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10 NOVEMBER, 2026

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Star Weekly
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All aboard for learning

Deer Park North Primary School has officially opened its new W-Class tram, marking an exciting milestone for the school community.

Supplied through VicTrack's free tram program, the historic tram was craned into the school grounds in 2024 before undergoing extensive refurbishment to transform it into a unique learning space.

The school has since secured $35,000 through the state government's 2027 Creative Learning Partnerships program to bring the project to life.

The project will give students an opportunity to help shape the tram into a permanent, imaginative learning space while building their creativity, confidence and literacy skills.

Partnering with Footscray-based creative writing organisation 100 Story Building, Deer Park North Primary School will join 14 other schools in an initiative exploring storytelling, creative writing, visual arts and student co-design.

Year one students Mery, Aysel, Johnny, Princess and Raiden in front of the tram.
(Damjan Janevski) 588111 02

Tobacco crackdown

Police have targeted tobacco stores with alleged links to organised crime in Melbourne's west as part of a proactive effort to reduce the risk of serious and violent crime in Sunshine.

Sunshine police, working alongside VIPER Taskforce, conducted a series of search warrants targeting stores suspected of involvement in the illicit tobacco trade.

According to Victoria Police, tobacco stores linked to organised crime have repeatedly been the target of arson attacks and other serious criminal activity across Victoria, placing neighbouring businesses, workers and members of the public at risk.

Results from the 29 October operation include the search of five tobacco stores and seizure of 50,949 illicit cigarettes, four kilograms of illicit loose-leaf tobacco, 593 vapes, $24,000 in cash and one imitation firearm. Five people have been arrested and released pending summons or with official cautions.

Police said legitimate businesses operating near tobacco stores are often left to deal with the consequences, including damage, disruption and ongoing safety concerns.

"This operation was about protecting local businesses, workers and residents from the harm associated with organised crime", Brimbank Local Area Commander, acting inspector Rochelle Kelly said.

"By taking action against businesses allegedly linked to the illicit tobacco trade, we're reducing opportunities for further harm and making our community safer as a result.

"Local businesses deserve to operate without fear of criminal activity occurring next door, and that's exactly what this operation was designed to support."

Victoria Police used new powers under the Tobacco Act 1987, which allow 90-day closure notices to be issued to stores found to be selling illicit tobacco.

The operation forms part of an ongoing statewide effort led by the VIPER Taskforce to disrupt organised crime involvement in the illicit tobacco trade

"The illicit tobacco trade continues to provide a lucrative revenue stream for organised crime networks, which are motivated by profit and have little regard for the harm they cause communities," VIPER Taskforce Detective Inspector Anthony Gasparini said. "Every store we close is another opportunity taken away from organised crime to profit and another step towards preventing serious incidents from occurring."

Anyone with information is urged to contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 www.crimestoppersvic.com.au

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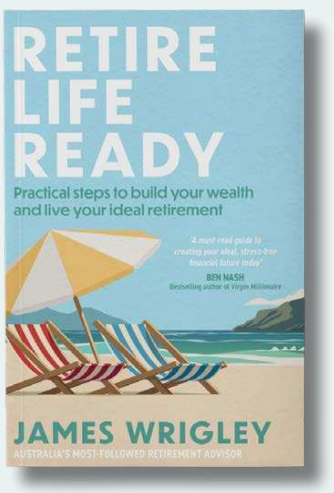
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Pause Albion quarter: Council

By Sebastian Conidi

Brimbank council is urging the state government to pause its massive redevelopment plan for the 84-hectare Albion Quarter surrounding Albion Station until funding for essential infrastructure is guaranteed.

The Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) recently released the draft Albion Quarter Structure Plan and proposed planning changes under Amendment C245brim. The state's proposal aims to rezone local industrial land to make way for 6,000 new homes, 10,200 residents and 8000 jobs.

While council recognises the precinct as a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" to drive growth in Melbourne's west, its official 80-page submission warns that the current state plan is "premature".

The submission outlines several key changes council wants the state government to make. These include introducing a mandatory requirement for at least 10 per cent affordable housing across the precinct, alongside a requirement for 10 per cent on-site social and affordable housing on government-owned land.

Council is also pushing for open space contributions to increase from the state's proposed five per cent (2.25 hectares) to eight per cent, in line with major urban renewal precedents across Melbourne. This would help deliver more centrally located parks and playgrounds for future residents, the submission stated.

Other priorities include a funded plan to transform the concrete Stony Creek drainage channel into an accessible green corridor featuring walking and cycling trails, as well as a commitment to rebuilding Albion Station into a fully accessible, modern transport hub.

Council also wants safe pedestrian and cycling bridges connecting the precinct to the future Sunshine Energy Park.

Council warns that the state's draft planning controls focus too heavily on maximising development capacity rather than creating a liveable and attractive neighbourhood.

It has asked the planning minister to pause the rezoning process and appoint an independent standing advisory committee of planning experts. The proposed panel would review public feedback and ensure essential infrastructure commitments are secured before any land is formally rezoned.

Council's submission to DTP was formally noted at the recent council meeting, where Cr Duyen Anh Pham described it as a "strategic move in the right direction" to protect the area's future.



Police dog Devil and handler Leading Senior Constable Michelle Dench (supplied)

Retirement beckons for Devil the dog

Victoria Police is saying goodbye to one of its most accomplished police dogs as he hangs up his collar and heads off into retirement.

After eight years of keeping the community safe and being a committed service police dog, Devil retired on 30 October.

Together with his handler Leading Senior Constable Michelle Dench, they have formed one of the longest partnerships in Dog Squad history.

"His retirement is such an emotional milestone as we've been a team together for the past eight years. He's had my back and never let me down. It won't be the same without him and I will miss not having him at work with me every day," Leading Senior Constable Dench said.

Devil was feared by offenders and he was known in the force for his tracking ability and siege work. Some of his best work included during a police vehicle ramming in Vermont.

Leading Senior Constable Dench and Devil were travelling to a job at high speed. The driver of the stolen vehicle fled at the scene and Devil chased him down, leading to his arrest.

Leading Senior Constable Dench and Devil were lucky to have no injuries.

Devil turns 10 this year and while he remains fit and healthy, the Dog Squad have made the difficult decision to retire him given his age so he can enjoy his final years.

"Devil has always been more than just a dog, he's a much loved member of the force. He is my family," Leading Senior Constable Dench said.

Devil will continue living at Leading Senior Constable Dench's home but he will now spend his days as he chooses.

Funding secured for greener urban spaces in Brimbank

Brimbank council recently secured more than than $500,000 in state government funding for three urban greening projects across the municipality, promising trees, shade and greener public spaces.

The funding, provided through the More Trees for Melbourne program, will support tree planting and shade improvements at Glengala Village in Sunshine West, Alfrieda Street in St Albans and parks and creek corridors across Brimbank.

The projects will deliver more shade and greenery across Brimbank, helping to reduce urban heat, boost biodiversity and improve amenity in local parks, streets and shopping precincts.

The Glengala Village Streetscape Improvement Project will receive $250,000, to deliver extensive canopy tree planting throughout the Sunshine West activity centre.

The Alfrieda Street Activity Centre Urban Greening project will receive $130,000 to increase shade and greenery throughout the busy St Albans shopping precinct.

The Brimbank Open Space and Creek Line Greening project will receive $120,600 to plant mature trees at Keilor Lodge Reserve in Taylors Lakes and increase the planting across seven sites along the Maribyrnong River, Taylors Creek and Kororoit Creek.

Brimbank community programs in November

Residents across Brimbank are encouraged to take advantage of a range of free and practical programs running throughout November at local neighbourhood houses and community centres, offering opportunities to develop new skills, explore career pathways and build confidence.

There is something on offer for people at different stages of their personal and professional journeys.

Those interested in hospitality can take part in a three-day practical hospitality course on 18, 19 and 20 November in Sunshine. The course is designed to equip participants with essential food and beverage service skills, helping them take their first steps towards employment in the hospitality industry.

For those wanting to improve their communication skills, Master of the Mic – Public Speaking Club returns on 25 November, from 4pm to 5.30pm, at Visy Cares Hub.

This monthly program offers a relaxed and welcoming environment where participants can practise public speaking, share ideas, meet new people and take part in interactive challenges and fun activities.

Practical employment support is also available throughout the month. Free one-hour career counselling sessions with a careers consultant from VU Skills and Jobs Centre are offered on Wednesdays between 1pm and 5pm.

Residents preparing for job opportunities can also access mock interviews on Thursdays, from 2pm to 5pm, to practise answering questions and build confidence ahead of real interviews.

Additional job application support is available Monday to Friday, from 9am to 4pm, helping residents strengthen their resumes and cover letters. Participants can book ahead through the relevant link or simply drop in during opening hours.

All programs take place at Visy Cares Hub, 80b Harvester Road, Sunshine.

Young entrepreneurs also have an opportunity to get involved, with expressions of interest now open for the Roaming Youth Market. The initiative will give young people the chance to showcase and sell their products at a variety of locations across Brimbank throughout the year, providing valuable experience in business, creativity and entrepreneurship.

Steps to reducing violence

As part of Star Weekly's ongoing We Deserve Better campaign about crime in Melbourne's west, Glenn Fisher takes a look at the state's new Violence Reduction Unit and how it operates.

The noise from the community has been getting louder over the past few years. Noise about rising violence and crime rates, with a particular focus on 'out of control' youths in our midst.

When the state government appointed Youth Justice Commissioner Andrea Davidson as chief executive of the new Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) 12 months ago, her goal was to set up a reference group to bring together local organisations and community leaders to guide the government on the challenges and opportunities facing the VRU.

The VRU says its focus is on stopping violence before it starts, working with young people, families, schools, community organisations and government agencies to address the underlying causes of violence.

The VRU model, which is based on similar units in Glasgow, Scotland, and London, England, but is tailored to Victoria, has seen the state government partner with Blue Light Victoria, which already has a successful youth mentoring program operating in schools to address the issues of school disengagement, isolation and limited access to positive role models.

More than $30 million has been invested in the VRU, with recent announcements including $10 million towards 17 new violence prevention programs in communities most affected by youth crime, the launch of a $13 million targeted grants program called Ground Up to help organisations already doing the work on the ground, and $9.5 million to boost Blue Light Victoria's youth mentoring program.



Attorney-General Sonya Kilkenny (left) and Werribee MP John Lister (centre) were at Werribee station recently with outreach workers for the expansion of the VRU's Community Connectors program. (Supplied).

"There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to violence prevention," Ms Davidson said.

"By supporting local programs to deliver solutions that work for them, we can make communities safer for everyone."

The new violence prevention programs will help deliver early intervention in schools and communities, including knife-crime prevention, homework clubs and youth mentoring, with programs such as the Melton-based Airtime Cobblebank Basketball Program already giving young people a positive place to connect and keep them away from bad influences.

Another VRU initiative involves community organisation 1000 Generations providing youth drop-in centres across Brimbank and Melton that will give young people a dedicated place to build strong positive relationships, access education, employment, wellbeing and community support services, and to develop practical life and employment skills.

Blue Light Victoria may be remembered by older generations for its popular police-run discos in the 1970s and '80s, but it's much more than that these days with its youth mentoring and early intervention programs such as Blue EDGE.

Run in partnership with police and emergency services, Blue EDGE blends fun fitness activities with life skills to boost resilience, encourage healthy and safe decision making, and strengthen community connection in the 10-21 age group.

Train stations in Melbourne's west have also benefitted from VRU funding, with Attorney-General Sonya Kilkenny visiting Werribee late last month with Werribee MP John Lister to announce the expansion of the Community Connectors program.

Community Connectors are specialist outreach workers who patrol train stations and provide proactive support to community members to prevent incidents arising.

Two outreach workers will be based at Werribee station by the end of 2026, providing on-the-ground support for people experiencing challenges such as homelessness, mental health concerns, trauma, family violence, alcohol and other substance issues.

The outreach workers build meaningful connections with the people they're there to help, and also provide training, mentoring and support to Metro Trains staff in managing people with complex needs.

Werribee is the third station funded through the VRU, with Community Connectors also present at Sunshine and St Albans. Outreach workers were also introduced at Footscray and Broadmeadows stations earlier this year.

Details: https://www.vic.gov.au/what-violence-reduction-unit-vru

Sagalee is proud to be nominated as a top Australian

By Ella Burns

A western suburbs man who has been transforming the lives of young people through sport, education and community action has been named among Victoria's nominees for the 2027 Australian of the Year Awards.

Twenty-eight-year-old Sagalee Omer is one of 16 Victorians recognised across four award categories, joining 130 nominees from across Australia celebrated for their contributions to their communities.

He is nominated as the Young Australian of the Year for Victoria.

National Australia Day Council chief executive Carrie Leeson said the Victorian nominees demonstrated the many ways people could support those around them.

"The nominees for Victoria are standing up for what matters, providing support to people when they need it most and helping to shape better futures for the next generation," Ms Leeson said.

Mr Omer is the founder and social impact leader behind Shooters Shoot, a youth-led organisation creating opportunities through sport, education, culture and community initiatives. It operates across the west.

The organisation emerged from Mr Omer's 23rd birthday celebration that he transformed into a basketball tournament to create connections through sport coming out of covid lockdowns to raise money for young people's mental health. The event raised $16,000 for Foundation House.

"Being Michael Jordan's jersey number (23), I thought I'd do something creative for my Jordan year and organise a basketball tournament to bring people together," he said.


Australian of the Year Awards for Victoria nominee Sagalee Omer. (Damjan Janevski) 587800 02

Since then, Shooters Shoot has grown to engage more than 5,000 young people and raised more than $100,000 through its programs and events. It has also distributed more than 400 bicycles and funded over 200 therapy sessions for young people needing support.

"It wasn't just about the games being played, but the conversations, relationships and opportunities that came from bringing people together," he said.

"That's when I realised basketball could be the vehicle for something much greater."

For Mr Omer, from Tarneit, the greatest achievements are not measured by numbers but by the personal growth of the young people he supports.

He recalled one young person who was struggling when they first connected through Shooters Shoot and through the help he helped provide, the young person grew in confidence and is now working towards publishing a book about their experiences.

"Sometimes the greatest achievement is seeing a young person begin to believe in themselves, recognise their own potential and take ownership of their future," Mr Omer said.

Mr Omer combines local action with global advocacy. He is a member of the Refugee Advisory Group for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and contributes to conversations about refugee inclusion and representation. He has also worked with Foundation House to develop culturally safe programs for young people from refugee backgrounds.

Mr Omer said one of the most important lessons he has learned is the value of making young people feel heard.

"Every young person has their own story, experiences and challenges," he said.

"When we take the time to genuinely listen and understand them, we create an environment where they feel valued and supported."

This west local has become a standout on both the community and national stage through his commitment to helping young people access opportunities, build connections and shape stronger, more inclusive communities.

The Victorian award recipients will be announced in Melbourne on 12 November. Winners will then represent Victoria as finalists in the national Australian of the Year Awards, which will be announced in Canberra on 25 January 2027.

Mr Omer said he was "extremely honoured" to be nominated for the Australian of the Year Awards.

"This recognition isn't just about myself," he said.

"It's a reflection of the incredible team, volunteers, partners, supporters and young people who have all played a part in building Shooters Shoot into what it is today."

The nomination was a reminder to Mr Omer of how far Shooters Shoot has come after more than five years of supporting young people. Shooters Shoot's next event will be held on 28 and 29 November at RS Studios in Maidstone. Details. https://thefifth.shootersshoot.com.au/#top

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PHONE \ 03 8318 5777

LOCATION \ Corner Thomsons Road and Keilor Park Drive, Keilor Park, 3042

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MMP Star

Published by MMP Star Pty Ltd ACN 168 220 399
Head Office Corner Thomsons Road and Keilor Park Drive, Keilor Park, 3042
Publisher/Managing Director, Paul Thomas
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Zoe McLelland (standing for Isabella Thompson) along with Quynh Nguyen, Tara Cao, Chantell Nguyen and Han Pham. (Sebastian Conidi)

Fashion takes centre stage

St Albans Secondary College students have again taken out the John Claringbold Memorial Schools Cup at the 2026 Fashion Awards Australia, marking the ninth consecutive year the school has won the prize.

Individual students also took home a number of prizes across various categories.

"I like really unique stuff. Big structured gowns are more eye-catching to the judges," said Chantell Nguyen, who received second place in the Australian Gown of the Year category.

Tara Cao, who won first place in the calico section of the Year 11/12 category, said she drew inspiration from architecture when developing her design.

"There were very structural layers that created depth," she said.

Quynh Nguyen, who received third place for evening wear in the Year 9/10 category, said her design went through several stages before she settled on the final look.

"Originally, I had another sequin dress; however, it was extremely hard to sew and would have taken more than three machines to sew," she said. "I had to switch it up. This dress was easier to make because the sequins I used were easier to sew. We hand-sewed beads and embroidery onto it, so it was still a difficult process."

Fashion and art teacher Michael Bowden expressed pride in his students' achievements and was eager to share the creative processes behind their designs, singling out Isabella Thompson who won first place for daywear.

"Isabella's dress is a calico dress that has been hand-dyed, hand-painted and silk-screened. The designs take a long time to make and go through multiple processes," he said.

Briefs

Pickleball centre approved

Keilor East is set to get a dedicated indoor pickleball centre after Brimbank council approved plans for a new venue at 18 Disney Avenue. The $160,000 private investment will see the site, which is located in an industrial area, converted into a purpose-built facility for the fast-growing racket sport. The planning permit was first lodged in June 2026 and granted under council delegation in September, before being formally noted in council's planning update. The indoor venue is expected to provide players with a year-round, all-weather place to play, while keeping court noise and parking within the industrial site and away from nearby residential areas. With planning approval secured, construction and internal fit-out works can now get underway.

$2.5 million St Albans promise

St Albans MP Natalie Suleyman has announced a Labor government will initiate improvements to St Albans through a $2.5 million package if re-elected. The package includes street-scaping and beautification works, resurfacing Main Road East between St Albans Road and Sunshine Avenue and upgrading playground equipment at Errington Reserve.

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Greg Woolford (right), with representatives from council, state government, school and the community.

Students lead the way with mural

Community members recently gathered at Our Lady's Primary School in Sunshine to celebrate the opening of a special new mural that was two years in the making.

Representatives from the Western Bulldogs, Brimbank council, the Centre for Multicultural Youth, state government and Foundation House joined students as they unveiled the project.

The mural grew out of an eight-week program, Leader of the Pack, led by the Western Bulldogs Community Team in 2025. Following the program, students were keen to build on their progress. Discussions between students, teachers and school partners led to the idea of creating a mural.

After securing funding from Brimbank council, Grade 6 students developed the initial design, with the whole school community getting involved in the painting process.

Students agreed that the mural should reflect themes explored during the Leader of the Pack sessions while also incorporating key features of the local environment. The final design captures this vision, depicting the school in relation to nearby Kororoit Creek as it flows downstream towards Port Phillip Bay.

The school also enlisted the support of professional artist Dr Debbie Qadri, who helped guide the final design. Dr Qadri worked with grade 6 students and the school's art teacher, Pina McDonald, to bring their ideas together.

The mural features children, adults, animals, fish, birds, insects and plants, with students particularly enjoying the collaborative creative process.

Alongside the mural project, students have also been producing a series of short films in which grade 6 students explain the mural's meaning and share their understanding with the wider school community. The films will be presented to all year levels.

"It's been a two-year process and a very successful one," said Catholic Education Office western cluster engagement leader Greg Woolford. "It's a great multi-layered outcome."

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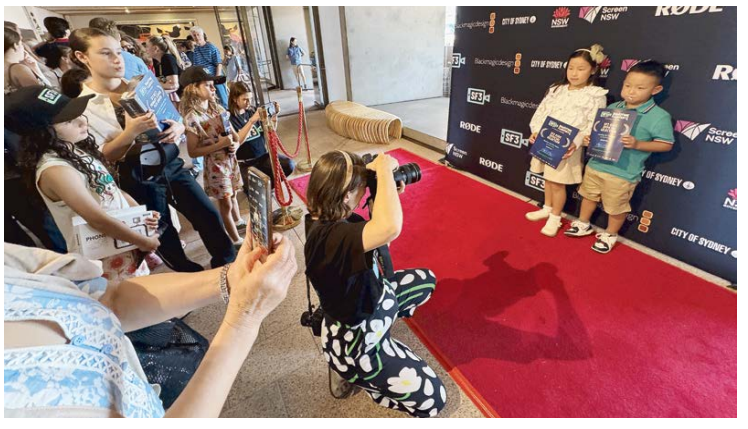
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Tez Vi Truong with children Alexis and Charlie at the Sydney Opera House for the SF3 Smart Fone Film Festival on 1 November.



Maribyrnong's Truong siblings Alexis and Charlie shoot their smart phone films.



Alexis and Charlie pose for the paparazzi after being announced as finalists in the 2026 SF3 Smart Fone Film Festival. (Pictures: Supplied)

Film festival a family affair

Armed with nothing more than their phones, a heap of ideas and a tonne of enthusiasm, a western suburbs family is making films on small screens that are being shown on big screens. Cade Lucas reports.

In an era where many parents are concerned about the amount of time their children spend staring at screens and often seek to limit or even prevent them from accessing smart phones and tablets, it's fair to say Maribyrnong's Truong family go against the grain. Not only do Tez Vi Truong and his wife Doris allow their children Alexis, 8, and Charlie, 6, to use smartphones, they actively encourage it.

The Truongs, especially dad and the two kids, probably spend more time using their smart phone devices than just about any family, let alone those with kids aged under 10.

Far from it being detrimental, recent evidence suggests that the Truong's smartphone fanaticism is paying dividends.

After all, how many primary school students, when asked on a Monday morning what they did on the weekend, are able to answer that they attended a film festival at the Sydney Opera House and were awarded first prize?

Well, the answer is at least two, because that's exactly what happened to both Alexis and Charlie Truong at the 12th annual SmartFone Flick Fest (SF3) on Sunday 1 November.

One of the world's largest and most prestigious smart phone film festivals, the 2026 SF3 attracted a record 400 entries from around the globe, including 19 feature films and 16 AI films, all vying for a share in $50,000 in prizes.

While finalists in the festival's 'Mini' and Feature Film sections were screened and winners announced at the White Bay Power Station in Rozelle on Halloween, both the SF3 Kids and Gala Finals sections were held on Sunday at the Sydney Opera House Playhouse.

Alexis and Charlie won the Best Documentary and Touch Finished on Mobile categories, respectively, in the kids section announced on Sunday morning.



Alexis Truong's 102 year-old great-grandfather Chiec Thau Ngo, the subject of her award winning smart phone film 'My Great-Grandfather.' (Supplied)

Not to be outdone, their father won his second consecutive Best AI Film award at the festival's grand finale held on Sunday night.

While Tez Vi Truong thought he stood a good chance of winning again, he wasn't banking on his two children making it a Truong family trifecta.

"Absolutely ecstatic," the proud father said when asked how he was feeling the day after.

"The kids winning was really unexpected."

Proving good things come in threes, not only did all three Truongs take home prizes, but this was the third year in a row they had all entered SF3 together.

Truong said having witnessed how far smart phone filmmaking had come in that time made Alexis and Charlie's triumphs all the more meaningful.

"Last year and even the year before, the quality of the work was great, but this year the quality was really fierce. Some of the people from last year didn't even get accepted (into the festival) this time. Not only are we proud of them getting accepted but winning, that's next level."

Alexis Truong was named joint winner of the best documentary award for her short film, 'My Great Grandfather,' a two-minute celebration of the life of Chiec Thau Ngo, the Truong family patriarch.

The 102-year-old is still alive, though at the time of writing he'd not yet been made aware he was now the star of an award-winning film.

"We haven't seen him yet but we're about to," Truong said of his grandfather and his daughter's great-grandfather.

Alexis shared the award with Wolfe and Lucette Meisner and students from Scarborough Public School in Wollongong for their film 'Between the Mountains and the Sea.'

Younger brother Charlie also shared his prize, having been named joint winner of the Touch Finished on Mobile Award for his autobiographical film 'Charlie's Secret'.

As the name suggests, Charlie reveals some of his biggest secrets and takes the audience on a fun, honest, and unexpected journey through his imagination and personal world in the film he recorded when he was just five.

He won alongside students from the Hills Drama School in Rouse Hill near Sydney for their film 'The New Prisoner.'

Truong was named the sole winner of the Best AI Film award for 'No.08' which he described as: "basically it's an exploration of what we perceive as values and what we consume."

Coming it at 4:44 in duration, No.8 is more than two minutes longer than Alexis' or Charlie's films and joins Truong's 2025 film "The 5-Minute Empire" in winning the best AI film category.

In contrast to other categories, Truong said AI films didn't involve any camera work and were generated solely on smart phones rather than being edited on other devices.

A former screenwriter at Disney, Truong has a background in the film industry but said filmmaking became a family affair after Alexis entered a storytelling competition at a local library.

"She didn't get into (the storytelling competition) so then we looked for other avenues for her work and stumbled upon SF3."

While offering them guidance here and there, Truong said Alexia and Charlie generate their own film ideas and execute them themselves.

And while she mightn't have any awards to her name, mum Doris also plays a significant role.

"She's the backbone," Truong said of his wife who organises the logistical side of the family filmmaking along with various other off-camera roles.

"She's even involved in the production design and make-up with the kids."

After taking a break for the festival, the Truongs are now busy brainstorming more film ideas and hope to eventually screen some of their work at home in Victoria.

With screenings mostly confined to festivals such as SF3, Truong said the best way for people to keep up to date with the family's work was via his Instagram page at: https://www.instagram.com/tezfrost/?hl=en

To learn more about SF3, go to: https://sf3.com.au/

Shannon elected mayor

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres

Councillor Julie Shannon is Melton's mayor.

Cr Shannon was elected mayor 2026-27 at a council meeting held on Thursday 5 November, replacing outgoing mayor Lara Carli.

Amid cheers from the sidelines of the council chamber from her family members, Cr Shannon said she was truly honoured to be elected mayor for the first time.

Cr Shannon is serving her second term on council and was elected to the role of deputy mayor in 2022-23.

"Thank you to my fellow councillors for placing their trust in me to lead our beautifulc ity over the next 12 months. I promise to lead with integrity, transparency and passion," Cr Shannon said.

"The City of Melton is one of the fastest growing cities in Australia. I don't take that lightly and I am very aware of our urgent need for investment in roads, infrastructure and services. I will wholeheartedly advocate for the things our growing city needs."

Cr Shannon said her priorities were centred on building an inclusive, supportive, and thriving community, where residents feel valued, supported and heard.

"I care deeply for those doing it tough, value the wisdom of our seniors, celebrate the contribution of volunteers, and stand alongside people living with disability or invisible illness," she said.

"I believe in a community where business, sport and tourism should thrive. Where children should learn, families should be celebrated, safety should be a given, residents should be heard and council's role is to lead and support the city well."

Cr Steve Abboushi was elected to the role of deputy mayor, replacing outgoing deputy mayor Phillip Zada.

Cr Abboushi is serving his third term on council and was deputy mayor in 2019-20 and 2023-24, and mayor in 2024-25.

He said he accepted the role with a deep sense of responsibility and gratitude.

"I'd like to sincerely thank my fellow councillors for placing their trust and confidence in me," Cr Abboushi said.

"It's an incredible honour and one that I accept with a deep sense of responsibility and of course, gratitude."

From Point Cook to Telluride

By Ella Burns



Point Cook filmmaker Ravi Chand. (Damjan Janevski) 586231 01

For western suburbs filmmaker Ravi Chand, telling multicultural Australian stories is deeply personal.

After reconnecting with his grandmother he thought had died decades earlier, he rediscovered his language, culture and identity, a journey that inspired his short film, Coconut.

The 12-minute comedy has travelled from its world premiere at the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) to the prestigious Telluride Film Festival in Colorado, one of the world's most respected film events.

Written, directed and produced by Chand as part of his master of film and television studies at the University of Melbourne and Victorian College of the Arts, Coconut follows 19-year-old Dev, who unexpectedly becomes best friends with his non-English-speaking grandmother after the death of his grandfather.

While the film is packed with humour, its emotional core stems from Chand's own life.

Chand migrated from Fiji to Melbourne in 1982 and grew up near Moorabbin Football Ground, barracking for St Kilda and embracing Australian culture.

"I was obsessively playing Aussie Rules footy and developed an Australian accent stronger than Mick Dundee," he said.

But despite feeling Australian, Chand said he rarely saw people who looked like him.

Fast forward to today after 15 years living in Point Cook, he is surrounded by what he describes as a "wonderfully diverse" community.

"When I see children who remind me of myself when I was their age, it brings home why the stories I tell exist," he said.

The inspiration for Coconut came after Chand discovered his maternal grandmother, who he believed had died decades earlier, was in fact still alive in Fiji.

The reunion reconnected him with a language he had barely spoken for about 30 years.

After being laughed at for speaking Fiji-Hindi as a child, Chand stopped using the language altogether. His grandmother, who speaks Fiji-Hindi, Tamil and iTaukei but no English, helped him reclaim that part of his identity.

"My grandma never judged me or cared how I sounded. She was just overjoyed to have her grandson back and hear him talk," he said.

Having lost his mother in a car accident shortly before his 12th birthday, Chand said hearing his grandmother's voice felt like reconnecting with her.

"Whenever my grandma spoke it was like having my mother whisper in my ear," he said.

Now speaking with his grandmother in Fiji-Hindi every week, Chand said the experience continues to shape the feature-length version of Coconut, which he is currently developing.

The film is also a love letter to Melbourne's west, with locations including Point Cook, Werribee, Altona, Newport and Yarraville deliberately selected to act as a "silent character" in the story.

Chand spent an entire summer exploring the region, narrowing more than 40 potential locations down to six.

"When people from around the world are struck by the locations, it's a great feeling," he said.

The film's success has resonated beyond Australia, drawing messages from Fijian-Indian communities across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Fiji and beyond, proving that a story born in Melbourne's west can connect with audiences around the world.

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A reckoning and a player

Romsey movie buff Evan Turok is Star Weekly's film reviewer. Each month he shares his take on recent releases, cult classics, modern favourites and everything in between.



Evan Turok.
(Damjan Janevski)
545799_04

★★★★☆

The Player

1992's 'The Player' features Tim Robbins playing Griffin Mill, a studio executive in charge of separating the thousands of yearly film ideas from the mere 12 that will be produced. With an apathetic indifference to the countless writers he rejects on a daily basis, it becomes impossible to know which of them has begun to send death threats his way. What follows is a witty and tense comedy thriller supported by technical filmmaking excellence.

Having to constantly crush the dreams of writers is sure to lead to some enemies. Soon after being the last straw to an unstable writer, Mill becomes embroiled in a murder mystery in which he himself is the main suspect. What worries me is that, with the waves of unwatchable garbage that we already have to sift through to find something enjoyable, I can't help but lose sleep imagining what kind of ideas couldn't even get a look in!

Director Robert Altman opens with an incredible nine minute single shot sequence. Choreographing a series of actors, a camera, a crew, as well as hundreds of extras is not only wildly impressive, but is the heart and soul of directing a film. Blocking a scene from start to finish allows the audience to witness the dynamic nature of a well written scene. Altman uses this long take to make the world of the film feel lived in, as if each character is only a small piece of the puzzle in the lively yet mysterious world of Hollywood.

★★☆☆☆

The Social Reckoning

Written and directed by the writer of the original, Aaron Sorkin, The Social Reckoning continues on from the 2010 film 'The Social Network'. We follow Frances Haugen (Mikey Madison), an ex-employee of Facebook who attempts to expose the media conglomerate's greedy willingness to promote hateful content.

What was once an unnerving, gripping thriller has become a melancholic math mission with no personal emotional weight. The fact that 'private message shares carry a 3.2x higher algorithmic weight than a standard passive reaction' means nothing to me and should not be the sort of statistics that become the sole focus of the film. (If it means anything to you, please call me and explain. Talk slowly.) My point being, the detrimental difference between the two films is that the original understands that human connection is much more valued to an audience than a series of facts and statistics.

None of the characters have any distinctive personality besides the mutual fast talking wittiness found in all Aaron Sorkin dialogue. Unfortunately, when every single character has the same personality trait, it ceases to be one at all.

Visually, there was nothing defining about Sorkin's vision, a simple dot-to-dot approach that lacked a style and failed to do its part to create desperatel needed tension to enhance this so-called 'thriller'.

Jeremy Strong plays Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg with an uncanny perfection. His presence on screen is the clear highlight but not enough to save this 'colour in the lines', non offensive but emotionally void film.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Star Weekly looks back through the pages of our predecessors


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Advocate

KEVIN DENNIS HUGE SAVINGS ON NEW CARS

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Hyundai

Kevin Dennis 3716111

MOTOR ACCIDENT VICTIMS

SPOTSWOOD 610 Melbourne Rd

GREENWOOD

40 years ago

12 November, 1986

Sunshine Council has lifted the municipal rate to 20.2 cents in the dollar – a rise of 9.19 per cent on last year's 18.5 cents.


The Advocate

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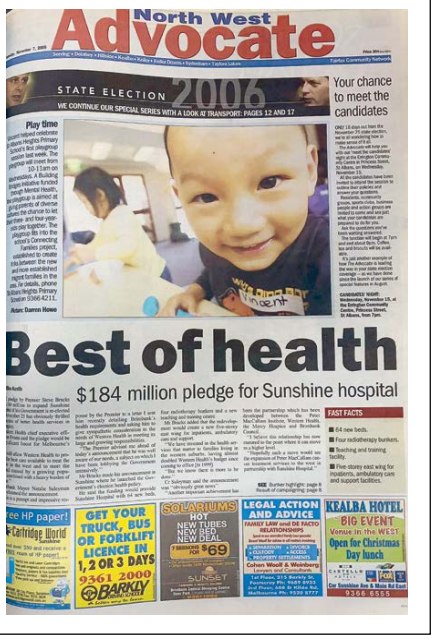
DEER PARK TYRE SERVICE

LEGAL ACTION AND ADVICE

30 years ago

13 November, 1996

Brimbank City council is revving up to drive down the information super-highway with direct public access to the Internet.


North West Advocate

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7 November, 2006

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Domain

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TEMPUR TRUCKLOAD SALE

MASSIVE SAVINGS ON THE ENTIRE TEMPUR RANGE THIS WEEKEND ONLY!!

Harvey Norman

TAYLORS LAKES

10 years ago

8 November, 2016

A long, dark era in St Albans' history has ended with two of the state's worst level crossings now gone forever.

Downsizing tips as you prepare for a new chapter



Embarking on the journey of downsizing for retirement and preparing for the next chapter of life can be exciting and overwhelming. It's a time to simplify, declutter, and create a space that aligns with your evolving needs and aspirations.

To ensure a smooth transition, follow our helpful and practical tips for downsizing your home for retirement. By following these suggestions, you can navigate the downsizing process more effectively and make thoughtful decisions about what to keep, donate, or let go of.

With careful planning and preparation, downsizing for retirement can be an opportunity to begin an enriching new chapter in your life. Are you ready to begin?

How To Downsize Your Home for Retirement.

- Start early: Begin the downsizing process well in advance to allow ample time for sorting through belongings, making decisions, and preparing for the move. Starting early helps alleviate stress and ensures a smoother transition.
- Assess your needs and priorities: Determine what is essential and prioritise items accordingly. Consider your lifestyle in the retirement home and the available space when deciding what to keep, donate, sell, or discard.
- Seek support from loved ones: Involve family members or close friends in downsizing. Their assistance and emotional support can make the experience more manageable and enjoyable.
- Take inventory and measure: Take inventory of the furniture, appliances, and personal items you plan to bring to the retirement home. Measure the available space in your new residence to ensure that your belongings will fit comfortably.
- Stay connected to your community: As you move into your retirement home, maintain connections with your existing community by staying in touch with friends, joining local clubs or groups, or participating in social activities. This will help ease the transition and foster a sense of belonging in your new environment.

Common Mistakes When Downsizing

By being aware of these common mistakes and taking proactive steps to avoid them, seniors can ensure a more successful and less stressful downsizing experience. When downsizing, people commonly make the following mistakes:

- Failing to plan ahead: Not planning ahead can result in a rushed downsizing process. Creating a detailed plan, including timelines and specific tasks, is important to ensure a smoother transition.
- Holding onto unnecessary items: Some individuals struggle to let go of items with sentimental value or that they might need in the future. However, keeping unnecessary items can lead to clutter and hinder the benefits of downsizing.
- Not asking for help: It takes a lot of effort to downsize and eventually move. Consider asking family or trusted friends to help you make the move. Or, if there are belongings that you really don't want to part with, ask them if they can store your belongings for you in their garage or cupboards.

When downsizing, consider Centennial Living Retirement Villages and discover a vibrant, supportive community where residents can connect with like-minded peers and form lasting friendships. For any questions or to book a tour, visit www.centennialliving.com.au or call our team on 1300 098 000.

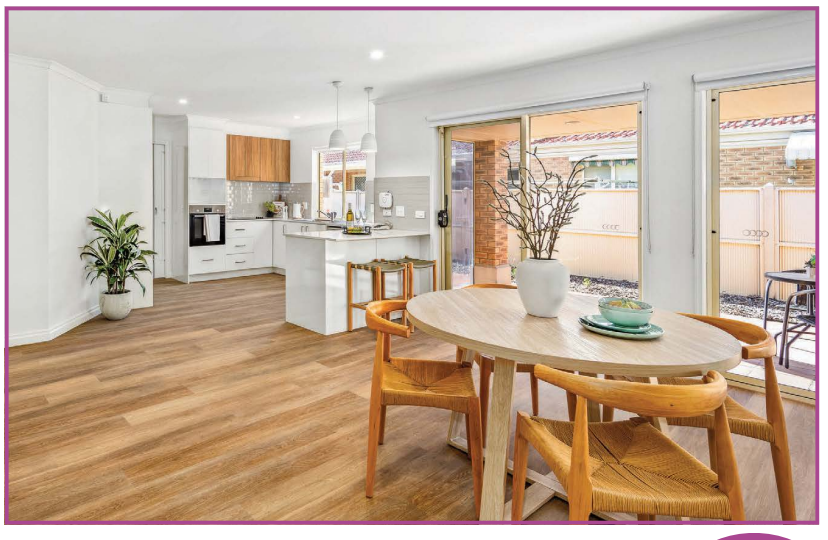
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Moving Ahead

10 November 2026



Mayor's message Cr Julie Shannon

I am honoured to have been elected Mayor of the City of Melton for the next 12 months and to have the opportunity to serve and lead our wonderful community.

I would also like to congratulate Cr Steve Abboushi on his election as Deputy Mayor. I look forward to working closely with him, my fellow Councillors and Council officers to deliver positive outcomes for our residents.

The City of Melton is one of the fastest growing areas in Australia. I am very aware of our community's urgent need for investment in roads, public transport, community infrastructure and essential services. As Mayor, I will be a strong advocate for the projects and funding our growing city needs.

I care deeply about ensuring no one is left behind. I value the wisdom of our seniors, the contributions of our volunteers, and stand alongside people living with disability or invisible illness. A strong community is one that supports and includes everyone.

I also believe in a city where local businesses can prosper, sport continues to bring people together, and tourism helps showcase everything our region has to offer. Our children deserve every opportunity to learn and succeed, families should be supported and celebrated, and residents should feel safe, connected and heard.

Over the coming year, I promise to lead with integrity, transparency and passion. I am committed to listening to our residents, working collaboratively, and ensuring Council continues to serve our community with care, respect and purpose.

I am excited for the year ahead and all that we can achieve together.

Feel free to contact me about Stringybark Ward or our City more generally on 0499 801 302 or email at: Julie.Shannon@melton.vic.gov.au

Stay Informed

Quickly and easily connect with us online:

melton.vic.gov.au
facebook.com/cityofmelton
Instagram @cityofmeltonofficial

Mayor and Deputy Mayor elected

Councillor Julie Shannon was elected the City of Melton Mayor and Councillor Steve Abboushi elected Deputy Mayor for 2026/27 at a Council meeting last week.

Mayor Shannon is serving her second term on Council and was Deputy Mayor in 2022/23. This will be her first term serving as Mayor. Deputy Mayor Abboushi is serving his third term on Council and was Deputy Mayor in 2019/20 and 2023/24, and Mayor in 2024/25.

We wish our new Mayor and Deputy Mayor all the best in their new roles.

To get in touch with your Ward Councillors, visit **melton.vic.gov.au/councillors**

Free garden waste disposal

Summer is just around the corner and that means getting ready for the fire season. To help with that, City of Melton residents can drop off garden waste for free at the Melton Recycling Facility from 13 November 2026 until 12 January 2027.

This available to both property owners and renters. Proof of residency is required.

The Melton Recycling Facility is open seven days a week between 8am to 4.30pm (except for Christmas Day and New Year's Day).

Conditions apply. For information, visit **melton.vic.gov.au/greenwaste**

Save the date: Carols by Candlelight 2026!

Saturday 12 December, 5-9:30pm
Police Paddock, 249 High Street, Melton

Mark the date in your calendar and join us for this year's free family friendly Carols by Candlelight event hosted by Melton City Council.

A special screening of a family favourite Christmas movie will kick-off the event, followed by community performances and Carols by Candlelight. There will be food trucks, face painting, a festive neon trail, Christmas craft workshops and the opportunity to write a letter to Santa and to meet him!

For information, visit **melton.vic.gov.au/carols**

Coolibah Ward with Cr Brandi Morris



There's plenty happening across Coolibah Ward, with new recreation facilities, community services and improvements to local parks helping shape our growing neighbourhoods.

Planning is progressing on the future Weir Views Active Open Space, which will include soccer pitches, a cricket oval, a pavilion and a district-level playspace. These spaces are about more than sport. They help people stay active, connect with others and build a stronger sense of community, supporting the health and wellbeing of our growing neighbourhoods.

The Cobblebank Community Hub is also a step closer to opening, with construction complete and internal fit out to commence in early 2027. The five-level facility will bring a range of allied health and social support services together under one roof, making it easier for residents to access the support they need.

Meanwhile, Council will soon be seeking community feedback on plans for a new fenced dog off-lead area at Bill Cahill Reserve, Melton South. The proposed space will include open grass areas, dog agility features, shade and seating. Residents will have an opportunity to provide their feedback via an online survey or at an in person drop-session. Keep an eye on our City of Melton Conversations page for more information.

Finally, congratulations to Cr Julie Shannon on being elected Mayor, and Cr Steve Abboushi on being elected Deputy Mayor at last week's Statutory Meeting. I look forward to working with them both to help deliver positive outcomes for our community.

Feel free to contact me regarding Coolibah Ward or our City more generally on 0418 999 577 or email Brandi.Morris@melton.vic.gov.au

Your Councillors – Visit **melton.vic.gov.au/councillors** to find your ward Councillors and their contact details



Mayor
Cr Julie Shannon



Deputy Mayor
Cr Steve Abboushi



Cr Lara Carli



Cr Kathy Majdlik



Cr Brandi Morris



Cr Sophie Ramsey



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MY PLACE

Derrimut mortgage broker Niti Bhargava is a powerhouse in the financial world. Through her work, she empowers migrant women toward financial independence. She chats with Jack O'Shea-Ayres about her pride as a long-time resident of the west.

What's your connection to Melbourne's north-west?
Melbourne's north-west is home for me. I have lived in Melbourne's west for almost two decades, and over the years I have built not only my business here but also deep personal and community connections. My career in finance and banking spans around 18 years, and I have seen first-hand how access to the right financial information can change the direction of a family or a business. My connection to the west goes well beyond finance. I am passionate about creating opportunities for people, particularly women and migrant communities, to build financial confidence and independence. Through financial literacy workshops and community programs, I have supported hundreds of people across Melbourne's west, including migrant and culturally diverse women, young people and small business owners. I am also the co-founder of Business Women of Melbourne, a grassroots network created to connect, support and celebrate women in business across Brimbank, Melton and surrounding communities.

What do you like about where you live?
What I love most is the sense of community. The west is incredibly diverse, ambitious and entrepreneurial. You meet people from different cultures, backgrounds and walks of life, but there is often a shared desire to build something better for their families and their community. I also love that people here genuinely support local businesses. As a business owner myself, I understand how meaningful it is when someone chooses to support a local business, refer a friend or simply says, "I know someone who can help you." There is a real sense that the west is growing and evolving, while still retaining that strong community spirit.

What, if anything, would you change about where you live?
I would love to see even more investment in opportunities for local people, particularly young people, women and small business owners. The west has enormous talent and entrepreneurial energy. I would like to see more accessible mentoring, business education, financial literacy programs, networking opportunities and pathways into leadership. I also believe financial wellbeing should be treated as an important part of community wellbeing. Understanding money, credit, debt, home ownership and business finance can have a profound impact on people's lives.

Where is your favourite local place to spend time?
For me, it is often the places where people come together rather than one particular destination. I love attending local community events, networking with women in business, meeting local business owners over a coffee and being involved in events across Brimbank and Melton. Some of my favourite moments have simply been sitting with another local businesswoman and hearing her story, talking about her challenges and working out how we can support each other. Those conversations are often where the most meaningful connections happen.



Niti Bhargava. (Damjan Janevski) 577609 01



Each week, Star Weekly photographers are out and about capturing the people and events across Melbourne's western and northern suburbs.



Above: Sharon Murphy from Keeley's Cause. (Damjan Janevski) 585064_04
Left: Ekram Hassan-Ali is the One Wyndham recipient for October. (Damjan Janevski) 584723 03
Right: Karen Spaull and Gisborne Golf Club general manager Brett Campbell. (Damjan Janevski) 584822 05





Sunshine Hospital palliative care unit director Maria Coperchini with staff Sacha McDonald, Carmen Camilleri and Mariana Grgat. (Damjan Janevski) 587239 04



InFUse Lab participant Millie Sanchez Montoro, program facilitator Augustine Ang and participant David Soderlind. (Damjan Janevski) 587195 04



Altona Meadows Primary School students Max (front), Ethan, Ayman, Emily, Imogen, Liam and Rose. (Damjan Janevski) 585921 05

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

WANT YOUR EVENT LISTED?
Community Calendar is made available free of charge to not-for-profit organisations to keep the public informed of special events and activities. Send item details to Star Weekly Community Calendar, Corner Thomsons Road and Keilor Park Drive, Keilor Park, 3042, or email to westeditorial@starweekly.com.au by 9am Wednesday the week prior to publication.



This week's photographer's choice picture is of an Australian king parrot at Mount Macedon. (Damjan Janevski) 588000 01

Sydenham candidate forum
Join Keilor-Taylors Lakes Action for a community candidates' forum on Monday 16 November, from 7pm to 8.30pm at the Keilor Hotel, 670 Old Calder Highway, Keilor. Candidates for the Sydenham electorate are invited to deliver a three-minute presentation, followed by a question-and-answer session, giving residents an opportunity to hear from those seeking to represent their community. Entry is free.
▪ https://www.trybooking.com/au/event/1674855

Carols by Candlelight
Sunshine Community Brass and the Lions Club of Deer Park present their annual Carols by Candlelight, at Sassella Park (119 Station Road) Deer Park on Saturday 12 December from 7pm, including a visit (and lolly-drop) by Santa, a raffle ($2 per ticket or 3 tickets for $5) with a $500 gift voucher as 1st prize and sausage sizzle. Traditional Lions Christmas Cakes will be for sale.
▪ Sue, 0434 532 611 or Michael, 0417 307 572.

Community Kitchen
Community Kitchen is a welcoming and inclusive space where community members come together to cook, share a meal, connect, and learn. Tuesdays 12:15-1:30pm at commUnity+ Neighbourhood House, 822 Ballarat Road, Deer Park.
▪ neighbourhood@comm-unityplus.org.au

Creative Stitches
Bring along your knitting, crochet, sewing or other craft projects and enjoy some time creating alongside others in a friendly, relaxed space. BYO materials and projects. Wednesdays 9.30am – 11.30am at commUnity+ Neighbourhood House, 822 Ballarat Road, Deer Park.
▪ neighbourhood@comm-unityplus.org.au

St Albans senior citizens
St Albans Senior Citizens group meet at the centre at the corner of Alfrieda and William streets, St Albans, on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, from 9am-2pm. Annual membership: $10. Cost: $1 entry on attendance day.
▪ Beverley, 040 3685 632

Garden club
The Sunshine Golden Age Garden Club meets on the second Wednesday of the month at Glengala Community Centre, corner Simmie Street and Glengala Road, Sunshine West at 7pm. New members welcome.
▪ Helen Reid, 9746 3933 or reidhm@hotmail.com

Master of the Mic
Build confidence in public speaking, communication and leadership in this fun, supportive club for young people aged 15–25. Enjoy interactive speaking activities, challenges, feedback and opportunities to meet new people. No experience required. Meets on the last Wednesday of each month.
▪ blfvisycareshub@brimbank.vic.gov.au

INFuse Lab
Looking for a relaxed space to create alongside other local artists? Join us weekly for an open studio style session where you can work on your own projects, meet new creatives and enjoy genuine conversation in a supportive environment.Takes place Wednesdays during the school term 3:30pm to 6pm at St Albans Community Centre.
▪ 9249 4600, creative@brimbank.vic.gov.au

Maltese Folklore Association
All seniors are warmly invited to join Klabb Ghannejja Maltin (Maltese Folklore Association) and enjoy the friendly atmosphere the club provides. The club is open Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday with traditional Maltese folk music held every Friday night and social nights hosted once a month on Saturday nights. Come to 4/6 Gooding Street, St Albans, meet new friends, and enjoy the wonderful Maltese culture and entertainment.
▪ 9356 4638

Free Bingo
Locals, especially seniors, can enjoy bingo but with a twist. binGO move encourages participants to get active, make friends and improve physical and mental wellbeing all while enjoying a classic game. Sessions run fortnightly on Thursdays from 1.30-2.30pm at St Albans Tin Shed, 309a Main Road East, St Albans.
▪ 9366 4302

St Albans Bowls Club
Everyone is welcome at St Albans Bowls - no matter age, gender or ability. Whether you're an experienced bowler or just curious to give it a try, the club would love to see more locals on the green. The club hosts social bowls every Thursday and Saturday at noon at Kings Park Reserve, off Magnolia Avenue, Kings Park. Come along for a friendly game, meet new people and spend time in great company.
▪ stalbans.bowls.com.au, stalbansbowlsclub@bigpond.com, 9366 0290

Women's only conversation English
Duke Street Community House is inviting locals to make friends, learn new skills and practice English in this fun and free women's social group. Tuesdays during school terms, 9.30am-noon, at Duke Street Community House, 27 Duke Street, Sunshine.
▪ 9311 9973, or dukest@dsch.org.au

Crafternoons
Duke Street Community House is inviting locals to a free adult social opportunity to get together and be creative. Learn a new craft or bring along your own craft projects. Tuesdays during school terms, 12.30-2.30pm, at the Duke Street Community House, 27 Duke Street, Sunshine.
▪ 9311 9973, or dukest@dsch.org.au

Over 50's club
The Keilor Over 50's Recreation Club meets at Kealba Hall, 24 McShane Drive, Kealba, on Tuesdays, from 10am-3pm, and Wednesdays, from 7-10pm. Have a coffee and a chat, play social table tennis, pool and card games, go on organised outings and enjoy barbecues. First two visits are free then annual membership fees apply.
▪ Graeme, 0404 809 640, keilorover50@gmail.com, www.keilorover50.com.au

Sunshine Community Brass
Sunshine Community Brass is looking for trumpet and percussion players to join its vibrant band of musicians. With more than 90 years of history, the band rehearses at 45 Furlong Road, North Sunshine, on Tuesdays, from 7.30pm.
▪Andrew, 0419 444 620

Deer Park Probus Club
The Deer Park Probus Club meets at the Deer Park Club, 780 Ballarat Road, Deer Park on the second Wednesday of the month from February to December. Meet at 10am followed by lunch available from 12pm. The club offers bus trips, lunches, morning melodies etc. New members welcome.
▪0427 495 584

Keilor Park Tennis Club social night
Join the club on Monday nights for a free social hit and get to know other club members. All levels are welcome. Female players are also required for Thursday competition from 10am-2pm and also for the B-grade mixed team on Wednesday, 7-9pm.
▪ keilorparktennis@gmail.com

Create & Chat
Dig out your craft projects and get inspiration from fellow like-minded crafters with the create and chat sessions at Sunshine Library, from 10-11am, on the first Tuesday of every month. All skill levels are welcome.
▪ library@brimbank.vic.gov.au

Women working together
A program connecting women aged 50 and above and in need of assistance, with mentors and mentees. Open to women across the western suburbs, including Brimbank.
▪ 9655 2131, EmploymentSupport@cotavic.org.au, or cotavic.org.au/our-programs/employment-support/

Family bootscootin' night

Dust off your boots and get ready for a night of country fun at the Commercial Hotel in Ballan.

Country music, line dancing, and family-friendly fun will take over the Commercial Hotel in Ballan this month, with locals invited to dust off their boots for a lively country night out.

Family Country Night will take over the Commercial Hotel on Friday 13 November, promising to bring a taste of country hospitality to Ballan from 5 to 10pm.

The evening is set to kick off with free face painting and pony rides for the kids,



before the dancing gets underway.

The Boot Scooting Society will lead a free line dancing session from 7pm, welcoming everyone from seasoned dancers to first-timers keen to learn a few new steps.

Live country music will follow, with performer Tristan Ross taking to the stage to keep the country atmosphere going throughout the evening.

Entry to the live music costs $10 per adult, while the line dancing session and children's activities are free.

Organisers are encouraging families and friends to come along, get involved and enjoy a night of entertainment close to home.

Those planning to stay for dinner are encouraged to contact the hotel ahead of time to secure a table.

Tickets can be purchased through Eventbrite or at the venue.

So bring your friends, round up the family, and join in on the fun for a boot-scootin' good time!

Family Country Night will run from 5pm to 10pm on Friday 13 November, at the Commercial Hotel, 151 Inglis Street, Ballan.

Details and tickets: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/line-dancing-country-music-night-at-the-commercial-hotel-ballan-tickets-2003750484639.



Organiser of storytelling salon, Between The Lines, Aud Pitch, at The Chestnut Tree Bookshop in West Footscray where the monthly event is held. (Damjan Janevski) 554512_01

Saturday night live storytelling salon

Live storytelling salon, Between The Lines, returns for the final time in 2026 on Saturday 28 November at The Chestnut Tree Bookshop in West Footscray.

Held on the last Saturday of each month, Between the Lines is an invitation for people to share something true to a room full of strangers who are there to listen.

You don't need to be a writer, a poet, a performer, or really anything other than someone willing to tell a story that is true, that is your own and which is in keeping with a chosen theme, which for November is 'the long day.'

You must register beforehand and then on the night wait and your name is drawn at rundown from a storytelling pool.

If it is, you will get handed the mic and the attention of the audience for 10-12 minutes to tell them your story. Selected speakers also get a glass of wine on the house to ease any nerves.

If it's not, you get to remain a member of the audience and enjoy a night of bold, honest, and unfiltered storytelling.

Whether on stage or in the crowd, everyone pays for a ticket in order to keep the event fair and sustainable.

To register, book tickets and learn more about Between the Lines, go to: https://events.humanitix.com/between-the-lines-storytelling-salon

Raise a glass to the 35th annual Budburst festival

Get ready for a weekend of food, wine and country hospitality as Budburst Wine Festival is back in the Macedon Ranges celebrating 35 years.

Every year, the wineries of the Macedon Ranges region come together, open their doors and showcase their cool climate wines and local food.

Budburst not only features the region's established cellar doors but also producers not normally open to the public, small batch wines and special releases.

The event spans across Saturday 14 November to Sunday 15 November, from 10am to 5pm, with tastings, curated good menus, live entertainment and the chance to chat with the winemakers at every stop.

Passes start from $39 with weekend passes $55.

Tickets come with a keepsake Plumm crystal Macedon Ranges wine glass, a festival passport with all the details you need for the weekend and wine tastings across participating wineries.

The festival welcomes all and is a family friendly event with designated drivers and children under 18 are invited to join the festival for free.

Participating venues will offer visitors the chance to taste their wines, hear their stories and learn what makes the region so special.

Details: https://www.macedonrangeswineandfoodfest.com.au/



Lyons Will Estate owner and winemaker Renata Morello celebrating the upcoming Budburst Festival. (Damjan Janevski) 586977 04



Explore your creativity with Way Out West

Deaf and disabled artists across Brimbank are being invited to unleash their creativity, develop new skills and connect with fellow artists through Way Out West (WOW), an inclusive multi-arts studio presented by Arts Access Victoria.

Open to artists aged 18 and over, Way Out West provides a welcoming and supportive space for people to experiment with different art forms, share ideas and explore new ways of creative expression.

The program offers opportunities to explore visual arts, performance, installations, music, animation and video. Participants can combine traditional art techniques with digital technology, including iPads, musical instruments and sound-making equipment.

More than simply a place to make art, WOW is about building connections, sharing stories and celebrating the diverse experiences and creative talents of deaf and disabled artists.

Artists can work alongside others, explore their individual interests and develop their artistic skills in an environment that encourages collaboration, experimentation and creative freedom.

For Brimbank residents interested in exploring their artistic side, the workshops offer an opportunity to try something new, build confidence and become part of an inclusive creative community.

The final Way Out West workshops for 2026 will be held on Saturday 21 November and Saturday, 5 December at St Albans Community Centre, from 10am - 4pm.

Way Out West welcomes deaf and disabled artists aged 18 and over, whether they are experienced creatives or looking to take their first steps into the arts.

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20253000I-KF29-25

SPORTS QUIZ

1. 2026 WNBA Finals MVP Gabby Williams won the award playing for which team?
2. Which country's men's national rugby league team is known as The Cedars?
3. The 2026 Liz Ellis Diamond was recently awarded to which Adelaide Thunderbirds player?
4. American sports identity Pat McAfee played his entire career with which NFL team?
5. Which horse did jockey James McDonald ride to victory in the 2026 Victoria Derby?
6. The Connecticut Sun has been sold and will relocate to which Texas city for the 2027 WNBA season?
7. Australia's national wheelchair rugby league team is known by what nickname?
8. Former Brisbane Lions coach Chris Fagan recently joined which AFL club as Director of Coaching?
9. Anthony Ippolito portrays which famous actor in a 2026 biographical drama based on the development of a 1970s sports film?
10. 2026 World Series MVP William Contreras won the award playing for which team?
11. Who is the current captain of the Jillaroos?
12. In what place did Australia's Haftu Strintzos finish the 2026 New York City Marathon?
13. In June, high diver Molly Carlson made history as the first woman to dive off what?
14. What is the only country with a single FIFA World Cup win?
15. Which of these singers has run a marathon: Bruno Mars, Harry Styles or Mick Jagger?
16. Who is the youngest F1 World Champion in history?
17. Pencak Silat is a class of martial arts that originated in which country?
18. Sensei, in karate, is equivalent to what role in kung fu?
19. Who defeated Alex de Minaur in the 2026 Vienna Open final?
20. What is the maximum number of free throws you can be awarded at once in basketball?
21. How many teams qualify for the AFL Women's Finals Series each year?
22. Steve Smith suffered an injury to which part of his body during the recent Test cricket series against South Africa?
23. English soccer team Fleetwood Town defeated which iconic EPL team in a recent EFL League Cup match?
24. The Socceroos are scheduled to play which two nations in the Middle East this month?
25. Which state has won the most Sheffield Shield titles?
26. In 1972, who became the first woman to win five individual swimming medals at a single Olympic Games?
27. In soccer, the penalty spot is how many metres from the goal line?
28. What is the highest score you can get in a single turn of darts?
29. Which Australian city is currently hosting the inaugural SWIM GP event?
30. Karen Rolton Oval is a cricket venue in which Australian city?


Alex De Minaur


Steve Smith

1. Golden State Valkyries 2. Lebanon 3. Georgie Horjus 4. Indianapolis Colts 5. Stormy Marco 6. Houston, Texas 7. The Wheelaroos 8. Carlton 9. Sylvester Stallone 10. Milwaukee Brewers 11. Isabelle Kelly 12. Fifth 13. A free-standing iceberg 14. England 15. Harry Styles 16. Kimi Antonelli 17. Indonesia 18. Shifu (or sifu) 19. Carlos Alcaraz 20. Three 21. Eight 22. Neck 23. Arsenal 24. Qatar and Jordan 25. New South Wales 26. Shane Gould 27. 11 metres 28. 180 29. Melbourne 30. Adelaide

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General Notices

PUBLIC NOTICES AND EVENT

Council Meeting Dates 2027

Brimbank City Council

Date	Time	Venue (in person)
16 February 2027	7pm	Council Chamber, 301 Hampshire Road, Sunshine
16 March 2027	7pm	Council Chamber, 301 Hampshire Road, Sunshine
20 April 2027	7pm	Council Chamber, 301 Hampshire Road, Sunshine
18 May 2027	7pm	Council Chamber, 301 Hampshire Road, Sunshine
15 June 2027	7pm	Council Chamber, 301 Hampshire Road, Sunshine
20 July 2027	7pm	Council Chamber, 301 Hampshire Road, Sunshine
17 August 2027	7pm	Council Chamber, 301 Hampshire Road, Sunshine
21 September 2027	7pm	Council Chamber, 301 Hampshire Road, Sunshine
19 October 2027	7pm	Council Chamber, 301 Hampshire Road, Sunshine
16 November 2027	7pm	Council Chamber, 301 Hampshire Road, Sunshine
23 November 2027 (Mayoral Election)	6pm	Council Chamber, 301 Hampshire Road, Sunshine
14 December 2027	7pm	Council Chamber, 301 Hampshire Road, Sunshine

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PUZZLES

SUDOKU

No. 315

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every number from 1 to 9 must appear in: each of the nine vertical columns, each of the nine horizontal rows and each of the nine 3 x 3 boxes. Remember, no number can occur more than once in any row, column or box.

easy

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

medium

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

hard

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

easy

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

medium

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

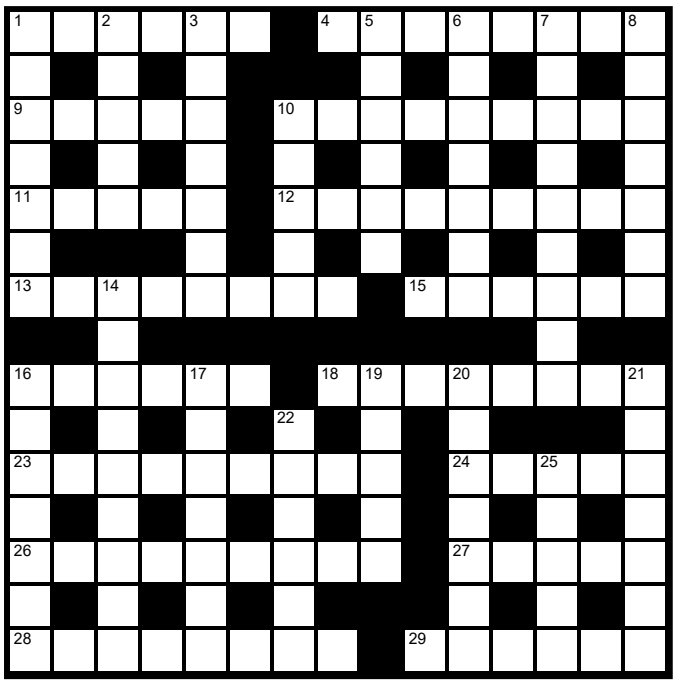
hard

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

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QUICK CROSSWORD

No. 315

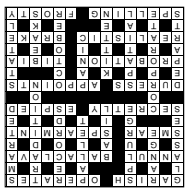


ACROSS

1 Gaudy (6)
4 Manages (8)
9 Cancel (5)
10 Warm knitted hood (9)
11 Daub (5)
12 Common chewing gum flavour (9)
13 Covertly (8)
15 Spotted (6)
16 Illegal compulsion (6)
18 Names (8)
23 Test period (9)
24 Shinbone (5)
26 True to life; practical (9)
27 Slow (5)
28 Bee activity? (8)
29 Frigid (6)

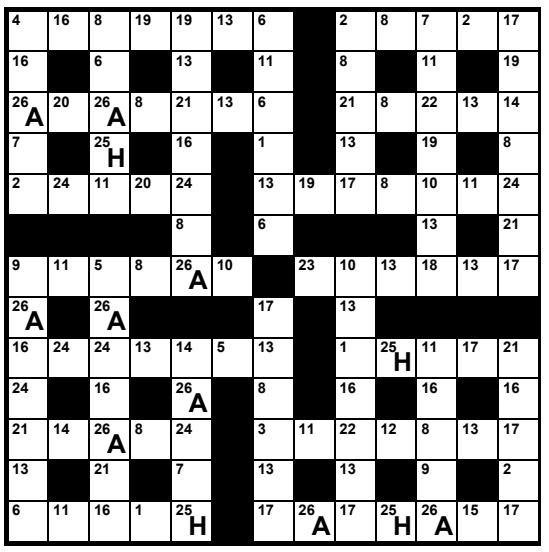
DOWN

1 Spectacles (7)
2 Scope (5)
3 Indulge, – on (7)
5 Makeshift bed (6)
6 Accounts (7)
7 Custom (9)
8 Stung (7)
10 Herb (5)
14 Relating to a large company (9)
16 Exits (7)
17 Having three dimensions (7)
19 Be overcome by a sudden fear (5)
20 Sean Connery starred in *The Hunt for Red* – (7)
21 Majestic (7)
22 Young cat (6)
25 Bird jaws (5)



DECODER

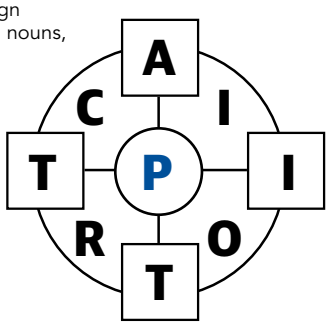
No. 347





9-LETTER WORD

Using the nine letters in the grid, how many words of four letters or more can you list? The centre letter must be included and each letter may only be used once. No colloquial or foreign words. No capitalised nouns, apostrophes or plural nouns ending in 's'.

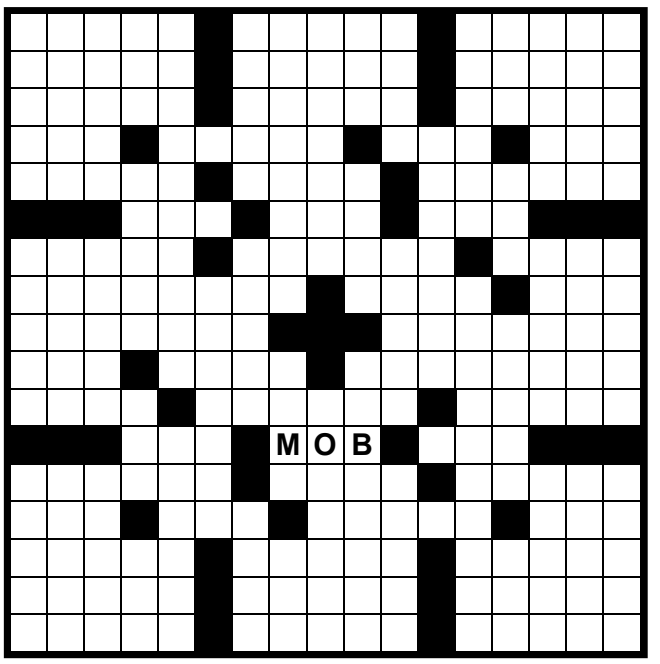


Today's Aim:
12 words: Good
18 words: Very good
24 words: Excellent

PATRIOTIC, pica, picot, pita, pitta, port, rapt, tapir, topic, trap, trip, tropic
apricot, atop, captor, carp, copra, crop, optic, pact, pair, part, patio, patriot,

WORDFIT

No. 315



3 LETTERS
ACE
APE
AVO
AWE
BIN
BYE
DAD
DOE
ERA
FOX
ICE
IRE
~~MOB~~
ODE
ORE
OUT
PIE
RAM
REV
SIT
TON
TRY

4 LETTERS
EDGY
ERRS
EYED
GODS
LEWD
MESH
PEAR
RAMP
SAME
SHIP

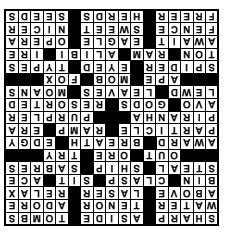
5 LETTERS
ABOVE
ADORE
ALIBI
AORTA
APPAL
ARROW
ASIDE
ATLAS
ATONE
AWAIT
AWARD
BLADE
BRACE
CLASP
DELTA
DIETS
EAGLE
ERRED
FENCE
FREER
GREEN
HABIT
HERDS
INANE
LASER
MOANS
MOLAR
NICER
OPERA
PIECE
POWER
PROXY
RELAX
SEARS
SEEDS
SEXES
SHARP
STAFF
STEAL
SWABS
SWEET
TAPES
TENOR
TOMBS
TYPES
WAIVE
WATER
YARDS

6 LETTERS
BREATH
LEAVES
PERTER
SABRES
SPIDER
TARTAR

7 LETTERS
CHOLERA
INSPIRE
ISTHMUS
PIRANHA
PURPLER
VOYAGER

8 LETTERS
PARTICLE
REBELLED
RESORTED
SEASHORE

10 LETTERS
PRECLUDING
PROMOTIONS



13-11-26

5x5

R		P		D
	B		D	
D		I		N
	S		E	
R		E		S

No. 422

Insert the missing letters to make 10 words – five reading across the grid and five reading down.

NOTE: more than one solution may be possible

R	E	E	D	S
A	S	S	E	T
D	E	I	G	N
A	B	O	D	E
R	O	P	E	D

QUICK QUIZ



1. Which nursery rhyme characters travelled by sea in a pea-green boat?
2. What is the term for a male duck?
3. In what year was the first Samsung Galaxy phone released?
4. Gillian Anderson (pictured) portrayed which historical figure in *The Crown*?
5. Moose Jaw is a city in which country?
6. How many total players are on the court in a game of volleyball?
7. Commemorated with a famous basilica, who is the patron saint of Venice?
8. What is the southernmost point of the Australian mainland?
9. Not counting re-recordings, *The Life of a Showgirl* is what number studio album by Taylor Swift?
10. The Orionids meteor shower is associated with which well-known comet?

ANSWERS: **1.** The Owl and the Pussy-cat **2.** Drake **3.** 2009 **4.** Margaret Thatcher **5.** Canada **6.** 12 (six per side) **7.** Saint Mark the Evangelist **8.** Wilsons Promontory **9.** 12th **10.** Halley's Comet

Tiggo super in name only

By Chris Riley, Marque Motoring

Let's get something straight.

Wheels magazine (is it still a magazine?) may have recognised the Chery Tiggo 9 as Australia's best value large SUV.

But they're talking about the top of the range Ultimate model, not the entry Elite which is the one most punters will end up buying at this end of the market.

And the Elite is a quite different beast, front-wheel drive, with a smaller battery, less powerful drivetrain, less electric only range and of course less equipment. But it costs less and it still seats seven.







It's expensive, but the Tiggo 9 is decent value, but with some drawbacks. (Pictures: Supplied)

Styling

There are two grades, Elite FWD (our test vehicle) priced from $52,990 and Ultimate AWD priced from $59,990.

Although both are described as 'super hybrids' with the same 1.5-litre turbocharged petrol engine, Track has two electric motors, while the Ultimate adds a third motor and larger battery. This means more power and greater range.

Standard kit for Elite includes synthetic leather trim and two-zone climate air with rear outlets, heated power-adjust front seats, acoustic glass for windscreen and front doors, colour selectable ambient interior lighting, cooled console box, power tailgate and a tilt-slide panoramic sunroof with powered sunshade.

There's also 19-inch alloys, puddle lights, pop-out door handles, walk-away locking, LED head, tail and daytime running lights, auto high beam, auto lights and wipers, and front and rear parking sensors.

Ultimate adds 20-inch wheels, real leather, auto dimming mirror, a heated steering wheel, heated and cooling for both the front and rear seats, massage for the front seats, head-up display, automatic parking assist, additional side parking sensors, and a 14-speaker Sony system.

Tiggo 9 is covered by a seven-year unlimited kilometre warranty, plus an eight-year battery warranty, with capped price servicing and roadside assistance for seven years.

Service is due every 12 months or 15,000km, with servicing capped at a total of $3174 for the first seven years.

Infotainment

Infotainment consists of a 15.6-inch touchscreen and 10.25-inch instrument display, with Bluetooth, intelligent voice control, built-in navigation, AM/FM and DAB+ digital radio, wired and wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

Audio is provided by an eight-speaker Sony sound system.

There's also 50W wireless phone charging, USB-A and -C ports front and back, 12-volt outlet front.

Safety

Tiggo 9 has not been rated for safety yet but features an array of active and passive safety features.

There are 10 airbags that include front, front side and centre, rear side, driver knee and side curtain airbags.

The advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) incorporate the likes of Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB), Emergency Lane Keeping (ELK), Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC) and Forward Collision Warning (FCW) – just to mention a few.

Engines/transmissions

Powering the Tiggo 9 Elite is a 1.5-litre turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engine, which produces maximum 105kW of power and 215Nm of torque, together with two electric motors, both of which are located at the front – delivering 75/170Nm and 90kW/220Nm apiece.

Combined output is 225kW of power and 315Nm of torque.

With three electric motors, Ultimate, in comparison, delivers 315kW and 580Nm.

Torque is the more significant figure because it's the stuff that gets you moving quickly and makes short work of hills when the car is fully loaded.

In the Elite driving force is sent to the front wheels via a three-speed dedicated hybrid transmission.

Driving

You're buying this car primarily for the seven seats, right? So, let's have a look at the seats first.

The key figures are the length and wheelbase which dictate how much room it has inside. The Tiggo 9 is 4.8m long with a 2750mm wheelbase.

To give this some perspective, Toyota's soft road Kluger is 166mm longer with a 100mm longer wheelbase, which means more room for longer legs.

There's a smaller Tiggo 8 that seats seven too, but at 4724mm/2694mm it has even less legroom – it is however $10K cheaper.

Other alternatives include the Jaecoo J8 or fancier Omoda 9 (also produced by Chery).

But back to the Tiggo 9.

Getting in and out of the third row presents some challenges.

First, to raise the two third row seats with the straps provided, you need to slide the second row forward to provide clearance for the headrests.

Second, the single, second row, tilt and slide seat that provides access is located on the driver's side of the vehicle, not ideal in our neck of the woods where it exposes those getting in and out to the risk of passing traffic.

By rights it should have been switched to the other side as most manufacturers normally do.

Third, returning the access seat to its original position proved problematic, requiring the driver's seat to be moved all the way forward before it too could be moved all the way forward.

This unlocks the seat and allows it to be returned to its original position. Talk about a major pain in the butt.

Once ensconced, there's just enough room for smaller children and even then, some negotiation may be required with those in the second row. Adults can forget it.

The seat adjustment, by the way, is located on the door, like a Mercedes.

With the seats in use there's little room leftover for luggage, as is the norm for most seven-seats SUVs, but at least the third-row packs flat when not required.

Cargo capacity is limited to 143 litres, with 819 litres when the second row is folded, or 2021 litres with both rows folded.

There's no spare under the rear floor either, just a tyre repair kit.

Four driving modes are available, accessed by a large circular control knob in the centre console: pure electric, series, parallel, and energy recovery.

Despite the fact it plays second fiddle to the Ultimate in terms of power, the front-drive Elite with its single electric motor is by no means a slouch.

Chery doesn't provide acceleration figures, but it feels around the 8.0 or 9.0 second mark from 0-100km/h.

Of course, you need some charge to receive assistance from the battery.

With a 70-litre fuel tank the Tiggo takes premium 95 unleaded and has claimed fuel consumption of 1.5L/100km, but that depends on keeping the battery topped up – otherwise it reverts to normal hybrid operation.

Power consumption is 15.6kWh/100km. You can expect to get about 77km (WLTP) driving on electric power alone (1250km combined).

Driving mainly in normal HEV or hybrid-electric mode, we clocked up just under 400km at a rate of 6.0L/100km.

In our defence, sometimes it is not convenient to charge the battery, but it's great to have the option.

AC charging is limited to 6.6kW, but with a fast DC charger it can be charged at a rate of up to 41kW.

Access to the car is via walk-up/walk-away locking, with pop-out door handles and a drivetrain that powers up automatically in readiness for departure.

There's no start/stop button. However, before the transmission will engage, you must have your seatbelt fastened.

It sounds like a great idea, but in practice it wears thin fairly quickly.

Surprisingly at this price point the steering wheel is power-adjust, but disappointingly offers very little range of adjustment.

You can also choose between Comfort and Sport settings in the system that alters the amount of steering effort required.

Of note, sometimes the transmission wouldn't go into gear and at other times it jumped out. This happened on more than one occasion.

RATINGS
Looks: 7
Performance: 7.5
Safety: 7.5
Thirst: 7
Practicality: 6
Comfort: 7.5
Tech: 7.5
Value: 7.5
Overall: 7.2

Once up and running however the Tiggo is an easy, inoffensive car to drive and that is a compliment.

It accelerates briskly and even handles pretty well as we discovered, pushing hard through a few corners.

Ride and handling is a pleasing balance of comfort and control and it doesn't porpoise the way some SUVs do on undulating roads.

The Tiggo just feels a little disconnected, but that won't be a problem for the majority of drivers.

Three-level regenerative braking is offered, but there doesn't seem to be a way to adjust it that we could find.

On a downhill run you can actually see the battery level begin to rise.

Thankfully, most of the driver assistance stuff isn't too intrusive. The Chinese seem to be getting better at this stuff.

A complete lack of physical controls however became annoying after a while.

Want to change the temperature? See the touchscreen. Turn the radio down.

Touchscreen. Anything else. Touchscreen.

Not only is it annoying, it is also difficult once you're on the move.

Limited control is accessible via the steering wheel buttons, but these can be difficult to see in strong sunlight.

Alternatively, there's always voice control, but after a minute trying – like us – you'll probably give up, swearing.

We've been doing this job for a long time. Once upon a time glitches in test vehicles were rare.

These days they have become commonplace, and point to a lack of research and development.

Summing up

Is the Tiggo 9 value for money? Sure.

Is it cheap? Not really, not when you consider that it costs almost $60K to put on the road.

We wonder when this became the price point for a family wagon?

The quality of Chinese vehicles may have come on in leaps and bounds, but so too has the price. What next?



Yarraville Club players wait around. 589004_02



No action at Deer Park. 589004_04.



Williamstown's Sean Sturrock. 589005 02



Williamstown's Jarrod Flood Bauce bowls to Ralf Beer. 589005 17



Point Cook Centrals' Mitchell Waugh. 589006 07

Weather again plays havoc

It was another wet and windy day on Saturday, leaving many cricketers on the sidelines yet again. Star Weekly photographer Valerius Boenawan was out shooting some of the action that went ahead.



Caroline Springs celebrate a wicket. 589009 06



PEGS' Charith Sylvester. 589009 15



Woodend's Harrison Sheahan. 589012 12



Point Cook Centrals' Max Pritchard bowls to Melton South Royals' Steven Szabo.



Woodend's Thomas Robson bowls to Gisborne's Keaton Jennings. 589012 02

Burnside and Cougars tie

By Tara Murray

Burnside Springs United and Sunshine YCW couldn't be split as the two teams played out a tie in the Victorian Turf Cricket Association Clark Shield on Saturday.

The Cougars' total of 88 never looked like it would be enough, but the match proved to be one of the bowlers and the Cougars were able to share the points.

After resuming on Saturday at 5-21, Burnside worked at chasing down the runs.

At 9-74, the odds were back in favour of the Cougars.

The final pair for Burnside of Stafan Ediripullige and Joshua Kelly continued to fight, falling just short as their side was also bowled out for 88.

Burnside captain-coach Ashan Ranaweera said it was a crazy result.

"We still had a few batsmen," he said. "We had a collapse but we still had our two top order batters, Shohan [Rangika] and Mathew [Sanders].

"We kept them to bat yesterday [Saturday]. That was the plan.

"The wicket was not easy and it was turning and it was wet conditions.

"We had hoped that the last ball would get one run, but unfortunately he was out."

Ediripullige top scored with 22.

Ranaweera said they had hoped to try and force an outright result and sent the Cougars back in.

They were in trouble at 4-38 before they settled to ensure they batted out the day, finishing 7-148.

Ranaweera said they always knew it would be tough with just 39 overs to force a result.

"They had one guy who batted really well [Dylan Payne] and made 70-odd not out."

Payne finished 77 not out off 105 balls.

Rangika took three wickets for Burnside in the second innings, as eight bowlers got a bowl.

After five rounds, Burnside Springs United sits atop the ladder and is the only undefeated team.

Ranaweera said they were happy with how they were playing in their first season in the division 4 competition, having won the Russell Pollock Shield last season.

"The youngsters' mindset has been really clear and how they are playing," he said.

"They are playing with freedom and we're allowing them to attack the ball.

"We want to play our own game and it's about always sticking to the game plan."

Ranaweera said they felt confident at this level but they weren't getting ahead of themselves.

He said they just continue to take it week-by-week.

"So far, so good," he said. "I'm proud of the guys.

"They are working hard and training hard."

Burnside faces bottom side Bellbridge in a two-dayer in the next round.

Ranaweera said they won't underestimate them and they would look to make fewer mistakes from this week.

Recovery has its rewards

By Tara Murray

Taylors Hill volleyball player Denise Chan has a new found love of spending time on the court.

After a back injury ruined a lot of her 2025 season, Chan has found her way back to the court and started to show why she is one of the best young talents in the country.

"It was really tough, mainly mentally tough," she said.

"No matter what I did physically I just couldn't get back on the court which was really hard.

"I got through it, and it's really great now."

Chan said her weekly rehab routine included pilates, swimming and going to the gym three times a week.

Once she was back on court it was slow going.

"When I was trying to get back on the court it would be 30 minutes of volleyball and that wouldn't even be on the court," she said.

"It would be easy touches."

Chan, who has already played for Australia, returned to the court in November last year and was quickly back winning gold, helping her school, the Maribyrnong Sports Academy win a competition.

She admits to being rusty, but had a good team around her.

Chan's focus then turned to making the Victorian squad for the national championships in September.

She didn't know what to expect.

"I was really hoping to," she said. "I just did a lot of training and had to focus throughout training as I couldn't fully train, I could only do two a week.

"I had to make the most of what I had.

"I was honestly really stressed out and worried if I would get in, but I did and it worked out and I'm really happy about that.

"I wasn't fully expecting it, but I was trying my best."

Chan said it was special to play with all of her friends at the national championships.

Victoria won gold but it wasn't without drama for Chan.

"I had a flare up on my back," she said. "During warm up I went to pick up a ball and I bent over and had a spasm in my back and I felt like I couldn't move.

"I had to sit out two games and work with the physio, do pool recovery.

"I ended up getting to play the semis and final for a little bit and won gold which was great."

Chan, who is currently doing rehab, knows that she will have to continue to watch her back throughout her career.



Denise Chan. (Supplied)

She's now turned her attention to year 12 exams.

Then she'll start thinking about what comes next.

"I'm getting back my full fitness," she said. "I'm just trying to improve and see where I can go to.

"I'm looking at US colleges potentially, or trying to get to the highest level again.

"I'll do whatever makes me the best player I can be.

"Whether that's in the US, trying and playing at the highest level in college or back in Australia and representing Victoria and Australia in the future."

Dragons unveil recruits

Sunshine Heights has looked to add some young talent to its squad for next year's Western Football League division 2 season.

The Dragons have been busy in the off season and have announced several new signings in the past couple of weeks.

Brody Mitchell joins the Dragons from Laverton where he won the under-18s best and fairest in 2025 and took out the senior best and fairest in 2026.

"At just 19, Brody is a genuine all-rounder who can play midfield, forward, or back, bringing a hard edge at the contest and real polish on the outside," the Dragons said.

"His skill with the football and his competitive attitude will be a massive asset to our club as we build toward a huge 2027 campaign."

Codey Guy crosses from the Suns where he played predominantly as a small forward, while also spending time through the midfield.

"Known for his hard edge around the contest and relentless forward pressure, Codey brings toughness, intensity and a competitive spirit that will be a massive asset to our side in 2027," the Dragons said.

Matthew McKinnon crosses from Strathmore in the Essendon District Football League.

"An exciting forward with the ability to take strong contested marks, Matthew brings excellent foot skills, a fierce competitive edge and a willingness to attack every contest," the Dragons said.

"His marking ability, skill and determination will make him an exciting addition to our playing group for Season 2027."

Beau Arnautovic is the other new signing announced for the Dragons.

He crosses from the Western Rams.

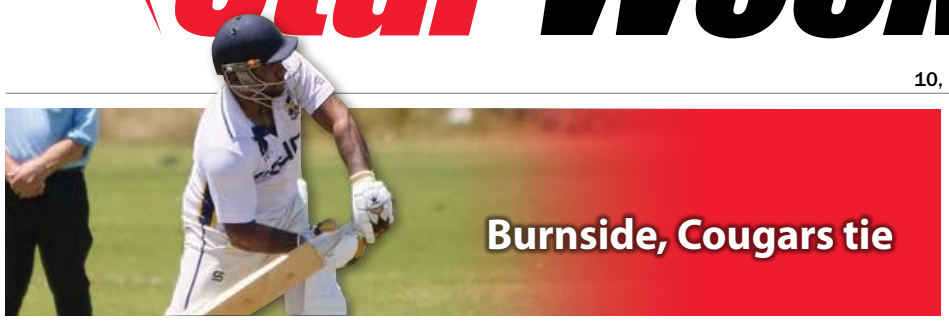
"At just 22 years of age, Beau is a versatile key-position player who can make his presence felt at either end of the ground," the club said.

"Down back, he's known for his strong intercept marking, while up forward, he's more than capable of launching himself onto opponents' shoulders to take a spectacular grab.

"Beau's fierce competitiveness, strong aerial presence and impressive marking ability will be an exciting addition to our playing group for Season 2027."

Young ruck Malaki Middleton joins the Dragons from Newport.

Star Weekly Sport
starweekly.com.au
10, NOVEMBER, 2026


Burnside, Cougars tie


Chan making her mark



Salman Afridi bowls to Sam Ainsworth.
(Valerious Boenawan)
589009 03

Falcons undefeated

By Tara Murray

Caroline Springs held its nerve to turn its game with PEGS on its head to keep its winning start to the Victorian Turf Cricket Association McNamara Shield alive.

Both sides entered the round five clash undefeated, and halfway through day two it seemed that PEGS would be the one to continue on.

Two overs turned the game in the favour of the Falcons, who would go on to win.

Falcons' coach Ian Shattock said it had been a really good start to life in the McNamara Shield.

"It has been excellent, and we're really happy," he said.

"There haven't been any easy games, and the boys are really connected and have put in some great performances so far."

Shattock said they entered every game expecting to win, but they weren't taking anything for granted.

He said they thought they were as good as any other side in the competition and have their eyes on doing as well as they did last season, when they won a premiership.

The Falcons batted first on day one of the clash and finished the day at 8-223.

They added just one run on Saturday as they were bowled out for 224.

Shattock said it was good to see some different players contribute with the bat.

"Last week was pretty solid," he said.

"We lost a few wickets early and a few things didn't go our way before Flynn Rice was outstanding.

"He gutsed it out in tough conditions and showed a lot of commitment and frustrated them a little bit.

"Ashan [Abeykoon] was really good last week and turned the game with his batting."

Abeykoon top scored with 77 off 83 balls after coming in at number eight.

Rice finished 47 not out with Shattock saying that he deserved to get a half century.

At 1-116, PEGS was in control of the run chase and looked set to continue its winning run.

But things quickly changed.

"It was not ideal, but we were never out of the game," Shattock said.

"We had to keep playing the way we wanted to.

"We took 4-6 or 4-7 in a couple of overs, and it turned the game for us.

"Salman Afridi bowled well."

PEGS wasn't able to regain the momentum and was bowled out for 182 in the 62nd over.

Abeykoon took four wickets for the Falcons, while Afridi took three wickets.

Shattock said conditions weren't easy for the bowlers, with a strong wind from one end meaning the spinners couldn't bowl from that end.

The challenges keep coming for the Falcons, who will face Williamstown Imperials in the next round.

The Imperials are the team to beat this season.

Elsewhere, Grand United got the win against West Coburg St Andrews.

Having made 187, the Gorillas kept the Redbacks to 162.

All matches in the top two grades were called off on the weekend due to the weather.

Sharma puts on a show for Lions

By Tara Murray

Mayank Sharma put on a show as Taylors Lakes secured a third straight win in the Victorian Sub-District Cricket Association north-west.

Taylors Lakes and Coburg had a three-hour delay on Saturday before play got underway in a shortened 25-over-a-side game.

Sharma put the Lions in a strong position with the bat and then backed it up with the ball, as the Lions had a comfortable win.

"Going to Coburg we thought we should be winning this game, but with it cut down to 25 overs, silly things can happen in a shortened game," Lions' coach Peter Brasher said.

"I thought we were going to win a fair way out with the ball.

"It was not so much with the bat."

After being sent in, the Lions were in trouble at 6-78.

Enter Sharma, who turned the game. He finished 71 not out off 34 balls to help the Lions finish 7-164.

Brasher said they had a lot of starts early in the innings before the batters found a way to go out.

"At 6-78 we were looking like we might get to 125-130," Brasher said.

"The big fella [Sharma] then came in and said let me sort it out.

"It was ridiculous what he was able to do. We needed someone to step up.

"He hit seven sixes and it was some of the cleanest sixes that I've seen."

The Lions were then able to back it up with the ball, restricting Coburg to 9-103 from its 25 overs.

Sharma took 4-14 to cap off his day, with Brasher saying it was a really good team bowling performance.

"Our first couple overs weren't great but we were still able to consistently get wickets," he said.

"At 4-30 they shut up shop for a while and it took away the chance of them winning the game.

"We were hoping to bowl them out in the end, but to have them nine down and win by 60 runs in a 25 over game is always positive."

The win backed up a strong performance from the previous one-dayer with Sharma hitting a six in the final over to beat Brunswick.

The Lions are 3-1 after four rounds and sit in fourth spot.

Brasher said they had shown a bit more maturity the past couple of weeks, which they didn't show the past few seasons.

"We're in front of the ledger at 3-1 and it's a good platform in the run up to Christmas," he said.

"The key is to stay in front of the ledger at this time of the year."

The Lions now face Williamstown in a Saturday-Sunday clash this coming weekend.