

The Yea Chronicle

92 High Street, Yea. PO Box 5, Alexandra Vic. 3714

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

Ph: (03) 5797 2468 or (03) 5772 1002; Fax: (03) 5797 2257; Email: reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au Your community newspaper since 1885 Wednesday, April 10, 2024 \$2.00 inc. GST

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An emergency services multi-agency training event was held in Trawool last week. More on page 4 of this edition. -S

Lake Eildon assessment finds no viable options for flood mitigation

THE Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)'s technical assessment of Lake Eildon's operating arrangements, conducted by Hydrology and Risk Consulting, has been released. The aim of the assessment was to find ways of reducing downstream flooding, and particularly referenced the October 2022 flood event.

The technical assessment "does not identify any option at Lake Eildon which warrants further consideration."

Six options were explored for their potential to improve protection for downstream communities. The report states, "All options explored were found to be ineffective or unreliable as flood mitigation strategies, or created costs and impacts that outweigh

the benefits of a change to how the storage is managed."

It adds, "The assessment report highlights that tributaries that flow into the Goulburn River downstream of Lake Eildon have a more significant impact on flooding in communities downstream, including Molesworth and Seymour, than releases from the lake."

The options assessed were:

Option one: Changing target filling curves so that Lake Eildon is full later in the year (for example December/January instead of October/November) and under less conservative inflow statistics (for example, reaching full supply in 85 years out of 100 instead of 95 years).

Continued Page 12



Free admission



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Our office will be closed Thursday, April 25.

Early display advertising deadlines will apply. Bookings and artwork deadline is 5pm Wednesday, April 24.

All other deadlines remain the same.

We will reopen Friday, April 26, at 9am.

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The Yea Chronicle

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Letters to the Editor

Yea doctor departs

IT is with mixed feelings that I would like to inform the Yea community and surrounding districts that I am leaving my general practitioner role at Yea Medical Centre.

After 11 years at Yea Medical Centre and 28 years in general practice, I am very grateful and humbled by the privilege I have had in sharing and supporting many patients through some significant and varying health issues at various stages in their life, the highs, the lows and everything in between.

I appreciate your trust, patience and willingness to share your physical and/or

mental health journey in some challenging times. Floods, COVID-19, bushfires, cost of living increases, hospital system stressors and the general speed of life have all added to the complexity of helping people manage their health concerns.

I have enjoyed working with all the Yea Medical Centre staff and appreciate the expertise of my colleagues, the Yea and District Memorial Hospital and Alexandra District Health, and the many allied health professionals that together support the community in health and wellbeing. I am keen to keep learning and improving my skills and look forward to another stage in my life whatever that may be.

Thank you for your support and especially your patience waiting in the waiting room.

Dr Natasha Ward, Yea

Great Victorian Rail Trail

LAST month I spent four glorious days travelling the Great Victorian Rail Trail (GVRT) from Tallarook to Alexandra,

fulfilling a long held ambition to undertake the journey by foot.

The weather was marvellous, the birds in full voice, the views inspiring. Fellow trail users (all cyclists and one rider) were all curious about my chosen approach to such a highly walkable route with its gentle inclines and declines, no scrabbling up steep hills.

Staying overnight at Trawool, Yea and Alexandra broke the journey into manageable chunks with wonderful local food and rest.

Adding value along the way, were the informative signs, quirky public art and occasional seats to take in the views (and rest one's legs).

I hope to complete the Alexandra to Mansfield sections of the GVRT in the spring. It's a truly wonderful asset for the community and testament to all who had the foresight to create a truly special journey through some of our most beautiful countryside. A hidden treasure.

Jane Sharwood, Gisborne



THUMBS UP: A huge thumbs up to all the children who use the crossings when I am on duty. You are all so very polite and lovely and are a credit to your parents and teachers. Thank you for putting a smile on my face daily with your smiling faces and beautiful manners.

THUMBS UP: To instructor Jennifer and the Yea Social Ballroom group for running dance practice every Wednesday night in Yea. It's a great way to keep fit and mentally active.

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

Thousands busted during Operation Nexus

VICTORIA Police ran a statewide operation, dubbed Operation Nexus, over the Easter long weekend.

Designed to prevent unnecessary road deaths due to dangerous road behaviour, the operation ran from Thursday, March 27, through to midnight on Easter Monday, April 1.

Results for the operation were released on Tuesday, April 2.

Statewide, over 8000 traffic offences were detected during Operation Nexus, while over 4000 Victorians were caught speeding. 378 people were caught driving under the influence of either alcohol or drugs,

728 people drove an unregistered vehicle, and 283 people used their mobile phones while driving.

In the Benalla Police Service Area, which includes the Shire of Murrindindi, there were six drink drivers and one drug driver caught, as well as three disqualified drivers and five unlicensed drivers.

Across the shire, 69 speeding offences were detected, 16 unregistered vehicles were discovered, two impoundments were made, and two cyclist offences managed.

Three fatalities were reported for the Easter long weekend in Victoria.

Weekly Weather
April 10 - April 16, 2024

Temperatures may be subject to change from date of publication

Alexandra			Yea		
DAY	LOW	HIGH	DAY	LOW	HIGH
Wednesday	10	17	Wednesday	10	17
Thursday	7	18	Thursday	7	17
Friday	7	19	Friday	7	19
Saturday	7	20	Saturday	8	20
Sunday	9	22	Sunday	9	22
Monday	10	21	Monday	10	21
Tuesday	10	21	Tuesday	10	21

Standard **The Yea Chronicle**

ALEXANDRA NEWSPAPERS

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

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

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

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 The Yea Chronicle

RIVER HEIGHTS FOR THE GOULBURN CATCHMENT

STATION NAME	TIME	HEIGHT	TENDENCY	FLOOD CLASS
Goulburn R at Lake Eildon D/S	12.00pm Mon	1.56	steady	below minor
Rubicon River at Rubicon	12.00pm Mon	0.49	steady	
Acheron River at Taggerty	12.03pm Mon	0.62	steady	below minor
Home Creek at Yarck	11.52am Mon	0.17	steady	
Yea River at Devlins Bridge	10.24am Mon	0.52	steady	below minor
Yea River at Yea	11.22am Mon	0.58	steady	
Goulburn River at Ghin Ghin	12.00pm Mon	3.70	steady	
King Parrot Creek at Flowerdale	12.00pm Mon	0.48	steady	below minor
Goulburn River at Trawool	12.00pm Mon	1.32	steady	below minor
Sunday Creek at Tallarook	12.00pm Mon	0.33	steady	below minor
Goulburn River at Seymour	12.00pm Mon	1.62	steady	below minor
Whiteheads Creek at Seymour	11.07am Mon	1.16	steady	

****ISSUED AT 12.15PM ON MONDAY, 8 APRIL 2024**

DISTRICT RAINFALL

Alexandra.....	61.7mm
Buxton.....	82.5mm
Eildon (AWS).....	45mm
Flowerdale.....	52mm
Jamieson.....	59mm
Kinglake.....	86mm
Lake Eildon.....	46mm
Mansfield.....	50/10mm
Taggerty.....	65mm
Yarck.....	46mm
Yea.....	53mm

Above details for 7 days to 9am Monday

LAKE EILDON

Height above sea level this week.....	286.99m
Capacity as at 9am Monday.....	92.4%
Metres below full supply.....	1.91m
Daily inflow.....	800ML
Release.....	3000ML
Eildon Pondage (may be subject to rapid change).....	90.6%

The Yea Chronicle

DEADLINES

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

If you have any enquiries please do not hesitate to contact the office on 5772 1002 or

reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au

We thank you for your continued support

Time for Aussies to shoot flu

THE Pharmacy Guild of Australia is urging all eligible Australians to get their flu shot following an alarming number of flu cases across the country.

In the first quarter of 2024 there were 26,836 influenza cases reported by the National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NNDSS).

By February, case numbers were already double those reported at the same time last year.

Pharmacy Guild National President Professor, Trent Twomey, says Australians should get ahead of the flu season and get their vaccination now.

“The flu season typically runs from May to October,” Professor Twomey said. “However, flu vaccines for the 2024 season are available now in community pharmacies across Australia.”

Professor Twomey said that getting vaccinated ahead of the flu season

is important for protecting yourself and your loved ones from the flu and its complications.

“Although the vaccine will last throughout the year, it is most effective



Make sure you get your flu shot in time for winter. -Mcfarlandmo

in the first three to four months following its administration.”

According to the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), people who received an influenza vaccine in late 2023 are still recommended to get the flu vaccine in 2024.

ATAGI also advises that flu vaccines can be given on the same day as other vaccines, such as COVID-19.

The Australian Government funds influenza vaccines for eligible patients under the National Immunisation Program (NIP).

Further information will be available from the Department of Health and Aged Care when NIP-funded influenza vaccines become available.

Ask your community pharmacist about your flu vaccine or visit findapharmacy.com.au to book an appointment.

Free green waste disposal in April

WITH autumn leaves falling and the weather beginning to cool down, now is the perfect time to clean up your garden.

From April 1 to April 30, local residents can dispose of green waste for free at council's Resource Recovery Centres (RRCs) in Alexandra, Yea, Kinglake, Eildon and Marysville.

This includes domestic quantities of grass clippings, leaves, garden trimmings, branches, and tree trunks.

For more information on green waste disposal, including what is and isn't accepted, visit council's website.

Cost of letter postage increases by 25 per cent

THE price of posting a domestic letter rose by 30 cents on Wednesday, April 3, an upwards jump of 25 per cent.

Australia Post made the decision to increase the price from \$1.20 to \$1.50 earlier in the year, with no objection from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

Australia Post made a statement justifying the price inflation.

“Australian households only receive two letters on average each week and letter volumes are expected to halve in the next five years. On average, for households that regularly send letters, the increase to \$1.50 will cost them about \$4.50 extra per year,” Australia Post said.

Other cost increases include changing the price of large letters up to 125 grams from \$2.40 to \$3, and large letters between 125 and 250 grams from \$3.60 to \$4.50.

Anzac Day services require a permit

FOLLOWING concerns from local RSL groups over the requirement that Anzac Day and other services during the year require a permit, Murrindindi Shire Council provided the following response.

“Local Law Permits are required for all public events and functions undertaken on land managed by Council. The permit process ensures our public land is used appropriately and that event organisers are supported to plan and deliver safe and enjoyable events. It considers traffic management requirements, as well as covering insurance and liability protection for the organisers from any claim or incident that may occur during the event. There is no charge to apply for a Local Law Activity Permit.

“It is understood that the permit requirement also applies to Remembrance Day, as well as any other public event or function held on land managed by council.

“Our Community Safety and Events staff work closely with event organisers, supporting the application process. We are pleased to be engaged with all nine Anzac Day event organisers across the Shire and haven't been informed of any issues with the application process.

“Some Anzac Day events have not sought permits in the past. This leaves them vulnerable to risk and liability exposure, as technically, they are not authorised to conduct public events on council land, hence

their insurance is void. This is why we have initiated a change this year to ensure that all events are treated the same and have permits.

“The event permit process is simple and council officers work closely with event organisers to step them through what's required. If they are unable to apply for a permit, we will discuss with them the best path forward for a safe and smooth event.

“Council is proud to support the celebration of Anzac Day and we continue to work with the organisers of the events to ensure they are all run safely and successfully.”

For further information or to apply for a permit, please visit murrindindi.vic.gov.au/permits or call 5772 0333.

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COMMUNITY DIARY

Local Radio Frequency

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

WEEKLY

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

MONTHLY

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

ALEXANDRA NEWSPAPERS

For a \$5 annual fee for one line, your club or organisation's regular meeting dates will be listed each week. Not only is this a reminder to your regular members but also a good source of what groups are available in the community, when they meet and a contact phone number.

Church Services

ST PETER'S MEMORIAL ANGLICAN CHURCH
Cnr Bald Spur/Whittlesea Kinglake Rds, Sunday Services, 8.30am Communion.
Minister: Rev. Ruwan Palapathwala
0458 113 099

ST LUKE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH OF YEA
Sunday Service time 11am
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 11.15am
Colin Whiteway
Ph 0457 340 525

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

Out & About

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

THE WINNER OF OUR SEYMOUR EXPO FAMILY TICKET COMPETITION WAS Bruce Wilson of Alexandra. Thank you to everyone who entered.

DISPOSAL OF GREEN WASTE IS FREE DURING APRIL; Domestic quantities of garden waste, if not mixed up with other materials, needs to be no longer than 1.5m and less than 25cm in diameter. murrindindi.vic.gov.au/greenwaste

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10
Alexandra P & A Ladies Committee AGM will be held today 2.30pm in the admin building at the showgrounds caravan park. All welcome.

FRIDAY, APRIL 12
Superstar – The Carpenters Songbook at Yea Shire Hall. Bookings *trybooking*.

com/cosst. More information available at carpenterssongbook.com

SATURDAY, APRIL 13
The Stony Six – a group of musicians creating joyous and buoyant contemporary acoustic music, are performing at MiRA Marysville. Workshop at 4pm, tickets \$10. Concert at 8pm, \$15. Workshop and concert tickets \$25. 16 and under free. For bookings contact Rita 0411 168 840 or email rita.seethaler@tuti.com.au

SUNDAY, APRIL 21
Buxton CFA is turning 80. They would like you to help them celebrate at their open day 11am-3pm. Trucks and demos, kids activities, memorabilia, barbecue lunch, and much more.

TUESDAY, APRIL 23
Join in on information sessions to learn more about Shaping Murrindindi's Future Project and see how you can get involved in the next stage. Noon-2pm at Taggerty Hall or 3.30 to 6.30pm at the Alexandra Shire Hall. For more information contact Allisha Milestone 0458 758 379 or email

amilestone@murrindindi.vic.gov.au, or visit shapingmurrindindifuture.com.au

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24
Join in on information sessions to learn more about Shaping Murrindindi's Future Project and see how you can get involved in the next stage. 10am-1pm at MiRA Marysville. For more information contact Allisha Milestone 0458 758 379 or email amilestone@murrindindi.vic.gov.au, or visit shapingmurrindindifuture.com.au

SATURDAY, APRIL 27
You are invited to the open of *The Life of Anne Frank* at the Alexandra Library, at 11am. RSVP by visiting murrindindi.vic.gov.au/annefrank or call 5772 0333.

Murrindindi Jobs Expo is on again. 11am-5pm at the Alexandra Football Club. Skill development, networking, resource sharing and plenty more. Free business booths and spaces available. Locally catered event. murrindindifoodandwine.org.au

Multi-agency exercise in Trawool

THE Country Fire Authority (CFA) last week led a multi-agency exercise to test and strengthen how emergency services respond to mass casualty incidents similar to the 2023 Eynesbury bus incident.

The exercise was a huge undertaking with 90 first responders from CFA, SES, Ambulance Victoria, Victoria Police and St Johns Ambulance taking part as well as 27 students from La Trobe University who acted as casualties.

Trawool Captain Sean Kerris said the exercise required significant planning and wouldn't have been possible without the hard work of all involved.

"It was a challenge to bring the exercise vision to life but the learnings will be invaluable for our first responders," he said.

"Our emergency service personnel will have a better understanding and ability to navigate very confronting emergencies if they arise after this exercise."

First responders were first briefed on the scenario when the exercise got underway to ensure their response was as realistic as possible.

The scenario involved a hypothetical bus accident in which the bus driver suffered a cardiac arrest while in transit. The bus then veered off the road as a result and into the back of a music festival hitting several campers. There were more than 30 passengers on board the bus at the time who suffered injuries of varying degrees from the bus rollover.

The scenario was influenced by recent tragic events such as the 2023 Eynesbury bus incident and the 2023 Hunter Valley NSW incident.

The objective of the exercise was to test and improve the way emergency services work together when responding to large scale emergencies.

VICSES Seymour Unit Controller Christine Welsh said it's important VICSES volunteers are prepared for any scenario and these exercises play a vital role in upskilling and nurturing important inter-agency teamwork.

"These relationships are particularly important in regional areas and have been an ongoing focus of VICSES' Seymour Unit volunteers over the last 12 months .

"VICSES volunteers pride themselves on being there to support their communities during a challenging emergency response,

and these training exercises only strengthen that resolve."

The scenario was chosen because music festivals are commonly held within the region and the scale of such events can present unique challenges for emergency responders.

More than 30 people were on site in a supporting capacity.



The exercise involved 90 first responders from CFA, SES, Ambulance Victoria, Victoria Police and St Johns Ambulance. -S



Emergency services at the scene of the bus crash, part of the training exercise in Koriella. -S

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MURRINDINDI SHIRE COUNCIL NEWS



FREE GREEN WASTE DISPOSAL IN APRIL

From 1 - 30 April, you can dispose of your green waste for FREE at Council's Resource Recovery Centres.

This includes domestic quantities of garden waste. For green waste to be accepted, it must:

- not be mixed up with other materials
- be no longer than 1.5 m in length and less than 25 cm in diameter (branches and stumps larger than this will incur a fee)

For more information on green waste disposal, give us a call on 5772 0333 or visit murrindindi.vic.gov.au/greenwaste

RAPID ANTIGEN TESTS NO LONGER FREE

RATs are no longer free or available from Council locations. Please visit your local supermarket or pharmacy to purchase tests.

For more information on COVID-19, visit betterhealth.vic.gov.au and search 'COVID-19'.

SLEEP & SETTling INFO SESSIONS

Join our FREE Sleep and Settling Information Sessions, facilitated by our dedicated Maternal and Child Health experts.

Topics will include frequent overnight waking, bottle dependency, bedtime or nap refusal, cot to bed transition and catnapping.

The next session is in Yea, Tuesday 16 April 2024.

Scan the QR code to book, or visit our website to view more information and other Maternal and Child Health Programs and Activities
murrindindi.vic.gov.au/mch



SHAPE THE FUTURE OF STATE FORESTS

Help the Victorian Government understand the Central Highlands State Forests by completing an online feedback form or dropping a pin on their map.

For more information and to participate, visit engage.vic.gov.au/central-highlands-forests

THE MOBILE LIBRARY IS 'ON THE ROAD'

Join us for an evening, real people talking about real books, eBooks, magazines, films and other great works.

- Marysville, 17 April, 7.00 pm
- Eildon, 24 April, 6.00 pm
- Glenburn, 21 June, 7.00 pm
- Highlands, 13 September, 6.00 pm
- Flowerdale, 18 September, 7.00 pm
- Buxton, 25 September, 7.00 pm
- Taggerty, 16 October, 7.00 pm
- Toolangi, 23 October, 7.00 pm

Please RSVP by calling 5772 0333.

ATDW - IS YOUR BUSINESS LISTED?

Business listings and events on most official tourism websites come from the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW). This includes discoverdindi.com.au

For an annual fee of \$295 your business will be listed on tourism websites all over the country. For more information, visit our website, we can even help get you started!
murrindindi.vic.gov.au/atdw

DRAFT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Council's draft Economic Development Strategy is now ready for you to review and provide feedback. Visit our online engagement platform, The Loop, and search 'economic strategy':

theloop.murrindindi.vic.gov.au

Feedback closes Sunday 12 May.

AFRICAN DRUMMING WORKSHOPS

Council is hosting two African Drumming Workshops, taking participants on a memorable journey into West African Music.

There are two sessions on Thursday 9 May:

- Yea Wetlands Discovery Centre: 10.45 - 11.15 am
- Alexandra Shire Hall: 5.30 - 6.00 pm

Both sessions will be followed by a meal.

There are limited spots available for each session – so get in quick! Please register for catering purposes at murrindindi.vic.gov.au/africandrumming

STAY INFORMED

To stay up to date with the latest Council news, visit murrindindi.vic.gov.au/news or follow us on Facebook.

GET IN TOUCH

customer@murrindindi.vic.gov.au
murrindindi.vic.gov.au/request
5772 0333

Fire restrictions set to end April 15

THE Fire Danger Period (FDP) will finish at 1am on Monday, April 15 in Murrindindi Shire. While the restrictions being lifted, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) still expects the grassfire risk to remain across the state so Victorians need to remain alert and prepared.

CFA District 22 Assistant Chief Fire Officer Rohan Taylor said with weather conditions changing they're able to lift restrictions to assist people in the agricultural sector with preparations for cropping and farming.

"It's also an opportunity for people to start cleaning up around their properties. The fuels are still very dry in the Goulburn Valley, so we're urging everyone to stay safe, whether you're living in or travelling to high bushfire risk areas" he said.

"Please monitor the conditions on hot, dry and windy days, as we may still see some days of elevated fire risk."

The end of the FDP will be an opportunity for some landowners to burn-off again, however it's important that residents check that local conditions are safe before undertaking these activities.

"You must register your burn-offs, check weather conditions and follow local council laws and regulations," ACFO Taylor said.

"Registering your burn-off ensures that if smoke or fire is reported, the incident is cross-checked with our register, which prevents firefighters from unnecessarily responding."

"When conducting burn-offs, remain alert and always have resources on hand to extinguish the fire. Landowners can register their burn-off online at firepermits.vic.gov.au or call 1800 668 511. If possible, landowners should also notify their neighbours and others nearby who may be sensitive to smoke so they can take necessary precautions.

Night strike training in Fawcett

THE Koriella Fire Brigade located at 10 Stoney Creek Road, Fawcett, is to conduct another night training exercise as part of the Koriella Fire Brigade's annual series of 'Night Strike' training exercises on Friday, May 10.

The exercise will include most of the local brigades from within the Alexandra Group. The Australian Defence Force as well as State Emergency Services (SES), Victoria Police (VICPOL) and the Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action (DEECA) have all been invited to attend again.

The exercise will be conducted in the Fawcett and Koriella areas from 6pm through to 11pm.

The exercise itself will involve local brigades 'Turning Out' to a lightning strike which has subsequently started a grass and scrub fire threatening building assets. There will be no live or active grass fires, however, a Country Fire Authority (CFA) car prop will be in position and utilised.

This training is conducted to expose crew members to situations that they will often come across when 'Turning Out' to real incidents. The better trained they are the better the response is. This is to ensure that the CFA remain a trusted and reliable capability for their communities and to build stronger ties and better cohesion with local emergency services.

Lastly, being a night exercise, the CFA would appreciate that if you need to travel along Spring Creek Road Korellia or Fawcett that night, please exercise caution when doing so, so that CFA volunteers are not put in harm's way with the additional risk of speeding traffic. Please observe the required 40kph speed limit when approaching flashing red and blue lights. Victoria Police will be on site.

All queries can be directed to the Koriella Fire Brigade Captain, Scott Reeves, via e-mail scott.koriellafb@gmail.com or by mobile phone 0417 584 910.

COVID-19 in australia oral history project

THE National Library is recording interviews with a diverse range of Australians to ensure that stories of the COVID-19 pandemic are captured for present and future generations.

The National Library will record up to 300 interviews, exploring how Australians have responded to and continue to respond to this extraordinary health crisis.

The COVID-19 virus was first identified in December 2019 with the first Australian case recorded January 20, 2020. By the end of October 2023, Australia had officially recorded 23,289 deaths and 11,623,332 cases of the virus, with unreported figures thought to be higher still.

The pandemic's effects in Australia and across the globe continue to be profound. Lockdown restrictions, social constraints, financial disruptions, and resource shortages have changed the way Australians engage with one another and their environments.

Senior Advisor for Curatorial and Collection Research at the National Library, Scott McKinnon, said "This will be one of the Library's largest

oral history projects to date, ensuring we capture the diversity of Australian responses to the pandemic."

The National Library will record interviews with people in each state and territory, across urban, regional, rural and remote areas. They will speak to people of diverse cultural backgrounds, ages, genders and abilities. The project will also capture diverse perspectives on public health issues and policies, and will create a record of policy decisions, debates and medical advances that shaped Australian COVID-19 experiences.

The COVID-19 oral history project will become part of the National Library's oral history collection, so that future generations will be able to understand the impact and significance of the COVID-19 pandemic as a major global event.

Learn more about the COVID-19 oral history project online at nla.gov.au/collections/building-our-collections/current-collecting-priorities/responses-covid-19-australia

What's happening at the state's hospitals?

THE state Liberal Party have claimed that "regional and rural health services across Victoria are facing forced amalgamations, service cuts and closures as the state government slashes millions in health funding."

Leader of the Opposition, John Pesutto, said, "Victorians should make no mistake, these are not changes to improve efficiency, but desperate and savage cuts triggered by Labor's financial mismanagement.

"Under the Allan Labor Government, regional and rural communities across the state will be stripped of their voice in local health services."

Shadow Minister for Health, Georgie Crozier, accused the government of "funding cuts by stealth... it is patients across rural and regional Victoria who will suffer."

Health Minister Mary-Anne Thomas spoke to Richard Willingham on ABC Melbourne on Thursday, April 4, in response to media reports saying that regional hospitals may be forced to close if they are unable to find savings.

She said that the article in the *Herald Sun* on Thursday was "at best misleading and at worst it's just simply wrong."

She pointed out that the government has invested \$24.8 billion, almost a third of the state's budget, in the health service system and they want to see it spent on care delivery. They're keen for health services to look at their use of consultants and public relations staff, and to see if there are duplicated processes.

She noted pressure that COVID-19 put onto the state's budget as well as on medical services, and the extended lifespan of Victorians. She also acknowledged the staffing challenges in regional hospitals.

She said, "There will be no hospital closures under my watch."

Contacted for further comment, including whether amalgamations or budget cuts are in play, a Victorian Government spokesperson said, "There are no plans to close any Victorian hospitals, unlike the Liberal National Party. We are not in the business of shutting down, privatising or slashing funding to our hospitals.

"Victorians rightly expect us to prioritise the frontline health services they need and that is what we have done. Streamlining back of house functions will not impact our frontline health workers."

"We have a world-class health system in Victoria. It continues to be our largest investment and this will continue to be the case."

It's understood that the Department of Health has requested that services look at options to reduce any back of house inefficiencies, as it was not acceptable to learn that some rural health services were using taxpayer funds on expensive PR firms and other consultants.


Member for Eildon Cindy McLeish said, "These funding cuts by stealth are the real-world consequence of Labor's financial mismanagement and, it is patients across rural and regional Victoria who will suffer. These cuts and threats of large-scale amalgamations demonstrate the disregard Labor has for our local community. This is not the first-time health services have been amalgamated, there are already a number of hospitals in the west of the state that have been forced to amalgamate to survive. Make no mistake, these are not changes to improve efficiency, but desperate and savage cuts triggered by Labor's financial mismanagement."



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Extension for e-scooter trial

THE government is extending the current e-scooter trial for the next six months to investigate additional safety and compliance measures ahead of introducing permanent regulatory settings later this year, ensuring e-scooters are safer for all road users.

Victorians, especially shift workers, have embraced e-scooters as another mode of transport for getting home, with more than eight million trips recorded during a closely monitored trial – making the public hire share scheme one of the world's most popular.

Minister for Public and Active Transport, Gabrielle Williams, commented on the e-scooter program, saying, "E-scooters are here to stay – they've proven popular among commuters, especially shift workers, providing an additional option to travel home safely."

Data gathered during the trial period shows most e-scooter users are doing the right thing, however it also indicates that more time is needed to improve compliance and make e-scooters safer, and support riders to understand the rules.

"We have more work to do on safety and compliance to ensure that e-scooters are safe when they're made permanent later this year," Ms Williams said.

The government is investigating extra measures to ensure e-scooter riders and other road users are fully aware of and comply

with the rules for e-scooter use. During this time, the current settings will continue.

To assist with this, a refreshed education campaign is being developed for roll out across trial areas, focusing on safe rider behaviour, helmet use and e-scooter parking.

Riders must not ride on footpaths, always wear a helmet, be at least 16 years old, not carry a passenger and not drink and ride. E-scooters must not travel at more than 20km/h and only be ridden on roads with a maximum speed limit of 60km/h or less.

User surveys conducted by share scheme operators revealed that around 28 per cent of e-scooter trips in metropolitan areas and up to 40 per cent of trips in Ballarat replaced a vehicle trip (private car or rideshare vehicle) on the riders' most recent e-scooter ride, helping to alleviate traffic congestion and reduce emissions.

Share hire e-scooters are only legal in councils that have an agreement with an operator.

The government will continue to help councils who choose to introduce share hire schemes by developing a guide with best practice advice on how to manage e-scooter share schemes, including parking management and operator insurance requirements.

The current settings will now end on October 4.

Ride for cancer research lunches in Yea



The 28 participants of the 2024 Ride for Lily stopped in Yea for lunch. -S

MONDAY, April 1, saw the Ride for Lily, a Live for Lily foundation cycling event, pass through Yea. The group of 28 riders stopped for lunch, provided by the Rotary Club, before continuing their 1000 kilometre, seven day journey.

The ride is an annual event designed to raise funds for cancer research and personalised medicine programs for children with cancer, and is entirely volunteer driven.

Foundation founder, Aaron Hester, who together with his wife, Katie Hester, organised the Ride for Lily, spoke about how 100 per cent of profits from the ride make their way to cancer research.

"All of the riders pay their own way, they are required to raise \$5000, and all of the people who are driving the vehicles (the vehicles are donated by Airport Toyota), they're all giving up their free time to come along. What's unique is that 100 per cent of everything that is donated ends up getting to those

two channels: the Murdoch Institute and the Children's Cancer Institute, which are the main things we're supporting at the moment in terms of research," Aaron said.

The route for this year's event takes the riders from the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne up to Mansfield, then across to Bright, then up the mountain to Omeo, across to Metung, then Moe, down to Cowes, and then finally back into Melbourne to finish where they started, at the hospital. This route covers 1000 kilometres, and the group will reach their destination on April 7.

The first day of the Ride for Lily had the group travelling from the Royal Children's Hospital to Mansfield, which saw them pass through the Murrindindi Shire. They passed Kinglake, and stopped for lunch in Yea, provided by the Rotary Club.

"We stopped in Yea, and had lunch. The Rotary Club of Yea organised lunch

for us in Yea. That was our major lunch stop. We had it at the little park where the public toilets are, and there's some seating and some shade there. It's a really beautiful little spot. The weather was beautiful at that time. When we left, within 15 minutes, the heavens opened up and we got absolutely belted with rain for about an hour and a half," Aaron said.

The route was created in memory of Alex Preston, whose family took him on a holiday across the route before they discovered he was terminally ill with brain cancer. He passed away in 2009, at age eight. Both of Alex's parents are taking part in this year's Ride for Lily.

The Ride for Lily has a fundraising goal of \$300 thousand this year, and, as of April 3, had collected \$225 thousand in donations. People looking to donate, or to find out more about the Live for Lily foundation, can visit the foundation website liveforlily.org.au

Anne Frank exhibition coming soon to Alexandra

MURRINDINDI Shire Council is inviting both locals and visitors to join the official opening of the exhibition titled *Let Me Be Myself – The Life Story of Anne Frank* on Saturday, April 27, at 11am at the Alexandra Library.

This remarkable exhibition, produced by the Anne Frank House, brings to life the touching story of Anne Frank, a Jewish German girl, and victim of the Holocaust, who is now famous for keeping a diary of her experiences while she and her family were in hiding, avoiding Nazi persecution.

The exhibition is being held at the library from May 1 to June 29, during usual library opening hours and entry is free. It is suitable for families and highlights prejudice and discriminatory issues, then and now, through young voices.

Red Gate Ward Mayor, Damien Gallagher, said "We are delighted to bring this incredible exhibition to Murrindindi Shire and host it at our wonderful Alexandra Library.

"Anne Frank is a well-known historical figure and one of the most prominent relating to the Holocaust. Her story is moving, devastating, hopeful, and provides an opportunity for us to remember and educate ourselves about the Holocaust, recognising those who suffered during this horrific time and those who continue to face discrimination and persecution in the present day."

"I'd like to congratulate council's library team for all their work in making this exhibition possible for our communities to experience."

'Let Me Be Myself' includes eight historical modules that weave Anne's personal story with the broader context of her time. Visitors will gain insight into Anne's joyful childhood in Frankfurt, her immigration to Amsterdam, and her life in hiding. The exhibition also sheds light on the rise of the National Socialists, the Holocaust, and the impact of anti-Jewish measures on individuals like Anne Frank.

Explore her extraordinary story and how it's relevant today through the historical modules, a model of the Anne Frank House, extracts from her diary, Second World War memorabilia and a copy of her diary.

For more information and to register for the opening event, visit murrindindi.vic.gov.au/annefrank or call 5772 0333.

Drumming workshops in Yea and Alexandra

MURRINDINDI Shire Council is hosting two African Drumming Workshops, taking participants on a memorable journey into West African Music. The workshops will be held on Thursday, May 9 in Alexandra and Yea.

Drums play an important role in every aspect of African life, including the physical, emotional and spiritual. Come along for an exciting experience filled with energy. Boost your mental wellbeing and help foster a sense of community and camaraderie.

During the workshops, the participants will learn about instruments, songs and rhythms. Every participant gets a djembe drum for the session. Sessions are inclusive regardless of age or ability. The sessions encourage mindfulness and provide stress relieving benefits.

The Yea workshop will be held at the Yea Wetlands from 10.45 to 11.15am, followed by a lunch.

The Alexandra workshop will be held at the Alexandra Shire Hall from from 5.30 to 6pm, followed by a barbecue dinner.

There are 100 spots available for each session, so get in quickly. Please register with council for catering purposes. For more information, please call council on 5772 0333.

This event is proudly supported by Council's Flood Recovery Unit. Flood recovery across Murrindindi Shire Council is jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments through Emergency Recovery Victoria.

MURRINDINDI COMMUNITY
food SHARE

SHARE WHAT YOU CAN
TAKE WHAT YOU NEED

First Thursday
each Month
9am - 12pm

Rear - 88a Grant St, Alexandra
Enter from Bayley St



You are invited to our

Exhibition Opening Event THE LIFE STORY OF ANNE FRANK

Saturday 27 April 2024 | 11.00 am
Alexandra Library, 49 Grant Street

Celebrate the official opening of the exhibition titled 'Let Me Be Myself - The Life Story of Anne Frank', as we reflect on the past, and consider the contemporary relevance of Anne Frank's story.

RSVP for this free event by visiting
murrindindi.vic.gov.au/annefrank
or by calling 5772 0333.

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Consulting at Alexandria District Health
- Starting in April 2024



GENERAL BREAST AND THYROID SURGEON, ENDOSCOPIST
Mr Binh T Nguyen
MBBS(Uni Melb)
FRACS

Mr Binh T Nguyen was trained in Melbourne, Australia. He completed his medical degree through the University of Melbourne. He is a Consultant Surgeon at Northern Health, Kilmore Hospital, Western Health (Bacchus Marsh) and Kyneton District Health. He operates privately at Northpark, Warringal and Epworth Hospitals. His subspecialty areas of interest are as follows:

- General surgery: skin lesions, ingrown toenails, hernias, varicose veins, circumcision, haemorrhoidectomy, gallbladder surgery, carpal tunnel, vasectomy, pilonidal surgery, perianal surgery, laparoscopic abdominal surgery
- Endoscopy
- Thyroid Surgery
- Breast Surgery

*Fees Apply



General surgical services commence in April at Alexandria District Health

by Director of Medical Services, Dr Poranee Buttery, Alexandria District Health

IT gives me great pleasure to announce that Mr Binh Nguyen, an experienced general, breast and endocrine surgeon has commenced practice at Alexandria District Health.

Mr Nguyen's range of surgical management offerings include, but are not limited to hernia surgery, endocrine conditions including thyroid, breast lesions and lumps, surgical endoscopy, and other soft tissue lesions.

While there is a preference to look after everyone as near to home as possible, sometimes conditions need a higher level of

care. With a public hospital appointment at the Northern Hospital, and private consulting at the Epworth, Warringal, and North Park Private Hospitals, Mr Nguyen can treat more complex surgery and support patients who require additional medical care.

For more information, his rooms can be contacted on 9017 1617. Please fax all referrals to 8888 4969. Email reception@gilbertroadspecialists.com.au

Bookings are now open, for consultations that will commence in April.

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APRIL COMMUNITY UPDATE - GOULBURN VALLEY PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT

STAY AHEAD OF FLU AND COVID THIS SEASON

This winter, we know what to do to stay well against the flu and COVID. Get your flu shot and up-to-date COVID vaccine. It's the most effective way to stay protected this winter.

You can get both vaccines at the same time, and the flu shot is free if you're

- aged 65 and over
- pregnant
- an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander over 6 months old
- and people with medical conditions that put them at increased risk of severe flu.

Remember, the flu shot protects children from serious illness caused by the flu. Children and babies six months or older need to get the flu vaccine every year. It can be given at the same time as other routine childhood vaccines and it's free for kids aged 6 months to under 5.



BOLO APRIL REPORT (Be On the Look Out)

COVID-19, FLU & RSV

COVID-19, flu and RSV are increasing in our community and we all need to help stop its spread. More people are getting sick in the community because our protection from both infection and vaccination decreases with time. We need to help and take care of people who are at greatest risk of getting sick – this includes older people over 65, people with a disability or other medical problems and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. If you feel sick or have any cold or flu like symptoms, it's important not to visit people who are at higher risk of getting very sick from the virus.

Book now with your doctor or pharmacist, find out where through the vaccination finder by scanning the QR code.

For more information visit betterhealth.vic.gov.au/stay-well-this-winter





Keeping the honey bee population healthy

WITH over 47,900 registered beekeepers who own approximately 855,300 hives, keeping Australia's honey bee population healthy is no mean feat.

'Bee Pest Blitz' is an annual month-long national campaign to increase awareness of the importance of bee biosecurity and encourage beekeepers to inspect

their hives for high priority exotic and established pests.

Launched in 2023, the annual campaign calls on all Australian

honey bee beekeepers to undertake biosecurity surveillance activities.

"Surveillance is key to the timely detection of new pests and provides the best chance for industries and

governments to respond before pests become established and widespread." Sarah Hilton, Bee Biosecurity Manager at Plant Health Australia said.

Under the *Honey Bee Industry Code of Practice* beekeepers are required to inspect their hives twice per year, using a method that looks for the presence of arthropod pests, including *Varroa* spp. (*varroa*) and *Tropilaelaps* spp. (*tropilaelaps*) mites.

By participating in 'Bee Pest Blitz' beekeepers will fulfil one of their annual bee biosecurity obligations and requirements.

This time of the year is ideal to conduct hive inspections which are crucial for the early detection of exotic and reporting of high priority established bee pests.

Beekeepers are asked to keep samples of suspected pests and report their findings via the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline 1800 084 881.

Surveillance reporting will be handled at a jurisdictional level and all personal information will be kept confidential.

"Maintaining honey bee health and sustainable bee populations is essential for the future production of Australian honey and supporting those agricultural sectors that depend on honey bee pollination services," Sarah said.

Visit beepestblitz.com.au for free surveillance resources and video tutorial.



Beekeepers are being asked to help keep the local bee population healthy. -John Sullivan

Seeking farms for demonstrations

AGRICULTURE Victoria, in partnership with Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA), is conducting a new producer demonstration program with the opportunity to establish five new on-farm demonstration projects.

Agriculture Victoria Project Leader Farming Systems, Bindi Hunter, said the program is inviting expressions of interest from Victorian sheep and beef producer groups to design and conduct their own three-year project.

"The demonstrations are conducted on group members' farms (preferably three sites per project per year) and involve participation by members in group activities, including skill development, site monitoring and discussion of results.

"Projects must be focused on increasing adoption of key management practices or commercially available technologies that improve business profitability, farm productivity and sustainability," Ms Hunter said.

Selected projects will focus on demonstrating systems or technologies in one of four priority areas: Manage and adapt to a changing climate or specific regional conditions (e.g. addressing feed gaps, grazing system, enterprise mix); reduce emissions or emissions intensity, (e.g. reproductive efficiencies, feed types and quality, soil fertility management); manage animal health and welfare risks resulting from increasing or emerging biosecurity threats in a changing climate;

or implement on-farm innovations that improve production and management efficiencies (e.g. recent research findings, genetics, ag tech).

Expressions of interest close on Monday, May 13.

For more information and to receive an expression of interest form, contact Bindi Hunter, Project Leader Farming Systems on 0428 589 016 or email bindi.hunter@agriculture.vic.gov.au

MARCH PHOTO COMPETITION

WINNER

'Bulls' March competition winner
Bronwyn McFadyen



Judge Sam Hicks comments: Gorgeous boy!!!
The image is a clear capture, and he is cheeky poking his tongue out, so he is the winner.

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Submit your photo entry to manager@alexandranewspapers.com.au by April 30, for your chance to win a \$50 gift voucher from *Dindi Country Clothing* in Alexandra.

The April theme is 'CHANGING TREES'.

Professional photographers are ineligible to enter

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PHOTO COMPETITION

Submit your photo competition entry for April, for your chance to win a \$50 gift voucher from *Dindi Country Clothing* in Alexandra.

The April theme is 'changing trees'.
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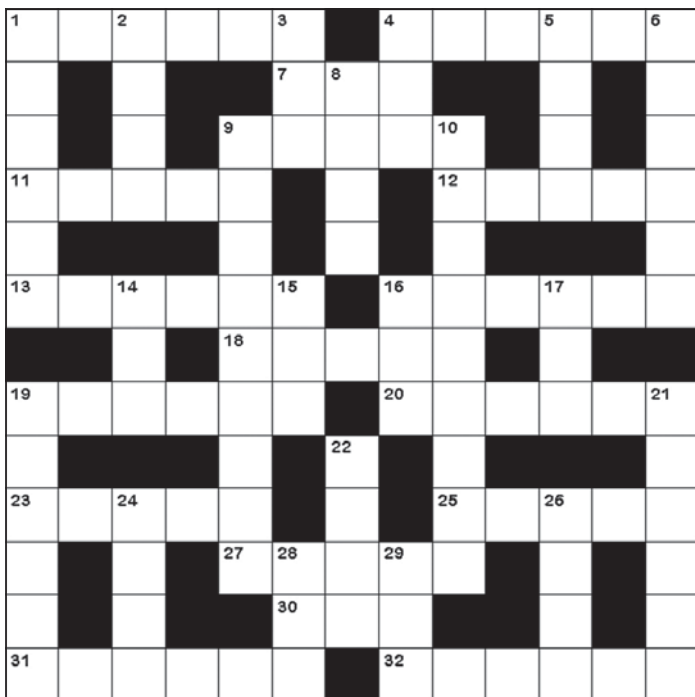
PUZZLES

SOLUTIONS
Page 11

Crossword

ACROSS

1. Not private.
4. A light refreshing wind.
7. An alcoholic drink.
9. Main force of a blow.
11. A very dark black.
12. Make corrections to.
13. Material for starting a fire.
16. A keen insight.
18. Born in Wales.
19. Went back to bad behaviour.
20. Take and hold for ransom.
23. A descriptive heading.
25. A high sheen.
27. Put on clothes.
30. Be in debt.
31. Put together two or more pieces.
32. Australia's floral emblem.



DOWN

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Set in advance. | 9. Covered with precious gems. | 21. Hand tool used to grind and pulverise. |
| 2. A cutting remark. | 10. Schools of thought. | 22. Masticate. |
| 3. An automobile. | 14. A small sharp bite. | 24. A duplicate copy. |
| 4. A Buddhist doctrine. | 15. A carpet for celebrities. | 26. Leave undone. |
| 5. A fish similar to cod. | 16. Inquire about. | 28. A fishing pole. |
| 6. Covered with fleas. | 17. Adult males. | 29. Stitch together. |
| 8. A small cube of sugar. | 19. Capable of causing death. | |

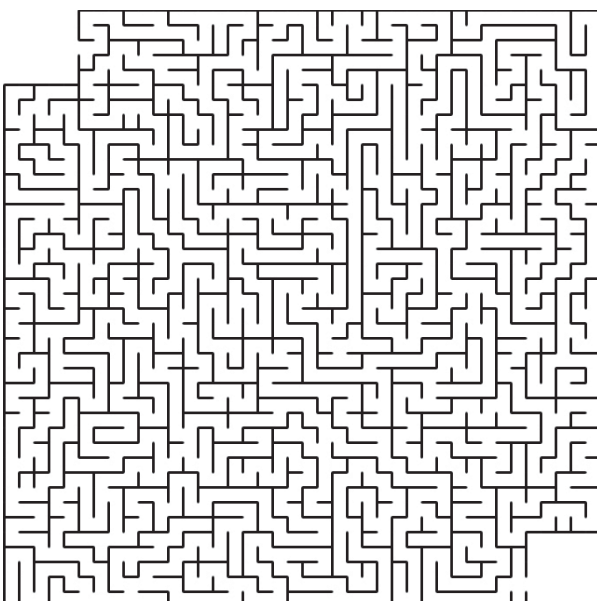
Word Search

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

OUTER SPACE

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| ASTEROID | METEOR |
| ASTRONAUT | MOON |
| BLACKHOLE | NEBULA |
| COMET | ORBIT |
| ECLIPSE | SATELLITE |
| GALAXY | SUN |

Maze



Sudoku

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

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.

Math Square

4	÷		+		9
×		+		+	
	×		+		48
+		+		+	
	-		-	1	-3
42		15		11	

Fill in the missing numbers.

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

AGL grants for local community organisations

LOCAL community organisations could be eligible for up to \$5000 in grants from the AGL Hydro Community Fund.

The fund, which aims to support the community located around AGL's hydro assets, is open for applications from April 1 to April 30.

AGL representative, Belinda Young, said of the fund, "We aim to work in ways that give lasting benefits to the communities that we operate in, and our goal is to create positive social, environmental and economic outcomes as our business grows."

To be eligible for the grants, organisations must be not-for-profit and located close to AGL's hydro assets. This, in particular, relates to the communities of Eildon, Mount Beauty, and Rubicon. However, other local community organisation applications are also accepted.

Organisations that AGL considers for the grants include local sporting clubs, grassroots community groups, toy libraries, writers' festivals, kindergartens and schools, to name

just a few. The company is also willing to provide grants to local support services, for things that help the community in times of need.

Ms Young said that AGL moves forward "with the view that we hope we can create resilient communities, we can help with climate action, cost of living, and First Nations empowerment, they are all really important."

The guidelines for the AGL Hydro Community Fund has information on the groups that are eligible to apply for a grant.

Announcements regarding successful applications and distribution of grants will be made sometime before the end of May, and invoices are required before the end of the financial year.

Applications can be completed via an online form, found on the company's website, agl.com.au/hydro and navigating to the community tab, or a paper version can be provided. For further enquiries, contact Belinda Young on 0429 597 535.

Digital drivers licences

VICTORIANS will now have the option to carry their licence on their phone, with the Victorian Government's digital driver licenses set to begin rolling out across the state next month.

Minister for Roads and Road Safety, Melissa Horne, and Minister for Government Services, Gabrielle Williams, announced the rollout.

Throughout April, consultation will ramp up with organisations that rely on photo identification including bars, restaurants, retailers, Victoria Police, and Australia Post to ensure they're prepared for the rollout.

In May, more than 4.5 million Victorians who are fully licenced drivers, motorcyclists, or heavy vehicle operators will be the first eligible to download digital driver's licences as part of the state-wide launch.

This follows a successful trial in Ballarat last year, where more than 15,000 Victorians accessed their digital licences via the myVicRoads and Service Victoria apps.

Digital licences have undergone rigorous privacy and security testing, boasting features like a dynamic hologram and a timed QR code that businesses and authorities can scan to verify authenticity and prevent fraudulent use.

The licences can also be updated in real-time if there are changes to licence conditions or personal information like home addresses.

Victorians who have downloaded either the VicRoads or Services Victoria app will automatically receive their digital licence through their app once it has been processed in May and will be alerted either by push notification or email.

Learners and probationary licence holders will be able to access their digital licence by 2025. Visit the VicRoads or Service Victoria websites to find out more about digital driver licences.

Minister for Roads and Road Safety Melissa Horne said, "Our digital driver licences will make it easier for Victorians when they go about their day-to-day lives, whether that's driving around, renting a car, collecting a parcel, or visiting a licensed venue."

Minister for Government Services Gabrielle Williams added, "Victorians have been asking us for a digital driver licence, and from next month millions of Victorians can access them on their phones alongside other government-issued cards like a Working with Children Check, seniors card or fishing licence."

One giant leaf for plant-kind

NASA has announced that when humans take their first steps back on the moon after 50 years during the Artemis III mission, astronauts will cultivate and return lunar-grown plants to Earth for the first time. The mission is slated for a September 2026 launch.

Known as Lunar Effects on Agricultural Flora (LEAF), the project will collect plant growth and development data that will help scientists understand the use of plants grown for both human nutrition and life support on the moon and beyond.

The project involves the University of Adelaide, University of Western Australia, and La Trobe University, as well as various United States departments and universities.

"This research will be a pivotal step toward understanding how we might use agriculture in space to support human crews, paving the way for sustained lunar exploration and even missions to Mars," said Project Lead and Space Lab Vice President, Christine Escobar.

Associate Professor of Plant Synthetic Biology at the University of Adelaide and P4S

Chief Investigator, Jenny Mortimer, said the mission will tell us how plants respond in an off-Earth environment, and how well we can build a robust, fully contained environment that allows them to thrive.

"The data we capture from the mission, both from the lunar surface and what we learn when we analyse the samples upon return, will help us to design the lunar and martian crops of the future," Associate Professor Mortimer said.

The LEAF experiment includes a plant growth chamber with an isolated atmosphere, housing red and green varieties of *Brassica rapa* (Wisconsin Fast Plants), *Wolffia* (duckweed), and *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

Experiments undertaken as part of the LEAF program will progress P4S goals to develop novel plant-based foods and biomanufacturing technologies that assist humans to explore deeper into space than ever before, while also advancing on-Earth sustainability and efficiency.

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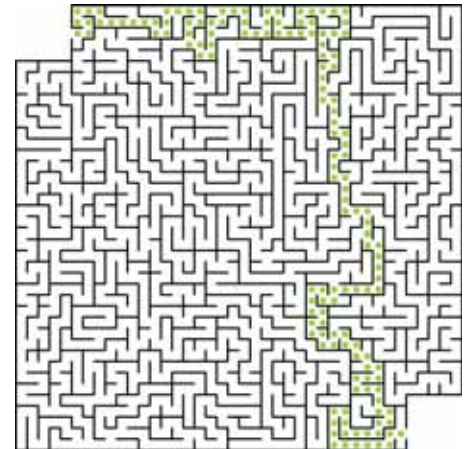
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Duck hunting at GMW storages

GOULBURN-Murray Water (GMW) is reminding duck hunters to be aware of designated hunting areas at the water corporation's lakes, dams, and reservoirs this hunting season.

The Victorian Government has announced the 2024 duck season will open at 8am on Wednesday, April 10 and close 30 minutes after sunset on Wednesday, June 5.

The announcement detailed that the hunting start time will be 8am until 30 minutes after sunset for the entire season and that the daily bag limit will be six ducks per day. Blue-winged shovellers and hardheads cannot be hunted for the 2024 season due to their threatened status.

GMW acting Water Storage Services General Manager, Craig Kellow, asked people to make preparations before going hunting at GMW lakes, dams, and reservoirs.

"It is important hunters familiarise themselves with the duck hunting arrangements for the 2024 season," he said.

"Duck hunting is permitted at several of our lakes, dams, and reservoirs, but there

are still areas at these storages where hunting is prohibited.

"It is important hunters are aware of these locations before they visit. We have maps on our website showing people where hunting is not allowed, and we encourage people to get in touch with us if they need something clarified.

"Hunters will also need to get landholder consent to hunt or pass through private property that adjoins GMW land, waterways, and storages.

"We ask everyone to be considerate of other members of the public and the environment, and to make safety their priority."

Duck hunting is permitted at the following GMW storages: Cairn Curran Reservoir, Tullaroop Reservoir, Lake Hume, Lake Eppalock, Laanecoorie Reservoir, Greens Lake, Lake Eildon, Lake Buffalo, Waranga Basin, Lake Charm, Kangaroo Lake, Lake Nillahcootie, and Lake Nagambie.

However, wetlands can be closed to hunting by the Minister for Environment and the Minister for Outdoor Recreation under the *Wildlife Act 1975* for various reasons, including

to protect significant numbers of threatened species or breeding waterbird colonies.

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

The Victoria Police, and authorised officers from partner agencies, will patrol wetlands across Victoria to ensure people are abiding by the rules.

People can report illegal hunting and breaches to public safety laws to the GMA, by phoning 136 186 or visiting the GMA website, gma.vic.gov.au

The GMA website also contains the details of the 2024 duck hunting season arrangements at gma.vic.gov.au/hunting/duck/duck-season-arrangements

More information on duck hunting at GMW storages, including maps specifying where duck hunting is permitted, can be found on the GMW website gmwater.com.au/duckhunting

Concern wetlands closures fall short

REGIONAL Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting Inc (RVOTDS) welcomed the closure of the 32 wetlands to protect threatened species, but slammed the Victorian Government for ignoring evidence put to it, to close a small list of additional waterways for other "critically important" reasons.

The not-for-profit recently submitted to the minister, a list of 26 public duck-shooting sites it requested be closed not just for the presence of threatened species, but for aboriginal culture, proximity to residents, and public health or safety concerns.

Six of these requests have been fully granted and two partially, on the basis of protecting threatened species. However, none were granted on the basis of Indigenous culture, proximity to residents, or health and safety or social and economic reasons.

RVOTDS spokesperson, Kerrie Allen, said, "My question is this. How many tens of thousands of Victoria's public waterways do less than half of one percent of the population who like to shoot birds, need to be able to shoot on? And what is the mental, physical, social and economic cost to everyone else?"

"Shooting hampers tourism and more popular (and financially beneficial) pastimes such as boating, fishing, and birdwatching. Incessant gunfire from duck shooters' shotguns is audible within three kilometers, a nuisance (legal term) which has an adverse impact on people's mental health as well as their ability to earn a living. Eco tourism businesses are forced to close. Shift workers cannot sleep. People cannot work from home. Farmers cannot attend their crops, irrigation pumps nor stock, for fear of being shot. Ammunition (sometimes lead) lands on rooves which collect water supplies."

RVOTDS said feedback from regional communities was critical, as no cost-benefit analysis has ever been done by authorities. Similarly, only two risk assessments have ever been done and both of those wetlands were closed to shooting (in 2019) as a result.

"We are appalled the government is not heeding community feedback, nor taking public health and safety more seriously.

"Closing a number of waterways to shooting would go a long way towards ensuring the regulator can actually perform its job and monitor the shooting, that nearby residents and landowners' rights are protected, and that tourism could thrive in regional areas where it's needed most.

"As most native bird shooting occurs on private land, removing these 26 public sites from the shooting list, does not restrict the shooters' recreation. But it does benefit the wider community, significantly.

"The government appears to have very low regard for our native wildlife and regional communities. It can't fund our hospitals, but it can find millions of dollars to support the minority recreation of native bird hunting, and it lets it happen at so many thousands of public waterways they can't possibly be monitored.

"Why have a requirement in the *Game Management Authority Act* which states the regulator must consider social/economic impacts of hunting on community, when over the last decade it has continually refused to do so?" she said.

when hunting, including knowing where it is legal to hunt.

GMA Game Officers, Victoria Police and Authorised Officers from DEECA, DJSIR and Parks Victoria will be patrolling wetlands across Victoria.

For more information on game hunting in Victoria, visit gma.vic.gov.au



A female freckled duck. Freckled ducks are one of the species which are protected from this year's duck hunt through the closure of 32 wetlands areas. -Dick Daniels

Some wetlands closed to hunting

THE Victorian Government has closed or partially closed 32 wetlands to hunting for the 2024 duck season to prevent losses or disturbance to significant numbers of threatened species and breeding waterbirds.

The number of wetlands closed to hunting in 2024 is partly due to an increase in the presence of threatened species currently present at Victorian wetlands.

The increase in the presence of threatened species is due to favourable environmental conditions, including extensive flooding in late 2022, resulting in increased waterbird habitat and breeding activity. As wetlands dry, birds are concentrating on remaining wetlands.

Wetlands have been closed to duck hunting to protect significant concentrations of threatened species including the blue-billed

duck, blue-winged shoveler, freckled duck, curlew sandpiper and brolga.

Other wetlands have also been closed to prevent disturbance to colonies of breeding waterbirds, and three wetlands (Kow Swamp, Reedy Lakes and Richardson River) are routinely closed each year to reinforce their status as wildlife sanctuaries where game hunting is prohibited.

Signage will be installed to alert hunters to the closures and wetlands will be monitored throughout the season. If the reason for closure no longer exists, the wetland may be reopened to hunting.

Closing wetlands or regulating hunting methods at wetlands ensures that threatened species are protected and duck hunting remains sustainable.

Other wetlands may be closed or further regulated if significant concentrations of threatened species are found.

Hunters should check the GMA website regularly for updates to wetland closures at gma.vic.gov.au

Hunters are reminded that the hunting start time is 8am every day of the season, from Wednesday, April 10 to Wednesday, June 5 (inclusive). Hunting must stop 30 minutes after sunset. The daily bag limit is six game ducks.

The blue-winged shoveler and hardhead must not be hunted in Victoria this year.

Hunters are responsible for understanding their legal, ethical and safety obligations

Flood insurance inquiry to hold hearings in Melbourne and regional Victoria

THE House Standing Committee on Economics will hold public hearings in Melbourne and regional Victoria from April 17 to 19 as part of its inquiry into insurers' responses to 2022 major floods claims.

The committee will hold public hearings at Maidstone Community Centre in Maribyrnong (Wednesday, April 17), Rochester Shire Hall (Thursday, April 18), and Heathcote RSL Hall (Friday, April 19).

Committee Chair Daniel Mulino MP said the inquiry had heard from regulators, insurance companies and consumer advocacy and legal rights groups. "Now we want to hear firsthand from the locals in some of the worst-hit regions," he said.

Dr Mulino said the hearing on April 17 will hear from affected councils, community organisations and businesses, which have

been invited to give evidence at roundtable discussions. Organisations that wish to contribute can email their interest to the committee secretariat.

Expressions of interest are also being sought from residents to give a three to four-minute public statement about their experience with their insurers. Dr Mulino urged people "with a story to share, and who are willing to go on the public record, to register as soon as possible their interest in appearing".

The committee would like to hear about any of the following issues: The experiences of policyholders before, during and after making claims; timeframes for resolving claims; obstacles to resolving claims; insurers' communication with policyholders; accessibility, affordability and quality of hydrology reports and other expert assessments; affordability of insurance

premiums; and claimants' experiences of insurers' dispute resolution processes.

People who wish to make a public statement should email a one or two sentence summary of their experience to the Committee secretariat at floodinsurance.reps@aph.gov.au

They should write 'Public hearing' and the hearing location (Maribyrnong, Rochester or Heathcote) in the subject line and include the full name(s) for each person who wants to participate, as well as a contact number and email address.

Dr Mulino said that the hearings may not be able to accommodate everybody on the day. "We know that in some of these places almost everyone has a story to tell. But for anyone who misses out or who wishes to provide information to the Committee,

there is still time to make a public or confidential submission, and/or complete our online survey."

More than 400 people have completed the survey about their experience with their insurer.

Submissions can be uploaded at aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/OnlineSubmission or emailed to floodinsurance.reps@aph.gov.au until July 31.

Programs for the hearings will be posted on the inquiry website aph.gov.au/floodinsurance closer to the time. A live audio stream of the hearings will be available on the APH website.

For further information contact the committee secretariat on 02 6277 4707 or email floodinsurance.reps@aph.gov.au

Removal of right to appeal renewables projects

MEMBER for Indi Helen Haines has written to the Victorian Government expressing her dismay with its decision to remove the right for third parties to appeal renewable energy planning decisions through the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

From April 1, third parties will no longer be able appeal to VCAT about planning decisions of renewable energy projects.

"I'm listening to my communities, including people from Dederang and Meadow Creek, who are telling me about their genuine concerns about large-scale renewable energy projects proposed close to where they live," Dr Haines said.

In her letter to the Minister for Energy and Resources, Lily D'Ambrosia, and Minister for Planning, Sonya Kilkenny, Dr Haines expressed concern that under the current system, there are not enough safeguards to ensure communities are heard and their issues acted upon by developers.

"The State Government is not listening to these concerns, and project developers are not consistently offering real benefits to regional communities expected to host these projects. The removal of the right to appeal to VCAT will exacerbate this situation," Dr Haines said.

"I am with my communities 100 per cent on this. Fast-tracking projects and silencing communities is terrible governance."

To address the concerns of regional and rural communities about renewable energy infrastructure projects, Dr Haines and Independent Senator for the ACT, David Pocock, worked with the federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Chris Bowen, in 2023, to establish an independent review into community engagement and benefit sharing for renewable energy developments.

"The Community Engagement Review final report was clear - the state and federal governments must improve community engagement and consultation," Dr Haines said.

"The decision to remove the right to appeal to VCAT is contrary to the recommendations of the review's final report.

"In my letter to the state ministers, I asked how the Victorian Government will act to implement the recommendations of the review to ensure community engagement and community benefit are delivered for the communities in Indi impacted by renewable energy projects.

"The federal government needs to put money behind the recommendations in the review and work with the states to legislate best practice community engagement for the energy transition.

"I support the transition to renewables but regional people should be given opportunities to benefit from the renewable energy transition, this must be done with us, not to us.

"I will continue to fight for regional and rural communities who should be benefitting from the shift to renewables, not punished for speaking up when the government gets it wrong."

When contacted about the issue, a Victorian Government spokesperson said, "Victoria's old coal fired generators are closing and the cost of fossil fuels are rising globally. That's why we're streamlining planning approvals for renewable energy projects to keep the lights on and bills down.

"These changes bring renewable energy project approvals in line with other significant economic projects in Victoria, including for affordable housing and hospitals.

"Of course Victorians will still be able to have their say and our planners will consider all submissions and unresolved issues will be referred to our advisory committee."

More than one in five renewables projects end up getting stuck in VCAT and in the overwhelming majority of cases the initial decision to support the project is upheld.

Community consultation will continue to form a key part of the renewable project planning process. There are no changes to the public notice process and all members of the community will be able to make submissions. All objections and feedback will be considered as part of the usual assessment of any application.

Seymour Alternative Farming Expo is right around the corner

THE Seymour Alternative Farming Expo is fast approaching, and there is not only fun to be had but also lessons to learn and questions to answer.

The farm lectures and learning hub talks are among the many ways visitors can make their trip both educational and entertaining.

One of the businesses attending is Australian Bee Supplies, which will provide beekeeping tips for beginners and demonstrations.

"We'll go through cost, how to get bees, the required equipment and the different types of frames and their advantages and disadvantages," Andrew Stanish from Australian Bee Supplies said.

"We will also do some demonstrations on smoking, and there will be beekeepers there to answer anyone's questions."

During the three-day event, the Seymour Agricultural and Pastoral Society will also be present to answer any questions.

Those interested in fluffy, furry friends can chat with the Mayfield Poll Highland Cattle team about their unique breeds.

Plus, the Eden Rise Alpacas will be present to dispel any myths about alpacas as pets.

One of the highly anticipated features at the expo for both experienced anglers and casual fishers is the Berkley Supertank.

The Berkley Supertank is one of the biggest mobile fish tanks in the southern hemisphere and will take visitors of all ages

on an underwater journey with up to 20 live fish, including barramundi.

The 12,000-litre tank is a portable fishing show and educational program designed to give the public a fish-eye view of the world of angling.

Michael Cooke, a seasoned angler with over 60 years of fishing experience, will demonstrate lure and bait fishing techniques from on top of the tank during a 20 minute show.

"This is a show for the whole family, even non-fishing people, and we don't use any hooks," he said.

"The presentations include catch and release techniques, mastering lures and gear tips for the first timers.

"The team will also demonstrate how the many different types of fish react to different lures and techniques used by many of today's top anglers."

The live demonstrations are educational, exciting, entertaining and will run throughout each day of the event.

The clear perspex sides of the tank provide a good view of how the lures work and the action in the water.

If learning is what you love, there's plenty to enjoy at this month's Seymour expo.

The Seymour Alternative Farming Expo will be held from Friday, April 12, to Sunday, April 14, from 9am to 4pm each day at Kings Park Reserve on Tallarook St in Seymour.

Murrindindi Community Food Share initiative

FOUNDATION Murrindindi is proud to announce the launch of its new food share initiative, Murrindindi Community Food Share. Designed to address the pressing issue of food insecurity in our community, the program aims to provide accessible food to those in need.

The *Foodbank Hunger Report 2023* reports that the rising cost of living is the most common reason why people in Australia are struggling to put food on the table. Recognising the urgency of this issue, Foundation Murrindindi has taken proactive steps to establish Murrindindi Community Food Share for people experiencing financial hardship in a non-judgemental and respectful way.

"We recognise the need to address food insecurity in our community, and the launch of the Murrindindi Community Food Share initiative reaffirms our commitment to supporting the well-being of residents in Murrindindi

Shire," Robyn Hill, Executive Officer of Foundation Murrindindi said.

"By harnessing the power of community support, we believe that we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of those experiencing food insecurity. The philosophy behind Murrindindi Community Food Share is 'Share what you can, take what you need'. This initiative is a tangible way that community can support community in addressing food insecurity."

Murrindindi Community Food Share will be open on the first Thursday of every month, from 9am to noon at the rear of 88a Grant Street, Alexandra accessed via Bayley Street. Non-perishable food and personal care items will be available. No appointments are necessary, simply drop in to the Community Food Share and bring your own bag if possible. The food share gratefully accept donations of

fresh fruit and vegetables during opening hours on the day the Food Share is open.

This free initiative aims to complement the existing service providers addressing the increasing demand for food relief in our community.

Foundation Murrindindi encourages individuals and businesses interested in supporting the Food Share project to get involved by donating food items or providing financial contributions to sustain the program's operations.

To learn more about Foundation Murrindindi and how to get involved in the Foodshare initiative, please contact Robyn Hill on 0488 007 688 or robyn@foundationmurrindindi.org.au

Foundation Murrindindi will also have a new office location at 88A Grant Street in Alexandra, so you can pop in and visit them. The new office opened on April 1.



Highball Cars and Coffee rolls in

A vehicle driving through the spectacular autumn leaves. -AR



A micro coupe. -AR



The driveway trees provided a great backdrop to the event. -AR



A huge array of cars were on display. -AR



Fortunately, the rain held off during the event. -AR



The event was a great fundraiser for the Buxton CFA. -AR



A Commer. -AR



The food at the event was provided by Grant Street Grocer and the Marysville Lions Club. -AR



A modified Nissan. -AR

The Chronicle Sport



Sports Editorial: sports@alexandranewspapers.com.au



The Royal Yea Golf Course looking magnificent. -S

Slow Track and Barry Moore Trophy

by Phil Armstrong and Alan Pell

DESPITE extra heavy recent rain, the stewards declared a good track for last Wednesday's stableford event at Yea Golf Club. The colts and geldings event attracted 16 entries, including some that have recent good form. Mick Spagnolo (6) took out the event in a photo finish from Phil Armstrong (22), when they both finished with the excellent score of 39 points. Martin Lowe (19) who has had recent success on good tracks showed his versatility to take out third place with 35 points. A fast finish from John Phillips (18) saw him just get pipped and take home fourth place on count back. John responded with a quinella, taking home the nearest the pin on the second hole.

The steward's report noted that several starters weren't suited by the heavier going, and that Russell Haack was swabbed post event and awarded the Club Award.

In the mares and fillies event, 13 starters went to the barriers. Proven stayer Miranda Gill (17) showed all her experience to take out the event with 35 points, turning the table on Cindy Armstrong (32) with 34 points. These two would be at low priced odds for the quinella at their next start. Khai Jarvis (37) filled the minor placing with 30 points showing the benefit of recent starts in the northern regions. Di Elliott, Margie Wright and Sharon Grogan also finished with 30 points. There was no nearest the pin on the second hole for the ladies.

Saturday, April 6, saw 22 men contest the second round of the Barry Moore Trophy at 'Royal Yea'. Conditions were good with light rain showers at times. Winner of the day, continuing his form from Albury Golf Week, was Paul Clayton (10) with 38 points. Second on count back was Michael Spagnolo (6) following up on his win from last Wednesday. Third with 37 points was Greg Clements from fourth Andrew Bohn (6), also on 37. Fifth was John Phillips (18) with 36 points. Nearest the pin on the second was Brendan Chenhall, while Jeff Aurisch won the Club Award. Jan Wealands with 34 points won the ladies' stableford event on Saturday, April 6.

Barry Moore won 18 A-Grade and four B-Grade championships at Yea from 1953 to 2001. The two round event named in

his honour was won by Malcolm Bett this year with scores of 42/33, and a total of 75 stableford points. Second with 74 points was Martin Lowe from third Michael Spagnolo with 73. A full list of results is available on the Yea Golf Club website.

As mentioned before, Paul Clayton was the Golf Week Champion of 2024 at Albury. Winner of the Scratch Eclectic for 2023 was Anthony Coleman and the Handicap Eclectic Winner for 2023 was Alan Pell.

Pennant was played on Sunday, April 7, by Yea at Alexandra Golf Club versus Strathbogie. Rick Wills won one up. Brendan Chenhall lost 4.3, while John Phillips won 4.3. Greg Clements lost 2.1. Tom White won 5.3. Yea won the round, 3.2.



Alan Pell, Handicap Eclectic 2023. -S



Anthony Coleman, Scratch Eclectic 2023. -S



Paul Clayton, Albury GW Champion. -S



Malcolm Bett. -S

Grants available for regional racing clubs

REGIONAL racing clubs could be eligible for grants worth up to \$100 thousand under the government's Regional Customer Facilities Program.

The program, which aims to support regional racing clubs to improve infrastructure and facilities, is open for applications until July 31.

Speaking about the program, Acting Minister for Racing, Enver Erdogan, said "we want to develop facilities that support participation and inclusion of the broader community in regional racing clubs – it's about bringing communities together and boosting local economic activity.

"These grants will give regional communities and racegoers access to top notch facilities that go beyond race days and can be used for cultural events and community celebrations," he said.

Racing clubs that are eligible for the grants include those licensed under section 24A of

the *Racing Act 1958*, and clubs licensed by Racing Victoria Limited as a picnic racing club.

Applicants can request up to \$100 thousand per project involving upgrading club facilities. Further information can be found at vic.gov.au/regional-customer-facilities-program