

Standard

INCORPORATING THE ALEXANDRA TIMES - THE YARCK, GOBUR, TAGGERTY, THORNTON, AND ACHERON EXPRESS

P.O Box 5, Alexandra, 3714. Ph: (03) 5772 1002; Fax: (03) 5772 1603; Email: reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au Wednesday, February 11, 2026 \$2.00 inc. GST

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FAF: Greg and Darcey Heffernan



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Murrindindi carries major share of Victoria's fire losses

INITIAL assessments indicate the Murrindindi Shire community experienced nearly half of the total damage from the January 9 fires across Victoria.

Four weeks on and many community members are now confronting the long and often overwhelming path to recovery.

With fire activity reduced, council said they are focused on supporting the community by providing clear information, practical help and a steady path forward through recovery and rebuilding.

Council teams have supported the state-led response efforts throughout the emergency and will continue to keep the community informed. While conditions have stabilised, safety risks remain. Active fire remains in parts of the landscape and flare-ups may still

occur. Residents are encouraged to continue monitoring official advice via the Emergency Victoria app.

With community recovery underway, the next stage is about gaining a detailed understanding of the full extent of the fire's impact, so support can be targeted and community-led recovery efforts are based on real needs. This work is detailed and will take time. It includes driving, walking and inspecting around 450km of roads, trees and infrastructure, on both sides, around 900km of detailed assessment.

Visiting every impacted property, including homes, sheds, outbuildings, stock fencing, water tanks, septic systems and other infrastructure. Conducting environmental health checks, including septic tank advice.

Assessing building safety and structural integrity. Documenting infrastructure damage, including areas not yet visible or accessible.

These inspections are essential to support a safe return, guide rebuilding and ensure that recovery funding goes where it is genuinely needed.

Fatigue, grief, frustration and uncertainty are natural and understandable responses at this stage.

Across the shire, communities have shown extraordinary care, checking in on neighbours, sharing supplies and information, and supporting one another emotionally and practically. Council is working to facilitate these community-led efforts by providing

supplies, information and support wherever it's needed.

Council officers will stay in close contact with the community throughout this process, providing updates, listening to concerns and connecting people with the right support.

Information and support are available at council's Bushfire Information Hubs located at Yea Library and Customer Service Centre and Alexandra Library.

These hubs offer face-to-face support, help access disaster relief payments and state and Commonwealth services, referrals for clean-up and wellbeing supports, and clear, up-to-date information.

A key role for council is to advocate to state and federal governments throughout the long journey ahead to ensure the needs of Murrindindi communities remain central in all relief and recovery decisions. Further advocacy is focused on state-led clean-up of impacted properties, waiving fees associated with rebuilding, support for impacted businesses and agricultural ventures, funding to support rebuilding resilient community facilities and infrastructure, and support for community-led recovery plans.

This work will continue throughout the months ahead.

Murrindindi Shire Mayor Damien Gallagher said the community's needs must remain at the centre of all response and recovery efforts.

"Our community has experienced profound loss, and people are beginning to feel the weight of what lies ahead. Fatigue, frustration and uncertainty are completely understandable.

"At the same time, we continue to witness remarkable care, generosity and resilience. Council is committed to supporting every impacted resident, business and town. Your recovery is our priority.

"With this media release coinciding with the anniversary of the 2009 bushfires this Saturday, we are reminded that recovery is not a moment in time, but a journey.

"As a community that has lived through and learned from the lasting impacts of fire, we honour those we lost, reflect on how far we have come, and recommit to standing alongside one another through recovery.

"We are here to help, whether you need clear information, support to navigate services, or simply a place to sit, talk and have a cuppa. Council's doors are open, and we will continue walking alongside our community for as long as it takes."



Guneet, Sharon, Izabella, Kylie and Shivaun. -S

Community heroes recognised

The Yarck Hall Committee recognised some special efforts at the inaugural pot luck dinner on Monday, February 2.

Kylie jumped in to support some of Yarck's most impacted farmers with stock management and fencing, and Izabella who

attends St Mary's Primary School and Guneet who attends Alexandra Secondary College dedicated a chunk of their school holidays to configuring, sorting, and tidying the community-led Hub at Yarck. What a wonderful effort.



Photocopied or emailed entries will not be accepted.
ONE ENTRY PER HOUSEHOLD
Melbourne Showgrounds Feb 18-22
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Staff or associated family members of Alexandra Newspapers are not eligible to enter.

Win 1 of 5 double adult passes (Children under 15 FREE)
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Name

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ALEXANDRA
NEWSPAPERS

 Letters to the Editor

CFA fleet concerns

THE reason that Jacinta Allan was confronted by angry fire impacted residents recently was the failing firefighting fleet

due to the ongoing chronic underfunding by the Victorian Labor Government, these units have now passed into the 'out of date' fleet.

What is needed to correct this situation, is

The current aging CFA fleet of tankers has been the subject of a number of reports that have fallen on 'deaf ears'. The current situation has arisen due to chronic underfunding since the Labor party took over as the Victorian Government in 2014.

The ability to achieve the above objectives is contingent upon the equipment suppliers being able to double production for the next five years, and to then produce 100 to 120 new units per year thereafter. While the 'out of date' units are kept in good working condition, the main issues at this point in time are, that the manufacturers are no longer required to supply spare parts, and these units do not comply with the current emission standards, or Occupational Health and Safety, and Workplace regulations.

The CFA volunteers who are saving Victorian taxpayers \$10 billion per year in wages and associated costs, and the government cannot even supply them with operational and compliant equipment.

Letterboxes

IMMEDIATELY after the Longwood fire swept through the Highlands area, I received a phone call from Gary Tuck, President of the Yea Men's Shed. Gary asked two very good questions, 'What do you need?' and 'How can we help?'



THUMBS UP
THUMBS DOWN

THUMBS UP: Large appreciation to the staff at The Hub and Centrelink for their help and professionalism. We are lucky to have such an asset in the area.

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

The generous residents of Yea responded beautifully, and the Men's Shed quickly became a busy collection point. Three trailers have been donated and gifted to people whose vehicles have been destroyed. Several chainsaws have likewise been gifted to those in need and of course the trailers were dispatched laden with all sorts of tools. The Men's Shed have also arranged for tools to be sent to Alexandra for distribution to Fawcett, Yarck, Terip Terip and Ruffy.

Our mission was simple, provide a ray of hope and a bit of a starting point to people who had lost much. The generosity of people donating tools, as well as the time, energy and collaboration, has been heartwarming. We live in a fantastic community and I am proud to be part of it.

Alex Bauer, Highlands

ALEXANDRA
NEWSPAPERS

Ph: 116

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

can be submitted via email to
editorial@alexandranewspapers.com.au or
reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au
or by mail to Alexandra Newspapers
PO Box 5, Alexandra 3714.

Letters **must be 300 words or less**. We will 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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The *Yea Chronicle*

THE ALEXANDRA · EILDON · MARYSVILLE

Standard

INCORPORATING THE ALEXANDRA TIMES - THE YARCK, GOBUR, TAGGERTY, THORNTON, AND ASHERON EXPRESS

DEADLINES

Real Estate	Thursday 5pm
Trades & Services	Thursday noon
Early General News	Thursday 5pm
Classifieds	Monday noon
Editorial	Monday 9am
Sports Editorial	Monday 10am
Letters to the Editor	Monday 9am
Thumbsup/down	Monday 10am

If you have any enquiries please do not hesitate
to contact the office on

5772 1002 or
reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au

We thank you for your continued support

This Way North heading to Fawcett Hall for ninth year in a row

THIS Way North is partnering up with Jude Pearl and the Tuck Shop Ladies for an unforgettable show at Fawcett Hall on Saturday, February 21.

This will be the ninth event in nine years that the band has held at Fawcett Hall, but they are bringing a little something extra this year.

"I've got a little girl called Frankie. She's just turned nine months old this week," guitarist and vocalist Leisha Jungalwalla said.

"So this year, I'm not sure if she'll make the show. She might come and hang out for a little bit and then get whisked away. She loves music and Cat's already been getting her drumming, like she loves her drums.

"She's always tapping away with her foot and she's got little drumsticks and of course Cat found a children's drum kit on marketplace a couple of months ago, where I was like, she's six months old, and she was like, 'I know, but it's a great deal'. She's already got a drum kit, so I don't think she has a choice at the moment."

This Way North will be finishing up a tour of Victorian bowls clubs just before heading to Fawcett Hall.

"We're just about to complete actually, the night before we come to Fawcett, we're doing our final show of a bowling club tour, where we played regional bowls clubs in Victoria. We're doing the Yackandandah one, which is our hometown," Leisha said.

"We did five shows, across Melbourne, Bendigo, Torquay, Warrnambool and Yackandandah. They've actually all sold out except for Warrnambool, which had a huge capacity.

"It's just wonderful to be able to still keep playing music and, you know, remember that side of ourselves almost. This year we're getting ready to do some more writing and playing a handful of shows as well."

Leisha is excited to be heading back to Fawcett Hall for the ninth year in a row, after the hall was saved during the Longwood bushfires.

"Pretty pleased that we can return to Fawcett Hall to play again. It's going to be a very special one obviously, and it feels pretty amazing that the hall's still standing. And somehow we've managed to do it nine years in a row through Covid and now through the fires. So yeah, it's definitely going to be a good one," she said.

"It's going to be, probably an emotional one. The reason we're able to put it on for free, because we got funding through Look Over the Farm Gate, which is really awesome. And we are really hoping to get a lot of the local community down and, you know, CFA volunteers and people who have been either affected by the fires or helping out, which is pretty much everyone in the community. So I think it's just to provide a bit of relief, really.

"Our guest artist this year, Jude Pearl, is a phenomenal songwriter in a pop sense, and

then she's also hilarious in the songs that she writes. It's going to be a really nice sort of comic relief with her and then Tuck Shop Ladies is always hilarious as well.

"It's a long road, and my parents have been affected, and it's just really nice to be able to get those little breaks in for everybody, I think. So that's what we're sort of hoping that everyone can come together and focus on something else for a little bit."

People who are interested in heading along to the event should book in advance if possible, by visiting trybooking.com/events/landing/1509411

Places are limited as there is a capacity of 180 for the Fawcett Hall show. Tickets are free, thanks to funding from Look Over the Farm Gate. BYO drinks and food.



This Way North and friends at Fawcett Hall previously. -S

Elder Rights Australia visiting Menzies to support

ELDER Rights Australia (ERA) foster a diverse community where older people are respected, heard and well-informed, and can exercise their rights with confidence. A founding member of The Older Persons' Advocacy Network (OPAN), ERA delivers the National Aged Care Advocacy Program (NACAP) and the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS) in Victoria.

They also work within the broader community to raise awareness of elder abuse response and prevention. Their services are free, independent and confidential, and focus on empowering the older person to achieve positive outcomes that support their individual needs.

Advocacy

Assistance in registering for and accessing aged care services. Professional advocacy

and one-on-one support to ensure that older people receive culturally safe, quality aged care at home or in a residential setting. Help to raise concerns or complaints. Reliable information on aged care including fees and charges. Help with financial hardship applications.

Social Support

Connecting volunteers with isolated older people who receive aged care via the AgedCare Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS).

Education

Community information sessions on all aspects of aged care and the rights of older Australians. Education sessions for the aged care sector including elder abuse prevention and response, balancing rights

and risk and the Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS).

Face-to-face support all over Victoria

ERA professional Advocates live and work in their communities, giving them a deep understanding of local issues and strong community connections. Volunteers provide social support and also foster meaningful connections within the local community.

Elder Rights Australia is coming to chat to staff and clients on Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 1pm. This will be held at the Mount, 2456 Goulburn Valley Highway, Alexandra.

Details are in the flyer. To RSVP or receive further information contact 0493 892 567.

A light afternoon tea will be provided.




Elder Rights Australia are coming to chat to the Menzies staff and clients.

Elder Rights Australia foster a diverse community where older people are respected, heard and well-informed, and can exercise their rights with confidence. Their services are free, independent and confidential focusing on empowering the older person to achieve positive outcomes that support their individual needs.

Date and time:
Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 2pm

Address:
**The Mount.
2456 Goulburn Valley Highway, Alexandra**

To RSVP or receive further information,
please contact on **0493 892 567**

A light afternoon tea will be provided.



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The loss in these 2026 fires is so great and your strength so profound it has brought Australia and beyond together to share that Spirit.

You're an AWESOME COMMUNITY.

On behalf of my amazing team and our families
Here's to better times ahead.

Be kind to yourselves and thanks.

- Ros Bowd

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SATURDAY 21 FEB 2026



This event is supported by a Look Over the Farm Gate grant provided by Agriculture Victoria under the Victorian Government's 2025 Drought Support Package. #LookOverTheFarmGate



Parliamentary Inquiry into Victorian bushfires

THE Victorian Liberal Nationals announced on Wednesday, February 4 that “Victorians will be able to have their say and have questions about the summer bushfires answered after the Liberals and Nationals secured support for a Parliamentary inquiry.

“Volunteers, firefighters, farmers, emergency management personnel and communities affected by the 2026 summer bushfires have all raised questions about preparation, resourcing of emergency services agencies and management of the fires.

“These can now be addressed through the inquiry to be undertaken by the Legislative Council’s Environment and Planning Standing Committee.

“Victorians impacted by the bushfires deserve a voice. They deserve to have their experiences heard,” Leader of The Nationals and Shadow Minister for Emergency Services, Danny O’Brien said.

The inquiry is expected to question the government’s bushfire preparedness and response and ensure that governments learn from these fires and strengthen the state’s future strategies.

The government supported the inquiry. The inquiry will report by June 1.

National disaster resilience toolkit for emergency services launched

FORTEM Australia has launched the first stage of its dedicated Disaster Resilience Toolkit, expanding its mental health literacy resource hub to better support emergency services workers, their families, and communities impacted by disasters and critical events.

The new toolkit brings together practical, evidence-based resources into a centralised, one-stop platform designed specifically for the unique pressures faced by police, fire, ambulance, SES and other frontline personnel, as well as their families who support them at home.

“Education and preparedness sit at the heart of everything we do,” Fortem Australia CEO Mick Willing APM said.

“By strengthening mental health literacy, reducing stigma and improving access to support, the disaster resilience toolkit is another way Fortem helps emergency services workers and their families build resilience before, during and after disaster events.”

As part of the initial rollout, Fortem has released *Disaster resilience: recover*, a practical A5 resource available in digital and printed formats to support accessibility and ease of use. The booklet provides practical

guidance to help individuals understand emotional, physical, and psychological impacts of disaster and critical incidents, and outlines pathways to support services challenges.

The resource is available for free download via Fortem’s website, with printed copies distributed through Fortem-led social connection activities and agency engagements. First responder agencies and community organisations can also order printed copies directly through the website.

The toolkit also introduces a new disaster resilience directory, a dedicated web page that compiles links to state, territory and local government disaster resilience, emergency management and recovery information in one central, easy-to-navigate hub.

“During disasters, families need clear, reliable information they can trust,” Mr Willing said.

“Emergency services workers are often deployed across the country or required to move at short notice, which can leave families navigating unfamiliar systems while supporting loved ones on the frontline.”

By centralising resources in one place, the directory reduces confusion and stress, helping families quickly find clear, trusted information so they can better understand available services, recovery processes and local assistance.

Local governments are invited to submit their disaster webpages for inclusion, strengthening local relevance while maintaining national accessibility and consistency.

Additional features include a new disaster-specific resources page and the recently launched *Aftermath: rebuilding strength, restoring hope*, which has already been downloaded hundreds of times since its release on January 6.

Future updates to the resource hub will include additional resources as well as a service locator tool, enabling users to identify additional support services in their area.

The launch aligns with Fortem’s strategic commitment to expanding engagement in regional, rural and remote locations, ensuring support is accessible regardless of postcode.

You can explore the full toolkit and access resources via: fortemaustralia.org.au/

Out&About



THE items in Out and About are sourced from our current advertising. Out and About is **not a free community listing diary**. Not all items can be included and are placed at the discretion of Alexandra Newspapers.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

You are invited to a chat with Elders Rights Australia and the Menzies staff and clients at 2pm. The Mount, 2456 GV Highway,

Alexandra. RSVP or for further information contact 0493 892 567. A light afternoon tea will be provided.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21

This Way North, Tuck Shop Ladies and Jude Perl will be at Fawcett Hall. This is a free local event, bookings essential. Music, fun, BYO drinks and picnic.

Tiny Towns grants available

THE Victorian Government is giving Victoria’s smallest towns an extra month to apply for a Tiny Towns Fund grant, offering regional communities more time to apply for support to help improve their towns.

Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes announced that applications for round three of the \$20 million Tiny Towns Fund have been extended by four weeks and will now close at 4pm on Wednesday, March 4.

Grants of between \$5000 and \$50,000 are available to towns with fewer than 5000 people for projects that provide more opportunities to connect, attract visitors, improve facilities and deliver infrastructure upgrades.

The application extension is part of the Victorian Government’s broader response to support communities impacted by bushfires and floods.

Applications for a Tiny Towns Fund grant can be submitted at rdv.vic.gov.au/tiny-towns-fund

Man dies at Lake Eildon

Police will prepare a report for the Coroner following the death of a man at Lake Eildon on the afternoon of Sunday, February 8.

Emergency services were called to the vicinity of Jerusalem Track about 2.30pm after reports two men had entered the water and could no longer be seen.

The area was searched and one of the men was located and given CPR on the shore. He has been taken to hospital in a serious condition. The other man was located a short time later but could not be revived. The investigation into the incident is ongoing.

Our condolences to the man’s family and friends.

Travelling on closed roads places you and others at risk

There are still 410 km of roads to assess following the recent bushfire. To date, 40 km has been opened. Travelling on closed roads places you and others at risk.

If you travel on a closed road for reasons other than commuting to your residence or business, including farms, you may void your vehicle insurance if an incident occurs.

Even when travelling to your residence or farm, you do so at your own risk. While access may be necessary, authorities may recommend that you do not travel where conditions are unsafe.

Roadside assistance providers may also refuse to attend incidents on closed roads.

Do not move or interfere with road closure signage. These signs are in place to protect road users and workers, and moving them creates serious safety risks.

Essential recovery activities, including tree works, Ausnet works and clean up operations, are being delayed by ongoing vehicle movement on closed roads. Please limit travel to allow these crews to work safely and efficiently.

Some damaged roads may take months to repair. The longer these works take, the longer roads will remain closed. Reducing unnecessary travel will help reopen roads sooner and support faster recovery for the whole community.

For the most current information on closures, visit tinyurl.com/tfs3hktk

Alexandra and District Senior Citizens Cub report

by honorary secretary Mike Jennings

LAST Friday saw the restart to the year’s activities with a committee meeting in the morning and a business meeting in the afternoon. The Longwood fire affected two members who lost their homes and our thoughts are with them.

The funeral for Life Member, Roma Lund was held at the Lawn Cemetary on Friday, January 30 and was a lovely tribute to her 100 years from her family and friends who had to contend with 38 degree temperatures. It was good to see the smiling faces at the meetings and catch up with all the news.

The bridge players are back in action on Wednesday afternoons and if you fancy a chat, a cuppa and a game of cards you will be most welcome to come on a Friday afternoon at the Bayley Street clubroom. Meanwhile, stay safe and keep smiling.

A close call in Alexandra on New Year’s Eve

DETECTIVES from the Alexandra Crime Investigation Unit are investigating the circumstances surrounding a fire that occurred in Villeneuve Street in Alexandra on New Years Eve.

Emergency services were called to a small grass fire on a vacant residential block at around 7pm. Firefighters extinguished flames without any damage being caused to nearby residences. Investigations have revealed that the fire appears to have been caused as a result of an unknown person or persons, discharging a distress signal or parachute style flare some distance away, before it landed on dry grass in a vacant residential block causing the grass to ignite.

Detective Sergeant Flynn Loughlin said, “It’s incredibly lucky that the flare landed where it did, oppose to landing on the roof of a nearby house which could have resulted in the destruction of someone’s house. While New Year’s Eve is all about having fun, this is an extremely idiotic act that only through luck landed in the middle of a vacant block.”

Anyone with information about the incident can contact CrimeStoppers on 1800 333 000 or via crimestoppersvic.com.au

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Alexandra, Sunday 8.45am
Sacred Heart Yea, Sunday 10.45am

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Alexandra
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Foundation Murrindindi's Murrindindi Disaster Fund to support bushfire recovery

FOUNDATION Murrindindi has established the Murrindindi Disaster Fund to support bushfire recovery in Murrindindi Shire, with donations welcomed from individuals, families, community groups, organisations and businesses across Australia.

The Murrindindi Disaster Fund has been established to provide support across the short,

medium and long term, including immediate relief, recovery assistance, and initiatives that help rebuild wellbeing, livelihoods and community connection.

Donations can be made directly through the Foundation Murrindindi website foundationmurrindindi.org.au

Tax deductible donations are also available through Foundation Murrindindi's partner, Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR), via the QR code in the advertisement or through contacting Foundation Murrindindi directly. All contributions, large or small, help ensure that support remains available not just today, but well into the future. Every cent raised stays here in Murrindindi Shire.

Bushfire recovery is strengthened when people come together, drawing on local knowledge, relationships and collective resilience. Foundation Murrindindi recognises the importance of these community-led pathways and is committed to supporting recovery as communities heal and rebuild.

"The needs following a bushfire evolve over time," Robyn Hill from Foundation Murrindindi said. "There is immediate support required now, but there are also medium- and long-term needs that can emerge months and even years later. Our role is to walk alongside our community for as long as it takes."

Established in the aftermath of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, Foundation Murrindindi was created by the community, for the community, to support long-term recovery and resilience. With deep local knowledge and years of experience in bushfire recovery, the Foundation understands that recovery does not end when the emergency response is over.

As a trusted local community foundation, Foundation Murrindindi works closely with community groups, services and residents to identify gaps and direct funding where it can have the greatest impact.

Importantly, Foundation Murrindindi will not take any administration fees from the Disaster Fund. Every dollar donated will be carefully stewarded to ensure it reaches those who need it most, when they need it most.

Foundation Murrindindi stands alongside communities in Murrindindi Shire, now, and for the long road ahead.

Our wonderful fire recovery hubs

by Seymour Incident Control Centre

IN the aftermath of the devastating Longwood fires in Victoria's North East, small communities are showing extraordinary strength and unity. Across the region, community run hubs, created for community, by community, have become lifelines for residents navigating loss, uncertainty and the first steps of recovery.

At Highlands, Andrea Bower and the Highlands-Caveat community have opened their hall to anyone needing meals, donated goods, provisions, or simply a place to connect. Volunteers work around the clock to make sure neighbours have what they need, practical support delivered with compassion.

In Fawcett, Sam Hicks and the Fawcett-Koriella community are running a vibrant hub at the Fawcett Hall, distributing food, clothing, linens and essential items. They've also created a welcoming space for information sessions delivered by support agencies and organisations, ensuring vital advice reaches community members directly.

At Creightons Creek, Chris Bakker and the local community are providing essential supplies and keeping their community connected. From practical goods to organised sessions focused on mental health and other important recovery topics, they are ensuring that people are supported not just physically, but emotionally recognising that true recovery is both practical and deeply human.

In Terip Terip, Lyn Burley and her volunteers continue to coordinate meals, goods and

everyday essentials for families who have lost homes and properties. Their steady, organised approach has been a source of reassurance and stability for many.

Over in Yarck, Graham Halliburton and the Yarck-Gobur community have opened their space to provide hot food, donated goods, animal feed, clothing, and a safe environment where people can talk, ask questions and access visiting service providers.

And at Ruffy, Felicity Sloman and the Ruffy community have mobilised swiftly, creating a responsive hub that is supplying essential items, meals, support and practical help to affected residents. Their focus has been meeting immediate needs while ensuring no one feels isolated during the recovery process.

The Yea Community House also activated very quickly and have been doing a wonderful job of supporting fire affected people in so many ways.

Across all these towns, agencies and organisations are coming directly into the hubs to meet community members where they are making support more accessible, trauma informed and locally centred.

These hubs are more than distribution points. They are gathering places, sources of hope, and anchors of resilience. They show what happens when local knowledge, kindness and community leadership drive recovery efforts.

This is community led recovery at its finest, practical, dignified, connected and powered by the people who know their communities best.



Foundation Murrindindi

MURRINDINDI Disaster Fund

Foundation Murrindindi has launched the Murrindindi Disaster Fund to support affected communities within Murrindindi Shire.

This fund will provide practical assistance to support medium and long term community led recovery activities and projects. Every contribution, no matter the size, matters. All financial donations stay within Murrindindi Shire.

To make a direct donation to Foundation Murrindindi. Scan here

To make a tax deductible donation through our Charity Partners at the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR). Scan here

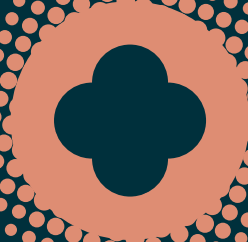
For more information contact Roby Hill 0488 007 688 or visit www.foundationmurrindindi.org.au



and



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Find out more



omniachcommunityhealth.org.au



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Ava, Carter and Jax are the students of the week.

For showing respect for others by following our classroom expectations and being great role models.

Student of the Week

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Bendigo Bank Victorian Bushfire Appeal surpasses \$600,000

BENDIGO Bank's Victorian Bushfire Appeal has raised \$615,000 in less than a month in a powerful show of support for individuals, families and communities impacted by the fires.

Since the appeal was launched by the bank's charitable arm, the Community Enterprise Foundation on January 12, funds have already helped deliver immediate relief to fire-affected residents and communities including \$20,000 to support the Blazeaid Camp for Longwood and surrounds, and \$22,000 to support the employment of a relief coordinator for three months to design, implement and support a recovery program for people impacted by the bushfires.

Bendigo Bank CEO, Richard Fennell, said while these early interventions delivered important support to those impacted, the majority of the funds raised would be directed toward medium and long-term recovery initiatives.

"We know from experience the impact of bushfires lingers long after the flames are extinguished," Mr Fennell said. "The emotional, financial, and environmental effects can last for years. Medium and long-term recovery funding will focus on helping communities rebuild, supporting mental health and wellbeing, and working with local communities on what they need to recover.

Mr Fennell thanked everyone who had donated so far, calling out the Bendigo Bank Community Banks in Victoria, in particular.

"The Appeal's success reflects the generosity of many donors, in particular, our Community Banks in Victoria, which have contributed over half of the donations received so far, furthering the ongoing support to their communities which has seen more than \$400 million returned since its inception. This response sends a powerful message to fire-affected communities: you are not alone and our support will continue," Mr Fennell said.

People wishing to support these communities are encouraged to provide monetary donations directly to the Victorian Bushfire Appeal at bendigobank.com.au/community/foundation/disaster-appeals/victorian-bushfire-appeal/ as monetary donations are quicker, more effective, and logistically provide far more flexibility than donations of material items or pre-loved goods. Donations can be made at any time online or at your local Bendigo Bank branch. All donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

Eligible customers impacted by the Victorian fires can access a range of support from Bendigo Bank.

ADH: Providing shelter in a time of crisis

by Alexandra District Health

ALEXANDRA District Health (ADH) has been thanked for its swift, coordinated and compassionate response to the bushfire emergency that swept through the region on January 9, an event that has caused significant disruption and distress across the whole Murrindindi community.

While many local families and staff faced personal losses, including damage to homes, farming properties, fencing and livestock, ADH became a refuge and point of stability during the crisis.

On the Friday, as fire conditions rapidly deteriorated, around 40 community members sought emergency shelter at the hospital. In line with ADH's strong commitment to community-centred care, pets were welcomed into the safe space as well, including several dogs and even a much-loved cockatiel that quickly became a comforting presence for evacuees.

Despite facing their own uncertainties and, for some, significant property loss, we are very proud of ADH staff who demonstrated exceptional dedication. Those who had chosen not to evacuate arrived at the hospital ready to assist however they could. Families of staff also came in voluntarily,

providing additional hands when it mattered most. A massive thank you to Peter Mitchell, Mark Warren-Smith, Charlie, Louise and Rose Hurrey, and Bradley and Hayley Soward-Findlay who stepped in without hesitation. Their support ranged from preparing food and drinks to undertaking essential fire-safety tasks such as placing wet towels under doors and positioning buckets and mops to extinguish potential ember attacks.

Their contribution ensured the hospital remained a safe and welcoming environment for everyone.

The bushfire also disrupted normal staffing and medical rosters. With several clinicians unable to travel due to road closures and hazardous conditions, local GP Dr Mark Wallace from the Alexandra Medical Centre joined ADH nursing staff to provide ongoing care for Urgent Care Centre patients throughout the emergency period. We are very grateful to Mark for his support. His collaboration with ADH clinicians ensured that critical healthcare services remained uninterrupted, despite the rapidly changing situation.

The response effort extended well beyond Alexandra. Our colleagues at Yea and District Memorial Hospital stayed in regular contact and provided hands-on assistance by sending two

staff members to Alexandra when road closures prevented them from travelling to Yea. Their presence provided necessary relief and additional support to the ADH team.

When regular suppliers were unable to reach the region, Eastern Health stepped in to ensure continuity of essential provisions. They supplied medical items, pharmacy stock and linen, resources that proved vital to maintaining safe operations during the emergency. ADH Director of Medical Services, also collaborated closely with her colleague at Eastern Health to organise ongoing medical workforce coverage, ensuring emergency physicians were available to staff the Urgent Care Centre.

The bushfire was a frightening and exhausting experience for many across the district, but the response at ADH has been described as a powerful example of what community resilience looks like in practice. Staff, families, volunteers and partner organisations came together to ensure everyone, patients, staff, and members of the public, had safety, shelter and compassionate care when it was needed most.

As recovery continues, ADH leaders have expressed deep gratitude for the extraordinary teamwork displayed across the region.

Scam warning: Roof cleaning post-fire

A PERSON in the fire impacted area was in contact with their insurance company following the fires and the clean up was being arranged. The person then received a call from a man keen to arrange roof cleaning for the house. The person thought it was through the insurance company, but there was an odd amount of pressure for the cleaning to happen the following day and there was no business name mentioned.

On the following day, one man arrived, looking very unprofessional and did some work, but not as had been determined by the insurance company. \$1400 was demanded for the work, saying (falsely) that it could be claimed back off the insurance company.

The fire-impacted people contacted their insurance company who quickly advised that it was a scam and as a result, they refused to pay.

If you are approached with a similar offer, call your insurance company immediately to confirm whether they are legitimate. If you have already been scammed, contact the police.

If you are aware of any other scams occurring, please let us know.

It's truly shocking and appalling that fire impacted people are being targeted like this.

McLeish presents fire condolence motion in parliament

ON Tuesday, February 3, Member for Eildon Cindy McLeish put forward a condolence motion in the Victorian Parliament regarding the 2026 Longwood bushfire.

She said, “As we have heard, the fire at Longwood moved quickly and tore through the areas of the northern part of my electorate, doubling in size and eventually burning 140,000 hectares. Unusual because it did not have a particular fire front, it burnt in 360 degrees and left multiple paths of devastation, loss of homes, sheds, tools, machinery, stock, hay, silage, pasture, water troughs, tanks and livelihoods. And as we have heard, we lost the life of Max Hobson, cattle farmer at Terip Terip.

“Seventy per cent of the Longwood fires tore through my electorate, predominantly in Murrindindi and also through Mansfield. The impact assessment shows that 45 per cent of the total number of structures destroyed across Victoria were in the Murrindindi Shire.

“Murrindindi Shire is a small, cash-poor shire at the best of times and will very much struggle to make ends meet here and will need considerable government support. They have behaved exceptionally through these fires. 193 homes were lost in Murrindindi across 21 localities. Highlands lost 38 homes, Yarck 33, Gobur 23, Terip Terip 19, Caveat 18, Fawcett 11, Molesworth 10, Alexandra seven, Dropmore seven, Kanumbra six, Ghin Ghin five and Koriella four. Across Cathkin, Maintongoon, Whanregarwen, Limestone, Devils River, Gooram, Merton and Ruffy there were a handful. Merton also lost five, in the Mansfield Shire.

“These are exceptional numbers of losses on top of 519 sheds, 2000 kilometres of damaged or destroyed fencing, 14,000 hectares of farmland, which is different from the areas burned, and over 5500 livestock.

“What people might not expect was that 389 beehives were lost there, and this could have particular impacts on the agricultural sector going ahead. 3222 people sought drought disaster relief payments.

“These losses were extensive. But for many in my electorate, this was not their first rodeo. Murrindindi is used to devastation. We had the October 2022 floods. We have had storms, cyclones and the tragic circumstances over Black Saturday. I acknowledge that this Saturday it will have been 17 years since that event. Our emergency services performed exceptionally, backed up by locals, the farmers with their own units, the private vehicles, but also the staff from Forest Fire Management Victoria, who are seen very positively.

“We saw the spirit of mateship through all of this. As I said, for many it was not their first rodeo. I was talking to young Kellan Fiske of Gruyere Fire Brigade. Kellan was 20 on the back of a truck in Marysville, where his family hails from, on Black Saturday. He had been there before. John Drysdale, who lost his grandfather’s house in Yarck, had been through Ash Wednesday, Black Saturday and these fires. He stayed to defend but said, ‘I knew when to leave.’ It was evident that so many people did have plans, whether they were staying to fight or leaving early or choosing the time to leave.

“The roads were burnt, so they were cut off. Our communities were cut off. People could not get there to give them support. What was remarkable was the growth from within. At the Yea Community House, Charlie Underhill got into action really quickly. At Fawcett we had Sam Hicks, Andrea Bauer in Highlands and Lyn Burleigh at Terip Terip. In Yarck, the pub was initially the community meeting place, followed by the hall, and it was a community effort with everybody playing to their strengths. People came together locally to determine what they needed, and it was just amazing what could be achieved and brought together from the ground up. Community-led recovery absolutely worked so well here. They were overwhelmed with the support of donations and food. The hay supplies had a lot of trouble getting in. We had so many donations of hay, and it was slow to come in.

When farmers lost fences, pasture and hay, they needed hay. They needed to get stock out and taken elsewhere. There were some delays there but it eventually got through, and we had some incredible convoys going through. Andrew Embling from Alexandra and Dame Pattie Menzies really got this going. We had the Need for Feed through the Lions Club.

“My gratitude goes to so many of the volunteers, whether they were the CFA, private vehicles, those providing food, those helping sort through the donations, of which there were many, or those that helped euthanase as well, because they do not want farmers to put down their own stock. There is nothing more distressing than to put down your livelihood, and people came to help them with that, community members who rallied.

“The council staff at Murrindindi were amazing, led by the mayor Damien Gallagher,

who started on the back of a truck before ending up taking on more of his mayoral role. There was the collaboration, and this is so important, between Murrindindi, Mansfield and Strathbogie shires and then the support given to them by the Yarra Ranges shire and Whittlesea and most recently by Melbourne City Council, because they have skills that they can help Murrindindi with at the moment.

“We had the unbreakable farmers. The stock agents were fabulous getting into gear to help the farmers. Agriculture Victoria, as mentioned before, were on the ground trying to help people. I spoke to somebody from Leongatha, Colac and Horsham in Yarck, which is where they had come from.

“My support has been unwavering, and this is not my first rodeo either. I will continue to support those impacted.

“I have got to thank Jack Buksh from the Premier’s office, who on some days I felt like I spoke to 40 times, and I still continue to do so. I did appreciate him being available and getting back to me. My messages now are here, fencing, fencing, fencing. People have said we have got to get systems in place. Well, systems are in place. The communities are doing this. They cannot wait for government to make decisions and move. They need support in coordination. They need local support in getting that fencing done. The majority of people who were impacted are farmers and the difficult period is coming now, after that adrenaline wears off over the next few weeks. I pledge that I will be there for them. Things were not perfect; they are not perfect. There are still challenges, and we need to get through those so that our communities continue to thrive again in the future.”

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GREG and Darcey Heffernan, a father-daughter duo farming cattle on some 530 hectares of land called Merrinehbk in Cathkin, were affected by the recent Longwood bushfires.

They took time out of their busy schedule of post-fire recovery to talk about the impacts of the fires on their property and farming operations.

During the fire event, Greg stayed to protect the house while Darcey and the rest of the family evacuated to the cricket grounds. Their house was unaffected, but they lost cattle and hay sheds.

“On that day, you couldn’t see how anything could work. It was just swinging from east to west, all from the north,” Greg said.

“A fire started right up in the middle of the paddock, about one and a half kilometres from the house, and the fire hadn’t even come over the hill yet. And then fire after fire after fire came in. I’d say at least four fires came in.

“They were just sort of on different fronts, different parts. Didn’t have the CFA here at all, no planes, no helicopters, no nothing. But I honestly don’t know if they would have made much difference.”

Darcey manages the Merrinehbk farm and its operations and was able to give detailed accounts of what happened after the immediate fire crisis.

“Our immediate problems were with the livestock, because we knew that some must have been burnt. We had to deal with that straight away.

“We had the vets out on the Sunday, and then we drafted them up on the Monday and they came out to confirm what we had picked out. And so they said, ‘yep, all those ones have to be put down,’” Darcey said.

“Then we had the knackery out on Monday, at the end of that, Monday night. And then we still, there’s two more in there that I’d still consider a loss to the fires as well, but they’re still alive at the moment, but they won’t be.”

Greg added, “Of course, putting all the cattle into somewhere where they could get feed, but we had feed. We were very fortunate.

“And then we had the vet out, and we spoke to them. He said you can just feed them silage. A lot of our silage did survive. So we did some silage and they actually didn’t go backwards at all. We just got rid of two mobs of cattle cows, and there’s another mob to go next Tuesday. So we’ve lightened a fair bit.”

The impact on their farming operations has hit particularly hard, given this year was going to be a great year for Merrinehbk.

“We were set up to have a bumper year, we were really looking forward to this year,” Greg said.

Darcey added, “This year was going to be the year we were organised and set up and everything was going to be good, really good. We weaned everything two weeks ago now. And they were spring drop calves weaned. Four to five months.”

“We don’t do that,” Greg explained, “But I mean, you’ve got to because the cow’s going to look after herself before they look after the calf, and they usually go downhill. So you’ve got to.

“And you’re saving your best tucker for the calves, and we are. We’ve got an agronomist helping us, or a couple of agronomists helping us with what’s required for the feeds.”

The farm lost 12 head of cattle initially, and there are two more that Darcey is fairly certain won’t survive much longer. Plus any pregnancies that the distressed cows aborted.

“We pregnancy tested on Monday and I believe we had a high percentage that weren’t in calf,” Darcey said.

“For some, that’s normal, but I reckon there would have been at least 10 or so that were aborted due to the fires and then due to their calves having to be put down. I think it was all a bit too much. Obviously it’s just a high stress event. So I think there were quite a few abortions in there. I’d consider that a loss as well.”

Three hay sheds on the property burnt, with one surviving that was still full of hay, putting Greg and Darcey in the lucky position of being able to feed their cattle immediately afterwards.

“Three hay sheds. One was half full, one was full. Another one had the machinery in it, which is all gone too,” Greg said.



The farmers from Merrinehbk, Dylan, Darcey Heffernan and Greg Heffernan. -BD

“We built the new hay shed, we didn’t use the old ones. So we put the machinery in it. And we’ve had some quotes for replacement, but we’re shocked at how much it will be. Unfortunately we didn’t insure that machinery, because I didn’t think it was worth it.

“But I did have my hay insured, and I did have the hay sheds insured. It won’t be so bad, especially if they come good on it. We’ve only gone through the start of the process of getting paid. The assessor is independent, and he’s written up what we should be getting.”

As with most of the properties within the affected area of the Longwood bushfires, power supply immediately afterwards was a big problem, with restoration still ongoing for some.

“A big one for us initially was the power,” Greg said.

“Because one of the switchboards was in one of the old sheds that burnt down, you’ve got to get a plethora of different people to come and sign off on it. You’ve got to get SP AusNet, you’ve got to have your own electrician with his own inspector. And then you’ve got to have the final bloke who goes and inspects the whole lot. That took two weeks, or over two weeks.

“The trouble was our good water. We’ve got water that comes out of the hills, which is gravity fed, but we’ve got good bore water, which of course you can’t run without a pump. So that was a bit of a stressful thing. But we managed to get through it, and of course running generators all the time.”

Fencing is another important issue for farmers that has emerged following the bushfires.

“We’ve got a lot of steel fencing, we’ve had a lot of new fencing, but actually we haven’t even been up there to have a look at it. I imagine it would have survived,” Greg said.

“The trouble is it will have shortened its life significantly. So it’s not a problem now, but probably in three or four years’ time when the bottom ones start to rust, and hopefully the steel fence plates don’t rust too much.”

Darcey added, “Some of the wires are broken because of the heat. Some are melted. But a lot of our gates were hung on strainer posts, wooden strainers, so they’ve been broken.”

“Everything wood was burnt, so we’re replacing everything with steel. We’ve actually got a couple of fencers here, they’re helping out and chipping away,” Greg said.

“Initially, the very first couple of days, we had to make sure that we could keep our stock in. But the stock were in so much shock that they weren’t wandering around much. The bulls, honestly, were in the front paddock, and any one of them could just walk straight out. They didn’t.”

Tree cover and shade is something that wouldn’t perhaps enter the public consciousness, but it will prove a challenge for livestock moving forward. Giant 200-year-old trees cannot be replaced, even if new trees are planted tomorrow.

“One of our biggest problems is going to be all the shelter. We lost a lot of trees,” Darcey said.

“There’s going to be a lot of paddocks that aren’t going to have enough shelter in them now. Like, big 200-year-old redgums and stuff. It’s a pretty big loss. You can’t replace that.”

Asked about making decisions on how to move forward following the fires, Darcey advocated for a level-headed approach that doesn’t rely on immediate reaction, but rather, careful consideration.

“We kind of keep conservative, like a safe amount of stock that we can handle all the time. I’m pretty keen on keeping that the way it is. I was talking to Dad about it yesterday, I was never going to make a decision in the first week,” Darcey said.

“A lot of people might have just pulled the pin, or could make that decision to decide to sell everything and call it quits. I can’t, I couldn’t make that decision. I definitely couldn’t have. It would have killed me sending every cow to the abattoirs to get rid of them and call it quits.

“I said, if that’s something I’m still worried about and I don’t want to do this anymore, it’s something I’d think about in six months’ time. I’ve got to deal with this problem and fix it and make everyone happy again. Keep the cattle happy, everyone’s happy, and then make that decision.

“But I don’t think that decision will happen, I’m quite happy doing this indefinitely. I don’t think we’ll really change much. I think we’re quite happy with how things are and how we run things. I think keep it the way it is, maybe try and manage the hills a little bit better.”

Greg explained that they made a list of options in the first week and stuck it on the fridge, to keep all the paths forward in mind.

“The first week I ran up a little bit of a thing of all our options, and, you know, whatever

they were, just everything. I stuck it on the fridge. So we could think about it,” he said.

“But the truth is, our cattle, we’ve had them now for 20 years or so. Not the cows, but you know, the herd. And when you start looking at the cows and how they’ve come out of this, you go, well, very resilient. It’d take a long time to get back to where we are.

“If you threw it all out, start again, you know, she could, but I can’t. And I’m thinking, we’ve got options. We’ve got options with hay. And we’ve got people wanting to help, if we do get some decent insurance, we’ll go and buy a heap more hay.

“And we’ll get over it. You know, the little fences, they’re only fences and we’ll fix things. But it’s the stock that you put your heart and soul into. So if you can keep them and soldier on, good.”

Like many in the communities of the fire area, Greg and Darcey have had a lot of support behind them to help with recovery.

“We’ve had a lot of support. You have the DPI, and all the people you can consult with about what to do or how much to feed and when to wean and when to do things and all of that,” Darcey said.

“Contractors, Ernie Hadfield, they’ve been really good. Everyone in Nutrien Alexandra, Emma, she’s fantastic. She’s done really, really well. She’s the only one in the shop at the moment. And then Stuart, the agronomist, he’s done really well. They’ve all been really good, and I don’t know how we would have done without them.”

Greg added, “Yeah, our stock agents have helped us a lot. I had three phone calls from agents I don’t even use, but I know, I just know them. Everyone was looking after us straight away. Probably without even knowing that we actually did burn. They would have said, ‘oh, Alexandra’ and just called.”

Darcey’s concluding words were offering advice to the community and talking about the small moments of positivity.

“Look after yourselves. Talk to people, thank all the people that helped. Everyone in our little street, everyone’s been great. Rely on and talk to your community. Don’t just sit there by yourself all the time, it’ll do you no good,” she said.

“The community has been great. Even watching all the hay trucks go past. It’s heartwarming. It’s good to see, just a bit of positivity to see something good.”

Their best start, starts with Free Kinder



Free Kinder is available for three- and four-year-old children at standalone sessional kindergartens and long day care centres across Victoria – saving families an average of \$2,400 per child, per year.

From 2026, some children will be eligible for more time at Four-Year-Old Kindergarten each week.

Visit vic.gov.au/pre-prep

Kindergarten is a safe environment for children to build skills, become more independent and make friends.

At kindergarten, children will learn:

- language, literacy and numeracy skills through play, art, music and dance
- skills and confidence before primary school.

Contact your preferred kinder service or local council to learn about how to enrol for 2026.

Visit vic.gov.au/kinder



Sarah and Rod Chisholm from Fernside in Highlands. Their cattle were being sold last Friday. -BD

Mixed quality for February combined store sale at Yea Saleyards

YEA Saleyards held their February Combined Agents Store Sale last Friday, with Nutrien, Elders and VLP all selling. There was over 1700 cattle yarded, with mixed quality.

The average price per head was \$1430 with an average weight of 326 kilograms, equalling out to around 439c/kg on the day.

Representatives from Agriculture Victoria and Farm Angels were around, while Yea and

District Memorial Hospital were utilising the new Mobile Health Van to conduct skin checks on-site.

Nutrien Ag Solutions Livestock Agent Austin Gerhardy summarised the store sale.

“It’s the first store sale fixture for 2026. Lightweight steers and heifers were plentiful and dominated the yarding. Overall, the quality was mixed but heavy grown and yearling cattle of both types were of good quality and sold to strong competition,” Austin said.

“Bearing in mind with the mixed quality throughout the yarding buyers were selective on their types and quality, with price ranges reflecting that trend.

“Feeder steers sold from 420 to 485c/kg. Backgrounding type steers sold anywhere from 465c/kg to 592c/kg, they’re a very good

line of weaned lightweight Angus steers to head back to the paddock. There were some lightweight cattle that were sub 250 kilograms in the coloured steer offering that did sell to 486c/kg.

“The Angus heifers, the first lane was of outstanding quality in my opinion, and these sold from 390 to 455c/kg, and that was right through all classes and weight lanes with Angus heifers. Coloured heifers were very similar.

“It was shared with local competition. Gippsland were influential and did buy, they were possibly the strength of that sale, certainly. Obviously with the season that they’re having, they’re playing a role in that.”

The next cattle sale at the Yea Saleyards will be the March Combined Agents Store Sale on Friday, March 6, beginning at 9.30am.



A decent crowd showed up for the first Yea cattle sale since the Longwood fire. -BD



The various vendors for the combined agents cattle sale, being Nutrien, VLP and Elders. -BD



There were a variety of cattle breeds being sold last Friday. -BD

YEA SALEYARDS STOCK REPORT 6 FEBRUARY 2026				
Combined Agents Store Sale	Total Yarding	Steers	Heifers	Cows & Calves
Number of head	1,724			
Average \$ per head	\$1,430			
Average weight per head	326kg			
Top price per head		\$3,000	\$2,110	\$2,300
Top weight		750kg	505kg	
Turnover	\$2.45 million			



The crowded first steer laneway. -BD

Consider options before re-fencing after fire

by Clem Sturmfels, Land Management Extension Officer, Agriculture Victoria

RECENT bushfires have had devastating consequences for many farming families, destroying infrastructure such as fences, sheds, and water systems. Among this devastation, they also offer an opportunity to review and update farm layouts.

Farmers are encouraged to consider if their current layout is still the most effective for their business and to reflect on the following questions: Are you making the best use of more productive areas on the farm? Are you protecting areas vulnerable to soil erosion, structure decline, and inundation?

Can you better protect areas of bush, native grasslands, and waterway frontages? Would a new laneway system make running the farm easier and more efficient? Are your gates and troughs in the best location to maximise production and allow the efficient movement of stock and equipment?

Along with those questions, consider reviewing your fencing requirements. Do you need traditional fencing, or might electric fencing offer more flexibility and lower cost? Would you consider virtual fencing sometime in the future?

Rather than putting fences where they were prior to fires, consider re-fencing along land management unit or land class boundaries.

Land class fencing allows you to better manage different land types on your farm and can result in better pastures and crops, improved productivity and the protection of soils, wetlands, and remnant vegetation.

While slope is a key criteria in determining land class, it’s also important to consider the depth and structure of soil, the presence of stone or rock and the risk of water logging or inundation. In normal times these are the sorts of things you might consider over a longer period of time.

It might involve discussions with your family and employees, attending a whole farm planning course and preparing a plan

of your future farm using a large, laminated aerial photo or computer mapping program.

A video providing an overview of whole farm planning is available on Agriculture Victoria’s Feeding Livestock website feedinglivestock.vic.gov.au/pasture-resources/pasture-tools/

To assist with land classing, Agriculture Victoria has also developed an application which can be used on smartphone, tablet or computer. The application is available via our Learning Management System at learning.agriculture.vic.gov.au/

For more on fire recovery support and information, visit agriculture.vic.gov.au/bushfires or call 136 186.

Cracking down on illicit tobacco

THE Victorian Government is intensifying its crackdown on illicit tobacco, with Tobacco Licensing Victoria to begin enforcing Victoria’s new tobacco licensing scheme this week.

Minister for Casino, Gaming and Liquor Regulation Enver Erdogan last week announced inspectors will start compliance and enforcement operations, working with legitimate retailers to meet their licensing requirements and gathering intelligence to take action against operators selling illicit tobacco.

“Inspectors will be out in the community and won’t hesitate to act on operators who think they can ignore the law,” Mr Erdogan said.

“This scheme gives Victoria Police and other agencies the intelligence and powers they need to crack down on organised crime.

“If you are doing the wrong thing and dealing in illegal tobacco, you will get caught and you will face the toughest penalties in Australia.”

Inspectors will undertake compliance and enforcement operations to ensure businesses are meeting their licensing obligations, and take strong action against stores breaking the law.

Under tough new penalties, anyone found selling illicit tobacco faces fines of almost \$370,000 or up to 15 years in jail, while businesses risk fines of more than \$1.8 million.

Since the scheme started on July 1, 2025, Tobacco Licensing Victoria has received more than 4100 licence applications, with more than 2000 licenses now granted.

Redress for historical institutional abuse

IF you experienced abuse and/or neglect as a child in institutions in Victoria prior to 1990, you can apply for Redress. Redress has been set up to recognise and acknowledge what happened, and the harm caused.

Support is available to applicants, at any stage of the process, through free and confidential Redress support services.

No amount of money can ever make up for what happened, but there can be acknowledgement of what has happened in the past and support can be provided to to address the impacts of abuse and neglect.

To apply, visit services.dffh.vic.gov.au/redress

Child sexual abuse at schools prior to 2000

THE Forum for Truth and Recognition is providing people with a safe and respectful space to share their experiences of child sexual abuse in Victorian government schools and certain non-government schools prior to the year 2000.

Angela Connors, Chair of the Forum, is hearing directly from people who have experienced child sexual abuse in Victorian schools by a relevant employee.

The experiences shared will contribute to a public record that recognises people’s trauma and the lifelong and far-reaching impacts of child sexual abuse.

People have the choice of meeting with Ms Connors in-person or online to share their experiences or by making a written or creative submission. Experiences can be shared anonymously, confidentially or publicly.

The Forum encourages people to participate by contacting the Forum or making a submission up until Wednesday, March 18.

Ms Connors is scheduled to deliver her report to the Premier of Victoria in mid-2026.

To participate, contact the Forum on 1800 967 933 (free call) or email [contact@truthandrecognition.vic.gov.au](mailto:truthandrecognition.vic.gov.au). More information is available on their website.

Businesses that lodged their application before February 1 can continue trading while their application is assessed.

Tobacco Licensing Victoria can suspend or cancel licenses, seize illegal tobacco products and take court action.

Inspectors will also work closely with Victoria Police and other enforcement agencies, providing intelligence as part of broader efforts to disrupt organised crime and illicit tobacco supply chains.

Victoria Police continue to run intelligence-led operations targeting organised crime groups involved in illicit tobacco.

Tobacco Licensing Victoria will provide regulatory intelligence to support these broader investigations, enabling police to use

their additional powers, including executing warrants and dismantling criminal supply chains, to disrupt illegal activity at every level of the market.

Victorians can also report stores selling illegal tobacco via the Tobacco Licensing Victoria website. A list of licensed tobacco retailers and wholesalers will be publicly available and regularly updated.

The *Victorian Budget 2025/26* included \$46 million to establish the new licensing scheme and regulator, which oversees the legal supply of tobacco products in Victoria including licensing, compliance and enforcement.

For more information or to apply for a tobacco licence, visit vic.gov.au/tobacco-licensing

Register for Clean Up Support

CLEAN Up Support is available for people impacted by the recent fires, however under the current guidelines, sheds will only be cleaned up under this program if they are within 100m of the main residence. The government was asked why this is the case, given that on farms, the vast majority of sheds are away from the main house, meaning that a very large number of farmers in our area will be unable to access this support.

They responded, “Property owners may be eligible for free clean-up support if their property is in an eligible council area, has structures damaged by the January 2026 bushfires, and is uninsured or underinsured.

Registrations for the Clean-up Program opened on January 30. Public information outlines the core eligibility criteria, and works including all-hazards assessments, are currently underway.

“Every property and structure is different. Owners with uninsured or underinsured damaged structures including sheds are encouraged to register for the program so assessors can determine eligibility.

“All Victorians who have been impacted by the January 2026 Victorian bushfires can call the Emergency Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760 to find out what recovery services they are eligible for.”

AusNet replaced 300 poles in Longwood fire area

THE Longwood fire caused widespread damage to AusNet infrastructure. Specifically, over 300 poles have been replaced with non-wood alternatives in the region.

AusNet’s priority and focus has been on restoring supply as quickly and safely as possible. They are still undertaking emergency repairs identified during the full network assessment and expected these critical works to be completed by the end of last week.

The majority of AusNet customers had their power back on by January 29.

There are currently just over 100 customers still without power in some of the most bushfire-affected areas and crews are working diligently through

these. Beyond the immediate restoration and emergency repairs, AusNet will continue broader resilience building works over the next month.

These activities are expected to have minimal impact on customers and will significantly improve the network’s long-term performance and reliability. They have also brought forward their asset inspection program for the region.

By aligning inspections with the rebuild activities, AusNet aim to complete all required maintenance works earlier than originally scheduled, reducing the need to return to the area for further planned works for the remainder of 2026. AusNet is committed to constructing a stronger, more resilient network for the community.

Applications open for Power Saving Bonus

ELIGIBLE concession card households can claim the \$100 Power Saving Bonus payment by applying online at the Victorian Energy Compare website.

If you need help to apply, visit one of 259 participating Neighbourhood Houses across the state, or call the Victorian Energy Compare helpline on 1800 000 832.

One payment is available per household for eligible concession card holders, including Health Care card, Pensioner Concession card, Veterans’ Affairs Pensioner Concession card, and Veterans’ Affairs Gold card.

Visit compare.energy.vic.gov.au to claim your bonus by March 31, and compare energy offers while you’re there.

Lions Tool Depot

THE Alexandra Lions Club’s tool library has been renamed as the Alexandra Tool Depot, as most of the items are being donated to people. Only some of the more expensive tools are loan only.

There is already a great selection of basic tools at the Tool Depot, as well as gloves and goggles.

The tool depot is looking for donations of used and new tools.

If you can’t come into Alexandra, they can deliver tools to local relief hubs for pickup or they can come out to you.

The Alexandra Tool Library is located at the Lions Club of Alexandra Sheds at 9 Lamont Street, Alexandra. For enquiries, contact John Beale on 0427 595 318.

What are the tax implications following a fire?

THE post-fire recovery can have tax implications, some helpful and some potentially challenging.

An Australian Taxation Office (ATO) spokesperson said, “If you’ve been affected by an event or natural disaster such as a bushfire, we can support you. We understand that family and property are your priority at this time. We’ll give you time to recover and help you sort out your tax affairs when you’re ready. We generally stop sending correspondence to people in areas affected by major disasters. Once the crisis has passed, we can help you get back on track.

“Depending on your situation, we may be able to give you extra time to pay tax or lodge tax returns, activity statements or other obligations, set up a payment plan tailored to your individual situation, or remit penalties or interest charged during the time you’ve been affected.”

For more information on what support is available in your circumstances, visit tinyurl.com/ycyshe9d or phone the ATO’s Emergency support line on 1800 806 218.

Whether an insurance payout is subject to tax depends on what you received the payout for and your individual circumstances.

Insurance payouts for damaged or destroyed personal items or assets, such as your family home (main residence), furniture or electrical goods, are generally not taxable and don’t need to be declared as income.

However, there can be tax consequences, where the insurance payout relates to personal use asset (ie. a boat) that cost you more than \$10,000, a collectable, such as a painting, jewellery or antiques, that cost you more than \$500, property used to earn assessable income, for example, a rental property, business premises or part of a home used to run a home business.

There are also specific concessions and elections that may be available to Small Business owners and those involved in primary production businesses.

For more information on the tax consequences of receiving an insurance payout as a result of a disaster, visit tinyurl.com/yc6ashap, or contact a registered tax agent for advice.

The Victorian Caravan and Camping Supershow

THE future of Australian travel will be on full display when the Victorian Caravan and Camping Supershow rolls into Melbourne Showgrounds from Wednesday, February 18 to Sunday, February 22. As the country’s largest and most influential caravan and camping event, the Supershow will unveil new 2026 models, milestone industry moments and hands-on experiences that show how caravanning continues to evolve for modern travellers.

For five action-packed days, the Showgrounds will become the place where dreams of the open road turn into real plans, where questions are answered, and where the next generation of Australian adventures begins.

“This show is about inspiring and educating people to travel their own way,” Daniel Sahlberg, CEO of Caravan Industry Victoria said. “The Supershow brings together innovation, education and inspiration in one place, so visitors can explore what’s possible, make informed decisions, and confidently take their next step, whether that’s their very first trip or their biggest adventure yet.”

With hundreds of exhibitors and thousands of products on display, visitors can explore everything from high-end off-road caravans and advanced campers to compact touring solutions, accessories and outdoor gear all in one massive indoor and outdoor space. It’s the ideal place to compare, ask questions and discover what suits your lifestyle.

Fill in the form on the front page of this edition for a chance to win free tickets.

KID'S PUZZLES PUZZLES

SOLUTIONS
Page 14

Colouring Page



Word Search - Words starting with "B"

BACKPACK	J	S	N	O	O	L	L	A	B	B	B	T	G	I	O
BALLOONS	I	G	X	R	P	S	D	Q	X	P	O	D	C	A	R
BANANA	J	Q	K	W	L	I	X	B	E	V	R	W	I	S	Q
BASKETBALL	M	N	H	I	S	M	L	G	Q	A	A	B	L	W	W
BEACH	T	D	P	C	X	M	A	J	O	H	O	U	G	T	W
BEDROOM	O	E	Q	L	A	H	U	B	Z	M	H	B	Q	T	K
BICYCLE	L	L	A	B	T	E	K	S	A	B	N	B	J	P	C
BLACKBOARD	I	Y	X	M	K	C	B	M	B	Q	P	L	L	P	A
BOWL	Z	O	Z	C	A	E	Q	O	R	I	Q	E	S	B	P
BRICK	P	X	I	L	A	U	P	O	B	E	C	S	C	R	K
BRICK	S	R	B	U	N	N	Y	R	U	X	H	Y	I	B	C
BROTHER	B	M	U	S	O	A	G	D	L	K	B	T	C	M	A
BUBBLES	B	A	N	A	N	A	K	E	L	R	I	Z	O	L	B
BULL	Z	P	C	F	B	L	H	B	J	O	T	C	P	R	E
BUNNY	Y	I	J	Y	B	C	B	Z	A	L	E	G	T	I	B

Math Square

Fill in the missing numbers.

The missing values are the whole numbers between 1 and 9.

Each number is only used once.

Each row is a math equation.

Each column is a math equation.

Remember that multiplication and division are performed before addition and subtraction.

	-		+	9	6
+		-		-	
	-		+	2	4
+		+		+	
	-		+		9
15		11		13	

Jokes

- Q:** Why was 6 afraid of 7?

A: Because 7, 8, 9.
- Q:** What is worse than it raining cats & dogs?

A: Hailing taxi's

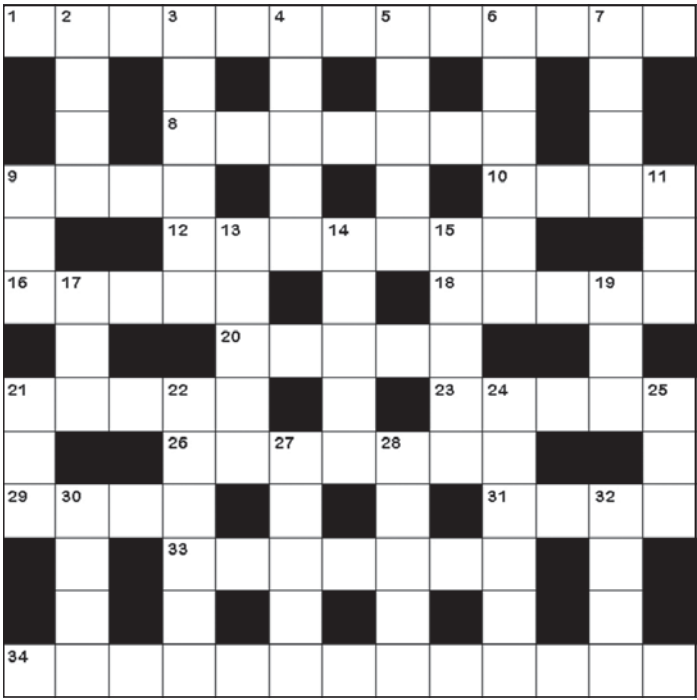
Crossword

ACROSS

- The children of your son or daughter.
- Converts ordinary language into code.
- An abrupt spasmodic movement.
- A tiny, scarcely detectable amount.
- Enters one's name on a membership list.
- Move smoothly and effortlessly.
- Not the same as the ones already mentioned.
- House lizard found on walls in warm climates.
- A rise in the temperature of the body.
- Open disrespect for a person or thing.
- Large edible marine crustacean.
- Festive occasion for an athletic competition.
- Move gently and carefully into place.
- Dumped down with a heavy thud.
- Firms that eradicate rodents and insects.

DOWN

- Meat cooked a short time to retain redness.
- Cut very slightly, with a razor.
- Pickled flower bud used in pungent sauces.
- Considered the best of its kind.



- Refrain from certain behaviour.
- The departure of an actor from the stage.
- Run or ride at a steady slow trot.
- A simple tune for instrumental performance.
- Person with dark skin who comes from Africa.
- Predatory black-and-white toothed whales.
- Not carefully arranged in a package.
- The liquid obtained by leaching wood ashes.
- The organ we use for hearing.
- A thick mist that reduces visibility.
- Pass or slip by.
- A person's financial standing.
- Indicates the maiden name of a married woman.
- A blossom on a flowering plant.
- Something of sentimental value.
- The highest point of something.
- Mark left by the healing of injured tissue.

Word Search

C R X B E B U X B T O B B I A
U H M B O Y C M N D Q B M D Z
S U O N U H D E S T R A E H T
O E F C U K M N I P Z Z C G D
J R S K O E C H A M P A G N E
H O V S G L Y O F C N D E M L
M M F A I B A L O D L I T B D
N A G I I K O T L B R K F I N
A N K M Q W D E E F F D R G E
E C V V E C L V L S O G Y N I
Z E L R T I N R I Q J P N L R
E T S Q G N I C N A D Z W J F
K X V H E G V X Z U S D N L Y
Z U T M U F R D C M R U M N O
R E S T A U R A N T W F T H B

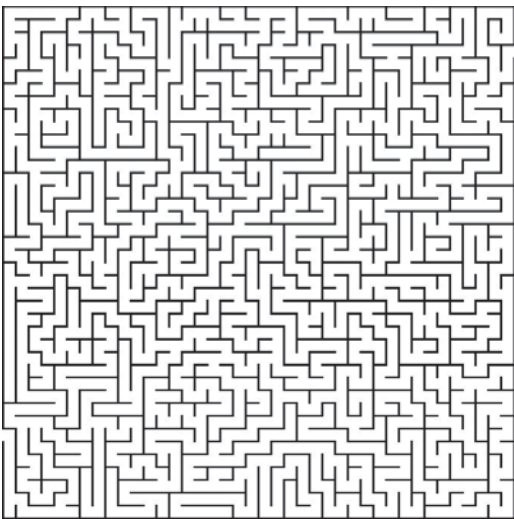
Sudoku

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

Valentines Day

BOYFRIEND	FLOWERS
CANDLELIGHT	GIRLFRIEND
CHAMPAGNE	HEARTS
CHOCOLATES	KISSES
DANCING	RESTAURANT
ENGAGEMENT	ROMANCE

Maze



Difficulty: Very Hard

Fill in the boxes using the numbers 1 to 9. Every row and column and every group of 9 boxes inside the thicker lines must contain each number and letter only once.

Math Square

4	-	7	+		-1
+		x		-	
	-		+		6
+		+		+	
	-		-		2
21		36		5	

Fill in the missing numbers.

The missing values are the whole numbers between 1 and 9. Each number is only used once. Each row is a math equation. Each column is a math equation. Remember that multiplication and division are performed before addition and subtraction.

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R	C	I	P	H	E	R	S					
J	E	R	K	E	A	I	O	T	A			
O		E	N	R	O	L	L	S				
G	L	I	D	E	R	O	T	H	E	R		
Y			G	E	C	K	O		A			
F	E	V	E	R	A	S	C	O	R	N		
O			L	O	B	S	T	E	R			
G	A	L	A	L	O	E	A	S	E			
P			P	L	O	N	K	E	D			
E			S	O	E		I	A				
E	X	T	E	R	M	I	N	A	T	O	R	S

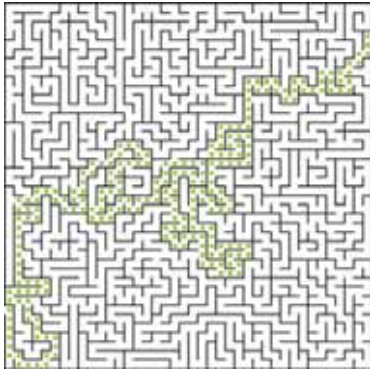
SUDOKU

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

MATH SQUARE

4	-	7	+	2	-1
+		x		-	
8	-	5	+	3	6
+		+		+	
9	-	1	-	6	2
21		36		5	

MAZE



KIDS - MATH SQUARE

4	-	7	+	9	6
+		-		-	
3	-	1	+	2	4
+		+		+	
8	-	5	+	6	9
15		11		13	

Bushfire contractor pay

THE Victorian Opposition recently expressed concern that multiple contractors providing heavy machinery supporting summer's bushfire effort hadn't yet been paid. Some starting work on fires in December.

They said that in many cases, the outstanding amounts tally into the hundreds of thousands of dollars for individual contractors, with an estimated \$15 million in total.

Leader of The Nationals and Shadow Minister for Emergency Services, Danny O'Brien said contractors have been told Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV) hasn't paid them because they don't have the staff to process timesheets.

Mr O'Brien put this to the government during Question Time, and Environment Minister Steve Dimopoulos said FFMV was not focussed on 'bookkeeping'.

Mr O'Brien said Labor's payment tardiness was unacceptable and was placing enormous pressure on small businesses with very large overheads.

He added, "These contractors are doing incredible work in dangerous conditions to support the fire effort and to have to wait for payment is threatening their businesses."

When contacted about the issue, a Victorian Government Spokesperson said, "We acknowledge and thank all of the work done by everyone involved in the bushfire response to keep our communities safe. DEECA has increased its resources and put on additional staff to support faster payments to contractors. Any outstanding payments are being addressed as priority."

Recovery and wellbeing boost for local schools

DEPUTY Premier and Minister for Education Ben Carroll recently announced the schools in areas most impacted by recent bushfires that will share in \$2 million of additional funding to address the immediate mental health and wellbeing needs of students.

The funding will be delivered as a top-up to impacted public schools' existing Schools Mental Health Fund, enabling them to purchase additional evidence-based mental health and wellbeing support.

Schools were identified based on direct bushfire impacts to facilities and communities, including where students and staff have experienced loss of property or disruption.

Locally, these schools include Eildon Primary School (\$30,404), Buxton Primary School (\$30,404), Alexandra Primary School (\$37,500), Yea Primary School (\$37,500), Alexandra Secondary College (\$75,000) and Yea High School (\$75,000).

The funding will provide impacted public schools with access to increased recovery and wellbeing support, focusing on trauma-informed support as well as disaster, grief and loss programs.

This boost supports the government's Recovery and Resilience Model for schools, an evidence-based framework which includes the core features of routine and safety, health and wellbeing, belonging and connectedness.

New uniforms, books and other educational items can also be replaced through State Schools' Relief. Schools can also apply for additional support through the School Breakfast Club Program.

Minister Carroll said, "We want our students and staff across the state to know we are behind them every step of the way, and help restore a sense of safety and calm to our school communities."

"We know the significant damage these fires can bring to our students emotional wellbeing, and we are putting every effort in place to mitigate the trauma and disruption they have caused."

Breanna Stillman chosen to sing anthem at Winter Olympics

BREANNA Stillman, neice of locals Josie and Murray Parsons, was chosen to sing the Australian National Anthem as the Australian team marched into the stadium during the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics.

Breanna has also been invited to give performances at the Vatican twice. In Kenya, she uses music to inspire children from slum areas through her non-profit charity, OperAffinity.

Breanna has previously participated in Opera at the Pondage, delighting locals with her remarkable voice.

She said of her appearance at the Winter Olympics, "As an Australian living abroad, sharing my voice in front of the Olympic team, athletes who embody the very best of



Breanna Stillman. -S

Australian talent, dedication and spirit, was deeply moving. Building bridges, creating dialogue and representing Australia through music is

a responsibility I carry with pride. It was a very special moment I will always carry with me."

Lions and Rotary hold social get-together



Alexandra Lions members enjoying a chat at On Point Brewery on Friday, January 30. -AR



Greg, Helen, Simon and John. -AR



Members of Alexandra Rotary enjoying a tippie after a long couple of weeks. -AR

Community meeting held in Yea

A COMMUNITY meeting was held on Thursday, February 5 at the Yea Shire Hall to discuss the current status of the Longwood fire.

Mayor Damien Gallagher emceed the meeting and provided the opening address. He spoke about the wonderful volunteer efforts in the shire, along with the vital community support hubs.

Jamie Hanson was the CFA Incident Controller during the Longwood fire. He explained that the control centre had to be moved from Alexandra to Seymour due to the loss of power and communication challenges. A full interview with Jamie will be included in next week's edition.

Mariela Diaz, CEO of Emergency Recovery Victoria, and Jeff Ryan from Forge Solutions, the contractor for the clean up, also spoke.

Attendees also heard from Murrindindi's Community and Development Director Andrew Paxton who spoke about the assessments being done by the shire, as well as the vast amount of work needed to fix the infrastructure of the shire.

There were also representatives from the Department of Family Affairs and Housing and Agriculture Victoria in attendance.

Anne Leadbeater, who works nationally on disaster recovery, said, "I have to say that research and experience tells us that where we are right now, three to four weeks after

the disaster, is about the hardest place we can be. There is such a lot that's going on. People have been running on adrenaline for four weeks and also trying to come to terms with the enormity of this event and what the impact is on their lives and long-term. So if it feels really hard now, that's pretty right. That's exactly where we land. At this stage, it can be very common for the impacts of disasters that start impacting on your sleep patterns. You might be absolutely exhausted, but still finding yourself playing awake at three o'clock in the morning and not able to sleep. You might be not as hungry as you normally are, you might be forgetting to drink water, all of those things that we normally just do automatically can get sidetracked by the experience of a disaster."

She later added, "Be on the lookout for those signs of distress and fatigue. And rather than waiting for it to go wrong and then seeking the help to fix it, maybe think about trying to seek the help to stop it going on in the first place. Reach out to whomever it is, a trusted friend or family member, your GP, a counselling service, the bushfire support line, don't wait. Just try and share the burden, share the load, and that's going to make it easier for you to manage day to day, also manage for the longer term."

To watch the full meeting, visit facebook.com/share/v/1CDpBGeDL9/

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Lions Club: providing support following the fire

by Bob Cooper, Lions Club of Alexandra

THE new year for the Alexandra Lions Club officially started with a dinner meeting, held at the Corner Hotel on Wednesday, February 4. The meeting was well attended with club members and participating visitors enjoying each other's company.

Special guest speaker for the evening was well known and respected long time local resident, Penny Paxman. Penny gave some interesting insights into ways through which individuals, and groups, could help themselves recover from traumatic situations in their lives, the very recent bushfires being classic examples of this. Penny spoke about her booklet, *Riding the Ripples, 7 Steps to Getting Back on Your Surfboard After a Wipeout*. The hints and suggestions contained therein would be of immense benefit to many in our local community, and beyond. Penny's presentation was much appreciated.

Also attending that evening were two locals, Joanne and Ian Lakeland, who were inducted and welcomed as new members of Alexandra Lions. We wish them a happy and productive time in their service to the community.

Although this was the first formal step into the new Lions year, much had already been done and achieved by the club membership. One such event was the catering for the drivers of in excess of 70 Need for Feed truck drivers delivering hay to the needy farming communities, local and beyond.

Lunch was provided for all on the day, followed by a tea time snack as the hay heroes returned. Not yet finished, Alexandra Lions also served breakfast at Rotary Park the next morning. Well done.

With so many farmers and others needing help with repair work, many of them having lost all of their tools and equipment in the fires, Alexandra Lions have established a 'Tool Library', now renamed 'Tool Depot', providing that much need support where and when needed.

On a lighter note, many of the members of Alexandra Rotary, Alexandra Lions and visiting Blaze Aid personnel, met recently for a very convivial social get-together which was much enjoyed and appreciated.

As we are all very much aware, there is still so much more to be done to help others, to support those disadvantaged by the ravaging fires, and their aftermath. Alexandra Lions will be there to assist.

Landcare leading bushfire fencing project

THE Upper Goulburn Landcare Network (UGLN) are helping farmers and others who did not have insurance or adequate insurance to cover their loss of fencing that resulted from the disastrous 'Longwood fires' that commenced on Thursday, January 8.

UGLN's fencing work will be coordinated by Chris Cobern, who has vast experience from previous fires including the 2009 Black Saturday fires. The actual work will be split into two components.

The first is the removal of damaged fences and preparation for the rebuilding. Much of this work will be carried out by volunteers directly supervised by Chris. Many of these volunteers will be staff of various corporations, such as the NAB and ANZ.

The second component is fence reconstruction. This work will be carried out under the overall coordination of Chris but managed on a day-to-day basis by an experienced fencer assisted by volunteers.

In carrying out the work, UGLN volunteers will use plant and equipment donated to UGLN by the Uniting Church in Benalla. This equipment was used after the 2009 fires by the Uniting Church and UGLN to rebuild fences on affected properties. Tools and

sundry equipment are either part of the donated equipment, donated by others or purchased. All actual fencing materials will be supplied by the landowners.

Volunteers will be given proper training in toolbox meetings before commencing work each day. First aid will be available and adequate food and water provided. Volunteers will be covered by personal accident insurance. The overall programme is anticipated to last for at least two years.

UGLN will need volunteers to assist with all the above work. Experience in fencing would be helpful but not essential as a lot of the work especially the clean up and preparation is unskilled work involving cutting and coiling of damaged wire, extracting burnt or damaged posts and end assemblies and general clean up. Protective equipment, water and lunches are provided.

This is an opportunity for members of Landcare groups and the community to assist those who have been so badly hurt by the fires. It's envisaged that volunteers would commit to work on a particular property for a day or days together with other volunteers as required.

Interested people should contact Chris Cobern on 0413 855 490 or by email ugln.projects@ugln.net



Landcare members hard at work. -S



Landcare members at a property which required re-fencing. -S

ADDOC farewells Pam Poole

by Jeanne Roberts

THERE are changes ahead for the Alexandra and District Dog Obedience Club this year. Firstly, there is a new training Ground at the Showgrounds in Alexandra. This will provide an area specifically for members and their dogs. The club is run by volunteers, instructors and committee members.

At the end of last year, the club farewelled one of its long serving volunteers, Pam Poole. Pam joined ADDOC in 2008 and she very quickly became involved in all the activities on offer. She participated in public appearances at local markets, the

RSPCA walk around the Pondage, club workshops and the day out at the Alexandra Show.

Over this period, she has shared her love of and passion for dogs, with a kelpie, a gordon setter, plus several German shepherds, poodles and now Belgian malinois. Dogs are an excellent judge of character, and they have all loved/or love her and work beautifully for her.

She showed her commitment to ADDOC by being an Instructor for Level Five, as well as coaching and judging the CCD (Community Companion Dog), CD (companion Dog) and Obedience for our Members

Competitions. She also made her mark as the creative inspiration behind the Obedience Demonstration Team. In addition to all this she served as a committee member.

She was a source of inspiration to her students and a good friend who has decided it is now time to move on. The club will miss her but hope she comes back to visit occasionally. The club wished her all the very best with her ongoing obedience competitions and in the show ring.

Contact ADDOC if you are interested in classes. Classes are held at the showgrounds every Sunday morning. Email alexdogclub@gmail.com



Pam Poole. -S



Competing in the heat. -S



Cheyanne Richards from Murrindindi and Georgia Robertson from Shepparton. -S



Some of the Murrindindi Little Athletics group at the Regional Athletics Competition in Bendigo. -S

Murrindindi Little Aths at Regional Athletics Competition

OVER the weekend, a determined group of Murrindindi Little Athletes braved the Bendigo heat to compete at the Regional Athletics Competition.

Across two big days, seven athletes took on 28 events, delivered 18 personal bests, and proudly brought home 17 medals.

The club says a huge thank you goes to the parents and siblings who volunteered throughout the event. Your support keeps

opportunities like this possible, and the whole club is grateful for the time and energy you give.

Best of luck to the athletes who have qualified for the state championships in March.



Levi Campbell with his medals. -S



Logan Steiner with his medals. -S



Zoe Collier with her medal. -S



Shiloh Clacy had some success in Bendigo. -S

Alexandra Squash Club starts up for 2026

by Kristelle Leary

Monday competition Magpies versus Crows

ETHAN versus Robbie: Some great rallies. Robbie is now an official club member having joined the weekly pennant and making a statement by winning his first official match. 56 to 49.

Randy versus Laura: It was the first match back and everyone was a bit rusty. As the match went on Randy found his range to take the lead and the match. 86 to 48.

Justin (fill in) versus Chris: Justin was too strong for Chris, putting in four solid games. Justin's practice and competitions over summer have really paid off helping him in his victory. 83 to 47.

John versus Jim: John jumped to a lead with his precision game. The next three games were a slug-fest with neither player conceding an inch. The margin from the first

game was the difference and the clincher in John's win. 58 to 50.

Pelicans versus Cockatoos

Tyler versus Jordan/Jim (fill in): Tyler had the first two games against Jordan who had to leave for basketball, Jim took his place for the rest of the match. Jordan was holding ground against Tyler who picked up his game in second half. Tyler couldn't quite pull off the win. 62 to 59.

Jess versus Liane: Jess raced out of the blocks to set up a lead that was maintained for the rest of the match. A fun match to watch. 61 to 46.

Mark versus Ben F: Mark makes his return after a 10-year break. He still has it going toe-to-toe all the way to the end, tying the match with Ben. 56 to 56.

Michael H versus Phil: Michael took a strong lead. Phil stepped up a level this pennant and had a tough two games at the

start but steadied to make Michael work for it. Michael claimed the victory. 62 to 45.

Wednesday competition Freightliners versus Scania's

Nicole versus Ben H: Starting slow, Nicole didn't quite win the first game in her first official match. Taking Ben head on, Nicole made her presence known by claiming the next three games to triumph in her debut. 53 to 46.

Sam versus Travis: A familiar feud between two well matched players. While Travis played in a competition over the break, Sam has not been on the court since last year. At the end of the third game Travis was up by one point. They went all out in the final game to draw, crowning Travis the match winner with a one-point lead. 63 to 62.

Michael M versus Justin: Michael M opened with a winning game only to have Justin return with ferocity and a newfound focus. Making the most of each point, Justin

swung through to win the rest of the games and the match. 64 to 50.

Kenworths versus Macks

Matthew versus Jessica: A close and entertaining match. It was two games each with Jessica holding control in the middle and Matthew taking games one and four. With only a three-point difference, Jessica took victory. 55 to 52.

Travis (fill in) versus Kristelle: What should have been a good match was a sad excuse for squash. Travis was playing fine, but Kristelle was not herself and appeared to lack basic squash skills on the night. Travis absolutely trashed his opponent. 80 to 46.

Daniel K versus Daniel W: Daniel W put on his running shoes to keep up with Daniel K. The rallies were long and the continuous drives down the wall were deep. Daniel W had a good match, making a decent score, but Daniel K claimed the match. 59 to 39.

SPORT

Merton cricketers leap to top of WDCA ladder

MERTON cricketers travelled to the North Wangaratta Oval to take on Rovers Bruck United in a match that was a must win for both sides with Merton second on the ladder and Rovers third.

Merton won the toss and batted making a respectable 6/182 off the allocated 36 overs. A solid second wicket partnership between Murray Sutton 67 and 17 yr old James Benton 78 not out, the pair involved in a 110 run partnership which would set up the game for the visitors.

James Campbell with 4/25 the leading wicket taker for Rovers. The 182 victory target was a little under par in trying conditions and a quick outfield with the home sides key batsmen first and second in the league batting.

Merton would have to bowl well and take wickets for any chance of victory. The Merton opening bowling attack of Sutton 1/14 and Luke Berriman 2/29 bowling well with good support from their teammates in the field keeping the pressure on.

Henry Berriman again changed the game with a fine spell of bowling taking 4/33 along with Harry Craddock one wicket and the father son combination of Rohan and Henry Berriman removing the top scorer Jerrimy Ackroyd for 58 saw the home side all out in the last over for 163. James Campbell the other top bat for Rovers making 44.

The win has elevated Merton to the top of the Wangaratta and District Cricket Association B grade ladder with three rounds remaining before the finals. Merton host Beechworth Wanderers next Saturday at the Merton Cricket Ground (MCG).



James Benton on his way to 78 not out. -S

Two person Ambrose at Eildon Golf Club

by Puttomatic

LAST week Eildon Golf Club had 15 players compete in a two person Ambrose competition, the weather was great but it did warm up by the end of play.

Winners for last week Sandi and Michael McLear with a net 64.5 on a countback from John Rachcoff and Phil Dally also with net 64.5. The club's ball run winners last week were Leigh Munro and Kerry Power with net 65.

Nearest the pin winners were Kerry Power on the 12th, Phil Dally on the 14th, but no

winners on the fifth and 11th. Entry draw winner was Ian Lakeland and the lucky swindle winner was Michael Lynch.

Next Saturday, February 14, Eildon will host the Murrindindi Masters proudly sponsored by FoodWorks and a huge thanks to the Reddrops family for their support and keeping this fantastic competition going and growing. Eildon are expecting close to 100 players and given the recent weather, the course is in great condition due to the hard work and dedication of terrific volunteers.



Murray Sutton. -S

Tuesday golf on a Monday at Alexandra Golf Club

by Dave Silverman

JUST for something completely different last week, Tuesday's golf was actually played on Monday, as Elizabeth's funeral was held on Tuesday at the clubrooms.

Ten players teed off at 9am in fine, mild conditions, but despite the good weather, only one player bettered his handicap. That player was Lennie Jenkins, who brought in a score of 39 points to win the day comfortably from second-placed Russell Purcell, who had 35, and yours truly in third on 34.

Russell also claimed the only nearest the pin, with a good second shot on 17, and rundown vouchers went to Brad Newton and Perrin Gooding.

It was Monthly Medal for the ladies last Wednesday, so Stroke was the order of the day. Once again, fine, warm to hot weather greeted the seven players who teed it up early in the morning, and it was Sue Greatorox who burst from the pack to take the medal, with a very creditable 89 net 68. Ruth Worland was second with a net 70, and third spot went to Helen Findlay with a net 73.

Barb Doyle was the nine hole winner, with a net 38 on the back nine, and she and Sue shared the honour of having the fewest putts, with both ladies playing only 30 shots with the flat stick.

Barb also took the nearest the pin on five, with seven and 18 going to Helen.

Twenty members turned out for last Saturday's competition, which was to be played, predictably, in warm to hot conditions. Sponsored by Burnsies Pizza, the February Monthly Medal round also incorporated round one of the Summer Cup, and round one of the Golden Putter.

The scoring was tight, especially at the top. Best of the day was Nigel Waterhouse, who took home the Medal with an 87 net 69. Second, third and fourth all recorded a net 70, respectively, Todd Galloway, Corey Jack and James Kidd, with fifth-placed Len Jenkins snapping at their heels with a net 71.

Nobody claimed the nearest the pin on two, while five went to Todd, Brad Kidd took seven and 18, and Corey got 12. Shane McGorlick needed only 27 putts, and took the honours for that, and the raffle was won by Jan Petrzela.



Winners of the 2026 Liesfield Trophy. -S



Some golfers had to navigate the sprinklers on the 12th fairway. -S

Liesfield Trophy at Marysville Golf Club

by Lesley Rundle

ON Saturday, February 7, all those affected by the 2009 Black Saturday fires were remembered.

The Marysville golfers played the annual four ball best ball stableford game in memory of James and Matthew Liesfield, their Mother Elizabeth and all those who lost their lives that day.

The boys were keen and talented young golfers and had played in the February monthly medal on the morning of February 7. Their Aunty Marianne and Uncle Colin have joined members for many years to participate in the Liesfield Trophy game and to present the cup. Last Saturday the club were thrilled to welcome them again from their home in Warrnambool.

The Liesfield trophy is a highly sought after trophy with members keen to get their names engraved on the cup. The 2026 first time winners were David Douthwaite and Keith Atwell with an excellent 45 stableford points. The runners up were Helen Howard and Heather Jenkins with 41 points on a countback from Gail Leigh and Margaret Blair. The nearest the pins were won by Ray Jones, Adam Littlejohn, Helen Howard and Brian Worcester who also won the Golden Shot.

The Thursday nine holers played Ambrose on the front nine holes and were pleased to welcome back Mark Alexander. With a decisive win Colin Davies (11), Geoff Ferguson (8) and Brian Worcester (10) won with a score of 26.2. The runners up were Gail Leigh and Keith Atwell with 33 points. The nearest the pins went to

Glen Rattay and Brian Worcester who after driving the ninth green was able to sink a 10-foot putt for a birdie.

Next Saturday members will be playing at Eildon Golf Club for the third round of the FoodWorks Murrindindi Masters. The final round will be held at Yea on Saturday, February 28.

The Marysville members are preparing for a very busy period at the club with the annual Lakeside Challenge on Saturday, March 7, a golf clinic on Tuesday, March 17, the Ladies Sandy Wilson Bowl on Thursday, March 26 and the Dalhousie Veterans on Tuesday, March 31. For information regarding spaces available in the Clinic on March 17 and the Junior Invitational Day on April 4 please refer to the golf club website or contact Heather Jenkins on 0429 146 763.



Best Division Three winning rink of Graeme Matthews, Malcolm Gill, Ian Harper and Ken Argent. -S



Club Championship Pairs Larry Scott and Greg Gilmore. -S

Match reports for SDCA round

A Grade

YEA Tigers 1/55 (Z Macleod 31 not out) defeat Alexandra 51 (V Hewage 21, D Thompson 3/3, Z Macleod 3/9).

It was an early finish at Yea as the Tigers put in a dominant performance against Alexandra. It was Dylan Thompson (3/3) and Zayde Macleod (3/9) who led the way with the ball, supported by Biron Hardinge (2/13) and Jack Christie (2/15). Alexandra ended up all out for 51 with Vinu Hewage the only batsman to offer any resistance.

With the bat it was Macleod who backed up his strong bowling performance, making 31 not out off 26 to guide Yea to the win within 10 overs.

B Grade

Alexandra 182 (A Wood 53, L Ronalds 45) defeated Yea Tigers 13 (T Ward 6/6).

Penultimate games of the year for Alexandra Bowls Club

by Marie Evans

THE Alexandra Bowls Club Championship Pairs were played last Sunday. The game was 18 ends and took over three hours in what was hot conditions. Four very experienced and previous champions had a great game.

Greg Gilmore and Larry Scott played Ian Harper and Graeme Matthews. Gilmore and Scott led five to zero on end three but it was five all by end five. End eight had a drawn game at eight all. Gilmore and Scott won the next four ends and led 14 to eight. Harper and Matthews had reduced that to be 13 to 15 down by end 16.

Gilmore and Scott won the last two ends to win 17 to 13. They will now play in the GV round of the Champion of Champion Pairs to be played at Tatura Bowls Club next Sunday.

There were some good results for the Alexandra Bowls Club in the penultimate pennant games of the season. Saturday Division Three played third placed Mooropna Golf and had a very impressive win. Midweek Division Four had a very close

game against East Shepparton in what could have gone either way. Saturday Division Five unfortunately shared the points with Seymour as the game was declared 'unplayed'.

Midweek Division Four played away to East Shepparton and had two winning rinks. The best winning rink was Ken Argent (Skip), Greg Gilmore, Clive Murphy and Craig Parkinson. They won 21 to 16.

Doug Cooper (Skip) Pauline Gilmore, Mal Gill and Peter Collyer also had a good win and defeated their opposition 19 to 15. Graeme Matthews (Skip), John Blamey, Martin Manning and Warren Nelson lost their game 16 to 28. East won the overall 59 to 56. The last round of the season is at home to Murchison who are currently in third place on the ladder.

Saturday Division Three played at home against Mooropna Golf who were in third place on the ladder. Alexandra had three winning rinks out of the four and won the overall 100 to 56.

The best winning rink was Ian Harper (Skip), Graeme Matthews, Ken Argent and Malcolm Gill. They won 15 out of the 21 ends. The game was six all on end seven but the Alexandra rink then won the next six ends to be 25 to six up on end 13. Two impressive six shot wins on ends 10 and 11, certainly made it a difficult task for Golf to regain any momentum. Alexandra won five out of the last eight ends to win comfortably 34 to nine. A tremendous result.

Greg Gilmore (Skip), Larry Scott, Andy Tobias and Lauren Gilchrist also had a convincing win. They were seven to zero after the first two ends but East won the next five ends to draw the game seven all on end seven. Alexandra had control of the game by end 14 and were 17 to nine up. Golf only managed to win two out of the last seven ends and Alexandra won 28 to 11.

Tim Langmead (Skip), Doug Cooper, Steve Kirby, and Ben Gilchrist won 12 out of the 21 ends. They were 10 to one up on end four and led 12 to three on end seven. Alexandra was 13 to seven on end 12 and won the next

five ends to lead 19 to seven. Golf won three out of the last four ends but Alexandra came away with a solid win of 21 to 12.

David Nicklos (Skip), Scott Ferrier, Craig Parkinson and Bob Mayfield were zero to nine on end four but had improved to be six to 13 by end 10. It was 11 to 15 on end 15. Alexandra had reduced that to trail 17 to 20 on end 19. However, Golf won the last two ends to win 24 to 17.

Alexandra plays at home next week in the last game of the season. They play Euroa who are just holding on to second place by three points in front of Rushworth. Alexandra will be looking to finish a disrupted year with a victory.

Division Five will play Seymour VRI at home in their last game and hopefully will be on the green in what has been a disappointing post-Christmas season.

SDCA wins the inaugural McIvor Challenge

SENIOR representative cricket has returned with a bang for the Seymour District Cricket Association (SDCA) following a convincing 56 run win over the Emu Valley Cricket Association (EVCA) in the first ever McIvor Challenge.

The match marked a significant milestone for cricket in the region, providing an opportunity for the region's finest cricketers to go head-to-head in a one off match.

EVCA won the toss at Chittick Park and sent the SDCA in to bat with Josh Rudge (28) and Charles Davies (39) getting the side off to a flying start, going at six runs an over for the first 10.

Rudge's dismissal brought Lachlan Watts to the crease, allowing the competition's leading player to stamp his authority on the contest.

Watts dominated the EVCA bowling attack, supported in a 57 run partnership

with Lachlan Drummond (14). Watts was eventually dismissed for 99, with 14 fours and a six, showing his class at a higher level.

Cam Evans chipped in with a tidy innings of 22 not out to get the SDCA to 227 at the completion of their 45 overs.

Blake Munari-O'Dwyer got the SDCA off to a strong start with the ball, claiming two wickets in his opening spell before Watts

came into the attack and chipped away at the EVCA middle order.

Across a game winning spell of nine overs, Watts claimed 4/40 and held two catches in the field to complete an incredible all round performance.

Andrew Butterworth claimed the final three wickets of the match as the SDCA got over the line by 56 runs.



The victorious Seymour Club SDCA team. -S



SDCA Coach Cam Armstrong and Captain Lachlan Watts. -S

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Carlton Blues inspire Alexandra Football Netball Club

ALEXANDRA Football Netball Club recently welcomed a special visit from Carlton Football Club, giving local junior players an unforgettable AFL experience. The excitement began with the Carlton players arriving in town aboard Alexandra fire trucks, escorted by CFA Captain Chris Lynch, a memorable moment that set the tone for a fantastic afternoon.

Carlton players George Hewett, Francis Evans, Cooper Lord and Rob Monahan spent

time on the ground running drills with junior players, sharing tips, signing autographs and posing for photos. They were joined by a group of Alexandra senior players, who volunteered their time to help run activities, support the younger players and showcase the strong connection between the club's junior and senior programs.

The visit was co-organised by Alexandra Football Netball Club Junior Vice President

Ben Van Leirop in conjunction with the Junior Goulburn Valley League and Club President Kylie Cairns.

The event was one of several off-season initiatives focused on strengthening junior pathways, community engagement and partnerships.

With Carlton Football Club now zoned to the Alexandra region, the club is hopeful the visit marks the beginning of an ongoing

relationship, creating more opportunities for local players to see, meet and learn from AFL players.

Club President Kylie Cairns said, "Seeing our juniors train alongside AFL players and having our senior players step up to support them is exactly what Alexandra Football Netball Club is all about, community, connection and creating opportunities for the next generation."

