

Standard

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

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Renee Ward receives REA Top Agent 2025 award



Renee Ward, Director of O'Brien Real Estate Alexandra. -S

LOCAL real estate agent Renee Ward, Director of O'Brien Real Estate in Alexandra, recently received the REA Top Agent 2025 award from realestate.com.au

Renee was one of 12 O'Brien Real Estate agents to receive the award.

According to realestate.com.au, the award recognises the top performing residential sales agent in suburbs across Australia, based on their sales results, ratings and reviews. The annual award recognises agent performance based on calendar year results.

Renee described finding out she had won the award in the midst of a shaky start to 2026 for Murrindindi Shire, as well as personal losses for her.

"It was funny the other day I was sitting here, and I'm like, what is this email? It's saying I'm number one. Because you know,

it hasn't been an amazing year because we had such a sad start. I want to be positive, and you have to take the positives," she said.

Renee bought the O'Brien Real Estate office in Alexandra four years ago, with the award marking a nice victory for the business and all the work they do.

"It was also funny that I had the award come through, because it was four years on February 1 since I bought the business from Robyn Schrader," Renee said.

"So it was nice because it was like the anniversary sort of time. And I thought it was really nice to receive it."

Being born in Eildon, then growing up in the local area and going to school here, means that Renee is deeply connected to Murrindindi Shire.

"The main thing for me probably is I'm genuine and an honest real estate agent, I think because I grew up here," Renee said.

"I moved away for 15 years and did property management in Berwick, then moved back and worked for Robin. Then I bought the business from her four years ago.

"A lot of my work is by mouth and it's people communicating, but also from previous sales and things like that. I use my database a lot and also our office location. We don't just advertise on realestate.com, we obviously do Domain, and O'Brien Real Estate, and all that stuff as well.

"My rapport and my communication with the clients. It's one of my main things and working with my database, making sure everyone gets a smooth run with sales and things like that."

Her team is made up of local women, from both Alexandra and Yea.

"I've got a team, there's five of us here. So I've got a really nice team too. They're all local girls, and that makes a difference. It's one of those things where you think, well, it's pretty good to have it all local," Renee said.

"My kids go to school here, my husband works locally here. He does earthmoving. And we live just across the hill. We were affected by the fires, but we've still been trying to help with everything else."

On top of her work as a real estate agent, Renee has also been trying to support the community following the Longwood bushfires of January.

"I had a family friend that had a contact to a workwear company. So she just mentioned to him, if you've got work boots or something, and nothing else was said. Then I went to the post office and he goes, 'have you got your car here?'" Renee said.

"There was six boxes of work boots. I contacted like any tenants that have been affected, any landlords that have been affected, trades, services, anyone that I sort of knew personally. Any leftovers I gave to Menzies. I've been doing some cooking for Fawcett Hall. So I've been trying to do a few bits and pieces after work.

"Also I've been working with O'Brien Real Estate head office because corporate did a fundraiser through all the offices and they've raised \$7000. So we're just working out, we're teaming up with Blaze Aid and Rural Fence from Coldstream and so they're going to do the fencing cost and stuff.

"We're just trying to work out how we're going to allocate to help out local people. We've been doing that, which is very exciting," she finished.



A large number of people enjoying the barbecue. -S

THE Embassy of Ideas held a fabulous night of community connections on Thursday, February 19. The community barbecue was a wonderful event to meet new friends and connect with familiar faces.

One hundred and sixty-five people attended, including BlazeAid, Operation Veteran Assist and Victorian Council

of Churches volunteers who have been assisting our local communities in the fire response and recovery efforts.

Luke and Dan from Elgas LPG not only supplied the sausages and salad, but also got on the tools and cooked the barbecue. They then donated the barbecue to the Embassy. The Embassy of Ideas would

like to thank Elgas for their generosity and supporting our community.

It is so important right now to continue to look out for each other. Keep talking. Keep checking in. And keep showing up with kindness and compassion. Community matters.

CLOSED LABOUR DAY - MONDAY, MARCH 9 EARLY DEADLINES APPLY

CLASSIFIEDS - FOR SALE, MEETINGS ETC INC DEATH NOTICES - 2PM FRIDAY, MARCH 6
ALL OTHER DEADLINES REMAIN THE SAME

Alexandra District Health
5772 0900
 Yea & District Memorial Hospital
5736 0400
In an emergency dial 000

Standard The Yea Chronicle

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Letters to the Editor

Fires and the solar farm

AFTER the January devastating fires in the Alexandra, Thornton and Eildon areas, we need to realise the importance of the face that these fires almost came to the Blue Ranges at Rubicon.

This again brings to mind the proposed solar panel project for the 300 hectares of prime grazing land at Rubicon by the Samsung company, owned by South Korea.

We have lost 140,000 hectares of grazing land in Murrindindi Shire, so why destroy the 300 hectares of grazing land in Rubicon? It will take at least five years to get this land lost in the fire back to grazing land as it was.

Why is the Australian government allowing us to be taken over by certain foreign countries, to the detriment of our loyal, hardworking Australians, who include farmers, etcetera, who work for long hours to bring food to our tables?

What is happening to our beautiful Australian country?

Why are the government leaders selling us out for money to these foreign countries, instead of helping the Australian people, including farmers, by rejecting the proposed solar panel project for Rubicon?

I would like to say that I am not against solar panels, just not on prime grazing land.

Name and address supplied but withheld by request

New location for Alexandra Rotary vouchers

THE Alexandra Rotary voucher location is changing. They are moving to the Alexandra Community Hub at 38 Downey Street in Alexandra from Monday, February 23.

Alexandra Rotarians are distributing vouchers to those whose properties have been adversely damaged by the fires and they are in need.

Vouchers adding up to a total of \$400 are available. Those receiving these can decide what they need. The vouchers are accepted by the local Alexandra Apparel, Alexandra Butcher, Alexandra Community Pharmacy, Alexandra Newsagency, Alexandra Tyrepower, Bedrock Garden

Supplies, Alexandra Motorcycles and Machinery (Bowds), Country Tech, Cowboy Co-op, Davenport's Auto Elec, Dindi Water Cartage, Dindi Western Clothing, Elysian Hairdresser, Embling Rural, FoodWorks, Goodys' Discounts, Grain Store, Lyand Farm and Industrial, Nutrien Ag Solutions, Pump Shop, Simpson's Fuel, Wildcraft Beauty and Wellness and Yencken's Hardware.

At the moment, the Hub is open Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm and Saturday 9am to noon. After Services Australia leave, the normal hours will be Monday to Thursday 9am to 4pm. Contact 5772 1238.

COMMUNITY DIARY

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 Commutea 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.

MONTHLY

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

ALEXANDRA NEWSPAPERS

For a \$10 annual fee for one line, your club or organisation's regular meeting dates will be listed each week. Not only is this a reminder to your regular members but also a good source of what groups are available in the community, when they meet and a contact phone number.

Weekly Weather
 February 25 - March 3, 2026

Temperatures may be subject to change from date of publication

Alexandra **Yea**

DAY	LOW	HIGH	DAY	LOW	HIGH
Wednesday	15	25	Wednesday	14	24
Thursday	13	26	Thursday	12	26
Friday	16	27	Friday	16	27
Saturday	17	27	Saturday	17	27
Sunday	18	25	Sunday	18	25
Monday	19	22	Monday	20	23
Tuesday	18	26	Tuesday	18	25

Standard The Yea Chronicle

MLA statement on US tariff announcement

by Michael Crowley, Managing Director Meat and Livestock Australia

MEAT and Livestock Australia (MLA) is aware of the United States Government's decision to introduce a 15 per cent baseline tariff on all imports. It is important to note that Australian beef will remain exempt from this measure, maintaining a zero per cent tariff following the announcement made in November 2025.

Unfortunately, Australian sheepmeat and goatmeat will see tariffs increase from 10 per cent to 15 per cent under the new arrangements. MLA will work with industry and the Australian Government to navigate the challenges this new tariff hike will impose.

The United States was Australia's number one export market for beef, lamb and goatmeat in 2025, highlighting the importance of this trading relationship for our producers and the broader red meat supply chain.

MLA maintains a dedicated office in Washington, D.C., and we continue to liaise closely with the Australian Government, industry partners and stakeholders throughout the supply chain to ensure Australian red meat remains highly valued, competitive and trusted in the US market.

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ALEXANDRA NEWSPAPERS

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 can be submitted via email to
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 or by mail to Alexandra Newspapers
 PO Box 5, Alexandra 3714.

Letters **must be 300 words or less**. We will not publish defamatory letters, or content which is offensive, threatening or containing personal attacks. Submitted letters may be edited before going to print.

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

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RIVER HEIGHTS FOR THE GOULBURN CATCHMENT				
STATION NAME	TIME	HEIGHT	TENDENCY	FLOOD CLASS
Goulburn R at Lake Eildon (TW)	8.00AM Mon	1.85	LGH	steady
Rubicon River at Rubicon	8.00AM Mon	0.67	LGH	steady
Acheron River at Taggerty	8.00AM Mon	0.54	LGH	steady
Home Creek at Yareck	8.00AM Mon	0.60	LGH	falling
Yea River at Devlins Bridge	8.26AM Mon	0.36	LGH	steady
Murrindindi River Above Colwells	7.00AM Mon	0.34	LGH	steady
Yea R at Old Killingworth Rd	8.00AM Mon	0.33	LGH	steady
Goulburn River at Ghin Ghin	9.00AM Mon	3.78	LGH	steady
King Parrot Creek at Flowerdale	8.00AM Mon	0.28	LGH	steady
Goulburn River at Trawool	8.00AM Mon	1.44	LGH	steady
Sunday Creek at Tallarook	8.00AM Mon	-0.09	LGH	steady
Goulburn River at Seymour	8.45AM Mon	1.72	LGH	steady
Whiteheads Creek at Seymour	8.00AM Mon	0.79	LGH	steady

***ISSUED AT 9:09 AM AEDT MONDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2026**

DISTRICT RAINFALL	
Alexandra.....	19mm
Buxton.....	42.3mm
Eildon (AWS).....	22mm
Flowerdale.....	17mm
Jamieson.....	28mm
Kinglake.....	27mm
Lake Eildon.....	26mm
Mansfield.....	53mm
Taggerty.....	23mm
Yareck.....	9mm
Yea.....	20mm

Above details for 7 days to 9am Monday

LAKE EILDON

Height above sea level this week.....	272.13m
Capacity as at 9am Monday.....	46.6%
Metres below full supply.....	16.77m
Daily inflow.....	5000ML
Release.....	4000ML
Eildon Pondage (may be subject to rapid change).....	67%

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 INCORPORATES THE ALEXANDRA, YEAL, THE YEA, GOULBURN, TAGGERTY, THORNTON, AND ACHERON EXPRESS

DEADLINES

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

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

5772 1002 or
 reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au

We thank you for your continued support

Charmaine Beggs working on Mafeking Rover Park recovery

CHARMAINE Beggs, honorary treasurer for Mafeking Rover Park in Caveat, kicked into gear almost instantly for community recovery following the Longwood-Berry's Lane bushfires.

Born in Eildon and now living in Benalla, Charmaine used her trucking knowledge to deliver necessary supplies to Highlands just days after the fires went through, and is now working on fundraising to restore Mafeking Rover Park to its former glory, the facility having been severely damaged during the fires.

"The first thing we did was actually take food and water and a generator and fuel up to Highlands on the Saturday after the fire had gone through and just gave them some supplies and some power and some kind of help," Charmaine said.

"We went up, we had two utes, we had our own water source and we took chainsaws just to allow us to be able to get in and help clear the trees to get up through there. Because we all had no idea what the situation was we were driving into, except that the fire had passed through. And it was now over towards Alexandra was where the main fire front was.

"We went through on a route that the CFA boys from Highland had said they had travelled themselves. They just said there might be trees down, who knows what happens between when we go through and when you go through.

"We made sure we were prepared with chainsaws and water that if we got ourselves stuck, that we could get us unstuck. And we wouldn't then be relying on somebody to come and save us.

"And then the Sunday I went and did a hay run to a farm just out of Alexandra in Fawcett. We took some machinery there through my partner's work. I just jumped in the truck with them and went across.

"Then on the Monday, they put a call out for assistance at the Longwood Hay Depot to organise deliveries of hay and everything else. And my background of being a truck driver and knowing the transport industry and having done hay runs before with the Aussie Hay Run, it put me in a good position to do and offer my assistance with all of that."

Fortunately for the communities that Charmaine helped with immediate recovery, her work was very understanding, knowing her background in the area.

"I went into work and said I won't be in, see you next week. I need to go and do this. They were very understanding which was very good," she said.

Having been involved with Mafeking Rover Park for a significant amount of time as both volunteer scout leader and other roles, its situation is deeply important to her.

"I'm a past chairman, but I now sit as of August last year, I'm the honorary treasurer. So I do treasury stuff but I also help mentor the rovers that are just joining the committee and teach them about, you know, skills for running such a large property," Charmaine explained.

"It's not something you learn overnight, it's something you learn over time and so it's just that extra support network for them with my background and being a rural person and knowing about farming and all that kind of stuff and machinery and tractors and everything. Definitely adds an extra layer of help for them.

"We've got one remaining toilet block and water tank. And then our scout hut, which is at the front of the sign. Everything else has been completely wiped out."



Charmaine and fiancé James standing in front of what use to be the Harold Gardener Hall at Mafeking. -S

There are a number of ways that Charmaine is working on for community to be able to donate and support the recovery of Mafeking Rover Park.

"We've got a Shout for Good, which is a financial donation. We've also got a bushfire badge, which is \$5 and the proceeds from that go back to the scout camp," she said.

"We've set up a QR code for all of Victoria for can collections so that people can, you know, it doesn't matter what kind of financial situation you're in, you can give back if that's what you want to do. So a can deposit.

"And we're releasing some t-shirts. They're going to be \$50 and they're going to have the massive logo on it for people to wear out and about. Anything above the cost price for us, so \$15 from every shirt will go towards rebuilding the scout camp."

The Shout for Good financial donation page can be found at shoutforgood.com/fundraisers/standing-together-for-mafeking

Bushfire fundraiser badges can be ordered at scoutshop.com.au/products/mafeking-bushfire-fundraiser-badge

While not the goal of her support and assistance, Charmaine is now being recognised for her efforts in the form of a nomination for the Bunnings Community Legends Awards.

According to a press release from Bunnings Warehouse, "Bunnings has recognised 26 year old Charmaine Beggs from Benalla as a local Community Legend, celebrating their outstanding contribution to the Mafeking Rover Park Scouts and January 2026 Highland bushfires.

"Charmaine is one of five Community Legends recognised nationally this week as part of the Bunnings Community Legends Awards, which shine a spotlight on everyday Australians who strengthen pride, inclusion, resilience or wellbeing in their communities.

"Playing a critical role in supporting the Highland community, Charmaine coordinated deliveries of essential supplies including food, water, hay and generators to affected families

and farmers. Driven by her commitment to those surrounded by debris and loss, she helped lead recovery and fundraising efforts to aid in the rebuild of both her community and the Mafeking Rover Park.

Serving as a volunteer Scout leader and Treasurer at Rover Park, Charmaine is determined to pass on the values that Scouting instilled in her to the younger generation of the Victorian Highland community – teaching them the importance of service, resilience, and caring for the land.

Over the past two months, Bunnings team members and Community partners from across Australia have been nominating local legends within their communities, sharing stories that celebrate everyday Australians who are doing extraordinary things in their local area. Charmaine was recognised by a Bunnings Team Member from the local Seymour store.

Bunnings Head of Community, Partnership and Events Michelle Walter said the initiative reflects Bunnings' strong connection to local communities across Australia.

"In every community, there are people quietly going above and beyond to support others, often without recognition," she said.

"The Community Legends Awards are about shining a light on those everyday Australians who make a genuine difference where they live and we're thrilled to recognise Charmaine's critical role supporting the Highland community.

"Charmaine has been nominated for the Community Resilience Legend and will go into the running to be one of the five shortlisted Community Legends, culminating in one winner being announced in June 2026.

"The overall Community Legends winner will receive a \$10,000 donation to their chosen community group or charity, along with a \$1000 Bunnings voucher and a trip for two to the Bunnings Conference."

Liquor licence relief for bushfire-affected businesses

THE Victorian Government is helping businesses hit by this summer's bushfires, waiving and refunding liquor licence fees so local operators can focus on reopening and recovery.

Minister Enver Erdogan last week announced that businesses affected by the January 2026 bushfires will have their liquor licence renewal fees waived.

"Businesses impacted by the fires have lost stock and trade, and many are rebuilding from scratch. And these fee waivers will take one pressure off their recovery," Mr Erdogan said.

"We'll continue to back bushfire-affected communities and support the businesses that are so important to local jobs, local economies and local recovery."

This support will help pubs, wineries, distilleries, cafés and bottle shops save money at a time when every dollar counts.

Businesses in areas including Avenel, Merton, Seymour, Alexandra, Skipton, Natimuk, Tallangatta, Gellibrand and many more are eligible.

Businesses who lost stock in the Harcourt Cooperative Cool Stores fire will also have their 2026 fee waived.

More relief will be extended to licensees impacted by bushfires still active across the state.

All eligible businesses will have their fees automatically waived or refunded.

Hospitality and retail businesses play a vital role in local economies and supporting them is central to helping regional communities recover from this year's devastating bushfires.

The fee relief builds on more than \$370 million in jointly funded support already announced for affected families, farmers, businesses and councils.

For recovery help, call the Emergency Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760 or visit vic.gov.au/bushfirerecovery

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New classification system for fire-impacted roads

MURRINDINDI Shire Council has introduced a new road classification system to help manage access safely while recovery works continue. This system allows essential and authorised users including residents to move through the area.

Classifications

Open – Unrestricted: Fully accessible to all users.

Open – Restricted: Open under traffic management due to hazards.

Road Closed – Authorised Access (local traffic only): Limited access such as residents, emergency response, essential services, farming support and waste services (daylight hours only).

Road Closed – No Access: Unsafe for all traffic except emergency services.

Conditional Access: Access only with prior notification to, or supervision by, council.

Importantly, Ghin Ghin Road (to Highlands Hall) has now reopened under temporary speed restrictions following recent impacts from the Longwood Fire.

While crews continue tree management and safety works across the fire-affected area, please drive with care and follow all signage in place.

Visit the road access and closures page at tinyurl.com/22hp43s6 for a full list of impacted roads.

FOLLOWING the announcement that the boards of Alexandra District Health (ADH) and Eastern Health (EH) have recommended a merger, pending approval from the Minister for Health, two questions were posed to the communications team at Eastern Health, the media contacts for the merger.

Firstly, they were asked, “With EH CEO David Plunkett deciding not to renew his contract when it concludes, and the Alexandra District Health CEO being made (presumably) redundant under the proposed amalgamation, what guarantees can be offered that the promises made during the ‘consultation period’ will be kept, given that both leaders will be gone?”

“Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health” responded, “This process is boarded and governed under the *Health Services Act 1988*.

“The decision to formally recommend a voluntary amalgamation follows a structured engagement process with staff, stakeholders and community members, which helped inform the business case and was carefully considered by the boards of both health services.

“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. Importantly, the recommendation includes clear safeguards to protect local identity, leadership and community involvement.

“If a voluntary amalgamation is approved by the Minister for Health, more services will be delivered locally, 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.

“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.”

Unfortunately, the Freedom of Information review to gain access to the comments from the ADH/EH survey was unsuccessful. The survey asked no direct questions about whether respondents were keen on the merger going ahead, and the only location where people could express an opinion was in the unreleased comments section.

Murrindindi Shire Council (MSC) also surveyed the public about their thoughts late last year. 278 people responded across the 16 days.

In the MSC survey, 69 per cent considered the engagement period to be too short, and 69 per cent did not believe that the community had been appropriately consulted and engaged in the decision-making process.

When asked “What are your views about a voluntary amalgamation being proposed following last year’s community opposition to a forced amalgamation?”, 64 to 67 per cent were strongly opposed.

Eighty-eight per cent of respondents felt that it was ‘very important’ for Alexandra and Yea to retain a clear local voice in health governance after any amalgamation.

As stated in the summary, “The community responses across all questions reveal a highly polarised but broadly negative sentiment toward amalgamation, with a significant number of people expressing confusion, distrust, or a desire for more information. While a minority strongly support amalgamation and see clear benefits, most respondents are either opposed, worried, or uncertain.”

The other question asked of the EH media team was, “With Alexandra District Health expected to change from block funding to activity funding if the minister approves the amalgamation, what capacity will there be for Alexandra District Health to be nimble with health provision in the case of a local emergency, such as the major fires in our area in January? My understanding is that activity

funding is very specific, while under block funding, changes can be made to address the needs of the community.”

ADH/EH responded, “Funding models, including any transition from block funding to activity-based funding, are matters determined by the Department of Health.”

Government responds to Fire Services levy accusations

THE state Opposition has accused the Victorian Government of collecting \$191 million in extra fire levies from Victorians last financial year but only passing \$72 million of it onto Fire Rescue Victoria and the Country Fire Authority.

They said that according to data published by the State Revenue Office, Victorians paid \$1.03 billion in Fire Services Property Levy (FSPL) in 2024/25, the first time the levy has collected more than a billion dollars, but the fire services’ annual reports show only \$72 million of this was passed on to the CFA (\$22 million) and FRV (\$50 million) in increased grant funding.

The Opposition stated, “This followed three consecutive years prior where the CFA grants funding from government was actually cut.”

The government refuted the allegation. A spokesperson for the Victorian Government said, “Every single dollar raised by the Fire Services Property Levy went to supporting the emergency services Victorians rely on. This figure does not include all funding provided to the Fire Rescue Victoria and the Country Fire Authority, with funding exceeding the amount raised by the Fire Services Property Levy.”

They said that “Victoria has the best funded fire services in the nation.”

The following information was also provided: The FSPL was typically calculated preceding the financial year it was applied to, which means it did not include additional budget supplementation given throughout that financial year, such as funding held in contingency or funding provided in that financial year for emergency events. The grant allocations referred to are from Annual Reports reporting the previous financial year financial results, including supplementation not covered in the original FSPL calculations. Total grant allocation to the agencies well exceeded this because of increases provided throughout the year, resulting in a total grant allocation by government of \$1.46b in 2024-25. The same principle applies in 2023-24. In both years, not only was the FSPL (as published) passed on to these agencies, further budget funding was provided to reflect specific requirements of the agencies in these financial years.

Communications for emergency services

COMMUNICATIONS on fire grounds can often pose a challenge due to blackspots, so if workarounds are available, they should certainly be explored. In some cases, it may be a matter of life or death.

In light of this, the Victorian Government was asked whether actions are being undertaken to provide CFA (and other emergency services, including SES, Forest Fire Management, Fire Rescue Victoria, Ambulance Victoria, etcetera) with Starlink devices, as they would alleviate the communications challenges, providing phone and internet connections.

A Victorian Government spokesperson responded, “We’re trialling Starlink to strengthen emergency communications, with CFA already using more than 25 devices and expanding installation across its headquarters and control centres.

“In November 2025, the Labor Government delivered a \$138 million upgrade to CFA’s radio network, rolling out more than 18,000 new GPS-enabled radios to eliminate blackspots and improve firefighter safety.

“We’ll continue working closely with CFA, FRV and FFMVic to ensure every firefighter has the tools and support they need, and the State Response Controller has already issued a safety update to all agencies.”

The following information was also provided. The Victorian Government is trialling Starlink technology to support emergency management communications, with 12 devices currently operating as part of this sector-wide trial. These mobile units help maintain connectivity during emergencies, particularly in areas affected by blackspots. Separately, CFA is expanding its own use of Starlink to strengthen operational communications. CFA already uses more than 25 Starlink devices across transportable units, Field Operations Vehicles and Mobile Command Vehicles, and is now installing services at District Headquarters and Incident Control Centres. Starlink and other satellite technologies are being assessed as complementary tools to improve communication capability across emergency agencies during major incidents.

Out&About

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

Congratulations to the winners of our 2026 Victorian Caravan and Camping tickets. We hope you had a great time. Happy camping.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Dindi Daze is back. Presented by Alexandra Rotary; A festival to celebrate all that is good in Murrindindi. Plenty for the kids to do, and the adults too. Live music, craft beer, historic car show, petting zoo, arts and crafts and more. 9am-3pm. Rotary Park, Alexandra.

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.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4

Look after yourself and others after the fires. 6.30pm at the Alexandra Shire Hall. Council are hosting a recovery session to support those affected by the recent bushfires. Dr Rob Gordon will talk about common emotional responses and share practical strategies to support your wellbeing and those around you. A light supper and chat time will follow the session.

SATURDAY, MARCH 7

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

What’s happening with the FRV fleet?

THE Victorian Opposition has claimed that “As Victoria remains in a period of elevated fire danger, it has been revealed one third of Fire Rescue Victoria’s (FRV) metropolitan fleet is currently unavailable. Of the 131 trucks in FRV’s metropolitan fleet, 44 this week were sitting and awaiting repairs in a workshop at Thornbury. Under Labor, a staggering 65 per cent of the entire fire truck fleet in Victoria is past its service date. This means our firefighters are responding in trucks that routinely break down and place them and the public in danger.”

When contacted about the issue, a Victorian Government spokesperson said, “Fire Rescue Victoria’s vehicles and equipment are maintained by an expert team to ensure they are both safe to use and ready to respond. Victorians are never put at risk when this occurs.

“We’re giving FRV \$40 million towards an ongoing truck replacement program, building on \$15 million for five new specialist pumpers. That’s on top of 25 vehicles already delivered and the ones currently being built.

“Our fire services are the best funded in the nation, with more fire fighters than any other state, and the fastest response times of any state. We continue to strengthen support for all of our fire services to ensure they can keep Victorians safe.”

The government also advised that FRV has established a specialist team to strengthen its fleet maintenance regime, and that firefighting appliances are purpose built and can remain in service for long periods, depending on their usage and workload.

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

UNITING CHURCH In Australia
St Andrews, Downey Street,
Alexandra
Worshipping. Welcoming
Sharing the transforming love of
Jesus. Services 10am each Sunday
Contact 5772 2362

OASIS COMMUNITY CHURCH
Loving God, Loving People,
Loving Life
118 Grant Street, Alexandra
0408 123 581
Meeting every Sunday @ 10am

MOUNT CATHEDRAL COMMUNITY
BAPTIST CHURCH
37 Grant Street, Alexandra
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

The economic impact of the fire on Murrindindi Shire

AN Impact Report compiled by Murrindindi Shire Council details the severe and compounding impacts of the January 2026 Longwood Bushfire and earlier floods on local businesses, farms and the visitor economy, making clear that recovery will be won through coordinated investment across government, philanthropy and industry, over the long term.

Council's work on developing an Economic Development Strategy and Shaping Murrindindi's Future provides a strong and viable roadmap for recovery and future economic prosperity within the shire for future generations. However, recovering from this catastrophic natural disaster will require substantial targeted support from state and federal government along with partnership and significant investment from the private sector.

Murrindindi Shire Council are calling for visitors to return and support local businesses and communities impacted by the fires.

Feedback from affected businesses and primary producers, supported by data from Agriculture Victoria, shows recovery will take years and requires sustained, flexible and outcomes-focused support that helps enterprises reopen, re-employ and rebuild productive capacity.

Primary producers and small businesses across the entire shire have experienced significant income disruption, livestock and crop losses, and extensive damage to fencing and core infrastructure.

Almost 7800 animals were killed and over 4800 kilometers of fencing destroyed, with replacement costs estimated at over \$120 million, a scale of loss that directly affects regional supply chains, on-farm productivity and local employment. Loss of sheds, machinery and irrigation systems continues to delay recovery and keeps businesses from returning to full production.

New spending data highlights immediate economic shock. The fire event resulted in \$3.47 million reduction in total spending across Murrindindi Shire over 24 days, a 39 per cent decline compared to a non event trading period. Total spend fell from \$12.2 million to \$8.75 million, driven almost entirely by the collapse in visitor expenditure.

Visitor spending declined by \$3.55 million, or 74 per cent. Resident spending remained largely stable, falling by just \$60,247, or two per cent. This indicates continued local purchasing of essential goods and services, but a sharp contraction in the visitor economy.

Yarck recorded an estimated \$375,000 loss, with visitor spending down around 90 per cent. Alexandra recorded a 77 per cent fall in visitor spending and a 22 per cent reduction in total spend, despite a nine per cent increase in resident activity. Eildon experienced a 53 per cent decline in visitor spend and a 47 per cent reduction in total spending. Marysville saw visitor expenditure fall by 75 per cent, driving a 51 per cent drop in total spend. Yea experienced a 90 per cent collapse in visitor spend, contributing to a 36 per cent decline in total local expenditure.

This data also identifies substantial gaps in insurance coverage. Many businesses are uninsured or under insured and delays in insurance assessments and payouts are increasing financial stress and limiting the ability of otherwise viable enterprises to reinvest quickly.

The toll on people is growing. Families and business owners are dealing with ongoing stress, safety worries and uncertainty about the future. At the same time, fewer visitors are coming to the region, and with many farmers nearing retirement, there is a real risk to local jobs, productivity and the long-term strength of our communities.

The report concludes that one off grants and short-term relief are insufficient for asset

heavy, production-based businesses. It calls for integrated economic, infrastructure and wellbeing recovery programs that are designed for the realities of regional production, and that mobilise multiple partners to stabilise and rebuild the Murrindindi Shire economy.

Portfolio Councillor for Economic Development, Local Jobs, and Skills, Sandice McAulay said this report highlights the scale and duration of recovery facing the region, and the importance of a shared recovery partnership that brings together State and Commonwealth programs with private and philanthropic co-investment.

"It's important we acknowledge the significant and ongoing impacts these natural disasters have caused our community. For example, fencing is critical economic infrastructure and without targeted support to rebuild these foundations, businesses cannot restore production, retain staff or sustain operations, impacts that flow through the whole regional economy," Cr McAulay said.

"We are inviting philanthropists and business leaders to partner with us in practical, high-impact recovery: rebuilding productive infrastructure, backing local contractors and jobs, and supporting integrated case management and mental health services so people can stay on their land, keep businesses open and communities strong if you have plans to invest and support the local economy please reach out to the team.

"Flexible programs, reduced administrative burden, funded local case management and integrated mental health support are key to keeping businesses operating and communities resilient.

"We can't forget the impact that visitors to the region have on our local economy. We are open for business and look forward to seeing visitors back supporting local business as we set our vision to the future."

Investigation into Longwood fire cause

VICTORIA Police were asked for an update regarding the investigation into the cause of the Longwood fire.

A spokesperson for the organisation said, "Victoria Police continues to work with its partner agencies following the fires across the state, including the Longwood blaze.

"The investigation into the cause of the Longwood fire and the associated death is being led by the Arson and Explosives Squad.

"Such investigations are complex and when we are in a position to provide confirmed information about the cause of any fire, we will do so.

"The body of a person located deceased in the fire has been formally identified as a 78 year old Terip Terip man. Police will prepare a brief for the coroner."

Dindi Daze back for second iteration

'DINDI Daze', now in its second year, is a fun-filled, family-focussed celebration of everything that makes Murrindindi great.

Held in Rotary Park from 9am to 3pm on Saturday, February 28, this year's event will feature a range of children's activities, including free face painting, games, and competitions, a highlight will be the mobile animal farm. Local performers will provide entertainment throughout the event, creating a lively and inclusive atmosphere.

Visitors can enjoy food vans and pop-ups, local craft beers, wines, and spirits, as well as arts and crafts stalls, a historic car display and even steam train rides.

Finally, the organisers also think that given the timing, it will provide a wonderful chance for the community to unwind, reconnect and celebrate community as everyone recovers from the January fires.

For more information, visit DINDI DAZE on Facebook.

A FESTIVAL TO CELEBRATE ALL THAT IS GOOD IN MURRINDINDI

KIDS ACTIVITIES
LIVE MUSIC
CRAFT BEER
HISTORIC CAR SHOW
LOCAL PRODUCE
PETTING ZOO
ARTS & CRAFTS
STEAM TRAIN RIDES
FACE PAINTING
PICNIC
SAUSAGE SIZZLE

ROTARY PARK ALEXANDRA
9AM TO 3PM
28 FEB 2026

Alexandra Rotary Club
Murrindindi Shire Council

Proudly supporting Student of the week

Community Bank · Yea & District and Alexandra



ST MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

Isabella Peers

Isabella Peers is a most deserving recipient of the Principal's Award for the efficient and responsible way she completes her learning tasks. She consistently supports her classmates with kindness and patience, and sets a wonderful example for her peers through her positive attitude and strong work ethic. Well done Isabella.



ALEXANDRA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Griff

Griff has shown fantastic effort in class by staying focused and contributing positively to our learning environment. Griff should be very proud of the way he approached Athletics this week, giving every event a go with a positive attitude and showing great sportsmanship. We are proud to have you in our learning community. You are a star.



BUXTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Leo, Jess and Declan

Leo, Jess and Declan for doing a great job following school routines and showing respect for others.



Student of the Week

Proudly supported by
Kinglake branch



The Longwood fires in Murrindindi Shire

by Dianne Goschnick

ON Friday the ninth of January 2026

A catastrophic disaster warning came - we were in a fix
When emergency warnings were out there in force,
with a bushfire now raging, things were getting worse.

At first there came warnings - to evacuate
"Get out, get going, there's no time to wait."
Then it was "Take shelter, it's too late to leave"
Everyone of us so frightened, but did take heed.
But while many fled away from this horrendous fire
the firefighters and volunteers leapt
into action around our shire,
Aiming to hit it head on - this Fiery Beast
as it lashed about, north, south, west and east.
As this Fiery Demon breathed heat and flames so hot
And the winds blew more wildly, it burnt the lot

Devastating the environment,
properties, homes and more
Known as the Longwood fires -
lashing right at our door.
As the winds got wilder and the flames swept higher
So did this terrible beast, in the shape of destructive fire
Rolling and raging right across the land
Over the Murrindindi Shire, a place once so grand.
So many lives were changed on that day
When this fiery monster rushed our way
With our fate unknown or how this event would end
Prayers and messages to loved ones we all did send.
Somehow with some luck on our side, it
slowed down on the edge of town

Thank you for the support of the CFA volunteers, DEECA and all the others that came to the aid to fight the fires that severely impacted the Murrindindi Shire and beyond. Our thoughts and prayers are with those most severely impacted by this horrendous event and with your hope and healing as we move into the recovery phase and ongoing future. Thank you also to the all the support services and caring people out there assisting people to navigate the systems of support following the recent bushfires.

Not before it had razed so much country all around
Houses, buildings, sheds, trucks and cars,
Disaster and destruction across the landscape so far.
So many tankers came to the rescue from near and far
Fighting this beast, they were soon
covered in soot and char
We are so proud of their efforts in this fiery war
And how they fought so hard, and feel for
destruction and heartache of what they saw,
In the aftermath of this cruel disastrous event
We see so much destruction, properties
destroyed and steel all bent
The landscape now different we
see how it has all changed
When this Fiery Beast razed our district,
now with things rearranged.
Now five weeks later and with hope
this beast is laid to rest
We congratulate the firefighters and
volunteers who did their best
With their own lives on the line of this raging fire
We thank them all right across the state,
and the Murrindindi Shire.
As we try to rebuild our lives every
day and slowly move forward
Though difficult for some and will always be haunted
Support each other and please be ever so kind
No closer community like ours, you will ever find.
Please give thanks and all support one another
And celebrate our survival even if you did run for cover
We will rebuild with time, love, hope and support
And become wiser and stronger after
the Fiery Monster was fought.

Flame

by Alex Jones, Maintongoon

Warm and cosy, on a winter's night,
when frost does try to bite.
Fuel I give to make you grow,
darkened night, amber glow.
Charcoal shimmer, orange glimmer.
Flicker flame, in my house you burn, here you are tame.
A candle dances, suits romances, we have it on a stick.
Its wax is ever burning slow, the flame begins to flick.
Happy birthday, the greatest song,
more candles to your name.
And as if a challenge sitting there, we blow upon the flame.
There you were upon a hill, looking down at me one day.
You screamed and roared so loudly,
it was all that you could say.
Then your dance raced forwards, bouncing
off trees that were in your way.
You're angry now, I don't know why.
Your friend the wind so gusty, has swept you
off your feet, and how your heart is beating
with an intense and scorching heat.
To stop and stare and watch you work,
your wild and wicked ways,
Has taken my burst for life away,
and it's been gone for days.
Water, a summer friend, close to me that day.
Gave me power to stop your march,
as I slowly drove you away.
When winter comes, we will meet again.
I will give you so much life.
Hot fire, flame, you are not tame and you
burn just like the sun so bright.
As an ever-changing spectrum of life inspiring light.

Goulburn River autumn water release to help native fish and plants



A golden perch. -S

WATER for the environment will be released into the Goulburn River in autumn to encourage native fish movement and plant growth on the banks.

Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (CMA) Environmental Water and Wetlands Manager, Simon Casanelia, said the water release was referred to as the 'Goulburn River autumn fresh' and was expected to run from early March to early April.

"Conditions have been dry, with multiple heatwaves over summer and below-to-well-below average rainfall in the Goulburn River catchment over the past 12 months," Mr Casanelia said.

"The autumn fresh will reinvigorate mid-bank vegetation along with the potential to attract Golden and Silver perch fish into the river."

Mr Casanelia said the timing of the water delivery had been planned with the community in mind.

"Autumn is a popular time for people to enjoy the Goulburn River, especially during public and school holidays. This year the autumn fresh has been scheduled to avoid the key Easter and school holiday periods. The water level will have returned to base flows before the Easter long weekend."

Water for the environment is water allocated and managed to improve the health of rivers, wetlands and floodplains.

This complements on-ground activities such as delivering stock fencing, off-stream watering, weed control and revegetation incentives to restore high quality riparian vegetation corridors that are resistant to flood related channel change such as river bed and bank erosion.

Mr Casanelia said the autumn fresh is targeted for the lower Goulburn River. It will have a peak flow of approximately 6000 mega litres per day at Shepparton before slowly dropping back to below 1500 mega litres per day in late March.

"The water delivery is likely to incorporate Inter Valley Trade (IVT) allocated water

which would otherwise have been delivered separately," he said.

"By combining the two it reduces the amount of time bank vegetation is under water. The IVT pulse component will be delivered first with a small peak of approximately 3000 mega litres per day followed by the larger peak of 6000 mega litres per day.

"This double peak will mimic natural variable flows and will encourage fish movement into the Goulburn River and bank vegetation structure diversity."

Peak flows will be well below minor flood levels along the Goulburn River. At Shepparton the river will reach 4.3 metres, with the minor flood level at 9.5 metres. The timing and height of the fresh may vary depending on natural flows in the river. Delivery of water for the environment will reduce or stop if there is any flood risk.

"Environmental flows are planned by the Goulburn Broken CMA in consultation with the local community, Traditional Owners, river ecologists, Goulburn-Murray Water, the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH) the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and the Murray Darling Basin Authority," Mr Casanelia said.

"Decisions about using water for the environment are based on science, including research by river ecologists and long-term environmental monitoring. The research and monitoring clearly demonstrates water for the environment is improving the health of the Goulburn River."

To check how water for the environment changes flows in the Lower Goulburn, view the hydrograph on Goulburn Broken CMA's website: fchmcccoys.hydronet.com/ (updated weekly).

The flows are authorised by the VEWB in line with its *Seasonal Watering Plan 2025-26*. The plan is available for download from vewh.vic.gov.au, with regular watering updates posted on the Goulburn Broken CMA website at gbcma.vic.gov.au



Bushwalking with Peter. -S



Ladies Do Lunch. -S



Line dancing. -S

Murrindindi East U3A happenings

THERE has been plenty happening over the last week or so at Murrindindi East U3A.

Peter's Bushwalking Group headed up to Lake Mountain for a 12km walk. Starting at Arnold's Gap, they went over Snowy Hill and Lake Mountain summit to Gerraty's. They passed the Sherlock and Taggerty Valley Lookout's which stood high over the remains and regrowth from the 2009 fires finishing on the Bjorne K Dahl Boardwalk.

Sue hosted the group's first 'Ladies Do Lunch' at the Rubicon Hotel and the smiles suggest they enjoyed themselves.

Anthea's Art Group had their first session at CH@T in Taggerty and produced some beautiful eyes with graphite.

The Murrindindi East U3A committee met for the first time this year and would

welcome anyone interested in joining this dynamic group, who keep their community thriving and activities going strong, to give them a holler.

Andrea had her first pop-up session in the Healthy Ageing Course at the Embassy of Ideas, this session was all about sleep and how to get more of it.

Jeanne was back teaching her advance and beginners Tai Chi Groups.

Andrea stepped in to run the Line Dancing class while Tricia is out of action.

Finally, it was the first of a series of 'Foodies Kitchen' cooking classes being held by Judy Maraspin at St John's Hall. This month it was Greek food with U3A members cooking Pork Souvlaki, Pita Bread and Tzatziki dip and Almond Yoghurt Cake and then having the pleasure of sitting down to eat it all.



Looking after yourself and others after the fires

**Wednesday 4 March from 6.30 pm
at Alexandra Shire Hall, 55 Grant Street**

The Alexandra community and Murrindindi Shire Council are hosting a recovery session to support those affected by the recent bushfires.

Join us to hear from Dr Rob Gordon, who has nearly 40 years' experience helping communities recover after trauma. He'll talk about common emotional responses and share practical strategies to support your wellbeing and those around you.

This will be a relaxed, supportive session with a light supper and time for a chat to follow.



murrindindi.vic.gov.au/afterfirewellbeing

5772 0333

New preps start their educational journey



The new prep students at Alexandra Primary School. -S



The new prep students at Buxton Primary School. -S



Lachlan Fraser, William Tatham, Daniel Joshy and Ruby Rich from Eildon Primary School. -S

Rob Gordon provides fire recovery advice

SINCE the Ash Wednesday fires in 1983, Doctor Rob Gordon OAM has dedicated his career to helping traumatised communities and emergency service workers recover after disasters. He has recently spoken at public events in Yarck and Ruffy, and his insights are invaluable.

He was interviewed for his thoughts on how people can help their recovery from the Longwood bushfire in early January.

The current stage of recovery

He was asked about the current stage of people's recovery, and what people might expect of this time period if they were impacted. He responded, "I think they're often saying it hasn't really quite hit them yet because they are very active in dealing with a lot of immediate problems. But certainly, they're starting to get very tired. We know that if people can get involved in community meetings and come to the meals and the gatherings that are being offered, that this is very helpful to help them come to grips with it. Otherwise, they tend to become very isolated and totally immersed in their own situation. The shared experience would make a big difference.

Asked how they might find a path forward, Dr Gordon replied, "I think people have got lots of immediate problems, but as soon as people can get a stable arrangement, somewhere to live if they lost the house, do the immediate urgent stuff for their farms and then try to settle into a bit of a routine where they start to give themselves some time out and some rest. Because there is a tendency when you're in that sort of emergency situation to be in this adrenaline state where you want to just get on and try to fix everything as quickly as possible. The reality is, of course, it can't be fixed so quickly and people will tend to exhaust themselves. When they exhaust themselves physically, it's very hard to manage emotions and that's when I think people feel overwhelmed, possibly unable to see how they're going to get through it and so on. One of the best protections against that is to start taking care of themselves now, do it a little bit slower and steadier. Maintain social contacts and other activities."

When asked what stages people tend to go through from this point, Dr Gordon replied, "People are usually very active in the early stages when they get as much done as they can, particularly on farms. And then there's often a period when they have to wait for insurance companies to do their thing, wait for various government activities to get going, and most importantly, to start thinking about whatever they need to do to replace their losses. And so really that's the point where I think it's most important for people to understand that it is going to be a slow, steady process. It will happen, but it won't happen as fast as we want. Of course, the degree of frustration we feel is determined by our expectations. If we think the insurance companies should get back to us quickly, we're going to get very frustrated if they don't. I think people can protect themselves from that by trying to make realistic judgments, and that's where I think it's very, very valuable for them to make contact with Emergency Recovery Victoria on 1800 560 760 and register for a case support worker who can help them, first of all to negotiate all the different government processes and that will help them be more realistic about how fast they can expect this to happen. I think it's quite hard for people to sit around on calls, pressing buttons and waiting and so on. If they've got someone who can tell them exactly what they can get and how they can get it, it's very helpful for people."

He added, "I would think another thing to do is try to put time into planning how they're going to do it. Because often when there are so many things to do, people have trouble being strategic and working out what's important and what order they should do things, and they just end up doing what they can do rather than the most important things. So again, that's when having a case support worker.

"One man told me he'd actually ask various family members to do things for him. Ask one to get a ute and another to see if he could source a second-hand tractor and somebody else was handling the insurance claims. If you've got friends and relatives who want to help, giving them tasks is a really helpful thing to do.



Dr Rob Gordon. -S

"But those who haven't got that help, then they can use the system and I think even just talking with your community members will help you work out what they're doing and what you should do. Just trying to think outside your own head because your own head gets pulled up and you don't know which way to turn."

It can be quite immobilising if there's so many tasks ahead of someone, so Dr Gordon suggested, "Make plans, forward plans, prioritise things and to set a program about doing them one at a time. It requires a clear head, and that's where I think it's very important for people to just put it all aside and maybe take the evening off or go and visit friends or go to a community meeting and just hang out with people, and then come back the next day and sit down and have a planning session or maybe talk it through with somebody who can help you think through how to do it. Maybe another farmer who's not in the area who understands the business, but is not in the same state as you. Because that sort of planning, I've had farmers tell me that they work their fingers to the bone for six months doing all sorts of things, and a couple of years later they realised it wasn't properly planned and they had to end up redoing a lot of it. That can be avoided by just being a little bit slow and thoughtful, steady."

The importance of having case workers

Given that Black Saturday badly impacted Murrindindi Shire in 2009, a number of survivors of that blaze are now case workers for the Longwood fire.

Dr Gordon commented, "I think there's no doubt to have had some experience of what it's like is going to make people much more sensitive. But ultimately, if they [case workers] are well briefed and well trained, they should be able to really help people. Most people don't have a great deal to do with government systems normally, and these are often very new systems and they have trouble even remembering all the names. Someone who's really been briefed on the whole system and all the things available can be very helpful."

He added, "The message we need to get through to people is there is going to be a lot of help. It will take time. But we know that a few years down the track, people have gone through massive losses, but have got up and got running again. And it's the optimism of being able to just get through that difficult time those few years to get into that new position."

He also said, "For some people, of course, if you're a farmer and you've got your farm and you're happy on your farm and so on, and it's been burnt or damaged or whatever, of course, you just want to get it all going again as soon as you can. And that's straightforward. But for a number of people, it might end up being a life-changing event. Some people will say, particularly if they didn't have good insurance or whatever, that they're not going to be able to quite get back into the situation

they were in. I think for those people, or maybe older people who just don't feel they've quite got the energy to do it all again, I think it's really important to give yourselves time and stabilise things. Get your temporary accommodation, put the focus in getting a sort of lifestyle that is manageable now, give yourself some time and then decide.

"I tell the story of a Gippsland couple who I talked to about this sort of thing. They went away from the meeting after Black Summer. They'd lost everything on their property, which I think had a bit of a nursery and plantation and so on. The only thing that survived was a railway carriage, an old railway unit. So they put their grant money into renovating the railway carriage and they said, well, we'll live here for two years and then we'll decide what to do. And at the end of two years, they said, we actually feel a bit too tired and we're a bit too old to redevelop this entirely. So what they eventually decided to do was to bring forward their retirement plan by about 10 years, which was to buy a house in the neighbouring town where there were good medical services and supports, and they said 'we are thoroughly enjoying renovating this house and joining the community in the town and we'll probably still do something with our property but it won't be the same'. So in a way, this has been a creative opportunity and so if people are just focused on what they've lost and maybe they can recoup it or maybe they can't, think of this as an opportunity to say okay, where will I go now? What's important? What can be a good life goal? And to do that you've got to allow some time, settle down, stabilise things and just give yourself time."

His advice was similar to the advice of Black Saturday survivors, recently included in this newspaper: Don't make snap decisions.

Children

There are particular challenges for children, and parents of children, in the fire-impacted areas. Dr Gordon said, "I think what's important for children is we know that their resilience is very much associated with their parents and how the parents can set up a good, stable lifestyle with enjoyment and time. Now, if the parents are worried and sad, that's difficult, but you can do it, with a bit of thought. Just make sure that you don't have all the long, complicated conversations about 'what are we going to do about this, that or the other', in front of the children.

"You might keep them informed. Particularly if they're teenagers, they will know what's going on. Keep them informed, but try and shield them a bit from the raw uncertainties the adults feel."

He said that children could form the view that they might end up living under a bridge. "That's the sort of conclusions that young kids draw," Dr Gordon said. "Reassure them, we'll get through this. It'll be okay... We're going to work it out. In the meantime, what would you like to do on the weekend?"

"Maintaining contact with their friends and peers, if possible, particularly if they

move away, is very valuable... Trying to pay attention to the natural stages of their development and what they need to be doing next."

He said that children might not ask for things like going riding on their bike or visiting friends if they can see the family's tense and worried. "I think it's so important for them to continue," Dr Gordon said. "By all means, get them to help out, but also make sure that they can actually get on with their own development. Otherwise, that causes problems later if they haven't done those stages."

Those who help others

Many people have been helping others in the community, so Dr Gordon was asked if he has any advice for them.

Dr Gordon said, "One of the first things I'd say is disasters affect everybody, but in their own unique way. You don't have to have material loss to be severely affected. It can be severely affected because, you've got some other issues in your life and you've been used to getting the support of neighbours and friends, but they're all unavailable now.

"I can think of that example from an earlier fire. I worked with a young mother, a single mother with, some challenging kids, and she had a bunch of good friends in the area that helped her and supported her, but they were all now busy with their fire recovery and so she was suddenly felt kind of alone and overwhelmed with their problems. I think it's very important that people don't judge other people's need in the community and realise that everyone is involved in different ways.

"Often people who may feel a bit of survival guilt you know, my house didn't burn, I should help out, will be very strongly motivated to help out. But I would say this, that as soon as possible over the next few weeks, people should try and organise their lifestyle so that they can continue that voluntary work. It's incredibly valuable and it's wonderful to see the, the emerging groups and supports that are happening. That's going to be the most important value for the communities.

"But I can tell you that those helpers often get into strife in the second year, where they become exhausted. I can think of examples of people who didn't actually pay attention to what was going on with their children at that time, and then they suddenly find they've got problems with their kids at school or something. Or people will work hard and then their health suffers. So I'd say over the next little while, the next month or so, try and actually think about how you can get things organised so you can continue that valuable work, but also keep track of your own responsibilities and take time out, because again, it's a long-term process. Very often what comes out of it is a much stronger, more cohesive community.

"But people need to be cautious about the tendency that we all have when we're in a high-stress state of being judgmental, having simplistic ideas. I don't know what you're complaining about, you didn't get burnt, or this, that or the other. Try and just think of it as the whole community, we're all affected, we've all got entitled to feel sad, even if we're just sad at the loss of nature. We can all support each other if we can open our hearts to each other. And because sometimes just the misunderstandings and tensions and conflicts and then people withdraw and so on. I'd say really holding together the whole community, acknowledging everybody's got a right to come to these events and to use the services. And then for the volunteers to really start building their own self-care into the whole process."

He added, "I'd like to say that I think these communities I've seen are in very good hands. I'm very optimistic that people will get through this and that these communities will come out with something positive. It's just a matter of making sure that they take care of themselves on the journey. I think it'll take time for the state government and the shires to do all their assessments and get the funding flowing, but when that happens, I think people probably feel there's a bit more support in the system."

Dr Gordon will be speaking at the Alexandra Shire Hall on Wednesday, March 4 at 6.30pm. Details can be found in the advertisement on page 7 of this edition.

Fire affected farmers: Sharon Fox

THE Fox family farm in Kanumbra has existed since 1871, when Sharon Fox's great-grandfather selected the property. With over 150 years of history, it was sad to see the damage the Longwood-Berry's Lane fire had caused to the property.

Though the house survived, most likely due to the efforts of CFA brigades, sheds were lost, livestock was lost, and trees were burnt and collapsed.

Sharon Fox generously sat down with this paper to talk about her experience of evacuating because of the fire, and then the immense work that comes after in dealing with livestock and the farm clean-up.

"I evacuated, and I didn't come home until the Tuesday after the fire. I had been prepared because somebody had sent me photographs, and that was, I was so glad they did. I think if I had driven in, and seen all the collapsed, burnt pines and cypresses for a start, and the collapsed sheds, it probably would have affected me more than it has. So I was lucky there," Sharon said.

"A neighbour had rung me on the Saturday, Lou, who is over the road, and she said, 'I can't get in Sharon, because the pines and the cypresses are still burning. It's too dangerous, but I think I can see your chimneys and the roof of your house. And the cottage is there'. That made me feel a bit better.

"I must say, those days in Melbourne, I was sort of numb. When I think back, I can't think, I can't remember what I was thinking. I was staying with friends and I couldn't drive anywhere, I just felt I was too shaky to drive. That was the immediate reaction after."

Around 60 per cent of Sharon's sheep flock were either lost in the fire, or suffered adverse health effects that required putting them down.

"When I came home, my tenant, Laura, the girl who lives in my cottage, she was, she'd been looking after the sheep because I had lost about 60 per cent of the sheep and I had a lot that were burned," Sharon said.

"They didn't all perish in the fire, but one day we had to put down 35. That was tough, because I raised all those sheep. I don't buy in sheep, I have a self-replacing flock. So that was a pretty tough day.

"But then we still had sheep that we were treating with penicillin and spray on antiseptic and such. They've come good. I only lost one more after that 35. So they're all up there together in the back paddock, being fed every day with some pellets and some hay, but they're doing fine. They're due to lamb starting in about April, and the second lot in about May.

"The main thing was burnt feet and burnt udders. When they, if they get burnt feet, what happens is the hooves basically drop off. And when you see that starting to happen, you have to put them down. Also some of them too, I think, had inhaled the smoke and maybe even some embers and flames, because they were, you could tell by their noses were dirty and such. They weren't breathing very well, but as well as they should have been."

It was difficult for Sharon to ascertain what had been happening at the farm during fire event, as she was staying in Melbourne, but she heard the stories second-hand.

"In terms of on the particular day, apparently Yarck came in with their truck, they were recalled back to Yarck and they came in here, put out a couple of spot fires and ran out of water. Then I believe Molesworth brigade were here too. They must have left, and then there was Cranbourne North CFA and Carrum Downs CFA. They were based out of Whanregarwen, apparently, but they were down at Yea," Sharon said.

"How I know this, is last Monday week, I was doing some ironing and I saw this vehicle drive in and there was a medi assist on the side of it. And I thought it was someone doing a welfare check.

"Anyway I went out to the back gate and no-one got out of the car for half a minute and then someone got out, a young, good-looking chap he was, and he walked down towards me. And the first words he said to me were, 'I didn't think I'd find anything here'. I said, where are you from, and he said 'I'm from Carrum Downs CFA'.

"He didn't tell me his name and I didn't think to ask his name. Anyway, he was quite



Sharon Fox at her property in Kanumbra, where the Longwood bushfires wreaked havoc. -BD

emotional and I sort of gave him a hug. And he started to apologise for not being able to save the sheep. He said, 'We tried to get them onto some bare ground, but they kept running back towards the fire'. He said 'I'm sorry about your sheds'. I said but look, you've saved the houses. And he didn't say yes or no.

"Apparently the pine trees were ablaze and crowning. He'd never seen crowning, was what he said. He said, 'your pines were ballistic'. It must have been terrifying for them because they, you know, they're 126 year old pine trees and cypresses. It must have been terrifying for them.

"And anyway, he said, 'well, we did what we could, and then we had to leave. We didn't think we'd find anything. We thought it would be burnt with embers and things, but it wasn't'.

"And he said they were based at Whanregarwen, but they were at Yea when they got the call and they were told to get up the road to Yarck and Kanumbra. He said that basically they just had to pick a property. It was lovely meeting him, and after he was gone, I was quite emotional. I hadn't been when he was with me, but I was quite shaky after, you know, hearing him.

"Apparently too, that day, there was lots of farmers with their slip-ons going about."

The house is providing Sharon with a solid base from which to work on the rest of the farm. She's had help, but as for a lot of people, it is a slow road to recovery.

"To still have the houses, it's just lovely. But I lost the sheds and all the things, like if you think, I need something, you think it'll be in the shed, the shed that's not there," Sharon said.

"All your tools and things. I think I was left with, I had a hammer, I've got a screwdriver, some multi grips and some pliers that were always in the ute. That was about what I came out with. My vehicles were all safe. My hay shed was safe. I don't know how that survived, well, it's mainly all metal. But it had hay in the back corner. The tractor was in there.

"I've had Blaze Aid here, and they were here last Friday, just taking down the road fence and now my fences have started to fence the road fence. Because that's the important one, although my stock are contained. I did a lot of new fencing last year and that survived pretty

well. There's gate posts and things that need replacing, but the sheep are secure, so they're not running around on the road.

"I've been donated hay, and I was donated some wheat knobbles. Also I bought a bag of bulk pellets because they like the pellets and they'd been on those. And I've got a bit of grass up in where they are, up the back, where I had a leak from the dam up there. That was quite green in the bottom. So they've had a little bit of rough feed up there."

On a lighter note, Sharon detailed the vast history of the Fox family in the Kanumbra area, and their farm operations. It is a long and proud history.

"I'm the third Australian born generation. My great-grandfather, James Fox, he settled here in, well, he selected the property in 1871 under the Selection Acts of 1860-something, I think it was, where a farmer could select 240 acres. The deal was you had to make certain improvements every year, and those improvements basically were boundary fencing," Sharon said.

"He actually didn't live here, up until about 10 years later, but he had a man here all the time and he had a little hut up in the back paddock. And there was, up until a fire went through here in 1959, which was the last fire that went through our property, up on top of the hill were some stumps which were left over from great grandfather's cottage, the little shack that his man used to live in.

"When he used to come up and visit he'd stay overnight because, they'd have to ride a horse or something, which it would probably take three days to get here. And then he'd stay a few days and then he'd go home.

"We have records of the sign off from the lands department of the yes, he's done so much of this and so much of that. He lived in Norton Vale, which is the next door property. He bought that off his cousin and then moved his family. He had 14 children. About three of them, I think, died before they married. But my grandfather had four brothers and the five brothers settled in this area. There's only two of us left in Kanumbra now. Myself, and Stuart Fox, who farms the high hills behind me.

"So my grandfather built this house in 1906, and then he bought the property over the road where that old wool shed is, he bought that

in 1923. So Dad lived here in about 1935, I think. They went to Melbourne and Dad went to Melbourne Grammar and they lived in Melbourne for a few years and then came back to the farm and my father has been here ever since then.

"He died in 2016 and up until then I was living in Melbourne. In 2012 I came home to look after Dad. And then when he died, my sister and I inherited the properties and then we split them. I took this one."

Sharon has some important decisions to make moving forward, such as whether she continues to farm the property.

"I could never sell the place. I don't know what will happen, but I couldn't sell it just because it's so much of the Fox history in the area," she said.

"I'm going to have to make the decision of whether I keep my sheep now that I don't have a wool shed. Many people don't have wool sheds.

"My decision now is whether I continue farming or whether I let them have their lambs, then sell them, and then before they're ready to be shorn, sell all the sheep. That's something I've got to think about, because my back paddock up the back there, Stuart agists his cattle there, and the hill paddock up here behind the cottage, another cousin, he agists sheep up there too. I'm sure either of those would like some more agistment there.

"I'll be sad to sell the sheep, because I never buy sheep in except rams. And they're my father's poll Dorset genetics, all those, they go way back to when he formed the stud in 1968, I think. It's no longer a stud. I haven't kept up the stud part of it, but I did for quite a few years. And then I thought, no, I don't need that. But they're still the same sheep and they still have, you know, they still have their little lambs and they've replaced the older ones.

"That'll be sad. It'll be a bit tougher, to have to do that. That's what I'm thinking now, but who knows how I might think in six months' time. The headspace is a bit shaky."

Sharon finished on a positive, saying "I've had tremendous help from people who I don't know. Laura had some people come and do some fencing to keep the sheep in. And then she had people helping treat them, as well. Just a lot of people, just sort of turned up when they were needed, really."

Thornton Gem and Rock Exhibition

THE Thornton Gem and Rock Exhibition was held on the morning of Sunday, February 22 at the Thornton Recreation Reserve, hosted by the Alexandra and Eildon Gem and Lapidary Club.

The event drew storeholders and shoppers from across the state, with a wide range of gems, opals, minerals, crystals, fossils and jewellery for sale. There were also activities for children including gold panning, and coffee was available.

Fortunately, the weather stayed dry during the event, with the rain arriving later in the afternoon.



A display at one of the stalls. -AR



There were plenty of keen shoppers at the event. -AR



Keen shoppers were pleased that the rain stayed away until the afternoon. -AR



Some beautifully polished minerals. -AR



Harvey (8) trying gold panning. -AR



Jan and Graham from the Waverley Gem Club. -AR



Michelle from Kilsyth. -AR



In addition to gems, there were also other metal and woodwork items. -AR



Dave, Pat and Steve from the Alexandra and Eildon Lapidary Club. -AR



Fio with a wide range of items at his stall. -AR



Joan and David from Albury. -AR

KID'S PUZZLES PUZZLES

SOLUTIONS
 Page 14

Colouring Page



Word Search - Words starting with "D"

DANCE	P	C	N	K	C	O	E	J	D	C	Y	N	A	B	H
DARK	K	I	K	D	H	L	F	L	R	S	U	C	R	I	C
DEEP	F	A	F	A	A	B	O	A	C	A	M	E	R	A	P
DESK	Q	I	U	T	I	S	Y	C	P	Y	D	G	M	D	J
DINNER	Y	N	S	G	R	O	W	G	K	M	C	D	C	I	B
DINOSAUR	P	H	C	B	N	E	Q	K	F	T	B	N	G	G	W
DIRTY	A	D	F	L	L	F	K	W	K	E	O	E	K	V	P
DIVE	L	D	I	T	E	Z	E	V	U	S	F	R	Z	Q	C
DOCTOR	Q	X	S	K	F	V	K	V	C	E	T	E	R	L	D
DOGS	J	A	K	O	C	N	E	R	O	E	E	W	U	A	O
DOLPHIN	C	F	N	W	O	L	C	R	M	H	K	M	K	B	C
DONKEY	Q	G	C	P	E	X	Z	M	B	C	S	K	C	N	K
DRESS	N	C	Z	N	N	C	I	N	I	Y	C	H	P	C	F
DUCK	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.

	+		+		12
+		-		+	
9	+		+		15
+		+		-	
7	+		+		18
19		12		0	

Jokes

Q: What do you call a bee that lives in America?

A: A USB

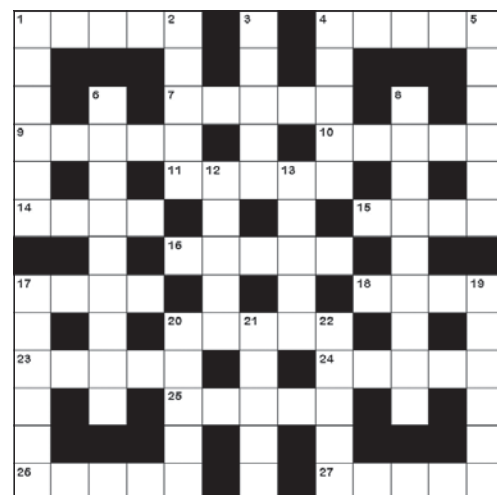
Q: What is a bee's favourite sport?

A: Rug-bee

Crossword

ACROSS

- A person who was legally owned by another.
- A lack of guile or worldly experience.
- Great vitality, enthusiasm, and liveliness.
- A red powder applied to the cheeks.
- The top point of a mountain or a hill.
- The land along the edge of a waterway.
- A cut or puncture using the teeth.
- The hard outer layer or skin on bacon.
- Small cuts made with scissors or shears.
- A bunch of feathers or hair.
- Join metals together by applying heat.
- Responsibility for a bad situation or event.
- The last letter of the Greek alphabet.
- A small swelling on the skin.
- A brief experience of something.
- To give right of way to other traffic.
- An adhesive made from water and flour.



DOWN

- Beetle considered divine by ancient Egyptians.
- Small, mischievous, magical creatures.
- Something unusual, worthy of collecting.
- A daughter or your brother or sister.
- Full of high-spirited delight and optimism.
- Shown to be free from blame or guilt.
- The outer boundary of an enclosed area.
- A reddish brown dye used especially on hair.
- Be effective in keeping something away.
- Something given as a token of victory.
- Rich and superior in quality.
- Doomed to death or destruction.
- An improbable and unexpected victory.
- Someone who is regarded as contemptible.

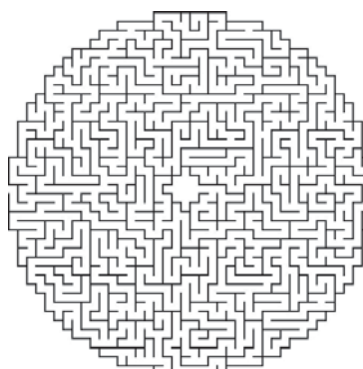
Word Search

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

Boys names

ARCHIE	GORDON
BENJAMIN	MARK
CHARLIE	MICHAEL
DANIEL	OLIVER
DARREN	ROBERT
DONALD	WILLIAM

Maze



Sudoku

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

Difficulty: Very Hard

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

Math Square

	-	7	-		-12
+		-		-	
	+		+		11
-		x		+	
8	x		-		15
-2		1		11	

Fill in the missing numbers.

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

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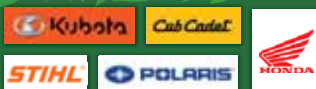
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Standard



BUSINESS & TRADES DIRECTORY**PHONE 5772 1002****Paramedics back on the road faster in the Hume region**

AMBULANCE Victoria (AV) paramedics and first responders are getting back on the road faster and improving response times thanks to a significant drop in clearing times in the Hume Region.

Hospital clearing times are the duration between an ambulance crew completing their patient handover and being available to attend another case.

Introduced last year, the Standards for Safe and Timely Ambulance and Emergency Care (the standards) are improving handover times across the state.

Hume Regional Director Narelle Capp said in the Hume Region, the average hospital clearing times dropped by more than five minutes last year.

"Every small improvement, from more efficient hospital handovers to quicker clearing times, adds up to better care for all Victorians," Ms Capp said.

"We are extremely proud of our paramedic and first responder crews who through dedication and teamwork have made remarkable improvements to hospital clearing times and are returning to the community faster."

The Hume Region average clearing time has dropped from 29.7 minutes between January and March 2025 to 24.4 minutes between October and December 2025.

The latest ambulance performance data for October to December 2025 has shown improvements statewide and in 49 Local Government Areas (LGAs).

During the October to December quarter across Victoria, AV crews responded to 65.1 per cent of Code One cases within the state-wide target of 15 minutes, up from 64.1 per cent in the previous quarter. The state-wide average response time to Code One emergencies was 15 minutes and 40 seconds, six seconds faster than the previous quarter.

AV responded to 100,292 Code One emergencies across Victoria during the October to December quarter, slightly down on the previous quarter but still the third highest on record.

"Despite this demand, we continue to lead the way in pre-hospital patient care, including the best cardiac arrest survival rates in Australia and third best anywhere in the world," Ms Capp said.

In the Hume Region, paramedics and first responders responded to 5791 Code One cases between October and December 2025.

AV Acting Executive Director Regional Operations Michael Georgiou said AV is working closely with hospitals, emergency services and government partners to keep patients moving through the system as quickly as possible and get ambulances back on the road sooner.

"Reducing clearing times is just one way we are striving to achieve the standards, with work also underway to complete more efficient patient transfers and using other care options such as the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department (VVED) when safe and appropriate," Mr Georgiou said.

"By leaving hospitals faster, we can get to the patients who need our lifesaving care the most, and that means better patient outcomes."

Mr Georgiou said the support of the community can also help save lives.

"If you need help but it's not life-threatening, we encourage you to consider the most appropriate care for your situation," Mr Georgiou said.

"AV paramedics and first responders are focused on reaching the sickest patients first, but every day, about one in five calls to Triple Zero (000) do not need an emergency ambulance response.

"Getting the right care at the right time can make a big difference. There are many options people can access when they need timely medical care and health advice, but not an emergency ambulance, including the VVED and Nurse-on-Call which are available at any time of the night or day. Local Urgent Care Clinics, GPs and pharmacists are also great options."

Mr Georgiou said AV's Triage Services team, staffed by nurses and paramedics, also plays a vital role by connecting people with the right care and freeing up ambulances for life-threatening emergencies.

"From October to December, 49,737 people who did not need an emergency ambulance were instead connected to more appropriate care by paramedics and nurses in Triage Services," Mr Georgiou said.

In a life-threatening emergency always call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

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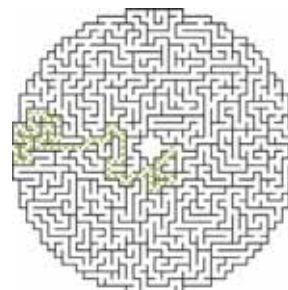
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MATH SQUARE

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+		-		-	
5	+	2	+	4	11
-		x		+	
8	x	3	-	9	15
-2		1		11	

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3	+	8	+	1	12
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Hay bales provided by prisons following Longwood fires

THE Victorian Government is backing farmers with practical new recovery supports, including Corrections Victoria Prison Industries supplying livestock feed and on-ground assistance to communities hit hard by recent fires.

Langi Kal Kal Prison has delivered more than 60 hay bales to Stoneleigh for distribution to local farmers impacted by recent fires, with prisoners at the minimum security facility helping to grow, cut, rake and bale the hay onsite.

This follows a further 110 hay bales provided to communities affected by the Longwood fires, helping replenish critical livestock feed reserves after paddocks and stored fodder were destroyed.

Prisons across Victoria are also contributing to local recovery efforts.

The Landmate program, run in partnership between the Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, operates across Langi Kal Kal, Tarrengower, Beechworth and Hopkins prisons.

Under the program, supervised prisoner crews give back to the local community, supporting environmental management projects, maintaining local recreation facilities and supporting disaster recovery projects.

Landmate crews within 100km of bushfire-affected areas will be on the ground providing recovery support over the next year.

Council discusses public liability insurance post-fires

MURRINDINDI Shire Council was asked about public liability insurance after the Longwood-Berry's Lane fires of January.

They were asked, 'Are you able to provide any information about what council is doing (if anything) re public liability insurance for people helping out post-fires, with the distribution of goods, non-professional services, etcetera, excluding public halls, which presumably have their own/council liability insurance. If it's not council's realm, is there another organisation involved? Is public liability insurance for post-fire assistance a consideration in council's emergency management plan? If not, why not? Who's responsibility should it be? Is the cost of public liability insurance placed on individuals trying to help out? This seems unreasonable. Is this something which governments (state, federal or local) could/should arrange when there is a major disaster?'

Council replied with the following information. "Murrindindi Shire Council has public liability insurance in place to cover its employees and for volunteers who are formally registered, inducted and operating under council's direction as part of council-organised activities. This includes council-led emergency response or recovery activities following an incident such as a fire.

"Public liability insurance is generally the responsibility of the organisation that is directing, supervising or controlling an activity. Where council is the controlling organisation, council's insurance applies. Where another organisation is in charge, such as the CFA, a state government agency, a charity or a community organisation, the insurance arrangements of that organisation apply to their staff and volunteers.

"Council recognises that, following emergencies, many people assist neighbours and community members independently and with the best of intentions. Where individuals choose to help outside any organised, directed or registered arrangement, council does not have the ability to extend its insurance coverage to those activities. In those circumstances, individuals would need to rely on their own insurance arrangements.

"People assisting as volunteers through other organisations should check directly with those organisations regarding public liability and personal accident cover, as insurance arrangements differ between groups.

"It's also important to distinguish between public liability insurance and personal accident insurance. Public liability cover applies where a person's actions cause injury or property damage to a third party and negligence is established. Personal accident insurance relates to injuries sustained by the individual themselves, regardless of fault, and is a separate form of cover.

"Victoria's Good Samaritan protections under the *Wrongs Act 1958* (Vic) provide certain legal protections for people who give emergency assistance in good faith during immediate emergency situations. These provisions do not create insurance cover and do not generally extend to organised or ongoing recovery activities once the immediate emergency phase has passed.

"Public liability insurance for post-fire assistance is considered within council's emergency management planning to the extent that council can lawfully register, direct and supervise volunteers. Council does not have the authority or practical capacity to insure all informal or spontaneous community assistance, as this would require council to assume control and responsibility for those activities and for the individuals involved.

"The broader issue of insurance coverage for informal community assistance following major disasters sits beyond the remit of local government alone. This is an area where state and federal governments are best placed to consider whether broader, coordinated insurance or indemnity arrangements could be established for large-scale disaster recovery efforts."

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PUBLIC NOTICES



Energy,
Environment
and Climate Action

Safety on Public Land Act 2004

NOTIFICATION OF PUBLIC SAFETY ZONE DECLARATION

I, Chris Hardman, Chief Fire Officer, as delegate of the Secretary of the Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action, give notice pursuant to section 7(1)(a) of the *Safety on Public Land Act 2004*, that I have made a public safety zone declaration published in the Victoria Government Gazette.

The declaration made on 19/02/2026 takes effect 01/03/2026 to 31/08/2026 inclusive.

They specify areas of State forest which have been declared public safety zones for;

- conducting fire operations and the maintenance of public safety.

The declaration specifies the period for which the areas have been declared public safety zones; the times or periods during which access to the public safety zones is restricted or prohibited; activities permitted, prohibited, or restricted in the public safety zones; restrictions or conditions (if any) applying to the public safety zones; and persons or classes of persons exempt from their operation.

A copy of the declaration, and maps showing the location of public safety zones, may be inspected at the Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action, 8 Nicholson Street, East Melbourne, Victoria, 3002 (by appointment with the Joint Fuel Management Program Coordinator, telephone 136 186).

A copy of the declaration is available at Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action web site at: <https://www.ffm.vic.gov.au/permits-and-regulations/closures-of-parks-and-forests>

A copy of the maps showing the location of fire operations is available at Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action web site at: www.ffm.vic.gov.au/JFMP, or by appointment with the Joint Fuel Management Program Coordinator, telephone 136 186.

Active planned burns are listed on the Planned Burns Victoria Website (plannedburns.ffm.vic.gov.au) as either 'Within 10 Days', 'Next 24 hours', 'Now' or 'Patrol'.

Jason Hellyer,
A/Chief Fire Officer,
as delegate of the Secretary of the Department of
Energy, Environment and Climate Action

BIRTHDAYS

To celebrate the 100th birthday of Norma Tobias on March 16, 2026. An afternoon tea is being provided at Rosebank Aged Care Yea between 2 and 4pm. RSVP to Lorraine on 5736 0410 by March 6.

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How does nature respond to fire, and how can we help?

by Cathy Olive, Euroa Arboretum

OUR ancient landscape has withstood fire for millennia. Plants and many animals have adaptive behaviour to cope with fire events. However, our recent Longwood fire will surely create local extinctions for some species due to the extent and in some areas the intensity, in a landscape already stressed with drought and fragmentation. So, what are the signs nature is recovering and what can we do to assist this process?

Our eucalypts are showing some of the most visual signs of recovery currently. From blackened, scarred trunks, green, juvenile leaves are emerging. Far from looking dead, the epicormic buds, scattered up the trunk and branches of eucalypts beneath the burnt bark begin to emerge. Sometimes growing up to 26cm per day, these little shoots and branches allow the tree to photosynthesise and recover their supply of sugars. Roots deep in the earth, connected to fungal threads, continue to seek nutrients and moisture, and distribute these to the plant in exchange for sugar. Our eucalypts are on the mend.

Unfortunately, the hollow bearing trees, the matriarchs and ancients of our landscape, have taken a heavy loss. Many centuries old, supporting countless insects, birds, possums, gliders, bats, lizards; many now lie fallen. Early estimates might suggest 90 per cent of these ancients have succumbed, numbering into their thousands across the burnt country. Their very feature, their dry, hollow core, has allowed fire at the base of the trunk to act as a chimney, drawing smoke and flame into the heart of the tree. Such a loss is unbearable and will have repercussions for decades for hollow dwelling animals. Trees take at least 100 years to develop hollows, and many birds, bats, owls, possums, gliders and phascogales either depend on them year round or seasonally to breed, thus there is urgency to begin the task of building artificial hollows.

Our soils after fire are exposed and vulnerable, showing our landscapes very bones, and sometimes exposing artefacts thousands of years old. They repel water initially, with water unable to penetrate and sheeting off the surface, risking erosion. However, our native grasses, adapted to fire, respond already with new green shoots. Deep rooted and surprisingly old grass tussocks, rivalling even our ancient trees and dated to 500 years of age in some cases, send up green shoots despite the lack of rain. Introduced perennial grasses respond too, stabilising bare soils and providing a protective cover. In the damper gullies and creeks, the much-maligned common reed, *Phragmites australis*, has great capacity for filtering water. Underground tubers have withstood the fire, and shoots are already a foot high. It is braced and ready for the first rains, ready to filter water and trap soil particles. Our sedges and grasses around waterways are truly our first responders for protecting our water quality.

Quietly, patiently, waiting in the soils rest our seeds and native tubers. This is their moment. Each year, wattles, peas, grasses, wildflowers, trees, they all shed thousands of seeds. Some are short lived, some quickly become food for birds and insects, but many lie dormant in the soil. The wattles and peas are hard seed coated so they need the jaws of an ant to scratch their surface, boiling water in our nursery, or a fire event to break their dormancy and crack their seed coat. They can survive in the soil for at least one hundred years. Finally, they have sunlight, warmth and a lack of competition. All they wait for is rain. Careful what you wish for. The wattles will be first and they will be abundant. They are the pioneers. Short lived, fast growing, they change the humidity at the ground level quickly, sheltering the way for the next species, and fix inorganic nitrogen in the soil, making it available to other plants. They are an abundant food source



Epicormic growth sprouting after fire. -S

—sap, leaves and seed. Finally, there is food to go around.

Also, dormant but patiently waiting for a gap in the grass cover are the wildflowers. If our season brings rain, just wait for spring this year or next, those tuberous plants, growing naturally in the gaps between grass tussocks, will be colourful and bring much joy.

So, nature is getting on with what she does, but she does need your help. Here are some initial tips. Our soils are very fragile right now. Avoid driving over them. Leaf litter creates a tiny bit of soil cover. If you have branches down, lay them across the slope around gullies

or creeks or in areas of remnant habitat. Allow some small stacks of timber in remnant areas. There is no cover right now, and any surviving animals (bandicoots, lizards, native mice) are terribly vulnerable to predators. If you do suspect you have found cultural heritage, leave it in place. Let us know and we can ensure you follow the right protocols for reporting. Surviving paddock trees are terribly precious. They are important for stock shade, but more vulnerable than ever to stock compaction and high nutrients around their trunk. Fencing to the edge of the drip line for those trees is ideal, allowing stock to still seek shade on the south

side of the tree. However, with so much fencing to be done, laying large fallen branches away from the trunk can provide a perimeter of protection for the tree. Stock can rub on branches, rather than the trunk, and there is a chance of regeneration of the old tree. It does make future weed control a challenge, but it can buy time and bring important, immediate protection.

Creating artificial habitat with nest boxes and modified hollow branches will be a major focus for the Biodiversity Recovery Alliance and supporting landcare groups in the months and years to come. We are currently confirming designs and sourcing funding for material supply but will love your help with construction. If you are a Men's Shed with ability to pre-cut nest boxes, or a community group keen to build boxes, we would love to hear from you.

Lastly, while nature is primed and ready to germinate, the animals who have survived the fires are hungry and ready to munch. We have watched over the last decade or two, many plant species become locally rare due largely to the impact of deer, or in some cases weeds. Plants have this one chance to grow again. We are keen to monitor deer populations, and act quickly with culling. If you have a creek or river corridor on your property, we would love your permission to begin monitoring. Please register your interest.

One final word. This time in our Country is hard. Don't turn your back because it is too painful. Take photos, visit, observe, make nest boxes and art. Celebrate each of those incremental signs that our landscape is recovering and take time out for yourself.

Register your interest or your property, through the website, biodiversityrecoveryalliance.com We're keen to help too.

Study explores new ways to build family resilience in rural communities

WHEN rural communities are impacted by natural disasters such as fires, floods, drought and storms, the recovery and rebuilding phase can be long and exhausting.

These experiences along with everyday pressures such as work, finances, and limited access to services can place significant strain on families and their wellbeing.

Researchers from Deakin University in partnership with community health services and organisations across Victoria are looking for new ways to support families and strengthen wellbeing in rural communities facing both ongoing stress and future environmental challenges.

Families with young children from newborn to 12 years old, living in country communities, are being invited to take part in a research project that aims to look at different ways families can be supported to navigate stress, maintain relationships, and access appropriate care, including during periods of disaster recovery.

The research team is conducting the first national trial of an eight session program called Family Foundations, which is delivered online by health professionals and is designed to promote parent wellbeing, strengthen parenting partnerships and improve family communications.

The study will compare Family Foundations with a second program, Family Life Check In, that involves a 30 minute telephone call with a health professional to discuss family wellbeing and relationships, and identify any supports needed.

Lead researcher Professor Rebecca Giallo, from SEED Centre for Lifespan Research in Deakin's School of Psychology said rural communities were disproportionately affected by environmental threats and the ongoing hardship that results from the rebuilding phase.

"Between 20 per cent to 30 per cent of adults and children experience significant stress and mental health challenges following environmental disasters," Professor Giallo said.

"But it can be difficult for people living in rural communities to access appropriate support at the time when they need it the most. Our project aims to better understand how different types of support can assist families, and we look forward to working with families who choose to take part."

The project uses online and telephone support for families who may prefer privacy or who live in isolated areas, reducing the need for travel or face-to-face appointments.

Professor Rebecca Giallo said importantly the project was being conducted in partnership with rural and metro health and community service providers including Holstep Health; The Bridge Youth Service; Brophy Family and Youth Service; Colac Area Health; Kids First Australia; Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria (RFDS Vic); Western District Health Service; National Centre for Farmer Health (NCFH); and the Western Victoria Primary Health Network.

Funding has been provided by the Australian Government's Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and Deakin researchers will be working with researchers from La Trobe University, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, The Adelaide University, The Australian National University, and Pennsylvania State University.

Interested families can go to this website to find out more about the project at seed.deakin.edu.au/our-research/project/family-foundations-trial/

Professor Giallo and the team hope the project will provide the evidence needed to ensure rural families have the right care to support their recovery in the face of extreme weather events and build their resilience to respond to future environmental crises.

Taungurung provided support during Alexandra fire fight

THREE staff from Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLWC) and BIK Land Management volunteered to help enact the municipal emergency management plan during the January fires, supporting town protection activities in Alexandra.

This involved off-siding a grader, putting in fire breaks around key town assets and a constant patrol of the southern end of town.

When the fire first impacted Alexandra, the grader team helped flank the running fire behind the speedway and golf course. A spot fire to the south was tackled, but managed to move across a road to continue on.

They then helped protect the town landfill by providing intel back to the incident management team (IMT) and assisted with planning functions.

The TLWC Alexandra Office was also a location for staff to rest and recover both pre and post fire support.

TLWC and BIK Land Management has staff with wildfire fighting experience through previous roles in government departments and emergency response. This includes proficiency in hose winding, backhoe dragging, division command and various IMT roles.

Despite this experience, TLWC and BIK has no official responsibility in crisis wildfire management. Skills and knowledge are used to support the Taungurung Nation on a path to reawakening fire knowledge.

TLWC, and by extension BIK Land Management, has two Land Cruiser trays fitted with previous Forest Fire Management Victoria slip-on units.

BIK Land Management delivers on ground works for the healing and caring of Taungurung Country. The team achieves this in line with the objectives set by the nation in the Cultural Land Management Strategy. Utilising cultural and contemporary practices, BIK has a large presence on Taungurung Country and leads by example in the land management space.

Their services include specialist flora and fauna monitoring and management, landscape restoration and habitat improvement measures, environmental monitoring and assessment, and fire hazard assessment and burn preparation.



Athletics day at Alexandra Primary School



SPORT

Alexandra B Grade cricketers struggle against Puckapunyal

by Michael Mawson

THE 16th round of the Seymour District Cricket Association (SDCA) season saw the B-Grade Alexandra side wilt in the heat against a Puckapunyal team that was performing at its peak.

The loss puts the Redbacks at risk of losing a once-assured place in the finals.

Levi Ronalds and Toby Ward returned to the Redbacks' side. There was also the senior debut of Nathan Webb. Webb travelled over from his junior match to help the B-Graders.

The match took place at Rebel Park, instead of Leckie Park due to the breakdown of the ground's roller. Puckapunyal's Captain, David Grundell, won the toss and elected to bat, presumably in the hope of having his strong batting line-up exploit the flat artificial pitch.

Will Ellis and Jordan Ferrier opened the bowling and found the going tough. They had to contend with the heat, skilful batsmen and an umpire who was inexplicably strict on the calling of wides. Ellis bowled five wides in his first over alone. Astonishingly, this included several balls that struck the batters on the pads.

Ferrier was the pick of the bowlers with an economical spell that tied down Grundell and claimed his wicket with a leg before wicket for four. Puckapunyal's other opener, Pieter Murtagh had an easier time and rode his luck with a big hitting 44. He was aided by dropped catches and several high hits that managed to land just outside the reach of fielders.

Andrew Wood came on for his first spell in 18 months and, once he found his range, claimed the wicket of Murtagh with a good

catch taken by Harrison Christie. Toby Ward bowled with consistency and claimed a wicket. Levi Ronalds and Thayananth Sathasivam did not find line-and-length with their usual consistency but were able to claim a wicket each. Reigan Kuttikadan's off-breaks confounded the Puckapunyal batsmen and he claimed two wickets.

Reigan's spell also witnessed the highlight of the innings. This occurred when the oldest Puckapunyal batter took a risky single and he collided with the umpire. Neither could quite avoid the other. Both hit the ground in a tangle of arms, legs and pot-bellies that would have had a combined age approaching 150 years.

The pick of the Puckapunyal batsmen was Ben Kingston. He was merciless towards any short bowling and clouted eight fours on his way to a score of 55. It was up to the

Dusty Fitzpatrick to unseat him when Christie claimed another catch.

The umpire called time on the innings after 41 overs. Even with four overs taken off the innings, Puckapunyal had achieved an imposing score of 209.

The Alexandra innings began disastrously. Opening bat and team captain, Michael Mawson, had another chapter in his horror batting year when he faintly edged Jacob Nipperess and was caught behind for a duck. Nipperess went on to have a field day as he knocked over the wickets of Will Ellis, Levi Ronalds and Harrison Christie for one, zero and two respectively.

Wood demonstrated the defensive mindset and resolve that was absent elsewhere and he accumulated 24 runs with only one boundary in the total. Ward began his batting innings

with promising shots, only to be caught and bowled for six.

Rob "Yobbo" Andrews brought his usual flair to the crease and made 22 runs before being bowled by Mark Nipperess. The elder Nipperess than claimed another three wickets by bowling out Ferrier and Fitzpatrick for ducks and Kuttikadan for 15. Kuttikadan's cameo was a big-hitting highlight in what had become a lost cause.

Alexandra was humbled for 81 in only 21 overs. This result demotes the former ladder-leaders to third on the SDCA ladder. Making it to second place is highly unlikely and missing the finals altogether is now possible. Next round, the Redbacks travel to Tallarook to take on the ladder leaders. Hopefully, the B-Grade batters will use this week's training sessions to work on their defensive technique.

SDCA match reports

A Grade

PYALONG 1/156 (D Clancy 73 not out, D Sowden 27 not out) defeated Yea Tigers 152 (J Wilkins 4/20, M Wittig 4/35).

Pyalong put in a strong performance over the weekend to get the win over the third placed Yea Tigers.

Yea was able to put a respectable total of 152 on the board batting first with youngster James Wilkins the most threatening of the bowlers, finishing with 4/20 off nine overs. Mitch Wittig was the other standout, also taking four wickets to wrap up Yea's tail.

In reply it was Dermott Clancy who stood tall, finishing 73 not out to guide Pyalong home in an innings that included 12 boundaries. He received solid support from Daniel Sowden who finished on 27 not out.

Puckapunyal 104 (C Davies 46, N Waugh 4/20, M Wal 2/2) defeated by Alexandra 9/226 (M Wal 45, J Leary 25, J Voogt 2/22, C Crabbe 2/38).

Alexandra has stayed within touching distance of the top four following a strong win over Puckapunyal.

Batting first, Alexandra saw strong contributions from its middle order with young gun Matthew Wal leading the way with 45, supported in the lower order by Dinesh Sivakumar (24no) and Justin Leary (25). For Puckapunyal, both James Voogt and Christopher Crabbe claimed two wickets.

Yet again it was Charles Davies who was the lone hand of resistance for Puckapunyal with the bat, finishing on 46 out of a team total of 102.

Nathan Waugh had his best day for the Redbacks, taking 4/20, while Matt Wal (2/2) and Vinu Hewage (2/20) chipped in.

B Grade

Yea Tigers 19 (D Zoch 2/1, J Biagioni 2/4) defeated by Pyalong 8/223 (J Hill 67, D Zoch 33 not out).

Alexandra 81 (A Wood 24, R Andrews 22, M Nipperess 5/14, J Nipperess 4/6) defeated by Puckapunyal 8/209 (B Kingston 51, P Murtagh 44, R Kuttikadan 2/27).



Adam Mahoney. -S



Luke Berriman. -S



James Benton. -S

Merton cricketers take on Benalla and win

TOP of the table Merton Cricket Club travelled to Arundel St oval to take on seventh placed Benalla in hot conditions on a quick outfield. Benalla won the toss and batted making 129 all out in the 35th over.

Captain Jordan Smith top scoring with 46. Noah Anderson 21 the other batsmen among the runs, Merton's Henry Berriman again bowling well taking 5/31. Jai Lerch-McKinnon 2/18 and Murray Sutton 1/20 the other top performers, Harry Craddock

with two run outs finished a hot day for the visitors.

Merton's opening pair of Sutton and Mackinnon played with aggression. Sutton particularly damaging smashing three big sixes early in his innings before he was dismissed for 39. Ross McKinnon 24 fell shortly after with Merton losing a number of middle order wickets in quick succession, the visitors looked shakey.

However the in-form James Benton played the perfect innings under pressure

while his teammates fell around him making 30 not out hitting the winning runs in the 34th over, Merton passing Benalla's total eight wickets down.

Stewart McLeod and Brendon Anderson Benalla's best bowlers with three wickets apiece.

Merton host second placed Ovens Valley United at the MCG for top spot on the Wangaratta District Cricket Association b grade ladder leading into the finals.

Daily bag limit announced for 2026 duck hunting season

THE Victorian Government has set a daily bag limit of nine ducks per hunter for the 2026 duck hunting season.

The season length, as set out in the Victorian Government's Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2024, remains unchanged, opening at 8am on Wednesday, March 18, 2026 and closing 30 minutes after sunset on Monday, June 8, 2026.

The daily hunting times are from 8am until 30 minutes after sunset for the first five days, then from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset for the remainder of the season.

Seven game duck species can be hunted. They are Pacific Black Duck, Grey Teal, Chestnut Teal, Wood Duck, Mountain Duck, Hardhead and Pink-eared Duck.

The nine bird bag limit has been informed by modelling undertaken as part of Adaptive Harvest Management for game ducks in Victoria, which is now being used to inform sustainable duck hunting arrangements each year. See more information at gma.vic.gov.au/hunting/duck/Adaptive-Harvest-Management-for-game-duck-hunting-in-Victoria

All hunters must have a valid Game Licence and Firearms Licence before hunting ducks in Victoria.

As a condition of licence to hunt gamebirds in Victoria, all new and renewing Victorian gamebird licence applicants must complete an online education program. New duck hunters must also successfully complete the Waterfowl Identification Test. Visit gma.vic.gov.au/licencing/changes-to-gamebird-licensing-conditions for more information.

The GMA and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action will monitor wetlands in the lead up to and during the season. Where warranted, hunting may be further regulated at some wetlands, and some wetlands may be closed to hunting to protect concentrations of threatened species or breeding waterbirds.

Hunters are reminded to regularly monitor the GMA website for updates to wetland closures and other management actions at gma.vic.gov.au/hunting/duck/wetland-closures

GMA Game Officers, Victoria Police and Authorised Officers from partner agencies

will patrol wetlands across Victoria to ensure people act in a safe and responsible manner.

Details of the 2026 duck season are available on the GMA website at gma.vic.gov.au/hunting/duck/duck-season-arrangements

Coalition Against Duck Shooting responded to the news in a press release, saying, "Premier Jacinta Allan is commended for initiating the First Nations Treaty, but calling a 2026 recreational duck shooting season shows a profound disregard for Victoria's First Nations peoples and their waterbirds by allowing a small number of thrill-seeking duck shooters (only 0.2 per cent of the Victorian population) to blast their birds out of the sky for fun.

"Victoria is in debt to the tune of around \$188 billion yet this Premier prefers to waste \$11 million of our taxes on propping up a dying duck shooting activity rather than investing in a First Nations cultural, nature-based wetlands tourism industry. In NSW (where duck shooting is banned) 3.2 billion in cultural tourism is generated and overseas birdwatchers across Australia, spend \$2.6 billion annually."

Stroke round and February monthly medal at Eildon Golf Club

by Puttomatic

LAST Saturday was a stroke round and the Eildon Golf Club's February monthly medal. It was also the fifth round of their summer cup and the final of the medal of medallists.

Eildon had 13 players compete and the day was great for golf, congratulations to Phil Dally who finished on top with a net 69 to win the monthly medal and the 2026

medal of medallists. Coming in second, in a countback was Grant Walters net 69 from Colin Long also net 69 winning the ball run with Denis Macdonald net 70, John Beale net 70 and Kerry Power also with a net 70.

Nearest the pin winners last week, Rod Taylor on the third, Ken Coller on the fifth and 11th, Peter McNair on the 12th, Kerry Power on the 14th, Phil Dally scored an eagle

on the eighth but no birdies on the 15th. Denis McDonald was the super six winner, Colin Long was the entry draw winner and Denis also was the lucky swindle winner.

Next Saturday, February 28 there will be no competition at the Eildon Golf Club as the Yea Golf Club will be hosting the final round of the Murrindindi Masters, sure to be a great day.

Race days to honour bushfire response effort

THE Victorian Government is supporting regional race days to honour the volunteers, firefighters and emergency services workers who worked tirelessly through January's devastating bushfires.

Minister for Racing Anthony Carlines acknowledged the dedication and skill of emergency responders and CFA volunteers at the first 'Racing for Our Regions' event held at the Seymour Racing Club.

The four-day initiative is being delivered by Racing Victoria with almost \$50,000 in support from the state government through the Victorian Racing Industry Fund.

Around 200 volunteers and emergency service workers enjoyed complimentary entry to the Seymour race day, including a dedicated marquee and community barbeque. A Racing Victoria fundraiser at the event will raise additional money for the Country Fire Authority Trust and Strathbogie Disaster Relief Fund.

More events will be held across fire-affected regional locations in the coming weeks including in Towong, Alexandra and Kyneton.

Locals are encouraged to attend their local event, enjoy a day at the races and recognise the extraordinary commitment of emergency services workers who protected their communities.

Mr Carlines said, "...We honour the volunteers, firefighters and emergency service workers who spent January on the frontline, sacrificing their time and working through dangerous conditions to keep their communities safe."

Busy week at Alexandra Golf Club

by Dave Silverman

FINE, warm and sunny this week for all the golf at Alexandra Golf Club, which kicked off last Tuesday with a stableford round, of course. Of the 11 players who teed off at 9am, it was Russell Purcell who had the best of the conditions, taking the win with 39 points. Leo Dynes and Bruce Colville both had 34, to take second and third respectively.

Yours truly claimed both nearest the pins on seven and 18, and also picked up a rundown voucher, along with Dan Burns and John Greateorex.

Last Wednesday saw the ladies play a four ball best ball team event, which was won by the pairing of Judy Pearson and Sandra Morris, who scored an impressive 50 points. Second, with 40 points was the team of Lyn Capp and Deb Richardson.

Only two nearest the pins went off, with five going to Sue Greateorex and Marie Stace, with 18 claimed by Barb Doyle and Marg Fahey.

And so on to last Saturday, and with a goodly number of regulars away on a golf trip (well, that's their story, anyway), there were still 15 who teed it up in a stableford round sponsored by the H G Turf Group. Now, normally at this point Dave would be reporting that "your humble scribe" had had a good day out, but just this once, he will not be humble.

Dave had a great day, with only six bogies and 12 pars on the card, a winning score of 42 points. And without wishing to belabour the point, to score only 76 strokes at age 78 is no mean feat. Over to you, young fellas.

Mick Holohan came in second with 37 points, with Jan Petrzela in third, also with 37, and Leo Dynes and Perrin Gooding both in on 36 for fifth and sixth respectively.

Jan took nearest the pin on two, and Mick got 18, with five going begging, seven falling to Steve Darmody and Nigel Waterhouse taking 12.

Alexandra Squash Club: Round three of term one pennant

by Kristelle Leary

Monday competition Crows versus Cockatoos

TYLER (fill in) versus Jordan: Jordan was too casual and Tyler took advantage of this to take a respectable win. 46 to 40.

Laura versus Liane: Good placement by both players. This match was down to the wire until the final game where Laura got ahead to win the match by five. 57 to 52.

Chris versus Ben F: Ben was too good from start to finish. Chris tried many unconventional shots to stay in the match but was unable to apply pressure on Ben's game. Ben was victorious. 64 to 40.

Jim versus Phil: Jim mixed up his shots with lobs, drives and drops to keep Phil guessing while Phil used his serve to cramp his opponent. Overall, Phil made too many errors, handing Jim the victory by 10. 53 to 43.

Magpies versus Eagles

Ethan versus Eric: Such a close game. There were some really great shots, but Ethan had the edge in the end to take the win. 59 to 58.

Jess (fill in) versus Sally: Jess blitzed the first game. Sally dug in to win the next three but was unable to win enough points to overcome the first game deficit. Jess claimed the match. 56 to 49.

Matt versus Justin: Justin continues to impress this season. Matt tried hard to run the ball down, but Justin was too good with his shot placement. 77 to 44.

John versus Daniel W: Daniel came out guns blazing to take the first game until John used his experience to figure out how to play his opponent. John took the next three games to cruise to victory. 61 to 42.

Wednesday competition Kenworths versus Western Stars

Matthew versus Beth: Great game. Big swings back and forth. Matt held it together in the last game to seal the win. 56 to 51.

Mick versus Daniel L: In his debut return to squash Daniel prove that he has not lost his hard hit. Mick was not prepared for the power, allowing Daniel to take the first game. Mick came back to take a good lead across the next two games. The final game was close, but Mick had enough of a lead overall to claim the match. 60 to 51.

Daniel K versus Ben F: While it was a very one sided match it was entertaining to watch. Daniel kept the ball in play, Making Ben work hard for every point he won. Both players had some beautiful shots, but Daniel was victorious. 67 to 34.

Macks versus Scantias

Jessica versus Ben H: Until the third game it was anyone's guess which way it would fall with only a couple of points in it. Jessica upped her game in last to take a substantial win in the game and match. 61 to 44.

Kristelle versus Travis: Springing forth with a crushing lead, Travis won the first game ten-points up. Kristelle made some great returns and kept the next three games close, but the initial lose of point lost her the game. Travis was the victor. 70 to 52.

Daniel W versus Michael M (fill in): Daniel has been showing great improvement which shone through in this match. Michael had some shining moments, but Daniel's recent upskilling won him the spoils. 69 to 38.



Ben strolls over to return Chris's shot. -S

Marysville golfers enjoy time at home

by Lesley Rundle

LAST Saturday the Marysville golfers, having played at Eildon the week before and preparing to play at Yea next week, enjoyed a day on their own course. The golfers played stroke for the February monthly medal and the ladies' game included the first round of the Barton Shield. The course was looking lush thanks to the course volunteers being able to irrigate with recycled water.

The ladies winner was Sabrina Stow (24) with nett 74 followed by Gail Leigh (9) with nett 76. Congratulations to Gail who played an eagle two under par on the 391m par five 17th hole. A great achievement on a hole described on the website as 'an elevated tee with a dogleg right and a river protecting the green' and advice to 'select your shots carefully' which Gail obviously did.

The men's winner was Glen Rattay (12) with nett 69 with Richy Clark (14) runner up with nett 71. The nearest the pins were

won by Peter Lilley, Gail Leigh and Richy Clark who also won the Golden Shot. The best putter on the day was Heather Jenkins with 24 putts. Next Saturday golfers will gather at Yea for the fourth and final round of the 2025/26 season of the FoodWorks Murrindindi Masters.

On Thursday, five ladies will play in the first Dalhousie club event of the year at Alexandra and this is the beginning of a busy period at Marysville and other clubs. Marysville are preparing for 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.



Gail celebrating her eagle on the 17th hole. -S

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Top coach Rob visits Murrindindi Little Athletics to provide insights

THE Little Athletics summer season has been progressing wonderfully, with fantastic turnouts most Saturdays and a number of Murrindindi athletes proudly competing at regional level.

The club are especially excited to be sending five athletes to the State Track and Field Championships over the March long weekend, a tremendous achievement for both the athletes and the club. The club wish them every success as they prepare to compete at the highest level.

Last Saturday, the club were privileged to welcome top coach Rob from Little Athletics Victoria. Rob shared a wealth of knowledge with the athletes, providing expert guidance on techniques across all events. He spent valuable one-on-one time with athletes during throwing and jumping sessions, offering practical tips and encouragement.

The impact was immediate, with many athletes refining their skills and achieving even more personal best performances. It was also wonderful to see an increasing number of parents stepping up to assist with events, building their confidence and helping guide the young athletes as they continue to improve.

Overall, it has been a fantastic period for the club, with strong participation, continued development, and an exciting few weeks ahead.



Personal best medallion recipients. -S



Ned and Sonny putting out a good pace during their race. -S



Gold, silver and bronze medallists. -S



Cheyanne clearing the high jump. -S



Harish, Levi and Zoe breaking club records. -S