

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 18, 2026 \$2.00 inc. GST

Most trusted news source in the Murrindindi Shire since 1890

murrindindibusiness.com.au

INSIDE THIS WEEK'S EDITION

Rotary Yea scholarships



Page 13

A wheel mystery



Page 15

Yarck Colour Run



Page 17

Weekend sport



Pages 19-20



The Yea Fire Brigade were fortunate to be loaned a vintage fire engine to display at the February Yea Cruise Night. More images from Yea Cruise Night on page 18. -Dale McKeon, Plymouth Dale Photos

Local VFBV reps stress importance of new CFA trucks

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

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

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

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program to build 50 new 2000 litre Light Tankers, that's just a drop in the ocean when there are still nearly 700 outdated appliances in need of replacement.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

something like three quarters of the vehicles that need to be replaced."

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

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

"Speaking with the Treasurer was also an opportunity to talk about the need for another dedicated program to upgrade rural fire stations, similar to the 2010 Rural Fire Station program that occurred after the 2009 Victorian Bushfires. That program resulted in a number of brigades in the Alexandra Group area receiving new stations along with an extension to the Buxton station, but there are many more stations in need of replacement or upgrading. The 2010 program delivered around 250 new or rebuilt fire stations and something similar is required to tackle the

remaining 'tin shed' stations across the state. We still have stations that do not have a dedicated toilet within the fire station. Our volunteers shouldn't have to visit another nearby building to use a toilet.

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

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

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

"The realities of a situation like the Longwood Fire shows what is really happening, not what you might think is

happening sometimes. It showed that the people who are in the CFA are quite capable of looking after the area. They worked extremely hard under pretty horrible circumstances, quite smartly as well.

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

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

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

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

Council welcomes bushfires inquiry, seeks deadline extension

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

Murrindindi Shire experienced almost half of the total statewide impact from the 2026 summer fires, including 193 homes destroyed,

making it the hardest-hit municipality in Victoria.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Out&About



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

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18

You are invited to a chat with Elders Rights Australia and the Menzies staff and clients at 2pm. The Mount, 2456 GV Highway, Alexandra. RSVP or for further information contact 0493 892 567. A light afternoon tea will be provided.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21

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

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22

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

MONDAY, MARCH 2

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

SATURDAY, MARCH 7

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

COMMUNITY DIARY

Yea District Hospital
5736 0400

Non-emergency police assistance
131 444
EMERGENCY 000

Local Radio Frequency
UGFM 88.9 Yea / Highlands
UGFM 98.9 Flowerdale/Hazeldene
UGFM 94.5 Kinglake Ranges

MONTHLY COMMUNITY GROUPS

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 Wed Molesworth Patchwork & Craft, Molesworth Hall 10am-4pm.
4th Wed Molesworth Patchwork & Craft, Molesworth Hall 10am-4pm.
Last Fri Yea-Kinglake RSL, 11.30am RSL Hall, Ph 5796 9353



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.

RIVER HEIGHTS FOR THE GOULBURN CATCHMENT

STATION NAME	TIME	HEIGHT	TENDENCY	FLOOD CLASS
Goulburn R at Lake Eildon (TW)	9.00AM Mon	1.89	LGH	steady
Rubicon River at Rubicon	9.00AM Mon	0.39	LGH	steady
Acheron River at Taggerty	9.00AM Mon	0.45	LGH	steady
Home Creek at Yarck	9.00AM Mon	0.06	LGH	steady
Yea River at Devlins Bridge	8.26AM Mon	0.36	LGH	steady
Murrindindi River Above Colwells	08.00AM Mon	0.19	LGH	steady
Yea R at Old Killingworth Rd	9.00AM Mon	0.37	LGH	steady
Goulburn River at Ghin Ghin	9.00AM Mon	3.81	LGH	steady
King Parrot Creek at Flowerdale	9.00AM Mon	0.26	LGH	steady
Goulburn River at Trawool	9.00AM Mon	1.47	LGH	steady
Sunday Creek at Tallarook	9.00AM Mon	-0.09	LGH	steady
Goulburn River at Seymour	9.15AM Mon	1.76	LGH	steady
Whiteheads Creek at Seymour	9.00AM Mon	0.79	LGH	steady

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



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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

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



Weekly Weather

February 18 - February 24, 2026

Temperatures may be subject to change from date of publication

Alexandra

Yea

DAY	LOW	HIGH		DAY	LOW	HIGH	
Wednesday	13	23		Wednesday	12	23	
Thursday	11	28		Thursday	12	27	
Friday	12	32		Friday	12	32	
Saturday	16	35		Saturday	15	35	
Sunday	118	31		Sunday	18	31	
Monday	15	26		Monday	15	26	
Tuesday	13	25		Tuesday	13	24	



DISTRICT RAINFALL

Alexandra.....	7mm
Buxton.....	13mm
Eildon (AWS).....	9mm
Flowerdale.....	7mm
Jamieson.....	11mm
Kinglake.....	13mm
Lake Eildon.....	8mm
Mansfield.....	3mm
Taggerty.....	8mm
Yarck.....	7mm
Yea.....	8mm

Above details for 7 days to 9am Monday

LAKE EILDON

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

The Yea Chronicle

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
Thumbs up/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

Council calls for urgent, locally delivered mental health support

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

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

The January 2026 bushfires burned through around a third of Murrindindi Shire, destroying approximately 200 homes and

accounting for almost half of all residential losses across Victoria. Together with Strathbogie Shire, Murrindindi experienced a disproportionate share of the damage, with families displaced, livelihoods lost and communities re-traumatised.

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

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

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

"For people experiencing trauma, grief and loss, asking them to travel long distances away from their support networks is not a

minor inconvenience, it is a barrier that will prevent access altogether."

Council is calling for a portion of the funding to be allocated directly to established local services in Murrindindi Shire, including Yea and District Memorial Hospital, Alexandra District Health and the Lower Hume Primary Mental Health Service. These providers have strong local knowledge, trusted relationships and proven experience delivering trauma-informed care in rural communities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yea man to fight charges in May

ON Tuesday, February 10, Yea man Jake Crockett, along with 13 others, faced the Melbourne Magistrates' Court. The 14 men were allegedly involved in an incident at Camp Sovereignty at Kings Domain on August 31, 2025.

A co-accused pleaded guilty and will reappear at a plea hearing on August 3.

Three of the men entered pleas of not guilty, and their matters will be heard on March 10.

Four of the men, including Mr Crockett, have instructed their lawyers to cross-examine the police informant who charged them. This was allowed by the magistrate, in the "interests of justice" for the accused men to know that the investigation had been fairly conducted. The cross-examination will occur in May.

Mr Crockett faces charges of violent disorder, affray and discharging an unknown object to the danger of a person.

The other three men have had their matters adjourned to March 26.

All are currently on bail under strict conditions, including not to enter Melbourne's CBD or Kings Domain. They are forbidden to associate with each other, are subject to curfews and cannot travel outside of Victoria.

One of the accused men, Thomas Sewell, was the leader of the National Socialist Network before it was disbanded due to then-proposed Federal hate speech laws. These laws passed parliament with amendments in January.

According to the ABC on January 21, "The laws grant powers for the government to list so-called hate groups, more easily deport or cancel the visas of individuals associated with hate groups, increase penalties for hate crime offences, and create new aggravated penalties for hate preachers and leaders who advocate violence."

Voluntary hospital amalgamation recommended by boards

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The FOI was rejected by ADH on the ground that it's an internal working document and that "participants were informed that

their responses would be kept anonymous and confidential."

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

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

ADVERTISEMENT

Cindy McLEISH MP
STATE MEMBER FOR EILDON

 CindyMcLeish.com.au

 Shop 10, 38-40 Bell Street, Yarra Glen
 03 9730 1066  CindyMcLeishMP
 cindy.mcleish@parliament.vic.gov.au

Authorised by Cindy McLeish MP, Shop 10, 38-40 Bell Street, Yarra Glen

Alexandra & Eildon District Gem & Lapidary Club Presents:

Thornton Gem & Rock Exhibition

Gems Opals Minerals Crystals Fossils Jewellery

Something for all ages

When: Sunday, February 22, 2026 from 8am

Where: Thornton Recreation Reserve, Thornton-Taggerty Road, Thornton

For further information phone:
Dave: 0408 306 823 or Alan: 0492 876 595

PROUD Princess MARY PRESENTS...

Womens wellness retreat

FLOWERDALE ESTATE
19-21st JUNE 2026

OFFERINGS INCLUDE:
YOGA • NUTRITION • ART THERAPY • RELATIONSHIP COACHING • SPECIAL GUESTS • AND MORE



trawoolstate.com.au

CARRIBEAN CRUISE

MURDER MYSTERY

3 COURSE DINNER

+ GAME & ENTERTAINMENT

SAT 7 MARCH



Enjoy a three-course dinner as the mystery unfolds around you. Interrogate suspects, uncover clues and work together to solve the crime before the final reveal.

\$99 per person

T R A W O O L
8150 GOULBURN VALLEY HWY, TRAWOOL 3660 5792 1444

 BOOK HERE

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

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

Ms McLeish said that volunteers, firefighters, farmers, emergency management personnel and communities affected by the 2026 summer bushfires have all raised questions about preparation, resourcing of emergency services agencies, management and response to the fires. These questions can now be addressed through the inquiry to be undertaken by the Legislative Council's Environment and Planning Standing Committee.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In one instance a constituent told Ms Tyrrell their family was battling fire on their property outside of Yarck when a CFA tanker arrived, drove into the paddock and immediately left, the crew ordered to return to the command

1st and 3rd Sundays 9am, 1050 Main Road,
Kinglake West. 9716 2330

Free Weekend Travel



Seniors can now **travel free**
on weekends across all public
transport, Victoria wide

Learn more at transport.vic.gov.au/myki

Student of the Week

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



SACRED HEART SCHOOL

Congratulations to Olivia, Isla, Tahlia and Esther for their commitment to living our school values of Respect, Resilience and Safety.

Student of the Week

Proudly supported by
Kinglake branch



Incident controller Jamie Hansen speak about the night of January 9

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE PUT YOURSELF OUT THERE BIT

Head for the hills and discover Victoria's regional events. Try your hands (and feet) at various things you've never done before. You could find yourself cider quaffing, tulip sniffing, star gazing, maybe even grape stomping.

VICTORIA EVERY BIT
DIFFERENT

VISITVICTORIA.COM

FIRE RECOVERY

You don't have to navigate recovery alone.

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

If you've been impacted, this newsletter is for you. Sign up today. Stay connected.

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



Mayors Message

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

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

Cr Damien Gallagher
Mayor, Murrindindi Shire Council

Fire Recovery Hubs

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

Alexandra Library - 49 Grant Street

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

Yea Library - 15 The Semicircle

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



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

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

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



Get in touch
5772 0333
murrindindi.vic.gov.au/request
customer@murrindindi.vic.gov.au

Stay informed
murrindindi.vic.gov.au/news
Follow us on Facebook @murrindindishirecouncil



**Watch this
90-second
video before
you climb
another
ladder!**



 worksafe.vic.gov.au/high-standards



Highlands CFA: where was the support?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When asked where the directive was coming from, David said, “It comes from the ICC, who ran the fire and they just showed complete and utter incompetence and lack of knowledge. A lack of understanding for what was happening on the fire ground. It comes down to a lack of knowledge of the geography but they never even attempted to get out and see. We never saw anyone from the ICC. We

still have not seen a single person from the ICC visit Highlands. We’ve seen commanders of different roles and stuff like that come and see us, but there’s been no one from the ICC come up and visit Highlands.

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

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

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

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

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

“The roads are closed to the public, but the emergency services, they’re not closed to. So we can travel those roads providing they’re trafficable, and we can always make them trafficable in fire trucks, because we’ve got chainsaws and operators. We just weren’t given any maps. We knew as locals, and that’s why we had to guide the crews around in the end of the second week when they did come up to help us.

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

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

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

David was interviewed for a Nine News report which aired last week. CFA Chief Fire Officer Jason Heffernan was also interviewed.

When asked by the interviewer, “Can you understand why they might feel abandoned?” Jason responded, “I can appreciate the sentiment that some of our people may hold in the midst of the fire fight. As chief, I’ve been calling and speaking to these people, hearing their accounts.”

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

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

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

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

How many incident controllers are based in Murrindindi Shire?

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

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

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

The following background information was also provided: Incident Controllers are deployed across the state in line with risk, readiness and response arrangements. The rigorous accreditation process for becoming a Level Three Incident Controller ensures that Victoria has an extremely high calibre of incident controllers positioned around the state.

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

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

CFA questioned about whether firefighting support was refused

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Triple Zero actions during recent fire

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

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

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

Support eligibility challenges

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

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

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

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

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

Primary Producer Bushfire Recovery Grants of up to \$75,000 are available for eligible primary producers to support the

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

Rural Financial Counselling Service Victoria North East can help identify whether a business is eligible and can be contacted on 1300 834 775. Landholders whose properties share boundaries with public land are encouraged to visit the public land recovery page on the Department of Energy,

Environment and Climate Action website for information about fencing including the fencing policy and essential water replacement after a bushfire.

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

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

TRAVELLING THIS FIRE SEASON? DON'T FORGET TO PACK THE VIC EMERGENCY APP.



Travelling in Victoria this fire season? Make sure you've packed all the essentials, including the VicEmergency app. So you can check the Fire Danger Rating daily.



Download VicEmergency App and
check the fire danger rating daily.

**HOW WELL
DO YOU KNOW FIRE?**



Authorised by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne

KID'S PUZZLES PUZZLES

SOLUTIONS
Page 14

Colouring Page



Word Search - Words starting with "C"

CAMERA	P	C	N	K	C	O	E	J	D	C	Y	N	A	B	H
CARROT	K	I	K	D	H	L	F	L	R	S	U	C	R	I	C
CASTLE	F	A	F	A	A	B	O	A	C	A	M	E	R	A	P
CHAIR	Q	I	U	T	I	S	Y	C	P	Y	D	G	M	D	J
CHEESE	Y	N	S	G	R	O	W	G	K	M	C	D	C	I	B
CIRCLE	P	H	C	B	N	E	Q	K	F	T	B	N	G	G	W
CIRCUS	A	D	F	L	L	F	K	W	K	E	O	E	K	V	P
CLEVER	L	D	I	T	E	Z	E	V	U	S	F	R	Z	Q	C
CLOCK	Q	X	S	K	F	V	K	V	C	E	T	E	R	L	D
CLOWN	J	A	K	O	C	N	E	R	O	E	E	W	U	A	O
CLUMSY	C	F	N	W	O	L	C	R	M	H	K	M	K	B	C
COMB	Q	G	C	P	E	X	Z	M	B	C	S	K	C	N	K
CRAYON	N	C	Z	N	N	C	I	N	I	Y	C	H	P	C	F
CYCLE	C	I	R	C	L	E	P	B	K	W	M	A	N	K	W
	V	A	L	L	U	Q	Y	E	U	G	X	K	C	P	W

Math Square

Fill in the missing numbers.

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

Each number is only used once.

Each row is a math equation.

Each column is a math equation.

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

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

Jokes

- Q:** What is a robot's favourite snack?

A: Computer chips.
- Q:** What is a calendar's favourite food?

A: Dates.

Crossword

ACROSS

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

DOWN

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

1		2				3			4		5
					6						
				7			8				
9							10				
				11							
12		13					14		15		
				16							
17							18				19
				20							
21		22					23		24		
				25							
26							27				

4. An open-mouthed stare of amazement.

5. A toy used to amuse babies.

6. Showing little interest or enthusiasm.

7. Firm, dependable and loyal behaviour.

8. An obstruction that delays progress.

13. Drink made by steeping leaves in water.
15. Bother persistently with trivial complaints.

17. An uneasy feeling about one's conduct.

19. Anything capable of causing death.

22. A long, loud, mournful wail.

24. Open glass used for holding cut flowers.

Word Search

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

Outdoors

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

Math Square

	+	6	×		52
-		×		÷	
	+		+		6
+		+		-	
7	+		+		21
8		11		-5	

Fill in the missing numbers.

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

Each number is only used once.

Each row is a math equation.

Each column is a math equation.

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

Cryptogram

AFL Teams

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
8								

J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R

S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
23	5						

T							A	T			
5	25	9					15	11	9	8	5

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

S					T
23	19	7	11		5

Sudoku

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

Difficulty: Hard

Fill in the boxes using the numbers 1 to 9.

Every row and column and every group of 9 boxes inside the thicker lines must contain each number and letter only once.

Ruth Konig Memorial Scholarship: Ashlee Francombe and Matilda Underhill

THE Rotary Club of Yea's dinner meeting on February 12 was a special evening as the guest speakers were Ashlee Francombe and Matilda Underhill who in December 2025 were each awarded a Ruth Konig Memorial Scholarship.

In late 2025 Yea Rotary was delighted to accept a very generous donation from the Yea-Kinglake RSL Sub-branch which enabled two awardees to be selected for the scholarship

In their presentations, both Matilda and Ashlee shared with the audience a little of their personal circumstances, community volunteering and tertiary goals and aspirations. Matilda has accepted an early offer to La Trobe for a Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood and Primary teaching) and has already moved onto campus accommodation.

Ashlee received a first-round offer to RMIT, Bachelor of Nursing, Off campus and will commence studies in early March. When she completes her nursing studies, she is hopeful of returning to work in the local area.

Both Ashlee and Matilda expressed their gratitude for the club's support and are deeply committed to making the most of their opportunities, acknowledging that the scholarships would allow them both to overcome the barriers of rural disadvantage and give them the chance to achieve higher education success for the future.

Jeff Swain (Yea-Kinglake RSL Sub branch) also spoke of the continuing partnership between Yea Rotary, the RSL and Yea HS. At last year's high school presentation afternoon, he was particularly pleased to present Matilda with the ADF Long Tan award, as well as presenting Ashlee with the certificate that accompanied her scholarship.

Yea Rotary and the Yea- Kinglake RSL are proud to provide this significant financial support, in Ruth's memory, to both Matilda and Ashlee and wishes them all the best for their futures.



Ruth Konig Memorial Scholarship recipients Matilda Underhill and Ashlee Francombe alongside President Darryl King. -S

ADH statement: Board recommends hospital merger

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

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

Around 40 per cent of hospital care for people living in the Alexandra catchment is currently provided through Eastern Health, with the two organisations working closely together to provide oncology services, dialysis planning and shared workforce and training initiatives. Building on this, the business case identifies clear opportunities to deliver more care locally, including: Expanded local access to specialist care, with new and increased specialist clinics delivered at Alexandra District Health, including general medicine, geriatrics and paediatrics, reducing the need for patients to travel long distances for routine specialist review; increased low-complexity surgery services to better utilise existing beds and theatre capacity to safely deliver more care locally; a three-chair dialysis service at Alexandra District Health, operating as part of Eastern Health's renal hub-and-satellite model; improved access to imaging (X-ray) and diagnostic services, addressing current service gaps that limit the ability to deliver and coordinate care locally; stronger workforce sustainability, supported by expanded training and career pathways across rural and metropolitan settings, including access to Eastern Health training programs, commencement of an allied health graduate program from 2027, extension of learning management and scholarship programs, and opportunities for postgraduate education and specialist supervision; clearer, more integrated care pathways, supported by unified clinical governance and, over time, shared patient information systems, making it easier for patients to move between local and metropolitan services when escalation or specialist care is required; and more sustainable use of shared systems and support services, including emergency and disaster response, allowing Alexandra District Health to focus resources on frontline care while maintaining a strong local presence.

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

Feedback from this engagement highlighted strong support for sustainable local healthcare and expanded access to services, alongside the importance of protecting the strong, rural identity at Alexandra District Health, maintaining essential services and ensuring local voices continue to be heard.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Alexandra and District Tourism and Traders (ADTTA)

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

Youth achievements celebrated

THE Rotary Club of Yea's dinner meeting on February 6 highlighted youth achievements, celebrating five individuals who are currently recipients of the Ruth Konig Memorial Scholarship.

Ruth was a committed, passionate and inspirational Rotarian and teacher at Yea High School, whose vision was to see all students reach their educational potential. When Ruth died in 2016, she left a bequest to Yea Rotary and in her memory, with added club funds, the Ruth Konig Memorial Scholarship was created.

The scholarship is awarded to Year 12 students at Yea High School who are commencing their first year of higher education. It offers \$2000 annually for a duration of three years to assist in covering some of the expenses incurred with tertiary study.

Guests welcomed were Declan Fulford and Olivia Johnson, inaugural recipients of the scholarship in 2022, Maddy Granter and Louis Callander (2023) and Madalen Flynn (2024).

Olivia, who completed her second year of nursing at RMIT, thanked the club for its impactful support. She outlined her journey to date and how the scholarship has allowed her to focus on her studies and clinical training without the worry of how the next bills would be covered.

Olivia spoke of her appreciation of the club's belief in her future and recognition of her potential. She concluded her address with, "Thank you for all the work you do for our community and believing in and supporting us."

Declan, now in his third year at Melbourne University, is majoring in biomedical engineering for his Bachelor of Science degree. His field of study has included design implementation of medical technology, prosthetic limbs, monitoring equipment, artificial body parts and drug delivery systems. Declan has found this technology both exciting and interesting and hopes one day to be the creator of something that improves people's lives. This year Declan will specialise in subjects required for his major including biomaterial, electric circuits, mechanics and biochemistry. He thanked the club for the financial assistance which has helped cover some of his accommodation costs in Melbourne.

Louis Callander who commenced studies in Cyber Security at La Trobe Uni in Bundoora in 2024, emphasized that while he has chosen to continue to reside in Yea, he incurs considerable costs with petrol and parking fees. This year his studies will focus on wireless networks and security, network engineering and artificial intelligence. Louis has recently gained employment working as a specialist technician at three local schools and when he completes his degree he hopes to work in the cyber security field. Louis conveyed his gratitude for Ruth and the scholarship, as it enables him to pursue his chosen field of study and follow a career path that interests him.

Another recipient who commenced studies last year, Maddy Granter has successfully completed her first year of a Bachelor of Occupational Therapy at Deakin University in Geelong. As Maddy was living on campus, the scholarship has helped defray some accommodation costs.

Maddy noted that her studies involved visiting hospitals and private clinics, providing insight into the various specialities in Occupational Therapy. One of the most impactful areas she worked in was neurological rehabilitation at the Royal Talbot Rehabilitation Centre.

Maddy thanked the club for awarding her the scholarship in Ruth's honour as it has made a huge difference to her ability to focus on her studies and pursue her passion.

The final student to address the meeting was Madalen Flynn. Maddy moved to Yea High School in 2021 and graduated Year 12 last year as the School Captain. She mentioned her family situation, being one of seven children in a single-income household, and described the wonderful support, love and guidance from her father in navigating life.

Maddy has enrolled in a Bachelor of Science with a Master of Teaching program at RMIT in Melbourne. She has a passion for teaching, finding it very rewarding helping students who may be struggling particularly with motivation. Maddy values the scholarship and is determined to honour Ruth's legacy.

The club enjoyed hearing all the confident and articulate young adults speak about their goals and aspirations and wishes them well in their future studies.

Ruth would have been immensely proud of the legacy that has been created in her memory.

ANTENNAS



Christopher Edwards
0405 554 915
info@chris-tv.com.au
Sec Reg: 997-462-605

Chris's TV

The Television Reception Specialist

- TV & FM radio antennas
- Starlink, VAST & Foxtel installs
- Extra TV wall points
- TV brackets & wall mount TVs
- Surround sound systems
- Home theatre
- Data points & mesh WIFI
- CCTV security systems

Fully Registered Fully Insured Fully Vaccinated

FENCING

McMASTER FENCING CONTRACTOR

All general farm fencing, cattle yards, sheep yards, vineyards, on site welding and oxy work.
Tree plantation ripping
5 hydraulic post drivers and pneumatic drivers

GRASS SLASHING
4 extra heavy duty slashers

GENERAL FREIGHT
Hay, timber, wool, steel, grapes, machinery

GLEN (HORACE) McMASTER
5797 2921
Mobile 0417 529 809

EMC0072

BOOKKEEPING



TURNOVER BOOKKEEPING

*BAS *IAS *Superannuation
*Accounts Receivable
*Accounts Payable *Payroll

Ph Trevor Turner
0419 575 176

CARPET CLEANING



- ✓ Stain removal
- ✓ Urine treatment
- ✓ Upholstery cleaning
- ✓ Carpet steam cleaning
- ✓ Tile and grout cleaning

Ph 0427 322 124
admin@gvrestorations.com.au

CONVEYANCING



Sargeants

CONVEYANCING & PROPERTY TRANSFER SPECIALISTS

Debra Loveday
5772 2500
71 Grant Street, Alexandra
debra@sargeantsm.com.au
Conveyancing throughout Victoria

ELECTRICIANS

ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS



• Domestic / Commercial
• Undergrounds
• Cable Locations • Trenching
• Solar Installations & Batteries

Ph 0418 543 310
info@e-tec.net.au
www.etecelectrical.com.au

MM00042 Rec N°12906

EXCAVATION & EARTHMOVING

KEATH'S EXCAVATIONS P/L, YARCK

EARTH MOVING

Excavators ~ Dozers ~ Graders
Scrapers ~ Loaders ~ Rollers
Backhoe ~ Water Carts
Low Loader ~ Tipplers
Trucks & Trailers

All equipment operated by qualified operators
PERSONAL SUPERVISION – 42 YEARS EXPERIENCE

Phone 5773 4242 Mobile 0428 577 951
keathsexc@bigpond.com

EMC0082

PAINTERS

W. & J. GREEN

PROFESSIONAL PAINTING

50 Years experience in all things painting

0407 134 756

PLUMBERS

G (Jack) McMaster

Plumbing Lic No 29767 YOUR LOCAL PLUMBER

- New work & Renovations • Domestic & Commercial
- Septic tanks, Water tanks • Pumps etc • Gas Fitting
- Roofing & Spouting • Trenching • Backflow Prevention

Ph 0428 972 386

SERVICE STATIONS



Fuelling North East Victoria since 1953
with quality products and great service.

Supplying bulk fuels to your farm or business.

Lubricant specialists, catering for all your needs
with Mobil and Prolube lubricants,
greases and solvents.



Ampol Alexandra
Ampol Eildon
Mansfield Diesel Stop



0357721205 | www.simpsonsfuel.com.au

WATER BORING



North West Drilling

Water Bores

Extensive experience in drilling for water in Mansfield, Alexandra and surrounding areas.
Established since 1976

For answers to all your questions and a no obligation free quote contact GRAHAM BRENNAN
Phone/Fax: (03) 9436 1982 Mobile: 0409 362 289
northwest.drilling@bigpond.com
www.northwestdrilling.com.au

EMC1840

The Yea Chronicle

Book your space in our trades directory today!

5772 1002

DEADLINE: 12 NOON THURSDAYS

Email: reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au



Local VFBV reps stress importance of new CFA trucks

Continued from Page 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It also gives rise to a range of health concerns, particularly in a bushfire response as the crew on the rear will be breathing the

hot air and toxic smoke products produced by the fire.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PUZZLES SOLUTIONS

CRYPTOGRAM

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

THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN SPORT

CROSSWORD

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

MATH SQUARES

4	+	6	×	8	52
-		×		÷	
3	+	1	+	2	6
+		+		-	
7	+	5	+	9	21
8		11		-5	

SUDOKU

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

KIDS - MATH SQUARES

3	+	4	+	8	15
+		+		-	
9	-	1	-	5	3
+		-		-	
6	-	7	+	2	1
18		-2		1	

Classifieds

Call 5772 1002 now to book your ad today!
Fax: 5772 1603 or Email: reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au

ALEXANDRA
NEWSPAPERS Pty. Ltd.

Classified information

Office hours

Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm
 Ph 5772 1002

E: reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au

Deadline - Noon Monday

Proofs

Line ads proofs not supplied
Display will only be supplied if requested

Payment

Payment is required at the time of placing a classified advertisement. Cash or credit card facilities available. Master Card or Visa (no AMEX). Non-payment prior to deadline may result in advertisement not appearing.

Death notices

Cannot be published without confirmation from a direct family member or funeral director.

Vehicles/Deals on Wheels

Registration number or VIN number must be included in advertisement. Deals on Wheels will run for 8 weeks unless cancelled.

Bargains under \$100

Either one item to the value of \$100 or several items not totalling more than \$100.

Animals

It is an offence to advertise the sale of a dog or cat or to give away free unless the Source number and microchip identification number of each animal generated by the Pet Exchange Register is included in the advertisement.

Refunds or credits

Check your advertisement on its first appearance. Although every care is taken to ensure your advertisement is correct errors can occur. Notify us immediately if there are errors in your advertisement. Refunds or credits will not be issued if your advertisement has appeared more than once and you have not notified us. Credits or refunds will not be given if advertisements appear out of order.

Conditions of advertising

Alexandra Newspapers Pty Ltd has the right to refuse any advertisement. *Alexandra Newspapers Pty Ltd* gives no guarantee for positioning of advertisements.

Copy right

Material published in this edition is subject to copyright provisions and cannot be used without the company's permission.

Alexandra Newspapers Pty Ltd accepts no responsibility for the unauthorised republication of such material.

TRADES ADVERTISING DEADLINE NOON THURSDAY

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

Print Post Approved - PP 100000292.

DEATH NOTICES

BROWN, PATRICIA ELLEN (nee Betts)

Born 18/03/1937.

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

Daughter of James and Norah Betts (both dec).

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

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

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

PUBLIC NOTICES

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

FUNERAL NOTICES

CELEBRATION of Pattie's Life –

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

FOR HIRE

FITNESS EQUIPMENT

Rental and Sales

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

MEETINGS

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

PETS & LIVESTOCK

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

SITUATION VACANT

ALEXANDRA
NEWSPAPERS Pty. Ltd.

**PART TIME
 ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
 Monday-Friday 9am-3pm
 27.5hrs per week**

ARE YOU A MULTI-TASKER WITH A CAN DO ATTITUDE?

A position has become available with *Alexandra Newspapers* to join our busy team.

JOB REQUIREMENTS:

- Excellent customer service;
- Excellent communication skills and phone manner;
- Computer skills essential. Email, Excel and Word a must;
- Previous admin experience an advantage;
- To be respectful, friendly and punctual;
- Ability to work in a small close knit team;
- Have the ability to work within strict deadlines;
- Proof reading will be a requirement at times;
- Ability and willingness to learn new tasks;
- On job training will be provided.

TASKS:

- Telephone duties, ringing customers and answering enquiries;
- Assisting customers in person;
- Accepting advertising and processing payments via EFT in person and over the phone;
- Assist with preparation of weekly newspapers and associated tasks;
- Photocopying/scanning/filing and all general admin duties;
- Client follow up;
- This position is not limited to the above tasks

Please email cover letter and resume addressing above criteria with three references to

manager@alexandranewspapers.com.au

Closing date February 27, 2026.

Standard THE ALEXANDRA STANDARD, HARTSVILLE **The Yea Chronicle**

A wheel mystery

LATE on Friday, February 6, Kinglake Police received multiple calls for anti-social behaviour at the intersection of Melba Highway and Kinglake-Healesville road in Castella.

On arrival, approximately 30 to 40 vehicles dispersed from what was believed to be a high-risk driving event. Multiple registrations

were obtained by police and enquires will be made with those drivers.

Located at the scene were two vehicle rims and a red jack believed to be connected to the event. Police would like to reunite the items with their owner and are intrigued on how their vehicle managed to drive home leaving two wheels behind.

Proof of ownership will be required.



Police are seeking the owners of this jack and two wheels. -S

New chat support from Dolly's Dream

IF your child is being bullied, or you're a young person experiencing bullying, you don't have to deal with it alone. The national anti-bullying organisation Dolly's Dream recently launched 13 DOLLY, a confidential support line and web chat.

The service connects kids, teens and parents directly to a qualified Kids Helpline or ParentLine counsellor. Its launch comes as new Dolly's Dream polling suggests some young Aussies are seeking emotional support from unqualified sources like AI chatbots.

A Dolly's Dream Instagram poll of 374 Australian parents conducted this month revealed: 65 per cent said their child uses AI tools; of the young AI users, 92 per cent were aged 13 to 20, while three per cent were under nine years old; 26 per cent confirmed their child used AI for help when feeling sad.

A Dolly's Dream TikTok poll conducted last week asked: 'If you were reaching out to an organisation for support, how would you rather do it?' The results from 96 respondents found: 76 per cent prefer to chat online and 24 per cent would rather speak on the phone.

Sally Sweeney, Head of Dolly's Dream, spoke proudly about the new support line.

"We are proud to be launching 13 DOLLY, our Bullying Support Line, considering the number of young people currently using AI in Australia. We know that kids and teens are turning to AI for help, and while it will always give a response, AI can't offer the safety or qualified guidance of a human counsellor," Ms Sweeney said.

"13 DOLLY provides that vital, real connection and that's why we've created a web chat service alongside our phone line, so kids and teens can contact us anytime, in the way many are currently turning to AI. But the big difference is that when they use 13 DOLLY, they'll actually be chatting with a qualified counsellor, who is ready to listen and trained to help.

"Our message to kids is clear. If you're getting bullied, please turn to a human at 13 DOLLY, not an algorithm."

To access support, call 13 DOLLY (13 36 559) or to web chat search '13 DOLLY' or visit the Dolly's Dream website at dollysdream.org.au

Why is electricity reconnection so expensive after a fire?

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

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

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

This work is generally done by electricians.

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

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

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

The fires: Alexandra and the hamlets

by Robyn Ellis

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

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

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

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

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

With erratic winds the fires raced between Gobur and Terip Terip. Our friends there, Donald and Elizabeth Coles, decided Elizabeth would evacuate and they’d get their

horses to safety. Donald with a neighbour, saved two nearby homes, their calls for back up proving fruitless. Several hours of hard work later he managed to singlehandedly save their home, though losing all but one of their sheds, machinery and garden. I saw their photo along with other thankful survivors on local Facebook page at the Highlands Community Hub, being provided with food, essentials and probably an appreciated sanity check-in.

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

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

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

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

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

Heroically, the CFA and FFM managed to prevent the fires snatching the girdle of Yarck shops and homes hugging the highway, but as you cast your eyes up the hill, the trail of

destruction had claimed fields, the cemetery, the odd farm house and five prized cherry orchards, Koala Cherries later lamented on Facebook.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Back on the showgrounds side of Alexandra, at least a dozen CFA units were also grading

and doing everything to protect the town from being hit. Murrindindi Mayor, ‘Damo’, is also a volunteer in the Alexandra CFA. Apparently he was fighting elsewhere when his own sheds burnt down. Around this time, the decision to not evacuate Kellock Lodge, our old people’s home, was being tested. However a CFA unit was stationed on each of the four street corners around it, ensuring protection.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The importance of gaining psychological support following the fire

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

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

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

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

What is Givit and what do they do?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Yes. So we will be here for the long-haul recovery and I’ve actually just been popping

into a few of the local suppliers to find out how best we can purchase through them because we want to boost the local economy wherever we can,” Mel said.

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

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

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

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

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

Givit can be found online at givit.org.au

Over 300 people attend Yarck Colour Run

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Over 300 people attended the event in Yarck. -BD



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



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



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



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



Water and colouring was spread around. -BD



The James family from Alexandra. -BD



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



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



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



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



The stars align for Yea Cruise Night

AFTER last month's cancellation due to the Longwood bushfires and December's rain and gas leak in Yea hampering the scheduled events, the Yea Cruise Night finally had all the stars align for them on Saturday night. Perfect weather and a huge crowd made it a very enjoyable evening for hundreds of enthusiasts and locals.

They hosted the Studebaker Car Club and the GT Falcon Car Club and the CFA were fortunate to be loaned a vintage fire engine to display. It was a hit with the crowds and a great talking point and photo opportunity for children, and some grown ups. Thank you to Jack McMaster for organising it, and Kelvin McLoughlin for transporting the old truck to the site.

Yea Cruise Night would also like to thank to the Yea Water Tigers who cooked up a storm with the community sausage sizzle.

Yea Community House and the Yea CFA also would like to extend their gratitude to the many people who donated to support the ongoing bushfire emergency relief.

There will be one more Yea Cruise Night for the season on March 14. The theme will be 'Ladies Night'.

Photos by Dale McKeon, Plymouth Dale Photos



Merton cricketers back at the MCG

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

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

partnership setting up a big total for the Merton side.

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

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

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

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



Jimmy Herridge getting low to intercept the ball. -S



Beechworth players set up to catch any backwards flying balls. -S



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



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



Setting off at a run to follow the ball down the field. -S



Ross McKinnon also getting low for best performance. -S

Alexandra Squash Club: Round two of term one pennant

by Kristelle Leary

Monday competition Magpies versus Pelicans

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

Randy versus Jess: Jess had better court awareness and played the ball away from Randy. As a result, Randy could only play

catch-up and was not able to control the play. 73 to 35.

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

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

Crows versus Eagles

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

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

Chris versus Justin: Justin continues his run of good form, leading from start to

finish. Chris attempted to bring it back but did not prevail. 75 to 53.

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

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

The Chronicle Sport



Sports Editorial: sports@alexandranewspapers.com.au

Yea Bowls Club end pennant season with a win

by Maurie Finn

IN the final round of the home and away pennant season, Yea Bowls Club came away with a good victory over Tallygaroopna at Yea last Saturday.

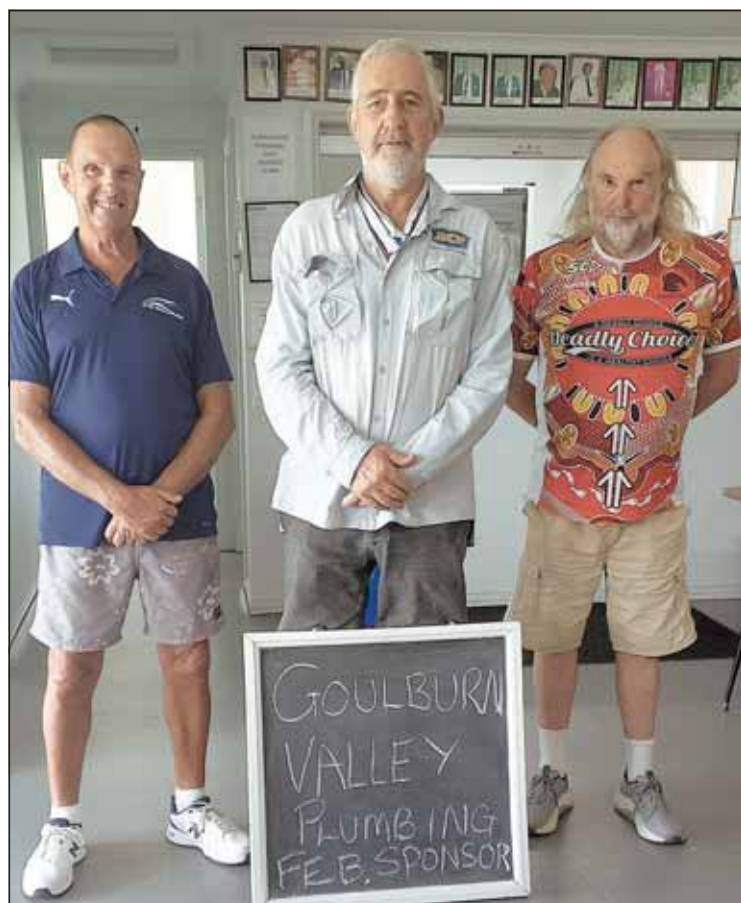
Yea finished with three rinks up and a winning score of 83 to 76.

Scores were very close all day, but the Yea teams were able to hold on for a solid win. This result left the club in fifth position on the ladder, a solid effort as they used several new pennant bowlers throughout the season.

Monday Triples

Thanks to Goulburn Valley Plumbing for their sponsorship for the month of February.

Winners last Monday were John McDonald, Howard Geldard and Rob Marks. Runners up were Maree Brennan, Janette McDonald, and Viv Cavanagh. It has been great to have some new bowlers join Monday Triples of late and to have four rinks.



Last week winners of Monday's Triples games being John McDonald, Rob Marks and Howard Geldard. -S

Barefoot Bowls

There were full rinks again for Barefoot Bowls with some very impressive bowling at times and lots of fun had by all.

Next Sunday evening will be the last evening for this format, followed by a Community Challenge Event over four weeks in March which will be held on Thursday evenings so get your teams together. Anyone without a team can head along and the club will try to organise a team for you.

Annual Inverloch group visit

Last Sunday afternoon, Yea hosted a group of 26 social bowlers from Inverloch.

This was the fifth year they have attended. They organise their own games and are served up a scrumptious lunch by Yea Bowls Club members. An annual plaque is presented to the winners.

If you have a group of family and friends, having a friendly game of bowls is a great way to enjoy each other's company.



The Inverloch visitors receiving their trophy. -S

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."

Yea students bring their energy to KBA in season start

THE new basketball season has officially tipped off at Kinglake Basketball Association (KBA), and what a fantastic first week it has been.

Yea students are well represented this KBA season. The Yea students pictured, Toby, Archie, Elias, Oscar, Roy, Jacoub and Cullen, certainly made their mark, with

a fantastic display of skills, camaraderie and sportsmanship both within and across their teams.

All in newly formed teams, these boys worked hard for all their games, and if the first week is anything to judge by, there will be some big contributions from the "Yea Boys" each week.

The first games of the season, which serve as grading games, have set the tone for an exciting season ahead.

Players quickly found their rhythm, supporting one another, sharing the ball and quickly working out how their new teammates play as part of the group.

Adding to the excitement, Mini Ball tipped off for the very first time last Monday. The youngest players had a great time learning new skills, making friends and experiencing the fun of being part of a team.

The smiles said it all. It's safe to say Mini Ball is off to a brilliant start and will be a wonderful pathway for future stars.

Behind every successful game day is a dedicated group of volunteers, and last week was no exception. A heartfelt thank you goes to everyone who stepped up to help the competition run smoothly, from scoring and coaching, to setting up and packing down. KBA also extend their appreciation to the referees, whose guidance ensure the games are played in the right spirit.

And if you're still thinking about joining, there's good news. Registrations remain open, so you haven't missed out. Contact KBA via Facebook to get involved. There's still time to be part of the action, build skills, make friends and enjoy everything the Kinglake basketball community has to offer.



The 'Yea boys' of Toby, Archie, Elias, Oscar, Roy, Jacoub and Cullen. -S