

The Yea Chronicle

PO Box 5, Alexandra Vic. 3714

With which is incorporated The Yea Telegraph, The Yea Telephone and Upper Goulburn Advocate

Ph: (03) 5772 1002; Email: reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au Your community newspaper since 1885 Wednesday, February 19, 2025 \$2.00 inc. GST

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Weekend sport



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The students looking great in blue at the Yea High School House Swimming Sport last week. More images on pages 13 and 14. -S

New wind farm proposed

A NEW wind farm is being proposed for the Puzzle Range. The Puzzle Range is between the towns of Merton, Bonnie Doon and Fawcett.

The company behind the project is Tetris Energy. We spoke to their managing director, Frank Boland.

Mr Boland explained that Tetris Energy is Australian renewable energy developer. They're headquartered in Melbourne and have staff across Australia. He said that the Puzzle Range project was introduced to them by some local landowners.

He commented, "It's always a good way to initiate a project when it's sort of introduced from a previous project. Some of our team developed the Cherry Tree Wind Farm near Seymour and after the success of that were introduced to some landowners in the Puzzle Range area which has the high voltage power lines that traverse that area, so they had the power lines that really supply Melbourne from the Snowy Hydro system, so they're part of the main interconnection with NSW."

"For a new renewable energy project, it's really important having high quality power lines because that's the end of the game, to

really be able to deliver the power as cheap as possible and as reliable as possible. They're a great asset to have there."

Asked how many turbines they will be looking to install for the project, Mr Boland said, "It's still evolving and we're still speaking to interested people who want to be involved, and also measuring the wind and doing different surveys, but at this stage would sort of aiming for around 350 megawatts, which for seven MW turbines is about 50 turbines, right across the quite a large area."

They haven't selected the height yet, but "the modern turbines these days range from 130 to 150 metres, and each turbine will be around one and half hectares area with tracks and cable, so it's a pretty small footprint, grazing right under, similar to Cherry Tree."

The project is still at early planning stage. Mr Boland said, "We're doing preliminary studies and still speaking to interested people who want to be involved. And as I said, it was sort of landowner led and introduced project. So it's evolved from that and we've added in neighbours who expressed interest. We're also doing preliminary studies on ecology, wind resource monitoring and connection as well, with Ausnet, to the power lines. There's lots of different pieces that will run concurrently at this stage."

He said that community consultations will be very extensive, and that it's already started through how the project originated. "We're going around meeting with different people, interested or not interested. We're really keen to get people's opinion and that's part of the success of the project is the community could be involved in shaping the

Alexandra District Health
5772 0900

Yea & District Memorial Hospital
5736 0400

In an emergency dial
000

Standard

The Yea Chronicle

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ALEXANDRA
NEWSPAPERS

PUBLISHERS

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Approved - PP 100000292

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Letters to the Editor

Response to Julian Browne

JULIAN Browne’s letter to the editor on February 12, the response to Taungarung statement, may get a pass in a university assignment but in the real world it gets a fail. Basically Julian is saying despite denying it, ‘if your white you inherit past atrocities’. Whatever they were, no one really knows.

I’m surprised a psychotherapist would suggest such an inheritance is possible as others in the same discipline have said it’s unhealthy to take on a third party offence or accept guilt for other’s actions.

The reality is this season of discontent is driven by overseas interests that destabilise countries by causing division. We’ve seen it in Venezuela, Syria and most African countries.

Alexandra is the best community I have ever lived in. The locals don’t deserve this as an inheritance.

Tom Collins, Alexandra

McLeish
petition to repair
Whittlesea-Yea Road

MEMBER for Eildon Cindy McLeish is calling on the Victorian Government via a parliamentary e-petition to action repairs on the Whittlesea-Yea Road between Flowerdale and Kinglake West.

After being contacted by fed up locals and driving the road often herself, Ms McLeish said she knows the road is full of large, deep recurring potholes, failing surfaces and crumbling shoulders.

“Road users desperately want to see this road fixed once and for all,” Ms McLeish said.

“The hazardous road puts drivers at risk of accident and regularly causes damage to vehicles including busting rims and bursting tyres. It’s not uncommon to see cars pulled over with their hazard lights on.

“We need to ensure driver’s safety. It can be a tricky road at the best of times, particularly when raining or at night.”

“The government needs to listen to the community, take action and repair this section of road.”

Ms McLeish is encouraging everybody to sign and share the e-petition via the link, parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/petitions/whittlesea-yea-road-between-flowerdale-and-kinglake-west

The e-petition closes March 31, 2025.

RIVER HEIGHTS FOR THE GOULBURN CATCHMENT				
STATION NAME	TIME	HEIGHT	TENDENCY	FLOOD CLASS
Goulburn R at Lake Eildon D/S	9.00am Mon	2.20	steady	below minor
Rubicon River at Rubicon	9.00am Mon	0.43	steady	

Pumped hydro project in planning for Molesworth

BE Power have announced the Big-S Pumped Hydro Energy Storage (PHES) Project in Molesworth. It's in the planning stages at present.

The renewable energy project has a planned generating capacity of 400 megawatts of hydroelectricity with 10 hours of storage duration at full output, with four GWh total storage.

The BE Power website stated, "The project is expected to commence construction in late 2028 and last for circa four years, delivering significant economic benefits to the local region."

It's to be a "compact closed-loop pumped storage system to substantially increase energy storage capabilities in Victoria. As one of the most cost-effective projects globally, it stands to significantly firm up local grid requirements, providing support to the region's growing renewable energy and Victorian grid.

"The project will deliver substantial economic benefits, both during its construction phase and throughout its operation, by stabilising power prices and contributing to the economic resilience of Victoria."

The project has completed the Concept Study and initial environmental assessment. Grid connection and water access investigations have been made, to ensure viable alternatives are available. The plan for initial geotechnical investigation and Bankable Feasibility Study is being developed.

It's stated that "The project utilises two valley dams to form the upper and lower reservoirs. At its core, the underground power station complex, equipped with two 200 MW fixed-speed reversible Francis pump-turbine units, aims for a 400 MW generation capacity.

"Water sustainability is a key focus, with the project's water requirements to be provided via the Goulburn River, which is directly alongside the lower storage. The water trading scheme on the river ensures a reliable and environmentally sustainable approach to its initial and then modest ongoing operational water needs.

"Grid connectivity is secured with several viable options to join the 330kV Ausnet network, demonstrating the project's integration into the existing energy grid. Shared infrastructure with other renewable projects is also a consideration."

New wind farm blows in

Continued from Page 1

"One of the legacies we want to have this project is, you know, local jobs and benefits flowing through. We've already had a young chap from your area who's an electrician working up near Dubbo wants to move back there as an electrician on the project, as an example. It would be really good to create those sort of jobs."

Asked about other benefits for the community, Mr Boland said, "We'd love to substantially provide discounted clean power to the region, and that's a real aspiration for us. If we can deliver really cheap, really reliable power for the area that would be terrific. We like to let the community help inform what the community benefits package looks like.

"Some projects, it's a royalty from the project, others it's proximity payments, but given our project is not associated with just one town, there are towns around Bonnie Doon, Merton, Yarck, Fawcett, it would be great to have a structure that the benefits flow to all of those places."

As Cherry Tree Wind Farm doesn't appear to have run their Community Benefit Fund for local community groups in the past year, Mr Boland was asked about this. He responded, "I'm not across the operation of that anymore.

If people are keen to have their say on the Puzzle Range Wind Farm project, Mr Boland said they are keen to hear from everyone. "We're out there all the time and as the project advances, it's still very early days, but as it matures, we will be having sessions to meet with people and perhaps some drop in sessions, and we've met the councils already, but continue to have those discussions. We've got links on our website where people can send us an email or register their interest, get a copy of our regular newsletters and stuff."

Asked whether there is government approval for the use of the location and whether it is in a Renewable Energy Zone (REZ), Mr Boland said, "It is in an appropriate zone and as I said at the beginning, it's very

appealing because of its proximity to the power line and utilising that a lot of the rest of Victoria doesn't have sufficient power lines servicing it and you know, you read about that, Powerlines having to be constructed to unlock those areas, whereas here, you've got two of them already, going straight through the site. It's really good access as well, with the Maroondah Highway. You don't need to construct a lot of roads or anything like that."

They're still a while away from applying for approvals for the project with it still in the early stages.

"We'll just keep progressing it and the different approval streams. We'll just keep working through those. We don't have a set date, but we're keen to progress it efficiently and hope to get it up and running as soon as possible

Out&About



THE items in Out and About are sourced from our advertising and news stories. *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*.

Pop up information sessions to save energy and save money. You are invited to attend one of the pop up sessions and chat about solar energy, batteries, heat pumps and split systems. Learn how they work and more. Alexandra FoodWorks 11am-1pm and Eildon Grocer 2-4pm today. See below for further dates and times. Visit murrindindi.vic.gov.au/gmss for more details.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Attention Yea and surrounds. Council are taking a deeper dive into your aspirations and big ideas for the communities future. Enjoy a light meal, chat, connect and share ideas with other community members, councillors and council officers. Your feedback will help shape the new council plan. Yea Council Chamber, 6-8pm. Register at murrindindi.vic.gov.au/councilplan

COMMUNITY DIARY

Local Radio Frequency

UGFM 88.9 Yea / Highlands
UGFM 98.9 Flowerdale / Hazeldene
UGFM 94.5 Kinglake Ranges

WEEKLY

Thu Town Club, RSL Hall, 6-8pm. Ph 5797 2179
Sun AA Anglican Church, Alexandra 7pm PH 0402 428 086
Sun Alanon Recovery, start 5.30pm. Ph Sheila 0402 428 086

MONTHLY

1st Mon St Luke's Seniors, St Lukes Hall, Ph Jenny 0407 972 099
1st Thu Yea Hospital/Rosebank Aux 2pm. Ph 5797 3057
2nd Sat Alex Repair Café 1-3pm @ Embassy of Ideas 0422 225 801
2nd Wed Molesworth Patchwork & Craft, Molesworth Hall 10am-4pm.
2nd Thu Yea Garden Club Yea RSL Hall 1.30pm Ph 0439 870 315
4th Wed Molesworth Patchwork & Craft, Molesworth Hall 10am-4pm.
4th Thu Yea CWA Yea RSL Hall, 1.30pm Ph 0400 424 888
Last Fri Yea-Kinglake RSL, 11.30am RSL Hall, Ph 5796 9353



For a \$5 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.

Church Services

ST PETER'S MEMORIAL
ANGLICAN CHURCH

Cnr Bald Spur/Whittlesea Kinglake Rds,
Sunday Services, 8.30am Communion.
Minister: Rev. Ruwan Palapathwala
0458 113 099

ST LUKE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
OF YEA

Sunday Service time 11am
Prayerful Reflection - held each Tuesday,
10am to 11am - all welcome
Father Mario Hendricks
Ph: 0435 953 777

CATHOLIC PARISHES OF
ALEXANDRA AND YEA

Parish Priest, Father Jose Mathew
0459 402 547
St Matthews Eildon, Saturday 5pm

Nationals raise concerns about CFA and fire levy

VICTORIAN Nationals member, Danny O'Brien, Shadow Minister for Emergency Services, released a statement on Wednesday, February 5, stating that Victorians are paying more and getting far less amid an alarming and dangerous drop in volunteer firefighter numbers.

He said a new report reveals volunteer firefighter numbers are down more than 20 per cent since 2014, with Victoria having just 28,906 operational CFA volunteers, less than half New South Wales' volunteer force of 67,569.

He said that Victorians are paying double for firefighting services compared to 10 years ago, and added that "Labor has disrespected volunteers and gutted the Country Fire Authority.

"We are less safe with less firefighters and it is costing us more," Mr O'Brien said. "While the CFA has lost its autonomy and volunteers are driving around in 30-year-old trucks, we are paying double what we were. We are seeing more and more money going into Fire Rescue Victoria without a commensurate improvement in response times."

The Fire Services Property Levy is set to be replaced with a new Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund from July 1.

"For the first time, we are going to be paying a levy for core government services like Triple Zero and Emergency Management Victoria and that is because Labor can't manage money and can't manage our fire services," Mr O'Brien said.

When contacted about the issues raised, a Victorian government spokesperson responded, "Our volunteers put their lives on the line every day to protect Victorians, and we are incredibly grateful for the work they do.

"We know we need to support our volunteers to continue growing the pool. That's why we are delivering more resources, including brand new trucks fitted with the latest technology, new and upgraded stations, and advanced training opportunities.

"Victoria is one of the most fire prone areas and we have some of the most highly skilled paid firefighters and volunteers in the nation. The community should rest assured that they are well protected in a bushfire emergency no matter where they live."

The following information was also provided: CFA volunteer numbers have increased in the last year thanks to the successful Give Us A Hand recruitment campaign and local brigade efforts. There is a fleet of 29 ultra heavy tankers rolling out across regional Victoria, backed by \$12.8 million from the government. Every single dollar raised by the new Emergency Services and Volunteers Fund will go back into our emergency services. As part of this announcement, the state government is delivering a four year \$250 million package to support our volunteers, so they have the trucks, equipment and resources they need to keep Victorians safe.

Over 1100 illegal fires since 2019 in Victoria

DATA released by CFA and the Crime Statistics Agency has revealed a concerning number of fire-related offences across Victoria over the past five years.

Between 2019 and 2024, there were 1010 recorded instances of lighting a fire during the Fire Danger Period (FDP) and 187 cases of lighting a fire on a Total Fire Ban (TFB) day.

The Fire Danger Period is a designated time in each Victorian municipality when fire restrictions apply due to increased fire risk. A Total Fire Ban is declared on days of extreme conditions, prohibiting any fires in the open air.

Under the *CFA Act*, penalties for allowing an open-air fire to escape during a declared FDP can include fines of up to \$23,710, 12 months' imprisonment, or

both. The penalties double if the escape occurs on a Total Fire Ban Day.

CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan said the stats are worrying.

"Lighting a fire during the Fire Danger Period and on days of Total Fire Ban puts lives, homes, and emergency responders at risk," he said.

"If you ignore fire restrictions, you could be facing serious legal repercussions and more importantly, you could be responsible for devastating losses.

"Victoria is already one of the most fire-prone regions in the world, so we certainly don't need unnecessary challenges created by carelessness or deliberate acts."

A recent incident in Diamond Creek serves as a reminder of the serious consequences of ignoring FPD restrictions.

CFA was called to a property at around 6.28pm on Monday, January 20, where crews arrived to find smoke issuing from a pile of green tree branches approximately a metre high.

Student of the Week

Proudly supported by Yea & District **Community Bank®** Branch



YEA PRIMARY SCHOOL



Congratulations to our Values Award winners this week, Madi, Kalliyan, Lucy, Sienna, Asher and Logan.

What an excellent start to the year.

SACRED HEART SCHOOL



Congratulations to Zach, Charlie, Olympia and Isla for receiving awards for outstanding actions that align with our school values of Respect, Resilience and Safety.

Student of the Week

Proudly supported by
Kinglake branch



Denis Smith and the Yea Racing Club

DENIS Smith, recent former president of the Yea Race Club, spoke about his time with the club and his plans for the future, as well as his history in Yea.

Denis originally left Yea in 1955. He was the oldest in his family. His father, Arthur Harris (Mick) Smith. Mick, with his brother Mahon, had a cordial factory called AH Smith Pty Ltd. It was originally started by Denis's grandfather. They purchased a factory in Wangaratta, and Mick moved to the town to manage that end of the business, and Edward McMahon (Mahon) Smith stayed in Yea.

Mick died on November 1, and his family were "stuck in Wangaratta." Denis's younger brother was just two weeks old at the time.

Denis eventually moved to Melbourne in 1970 for work and to umpire football. Then in the late 90s or early 2000s, Denis's cousin Sandra Cox, Mahon's daughter, moved back to Yea. Dick Cox started taking an interest in the local picnic club. At that stage, Denis had a chauffeur driving business and he was invited to ferry the stewards around to their towers, which was the done thing at the time.

Denis joked, "I had a nice big car. They enjoyed it. Had six races, a drink after every race. What could go wrong?"

He said that in connection with his business, he got to know the CEO of Racing Victoria, who said to him that they've done a survey of all of the clubs in Victoria, including picnic clubs, and that several club would lose. He said that Yea looked like losing two out of three meeting due to poor attendance and communication issues.

Denis asked whether he could save one if he got on the committee. He was given two years. They did save one, and then the year after that, Denis became president, focused on attracting more people to the races.

Seymour Show'n'Shine on the horizon

THE fifth annual Seymour Show'n'Shine held jointly by the Lions Club of Seymour Goulburn and the Seymour and District Car Club will take place on Labour Day this year, March 10.

With an 8am start and gold coin entry to Kings Park in Seymour, this event is set to provide entertainment for both car enthusiasts and the family unit. Just outside

of Murrindindi Shire, the show'n'shine is a great opportunity for a day out.

It is the major fundraiser for the Lions Club and a significant event on the car club's calendar.

Regina Young from the Seymour Lions Club told the *Alexandra Standard* that the event is designed to cater for everyone.

"We try to keep it as family friendly as we can. The focus is on the show cars, for the show car enthusiasts to have an opportunity to see them," she said.

"But we also want to do something for the community. The Lions Club used to hold their market on Labour Day down at Goulburn Park, and then that got cancelled a few years ago now, probably seven years ago, so we thought let's bring back something on Labour Day and let's make it bigger.

"It becomes quite a busy day for families, as there is children's entertainment and amusement, we have the SES in attendance, the CFA will be there, the police, the local historical society, the Mitchell Fixed Wing Aero Club with their model aeroplanes, and a petting zoo for the kids.

"Lots going on to keep the family in the park and keep people happy for a few hours."

All makes of cars are welcome at the show'n'shine, with the price of entry for display cars on the day being \$10, all occupants included, and no pre-booking

is required for either the cars or the swap meet. Based on previous years, there will be approximately 65 to 70 swap meet stalls.

"There is a wide range of vehicles. We have in excess of 450 cars on average every year, and there's judging and trophies awarded at the end," Regina added.

On top of the cars is the market, live music, food and coffee vans. On top of that, items donated by local businesses will be auctioned on the day, with a professional auctioneer heading along to sell them.

The Lions Club of Seymour will hold their barbecue and continue selling raffle tickets that they also sell on the street beforehand, with over \$3000 in prizes drawn on the day.



Agriculture, Horticulture, Viticulture, Aquaculture and Silviculture

Contention over duck hunting announcement

THERE is some contention over the announcement of the 2025 Victorian duck hunting season, with Wildlife Victoria positioning themselves in opposition to the Victorian Government.

A media release from the state government announced the plans for this year's duck hunting season.

"The Victorian Government is ensuring the duck hunting season in Victoria is sustainable, safe and backed by science.

"Minister for Outdoor Recreation Steve Dimopoulos recently announced the settings for the 2025 duck hunting season, determined by the science-based Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) model and the *Wounding Reduction Action Plan*.

"This year is the first season the Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) model will be used to guide the daily bag limit in Victoria, with the modelling tailored to Victoria's unique conditions, habitats and species.

"Duck hunting is a legitimate activity that matters to thousands of Victorians and we're making sure it can continue sustainably and responsibly, backed by science," Mr Dimopoulos said.

"Our wounding reduction action plan will improve animal welfare and is a significant step to make sure recreational

hunting can continue sustainably in Victoria," he finished.

"From this season, all new hunters seeking a license are required to do mandatory online knowledge training and testing, including Aboriginal cultural awareness training, as part of the *Waterfowl Wounding Reduction Action Plan*. All hunters renewing their licence from 2026 will also be required to complete this training.

"The 2025 duck season will open on Wednesday, March 19 and close on Monday, June 9. The start time is 8am for the first five days of the season, after which hunting can start 30 minutes before sunrise.

"The 2025 daily bag limit is nine ducks, and seven duck game species can be hunted. The blue-winged shoveler cannot be hunted this season, and the use of lead shot for quail hunting is also banned.

"We're also giving hunters certainty about future seasons with the dates for the next three years set out in the *Wildlife (Game) Regulations*.

"The state government has invested \$11.6 million to ensure the proper compliance and enforcement measures are in place so duck hunting remains safe and sustainable into the future.

"Further details about the 2025 season, including any wetland closures, will be regularly updated on the Game Management Authority (GMA) website."

CEO of Wildlife Victoria, Lisa Palma, responded with her own statement expressing her disappointment in the state government for allowing duck hunting to continue.



Murray Spencer. -AR



Holly Daze. -AR

‘When I’m Holly I feel like a rock star’

YEA local Murray Spencer said that his first memory of crossdressing would have been when he was aged just four or five years, trying on his sister’s tutu.

He attended the interview dressed as Murray rather than Holly. He said, “That was a long time ago. I’m 61 so I’ve hidden [for a long time]. I’ve only come out in the last 18 months, so it’s been a long time hidden and now I just don’t give a damn. I just do it. All through life, I’ve crossdressed but never publicly... Never like I do now. I do it more fully now. I try and do the make-up, the wig and everything. I just enjoy it. Years ago, I found that when I was stressed I did it more. It’s a stress relief. It enables me, and we’re all different, to shake off all that macho sh*t and just be who I want to be.”

“All through life, I don’t think I’ve ever told anyone until I came up here to Yea in 2001.” There were whispers on the wind however, and now that he’s come out, some people have told him that they already knew.

Asked how people have reacted, Murray said, “So far, it’s been very positive. It’s predominantly women, but there are some guys, who have said ‘Good on you. I admire you for doing it. A couple have said they respect me more now because I’ve actually come out and done it. But I heard second-hand that some people have said they have less respect for me now... but I haven’t had anything in my face. Nothing said to me, which has been really good at and now, as

I said, I don’t give a damn and I’ll just go shopping. Now I come down the street here and I’m just in a skirt and a top and I don’t have any makeup or anything.”

When crossdressing, Murray’s name is Holly Daze. Holly has been shopping in Seymour and Melbourne, and holidayed in Mildura and Longreach. “That felt fantastic,” Murray said. “To be able to do that and everywhere I went, it’s mostly women, but they’re all very, you know, good on you.”

He said that they’re also “curious to know a lot more about me because of it.”

Murray said, “I don’t really have any plans to have a sex change. I still live as Murray, but I still dress everyday pretty much, except for today. I was working. I was tiling.”

Assistance with the cost of camps and excursions

THE Victorian Government is delivering a new round of support for children to attend camps and excursions in addition to the \$400 *School Saving Bonus*.

The state government’s *Camps, Sport and Excursions Fund* makes sure every student, regardless of their background, gets the chance to go on camps and excursions with their friends.

This year, families of more than 200,000 students across the state will be able to access this support, which has helped more than two million kids go to camps and excursions since it was introduced.

Under the program, families with healthcare cards will be able to access \$154 for primary school children and \$256 for secondary school students.

The government has made an important change to the program for 2025. Families who have multiple children at the same school will be able to pool their allocated funding to use on one child or for one specific activity. This could help in situations where the costs for activities in a certain year level are higher than others.

This Fund comes on top of the \$400 School Saving Bonus, which can also go towards school activities such as camps or excursions, plus school uniforms and textbooks.

Around 700,000 students statewide will benefit from the School Saving Bonus. More than 450,000 transactions have been processed, saving parents more than \$100 million on back-to-school costs.

School uniforms have been the most popular item on which to use the Bonus, with over \$40 million spent so far. School activities were also favoured, with over \$26 million spent. Nearly \$30 million have gone towards textbooks.

Murrindindi businesses creating jobs

THE Victorian Government is helping small businesses in the Murrindindi Shire expand to create new jobs and growing the local economy.

Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence announced last week that a total of \$100,000 in funding has been awarded to a local childcare centre and a local boat servicing business from the Forestry Transition Fund, round one grants program.

Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence said, “Both Forestry Transition Fund grants are providing important services to their local communities, while creating employment opportunities for workers and contributing to the local economy.”

Dindi Daycare, located in Alexandra, is using a \$50,000 Forestry Transition Fund grant to build acoustic fencing at the childcare centre to provide a safe environment for children.

Shire comments on Melba Highway closure

MURRINDINDI Shire Council is keen to reassure that the shire remains open for business, and local residents and visitors can still easily reach our towns, businesses and services while essential landslip repairs take place on the Melba Highway.

The Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) is repairing two landslips along the Melba Highway at Dixons Creek, between Healesville-Kinglake Road and north of Hunts Lane. Works begin on February 17 and are expected to finish by the end of March 2025, weather permitting.

While a section of the Melba Highway is temporarily closed, well-marked detours ensure uninterrupted access to all Murrindindi Shire businesses, services, and attractions.

Light vehicles, rigid trucks and buses can use the Healesville-Kinglake Road and Healesville-Yarra Glen Road detour (allow an extra 30 minutes). Heavy vehicles must follow alternative routes via the National Network Maps (maps.nhvr.gov.au/). Access remains open from Yarra Glen to businesses and properties south of Healesville-Kinglake Road.

For those traveling to or through Murrindindi Shire, there are multiple scenic alternative routes: These include Maroondah Highway via Healesville and the Black Spur, Hume Highway and Broadford/Flowerdale Exit, Maroondah Highway to Toolangi and Kinglake National Park, and Whittlesea-Yea Road via Kinglake West.

Murrindindi Shire Council is working closely with businesses and the community to ensure clear communication and minimise disruptions.

“We encourage everyone to plan ahead, allow for additional travel time, and continue supporting local businesses,” Mayor Damien Gallagher said.

“

Hume region ambulance response times

PARAMEDICS and first responders across Victoria are continuing to respond to around 100,000 critical ‘Code One’ emergencies every three months.

Ambulance Victoria (AV) Executive Director Regional Operations Danielle North said demand on ambulance crews remains steadily high, with the last quarter of 2024 AV’s fourth busiest on record.

“We have seen a 26.6 per cent increase in Code One cases since the COVID-19 pandemic began more than five years ago,” Ms North said.

“October to December is commonly one of our busiest times, and last year was no exception as our crews were called to 99,799 Code One emergencies. This was also the third quarter in a row close to or above 100,000 cases.

“In the face of this sustained pressure, our highly skilled paramedics and first responders do a remarkable job providing best care to their communities, each and every day.”

From October to December 2024, AV crews across Victoria responded to 64.9 per cent of Code One cases within the state wide target of 15 minutes. The state wide average response time to Code One emergencies was 15 minutes and 42 seconds.

In the Hume Region crews responded to 5837 Code One cases between October and December 2024. In the Hume Region, the biggest improvements were in the Mansfield and Wangaratta LGAs.

In the Mansfield LGA, paramedics attended 50.5 per cent of Code One patients within 15 minutes, up from 43.7 per cent a year earlier. Compared to a year earlier, Code One response times decreased by 37 seconds in the Wangaratta LGA. In the Wodonga LGA, paramedics attended 77.7 per cent of Code One patients within 15 minutes, which was the third best result in the state.

In the Murrindindi Shire paramedics attended 31.1 per cent of Code One patients within 15 minutes, with the average response time being 25.45 minutes. There was a total of 241 first responses in this recent quarter.

Hume Regional Director Narelle Capp said, “We know there is more work to do. AV continues to work with hospitals to promptly transfer patients and ensure all Victorians receive the right care at the right time.

“More new paramedics have also hit the road to help meet demand. Since last November, we have welcomed 84 new graduate paramedics to our ranks and a further 15 new recruits will start soon including qualified paramedics from New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory and New Zealand.

“Our people are our greatest assets. It is through them that we continue to lead the way in patient care including one of the best cardiac arrest survival rates in the world.

“We are also giving them the latest technology they need to do their job and get back on the road quicker.

“In 2025, we are rolling out new digital radios across regional Victoria and iPads to all our crews with a modern platform making it easier and faster to complete electronic patient care records.”

Ms Capp said, “Our expert Secondary Triage team of nurses and paramedics also make a real difference by connecting patients with the care they need while helping free up crews for patients in time-critical emergencies.

“From October to December, 43,864 people across Victoria who did not need an emergency ambulance were instead connected to more appropriate care by paramedics and nurses in Secondary Triage.

“In 2023-24, paramedics referred nearly 43,000 patients to the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department (VVED), with over three quarters cared for without transport to a physical ED.

“And our Medium Acuity Transport Service (MATS) crews dedicated for less-urgent calls attended 8100 cases during the last quarter, freeing up more ambulances to respond to the most critically ill patients.”

Ms Capp encouraged Victorians to do their part to ensure AV’s highly skilled paramedics were available for patients most in need.

“In less urgent cases, there are many options people can access when they need timely medical care and health advice all day every day, but not an emergency ambulance or calling Triple Zero (000),” Ms Capp said.

“This includes the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department (VVED), Urgent Care Clinics and other options such as your GP or pharmacist, or Nurse-On-Call on 1300 606 024.”

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Looking bright and cheery in yellow. -S



Spiderman made an appearance. -S

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Yea High School House Swimming Sports



Happy faces on the day. -S



Some swimmers looking happy with their efforts. -S



The Casey team representing in their colours. -S



The staff got into the spirit. -S



Smiles all around at the swimming sports event. -S



A student looking very serious. -S



Winners are grinners. -S

Murrindindi Little Athletes shine at regional championships

MURRINDINDI'S young athletes did their community proud over the weekend, putting in a stellar performance at the Regional Track and Field Championships in Albury.

Despite cool and windy conditions, they warmed up quickly, both literally and figuratively, to bring home an impressive nine medals from the event.

Competing against top athletes from the Northern Country Region, the Murrindindi team made the most of the fantastic facilities and showcased incredible talent, determination, and sportsmanship.

The club offers a huge congratulations to the medal winners: Charlotte Boulton, Levi Campbell, Chase Hilder, Clay Hilder, Zoe Collier, and Declan Baker. An outstanding achievement.

Beyond the medals, almost every Murrindindi athlete achieved a personal best, which is the true essence of Little Athletics; striving for improvement and having fun along the way.

Notable performances and personal bests came from: Maverick Clacy in the 800 metres; Zoe Aldrick in the 100 metres, 400 metres, 80 metre hurdles, and long jump; Ryder in the 1500 metres and 800 metres; Zoe Collier in the 1500 metres, 200 metres and long jump; Ethan Boulton in discus and javelin; Declan Baker in 200 metre hurdles; Levi Campbell in 100 metres, 200 metres, 400 metres, long jump and triple jump; Declan Armstrong in 100 metres, 200 metres, high jump and long jump; Chase Hilder in 1500 metres, 200 metre hurdles and 90 metre hurdles; Clay Hilder in the 1500 metre race walk.

The club says a big thank you to the parents who volunteered their time as call room marshals, track umpires, and long jump pit officials. These events couldn't run without your support.

The club also extends special appreciation to dedicated Team Manager, Louise Cummins, for her leadership and organisation across the weekend. With so many personal bests, medals, and fantastic memories made, it was a weekend to remember for Murrindindi Little Athletes.

Murrindindi Little Athletes overall placings:

Female 14

Discus: Charlotte Boulton 16.65m (third); Javelin: Charlotte Boulton 16.80m (fourth);

The Chronicle Sport

Sports Editorial: sports@alexandranewspapers.com.au



Yea playing Colbinabbin at Yea during the Pennant Season. -S

Yea Bowls Club into the Finals

by Angela Finn

GOING into the last round of the season, Yea held fourth place on the ladder but needed to win to guarantee a spot in the finals. Not only did they win but they catapulted into second place to gain a double chance with a 23 shot win over Tatura Hilltop.

The rink with Justin Branch skip, Darren Sherman, Terry Muller and Mick Barrott, held the lead for the entire game to win 24 to 18.

Rink two with Terry McInnes skip, Rob and Maureen Marks, and Viv Cavanagh were in trouble early, down 0 to 14 but staged a truly

remarkable comeback to finally go down by only two shots 17 to 19.

Rink three with Maurie Finn skip, Neil Rieschieck, Barb Tanner, and Angela Finn were also down two to six early but managed to completely dominate from that point on to win by 19 shots: 28 to nine.

To make second spot having gone up a division after winning the premiership last year is a great effort.

Next Saturday, Yea will be up against the top side, Colbinabbin, in the qualifying final played at Shepparton, with the winner going straight into the Grand Final and the loser to get a second chance the following week.



One of the Merton cricketers geared for the match. -S

Maiden century sets up Merton win