

INSIDE THIS WEEK'S EDITION

Eildon Lions donation



Page 4

Yarck Colour Run



Page 8

Rotary hosting legal team for fire support



Page 12

Weekend sport



Pages 18-20

Voluntary hospital amalgamation recommended by boards

ON Monday, February 16, Alexandra District Health (ADH) and Eastern Health announced that their boards have formally recommended a voluntary amalgamation.

They said in a statement, "This follows the completion of a comprehensive business case and consideration of staff, stakeholder and community feedback.

"This recommendation has been submitted to the Victorian Department of Health and the Minister for Health for consideration.

"Importantly, no changes will occur unless and minister approves the proposal. In the meantime, it is business as usual.

"The recommendation is focused on strengthening access to care closer to home and supporting the long-term sustainability of local healthcare.

"If approved, it would build on our established partnership with Eastern Health and expand inpatient care, increase specialist clinics, introduce a dialysis service, strengthen oncology services, and improve local access to diagnostics."

They directed people to learn more and access FAQs at connectingcare.net

They said that they will continue to keep the community informed.

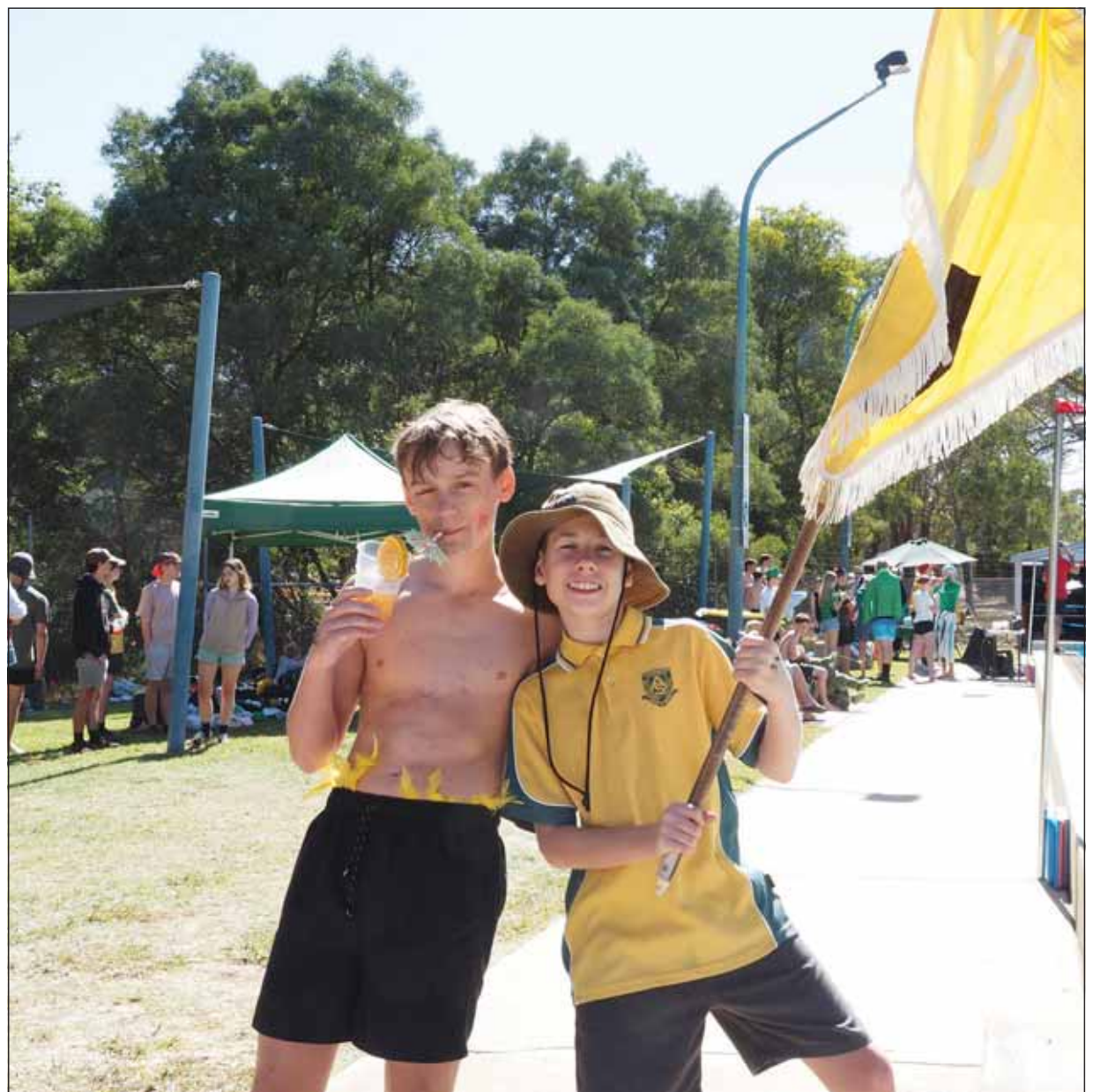
The topic was the subject of much community debate late last year, with both Yea and District Memorial Hospital and Darlingford and Upper Goulburn Nursing Home objecting to the proposal, along with many in the community.

The survey conducted by Alexandra District Health is currently the subject of a Freedom of Information (FOI) request. The FOI seeks the de-identified comments in the survey as this was the only location where people could express an opinion about the proposed merger.

The FOI was rejected by ADH on the ground that it's an internal working document and that "participants were informed that their responses would be kept anonymous and confidential."

A review has been sought from the Information Commissioner on the grounds that ADH has previously released information to the public from the survey, being the sections which didn't relate to the proposed merger.

ADH's full press release can be found on page 17 of this edition.



The Alexandra Secondary College Swimming Sports Day was held at the Alexandra Swimming Pool on Friday, February 13. More images on page 20. -AR

Council welcomes bushfires inquiry, seeks deadline extension

MURRINDINDI Shire Council has welcomed the Victorian Parliament's Inquiry into the 2026 summer fires, while formally calling for the submission deadline to be extended to allow meaningful participation from the communities most heavily impacted.

Murrindindi Shire experienced almost half of the total statewide impact from the 2026 summer fires, including 193 homes destroyed, making it the hardest-hit municipality in Victoria.

Mayor Cr Damien Gallagher has written to the Premier and Leader of the Opposition requesting a two month extension, noting that Murrindindi Shire has experienced a disproportionate share of the impacts of the fires across the municipality.

The Longwood Fire continues to generate ongoing response and relief consequences, and recovery activity is now underway with a long journey ahead.

Cr Gallagher said council supports the establishment of the Inquiry and its intent, but the current deadline of March 15 does not reflect the realities facing fire-affected communities.

"We welcome the Inquiry and the opportunity for lessons to be learned," Cr Gallagher said.

"However, our community is still in the early stages of recovery. Many residents remain displaced, households are still stabilising, and families, farmers and businesses are focused on meeting immediate needs and rebuilding their lives."

Since January 9, local communities across Murrindindi have led relief efforts, including the operation of community-led relief hubs, often in isolated conditions due to road closures, extended loss of power and telecommunication and dangerous access constraints. Volunteer groups, local CFA brigades and community organisations continue to provide sustained on-the-ground support.

Council itself remains under significant and sustained operational pressure, supporting ongoing response and relief activities while coordinating the clearance of more than 450 kilometres of fire-impacted local roads to restore safe access for residents, emergency services, utilities and recovery providers.

At the same time, council is establishing new teams, governance arrangements and systems to support medium and long-term recovery, with many staff directly impacted by the fires and redeployed into emergency-related roles.

Cr Gallagher said expecting those with direct lived experience of the fires to prepare considered submissions at this stage places an unreasonable burden on already traumatised communities.

"The impacts on our residents, businesses and community groups are still very raw," he said.

"It is unreasonable to expect people who are displaced, rebuilding, managing stock losses or dealing with ongoing trauma to have the time, capacity or emotional bandwidth to engage meaningfully with the Inquiry at this point, and they need their voices to be heard."

Council is seeking a two-month extension to May 15 to ensure submissions from heavily impacted rural communities are informed, reflective and of genuine value to the Inquiry's outcomes.

"For this Inquiry to be effective, it must hear accurate, comprehensive and evidence-based information that reflects both the immediate response and the full impacts experienced by rural and regional communities," Cr Gallagher said.

"An extended timeframe would ensure those most affected can participate in a way that is fair, considered and proportionate to the scale of impact experienced in Murrindindi Shire."

Council will continue to encourage community members to make a submission when they feel ready and able to do so, recognising that revisiting fire experiences may be difficult for many.

More information about the inquiry and how to make a submission is available at parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/inquiry-into-the-2026-summer-fires-across-victoria

For local recovery information and support, visit murrindindi.vic.gov.au/longwoodfire or contact council on 5772 0333.

43 Grant Street - PO Box 5, Alexandra 3714
Telephone: 5772 1002 Fax: 5772 1603
Hours: 9am-5pm Monday-Friday

ALEXANDRA
NEWSPAPERS

PUBLISHERS

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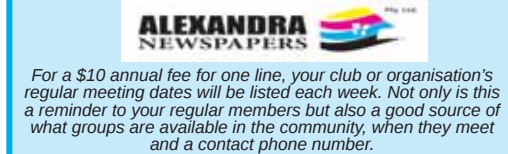
Alexandra District Health
5772 0900
Non-emergency police assistance
131 444
EMERGENCY 000

Local Radio Frequency
 UGFM 106.9 Alexandra / Lake Eildon
 UGFM 98.5 Marysville / Lake Mountain

MONTHLY COMMUNITY GROUPS
WEEKLY

Tue	Women's Walk @ 7am @Embassy of Ideas
Wed	Oasis Church, free coffee connection Ph 0408 123 581
Fri	Man Walk @ 7am meet at RSL Hall
Fri	Communithea 10am-12pm @ Embassy of Ideas 0422 225 801
Sun	Alex & Dist Dog Obedience, training. Ph 0456 583 611
Sun	AA meeting; 7pm St Johns Hall. Ph 1300 22 22 22.

1 st Wed	Alexandra Lions dinner meet, Corner Hotel 0427 595 318
1 st Thur	Murrindindi Men 6-8pm@ Embassy of Ideas 0422 225 801
1 st Sun	Crop/Produce swap 10.30am-noon @ Embassy of Ideas
2 nd Tue	Alexandra District Garden Society Meeting Ph 5772 2285
2 nd Wed	Molesworth Patchwork & Craft, Molesworth Hall 10am-4pm
3 rd Wed	Alex Lions business meeting, rear RSL hall 0427 595 318
3 rd Thu	Alexandra Ladies Probus 10am RSL Ph 0428 976 252
3 rd Thu	Community Potluck dinner 6-8pm @ Embassy of Ideas
3 rd Sun	Alexandra RSL Ph 0409 950 913
4 th Wed	Molesworth Patchwork & Craft, Molesworth Hall 10am-4pm.
4 th Thu	Alexandra Redgate CWA Meeting 1pm, Ph 0402 804 517
Last Fri	Carers Group 10am Grant Street Grocer. 0418 402 455



***ISSUED AT 9:39 AM AEDT MONDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2026**



The CWA's first meeting this year was a shared dinner and meeting at 7pm. Competitions are Flower of the Month and an old Australian Item. The next meeting is on Thursday, February 26 at 1pm at the club rooms on Perkins Street, Alexandra. The hostesses are Gail and Jane, and competitions are Flower of the Month and a Photograph by You. The theme is Valentine's Day and guest speakers are two members of the Victorian Police.

If you would like more information, please call president Martine Sloan on 0411 287 763 or Maureen Holohan on 0402 804 517.



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.

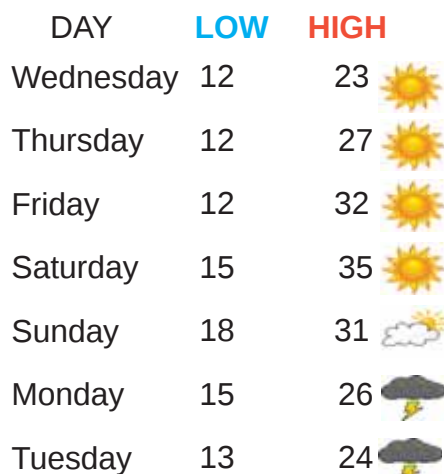
All letters must contain writers name, address and contact number. (not necessarily for publication). Letters without these details supplied cannot not be published. Deadline for Letters to the Editor is 9am Monday.



Above details for 7 days to 9am Monday

Height above sea level this week.....	272.43m
Capacity as at 9am Monday.....	47.4%
Metres below full supply.....	16.47m
Daily inflow	500ML
Release.....	4200ML
Eildon Pondage (may be subject to rapid change).....	63%

DAY	LOW	HIGH
Wednesday	13	23
Thursday	11	28
Friday	12	32
Saturday	16	35
Sunday	118	31
Monday	15	26
Tuesday	13	25



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

5772 1002 or
reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au

We thank you for your continued support

Eildon Events to benefit from funding for performances in regional Victoria

THE Victorian Government is backing arts and culture in regional Victoria, with new grants to support more live performances and creative workshops in local venues.

Minister for Creative Industries Colin Brooks last week announced 13 community groups and not-for-profit organisations are being supported through the latest round of the Small Regional Presenters Program.

“Victoria’s creative spirit thrives in every part of our state, and programs like Small Regional Presenters ensure that regional communities have access to high-quality performances and experiences close to home,” Mr Brooks said.

“These grants empower local presenters to bring music, theatre, and cultural events to life, strengthening community connections and celebrating the diversity of our creative talent.”

The program helps to attract high quality artists to regional venues while building local skills and growing creative talent.

First-time grant recipient, Eildon Events, will bring the musical comedy duo David Cosma and Charles Jenkins to the region for a workshop with local residents that will lead to the creation of a unique song for the town, thanks to a grant of over \$3000.

Member for Northern Victoria, Jaclyn Symes, said “Creative events bring people from all walks of life together. They can attract tourism and provide a boost to local businesses.

“We are proud to back Eildon Events Incorporated, which works hard to bring us events and experiences that make the region such a great place to call home.”

The Small Regional Presenters program is a Victorian Government initiative delivered by Regional Arts Victoria.

For more information, or to see the full list of 2025 recipients, visit creative.vic.gov.au



Noel McIlwraith, Jenny Paul and Helen Gibb at the Woodies. -S

Rotary Alexandra’s voucher scheme

by Ian Gibb, treasurer, Alexandra Rotary Club

THE Rotary Club of Alexandra’s voucher system was implemented to provide for the urgent needs of people affected by the fire, give them some dignity and choice, and to support local businesses, which the club knew would also suffer a loss of trade.

The scheme is funded by public donations. The donations have been generated through social media postings, local advertising and word-of-mouth use of contacts of members of the club. As of February 11, the club had received over \$52,000 in donations. Donations are still rolling in. All of this money will be distributed.

Voucher distributions have occurred using Rotary’s own \$50 and \$100 vouchers. They try to provide more support to those in most need. As of February 10, the club had issued 500 Rotary vouchers with a face value of just over \$34,000. These are redeemable at

participating local businesses. So far about 30 per cent of the vouchers issued have been redeemed.

The Rotary voucher system has been very well received by the public and by local businesses.

Paul Sheehan from The Grain Store said, “I can understand why we need physical donations but they cause problems for businesses like ours. The Rotary voucher system works well for us. It puts money back into the local economy.”

Pam Coulson from Alexandra Tyrepower said, “The Rotary vouchers are working really well for us and our customers.”

Anyone who would like to donate can deposit money in the Rotary account. Account Name: Rotary Club of Alexandra Inc. BSB: 083 503. Account number: 60663 0744.

The club also encourage you to talk to friends, relations and groups you are associated with to ask them to contribute too.

Support eligibility challenges

SOME fire-impacted resident have expressed concerns that there are no state government fencing or clean up supports being offered to people in their particular situation post-fire due to the strict eligibility criteria.

When questioned about this, an Agriculture Victoria spokesperson responded, “The recent fires across Victoria have had significant impacts for many landholders.

“Landholders impacted by the recent fires are encouraged to head to the Agriculture Victoria website for information and advice, including financial supports available, to support their recovery.”

They also provided the following information: Individuals are encouraged to contact Rural Finance to get advice on whether they are eligible for a grant, rather than self-assessing. Information on eligibility and how to apply is available at ruralfinance.com.au or call 1800 260 425.

Information and advice for landholders impacted by the recent fires, including information on various financial supports available, can be found at go.vic.gov.au/4a2dpjM

Primary Producer Bushfire Recovery Grants of up to \$75,000 are available for

eligible primary producers to support the costs of clean-up and reinstating their enterprises. To be eligible, the farm must contribute to more than 50 percent of income. Funding can be used for essential recovery activities such as disposing of livestock, rebuilding or replacing damaged on-farm infrastructure (including fences) and restoring operations.

Rural Financial Counselling Service Victoria North East can help identify whether a business is eligible and can be contacted on 1300 834 775. Landholders whose properties share boundaries with public land are encouraged to visit the public land recovery page on the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action website for information about fencing including the fencing policy and essential water replacement after a bushfire.

Unfortunately, none of this helps the small landholders where their home didn’t burn but their farm was destroyed, and who work in non-agriculture fields.

It also doesn’t help people who are looking to have their burnt sheds cleaned up if the sheds are more than 100 metres from the main residence, as is the case for many farmers.

A successful rescue at Gooram Falls

LAST Wednesday, Euroa SES members were called to Gooram Falls to assist a man who had fallen over on the rocks and hurt his head and arm. Members located the man alongside Gooram CFA and police. They liaised with oncoming High-Angle Rescue crews from SES Alexandra Unit, SES Marysville Unit and FRV Wangaratta to explain the situation and the need for a rope rescue to get the person up from the falls.

They spoke with Ambulance Victoria paramedics on scene who deemed the man was well enough to walk out. The combined high-angle rescue crew from CFA, FRV and SES helped guide the man to flat land using ropes and harnesses.

Euroa SES wished the man a speedy recovery and thanked neighbouring emergency services for coming across to help out on the job.

The rescued man provided a statement via the Alexandra Newspapers Facebook page. He said, “I am the person who fell and was assisted by all these amazing people. Thank you, everyone involved. I felt extremely well cared for, valued and supported. You are all absolute Superstars. You are all worth your weight in gold. I am also happy to report, other than a handful of stitches in the back of my noggin and some tender bruises, I am all tickety-boo. Thank you again everybody involved. Cheers, Col.”

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Out&About

WHAT'S ON?

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.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Thornton Gem and Rock Exhibition at Thornton Recreation Reserve from 8am. All welcome. For further information phone Dave 0408 306 823 or Alan 0492 876 595.

MONDAY, MARCH 2

The Alexandra Football Netball Club ladies committee AGM will be held at the club rooms at 6pm. Everyone welcome. For further information contact Kat 0438 520 382.

SATURDAY, MARCH 7

Caribbean Cruise Murder Mystery at Trawool. Three course dinner, game and entertainment. \$99 per person, bookings essential trawoolestate.com.au or phone 5792 1444.

Church Services

ANGLICAN

St Johns Alexandra

9am Eucharist each Sunday

Children welcome.

Rev Mario Hendricks -

Rectory 0435 953 777

CATHOLIC

Immaculate Conception Parish

Parish Administrator Fr Jose Mathew.

Presbytery 0468 810 871

St Matthews Eildon, Saturday 5pm

Alexandra, Sunday 8.45am

Sacred Heart Yea, Sunday 10.45am

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Pastor Daniel Kriss

Services 10am every Sunday

Phone 0400 282 536

mccbc.com.au

THE VINE

A Christian community part of the Baptist

Union of Victoria

Sunday 4.30pm service

Kids program during school term

Meets at St Andrew's, 37 Downey Street,

Alexandra

Contact - 0438 642 559

Eildon Lions donate to Foundation Murrindindi

PRESIDENT of the Eildon Lions Club, Kevin Tappe, presented Foundation Murrindindi with a \$5000 grant on behalf of the Eildon Lions Club members on Monday, February 16.

It’s a welcome donation in light of the recent fires, with Foundation Murrindindi CEO Robyn Hill commenting that the money can go a long way towards helping people in our community.

Eildon Lions Club is a small club, but they felt that this was a worthy donation to make. Kevin said that it was suggested at a recent meeting that they should make a donation.

“At Eildon Lions, there’s only 13 members. When we do distributions, like disbursements, it’s usually

around \$25,000 at the end of the year. So this is on top of that. We normally do disburse money to other disasters, I think we did the Queensland floods one year, and then there have been other disasters where we helped.”

He explained that most of the money comes from the Big River Youth Camp. “That’s is our main source of funds, but we also do sausage sizzles,” Kevin said. “There was a garage sale at the Thornton Caravan Park, and the Lions were asked to do the sausage sizzle. I think most of the Eildon Lions want to donate towards local charities, but under the Lions charter, we do donate to international charities and Australian Lions as well.”



Eildon Lions President Kevin Tappe with Foundation Murrindindi CEO Robyn Hill. -AR

Highlands CFA: where was the support?

HIGHLANDS CFA Captain David Webb has expressed some significant concerns about the lack of back-up support available during the Longwood-Berry’s Lane fire fight.

David said of the brigade’s experience during the fire, “Our brigade was deployed out to the Longwood Fire on the Wednesday afternoon [January 7], to which we didn’t think there were enough CFA appliances deployed to the whole fire and it wasn’t hit hard enough.

“Our tanker was kept there on the Thursday with a relief crew from Yea, and it was returned to Yea on Thursday night. It wasn’t even returned to Highlands. We then had to go and pick our truck up at 3am on the Friday morning, which was the day of the catastrophic fire day. We had to go down to Yea and pick up our fire truck and bring it back. And then we fought all day. We pretty much fought all day Thursday in slip-ons and private units, but we fought all day Friday in our truck in our area in Highlands when we were impacted majorly in the Highlands Caveat Fire Brigade area. It pretty much burnt the entirety of our brigade area. We lost 38 homes in our brigade area.”

He added, “But wholly and solely, it’s to do with the incompetence of the CFA’s Incident Command Centre (ICC) and the management of this entire fire. I don’t think it’s budget related. I certainly am not blaming old trucks or anything like that because that’s not the case. This is just complete and utter incompetence by the CFA and the people running.”

His concerns started on the Wednesday night, the first day of the fire. He said, “When we all were at the fire on the Wednesday night, there were trucks parked on roads that refused to go into the paddock and fight the fire. There were not enough trucks even deployed to the area. People kept making requests for more appliances.

“On the Thursday and the Friday, I was the sector commander of the Hughes Creek sector. I made multiple requests for more appliances, more trucks to help with the firefight, and I was just told blatantly, ‘no, it’s not happening. You’re not getting any more. They’re in Yea on asset protection.’

David said, “The best way to protect assets is by putting the fire out before it gets those assets. And we know full well there were 15 to 20 trucks in Yea on the Friday, that were not tasked with doing any sort of firefighting, just protecting Yea if it got to Yea.

“It wasn’t there, and it also looked like it wasn’t going there, which we were right about. It never actually went to Yea. Most of the people on the fire ground probably could have told you that Yea wouldn’t be impacted, but obviously the boffins in the ICC believe that their maps are better than what the people are telling you on the ground, which is what it is.”

Asked whether his major concern was that there were so many trucks located at Yea and they should have been up fighting the fires,

David responded, “What do we class as an asset? We’re all farmers up here, so our assets are our farms. You know, there’s 38 homes that were lost up here because there was an insufficient number of vehicles up here. Now, I’m not saying we could have saved every one of those homes by having more vehicles, but I made requests on the Thursday to have five strike teams in my sector on the Friday, which is five times four trucks, and we received one. We received four trucks, and they didn’t arrive until 9 o’clock in the morning.

“It was a catastrophic day, and we are the southern edge of the fire on a catastrophic day with the northern wind. It doesn’t take a genius to work out where you would put your appliances,” he said.

“They knew for a long time that Friday was going to be bad. I know there were people, crews standing up in outer urban brigades in Melbourne, that wanted to come and help fight the fire on the Thursday and Friday and they were told to go home. They weren’t required.”

When asked where the directive was coming from, David said, “It comes from the ICC, who ran the fire and they just showed complete and utter incompetence and lack of knowledge. A lack of understanding for what was happening on the fire ground. It comes down to a lack of knowledge of the geography but they never even attempted to get out and see. We never saw anyone from the ICC. We still have not seen a single person from the ICC visit Highlands. We’ve seen commanders of different roles and stuff like that come and see us, but there’s been no one from the ICC come up and visit Highlands.

“We never saw a single person from the ICC come and put their eyes on anything and say, can we help you do this? Do you think maybe we should do that? Can we give you a break by giving you this?”

Many fires have been occurring in the landscape following the main fire, and David said that Monday, February 9 was the first day in 34 days that he wasn’t on a fire truck, thanks to the rain overnight on Sunday.

He added, “We have had backup vehicles come up at the end of the second week. We had some backup vehicles come and they just attended whatever we took them to. But they still needed the local guidance. We still had to turn out our vehicles to show them where to go, what to do, because they weren’t getting maps, they weren’t getting any information out of the ICC.”

They were unable to access Google Maps or similar because there was no phone service.

David added, “When you start accessing Google Maps, because all the roads were closed, Google Maps knows that, and so it sends you completely different routes. It takes you two or three hours to get 10 minutes up the road.” He said that hard copy maps were certainly needed under the circumstances.

“The roads are closed to the public, but the emergency services, they’re not closed to. So we can travel those roads providing

they’re trafficable, and we can always make them trafficable in fire trucks, because we’ve got chainsaws and operators. We just weren’t given any maps. We knew as locals, and that’s why we had to guide the crews around in the end of the second week when they did come up to help us.

“Crews should have come up in the first week. We didn’t see any CFA help in Highlands until the end of the second week. Up to 10 days after the fire front went through, we never saw another CFA vehicle in Highlands.

He said, “We definitely didn’t get anywhere near the support that we were probably deserved and entitled to, and I just believe it’s a failing by the CFA.”

When he was asked what changes he would like to see put in place for future situations, he said, “I’d just like them to be better educated in the management role, and I’d like to see them listen to volunteers that are on the fire ground and give those volunteers what they’re requesting. I mean, I requested 20 fire trucks on the Friday when it jumped the containment line that we had in place, and the response I got on the radio was, ‘request denied.’ I got four trucks that had already turned out. Other than that, the other 16 trucks were all cancelled. It shows no respect for the volunteers that are on the ground making the decisions. I believe that if we’d have got those 20 trucks, we could have saved this fire from burning a significant number of houses and a significant number of acres that it didn’t need to burn.”

David was interviewed for a Nine News report which aired last week. CFA Chief Fire Officer Jason Heffernan was also interviewed. When asked by the interviewer, “Can you understand why they might feel abandoned?” Jason responded, “I can appreciate the sentiment that some of our people may hold in the midst of the fire fight. As chief, I’ve been calling and speaking to these people, hearing their accounts.”

David said of this statement, “He has not contacted me and I am so angry about it. It’s not even funny.”

He also commented that he doesn’t believe that the older style fire trucks were a major issue, saying that the two trucks which broke down on the fireground were both quite new. “They went into limp mode because of the heat,” he said.

He added, “I don’t believe this fire grew to the size it did was anything to do with funding. It is completely irrelevant. This fire was 100 per cent to blame on the CFA because of their incompetence in the management role of it, and the lack of resourcing that was sent out to people requesting it.”

David said, “I’d love to know who the incident controller was that said my request was denied and we will find out because it’ll all be documented. We do believe that the incident controller that cancelled my request for the additional 20 trucks, needs to be held responsible for a lot of this fire.”

Incident controller Jamie Hansen speak about the night of January 9

INCIDENT Controller Jamie Hansen worked on the Longwood-Berry's Lane fire on the evening of January 9, as well as later working on the Walwa fire, near Wodonga.

The Longwood fire started on Wednesday, January 7 on the Hume Highway, at the start of two days of extreme weather, and the fire progressed south. On Friday, January 9, a day of catastrophic fire weather conditions, it spread even further south. Jamie said, "Along the way, it tore through the landscape and as a result there were over 1500 homes that were damaged or destroyed, and tragically, we lost the life of a community member in that area."

Jamie had been rostered on with a mobile statewide incident management team and was effectively on standby from 4pm in the afternoon of Friday, January 9. Their role was to attend anywhere in the state where a fire was burning and they needed a management team overnight.

Jamie said, "That team is in addition to normal night shift arrangements that incident control centres (ICCs) would have had prepared in readiness. I guess having said that, when the fire started burning around Alexandra, it impacted many of the people that were working that night or rostered to work that night and, in fact, that day. In many cases, people weren't able to get to the incident control centre to work that night."

In addition, there were intermittent power outages and internet outages and phone interruptions throughout the day of Alexandra.

Jamie explained, "So I, along with my team, was activated early. I think we got the call around one or two o'clock in the afternoon and were deployed into Seymour Incident Control Centre. We worked with the Alexandra team to transfer control for the evening across to us. We would then manage the operations for that night. Personally, I drove up from Mount Eliza on the Mornington Peninsula, and a number of my team came from different parts of the state, all into Seymour, and got ourselves established. We took control just after eight o'clock that evening."

As he was driving into the area, he was on the phone with his operations officer who was coming in via Yea. Jamie said, "We were having quite a few conversations about the scale and the intensity of the fire and how fast it was moving through the landscape. Forefront of our mind was that we could see that there were emergency warnings in place, but our great fear at the time was that people weren't able to get out of the path of this thing."

Fortunately, many people had evacuated, following the emergency warnings. He said, "That's one of the things that stood out for us is that we didn't have a great deal of people that were trapped or stranded. Most people heeded the warnings and the advice to leave early and were able to do so, which has certainly, in my opinion had a positive effect on any potential further losses of life."

Jamie was asked how the CFA ICC work in with other agencies. He said, "Under the umbrella of Emergency Management Victoria, all the emergency service response

agencies, such as CFA, Fire Rescue Victoria, Forest Fire Management Victoria, State Emergency Service, Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria, all come together in a standard incident management system that we all utilise. The teams that we put together for these events are cross-jurisdictional. You'll have people from all different agencies fulfilling roles within that team. It really is a testament to the sector, and we go by the mantra that we work as one. It's events like this that really demonstrate that. There are different experiences, there's different expertise, and everyone is working together regardless of the badge on their arm."

He added, "We've even had more than 1400 personnel from right around Australia and New Zealand and Canada that have also come in to support that and they all work under the same system. Some of our international guests require a little bit of a refresher on things because it's slightly different to overseas, but the general principles are all the same, so they're able to pick up quite quickly."

Jamie was asked, given that the CFAs are largely volunteer brigades, how did it work in terms of calling brigades out to help in the area? Did you just put a general call out? Or were there specific skills and brigades that were called for to come and help?

He responded, "The way it works is that right across the CFA area, on days like the seventh, eighth and ninth of January, the districts will have their readiness arrangements in place which will have pre-identified and pre-formed strike teams of crews on water tankers, and they're ready to go. They'll have teams that respond locally and then they'll have teams that can respond anywhere in the state."

"As soon as the fire escalates to a point where control can't be achieved in the first attack, then the request goes through our system, which will then call upon the closest of available strike teams, but then also goes out to more strategic planning about where we can get the extras from. We don't want to take tankers or strike teams from areas that are likely to be affected by fire, so we might end up going a bit further afield."

Questioned about the logistical challenge of keeping track of units under such conditions, Jamie said, "We've got a good understanding of where brigades have responded, via radio, and we're also able to track them using the GPS in their radios. There's been a lot of work done in the past, particularly within CFA, to have a better understanding of where their equipment is, and to ensure that our firefighters are always in contact with the control centre and that we can provide them with any critical safety information during their operation."

At the height of the fire, there were two divisions for the fire, comprising around five sectors, with a divisional commander in charge of each of them. Each sector might have five, six or seven strike teams allocated to them.

Jamie said, "The thing that always stands out for me is that right throughout the campaign of these fires, we continually have volunteers that step up to come out and do some of the most arduous tasks that

we can ask of them, and that can be at two or three o'clock in the morning where we need them to go and black out a paddock or a tree stump or the side of a road. Far less glamorous than saving someone's home. But we're constantly impressed with that. That extends right through to our FFM personnel who are working in the bush every single day, throughout the heat. On those 40 odd degree days, we still had crews in there with chainsaws and rake hoes and operating machinery, making our containment lines strong and keeping the fire contained. In some of them, it was to the detriment of their houses during this fire."

"We had quite a number of our emergency responders who lost homes while they were at work and we've also had many others that have had their properties impacted by fire, whether it be burnt through their farm, lost stock, fences, trees, outbuildings, etcetera," he said.

He added, "One of the things that I do love about being involved in these incidents is that while there were devastating impacts on community that we have to bear and live with, and understand and appreciate, it's how well their response and support agencies come together and work together for one purpose."

When asked how he personally coped with the pressures of the role, he said, "When I take on the role of incident controller, the most important thing is to control a large team that is attempting to bring about some kind of control in some cases like this one, a fire that cannot be controlled. So I do get quite focused on that. And for me, it's about ensuring that the team is working effectively and keeping focused and where required, they get the support and the ability to have that five minutes to check themselves, and then get on with the work in a clear state of mind."

With 30 years of experience with the CFA and Fire Rescue Victoria, and having been to some of Victoria's largest bushfires in that time, he knows what it's like on the fireground. "I know what it's like to be at the front door of a house with an incredibly intense bushfire bearing down upon you where the sky goes black and you're completely and utterly showered in embers and the radiant heat that comes off these things and then the screaming flames and trees falling and power line falling and gas cylinders exploding and cars blowing up in front of you. It can be a very traumatic experience. We in the fire service are very fortunate to have the psychological support after the fact, but also prepare us before the fact."

Incident controllers also do a lot of work with psychologists to understand how they're most likely going to react in certain situations.

He added, "I do sympathise with people who have lost their homes and that tried to defend their homes. For those people, I can empathise with them on what it's like. Not that I've had to defend my own home, but I've had to defend others where, you know, we thought we were all gone. They are moments that, as I was driving in to this control centre and watching that fire burn, I was thinking about some of those moments, but it doesn't

take your focus away. It just keeps it real for you, I think."

He commented that, "While there's still a lot of activity happening, it's in those down times and the quieter periods where the flashing lights are turned off that people start to reflect and they start to question their own decisions."

But as they say, hindsight is always 20/20.

He said, "It's an understandable feeling to go through that, and I completely acknowledge it, but it is absolutely impossible for us to defend every single home... Everyone gave it 100 per cent as far as I could tell, or 110 per cent."

In the weeks following the fire, small fires have continued popping up all over the landscape. He said that their focus has been on containing the perimeter and extinguishing hot spots, with some areas inaccessible. Decomposed vegetation along creek lines have also caused significant challenges.

They are less interested in smouldering trees in areas of burnt ground, but are certainly keen to extinguish stumps and trees that are threatening or have the potential to get into an unburnt area of bush or grassland.

In the post-fire environment, "Everyone will be going through different levels of impact, right through from the people that lost their home through to people that feel guilty about the fact that they didn't lose their home, and everything in between. The stock loss, the potential displacement, the inability to get back to their homes, the damage to their property, the impact on the environment and to the local fauna, it all plays out in different ways. When you are confronted with that level of trauma and this overwhelming situation that's in front of you, you can often feel frustrated, angry and isolated, and really feel alone. What we don't want people to do is to go inside their shell and think that they can do this all by themselves. You know, they're not alone. They don't need to bear this burden by themselves. We have the emergency recovery hotline. That's a really good one-stop shop to get the support that people need, right through from how to go about insurance, how to go about temporary accommodation, and the psychosocial sociological support that is often required... It's everyone in the family that needs to be checked on here and particularly the children who often won't verbalise it. We know from the research that getting back to a sense of normality for children really does protect them from further psychological damage down the track," he said.

He added that there is traditionally another eight weeks of hot weather. "As much as it's difficult to comprehend, there is still potential for significant fires across Victoria over the next eight weeks. We just continue to encourage people to utilise the Vic Emergency app on their phone and keep doing what they've been doing. I want to, again acknowledge the frustration that people have felt over the last few weeks. We know that it takes time to open roads and make areas safe for people to return. I personally thank people for their patience and completely understand the frustration."



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Local VFBV reps stress importance of new CFA trucks

CAPTAIN of the Buxton Fire Brigade, Paul Denham, and Captain of the Strath Reedy Creek Fire Brigade, Eric Smith, are both state councillors for Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV). In the aftermath of the Longwood bushfires, they are petitioning for updated trucks to support volunteers and brigade operations.

Captain Paul Denham was able to speak with Victorian Treasurer Jaclyn Symes while she was at the Alexandra CFA Station post-fire.

"We had a one-on-one discussion in relation to the fleet and fire stations in District 12, particularly Yea and Alexandra Group areas," Paul said. "We spoke about the need to replace the almost 700 single cab tankers that are still in the fleet. The estimated cost to replace these antiquated vehicles is around \$350 million, not a lot of money considering the contribution that volunteer firefighters make to the Victorian economy each year.

"While there's a current program to build 50 new 2000 litre Light Tankers, that's just a drop in the ocean when there are still nearly 700 outdated appliances in need of replacement. And when something like the Reservoir Rail Station costs \$250 million, that one train station in Melbourne equates to something like three quarters of the vehicles that need to be replaced."

The age of the trucks, as well as their mechanical state of being, are key concerns when it comes to CFA operations.

"It's not just a summer issue. It's riding on the back of the truck in the rain in winter and the baking sun in summer. It wasn't all that long ago that members of the Buxton brigade had to ride on the back of the truck in the snow when responding to incidents at Lake Mountain during winter. But the Buxton brigade is fortunate now, as they now have two twin cab tankers. The likes of Koriella, Taggerty and others still have single cab tankers which is less than ideal," Paul said.

"Speaking with the Treasurer was also an opportunity to talk about the need for another dedicated program to upgrade rural fire stations, similar to the 2010 Rural Fire Station program that occurred after the 2009 Victorian Bushfires. That program resulted in a number of brigades in the Alexandra Group area receiving new stations along with an extension to the Buxton station, but there are many more stations in need

of replacement or upgrading. The 2010 program delivered around 250 new or rebuilt fire stations and something similar is required to tackle the remaining 'tin shed' stations across the state. We still have stations that do not have a dedicated toilet within the fire station. Our volunteers shouldn't have to visit another nearby building to use a toilet.

"The Treasurer was interested to know which stations I was referring to. The obvious stations in the Alexandra Group area that came to mind were Koriella, Yarck, Terip Terip and Taggerty. You'd probably add Narbethong to that, along with places like Homewood, Highlands and Molesworth in the Yea Group area.

Strath Reedy Creek Fire Brigade Captain Eric Smith added to these concerns, explaining that the Yea CFA Group is facing similar issues.

"Yea Group's got lots of tankers that are well and truly over 30 years old. Some of the stations need a lot of work. Highlands and Molesworth come to mind. Molesworth is in the process of doing some building modifications, but I think what this fire has proven is that Molesworth probably needs more than what they were thinking they needed to do," Eric said.

"The realities of a situation like the Longwood Fire shows what is really happening, not what you might think is happening sometimes. It showed that the people who are in the CFA are quite capable of looking after the area. They worked extremely hard under pretty horrible circumstances, quite smartly as well.

"I think there were mechanical failures on both new and old tankers. Which is the nature of machinery. But it showed the shortcoming of the lack of a comprehensive replacement programs for trucks.

"They just need to have a program that replaces vehicles in a timely fashion and budget for it.

"Volunteers just want CFA to get its fair share of the money. CFA protects 93 per cent of Victoria's land mass, yet only gets 20 per cent of the money. Given volunteers are also donating their time and safety, the least the government can do is ensure CFA is funded to the same standards as its paid services," he concluded.

Paul also spoke to the issue of ongoing representation from the Chief Fire Officer that

all CFA vehicles are fit for purpose, when a lot of the trucks don't hold up to modern standards. The CFA Chief Officer has reportedly stated that provided an appliance is roadworthy, it is safe and fit for purpose.

"I broached that very point with [Jaclyn Symes] and she made the point that the Chief Fire Officer repeatedly makes these comments that the vehicles are fit for purpose. I would ask the question, what is fit for purpose? And just because a vehicle is roadworthy doesn't mean that it is fit for purpose," Paul said.

"In response to those who say a vehicle is fit for purpose merely because it is roadworthy, I would suggest that a Model T Ford can be roadworthy, but it's not necessarily the safest vehicle to be driving in an emergency.

"The key concern with a single cab tanker is that you have two or three people isolated in the rear seating area and that does not make it conducive to good communications when you're heading into a firefight. It's nothing about comfortable seating, although it definitely isn't comfortable, it is about being exposed to the elements and not being in good communication with the Crew Leader.

"And that can be the case with the average run-of-the-mill incident, such as a motor vehicle accident on the Black Spur, where the Crew Leader is wanting to communicate with the crew on the back about what they want them to do as they're approaching the incident.

"Those members sitting on the rear of the vehicle are not seeing what the Crew Leader is seeing and that can create a dangerous situation. Rather than simply turn around and talk to them, you have to rely on an intercom. It simply isn't good enough and is nothing to do with a vehicles' roadworthy.

"You do not get good situational awareness facing backwards looking at where you have been, rather than where you are going to. Those on the back of a single cab vehicle are isolated and that, in itself, can be dangerous, especially if the crew goes into an entrapment situation.

"It also gives rise to a range of health concerns, particularly in a bushfire response as the crew on the rear will be breathing the hot air and toxic smoke products produced by the fire.

"Anyone that says that a single cab tanker in this day and age is fit for purpose does not understand what it's like to ride on the back of a single cab tanker. Both in summer and in winter.

Asked about the inquiry into CFA's management of the Longwood bushfire, Paul responded with optimism.

"We teach our new recruits the process for conducting an After Action Review right from the start of their training. It is a vital part of learning from incidents we attend. It will be important for everyone to partake in the various reviews in an open and honest way. I'm sure there will be things to learn and things that can be done better in the future," he said.

"I don't believe you could be critical of CFA's intentions and the work that was done by the community safety teams at a brigade level, district level or state level. But there's always an opportunity to have that conversation and look for improvement."

Paul concluded by speaking about how the ongoing issue of support for CFA at a government level could be resolved.

"If you turn around and say to volunteers, within the next three years, we will replace every single cab tanker in the fleet, then the argument and the discussion becomes null and void. People who are actually out there putting their lives at risk deserve better," Paul said.

"I remember someone saying to me years ago that all we want is good training, good equipment, good protective clothing and good facilities. Simple as that.

"Today we have very good structural and bushfire protective clothing, improved training, state-of-art equipment like breathing apparatus and thermal imaging cameras being rolled out on new appliances, and every vehicle now carries an AED.

"So, while we have some good equipment, some of that equipment is being carried on antiquated appliances," he added.

Paul and Eric both commented on the need to ensure that volunteer brigades have modern facilities in order to attract younger members to the organisation. This was a point that wasn't lost on the Treasurer when she asked which brigades needed better facilities in both Group areas.

Parliamentary inquiry into summer bushfires to go ahead

MEMBER for Eildon, Cindy McLeish MP, said that the Parliamentary inquiry into the 2026 Longwood bushfires is an opportunity for Murrindindi and Mansfield Shire locals impacted by and having responded to the bushfires to have their say and have questions about the summer bushfires answered.

Ms McLeish said, “The bushfires decimated 140,000 hectares including large swathes in the Murrindindi Shire and into Mansfield Shire.”

“A shocking 45 per cent of the total number of structures destroyed across Victoria were in the Murrindindi Shire. That includes 93 homes lost across 21 localities. In Mansfield Shire, five homes in Merton were lost. These were the largest losses in the state.”

“On top of this, 520 sheds including shearing and machinery sheds, 2000 kilometres of damaged or destroyed fencing, 14,000 hectares of farmland, and over 5500 livestock were lost.”

Ms McLeish said that 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, management and response to the fires. These questions can now be addressed through the inquiry to be undertaken by the Legislative Council’s Environment and Planning Standing Committee.

After originally opposing the inquiry proposal, the Victorian Government relented.

The inquiry will consider and report on the state government’s bushfire preparedness, as well as the causes and circumstances of the bushfire, funding and equipment for emergency services and overall impact.

Ms McLeish encourages as many people as possible to make a public submission by the closing date of March 15 via parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/inquiry-into-the-2026-summer-fires-across-victoria/submissions

Parliament determined the inquiry is to be completed by June 1.

Inquiry into the 2026 summer fires across Victoria

On February 4, the Legislative Council agreed to the following motion:

That the Environment and Planning Committee inquire into, consider and report, by June 1, on:

(1) the preparation and planning by government, emergency services agencies and the community ahead of the fire season, including management of public and private land and roadsides;

(2) the causes and circumstances of the bushfires, including climate change and the adequacy of the government’s climate policies and actions, forecasts, warnings and public education on bushfire threats;

(3) funding, equipment and appliances for the Country Fire Authority (CFA), Fire Rescue Victoria and Forest Fire Management Victoria and recruitment and retention of CFA volunteers;

(4) the emergency responses to control and contain the fires, including adequacy of resources and communications;

(5) resilience of critical services and infrastructure such as electricity, water and telecommunications during and after the fires;

(6) the impact on the community, business and agriculture and efforts to aid in recovery;

(7) the impact on the environment, including native wildlife, and any measures to better protect native forests, including technology for early detection and firefighting in remote locations;

(8) the impacts of climate change on the natural environment, which has resulted in more frequent and intense bushfires occurring in Victoria;

(9) the prevalence and impact of misinformation leading into and during the fire season;

(10) the interjurisdictional support into and out of Victoria leading into and during the fire season, including interstate and international deployments, Commonwealth support and relief efforts; and

(11) lessons from and progress on the implementation of recommendations from previous inquiries, reports and Royal Commissions.

Tyrrell seeks explanation into CFA command decisions

ONE Nation Member for Northern Victoria Region Rikkie-Lee Tyrrell has used the first sitting week of State Parliament for 2026 to question some operational decisions by CFA command during the last month’s devastating bushfire events in Northern Victoria.

In a constituency question to the Minister for Emergency Services Vicki Ward, Ms Tyrrell raised concerns about examples of CFA crews being ordered by commanding officers away from fire scenes, leaving residents to fight fires by themselves, using their own equipment.

“In the face of catastrophic bushfires, affected communities joined together to help save each other’s homes and livelihoods with great courage and resilience,” Ms Tyrrell said.

“Once again our brave CFA members came to the rescue, continuously fighting fires for days on end to save properties and lives.”

“In the wake of the fires however I have been told stories by my constituents of CFA crews being

ordered from fires by commanding officers, leaving property owners to battle the fires alone with their own equipment,” Ms Tyrrell said.

In one instance a constituent told Ms Tyrrell their family was battling fire on their property outside of Yarck when a CFA tanker arrived, drove into the paddock and immediately left, the crew ordered to return to the command centre where they sat unused. The family saved their home but sadly not their herd.

In her contribution, Ms Tyrrell said similar incidents were experienced by residents at Koetong in the northeast and at Mt Tenneriffe near Locksley.

“No-one is questioning the commitment of CFA personnel to keep Victorian’s safe but reports of decisions by commanding officers to stand down units on the frontline, leaving residents alone are extremely concerning,” Ms Tyrrell said.

“I have asked Minister Ward to enquire into the circumstances surrounding these decisions because my constituents affected deserve answers.”

Why is electricity reconnection so expensive after a fire?

MANY in the bushfire-impacted area have been shocked at the cost of reestablishing a power connection to their properties.

An Energy Safe Victoria spokesperson explained, “Victoria’s bushfire history shows the serious risks posed by private aerial lines. To better protect lives, homes and communities in the highest risk areas, the law requires these assets to be placed underground in line with long-standing expert advice.”

In Victoria, where private electric lines need to be constructed, replaced or significantly repaired in Hazardous Bushfire Risk Areas (HBRA), they must be placed underground, as outlined in the Electricity Safety (General) Regulations 2019.

This work is generally done by electricians.

For more information about private aerial lines and electricity distribution, please visit, energysafe.vic.gov.au/industry-guidance/electrical/installations-and-infrastructure/private-aerial-lines

As part of the Powerline Bushfire Safety Program, the Victorian Government invested \$200 million in undergrounding and insulation works for powerlines, including some private electric lines, in high bushfire-risk areas. The program has now closed.

AusNet handles the reconnection once these works have been done. An AusNet spokesperson said, AusNet will be prioritising [bushfire associated] connection requests and will explore waiving the application fee or other AusNet associated costs on a case-by-case basis. Impacted customers should call the dedicated Bushfire Support Line 1300 561 171.

Questions asked of the State Control Centre

THE State Control Centre was asked a series of questions about the management of the Longwood-Berry’s Lane fire. The questions were: When was an incident control centre (ICC) set up for the Longwood-Berry’s Lane? What shifts did incident controllers work? Did any incident controllers abandon their posts during a shift? When was power and communications lost in Alexandra and what impact did this have on calling in additional vehicles? When was the ICC moved from Alexandra to Seymour, was there an incident controller for the whole time while this was occurring? How many additional brigades were called in when the fire was approaching Ruffy and Highlands?

A State Control Centre spokesperson responded, “An ICC was positioned at Alexandra on January 7 to support emergency operations in the Alexandra-Seymour ICC footprint. This is governed by joint standard operating procedures in place across our emergency services agencies. ICCs are staffed by a mix of highly trained career staff and volunteers.

“Given how quickly the fire grew and the potential to impact the Alexandra township, the incident management team was relocated to the Seymour ICC facility, which was a seamless transition.

“Additional resources were called in as needed and this has included interstate and international support.

“Consistent with our continuous improvement culture, an after action review will be conducted to identify opportunities for improvement and things that went well that should be sustained for our future emergency response.”

Two further questions were also sent: Are you able to advise whether any members of incident command abandoned their post during their shift during the Longwood fire? Are you able to advise why the ICC for the Longwood-Berry’s Lane fire was set up at Alexandra, in the path of the fire, in a building on the northern edge of the town?

No response was received by the time this newspaper went to print.

How many incident controllers are based in Murrindindi Shire?

EMERGENCY Management Victoria was asked how many active Level Three Incident Controllers are located in the Murrindindi Shire area.

A State Control Centre spokesperson said, “There are currently 79 Level Three Incident Controllers across Victoria, with an additional 50 Level Two Incident Controllers on the path to being accredited as a Level Three.

“The number of Level Three Incident Controllers across the sector is sufficient to meet the needs of the emergencies we face this high risk weather season.”

The following background information was also provided: Incident Controllers are deployed across the

state in line with risk, readiness and response arrangements. The rigorous accreditation process for becoming a Level Three Incident Controller ensures that Victoria has an extremely high calibre of incident controllers positioned around the state.

When asked whether no data was available regarding Murrindindi Shire Incident Controllers, we were advised that they would be unable to provide that information as it would be a breach of privacy.

It was pointed out that there would be no breach of privacy in providing such numbers, however no response was received by the time this newspaper went to print.

Triple Zero actions during recent fire

Triple Zero Victoria spokesperson has advised, “Triple Zero Victoria has robust measures in place to respond to periods of peak demand and extreme weather, and we were well prepared for January 9.

“In addition to extra staff at our State Emergency Communications Centres, TZV also deployed Emergency Field Communications Officers (EFCOs) to key control centres, including the Incident Control Centres at Alexandra/Seymour, Epsom and Tallangatta, where they supported the management of the Longwood, Harcourt and Walwa fires.

The deployment of Triple Zero Victoria EFCOs to Incident Control Centres provides a critical extra layer of real-time data, on-the-ground support and field intelligence, significantly strengthening situational awareness for all emergency responders.

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Over 300 people attend Yarck Colour Run

THE Yarck Community Picnic and Colour Run was well attended last Saturday at the Yarck Recreation Reserve, with over 300 Murrindindi Shire families and children turning out to bring some colour to the fire blackened landscape.

Entry was through a gold coin donation, with all proceeds going to the Yarck CFA. Some \$1070 was raised and donated.

There were children’s activities, face painting, and the main event of the colour run and water fight at 5pm.

Red Earth Bulbs from Silvan, after fundraising and communication with local groups, turned out for the colour run, bringing donations with them.

They facilitated potting up of bulbs with all the children to remind the community that bulbs go through a dormant period,

before they flourish. They also brought with them a truck load of in-bloom sunflowers and liliums.

Red Earth Bulbs managed to raise \$10,708 towards bushfire recovery and spent \$4474 on this event. They replaced two Chromebooks for year seven and year nine boys, replaced a year eight boys saxophone, replaced two monstera plants for a year seven boy, thanks to Biemond Nurseries, and brought 200 water pistols, 10 tables and four marquees to the Yarck Recreation Reserve.

They also presented ‘The Story of Daffy’, a children’s book by Tim Drewitt from Red Earth Bulbs.

This is yet another example of the amazing support being given to the communities affected by the Longwood bushfires, and a great day of fun for children and families.



Over 300 people attended the event in Yarck. -BD



The battle was on with over 200 water pistols. -BD



Attendees enjoyed a strong game of tug of war. -BD



Watching the water fight and colour run at the Yarck Recreation Reserve. -BD



The Red Earth Bulbs marquees, with bulb potting and sunflowers for attendees. -BD



Water and colouring was spread around. -BD



The James family from Alexandra. -BD



Participants were doused in water and colouring for some fun. -BD



White clothing didn’t stay white for long. -BD



Sprinklers were set up to make sure everyone cooled down. -BD



The children were looking especially colourful by the end. -BD

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FIRE RECOVERY

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The new Fire Recovery Newsletter keeps our community connected with the latest support, resources and local updates following the January 2026 fires.

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Register at murrindindi.vic.gov.au/recovery-news



Mayors Message

As Mayor of Murrindindi Shire Council, I warmly welcome you to read the inaugural edition of our Fire Recovery Newsletter, and register for upcoming news.

The Longwood fire has had a profound impact on many people across our Shire. For some, the effects have been immediate and life changing. For others, the impacts continue to unfold over time - emotionally, practically and financially. This newsletter has been created to support our community throughout the recovery journey.

Cr Damien Gallagher
Mayor, Murrindindi Shire Council

Fire Recovery Hubs

If you've been affected by the January 2026 bushfires, support is available at our Fire Recovery Hubs. You don't need to know what help you need - you can simply drop in to ask questions, get information, or talk things through.

Alexandra Library - 49 Grant Street

- Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm

Yea Library - 15 The Semicircle

- Tuesday and Thursday from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm
- Saturday from 9.30 am to 12 noon



Community-led relief hubs continue to support recovery, with Council staff available to help residents connect with support and services.

Yarck Hall	Monday 23 February	10.00 am to 12 noon
Terip Terip Recreation Reserve	Thursday 19 and 26 February	1.00 to 4.00 pm
Highlands Hall	Friday 20 and 27 February	9.00 am to 12 noon

For more recovery information, scan the QR code or visit
murrindindi.vic.gov.au/recovery



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ON Wednesday, February 4, Alexandra Rotary hosted Jack Piper from ARC Legal, a community legal service with offices in Bendigo and Shepparton.

Jack is presently based at the Alexandra Hub, providing free advice and referral to those in need.

The main take home message from his talk was that people should seek advice before signing any documents or accepting any settlement. Having an extra set of eyes go over the paperwork can help to ensure that people receive their entitlements. The stresses associated with disaster can adversely affect peoples ability to make the best decisions for themselves and their families.

Many people who have had minimal contact with lawyers previously may need assistance with tenancy, consumer, family law, insurance or civil matters in the coming months.

ARC Justice is a community legal centre, supporting communities across central and northern Victoria after the fires. Free legal help is available. This includes renters’ rights when homes are damaged or destroyed, insurance claims including cash settlements and disputes, court access and orders affected by fires or displacement, emergency payments where government or insurance support is delayed or denied including Centrelink, other legal issues that come up during recovery, lost important documents or identification, issues with neighbours including fencing, boundaries and fallen trees, unpaid fines and debt or problems keeping up with payments, and treatment at work including unfair dismissal or denied leave entitlements.



John Allcock, Jack Piper, Chris Barry, Sue Sedelies and Geoff Proctor. -S

The fires: Alexandra and the hamlets

by Robyn Ellis

I LIVE in the country town of Alexandra, in the north east of Victoria. Generally I have to explain to people, even most Victorians, where it is. That is, until recently when it became the vortex of massive bushfires. I knew it had cut through local anonymity, and astoundingly cracked global notice when I received a Whats App message from my concerned Parisian friend. Alexandra had made it onto the French news.

Alexandra boasts around 2500 people. It is the big smoke to many little hamlets that surround it. These dots on the map have historical roots from gold rush years like Alexandra, maybe also from timber, farming or just providing a strategic stop for watering horses or providing a railway station, long since gone. The Great War memorial on the Maroondah Highway in the middle of Yarck, names many young men from more than several of these hamlets, hinting at thriving former times. But the names of these hamlets had been largely unknown even to recent tree changers to Alexandra.

But with the Longwood fires travelling some 80 kilometres at speeds quicker than you could drive, these hamlets were wrenched from anonymity.

I woke that fateful Friday morning from evacuated safety, to the ABC news that dear little Ruffy had lost its general store and its community hall, along with most of its 20 homes.

Within a blink, Terip Terip was next hit. It’s CFA crew of six with three trucks or units, even after repeated calls for back up, were left alone to defend their little hamlet. One of the more heart-rending newspaper reports I read, was of the Head of the Terip Terip CFA having to make the call not to save her own home, as it had a long drive way bordered by large cypresses and was unlikely to survive. So she and her partner, also fighting the fires, saved the home opposite.

With erratic winds the fires raced between Gobur and Terip Terip. Our friends there, Donald and Elizabeth Coles, decided Elizabeth would evacuate and they’d get their horses to safety. Donald with a neighbour, saved two nearby homes, their calls for back up proving fruitless. Several hours of hard work later he managed to singlehandedly save their home, though losing all but one of their sheds, machinery and garden. I saw their photo along with other thankful survivors on local Facebook page at the Highlands

Community Hub, being provided with food, essentials and probably an appreciated sanity check-in.

Highlands is obscurely located on a tableland surrounded by squabbily forests and steep, rocky roads, somewhere near Ruffy and Terip Terip. I’d declared it a kind of Brigadoon, until that touching scene of practical kindness and care by local Highlanders made it real.

Then came Kanumbra. This was getting more personal, as my good friend Stewart lives on the corner of the Gobur Kanumbra Road and the Maroondah Highway. As indicated by the Yarck Memorial, Kanumbra had once been larger. What remained was a school, school house and two churches, until that morning.

Stewart is retired and lives with his border collie, Cora. He had been resolute about staying. I was alarmed to see on the Victorian Emergency App that the fires were travelling towards his home. I texted him about the fires being four kilometres away. He left quickly after my message, already having hooked his caravan to his four-wheel drive.

When he did go home four days later, his house was standing but everything around it was blackened and flattened. Sheds, garden, machinery, tools, tanks, infrastructure and garden. I offered to do a Go Fund Me, but he said “Others are worse off, and I have my caravan with a gas fridge.”

Down the Maroondah from Merton Cutting, trees on both sides instantaneously became a charred twisted wreath, and the fires undaunted headed towards Yarck. Here, the best and most plentiful cherries in Australia are produced at Koala Cherries. Because of this some people know Yarck. But you also have to drive through it to get to the high country for snow skiing in the winter or for water skiing and fly fishing in the summer. This ‘punching above its weight’ small hamlet is also an excellent pitstop with Bucks meat pies, Giddy Goat’s berry vanilla slices and top coffee.

Heroically, the CFA and FFM managed to prevent the fires snatching the girdle of Yarck shops and homes hugging the highway, but as you cast your eyes up the hill, the trail of destruction had claimed fields, the cemetery, the odd farm house and five prized cherry orchards, Koala Cherries later lamented on Facebook.

Our Yarck friends, Robyn and John lost a cottage, a shed and a huge paddock. Their

cattle are being looked after by friends near Acheron. When I texted Robyn she replied, “We are fine. We’ll have fun rebuilding the cottage, and wasn’t it lucky we had already fundraised for the refugees, cutting up all that red gum wood from the paddock.”

The fires seemed to know the turnoff to Alexandra from Yarck, but they had also travelled from Caveat past Molesworth, haphazardly burning around the Cathkin turnoff, then with an astounding acceleration burnt every grass blade, ancient tree and sapling for as far as the eye could see up until the Goulburn Valley Highway joined up again with the Maroondah.

Fawcett was its next victim. All along Spring Creek Rd properties were razed to the ground. The attending Koriella CFA, like all units, implemented the mostly successful strategy, to just save the homes. Luckily the Fawcett Hall was also spared and days later became another well appreciated community hub.

The fires were now only five kilometres away from Alexandra, coming through Koriella and up and over the Eglington Cutting, claiming the Deelen’s home on the hill to the right. Elizabeth Deelen was in church the following Sunday doing the readings. I had not known her as a robust person so I was in absolute awe of her resilience. Mario the Anglican Vicar preached his most compelling sermon, using Elizabeth’s clever cattle as his theme. These cows had headed to and stood in the dam for the fire’s duration.

On the other side of the cutting, Maintongoon properties were singed, conifers blackened and sheds reduced to twisted corrugated pulp.

Then things got really risky, as the CFA, Forest Fire Management (FFM) and experienced hardworking locals were simultaneously fighting the fires coming in from Whanregarwen, approaching Alexandra from the south to the Maroondah Highway. It jumped the road several kilometres closer in and the Whanregarwen and Buxton CFA along with units from other places, were grading along property boundaries well in advance of the fires, attempting to stem the flames.

Back on the showgrounds side of Alexandra, at least a dozen CFA units were also grading and doing everything to protect the town from being hit. Murrindindi Mayor, ‘Damo’, is also a volunteer in the Alexandra CFA. Apparently he was fighting elsewhere

when his own sheds burnt down. Around this time, the decision to not evacuate Kellock Lodge, our old people’s home, was being tested. However a CFA unit was stationed on each of the four street corners around it, ensuring protection.

After such a coordinated hard working team effort the miraculous happened, the fires obliged by going along the seam of surrounding hills, mainly avoiding the town.

But the fires hadn’t quite finished. They came back towards Acheron, another small hamlet with its own hall and CFA, on the Melbourne side of Alexandra. In a hard to fathom fickle trajectory the fires took several homes and purged properties, but left the next green and untouched. Acheron’s well-loved artist Marian, often opens her established family property for arty cultural events. As a gesture of gratitude that her home was spared, she donated one of her treasured works entitled, *New Life*, to the fundraising effort for the remarkable volunteer CFA teams.

The one home that burned down in Alexandra, is around the corner from our place. An ember had jumped from the Acheron blaze, back along Mount Pleasant/Hobans Road and snuck up and over the hill towards Halls Flat Road. Experienced CFA and FFM neighbours knew who to call and seven units arrived to contain the blaze before more carnage occurred. The next day, a return blaze saw the same immediate response.

I was so deeply humbled and thankful by the courage, quick thinking and hard work of neighbours who had stayed behind.

Now you know the names of the little hamlets near here, and how deeply impacted they were with so many homes and properties burned, and their livelihoods ransacked. On one hand it’s hard to separate them out from us in Alexandra, as we were all in it together. But on the other hand, though just a community hall or CFA each hamlet has its own identity and history, and adds its own particular flavour.

To witness how our shire generally, and Alexandra led by our Mayor who ‘held a hose’, how community leaders experienced in coordination, logistics, attending to needs and building resilience, and to see the massive outpouring of compassion, generosity and good will is a thing that makes living in this small town, with its surrounding unique hamlets, is a thing of joy.

PUZZLES

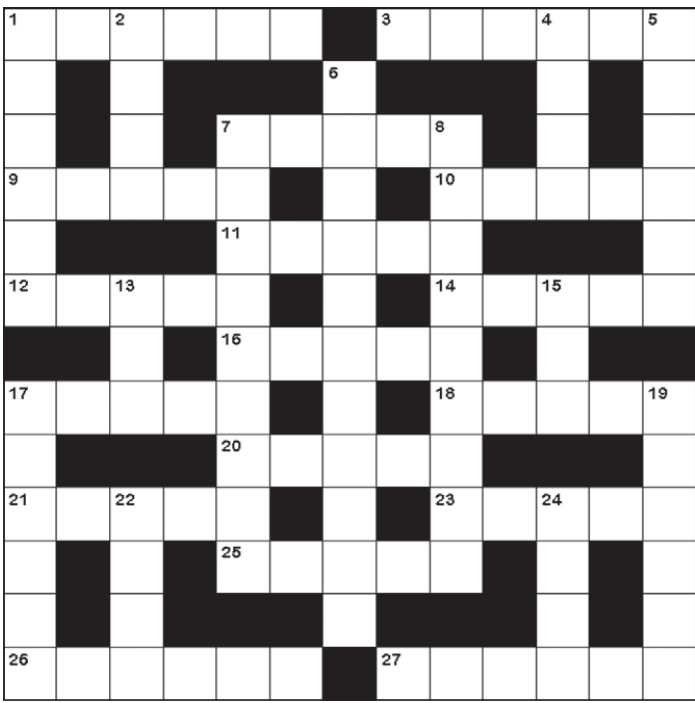
SOLUTIONS
Page 15

KID'S PUZZLES

Crossword

ACROSS

- 1. Act in a threatening manner.
- 3. A tenant in someone's house.
- 7. Break into pieces violently and noisily.
- 9. Not secret or hidden.
- 10. Unable to move or resist motion.
- 11. Small, delicate, and charming.
- 12. A minor actor in crowd scenes.
- 14. Slow to learn or understand.
- 16. Depressing in character and appearance.
- 17. Swallow a drink heartily in one go.
- 18. A beautiful messenger of God.
- 20. A covering worn to protect clothing.
- 21. A seemingly bottomless gulf or chasm.
- 23. Crave for someone else's property.
- 25. The subject matter of a discussion.
- 26. A formal military gesture of respect.
- 27. A breakfast food prepared from grain.



DOWN

- 1. An ill-tempered or gloomy state of mind.
- 2. The central block or hub of a wheel.

- 4. An open-mouthed stare of amazement.
- 5. A toy used to amuse babies.
- 6. Showing little interest or enthusiasm.
- 7. Firm, dependable and loyal behaviour.
- 8. An obstruction that delays progress.
- 13. Drink made by steeping leaves in water.
- 15. Bother persistently with trivial complaints.
- 17. An uneasy feeling about one's conduct.
- 19. Anything capable of causing death.
- 22. A long, loud, mournful wail.
- 24. Open glass used for holding cut flowers.

Word Search

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

Outdoors

- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| ADELAIDE | GEELONG |
| BRISBANE | HAWTHORN |
| CARLTON | NORTHMELBOURNE |
| COLLINGWOOD | RICHMOND |
| ESSENDON | STKILDA |
| FREMANTLE | SYDNEY |

Math Square

	+	6	×		52
-		×		÷	
	+		+		6
+		+		-	
7	+		+		21
8		11		-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.

Cryptogram

AFL Teams

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
8								

J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R

S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
23	5						

T							A	T
5	25	9		15	11	9	8	5

A		S	T		A			A	
8	3	23	5	11	8	6	26	8	21

S				T
23	19	7	11	5

Sudoku

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

Difficulty: 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.

Colouring Page



Word Search - Words starting with "C"

- CAMERA
- CARROT
- CASTLE
- CHAIR
- CHEESE
- CIRCLE
- CIRCUS
- CLEVER
- CLOCK
- CLOWN
- CLUMSY
- COMB
- CRAYON
- CYCLE

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

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.

3	+		+		15
+		+		-	
	-		-		3
+		-		-	
	-		+	2	1
18		-2		1	

Jokes

Q: What is a robot's favourite snack?

A: Computer chips.

Q: What is a calendar's favourite food?

A: Dates.

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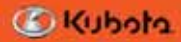
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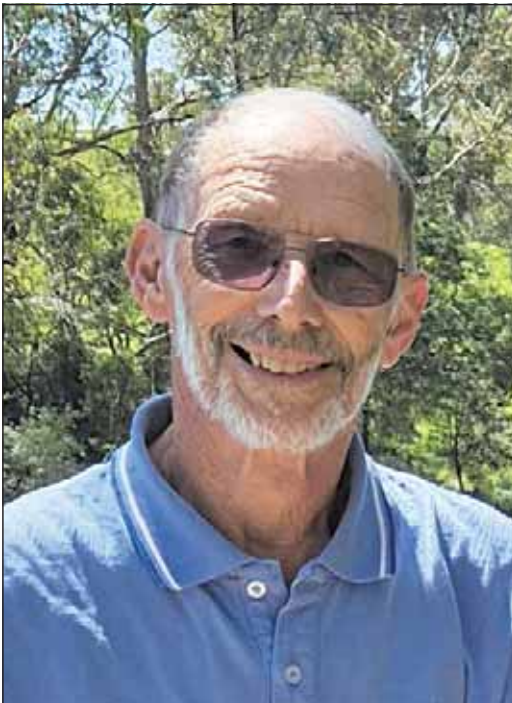
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Ross Carr. -S

Vale
Ross
Carr

by members of the Yarck Rural Fire Brigade

IT is with sadness that the Yarck Rural Fire Brigade learned of the passing of former esteemed member, (Donald) Ross Carr on January 27 at the Warragul Community Aged Care Facility.

Ross was a member of the Yarck Brigade for nearly 35 years commencing his active membership on January 16, 1986. Ross owned a small engineering business in Melbourne but more often than not, weekends and days off saw he and his wife Ann invariably attend the little house they owned near the station. They also saw it as their added contribution to the brigade to make sure the station was spotless inside and that the grass and surrounds were well maintained.

In his fire firefighting capacity, Ross was always first at the station and ready to go. His efforts were recognized with the National Emergency Medal for services on Black Saturday and the days following with his attendance at Marysville and other sites to fight fires and assist the community.

He engineered what would seem to be a simple hose winder for our members but in fact the reel has saved hours of manual rolling of hoses over the years. Simple yet a valued asset of the brigade, particularly now.

On a personal level, Ross, together with Ann, epitomized what membership of a local brigade looks like, protecting the community when needed and actively contributing to a strong cohesive local fire brigade. To Ann, their son Chris and other family members we offer our sincere condolences to a man that was special to us and will be remembered.

Alexandra
benefits from
funding to
help regional
shows thrive

THE Victorian Government is providing funding to 40 agricultural and pastoral societies to deliver projects that families and visitors can enjoy.

Member for Northern Victoria Jaclyn Symes announced local recipients of the 2025 Agricultural and Pastoral Society Grants Program, supporting projects that bring communities together and promote Victoria's agricultural industry.

"Helping regional communities thrive is at the heart of these grants. As a government, we're proud to support initiatives that deliver real benefits and enable society to create events that bring their communities together," Ms Symes said.

Alexandra Pastoral and Agricultural Association Inc will use the funding to construct permanent working dog trial yards, enabling them to conduct more trials throughout the year and reduce manual handling.

The program supports projects and activities promoting agriculture, improving infrastructure and upgrading amenities for community use during annual agricultural shows and events, ensuring these shows remain a vibrant hub for families, volunteers, and visitors alike.

For more information, head to agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/funds-grants-programs/agricultural-and-pastoral-society-grants

Driving safely
to avoid hitting
kangaroos

ON the morning of Wednesday, February 11, concerned locals noted the deaths of two kangaroos on Bayley Street in Alexandra, a mother and a joey.

Kangaroos are a common sight in our towns, and drivers always need to keep an eye out for them, particularly at night.

It's always wise to reduce your speed, well below the speed limit. Use high beams, but avoid flashing your lights as it is likely to dazzle the animal. Don't swerve but brake hard if a kangaroo is on the road in front of you.

If you hit an animal and it is injured, contact a local wildlife rescuer. If the animal is killed in the collision, move the animal off the road. Check for joeys if the animal is female. Contact a wildlife rescuer if the joey is still alive.

PUZZLES
SOLUTIONS

CRYPTOGRAM

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
8 4 16 22 9 20 15 25 26 13 18 6 10 21 7 19 17 11 23 5 3 1 14 2 12 24

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

MATH SQUARES

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KIDS - MATH SQUARES

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+		+		-	
9	-	1	-	5	3
+		-		-	
6	-	7	+	2	1
18		-2		1	

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TRADES ADVERTISING DEADLINE NOON THURSDAY

The Alexandra Standard and *The Yea Chronicle* are printed by North East Media, Wangaratta.

Print Post Approved - PP 100000292.

DEATH NOTICES

BROWN, PATRICIA ELLEN (nee Betts)

Born 18/03/1937.

Pattie passed away on Friday, 06/02/2026, aged 88. Much loved mother of Jeanine and Andrea, mother in law to Graham, grandmother to James, Kaitlin and Sam, great grandmother to Abel, Amelie and Caspar.

Daughter of James and Norah Betts (both dec).

Sister of John (dec) Lesley (dec) Lorraine and Yvonne.

Special thanks to Kellock Lodge staff and friends from the independent living units for their lovely care of Pattie.

"Mumsie", our love is in you and around you, wherever you go our love goes with you. You will be sadly missed.

PUBLIC NOTICES

I, Parminder Singh, residing at Narre Warren, Victoria, Australia, have changed my name to Parminder Singh Virk as per Change of Name Certificate issued by Births, Deaths and Marriages, Victoria Certificate No: 93298/2026, dated 6/02/2026. Henceforth, I shall be known as Parminder Singh Virk for all purposes.

FUNERAL NOTICES

CELEBRATION of Pattie's Life –

All welcome. Saturday, March 14, 2026 at 11.30am. Rennies At Acheron Gallery 132 Breakaway Road Acheron. If attending kindly RSVP Jeanine text or call 0438 815 788 for catering purposes by Wednesday, March 4, 2026.

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FITNESS EQUIPMENT

Rental and Sales

Alexandra
 Treadmills, X- trainers,
 exercise bikes, rowers
 and more.
PH:0407 231 377

MEETINGS

The Alexandra Football Netball Club Ladies Committee AGM will be held at the club rooms at 6pm on Monday, March 2, 2026. Everyone welcome. Any queries please contact Kath Hedger on 0438 520 382.

PETS & LIVESTOCK

ISA BROWN LAYERS - POL, \$35 each. Phone 5798 1868. Pick-up in Alexandra or Yea. beckysfreerange@gmail.com

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- To be respectful, friendly and punctual;
- Ability to work in a small close knit team;
- Have the ability to work within strict deadlines;
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TASKS:

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Closing date February 27, 2026.

Standard **The Yea Chronicle**

CFA questioned about whether firefighting support was refused

THE CFA was asked whether any calls from CFA teams for additional firefighting support were refused during the Longwood fire, and if so, whether they could provide further information and the reason/s for the refusal.

CFA Deputy Chief Officer North East Region Gavin Thompson replied, "The request for resources to the Longwood fire since commencement has been consistent, in addition to a significant call on CFA resources across all firegrounds statewide.

"Throughout the January fire period resources were dispatched to fires based on priority needs against the State Emergency Management Priorities established in the State Emergency Management Plan.

"CFA will be doing an after-action review into the January fires and have asked our members for their feedback."

When further pressed, they added, "Resource requests to the Longwood fire have been responded to from the very beginning, and throughout the January fire period.

"CFA and other emergency services resources were continually dispatched to fires based on priority needs against the State Emergency Management Priorities established in the State Emergency Management Plan.

"However, similar to other emergency response requests across the state during this period, some resources were unable to be met."

Council calls for urgent, locally delivered mental health support

MURRINDINDI Shire Council is calling on the Victorian Government to urgently revise the delivery model for recently announced bushfire mental health funding, warning that the current announced approach risks leaving some of the state's most heavily impacted communities without accessible support.

In an open letter to Ingrid Stitt, Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, council has raised serious concerns that Murrindindi Shire is effectively excluded due to the tyranny of distance and being disconnected from the primary mechanism through which the \$6.9 million joint Commonwealth-State mental health package will be delivered.

The January 2026 bushfires burned through around a third of Murrindindi Shire, destroying approximately 200 homes and accounting for almost half of all residential losses across Victoria. Together with Strathbogie Shire, Murrindindi experienced a disproportionate share of the damage, with families displaced, livelihoods lost and communities re-traumatised.

Despite this scale of impact, Murrindindi Shire does not sit within the catchment of any Mental Health and Wellbeing Local facilities. The nearest services are located in Benalla, Shepparton and Lilydale, requiring travel of between 85 and 160 kilometres, or up to two-and-a-half hours each way, with no public transport options for many affected residents.

Murrindindi Shire Council Mayor Damien Gallagher said the current model creates an unacceptable barrier to care for people already dealing with trauma and loss.

"While we welcome the commitment of additional mental health funding, the way it is proposed to be delivered simply does not work for rural and dispersed communities like ours," Cr Gallagher said.

"For people experiencing trauma, grief and loss, asking them to travel long distances away from their support networks is not a minor inconvenience, it is a barrier that will prevent access altogether."

Council is calling for a portion of the funding to be allocated directly to established local services in Murrindindi

Shire, including Yea and District Memorial Hospital, Alexandra District Health and the Lower Hume Primary Mental Health Service. These providers have strong local knowledge, trusted relationships and proven experience delivering trauma-informed care in rural communities.

"Their work behind the scenes, supporting individuals and families through what is an incredibly difficult time, should be recognised and sincerely thanked," he said.

Since the bushfires, local health providers have reported a significant surge in demand, averaging an additional 30 hours per week across services. Council has warned this level of demand is unsustainable without immediate and targeted investment.

Cr Gallagher said the current approach contradicts the National Disaster Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework, which emphasises place-based, flexible and locally responsive recovery.

"Our experience is clear. Local, trusted services work," he said.

"Following previous disasters, locally delivered health responses prevented escalation and avoided far more costly interventions later. Investing directly in local services ensures continuity of care and sustainable recovery outcomes."

Council has formally called on the Victorian Government to: Immediately allocate a proportion of the announced funding directly to local providers in Murrindindi Shire; enable flexible funding arrangements that allow services to scale outreach, engagement and therapeutic support now; ensure delivery models for rural and dispersed communities align with national disaster mental health principles.

"Recovery is not one-size-fits-all," Cr Gallagher said. "Murrindindi has carried an extraordinary share of Victoria's bushfire impact. Our community deserves an equitable, accessible and locally delivered mental health recovery response."

For more information on bushfire recovery support, visit murrindindi.vic.gov.au/longwoodfire

The importance of gaining psychological support following the fire

MANY people in our shire have been terribly impacted by the recent fire, whether directly or indirectly. Don't be afraid to seek support.

Dr Zena Burgess, CEO Australian Psychological Society, said, "Experiencing a bushfire can be highly distressing and traumatic for many people in disaster affected communities. There are many reasons a person may feel uncertain about seeing a psychologist following a natural disaster. Psychologists understand the impact that such events can have on a person. It is very important to seek support at times of poor mental health. If you feel that the stress or anxiety you or your family are experiencing as a result of a bushfire is getting too much, we encourage you to seek support and a psychologist may be able to help.

"Psychologists are highly trained and qualified professionals skilled in providing effective interventions for a range of mental health concerns, including stress. A psychologist can help you manage your stress and anxiety using techniques based on the best available research.

"Psychologists must always prioritise the wellbeing and safety of their clients. Where there is risk, a safety plan may be developed. This would require the psychologist and the affected person to look at factors which may support safety and make plans together in a collaborative way to ensure their wellbeing. This should not prevent people from accessing support they would otherwise benefit from," she said.

ADH statement: Board recommends hospital merger

THE boards of Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health have formally recommended a voluntary amalgamation to strengthen access to care closer to home for the Alexandra and district community.

A comprehensive business case has found the voluntary amalgamation would create a more sustainable local health service and support the delivery of more connected care across the rural–metropolitan catchment by strengthening the established partnership that is already benefiting local patients and staff.

Around 40 per cent of hospital care for people living in the Alexandra catchment is currently provided through Eastern Health, with the two organisations working closely together to provide oncology services, dialysis planning and shared workforce and training initiatives. Building on this, the business case identifies clear opportunities to deliver more care locally, including: Expanded local access to specialist care, with new and increased specialist clinics delivered at Alexandra District Health, including general medicine, geriatrics and paediatrics, reducing the need for patients to travel long distances for routine specialist review; increased low-complexity surgery services to better utilise existing beds and theatre capacity to safely deliver more care locally; a three-chair dialysis service at Alexandra District Health,

operating as part of Eastern Health’s renal hub-and-satellite model; improved access to imaging (X-ray) and diagnostic services, addressing current service gaps that limit the ability to deliver and coordinate care locally; stronger workforce sustainability, supported by expanded training and career pathways across rural and metropolitan settings, including access to Eastern Health training programs, commencement of an allied health graduate program from 2027, extension of learning management and scholarship programs, and opportunities for postgraduate education and specialist supervision; clearer, more integrated care pathways, supported by unified clinical governance and, over time, shared patient information systems, making it easier for patients to move between local and metropolitan services when escalation or specialist care is required; and more sustainable use of shared systems and support services, including emergency and disaster response, allowing Alexandra District Health to focus resources on frontline care while maintaining a strong local presence.

The decision follows a structured engagement process with staff, stakeholders and community members, which helped inform the business case and was carefully considered by the boards.

Feedback from this engagement highlighted strong support for sustainable local healthcare

and expanded access to services, alongside the importance of protecting the strong, rural identity at Alexandra District Health, maintaining essential services and ensuring local voices continue to be heard.

Alexandra District Health Board Chair, Kim Flanagan, said importantly, the recommendation includes clear safeguards to protect local identity, leadership and community involvement. “If approved, Alexandra District Health will retain its name, and all locally raised funds and donations will continue to be used to support services for the local community,” Mr Flanagan said.

“Local leadership will remain in place, and the Community Engagement Committee will continue to play a formal role in ensuring community perspectives inform service planning and decision-making.”

In making this recommendation, the boards have been mindful of the recent Longwood fire and the ongoing recovery across Alexandra and surrounding district communities. The fire highlighted the value of the existing partnership, with Eastern Health providing support to Alexandra District Health during a period of heightened demand across the district. The boards agreed that formalising this partnership is an important part of supporting community health and wellbeing into the future.

Mr Flanagan said the recommendation responds to the challenges facing rural communities and smaller health services.

“Our communities experience higher rates of chronic disease and mental ill-health than the Victorian average, alongside an ageing population and higher hospital admission rates,” Mr Flanagan said.

“At the same time, access to primary and specialist care is constrained, with many local people travelling between 45 and 90 minutes for care that could be provided closer to home if local capability were strengthened.”

“Alexandra District Health’s size also limits its ability to sustainably expand services, attract and retain workforce, and invest in the systems and governance required for contemporary models of care.”

“The board has determined that a voluntary amalgamation with Eastern Health provides the strongest platform to address these challenges, expand access to care closer to home, and protect what the community values most about Alexandra District Health.”

Eastern Health board chair, Eugene Arocca, said the recommendation reflects a partnership that is already delivering for patients across the the catchment.

“Our organisations already work closely together, with around 40 per cent of hospital care for people living in the Alexandra catchment currently provided through Eastern Health,” Mr Arocca said.

“A voluntary amalgamation would allow services to be planned and delivered in a more coordinated way, strengthen clinical governance, and make it easier for patients to move between local and metropolitan services when specialist care or escalation is required.”

The recommendation has been provided to the Secretary of the Victorian Department of Health and the Minister for Health for consideration and approval, in line with the Health Services Act 1988.

“No changes will occur unless the Minister for Health approves the proposal,” Mr Flanagan said.

“In the meantime, it is business as usual. Our focus remains on delivering safe, high-quality care for our communities and continuing to work together through our existing partnership.”

Alexandra and District Tourism and Traders (ADTTA)

ADTTA commented about the decision, “Our priority is simple: stronger, sustainable healthcare for our community. We have not yet received confirmation on whether the recommendations and questions we submitted in November have been reflected in the business case, and we look forward to reviewing the detail. We remain committed to helping our community engage with the proposed amalgamation to ensure it delivers measurable benefits for Alexandra and the wider Murrindindi Shire.”

What is Givit and what do they do?

THE Engagement Officer for Victoria for charity organisation Givit, Mel, explained how Givit is looking to support the local area following the devastation caused by the Longwood bushfires.

Givit is a national not-for-profit organisation, designed to manage the flow of donations in response to emergencies.

Mel said Givit was “set up 16 years ago in response to a flood up in Queensland where our founder Juliette Wright, she wanted to create a platform where it could connect the things that people want to donate with the people wanting to give. And so now we have a contract with the Victorian Government, which we’ve had for about five years now, to be the official donation management partner of government in times of disaster.

“Any individual can donate. So any person can jump onto the website and donate something that they want to give away. It could be specifically for the bushfires and they can tag that.

“It can be anything. So they can just post into the online warehouse anything that they might have to give. But the other side of the platform is that registered partner organisations, charities, government schools can put up requests for the things that they need.

“As a public donor, you could actually go through the what’s needed list and see if you have something there that you want to give. So if someone’s requesting a microwave and you

have one, you can offer it directly against that request. And then that will put you in touch with the charity who are requesting that item.”

Mel explained that the community hubs cannot request specific items, but they can go through council to make requests.

“No, so I’ve actually been on the road today and I’ve been with Highlands, Ruffy and Yarck. They themselves are not eligible to register, but what we’ve been doing instead is council has been putting requests up on their behalf,” she said.

“Murrindindi Shire Council have already been putting requests up for Highlands. They’ve been receiving like bulk fuel vouchers and hardware vouchers through that. Now we’re moving into more specific needs. They’re about to put requests up for like chainsaws and wheelbarrows.”

Givit is unable to manage fencing materials, vehicles or offers of accommodation.

“We have a couple of things that are prohibited, but we do other types of hardware, as I mentioned, we do hardware vouchers, but we also do other tools that might be needed. And then we really are looking at that down the track, household fridges, washing machines, beds, other household items,” Mel said.

Givit will be working on the long-term recovery of the area, as well as trying to support the local economy.

“Yes. So we will be here for the long-haul recovery and I’ve actually just been popping into a few of the local suppliers to find out how best we can purchase through them because we want to boost the local economy wherever we can,” Mel said.

“So just finding out who sells beds, who sells fridges, and how they want to receive if they do vouchers or how they want to receive a payment.

“It’s been really tricky particularly in the early days of the fire where lots of clothes were coming in which was so thoughtful of people but the problem was that the opp shop was full and the pop-up was full and you know, all of the hubs started getting full as well. Yes. But people had nowhere to put a wardrobe full of clothes.

“It’s actually been really sweet because they’ve started going, you know, anyone can come in, give us a bit of money, we’ll put it into the bushfire fund. Being specific like this, I think is a fabulous thing.

For Murrindindi, like I’ve just met Foundation Murrindindi this morning, they’ll be using the platform. Yea Community House are using the platform as is council on behalf of the hubs, so we should really be able to support the area. And that’s aside from the service providers that will be operating over phone calls and things, they’re also registered with Givit.

“Hopefully we’ll get what’s needed for the people who need it most,” Mel concluded.

Givit can be found online at givit.org.au

Councils unite to support Murrindindi’s fire recovery

AS the Murrindindi community continues the long road to recovery following the January fires, the scale of the task has made clear the importance of councils working together, alongside state and federal government support.

Murrindindi Shire Council covers more than 3880 square kilometres. That’s more than five times the size of Singapore, and operates with around 160 full-time equivalent staff. When a major emergency strikes a rural municipality of this size, additional capacity is essential to ensure communities are supported while everyday services continue.

Through the Municipal Association of Victoria’s emergency management support program, councils from across Victoria have stepped in to assist Murrindindi Shire Council during the early and critical stages of recovery.

More than 90 staff from over 15 Victorian councils have stepped in to assist the Murrindindi Shire community, including close to 50 from the City of Whittlesea, as well as teams from as far afield as Port Phillip, Bass Coast, Wyndham and Wellington councils. In addition, council has engaged a further 50 to 60 contractors to deliver

critical infrastructure and recovery works across the shire, including several local workers.

Murrindindi Shire Council is also working closely with fellow Longwood fire-affected councils, Mitchell, Strathbogie and Mansfield, under a shared agreement to support our communities wherever help is needed, regardless of council boundaries or administrative barriers.

This means that if residents see staff wearing another council’s badge working on local roads, trees, bridges or entering fire-impacted properties, they are there on behalf of Murrindindi Shire Council. Community members are encouraged to give them a friendly welcome and know they are part of a coordinated recovery effort supporting our shire.

The additional workforce is playing a vital role across our shire, supporting recovery information hubs, undertaking on-site property assessments, inspecting roads, bridges and trees, and helping maintain essential council services while recovery work continues at pace.

To date, hundreds of kilometres of roads have been assessed and more than 250 property assessments completed, helping to restore access and provide certainty for affected residents and landholders.

Council also acknowledges the significant support from the Victorian and Australian Governments, with funding covering the majority of costs associated with employing additional staff for the recovery effort. This investment ensures council can respond to increased demand created by the emergency while continuing to deliver core services to the community.

Around half of council’s own workforce has been personally affected by the fires. Having extra staff on the ground means council can continue supporting the community, with minimal disruption to services.

To stay updated on fire recovery in Murrindindi Shire, visit murrindindi.vic.gov.au/recovery and sign up for the Fire Recovery Newsletter.

Mayor of Murrindindi Shire, Damien Gallagher, said collaboration had been central to the recovery efforts. “Our community has been through an incredibly difficult time, and our priority is making sure people feel supported at every stage of recovery.

“The additional staff who have joined us from other councils, are making a real difference on the ground. Their contribution is helping us

provide timely, practical assistance to residents, farmers and businesses where it’s needed most.”

“We also want to acknowledge the strength of our community and the way people continue to support one another. Recovery will take time, but council will walk that path alongside our community and stay focused on what is needed at each step.”

The numbers

Murrindindi Shire is by far the most impacted local government area in the January fires.

Damage is still being assessed, and to date includes: Houses destroyed 193, Sheds and other structures lost 519, Vehicles and machinery lost 691, Total stock/animal losses (including bee hives) 5672, Fencing destroyed 4524km, Agricultural land impacted 561.4 hectares

Road and bridge assessments at a glance: 451 kilometres total roads to be assessed, 376 kilometres roads currently estimated as directly impacted, 43 kilometres of roads open including speed restrictions, 87 kilometres of tree works underway, 228 kilometres of tree assessments underway, 73 bridges assessed, nine bridges closed, and 48 bridges damaged but remaining open.

SPORT

Alexandra Squash Club: Round two of term one pennant

by Kristelle Leary

Monday competition Magpies versus Pelicans

ETHAN versus Tyler: Tyler blitzed the first game and managed to hold the lead through to the end to win by three points. 53 to 50.

Randy versus Jess: Jess had better court awareness and played the ball away from Randy. As a result, Randy could only play catch-up and was not able to control the play. 73 to 35.

Matt versus Mark: Great court coverage with good long rallies. Mark had the edge with better placement to take the match. 62 to 50.

John versus Michael H: This match went down to the wire in a hard-fought play out. Michael held out until the end to win by a single point. 56 to 55.

Crows versus Eagles

Robbie versus Eric: A great game to watch. Robbie won over Eric with his killer long serve, taking all four games and the match. 75 to 45.

Laura versus Sally: The majority of the match was close. But a blow out in the second game saw Sally take the lead to sail through to victory. 68 to 55.

Chris versus Justin: Justin continues his run of good form, leading from start to finish. Chris attempted to bring it back but did not prevail. 75 to 53.

Jim versus Daniel W: Jim had Daniel on the run for much of the match, but in the third game Daniel slowed his serve down and found the corners. This unsettled Jim enough to tip the balance in Daniel's favour. 49 to 48.

There were no Wednesday games played due to a power outage.

Merton cricketers back at the MCG

MERTON Cricket Club hosted the Beechworth Wanderers on a fast outfield being the first game at the Merton Cricket Ground (MCG) since the fires of January.

Merton won the toss and batted making 8/204 James Benton again top scoring for his side making 50. He combined with Jai Lerch-McKinnon 46 in a 73 run third wicket partnership setting up a big total for the Merton side.

The experience of Ross Mackinnon 37 and Jimmy Herridge 18 with two big sixes keeping the runs flowing in the later overs along with Murray Sutton 25 showed some determination early in the home sides innings.

With the resumption after the tea break the Merton bowlers gave limited scoring opportunities to the Beechworth top order along with some tight fielding the visitors struggled to find any momentum and ended the allocated 36 overs on 6/122. Michael Schultz not out on 47 put up some fight to be the top scorer for the Wanderers.

Brothers Luke 2/23 and Henry Berriman 2/25 bowled well with Murray Sutton taking 2/1 off four overs to really lead the way for the Merton side. Lerch-McKinnon and Craddock also bowling very economical.

Merton sit on top of the ladder with Benalla the next challenge on the road next Saturday.



Ross McKinnon also getting low for best performance. -S



Jimmy Herridge almost down on one knee to intercept the ball. -S



Ross McKinnon sending the ball flying at the MCG. -S

A message from the Thornton Eildon District Football Netball Club Committee

by TEDFNC Committee

WE write with equal measures of pride and concern. Pride, because our women's team is the beating heart of a club with more than 106 years of history. Concern, because without stronger community support and increased playing numbers, the future of Thornton Eildon Football Club is at risk.

Since 2020, the Roo's have been a single-team club, with our women proudly leading the way and ensuring the club continues as a place to play footy, connect, and belong. They were the first women's team in the Outer Eastern League, paving a pathway for women and girls to play footy locally.

We are immensely proud of what has been achieved, particularly the positive impact our club has had on building friendships, confidence, family connections and creating a sense of belonging. We're proud of the partnerships the club has made with our sponsors, the Murrindindi Shire Council, as well as the Alexandra Football and Netball Club. We thank them deeply for their ongoing support.

The dedication of our core group of committed players has kept the Thornton Eildon Football Club strong. To build on

this foundation and continue being a place of connection and support, we need additional players to ensure we can field a full team this year.

Our most immediate priority is securing a women's team for the 2026 season. With the cut-off date fast approaching, we are actively seeking players to help safeguard the long-term future of our club.

If you're reading this and have a daughter, sister, wife, cousin, neighbour, or if you've ever wondered what it might be like to join a team that feels like family, we would love to welcome you.

Training runs Mondays and Thursdays from 6pm to 7.30pm. Bring a friend. Come be part of something that lifts people up.

We are a family-oriented club, welcoming players aged 14 and above. Whether you've played for years or have never picked up a footy, there is a place for you here and an opportunity to help build a club that truly reflects our whole community.

Together, we can ensure the Thornton Eildon District Football Netball Club not only thrives, but grows stronger, prouder, and more connected than ever.

Contact Coach Tash on 0430119420 or email the club at tedfnc@outlook.com



The Thornton Eildon Football Club team from last season. -S

Success at Murrindindi Masters for Marysville Golf Club

by Lesley Rundle

LAST Saturday another very successful round of the FoodWorks Murrindindi Masters was held at Eildon. A field of 97 players attended which included 13 men and 10 ladies representing Marysville Golf Club.

The Marysville players who were on the winners list were Sabrina Stow (22) winning A Grade with 40 points, Beverley Bellman (34) winning B Grade with 39 points, Steve Coker (16) was runner up in B Grade with 34 points and Peter Lilley won the nearest the pin on the fifth hole. Congratulations

to these players and also to Sandi McClear and Michael Lynch from Eildon for winning the 2026 Eildon Mini Masters titles.

All winners were delighted to receive the very generous vouchers from FoodWorks and all golfers thank them for their ongoing support. The course was beautifully presented and Marysville members thank all the Eildon volunteers for their hard work and hospitality.

On Saturday, February 28, the four clubs will meet at Yea for the final round of the Masters. Next Saturday the Marysville golfers will

play stroke for the February monthly medal and the ladies round will include the first round of the Barton Shield.

The Thursday nine holers played stroke on the back nine holes and Glen Rattay (7) was the winner with nett 35 on a countback from Richy Clark. The nearest the pins were won by Gail Leigh and Brian Worcester and Bob Emblin's putting was on fire with 11 putts. The club says thanks to Amanda Rattay for each week reporting the results of the Thursday nine-hole competition.

The Marysville members are preparing for a very busy month of March 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.



Bev and Peter at Eildon Murrindindi Masters. -S

Strong winds rough up Alexandra Golf Club

by Dave Silverman

JUST as Alexandra Golf Club thought that they'd survived the fires, and everything was alright, last Wednesday brought another little surprise. The trough which brought the cool



Golf goes on regardless. -S

change, also caused some very strong winds, and the club's beautiful old River Red gums bore the brunt of it, with three of them losing very large branches, and a number of others sustaining minor damage.



Like a phoenix rising from the ashes. -S

Fortunately, the greens and tees were spared, but there is a lot of cleaning up to be done.

Before that, however, there was golf. Ten players braved the heat, which, even with the early start, was a factor. Len Jenkins continued



Some of the wind damage from last Wednesday evening. -S

his run of good form, winning the round with 41 points. Second was Steve Darmody with 40, and also experiencing something of a purple patch is Nigel Waterhouse, who came in third with 36.

Nigel claimed the only nearest the pin, which was on seven, and rundown vouchers went to Russell Purcell and Brad Newton.

It was a cool start to round three of the Ladies' Summer Cup last Wednesday, but quite warm by the time all were back in the clubhouse. Ruth Worland won the day with 38 points on a countback from Deb Richardson. Another countback was needed to decide third and fourth, with Helen Findlay and Judy Pearson both on 37, while Sue Greatorex came in fifth on 35.

Deb picked up the nearest the pin on two, Judy took seven and 12 went to Donna Meggitt.

Twenty-four competed in the Chook Run last Thursday evening, which was won by young Will Simpson, who has come up through the ranks as a junior. Well done, Will.

Last Saturday saw the Eildon round of the FoodWorks Murrindindi Masters. The best performance from an Alexandra member was Lennie Jenkins, who came second in A Grade.

Finally this week, an appeal for volunteers. The club needs someone, or preferably a small group of someones, to manage the day to day running of the clubhouse. This would include things like helping to keep the bar stocked, looking after bookings and so forth.

If you think that you might be able to help, please contact either Luke Heard or Matt Richards. And, as always, the club need people to mow, and also to help clean up the debris from Mother Nature's recent vicissitudes.

Busy end to the season for Alexandra Bowls Club

by Marie Evans

IT was a positive finish to the pennant season for the Alexandra Bowls Club.

Midweek Division Four had a victory over Murchison, Saturday Division Three defeated Euroa who were second on the ladder and Division Five had a strong competitive round against Seymour VRI. Alexandra may not have made the finals but these results indicate an excellent 2026-2027 season ahead.

The Alexandra Bowls Club Men's Singles Championship was also played last Sunday with the Women's Club Champion Lauren Gilchrist marking the game. Ian Harper and Ken Argent played 31 ends in a game that saw them drawn on six occasions and the lead changed six times.

Ken Argent won 25 to 20 after what can only be described as a game of exceptionally skillful bowling by both players. Ken will now play in the Goulburn Valley Playing Area finals to be held on March 1 at Tatura Hilltop.

Division Three played Euroa and it was a heartfelt and much appreciated response from the Euroa team manager at the conclusion of the game. He acknowledged how much his club enjoys coming to Alexandra for the sportsmanship and hospitality. He also commented on how clubs like the Alexandra Bowls Club help to bring community together in the most difficult times.

With back-to-back wins Division Three completed a season that could have seen them in the finals. However, too many cancelled games resulted in fifth place finish. They won all four rinks on Saturday defeating Euroa 90 to 53.

The best winning rink repeated their outstanding win from last week. Ian Harper (Skip), Graeme Matthews, Ken Argent and Malcolm Gill won 32 to seven. It was three all on end four but Alexandra won 13 out



The best winning rink for Division Three of Ian Harper, Graeme Matthews, Mal Gill and Ken Argent. -S

of the next 17 ends to once again demolish their opposition.

The next best winning rink saw some major adjustments to the playing order. Scott Ferrier played his first game as Skip, David Nicklos played third, Christine Mayfield took charge of second and Bob Mayfield led. Alexandra had a 13 to two lead on end six after picking up six shots on end six. They had increased that lead to be 20 to seven by end 12. Euroa found some form and won five out of the last seven ends but not enough to overcome an Alexandra 24 to 18 win.

Tim Langmead (Skip), Doug Cooper, Steve Kirby and Ben Gilchrist also had a victory in a closer contest. It was four all on end five, six all on end eight, eight all on end 11 and nine all on end 13. Alexandra won the next four ends to lead 16 to nine. Not to be denied Euroa won three out of the last four ends to make some gains but the win was 18 to 15 to the home side.

Topping off a clean sweep was the Greg Gilmore (Skip), Larry Scott, Andy Tobias and Lauren Gilchrist rink. Alexandra may have thought they were going to have a challenging game with Euroa up seven to two on end five and 11 to five up on end nine. But Alexandra won 10 out of the last 12 ends to win 16 to 13. Gilmore was said to have had a stellar game producing winning shots end after end.



Men's Singles Champion Ken Argent and runner-up Ian Harper. -S

Division Five played Seymour VRI. They had one winning rink and that was John Blamey (Skip), Mark Stone, Anne Gunton and Warren Nelson. They led for the entire game and won 12 ends overall, including six out of the last eight and won 20 to 15. Great effort.

Ray Mathieson (Skip), Clive Murphy, Pauline Gilmore and Peter Collyer were six all on end six, seven all on end eight. They trailed 10 to 11 on end 13 but VRI took control to win the next five ends and lead 18 to 10. Alexandra won two of the last three ends to lose 15 to 20.

Bob Binghamy (Skip), Craig Parkinson, Marty Manning and Luke Chapple were six all on end seven but VRI won nine of the next 10 ends to lead seven to 21. Alexandra reduced that to lose 12 to 24. VRI won the overall 59 to 47. Division Five faced a major disruption in the second half of the season so we congratulate them all for their willingness to keep playing under what for some has been great personal loss.

Tuesday Pennant played at home in their last game and had a two shot win over Murchison 57 to 55. Graeme Matthews (Skip), Bob Binghamy, Marty Manning and Warren Nelson won 26 to 16. Matthews was six to three up on end four but lost the next four ends to trail six to 11 and eight to 13 on end 10. Some excellent bowling gave Alexandra eight out of the last 11 ends to have a match winning score 26 to 16.



Division Five winning rink of Warren Nelson, Anne Gunton, John Blamey and Mark Stone. -S

Ken Argent (Skip), Craig Parkinson, Steve Kirby and Clive Murphy were five all on end four, seven to 11 down on end 10. They were eight to 16 on end 15. However, they had kept Murchison to singles which meant the game was still up for grabs. This became evident with Alexandra winning five out of the last six ends to draw the game 17 all. A terrific comeback.

Doug Cooper (Skip), Malcolm Gill, Pauline Gilmore and Peter Collyer had a slow start and were seven to one down on end three. However, in a great fight back they were all square 10 all on end 11. Alexandra led after end 12. End 13 it was 11 all, 12 all end 15 and the game was anybody's. Alexandra was two shots down by end 19 14 to 16. Alexandra could not make up the difference and lost 22 to 14.

With pennant completed it was time for the knockout rounds of the Goulburn Valley Playing Area Men's Championship Pairs Final. It was played at Tatura last Sunday and the club's Champions Greg Gilmore and Larry Scott played Seymour pair Robbie Baldwin and P. Nichols. It was five all on end six. Alexandra had the lead 10 to five by end eight. However, the Seymour pair won the next four ends to be 13 to 10 up. Alexandra had reduced that to be 12 to 13 in the penultimate end. Seymour clinched the game on end 15 to win 14 to 12.

There are a number of club championship games to be played and members are asked to check the noticeboard for draws and results. Those who wish to play in the 60 and over competition please check for dates and sign up. Please look for information on Social Bowls over the next month.

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Alexandra Secondary College makes a splash at swimming sports



-Photos by AR

