

MARIBYRNONG & HOBSONS BAY

Star Weekly

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Altona Senior Citizens members (L-R) Danny Civitico, Dorothy Kendall, John Dawson and Steve Jauhari get in the groove for the club's weekly music sessions. (Damjan Janevski) 559178_03

Mystery music

Tuesday afternoon isn't a time normally associated with live music, but in Altona it soon might be thanks to the local senior citizens club.

Featuring bands, solo performers, choirs and even karaoke and music trivia, Mystery Music Sessions are held every Tuesday at 1.30pm at the Altona Senior Citizens Club on Sargood Street.

Not only is the time slot unusual, but the venue is too, with senior citizens clubs better known for hosting bingo or indoor bowls than live gigs.

Organiser and club member John Dawson said that was part of the reason why the weekly performances were established.

"These sessions came out of a need to fill a void in activities we offered," Mr Dawson said.

"Live music, of any kind, is very therapeutic and lifts your spirits."

The Glenrowan Bush Band will headline the next session on Tuesday 30 June, while previous acts to have featured include The Hubcaps, Evening Breeze, The Good, The Bad and the Elderly, Danny and the Rockets, Altona Choir and Dorothy's Music trivia.

It's an eclectic line-up with the only constant being that all performances are offered free of charge, to both club members and non-members alike.

Inquiries: 9932 1311

Data moratorium

By Cade Lucas

Opposition to data centres in Melbourne's west continues to grow with one campaign group demanding a moratorium on their construction.

Borderlands Collective, a social and environmental justice organisation based in Footscray, want the state government to immediately halt the roll-out data centres across Victoria, arguing the giant facilities needed to support AI are being imposed on communities without them having a say.

"There's no democratic oversight," Borderlands spokesperson and Kingsville resident Peter Gartside said of the state's data centre boom.

"Decisions are being made on Springs

Street without even councils being part of the discussion."

Data centres operators can apply for planning permission through the state government's fast-track approval system, resulting in some facilities being built with limited or no input from local residents and authorities.

But due to concerns about their environment impact, energy consumption and sheer size, that has begun to change, with both local residents and Maribyrnong council opposing the an application by data centre operator Next DC to double the size of its existing facility West Footscray to almost 10 hectares.

The amount of old industrial sites in the western suburbs has made it a popular

destination for data centres and Mr Gartside said the number already built in the area meant it would only attract more.

"There's a sort of clustering effect because once the upgrades to the grid are done the several data centres will cluster around that infrastructure," he said, referring to the upgraded electricity grid needed to host data centres due to the sheer amount of power they consume.

To back-up that power, data centres also have dozens of diesel generators that need regular testing, leading to concerns about the risk to local air quality and fire safety.

Mr Gartside said beyond all these concerns was the broader issue of AI itself.

"I think there's a general concern about where AI is going given the control of this

technology is in the hands of a few US billionaires," he said.

"The more you look into it the harder it is to find an upside."

Along with calling for a moratorium, Borelands is holding a public meeting on 1 July to discuss concerns about data centres and AI and begin organising a campaign against them.

"We'll just get people in a room and make them feel like they're not on their own," Mr Gartside said.

"Together we're a more powerful voice."

Both state and federal governments and Maribyrnong council were contacted for comment.



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Data centre regulation NOW

All over Australia, state governments are racing to host data centres. Lots of them.

This is despite growing international evidence that AI infrastructure comes with terrible consequences for our environment, our energy system, and our communities.

Since the middle of last year, I've been sounding the alarm on the frenzied rollout of AI data centres in Victoria.

I've asked:

- About data centres and their water use
- About the elusive Sustainable Data Centre Action Plan
- Whether or not NextDC's proposed expansion in West Footscray will be guided by the Commonwealth's expectations
- How the government intends to reconcile Victoria's carbon emission reduction targets with a planned 350-hectare AI megahub in Plumpton 'so big it will need its own gas turbines to avoid tripping the power grid' and needing more power than the total capacity of Loy Yang A

I've also had meetings with the Water and Energy Ministers, as well as briefings from The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

Major questions remain about why we need a data centre expansion of such scale, and at such speed, and why we're not regulating this boom industry before it takes over our land, water, and energy.

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Hansen pavilion passed over

By Cade Lucas

The Maribyrnong mayor has been challenged to come and inspect the dilapidated pavilion at Hansen Reserve himself, after a long planned upgrade of the West Footscray facility was overlooked in last week's council budget.

In a letter seen by Star Weekly, local parent and Footscray Rangers Soccer Club member Lara Forbes asked Cr Mohamed Semra to come and see the state of the facilities used by her two sons and as well as hundreds of other soccer players, footballers and cricketers.

"The current facilities at Hansen Re-

serve do not reflect the value of the people using them," Ms Forbes wrote, adding that council's decision to defer funding for the redevelopment was "deeply disappointing."

"This is not a new or speculative project," she said pointing out that a master plan was unveiled in 2023.

"The community was led to understand that construction was coming."

Ms Forbes' frustration was echoed by members of fellow Hansen Reserve tenants North Footscray Football Club and Yarraville Club Cricket Club (YCCC).

North Footscray vice president Jason Agrotis said the pavilion's toilets and

showers often didn't work.

"We're trying to grow the women's team and re-start our junior teams again. When parents bring their kids down they want it to be sanitary and up to scratch," Mr Agrotis said.

YCCC president Darren Cain said the facility was also too small.

"From our perspective, our club has effectively doubled in size in the last three years," Mr Cain said.

"We've now got women's teams and multiple junior teams and the facilities at Hansen are just not up to scratch."

Cr Semra said council was also disappointed to have to delay the upgrade,

but that cost increases on other projects meant they had no other choice.

"We had originally budgeted \$5 million this year and another \$6.5 million in the 2026/27 financial year, unfortunately other project timelines and unexpected new projects mean that it isn't feasible right now," Cr Semra said, adding that temporary facilities would be installed in the meantime and that council was still committed to the project.

"We will continue to look for funding opportunities and review the project during our next budget process."

It's unknown if the mayor will take up Ms Forbes' offer.

Mayor's indoor cricket cameo a hit for six

Footscray All-Abilities Indoor Cricket held a come and try evening on Tuesday 16 June and among those who went along to have a hit was Maribyrnong mayor Mohamed Semra.

"He had a quite a good style," coordinator Lorraine Woodman said of the mayor's cricket skills which he displayed while playing alongside newcomers and regulars.

"It was fantastic. The guys got a great thrill out of it," Ms Woodman said of their reaction to Cr Semra joining them.

The mayor dropped in to the come and try event at the indoor sports centre on Gordon Street after it was made possible through a \$1500 funding grant from the Altona and Laverton Community Bank.

"I'm always applying for grants everywhere to keep the project going," Ms Woodman said of the all-abilities indoor cricket competition she has been coordinating for 33 years.

The funding from the latest grant was used to advertise the come and try event which attracted about 20 people.

"The people who came and tried we're hoping they will come again and keep playing," Ms Woodman said, adding that the come and try evening was a little less serious than usual. "Normally it's very serious on a Tuesday night, very competitive."

Roughly 30 cricketers, both male and female, regularly attend the Tuesday night competitions, which Ms Woodman started in 1993.

"Some from the very beginning are still with us," she said.

"They're in their 60's now some of them."

To join, contact Lorraine Woodman on 0438 981 882.



Maribyrnong mayor Mohamed Semra shows off his batting skills at an all-abilities indoor cricket come and try evening in Footscray on 16 June. (supplied) 561135_01

Travellers can now use tap and go technology on the trams

In a move to modernise public transportation, commuters in Victoria will now be able to pay for their tram journeys using a bank card, smartphone, or smartwatch. This expansion of the tap and go payment system follows its rollout across the state's train network.

"From today, you can step off a train and straight onto a tram using the same phone, watch or bank card," said Public and Active Transport Minister Gabrielle Williams.

The new system allows passengers to use the same payment method, wheth-

er they're catching a train, jumping on a tram, or switching between the two. This convenience has already proven popular, with four out of five tap and go trips being made using a phone or smartwatch, according to the minister.

The move is part of a broader effort to make public transportation more accessible and affordable for Victorians. The government has also introduced half-price fares until the end of the year.

"Four in five tap and go trips are already being made with a phone or smartwatch - showing more Victorians are

leaving the wallet at home," Ms Williams said.

While the tap and go system is now available on trams, concession passengers, seniors, and those under 18 should continue using their existing myki cards. Passengers traveling where myki is not yet available should use paper tickets or eTickets.

Passengers who prefer to use their myki can continue to do so.

Inner west crime wave curtailed

Efforts to tackle inner west crime appear to be paying off, with both Maribyrnong and Hobsons Bay recording their best results for a number of years according to the latest statistics.

Data released by the Crime Statistics Agency on 18 June showed that for the year to March 2026, crime in Maribyrnong rose by just 0.9 per cent, with 12,350 offences recorded, while in Hobsons Bay there was a slight reduction, with offences falling 0.6 per cent to 7807.

Both results stand in stark contrast to the 12 months to March 2025 when crime in Maribyrnong rose by 21 per cent and in Hobsons Bay by an extraordinary 32 per cent.

In Maribyrnong, stealing from a motor vehicle remained the most common offence with 2790 incidents recorded, up from 2422 a year earlier and more than double the next most common offence, other theft on 1181.

Instances of other theft actually fell, as did other categories such as stealing from a retail store and criminal damage, while Footscray was again by far the most common location for offending, but improved to 4408 offences recorded, down from 4454.

Streets, lanes and footpaths remained the most common locations for crime, rising from 2739 to 2820, while flats, units and apartments were the only locations to record a reduction, falling below a thousand to 881.

As in Maribyrnong, stealing from a motor vehicle was the most common offence in Hobsons Bay but improved from 1425 to 1269.

Altona North was the suburb with the most crime, rising to 1552 offences recorded, ahead of Williamstown which fell from 1523 to 1220.

Houses were the top location, but improved from 2054 to 1789.

Offences in streets, lanes, footpaths, other retail, service stations and train stations all increased.

A spokesperson for Victoria Police said while it was pleasing to see crime stabilising, it was still too high.

"This is why we are absolutely committed to ensuring our highly trained officers are where they are needed most - in the community, patrolling the streets, deterring criminal behaviour and preventing crime," the spokesperson said.

Budget adopted

By Cade Lucas

Major projects and upgrades to the Footscray CBD are some of the priority areas funded in the 2026-2027 Maribyrnong budget adopted on Tuesday night.

The \$245 million budget comprising \$154 million in funding for services, \$91 million for capital works and a projected underlying surplus of \$11.5 million was unanimously endorsed at the council's meeting on 16 June.

The budget includes an average increase in rates to the state government's cap of 2.75 per cent, while debt is expected to grow from just under \$8 million to more than \$20 million over the next financial year as council plans to borrow money to pay for the Shorten Reserve and RecWest redevelopment in West Footscray.

Council is proposing to borrow \$15 million for the project and expects to redeem just under \$2 million, bringing forecast debt to \$20.7 million.

Major projects to receive funding are the Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre (MAC) Waterslide and Splash Park which gets just over \$13 million for construction work and the Creative West cultural precinct which has been allocated \$7 million for planning.

Six million dollars will go towards revitalising the Footscray CBD, including upgrades to lighting, open spaces and activation works in Little Africa, while Nicholson Street gets a further \$2 million for footpath improvements.

More than \$2 million will go towards the planning, construction and design of new kindergartens and youth centres

Budget changes

- \$50,000 for active transport and bicycle infrastructure
- \$20,000 for the Maribyrnong River and Waterways Association
- \$14,800 for the open kitchen pilot
- \$10,000 for five neighbourhood houses: Angliss, West Footscray and Braybrook Maidstone neighbourhood houses, and Duke and Yarraville community centres

across Maribyrnong, while more than \$1 million will be spent on active transport infrastructure such as share cycling and

pedestrian paths, pram ramps, bike rails and maintenance stations.

Maribyrnong mayor Mohamed Semra said the budget was prepared following a robust engagement process and lamented that some worthy projects had missed out.

The council received 86 submissions following the draft budget.

"It is a very competitive process," Cr Semra said.

Among the projects to not receive funding was the proposed upgrade of the pavilion at Hansen Reserve in West Footscray, which local sporting clubs that use the facility are calling for.

Bluestone ward representative Pardeep Tiwari said he was disappointed the project had been overlooked, but said he would keep advocating for it.

"The reality is there will always be more worthy projects than there is money available," Cr Tiwari said.

Rivalries set aside for road safety funding

An inner west football club is urging its local rivals to apply for a statewide grants program that could earn them a share of \$700,000 in funding.

Western Football and Netball League (WFNL) club Yarraville Seddon Eagles was last year one of 320 clubs across Victoria that received grants of up to \$10,000 through the Transport Accident Commission's (TAC) annual TAC Club Rewards Program.

Delivered in partnership with AFL Victoria, the program provides funding to clubs so they can both improve their facilities and equipment as well as undertake road safety initiatives.

Yarraville-Seddon president Dmitri Colebatch said last year's funding grant helped the club both on and off the field.

"The grant helped fund balls and equipment for all our coaches from under eight's all the way up to seniors," Colebatch said, adding that the funding also supported road safety education programs for its junior players.

"As a club that has a lot of juniors and in 2027 we'll have our under 19 girls for the first time and that age for boys and girls is absolutely critical from a road safety perspective,"



Pride of Our Footscray owner and manager Matt O'Keefe celebrates after winning favourite queer venue and favourite burlesque venue at the recent Melbourne Excellence in Drag and Entertainment Awards. (supplied)

Pride picks up awards

Inner west venue Pride of Our Footscray scooped the pool at the recent Melbourne Excellence in Drag and Entertainment Awards (MEDEAs)

The Hopkins Street bar and nightclub was named Melbourne's Favourite Queer Venue and Melbourne's Favourite Burlesque Venue at the awards, the first time both categories have been won by the same venue in the same year.

Pride of Our Footscray owner and manager Matt O'Keefe said he was excited, grateful and a little bit shocked to win the awards, especially during such a difficult time for the hospitality industry.

"It's simultaneously the golden age of drag and yet the hardest time for venues, so to be honoured in this way was very special for all associated with Pride, particularly our dedicated staff," Mr O'Keefe said.

"The MEDEAs are a great night for this talented community which so rarely is able to get together because we're all working so hard, long may they continue."

As Star Weekly reported late last month, Pride of Our Footscray has been operating without insurance for the last two years due to a huge spike in premiums post-Covid19.

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After receiving a funding grant last year, Yarraville Seddon Eagles president Dmitri Colebatch is encouraging other clubs to apply for the 2026 TAC Club Rewards Program. (Damjan Janevski) 559597_02

he said in urging other clubs, especially those with large junior programs, to apply.

"Being involved in the campaign not only helps fund essential equipment for the club but gets the (road safety) message to your young drivers as they're getting their licenses."

Applications for the 2026 club rewards program are now open and close on Monday 24 August.

For more information and to apply, go to: <https://h1.nu/1s7Xa>

Services disrupted amid strike

By Georgia Tacey

Libraries closed and waste services were halted as more than 1500 council workers walked off the job as they continue their fight for a pay rise.

Workers across eight councils - Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Hume, Merr-bek, Yarra, Greater Dandenong, Darebin, and Melbourne - stopped work on Wednesday 17 June and descended on Spring Street.

The eight councils are currently engaged with multi-employer bargaining with the Australian Services Union (ASU), who said the councils have continued to stonewall negotiations with no pay offer after six months of bargaining.

The ASU is calling for a 10 per cent pay rise for council workers in the first year, followed by four per cent rises per year.

ASU Victoria and Tasmania branch secretary Tash Wark said union members have been patient and bargained in good faith.

"Frontline council workers are falling further behind every single month. They're up to 12 per cent behind in real terms since 2021," she said.

"They're tightening budgets, watching colleagues unable to afford housing or put petrol in the car just to go to work, and waiting for councils to take this seriously but sadly, their employer is yet to do so.

"Our members do not take industrial action lightly. They take pride in the work they do for their communities. But after six months of silence from councils and years of wages going backwards in real terms, they have been left with no other choice.

"We are calling on councils to stop hiding behind rate capping and start standing up for the workers delivering essential services in every suburb of this city. They cannot pretend they're negotiating in good faith while they're doing nothing effective to offer meaningful wage increases to workers."

A joint statement from the eight councils said they are continuing to negotiate in good faith with the unions.

"The Australian Services Union's industrial action is being undertaken very early



Council workers rallied at Parliament in their fight for fair pay (Pictures: Gary Sissons) 560194_23



Over 1500 council workers attended the rally. 560194_124

in the bargaining process. Councils remain committed to bargaining with all unions," the eight councils said.

"Each of the eight councils has worked to minimise impacts of the ASU's strike action on our communities as much as possible.

"While we respect the right of ASU members to take industrial action, it is regrettable



Australian Services Union Victoria and Tasmania branch secretary Tash Wark. 560194_30



Signs in the crowd. 560194_24

that the ASU's industrial action will affect our community and customers."

In Hume, red bin collections were disrupted, the Sunbury Resale Shop closed and library programs across Broadmeadows, Craigieburn and Sunbury were cancelled. Libraries also closed early. A catch-up collection was also scheduled for affected Sun-

bury and Bulla residents for Saturday 20 June.

In Maribyrnong, Braybrook, Maribyrnong and Yarraville libraries were closed due to the industrial action.

In Hobsons Bay, Williamstown Library was closed, with programs affected across the day.

Give us 'what's best for the west' demand rally protesters

By Jack O'shea-Ayres

Residents from across Melbourne's western suburbs gathered on the steps of Parliament on Thursday 18 June, calling on the state government to accelerate long-promised public transport projects and address what they describe as growing inequality in transport access.

The community-led rally was supported by local community groups Sustainable Cities, Better Buses and the Mt Atkinson Advocacy Forum.

It marked five years since the release of Victoria's Bus Plan and highlighted ongoing concerns about delayed rail and bus infrastructure in one of Australia's fastest-growing regions.

Residents voiced their concerns on the long-awaited Melton electrification project, first promised in 2018 but still in the design phase.

Speakers said the delay had left rapidly growing communities dependent on congested roads and limited public transport options.

"We want buses, we want trains," attendees chanted.

"We want what's best for the west."

Campaigners also raised concerns about the proposed Mt Atkinson train station, noting more than 5000 residents signed a petition supporting the project in 2024, but that little information had been provided since.

"We've been neglected for way too long," said Liberal candidate for the seat of Melton



Residents from across the west came together at Parliament steps to voice their concerns on Thursday 18 June. (Jack O'Shea-Ayres)

Jarrold Bingham.

"People bring up crime and cost of living, but the third highest priority people talk about is transport."

Residents from Mt Atkinson, Thornhill Park and Deanside told the rally they continued to rely on driving to stations at Caroline Springs, Deer Park, or Rockbank due to the lack of a local rail connection and limited bus services.

Organisers said poor inter-suburban bus links remained a major issue across the west, with travel between centres such as Melton, Sunshine, Truganina, Point

Cook, and Werribee often requiring indirect routes, multiple transfers, and lengthy journey times despite relatively short distances.

"We have been completely neglected in the west in terms of investment and public transport," Better Buses spokesperson Grace Eyre said.

"The bus reform that we're asking for costs basically pennies on the dollar compared to the Suburban Rail Loop, the Metro Tunnel, or other major projects."

Speakers also argued transport infrastructure failed to keep pace with population growth, leaving families increasingly

reliant on private vehicles and contributing to congestion on major routes including the Western Freeway.

The rally also highlighted the impact on shift workers, students, older residents, and people with disabilities, who organisers said were disproportionately affected by infrequent services and limited operating hours outside standard business hours.

Concerns were also raised about the burden placed on women and primary carers, with speakers describing transport access as an equity issue affecting access to employment, education, healthcare, and community participation.

"What I have found is people who are most affected by this sort of thing tend to be new migrants who don't have driver's licences or are anxious about driving," Ms Eyre said.

"Elderly people, people who can't drive for whatever reason - they expect public transport and are quite surprised when they arrive in the west and don't have reliable public transport.

"Other people who are affected by it are students and young people, as well as their parents."

Organisers said the purpose of the gathering was to give residents an opportunity to speak directly with elected representatives about the everyday impact of transport decisions and to seek commitments on improved bus networks, the delivery of the Melton electrification project, and progress towards a Mt Atkinson train station.

Building better, safer lives

A Syrian refugee who arrived in Australia a decade ago with little English and no local experience has carved out a career as a senior engineer working on renewable energy projects that are critical to Australia's economic future.

Another refugee given protection by Australia put his life in danger working to secure the release of the trafficked victims of scammer gangs operating along the Thai-Burma border. To mark Refugee Week (14 - 20 June) these remarkable individuals tell their stories of resilience and resettlement.

Jamila Alarkan says she made the most difficult decision of her life after arriving in Australia by deciding to continue with her passion for engineering.

After arriving in Australia from war-torn Syria, Jamila set about improving her English and began the process of having her qualifications recognised.

Since then, she has forged a career in engineering that deliberately encompassed a broad range of engineering projects in male-dominated environments. Drawing on her experiences and the resilience she gained as a refugee, Jamila has become a leader in her field. She is now a contract manager for a major engineering company in the renewable energy sector, and has also become an Australian citizen.

"Coming to Australia gave me the opportunity to rebuild my life and my career," said Jamila, who lives in Roxburgh Park. "I have been able to achieve more than I thought possible."

Jamila graduated in engineering amid some of the fiercest fighting of the Syrian conflict and the destruction of the ancient city of Aleppo, with friends and classmates being killed. Her undergraduate years were spent studying by candlelight in the bowels of an ancient convent as a bloody civil war raged around her. As the bombs fell, Jamila stuck doggedly to her dream of becoming an engineer, enduring the effects of war, sickness and physical injury to pursue an education and the chance of a bright future.

"Engineering has been my passion for



Senior engineer Jamila Alarkan.

as long as I can remember. My hero is my sister Dahlia who is ten years older than me and an engineer," she said.

"I've always loved mathematics and science and when Dalia studied engineering, I loved the drawings she used in her course. I've always enjoyed building things and making things work and I really love problem solving and finding solutions, so I knew I wanted to be an engineer when I grew up."

After graduating, with Syria in ruins and little chance of work, Jamila took the gamble of her life and left her family behind in search of a future.

"If I were to offer advice to someone settling in Australia today, I would say: be patient with yourself. Find what you're passionate about and hold onto it. Build community wherever you can. The journey takes time, and it isn't always easy, but it is possible."

Jamila says the achievements she values most aren't just professional milestones, but "the quieter ones — becoming independent, finding my voice, standing on my own feet, building a legacy, repetition and being able to plan for the future instead of simply surviving day to day."

"After ten years, I feel a deep sense of gratitude — for safety, for opportunity, and for the life I've been able to build here. It hasn't been simple, but it has shown me that with support, purpose, and determination, starting again can lead to something truly meaningful. I hope that one day my children will be proud to share this story — not just as a personal journey, but as part of a legacy that carries across generations of Australians, showing what can be built through resilience, opportunity, and giving back."

Jamila says she is "proud to be Australian-Syrian" and is "equally proud of the Syrian community here. So many people have rebuilt their lives from scratch, working hard, contributing, and doing their best to give back to society. I deeply respect them and feel honoured to be part of this community. Being able to call ourselves Syrian-Australian is something I will always carry with pride."

Refugee driven by a sense of justice

For almost 10 years, Johny* was one of a loose band of people and agencies fighting to expose a little-known but growing human rights crisis created by criminal gangs.

The researcher and advocate has been working to support and secure the release of the trafficked victims of scammer gangs operating along the Thai-Burma border.

So far, Johny has helped to free almost a thousand unwitting victims tricked into effective slavery by criminal gangs, which operate multi-million dollar online and phone scams with the acquiescence of the brutal military junta which currently rules Burma.

His work put him in danger and Johny was threatened by the gangs and forced to flee with his family.

Now resettled as a refugee in Tarnet, in Melbourne's west, with his wife, father and two children, Johny is continuing his humanitarian work and also studying, supported by AMES Australia.

His journey as an activist began when set up a small not-for-profit organisation to support displaced refugees in his region, mainly persecuted minorities such as the Karen and Chin.

The charity provides food and runs classes for refugee children.

"We started out delivering food and other aid to some of the 11,000 refugees along the border. But then we also started trying to help people who had been trafficked and kidnaped by the scammer gangs," he said.

On one trip to deliver aid, he was shot at by the Myanmar military. On another trip, a colleague was shot dead.



Refugee Johny at work. (Supplied)

Johny said that in recent times, more of his group's work has been about helping trafficked people. His group and other NGOs have helped in the release of more than a thousand people in recent years, he said.

In one instance, 26 Ugandans were rescued from a compound after being tricked into working for a gang of scammers.

He has also been part of research projects into the scammers for the Asia Foundation, the US Institute of Peace and Amnesty International, International Justice for Migrants; as well as research into labour issues and exploitation of migrant workers for the UK NGO Fair Square.

Johny said the research indicates there may be as many as 77,000 victims inside the scam centres. They come from a range of developing countries, including India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, China, Bangladesh, Vietnam, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Uganda, Morocco and other African nations.

Johny is a member of the Gurkha minority in Myanmar. There are about 250,000 Gurkhas living mostly in the rural Chin region. They are one of the ethnic minorities who have long been persecuted by the Myanmar military.

He said he plans to continue his work now he and his family are safe in Australia.

"I want to study human rights law and continue my work helping trafficked people as well as research into this area," he said. "Our work has been about how we can get these gangsters arrested and get justice and compensation for their victims. And that work continues."

Johny said education has also been a passion for him.

"In the worst times in Burma, education became my hope. That is why I continue studying here in Australia - because I want to build more skills and knowledge so I can continue helping communities both here and abroad."

*Johny's full name has been redacted to protect family members still in Myanmar

Ten facts about refugees

1. Global displacement is at an all-time high: More than one in every 70 people around the world have been forced to flee their homes due to persecution, violence, conflict or human rights violations. The figure of more than 117 million people forcibly displaced is nearly triple the 40 million recorded just two decades ago.

2. Almost half of the world's displaced people are children: Of the 117 million displaced in 2024, an estimated 49 million - about 40 per cent - are under 18 years of age, almost triple the number recorded in 2010.

3. Refugees contribute more to Australia's economy than they receive in services: Refugees and humanitarian migrants make vital, long-term economic contributions to Australia through high rates of entrepreneurship, regional labour force participation, and essential skills acquisition, according to a UNSW study.

4. Less than one per cent of refugees will ever be resettled: Millions of people are in need of resettlement, but the process is limited, complex and lengthy. Refugee vetting typically takes 18-24 months.

5. Most displaced people stay in their own or neighbouring countries: More than 60 per cent of displaced people remain within their own countries' borders as internally displaced persons.

6. Climate change is accelerating displacement: Climate related disasters have caused 220 million internal displacements in the past decade, averaging 60,000 people displaced every day.

7. Australia remains a leading host country for refugees: Australia accepts 20,000 refugee each year; one of the highest intakes in the world on a per capita basis.

8. Refugees have shaped science, culture and innovation: Refugees bring essential skills, knowledge and experience to their new communities. Scientist Sir Gus Nossal, artist Judy Cassab, comedian Anh Do, sports identity Les Murray all arrived in Australia as refugees.

9. Refugees fill critical labour shortages: Refugees play vital roles in the care industry, manufacturing, retail, hospitality, transport, tourism and education.

10. Refugees are neighbours, friends and community members: Refugees are more than numbers - they are people with hopes and dreams whose lives have been disrupted by conflict, climate change and threats to their safety.

*Source: AMES

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Kid's music performer Damo with Parker (2) during a recent performance at the Braybrook and Maidstone Neighbourhood House playgroup. (Damjan Janevski) 555773_04

Damo is king of the kids

Children's singer songwriter Damian Peck - aka Damo - was king of the kids at the Braybrook and Maidstone Neighbourhood House (BMNH) playgroup earlier this month.

The western suburbs based musician performed for children at BMNH's weekly Monday morning playgroup on 8 June.

With more than two decades of experience writing and performing music and theatre for children, Damo performs at playgroups as regularly as other musicians perform in pubs and clubs.

When not performing to children, Damo cares for his own, attributing much of his songwriting inspiration to looking after his two young boys.

It was no surprise than that with songs like Everybody's Different and It's OK To Be Yourself, Damo quickly won the audience over.

"Damo was a huge hit with the kids, who

loved singing along, dancing and joining in on the fun," BMNH playgroup coordinator Jodie Barrett said.

"His energy and enthusiasm kept everyone entertained and it was wonderful to see so many smiling faces throughout the session."

Performances from musicians like Damo are just one of the attractions children and their parents can expect at the weekly playgroup, which Ms Barrett said offered families the chance to connect, make friends and have fun.

The playgroup runs from 10am-12pm every Monday during school terms at the Braybrook and Maidstone Neighbourhood House on Melon Street, Braybrook.

For more information, visit: <https://bmnh.org.au/>

To find out more about Damo, go to: <https://damomusicforkids.com.au/about-damo/>

Briefs

Safety survey

Residents in Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong can share their safety concerns with police by completing the 2026 Community Sentiment Survey by 30 June. The annual survey offers residents the chance to tell police how they can make their community safer, what local issues they should focus on, how they would like officers to interact with them. All survey responses will then be used to support the Neighbourhood Policing Framework. The survey is anonymous and is open to people of all backgrounds. To complete the survey, go to: <https://bit.ly/42W1i52>

Cat curfew

Cat owners in Maribyrnong are being reminded that a dusk till dawn curfew comes into effect from the start of next month. From 7pm to 7am, cats will need to be kept indoors or in a secure enclosure in order to protect local wildlife and cats themselves. To prepare, residents are encouraged to begin gradually adjusting their cat's evening routine ahead of 1 July, with steps such as feeding them indoors at dusk and providing enrichment toys and comfortable indoor spaces known to help ease the transition. [Pets-and-animals/Cat-curfew](#)

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A surprising hit and a polarising miss

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.



★★★★☆
The Drama - MA15+

Going into the cinema, I had a feeling that Kristoffer Borgli's 2025 film *The Drama* wouldn't be for me ... I was wrong.

The drama follows the soon-to-be-married couple of Charlie Thompson (Robert Pattinson) and Emma Harwood (Zendaya).

While preparing for their big day, the pair and some of their friends begin discussing the worst things each of them have done.

In a drunken state, Emma lets out a secret from her past that turns the entire situation upside down, leading to a series of painful situations unfolding until finally coming to a head on their wedding day.

The two most important aspects of a film are if it entertains and if it can affect your emotions in the intended way.

Two big ticks for the drama. There were countless occasions where the tense, awkward situations, paired with realistic dialogue and naturalistic acting, left me wanting to curl up into a ball and disappear into the chair in the best way possible.

The Drama was funny, heart-breaking, and artistically creative.

Each new scene was willing to be bold and true to life, leaving us with a film that was so easy to relate to and get lost in.

This is why I was so disappointed in its ending, which so quickly abandoned the risk-taking style replaced by a forced happy ending that took away from the film in its entirety.

From the first second *The Drama* started, there was a beautiful look to it. It wasn't long before I noticed some flashes of white on the screen and immediately realised what made this movie so easy on the eyes, was the fact that it had been shot on 35 millimetre film.

Borgli's decision to make a movie the old-fashioned way added so much to the tone and atmosphere of the film and doubled as indisputable proof that 35 millimetre film should once again become the standard for capturing movie magic in its purest form.

The drama shows us that it's impossible to know someone truly is until you have seen every side of them and begs the question, how would you react in the same situation?

A well-made film, earning 4/5.

★★★★☆
EraserHead - M

David Lynch is a polarising film director, no one would be more opinionated and passionate about his films than him, a true perfectionist to his imagination.

His film *EraserHead* 1977 is without a doubt the strangest film I have ever watched.

Jack Spencer and his wife Mary are suddenly thrust into parenthood as the mother and father of a horrific alien baby.

The constant screaming and lack of sleep gets to Mary who leaves Jack as the sole parent, soon a series of unnerving, grotesque visions plague Jack while he struggles to care for the creature the best he can.

EraserHead is a visual and cinematic masterclass, starting with wide, still simplistic shots that demonstrate the nature of life in the melancholic urban environment the film takes place in.

It steadily transitions into a truly unsettling horror that is so incredibly uncomfortable on the eyes.

Lynch follows the philosophy of 'the only way past is through' and leans so hard into the style that you can't bring yourself to look away.

There is so little dialogue in this film it's hard to know exactly what the story is, and I believe that is exactly the point.

When people watch *EraserHead* they are desperate to find a cohesive beginning, middle and end style story that simply isn't here.

Although *EraserHead* is thin on story and hard to follow, it isn't about leaving you confused, it's about leaving you curious, the film demands to be rewatched, debated, studied and ultimately, never agreed upon. That's what makes *EraserHead* such a revolutionary film for its time.

At the end of the day this isn't my type of film, it is very slow paced and made ninety minutes feel much longer than it was.

The story is replaced with strange and striking visuals that can sometimes be hard to get on board with.

Ultimately this film made about as much sense as a football bat, so, if you are willing to take a risk and leave a film thinking to yourself 'what the heck just happened?' then *EraserHead* is for you, if not, give it a miss. *EraserHead* gets 3/5.



Turn an old sock into a puppet

Each month, Stephanie Martinez will share an exciting craft project designed to inspire and spark creativity.

Stephanie starred in the first season of *Making It* on Network 10, where she discovered and ignited her passion for crafting.

Join Stephanie as she explores the endless possibilities of crafting and turn everyday materials into something extraordinary.

This month, Stephanie is creating a crazy sock puppet.



Stephanie Martinez.



Crazy sock puppet

Materials

- Cardboard
- Wadding
- Sock
- Black and red felt
- Polystyrene balls
- Pom-pom
- Yarn

Equipment

- Scissors
- Glue gun / glue stick
- Masking tape

Step 1: Cut 1 oval shape from cardboard and cut it in half.

Step 2: Tape the two pieces together in the middle with masking tape so it can open and close.

Step 3: Cut 2 pieces of wadding slightly bigger than the cardboard and glue around the curved edges, leaving the straight side open for your fingers.

Step 4: Turn the sock inside out and glue the mouth piece into the toe end of the sock. Turn the sock back the right way out.

Step 5: Decorate your sock puppet with a mouth piece, tongue, polystyrene ball eyes, a pom-pom nose, and yarn hair.



Scan QR code and follow the links for more creative fun.

Recycling to help refugee youths find their place

At Footscray Rangers Football Club, a young person walking onto the pitch isn't seen as a refugee first. They're seen as a footballer, a teammate, a friend and a valued member of the community.

That's the heart of the Rangers Refugee Football Program, which provides accessible football experiences for children and young people from humanitarian and refugee backgrounds. The program is about more than the game, it's about giving young people the chance to participate, make friends, build confidence and feel a sense of belonging.

The club currently supports 33 refugee youth, many from families who have had to rebuild their lives in a new country while facing barriers such as cost, transport, language, social isolation and limited access to organised sport. For some families, the club becomes one of the first places they feel connected to their new home.

Club president Nathan McLean said football offers these young people something powerful.

"Football gives them a team, a routine, a place to be welcomed and a community that sees them for their strengths," he said.

"We participate in the Container Deposit Scheme because we believe football should be for everyone. Our role is to remove as many barriers as possible so children who love the game can play, regardless of their background or financial circumstances."

Funds raised through the Victorian Container Deposit Scheme (CDS Vic) go directly towards subsidising participation costs, including uniforms and sports equipment; ensuring participants can play for free. The club encourages



Mayen, and right, Jihan and Siyanne, are all participants in the Rangers Refugee Football Program. (Pictures: Supplied)

members through social media and signage around the grounds to share their eligible containers for the club to deposit on their behalf, or to donate their refunds through the CDS Vic West app.

The program has also sparked valuable conversations with young people about sustainability, while drawing support from local families, volunteers, coaches and sponsors.

CDS Vic West Zone operator TOMRA Cleanaway general manager Victoria Tony Catania praised the initiative.

"Footscray Rangers shows how recycling

can do far more than help the environment. Every container returned is helping these young people find belonging, friendship and a place to call home," he said.

Since the scheme launched over 2 years ago on 1 November 2023, CDS Vic has helped Victorians recycle more, reduce litter and keep valuable materials out of landfill. Across the state, Victorians have returned over 3.2 billion drink containers, earning more than \$320 million in refunds.

TOMRA Cleanaway processes more than 10 million drink containers on average

weekly across the CDS Vic West Zone, delivering an agile service for container deposit networks that reflects best practices and gives back to the community via a domestic circular economy.

To support the Footscray Rangers Refugee Program, download the CDS Vic West app, search for the Footscray United Rangers Football Club under "Charities," and set them as your payout.

There are 18 CDS Vic refund points across the Maribyrnong & Hobsons Bay areas, find your nearest CDS Vic return point, visit: cdsvic.org.au.

VICTORIA'S CONTAINER DEPOSIT SCHEME

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www.tomracleanaway.com.au/victoria/location-finder/



cdsvic.org.au



Old hospital plans slammed

By Cade Lucas

A local residents group has slammed the state government's draft masterplan for the old Footscray Hospital site, calling the community engagement process a "box-ticking exercise".

The government officially released the draft masterplan for community feedback on Monday 15 June, almost a month after it was accidentally published on Development Victoria's website.

Reimagining Old Footscray Hospital, a community group made up of nearby residents, criticised the official draft masterplan for having the same flaws as the

leaked version.

"The state government 'plan' doesn't reflect the community objectives and need for a major urban forest parkland, significant public and social housing, and a range of community infrastructure," the group said in a statement released on Wednesday.

"It's a box-ticking exercise with a basic 'master plan' lacking detail to enable informed feedback, another survey, and a community reference group only permitted to discuss features of a park."

Despite criticising the engagement process, Reimagining Old Footscray Hospital still want residents to take part in it,

urging respondents to demand at least 30 per cent of all dwellings be social or public housing, an urban forest to be planted in the quarry below the car park and for an emphasis to be put on community infrastructure rather than privatisation.

The group is also urging locals to write to local MPs and ministers to demand a better engagement and planning process for the old hospital site which has been vacant since the new Footscray Hospital opened in February.

According to the government, the eight hectare site – six kilometres from the CBD – is one of the largest urban renewal opportunities in Melbourne's west.

Its draft masterplan proposes a mix of homes, community uses and open spaces on the Gordon Street site, including above the former quarry, as well as walking and cycling links, and accessible public areas.

"More housing, more green space and more places for people to come together – this site's future belongs to the Footscray community," Footscray MP Katie Hall said of the draft masterplan.

Residents can have their say on the masterplan and open space design until 26 July.

Details: engage.vic.gov.au/former-footscray-hospital



Local Impact is hosting the Gather for Good conference. (Damjan Janevski) 559670_05

A gathering of the great and the good

Community organisations from across Melbourne will head to the inner west later this week for the inaugural Gather for Good conference.

Organised by Seddon based community foundation Local Impact, Gather for Good will be held at Victoria University (VU) on 26 June.

Featuring a range of interactive workshops and panel discussions, the conference will cover topics such as the impact of AI on the not-for-profit sector, how to diversify revenue sources, collaboration instead of competition and fundraising that works.

"We have a full day planned with local leaders showing insights and expertise on Melbourne's doing good community," Local Impact chief executive Andy Moutray-Read said of Gather for Good.

Mr Moutray-Read said the conference was an ideal opportunity for those in the community sector to network with a range of leaders and participants as well as a chance to take part in some unique exercises.

"We even have a flip my pitch where we get funders to pitch reasons for them to be able to fund you as a participant," he said.

Mr Moutray-Read is one of the keynote

speakers at the event, with the line-up also featuring VU deputy vice-chancellor and former state government minister, Wade Noonan, Reclink chief executive Dave Wells, Fruit2Work chief executive Simon Fenech, WYN Hub program manager Mehak Sheikh and general manager of the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation, Hannah Singleton.

Gather for Good will take place in Building M at VU's Footscray Park campus, beginning at 8am on Friday morning.

Bookings: <https://events.humanitix.com/gather-for-good-2026>

Digital 'green books' available

In a move that promises to alleviate the hassle of the traditional 'green book', the state government has introduced a digital alternative for parents and caregivers.

The green book, a record of a child's health and development, has long been criticised as cumbersome and inconvenient.

"The other thing commonly known about the green book is that it's cumbersome, heavy and messy," a state government spokesperson acknowledged in a statement on the digital change.

"People have to lug it around with them everywhere."

The new digital version, available through the Service Victoria app and website, aims to provide a more practical solution.

The information will be stored securely on parents' phones, allowing them to access it easily.

The digital portal will be accessible to parents and caregivers of up to 80,000 new babies in Victoria each year. They can create a profile for their child, including information such as a growth tracker, digital birth certificate, and birth registration.

While the physical green book will still be available, the digital version is intended to be used alongside it.

To access the Parent Portal, go to service.vic.gov.au or the Service Victoria app.

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MEET YOUR LOCAL REAL ESTATE AGENT ★Star Weekly



**Alex
Karlis**



RIVER EDGE REAL ESTATE
THE PROPERTY PEOPLE

Alex has enjoyed a successful 15-year career in real estate, primarily as a Property Manager, and is also the proud Director of River Edge Real Estate. As the leader of a boutique agency, Alex is committed to delivering genuine old-fashioned service where clients are more than just numbers—they are heard, understood, and supported throughout their property journey. Passionate about real estate, Alex believes it is much more than a career; it is an opportunity to help people through some of life's most important decisions and milestones. One of the aspects he enjoys most is connecting with people from all walks of life. No two days are ever the same, and every client brings unique goals and circumstances.

Alex thrives on the variety and challenges the industry presents and values the opportunity to continually learn and grow. He takes pride in building strong relationships through honest communication, professional advice, and a personalised approach. His commitment to exceptional customer service has helped him earn the trust and loyalty of clients throughout his career. Understanding that leasing can be stressful, Alex works hard to make the process as smooth and straightforward as possible. Helping clients overcome challenges, achieve their property goals, and move forward with confidence is what drives him every day. Seeing the satisfaction and excitement of a successful outcome is the most rewarding part of what he does, both personally and professionally.

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**John
Verduci**



RIVER EDGE REAL ESTATE
THE PROPERTY PEOPLE

Experienced in selling all types of property, John has a thorough understanding of client's needs and specialises in new developments and is able to provide valuable advice to clients in the same industry. With over 35 years experience in selling real estate, John gives nothing less than 100%, whether it is a small one-bedroom flat in Sunshine, a three-storey office in Footscray or a Child Care Centre in Keilor. Cross cultural links are vital for business in such an ethnically diverse area. John believes the values he has from his Italian background are similar to those of many other cultures. From them, he understands the need for confidentiality, respect and trust, as the basis for business and friendships.

Results and experience aren't only measured in dollars, but it's hard to go past the \$400 million worth of property John has dealt with over his many years in the industry. – A statement to his success.

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**Terry
Cooper**



RIVER EDGE REAL ESTATE
THE PROPERTY PEOPLE

Terry is one of the Wests most longest serving real estate agents in the area. With over 55 years in the real estate game, Terry Cooper's level of knowledge and experience is almost unmatched in Melbourne. A lifelong "people person", Terry has the gift of the gab and considers it an honour to meet and assist people from all backgrounds and walks of life. Terry is also an excellent listener, something he says is indispensable when it comes to looking after clients. "You can't sell people's property if you don't listen," says Terry, and his clients come to him knowing that he's going to keep their needs and wants front of mind.

His local knowledge is another distinct advantage. Terry has worked in Footscray for his entire career, so it's safe to say he knows the area like the back of his hand. Some of the many awards he's received during his career include Top Constructional Referrer (four times), Top Volume Seller (three times), and the Agent of the Year award in 2018.

This year Terry proudly celebrates over 55 years' experience in real estate and facilitating over 5000+ property transactions. Terry is a walking encyclopedia when it comes to real estate, so for personal and sound advice call Terry for all your real estate needs.

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**Raymond
Wah**



RIVER EDGE REAL ESTATE
THE PROPERTY PEOPLE

With over six years of experience in the real estate industry, I have developed extensive expertise across a broad range of disciplines, including residential and commercial property management, property investment strategies, leasing, contract administration, property settlements, and residential construction project management.

My strong understanding of the property sector, combined with hands-on experience throughout the property construction lifecycle and ongoing professional development in building and construction practices, enables me to deliver practical, efficient, and effective solutions to clients and stakeholders. Additionally, my fluency in both Cantonese and Mandarin allows me to communicate confidently with a diverse client base, fostering strong relationships and providing exceptional service across multicultural communities.

I am committed to maintaining high professional standards, delivering outstanding client outcomes, and leveraging my industry knowledge to support property owners, investors, and tenants throughout every stage of the property journey.

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

Star Weekly looks back through the pages of our predecessors



40 years ago
25 June, 1986

Williamstown council's chief executive officer, Rick McLean, has slammed the actions of a group of residents who entered the Newport Lakes area at the weekend.



30 years ago
26 June, 1996

Up to 100 jobs will be created when P&O Cold Stores opens its \$40 million cold storage factory and distribution centre in Laverton North.



20 years ago
27 June, 2006

He appears before dawn armed with a bucket, a broom and a leaf blower, to clean the streets around the Spotswood shops - for the good of the nation.



10 years ago
22 June, 2016

Hobsons Bay police and council have joined forces with Altona Meadows residents who last month started conducting citizen night patrols to deter criminals.

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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 weditorial@starweekly.com.au by 9am Wednesday the week prior to publication

The IT Club

A free, informal weekly drop-in workshop designed to build digital skills. Participants can bring their phone or digital device to learn from each other and work through tech challenges together. Held at Joan Kirner House, 14 Thompson Street, Williamstown on Mondays 10-11.30am. No bookings necessary.

■ Lucila, 9397 6168

Marriage course

The Marriage Course at Christ Church Anglican, Newport, is an opportunity to spend eight weeks strengthening and growing your marriage through sessions that have been designed to engage you in conversation with your spouse over topics such as good sex, the art of communication and resolving conflict. The first night will be held in-person before shifting to an online format over the following seven weeks. Held on Wednesdays from 7.30-9pm, until 29 July.

■ <https://www.christchurchnewport.org.au/marriage-course>

Community story time

Every Friday during term from 8-8.30am at the blocks behind Alfa Cafe Yarraville Free to attend and a free babychino with every coffee purchase, when you mention storytime.

■ 9314 5996, or office@sayarraville.catholic.edu.au

Book sales

Friends of Altona Libraries (FOAL) hold monthly book sales at the rear of Altona Library during the first week of each month. Books no longer required by the library are sold for as little as \$2. All money is returned to the Library to support community programs. New members who are happy to volunteer to help organise and sell books for only a few hours per month are welcome.

■ Ann Nicol, 0408 460 062

Discover new skills

Join Outlets Newport Community Education Centre for classes in English conversation, computers, devices, sewing, crafts and more at 43 Mason Street, Newport. All welcome.

■ 9391 8504, or outlets@outletsco-op.com.au

Learn digital devices

Know someone who needs help with their mobile phone or tablet? Outlets Newport Community Education Centre offers small, weekly classes that teach all the basics, tips and tricks to meet your needs. Register now. Classes are Mondays 10am-noon at 43 Mason Street, Newport.

■ 9391 8504, or



This week's photographer's choice picture is of Zumba instructor Christina Masino (front) with her class. Christina runs a free weekly session in Epping. (Damjan Janevski) 559406_01

outlets@outletsco-op.com.au

Cards and conversation

Do you like cards and games? Whether its Canasta, 500 or board games, come and join us weekly at Altona North Library. All levels welcome. Tuesdays from 10am-noon. Free of charge, morning tea provided and no bookings required. Altona North Library Corner of Millers and McArthurs Road, Altona North.

■ 1300 179 944

Walking football (soccer)

For anyone aged 50 and older and any fitness level - no running allowed. This is a social activity for fun and a bit of exercise, no experience necessary. Supported by Hobsons Bay Council and Football Victoria, this is a free activity each Wednesday, from 10-11am, indoors at the Sports Centre, Andrew Park Drive, Altona.

■ Mike, 0423 291 708

Fiddle group

The Newport Folk and Fiddle Beginner Play Along Group is a great place for beginners

or those with some experience, to play music in a safe, casual and welcoming environment. Come on down, have some fun, make new friends, have a cuppa and maybe even learn something new. All instruments and levels of expertise are welcomed where the main aim is to enjoy music and have fun. Children are also most welcome. The third Saturday of the month, from 6.30-8.30pm, at 2nd Newport Scouts, 6 Market Street, Newport.

■ <https://www.nffc.org.au/beginner-playalong>

Yin Yoga

Yin Yoga Classes are running at Brooklyn Community Hall and the Healing Garden Williamstown. Classes are held every Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Classes are costed for the community: \$8-\$25 per class. Star Weekly readers can get a complimentary first session to try it out. Yin Yoga is a gentle, passive practice that invites stillness and subtlety - offering up powerful physical benefits by targeting the body's connective tissues, joints, and fascia. For all bodies - stiff, sore, injured or just in need of deep release!

■ Hong, 0412 112 422, or yogawithhong.com

Craft, laugh and connect

Join us for a fun, calming session filled with creativity and connection. All craft styles and skill levels are welcome. Bring your favourite craft - knitting, drawing, colouring, puzzle, anything that brings you joy (no painting please). It's a great way to meet people, connect with your library and explore new creative activities. The craft sessions are held at Altona North Library from 1-3pm. Free of charge and no bookings required.

■ 9932 3005, 0407 247 087, or <https://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Libraries>

Mouth Organ Band

Yarraville Mouth Organ Band is looking for new members. Band practice is held on Friday evenings at 8pm in the band hall at 203 Williamstown Road, Yarraville. For great music in a friendly atmosphere feel free to call in one Friday evening.

■ Heather 9399 2190, or yomb1933@yahoo.com.au

YOUR SAY

Dark days for democracy

Hobsons Bay Council's decision to wash its hands of the controversial Williamstown lifesaving club redevelopment proposal and send it off to the state government is an assault on democracy in Hobsons Bay.

Here's how council has silenced its residents:

1. Under the abandoned process, residents could have appealed to VCAT if they disagreed with council's final decision on the redevelopment. Now, there will be no avenue to appeal to VCAT - that democratic right has been ripped away from the people by our council.

2. Under the abandoned process, council had promised to organise a public meeting and invite all objectors to this proposed redevelopment to have their say, in public and direct to the councillors. Now, council has cancelled that meeting. Our voices have been silenced.

3. Under the abandoned process, council's planning department was assessing the application and preparing a detailed report which would have been made public before councillors voted in open forum. Now, no such report will be written and the decision will be made behind closed doors, a long way from Hobsons Bay.

4. Under the abandoned process, the decision was to be made by the seven councillors - each of them members of our community, elected to represent our views and interests. Now, the decision will be made by bureaucrats and politicians in Spring Street, with no links to our community and no 'feel' for the precious, village-like atmosphere of historic Williamstown.

The official heritage advice to council is clear: this proposal is too big, too bulky, too damaging to the historic 1935 clubrooms, and should not proceed. Regardless of whether the government blocks this overdevelopment of

Williamstown beach or not, these are dark days for democracy in Hobsons Bay.

Paul Austin,
'Save Willy Beach' community group,
Williamstown

HAVE YOUR SAY

Star Weekly welcomes letters to the editor as well as comments and story tips on our websites and Facebook pages.

Post: Corner Thomsons Road and Keilor Park Drive, Keilor Park, 3042

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Strange Garden will grow

Create your very own curvy cardboard creation for the Strange Garden in a new interactive school holiday workshop.

Artist Eliza-Jane Gilchrist will host a number of workshops over the winter school holidays starting from Wednesday 1 July for children to add their own piece to the Strange Garden.

With hands-on guidance, kids (and grown-ups) will build their own floral creations and add them to a growing cardboard garden.

The garden begins with big, flowing cardboard flowers and slowly spreads through the room as each new creation

is added.

Gilchrist, a sculptor, said she created the immersive exhibit and workshop around exploring her own garden.

"The installation that I do with the children is they come in, and I have these sculptural forms that are large and they resemble plants or trees or flowers," she said. "They have all kinds of holes and receptacles so that the children can make a smaller, strange plant and plant it in the garden."

By the end of the workshop, kids and their parent helpers will have their own piece to add to the growing exhibition,

becoming part of the artwork.

"Because it's a strange garden, it means they can't go wrong," Gilchrist said.

"It's very abstract, just about following your curiosity, and finding shapes that you find interesting so it kind of makes a really beautiful installation."

The workshops run for one hour, and are designed for children aged six and over.

The workshops will be held over various times from Wednesday 1 July until Friday 3 July.

Bookings are essential, with each ticket a cost of \$5.

Details: <https://tinyurl.com/2wrdbw2s>



Artist Eliza-Jane Gilchrist will host a number of school holiday workshops for her interactive exhibition Strange Garden. (Supplied)



Canadian-American sound artist Claire Rousay will perform in Newport next month. (Katherine Squier)

Rousay to bring soundscapes to Substation

Acclaimed Canadian-American sound artist Claire Rousay returns to Australia next month and will be stopping by The Substation in Newport as part of her national tour.

Now based in Los Angeles, Rousay is primarily known for composing highly emotive, whisper-quiet musical works that feature sound design elements like haptic sound and field recordings augmented with strings, piano, electronic melodies and textures.

Her albums in this vein – on celebrated labels like Thrill Jockey and Shelter Press

– gained her notoriety in the international ambient and experimental community.

However, throughout her career Rousay has remained stylistically mercurial, with her more recent work incorporating generic elements from rock, electronic, hyperpop, noise, folk, free jazz, and more.

Rousay has performed at esteemed festivals and venues internationally including Unsound in Poland, Big Ears in the USA and both Rewire and Le Guess Who in the Netherlands. She's installed or exhibited her work at ICA in London and the Art Gallery of NSW in Sydney, while

also giving artist talks and workshops at renowned institutions worldwide.

Joining Rousay at The Substation and on the rest of her national tour will be Australian artist and musician Lisa Lerkenfeldt who mixes classical instrumentation with endless piano and tape loop variations and multi-layered arrangements.

Claire Rousay and Lisa Lerkenfeldt perform at The Substation in Newport from 7.30-10pm on Saturday 18 July.

Tickets are on sale now. Bookings: <https://thesubstation.org.au/program/claire-rousay-and-lisa-lerkenfeldt-room40>

Lights, laughter, action as Moonlite Theatre stages interactive show

Find yourself a part of the performance at Moonlite Theatre's interactive theatre show.

The community theatre initiative is inviting residents to step into the spotlight with a morning of improvisation, radio play readings, and interactive theatre fun coming to Bacchus Marsh next month.

BaccChat Interactive Theatre is set to be held at the Lerderberg Library in Bacchus Marsh on Saturday 4 July between 10am and noon, offering a welcoming space for people to explore performance in a relaxed social setting.

The event encourages audience members to become part of the action through

a range of interactive improvisation activities and opportunities to read and perform radio plays.

Organisers say the program is designed to be accessible to everyone, regardless of their experience.

No theatre experience required is a key focus of the event, with participants invited to simply come along, have a laugh, and take advantage of the creative atmosphere.

The morning aims to bring people together through storytelling, performance, and collaboration, while also providing an opportunity to meet new people and build community connections.

Alongside the theatre activities,

attendees will be able to enjoy a complimentary morning tea.

The event works to promote the idea that everyone has a story to tell, encouraging residents and avid thespians to discover the joy of interactive theatre in a friendly, fun, and supportive environment.

Whether you are an aspiring performer, a fan of radio dramas, or simply looking for a unique community activity, BaccChat Interactive Theatre promises an engaging and entertaining experience.

People of all ages and backgrounds are invited to come along and join in on the fun and experience the excitement of live, interactive storytelling.

A dark look into Santa's world

The beloved Australian institution Christmas in July is the fitting time to talk about some rumours regarding Santa Clause, Mrs Clause, the elves, what happened to Rudolph and with other reindeer of the pack.

Wyndham Art Works' strictly adult-only performance of *The Eight: Reindeer Monologues* will take you on a behind the scenes tour of Santa's workshop to get to the bottom of those rumours.

Jeff Goode's play premiered in 1994 and has been staged worldwide. Wyndham Art Works will bring it to audiences in Melbourne at The MC Showroom, Prahran, from Wednesday 8 July to Saturday 11 July.

Wyndham Art Works said the play is not your commonly nice and cosy Christmas story but a dark look into Santa's world.

"We aren't really telling stories of an imaginary Santa, but of real people who sit in a place of power and use that power not only to satisfy business purposes," producer and director Wolf Heidecker said.

"Santa Clause, representing the commercialised world of the 'Christmas-Industry', is on trial.

"The reindeer who spill the beans here are ... representing a segment of society, e.g. business functionaries, LGBTQI activists, feminists, or just self-protecting employees commenting from their individual point of view, perception, and judgment."

Fanny Hanusin (Dasher), Darren Thao (Cupid), Kay Morton (Blitzen), Sharon Karina (Comet), Joanne Armstrong (Dancer), David Lih (Donner), Isabelle Wang (Vixen) and Joshinder Kaur Chaggar (Hollywood) will star as 'The Eight' reindeers.



One of Moonlite Theatre's early radio play productions of Jane Serves on a Jury incorporated many of the elements explored in BaccChat Interactive Theatre. (Supplied)



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SPORTS QUIZ

- Which New York Knicks player won the 2026 NBA Finals Most Valuable Player award?
- And which team did he beat to achieve that award?



Matthew Ryan

- Which Australian player scored in the 27th minute against Türkiye at the 2026 FIFA World Cup?
- And which Australian player scored in the 75th minute against Türkiye at the 2026 FIFA World Cup?
- Who replaced Socceroos captain Matthew Ryan as goalkeeper in their opening game against Türkiye?
- What is the first name of London-born New York Knick 'OG' Anunoby?
- Which 2026 ABC television series features the fictional Great Southern Football Club?
- The NBA Championship trophy is named after which former commissioner of the NBA?
- What are the respective names of the 2026 FIFA World Cup moose, jaguar and bald eagle mascots?
- Who is the head coach of the Australian men's cricket team?

- What is the oldest sport on the Olympic Winter Games programme?
- What is the white target ball called in the game of bowls?
- The Tour Down Under is held annually in which state?
- What is the highest individual award in Australia netball?
- True or false: lacrosse will be contested at the 2028 Olympics?
- Which country won the inaugural FIFA World Cup in 1930?
- When was the last time a host nation went on to win the FIFA World Cup?
- True or false: no country has won multiple FIFA World Cups this century?
- Which two teams made the 2026 Super Rugby Pacific Grand Final?
- Which team was forced to alter their jerseys before their 2026 FIFA World Cup match versus Scotland?



- The first Formula One Grand Prix held in Australia was in what year?
- Sophie and Abbie McKay were drafted to which AFLW club under the father-daughter rule?
- Who is the current female world surfing champion?
- The NBA Finals Most Valuable Player award is named after which former Boston Celtic?
- Tom Mitchell won the Brownlow in which year?
- Which sport features in the film *The Benchwarmers*?

- In 2024, which Indiana Pacers NBA player featured on an episode of *WWE Smackdown*?
- Which sport is governed by the ISU?
- In which year did the Carolina Hurricanes last win a Stanley Cup?
- And which team did they beat?

2606

1. Jalen Brunson 2. San Antonio Spurs 3. Nestor Irankunda 4. Connor Metcalfe 5. Patrick Beach 6. Ogunna 7. Ground Up 8. Maple, Zayn and Clutch 9. Andrew McDonald 10. Figure skating 11. Figure skating 12. Jack Tyrese Halliburton 13. South Australia 14. Liz Ellis Diamond 15. True 16. Uruguay 17. 1996 (France) 18. True 19. Chiefs and Hurricanes 20. Haiti 21. 1985 22. Carlton 23. Molly Picklum 24. Bill Russell 25. 2018 26. Baseball 27. Tyrese Haliburton 28. Ice skating (International Skating Union) 29. 2026 30. Vegas Golden Knights

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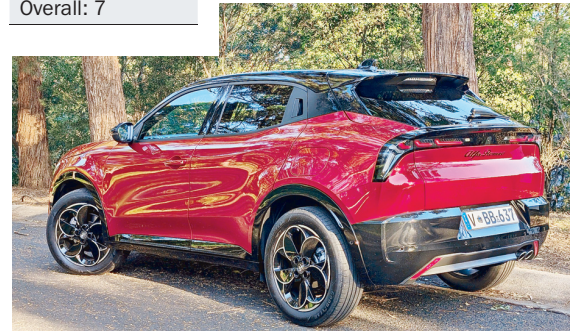
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Alfa Romeo Junior goes hard, doesn't use much fuel and is relatively cheap to buy. (Pictures: Supplied)

Alfa Romeo's face of fun

By Chris Riley, Marque Motoring

Alfa Romeo Junior is a replacement for the previous Mito and Giulietta hatches.

And while the small crossover adds an interesting dimension to Alfa's growing SUV lineup, they can keep the name.

Initially called Milano, parent company Stellantis opted to change the name after the Italian government objected. It argued that it was illegal to sell 'Italian-sounding' products that were not produced in Italy and sure enough Junior is built in Tychy, Poland.

Don't know how they came up with Junior, but it just sounds so American and at the moment that's probably not a good thing in the current political climate.

A replacement for Mito and Giulietta, the crossover is available in hybrid (Ibrida) and fully electric (Electrica) form and shares a platform with the Fiat 600 and Jeep Avenger, as well as the Peugeot 2008.

Styling

Junior comes in two flavours: hybrid Ibrida and fully-electric Electrica, priced from \$45,900 and \$57,900 respectively – plus on-road costs.

All colours except white add \$1990, with the only option a sunroof at \$1990.

From the stitching on the seats to the placement of controls, every detail reflects Alfa's dedication to creating a vehicle that is not only beautiful, but also a joy to drive.

Standard features include 18-inch alloys, two-tone paint, gloss black body kit, 'Spiga' seats trimmed in a combination of cloth and artificial leather with red finishes, single-zone climate air (no rear vents), heated front seats, with massage and power adjustment for the driver, leather steering wheel, aluminium pedals and door sills plus eight-colour ambient interior lighting.

Other features include LED matrix headlights, LED tail lights, active park assist, adaptive cruise control, traffic sign recognition, auto high beam, autolights and wipers, frame-less auto-dimming rear view mirror, front, side and rear parking sensors, plus a hands-free power tailgate.

The Alfa Romeo Junior is backed by a five-year/unlimited kilometre warranty, with five-year roadside assistance.

Infotainment

Infotainment consists of a 10.25-inch inset touchscreen, with another 10.25-inch screen for the stylised 'cannocchiale' instrument cluster.

There's also Bluetooth, voice control, AM/FM and DAB + digital radio, wireless CarPlay and Android Auto and six-speaker sound.

Though not branded, the latter is actually quite good.

A wireless charge pad carries the 'Biscione' logo, with front USB-A and -C ports and another rear USB-C port plus Alfa Connected Services.

Safety

Junior has not been rated for crash safety yet by the ANCAP organisation. However, it offers an array of driving assistance features, including six airbags, automatic emergency braking and Level 2 autonomous driving.

Autonomous Emergency Brake Control with Vulnerable Road User Detection (pedestrian and cyclist detection).

There's also blind-spot monitoring, intelligent speed control with traffic sign recognition, drowsy driver alert, lane keeping assist, traffic jam assist, 360-degree parking sensors with active park assist and 180-degree rear camera.

We'll update our safety rating after the car has been tested.

Engines/transmissions

The self-charging mild hybrid features a 1.2-litre three-cylinder Miller cycle engine with variable-geometry turbo and distribution chain for maximum reliability, together with a 48-volt lithium-ion battery and 21kW electric motor.

Producing 107kW of power and 230Nm of torque, drive is to the front wheels through a six-speed dual-clutch gearbox.

Driving

At a compact 4.17m in length, it includes several links to Alfa Romeo heritage.

An updated version of the triangular grille is accentuated by a black grille with Alfa Romeo signature in acrylic, paying homage to the Alfa Romeo sports cars of the 1920s and 1930s.

The protruding front number plate mount attracts plenty of comment and is obviously an add-on for countries like ours that require a front plate to be displayed.

Inside the driver-centric design delivers a unique and sporty driving experience.

However, there's plenty of cheap plastic to be found in the cabin if you go looking and the cupholders in the doors will not accommodate sports bottles, but the centre console with sliding lid hides a surprising amount of storage.

There are no door pockets at all in the

back, rear legroom is severely limited depending on placement of the front seats and the cheap plastic hinge used for the parcel shelf over the luggage pulled free, suggesting a limited service life.

We also cut the back of our hand on the driver seat mount while trying to remove the front mat from the foot well.

The 10.25-inch instrument cluster and its historical cannocchiale (telescope) design adds to the drama of the drive experience.

But we found it difficult to find a happy balance between front legroom and distance to the steering wheel – it's one of the other.

Inset in the dashboard and tilted towards the driver, a slick 10.25-inch infotainment display can be customised via quick and easy drag and drop, but was difficult to back out of some menus.

The team that worked on the ride and handling was the same as the one that developed the Giulia GTA.

The target was best-in-class road holding, with direct steering calibrated to be extremely precise, to enhance road holding.

How'd they do?

Evaluating the performance of a car without first checking out the specs is an interesting proposition, a bit like tasting wines blindfolded.

Without knowing what's lurking under the bonnet, you tend to avoid bias and expectations of any kind.

For instance, if you know it's a V8, you tend to expect big things.

On the other hand, a small three-pot is liable to be greeted with derision by a driver, resigned to the fact the drive experience isn't going to be much fun.

As it turned out the Ibrida happens to be plenty fun, despite its diminutive 1.2-litre three-cylinder engine – or 1200cc in motorcycle speak.

Helping to turn things around is a variable turbocharger plus further assistance from a battery and small electric motor.

The dash from 0-100km/h takes some 8.9 seconds and it has a top speed of 206km/h – around the same figures as our first generation Swift GTI (it too was fun).

It's also one-tenth quicker than the Electrica version.

With a 44-litre tank, fuel consumption is a claimed 4.1L/100km (WLTP) and it takes 95 premium unleaded.

Under hard acceleration the raspy note from the petrol engine quickly confirms its three-cylinder status.

While powering into our first corner

under brakes was also enlightening.

They've taken the time to set it up right because the Junior is clearly no run of the mill shopping trolley.

At the same time compact dimensions and basic torsion beam rear suspension see the car become unsettled on secondary roads, with some skipping evident in corners.

In stark contrast Ibrida offers a smooth driving experience around town, with the option of pure electric mode if required.

This is possible not only during parking manoeuvres or at low speeds in urban areas, but also out of town with a limited load at highway speeds.

The electric motor provides additional power when needed and regenerates energy during braking phases.

As with most twin-clutch transmissions, it occasionally becomes confused, especially in stop-and-go city traffic.

DNA drive mode provides Dynamic, Natural and Advanced Efficiency options with specific steering and accelerator calibration for different scenarios – in other words Sport, Normal and Eco.

Advanced Efficiency is calibrated for maximum energy efficiency by reducing consumption without affecting driving pleasure, but unfortunately the system defaults to Natural.

We were getting 5.5L/100km after just over 670km of mixed driving at an average 62km/h, including a return trip down the coast – highway driving does not generally favour hybrids.

Interestingly, however, the long-term average at a much slower 39km/h was 6.7L/100km, even though it must have included more city driving.

Luggage space is a generous 415 litres with both seat backs raised.

A tyre repair kit is standard.

Summing up

Much better than Mito, the Junior is a little trier.

It goes hard, doesn't use much fuel and is relatively cheap to buy. As such it is likely to hip, young up and coming professionals with money on their hands and an apartment in the city.

Old folks could well find the Junior an appealing runaround too and for all the same reasons – shame about the name.

You'd think 'Minore' or 'Giovane' which basically mean the same thing might have been a better option. Si?



Keilor's Emilly O'Keefe. 560549_07



Caroline Springs' Mylee Lake. 560549_17



Westmeadows enjoy the win and the weather. 560550_01



Westmeadows' Ruby Smith. 560550_07



Kyneton's Lauren Anglin. 560548_01

Winter sport at its best

It was a wet and wintry day on Saturday making scoring hard to come by on local sporting fields and courts. Star Weekly photographer

Ljubica Vrankovic was out shooting some of the action.



Riddell's Jarred Apps is tackled by Kyneton's Harry Ryan. 560542_05



Watching on. 560548_09



Riddell's Elijah Bretherton. 560542_12



Sunbury Lions' Sean Reilly. 560115_03



Sunbury Lions' Sean Reilly tackles Darley's Brett Bewley. 560115_23

Falcons have work to do

By Tara Murray

The City West Falcons added another win to the tally but still have plenty of work to do in the Victorian Netball League.

The Falcons were in action against the Geelong Cougars and jumped out to an early lead.

While the Falcons were able to stay in front throughout, but couldn't blow the margin out like they would have liked.

After steadying in the final quarter, the Falcons won 68-62 to make it three wins in a row.

Falcons' coach Marg Lind said they would take the win, but knows it wasn't the game they wanted.

"It wasn't a pretty win," she said. "We got out to a 10 goal lead, I think we took the foot off the pedal a little bit.

"I thought they made some good moves mixing up their midcourt and putting fresh

legs through the midcourt.

"When we took our foot off we were playing catch up. We settled in the end in the last quarter and got it back out.

"It wasn't our best game, that's for sure."

Lind said the move of Sussu Liai back into goalkeeper was the key for the Falcons to settle, with Achel Yout able to put some more pressure on out the front.

She said they didn't change too much in the attack end. Lind said Iani Fauonuku did really well when she came on in limited minutes, but they didn't want to put her under too much pressure.

Lara Turner was again strong in wing defence, while Soli Ropati got some more minutes as she returns from injury.

Lind said Georgia Berry was also good when she came on.

Jane Cook finished with 59 goals for the Falcons to lead the attack end.

The Falcons are fourth on the ladder, a

game off second spot.

Lind said they just needed to continue to keep winning.

"Hopefully we can keep our high scoring rate up and have a bit more improvement defensively," she said.

"We're working hard. I've never done as many defensive drills this year as I have before.

"I feel like if we can turn ball over in other positions, that will give us an advantage going into finals and that is what we're going to need."

The 23 and under side lost to the Cougars in a high scoring game, 75-70.

Lind said their defence didn't turn the ball over enough and only a couple of errors cost them.

The Falcons are sitting fourth on the ladder.

The Falcons are next in action on 28 June against the Bendigo Strikers in Bendigo.



Montana Holmes. (Tania Hardin)

Tonelli's breakout year on the lacrosse field

By Peter Howe

You could be forgiven for thinking that June Don Deeble nominee Samuel Tonelli had no choice but to play lacrosse.

His father, Richard is the Australian games record holder, mother Christine is on the Footscray committee and sister Mia also plays at Footscray.

"I did give soccer a go for a couple of years, my grandfather played at a high level and he encouraged me to give it a go," Tonelli said.

"However, when you are born into a club, the club becomes your extended family.

"The people, the culture and the environment become so familiar that you simply feel at home, so lacrosse it was.

"I fell in love with the game because it wasn't a mainstream sport

"Growing up with a lacrosse stick in my hands became an extension of who I was. It just felt like a part of me."

Tonelli suited up for his first game as a six-year-old in the under-11s and despite being the smallest player, he was anything but afraid.

He played in the under-11s for four years, winning several club best and fairests with the pinnacle being named the club's best junior player when he was 10.

Tonelli made his first representative team when he was 13.

"I made the Western Cannons and was selected to captain the team," he recalls. "Covid interrupted that process and the development programs were curtailed."

His next representative selection was in the under-15 western metro team, where he was captain both years.

Tonelli continues to grow with focus on his five days a week training regime that includes two nights a week at Footscray Lacrosse Club with juniors and seniors.

"I love playing juniors with my mates then the seniors take on a whole new set of challenges," he said.

"I am also lucky to be in the Catholic Regional College, Sydenham, Sports Academy.

"I have gym and skill sessions within my school program.

"Fridays I prepare for game day, I focus on my skills, particularly my stick work and then it's time to watch games that my upcoming opponents play to learn their style of play to be better prepared."

Tonelli announced himself on the national stage during the under-18 National Lacrosse Championships earlier this year, winning the most vulnerable player award for both the overall tournament and Victoria.



Samuel Tonelli. (Sidelines Collective)

His performance at nationals didn't happen by chance.

From the time Tonelli was selected in the Victorian team for the national titles he committed himself to be the best prepared he could possibly be.

One of Tonelli's greatest moments was playing alongside his father Richard.

The Tonellis' have always been synonymous with the number 16.

It's his father's number, and young Sam had always worn it as a junior.

Richard allowed his son to wear it in their first senior game together, but he had to relinquish it after that game.

Tonelli's strength is as a face-off specialist and is responsible for starting the game

after goals and each quarter.

"You must have speed and balance when facing off," he said.

Tonelli is focused on his studies where he is looking to tackle a sports science degree.

In his sporting journey, he's aiming for selection in his first under-20 Australian team and then look for Olympic selection representing Australia.

The Don Deeble Sports Star Award is sponsored by the Yarraville Club Cricket Club, Strathmore Community Bank, the Deer Park Club, Ascot Vale Sports and Trophies and Star Weekly Newspapers.

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Two former Falcons named in Games team

Two former City West Falcons stars will lead the Australian Diamonds at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, while a current Falcon is also headed to the Games.

The Diamonds team was named on Wednesday morning, with no surprises.

Captain Liz Watson will once again lead the side, bringing her trademark composure, creativity and elite midcourt leadership to a team built for high performance tournament play.

Kate Moloney is the side's vice-captain.

The pair came through the City West Falcons pathway before making their way in Suncorp Super Netball and for the Diamonds.

Watson is one of three players who will compete at their third Games.

Watson, Jo Weston and Courtney Bruce won silver in 2018 before winning gold in 2022.

Moloney, Kiera Austin, Sarah Klau and Cara Koenen were part of the 2022 team.

Jamie Lee-Price, Sophie Dwyer, Georgie Horjus, Sophie Garbin and Matilda Garrett will all make their Games debut.

"This is an incredibly exciting group with a great mix of youth and experience," Watson said.

"We know what it takes to perform on the world stage, and we're committed to doing the work required to give ourselves every chance in Glasgow.

"There's a lot of excitement around this group, but also a real determination to defend the gold medal we won in Birmingham. We know the challenge ahead and we're ready to embrace it together."

Horjus said earning selection for her first Commonwealth Games was a moment of immense pride.

"It's one of the biggest stages in sport, and the chance to represent Australia in Glasgow is really special. I'm excited for everything that comes with the Games experience and ready to make the most of the opportunity."

Current Melbourne Mavericks player Uneeq Palavi has been named in the Tonga team for the Games.

Palavi, who has played one game for the Falcons this season, has been a key player for the Tongan team for a number of years.

It will be the first time Tonga is playing netball at the Commonwealth Games.

Magpies secure a big win

By Tara Murray

Parkside was given a challenge against Caroline Springs and showed it was up to it in the Western Football League division 1 competition.

The Magpies produced one of their wins of the season as they were able to come from behind to beat the Lakers.

The Lakers looked headed for victory after taking the lead early in the last quarter, but the Magpies responded to win, 13.11 (89)-12.11 (83).

Magpies co-coach Chris Muratore said they knew they had to take the next step and were able to do that on Saturday,

"It was good to get one away from home and be challenged, and fight back and come out the other end with four points," he said.

"We knew they were going to come and we knew they were a quality outfit that has

played in a lot of big finals and grand finals the last few years.

"We knew that their deck with the wind in the last quarter, it was just about us staying engaged and if they do kick a couple of goals, to stay composed play every moment and see where it is and go away from the challenge and keep playing our way to the end.

"Win, lose or draw, if we do that, see where we sit at the end and the boys to their credit kept fighting."

The Lakers kicked the first four goals of the final quarter with the breeze.

The Magpies then kicked the next five to secure the win.

"It shows what type of group that we have, which is pretty special," Muratore said. "We've had a lot of belief within the group.

"The boys needed to feel it as they've put so much work in during the pre-season and



Jack Condon. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 410694_32

put ourselves in the position over the last couple of years.

"The challenge was there and we took it straight away."

Zachary Morris kicked seven goals in a best on ground performance for the Magpies.

Liam Canny and Jackson Barrett were

other standouts.

The Magpies remain in third spot, a game off top spot and one of three teams with an 8-2 record.

Muratore said they weren't getting ahead of themselves.

"It's round 10, we have to enjoy this win," he said. "We had our mid year ball last [Saturday] night.

"It was really good to see the smiles on people's faces and happiness.

"That was pretty cool, come tomorrow [Monday] we have to zero in on the pre-miers.

"We have Werribee Districts at home, quality outfit the last five or six years, they are the best of the best another real big challenge."

Elsewhere, Yarraville Seddon and Spotswood both had wins, while Altona and Newport suffered losses.



Kobe Tehau King-hawea. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 559190_19

Gators continue to fight for finals berth

By Tara Murray

Altona Gators continue to battle through the challenges in the Big V women's division 1 competition.

The Gators sit second on the ladder, with just two losses for the year which both came against ladder leaders Melbourne University.

Gators' coach Randy Shanklin said the group continues to fight hard as they push for another finals berth.

"We have a lot of injuries and different things off the court," he said.

"In spite of those things we are doing pretty well. We still have a lot of things to work on.

"Melbourne University is far the best team in the competition, so we have a little work to do.

"They are the only team that have beaten us, so we're not that far away."

The Gators will face Melbourne University in the final round of the season, giving them a good test heading into finals.

Shanklin said they had a number of players playing through injuries, including Kobe Tehau King-hawea, who is bat-

ting two different issues on the same foot.

He said while it wasn't as seamless as they would like, they were still doing plenty of good things.

"Every side has got something," he said. "We're really focusing on what we do and where we can get better.

"There's a lot of areas. Fortunately or unfortunately, winning covers a lot of those things.

"There's things I've picked up on the video."

Shanklin said energy on the defensive end was one area where they needed to step up, but said injuries could be part of the reason for that drop off.

He said coming back better after a week off was also something they wanted to address.

"Before the Melbourne University game we had two weeks off," he said.

"It wasn't a great time as we were playing well before the break.

"We have one more bye and if we finish second we have a bye in the first week of finals.

"We need to play a bit better and not have lapses when we get back on the

court."

The Gators got another win on Sunday, beating the Mildura Heat, 72-53.

The Gators had just eight players suit up but it didn't stop them getting off to a flier.

They led 25-9 at quarter time and that was the difference between the two sides, with the Gators outscoring the Heat by just three points the next three quarters.

Tehau King-hawea top scored with 21 points, while Alicia Sciberras scored 16 points.

The Gators have a double header this weekend, with Gippsland United on Saturday night and Collingwood All Stars on Sunday.

The Gators division 1 men's side had a tough night against the Blackburn Vikings.

The Vikings won all four quarters, including the last quarter, 35-13, to claim an 117-55 win.

Walleldin Elnour top scored for the Gators with 19 points.

The Gators sit ninth on the ladder with two wins for the season.

The Gators face the Coburg Giants this coming Saturday night.

Sports shorts

VTCA

West Newport has signed Abdul Nasir Nasiry for the 2026-27 Victorian Turf Cricket Association season. "Abdul joins us from Moonee Valley Cricket Club and Yarraville Club Cricket Club and is an exciting young player with plenty of potential. A middle-order batsman and spin bowler, he adds versatility and depth to our playing group," the Lions said on social media.

FV

Altona East Phoenix had a tough day against Western Suburbs in the FV state league 1 north-west competition on Saturday. Western Suburbs scored either side of half time to take a 2-0 lead and control of the game. Western Suburbs put the icing on the cake in injury time, winning 3-0. The Phoenix sits sixth on the ladder. On Friday night, Yarraville Glory lost to Westgate, 4-2.

Western FL

Parkside Spurs had a big win against Yarraville Seddon in the Western Football League women's competition on Saturday. It was an inaccurate Spurs that controlled the match on the way to a 10.19 (79)-0.0 (0) win. Marlo Atkins kicked four goals for the Spurs in a best on ground performance. Pippa Nolan was named the Eagles best. Elsewhere, West Footscray defeated Laverton, 8.11 (59)-2.4 (16). Juri Graco-Ilves was named the Roosters best. North Footscray lost to Point Cook Centrals, 20.9 (129)-1.0 (6).

Western FL

West Footscray won a thriller with Braybrook in the Western Football League division 2 competition on Saturday. The two sides traded the lead throughout the match, with the Roosters leading by 20 points heading into the final quarter. While the Brookers had their best quarter in the last, the Roosters were able to hold on and win, 14.13 (97)-14.8 (92). Matthew Turcinovich kicked five goals for the Roosters. In other matches, Laverton suffered a big loss to Sunshine Heights and North Footscray had a day out against Tarneit, winning by 188 points.

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Among the Australian athletes headed to the Commonwealth Games is four from Resilience Training Centre in Footscray. Tara Murray caught up with the four athletes looking to win gold.



The Australian Commonwealth Games judo team, including Danny Vojnikovich (pictured back row, far right). (Picture: Judo Australia)

'Family' dreams big

Resilience Training Centre's Danny Vojnikovich has set his sights big as after being named in his first Australian Commonwealth Games judo team.

One of four athletes from the Footscray-based Resilience Training Centre, Vojnikovich is one of two making their Games debut.

"It's very exciting," he said. "I've seen all my teammates go through the selection process and then they're obviously really good results."

"It's been a really big inspiration for me. I look up to them, and it's motivation for me to try and do the same thing."

Vojnikovich said while he had some little doubts over whether he had done enough to make the team, he was fairly confident that he would get picked.

He will compete in the men's 90

kilogram weight category.

"I was on the tram on the way home and I saw the email," he said of finding out.

"I just sat there and was like wow, I've actually made it, it was a really cool moment."

"I was fairly confident in my results, that they would speak for themselves and obviously they did."

"I was really happy, all was worth it."

Vojnikovich said the Commonwealth Games is the biggest event that he has been to in his career.

He's keen to make the most of the opportunity.

"Nothing short of success," he said of his aims. "I'm not going there for the tracksuit."

"I'm going to win, anything less it's not a successful trip"

"The next biggest [event] is another

multisport event ... The Pacific Games. I got the gold there and it was a teams event, which was really fun.

"Basing off that, this will be 10 times even better."

Vojnikovich said making his Games debut even more special was doing it with three people who he trains with all the time.

"Seeing them day in and day out and seeing how they can succeed in the same environment as me, only just adds fuel to the fire," he said. "It only makes it seem more and more possible."

"I've been travelling with them for years now."

"It's almost like a family at this point. Going there and celebrating with them, and travelling and competing with them, will be a very special moment."

Tinka Easton is going for gold

It's been a different preparation this time round for Resilience Training Centre's Tinka Easton ahead of the Commonwealth Games.

Easton will head to Glasgow as the defending champion in the women's judo 52 kilogram category.

She is one of four members for the Footscray-based Resilience Training Centre that has made the Australian team.

"It's really exciting," Easton said. "I have some fantastic memories from Birmingham and I'm super excited to be going back and competing at my second Commonwealth Games."

"I'm trying not to think about it [being defending champion] too much and take it as a competition in isolation."

"Focus step by step on the process, rather than the results."

Easton said it would be a dream come true to make it back-to-back Commonwealth Games gold medals.

She said she felt like she was more experienced heading into the game this year.

"It's been a bit of a different preparation," she said. "I had knee surgery last year and changed weight categories a little bit."

"I fought up for a year and went back down to the same category as Birmingham. It's definitely been a different preparation, but I feel very prepared and excited and I guess I know what to expect."

"I definitely want to medal, definitely aiming for the gold, But I'll follow the process and see what happens."

Easton said she never questioned whether she would get back from knee surgery in time, it was about making sure that she did the work.

It's a busy period for Easton with her weight category's Olympic qualifying starting before the Commonwealth Games, which run from 23 July to 2 August.

"I go to Mongolia next week to start to qualify for the Olympics, then go to China the week after that, then come back for 10 days and then over to Europe to prepare for the Commonwealth Games," she said.

"It's a lot to think about and a lot to prepare for. It's judo is non-stop. We don't have an on-season or off season, just pretty normal for us."

Easton said it was pretty special to have three of her Resilience teammates making the trip to the Games as well.

Judo sisters are bound for Glasgow glory

There were plenty of celebrations as Maeve Coughlan joined her sister Aoife Coughlan in the Australian Commonwealth Games judo team.

While Aoife, the defending champion in the women's 70 kilogram event, felt she had done enough to heading to Glasgow for the Games, her younger sister Maeve wasn't so sure.

Maeve competes in the women's 63 kilogram event.

"It's super special," Maeve said. "I was there in the crowd for Birmingham when she won her medal, that was a really emotional time for both of us, our family was there too."

"It'll be really exciting to have both of us competing there instead of just her."

Aoife added, "Maeve has worked really hard for this through a few injuries over the past couple of years."

"So the fact that she's managed to qualify for the Comm Games and to be competing alongside her, that is really special and we'll probably remember it for a long time."

Maeve said it was a big relief when she finally got the email telling her she had been selected.

She said it was touch and go there for a minute if she would qualify.

Aoife on the other hand was pretty



Aoife Coughlan. (Supplied)

confident that she would get the chance to defend her title.

Aoife was so keen to see if her sister made the team, she did some snooping so she knew how to support her sister, no matter the outcome.

"We got a selection email and my notification hadn't come up," Maeve said.

"She had sneakily gone into my phone and checked that I qualified before asking me after the session."

"I didn't have a notification, and then checked it was there."

Aoife said there was a little bit of pressure

knowing she was defending her title, but backed herself in.

"I know I'm as good as anyone else on that mat, if not better, as long as I put my best foot forward and perform the way I'm supposed to perform," she said.

"I've beaten all the girls that are competing before. I just need to follow my process and hopefully on the day it goes the way that I want it to."

Maeve said her focus was to walk away happy with how she performed.

Her sister said if she did that, she could definitely medal.

"I want to put in a good performance and one that I'm proud of and at the end of the day," Maeve said.

"If I'm proud, whatever the result comes with that, is what it is. It's a memory that we will have together for the rest of our lives."

A big Coughlan contingent from Australia and Ireland are set to watch the pair in action at the Games, and they joked it could be a disaster with the number in attendance.

The pair said it would be special to be at the Games with two teammates from their home gym in Footscray, Resilience Training Centre.

It's something that we pride ourselves on here at resilience," Aoife said.




Tinka Easton after winning gold in 2022. (Commonwealth Games Australia)

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ROUND 16

THURSDAY, JUNE 25 – SUNDAY, JUNE 28

Brisbane **V** Sydney (G)
Carlton **V** West Coast (MRVL)
Collingwood **V** Richmond (MCG)
Fremantle **V** Gold Coast (OS)
Hawthorn **V** GWS (MCG)
North Melbourne **V** Essendon (MRVL)
Port Adelaide **V** Adelaide (AO)

BYES: GEELONG CATS, MELBOURNE, ST KILDA, WESTERN BULLDOGS

**Correct at time of publishing*

GROUNDNS KEY: (AO) Adelaide Oval, (AS) Accor Stadium, (BA) Blundstone Arena, (G) Gabba, (GS) Giants Stadium, (M) Mars Stadium, (MRVL) Marvel Stadium, (MCG) Melbourne Cricket Ground, (MS) Metricon Stadium, (SCG) Sydney Cricket Ground, (OS) Optus Oval, (T) TIO Stadium, (UTS) University Of Tasmania Stadium.

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