

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, April 1, 2026 \$2.00 inc. GST

Most trusted news source in the Murrindindi Shire since 1890

murrindindibusiness.com.au

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Fire affected councils receive hub funding

THE Federal and Victorian Governments are helping bushfire-affected Victorians to rebuild and recover by funding 27 new Community Recovery Officers and investing in local Recovery Hubs.

Community Recovery Officers work with eligible councils to ensure community needs are understood.

Fifteen councils will share \$15 million, jointly funded under the Commonwealth-State Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements (DRFA).

Murrindindi Shire is among the 15 local government areas to receive funding. Councils will manage staffing appointments and exact Recovery Hub locations.

This summer Victorians have experienced the devastating impacts of bushfires. More than 430,000 hectares have burnt, and more than 1500 structures have been damaged or destroyed.

This investment is part of \$370 million in relief and recovery support the governments have committed under the DRFA.

Victorians can find out more about available recovery support on the Emergency Recovery Victoria website at vic.gov.au/january-2026-victorian-bushfires

They can also call the Emergency Recovery Hotline on 1800 560 760 to access support through the Emergency Recovery Support Program.

Federal Minister for Emergency Management Kristy McBain said, "The Albanese Government stands with Victorians in the aftermath of what has been a devastating event.

"I want to thank our first responders, emergency services and volunteers that were courageous in risking themselves to protect and save their community.

"Recovery has a long tail, and it will be some time before our bushfire affected regions are fully back on their feet, but the Albanese Government will be there every step of the way."

Victorian Minister for Natural Disaster Recovery Vicki Ward added, "Recovery works best when it's shaped by locals. We're giving councils the people and places they need to support their communities through the long road ahead.

"We'll always stand with Victorians as they get back on their feet after disaster."

Ms Ward along with Deputy Emergency Management Commissioner, Relief and Recovery, Mariela Diaz attended the Yea Hub on Friday, March 27, along with representatives from council and other special guests.

Among the guests was Larry, who lost his home in the bushfire in January. He shared his 77th birthday celebrations with the attendees, including the birthday cake.



Yea Rotary President Darryl King with Minister Ward and Larry. -AR

Following the event, Ms Ward was asked for her thoughts on the current state of recovery and what's going on in the Murrindindi Shire at the moment. She responded, "Murrindindi Shire are doing great work. I mean, they've been there from the start. We had Department of Families and Housing with them at the start. We've had Emergency Recovery Victoria with them at the start. Their ability

to draw on those already strong relationships they've got with communities and to be able to work through ways of helping people and the work with setting up hubs in a variety of communities is so important. We're so glad that they've done it and of course we are supporting that."

Continued Page 8

ALEXANDRA ROTARY 56TH EASTER ART SHOW

Art Show

ALEXANDRA SHIRE HALL, 55 GRANT STREET
www.alexandraartshow.com

Rotary



2026

Book for opening night online by scanning code or pay at the door



GALA OPENING NIGHT

Friday 3 April 6.30pm

\$25pp includes drinks and finger food

Saturday 4 April 10am-5pm

Sunday 5 April 10am-5pm

Monday 6 April 9am-12noon

Entry Saturday, Sunday & Monday \$5pp

Kids under 16 free

DEMANDING FUEL SECURITY FOR REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

There are real concerns about fuel supply and prices - and regional communities feel it most. Fuel isn't optional for us. I've urged the Government to work with industry and step in to prioritise supply for regional communities.

Helen Haines MP

Wangaratta: 117 Murphy Street, Wangaratta | 03 5721 7077

Wodonga: 79 High Street, Wodonga | 02 6024 6284

helen.haines.mp@aph.gov.au | helenhaines.org

Authorised by Helen Haines, 117 Murphy St, Wangaratta VIC 3677.



56th Annual Rotary Easter Art Show this weekend

THE 56th Annual Rotary Easter Art Show is returning to the Alexandra Shire Hall at 55 Grant Street this year.

The event opening is on Friday, April 3 at 7pm with a special preview evening featuring finger food, wine, beer and bubbles. Tickets are \$25 at the door or online.

This year’s opening night has a purple theme supporting Rotary’s campaign against domestic violence. After the official opening of the show, judge Drew Gregory will be announcing award winners.

Visitors can view and purchase artworks from talented artists throughout the weekend. Weekend entry is \$5. A raffle featuring artwork by Max Wilks and other prizes will support local community projects. The raffle will be drawn Monday at 1pm.

Liquid Drag Boat Nationals postponed

THE Liquid Drag Boat Nationals has announced on their Facebook page that the Eildon Drag Boat Festival has been postponed due to concerns around fuel prices. A new date will be announced once confirmed. They said, “We understand this is disappointing and appreciate your understanding and support. If you have any questions, concerns or issues, please reach out to us directly.”

Alexandra District Health
5772 0900

Yea & District Memorial Hospital
5736 0400

In an emergency dial
000



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Correction

IN last week’s edition, an article about Member for Eildon Cindy McLeish featured an incorrect headline. In the article titled, *McLeish expresses concern over fire data*, it should have read, *McLeish expresses concern over crime data*. Apologies for the error.



THUMBS UP
THUMBS DOWN

THUMBS DOWN: There is no fuel shortage.

THUMBS UP: Special request. People with tractors, post hole diggers and rammers are needed by fire impacted communities. If you are keen to help, contact the community hubs in Fawcett, Ruffy, Highlands or Yarck.

Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down is a reader's contribution section of Alexandra Newspapers. Send your Thumbs Up or Thumbs Down to editorial@alexandranewspapers.com.au

Contributions will be edited and/or published at the Editor's discretion. We request that this section not be used as a slander attack on persons, businesses or property

Farmers left wanting after National Cabinet fuel response

THE Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) says Monday’s National Cabinet outcomes fall short of delivering the certainty farmers need, warning that more must be done to give farmers confidence.

VFF President Brett Hosking said while the federal government’s temporary fuel excise cut may provide some relief for consumers, it does little to address the unique and massive impacts being felt at the farm gate.

“Farmers are among the hardest hit by fuel and fertiliser price spikes, yet today’s announcements contain no clarity on how fuel will be prioritised if the crisis deepens.

“Farmers are telling me they are facing a real make or break moment. They can’t keep absorbing skyrocketing input costs without a plan to at least break even in months ahead.

“This decision might help consumers in the short-term, but it leaves farmers out in the cold on price relief. Eventually, the pain felt by farmers now will hurt consumers at the supermarket checkout,” Mr Hosking said.

The VFF expressed concern that, despite ongoing calls from industry, National Cabinet failed to commit to a clear framework that prioritises fuel access for critical industries such as agriculture, particularly in regional and rural communities already experiencing supply disruptions.

“We’ve consistently called for a system that recognises agriculture as an essential service in times of shortage. That means guaranteed

Price rise due to increased costs

THE cover price of the Alexandra Standard and Yea Chronicle will increase to \$2.50 next week. The price increase is necessary due to increased costs including petrol prices. Unfortunately, we are not immune to the cost increases across the economy over recent years, including across the past month. This is the first price rise in four years. We hope that you will continue to support our publication.

access to fuel so farmers can plant, harvest and transport food and fibre.

“We’re seeing patchy shortages and growing uncertainty. Without explicit prioritisation, farmers risk being left at the back of the queue and many will be forced to look after their bottom line,” Mr Hosking said.

While efforts to stabilise national fuel supply are welcome, the VFF says they must be matched with practical, on-the-ground measures that support those most exposed to volatility.

“Ensuring fuel imports and supply chains are functioning is important but it’s only part of the solution. Farmers need certainty that when they need fuel, it will be available.

“Farmers are helping to keep food on the table and are underpinning our regional economies. In a crisis like this, they cannot be an afterthought,” Mr Hosking said.

COMMUNITY DIARY

Yea District Hospital
5736 0400
Non-emergency police assistance
131 444
EMERGENCY 000

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

MONTHLY COMMUNITY GROUPS

1st Mon St Luke’s Seniors, St Lukes Hall, Ph Jenny 0407 972 099
1st Thu Yea Hospital/Rosebank Aux 2pm. Ph 5797 3057
2nd Wed Molesworth Patchwork & Craft, Molesworth Hall 10am-4pm.
4th Wed Molesworth Patchwork & Craft, Molesworth Hall 10am-4pm.
Last Fri Yea-Kinglake RSL, 11.30am RSL Hall, Ph 5796 9353



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



Weekly Weather

April 1 - April 7, 2026

Temperatures may be subject to change from date of publication

Alexandra

Yea

DAY	LOW	HIGH	DAY	LOW	HIGH
Wednesday	13	26	Wednesday	12	26
Thursday	12	26	Thursday	13	26
Friday	9	21	Friday	9	20
Saturday	9	22	Saturday	9	21
Sunday	11	23	Sunday	11	23
Monday	12	22	Monday	12	23
Tuesday	13	23	Tuesday	12	23





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.



RIVER HEIGHTS FOR THE GOULBURN CATCHMENT				
STATION NAME	TIME	HEIGHT	TENDENCY	FLOOD CLASS
Goulburn R at Lake Eildon (TW)	9.00AM Mon	1.62	LGH	steady
Rubicon River at Rubicon	9.00AM Mon	0.42	LGH	steady
Acheron River at Taggerty	9.00AM Mon	0.52	LGH	steady
Home Creek at Yarck	8.34AM Mon	0.15	LGH	steady
Yea River at Devlins Bridge	8.26AM Mon	0.48	LGH	steady
Murrindindi River Above Colwells	9.00AM Mon	N/A	LGH	steady
Yea R at Old Killingworth Rd	9.00AM Mon	0.61	LGH	steady
Goulburn River at Ghin Ghin	9.00AM Mon	3.62	LGH	steady
King Parrot Creek at Flowerdale	9.00AM Mon	0.37	LGH	steady
Goulburn River at Trawool	9.00AM Mon	1.25	LGH	steady
Sunday Creek at Tallarook	9.00AM Mon	0.36	LGH	steady
Goulburn River at Seymour	9:15AM Mon	1.58	LGH	steady
Whiteheads Creek at Seymour	9.00AM Mon	0.89	LGH	steady
*ISSUED AT 09:39 AM AEDT MONDAY 30 MARCH 2026				



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

DISTRICT RAINFALL	
Alexandra.....	10mm
Buxton.....	N/Amm
Eildon (AWS).....	10mm
Flowerdale.....	49mm
Jamieson.....	17mm
Kinglake	58mm
Lake Eildon	27mm
Mansfield.....	8mm
Taggerty	18mm
Yarck	17mm
Yea	13mm
Above details for 7 days to 9am Monday	
LAKE EILDON	
Height above sea level this week.....	270.44m
Capacity as at 9am Monday.....	42.7%
Metres below full supply.....	18.46m
Daily inflow	600ML
Release.....	2800ML
Eildon Pondage (may be subject to rapid change).....	77%

Local school staff involved in stop work action

ON Tuesday, March 24, teachers from across Victoria, including many in Murrindindi Shire, went on strike as a result of a pay dispute with the state government.

At Alexandra Secondary College, principal Nigel Lyttle said on the day, “We have got a good collection of year 12 students studying at school and attending the year 12 classes that have got their normal teachers here. It’s only four classes.”

There were only four junior students at the school on the day, so the school ran an alternate program for them.

Nigel said, “We have seven teachers in the school today and we have 17 out on strike. There’s always going to be a couple of people away on approved leave as well.”

When asked whether plans were being put in place for additional strike actions, “I guess we’re hopeful that things will be resolved quickly and there’ll be no further interruptions needed to the school and community. I guess that’s in the hands of the people negotiating the agreement.”

In terms of some of the local primary schools, Buxton Primary School was operating as usual, at Yea Primary School nine staff members participated in the

industrial action, Marysville Primary School had one staff member attend the industrial action but the school operated as normal, and at Flowerdale Primary School one staff members undertook the industrial action and only three students attended school on the day.

The stop work action was the first such action in 13 years. Victorian Branch President Justin Mullaly said there are significant and ongoing staffing shortages affecting schools across the state, as Victorian public school staff continue to be the lowest paid in the country and increasingly overworked.

According to the Australian Education Union, this is occurring at the same time as Victorian public schools are the lowest funded in Australia, with schools funded in 2026 to the same level they received in 2023, as well as missing out on \$2.4 billion through to 2031 as a result of Premier Allan’s decision to delay a full funding deal with the federal government.

“Victorian public schools have a serious workforce shortage because excessive workloads and uncompetitive pay are driving experienced staff out of the profession and making it difficult to attract the next generation.” Mr Mullaly said.



The industrial action in Melbourne on Tuesday. -S

“This should be completely unacceptable in any state or territory, let alone for a Labor state government which prides itself on calling Victoria the ‘education state’.”

It’s understood that school staff have waited more than nine months for a reasonable offer from the Victorian Government and rejecting a “completely unacceptable” deal last week. They say that it did not do enough to properly and fairly deliver pay increases and address excessive workloads.

“Victorian teachers, principals, and support staff would much rather be in the classroom teaching Victorian students today, but because of the disrespect from the Allan Government, they are having to stop work for 24 hours,” Mr Mullaly said.

“If the Allan Labor Government really values the work of Victorian teachers, principals, and education support staff, they must come forward with an offer that addresses their real concerns.”

A recent survey showed only 30 per cent of staff plan to stay working in public schools long-term, while more than 80 per cent say their workloads have increased due to inadequate support.

By October 2026 experienced teachers will be earning as much as \$15,359 a year (\$295 per week) less than their NSW counterparts, a classroom-based education support employee starting out would be 10.5 per cent behind, and a Victorian school principal new to the role would start \$27,841 or 18 per cent behind a similar principal in NSW.

“The Premier and the Education Minister need to act immediately on this, and on delivering full funding through an agreement with the federal government which lifts Victoria off the bottom of the funding pile and delivers the resources in full, like other states and territories,” Mr Mullaly said.

Following this stop work, the Australian Education Union members are ready to escalate their industrial campaign if it is necessary to ensure that a fair and decent offer is made by the Victorian Government.

Murrindindi invites visitors to experience autumn and support local recovery

MURRINDINDI Shire Council is inviting visitors to experience the region this autumn, with a strong line-up of new experiences, events and campaigns showcasing the best of ‘Dindi’ following the January 2026 bushfires.

Autumn is one of the most spectacular times to explore Murrindindi, with vibrant landscapes, local experiences and welcoming townships all within a short drive from Melbourne.

Council is working closely with Tourism North East to support visitation and local businesses, encouraging people to plan a visit that offers a relaxing escape, while enjoying everything the region has to offer.

Cr Sandice McAulay, Portfolio Councillor Economic Development, Local Jobs and Skills, said autumn was the perfect time to experience Murrindindi.

“Our region has always offered incredible natural beauty, unique local experiences and a genuine country welcome, and that remains as strong as ever,” Cr McAulay said.

“This autumn is a chance to slow down, explore our towns and enjoy everything that makes Murrindindi special.”

Whether it’s attending a local event, exploring our trails or enjoying the food, wine and hospitality across our towns, visitors can experience the best of Murrindindi while supporting local businesses and jobs.

New trails invite visitors to experience ‘Dindi’ differently

A key focus of current tourism promotion is the launch of six new curated trails, designed

to help visitors experience the region through a range of lenses, from arts and culture to family-friendly adventure and scenic touring.

The trails are Arts, Culture and History Trail; Family Fun Trail; Scenic Drives Lookouts Trail; Pub and Tipple Trail; Wondrous Waterfalls Trail; and Furry Friends Trail.

These trails are complemented by additional itineraries available via council’s Discover Dindi platform, offering visitors an easy, inspiring way to plan immersive day trips or multi-day stays.

Events and experiences driving visitation

Murrindindi is also promoting a strong calendar of upcoming events and activities, including the inaugural Eildon Drag Boat Festival on April 11 and 12, as well as a range of local markets, festivals and Easter events across the shire

These events are expected to attract visitors into the region and deliver a welcome boost to local businesses.

Campaigns and collaborations amplifying the message

Council and regional partners are delivering coordinated campaigns to showcase Murrindindi to new audiences.

This includes a campaign with One Hour Out highlighting the new trail experiences; ongoing promotion through Discover Dindi digital channels, including six new town-based videos; social media influencer collaborations focusing on theme-based trails

and destinations; and Tourism North East’s *It’s my High Country thing* campaign which invites local tourism operators to share their stories via video guides designed to assist visitors holiday like a local in our beautiful part of the world.

Travel with confidence

The campaigns align with broader regional messaging that travel across Victoria remains accessible, with fuel supply stable and no disruption expected for visitors planning trips to the region.

Visitors are encouraged to plan ahead, take their time and consider longer stays to fully experience what the region has to offer.

Cr Sandice McAulay said Murrindindi offers an easy and rewarding escape for visitors looking to recharge while supporting local communities.

“Whether you’re coming for a weekend or staying longer, there are so many ways to experience Murrindindi, from scenic drives and walking trails to arts, culture and local events,” Cr McAulay said. “Just a short drive from Melbourne, it’s an easy escape that offers something genuinely different, and every visit helps support our communities as they continue their recovery.”

Visitors can explore trails, events and itineraries via discoverdindi.com.au/trails

For local recovery information and updates, visit murrindindi.vic.gov.au

Bank closure a serious setback to bushfire recovery

MURRINDINDI Shire Council has expressed deep concern about the decision to close the Community Bank Kinglake branch, warning it risks undermining bushfire recovery and will leave the community without a critical local service.

The branch will close on Friday, June 5, forcing residents to travel around 25 kilometres to access the nearest full-service bank in Hurstbridge.

Portfolio Councillor for Economic Development, Local Jobs and Skills Cr Sandice McAulay said the closure comes at the worst possible time, as communities continue to rebuild following the January 2026 bushfires.

“This decision lands right in the middle of recovery,” Cr McAulay said.

“We are working with residents rebuilding their homes, farmers restoring their properties, and small businesses trying to stay afloat. Access to local banking is part of that recovery.”

Cr McAulay said banks had seen firsthand the need for local presence after the fires. “In the days following the bushfires, banks came into our communities to provide support. They saw the importance of face-to-face services during times of crisis. But recovery does not end after the first few weeks. Our communities need ongoing support,” she said.

Cr McAulay said the closure will leave large parts of the shire without access to a bank. “Kinglake will now be left without a bank. Alexandra does not have one. The only full-service bank branch remaining in the shire is the Bendigo Bank in Yea. That is a significant gap in essential services.”

Cr McAulay said removing a bank from a recovering community creates immediate pressure.

“People are dealing with insurance claims, grants, loans and day to day finances after disaster. To lose a local branch now adds another layer of difficulty.”

She said the shift toward digital banking does not reflect the reality in rural communities. “We still have connectivity gaps, vulnerable residents who rely on face-to-face services, and businesses that depend on cash handling. Digital first does not work everywhere.”

Council acknowledged Bank@Post services remain available, but said they are not a substitute for a full-service branch.

“A post office cannot replace a bank. This is a reduction in service,” she said.

Council is calling on state and federal governments to act.

“We cannot rely on market forces alone to deliver essential services in rural communities. We need stronger expectations to ensure communities are not left behind, especially during recovery. Our community has been through fires, floods and is now facing the loss of essential services at a time we should be rebuilding. Regional communities cannot continue to lose the services they rely on.”



Standard

EASTER OFFICE HOURS AND DEADLINES
EARLY DEADLINES APPLY FOR APRIL 8 EDITION
NOON, THURSDAY, APRIL 2 ★DISPLAY ADS - BOOKING AND ARTWORK
★CLASSIFIEDS INC DEATH NOTICES ★TRADES.
10AM MONDAY, APRIL 6 ★EDITORIAL, SPORTS AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
CLOSED GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 3 AND MONDAY, APRIL 6
REOPENING 9AM, TUESDAY, APRIL 7

The Yea Chronicle



THE CFA Appreciation Dinner was held at the Alexandra Football Netball Club on the evening of Saturday, March 28. The rooms were beautifully decorated for the evening, and all in attendance had a great time celebrating the efforts of the CFA and raising funds on their behalf.

Organiser Jamie Duggan said, “It was a really good night. Everyone’s feedback has been really positive.”

The only challenge that was faced was the reduced internet speed due to the number of people in town for the rodeo, held on the same night, but the issue was soon fixed after Jamie went home and got his Starlink device.

Jamie added, “The food was great. Everything was set up really well. The football club were amazing. Kylie and the football club are just the best people. I’m surprised I haven’t met them before. They are such hospitable people. They were so good to deal with. Everything we wanted or needed, they helped with. It just made it really easy to be in a venue that was so easy to deal with.”

There were 164 diners at the event, although 180 had booked. “We didn’t lose too many,” Jamie said.

At the start of the event, guests were invited to mingle before being seated. Dinner was at 7pm, with the speakers including Mayor

Damien Gallagher and The Unbreakable Farmer Warren Davies.

Jamie commented, “It actually came together really well, better than I actually imagined in my head.”

The final amount raised for the local CFA units is yet to be determined, but it’s likely to be upwards of \$45,000.

“It was definitely worth it,” Jamie said. “I’d do it again 100 per cent. I’d do it in a heartbeat for the CFA. I’d do anything for the CFA people.”



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

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.

SEE THIS EDITION FOR
EASTER CHURCH SERVICES
ACROSS THE SHIRE

FRIDAY, APRIL 3

Alexandra Rotary Easter Artshow is on again at the Alexandra Shire Hall. Gala opening night 6.30pm \$25 per person including drinks and finger food.

SATURDAY, APRIL 4

Epic book sale Eildon is on at the Eildon Community Centre, Saturday 9am-6pm and Sunday 9am-2pm. Free entry. Fiction, non-fiction, and much more.

Alexandra Rotary Easter Artshow continues Saturday, 10am-5pm; Sunday 10am-5pm

and Monday 9am – noon. \$5 entry, kids under 16 free.

SUNDAY, APRIL 5

Alexandra Easter Fair is on at Rotary Park 10am-3pm. Local food, wine tasting, live music, market stalls, face painting, children’s amusements and much more.

TUESDAY, APRIL 7

Friends of Library Alexandra AGM will be held at 6pm at the Alexandra Library. New members welcome, full details from proctor@virtual.net.au

FRIDAY, APRIL 10

Free health checks at Yea Sale Yards; cardiac and diabetes checks.

SATURDAY, APRIL 11

Murrindindi Shire Council invites you to LEAP first 72 hours workshop at Community Hub @ Taggerty. 10am-noon. Visitmurrindindi.vic.gov.au/72hourstaggerty or call council 5772 0333 to book.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22

Eildon RSL sub-branch AGM will be held at 5pm at the Eildon Visitor Information Centre. Nominations for office bearers and five general committee members closes at 5pm, April 15. Nomination forms can be obtained from the secretary, Sue McLaurin, susanmclaurin55@gmail.com or phone 0409 050 494.

March meeting of Murrindindi Shire Council

COUNCILLOR Adams is away on planned leave.

Urgent business

Urgent matter regarding the appointment of building contractors for the Eildon Key Worker Housing, cannot wait until next council meeting due to the rapid timeframe of the project. CONT24/24 Eildon Key Worker Housing. Recommendation is that council note that negotiations are proceeding, and delegate negotiating power to the mayor and the CEO. There have been difficulties finalising design and pricing.

Guidelines for successful renewable energy in Murrindindi Shire

Report to guide council's engagement with renewable energy proposals. The report was finalised following community consultation, with 49 responders to the survey. Murrindindi Shire is not within a designated renewable energy zone, but there is still lots of interest in renewables. This report guides the response to that interest. Council don't hold the power to approve renewable energy projects, that is a state government decision, but they have an opportunity to have a say.

"Our community craves early, regular and authentic engagement, and doing away with secret non-disclosure arrangements and clandestine deals with landholders," Mayor Gallagher said.

Council accepted the report.

Murrindindi Health Network Plan 2026-36

The report has been developed collaboratively by local healthcare and community partners, setting out a 10-year approach to declining health outcomes, workforce shortages, and service fragmentation across Murrindindi Shire. The network plan proposes a community-centred alliance model, bringing together local hospitals, community health's, aged care, disability services, council and key regional partners, to operate as one coordinated local system while retaining their individual

governance and identities. The focus is on early wins for residents, navigation, transport, prevention and mental health access, followed by longer term workforce, training and digital solutions. The proposed amalgamation of Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health is not expected to have any impact on the health network or the health network plan. Council was told that Alexandra District Health would participate in the health network in its future form.

Council endorsed the Murrindindi Health Network Plan 2026-36.

Quarterly financial report

This report covers the period to December 31, 2025, and includes budget adjustments. The December end of year forecast is used as the basis for preparing the annual budget for the 2026-27 financial year. Forecast revenue has risen by \$13.36 million, while forecast expenditure has increased by \$10.7 million. The increase in revenue is driven by an increase in operating grants of \$10.2 million, primarily relating to fire funding, and \$3.6 million in capital grants. With all of the adjustments, the operating surplus is projected to rise from \$1.25 million to \$3.96 million. The underlying result, which excludes capital grants, shows an underlying deficit of \$5.8 million, reflecting a further erosion of \$1.3 million since the September review.

Council voted to receive the report and note the required budget adjustments.

Draft motions to MAV State Council

This report outlines the process for submitting motions to the May 2026 Municipal Association Victoria (MAV) State Council, which enables councils to influence sector-wide advocacy and priorities. The briefing proposes two motions: The first is MAV advocacy for a state-funded, shared pool of specialist resources to support councils in emergency response, relief and recovery; and the second calls on the Victorian and Australian Governments, to develop a

nationally consistent disaster impact data sharing framework, creating a single source of truth to improve coordination, reduce duplication, support humane service delivery, and ensure strong privacy protections.

Council endorsed the proposed motions.

Changes to the Annual Priority Action Plan

The Priority Action Plan contains key council actions to be undertaken during the 2025-26 financial year. It requires changing due to the impacts of the January 2026 bushfires. Of the 70 actions planned for the 2025-26 financial year, eight have been completed, and it is recommended that 42 continue unchanged, four continue with minor alterations, six continue with extended delivery timelines, and 10 have been paused and deferred to the 2026-27 year, or will be rescheduled to a date yet to be determined.

Council endorsed the changes to the Priority Action Plan.

Capital Works Program 2025-26 Mid Year Report

The report covers the progress of council's capital works from July 1, 2025, until December 31, 2025. Key highlights for this period include: Commencement of the Eildon Key Worker Housing Project, with offsite manufacturing underway; commencement of the Riverside Crescent, Flowerdale, drainage upgrade; commencement of the Road Major Patching Program; awarding of the Kinglake Memorial Reserve Oval reconstruction; tendering for the Breakaway Bridge replacement in Acheron; tendering of the Flowerdale closed landfill capping rehabilitation works; and commencement of the Mid Goulburn Valley, King Parrot Creek and Yea River flood studies. Various other projects have been completed in this period.

Council voted to note the report, the reallocation of funds between existing projects and the re-phasing of some projects.

Councillor reports

Cr Carpenter said that council is continuing to advocate for state support to waive statutory fees for planning, building and health.

Cr Hildebrand said that Snobs Creek Road widening has commenced and is on track to be completed by early April. Frog Ponds Bridge has been manufactured, just needs installing. Pathway renewal works are underway. Tender for Thornton Football Oval lighting will be advertised shortly.

Cr Lording said one of council's priorities after the January fires is clearing and making safe the 450 kilometres of impacted roads as quickly as possible. Approximately 100 people are working on the roads currently. All bridge, tree and road inspections have been completed. Across the road network, there are nine bridges destroyed and non-trafficable, 73 other bridges impacted, and 35 major culverts. Parts of the Great Victorian Rail Trail remain closed, and roads across the fire area remain with restrictions.

Cr Carr said that the team is working on council's draft budget, which should be presented at the April meeting of council. She was pleased to visit Snobs Creek Hatchery with Minister Dimopoulos on February 26 for the opening of the Macquarie Perch Recovery Centre. She congratulated Eildon Pondage Parkrun on their achievement of running for one year.

Cr Gallagher spoke about hosting the Victorian Governor at Highlands and Fawcett and showing the impacts of the January 2026 bushfires.

CEO report

Ms Bonazzi thanked council staff for their efforts in bushfire recovery and reminded people that submissions to the Inquiry into the January 2026 bushfires are due by April 19. The CFA has advised that fire restrictions for Murrindindi Shire will be lifted at 1am on Monday, March 30.

Blue-green algae warning for Lake Eildon

GOULBURN-Murray Water (GMW) is warning people to avoid direct contact with water in Lake Eildon after monitoring detected high levels of blue-green algae.

Warning signs will be positioned at formal recreational areas around the lake and remain in place while high levels of blue-green algae are present.

Lake Eildon will remain open to the public for any activities that do not involve direct contact with the water while the warning is in place.

GMW Water Quality Coordinator Bianca Atley asked people to take care around the water.

"Blue-green algae occur naturally in waterbodies but contain toxins harmful to humans and animals," she said.

"Contact with it can cause rashes; sore eyes, ears, and nose; or, if swallowed, nausea or vomiting. It is therefore important for people boating or enjoying

activities near the water to take extra precautions."

GMW recommends that people and pets avoid contact with the water. Those who come into contact with affected water should wash affected skin immediately in clean cold water. Seek an alternative water supply for stock and pets where possible. Don't use affected water for cooking, drinking, washing or showering. Boiling the affected water will not make it safe for these purposes.

It is not possible to predict how long the algae will remain at high levels.

Ms Atley said this latest blue-green algae warning at Lake Eildon was the 10th warning issued at the site since records began in 2004.

"This warning has been issued after GMW storage staff observed significant increases in blue-green algae levels across Lake Eildon," she said.

"It's important to keep in mind that blue-green algae are natural, unpredictable

and their levels can change very quickly.

"There is no one factor that GMW can pinpoint as the cause of high levels of blue-green algae at one of its storages or waterways including Lake Eildon.

"Staff will continue to monitor blue-green algae levels at Lake Eildon and will remove the warning when it is safe to do so."

People can stay up-to-date with blue-green algae warnings by phoning 1800 013 357 and selecting the option for blue-green algae information, or by visiting the GMW website, gmwater.com.au/news/bga

Water supplied by GMW is not suitable for human consumption without first being properly treated. Human consumption includes showering, bathing, washing, cooking, ice-making, and drinking.

For more information about blue-green algae and your health, phone NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 606 024 or visit the Department of Health's website, health.vic.gov.au

Separately, as of March 25, Lake Eildon was at 43.1 per cent capacity.



Recovery Hub Update

Recovery Hub support will no longer be available on Saturday mornings in Yea.

This change reflects current attendance and helps ensure recovery support is available when it's most needed during the week.

Recovery support will continue:

- **Tuesdays and Thursdays**
- **10.00 am to 3.00 pm**

Yea Library will continue to operate as normal on Saturdays, there will just be no specialist recovery support officers onsite.

If you need recovery support and can't attend on weekdays, call Council on 5772 0333.



murrindindi.vic.gov.au/hubchanges



A blue green algae warning is in place for Lake Eildon. -S

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Minister responds to McLeish concerns over ADH merger

MEMBER for Eildon Cindy McLeish stated that the Victorian Government must come clean on who is in charge and where the Alexandra District Health–Eastern Health merger is heading. She said she was backing concerns raised by Shadow Minister for Health Georgie Crozier in the Victorian Parliament last week, and stated that the Alexandra community is being left in limbo.

“This is a small, close-knit community that relies on its local health service, and right now, people simply don’t know what the future looks like,” she said.

“First, the merger proposal came as a shock to many. Now, with both CEOs retiring, there are real questions about who is steering this process.”

Ms McLeish said many residents remain concerned the merger could see local decision-making diluted within a much larger metropolitan system.

“People here are not opposed to better services, but they want guarantees that Alexandra won’t lose its identity or its voice,” she said. “This is about maintaining accessible, local care for Murrindindi residents.”

Ms McLeish said the uncertainty is being felt at every level of the community, from patients and families through to staff. “After a difficult period for this region, including the Longwood fires, the last thing this community needs is more uncertainty,” she said.

“The government must be upfront with people. Who is leading this merger, what it means for services on the ground, and how local needs will be protected.”

Ms McLeish said she will continue to advocate for transparency and for the interests of residents and health workers.

In response, Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas said, “We won’t be taking lectures from Jess Wilson’s Liberals who are yet to tell Victorians if Alexandra District Health is one of the hospitals they plan to close to fill their \$11.5 billion budget blackhole.

“Voluntary merger decisions are made by health services and are a matter for their boards. We will always listen to them to understand how we can improve local care.

“I want to thank Jane Poxon for her incredible leadership, particularly during the recent bushfires, and look forward to welcoming Claire Palmer as the Interim CEO from April 17,” she said.

Eastern Health has just announced Associate Professor Helen Cooper as their new CEO. She is highly experienced and respected across Victoria’s health system.

The minister’s office provided the following as background, “Collaboration between Alexandra District Health and Eastern Health is already delivering significant benefits to locals.”

Shaping Murrindindi’s Future project receives \$140,000 grant

LAST week, Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence announced more than \$390,000 for projects that create jobs in forestry areas. The *Shaping Murrindindi’s Future* project received \$140,000 to improve visitor experiences through three key projects, *Beyond the Black Spur*, *Ride Marysville* and the *Triangle Food Network* pilot.

Minister Spence said, “We’re putting regional communities first, driving job creation, strengthening local businesses, and ensuring opportunities stay where people live and work. This investment will support community-led projects and bring more visitors to regional Victoria.”

Murrindindi Shire Council led the state-sponsored local development strategy, *Shaping Murrindindi’s Future*, funded through the forestry transition program. The strategy was developed in close partnership with the community to identify new and emerging industries and opportunities to replace the lost economic output and multiplier from forestry.

Through extensive consultation in developing *Shaping Murrindindi’s Future*, tourism was identified as a focus area. Since the strategy was completed, community representatives have continued working with council to progress practical, place-based initiatives that support local jobs, businesses and long-term economic resilience.

Council is progressing a coordinated suite of tourism and visitor economy projects with community representatives. The \$140,000 funding is supporting a coordinated suite of visitor economy projects, collectively known as the *Beyond the Black Spur* initiative.

The program focuses on strengthening the south-eastern corridor of the shire including Narbethong, Marysville, Buxton, Taggerty, Thornton, Rubicon and Eildon by encouraging longer stays, supporting local businesses and developing new, sustainable visitor experiences.

The initiative includes three interconnected projects.

Beyond the Black Spur - Tourism Systems and Business Development

This project is underway and brings together local businesses, land managers and industry experts to better understand the region’s tourism identity and opportunities. It will inform new visitor experiences and support the development of future collaboration through a business-led tourism collective to strengthen year-round visitation.

Mountain Bike Destination - Marysville to Eildon Corridor (Ride Marysville)

Also underway, this project is exploring opportunities to expand and connect mountain bike and shared use trails between Marysville, Lake Mountain, Eildon and Buxton. The current phase focuses on feasibility, stakeholder engagement and business planning, for extending mountain bike trails around Marysville. This builds on strong community advocacy and demand for cycling experiences.

Triangle Food Network - Agritourism and Local Food Systems

Currently in development, this initiative is working toward establishing a cooperative or social enterprise model that connects local growers, producers and tourism operators. The focus is on creating agritourism experiences such as farm tours, workshops and farm stays, adding depth to the region’s visitor offering while supporting local producers.

Together, these projects are designed to strengthen the local visitor economy by supporting local businesses, enhancing the region’s identity and creating reasons for visitors to stay longer and return.

Mayor Damien Gallagher said the initiative was an important step for the shire at a time when communities are focused on recovery and rebuilding following the January 2026 bushfires.

“Our community has been through an incredibly challenging period, and supporting local businesses and rebuilding our visitor economy is a key part of recovery,” Cr Gallagher said.

“By investing in projects that build on our natural environment, local food and outdoor experiences, we’re strengthening the visitor economy in a way that supports recovery and long-term resilience.”

Portfolio Councillor for Economic Development, Local Jobs and Skills, Cr Sandice McAulay said the program reflects strong collaboration between council, community and industry.

“What’s really positive about this work is that it’s being shaped by the people who know the region best, our local businesses and community groups,” Cr McAulay said.

“By investing in experiences like nature-based tourism, cycling and local food, we are building a more diverse and resilient visitor economy that supports jobs and local enterprise.”

Council will continue working with partners and the community as the projects progress.

Insurance and Centrelink post-fire

Member for Eildon Cindy McLeish said on Wednesday, “I was advised yesterday that there were issues with people who receive a lump sum insurance payout having an impact on their pension.

“It doesn’t seem fair to me. The reason you’re getting a payout is because you’ve suffered a loss and you’re insured. So, if you’ve lost your house and you’ve received a payout, presumably to rebuild, it’s not something that you should be penalised for through Centrelink.”

She added, “I guess what’s important is the Federal Government understand that the circumstances for these people have altered dramatically. They’ve suffered loss, they’re traumatised, and this just adds to the trauma, not just for them, but for also the community who hear these stories and think it’s wrong.”

Ms McLeish said that she has contacted Senator Jane Hume about the issue, and she plans to send through the names and addresses of people who have been impacted.

She also plans to alert the Premier’s office if it’s an issue.

She said, “The circumstances have changed for these people dramatically and for the worst. They haven’t just won Tattsлото and they’ve got money to play around with, that’s just not the case. But we are actioning it. So as soon as I heard yesterday, we were straight on the ball here to get it moving.”

She asked that people contact her office if they are having similar issues around Centrelink payments.

Services Australia’s media team provided the following response when questioned. “Insurance payments to compensate for the loss of, or damage to, a person’s assets, including their principal home, are not counted as income or an assessable asset for Centrelink payments. This exemption is applied for up to an initial 12 months after the payment is received. In some cases, this exemption can be extended for an additional 12 months, or potentially longer, where there are exceptional circumstances.

“If the insurance payment is invested, money earned on the investment is not deemed under the income test while its asset value is not counted. Once the asset that the payment was for has been replaced or repaired, the exemption ceases and any remaining funds are assessable under normal income and asset test rules.

“If the payment is not invested, but spent for another purpose, it may become immediately assessable under the income and assets tests.

“It’s important to let Centrelink know of any changes to income and assets, including if you receive a insurance payment.

“We encourage people to take advantage of the free Financial Information Service. This is a team of specialists with expert understanding of payments, and they can help people make informed decisions about their finances.”

To speak with a member of the Financial Information Service, call 132 000 and say the words ‘Financial Information Service’ when asked for the reason for your call.

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Larry about to cut his birthday cake as Minister Ward watches on. -AR

Fire affected councils receive hub funding

Continued from Page 1

She also commented on the Mobile Health Bus, travelling around to check in on people in the smaller communities. “To be able to have someone come to you where possible is important because it’s those incremental steps of re-engaging with community.”

She was also asked whether there are likely to be further supports offered to the fire impacted communities.

She said, “As we heard earlier, it’s about being led by community. There’s the whole menu of supports that have been put out that people are starting to engage with, and they’re engaging at different speeds. There’s the Emergency Relief Housing Support, there’s the housing support, there’s the support that’s there to help clean up for those who are

underinsured or uninsured. There’s re-establishment grants that are there for people in similar circumstances. There’s been the grants for farmers, there’s been the fodder. There’s a whole variety of things and we’ll continue to work with communities around what is needed in the future as recovery continues.”

She was also asked about the lack of support for underinsured or uninsured people who don’t reach the \$75,000 threshold for primary farm income. Further information on this is likely to be forthcoming.

She added, “Being able to have the hubs and now the workers be able to be here permanently for the next two years is really important because it’s not just being able to have access to people and services. It’s about that established relationship of trust and knowing it’s going to be there for a while.”



Deputy Emergency Management Commissioner, Relief and Recovery, Mariela Diaz. -AR



Minister Ward. -AR

Murrindindi Shire Mayor appointed to State Mayoral Advisory Panel

MURRINDINDI Shire Council Mayor, Cr Damien Gallagher, has been appointed to the Victorian Government’s Local Government Mayoral Advisory Panel (LGMAP) for 2026, providing the Murrindindi community with a direct voice in key state-level discussions about the future of local government.

This marks the second time Cr Gallagher has been appointed to the panel, having previously served in 2024.

Chaired by the Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Nick Staikos MP, the panel brings together mayors from across Victoria to provide high-level advice on legislative, regulatory, strategic and policy matters affecting the local government sector.

The panel is established under the *Local Government Act 2020* and meets several times each year to share insights and experiences from across the sector.

Mayor Cr Damien Gallagher said he was honoured to once again represent regional communities such as Murrindindi at the state level.

“This appointment provides an important opportunity to ensure the perspectives of rural and regional communities are heard when decisions are being considered that affect local government,” Cr Gallagher said.

“I’m proud to represent Murrindindi and to share our experiences, particularly the challenges and opportunities facing smaller rural councils.”

The 2026 Local Government Mayoral Advisory Panel includes representation from councils across Victoria, including Melbourne City Council, Frankston City Council, Hepburn Shire Council, Whittlesea City Council, Darebin City Council, Mitchell Shire Council, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, Casey City Council, Stonnington City Council and Baw Baw Shire Council.

Cr Gallagher said the appointment also comes at a significant time for the region as communities continue recovering from the January 2026 bushfires.

“Our communities are continuing to recover from the impacts of the recent

bushfires, and that experience brings an important perspective to statewide conversations about disaster recovery, resilience and the role local government plays in supporting communities through these events,” he said.

Cr Gallagher said his previous experience on the panel in 2024 provided valuable insight into how the state government works with councils on reform and sector improvement.

“In 2024 the panel discussed key issues including governance reforms, councillor training, and planning and housing policy. Being part of those discussions reinforced how important it is that rural voices are included when policy is being developed,” Cr Gallagher said.

“I look forward to contributing again in 2026 and ensuring the needs of communities like ours are part of those conversations.”

The Local Government Mayoral Advisory Panel includes mayors representing metropolitan, regional city, interface and

rural councils across Victoria to ensure broad representation of the sector.

Meetings of the panel are typically held between March and October each year.

Murrindindi Shire Council Chief Executive Officer Livia Bonazzi congratulated Cr Gallagher on the appointment.

“This is an important opportunity for Murrindindi to contribute to statewide discussions on local government policy and reform,” Ms Bonazzi said.

“Having our Mayor at the table ensures the experiences of rural communities and small shire councils are part of shaping the future of the sector.”

For more information about the Local Government Mayoral Advisory Panel visit the Victorian Government website at localgovernment.vic.gov.au/our-partnerships/local-government-mayoral-advisory-panel



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The Yea Chronicle

Victorians missing out on container cash

VICTORIANS are throwing away thousands of dollars in potential refunds every day, with many eligible drink containers still ending up in household rubbish bins instead of being returned through Victoria’s Container Deposit Scheme (CDS Vic).

New research shows one in five Victorians are missing out on refunds because eligible containers such as flavoured milk bottles and juice boxes are often overlooked and discarded.

Since CDS Vic launched in November 2023, almost three billion drink containers have been returned, putting nearly \$300 million back into Victorians’ pockets. But with millions of eligible containers still being thrown away, there is a significant opportunity for Victorians to claim even more.

Flavoured milk cartons and bottles are among the biggest offenders. Despite being eligible for a 10 cent refund through CDS Vic, almost half (49 per cent) of Victorians put these in their household recycling bin. Another 10 per cent say they throw them in the landfill bin.

Juice boxes and poppers are also frequently misplaced. Around 40 per cent of Victorians put them in household recycling and 14 per cent in landfill, despite these items also being eligible for a refund through CDS Vic.

At the same time, almost one in five Victorians (18 per cent) attempted to return containers through the scheme that are ineligible.

Confusion about eligibility remains one of the biggest barriers to recycling through the scheme, according to Matt Davis, CEO of scheme coordinator VicReturn.

“Many everyday drink containers, including flavoured milk bottles and juice boxes, can be returned for a 10-cent refund, but they’re still often ending up in household bins instead,” he said.

He encouraged Victorians to check container labels for the 10 cent mark and remember that most aluminium cans, plastic bottles and small beverage cartons are eligible for refunds through CDS Vic.

“Every container returned through Victoria’s Container Deposit Scheme helps reduce litter and keep valuable materials in the recycling loop and remade into new drink containers,” Mr Davis added.

What’s eligible through CDS Vic

Aluminium, glass, plastic and carton drink containers 150ml to three litres.

Fruit and vegetable juice bottles, cans and cartons 150ml to one litre.

Flavoured milk and coffee bottles and cartons 150ml to 750ml.

Water, soft drink, sports drink, energy drink, beer and cider bottles and cans 150ml to one litre.

Tip: Keep the lids on as these can be recycled too.

What’s not eligible through CDS Vic

Plain milk bottles and cartons.

Flavoured milk, fruit or vegetable juice containers over one litre.

Wine and spirit bottles.

Cordial bottles.

Drink containers under 150ml.

Crushed containers.

To learn more about what can be returned through the scheme, visit cdsvic.org.au/eligible-containers



Coffee cups, wine and spirit bottles are not eligible for a refund.



Flavoured milk cartons up to 750ml are eligible for a 10 cent refund.



Juice, milk and coffee poppers are eligible for Victoria’s Container Deposit Scheme.

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MLA Cattle Industry Projections 2026: Record beef production expected

AUSTRALIA is on track for another year of historically high cattle throughput, with Meat and Livestock Australia’s (MLA) latest Australian Cattle Industry Projections forecasting total slaughter to reach 9.45 million head in 2026, the highest result since 1978 and above the 2025 total.

MLA’s Manager for Market Information Stephen Bignell said producers were entering 2026 from a strong position.

“It is forecasted that 9.45 million head of cattle will be processed in 2026, which is the highest level recorded in almost five decades,” Mr Bignell said.

“This reflects strong global demand and solid production conditions across much of northern Australia.”

The national herd is expected to remain above 30 million head, easing one per cent to 30.78 million as higher slaughter is offset by widespread rain and improved northern growing conditions. By 2028 the herd is projected to decline by about six per cent as the effects of sustained high turnoff flow through the system.

Average carcase weights are forecast to remain subdued at around 307.5 kilograms, influenced by a larger proportion of grassfed cattle in the production sector.

Production and slaughter

MLA’s latest outlook forecasts record beef production of 2,906,000 million tonnes carcase weight (cwt) in 2026, with elevated slaughter and broad seasonal support in Queensland and the Northern Territory helping underpin national output.

Stephen Bignell said the production result highlighted the resilience of the industry.

“Production is expected to reach just over 2.9 million tonnes this year. Even with slightly lighter carcase weights due to higher projected grassfed slaughter, the sector is positioned to deliver another production record,” Mr Bignell said.

“This would be the highest annual beef production on record at nearly 2.8 million tonnes cwt set in 2025, a four per cent increase year-on-year.”

The strong fundamental drivers include continued processor demand, improved paddock conditions in many northern regions and ongoing productivity gains from genetics and herd management.

While slaughter is expected to remain at historically high levels this year, it is projected to gradually ease in 2027 and 2028 as the herd contracts, a -13.3 per cent change in 2028 compared to 2025.

Exports and global demand

Australian beef exports are projected to reach a record 2.3 million tonnes shipped weight (swt) in 2026, supported by record production and tight global supply.

Demand for lean, grassfed beef remains firm, with the United States continuing to experience reduced domestic supply. This is contributing to a greater turnoff of grassfed cattle in Australia, which in turn influences national carcase weights.

“It is important to note that these projections were consulted and written prior to the outbreak of conflict in the Middle East,” Mr Bignell said.

“However, Australia’s beef markets are well diversified and there remains significant demand for Australian beef all over the world.

“We expect the conflict to influence input costs and logistics, and it is likely to affect exports to the region and global beef trade more broadly. MLA will continue to monitor market conditions and update settings as required.”

For live export, higher Australian cattle prices at the end of 2025 softened the typical early-year start to trade, and shifts in demand dynamics in key destinations such as Vietnam and Indonesia will remain important.

Despite these pressures, demand for affordable beef across the region remains stable and tightening local herds in importing countries may support ongoing trade.

Looking ahead

Analyst forecasts point to a stable price outlook through the remainder of FY2026.

The National Young Cattle Indicator (NYCI) is forecast to rise three per cent by 30 June, while the feeder steer and heavy steer indicators are expected to move only modestly at +0.7 per cent and -0.3 per cent respectively.

Mr Bignell said the coming years will be shaped by how the national herd responds to sustained high slaughter.

“Price movements across the major indicators are expected to remain steady. Modest shifts in the feeder and heavy steer indicators, combined with growth in the young cattle indicator, point to a market that is well supplied but still underpinned by firm global demand,” Mr Bignell said.

“The herd will remain above 30 million head this year, which is a positive sign. We expect the herd to decline by about six per cent by 2028 as the influence of consecutive high turnoff years becomes more evident.”

Despite the projected contraction, improvements in productivity, feeding systems, management and genetics continue to underpin the industry’s long-term trajectory.

Producers and supply chain partners should monitor seasonal conditions, market settings and export trends closely as processing volumes remain elevated.

To view the full report, visit: tinyurl.com/457extav



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Frustration over free trade agreement with EU

THE Federal Government last week concluded negotiations with the European Union (EU) over a free trade deal. The seeming lack of meaningful agricultural market access gains has left Australian farmers disappointed and frustrated.

National Farmers’ Federation President Hamish McIntyre said that the deal was disappointing, and that it benefits the EU more than Aussie farmers.

“What the Australian Government has accepted today appears to offer no material change for key agricultural commodities as what the government rightly rejected in October 2023,” Mr McIntyre said.

“For decades, our sector has been guided by a clear principle of wanting more two-way trade with the EU, not less.

“A deal with a market of this size offered an opportunity to help ease the pressure on farmers who are grappling with the impacts from the conflict in the Middle East, China’s beef tariffs, and United States trade volatility, which are creating global trade headwinds.

“While we acknowledge some progress on issues such as geographical indicators, preserving the use of names like prosecco and parmesan, farmers will rightly be concerned this deal hasn’t delivered commercially meaningful access for Australian agricultural exports.”

The Victorian Farmers’ Federation President Brett Hosking outlined what the free trade agreement means specifically for Australian farm industries.

“Australian agriculture is a net-exporter and the market access numbers simply don’t stack up. Beef access is a third of what industry was seeking and for sheep meat, New Zealand got five times more. This puts us at the back of the pack going forward and at a disadvantage,” Mr Hosking said.

“For our dairy farmers, it’s largely a one-way deal. The EU already exports \$980 million of dairy into Australia, with only \$29 million going back. It’s a hard pill to swallow for the country’s largest dairy producing state.

“Consumers could also be set to pay more at the checkout for dairy. This move slugs Aussie brands with harmful geographical indicators, that will confuse Australian shoppers and cost them more.”

The Red Meat Advisory Council (RMAC) has worked with the Federal Government over many years to pursue a fair outcome for Aussie red meat producers.

The new free trade agreement delivers only 30,600 tonnes cwt of beef access, far less than the minimum of 50,000 tonnes cwt needed to match EU terms for Australia’s competitors. Sheepmeat and goatmeat is similar, with just 25,000 tonnes cwt granted, short of the 67,000 tonnes sought.

Independent Chair of RMAC John McKillop spoke on the matter.

“The red meat industry expresses disappointment over the deal announced, noting the sector’s priorities have not been met. This is the worst Free Trade Agreement for the Australian red meat industry to date,” Mr McKillop said.

Leader of the Nationals, Senator Matt Canavan, criticised the Federal Government’s free trade agreement.

“As the National Farmers’ Federation has said, this deal provides no ‘commercially meaningful agricultural market access gains since Australia last walked away from negotiations.’” Mr Canavan said.

“What is worse is that the Labor Government is trying to pull the wool over farmers’ eyes and hide the dud nature of this deal. While the government has trumpeted the access of up to 35,000 tonnes of beef over time, this is measured in carcase weight terms.

“Until 2019, Australian beef producers had access to a global EU quota of 67,000 tonnes in carcase weight tonnes terms. Australia would often fill the lion’s share of this quota.

“But in 2019, the EU did a “ring-fencing” side deal with the first Trump administration that reduced Australia’s access to below 5000 tonnes carcase weight. Now Labor wants applause for lifting this to 35,000 tonnes (over time) which is not far from what we had before the EU’s side deal with Trump.

“The government has also sold-out Australia’s national interest by not making it clear that the EU has no right to impose decarbonisation or deforestation initiatives on Australians.

“Today, the Australian Parliament celebrated the shared democratic values of Australia and Europe. But the EU’s attempt to regulate our forests and our energy policy is not democratic because no one in Australia voted for the European Parliament.”

Candidate information sessions

REGISTERED political parties and prospective candidates for the 2026 state election are being urged to familiarise themselves with the regulatory requirements and avoid costly mistakes by registering for a series of new information sessions hosted by the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC).

The VEC will deliver a comprehensive program of online sessions designed to prepare both party-endorsed and independent candidates for the November state election.

The sessions will cover key topics, including political finance, nomination procedures, how-to vote card registration, campaign obligations and election operations.

The program will be delivered in three rounds across the year, with six targeted sessions in each round. Sessions are offered at a range of times, including weekdays and weekends.

Prospective candidates will be provided with practical guidance, learn how election processes work on the ground, and have the chance to speak directly with experts about the election processes that involve them.

Having a clear understanding of the rules well before the election timeline can help candidates avoid unnecessary errors and compliance issues.

Further details, including session dates, times and topics covered are available on the registration page at vec.vic.gov.au/se26-info-sessions

Changes to Recovery Hub locations and days

MURRINDINDI Shire Council will be changing the Alexandra Recovery Hub location and removing Saturday from the Yea Recovery Hub schedule from early April.

In Alexandra, Recovery Hub support will move from the Alexandra Library to council's Customer Service Centre at 28 Perkins Street from Wednesday, April 8. Recovery support officers will continue to be available Monday, Wednesday and Friday between 10am and 3pm.

In Yea, Recovery Hub support will no longer be available on Saturday mornings. The final Saturday session was held on 28 March 28, with recovery support continuing Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10am to 3pm.

These changes reflect current demand and will operate as a trial, with a review planned for May.

Recovery Hubs continue to provide information, referrals and recovery support for people impacted by the January bushfires.

For assistance or to check availability, contact council on 5772 0333.

Three hours of (free) power

VICTORIANS will soon be able to access three hours of free power in the middle of the day, every day. This could save families up to \$300 per year off their energy bills, and up to \$1070 if they have solar panels and batteries.

Victoria's Midday Power Saver offer will be available from October 1. It will benefit households who can shift their electricity use to the middle of the day. That includes people who work from home.

The overall benefit to Victoria is reduced peak demand, which is good for reliability and security. Under the plan, retailers will be required to offer a discounted tariff to households during the day.

About 2.6 million Victorian households will be eligible for the Midday Power Saver offer and can opt into the program with their energy provider. More details, including the time periods and prices for the offer across the state, will be released in May.

Due to renewable energy, the state produces more electricity than is needed during the day. More than 850,000 Victorians already generate solar power and enjoy cheap or free electricity during the day. The scheme shares the benefits to give even more Victorians cheaper power. Victoria has around 100 renewable energy projects in operation.



Let's eat, it's our treat

Enjoy an Easter feast at Sedona Estate



March Let's Eat voucher winner

THE winner of our March Let's Eat \$50 voucher was Ann Anstey from Limestone. Ann will be having a \$50 feed on us at Sedona Estate. Be sure to get your entry form from this edition for your chance to win a \$50 meal at the venue advertised in this edition of Let's Eat; It's our treat. Remember to circle your venue of choice.

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Name.....
Address.....
Phone.....
Venue of your choice (circle your venue of choice)

SEDONA ESTATE

**ONE ENTRY PER HOUSEHOLD
PHOTOCOPIES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED**

Return this form by noon, Wednesday, April 22 for your chance to win. Alexandra Newspapers 43 Grant Street, or PO Box 5, Alexandra Vic 3714.

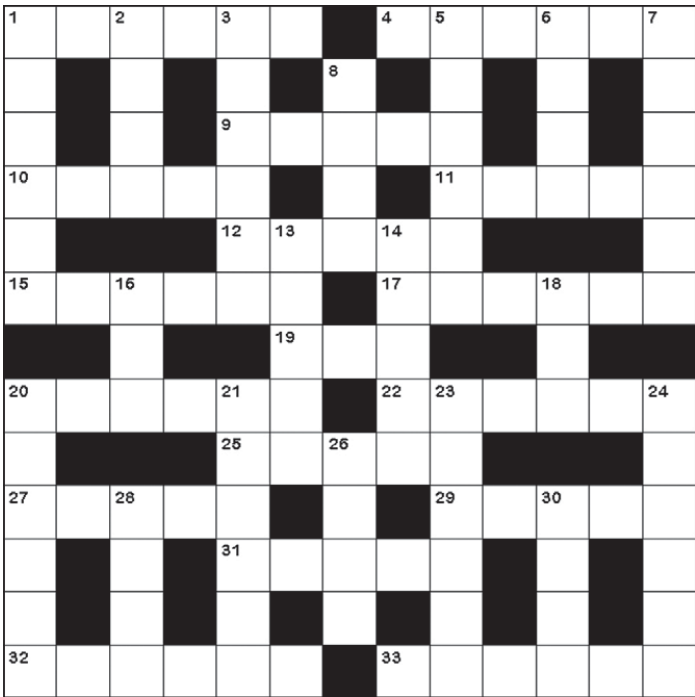
Winner will be notified by phone and published in the first edition of the month.
T&C: Only venues advertised in this feature are eligible to be chosen. Voucher is not redeemable for cash. To be used for one purchase only. Multiple vouchers cannot be saved and used together. Staff or family of Alexandra Newspapers are ineligible to enter. Original form must be returned. If you do not circle your choice of venue, your entry is invalid.

PUZZLES

SOLUTIONS
Page 16

Crossword

- ACROSS
- 1. An apparatus for taking photographs.
 - 4. Cause to wither or parch from exposure to heat.
 - 9. The loop at the end of the hangman's rope.
 - 10. Word with the same sound as another.
 - 11. Pretentious and luxurious country residence.
 - 12. A socially awkward or tactless act.
 - 15. A projectile that is fired from a gun.
 - 17. Land capable of being farmed productively.
 - 19. Any object with a spherical shape.
 - 20. A body of people under a single government.
 - 22. Throw or hit a ball in a high arc.
 - 25. A rise in the temperature of the body.
 - 27. Intense sorrow caused by loss of a loved one.
 - 29. A tasty mixture to be spread on bread.
 - 31. The Celtic language of Ireland.
 - 32. Interfere unwantedly in other people's affairs.
 - 33. Turn inside out or upside down.



- 3. Go back on one's promise or obligation.
- 5. Showing inventiveness and skill.
- 6. Not synthetic or spurious, genuine.
- 7. Showing moral and intellectual advancement.
- 8. A shaped mass of baked bread.
- 13. Turn away from sin and do penitence.
- 14. A deliberately false or improbable account.
- 16. A parcel of land having fixed boundaries.
- 18. A napkin tied under the chin a child.
- 20. A solid lump of a precious metal.
- 21. A room for clerical or administrative work.
- 24. Having experienced while sleeping.
- 26. A garment that covers the head and face.
- 28. An individual unit included in a list.
- 30. How big a thing is.

- DOWN
- 1. An angel portrayed as a winged child.
 - 2. A large and indefinite number.

Word Search

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

- Easter
- | | | |
|-------------|------------|--------------|
| CELEBRATION | EASTEREGGS | HOLIDAY |
| CHOCOLATE | EGGHUNT | HOTCROSSBUNS |
| COMMUNITY | FAMILY | PARADE |
| EASTERBUNNY | GOODFRIDAY | TRADITION |

Math Square

3	-		+		-5
-		-		+	
	+		+		18
+		+		+	
	÷		÷	2	1
4		7		8	

Fill in the missing numbers.

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

Each number is only used once.

Each row is a math equation.

Each column is a math equation.

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

Cryptogram

Easter

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
			16	18				
J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	
6								
E	S	E		E	S			
18	3	6	23	18	10	18	26	26
E				D	D	E		
3	10	18	7	21	16	16	18	19
E				S	S			
23	7	18	26	10	3	6	6	11
D	S					D		
1	21	16	6	23	2	11	21	19

Sudoku

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

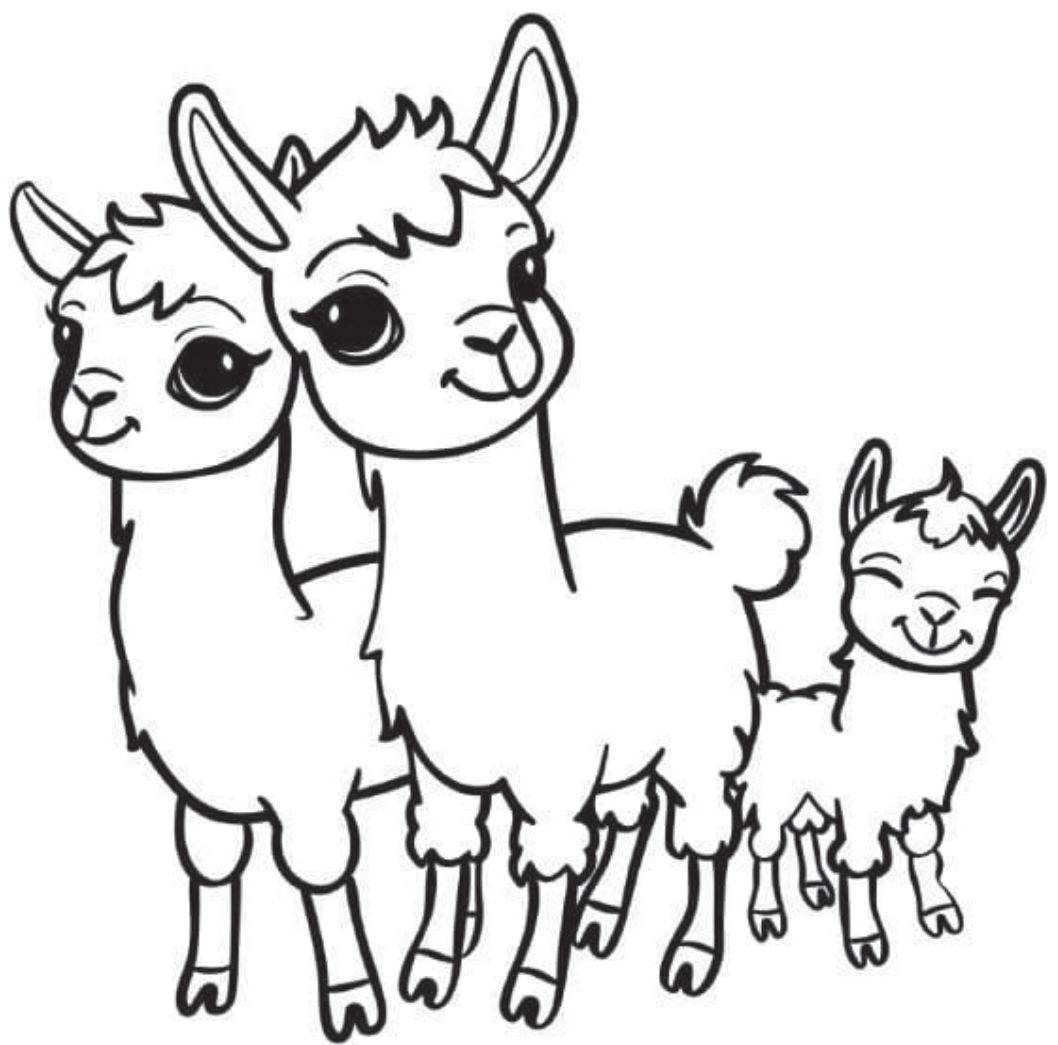
Difficulty: Hard

Fill in the boxes using the numbers 1 to 9.

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

KID'S PUZZLES

Colouring Page



Word Search - Words starting with "I"

ICEBERG	M	Y	N	I	F	G	O	R	U	O	T	T	E	C	J
ICECREAM	G	K	I	W	N	U	R	W	P	N	O	Z	N	Z	W
IDEA	G	N	T	K	M	V	K	E	A	T	Y	L	I	A	N
IGLOO	K	X	P	U	H	L	I	F	B	K	T	T	G	Z	N
IMAGINE	Q	Z	J	B	P	H	N	T	W	E	L	Z	A	I	L
INCH	L	T	A	A	L	I	M	X	E	R	C	X	M	C	S
INFANT	U	T	Y	O	B	E	O	V	V	U	S	I	I	X	X
INK	I	Y	O	A	T	D	N	V	B	Z	J	A	D	B	D
INSECTS	X	C	I	I	S	I	E	R	R	T	H	E	E	K	A
INSIDE	Y	R	E	U	E	D	I	S	N	I	S	L	A	N	D
INVITE	J	Q	H	C	H	Z	S	H	Y	L	P	V	S	X	W
ISLAND	L	H	C	K	R	K	S	G	W	U	Y	G	P	M	T
ISSUE	C	S	N	X	V	E	I	S	S	U	E	T	R	I	M
ITEM	D	W	I	A	Y	D	A	I	Q	U	A	N	E	P	R
	X	A	N	I	O	P	K	M	S	T	C	E	S	N	I

Math Square

Fill in the missing numbers.

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

Each number is only used once.

Each row is a math equation.

Each column is a math equation.

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

	+		+	6	18
-		-		+	
	-		-	5	-4
+		+		+	
	-		+		13
13		6		20	

Jokes

Q: What did Batman say to Robin before they got in the car?

A: Get in the car, Robin.

Q: Why didn't the teddy bear eat dessert?

A: Because it was stuffed.

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The Yea Chronicle

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EMC1540

Classifieds

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ALEXANDRA NEWSPAPERS



Classified information

Office hours

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Deadline - Noon Monday

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

Payment

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

Death notices

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

Vehicles/Deals on Wheels

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

Bargains under \$100

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

Animals

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

Refunds or credits

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

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TRADES ADVERTISING DEADLINE NOON THURSDAY

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

Print Post Approved - PP 100000292.

DEATH NOTICES

TATE, Gael Lee (nee Byrnes)
29/12/1949 to 20/03/2026.
Dear and beloved mother of Matthew, loving wife to Stephen and beloved by her family. We are bereft at her sudden and untimely passing. Her light was soft, her love was strong and her memory will always be dear.

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GARAGE SALES

GARAGE Sale.
Saturday, April 4 and Sunday, April 5, 8am-2pm.
Collectables, rustic farm items, retro chairs, jewellery, vintage wheels and heaps more.
7 Aitkin Street, Alexandra.

MEETINGS



Annual General Meeting
Friends of the Library

Alexandra & District Inc.

Tuesday, April 7, 2026 at 6pm.

Alexandra Library, Grant Street, Alexandra.

New members welcome

Nomination forms for committee positions available from the Secretary: proctor@virtual.net.au



Notice of 2026 Annual General Meeting,
Eildon RSL Sub-Branch

In accordance with By-Law 10C (11) (a),
The Eildon RSL Sub-Branch 2026 Annual
General Meeting will be held on:

Wednesday, April 22, 2026, 5pm

Eildon Visitor Information Centre, Main
Street, Eildon, Victoria 3713

Business:

Election of General Committee Members
and Office Bearers.

Presentation of reports.

All financial service, affiliate and life members can nominate. Nominations for Office Bearers and five general committee members open on Wednesday, March 31, and close at 5pm on April 15, 2026.

Nomination forms can be obtained from the Secretary, Sue McLaurin
susanmclaurin55@gmail.com
or 0409 050 494

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Enquiries and requests for a position description and Key Selection Criteria to Nigel Lytle on 5770 2000
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Applications close April 17, 2026
Position to begin April 27, 2026
Ends December 18, 2026



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THE Victorian school holidays are fast approaching, and Ambulance Victoria (AV) is urging everyone to be well prepared before enjoying all the adventures our state has to offer.

While activities like camping, hiking and trail riding can be great fun, they can also result in medical emergencies, something experienced rider Gary, 69, became familiar with last November.

Gary and his stepson Drew were adventure biking along a fire trail in Buckland when a wrong turn saw them end up on a steep gravel trail not designed for their motorcycles.

Unfortunately, Gary lost control of his bike and fell over the top of the handlebars, sustaining fractures to his pelvis and spine, as well as broken ribs and whiplash.

After realising what had happened, Drew called Triple Zero (000) as the remote location, steep landscape and extent of Gary’s injuries meant he was unable to be carried out of the park.

A specialist Air Ambulance Victoria (AAV) helicopter crew and an Advanced Life Support (ALS) paramedic attended the scene and worked with VICSES and Victoria Police to navigate the dense tree canopy and steep loose terrain to reach Gary.

A Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance (MICA) Flight paramedic was winched into the location and provided Gary with pain relief, oxygen therapy and splints to reduce his movement, before they were both winched 38 metres in the air to the waiting helicopter.

Due to the weather, Gary was airlifted to an airfield where he was then transported

by road ambulance to the Royal Melbourne Hospital for further treatment. After spending 10 days in hospital, he made the 400km journey back home.

Gary said his crash shows that no matter how experienced you are, serious accidents can happen to anyone.

“My message for others would be to stick to your plan and don’t attempt trails you haven’t prepared for,” he said.

“It’s also important to carry an emergency beacon and know the coordinates of where you are, so emergency services can find you easily.

“I’ve been an Ambulance Victoria member since I was 18 years old, and this is the first time I’ve ever needed to use it. I’m very grateful to the paramedics who came to my aid when I needed them most.”

AV Acting Hume Area Manager Adrian Pace said it’s crucial Victorians know how to get help in case something goes wrong in rural areas.

“It can be hard to know your exact location when heading out on rural or remote trails, such as the ones Gary was on, which is why we recommend everyone download the EmergencyPlus app,” he said.

“The app uses your phone’s GPS function to identify your address, latitude and longitude coordinates, as well as your ‘What3Words’ location, three words that emergency services can use to narrow your exact location down to three square metres, even in remote or unfamiliar environments.

“You may also consider taking a personal locator beacon (PLB) which, when activated, sends an emergency signal via satellite to emergency services.”

Regardless of the activity you have planned, Adrian said it’s important you’re well prepared as emergencies can happen anywhere and at any time.

“Make sure you’re dressed appropriately for the conditions and bring enough supplies, including water, food, sunscreen, a torch, basic first aid equipment and warmer layers in case you’re out for longer than expected,” he said.

“Research where you’re going and make sure your planned trip is suitable for your level of fitness and experience.

“Most importantly, always tell someone where you’re going and when you plan to return.

“You should also regularly check the VicEmergency app or website for incidents and warnings in the area you’re visiting.”

Top tips from Ambulance Victoria before you begin your outdoor adventures:

Plan your journey. Before you set off, take time to check trail maps and difficulty ratings. Stick to those that match your skill level.

Download the EmergencyPlus app. This free app has a built-in GPS function to pinpoint your exact location in an emergency, even if you don’t know where you are. The What3Words location function works offline so it can be used in remote areas with poor data connections as well.

Tell someone your plans. Let a friend or family member know where you’re going and when you expect to return.

Carry the basics. Pack a mobile phone, a small first-aid kit, enough water, and wear appropriate gear. Consider carrying a personal location beacon (PLB).

Woodwork and community: Backing Men’s Sheds

WHAT happens in Victoria’s Men’s Sheds goes well beyond woodwork and a cuppa, which is why the state government is investing in Men’s Sheds to make sure they can grow and expand.

Minister Spence joined Member for Ashwood Matt Fregon at Alamein Men’s Shed to announce that a new round of funding is open.

“A shed isn’t just a room. For a lot of men, it’s where they build a community and find support,” Ms Spence said.

“This is about more than just tools and timber. We’re proud to support the incredible work Men’s Sheds do in local communities across Victoria helping men stay connected, healthy and supported.”

Grants of up to \$100,000 will help Men’s Sheds buy new or update equipment, expand their sheds and upgrade their facilities or build a new shed to improve community access.

For many, their shed is more than a workshop, it’s where they find routine, friendship and community.

Alamein Men’s Shed has been delivering exactly that for more than 20 years, helping locals get stuck into woodwork, share skills and look out for each other.

Last year they received a grant to upgrade their machinery, install a water heater and expand their shed.

Newstead Men’s Shed used their funding to upgrade their kitchen, fencing and driveway.

More than 360 Men’s Sheds now operate across Victoria, with the government delivering more than 600 grants to sheds across the state.

Keeping men connected and part of their community can save lives.

Applications for the 2026-27 Men’s Shed Funding Program are now open at dffh.vic.gov.au/mens-shed-program

Local jobs powering bushfire recovery across Murrindindi

MURRINDINDI Shire Council’s bushfire response and recovery works are supporting a significant local workforce, with contracted tree works being undertaken by businesses based in Murrindindi, Mansfield, Yarra Ranges and Mitchell shires.

Over 100 people are now involved across multiple crews from 15 businesses delivering tree safety, clean-up and firewood processing works as part of the recovery effort. These local operators have employed new local staff to scale up well beyond their pre-fire operations to meet the urgent and ongoing demand for tree works following the January fires.

Council has deliberately prioritised local contractors wherever possible, ensuring recovery funding stays in the region while supporting businesses, workers and communities who were themselves impacted by the fires. Locals are more likely to spend locally, further improving the economic spend and the success of other local businesses impacted by the fires.

Council’s Economic Development, Local Jobs, and Skills Portfolio Councillor Sandice McAulay said the approach recognised that recovery is about people as much as infrastructure.

“These works are about keeping our roads and communities safe, but they’re also about helping local businesses stand back up, expand their crews and keep people working at a time of real disruption,” Cr McAulay said.

“Many of our contractors live here, employ local people and understand the landscape. That local knowledge is invaluable in recovery, and it means the benefits of this work flows straight back into our communities.”

Tree works are being delivered by a range of local operators, with several businesses moving from occasional or part-time council work, to running multiple full-time crews, including additional roles focused on firewood processing and material reuse.

The scale of the task reflects the severity of fire damage across the shire. One large tree removed from a fire-affected roadway measured over three metres in diameter, requiring a 20-tonne excavator to safely move it.

Sustainability and Assets Portfolio Councillor Paul Hildebrand said the complexity of the work highlights why experienced local contractors are critical.

“These are not routine jobs. Many trees are unstable, fire-damaged and located along narrow or high-risk roads,” Cr Hildebrand said.

“Local crews are working long hours in challenging conditions to make roads safe and reduce ongoing risks, while also employing people locally and supporting recovery in their own towns.”

Local contractors say the recovery works have allowed them to support their communities in practical and meaningful ways.

Ben, from local contractor Murrindindi Tree Services, said the work goes beyond a standard contract.

“We live and work here, so this isn’t just another contract for us,” Ben said.

“We’ve been able to bring on local people, keep crews working full-time and do something practical to help the community recover. Working alongside council, everyone’s focused on getting the job done safely and properly.”

Aaron, from Unlimbited Trees based in Yea, said the recovery works had created opportunities for both employment and using local knowledge.

“Before the fires we were doing occasional work with council, but now we’ve got multiple crews on the ground and local people employed full-time,” Aaron said.

“It’s tough work, but it’s good to know the effort is helping make roads safer and keeping local jobs going when they’re really needed.”

Dylan, from Leaf and Limb in Healesville, said his team is processing fire-damaged trees to be made available to affected residents for firewood in the coming weeks.

“We’ve been able to turn a difficult situation into something positive by employing locals and providing firewood and mulch back to the community,” Dylan said.

“That’s what recovery looks like at a local level.”

Tree safety and clean-up works will continue in the coming months as part of council’s broader bushfire recovery program.

Residents are reminded that tree works are prioritised based on safety risk and accessibility, and that not all damaged trees can be removed immediately.

PUZZLES SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

MATH SQUARES

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

CRYPTOGRAM

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

EASTER EGGS ARE HIDDEN IN THE GRASS FOR KIDS TO FIND

SUDOKU

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

KIDS - MATH SQUARES

8	+	4	+	6	18
-		-		+	
2	-	1	-	5	-4
+		+		+	
7	-	3	+	9	13
13		6		20	

Revamped rodeo raises funds for bushfire relief



-photos by AR



SPORT



The people recognised during the Alexandra Pro Rodeo Grand Parade for their magnificent work during and after the January fires. -photos by AR

Revamped rodeo raises funds for bushfire relief

THE Alexandra Pro Rodeo, postponed from its usual January date due to the fires, took place on Saturday, March 28, before a crowd of around 4400 people. The event was held as a fundraiser to support people impacted by the blaze.

It was run in a different format this year, with the rodeo interspersed with live music performances.

There were four rodeo sessions, including first and second division bareback, open and second division saddle bronc, open and

second division bulls, as well as steer riding, ladies' bronc and barrel racing.

There were 85 competitors across the afternoon and evening.

March 28 was a busy evening, with events including the CFA Appreciation Dinner and the Deb Ball, so some locals were unable to attend the rodeo this time around.

There was a large screen set up so that people could sit on the hill and watch the live music, as well as all the action of the rodeo.

Organiser Andrew Embling said that the Grand Parade was very emotional, with CFA

members, other first responders, and people involved in the recovery invited into the arena. The audience were certainly keen to thank them for all they have done.

The Australian National Anthem was sung beautifully by Tayla Arnett as the audience stood.

Many people camped at the showgrounds for the event, and Andrew said that everyone was very well behaved and that there have been no negative reports. Police also said that the crowd was well behaved.

The funds raised through ticket sales and direct donations will be dispersed to Alexandra Rotary Club, Alexandra Lions Club, Farm Angels and Rural Aid. The final amount raised has not yet been calculated.

"All in all, a very successful rodeo. It was just a great day and everybody was happy," Andrew said.

This weekend will be another busy one in Murrindindi Shire, with one of the highlights being the Easter Fair in Rotary Park on Sunday.



Tayla Arnett (left) singing the Australian National Anthem.



Alexandra Squash Club: Round eight of term one pennant

by Kristelle Leary

Monday competition Magpies versus Eagles

TYLER (fill in) versus Eric: It was a one-sided match. Eric put in a good effort but Tyler was too good for him and claimed the match with a good lead. 68 to 43.

Randy versus Sally: Sally had the situational awareness and played with pinpoint accuracy and some low shots that gave Randy no chance. Randy's serve gave Sally problems, but he lacked consistency, serving too many faults to be able to apply pressure on Sally. It was a win for Sally. 78 to 61.

Kristelle (fill in) versus Justin: Great effort by Kristelle to make it close in the second game. Lots of uncalled lets made it an entertaining match. Justin was just too strong in the end and won with a landslide. 100 to 39.

John versus Daniel W: John had to much class. Daniel pulled his game together to win eight of the last nine points to take the final game and show us what he is capable of, but he needs to be more consistent throughout the whole match if he's going to take the win away from John. 60 to 51.

Crows versus Cockatoos

Tyler (fill in) versus Jordan: Some good long rallies. Jordan was more consistent throughout, winning the



Ben lines up to smash the ball down the wall behind Chris. -S

match. 57 to 47.

Laura versus Liane: Liane had a better game, but Laura put up a good contest and made her work for it. Liane claimed the win. 70 to 51.

Chris versus Ben: Chris found himself out played for much of the match, but he has a knack of hanging in the rally and won't give

up making his opponent work hard to earn each point. Two games all but Ben accumulated more points. 61 to 48.

Jim versus Phil: Great game to watch. Jim just had the upper hand with his placement, making Phil cover some ground around the court. Great rallies were played and Jim came out on top. 52 to 42.

Wednesday competition Freightliners versus Western Stars

Nicole versus Beth: Nicole got off to a flying start only for Beth to find her range in the second game. From the on Beth disposed of any balls that Nicole hit within range. A comfortable win to the more

experienced player. 60 to 46.

Sam versus Daniel: Sam made great last-minute comebacks to level the first two games. Daniel had a very strong serve, and the match came down to a tiebreaker, pushing the match Daniel's way for a one-point win. 62 to 61.

Michael M versus Andrew: Michael was error prone early and Andrew capitalised to get a big early lead in the first game. From then on Michael picked-off Andrews serves, and it became a tight contest in the middle. In the final game, Andrew had the poise and Michael's short game lost impact. Andrew winning comfortably. 67 to 48.

Kenworths versus Scanias

Matthew versus Ben H: Both players were consistent and played well. Matthew kept trying, but Ben stayed on top to triumph. 74 to 43.

Daniel W (fill in) versus Justin: Daniel capitalised on some of Justin's errors to take an early lead in each of the first two games, albeit with late charges by Justin. Subtlety went out the window as each combatant spanked the ball around as they tried to claim position. Justin swung the match to go into the last game with a lead. Daniel had the calm and fortune to win back the lead and the match. 59 to 56.

A quick refresh on duck hunting responsibly

THE duck hunting season opened recently, on Wednesday, March 18, and is set to run until 30 minutes after sunset on Monday, June 8. Any hunters participating in the season are reminded to harvest the game ducks as ethically as possible, and respect the rules laid out by the Game Management Authority (GMA).

The bag limit for ducks in 2026 is nine game ducks, with permitted species including Pacific black duck, mountain duck, chestnut teal, grey teal, pink-eared duck, wood duck and hardhead. The blue-winged shoveler cannot be hunted.

Duck hunting can occur from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset until the season ends, and "hunters must make all reasonable efforts to immediately retrieve all downed game ducks and to salvage at least the breast meat from all harvested ducks," the GMA website says.

The Wildlife (Game) Regulations were remade in September of 2024, and with these came the allowance for two new gundog breeds that are permitted to duck hunt, these being the wirehaired Slovakian pointer and Murray River retriever.

Any new and renewing Victorian gamebird licence applicants must complete an online education program, courtesy of GMA. Duck hunters must complete: The 'Hunting essentials' online education module, the 'Duck hunting basics' online education module, and the 'Waterfowl Identification Test' and online education module (for new applicants only).

Duck hunters must also hold a valid Game Licence and Firearms Licence.

Something else to keep in mind this duck hunting season is the GMA's new research, in partnership with Deakin University, into the movements and behaviour of Victoria's game ducks.

According to the GMA website, "the research involves attaching small solar-powered satellite tracking devices to over 400 individual game ducks from four game duck species over three years. Duck species to be fitted with the trackers are Pacific

black duck, Australian wood duck, grey teal and chestnut teal.

"The lightweight tracking devices capture information about the duck's location, movement, breeding, feeding and resting patterns 24 hours a day and will send the information to GMA and Deakin University researchers via mobile phone network."

It is entirely possible that you might find a tracker attached to a harvested duck. Even if the tracker is damaged, it can still provide information to GMA about the duck's movements. In that scenario, GMA asks that hunters contact research@gma.vic.gov.au

GMA Research Principal Dr Jason Flesch spoke about this new study of game duck movements.

"This project aims to identify the drivers of game duck movement in relation to fluctuating environmental conditions, including water availability, in the Australian landscape. It will also record how long game ducks survive," Dr Flesch said.

"This vital knowledge will be used with other research to inform Adaptive Harvest Management of game ducks in Victoria, which is being implemented to ensure duck hunting in Victoria remains sustainable."

Those ducks fitted with a tracker, and many more, have also been banded with an aluminium ring around one of their legs. Hunters are allowed to keep the leg band, but are still encouraged to report the details to the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS) at dcceew.gov.au/science-research/bird-bat-banding/get-involved/report-band-sightings#How_to_report

Hunters can upload a photo of the band as part of their report, and the ABBBS will process the information and provide the hunter with a recovery report including when and where the bird was banded, its age at banding, the time since banding and the distance between banding location and recovery.

There is also continuous discussion around the sport of duck hunting, with many

opposed to the concept. Wildlife Victoria had their say on the matter, stating how they were opposed, but also many Victorian citizens were also opposed to duck hunting.

"Wetlands across Victoria will once again ring out with gunfire as the state's duck hunting season begins, placing native species protected under the *Wildlife Act* one day, the target of hunters the next," Wildlife Victoria says.

"Despite a 2023 Parliamentary Inquiry into Native Bird Hunting recommending a complete ban, the state government ultimately allowed the practice to continue.

"The Inquiry received the highest number of submissions in Victorian parliamentary history, with the overwhelming majority calling for duck hunting to end.

"Had the Victorian Government adopted the Inquiry's recommendation in full, Victoria would have become the fourth Australian state to ban duck hunting, joining Western Australia, New South Wales, and Queensland, which banned the practice in 1990, 1995, and 2005 respectively.

"Wildlife Victoria recently joined other leading wildlife care organisations, RSPCA Queensland, Wildlife Rehabilitation Advisory Group WA, and Wildlife Recovery Australia, in a federal pre-budget submission calling for a National Framework for wildlife protection, rescue, treatment and rehabilitation.

"The organisations warned that fragmented wildlife laws across Australia create gaps in protection and called on the Federal Government to consult with wildlife welfare groups to improve national coordination, particularly for threatened and endangered species."

Wildlife Victoria CEO Lisa Palma added her thoughts on the subject of duck hunting.

"Time and time again hunters have been unable to discern between 'game' and 'non-game' species," Ms Palma said.

"Threatened ducks such as the blue-winged shoveler and freckled duck are inevitably caught in the crossfire. It is unacceptable.

"We will continue to advocate for this cruel and unnecessary practice to end and for wildlife policy to reflect both community expectations and the growing pressures facing our native species."

The Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (SSAA) outlined what duck hunting contributes to Victoria.

"Recreational duck hunting is a valued activity for almost 22,000 Victorians and their families. It contributes around \$65 million to the Victorian economy each year, supports 587 jobs, and importantly, around 69 per cent of that economic activity occurs in regional Victoria," SSAA says.

"Duck hunting in Victoria has also undergone significant reform over recent decades. The season length and bag limit are now set through an adaptive harvest management framework that uses robust data and an objective scientific process, with sustainability at its core.

"In addition, new and renewing game licence holders are required to complete updated education modules covering their responsibilities to animal welfare, cultural heritage and the broader community.

"Out on the wetlands yesterday, we saw generations of families hunting together and enjoying time in nature, cultural traditions and the satisfaction of bringing home healthy, sustainable wild game meat for the table.

"Government research also shows that recreational hunters report higher levels of general wellbeing than the broader population.

"The simple reason SSAA Victoria supports recreational duck hunting is that it is a safe, responsible, sustainable and legitimate use of public land and natural resources. The fact that some people oppose duck hunting is not, in itself, a good reason to deny tens of thousands of responsible, law-abiding Victorians the opportunity to participate in an activity that delivers social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits," SSAA finishes.

SDCA celebrates season at presentation night

THE Seymour District Cricket Association (SDCA) has celebrated the achievements of its players at its 2025/26 Presentation Night, recognising outstanding performances across senior and junior competitions.

The evening brought together players and clubs from across the competition to acknowledge individual excellence following a strong and competitive season.

Awards were presented across batting, bowling and all-rounder categories, as well as major association medals, reflecting the depth of talent and high standard of cricket across the SDCA.

SDCA President Mitch Itter said the night was an important opportunity to recognise the performances that defined the season.

"The presentation night is a great opportunity to acknowledge the performances of players across all grades," Itter said.

"We've seen a really strong standard of cricket this season, and the award winners should be proud of their efforts and consistency.

"It's particularly pleasing to see the performances coming through our junior ranks, which highlights the strength and future of cricket within the SDCA."

A highlight of the evening was the awarding of Life Membership to Jason Tarran, recognising both his outstanding playing career and long-standing service to the association.

Tarran's on-field achievements place him among the most accomplished players in SDCA history, having claimed the A Grade bowling average on nine occasions, the A Grade batting average once, and being named A Grade Champion Player.

Off the field, Tarran has also made a significant contribution to the SDCA, serving as Treasurer for more than a decade.

Itter said Tarran's Life Membership was a fitting recognition of his impact on the competition.

"Jason's record speaks for itself. His achievements as a player are exceptional and place him among the very best to have played in the SDCA," Itter said.

"To win the A Grade bowling average nine times is remarkable, and to add a batting average and Champion Player award highlights just how complete a cricketer he has been.

"Beyond his playing career, Jason has given more than 10 years of service as Treasurer, playing a key role in supporting the administration and stability of the association.

"Life Membership is the highest honour we can bestow, and Jason is an incredibly deserving recipient."

The SDCA congratulates all award winners on their achievements.

2025/26 SDCA Award Winners

A Grade

Batting Award: Cameron Armstrong (294 runs at 98); Bowling Award: Kalon Winnell (21 wickets at 6.52); All Rounder: Lachlan Watts (870 points); Frank Zanelli Medal: Lachlan Watts.

B Grade

Batting Award: Jared Smith (354 runs at 70.8); Bowling Award: Jacob Nipperess (21 wickets at 7.14); All Rounder: Levi Ronalds (606 points); John Gadd Medal: Levi Ronalds.

Under 16s

Batting Award: Hamish Melville (340 runs at 113.33); Bowling Award: Finn Melville (18 wickets

at 10.83); All Rounder: Hamish Melville (575 points); Ken Hall Medal: Hamish Melville.

Under 13s

Batting Award: Braxton Tucker (393 runs at 196.5); Bowling Award: Blake Winnell (10 wickets at 3.9); All Rounder: Braxton Tucker (653 points); Sam Watts Medal: Braxton Tucker.

Junior Country Week Player of the Week

Under 13s: Archie Armstrong, Brock Inness; Under 15s: Tyler Caddie; Under 17s: Thomas White.

Life Membership

Jason Tarran.

SDCA Team of the Year

Charles Davies, 571 runs at 51.91;

Josh Rudge (wk), 348 runs at 34.8; Lachlan Watts, 620 runs at 88.57; Travis Stefanos, 371 runs at 41.22; Cameron Evans, 335 runs at 47.86; Cameron Armstrong, 294 runs at 98; Lachlan Drummond, 257 runs at 23.26 and 21 wickets at 11.67; Will Ashton, 24 wickets at 11.25; Kal Winnell (c), 21 wickets at 6.52; Matt Archibald, 21 wickets at 10.48; Joshua Crane, 20 wickets at 9.3.

Yea Golf Club: Phillip Island Golf Week wrap-up

by Alan Pell

GOLF Week at Phillip Island continued last week with Wednesday providing a well-earned rest day, at least for some. A group of 12 players ventured out to Red Rock Park Three in Cowes for a casual nine holes, while others enjoyed a visit to the Phillip Island Winery, explored the shops, or simply relaxed at the beach.

Last Thursday saw 31 players front up at the Phillip Island Golf Course for the final round. Unfortunately, the week finished in challenging conditions, with rain and cold weather making play difficult. Despite the tough conditions, two players managed to break 30 points.

Best on the day was Bob Glenister with 34 points, narrowly edging out Gary Pollard on 33. Local and past Yea champion Adrienne Anglin finished third with 29 points, followed by Margie Wright with 27.

The four ball best ball event was a tight contest, with Bob Glenister and John Renahan combining well to score 40 points and claim victory on a countback from Gary Pollard and Chris Keogh. The deteriorating weather took its toll, with seven players withdrawing after completing between nine and 15 holes.

The Overall Champion title was closely fought, with Gary Pollard finishing on top with an impressive total of 95 Stableford points across the three rounds, just one point clear of Bob Glenister on 94. Jeff Aurisch placed third with 89, followed by Phil Armstrong on 88. Equal fifth were Di Elliott and Margie Wright with 86 points. The Cross-Country Cart Driver Award went to Phil Armstrong.

Back at Yea last Wednesday, the "Stay at Home" event saw Glenn Walsh take the honours with 35 points, ahead of Jeff Moss on 32. Kevin Coghlan claimed the Club Award.

Last Saturday's Mixed Stableford at Yea saw Phil Armstrong continue his strong form, winning with 32 points from Jeff Moss on 31 (countback), with Clinton Rose third. Peter Johnston finished fourth with 30 points, while Kevin Coghlan once again took out the Club Award.

Last Sunday saw Yea's pennant team record a 3/2 win over Eildon Golf Club played at Marysville. Winners were Rick Wills, Tony Rule and Tom White. No pennant until after Easter when Yea takes on Alexandra at Eildon.



Overall Champion Gary Pollard with his trophy. -S