnestly and conscientiously."

In conclusion, the coroner stated, "I am satisfied that Damien is deceased. Further, I am satisfied that there are no further avenues of investigation reasonably open at this stage to elicit further evidence about the cause and circumstances of his death. The evidence does not enable me to be satisfied as to the exact circumstances or cause of Damien's death... There is no evidence to support a finding that any third party was involved in Damien's death."

The coroner commended the efforts of Victoria Police, each of the other agencies and the hundreds of volunteers involved in the search for Damien in 1974 and in the following years. It is acknowledged that the fact that Damien has not been found is very distressing for his family and they have not had an opportunity to have greater clarity in relation to the exact circumstances of his passing.

He also conveyed his sincere condolences to Damien's family for their loss.

Damien was remembered for "his love of the outdoors, participation in cub-scouts, athletics and football. Damien loved climbing trees, being active and riding his bicycle with his friends."



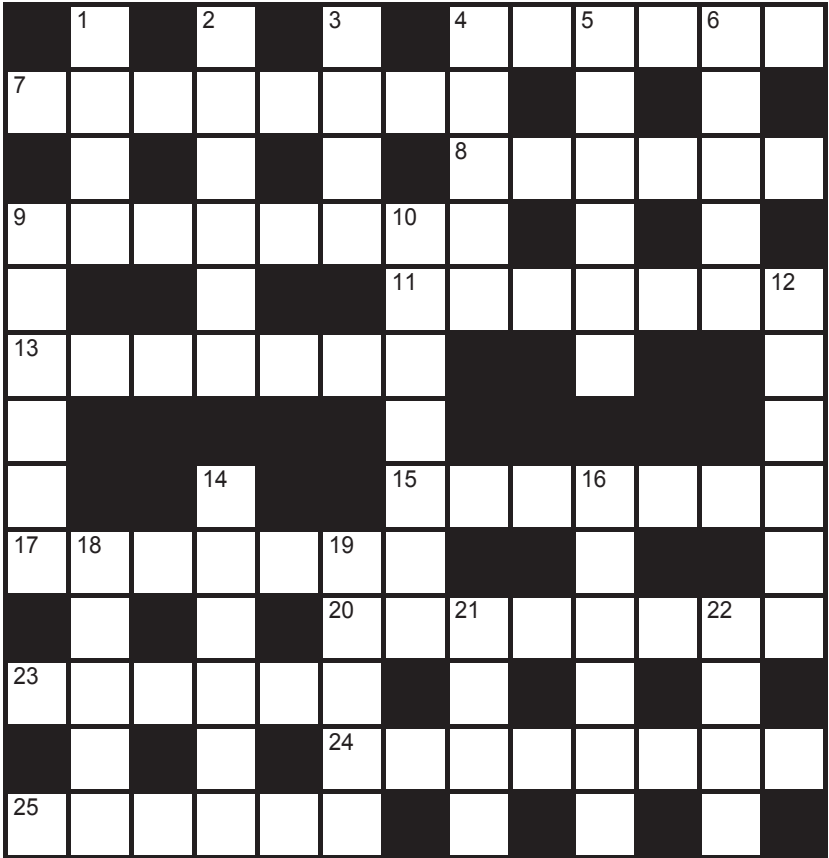
**MYSTERY DISAPPEARANCE:** Damien McKenzie was aged just 10 when he disappeared.



GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

1146

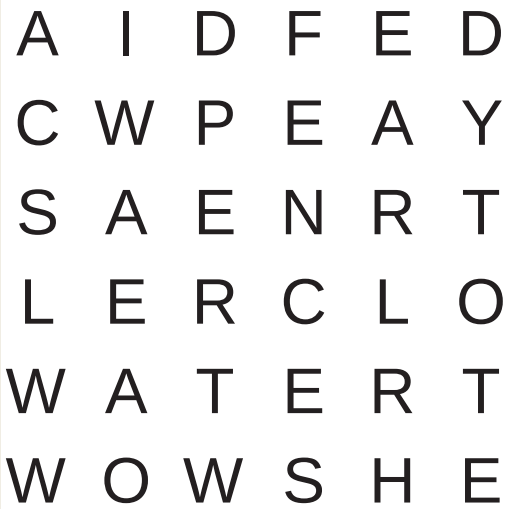
- ACROSS**
- 4 Name the upper house of the Australian parliament (6)
- 7 Which pattern or mould is used as a guide (8)
- 8 What are military forces (6)
- 9 What is a postponement (8)
- 11 To set apart, is to do what (7)
- 13 Which term means without beginning or end (7)
- 15 What are unusual artifacts called (7)
- 17 Which barbed spearlike missile is used in catching whales (7)
- 20 To choke or suffocate, is to do what (8)
- 23 To be extremely cold or frigid, is to be what (6)
- 24 Which term implies a relationship to higher education (8)
- 25 What is a hot spring (6)



- DOWN**
- 1 Which term means "in this place" (4)
- 2 To come into sight, is to do what (6)
- 3 To be free from bias, is to be what (4)
- 4 Name some marine carnivores (5)
- 5 Which term means "to wit" (6)
- 6 Name another term for larceny (5)
- 9 To wet thoroughly, is to do what (6)
- 10 What is a morbid affection of the body (7)
- 12 To get away from, is to do what (6)
- 14 What are sudden heavy downpours of rain (6)
- 16 What is a bicycle built for two (6)
- 18 To concur, is to do what (5)
- 19 What is an Academy Award known as (5)
- 21 To harvest, is to do what (4)
- 22 What is the den of a wild beast (4)

MINI WORD FIND

446



Find the following words in the grid. They may be read in any direction, even diagonally. Some letters are used more than once.

- |      |        |      |       |
|------|--------|------|-------|
| Aid  | Fat    | Pea  | Water |
| Awe  | Fed    | Set  | Welt  |
| Care | Fences | She  | Wow   |
| Cry  | Lap    | Tote |       |
| Earl | Law    | Warn |       |

WHICH WORDS

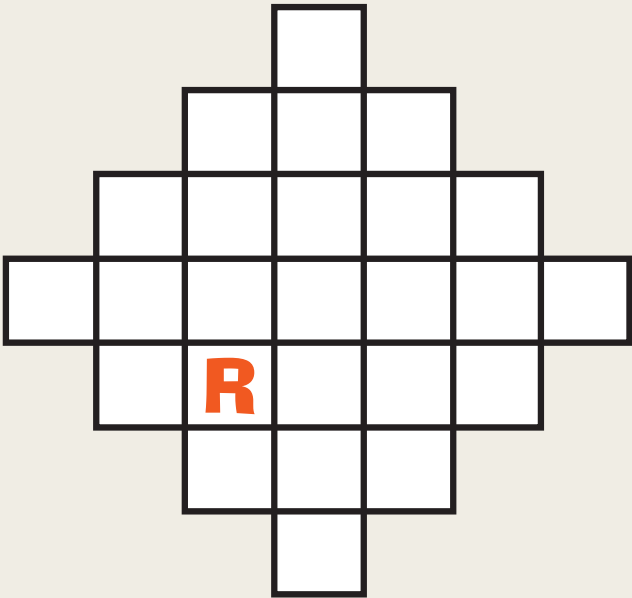
- 1 **AMBROSIA**
- (a) Loss of memory
- (b) A secretion of the sperm whale used in perfumery
- (c) The food of the gods
- 2 **BLARNEY**
- (a) Flattering talk
- (b) The blowing of a trumpet
- (c) Foolish speech

E-QUATIONS

456

Letters A to Z have a number value. Some are shown in the right-hand cells. Create remaining values using clues in centre cells.

|   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| C | N+D | 23 |
| D | U+U |    |
| E | C-U |    |
| H | E-D |    |
| N | D+R |    |
| R | H-U |    |
| U | E-N | 4  |



BIYWORD

186

Build it yourself using the clues and each of the twenty-four letters once only to form ten words: five across and five down. A key word (bold clue) builds on the letter set in the grid.

- CLUES:**
- Beyond the extreme (5)
- Directive** (5)
- Gather slowly (5)
- Implored (7)
- Latin: father (5)
- Muck (3)
- Muscle that rotates (7)
- Negative conjunction (3)
- Unleaded petrol (3)
- Variant of aero- (3)



SUDOKU

146

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   | 7 |   | 5 |   |   | 6 |   |
|   | 6 |   |   |   |   |   |   | 4 |
|   |   |   |   | 2 |   |   |   |   |
|   | 4 |   |   | 6 | 1 | 3 |   | 2 |
|   | 7 |   |   |   |   | 4 |   |   |
|   |   |   | 8 |   | 3 | 6 |   |   |
| 6 | 2 | 9 |   |   | 5 | 1 |   |   |
|   |   | 1 |   |   | 9 |   |   | 8 |
|   |   | 3 |   |   |   |   |   |   |

QUICK THINK

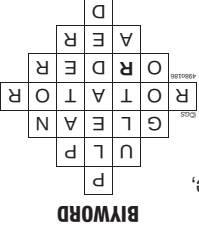
456

Solve the crossword. Each answer has four letters.

- |                       |                |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>         | <b>DOWN</b>    |
| 1 Agreement           | 1 Combine      |
| 5 Woodwind instrument | 2 Proficient   |
| 6 Pot over a fire     | 3 Fizzy drink  |
| 7 Plumbing problem    | 4 Durable wood |

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 |   |   |   |
| 6 |   |   |   |
| 7 |   |   |   |

SOLUTIONS

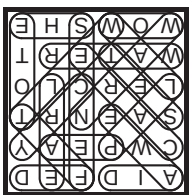


**QUICK THINK**

1 (c) The food of the gods 2 (a) Flattering talk

**WHICH WORDS:**

1 (c) The food of the gods 2 (a) Flattering talk



|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   | 7 |   | 5 |   |   | 6 |   |
|   | 6 |   |   |   |   |   |   | 4 |
|   |   |   |   | 2 |   |   |   |   |
|   | 4 |   |   | 6 | 1 | 3 |   | 2 |
|   | 7 |   |   |   |   | 4 |   |   |
|   |   |   | 8 |   | 3 | 6 |   |   |
| 6 | 2 | 9 |   |   | 5 | 1 |   |   |
|   |   | 1 |   |   | 9 |   |   | 8 |
|   |   | 3 |   |   |   |   |   |   |

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|   |   | 7 |   | 5 |   |   | 6 |   |
|   | 6 |   |   |   |   |   |   | 4 |
|   |   |   |   | 2 |   |   |   |   |
|   | 4 |   |   | 6 | 1 | 3 |   | 2 |
|   | 7 |   |   |   |   | 4 |   |   |
|   |   |   | 8 |   | 3 | 6 |   |   |
| 6 | 2 | 9 |   |   | 5 | 1 |   |   |
|   |   | 1 |   |   | 9 |   |   | 8 |
|   |   | 3 |   |   |   |   |   |   |



# Gillian Triggs to speak in Alexandra

RURAL Australians for Refugees will be hosting special guest speaker Gillian Triggs at an event in Alexandra. Gillian Triggs AC is a former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, United Nations Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees, and former president of the Australian Human Rights Commission.

She will be speaking about the Tampa Affair and why it still matters 25 years later.

On August 24, 2001 the MV Tampa, sailing in the Indian ocean came across a stranded Indonesian fishing boat with 438 asylum seekers on board, heading for Australian territory at Christmas Island. Following its high seas obligations, the Tampa picked up all but five of the refugees.

Reverend Doctor D Paul Dalzell from Alexandra RAR commented, "The Australian Government, in a move which was to bring us into international disrepute, refused to let the asylum seekers exercise

their right under international law and stopped the Tampa from off-loading the refugees onto Australian soil. By force of the SAS, these people were taken to Naoero (formerly known as Nauru).

"Later, on October 7 that year, another boat of asylum seekers was intercepted and turned back by the Australian Navy. In a frenzy of confected worry about being 'flooded' by refugees, ministers of the Australian Government, including Philip Ruddock, Peter Reith, the Prime Minister, John Howard and foreign minister Alexander Downer, all claimed that the asylum seekers were throwing their children overboard in an attempt to be given passage to Australia, knowing this, according to an advisor to Peter Reith, to be untrue.

"At that moment, says human rights campaigner Julie Macken, the boarding of the Tampa by SAS soldiers with guns turned Australia's human rights obligations

into a security threat. Since then, whenever governments talk of asylum seekers, they are also talking about 'keeping Australians safe'. From what I wonder.

"Stimulated by these events, Rural Australians for Refugees has been campaigning for humane treatment of asylum seekers, and a following of the spirit of the 1951 Refugee Convention. Broadcaster David Marr has described this convention as 'The world's way of saying 'sorry' to six million Jews,' he said.

The event is being held on Saturday, August 22 from 2-4pm at St John's Anglican Church Hall on Downey Street. Bookings are essential. Contact Robyn Walsh on 0467 413 767. Tickets are \$25 or \$230 concession, paid by cash or card on the day.

There will be welcome drinks at the event and a harp performance by Christine Tate. There will be a Q&A following the presentation and afternoon tea.



## Trawool Estate establishing as a premier destination

THE Trawool Estate is proving that regional destinations can offer more than just a weekend getaway. Nestled in the picturesque Goulburn Valley Ranges, the historic estate has established itself as a vibrant destination for special events that bring people together through food and entertainment.

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As regional tourism continues to grow, destinations like The Trawool Estate play an important role in encouraging people to explore beyond the city, supporting the ecosystem of local businesses and discover what the locals know are the gems within the region.

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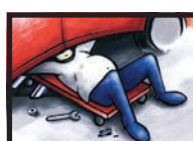
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Upper Goulburn Community Radio AGM

Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August 2026 at 7.30pm

Meeting via Zoom link & nominations: secretary@ugfm.org 03 5772 2722

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DEATH NOTICES

SAVAGE, Sydney Patrick.

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Devoted husband to Christine. Loving father to Shane, Andrew and Debbie. Father-in-law to Jodie and Geoff. Loving Pop to Zoe, Jason, Tess and Kayley.

R.I.P. forever in our hearts.

SLEVIN, Denis Patrick

17/12/1943 - 9/8/2026

Passed away unexpectedly after a short illness, surrounded by family on Sunday August 9, 2026 at the Wangaratta Public Hospital.

Aged 82 years.

Dearly loved son of the late Frank and Monica Slevin of Yea. Much loved and cherished brother of Francis (Frank), uncle of Chris, Michelle, Kate and Rob and grand-Uncle of Chelsea, grand-Uncle of Riley, James and their mother Donna.

Forever in our hearts. Rest in peace.

Funeral will be held on Monday, August 24, 2026 in Yea. Please refer McCormack Funerals webpage for details.



FUNERAL NOTICES

SAVAGE

The funeral service to celebrate Sydney's life will be held at the Lions Rotunda, 2 Riverside Drive, Eildon on Tuesday, August 25, 2026 commencing at 11am. Followed by a private burial.



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# Genomics driving smarter and more productive farming

VICTORIA is marking 25 years since a landmark international study co-authored by Victorian scientists helped establish genomic selection as a powerful tool used around the world to improve how farmers breed healthier animals and grow better crops.

Agriculture Victoria Head Agriculture Science and Technology Simone Warner said the 2001 research provided the foundations for a method that has changed how breeders make decisions.

“This work has shaped breeding programs around the world, delivering industry benefits since 2016, with even greater gains projected according to DataGene analysis, and reflects the long-term contribution of Victorian scientists to global agricultural research.

“Genomic selection allows farmers and breeders to use DNA to predict performance and make decisions earlier.

“Instead of waiting years to see results in the field, they can identify the best genetics at the start, reducing time and improving confidence on farm,” she said.

“The technology is now widely used across all major livestock and cropping industries, with Victorian scientists continuing to develop new tools and making them even more accessible to farmers.

“It has helped increase the rate of genetic improvement and supports progress in key traits such as fertility, feed efficiency and disease resistance.

“These gains demonstrate how long-term investment in science and technology has translated into improved productivity and profitability at the farm gate,” Professor Warner said.

She said through Agriculture Victoria’s industry and research partnerships around the world, our scientists are leading work that is shaping the next generation of genomic selection.

“We are combining genomics with things such as artificial intelligence, big data, sensors and drones to improve accuracy and speed.

“These tools will help more farmers and breeders make more informed decisions into the future.

“These benefits flow through to the broader economy, strengthening Victoria’s food and fibre sector and export competitiveness,” Professor Warner said.

Agriculture Victoria’s scientists deliver cutting edge research and innovation, supported by advanced analytics and supercomputing facilities at AgriBio in Bundoora.

Agricultural innovation helps farming communities thrive and builds a stronger future for Victoria.



GREENS - TALIA GULPILIL



ANIMAL JUSTICE PARTY - CHLOE BOND

## Eildon electorate: two new candidates announced

TWO new candidates have been announced for the Eildon electorate in the upcoming Victoria election.

**Greens – Talia Gulpilil**

Talia Gulpilil states, “I’m a First Nations Organiser, I’m a local mum, I’m hoping to be a home owner, and I’ve worked with the community for most of my career. I’m a deep listener, who cares about people and thinks outside the box.

“I’m passionate about politics because I care about our community. I will be a local representative who listens, advocates and works hard to deliver real outcomes for people.

“Housing and homelessness are amongst the most important issues to me because everyone deserves a safe, secure and affordable place to call home. I am calling for increased investment in public and genuinely affordable housing, stronger renters’ rights and addressing the underlying causes of homelessness.”

**Animal Justice Party – Chloe Bond**

The Animal Justice website states, “Chloe is a passionate and dynamic lawyer, writer, and advocate living within the Shire of the Yarra Ranges. She proudly stands as your Animal Justice Party candidate for Eildon in the 2026 State Election.

“As a Victims of Crime lawyer, Chloe has dedicated her adult life to providing a voice for those who are unable to use their own. As a self-proclaimed loud-mouth, she will never be quiet while victims, whether human or animal, are suffering.

“When elected, Chloe will advocate for a better future for wild brumbies, who are shot and killed throughout Victoria. Seeing the catastrophic injuries suffered by horses forced to participate in jumps racing, Chloe will push for an end to the industry. Further, she wishes to see a state-wide ban on rabbit meat farming and the legal torture it enables.”

## Liberals and Nations pledge to scrap gas ban

THE Liberal and Nationals parties are claiming they will restore energy choice for Victorians, launching a series of advertisements protesting Premier Ben Carroll’s gas ban.

They say that Victorian households should be allowed to choose how they cook, heat and produce hot water.

Labor has flagged it will ban consumer choice of hot water services and heating from March 2027.

The [nogasban.com.au](https://nogasban.com.au) site enables Victorians to see the advertisements and have their say.

Shadow Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, David Davis, said, “Labor’s gas ban will cost many families tens of thousands of dollars as the ban will prevent the replacement of existing gas appliances.

“Labor has also banned gas connections on new estates and limited energy options for new businesses.

“Only a Jess Wilson-led Liberal and Nationals Government will restore consumer choice by reversing Labor’s gas ban.

“Labor cannot be trusted on gas after a 12-year gas war. Premier Ben Carroll is part of the problem he supported at every turn Labor’s outrageous undemocratic gas ban.”

# Victorian family violence laws to include coercive control

VICTIM-survivors deserve a justice system that listens to them, protects them and holds perpetrators to account.

The Victorian Government has introduced legislation to strengthen protections for victim-survivors by criminalising coercive control, strengthening intervention orders and increasing protections against discrimination.

The effects of coercive control are pervasive and traumatic. It can cause immediate and long-term harm, and is a known precursor to intimate partner homicide.

The reforms create a new standalone offence for coercive control of an intimate partner, carrying a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison to reflect the severity of this behaviour.

As coercive control can be complex and subtle, the prosecution won’t need to prove physical or mental harm has occurred for a person to be found guilty, only that the accused should have understood their conduct would probably cause harm.

The Bill also removes ‘good character’ as a mitigating factor in sentencing, ensuring offenders cannot rely on their reputation to get a lesser sentence.

This will also help reduce the trauma experienced by victim-survivors who have been forced to sit through glowing character references for the person who harmed them.

Discrimination against people impacted by family violence will be prohibited in key areas of public life, including in the workplace, thanks to new reforms designed to reduce further exposure to mistreatment outside of the home.

Changes to family violence intervention orders (FVIOs) and personal safety intervention orders (PSIOs) will help ensure people protected by these orders will be kept safer for longer.

A court will be able to extend or change an FVIO at the end of related criminal proceedings, removing the need for a further application or for victim-survivors to return to court where there is a clear risk to their safety.

The court must seek the views of the protected person before deciding to change or extend an intervention order, making sure victim-survivors’ needs are prioritised and their voices are heard.

In cases where the offender is sentenced to prison for a family violence offence, the default length for extending an FVIO will be the length of the total sentence plus 12 months, giving greater security during periods of heightened risk.

In criminal proceedings where a pre-existing FVIO is in place, police will also be required to record this information and indicate if an application to extend or vary the FVIO may be made.

This will encourage earlier and more streamlined consideration of changes needed to better protect the victim-survivor, where appropriate.

The legislation will strengthen protections for children by clarifying that PSIOs may be made against adults engaging in grooming behaviour, which is deeply disturbing, profoundly harmful and often pre-empts sexual violence.

Victim-survivors and vulnerable Victorians will also have better access to social justice initiatives in the fines system thanks to the expansion of the *Work and Development Permit (WDP)* and *Family Violence Scheme (FVS)*.

People experiencing vulnerability or hardship who satisfy the eligibility criteria for the scheme will be able to work off unpaid court fines, not just infringement fines, through a WDP.

The FVS will be available for any victim-survivor who receives a fine for excessive speeding detected by road safety cameras who was not the driver but, due to family violence, cannot nominate the driver or reject a false nomination.

These reforms build on the landmark *Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Stalking and Other Matters) Act 2026* and the *2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence*.

Member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes said, “Every Victorian deserves to feel safe at home, at work and in their community. This legislation makes coercive control a crime and gives victim-survivors the protection and the justice system response they deserve. I’ll always back the reforms that keep local families safe.”

Attorney-General Sonya Kilkenny added, “Victim-survivors of family violence deserve the greatest quality of care, protection and security. These laws are a significant step forward in improving the way we support people impacted by family and gendered violence.

“Coercive control is a devastating form of abuse that has no place in our community. That’s why we’re changing the law to make it a crime.

“Regardless of who thinks you’re a good friend, good workmate or good person, if you commit a crime, you will no longer be able to rely on ‘good character’ to downplay your offending or lessen your sentence.”



# Murrindindi Shire students take part in Boite Schools Chorus

STUDENTS from schools across Murrindindi Shire, including Alexandra Primary School and Buxton Primary School, recently travelled to Melbourne to take part in a performance by the Boite Schools Chorus, a musical community known to bring together music aficionados from around the world.

The Boite Schools Chorus is an un-auditioned choir project for schools and community youth choirs that has involved over 9000 students from across Victoria since 2004.

Some 786 students from schools throughout Victoria came

together this year to celebrate the musical traditions of Ghana through song, rhythm and dance. They were guided by Ghanaian-Australian artists and musicians.

Students spent months learning Ghanaian music, language and stories to accurately reflect Ghanaian culture in the performance, called Akoma – The Heart.

Akoma, which means heart in the Twi language, symbolizes patience, goodwill, love and unity. These values formed the heart of the project, celebrating the connected communities and the power of music in bringing people together.



GHANAIAN CULTURE: MUSIC, RHYTHM AND DANCE ALL REPRESENTED THE RICH CULTURAL HISTORY OF GHANA.



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A GROUP EFFORT: AROUND 780 SCHOOL STUDENTS TOOK PART IN THE BOITE SCHOOLS CHORUS 2026.

## Mental health support in Murrindindi and Strathbogie

SEVEN months on since the Victorian bushfires, impact of this disaster remains for many people across the Murrindindi and Strathbogie.

Mental health support is available to help you and your family, friends and neighbours. Members for Indi Helen Haines provided the following list.

Mental Health Wellbeing Local (Mitchell & Murrindindi) are providing free telehealth mental health support for residents and will expand into face-

to-face services in coming weeks. You can find out more and access support by calling 1300 000 559.

Contact your local doctor (GP).

Yea Hospital phone 5736 0488.

Alexandra District Health phone 5772 0900.

Lower Hume Mental Health Service phone 5736 0418.

In addition to local services, there are 24/7 national services available to help.

Lifeline phone 13 11 14.

Lifeline's 13HELP for people living through bushfire recovery phone 134 357.

Beyond Blue phone 1300 224 636.

13YARN for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people phone 131 276.

Kids Helpline for people aged 25 and under phone 1800 55 1800.

If you, or someone you know, are in crisis or requires immediate support, please call 000 or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

## Government to recruit more Protective Services Officers

THE Victorian Government is giving Victoria Police the resources it needs to fight crime and keep the community safe. Premier Ben Carroll recently announced Labor will recruit an additional 150 more Protective Services Officers.

"More police and PSOs in more places, more often; all part of Labor's plan to keep Victorians safe," Mr Carroll said.

"You'll see more police where they are needed, keeping crime down and the community safe."

That brings the total number of new PSOs funded by government in the last year to 200, putting police and PSOs where the problems are, protecting Victorians where they shop, work and spend time.

As part of this boost, the government will change the regulations. It means PSOs will now be able to patrol in more places where there is crime and anti-social behaviour, such as local shopping strips.

The state government will also back Victoria

Police to extend and expand Operation Pulse till the end of next year, allowing police and PSOs to patrol more major shopping centres.

Operation Pulse has been welcomed by both shoppers and retailers, with more than 1700 people arrested and more than 3500 charges laid since it started.

This builds on the work to give police more flexibility to respond to crime based on their intelligence, including the deployment of PSOs on trains and expanded start times for patrols.



# IBAC reveals serious and concerning conduct

THE Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission's (IBAC) Operation Richmond has found serious and concerning conduct by senior public officers, including ministers and members of Parliament, occurred during enterprise bargaining agreement (EBA) negotiations with the United Firefighters Union (UFU) between 2016 and 2019 and during the establishment of Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) in 2019.

IBAC recently published the special report on Operation Richmond, an investigation which commenced in 2018 after IBAC received complaints and information alleging corrupt conduct in the negotiations for the Country Fire Authority (CFA) EBA, including allegations that the Secretary of the UFU, Peter Marshall blackmailed then-Premier, Daniel Andrews.

IBAC then expanded the scope of Operation Richmond which included investigating allegations relating to conduct during the negotiation of the former Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) EBA and establishment of FRV.

While IBAC found no evidence of blackmail, the extensive investigation identified that in 2016 a 'back-room' deal with Marshall was authorised by the then-Premier to be negotiated by then-Special Minister of State Gavin Jennings with assistance from then-Deputy Secretary at the Department of Premier and Cab-

inet Tony Bates, to the exclusion of other key stakeholders including the CFA and then-Emergency Services Minister Jane Garrett.

IBAC found that the actions of the Premier, Minister Jennings and Mr Bates over this period were contrary to government policy, procedures, convention and their respective codes of conduct.

IBAC's special report details how during the course of the EBA negotiations, the government placed itself in a position where Mr Marshall was able to extract concessions from government, gain privileged access to ministers and exert extraordinary influence over government under the threat of industrial action and public exposure of the undisclosed deal.

IBAC found conduct that enabled the politicisation of public appointment processes, undermined the effectiveness of accountability frameworks that exist to maintain the integrity of government processes and increased the risk of improper influence.

In addition to the conduct identified above, further examples of concerning conduct identified include: The CFA board was dismissed after they failed to endorse the EBA, which they were unaware was based on the undisclosed UFU deal. New board members were then appointed outside of proper procedure and were selected as it was believed they were amenable to follow the directions of govern-

ment regarding the EBA (page 53, 54).

Sensitive or confidential information was provided to Mr Marshall by an MFB board member (page 74) and twice by Mr Bates (page 50).

Minister Neville's inappropriate stakeholder management of Mr Marshall enabled privileged access, and paired with a lack of transparency, created significant risk of corrupt conduct, as Mr Marshall sought to influence the selection of the FRV Commissioner (Page 68, 73).

The government, including the then-Premier, did not take visible or effective action to address Mr Marshall's inappropriate conduct. This failure exposed individuals to harm, set a poor cultural standard within the Victorian public sector and fostered public perceptions of favouritism (page 84).

IBAC Commissioner Victoria Elliott said that while Operation Richmond did not find corrupt conduct, which must be a criminal offence under IBAC's legislation, it did find serious and concerning conduct and exposed a series of enduring corruption risks that jeopardise the integrity of government processes.

"Victorians expect their elected officials to act honestly for the best interest of our state, without fear or influence," Commissioner Elliott said.

"Operation Richmond revealed a number of actions that do not meet that expectation, including conduct contrary to policy, procedure and

codes of conduct, such as the misuse of information and deliberate attempts to conceal and mislead, highlighting the need for the government to take decisive action to embed strong standards of conduct across the government.

"IBAC has made three recommendations that seek to address the corruption risks identified by improving clarity and accountability on the application of constitutional conventions, formalising and embedding integrity standards for ministers, and strengthening awareness and understanding of ministerial obligations."

The recommendations include introducing legislation to establish a statement of values for ministers and requiring the publishing and review of a Ministerial Code of Conduct; that a Ministerial Handbook be published providing guidance on policies and the operation of the Westminster conventions; and, that training materials for ministers are updated to include navigating relationships with interest groups and lobbyists.

"These recommendations reflect IBAC's firm commitment to strengthening Victoria's integrity. IBAC will follow up with stakeholders to monitor the action taken in response to these recommendations and to address the corruption risks identified in Operation Richmond that persist today," Commissioner Elliott said.

## Red tee comps at Yea Golf Club

By ALAN PELL

THE Yea Golf Club was closed last Wednesday as were Alexandra and Eildon Golf Clubs due to the recent rain. But after several non-precipitous days Yea decided to open last Saturday with a red tee day for men.

With lower handicaps than usual, 18 men participated with Rick Wills (7) coming out on top with 38 points. Anthony La Grutta (10) still in form with 36 points was second. Andrew Bonn (2) was third with 34 on countback from Luke Gregory (5) fourth. No nearest the pin on the 14th and Sam Wright won the Club Award.

The ladies had six players with Christine Simmons (25) the best with 31 points. Margie Wright (20) was second with 29 points.



**CLAY TARGET SHOOTING: WINNERS PAUL MCKENDRICK, HARRISON PARKS, LLOYD PARKS, MANSFIELD CLAY TARGET CLUB PRESIDENT STEPHEN WILSON WITH THE SHIELD AND THIS MONTH'S SPONSOR SHAWN WOOD.**

## A SUN-SOAKED WINTER SHOOT AT MANSFIELD CLAY TARGET CLUB

SUNDAY, August 16 delivered one of those perfect winter days at Mansfield Clay Target Club, with clear sunshine, calm conditions and an excellent atmosphere for a full day of shooting.

A strong field of 40 competitors turned out, creating plenty of friendly rivalry and some impressive results across the three events.

Event one opened the program with a 50-target Double Barrel, shot over two grounds.

Mansfield's Domingo Diaz

claimed the overall win with a standout performance. In the grades, Euroa's Paul McKendrick took out A Grade, while fellow Euroa shooter Leon Tonks won B Grade. C Grade honours went to Mansfield's Harrison Parks.

Event two brought on the 25 Target Ball Trap, where the fast targets kept competitors on their toes and proved to be a real challenge.

AA Grade produced a three-way win between Cameron Ford from

MCC, Lloyd Parks from Mansfield and Phillip Matthews from Border CTC. In A Grade, Mansfield's Al Kidd and Euroa's Andrew Jacotone shared the win. B Grade was taken out by Geoff McClure, with Mansfield's Jason Foster finishing a close second. C Grade went to Robert Bevis from Woods Point, with Euroa's John King close behind in second place.

Event three rounded out the day with a 20-target Handicap, always a crowd favourite because

it levels the playing field and gives everyone a genuine chance.

Mansfield's Lloyd Parks came out on top after an exciting shoot-off with Euroa's Leon Tonks, who finished second. Alexandra's Geoff McClure secured third place, while Mansfield's Jason Foster finished strongly in fourth.

Overall, it was a fantastic day of competition, camaraderie and sunshine; the kind of winter shoot Mansfield does so well.

A big thank you from the club to

sponsor the Woods Family for your support and generosity which is greatly appreciated.

Looking ahead, next month's program includes the night shoot on Saturday, September 19, followed by the monthly shoot on Sunday, September 20.

Mansfield Clay Target Club will also hold its AGM at the club rooms, 416 Pikes Road, Mansfield, on Tuesday, September 15 at 7pm. Members are encouraged to attend.





**GETTING SWAMPED:** Seniors player Mitch Parker trying to move the ball while being surrounded by Pakenham players.



**IN THE AIR:** Seniors player Nathan Georgiadis attempting to intercept the ball in the air.



**KEEPING MOMENTUM:** Reserves player Sam Kidd kicking the footy.



**NO HUGS PLEASE:** Reserves player Will Goyder under pressure from the Pakenham side.  
**UNDER 17S:** Netballer Koa Parker taking stock of what her options are for ball movement.



**LEAPING INTERCEPT:** A Grade player Mia Rouget with a leaping attempt to stop Pakenham from scoring.



**DON'T DO IT:** C Grade player Kate Broadway trying to block Pakenham from a shot on goal.

# Rough week for Alexandra Rebels heading into finals

THE Alexandra Rebels travelled to Pakenham on Saturday, August 15 for the final home and away round of the season, with the Under 18s, Reserves and Seniors all taking to the field.

**Seniors**  
**Pakenham 98 defeated Alexandra 59**

The Seniors put in a strong effort and remained in the contest through to three-quarter time. Early injuries to key players **Sam Boots** and **Brad Johnson** made the task more difficult, and with limited rotations the Rebels were unable to maintain the pressure in the final quarter, with Pakenham pulling away late to secure the win.

**Awards:** Kervale Award, Mitch Parker; O'Briens Real Estate, Bart Wallace; RUOAK Hotel Award,

Justin Coventry; Buxton Hotel Award, Peter Cairns.

**Reserves**  
**Pakenham 137 defeated Alexandra 14**

An undermanned Reserves side made the trip to Pakenham with several key players unavailable and a couple of late changes adding to the challenge.

A big thank you to **Todd Galloway**, who stepped in to help in the ruck alongside his son **Shannon**, who had already played a full game in the Under 18s. **Harry Morley** also backed up from the Under 18s and helped the Reserves out until half-time. While the scoreboard didn't go their way, the willingness of players to step up and help their teammates was a great example of club spirit.

**Awards:** Shannon Group Award, Brendon Musgrove; Future Fit Finance Award, Shannon Galloway; RUOAK Hotel Award, Lachlan Collard; Buxton Hotel Award, Brent McDonald.

**Under 18s**  
**Pakenham 111 defeated Alexandra 8**

With only 17 players available for their final home and away match, the Under 18s faced a tough challenge against Pakenham. Despite being short on numbers, the young Rebels continued to battle throughout the game and gave their best until the final siren.

**Awards:** Bowens Award, Lachlan Williams; Kia Chadstone Award, Logan Conway; AFNC Club Voucher, Conor Kaempkes; Coaches Award, Jayden Valentine.

**Netball Results**

**A Grade**  
Pakenham 60 defeated Alexandra 28  
Incentive Award, Amy Jamieson; Corner Hotel Award, Clare Jungfer.

**B Grade**  
Pakenham 89 defeated Alexandra 23  
Incentive Award, Cassie Kidd; Corner Hotel Award, Ash Peers.

**C Grade**  
Pakenham 63 defeated Alexandra 13  
RUOAK Hotel Award, Katelyn Prendeville; Corner Hotel Award, Phoebe Kidd.

**Under 17s**  
Pakenham Gold defeated Alexandra 14  
Koala Cherries Award, Cassie Kidd; Corner Hotel Award, Taya Barkley.

This coming Saturday sees the Rebels begin their finals campaign, with three teams taking to the field.

The Under 18s will enjoy a week off before beginning their finals campaign the following weekend, while the Reserves will take on Belgrave, with the location and time still to be confirmed.

The Seniors will face Seville in a qualifying final at Woori Yallock, with the game time to be confirmed.

On the netball court, Alexandra's Under 17s will take on Seville White in an elimination final at Woori Yallock at 9am, where they will be fighting to keep their finals campaign alive.



A sun-soaked winter shoot at Mansfield Clay Target Club

PAGE 18



The Yea Chronicle

Sport

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YEA SENIOR WOMEN HOLD UNDEFEATED STREAK

HEADING INTO THIS SUNDAY'S GRAND FINAL

HEADING FOR THE GRAND FINAL: The Yea Senior women have had a perfect season so far this year. Can they end with a Grand Final victory? PHOTO: Savannah Gregory Photography

THE Yea Tigers Senior women will be taking on Officer in the league Grand Final this Sunday, August 23, from 10.45am at the Monbulk Recreation Reserve. They go into the Grand Final unde-

feated this season, recording a win in all 16 games they've played, with one forfeit from Woori Yallock all the way back in round four. Yea defeated Seville in the qualifying

final on August 8, taking them straight to the Grand Final, while Seville and Officer battled it out to see who would take them on in the Grand Final. The last time the Yea women had a

match against Officer was back in round 15, with Yea beating them 45 to 21 at the Rob Porter Recreation Reserve. Can the Yea Senior women round out a perfect season with a Grand Final victory?

# Trick shots for Nathan

■ See-sawing games and fierce competition for round five of term three pennant at Alexandra Squash Club

By ANDREW BROWN

**Monday competition**  
**Team Two versus Team Three**  
Lachie versus Tyler: Well-matched players in a see-sawing contest. Lachie came from behind in the last game to take the match by four: 65-61.  
Sally versus Will: Will took the lead early by attacking Sally's serve, however Sally adapted over subsequent games and regained the lead before Will strung together a run of points in the final game, narrowly winning the match 66-63.  
Stuart versus Sam: Stuart is settling back into form in his return season and used excellent shot

placement to win all four games and ultimately win the match convincingly, 70-50.  
Andrew versus Jim: A tightly fought contest throughout. Jim started strongly in the first. Andrew worked hard on position over the following three games and eventually finished just ahead 52-48.  
**Team Four versus Team Five**  
Eric (fill-in) versus Bec: The advantage of experience showed in this match. Bec still working on shot placement. Eric able to take control and power to a 75-49 victory.  
Laura versus Randy (fill-in): Laura was having an exceptional night and couldn't put a foot wrong,

reaching some amazing short balls and dominating court position. Randy battled hard and there were some great rallies, but it was Laura's night 72-42.  
Chris versus Mick: Both players worked hard throughout the match. Chris's defensive game gave him the edge, enabling him to absorb pressure and then attack in key rallies. Chris victorious 66-54.  
Daniel versus Derick: A game with some terrific, long rallies. Daniel was able to get the better of the majority of these to secure a great win 61-48.  
**Wednesday competition**  
**Team Two versus Team Three**  
Tyler (fill-in) versus Marty: Tyler

won the first and the fourth games by good margins. Marty had a very good second game and another win in the third. The final result was close, but Marty had done enough to win 63-60.  
Liane versus Nicole (fill-in): Scores were level at the end of the first game and the contest remained close for the remainder of the match. Liane was able to draw a little further ahead each subsequent game to take the win 62-54.  
Justin versus Ben: Two closely matched players and fierce competitors, and predictably, each game was close. The final result was a win to Ben by a narrow margin of three. 68-65.

**Team Four versus Team Five**  
Beth versus Jordan: Another close game. Beth just ahead over the first three games. Jordan fighting back to draw the final game, but unable to reduce Beth's lead. Beth taking the match 68-60.  
Nathan versus Matt: A good battle and a good win for Nathan, who was pulling out trick shots under his legs on his way to victory 68-49.  
Daniel K versus Michael H: Relatively close in the first game before Daniel flexed his muscle and shot out to a big lead in the second. Michael responded, finding shots that worked for him. Michael held his own against Daniel's skill until late in the final game. Daniel eased away to a strong win 78-36.

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