

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 25, 2026 \$2.00 inc. GST

Most trusted news source in the Murrindindi Shire since 1890

murrindindibusiness.com.au

INSIDE THIS WEEK'S EDITION

Vale Ian Sichlau



Page 4

Charmaine Beggs/Mafeking Rover Park



Page 6

New preps



Page 13

Weekend sport



Pages 14-16

The economic impact of the fire on Murrindindi Shire

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

Council's work on developing an Economic Development Strategy and Shaping Murrindindi's Future provides a strong and viable roadmap for recovery and future

economic prosperity within the shire for future generations. However, recovering from this catastrophic natural disaster will require substantial targeted support from state and federal government along with partnership and significant investment from the private sector.

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

Feedback from affected businesses and primary producers, supported by data from Agriculture Victoria, shows recovery will take

years and requires sustained, flexible and outcomes-focused support that helps enterprises reopen, re-employ and rebuild productive capacity.

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

Almost 7800 animals were killed and over 4800 kilometers of fencing destroyed, with replacement costs estimated at over \$120 million, a scale of loss that directly affects regional supply chains, on-farm

productivity and local employment. Loss of sheds, machinery and irrigation systems continues to delay recovery and keeps businesses from returning to full production.

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

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

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

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

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

The report concludes that one off grants and short-term relief are insufficient for asset heavy, production-based businesses. It calls for integrated economic, infrastructure and wellbeing recovery programs that are designed for the realities of regional production, and that mobilise multiple partners to stabilise and rebuild the Murrindindi Shire economy.

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

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

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

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

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



For information on how nature responds to fire and how we can help, visit page 4 of this edition. -S

CLOSED LABOUR DAY - MONDAY, MARCH 9
EARLY DEADLINES APPLY

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

Standard

The Yea Chronicle

DEPUTY Premier and Minister for Education Ben Carroll announced last week that nine schools will share in almost \$50,000 through the Lynne Kosky Memorial Applied Learning Grants.

“We’re giving more students the chance to develop real-world skills and build lifelong careers,” Mr Carroll said.

Alexandra District Health

5772 0900

Yea & District Memorial Hospital

5736 0400

In an emergency dial 000

Standard

The Yea Chronicle

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ALEXANDRA

NEWSPAPERS

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“We’re backing young Victorians to follow their passions and gain skills for the jobs they want.”

The grants target schools offering the VCE Vocational Major or Victorian Pathways Certificate and support innovative, community-focused projects that connect learning with real-life experiences.

One of the nine 2026 recipients was Yea High School.

At Yea High School, their VCE Vocational Major (VCE-VM) students are bringing local history to life through a Historical Signs Project.

The school is proud to be one of nine schools across Victoria to receive \$6250 through the Lynne Kosky Memorial Applied Learning Grants, a tribute to former Education Minister Lynne Kosky, who was a strong advocate for vocational and applied learning.

Through this project, Yea students are researching significant local people, places and events that have shaped the Yea community. They will design professional heritage-style signs to share these stories with residents and visitors, creating a lasting contribution to the town while

developing valuable real-world skills in research, collaboration and communication.

As part of the process, Yea students will be connecting with Murrindindi Shire Council, and other key stakeholders to bring the project to fruition. They are currently awaiting confirmation regarding next steps and potential installation opportunities.

The students at Yea High School would also love to connect with community members who may be willing to contribute stories, photographs or historical knowledge to support the project.

Investigation into Longwood fire cause

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

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

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

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

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

Murrindindi Film Society to close after 20 years

by Jill Dwyer, Secretary, Murrindindi Film Society.

AFTER more than 20 years of screening films for the local community in a pleasant and congenial setting, the Murrindindi Film Society regrettably announces that it will be closing its doors from now on.

This decision has been brought about by a number of factors including increasing costs, an aging demographic and the development of technology which brings entertainment at the touch of a button. Despite efforts over the last couple of years, the society has been unable to attract new and younger members, and it has now been decided that the time has come to cease operations.

There has been a lot of fun and companionship over the years while viewing films from all ages and genres, some inspiring and some less so, but mostly interesting and thought provoking. The society would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have helped over the years, from committee members, tech experts and operators, the Victorian Federation of Film Societies, Yea Butter Factory, Murrindindi Shire Council and staff, local papers and Yea website, and of course all the members who have attended over so many seasons, some who are sadly no longer with us but are fondly remembered.

At the final committee meeting it was unanimously decided to donate left over funds to the local CFA who have been doing such wonderful work in protecting us in this dry and dangerous summer.

MLA statement on US tariff announcement

by Michael Crowley, Managing Director Meat and Livestock Australia

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

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

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

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

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

ALEXANDRA

NEWSPAPERS

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

Weekly Weather

February 25 - March 3, 2026

Temperatures may be subject to change from date of publication

Alexandra

Yea

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

Standard

The Yea Chronicle

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NEWSPAPERS

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.

Like us on Facebook

Standard

The Yea Chronicle

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

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

DISTRICT RAINFALL	
Alexandra.....	19mm
Buxton.....	42.3mm
Eildon (AWS).....	22mm
Flowerdale.....	17mm
Jamieson.....	28mm
Kinglake.....	27mm
Lake Eildon.....	26mm
Mansfield.....	53mm
Taggerty.....	23mm
Yarck.....	9mm
Yea.....	20mm
Above details for 7 days to 9am Monday	
LAKE EILDON	
Height above sea level this week.....	272.13m
Capacity as at 9am Monday.....	46.6%
Metres below full supply.....	16.77m
Daily inflow.....	5000ML
Release.....	4000ML
Eildon Pondage (may be subject to rapid change).....	67%

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

Study explores new ways to build family resilience in rural communities

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

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

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

Families with young children from newborn to 12 years old, living in country communities, are being invited to take part in a research project that aims to look at different ways families can be supported to

navigate stress, maintain relationships, and access appropriate care, including during periods of disaster recovery.

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

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

Lead researcher Professor Rebecca Giallo, from SEED Centre for Lifespan Research in Deakin's School of Psychology said rural communities were disproportionately

affected by environmental threats and the ongoing hardship that results from the rebuilding phase.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bandidos member bailed in alleged intimidation case

A BANDIDOS bikie and former CFMEU official was granted bail over an alleged \$600,000 extortion plot, with the victim and his wife tracked to their workplace and intimidated.

Joel Leavitt, 32, from Eltham, was granted bail on Thursday, February 12. He is believed to be the president of the Melbourne chapter of the Bandidos, as well as the director of a company providing debt collection services.

A Yea man is alleged to have been his focus last month as he chased a debt on behalf of another company.

Mr Leavitt and five associates are alleged to have paid a visit to a Yea business, run by the man's wife, on January 18. He rang the man's wife while located in the business, and the man declined to meet with him. Mr Leavitt instead asked that they meet at the man's Brooklyn workplace the following day.

Mr Leavitt attended the Brooklyn premises on the following day and the meeting in the boardroom was recorded.

Constable Mountney said Mr Leavitt made "unwarranted" demands for \$663,000 and Mr Leavitt said, "Someone had to pay."

During the meeting, the victim was recorded saying, "Joel, yesterday my life has changed more in two minutes than it has in 54 years of being alive. I'll never return to Yea and I have no life left in Yea."

The court heard that the couple have been living in fear. Constable Mountney said they had not returned to their home, had closed down the business and had been unable to work.

The magistrate granted Mr Leavitt bail on the condition that he not associate with Bandidos members and not be involved in debt collection.

Liquor licence relief for bushfire-affected businesses

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

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

"Businesses impacted by the fires have lost stock and trade, and many are rebuilding from scratch. And these fee waivers

will take one pressure off their recovery," Mr Erdogan said.

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

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

Businesses in areas including Avenel, Merton, Seymour,

Alexandra, Skipton, Natimuk, Tallangatta, Gellibrand and many more are eligible.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Government responds to Fire Services levy accusations

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

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

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

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

funding exceeding the amount raised by the Fire Services Property Levy."

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

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

Communications for emergency services

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

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

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

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

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

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

New classification system for fire-impacted roads

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

Classifications

Open – Unrestricted: Fully accessible to all users.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Visit the road access and closures page at tinyurl.com/22ph43s6 for a full list of impacted roads.

Free Funeral Information Pack

Our Free Funeral Information Packs are designed to assist you with planning end-of-life and funeral services.

Included in the pack is:

- Funeral Planning Booklet
- Pre-Paid Funeral Info & FAQ's Sheet
- Free Legal Will Kit for Basic Estates
- Comprehensive Checklists
- Other Information & Funeral Service Ideas

To order you free pack please call or email us.



FINAL EMBRACE
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Out&About

WHAT'S ON?

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

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

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

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

MONDAY, MARCH 2

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

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4

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

SATURDAY, MARCH 7

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

Church Services

ST PETER'S MEMORIAL ANGLICAN CHURCH

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

ST LUKE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH OF YEA

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

CATHOLIC PARISHES OF ALEXANDRA AND YEA

Parish Priest, Father Jose Mathew
0459 402 547

St Matthews Eildon, Saturday 5pm
Immaculate Conception Parish
Alexandra, Sunday 8.45am
Sacred Heart Yea, Sunday 10.45am

CATHOLIC PARISH OF KINGLAKE

Fr Martin Ashe, Parish Priest
Ph 9717 6482
St Mary's Kinglake: Sunday 8.30am

SCOTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, YEA

Station Street Yea
Sunday Service 10.30am
Colin Whiteway
Ph 0457 340 525

UNITING CHURCH

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

Vale Ian Sichlau

by Terry Hubbard

Ian Parker Sichlau
24/8/1950 to 26/1/2026

IAN was a Rotarian for many years during which time he served as secretary and used his architectural skills on a number of community projects. As an amusement each monthly missive was accompanied by three different national flags with the invitation to Rotarians to identify them.

Ian prepared a design layout for the small reserve adjacent to the Yea Community House, creating an informative location for five history based cor steel images of Yea Landmarks. He then oversaw the installation of the images which included access paths. After installation Ian submitted the design to council only to learn that no approvals were obtained, this struck him as amusing because the president of the Committee of Management for that small reserve was none other than family friend and then Councillor Bec Bowles.

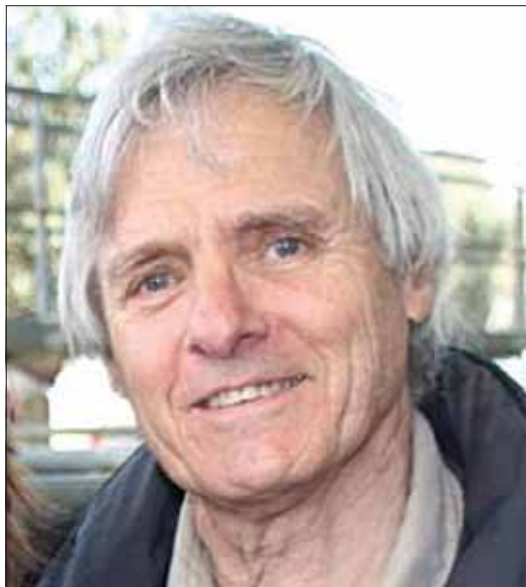
Ian provided his architectural skills in redesigning and

managing alterations to address the access needs for a near neighbour who was rendered a paraplegic following a tragic on-farm accident.

Countless hours were spent designing and seeking approval for the erection of a series of shade shelters in the High Street as a Rotary 100 years project. Following some objections, council refused permission. This weighed heavily on Ian who had put a great deal of time and effort into the project and a short while later Ian left the club.

Attempts by some fellow Rotarians to entice him back were unsuccessful but Ian continued to support the club using his talents to create the layout for the vendors at the very successful Yea Rotary Garden Expo over the past five years.

After Rotary, Ian continued to use his talents. He provided the drawings and advice for the restoration of St Lukes Anglican Church and designed homes and renovations for his friends and contacts.



Ian Sichlau. -S

Ian designed and oversaw the makeover of the Yea RSL Hall perimeter making access easier and safer for patrons.

Ian had strong links with his local Landcare Group and a lasting legacy is the impressive design and fencing out of a large wetlands on another neighbours property.

Driven by the need to record the proud history of his family, Ian and Pattie hosted the reunion of the Sichlau family for their 100 years in Yea.

His most recent contribution to community is his meticulous recording of the *History of the Yellow Creek/Dairy Creek CFA* which he published in book form in 2025.

Ian was a determined person, a pedantic perfectionist, passionate about his interest in community and history, and he was never afraid to speak up when he saw the need. We are the poorer without his generous and unselfish contribution.

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

by Cathy Olive, Euroa Arboretum

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

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

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

Our soils after fire are exposed and vulnerable, showing our landscapes very bones, and sometimes exposing artefacts thousands of years old. They repel water initially, with water unable to penetrate and sheeting off the surface, risking erosion. However, our native grasses, adapted to fire, respond already with new green shoots. Deep rooted and surprisingly old grass tussocks,

rivalling even our ancient trees and dated to 500 years of age in some cases, send up green shoots despite the lack of rain. Introduced perennial grasses respond too, stabilising bare soils and providing a protective cover. In the damper gullies and creeks, the much-maligned common reed, *Phragmites australis*, has great capacity for filtering water. Underground tubers have withstood the fire, and shoots are already a foot high. It is braced and ready for the first rains, ready to filter water and trap soil particles. Our sedges and grasses around waterways are truly our first responders for protecting our water quality.

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

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

So, nature is getting on with what she does, but she does need your help. Here are some initial tips. Our soils are very fragile right now. Avoid driving over them. Leaf litter creates a tiny bit of soil cover. If you have branches down, lay them across the slope around gullies or creeks or in areas of remnant habitat. Allow some small stacks of timber in remnant areas. There is no cover right now, and any surviving animals (bandicoots,

lizards, native mice) are terribly vulnerable to predators. If you do suspect you have found cultural heritage, leave it in place. Let us know and we can ensure you follow the right protocols for reporting. Surviving paddock trees are terribly precious. They are important for stock shade, but more vulnerable than ever to stock compaction and high nutrients around their trunk. Fencing to the edge of the drip line for those trees is ideal, allowing stock to still seek shade on the south side of the tree. However, with so much fencing to be done, laying large fallen branches away from the trunk can provide a perimeter of protection for the tree. Stock can rub on branches, rather than the trunk, and there is a chance of regeneration of the old tree. It does make future weed control a challenge, but it can buy time and bring important, immediate protection.

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

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

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

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

The Longwood fires in Murrindindi Shire

by Dianne Goschnick

ON Friday the ninth of January 2026

A catastrophic disaster warning came - we were in a fix

When emergency warnings were out there in force,

with a bushfire now raging, things were getting worse.

At first there came warnings - to evacuate

"Get out, get going, there's no time to wait."

Then it was "Take shelter, it's too late to leave"

Everyone of us so frightened, but did take heed.

But while many fled away from this horrendous fire

the firefighters and volunteers leapt into action around our shire,

Aiming to hit it head on - this Fiery Beast

as it lashed about, north, south, west and east.

As this Fiery Demon breathed heat and flames so hot

And the winds blew more wildly, it burnt the lot

Devastating the environment, properties, homes and more

Known as the Longwood fires - lashing right at our door.

As the winds got wilder and the flames swept higher

So did this terrible beast, in the shape of destructive fire

Rolling and raging right across the land

Over the Murrindindi Shire, a place once so grand.

So many lives were changed on that day

When this fiery monster rushed our way

With our fate unknown or how this event would end

Prayers and messages to loved ones we all did send.

Somehow with some luck on our side, it slowed down on the edge of town

Not before it had razed so much country all around

Houses, buildings, sheds, trucks and cars,

Disaster and destruction across the landscape so far.

So many tankers came to the rescue from near and far

Fighting this beast, they were soon covered in soot and char

We are so proud of their efforts in this fiery war

And how they fought so hard, and feel for destruction and heartache of what they saw,

In the aftermath of this cruel disastrous event

We see so much destruction, properties destroyed and steel all bent

The landscape now different we see how it has all changed

When this Fiery Beast razed our district, now with things rearranged.

Now five weeks later and with hope this beast is laid to rest

We congratulate the firefighters and volunteers who did their best

With their own lives on the line of this raging fire

We thank them all right across the state, and the Murrindindi Shire.

As we try to rebuild our lives every day and slowly move forward

Though difficult for some and will always be haunted

Support each other and please be ever so kind

No closer community like ours, you will ever find.

Please give thanks and all support one another

And celebrate our survival even if you did run for cover

We will rebuild with time, love, hope and support

And become wiser and stronger after the Fiery Monster was fought.

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

Flame

by Alex Jones, Maintongoon

Warm and cosy, on a winter's night, when frost does try to bite.

Fuel I give to make you grow, darkened night, amber glow.

Charcoal shimmer, orange glimmer.

Flicker flame, in my house you burn, here you are tame.

A candle dances, suits romances, we have it on a stick.

Its wax is ever burning slow, the flame begins to flick.

Happy birthday, the greatest song, more candles to your name.

And as if a challenge sitting there, we blow upon the flame.

There you were upon a hill, looking down at me one day.

You screamed and roared so loudly, it was all that you could say.

Then your dance raced forwards, bouncing off trees that were in your way.

You're angry now, I don't know why.

Your friend the wind so gusty, has swept you off your feet, and how your heart is beating with an intense and scorching heat.

To stop and stare and watch you work, your wild and wicked ways,

Has taken my burst for life away, and it's been gone for days.

Water, a summer friend, close to me that day.

Gave me power to stop your march, as I slowly drove you away.

When winter comes, we will meet again.

I will give you so much life.

Hot fire, flame, you are not tame and you burn just like the sun so bright.

As an ever-changing spectrum of life inspiring light.



Looking after yourself and others after the fires

Wednesday 4 March from 6.30 pm

at Alexandra Shire Hall, 55 Grant Street

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

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

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



murrindindi.vic.gov.au/afterfirewellbeing
5772 0333



NOTICE OF AN APPLICATION FOR PLANNING PERMIT

The land affected by the application is located at:	101 High Street YEA VIC 3717
The application is for a permit to:	Removal of one tree
Planning scheme clause and matter for which a permit is required:	43.01-1 (Heritage Overlay): Remove, destroy or lop a tree
The applicant for the permit is:	Murrindindi Shire Council Taylor Mainard
The application reference number is:	P121.2025
View the application and any supporting documents online at:	murrindindi.vic.gov.au/p121-2025

You can also scan the QR code to access the website.

Any person who may be affected by the granting of the permit may object or make other submissions to the responsible authority.

An objection must be made to the responsible authority in writing, include the reasons for the objection and state how the objector would be affected.

The responsible authority must make a copy of every objection available for any person to inspect free of charge until the end of the period during which an application may be made for review of a decision on the application.

The responsible authority will not decide on the application before:	11 March 2026
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If you object, the responsible authority will tell you its decision.

The Planning Unit can be contacted on (03) 5772 0333 or by emailing planning@murrindindi.vic.gov.au



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Charmaine Beggs working on Mafeking Rover Park recovery

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"It's not something you learn overnight, it's something you learn over time and so it's just that extra support network for them with my background and being a rural person



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

and knowing about farming and all that kind of stuff and machinery and tractors and everything. Definitely adds an extra layer of help for them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Playing a critical role in supporting the Highland community, Charmaine coordinated deliveries of essential supplies including food, water, hay and generators to affected families and farmers. Driven by her commitment to those surrounded by debris and loss, she helped lead recovery and fundraising efforts to aid in the rebuild of both her community and the Mafeking Rover Park.

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

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

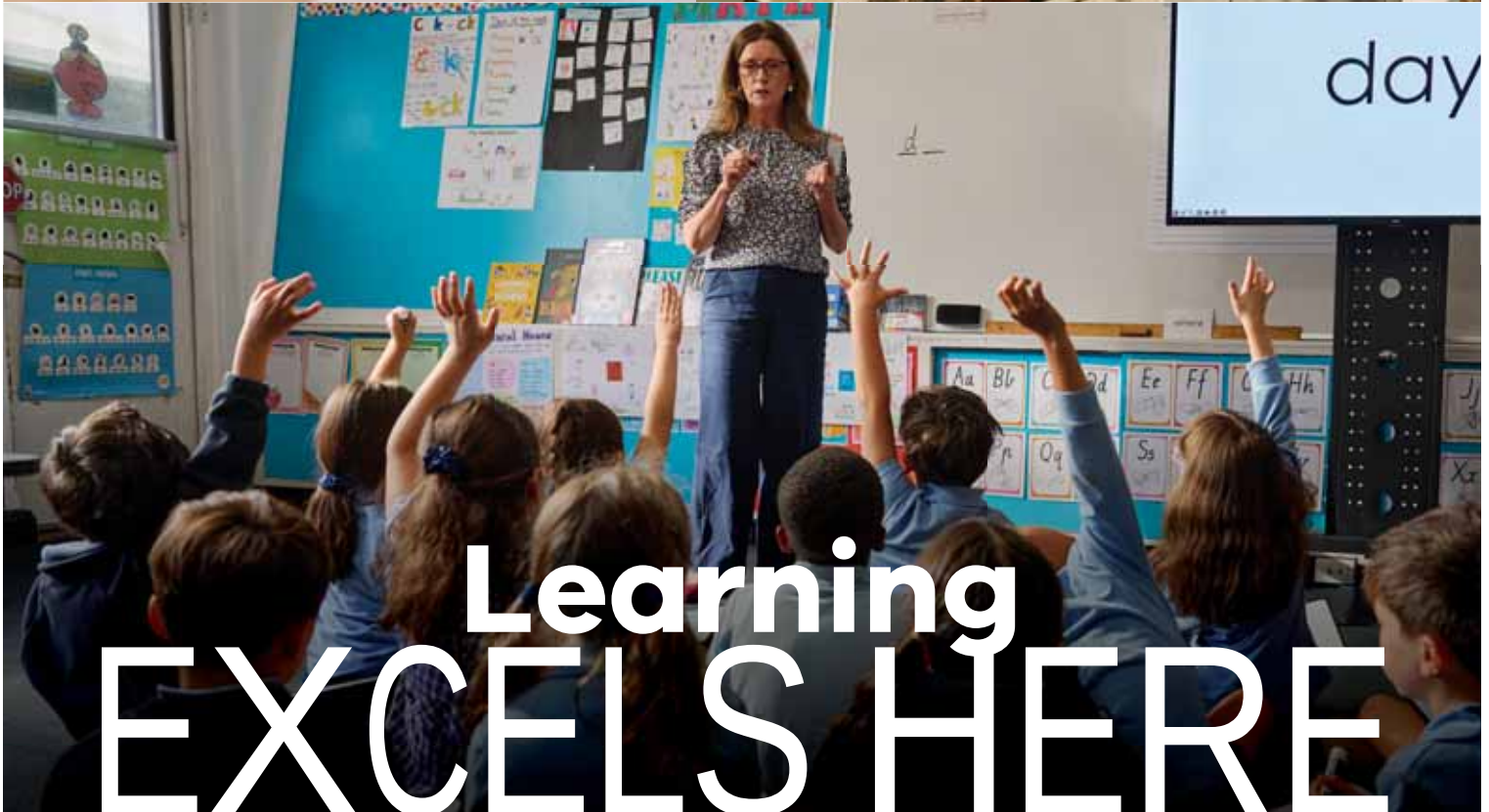
Bunnings Head of Community, Partnership and Events Michelle Walter said the initiative reflects Bunnings' strong connection to local communities across Australia.

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

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

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

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



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Fire affected farmers: Sharon Fox

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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The Yea Chronicle

Council discusses public liability insurance post-fires

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

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

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

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

"Council recognises that, following emergencies, many people assist neighbours and community members independently and with the best of intentions. Where individuals choose to help outside any organised, directed or registered arrangement, council does

not have the ability to extend its insurance coverage to those activities. In those circumstances, individuals would need to rely on their own insurance arrangements.

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

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

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

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

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

Hay bales provided by prisons following Longwood fires

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

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

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

Prisons across Victoria are also contributing to local recovery efforts.

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

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

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

What's happening with the FRV fleet?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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.

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A golden perch. -S

Goulburn River autumn water release to help native fish and plants

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

would otherwise have been delivered separately," he said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PUBLIC NOTICES



Energy,
Environment
and Climate Action

Safety on Public Land Act 2004

NOTIFICATION OF PUBLIC SAFETY ZONE DECLARATION

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

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

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

- conducting fire operations and the maintenance of public safety.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Watch out for parthenium weed in interstate fodder

FARMERS importing or receiving donated fodder from interstate due to drought or after the recent Victorian bushfires are reminded to watch out for weeds growing from seeds contained in hay, particularly the state prohibited weed parthenium weed.

Agriculture Victoria Biosecurity Manager Angela Constantine said biosecurity threats like parthenium weed or Parthenium hysterophorus can add pressure to already stressed systems.

"Parthenium is one of the world's most aggressive weeds and a continuing threat to Victoria, it isn't currently found in Victoria, but is present in New South Wales and Queensland, so the potential for it to invade Victoria is real," Ms Constantine said.

"Parthenium weed has several undesirable characteristics, not only is it difficult to control due to the large number of seeds produced by the plant's fast reproductive cycle, but it's also toxic to livestock, inhibits other plant growth

and can cause severe allergic reactions in humans.

"Farmers are asked to look out for the weed germinating in areas where imported fodder has been used.

"It can grow up to two metres tall, has deeply lobed leaves in a rosette and on the stem, with small white flowers up to one centimetre wide at the end of each branching stem. It can turn woody with age.

"Where possible feeding livestock in a contained area is an effective biosecurity practice to reduce the spread of weed seed across a property, but you should also monitor this area regularly.

"We encourage farmers to be particularly mindful when importing fodder from NSW and Queensland.

"Areas of Victoria along the Murray River, from Corowa, Cobram, Echuca to Swan Hill, are particularly at risk of invasion," Ms Constantine finished.

Parthenium weed is most commonly spread by vehicles and farm machinery, so roadsides and farmland are at risk of invasion.

More information about identifying and reporting parthenium weed is available on the Agriculture Victoria website at go.vic.gov.au/455DEUS

If you think you have seen parthenium weed email weed.spotters@agriculture.vic.gov.au or call the Customer Service Centre on 136 186. Agriculture Victoria will remove all plants, for free.

A permit to import interstate fodder is required for fodder sourced from all states and territories (excluding Northern Territory and Tasmania). Entry conditions are available on the Agriculture Victoria website at go.vic.gov.au/4bUbK2I or contact market.access@agriculture.vic.gov.au if you need assistance.

Find more information about support for drought or fire recovery at agriculture.vic.gov.au or call 136 186.



Parthenium weed with flowers. -Ethel Aardvark

New preps start their educational journey



Ms Penny Vanlierop, classroom teacher at Sacred Heart Primary School in Yea said, "Our [prep] students have made a wonderful start to the new school year, settling beautifully into their new routines and classroom environment. Each morning they arrive bright-eyed, energised and ready for the day ahead, showing great enthusiasm for learning and for being together as a class. It has been delightful to see new friendships forming, confident participation in activities, and such a positive approach to classroom expectations. We are so proud of the way everyone has embraced the start of the year and look forward to all the exciting learning still to come." -S



The new prep students at Kinglake West Primary School. -S

Alexandra District Health: What guarantees do we have?

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

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

"Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health" responded, "This process is board-led and governed under the *Health Services Act 1988*.

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

"Feedback from this engagement highlighted strong support for sustainable local healthcare and expanded access to services, alongside the importance of protecting the strong, rural identity at Alexandra District Health, maintaining essential services and ensuring local voices continue to be heard. Importantly, the recommendation includes clear safeguards to protect local identity, leadership and community involvement.

"If a voluntary amalgamation is approved by the Minister for Health, more services will be delivered locally, Alexandra District Health will retain its name, and all locally raised funds and donations will continue to be used to support services for the local community.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SPORT



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

Alexandra Squash Club: Round three of term one pennant

by Kristelle Leary

Monday competition Crows versus Cockatoos

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

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

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

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

Magpies versus Eagles

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

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

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

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

Wednesday competition Kenworths versus Western Stars

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

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

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

Macks versus Scanias

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

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

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

Top coach Rob visits Murrindindi Little Athletics to provide insights

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

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

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

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

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



Gold, silver and bronze medallists. -S



Personal best medallion recipients. -S



Harish, Levi and Zoe breaking club records. -S



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



Cheyanne clearing the high jump. -S



Luke Berriman. -S

Merton cricketers take on Benalla and win

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

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

Merton's opening pair of Sutton and Mackinnon played with aggression, Sutton particularly damaging smashing three big sixes early in his innings before he was dismissed for 39.

Ross McKinnon 24 fell shortly after with Merton losing a number of middle order wickets in quick succession, the visitors looked shaky.

However the in-form James Benton played the perfect innings under pressure while his teammates fell around him making 30 not out hitting the winning runs in the 34th over, Merton passing Benalla's total eight wickets down.

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

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



James Benton. -S



Adam Mahoney. -S

SDCA match reports

A Grade

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

KBA season continues

THE Kinglake Basketball Association (KBA) season continues on Monday and Wednesday nights.

Monday nights have been buzzing with energy as the club's Mini Ballers (four to seven year olds), under eights and under 10s take to the court. Mini Ball is all about building confidence, learning fundamental skills and, most importantly, developing teamwork in a fun and supportive environment.

The youngest players are mastering the basics of dribbling, passing and shooting, while also discovering how to listen, share and work together as a team.

The under eights and under 10s have made a fantastic start to the season. In just the first couple of weeks, the club have seen impressive improvement in ball control, defensive effort and game awareness.

The under 10s are currently playing grading rounds, which help ensure teams are evenly matched for the upcoming season. It's been wonderful to see players encouraging one another and embracing the challenge.

On Wednesdays, the under 12 and under 14 teams step up for competitive grading games. The intensity lifts as players battle it out, and there have already been a few exciting three-pointers swishing through the net.

Some of these players are in their second season or even more, but there have been quite a few newbies join the ranks in the last few weeks. While it's scary to start if you have never played before, the best way to improve your skills is on the court, and KBA encourage anyone who would like to try to get in touch with them.

It's shaping up to be a brilliant season ahead at Kinglake Basketball.

Race days to honour bushfire response effort

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

B Grade

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

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

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The Yea ladies celebrating their victory in the Gender Challenge. -S

Ladies win Gender Challenge for 2026 at Yea Golf Club

by Alan Pell

COMPLETING their dominance in this year's competition the Yea ladies won nine of the 18 individual matches with another two matches being drawn in the last and ninth round of the Gender Challenge at Yea Golf Club.

The individual winner and Mary Walker Trophy winner was Nicola Rule (53) with 39 points. Second was Luke Gregory (8) with

38, followed by Judi Newman (38) with 36, Jeff Aurisch (23) 36 and Meryl Connell (25) with 35. Team average went to the ladies who won the day with 55 points to 30 for the men.

Final scores of the competition saw the Ladies on 590 to the Men 355. This coming Wednesday will see the men preparing lunch for the ladies.

Last Saturday saw hotter conditions with most of the 29 players getting in early. In the

men's stableford one of the two afternoon players Andrew Bohn (7) defied the hot temperatures and recorded 36 points to win from four others all on 34 points.

Greg Clememnts (19) finished second on countback from Jonathon Fisher (11) third, John Phillips (19) fourth and Rick Wills (10) fifth. Mic Spagnolo was nearest the pin on the 18th and Clint Rose first up in a competition won the club award.

In the ladies Judi Newman (37) with 36 points had a win from Nicola Rule (52) with 32 points. Caroline Webber (44) was third with 31 points. There were eight players in the field.

Next Saturday sees the final round off the Murrindindi Masters to be held at Yea Golf Club.



Nicola Rule with her trophy. -S



The Gender Competition out on the field. -S