

Standard

INCORPORATING THE ALEXANDRA TIMES - THE YARCK, GOBUR, TAGGERTY, THORNTON, AND ACHERON EXPRESS

P.O Box 5, Alexandra, 3714. Ph: (03) 5772 1002; Fax: (03) 5772 1603; Email: reception@alexandranewspapers.com.au Wednesday, October 2, 2024 \$2.00 inc. GST

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Sudden changes to health transport

ON Thursday, September 26, Marie Bristow raised concerns on Facebook, saying that just a day earlier, local patients receiving dialysis at Seymour had been advised that they would no longer have transport to and from their treatment paid for through Non-Emergency Patient Transport, run by Ambulance Victoria.

Marie said that without the support, people needing the treatment from Alexandra would need to pay almost \$350 for each return trip in taxi if family and friends or volunteer drivers are not available, and they need treatment three times each week, for three to five hours each. This is obviously untenable for people on pensions or similar.

It's understood that the changes may also impact people receiving cancer treatments or transplant treatments, if they don't meet the criteria determined by Ambulance Victoria.

This tightening of the rules is likely to have an enormous impact on patients, particularly those living in regional areas, away from large hospitals.

Ambulance Victoria were contacted about the issue. Executive Director Specialist Operations and Coordination (Acting), Michael Georgiou said, "There has been no change to eligibility for NEPT. These rules ensure it's available for those who need clinical care during transport and help ambulance services focus on the sickest Victorians first.

"Each time NEPT is used for someone who doesn't need clinical care, it puts extra pressure on paramedics and we're working with health services to ensure

bookings follow the rules and to share other transport options, like public transport, taxis, or community services."

Ambulance Victoria also advised that Non-Emergency Patient Transport (NEPT) is for patients who require clinical monitoring or supervision during transport, but do not require an emergency ambulance. To ensure NEPT can support those who need the service, eligibility criteria will enforce existing NEPT Regulations from Monday, September 30. This means any bookings that do not meet this criteria will no longer be accepted.

They added that this will help Ambulance Victoria to significantly reduce the strain on air and road ambulances, and ensure that NEPT services can continue to meet the needs of the growing Victorian community, while also improving overall ambulance availability.

It should be noted that locally, patients have been using taxis rather than NEPT ambulances, reimbursed through the program.

Ambulance Victoria said that there has been a significant 25 per cent increase in demand for NEPT since 2019, meaning at times Ambulance Victoria has needed to use emergency vehicles for these non-emergency trips, to help meet demand. Recent analysis of these bookings shows that at least one in 10 patients currently accessing NEPT resources don't meet the existing criteria, because they don't need clinical monitoring or supervision for their travel and could use alternative transport options.

Criteria to qualify for the use of NEPT services includes: The patient

must require active clinical monitoring, care or supervision during transport provided by either a paramedic, health professional or qualified Patient Transport Officer or Attendant; and the transport must have been authorised by an appropriate health professional, require the use of specialised medical equipment contained within the vehicle, or require the clinical skill levels and qualifications of the staff in the vehicle, or have an illness or a disability that makes it impractical to use any other form of transport, for example, severe immobility or disorientation.

Bookings that do not meet the criteria for NEPT will no longer be provided transport, including taxis.

AV said they have been working with health services to communicate these changes with their patients so that they can explore alternative transport options.

The Department of Health were also contacted but their response was very similar to the one received from Ambulance Victoria.

Member for Eildon Cindy McLeish commented, "I would expect that non-emergency patient transport be arranged, so people aren't left in the lurch. It should be at the very least, especially with the service ending so quickly after patients were informed.

"Taxis are prohibitive and it is difficult to find someone to commit to driving that distance several times a week."

It's understood that members of the community have begun discussions to develop workarounds and to hopefully create positive outcomes for the people impacted by this change.



Steve Lynch caught this lovely photo of a rainbow over Alexandra on Tuesday, September 24. -S

Council pens letter to minister

ON Monday, September 30, Murrindindi Shire Council wrote to Mary-Anne Thomas MP, Minister for Health, Health Infrastructure and Ambulance Services, seeking urgent clarification regarding community concerns about the withdrawal of transport services for patients requiring dialysis, cancer treatment and other critical care.

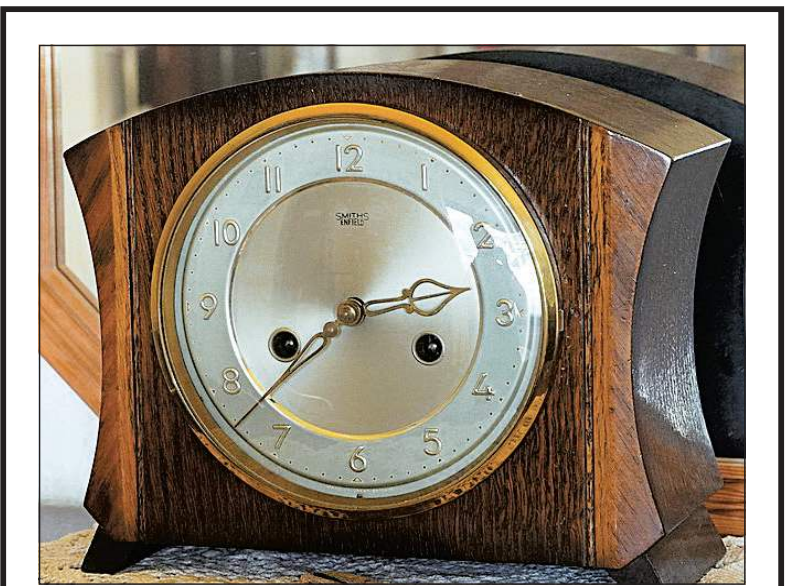
This follows feedback that transport to Seymour for dialysis treatment, a lifeline for patients, was discontinued on September 30.

Council said that the issue is of significant concern to the community, which already experiences a higher incidence of chronic health conditions, including kidney disease, compared to the Victorian average. Living in

Murrindindi Shire should not impede access to critical public health services.

Council is eager to work with the government to explore opportunities for expanding health services within the shire, including the possibility of providing dialysis locally. This would alleviate the financial and logistical burden of transport while also addressing the challenges of distance and the lack of public transport. Reducing these barriers would improve early diagnosis and treatment, preventing the progression of chronic conditions that can worsen due to delayed care.

Council will continue to advocate for the expansion and continuity of essential healthcare support.



DAYLIGHT SAVING: Spring has sprung, so don't forget that on October 6, it's time to 'spring forward' an hour (rather than 'fall back'). -Klaus Martin Weber

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- To show threatening behaviour towards our staff.

If you do, we have the right to ask you to leave our office and we may contact the police, or we may disconnect your call.

If you have a problem or complaint, we are happy to listen if you discuss this with us politely, please don't take your anger out on us.



Letters to the Editor

Council elections

IT is great to see that in this year's council elections every ward is being contested, so it behoves us to closely examine the claims and qualities of the candidates. In the voting pack there are statements from each of the

candidates which is a good place to start but do they stand up to scrutiny? If you don't know the candidate and their qualifications and activities in the community or work then please take time to talk to friends and neighbours to flesh out the bones.

Past experience as a councillor may be good or bad. Holding the office is not as relevant as the way they did the job.

A councillor is similar to a board member of a corporation. Councillors set the direction for operations, oversee the finances and double check proper process is being followed. The broad range of services provided by council requires councillors to acquire a commensurate broad understanding across all activities. Every year, each councillor is allocated a subset of council operations on which to concentrate and learn. Rotation of these portfolios of responsibilities enables the councillors, as a group, to enhance their knowledge across the board and make better decisions.

A problem with the current council has been that we allowed councillors to stick with portfolio areas in which they felt comfortable rather than challenging each other to expand our knowledge. I was guilty, having accepted the Governance and Finance role so often that some others had little idea of procedure nor key considerations of budgets, rates and rating strategies. There is also the danger that a councillor can become so focused on one area that they start to believe they are directly responsible for operations in that area which is contrary to their role and to the Local Government Act.

So, I would encourage everyone in their assessment of candidates to take time to gain an insight into how well a candidate can assimilate, and learn from, new ideas and knowledge and how well they can communicate their experience or ideas.

John Walsh, Yarck

Council election

I HAVE requested that this Letter to the Editor be published anonymously. I do not represent the views of my ward, am not contesting a seat in this upcoming election and have never served on any council. I am 'Jo Citizen' doing my due diligence to ensure my vote counts towards the running of our shire for the next four years.

I have scrutinised each of the 15 candidates responses to the four questions posed.

Question one: Biography. Hubris, rhetoric and padding aside I looked to what each candidate gives back to their community as volunteering was highest on my agenda. A number of candidates made no mention of this. Perhaps they forgot? In no order, lived experience, qualifications and business acumen are essential but only represents a small percentage of 'must' skills to fulfill the role of a competent councillor who represents me.

Question two: Political affiliations. The candidates who identified as Libertarian lost my vote. How can you represent me in the third tier of government when your party's philosophy is 'live your life your way'? You are representing your ward not yourself. The question going forward should be are you or have you ever been a member of a political party? If so, name them and when?

Question three: Concerns and goals. Potential councillors who canvass using 'Motherhood' statement lose my vote. Frankly, some of the statements that I read, such as "spending public money wisely," flies in the face of what our immediate past councillors have been doing. "Have faith that council will encourage young families." They are already doing this.

Continued Page 5

COMMUNITY DIARY

Local Radio Frequency	
UGFM 106.9	Alexandra / Lake Eildon
UGFM 88.9	Yea / Highlands
UGFM 98.5	Marysville / Lake Mountain
UGFM 98.9	Flowerdale / Hazeldene
UGFM 94.5	Kinglake Ranges

WEEKLY	
Tues	Art Group (Alex Tennis Rooms) 10am-3pm Ph 5773 2306
Tue	Seniors Carpet Bowls 1.15pm
Wed	Social Bowls 11am Alexandra Bowls Club Ph 5772 1150
Thu	Take off weight naturally 5.45pm 5773 2427
Fri	Seniors Social Club 1pm
Sun	AA 7pm Anglican Church, Alexandra Ph 0402 428 086
Sun	Alanon Recovery 5.30pm. Ph Sheila 0402 428 086
Sun	Alex & Dist Dog Obedience, training. Ph 0456 583 611
Thu	7.00-10pm SES, SES/CFA complex Ph 0418 576 666
Fri	Communita 10am-12pm @ Embassy of Ideas 0422 225 801

MONTHLY	
1 st Wed	Alexandra Lions dinner meet, Corner Hotel 0427 595 318
1 st Sat	Alexandra Quilters RSL Hall 10am-3pm Ph 0437 005 465
1 st Sun	Crop/Produce swap 10.30am-noon @ Embassy of Ideas
2 nd Tue	Alexandra District Garden Society Meeting Ph 5772 2285
2 nd Wed	Molesworth Patchwork & Craft, Molesworth Hall 10am-4pm.
2 nd Sat	Alexandra Market - at Station Street Ph 0427 509 988
2 nd Sat	Alex Repair Café 1-3pm @ Embassy of Ideas 0422 225 801
3 rd Sat	Murrindindi Men 6-8pm @ Embassy of Ideas 0422 225 801
3 rd Wed	Alex Lions business meeting, rear RSL hall 0427 595 318
3 rd Thu	Alexandra Ladies Probus 10am RSL Ph 0428 976 252
3 rd Thu	Community Potluck dinner 6-8pm @ Embassy of Ideas
3 rd Sun	Alexandra RSL Ph 0409 950 913
4 th Tue	Yarck CWA Meeting, 10.30am Yarck Hall.
4 th Wed	Molesworth Patchwork & Craft, Molesworth Hall 10am-4pm.
4 th Thu	Alexandra Redgate CWA Meeting 1pm, Ph 0402 804 517
Last Fri	Carers Group 10am. Free morning tea. 0418 402 455



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.

RIVER HEIGHTS FOR THE GOULBURN CATCHMENT

STATION NAME	TIME	HEIGHT	TENDENCY	FLOOD CLASS
Goulburn R at Lake Eildon D/S	12.00pm Mon	2.53	steady	below minor
Rubicon River at Rubicon	12.00pm Mon	0.58	steady	
Acheron River at Taggerty	11.53am Mon	0.75	steady	below minor
Home Creek at Yarck	12.00pm Mon	0.19	steady	
Yea River at Devlins Bridge	10.28am Mon	0.58	steady	below minor
Yea River at Yea GV Water PS	11.22am Mon	0.75	steady	below minor
Goulburn River at Ghin Ghin	12.00pm Mon	4.55	steady	
King Parrot Creek at Flowerdale	12.00pm Mon	0.54	steady	below minor
Goulburn River at Trawool	12.00pm Mon	2.47	steady	below minor
Sunday Creek at Tallarook	12.00pm Mon	0.32	steady	below minor
Goulburn River at Seymour	12.00pm Mon	2.56	steady	below minor
Whiteheads Creek at Seymour	12.11pm Mon	1.21	steady	

**ISSUED AT 12.15PM ON MONDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

THE ALEXANDRA · EILDON · MARYSVILLE

Standard

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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.

Like us on Facebook

Weekly Weather

October 2 - October 8, 2024

Temperatures may be subject to change from date of publication

Alexandra			Yea		
DAY	LOW	HIGH	DAY	LOW	HIGH
Wednesday	7	21	Wednesday	7	22
Thursday	12	24	Thursday	13	24
Friday	10	18	Friday	10	19
Saturday	11	18	Saturday	11	19
Sunday	11	20	Sunday	10	21
Monday	6	18	Monday	6	19
Tuesday	5	16	Tuesday	5	17

DISTRICT RAINFALL

Alexandra	8mm
Buxton	12mm
Eildon (AWS)	10mm
Flowerdale	7mm
Jamieson	12mm
Kinglake	11mm
Lake Eildon	13mm
Mansfield	0.6mm
Taggerty	11mm
Yarck	7mm
Yea	6mm

Above details for 7 days to 9am Monday

LAKE EILDON

Height above sea level this week	285.57m
Capacity as at 9am Monday	87.1%
Metres below full supply	3.33m
Daily inflow	2000ML
Release	8750ML
Eildon Pondage (may be subject to rapid change)	92.4%

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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
Thumbsup/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

Whole Town Garage Sale coming to Alexandra

ARE you looking to have a spring clear out and want to make some extra cash? Love a bargain? Jump on board and join Alexandra's Whole Town Garage Sale.

The Embassy of Ideas is coordinating a Whole Town Garage Sale on Saturday, October 19, guaranteeing to turn one person's trash into another person's treasure.

The day is not just about bringing bargain hunters to town, but also about community and creating a wonderful buzz throughout Alexandra and is a great way to connect with neighbours and the community.

Sasha from the Embassy of Ideas said, "Sellers get to move on items they no longer need and make some money, and shoppers have the best fun finding pre-loved treasures. It's a win win. It's not only for individual homes, but also any community group like the sports clubs, schools or social groups can host a collective garage sale or alternatively have a stall at the Embassy, onsite they will have a mini community garage sale/car boot sale on the day if you don't want to host a garage sale at your place."

How does it work for sellers? Host a garage sale yourself or book a stall at the Embassy of Ideas. Sellers pay a registration fee of \$20 to secure their spot on the Whole Town Garage Sale map. Registrations close on October 11. Anyone holding a garage sale keeps the proceeds. Register at humanitix.com/whole-town-garage-sale-alexandra

How does it work for shoppers? Shoppers and bargain hunters can buy a map and hit the garage sale trail. Maps showing the location, addresses, opening times and brief details of each garage sale will go on sale from 8am

on Saturday, October 19 at Rotary Park near the Alexandra Information Centre or from the Embassy of Ideas at 3 Bayley Street in Alexandra. Maps cost \$5.

All garage sales registered for the Whole Town Garage Sale will be easily recognisable as you drive around, due to the red flags, garage sale signs and coloured bunting.

The Alexandra Whole Town Garage Sale is a major fundraiser for the Embassy of Ideas and helps to support their community

activities such as their weekly community morning tea, Murrindindi Men's group, monthly potluck dinners and free annual community Christmas Day lunch.

There is still time to register to be part of this wonderful whole town community event. For more information email embassyofideas@gmail.com or contact Sasha 0422 225 801.

Who knows what treasures await you at the Alexandra Whole Town Garage Sale.



It was a week for rainbows. Valerie Pallaoro spotted this rainbow on Thursday, September 26. It was taken from the top of the hill on Cooper Street, looking west. -Valerie Pallaoro

POLICE REPORT

POLICE are investigating a fatal collision in Marysville on Saturday, September 28. It is understood the motorcyclist was travelling along Marysville-Woods Point Road when they collided with a 4WD about 11.30am. Sadly, the rider, a 22 year old Noble Park man, died at the scene.

Police are currently speaking to the driver of the 4WD in relation to the incident. Anyone who witnessed the incident, has CCTV, dashcam footage or any other information that could assist police is urged to contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or submit a confidential report online at crimestoppersvic.com.au

POLICE found that people were generally well behaved on the weekend. There were two or three people charged with driving under the influence of alcohol, some unlicensed drivers detected, and lots of warnings given for speeding.

MANSFIELD Highway Patrol attended an incident in Eildon, where a man was mooring a houseboat when it was caught by the wind. The houseboat hit a pontoon, which went across the deck area. The man's 30 year old son suffered non-life threatening lower body injuries and was airlifted to hospital.



The Alexandra SES were called into action during the windy weather on Thursday, September 26, after a piece of board came loose. It was quickly made safe for passing pedestrians. -MM



THUMBS UP:
To the Thornton Football Club for putting on free group fitness training sessions for the wider community every Thursday evening. Who knew exercising could be so much fun? Great job, Thornton.

THUMBS DOWN:
To think that a privately owned Italian sustainable energy company is allowed to come into our country, litter its pristine, scenic rural areas with hundreds of monstrous wind turbines and associated infrastructure, and take the money and run.

THUMBS DOWN:
To council for not doing something about the longtime potholed section of the Goulburn Valley Highway as it enters Yea's High Street from the east.

THUMBS UP:
To those maintaining Yea township's lawn areas to include the edging which was sorely needed. They are looking a treat.

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

Darren Gilbert
open studio

An open art studio of organic metal sculptures and pen & ink artworks of Australian animals.

Sat. 5th and Sun. 6th October
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AS REAL AS IT GETS

ALEXANDRA RACE CLUB

SATURDAY 26 OCTOBER 2024

COX PLATE DAY

- Music
- Horse Racing
- Tote & Bookies Services
- \$15pp or \$10pp for concession card holders
- Children 16 and under FREE
- Gates open at noon ~ first race at 1.15pm

BOOKINGS: country.racing.com/alexandra

Take the bus to the Alexandra Races Cox Plate Day October 26

3 Routes; Eildon, Marysville or Yea.

Bookings essential country.racing.com/alexandra

\$10 return, Children 15 and under Free.
Everyone, even children, must have a reserved seat



Alexandra District Health
5772 0900

Yea & District Memorial Hospital 5736 0400

In an emergency dial 000

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*.

by arrangement.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8

Gather and network – Eildon and Lake Eildon. Free business breakfast event at Café 501 – Jerusalem Creek Road, Eildon 7.30-9am. Book now at murrindindifoodandwine.org.au

up 10.30am. Competition starts 11am. All ages event. No drugs, alcohol, cigarette and vape free.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24

Eildon Action AGM will be held at 4pm at the Eildon Information Centre.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26

Alexandra Race Club Cox Plate Day. Music, tote and bookies, \$15 per person. Children under 16 free. \$10 for Concession Card holders. First race at 1.15pm. There will be a bus available bookings essential countryracing.com/Alexandra.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27

Alexandra and District Dog Obedience Club AGM will be held at 10am at Briggs Oval.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 28

Embassy of Ideas AGM will be held at 6pm at 3 Bailey Street, Alexandra. All welcome.

Check this edition for the Free lunches for seniors in October throughout the shire.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3

Thornton Online clearing sale commencing at noon. Concluding Monday, October 7 at noon. Inspection Wednesday, October 2, 10am-2pm. Contact Embling Rural for full details 0418 266 038.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5

Alexandra Museum – Station Street. Heritage Machinery Festival, Saturday and Sunday 9am-3pm. Steam train rides, working stationary engines, vintage cars, blacksmith and more. For more information contact Peter 0479 066 221 or email alexandra.rally@yahoo.com

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12

Eildon Golf Club AGM will be held at 6pm at the golf club. For more details email rod.taylor.rmt@gmail.com

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13

Round 13 Yea Skate Park, skate, scooter, BMX, roller skate. Registration and warm

Darren Gilbert Open Studio, Saturday and Sunday 10am-4pm each day. 5 Giffard Street, Yea. Open for inspections on other days

Standard The Yea Chronicle

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Murrindindi: the Cinderella of Victorian Councils

MURRINDINDI Shire CEO, Livia Bonazzi, spoke at the Victorian Government Inquiry into Local Government funding on September 19, describing Murrindindi as “the Cinderella of the Victorian Councils.” Her full speech was as follows.

“We make the case for urgent changes and reforms to the way the local government is funded and supported, and I trust that you will concur with us that Murrindindi Shire Council has an even greater need than most other councils of extra financial support.

“Apparently, some people also referred to Murrindindi as the Cinderella of the Victorian Councils. Just to provide a little bit of a snapshot, Murrindindi spans across 3900 square kilometres, we got about 15,500 in population and we covered townships from Eildon, Alexandra, Yea, Marysville and Kinglake.

“We have an issue with ageing population. More than a quarter of population is aged 65 and above, and by 2034 that will double to 50.2 per cent. That will increase service demands.

“We have suffered from isolation with poor or in-existent public transport and digital connectivity. It just worsens our access. We have very high cost to serve. We only have 12 residents per kilometre of local roads compared to 287 residents in the metropolitan area.

“Our costs are increasing as well. Materials and contractors and insurance have gone up 30 to 40 per cent in the last two years and also cost-shift and our out-of-pocket expenses for the full services have doubled due to cost-shifting in the last four years.

“We pride ourselves in having very lean operations, so council already does its bit. It’s from an organisational perspective. So our community also does its bit by enduring lower levels of service than the rest of Victoria. And that’s reflected in low community satisfaction and degrading community satisfaction for our services.

“Community, also the ratepayers, do their bit. They pay higher rates than the average, \$100 more, and so any further increase or any variation to the rate cut would be seen as unfair and unpalatable.

“We don’t have many options for further revenue. We don’t have parking fees. It’s not feasible. And then also we have insufficient grant funding, so I make a case for further support to sustain financial viability and avoid eroding essential services.

A small rural council requires sufficient support to maintain critical services and ensures stability of their communities.

“As analysis has shown, Murrindindi Shire is represented in the state lower house by only one member of Parliament and in the Federal House of Representatives, also by a single member of Parliament. Compare this with other local government areas (LGAs) that have 10 members in each level of state and federal, a total of 20, all championing their cause. This imbalance in political representation of local government areas results in undesirable outcomes due to the allocation of critical funding being in large part determined on advocacy by the local MPs, their political connections and



Shire CEO Livia Bonazzi. -S

influence, rather than real need or equity.

“The issue here is not just scarce government funding, but inappropriate distribution of the funding pool. Therefore, a major part of the solution to the financial sustainability of local government must consider how a grant pool of funding is allocated to ensure the more needy LGA’s receive their fair share, as well as securing an overall increase in the total grant funding pool through the Commonwealth, the focus to shift from political influence to actual need, ensuring the funding is allocated more fairly, and that historically under-funded councils like Murrindindi receive a fair share, potentially through significant lump sums in catch-up grants, in the spirit of restorative justice.

“The current funding models are outdated, inequitable and unsuited to the realities that we face in rural Victoria. Murrindindi Shire Council is not viable, let alone allowed to thrive under these conditions, and we’re not alone.

“The changes that we seek will not only support our community today, but will build a more sustainable future for all rural councils.

“I hope that you will take our recommendations to heart and work with us to ensure a fairer, more sustainable future local government in Victoria.”

Ms Bonazzi also presented to the Federal Government inquiry on Friday, September 26 in Wallan.

Church Services

ANGLICAN
St Johns Alexandra
9am Eucharist each Sunday
Children welcome.
Rev Mario Hendricks -
Rectory 0435 953 777

CATHOLIC
Immaculate Conception Parish
Parish Administrator Fr Jose Mathew.
Presbytery 0468 810 871
St Matthews Eildon, Saturday 5pm
Alexandra, Sunday 8.45am
Sacred Heart Yea, Sunday 10.45am

UNITING CHURCH In Australia
St Andrews, Downey Street,
Alexandra
Worshipping, Welcoming
Sharing the transforming love of
Jesus. Services 10am each Sunday
Contact 5772 2362

OASIS COMMUNITY CHURCH
Loving God, Loving People,
Loving Life
118 Grant Street, Alexandra
Contact: Ps Steven Turner
Ph: 0413 127 283
Meeting every Sunday @ 10am

MOUNT CATHEDRAL COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH
37 Grant Street, Alexandra
Pastor Daniel Kriss
Services 10am every Sunday
Phone 0400 282 536
mccbc.com.au

THE VINE
A Christian community of the Baptist
Union of Victoria Sunday 4.30pm service
Kids program during school term
St Andrew’s, 37 Downey Street,
Alexandra
Pastor - Geoffrey Johnstone
0481 472 152

Ilona Gerencser speaks about her time on council

MURRINDINDI Shire Councillor Ilona Gerencser, representing Kinglake ward, has decided not to stand for council in this election. Council-watchers may have noticed that she has been absent from council meetings and activities in recent times.

She said that she was happy for the community to know what has been going on in the past year, "because I think it gives clarity as to why I haven't been involved. And I think people need to know obviously the severity of it, and that I haven't just backed away and forgotten about everyone."

Ilona was diagnosed with a brain tumour, a glioblastoma, on October 26, 2023. Ilona said, it's at "grade four, so it's terminal. It's just come back again too, so off to have another operation. That's basically why I had to step back, because I can't drive... I've had seizures. It's quite serious."

Ilona continued, "So that's basically why I stepped back. I love doing the council, and I was going to put my hand up again, but when this started happening again, I thought, no, I need to concentrate on being healthy and stop worrying about Kinglake so much, even though I still worry about them."

She said of being a councillor, "It's not an easy job by any means, but I have enjoyed the challenge of it. It was just a bit weird because I think the last time I ever went to one of the briefings, I was having a bit of a vague day, and that was just before the diagnosis. So I got to Alexandra and I thought, I don't feel that great, and then within the next few days, I was in hospital and having an operation."

She's only had the one operation so far, with the next operation being to remove the parts of the tumour which were left behind and have grown back.

She had another seizure on Friday, September 13 while in Queensland with her family.

"Now we've gone back and we're just like, no it's time to get it out because the chemotherapy is not working," she said.

"Hopefully people won't be too upset with the fact that I couldn't do everything I wanted to do. I mean, there's still a lot of stuff in progress that's happening. If people read the [council] budget, obviously they'll see what's coming up in Kinglake and stuff, so I'm hoping they'll be happy with all of that."

During her illness, she has been fortunate to have a lot of family support, adding that "Kinglake has been amazing. I've got a very big support base up here, which is good. I suppose that's what happens when you live up here or anywhere for a little while, but I'm not used to the very small community help, because I don't think I've ever had that much



Ilona Gerencser. -S

support. What happened was when I went into hospital, everyone just rallied around. I had to leave my dogs and everything and just go into hospital and that was it for six weeks.

"They are fantastic community up here and I love them to bits."

Asked what she is most proud of from her time as a councillor, Ilona said, "I think the streetscape, I suppose, getting that done because that was sort of hanging around for such a long time. I wanted that to get finished and they're going to complete the other one hopefully soon. I'm still not going to stop nagging them. Because I think we need to finish what we started.

"So there's a streetscape, the village that nobody really wanted because we can't, we couldn't sustain anymore shops up here. We can't even get people in the shops that we've got now. Lots of empty shops and people who've got nowhere to shop. We haven't even got an opp shop anymore."

The building was hit by a car some time ago and the building is yet to be fixed.

She continued, "I'm still trying to hopefully get all these other projects finished. What have we got on the agenda? Our community

centre needs to be refurbished because at the market this weekend, it all flooded from the toilets. It all came up through the floor. It was horrible. We've got our footy oval that we need to get done. A few other projects. They've assured me that they'll all get done."

She added that Bollygum playground also needs some attention and commented that it was a shame when the market closed down. She said, "They did a good job the other day when they fixed all the posts that had been broken by vandals."

Ilona was also asked what advice she would give to the two candidates standing in Kinglake ward. She said, "Concentrate on the community and if you have an agenda, forget about it because the community is most important."

Asked what she learnt about being a councillor, she responded, "I think I learned that we haven't got as much control as we think we do, and you have to really work as a team and it's not all about just your town. It's about the whole shire. There are a lot of rules and regulations, and if you don't follow them, as we found from Strathbogie and everywhere else, you won't be on council anymore. Focus on the whole community and not just what you want."

She added, "I've absolutely loved it and like I said, if I could, I would have done it again. I'm hoping that maybe in four years' time, if I'm better, I'll put my hand up again.

"If you are thinking about it in the future, give it a go and just look forward to it and don't think of it as a bad thing to do, and try and brush off the comments because obviously everyone has their opinion as to what you should be doing, but most of the time they don't know what they're talking about."

Ilona is currently enjoying reading books and doing a lot of shopping, more than she has done in her whole life. During her 17 years in the police force, she didn't have much time to go shopping, but she's making the most of it now. The only challenge is that other people have to drive her around.



Letters to the Editor

Continued from Page 2

In my opinion as a 'Jo Murrindindi Citizen' under Damien's tutelage, dollars have been allocated and spent wisely and I would argue that in my ward all new families are welcomed and encouraged to be active participants in volunteering, etcetera.

Compare the Murrindindi versus Whitehorse population, 15,300 versus 178,500, with commensurate annual rates (approximately \$2000 per annum). Do the maths and decide for yourself if our council has been fiscally responsible. You will be surprised at how well they have been able to divide the 'loaves and fishes'.

Question four: Vision. My vision is for the elected councillors to be out and about, get to know your community by rolling up your sleeves and being present. Turning up to a council meeting monthly and making decisions on my behalf won't cut it if you do not communicate effectively. This is not posting something on social media. Many of us will or do not use social media. Let me know what you have done for me at each council meeting. Make a verbal report if you are present at the council meeting, or a written report in absentia. I watch the UGFM cast and scrutinise the synopsis in the *Standard's* publication monthly. Your performance or lack thereof counts towards my evaluation of your representation on my behalf.

Lastly, as we each cast our vote ask yourself if it passes the 'smell test'? If it's 'off' throw it out.

Name and address supplied but withheld by request

Indi supporting Hamas

IT'S bad enough watching our major city, Melbourne, become a cross between 1930s Berlin and present day Sana'a with militant protests daily supporting the destruction of Israel without our elected MP for Indi supporting a terror organisation.

I have written to Helen Haines twice about my concern Australia is sending money to UNRWA, an education organisation that is UN endorsed but controlled by Hamas. Each time I wrote a reply would come back six weeks later saying how important it was to support education in Palestine. Education, what a positive word until you realise every aspect of their education system is based on antisemitism, anti USA and anti Western countries. The donations go to Hamas so the amount that actually gets spent on education is debatable. Given there are four Palestinian billionaires living in Qatar siphoning off huge amounts of aid money while the whole of Gaza was constructed to be an underground bunker for the sole purpose of destroying its neighbour, the answer to that is minimal. So our Federal Government has donated eighty million dollars to UNRWA and other Hamas causes, one reason I wouldn't vote Labour but Helen Haines is an Independent, so what has possessed her to blindly support Hamas. Alexandra is not a town that supports violence and terror. Our sitting MP needs to get that message.

Tom Collins, Alexandra

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Steam train rides | Working stationary engines |
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alexandratramway.org.au
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Diabetes Community Screening
Where: Eildon Community Centre
45 High St, Eildon
When: Wednesday, 9th October 10am - 12pm
What: free, on-site Diabetes screening and
Health Checks
Walk-ins only, no booking required!!
For further information please
contact Melissa Storey or Angel Lau
at Alexandra District Health on
5772 0900
ALEXANDRA DISTRICT HEALTH



Cindy McLeish. -S

McLeish remains concerned about roads

MEMBER for Eildon Cindy McLeish is still concerned that the Victorian Government is treating Victorians like fools by constantly blaming the condition of our roads on 'repeated flooding' and 'unprecedented rainfall'.

She said roads across the electorate are crumbling due to funding cuts and neglect, not freak weather events.

Ms McLeish said that state budget papers indicate the area of road subject to resurfacing or rehabilitation has fallen from nine million square metres two years ago to just three million this financial year, and said that the government undertook just 343,000 square metres of works in 2023/24.

"Alarming, the roads maintenance budget is 16 per cent less now than it was

in 2020 and our roads continue to get worse for it. The Melba Highway, Warburton Highway, Eltham-Yarra Glen Road, to name only a few, are in a constant state of chaos. The Allan Labor Government cannot solely claim the weather is to blame for the sad state of our roads," she said.

"Years of neglect and 'patch up jobs' have left our roads in a dire state with serious and recurring surface issues.

"Re-sealing protects the road network against water penetration that causes potholes and damaged roads. Not hazard signs that Labor whack up as a solution.

"Not surprisingly, the government has confirmed that almost 1200 Victorians have lodged claims for damage caused by dodgy roads last financial year alone."

Free cat-snip

THANKS to a grant from the Victorian Government, Murrindindi Shire Council is offering a free desexing, microchipping, worming, vaccination and registration package for valid Pensioner Concession Card holders in the Murrindindi community who care for any cat, whether owned or stray.

Council's *Purrfect Care Program* aims to reduce cat overpopulation and address the issue of feral cats by making desexing services free to pet owners who need it most.

Feral cats threaten the survival of native wildlife in Murrindindi Shire and are a major cause of decline for many land-based endangered animals across the country, including the bilby, bandicoot and numbat.

A major contributing factor to the feral cat overpopulation problem is people feeding unowned cats but not taking full ownership or responsibility for them. The *Purrfect Care Program* will help prevent unwanted litters, ensure lost cats can find their way back home, minimise diseases and promote responsible pet ownership.

Eligible Pensioner Concession Card holders are encouraged to submit an online application before December 6, 2024 at murrindindi.vic.gov.au/catcareprogram

For more information or assistance completing the form, call council on 5772 0333.

Council's *Purrfect Care Program* is made possible through the Victorian Government's *Animal Welfare Fund Grants Program* and support from local veterinary clinics.

If you are not a Pensioner Concession Card holder, Animal Aid Coldstream is offering free microchipping for up to two cats/kittens to Murrindindi Shire residents. For more information visit animalaid.org.au/microchipping

Murrindindi Shire Council's CEO Livia Bonazzi said "Keeping our cats healthy and safe is the responsibility of every cat owner, whether you care for your own cat or your neighbourhood stray. This benefits our feline friends and also supports our environment and the diverse species that share it.

"We recognise that many in our community may find it difficult to access the necessary resources to take full responsibility for the ownership and care of stray cats, which is why we are pleased we can offer this program. We strongly encourage all eligible cat owners to participate in making our environment safer for all."



Megan Bennett, a Veterinary Nurse at Yea Veterinary Hospital, with members of Murrindindi Shire Council's Community Safety team, Malcolm Scheele, Jess Robinson and Jessica Clough. -S

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ROUND 13

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SUNDAY OCTOBER 13TH

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SCOOTER
BMX
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REGISTRATION & WARM UP 10:30AM
COMPETITION STARTING 11:00AM

ALL AGES EVENT
ALL EVENTS ARE DRUG, ALCOHOL, SMOKE & VAPE FREE

INFO: @ALSSKATECO

ALPINE, Mansfield Shire, RURAL CITY, Albury City, moira, towongshire, INDIGO SHIRE COUNCIL, frezza VICTORIA

Zoos Victoria calls for aid in protecting Bogong moths

ZOOS Victoria is working to help protect the Mountain pygmy-possum by looking after the Bogong moth. They are calling for assistance with this task, by asking people to submit their sightings of Bogong moths to the Zoos Victoria online Moth Tracker webpage.

Bogong moths migrate up to 1000 kilometres each spring to Australia's alpine zone, where they become food for the Mountain pygmy-possum.

There are usually billions of Bogong moths that fly to the mountains, but their numbers

have been significantly decreasing over recent years. This means there may not be enough food for the possums.

Zoos Victoria are therefore asking people to report their sightings of Bogong moths. All people have to do is if they see a Bogong moth, take a photo and upload it to the Zoos Victoria Moth Tracker webpage. This will help scientists better understand the habits and patterns of the Bogong moth.

To tell if the moth you are looking at is a Bogong moth, there are a number of defining characteristics. Bogong moths have a body length of around 2.5 to 3.5 centimetres; they have a dark strip that runs down each wing; they have a circular spot at the top of the stripe; they have a spot at the bottom of the stripe shaped like a kidney; both spots are the same colour.

Bogong moths were added to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Endangered Species list in 2021. They usually migrate in spring, particularly from southern Queensland, central NSW and western Victoria to the Australian Alps, and then make the return journey in autumn. Recent information suggest they may also be found in South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania.

Zoos Victoria also recommends that during Bogong moth migration periods (September to December and February to April) people turn off unnecessary outdoor lights at night. This can reduce light pollution, allowing the moths to better navigate their journey. Planting native flowers and not using insecticides can also help.

For more information and to find the Moth Tracker webpage, visit zoo.org.au/moth-tracker/



A Bogong moth. -Zoos Victoria

Call for illegal exotic pet surrender

FOLLOWING the discovery of the largest known domestic illegal exotic animal trade network ever uncovered in Victoria, Crime Stoppers Victoria is sending a clear message to owners of illegal exotic pets to surrender these animals now or risk getting caught.

This illegal trade poses a severe risk to public health, the farming community and local wildlife.

The 'Your Pet, Our Pest' campaign encourages owners of illegal exotic pets to voluntarily surrender their animals at one of four new surrender locations: RSPCA Burwood East, RSPCA Peninsula, Second Chance Animal Rescue in Craigieburn, and the Bird and Exotic Animal Clinic in Williamstown North.

These reputable organisations are offering a no-questions-asked policy when accepting exotic animal surrenders.

Chief Executive of Crime Stoppers Victoria, Stella Smith, explains, "This illegal trade prioritises profit over the well-being of the animals and the environment. These animals are not suitable pets and pose a severe risk to our community.

"We urge Victorians to take action to help end the trafficking and ownership of illegal exotic pets."



Indian star tortoise. -S

Adam Kay, Biosecurity Manager at Agriculture Victoria, warns, "The illegal trade of exotic pests threatens Victoria's ecosystem and biosecurity. These animals

are often stolen or bred under inhumane conditions. If smuggled into Australia without appropriate quarantine, they have the potential to carry diseases like rabies

that can spread to local wildlife, pets, and even humans."

Mr Kay explains, "Online marketplaces have made it easier for traffickers to sell exotic pest animals illegally, putting many Victorians at risk of unknowingly purchasing these animals and committing an offence.

"With ongoing investigations into the illegal exotic animal trade network and several related cases before the courts, now is the best time for owners to surrender any illegal exotic pets before getting caught."

Penalties for illegally importing, keeping, breeding, or trading exotic pests, such as the African pygmy hedgehog, can reach up to \$95,000.

Ms Smith emphasises, "If you have an illegal exotic pet, now is the time to surrender it before someone reports you."

Illegal exotic pets can be surrendered anonymously. For more information about surrendering your illegal exotic pet and for surrender locations visit crimestoppersvic.com.au

If you know someone who has an illegal exotic pet or someone who is involved in the trade of illegal exotic animals, let Crime Stoppers Victoria know. You can report anonymously online or by calling 1800 333 000.

Local funding for a greener future

THE Victorian Government is empowering thousands of young Victorians to protect and care for the state's natural environment and wildlife into the future.

Minister for Environment Steve Dimopoulos recently awarded more than \$409,000 to support 103 childcare centres, kindergartens, schools, Scouts, Guides and youth groups through the Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grants program.

Grants of up to \$5000 were awarded for educational activities that engage children in conservation and projects that improve and expand habitat for native plants, insects and wildlife.

Locally, Alexandra Secondary College is set to receive \$2671.42 for their Biodiversity Nest Box Project.

Since 2018, \$3 million has been invested to support more than 47,000 young people undertake on-ground conservation projects and activities.

Since then, these initiatives have achieved incredible results, including 99,000 new indigenous plantings and more than 1000 student excursions to wildlife sanctuaries.

The Victorian Landcare Program forms part of the Victorian Government's continued commitment to combat the decline of the state's native plants and animals, building on a record \$609 million investment in the delivery of Victoria's landmark 20-year Biodiversity Plan since 2014.

Minister for Environment, Steve Dimopoulos, said, "We are proud to support the next generation of Victorians to learn and take action to protect our natural environment. We've invested more than any other government to protect our biodiversity and improve our natural environment."

For more information on the Victorian Junior Landcare and Biodiversity Grants program, visit environment.vic.gov.au/grants/victorian-junior-landcare-and-biodiversity-grants

Influenza on the rise in Murrindindi

WINTER is behind us now but influenza is still on the rise. According to the Victorian Department of Health's *Surveillance of Notifiable Conditions in Victoria*, Murrindindi Shire has seen a considerable increase in influenza cases this year.

In the past 12 months, at the time of writing, the Murrindindi Shire has seen 142 cases of influenza and this year to date it's 129 cases. In 2023, a total of 79 cases of influenza were reported. The last time Murrindindi Shire saw numbers over 100 with influenza was back in 2019 with 101 cases.

Children have been suffering most from influenza in the Murrindindi Shire this year, with 21 cases being between the ages of zero to four years old, 12 cases from five to nine years old, and 18 cases from 10 to 14 years old.

Males have contracted influenza more than women, with 66 cases. Women had 62 cases, and no specified gender was one.

If you contract influenza, make sure that you get plenty of rest and drink lots of water. Stay at home to avoid spreading the disease.

To avoid catching the disease, practice good hygiene with coughs and sneezes. Cough or sneeze into your elbow rather than your hand. Try not to share cups, plates or cutlery as this can spread germs to others. Put all your tissues in the bin after use. Keep surfaces such as bench tops, phones, keyboards, doorhandles and light switches clean by using an antibacterial disinfectant. Wash your hands regularly with warm soapy water, or you can use sanitiser if water isn't available.

The use of antibiotics doesn't help combat the flu as it's caused by viruses, not bacterial infections. If at any time you are unsure about your symptoms visit your doctor or contact your urgent care centre, or the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department.

Murrindindi Shire Council postal election

My council, my vote

An election will be held for Murrindindi Shire Council.

Check the mail for your ballot pack

Ballot packs containing voting material will be mailed to enrolled voters from **Monday 7 October**.

This is a postal election only.

If you do not receive your ballot pack by **Tuesday 15 October** please visit vec.vic.gov.au to complete the online replacement form, or call **131 832** to arrange a replacement.

Candidates

Candidates who have nominated for election are listed in the ballot packs and at vec.vic.gov.au

A photo and candidate statement will also be included if provided by candidates. Responses to a candidate questionnaire, if provided, are available at vec.vic.gov.au

How to vote correctly

You must complete your ballot paper correctly for your vote to count. Put the number 1 in the box next to the candidate you want to see elected, then number all the other boxes in order of your choice. You must number **every box** and only use each number once.

How to return your ballot pack

Put your completed ballot paper in the ballot paper envelope, complete the declaration, then post it ASAP using the reply-paid envelope provided, or hand deliver it during election office hours to:

Murrindindi Shire Council Yea Office
15 The Semi Circle
Yea

Voting is compulsory

Voting is compulsory for all voters who were enrolled at 4 pm on Wednesday 7 August. This includes state-enrolled and council-enrolled voters.

If you don't vote and don't have a valid excuse, you may be fined.

Your completed ballot pack must be in the mail or hand delivered by **6 pm Friday 25 October**.

State-enrolled voters can register for free VoterAlert SMS and email reminders at vec.vic.gov.au



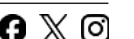
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For enquiries in languages other than English:

* Arabic (Arabic) 9209 0100 * ܐܪܡܝܝܐ (Assyrian) 9209 0160 * ភ្នំពេញ (Burmese) 9209 0161 * 简体中文 (Mandarin) 9209 0106 * 廣東話 (Cantonese) 9209 0101
* Hrvatski (Croatian) 9209 0102 * دري (Dari) 9209 0193 * 𑂦𑂣𑂱𑂪𑂰 (Dinka) 9209 01119 * Ελληνικά (Greek) 9209 0103 * آزدی (Hazaragi) 9209 0162 * Italiano (Italian) 9209 0104
* ភ្នំពេញ (Khmer) 9209 0192 * 한국어 (Korean) 9209 0194 * македонски (Macedonian) 9209 0105 * नेपाली (Nepali) 9209 0163 * فارسی (Persian) 9209 0195 * มลิว (Thai) 9209 0164
* Türkçe (Turkish) 9209 0110 * اردو (Urdu) 9209 0165 * Tiếng Việt (Vietnamese) 9209 0111 • All other non-English languages 9209 0112

Authorised by S. Bluemmel, Electoral Commissioner, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria.

@electionsvic



VEC Victorian Electoral Commission

How to be better prepared for blackouts

IN the event of a power blackout, here are some tips to help you ride out the storm.

Have a kit available in the event of an emergency. This can include battery operated torches and radios, spare batteries, and matches to light a gas stove or cooker. Candles are also recommended.

Charge all your battery packs and phones if you know that a significant weather event is on the way. Battery packs are a great investment as they can charge your phone or tablet, keeping you connected in an emergency (and keeping you entertained). You can also purchase solar powered battery packs.

Don't forget that you can also charge your phone or other small devices in a car, if you have a USB charger.

Make sure you always have some cash on you in the event that electronic payment systems go down during an outage.

You should also make sure that you know how to open your garage or fence manually so you can leave if the power goes out.

If you have an electric water pump, stock up on bottled water.

If possible, don't open your fridge or freezer. This will keep the cold air in and your food will last longer. However, if the blackout lasts for more than four hours, you will have to discard most of the food.

Make use of outdoor barbecues if you feel like a hot meal. Alternatively, small gas bottle cookers can be purchased cheaply to make some pasta or a cup of coffee during a blackout.

Check your camping kit for items which may be helpful, such as LED lights.

If you're heading to bed, make sure that you turn off the light switches to make sure you aren't awoken by bright lights when the power comes back on.

In Murrindindi, and in many other shires, libraries have generators. You can charge your phones and relax with a good book. If the weather is very hot, you can also make use of their air-conditioning. This is particularly important for elderly people or people in poor health.

If people rely on electrical medical equipment, they can register with Ausnet. You'll be entitled to enhanced customer protections including additional support before and during a power or gas outage.

Life support customers need to be ready to activate their emergency plan when weather warnings take place, call AusNet's priority line on 1800 818 832.

You can report faults and emergencies online at ausnetservices.com.au/outages/report-a-fault or on 131 799

For emergency services, call the SES on 132 500, or if you are in immediate danger, call police, fire or ambulance on Triple Zero.

Murrindindi Shire Council September meeting

THE September meeting of Murrindindi Shire Council was held on September 25. It was the last meeting of the current council prior to the election. Only four councillors were present at the meeting, Crs Gallagher, McAulay, Walsh and Lording. Apologies were received from Crs Carpenter, Gerencser and Haslam.

In open forum, Kathryn Dickie from Glenburn asked council to support and advocate on their behalf to the Department of Transport and Planning in reducing the speed limit on West Bridge Road and Glenburn-Kinglake Road from 80km/h and 100km/h to 60km/h, for the safety and well being of the community. She said that high powered vehicles often use the road as a track, and that the frequent turns means that it's not possible to travel at 100km/h, and they often veer into oncoming traffic. Wildlife is also at risk. It's also pedestrians, including school children, at risk as there are no footpaths. She said that the proposal has "100 per cent backing from the community," and that the car club organisers are also in support.

Community and Development Group reports

The findings report was presented by Andrew Paxton, outlining progress on the 2021-2025 Council Plan, and which may help to guide the development of the next plan. It will help the new council to better understand the community's aspirations. The engagement process resulted in over 350 pieces of feedback. Council voted to note the findings, and thanked the community participants for their feedback.

Financial and Performance statements

The report presents the draft 2023/24 Annual Financial Statements and Performance Statement for consideration and adoption in principle. These statements were reviewed by council's Audit and Risk Committee and the committee has also recommended in principle approval by council.

This financial year, there was an operating deficit of \$1.6 million, which was a \$2.7 million unfavourable variance compared with the original adopted budget. Mr Chesworth explained that this was mainly due to increases in expenditure on contractors and materials associated with flood recovery activity, and the need to complete projects carried forward from the previous year. It was also due to temporary filling of staff vacancies.

Another major contributor was the timing of the Commonwealth Government's financial assistance grants. Council had budgeted to receive \$4.9 million in June, but it was received a month later, in July, pushing it into the new financial year. This was offset by the receipt of \$4.7 million in emergency flood recovery funding (non capital) and increased capital funding of \$1.18 million Roads to Recovery funding, both of which were not in the original adopted budget.

According to the report, council experienced a decline in the adjusted underlying deficit falling from minus eight per cent to minus 16 per cent, which is a result of the increased

expenditure described above, and additional (non-budgeted) capital grants received during the year which increased the value of the capital grants that needed to be removed from the underlying result calculation. Continuous underlying deficits can result in a reduction in council's financial position and sustainability over the longer term and this will need to remain a focus in council's longer term financial strategy.

Mr Chesworth asked that the officer recommendation be updated to state that the adoption of the statement is subject to further minor adjustments due to the Landfill Rehabilitation Provision from non-current to current liability due to works planned for 2024/5. Councillors endorsed this.

In comments, Cr Lording said that while he was disappointed by the deficit, a lot of things happen during the year. Cr Walsh noted "the constant problem of trying to juggle services against the diminishing financial support base."

Audit and Risk Committee

The minutes and re-appointment of chair, Steve Schinck, were both approved by council.

Council's Road Advisory Group

The Road Advisory Group provided a summary of their deliberative engagement. Some of their recommendations have been implemented or are completed. These include that the Special Charge Scheme Policy be updated to ensure the scheme is more equitable; continuing advocacy to the Department of Transport and Planning to lower speed limits particularly in high-risk areas; commencing the review of work practices to identify efficiencies in ensuring maximum time is spent on maintaining roads; and the rapid response and tree crew is now in operation ensuring that road maintenance crews are not being diverted to other urgent maintenance works. This was accepted by councillors.

Councillor Reports

Cr Lording provided no report, citing caretaker period.

Cr McAulay provided a calendar of events and commented on how spring is nearly here.

Cr Haslam provided a report via Cr Gallagher. She spoke about the licence to operate the new landfill, the education plan for the new four bin service, trees in the shire, council's sign-up to a renewables buying group, the summer road works planned, the Eildon Reserves redevelopment and asset management plans.

Cr Walsh spoke about the Greenhouse Alliance Conference in Melbourne with Cr Haslam. He also attended the MAV conference, and in both cases, used a council's electric vehicle. He encouraged the community in this regard. He said that he was pleased to see that there will be elections in all wards of the shire in the upcoming council election. He encouraged voters to find out more about what each candidate

in their ward is proposing for the next four years. Do they know about council revenues and deficit budgets? What changes to services are they proposing if rate caps are less than the increases faced by council? Do they understand the rules and regulations under which councils operate? Will they meet your personal, local and shire objectives? Do they have enough time for the role? He thanked all who have stood for election and wished them all the best.

Cr Carpenter provided a report via Cr Gallagher. She commented on council's tree planting, the road grading program, line marking and roadside slashing.

Cr Gallagher spoke about the passing of Joan Collier aged 95, and her involvement with the Country Women's Association (CWA) and Alexandra Show. Her husband Max passed away just seven weeks earlier and they are now reunited. He also spoke about the Grand Ponderosa Cup and the Goulburn Valley Suicide Awareness Group walk. He congratulated Gordon Simpson on his reappointment as president of the Alexandra and District Traders and Tourism Association and the executive group, and congratulated the First Alexandra Scout Group who shared the contributions and volunteer contributions. In addition, he congratulated the Alexandra Race Club on being awarded Country Picnic Racing Club of the Year and commented on the financial contribution the club makes to the area. He spoke about the community concerns about the Victorian Government's Land Taxes and Short Stay Levy and said that it is within council's sphere of interest but not in their direct control. Council officers have sought answers from the State Revenue Office (SRO). He recognised Jackie Ashe, Dan Crane and Sam Hicks for their work helping locals, and advised that there will be SRO information sessions upcoming. He mentioned the ABC's interest in council's advocacy efforts around the flood, and in Livia Bonazzi's presentation on the local government financial sustainability and challenges. He encouraged residents to engage in the forthcoming election process. At the recent Municipal Association of Victoria Conference, Cr Walsh was recognised with an award for his 10 years of service and received a Mayor Emeritus recognition. He added, "And then he put Raygun to shame on the dance floor."

CEO report

CEO Livia Bonazzi commented on the upcoming election and the rules around the election period, including not making major decisions or allocating significant resources. She said that both state and federal governments are conducting parallel inquiries into local government sustainability, and she had the privilege of presenting to the Victorian inquiry recently. The day after the council meeting, she attended the public hearing for the Federal inquiry. Murrindindi Shire has made substantial submissions to both inquiries, and said that she hopes for large scale reforms.

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Helen Haines MP

INDEPENDENT FEDERAL MEMBER FOR INDI

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CFA asks are you ready for the fire season

by Jason Heffernan, CFA Chief Officer

VICTORIA could be facing an earlier start to the fire season this year and the CFA are asking those living in high risk areas to take action to prepare their family and property.

The Spring Seasonal Outlook recently released predicts an increased risk of fire to the southwest, west and northwestern parts of Victoria due to a drier than average first half of the year.

Without significant rainfall it is likely to lead to an above average fire risk and an earlier start to the fire season during the spring period.

There is an increased level of fuel hazard due to an accumulation in the amount of dead plant material resulting from reduced rainfall in the areas identified as increased risk of fire.

Grassland curing in these areas are likely to advance earlier than normal in the absence of significant rainfall.

The fire risk across the rest of Victoria is predicted to be normal, noting there is a chance the fire season may also begin earlier than normal in areas dominated by drier forests, woodlands and heathlands, inland and coastal.

CFA is ready to protect communities, as they do every year and has been working with Victorian emergency service partners throughout the cooler months to prepare for fire season and this year is no exception.

Crews urge the community to understand that fire safety is a shared responsibility between fire services and the community, and asking all Victorians in high-risk areas to take simple actions to prepare their family and property as the weather begins to warm.

If you live near areas with bush, forest, long grass or coastal scrub, these actions and decisions may well save your life and property in the event of a bushfire.

Find some time to sit down with your family or household and make a Bushfire Survival Plan, and if you already have one, it's a great time to review it.

It's also the perfect time to tidy up your property, this can include clearing your gutters, pruning branches away from your roof or walls, keeping grass shorter than 10cm and removing leaves and twigs from around your property.

Landowners should also consider private burn offs to remove green waste ahead of Fire Danger Period (FDP) declarations.

All burn-offs must be registered, which can be done online at firepermits.vic.gov.au

Stay informed by downloading the VicEmergency app to stay across incidents and fire danger ratings in your area.

I urge all Victorians to visit the CFA website to learn more about how they can prepare themselves ahead of this bushfire season at cfa.vic.gov.au/prepare



Chris Jackson and Lyn Wallace-Greenberg. -S

Rotary hears koala presentation

LYN Wallace-Greenberg accompanied by her partner Ken presented a thought provoking presentation on koalas to the Alexandra Rotary Club. Lisa explained what we can do to conserve koala populations.

This included, don't establish timber plantations in koala habitat. After harvest, it takes 25 years for new plantings to reach harvestable size. Conserve existing habitat and establish wildlife corridors. Koalas are at their most vulnerable when moving at ground level, with traffic on roads, and hunting by dogs. Do your bit to minimise climate change by buying locally sourced seasonal food, this

is less transport, less packaging, and less greenhouse gases.

Contact local wildlife rescue if you see a sick koala. Narbiewiew Animal Shelter, or Healesville Sanctuary. Take care at night on our roads and slow down.

Dogs and koalas don't mix. A colorbond fence can be a deathtrap to a koala which drops into a yard with a dog. Consider leaning a plank against the fence as an escape route.

Locally Upper Goulburn Landcare are trying to create a wildlife corridor by planting along GVRT to connect to Gobur. Manna gum, spotted and blue gums and Allocasuarina (she-oak).

Celebrities coming to Alexandra Open Gardens

AS part of Alexandra and District Open Gardens, one of the participating open garden owners, Marian Rennie has been successful in securing three guest speakers to talk about *Ways to the Future* on Sunday, October 27 from 1pm onwards.

Costa Georgiadis is Australia's most famous landscape architect and television presenter who has an all-consuming passion for plants and people. He knows how to bring out the best in both and takes great pleasure in bringing them together. His holistic approach is all about gardening, the soil and the soul.

Joining Costa will be Joost Bakker from Future Food Systems and the man

behind the creation of the zero waste Greenhouse that was beside Federation Square. Joost received global attention for the Greenhouse By Joost restaurants in 2008 to 2012, as well as his project that demonstrated non-toxic sustainable materials that could be used to resist a wild simulated bushfire.

Peter Burgess is co-founder of the Melbourne based Rainbow Bee Eater. RBE's ECHO2 biochar and syngas system was installed in June 2024 at Holla-Fresh in Tantanool SA. This provides conversion of biomass residue (instead of going to landfill) into hot water, electricity, bio char and horticultural CO2. Low cost, carbon negative, renewable energy from biomass.

The three guest speakers will be discussing gardens, the future and flowers. Marian is also encouraging people to join in and parade around the garden in wearable floral creations with prizes for the most creative entries.

There will be a licensed café with Little River Wines and On Point Brewery with Solomon and Lacey providing music during the afternoon.

The event will be at Rennies at Acheron, 132 Breakaway Road, Acheron (entry via Alexandra).

For more information and description of all nine of the open gardens and attractions go to alexandrapengardens.com.au

Entry is \$5pp per individual garden or \$40pp for an all-garden pass. Tickets are available on the weekend at each garden gate. Cash only as there is no card payment facilities. You can also purchase an all-gardens weekend pass through Trybooking. QR code is available on the event's website.



Costa Georgiadis. -S



FREE LUNCHES FOR SENIORS IN OCTOBER

Calling all community members aged 60 and over! In recognition of Seniors Festival in October, Council is hosting free lunches for you to promote active ageing and social participation. Hear from guest speakers and enjoy a performance by local musician Steve Paix!

Event details:

- Tuesday 22 October in Kinglake from 12 noon to 2.30 pm
- Thursday 24 October in Marysville from 12 noon to 2.30 pm
- Wednesday 30 October in Yea from 12 noon to 2.30 pm
- Thursday 31 October in Alexandra from 12 noon to 2.30 pm

Bookings are essential.

Please visit theloop.murrindindi.vic.gov.au/seniors2024

or contact Council's Access and Inclusion Officer, Andrew Langley on 5772 0333. Grab a friend, come on your own, just don't miss out - last year these events were a big hit!

Registrations close 12 noon on Monday 14 October for catering (or sooner if sold out).



Register your burn off online

AS hundreds of thousands of Victorians begin preparing their property for fire season, emergency services are encouraging landowners to register any planned burn-offs online, through the *Fire Permits Victoria* website.

Landowners will be looking to take advantage of the spring conditions and authorities expect a surge in burn-off registrations over the coming weeks.

The quickest and easiest way to register your burn-off is by using the *Fire Permits Victoria* website at firepermits.vic.gov.au/notify

Triple Zero Victoria Chief Operating Officer Nicole Ashworth said registering a burn-off online was quick and easy.

"Using the Fire Permits Victoria website to register your burn-off helps keep our non emergency phone lines free for higher priority calls," Nicole said.

"Every year at this time we see a spike in demand on the phone lines as landholders look to take advantage of suitable weather in the lead up to the fire danger period. This can sometimes lead to long wait times to register your burn-off."

CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan said the *Fire Permits Victoria* website is the preferred platform for community members to register their burns.

"By registering your burn-off, it allows emergency services to verify the fire is not an emergency and avoid unnecessary call outs for local brigades," Jason said.

"It also allows us to display burn-offs on the CFA website, preventing needless calls to Triple Zero (000)."

The website allows you to notify emergency services of your burn-off, and also check and apply for a permit, if necessary.

However, if your burn is taking place within the next two hours, you must register your burn via the phone line on 1800 668 511.

Before you notify *Fire Permits Victoria*, make sure you follow regulations or laws by CFA and local council; notify your neighbours if the burn will generate fire and smoke; check the weather conditions are safe to burn.

Postpone your activity if high fire risk conditions develop; Establish a gap in vegetation or fire break of no less than three metres cleared of all flammable material; There are enough people to monitor, contain and extinguish the burn safely and effectively, and never leave a burn-off unattended.

For more information about burning off safely, visit cfa.vic.gov.au/burnoff

Ian Maskiell: Eildon candidate

[Unfortunately, Ian Maskiell did not receive the emailed questions for inclusion in last week's edition with the other candidates, so his responses are included below. -Ed]

Short biography: I am 60 years old and have been resident at Thornton for 39 years. I am now semi-retired and live on a small beef cattle farm. I have worked as a support technician and in a supervisory role in broadcast television in Australia and overseas, predominately on sporting events such as tennis, soccer, rugby, motor car racing and AFL. As I am only working occasionally and only on a casual basis I believe I would have more than adequate time to devote to perform the duties of a Councillor for Murrindindi Shire.

Are you a member of any political party? I am not currently, nor have been in the past, a member of any political party and have not been associated with any lobby group. I believe that

a personal political bias is detrimental to serving all constituents of the shire equally. Councillors are elected to carry out the wishes of the shire residents and not to enact the agendas of a political party. I consider that, providing a person's activities cause no harm to others or the environment, any regulation should be kept to a minimum.

Concerns and goals for the shire: It is my belief that our council should operate with no debt and minimise expenditure where ever possible, so as to ensure the rates we pay are kept to a minimum. Council regulations should be kept to a minimum and where possible 'red tape' and delays in council approvals kept to a minimum. The council needs to address any concerns of business promptly. Keeping local businesses healthy helps local employment. We also need to ensure more community engagement



Ian Maskiell. -S

occurs with regard to council decisions.

Vision for the shire: Over the next four years, I would work towards growth of employment within our shire and with consultation with the community maintain or provide services and facilities for our shire residents. I particularly believe most residents do not want the local state parks to become national parks and the council should make this clear to the higher levels of government.

Concerns raised about the CFAs ageing fleet

YEA Group Officer for the Murrindindi CFA Group and Captain of Limestone Brigade, Paul Stanley, has expressed his concerns about the ageing truck fleet in Murrindindi Shire.

He said that the CFA currently have 193 tankers aged over 30 years, adding that they are all in rural fire stations. He said, "As I tried to explain to Jaelyn Symes, bushfire start in the bush. It's all right giving all these fancy tankers and equipment to people on

the periphery of Melbourne, but that's where their votes are.

He said, "My concern about the older tankers, is that even though when we're at a fire, we fight off the back of a truck. But we also, with the old tankers, we have to travel to and return from on the back of a truck. We go out in minus five degrees here to road accidents during winter, and we go out at 40 plus degrees in summer and we're on tankers that really don't comply with the

emission control now. Before we even get to a fire, we've usually sucked in a lot of exhaust fumes, a lot of dust and a lot of heat. And then we've got to come home in it.

"If we get called out at 3pm, we're guaranteed to be out for 15 hours, until 8am the next morning, minimum. And that's with nothing, no food, nothing... We're just volunteers," he said.

If something happens on the back of one of those trucks, such as a tree falling down on the truck the way to a fire, Mr Stanley believes that the people on the back are going to lose their legs or at worst, they'll die. He's told politicians that they will end up standing in front of a coroner or grieving family members over such a situation, "trying to explain why we are still driving around on trucks that are not fit for purpose in 2024. They might have been fit for purpose 32 years ago, but they're not fit anymore."

Mr Stanley believes that while previously, there was the aim of having no trucks over 25 years of age, now "It's while they're roadworthy."

He continued, "There are classes of brigade. Limestone is a class one brigade, which is just the straight rural. We fight bushfires, even though we we're the second call for Yea urban, and we also turn out the house fires and the car fires and accidents but we're just a class one brigade. So if you're a class one or class two brigade, you're sort of considered further down the pecking order. You don't get what other brigades closer to Melbourne get."

In terms of maximum truck ages, Mr Stanley said, "I think originally it was 15 years many years ago. Then it went to 20. Then it went to 25. And now it's as long as the vehicle is roadworthy. They say that they're checked for safety every year, but nobody can check a truck to attend every single type of incident on a bush fire, because they're all different.

"As Jacqueline Symes says, 'Well, I'd love to have you know, \$600 million to change all these trucks over, but unfortunately I haven't got it.'"

In the CFA annual report for 2022/23, it says, "The delivery of 50 new crew cab tankers is well underway with 17 completed by June 2023. These vehicles are replacing single cab tankers, which will eliminate the need for crew to be on the back while travelling to and from an incident. The remaining tankers should be completed by May 2024."

Mr Stanley laughed at the quote.

He said, "My biggest concern is when I send one of my crews out onto the fire ground, I want to make sure they're going to come home. Otherwise, forgetting the fact that even if I had done everything right, I've got to live

with it if something happens to someone. And that's why I'm so adamant that they should not be on the back of truck.

"The only thing we can now do, we won't let them ride to fires on the back of trucks. We put them in what they call a forward command vehicle, which is just a five seat utility that we have in the station and we would drive them to the fire scene, and then get on the truck once they get to the fire ground, but that's we shouldn't have to do that.

"The 40 trucks that they've originally spoken about just aren't happening. I think the last time I researched it, which was about six or eight months ago, they only had four on the production line. I mean, you're talking nearly \$250,000 a truck, and the government's got to fund it," he said.

He commented that the Flowerdale fire was the biggest fire in the state two years ago, but we haven't had any major fires in the last four or five years, and therefore the government doesn't want to spend any money on it. He said that they are however spending on Fire Rescue Victoria, which cost \$1 billion to run last year.

There's a huge amount goes in the Fire Services Levy as well, with some farmers paying a 77 per cent increase in their Fire Services Levy in the last year. "That money is not coming back to the CFA," Mr Stanley said. "If anything, we're getting our budget cut."

He's deeply concerned about volunteer numbers, and said that they just don't have the younger people coming through. "Volunteerism has changed a hell of a lot over the last 10 years. Kids would rather sit in front of the TV shooting people rather than coming out and getting outside the fresh air," he said, adding that it's a situation which doesn't just impact the CFA.

"I don't know what the future of the CFA is I really don't. Not in rural areas," he said.

In the Yea Group, Mr Stanley believes that six out of the 12 trucks are single cab, known as 24Ds. He was uncertain of the numbers on the Alexandra side.

The Limestone Brigade recently received Buxton CFA's 25 year old 24D tanker as their new tanker, replacing the 32 year old one.

Mr Stanley said, "Ours was really starting to struggle. If we were going up the hill with our lights and sirens on, someone on a push bike could overtake us."

On Wednesday, September 18, the CFA announced new tankers for Euroa, Shepparton, Numurkah and Nathalia.

When contacted about whether there would be new tankers coming for Murrindindi Shire's brigades, a CFA spokesperson simply said, "CFA allocates new appliances based on a statewide prioritisation."

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VNPA calls for deer pest classification

THE Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) has lead the creation of a letter calling for the unprotection of feral deer, with the desire for them to instead be listed as a pest.

This would bring the animal into alignment with other pests, including foxes and rabbits, allowing for greater population control measures.

Addressed to Minister for Environment and Outdoor Recreation, Steve Dimopoulos, and Minister for Agriculture, Ros Spence, the letter has over 100 signatures, including academics, land managers, and conservation groups.

The letter reads, "Stop protecting feral deer. A few deer released 150 years ago for game have now become a large uncontained and uncontrolled feral population. Feral deer must be removed from the *Wildlife Act 1975* to enable them to be dealt with as an established pest animal, no longer a game animal.

"We strongly urge you [Ministers in the Victorian Government] to take the opportunity to amend both the *Wildlife Act 1975* while it is under statutory review, and subsequently recognise all feral deer as established pest species under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*."

The letter also gives a depiction of the cost of not reigning in the feral deer population.

"Nationally, a recent study found that the cost of feral deer to agriculture is \$69 million annually. Frontier Economics found that over the next 30 years the losses in agriculture in Victoria due to feral deer impacts will be up to \$500 million.

"Declaring deer a pest would hardly be a burden for farmers any more than

for declared pests such as feral pigs, foxes or rabbits."

Jordan Crook, from the VNPA, told *The Guardian* that the Victorian deer population is a problem, and needs to be dealt with.

"Feral deer are spreading across the state at a rapid rate, destroying critical habitat for threatened species such as rainforests and alpine bogs, and starting to heavily impact agricultural production and increasingly becoming a road hazard.

"It's time to list feral deer as a pest, invest in effective and science-based control, and where possible, eradicate feral deer populations," Mr Crook said.

The Australian Deer Association (ADA) has a different opinion on classifying deer as a pest. They believe that feral deer being listed as game is the right option going into the future, with hunters able to manage the population.

"The concept that wild deer are protected in Victoria when they can be hunted up to 365 days a year is divorced from reality," an ADA spokesperson said.

"The government and its agencies go to great lengths to explain that game status does not impact the management of wild deer.

"Game status provides the framework for regulating the 50,000 licenced deer hunters in the state, who contribute close to 250 million dollars to the Victorian economy annually.

"Recreational deer hunters remove and consume the most wild deer in the landscape, game status provides access to public land to enable them to do this."

To read the VNPA letter to parliament in full, visit vnpa.org.au/joint-letter-stop-protecting-feral-deer/



A wild deer. -Simon Rizzi



Careers Advisor sessions from

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MURRINDINDI HEALTH NETWORK



Let's eat, it's our treat

Variety of food cultures at Rubicon Hotel

DARREN Thomas has been running the Rubicon Hotel in Thornton for over a decade and has worked hard to create a good atmosphere with a variety of quality food.

“We’ve been there for 11 and a half years, so family owned and run. We’ve got a manager, Dwayne Cornelius, and we’ve also got Melissa who runs our admin. She’s been with us for 11 and a half years, so she’s a local. There are probably 35 to 40 local staff.

“We’ve got some overseas chefs. We got them last year, and they got us out of trouble. We were struggling to get chefs. We’ve got Italian, Nepalese, Korean, Taiwanese and Indonesian chefs. Some really good food cultures, and that’s showing in our food with how well it’s going.”

The Rubicon Hotel also operates a number of other enterprises within the same location.

“We’ve got the pizza van outside which has been fantastic. Some beautiful pizzas and we’re doing specials each week. And then we’ve also got Post Office, Tattslotto, Thirsty Camel bottle shop, bistro and bar, and accommodation. It’s a one-stop shop really, and we also have a courtesy bus,” Darren said.

The locals are part of what keeps the Rubicon Hotel operating at its peak. They support the business, and then Darren tries to support them in return.

“The locals keep us going through the year, and you want to support your locals. We do, by looking after them but also local events and fundraising, which we try and get on board with. We also try to look after our tourists as well, which makes a difference. We do a lot of fundraising, we do a lot of the little individual stuff, we give to a lot of the local charities,” Darren explained.

The Rubicon Hotel has a number of events coming up in the near future, including a show with retired Essendon and Richmond players, a hypnotist by the name of the Bizarre Gazzard, and a comedy show in the near future.

For more information about upcoming events, visit rubiconhotel.com.au



A great dining experience at Trawool Estate. -S

Eat local at The Trawool Estate

NESTLED in a stunning bushland valley, The Trawool Estate is not just a luxury retreat but also a foodies paradise. Renowned for its commitment to local produce and sustainable practices, the Estate offers a unique dining experience that celebrates the bounty of the Goulburn Valley region. On site restaurants, Wild Water and Turbine, deliver farm to table dining which showcase the best seasonal ingredients, while supporting local farmers and reducing environmental impact of food transportation.

At Wild Water, soak up the most stunning views of the National Trust listed Trawool Valley while enjoying beautiful Australian cuisine with a focus on fresh, regional produce. The restaurant’s menu changes with the seasons, and has regular specials, ensuring you are treated to dishes made from ingredients at their peak of flavour. “Whether it’s cuts of meat sourced from local farms or freshly picked vegetables grow in our own veggie and herb gardens, every dish is a celebration of the land surrounding us,” says Executive Chef Sam Wills. With his childhood spent in Spain, you’ll always find mediterranean delights throughout his menu, currently you’ll find mussels, rabbit gnocchi and chicken coletta on the all day menu.

Turbine, on the other hand, offers a completely different experience, set in the depths of the building, this sultry speakeasy style cocktail venue draws on the Sri Lankan heritage of Chef Usitha’s menu. Share style makes for the perfect date night or friends get together, a menu you don’t want to miss, as it changes seasonally to different cuisines.

Want something for the family? The Herb Garden Pizzeria is the perfect place for a laid back afternoon with great drinks and wood-fired pizza, sitting alongside the Great Victorian Rail Trail. With plenty of space for kids to explore and pizzas made with fresh, local ingredients, including herbs picked straight from the garden, The Herb Garden offers a simple, tasty, and relaxed dining experience for all ages.

Dining at The Trawool Estate is not just about enjoying delicious food with your people, it’s about engaging with the local region and making conscious choices that have a positive impact on the environment and community. So why not book into The Trawool Estate soon and enjoy great food while making a positive impact on local livelihoods.

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ON THE LAND

Agriculture, Horticulture, Viticulture, Aquaculture and Silviculture

Update on dingo conservation and management

THE Victorian Government is setting out the future of dingo conservation and management in Victoria and supporting farmers with an additional \$2 million investment into non-lethal dingo controls and population research.

Minister for Environment, Steve Dimopoulos, and Minister for Agriculture, Ros Spence, recently announced the continuation of the dingo unprotection order in north east and eastern Victoria, which permits the control of dingoes on private land and along the boundaries of public land until January 1, 2028.

“We are striking the right balance between protecting our vulnerable dingo populations while giving farmers the ability to protect their livestock, and we will regularly engage to ensure settings continue to achieve this balance,” Mr Dimopoulos said.

“We’re supporting Traditional Owners to care for Country, and providing more resources to analyse statewide dingo population trends and effective conservation management measures.”

Dingoes will continue to be protected in the north west of the state where the dingo population is critically low. Lethal controls will not be permitted on private or public land in the north west. There is little evidence that dingoes are present in large numbers in these parts of the state.

To support farmers to protect their livestock the state government is investing more than \$2 million to undertake dingo monitoring and support for north west farmers to adopting non-lethal dingo management strategies.

“Renewing the unprotection order gives stability and certainty to livestock producers in the north east and eastern Victoria, enabling them to continue to protect their livestock from dingo predation,” Ms Spence said.

“We’re supporting our north west farmers with a \$2 million package into non-lethal dingo management strategies to protect their livestock and future.”

The new support package will fund trials, research and on-ground advice on non-lethal dingo management strategies that minimise the risk of livestock predation

in the north west, building on the work already underway as part of the \$550,000 North West Vertebrate Pest Management program announced in March this year.

The Wild Dog Management Program will be expanded to include extra supports for farmers through targeted controls of a wider range of vertebrates including deer, foxes, pigs and wild cats and to reflect this expansion, will be renamed the Vertebrate Species Management Program.

The wild dog component of the Victorian Fox and Wild Dog Bounty program will cease, with the final opportunity to submit wild dog parts at Maffra on October 16. The bounty for foxes will increase from \$10 to \$13 per scalp until June 30, 2025.

The remaking of the new dingo unprotection order follows a review of dingo conservation and management with feedback from Traditional Owners, farmers and landholders alongside scientific research.

For more details about the order visit wildlife.vic.gov.au and for farmers support visit agriculture.vic.gov.au

Grant funding for communities to fight pests and weeds

THE Victorian Government is investing an additional \$780,500 in support for community groups to protect their local environment, industries and cultural heritage from biosecurity threats.

Minister for Agriculture Ros Spence has opened the third round of the Partnerships Against Pests grants program, which provides community groups funding to deliver projects that educate, strengthen relationships and promote collaboration to manage established weeds and pest animals at a local level over a two year period.

“We’re proud to be helping Victorian communities to play an active role in managing invasive pests and weeds at a local level that affect our environment,” Ms Spence said.

Grants of between \$10,000 and \$50,000 are available to a wide range of agricultural and environmental not-for-profit organisations, including Landcare groups and networks.

This is on top of \$250,000 made available to Victoria’s four Community Pest Management Groups, in the Victorian Blackberry Taskforce, the Victorian Gorse Taskforce, the Victorian Rabbit Action Network and the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party, to expand their reach and strengthen partnerships with local communities.

The Partnerships Against Pests grants program has been embraced by Victorian community groups which have used the funding to help strengthen efforts to reduce the impact of invasive weeds and pests on Victorian landscapes.

The Victorian Invasive Pest Advisory Board Chair, Andrew Maclean, voiced his support for the grant funding.

“The Victorian Invasive Pests Advisory Board welcomes the third round of the Partnerships Against Pests grants and the extension of project tenures to include two-year projects. Funding projects for longer will enable community groups to design and deliver innovative and sustainable established invasive species projects,” Mr Maclean said.

An example of this from round two of the program is a \$30,000 grant for Bush Heritage Australia, in partnership with DJANDAK share the story about how they successfully removed wheel cactus at Buckrabanyule, a sacred site for the Dja Dja Wurrung people and wider Kulin Nation.

The Partnerships Against Pests funding is being used to promote this story of ‘Country, cactus and combating invasives’, so that a much wider audience can learn from their collaboration.

For details about the Partnerships Against Pests grants program and webinar visit, agriculture.vic.gov.au

The Rabbit Trap

By Jed Dunstan



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Real Estate GUIDE

More workers needed in building and construction

RELEASING their *Future of the Workforce Report*, Master Builders Australia forecasts the building and construction industry needs 130,000 additional workers this year to overcome workforce shortages.

This shortfall is on top of those required for natural attrition and requires Federal and state governments to prioritise reforms that will attract and retain more workers.

“While it is a significant number, this presents an opportunity for growth in an industry that is pivotal to the nation’s economic success,” Master Builders CEO, Denita Wawn, said.

The report takes a closer look at the current state of the industry, the impact of chronic workforce shortages, and recommends sensible policy measures to relieve the pressure.

As the country’s second largest industry employer, one in 11 Australians work in building and construction, but the number of people joining the industry each year is not enough to keep up with demand.

Ms Wawn added, “This is the very workforce needed to deliver the homes and supporting infrastructure we desperately need. Productivity has declined 18 per cent over the last decade putting significant pressures on workers and employers.

“Despite challenges, the industry is in a unique position to grow and innovate. There is a strong pipeline of work for the industry across the housing, commercial and civil sectors, presenting a great opportunity for people to join.”

“There’s no quick fix to the critical workforce shortages,” Ms Wawn said, “it will require a holistic approach across Federal Government portfolios from migration, skills and training through to industrial relations.

“Proposed solutions include increasing trade apprenticeships, leveraging skilled migration from similar regions, and fostering a diverse, inclusive culture to attract new talent from across the economy.”

The underquoting taskforce isn’t going anywhere

THE Victorian Government has announced it will make the underquoting taskforce permanent, to focus on dishonest conduct in the real estate industry.

Minister for Consumer Affairs Gabrielle Williams made the announcement with inspectors from the underquoting taskforce in Melbourne.

The taskforce was initially planned as a two year operation but will now be a permanent enforcement arm of Consumer Affairs Victoria. The taskforce’s work will protect Victorians from the illegal practice of underquoting while creating a fairer market for the many estate agents who do the right thing.

Since it was established, the taskforce has monitored more than 1900 sales campaigns, attended more than 180 auctions, issued more than 320 official warnings and fines totalling more than \$1.6 million. The taskforce also educates industry professionals on their responsibilities at auctions, with a focus on repeat non compliance.

Consumer Affairs Victoria has launched two new criminal court proceedings against estate agencies who elected not to pay their fines after being caught allegedly advertising properties for uncertain amounts. Fines for this offence are \$2371 for individuals and \$11,855 for companies.

The underquoting taskforce continues to receive a high volume of reports through

the dedicated underquoting complaints webform, with more than 2800 reports submitted since it launched.

There was a 70 per cent increase in reports received by the taskforce in 2023/24, and an increasing number of these reports come from estate agents, showing that those who do the right thing are frustrated by dodgy competitors.

Making the taskforce permanent ensures there will continue to be zero tolerance for deceptive practices in the real estate industry.

Information on how to report underquoting can be found at consumer.vic.gov.au/housing

Tax on housing lowers market confidence

THE Housing Industry Association (HIA) has released its *Economic and Industry Outlook* report. HIA Regional Director Keith Ryan said, “Tax imposts on housing have adversely affected market confidence and will delay a recovery in new home building in Victoria, despite strong underlying demand.”

“In addition to the 37 per cent of the cost of a house and land package in Melbourne that is attributable to government, new imposts include a windfall gains tax of up to 62.5 per cent, a land tax surcharge for Victorians with more than one home, and inflated costs associated with ongoing changes to the National Construction Code,” Mr Ryan said.

“These additional taxes and regulatory changes have added to the uncertainty created by rising interest rates and will see the recovery in home building in Victoria delayed until 2025. Most other states have already reached or passed their expected troughs.

“The 2024/25 financial year is expected to mark the trough in the cycle for Victorian detached housing, with only a marginal improvement in 2025/26. This would conclude the three weakest years of the decade for Victorian detached house commencements.

“Higher density housing development is even more constrained. Commencements of multi-units are down by more than 40 per cent since 2015, with 2023/24 concluding the two weakest years for the sector since 2011/12. Activity is not expected to truly gain steam until the second half of 2025.

“There is significant upside potential to home building in Victoria if policymakers address the constraints on the industry.

“This means not imposing new taxes and regulations on the industry and abolishing the punitive taxes imposed on the very investors that are so crucial to building new housing. Some of these taxes perversely cost

tax revenue in terms of lost construction activity, productivity and economic growth.

“Land shortages in Victoria are more acute, making land less affordable, than in almost any other jurisdiction. Land must be fast-tracked and made shovel-ready more rapidly in the coming years. Governments must also ensure sufficient infrastructure to accommodate higher density housing and address local resident and council objections and obstacles to such development.

“The Australian government must streamline visas for in-demand trades so projects can be completed on time and on budget, otherwise large apartment projects will struggle to even commence.

“As policy currently stands, the kind of home building numbers that would produce markedly more affordable housing in Victoria is not part of our forecasts,” Mr Ryan added.

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Nationals say regions left in the dark over wind turbine fire safety

THE Nationals are saying that the safety of regional communities is being placed at risk as it is revealed the Victorian Government's energy regulator has no records of internal fire suppression equipment being installed in any of Victoria's nearly 1500 wind turbines.

The majority of Victoria's wind farm turbines are located in some of the state's most fire prone areas, with some future projects set to be located in timber plantations.

The Nationals say that with another 900 turbines in the pipeline across regional Victoria, under-resourced CFA volunteers have been left in the dark as to which of them pose the greater fire risk to their local communities. A wind turbine fire near Portland in June this year had to be left to burn, as there is no equipment available to fight fires at such heights. A high-intensity fire 200 metres in the air can spray burning oil and fiberglass kilometres in certain conditions. While there have only been about three turbine fires in Victoria to date, the risk increases as ageing wind turbines degrade.

Leaders in the wind industry have confirmed that internal fire suppression equipment is optional and are not compulsory for turbines in Victoria.

Shadow Minister for Emergency Services, Richard Riordan, said, "Regional fire safety should not be optional. The government is fast tracking the wind industry in regional Victoria but failing to ensure fire safety standards keep pace.

"The Allan Government must immediately undertake a full audit of all turbines and immediately inform regional communities of the relevant risk."

Shadow Minister for Energy, Affordability and Security, David Davis, added, "The Allan Labor Government must take responsibility for the fire safety of wind turbines across the state and ensure energy safety regulations are unequivocal and strong. They must ensure existing wind turbines are audited and verified, particularly as wind farms age."

Record exports for Victoria

VICTORIA has recorded the largest increase in exports across Australia, growing exports by more than \$2 billion over the past 12 months.

Data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) recently shows that Victoria's exports increased by 3.6 per cent in the June quarter, taking exports to a record \$17.6 billion.

Exports of goods and services have increased by almost a third since 2015 with exports jumping a further 13.2 per cent over the past year, the strongest growth among the states.

Growing export markets builds the economy and creates jobs and an additional 26,300 Victorians were employed in July 2024, raising total employment to a record 3.7 million.

More than 850,000 new jobs have been created since 2014.

Treasurer Tim Pallas spoke about the importance of export trade in the Victorian economy.

"The strength of our export trade underlines the strength of our economy, which is supporting families, creating jobs and backing Victorian businesses."

"We're focused on growing trade and attracting investment because we know how important they are for local

jobs and increased opportunity," Mr Pallas said.

Victoria's business investment also grew by more than nine per cent in the year to March 2024, marking the second largest increase of the states and more than two per cent above the national growth.

The strong trade data reaffirms the importance of international exports to the state. Victoria is the Education State and international education is the largest export.

Victoria holds 30 per cent of the national market share of international student enrolments. As the state's largest export, international students generated \$14.8 billion in export revenue in 2023, supporting around 63,000 local jobs.

The state government's priority is to maintain the state's global reputation as an open and welcoming destination, while supporting international students to join the state's pool of highly skilled talent.

The state government say that is why the Commonwealth Government must reconsider its cap on international students, which risks damaging Australia's international education standing and economy.



Is your food budget optimised? -Arnaud 25

Getting the most out of your food budget

AS the cost of living increases, many people are choosing between heating or eating. When it comes to putting food on the table it's a daunting task if you're on a tight budget.

Whether you're providing meals for just one person or a family, there are some ways to help your food budget go further.

Meal planning and weekly meal preparation is a great way to help your budget. You can cook bulk meals, giving you leftovers which are great for lunch and those nights where you can't be bothered to cook, helping you to avoid the more expensive and convenient options. Through meal planning, you can incorporate what you have in your cupboards and fridge and then you're using what you have.

Having a shopping list helps you stick to buying only what you need. You can get apps for your phone or devices where you can share the shopping list with your family and it can be added to by anyone who has access to it.

Whether you shop locally or travel to do your food shopping, looking around for the best deal is the way to go. Looking at different food shops and butchers can really make a difference on where to get the best prices.

If things are on sale, stock up and freeze, or put away. Usually meat, vegetables and dairy can have quick sale stickers on them as their use by or best before date is close. Check if these are on your meal plan or adjust accordingly so you can get a cheaper deal.

Cooking from scratch is a great way to make meals in bulk and is usually a healthier option. You can bulk up meals like lasagna or spaghetti sauces with cheaper vegetables and pulses such as lentils and chickpeas, zucchini, carrot and onions. This will also help you get an extra couple of meals to enjoy for another day.

Using cheaper cuts of meat and making slow cooked meals are a great way to have a hearty meal with plenty of leftovers. The leftover meat could also be made into different dishes such as pies or dished up with pasta or rice.

Shopping for fruit and vegetables that are in season instead of sticking to the same items all year round can help keep costs down. If you want to save even more money, try and grow your own fruits, vegetables and herbs. There is nothing more satisfying than growing your own produce.

CPR Shocktober campaign from Ambulance Victoria

AMBULANCE Victoria (AV) has today launched its life-saving annual campaign Shocktober, which calls on the Hume community to learn the three simple steps to improve cardiac arrest survival rates: Call, Push, Shock.

Around 21 Victorians suffer a cardiac arrest every day and only one in 10 survive, which is why it's crucial that people know what to do.

Bystander intervention has the greatest impact on improving someone's chance of surviving a cardiac arrest. For every minute that CPR is delayed, survival decreases by 10 per cent.

Shocktober is a month-long cardiac arrest awareness campaign to highlight the importance of learning CPR and how to use an automated external defibrillator (AED).

AV Acting Regional Director Hume Peter Jenkins said you don't have to be a paramedic to be a life saver, it's as easy as calling Triple Zero (000), pushing hard and fast in the middle of the person's chest and if available, using an AED to deliver a shock.

"Every minute matters in a cardiac arrest and when a patient receives CPR and a shock from an AED before paramedics arrive, their chance of survival more than doubles," he said.

"Last year, paramedics responded to a record 7830 cardiac arrest patients but there was also a record amount of bystander intervention.

"Anyone can perform CPR and use an AED, you don't need training or to be qualified. If someone is in cardiac arrest and an AED is available, simply open it and follow the instructions."

AV will be out and about hosting community engagement sessions across the region.

Last October, AV organised 340 Shocktober events which reached more than 6700 Victorians.

While Victoria has the best cardiac arrest survival rates in Australia, and among the best in the world, Peter said there's more to be done and they need your help.

"There are a number of things you can do to help contribute to better cardiac arrest survival rates in Victoria," he said.

"I encourage everyone to sign up as a GoodSAM responder. It's a smartphone app that connects patients in cardiac arrest with members of the community who are willing to start CPR in the critical minutes before paramedics arrive.

"We have around 16,000 GoodSAM responders across the state, but we always need more.

"You don't have to be first aid qualified, you just have to be willing to perform hands-only CPR and be over 18 years old.

"Last Shocktober, we saw more than 600 people sign up as GoodSAM responders, so this October, please join the cause and register."

Businesses, shop owners and sports clubs are also encouraged to ensure their AEDs are registered with the AV website and made publicly accessible, so 000 call takers can direct people to it in an emergency.

Currently, more than 13,000 AEDs are registered with AV across Victoria.

For more information about Shocktober, the GoodSAM app and how to perform CPR and use an AED, visit ambulance.vic.gov.au/shocktober

Have your say on Maternal and Child Health Services

THE Department of Health has launched a statewide survey to gather valuable feedback on the Victorian Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Service, a free health service available for all Victorian families with children from birth to school age.

All parents, mothers, fathers, carers and families who have accessed Victorian MCH services in the past two years are invited to participate and share their experiences.

The survey encompasses all components of the MCH Service, these include the Universal MCH program including the 10 Key Ages and Stages visits, the Enhanced MCH Program, the Aboriginal MCH program and the

24 hour telephone support service, the MCH line.

Anonymous feedback gathered in the survey will provide valuable insights into what's working well and where improvements can be made, helping to better support Victorian children and families.

By sharing their experiences, families can directly shape the future of the service, ensuring it supports the health and wellbeing journeys of parents, carers and families in raising happy and healthy children.

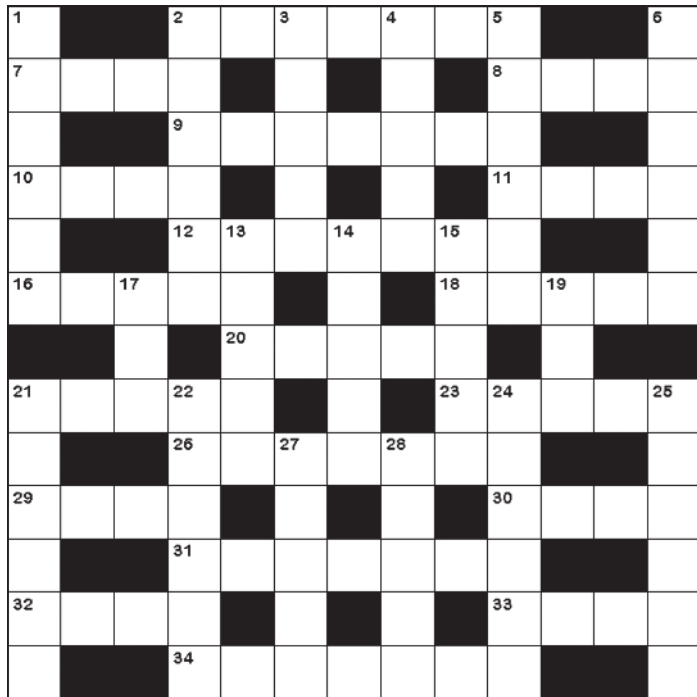
The survey is available in 10 community languages, in addition to English. The survey is open until November 17. To read more and have your say visit engage.vic.gov.au

PUZZLES

SOLUTIONS
Page 20

Crossword

- ACROSS**
- The largest ocean in the world.
 - Come off second best.
 - As well as.
 - Side roads that are little travelled.
 - Have no feeling.
 - Flip a coin.
 - From the side.
 - A small miserable dwelling.
 - The knob on the staircase handrail.
 - Not secret or hidden.
 - Prince of Darkness.
 - Model of excellence.
 - Leafy salad vegetable.
 - A score of zero in tennis.
 - Makes a request.
 - A piece of cloth that is left over.
 - A point that is open to argument.
 - Keep out of sight.
 - Plumbing fixtures that spray water.



- A natural talent.
- A large and stately mansion.
- A small amount of solid food.
- Isolated from everyone.
- Put in a great effort.
- An absurd or silly action.
- Examine carefully.
- Dainty and diminutive.
- A serious and dignified manner.
- Signals that warn of attack or danger.
- Loss of lives.
- Pay close attention to.
- The rhythm and rate of music.
- The act of using.

- DOWN**
- Draw back suddenly in shock.
 - A small smooth rounded rock.
 - A unit of weight for gold.

Word Search

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

Math Square

	-		+		11
x		+		÷	
6	+		-		9
-		-		+	
	+		+	9	13
29		6		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.

- Australian native flowers**
- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| ACACIA | GERALDTON |
| BANKSIA | HAKEA |
| BORONIA | PIGFACE |
| BOTTLEBRUSH | WARATAH |
| EUCALYPTUS | WATTLE |
| FLANNEL | WAXFLOWER |

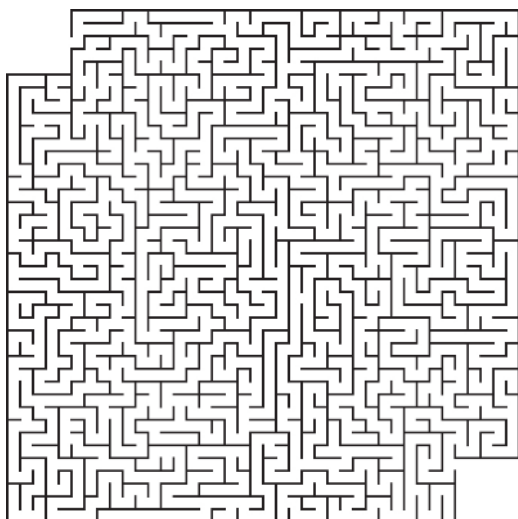
Sudoku

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

Difficulty: Medium

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.

Maze



A tiger snake. -S

Snake season is here

AS temperatures begin to rise, snakes are emerging from a period of reduced activity during winter seeking food and mates. Snakes may be more visible during the warmer months, but it's important to remember that they will generally avoid people.

Abby Smith, Senior Wildlife Projects Officer, from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) said, "Most snake bites occur when people try to capture or kill them. Snakes may defend themselves if they feel threatened. It's best to leave them alone and keep dogs on leads when out walking."

Supervise pets and children closely in areas where snakes are known to occur. Ms Smith said, "Talk to kids about snake safety; what to wear, staying on the path and not putting your hands in long grass, under rocks or tin."

It's important to remember that snakes present little or no danger to people when left alone. When in the bush make sure to wear long pants and proper shoes, carry

your mobile and snake bandages. Keep your pets away from areas with snakes. If you suspect your pet has been bitten, seek veterinary attention immediately.

Around the home make sure to maintain lawns and clean up around your house, snakes are attracted to shelter such as piles of rocks and timber, sheets of metal, and building materials. Untidy bird aviaries may attract rodents, which snakes eat; so make sure to clean up after your birds.

Don't attempt to capture or harm snakes; instead call a licensed snake catcher. If someone is bitten, call 000 immediately.

Snakes are protected under the *Wildlife Act 1975*, and capturing, harming, or killing them is illegal. You can report wildlife crime to Crime Stoppers Victoria on 1800 333 000. For more information contact DEECA on 136 186.

For essential snake bite first aid information, visit stjohnvic.com.au/news/snake-bite-first-aid-tips/

How do you know if your pet has suffered a snake bite?

SNAKES are coming out of hibernation and warming themselves in the sun. They can pose a problem for humans, but if you don't attack the snake, there is little chance that you will be bitten.

Your pets don't know this, and may investigate the snake, with potentially disastrous results. Do you know what to do if your pet gets bitten, and do you know the snakebite symptoms in pets? They can vary according to the type of snake, the location of the bite and the level of venom injected.

Cats and dogs are the most common domestic species bitten by snakes, but horses may also suffer snake bites.

Tiger snake and brown snake bites could display as paralysis, muscle weakness or coagulopathy, which is the limiting of the blood's ability to clot.

According to the RSPCA, other signs of snake bite could include sudden weakness and collapse which may be followed by apparent recovery, shaking or twitching, reduced eye blinking, loss of bladder or bowel control, dilated pupils, paralysis, difficult or fast breathing, bleeding from the nose or mouth and/or the site of the bite, refusal to eat (this particularly impacts cats), and bloody or dark coloured urine.

The symptoms may show within minutes, but they could be up to 25 hours later.

If you suspect that your pet has been bitten by a snake, take them to a vet immediately. Call ahead so the vet knows that you're on the way and you're not wasting time if the vet isn't available. This also give the vet the chance to prepare for your pet's arrival.

Keep the pet calm and quiet. Apply a pressure bandage above and below the snake bite if possible, depending on the location of the bite. If they have been bitten on the face or neck, remove the pet's collar to avoid swelling issues. Don't wash the bite location or apply a tourniquet.

Don't try to catch or kill the snake. If possible, take a photo of it from a safe distance but do not put yourself at risk. If needed, the vet can test which kind of antivenom is needed.

The vet bill for saving a pet following a snake bite can be large, so it's best to try to keep your pets away from snakes in the first place. Snake avoidance training is available for dogs.

Approximately 80 per cent of pets survive snake bites if they are treated quickly.



The building of an embankment at Eildon. -S

The many strikes of the Eildon Weir project

YEARS and years of work went into developing Lake Eildon into the wonder that it is today, all throughout the 20th century.

Construction was carried out in a different age, and strikes were a prevalent part of the industry at the time. During work on the Eildon Weir project, at least seven worker strikes occurred, and an unknown number more were narrowly avoided.

During the early work on the Sugarloaf Reservoir, which seemingly still falls under the Eildon Weir project banner, there were three recorded strikes.

On September 15, 1916, the *Alexandra and Yea Standard* reported that 200 men had returned to work, after striking over the issue of hours and wages.

Men working the wet trenches required shorter hours and one shilling extra pay per day, but movement veered to increase the wages of all of the workers by 11 shillings per day. Workers argued that they needed higher wages to counter the high costs of living in Eildon.

The demands of the workers were met, with wages increasing by 11 shillings per day.

The journalist who wrote the article said about the strike, "in view of the fact that the country is in urgent need of war recruits, it looks as though the men were trying to make themselves targets to a government that is in need of volunteers, and at the same time in desperate straits to carry on public works."

Another strike occurred in October 1918, though little information is available on why the workers went on strike. *The Argus* simply reported that 200 members of the Australian Workers' Union had gone back to work on the Eildon Weir project.

Again, in the *Alexandra and Yea Standard*, another strike where the demands were not publicly reported began in January 1925.

"The trouble is not settled as yet, although it is expected to be finished in a day or two. At present about 250 are idle and about 15 of the Builders L. U. men are working. Carpenters, blacksmiths, engine drivers, and several others who are in other unions are not affected by the stoppage," the article reads.

This strike was resolved on February 6, and the police who maintained a presence during the strike returned to their primary place of operations.

A strike was narrowly avoided in 1927, before a large break in the Eildon Weir project was undertaken.

Construction of the Greater Eildon Dam commenced in 1951, and was completed in 1956.

By July 17, 1951, workers were striking over pay rates. Two hundred men employed by the A V Jennings Construction Co. Ltd, who were tasked with building the Eildon township, went on strike.

"The Secretary of the Master Builders' Association (Mr E S Elliott) said that

the trouble had arisen because the Utah Construction Co. contractors for the dam were allegedly paying all their employees 15 per cent above award rates, but the A. V. Jennings Co. had refused this because of the terms of its contract," an article in *The Sun News-Pictorial* reads.

A further strike over time lost due to a stoppage was undertaken by 200 workers in June 1953. *The Age* reported that the men returned to work on the terms that half a days' pay be awarded to them for the time lost; they received seats in trucks going from the hostels to the job site; and they have free access to Mr J Fogg, general manager of Utah Constructions Ltd in the event of a dispute.

Two strikes occurred in 1954, with one potential one being avoided in January, one in April, and one in November.

As reported in *The Riverine Herald* on January 20, 1954, "the last minute recommendation by the union secretary has led 185 unionists to call off a strike at the Eildon Weir project."

In April, the dismissal of an engine driver led 300 members of the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association to strike. The flow on effect of this was that 100 members of other union groups were unable to work.

The Age reported that "there is now a possibility of the strike spreading to FEDFA members employed in the boiler house. This

would result in power being cut off to the local hospital."

Fortunately, the strike was settled a week later, with the agreed upon outcome that the dismissed man could apply for reinstatement in 14 days.

On November 4, 1954, the *Daily Mercury* published an article that read, "Victoria's giant £12 million Eildon Weir project may shut down before the weekend, making 1500 homeless and out of work. The Utah Construction Co.'s managing director, Mr J D Fogg, announced tonight that unless Eildon's 400 illegal strikers went back to work soon, the project would reluctantly have to be shut down."

The strike broke only four days later, and it was unclear what this particular dispute was about.

Despite the many strikes that plagued construction of the Eildon Weir project, the project was a success, with the establishment of the Eildon township as a result. A snippet from the history section of *lakeeildon.com* reads, "during the construction days, movies were shown every night and a talented revue company was formed from the local population. Variety shows and plays were performed frequently."

Clearly, working in construction on the Eildon Weir project wasn't all bad.

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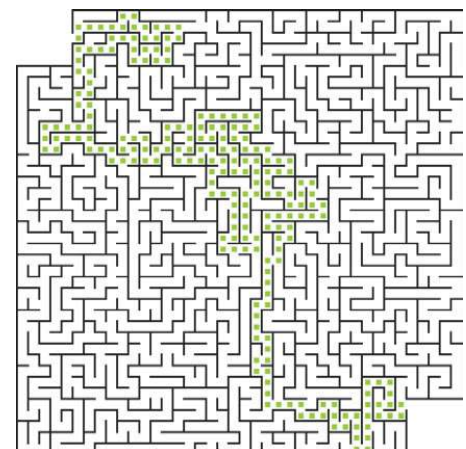
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MEETINGS

EMBASSY OF IDEAS.
 AGM will be held on Monday, October 28 at 6pm at EOI, 3, Bailey Street, Alexandra. All welcome.

MEETINGS

EILDON ACTION INC will hold its Annual General Meeting on Thursday, October 24, 2024 at 4pm at the Eildon Information Centre – 1 Main Street, Eildon. The agenda of the meeting will be to report on the finances for the year July 1 to June 30, 2024, elect office-bearers and set membership fees for the next year.

DEATH NOTICES

COOKSON, Geoffrey Neville
 20/01/1931 - 27/09/2024

Aged 93. Beloved husband of June. Loved father of Fiona and Geoff, Warwick (dec) and Trish. Granddad to Will and Amanda, Jack, Mackinlay, Molly and Gus. Great grandad to Bolton and Harrison.

Passed away peacefully at Kellock Lodge. At rest.

COOKSON, Geoffrey Neville

A funeral service celebrating the life of Geoff will be held at Murrindindi Chapel, 21 Johnston Street, Alexandra on Saturday, October 5, 2024 commencing at 11.30am followed by a private burial.



MARSHALL, Robert Thomas 'Bob'

The Marysville RSL Sub-Branch is sad to report that their esteemed member and friend, Bob, passed away on September 10 after a long illness.

We extend our deepest sympathy to wife Joan, their extensive family and many, many friends.

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The Reddrop Group are looking for Finance Officers to join our Finance Team based at Alexandra FoodWorks.

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Our Finance Officers are responsible for a broad range of tasks including supplier invoicing, balancing daily sales, data management and problem solving.

Ideally we are looking for people who have good computer skills, can work well as part of a team or unsupervised, are reliable and have good communication skills. An ability to multi-task and prioritise work, as well as be attentive to detail and accuracy is also vital.

Experience or knowledge of the finance area, such as knowledge of GST and general ledger accounts would be an advantage, however, it is not essential and we are happy to provide training to a candidate that shows enthusiasm and willingness to learn.

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Nominations open for ARV stakeholder positions

NOMINATIONS are now open for Alpine Resort Victoria's (ARV) stakeholder consultative committee.

ARV is calling for stakeholders of the state's six alpine resorts in Falls Creek, Lake Mountain, Mt Baw Baw, Mt Buller, Mt Hotham and Mt Stirling, to contribute to the strategic direction of the resorts via membership on the Stakeholder Consultative Committees (SCCs).

These volunteer committees play a pivotal role in the direction of the resorts,

providing advice on operational and strategic matters relating to their relevant mountain, and surrounding communities.

With nominations for membership of the SCCs now due for renewal, ARV is encouraging all suitable and passionate stakeholders to submit a short application to express their interest in one of the resort SCCs for a two year term, commencing January 2025.

"Victoria's alpine resorts are full of passionate and engaged stakeholders and

ARV wants to hear from anyone who is keen to contribute to and help us inform the strategic direction of the resorts," ARV CEO Amber Gardner said.

"We have had SCCs in each resort running for the last two years and they have played a crucial role in helping shape ARV's engagement with broader stakeholder groups and also inform ARV's direction in key areas like environmental management, emergency management, leasing policy and visitor experience.

"Membership on the SCC helps ARV protect and enhance the unique characteristics of each resort while helping to ensure the sustainability and long-term success of all of the resorts, and they provide a conduit for information and advice between ARV and key stakeholders ensuring local matters are heard and considered," Ms Gardner said.

More information can be found at alpineresorts.vic.gov.au



Suicide prevention strategy to save lives

THE Victorian Government is pushing for change as the new *Victorian Suicide Prevention and Response Strategy 2024-2034* will be put to the test and tackle the devastating impacts of suicide by establishing a whole of government and community wide response to suicide in Victoria.

The 10 year strategy was a key recommendation of the *Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System* and forms a crucial part of the ongoing transformation to Victoria's mental health and wellbeing system.

Acknowledging the wide-ranging factors of suicidal distress, like economic stress and family violence, the strategy is supported by an implementation plan which outlines the whole of government, community wide approach.

The rolling implementation plans will allow to respond flexibly to emerging issues and new evidence across the life of the strategy and shift approaches and focus accordingly.

Developed with clinicians and experts in the mental health sector, the strategy also includes the input of people with lived experience.

The strategy adds to the important work the state government is already doing on suicide prevention, including the Hospital Outreach Post-suicidal Engagement (HOPE) initiative to enhance support people leaving an emergency department or medical ward following treatment for an attempted suicide, planning or intent.

While reducing suicide is the strategy's main goal, it also aims to address and reduce factors that contribute to suicide such as childhood trauma, economic stress, harmful drug and alcohol use, and family violence, focusing on increasing social inclusion and connection to culture.

Since the Royal Commission, significant progress has been made with work underway to implement over 90 per cent of its recommendations and more than \$6 billion invested in the system over the past three years.

La Trobe University to source renewables from Seymour wind farm

LA Trobe University has entered into an agreement with Iberdrola, a global energy provider, to purchase renewable electricity to power their education sites. Iberdrola produces renewable energy at the Cherry Tree Wind Farm in Seymour, just outside the borders of Murrindindi Shire.

The university is aiming towards all electricity they purchase being 100 per cent emissions free by 2028.

As it stands, La Trobe University is also creating Victoria's largest urban solar farm to reduce their total university emissions by 15 per cent, and their regional campuses of Bendigo, Albury-Wodonga, Shepparton and Mildura are already net zero emission status.

The Chairman and CEO of Iberdrola Australia, Ross Rolfe, said about the purchasing agreement, "we are delighted to be supporting La Trobe University as they deliver their ambitious sustainability objectives.

"Their long term renewable energy supply agreement with Iberdrola Australia will help achieve their decarbonisation objectives and contribute to a brighter future for the Victorian environment and economy," Mr Rolfe said.

Keep up your handwashing to stop the spread of germs

THE Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission) have urged Australians to continue to practice good hand hygiene as the first line defence to reduce the spread of harmful germs.

Practicing good hand hygiene remains as important as ever, according to infectious diseases physician Professor Peter Collignon AM, Senior Medical Advisor for the Commission.

"Some people may have become complacent with how often and how well they wash their hands, by not using enough soap and water, doing it too quickly or not hand washing at all," said Professor Collignon.

"Hand washing should matter to all of us because it is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of germs and disease, particularly to reduce infections caused by multidrug resistant bacteria such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, also known as MRSA or 'golden staph'.

"Hand hygiene also decreases the risk of infection for us in everyday life in the community because it stops the spread of other bacteria that get onto our hands. There are many germs that can cause serious infections that you can pass on to those around you," Professor Collignon explained.

"E. coli which is a common cause of urinary tract and intra-abdominal infections, Streptococcus which commonly causes skin infections, and community strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* (golden staph) are just some of

many examples of common germs that are a danger to us all."

Good hand hygiene also helps reduce the spread of germs that cause gastroenteritis and contributes to reducing the risk of respiratory infections such as influenza and coronavirus.

Professor Collignon said the vigilance of some Australians around hand hygiene may have waned since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. "The pandemic shone a spotlight on the role of personal hygiene, including hand washing, but it's vital we keep reminding people to do it regularly because it is such an easy way to fight germs."

Effective hand hygiene reduces the transmission of microorganisms such as MRSA that cause infections in hospitals. These healthcare-associated infections affect more than 81,000 Australians each year.

Across Australia, staff in our hospitals continue to exceed the national benchmark of 80 per cent compliance with hand hygiene requirements, with the latest data showing almost 90 per cent compliance.

"Hand hygiene should be an everyday routine habit, whether you are at home, in hospital, attending healthcare appointments or out and about in the community," said Professor Collignon.

"Using good old fashioned soap and water is the best way to remove bacteria and viruses from your skin. But if you're busy in transit, travelling or a health worker, hand sanitiser or alcohol rub is a great alternative."



Aoidh Doyle with his dog Sue. -S

Competition ahead for Kelpie youngster Sue

AOIDH Doyle, a local resident of Fawcett, is participating in the 2024 Cobber Challenge Masters Edition with his Kelpie, Sue, starting October 7.

Sue is the daughter of Snip, a previous Australian Yard Dog champion, Supreme Stock Dog winner, and various other competition winners. Aoidh is a shearing contractor and the operator of Whisper Kelpies and Livestock Services, running both sheep and cattle.

Being the daughter of a superstar farm dog marks her as good stock, and Aoidh talked about how naturally farm work came to her.

"Sue is the daughter of Snip, who was the Australian Yard Dog champion this year and National Kelpie Trial winner and Supreme Stock Dog winner. This year, I couldn't enter Snip in it because she had pups. She's had pups on her, so she's out of work for a bit. Sue is the daughter of hers, and she's 20 months old. She's the next best thing coming through in our team.

"She's a real natural all-rounder. She works real nice in the paddock, and has heaps of punch when it comes to the yard work as well. She's just a real natural and easy to train. You get some dogs like that. It's just like humans. Some people are good at footy, and other have to train all the time to get good," Aoidh said.

The Masters Edition of the Cobber Challenge is where a selection of the nation's very best working dogs battle it out for the coveted title of Australia's ultimate working dog. This year there are eight dogs competing, with Sue one of them.

Each dog wears a GPS tracking collar to record their distance, speed and duration for each day they work, with points accumulated based on performance. After two weeks, the dog with the most points wins.

"This year they're doing the Masters Edition, which is all the blokes that have been sponsored as Cobber ambassadors. We're all against each other this year. Everyone's got

to put a tracking collar on their dog every day, and then they record all the data of the distance and everything the dog travels each day. There are some dogs doing up to 60 kilometres per day.

"With what I'm doing, I'm sort of penning up more in the sheds, so I'm not really doing as many kilometres. It's still a hard day's work, I'm just not getting the k's up because

I'm not out in the paddocks mustering as much as the others."

In terms of what he hopes to achieve in this year's Cobber Challenge, Aoidh is approaching the competition with a very practical mindset.

"It's good to compare the work you're doing with other people. Compare what sort of distances they're doing each day to what

you're doing. It's a bit of fun for us all as well," he said.

Aoidh also has future plans to enter Sue in lots of different competitions.

"She'll do a lot of dog trialling, like yard dog trialling, cattle trialling and utilities," he concluded.

To follow along with all the action of this year's Cobber Challenge, visit cobberchallenge.com.au

Benefits to working local

WORK smarter not harder, and work locally. Working locally could easily benefit your health as you live close to work you can ride a bike or walk to work, getting in your daily exercise as part of your work commute. Doing this will also reduce your carbon footprint.

Less travel to work also allows for a sneaky sleep in. There are many benefits to having extra sleep, including increased brain performance, better moods and other health benefits.

Reducing your travel time also provide a less stressful life and a better work life balance. Having this extra time also allows for more time with family and friends. If you have children, it allows you to be more present and available to attend sports, school events, and other commitments. You would also have time to join a sports club yourself, which is another way of improving your health.

The flexibility of working close to home means you can get things done on your lunch break or at the end of the working day, such as medical and self-care appointments.

Why would you want to leave your close knit community everyday and travel to a

place where you may not know anyone? Being present in the community helps you be part of that close knit group that most of people crave to be a part of, feeling a sense of connection.

If you're not spending hours on travel, you may have the time and space in your life to join a volunteer group or committee that your passionate about. Volunteer emergency services are always in need of volunteers. If people have to travel for employment, they aren't available for call outs.

Working locally also strengthens the local economy, jobs are created, you're shopping locally and not picking up items on your way home. Small businesses are therefore benefitting.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, working remotely has had its benefits and many people are still working from home in one form or another, meaning that there has been an increase in the number of people packing up their bags from the 'burbs and moving to regional Victoria to enjoy a less stressful and slower paced life.

It's all about balance. Life is short. Why do you want to spend it constantly behind the wheel?

Foundation Murrindindi announces grant recipients

LAST week Foundation Murrindindi announced the successful grant recipients of the recent Connecting Communities Grant Round. The following organisations and initiatives received support to locally deliver led projects that foster community connections; Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House with their volunteer appreciation event, Murrindindi Carers Group for the Carers Christmas gathering, Yea Community House with the youth movie nights, Kinglake Country Womens Association for Light up Kinglake at Christmas, Flowerdale Community-House's Community Christmas Lunch, Murrindindi East U3A with their Seniors week events and movie screening, and The Flowerdale Sports Club Inc for Mini Golf.

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Marysville Golf Club blooming

by Lesley Rundle

PERFECT weather conditions greeted the Marysville golfers last Saturday with an early start enabling players to watch the AFL Grand Final in the afternoon. Both the men and the ladies played a stableford round.

The ladies winner was Heather Jenkins (21) with 38 points and the runner-up was Lesley Rundle (33) with 30 points on a countback from Helen Howard. Richy Clark (13) blitzed the field to win the men's competition with

an excellent 41 points followed by Mark Bambery (24) with 35 points.

The nearest the pins were won by Gail Leigh, Richy Clark and Travers Stow who also won the Golden Shot. Members welcomed back Alan and Helen Howard after their long trip into Queensland and beyond.

The gardens around the clubhouse are stunning at the moment with the azaleas in full bloom. Members thank all those volunteers who assist with the upkeep of the gardens and the course.

Next Saturday a stroke round will be played by all players for the October monthly medal and the first round of the men's and ladies championships. The second round for the ladies and men will be played on Saturday October 12 and the final round for the men will be played on Saturday October 19. The ladies play four rounds with the best of three taken into account and their third round will be on October 19 and the final round will be on Saturday October 26.

The club is preparing for a number of events over the next few weeks. The annual Ladies

Tournament is being held on October 10, the Dalhousie Vets are playing at Marysville on Thursday, November 7, the major fundraising event and celebration of the opening of the back nine holes 50 years ago is on Saturday, November 9 and the annual men's/mixed tournament is on Sunday, November 10.

The ladies Dalhousie events are now in full swing and having played in the Kilmore Tournament two weeks ago this week the ladies will travel to Euroa to play in the annual bowl.



Golfers among the azaleas.

Varied weather for Alexandra golfers

by Elizabeth Goss

IT was a glorious spring day for the stableford round on Saturday at Alexandra Golf Club and for the footy finals barbecues. All agreed how good the course was looking and playing thanks to volunteers.

The winner was Russell Purcell with (19) 38 points and the runner-up was John Steer with (14) 35 points on a countback from Jon Petrzela with (25) 35 points. Next came Sharyn Petrzela with (20) 34 points on a countback from Shane McGorlick with (11) 34 points.

Nearest the pin on the second and seventh went to Steve Darmody, on the 12th to Jared Sloane and on the 18th to Pat Bucket. Next Saturday, October 6 is stableford, 11.30am gather for 12pm start. On October 12 the first round of the club championships will be played followed by the annual meeting.

Frank Devries was the winner on Tuesday with (26) 39 points followed by Peter Phillips with (6) 34 points and then John Greatorex with (18) 33 points. Nearest the pin on the seventh went to John Greatorex, on the 17th to Jared Sloane and on the

18th to Peter Phillips. Ball rundown: Russel Purcell, Jared Sloane, Dave Silverman and Michael Bossonnet.

With wet and humid weather on Wednesday there were only eight keen players. It was decided to defer the planned championship round and play a nine-hole stableford game. The winner was Ruth Worland with 16 points followed by Donna Meggitt with 15 points on a three-way countback from Judy Pearson and Sandra Morris.

Next Wednesday, October 9 is an ambrose.

Grand final stableford at Eildon Golf Club

by Puttamatic

LAST Saturday was a great day for golf and Eildon Golf Club had 19 players roll up to their grand final stableford competition. With an 8am tee time and dew still on the ground, the course was a picture and not only were the members enjoying the course, but also a host of green fee players were soaking in a great day for a game of golf.

Winner on the day was Phil Dally with 39 points. Runner-

up was Mark Mackwell with 38 points and the ball run winners were Rod Taylor with 35 points and John Beale also on 35 points.

The nearest the pin winners this week, no winner on the third second shot, on the par three fifth Kerry Power, 11th Rhys Southwell, 12th Kerry Power, and no winner on the 14th. Other winners, Colin Long won the entry draw, Peter McNair had a win with the swindle and Dennis Seamer had a shot at the joker.