

MELTON & MOORABOOL
Star Weekly
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Rubbish 'eyesore'

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres

A Truganina property owner claims years of illegal rubbish dumping along a busy road reserve has turned the area into an "eyesore", with piles of rubbish continuing to build after Melton council ceased cleaning it up.

Rodney Fleiszig, who owns land at 1264-1366 Boundary Road, said the corner of Boundary Road and Mt Atkinson Road has become a hotspot for dumped waste, with rubbish regularly discarded along the roadside.

Mr Fleiszig said the problem had persisted for about five years, and included building waste, tyres, and general rubbish strewn across the area.

"The road looks like a tip, there is garbage strewn everywhere, and I mean heavily everywhere," Mr Fleiszig said.

“ The road looks like a tip, there is garbage strewn everywhere, and I mean heavily everywhere ”

- Rodney Fleiszig

"Eventually we're going to get a rat infestation or something. There's building materials, tyres, it just looks like an eyesore."

Mr Fleiszig said he had repeatedly contacted Melton council about the issue over several years and said council had previously organised clean-ups of the dumped rubbish.

However, he claimed council had recently changed its position and was no longer willing to remove the waste.

"I've been reporting this issue for the last five years," he said.

"Council had previously cleaned up the road for years, but they've recently started pushing back over the past two to three months saying it's not an issue they can help with."

Mr Fleiszig said he was frustrated at the response, particularly given the ongoing development throughout the surrounding Mt Atkinson and Truganina growth corridors.

He said the build-up of rubbish not only



Rodney Fleiszig at the Mt Atkinson Road with the illegally dumped rubbish. (Pictures: Damjan Janevski) 554110_06

affected the presentation of the area, but also created potential environmental and public health concerns.

A Melton council spokesperson confirmed council was aware of the ongoing illegal dumping on Mt Atkinson Road.

"Mt Atkinson Road is currently at various stages of planning and construction and the roadside bordering 1264-1366 Boundary Road is currently private property," the spokesperson said.

However, *Star Weekly* understands the road is listed as a government road in titles provided to Mr Fleiszig.

"I don't understand the change in doing it for years to now not doing it now. I've been reporting this for quite a few years and I

haven't had the push back from council until now."

The spokesperson explained council had been monitoring the site using surveillance cameras in an effort to identify offenders responsible for the dumping.

The spokesperson also urged residents to report instances of illegal dumping through its website or customer service line, a process which Mr Fleiszig said got him nowhere.

"There's no other process to go through. There's only one process to report illegally dumped rubbish," Mr Fleiszig said.

"I just hope it's cleaned up and is

maintained because it's not acceptable."

Illegal dumping remains an ongoing issue across Melbourne's outer growth suburbs, with councils and landowners often left dealing with the clean-up costs and environmental impacts associated with discarded waste.

Under state law, penalties can apply for illegally dumping rubbish, including fines for individuals and businesses found responsible.

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Police swoop on car crime

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres

A 22-year-old Melton man allegedly nabbed for speeding was among 35 arrested during a recent nightly operation in Melbourne's western suburbs.

Police saturated roads across Melton and Brimbank during Operation Momentum between 13 and 16 May, which launched in March last year in a bid to target high harm crime across the western suburbs.

The operation has led to a recent 35 arrests with more than 240 charges laid, 12 stolen cars recovered, six weapons seized, including a sawn-off shotgun, 10 cars im-

pounded for driving offences, and more than 2800 vehicles checked.

The 22-year-old Melton man who was allegedly travelling at 116km/h in a 60km/h zone on High Street in Melton about 11.55pm on Friday 15 May was arrested after police attempted to intercept the allegedly speeding Toyota Kluger.

Stop sticks were deployed on the Western Freeway on-ramp after Air Wing units followed the vehicle across Melton, where the 22-year-old was arrested without incident.

Also among those arrested was five teenagers who were caught travelling in an allegedly stolen 2012 Dodge Journey

at high speeds throughout Rockbank just after 10pm on Saturday 16 May.

Police attempted to intercept the car on Dandelion Crescent before the driver allegedly failed to stop and crashed into two parked vehicles.

The driver then took off again before officers deployed stop sticks in Albanvale, bringing the car to a halt.

The five occupants then attempted to flee into nearby parkland before all five, including four 16-year-olds and a 17-year-old, were arrested.

Since the launch of Operation Momentum, police have made more than 180 arrests, laid more than 750 charges and lo-

cated some 50 stolen cars.

Police said with car thefts reaching decade highs in Brimbank and Melton, they will continue to run targeted operations like Operation Momentum to hold thieves to account.

Detective Senior Sergeant Nick DiMieri from Melton's Crime Investigation Unit said police will continue to target car thieves and dangerous driving in a bid to bring down the high rates of criminal activity across the west.

"We are out every night catching car thieves, however this bolstered response allows us to put a real dent in vehicle crime across the western suburbs," he said.



Rockbank firefighters Amit Menghani, Stefan Fender, Josh Stokes, Oliver Hinds-Meyer and Oliver Cross. (Damjan Janevski) 553084_03

Rockbank CFA scores safety boost

Rockbank CFA will strengthen fireground communication and safety after securing funding through Australia Post's 2026 People of Post grant program.

The brigade is among 84 Victorian organisations to receive support through the community grants initiative, which awarded almost \$500,000 nationally this year to projects focused on mental health, disaster resilience, literacy and environmental sustainability.

Rockbank CFA captain Luke

Hibbins-Leece said the funding would allow the brigade to purchase UHF radios to improve communication between CFA crews and private firefighting units operating in rural areas.

"This grant will provide our brigade increased ability to communicate with members of the community whilst combating fires," he said.

"This year it was evident that there were complications between CFA units liaising with private firefighting units

which are rather prevalent in rural areas."

He said the additional radios would help improve coordination and safety on the fireground during emergencies.

"It might seem like a small impact to some, but having that ability to communicate with private firefighting units does increase everyone's safety on the fireground, which is our key priority," he said.

Turtle study makes waves in Jacksons Creek

Turtles around Jacksons Creek are at the centre of a new study into how manmade forever chemicals in the environment affect the animals that live in it.

Environmental Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) scientists have joined researchers from CSIRO, the Arthur Rylah Institute and other agencies in a next-generation project measuring PFAS levels in Victorian turtles.

EPA said turtles were excellent subjects for scientists to study for this project, due to the wide range of prey they feed on, and how pollutants build up in their bodies over their long lives.

Researchers have been out and about along Jacksons Creek around Diggers Rest and Bulla to study the turtles, as well as the Murray River and Darebin Parklands.

EPA Victoria senior scientist in emerging contaminants Phoebe Lewis said the study would use advanced techniques known as omics, which assess thousands of molecular markers in the animal to detect changes to vital processes such as metabolism, reproduction and the immune system.

"So instead of just testing for PFAS in the water, we are testing how those levels have affected the turtles," Dr Lewis said.

"It means the animal becomes a living indicator of ecological health, and it helps us as a regulator to trial new tools that can help us to protect environmental values in future."

As part of the research, scientists have taken tiny blood samples of turtles in the waterways before releasing them back into their habitat.

Along with PFAS, CSIRO will analyse the fats, proteins and metabolites in the samples. These biological "fingerprints" can reveal disruptions to vital processes and provide early warnings of harm – long before visible damage or population decline.

Dr Lewis said the project had given EPA researchers the opportunity to work in a team on the cutting edge of environmental science, and was a great example of inter-agency collaboration.

"There are global concerns about the long-term impacts of chemical pollution, and we know we need new ways to measure and understand those impacts," Dr Lewis said.

"This research has the potential to transform the way we protect our waterways and the biodiversity they support."

Don't let frost bite your water pipes; keep them covered

Greater Western Water (GWW) is encouraging customers to safeguard their water meters against freezing as winter temperatures drop.

When temperatures drop below 0°C and frost sets in, exposed water meters and above-ground pipes can freeze.

This can stop water flowing into homes, causing significant inconvenience, especially during the early morning rush for a hot shower, tea or coffee and even lead to cracked pipes, water outages and damage to

property.

Protecting the water meter from frost helps ensure a reliable water supply throughout winter and can help customers avoid expensive repair bills caused by damaged pipes.

GWW general manager for service delivery Jodie Hallam says the organisation is encouraging customers to have some fun this year and 'dress up' their water meters.

Any covering placed over the meter must be easy to remove and allow a minimum

10cm clearance so GWW meter readers and field crews can safely access it.

If a water meter splits or breaks due to freezing, customers should contact GWW on 13 44 99 to arrange a replacement. GWW will also replace any damaged pipes located between the meter and the street.

If pipes are damaged between the home and the water meter, customers will need to contact a licensed plumber to arrange repairs.

Details: gww.com.au/frozenmeters

\$50m to start freeway works

The federal government has provided \$50 million to commence the upgrade of the Western Freeway between Caroline Springs and Melton.

The pre-construction works involve detailed planning and design, as well as teams out on-site checking ground conditions.

The government said this would lay the groundwork before heavy machinery arrived and will help ensure a smooth and safe construction phase, with as little disruption as possible to people's daily commutes.

These are the final steps before construction can officially kick off and will in-

form the next round of funding decisions and construction timelines, according to the government.

The pre-construction works are funded as part of the government's commitment to invest \$1 billion in upgrades to the Western Freeway, and build on a business case jointly funded by federal state governments.

According to the federal government, more than 86,000 vehicles travel between Melton and Caroline Springs on the Western Freeway every day.

As the population in Melbourne's west continues to boom, that figure is expected to rise to approximately 113,000 by 2031.

The Melton to Caroline Springs upgrade will improve capacity and safety along this key route for passengers and freight, the government said.

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government Minister Catherine King said the federal and state governments were working together to deliver the vital upgrade,

"We are getting money out the door and detailed planning underway, so we can get this project to a point where it is construction-ready and we can start building," she said.

Hawke MP Sam Rae and Gorton MP Al-

ice Jordan-Baird both welcomed the funding.

"This latest funding commitment is an important step forward for the Western Freeway upgrade – a project our community has long needed," Mr Rae said.

"I look forward to seeing it deliver real, lasting improvements for local families"

Ms Jordan-Baird said the community deserved infrastructure that kept paces with population growth.

"The Western Freeway is already at capacity in peak times, and this investment is another step towards getting the upgrades our community needs," she said.



Midwife Alison Edney and 2-day-old William are celebrating one year of MGP at the Bacchus Marsh Hospital. (Damjan Janevski) 554464_04

Program helps transform birth experiences

Families in the west are celebrating a year of Western Health's Midwife Group Practice in Bacchus Marsh.

A year after launching at Bacchus Marsh Hospital, the Midwife Practice Group (MGP) is already transforming the birth experience for local families, with 155 babies welcomed through the continuity-of-care program in its first 12 months.

The model works to pair women and birthing people with a small team of dedicated midwives who support them

throughout pregnancy, labour, birth, and the early weeks of parenting.

Midwife Jasmine Avramoska said the first 12 months of the program have been about connection, care and unforgettable moments.

"We're able to get to know each family personally, understand their needs, preferences, and concerns, which allows us to provide care that is truly individualised and consistent," she said.

At Bacchus Marsh, eight midwives make up the team.

"The MGP program gives us the time and space to get to know families, advocate for them, and guide them through informed choices," Ms Avramoska said.

"Each family's journey is unique, and being present for those pivotal moments is incredibly fulfilling. The relationships we build, the trust we earn, and the opportunity to make a meaningful difference are what make this role so rewarding."

Have your say on new Events Management Policy

Moorabool residents are being called on to help shape the development of Moorabool council's new Event Management Policy.

The policy is set to guide how temporary events on public and private land, which require statutory consent, are planned, assessed, and approved to ensure they are safe and well managed.

The new policy has been guided as part of an internal review by council, which identified the need to develop an overarching Events Management Policy to help ensure events held in public open space and roadways under the care and control of Moorabool council are managed safely and effectively.

The policy also aims to minimise the potential impacts and risks to the community and environment, while recognising the important role events play in bringing the community together and supporting local businesses and economic activity.

The 2023-2027 Visitor Economy Strategy also identifies events as a priority theme, with actions to review and enhance internal processes and resourcing to better support tourism events development.

As part of the consultation process, community members are invited to drop-in sessions between 4 and 6pm on Thursday 21 May at the Lerderderg Library in Bacchus March and the Ballan Library on Thursday 28 May.

Community members, event organisers, and local businesses are encouraged to share their feedback on the policy by Sunday 21 June.

Free drop-in support clinics for mums-to-be

Western Health launched free drop-in support clinics for expectant mums in Melton and Bacchus Marsh on Monday 18 May.

The Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies service will operate twice a month at Melton Health and Community Services.

The free community health programs are tailored for expectant mothers in the west, working to help connect them with support services they may need.

The clinics do not require an appointment and are aimed at offering access to specialist trained health workers, including community nurses or midwives, who can provide outreach support within people's homes or the community.

Western Health's Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies outreach worker, Aisling Maher, said the program's aim was to

help mothers and babies be as healthy as possible, and to ensure care and support are available if needed.

"Our free drop-in clinics provide one-on-one emotional and practical support for women at 36 weeks or less gestation, particularly those who may be experiencing personal or domestic challenges," Ms Maher said.

"We can help you access a wide range of antenatal, community and support services to help you and your families stay healthy during pregnancy and after your baby is born."

Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies free drop-in clinics will operate on the first and third Monday of the month between 10am and 1pm at Melton Health and Community Services, 195-209 Barries Road, Melton West.

Delivering for Melton

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Authorised by Sam Rae MP, 316 High St, Melton VIC 3337



Invest in Melton: Council

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres

Melton council is calling for further investment in the city following the release of the 2026-27 federal budget.

As Melton continues to shoulder a significant share of Victoria's housing growth, council is calling for greater long-term infrastructure investment from both state and federal governments to ensure services keep pace with the region's booming population.

Council welcomed the funding for key transport and local infrastructure projects, but has called for further direct investment to support the fast-growing municipality.

Melton's local government area is expected to accommodate about 109,000 new

homes over the next two decades under state government housing targets, which council said would place increasing pressure on roads, public transport and community facilities.

Among the federal budget commitments welcomed by council was the \$152.7 million joint investment by the federal and state governments to progress design and preparation works for the electrification of the Melton line.

However, council said planning alone will not address the immediate transport demands facing the growing community and is calling for a fully-funded commitment to deliver the project by 2030, in line with recommendations from Infrastructure

Victoria.

The budget also included \$50 million for upgrades to the Western Freeway as part of a previously announced \$1 billion package, although council is still seeking clarification from the state government about the scope and timeline of the works.

Additional funding measures welcomed by council include the \$2 billion Local Infrastructure Fund to support enabling infrastructure including water, sewer, and electricity connections, along with \$750 million for future funds of the Growing Regions and Thriving Suburbs programs.

Despite the announcements, Melton council said significant gaps remain in funding for community infrastructure.

Over the next decade, council expects it will need to deliver 20 new community centres, 10 active open space precincts, new and upgraded aquatic facilities, and three new libraries to meet population demand.

Melton mayor Lara Carli said investment was not keeping pace with growth.

"The reality is that our infrastructure is not keeping pace with the scale and speed of growth we're experiencing," Cr Carli said.

"We are delivering a significant share of Victoria's housing targets, yet investment in rail services, bus connections, roads and community facilities is not keeping up with growth.

Federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers was contacted for comment.



Melton's Citizen of the Year for 2026, Rohit Kumar. (Supplied)

Volunteers recognised across Melton

Volunteers from across Melton were recognised at a special event hosted by Melton council, celebrating their generous contributions to the community.

Winners of the 2026 City of Melton Community Volunteer Achievement Awards were also announced at the event which coincided with this year's National Volunteer Week.

The awards work to recognise the outstanding efforts of community members who dedicate their time to making a positive and lasting impact, enhancing the lives of individuals and strengthening the community.

Among this year's winners were Rohit Kumar, who brought home the Citizen of

the Year Award for recognition of his ongoing community leadership and involvement.

Since 2016, Rohit has shown extraordinary leadership in building a more connected, inclusive and supportive community for multicultural families, seniors, people with disabilities and vulnerable residents across Melton.

Through founding and leading multiple award-winning organisations, he has delivered countless free programs, cultural celebrations and inclusive events which bring people together and create a true sense of belonging.

Also recognised for their outstanding contributions was Young Citizen of

the Year Alanis Furtado for her commitment to ensuring young voices are heard through Melton's Youth Advisory Committee and community initiatives focused on inclusion, wellbeing and opportunity.

Amit Menghani brought home Inter-cultural Engagement Leader of the Year for his work with multiple volunteer services across the municipality, while Michelle Hobbs was recognised for her work with Specialist Hoops Victoria, being awarded Disability Access and Inclusion Leader of the Year.

Tom Markowski was awarded Gender Equity Leader of the Year, for his work in transforming opportunities for women and girls at Spring Hills Football Club.

Parents support group denied

Moorabool council has rejected a recommendation 5-3 to formally note a report into the feasibility of establishing a bereaved parent support group within the shire.

The report was presented at council's 6 May meeting and examined whether a non-clinical, community-based bereaved parent peer support group could operate within the shire, responding to a notice of motion brought forward by Cr Sheila Freeman at council's 4 February meeting.

Councillors were called on to note the findings and acknowledge council's advocacy in supporting positive community outcomes.

"What this motion has always been about is identifying a gap in our community and asking how council can help bridge that gap appropriately," Cr Freeman said.

"The report is very clear...we're not being asked to reinvent anything. We're being asked to connect our community to establish specialist supported models in a local context."

The report concluded an in-person bereavement peer support group was feasible if led by an external specialist organisation or a community-led group with appropriate governance, training, and supervision.

Council officers noted the preferred model would mean council play a limited facilitation role, including helping improve awareness and referral pathways, brokering partnerships and potentially providing venue access subject to policy and availability.

Cr Moira Berry spoke against the motion. "Establishing a council-run support group introduces significant risks," she said.

"This type of specialised bereavement support sits outside the traditional role and expertise of local government.

"Council is not equipped to manage complex mental health needs or crisis situations that could possibly arise in such a setting."

The investigation found specialist bereavement support services already existed for Moorabool families, largely through online resources helplines, and counselling providers.

However, officers noted there was limited access to consistent, locally based in-person peer support.

The report also highlighted significant governance and safeguarding requirements associated with bereavement support programs, including facilitator screening, mental health escalation pathways, privacy protections, complaints handling and insurance coverage.

Officers warned Maternal and Child Health nurses operating outside their clinical scope, reputational damage and inadequate referral processes represented high-level risks if governance measures were not in place.

Funding available to help schools with maintenance projects

Schools across Melton will be able to apply for a share of millions of dollars of state funding aimed at small-scale upgrades and maintenance projects.

Applications are now open for the latest round of the state government's capital works fund, which provides grants for improvements including roof repairs, playground upgrades, bike shelters, covered walkways and accessibility projects.

The state budget has allocated \$25.4 million toward the program this year, with \$10.6

million already committed to 24 schools across Victoria.

Schools can apply for grants of up to \$150,000 for small projects, up to \$350,000 for student inclusion projects, and up to \$600,000 for larger-scale works.

The inclusion funding stream is designed to improve accessibility for students with a disability, including projects such as inclusive playgrounds.

According to the state government, 146 schools have received support through the

fund since 2024.

Melton MP Steve McGhie said local schools should be encouraged to apply.

"Schools in Melton can apply for these grants to get them in tip-top shape for local students," he said.

"Whether a school is large or small, these upgrades make a big difference," education minister Ben Carroll added.

Applications close 12 June.

Details: visit schoolbuildings.vic.gov.au/capital-works-fund.

Melton station on track

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres

Melton station is one step closer to completion, with crews working to remove four level crossings across Melton and Truganina in preparation for the new train station to be ready to welcome passengers later this year.

The last of 44 concrete beams for the new rail bridges at Coburns and Exford roads have recently been delivered to site, with sections of track now being laid in the rail viaducts.

More than 22,000 tonnes of ballast made from crushed stone is expected to be used for the Melton rail bridges, which

will help drain water away from the track and keep it stable as trains pass over it.

Once crews install the ballast, concrete sleepers and train tracks are set to be installed, bringing the project even closer to hosting train services.

Construction crews are expected to lay more than seven kilometres of steel rails, delivered to site from Wyhalla in South Australia and hammering more than 34,000 metal clips into place to connect the rail to 4581 concrete sleepers.

The new tracks are also set to feature a unique piece of rail infrastructure known as a double compound crossover, which

will allow multiple tracks to intersect at the same section of rail, enabling trains travelling in either direction to switch onto either track, with the new infrastructure expected to improve service efficiencies for arrivals and departures.

Over the past month of construction works, teams have installed 198 glass panels into the station lifts and staircases, 530 tonnes of reinforced steel inside the station buildings, pedestrian through-links and building slabs, more than 290 tonnes of structural steel, and 775 square metres of roofing and external cladding.

The new station is on track to open

later this year and will feature four platforms with undercover areas to provide shelter from the weather, an air-conditioned waiting room, and two extended platforms.

Passengers are also expected to benefit from longer, nine-car VLocity trains running on the Melton Line from next year.

Four outdated level crossings are also being removed this year from the Melton Line at Coburns Road, Exford Road, and Ferries Road in Melton, and at Hopkins Road in Truganina.



Melton mayor Lara Carli with artist Audrey Buttigieg Cardona and her uncle Emanuel Cardona, who is the inspiration behind Buttigieg's work. (Supplied)

Melton's diverse artistic talent on show

Creativity, connection, and community are taking centre stage in Melton with the launch of the Melton Community Open Group Show's Common exhibition, celebrating the region's diverse artistic talent.

Doors opened to the public on Sunday 10 May, with the exhibition inviting visitors to explore the many creative voices that make up the local arts scene, showcasing works from artists who all share a connection to the Melton community.

Designed to provide emerging and established artists with the opportunity to exhibit in a professional gallery environment, the exhibit offers a platform for creatives who may not yet have enough

work for a solo exhibition, but still want to share their practice with the public, and in this case, their very own community.

The exhibition's theme, centred around the idea of "we all have art in common", aims to highlight the shared experiences and perspectives that unite the community through creativity.

Visitors can expect a broad range of artistic styles, mediums and personal stories, reflecting the diversity of Melton itself.

From painting and mixed media to photography and contemporary works, the exhibition works to provide an acces-

sible space for the community to engage with local art and the people behind it.

"This inaugural exhibition brings together 32 artists, aged from 11 through to 70. It features both emerging and established creatives and showcases a diverse range of styles, stories and perspectives that reflect the richness of our community," Melton mayor Lara Carli said.

With artists each having their own ties to the local area, visitors are likely to recognise a few familiar faces.

Common is on display at CS Gallery 193-201 Caroline Springs Boulevard, Caroline Springs.

Details: <https://tinyurl.com/2rh6wyh8>

Be fire safe at home this winter

As temperatures drop, Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) and CFA are reminding Victorians to keep flammable items away from heaters and fireplaces.

Combined data from FRV and CFA reveals firefighters responded to more than 175 incidents attributed to failing or malfunctioning heating systems across Victoria in 2024-25.

Fire services are also reminding residents that items placed too close to heaters can quickly ignite or create dangerous smoke inside the home.

Home heating systems can include fixed electrical or gas-powered appliances, portable electrical, gas or kerosene heaters, as well as open fires and wood heaters.

FRV deputy commissioner community safety and operational training Joshua Fischer said the winter months were the peak time for heater fires.

"While we are not yet in winter, many of us are feeling the recent drop in temperatures and are already looking to keep our homes warm. However, residents should know that we are also about to enter the peak period for fires started by heaters," he said.

"We want Victorians to be aware that making a check on the condition of their heaters and heating systems before they use them could make a potentially life-saving difference to them and their family.



Greater Western Water



The bucket approach



The out-of-the-box approach



The chilled-out look



The whole knit and caboodle

Keep your meter cosy

To prevent your water meter from freezing during frosty weather and stopping your water from running, simply cover it with something that helps trap the air around it.

You can keep it simple with a blanket, bucket or tub – or get as dressy as you'd like.

www.com.au/prevent-frozen-pipes



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MY PLACE

Josh Tooth is a Mt Atkinson local with a passion for the performing arts. He spoke with Jack O'Shea-Ayres about life in the west, and how community has driven his passion for theatre.

What's your connection to the Melton area?

My wife and I moved to Mt Atkinson several years ago, but I was already strongly connected to Melton through Melton Performing Arts (MPA), and through my wife's business. She became the owner-operator of hey dee ho Hobsons Bay & Melton' in 2019, and we're pretty passionate about helping each other succeed, so I was all in too! Through being involved in MPA I'd already formed really strong friendships and connections with people who lived in Melton, and I was already invested in growing and promoting performing arts in the area.

What do you like about Melton?

The thing I love most about Melton is its people! There are so many amazing, generous, supportive people in Melton, which is why our group, MPA, has been able to grow and connect with the community so successfully. There is a huge passion for performing arts bubbling just beneath the surface of Melton, that a lot of people in the area might not see yet, but which is full of creativity and passion and a drive to connect. We have wonderful creators and performers that call Melton home and the more space and scope we give them to explore their projects, the more wonderful things we are going to see.

What, if anything, would you change about where you live?

My big dream is to see a full-size, purpose built theatre space in Melton. We have wonderful sporting facilities and we have beautiful parks and common areas, but I know that a modern theatre space with tiered seating, lighting and sound infrastructure, adequate backstage space and dressing rooms, and perhaps even



Josh Tooth. (Supplied)

rehearsal rooms and workshop spaces, would serve a desperately needed purpose in the community for groups such as MPA, as well as local schools, dance groups and

community groups. How amazing would it be to have international bands and comedians perform right here in Melton, in our own theatre space!

Where is your favourite local place to spend time?

One of my favourite things to do is to walk my dog, with my wife, around where we live in Mt Atkinson. There is a beautiful wetland space that has been preserved when the estate was built, and we love to take our two dogs Holly and Stella on their walk and just enjoy the beauty and quiet of the local neighbourhood. I'm also very, very happy sitting with a good coffee at Culpa cafe in Woodlea, or at Madame Dolce at Strathulloh. We have some seriously good coffee in Melton.

Tell us about your work with the MPA group. How did you first get into it, and what's your favourite thing about it?

I was actually part of the first committee group for MPA. The founder and driving force behind the beginning of the group, a friend of mine named Dom, called me up with a big idea and a whole lot of passion, because he saw the community's need and desire for a theatre or performing arts group, and wanted to make it happen. I loved the ethos upon which he was building the group; the aim to make it open, accepting and responsive to the community; a safe place where performing arts people could maybe find a home. Now, I am the secretary on the committee and I have the joy of watching each project be more and more successful, and of watching people come to us and find a connection to like-minded people that are passionate about performing arts. This is my favourite thing about MPA. We are a non-profit group that is not about any one person or one project, but about creating a space in the community that people can flourish in, and feel safe and supported.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Star Weekly looks back through the pages of our predecessors



41 years ago
22 May, 1985

Senior officers from both Bacchus Marsh and Ballan Shire Councils have questioned the validity of Federal Government funds announced for local government this week.



30 years ago
22 May, 1996

Claims the Riddell District Football League is threatened with extinction were heightened when Melton South forfeited its game against Darley.



20 years ago
23 May, 2006

Melton has been overlooked in the much-awaited \$10.5 billion Transport and Liveability Statement, released by the State Government last Wednesday.



10 years ago
24 May, 2016

Caroline Springs' newly built train station is slated for a \$4.9 million redesign before it is even open to the public.



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Judy Alcock and Julia Meek. 553736_03



Bev Christie. 553736_04



Helen Szczerea. 553737_01

Quilting and painting in Darley

Creativity and community spirit were on full display at Darley Neighbourhood House on Thursday 21 May, as *Star Weekly* reporter Jack O'Shea-Ayres visited to capture the vibrant work of the neighbourhood house's quilt making and painting for fun groups. Volunteers busily stitched colourful quilts destined for young patients at Royal Children's Hospital, while local artists gathered to paint, chat and connect in a warm and welcoming environment.



Josephine Gunstone and Wendy Condie. 553737_03



Fay Schleyer. 553737_06



Helen Kelly. 553737_05



Ros Powell, Judy Alcock, and Julia Meek. 553736_01



Marlene Thurgwood. 553737_04



Christine Gordon and Daniela Sheen. 553737_02



Sharron Cook. 553736_02

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CONTACT US

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Moorabool councillors Sheila Freeman and Moira Berry at the dispenser at Lerderderg library. (Damjan Janevski) 554170_01

Shire tackles period poverty

Access to free period products has expanded across the Moorabool Shire, with a growing number of community venues now offering complimentary pads and tampons through a statewide initiative aimed at tackling period poverty.

Moorabool council recently announced that several council and community facilities are proudly supporting the Free Pads and Tampons in Public Places program, working to ensure residents can access essential hygiene products when they need them.

The initiative, backed by the state government, recognises period products are not a luxury item, but a basic necessity linked to health, dignity, and wellbeing.

Free vending machines stocked with pads and tampons have been installed at a range of locations across the shire, including the Lerderderg Library, Ballan Library, MARC Stadium, and the Bacchus Marsh Leisure Centre.

Machines are also available at Bacchus

Marsh Railway Station, The Laurels, and Darley Neighbourhood House.

The rollout is designed to make everyday life a little easier for residents who may unexpectedly need access to period products while out and about in the community, whether at school, work, sport, or while travelling.

Moorabool mayor Steve Venditti-Taylor said the program reflects a broader commitment to inclusion, accessibility, and community wellbeing.

“This is a fantastic Victorian Government initiative we’re proud to help facilitate. We now offer free pads and tampons at seven public places in Moorabool Shire, just one initiative to help improve the health and wellbeing of our community,” he said.

More information about the initiative and machine locations is available at <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/free-pads-and-tampons>.

Briefs

Lights on for Melton reserves

Melton’s residents are being encouraged to keep up their physical activity into the night during the cooler months with lights being switched on at selected local reserves so locals can keep up their exercise routine, or even start a new one, after dark. Melton council is turning the lights on at Aintree, Bridge Road, Brookside, and West Melton Recreation Reserves. Grab a friend, rug up, and enjoy staying active close to home. Find days and times at <https://tinyurl.com/4p4eewax>

Historic tree walk

Residents and visitors are being encouraged to explore the rich history and natural beauty of Ballan through the Ballan Arboretum Group’s Historic Tree Walk. The self-guided walk showcases trees planted during the town’s early years, many of which now line Ballan’s streets, providing shade, colour, and a living connection to the past. Featuring interactive stops and an online audio tour, the walk offers a unique way to discover the town at a relaxed pace. Organisers say the experience changes with the seasons, with autumn proving a particularly picturesque time to visit. More information is available at ballanchamberofcommerce.com.au/treewalk and moorabool.vic.au/ballan

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Mayor's message Cr Lara Carli

Last week, Council announced the winners of the 2026 City of Melton Community Volunteer Achievement Awards at an event celebrating the people who generously give their time, energy and passion to make a difference to others across our City.

Congratulations to this year's award winners for their outstanding contributions: Citizen of the Year, Rohit Kumar; Young Citizen of the Year, Alanis Furtado; Intercultural Engagement Leader of the Year, Amit Menghani; Gender Equity Leader of the Year, Tom Markowski; and Disability, Access and Inclusion Leader of the Year, Michelle Hobbs. The commitment to helping make our community stronger and more connected does not go unnoticed.

The Awards coincided with National Volunteer Week, providing an opportunity to recognise and thank the many volunteers who play such a vital role across our City. Our volunteers are incredible people who give their time on top of other commitments to support others and help create an inclusive community for all. We thank you for your compassion, generosity and quiet determination to make a difference.

Finally, I recently attended the opening of our inaugural Common exhibition at CS Gallery at the Caroline Springs Library and Learning Hub. It was wonderful to see the amazing artwork created by talented members of our community. Art plays an important role in bringing people together and sharing stories, and this exhibition does exactly that. Common runs until August, and I encourage you to visit the Gallery to see the inspiring work of our local artists.

Feel free to contact me about Sugar Gum Ward or our City more generally on 0409 951 020 or email at: lara.carli@melton.vic.gov.au

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Short Story Competition

Aspiring writers, storytellers and creatives are invited to enter the 2026 Melton City Libraries Short Story Competition.

Celebrating its 21st year, the competition provides the opportunity for entrants to have their work judged by popular authors and go in the running to share in over \$3,000 in prizes.

Entries can be text, illustration, video, verse, voice, or a combination of these across three categories – junior, teen and adult. Written entries are capped at 1500 words for juniors and teens, and 3000 words for adults. All other formats should be no longer than five minutes.

Entries close Friday 10 July and can be submitted online. Authors must live, work or study in the City of Melton.

For information and to enter, visit melton.vic.gov.au/MCLShortStory



Reconciliation Week event

Wednesday 3 June, 10am - 12pm
Civic Centre Lawn and Melton Community Hall

In recognition of National Reconciliation Week from 27 May to 3 June, Council is hosting a free community event to help raise awareness about reconciliation and learn about our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities. Join us for a flag raising ceremony, followed by Indigenous performances and native food tastings. Hear from keynote speaker Tyson Yunkaporta, author, researcher and senior lecturer in Indigenous Knowledges at Deakin University.

For information, visit melton.vic.gov.au/reconciliation-week.

Bullum Bullum Ward with Cr Steve Abboushi



connects.

It's always great to see investment in the places and spaces where our community lives, plays and connects.

Council's 2026/27 Draft Budget proposes many important projects that support the ongoing growth and evolution of our community, while also improving liveability.

Included in the draft budget is funding to progress the upgrades to Taylors Road, including duplication works between City Vista Court and Westwood Drive. These improvements are designed to provide a real difference to what is one of the busiest roads in our City.

The draft budget also includes proposed upgrades to the play space at Springlake Village Park. Works include upgrading and relocating the basketball facilities, adding a new sheltered area, along with additional tree planting and landscaping to enhance the space. Also proposed in

the draft budget are investments in other local parks, paths and recreation spaces that are critical for young people and families to stay active and connected.

It's also fantastic to see that the redevelopment works at Taylors Hill Recreation Reserve, home of Westside Strikers Soccer Club, have been completed. Council is proud to have delivered these upgrades which included reconstruction of three soccer pitches and two cricket grounds, improved lighting and fencing, and modern facilities that will support this growing club.

Together, these projects are creating spaces that support our community and the everyday needs of our residents.

Feel free to contact me regarding Bullum Bullum Ward or our City more generally on 0437 231 680 or email at steve.abboushi@melton.vic.gov.au

King's Birthday operating hours

Our offices will be closed on Monday 8 June 2026, for the King's Birthday Public Holiday. This includes City of Melton Libraries and the Animal Pound. There is no change to kerbside bin collections, so please put your bin out Sunday night if Monday is your usual collection day.

The Melton Recycling Facility is open 8am - 4.30pm. For information or to report an issue, visit melton.vic.gov.au/public-holidays

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



Mayor
Cr Lara Carli



Deputy Mayor
Cr Dr Phillip Zada



Cr Steve Abboushi



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Wyndham teen Busolami, was named the city's young person of the month for May. (Damjan Janevski) 551794_07



B 24 Liberator Museum volunteer John Phillips. (Damjan Janevski) 551792_11



Cassacio Egg Farm owners Josie and Paul Casaccio. (Damjan Janevski) 551932_05



Imran Abul Kashem is starting a podcast highlights migrant journeys. (Damjan Janevski) 553015_05

Faces of the west

Each week Star Weekly photographers are out and about capturing events and people across the western suburbs.



Adam Roberts, Robyn Kennedy, Donna Southern and Braidyn Withers are campaigning for a safer Leakes Road. (Damjan Janevski) 552696_02



Brimbank volunteers Peter Thomson, Lily Simovic, Joan Ellis, Cecilia Gomez, Liljana Simonovska, Pauline Farrugia and Miranda Kwai Chan. (Damjan Janevski) 542220_04

Melbourne Renewable Energy Hub



The Melbourne Renewable Energy Hub - Community Benefit Funds Are Now Open

Investing in local communities in Melbourne's west.

The Hub, delivered in partnership by SEC and GreenPoint Energy (a subsidiary of Equis Australia), is bringing long-term benefits to communities across Melton, Plumpton and surrounding suburbs.

One of the world's largest batteries, the Hub is now powering Victorian homes and businesses.

A \$2.5 million Community Benefit Fund is open for applications. Shaped by community feedback, the fund focuses on creating lasting, meaningful impact through two funding streams:

- **Youth Futures Partnership Grant** - receiving \$75,000 per year, this program supports young people through education, skills development and mentorship
- **Safe and Sustainable Community Grant** - \$25,000 per year is available for local initiatives that build connection, participation and sustainability across Melton and surrounding communities.



For more information or to apply, visit: engage.greenpointenergy.com.au/mreh



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Nylon Phoenix is on the rise

A chance meeting and a shared dream was the spark that Sunbury locals Jet Bastos and Floyd Bassett needed to come together. Georgia Tacey caught up with duo Nylon Phoenix to hear more about the band and its origins in the lead up to their debut single *Magenta* releasing this August.

Every great band has that iconic story of how they came to be.

U2 formed through an ad on a bulletin board. For Green Day, Billie Joe Armstrong met Mike Dirnt at a bus stop on their way to school.

But for Nylon Phoenix, it all started in a restaurant and the constant tap tap tapping of Floyd Bassett's imaginary drum.

His future bandmate Jet Bastos, though he didn't know it yet, was working at that very restaurant he came upon looking for his feed.

"Whenever I have to wait for anything in my life, whether I'm at the supermarket or the gym or anything, I just start tapping, going through drum beats," Bassett said.

"I could see Jet watching me as I'm tapping along, waiting for my food, and he walks up to me as he's like 'are you all right man? You've just ordered, it's gonna take a couple of minutes'.

"I'm like 'oh sorry, I'm just practising some beats that I'm working on', and he said 'Wait a minute, you're a drummer? I'm looking for a drummer in this band I'm starting'."

It was perfect timing.

Bassett, a skilled drummer, was looking for a fresh project after his previous band disbanded.

Bastos, already a solo artist, was looking for someone to join him and create a band and accompany his vocals and ukulele.

"We jammed and realised we had a good mix of influences and Nylon Phoenix was born," Bassett said.

Fusing ukulele punk and alternative, the duo has been playing a number of gigs and open mics around Melbourne as they navigate their way through the Melbourne music scene.

Their name - taken from Bastos's middle name Phoenix and the material used to make strings on the ukulele that defines their sound - was the perfect descriptor and title that was all thanks to Bastos.

"The name is a bit of a contradiction in of itself, being a combination of the artificial, contrasted by the natural; it's a critique of the insincerity of the modern popular music scene," Bassett said.

"It however also describes our music perfectly, as we combine live performances of acoustic and electric instruments with synthesized tracks, attempting to blend and balance the two different worlds together."

Over the past two years since their fateful meeting, Bassett and Bastos have been busy honing their sound and recording music, with their debut single set to release this August.

Magenta, their first single, will dive deep into Bastos' trials and tribulations navigating the modern dating world.

"It's pretty much a critique on myself in the modern dating scene, which I find quite funny," Bastos said.

The duo has spent the better part of the past year - alongside other gigs and projects - chipping away at the song, with Bastos taking the lead on production.

"Jet comes up with the initial song idea and shows me and we start to workshop some ideas to flesh it out," Bassett said.

"Jet usually has pretty solid ideas of the feel and mood of the songs as well as the chord progressions, lyrics and structure. I add some drum ideas and then Jet gets into recording mode."

Bastos then layers the tracks, adding drums, bass ukulele and synth before laying down the vocals, which are all produced by him in his own home studio.

Even the music video which they've been



Jet Bastos and Floyd Bassett from Nylon Phoenix. (Pictures: George Johnson)

shooting for the song has all been produced by them with little outside help.

"The music video is based on different caricatures and different people you'd see on online dating apps and I'm playing them in different costumes," Bastos said.

"[The music video had] two shoots, one in a studio with professional videographer and photographer George Johnson, and another on site in Bendigo with our friend Sara Hancock, using various locations and a wider wardrobe to capture the lyrical motifs in the verses of the song," Bassett said.

Now in the final stages, Nylon Phoenix are constantly working, creating music and gearing up for a busy few months as their single goes out to the world.

"We're working on music all the time," Bassett said.

"Every week is different as we sometimes have gigs on consecutive days or just a couple of days apart, but we are pretty strict about rehearsing at least once per fortnight."

Most recently, the duo took to a local stage, helping to put on a showcase of Sunbury's finest performers in the scene at The Industrial.

"Most of our shows are around the Fitzroy, Brunswick area ... which was one of the reasons we wanted to put on the Sunbury show because it's a fair distance for people to travel for those who are local to Sunbury," Bassett said.

"We wanted to give them a chance to hear us play with some of the other local bands around Sunbury."

For Bastos, this was his favourite performance.

"It was such an amazingly unexpected turnout," he said.

"It was a fantastic show, a good crowd,

great energy, a great performance ... I want to play more shows like that."

Bassett agreed, as well as the first show they ever performed together.

Performing live and making music was what they were meant to do, and Bassett said he was proud to work with Bastos on their music.

"The development of the music that Jet's putting together, it's a really unique style,"

he said.

"Not only having the ukulele as the front instrument ... but also the way he's crafting songs, taking elements since recorded music began and over the last 60 years of popular music, it's just something that's totally unique."

"If you come to our shows, you'll see something that you've never seen before."

Details: facebook.com/nylonphoenix



“ The name is a bit of a contradiction in of itself ... It however also describes our music perfectly ”

- Floyd Bassett

Winter roadworks alert

Melton drivers are being urged to plan ahead, with a list of roadworks set to disrupt commutes over the coming weeks.

Melton Valley Drive in Melton will remain closed at Federation Drive until 8 June, with motorists directed to access the area via High Street. Access to surrounding businesses will remain open throughout the works.

Further west, Murphys Road in Exford is closed at Exford Road until 30 June as upgrades continue on the Murphys Road and Exford Road intersection.

Residents in Hillside will also face lengthy disruptions, with Banchory Ave-

nue closed at the Melton Highway intersection until 14 August.

Several lane closures are also expected to slow traffic across the municipality.

On Grand Boulevard near Hopkins Road, one westbound lane remains closed until 27 May while crews undertake water main upgrades, with the timeline extended after workers encountered dense rock during construction.

Meanwhile, staged lane closures are continuing on Sinclairs Road, with traffic management in place between Akbar Avenue and Normandy Drive.

From 25 May until 24 July, the north-

bound lane between Normanby Boulevard and Akbar Avenue will close entirely, with detours via Akbar Avenue and Duffy Road. Heavy vehicles will be redirected via Taylors Road, Caroline Springs Boulevard and Neale Road.

Level crossing removal works will also contribute to disruptions, with southbound lanes on Ferris Road in Cobblebank set to close overnight between Abey Road and Shogaki Drive, and between Hollingsworth Drive and Coach Street between 31 May and 4 June. Detours will operate via Abey, Exford, and Bridge Roads.

Hopkins Road in Truganina has also

been temporarily closed to traffic at the rail crossing between Grand Boulevard and Meskos Road as part of level crossing removal works, with traffic diverted via Leakes, Troups, Dohertys, and Robinsons Roads.

Additional transport improvements are planned for later in the year, with the Department of Transport set to construct new and upgraded bus stops at locations across Cobblebank, Truganina, Thornhill Park, Fraser Rise, and Rockbank.

Temporary off-peak lane closures are expected from May and into the second half of 2026 while works are completed.



The green whistle program was launched at IPC Health. (Supplied)

Moorabool reviews arts strategy

Moorabool council has endorsed a communications and consultation strategy set to guide the review of its Arts and Culture Strategy 2021-2025, with community engagement set to take place later this month.

The strategy, adopted at council's 6 May meeting, outlines how residents, artists, organisations and government stakeholders will be consulted as council prepares to update its long-term vision for arts and culture across the shire.

The current strategy was originally adopted in August 2021 following extensive consultation with community members and industry groups. The council report notes the review as timely as the existing strategy nears completion and would help assess the effectiveness of current programs while identifying priorities for the future.

It established eight key pillars focused on growing arts participation, supporting local creatives, improving cultural infrastructure, and connecting communities through arts and heritage initiatives.

Under the adopted consultation plan, engagement activities will run between May and August this year and will include online surveys, artist forums, stakeholder interviewers, councillor briefings, and community pop-up sessions.

Council also plans to engage directly with local arts organisations, Traditional Owners, Regional Arts Victoria, state and federal arts agencies, and neighbouring councils.

'Green whistle' to help ease women's pain

A new green whistle program was launched at IPC Health's Sexual and Reproductive Health Hub.

Premier Jacinta Allen and Health and Ambulance Services Minister Harriet Shing visited the Deer Park campus to launch the program.

The rollout of the program will see the green whistle (Penthrox) at all women's sexual and reproductive health hubs as a free pain management option for IUD insertions and removal. This initiative aims to provide better pain management

options to make these procedures more comfortable and accessible.

IPC Health chief executive Jayne Nelson said that having access to the green whistle meant IPC Health can offer women and persons with a cervix a real choice in how they experience care.

"The integrated, holistic, multi-disciplinary care our women's health nurses provide has an amazing impact on women's lives," she said.

"Every day, we meet women at important decision points in their lives. And of-

ten, when discussing screening or treatment options, they ask: "Will it hurt?"

"That question is about more than just physical pain. It's about feeling safe, supported, and in control."

IPC Health has been delivering specialised women's health nursing services for more than 20 years.

The Sexual and Reproductive Health Hub was introduced in July 2024 as one of the state government's 20 Sexual and Reproductive Health Hubs.

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SCAN ME TO ENTER

Reconciliation Week in the west

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres

A series of free community events are set to be hosted across Moorabool and Melton during National Reconciliation Week, running from 27 May to 3 June.

In Moorabool, the week will begin with a Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremony and Flag Raising Ceremony on Thursday 28 May at 3.30pm at the Village Green in Bacchus Marsh, with afternoon tea provided to attendees following the ceremony.

Events will continue at the Ballan Library on Friday 29 May, kicking off with a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony at 10am, followed by a morning tea.

Moorabool council will also host a Wadawurrung Cultural Talk, facilitated by a Wadawurrung Traditional Owner following the Ballan Ceremony, starting at 10.30am.

Moorabool mayor Steve Venditti-Taylor said the community was warmly welcome to attend all events.

"National Reconciliation Week is an important time to strengthen relationships and foster understanding between the wider community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, acknowledging shared histories and working towards a more inclusive future," he Venditti-Taylor said.

"We look forward to hosting these

events and encourage the community to come along and take part."

Melton will mark National Reconciliation Week with a free community event celebrating shared histories, cultures and traditions, while raising awareness of reconciliation and showing support for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The event will be held on Wednesday 3 June from 10am-noon at the Civic Centre Lawn and Melton Community Hall, located at 232 High Street, Melton.

Attendees will hear from keynote speaker Tyson Yunkaporta, acclaimed author, researcher and senior lecturer in Indigenous Knowledges at Deakin University.

The program will also feature a flag raising ceremony, a First Nations performance, native food tastings and more.

"National Reconciliation Week is an opportunity for our community to come together, learn from one another and reflect on our shared histories, cultures and traditions," Melton mayor Lara Carli said.

"This year's theme, 'All in for Reconciliation,' calls on each of us to commit to reconciliation and building understanding, respect and stronger relationships."

For information on Moorabool's events, visit <https://www.moorabool.vic.gov.au/Events/Wadawurrung-Cultural-Talk>.

For Melton, go to melton.vic.gov.au/reconciliation.

Darley pours support into Biggest Morning Tea

Darley Neighbourhood House invited members from the community to come together in support of those affected by cancer on Thursday 21 May at their Biggest Morning Tea event.

The event formed part of Cancer Council's nationwide Biggest Morning Tea fundraiser, which aims to raise millions to support vital cancer research, prevention programs, and support services for those affected by cancer.

First launched in 1993, it's Cancer Council's most popular fundraiser and the most successful event of its kind in Australia, and Darley Neighbourhood House (DNH) is no stranger to hosting.

"We've been doing it for years," DNH general manager Amber Gordon said.

"Cancer affects everyone and it definitely affects people in our community and at the neighbourhood house. It's always really important to get together and just have a conversation about it," she said.

Over a million people participate annually, with the official month of May dedicated for nationwide events.

Participants show up to show support for those affected by cancer and give gold coin donations towards Cancer Council's overall cause.

For many, it's an opportunity to open up and connect with others around the community.

"I feel like everybody is touched by cancer in some way in Australia, it's certainly quite a personal thing for some people that attend," Ms Gordon said.

"It's always really important to get together and just have a conversation about it. The morning tea is a good conversation starter."



Attendees showed up to show support for those affected by cancer at Darley Neighbourhood House on Thursday 21 May. (Jack O'Shea-Ayres)

Others are encouraged to get involved and register their own Biggest Morning Tea events throughout May or June to help fund life-saving support for the almost 1

in 2 Australians impacted by cancer.

For details, and to register your own event, visit <https://www.biggestmorningtea.com.au/>.

Cobblebank hub named

Melton council has officially decided on a final name for Cobblebank's newest community building following a unanimous endorsement at its 27 April meeting.

Council endorsed the recommended name of the new building and will make a submission of a proposal to Geographic Names Victoria to approve Cobblebank Community Hub as the final name.

The five level community services building located on Hollingsworth Drive has been designed and constructed with the intention to address health and community services gaps across Melton by attempting to attract quality service providers to deliver critical services.

The building also attempts to address a proposed lack of fit-for-purpose office accommodation, works to provide an accessible and co-located community service space, and deliver critical services to improve community health and wellbeing.

Expected to be completed for practical use by the end of this year, community consultation took place on the naming theme of the services hub over November last year, with voters ultimately deciding on "linking the name to a place".

Further community engagement inviting a vote on the shortlisted names opened 24 February and attracted 88 votes, with Cobblebank Community Hub receiving the highest number of votes at 44.32 per cent.

Other shortlisted names included Cobblebank Community Service Centre, Cobblebank Community Support Centre, Cobblebank Connect, Cobblebank Place, and The Basalt Centre.

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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



Through the lens

This week's photographer's choice picture is Mount Macedon as seen from Tony Clarke Oval on a wintry Saturday afternoon. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 554589_01



Melton Carers Cuppa

Carers in the Melton community are invited to attend the Melton Carers Cuppa on Thursday 11 June from 10am-noon at Melton Library. The free event will provide information and support for people caring for someone with mental health challenges, disability, ageing or addiction, with presentations covering the NDIS, Services Australia, My Aged Care and Young Carers. Attendees can also connect with peer support workers with lived experience. Bookings are requested for catering purposes.

■ <https://events.blackthorn.io/5g4T0wQ7/5a2lMo7w4s1>

Hillside Probus Club

Hillside Probus Club is currently open to new members. Membership is open to retired and semi-retired professional and businesspersons and others with a similar background. The group meets from 10.30am-12.30pm every first Thursday of the month at Watergardens Hotel, 431 Kings Road, Taylors Lakes. There are no upper or lower age limits and the club is for men and women, couples and singles. Come and join for a cuppa and chat.

■ hillsideprobus@gmail.com

Melton South Community Centre

Melton South Community Centre is offering workshops about ginger beer and soy candles. The ginger beer workshop is on 15 June, from 1-2/30pm for \$5. The soy candles workshop is on 1 June, from 10am-12.30pm for \$90 or \$85 concession. Bookings essential.

■ 9747 8576, msscctr@bigpond.net.au

Community band

The Greater Western Community Band meets Thursdays from 7.30-9.30pm. The rehearsal venue is the Bridge Road Community Centre, Strathulloh (Melton South). The band is available for events.

Brass, woodwind and percussion players are always welcome.

■ Sally Hamond, 0401474582

God, movie and chat

A free community event is held every second Friday of each month with a film with spiritual themes screened followed by discussion. All thoughts are welcome. Bring your own sandwich. Tea, coffee, and popcorn are provided. The event is hosted at Holy Trinity Anglican Church Hall, 19a Gisborne Road, Bacchus March.

■ bacchusmarshanglican.org.au

Probus Club of Melton Ladies

The Probus Club of Melton Ladies meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 10am at the Melton Country Club. It is a social club where all ladies are welcome.

■ Glenda, 0418 504 616

Women Working Together

A program connecting women aged 50 above in need of assistance, with mentors and mentees. Open to women across the western suburbs, including Melton.

■ 9655 2131, or EmploymentSupport@cotavic.org.au

Zonta club

Zonta is an international organisation bringing women together to support other women. The Zonta Club of Melton meets on the first Monday of each month at Melton Country Club, Reserve Road, Melton. Meetings include guest speakers.

■ Janet, 0421 080 923, or info@zontaclubofmelton.org.au

Melton Over 50s Social Group

Join a friendly group of people aged 50 and older who enjoy each other's company while attending events such as dinners, shows, dancing, cinemas and more. If you live in the Melton area and would like to meet new

friends, in a welcoming group environment, this is for you.

■ Marlene, 0498 329 290

Rose carers of Maddingley Park

The group meets every Wednesday from 10am-noon at the Commemorative Rose Garden, Maddingley Park on the corner of Taverner Street and Grant Streets, Bacchus Marsh. They maintain the two rose gardens at the park. Volunteers are welcome and no experience is necessary to join.

■ Elaine, 0400 052 857 or Judy, 0428 463 538

Bacchus Marsh Ladies Probus Club

Meets on the first Thursday of every month from 10am-noon at the Avenue Bowling Club on 254 Main Street, Bacchus Marsh.

■ Krystyna, bacchusmarshladiesprobus@gmail.com

Melton Valley Ladies Probus

Melton Valley Ladies Probus Club meets on the second Friday each month at 10am at Melton Country Club. New members welcome.

■ Ann, 0425 705 150

Bacchus Marsh Senior Citizens

The Bacchus Marsh Senior Citizens look forward to meeting up with new members at the Andy Arnold Centre, 10 Bennett Street, Bacchus Marsh.

■ hopen@optusnet.com.au

Melton Concert Band

Rehearsals are on Thursdays from 7.30-9.30pm at the Bridge Road Community Centre, Bridge Road, Melton South. Musicians of any age who are able to read music are welcome to come along with their instrument (oboe, bassoon, flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, tuba, percussion). Please contact if you are intending to visit.

■ 0401 474 582

Cancer Support Group

MelMarsh Prostate Cancer Support Group is for prostate cancer patients and their carers and meets on the first Thursday of the month, from 12.30-2pm, at Melton South Community Centre. Attendees are encouraged as members share their journeys through what could be a very traumatic time of their lives. Explanations of medical terminology used in the treatment of this cancer are given in this group.

■ Grenville, 0412 741 865

Chatty Cafe Melton

Are you feeling lonely, isolated or just wanting to make some new friends? If so, Chatty Cafe is for you. The group meets on Friday mornings at 10am for delicious free coffee from Latin foods and wines at 10 Wallace Square, Melton.

■ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/352071857283331>

Friendship Group

For all aged 60 and older – are you looking for some new friends? Then this group is for you. The Melton and Surrounding areas Friendship Group meets fortnightly for a coffee and chat night and organises affordable outings such as dinners, movie nights and many social events – plus occasional weekends away, and local or overseas holidays.

■ Shirley, 0419 006 525 or Vera, 0406 493 734

Women's Support Group

Women's Support Group Melton is for any women who feel they would like to attend a peer support group which is relaxed, friendly and non-judgemental. The group meets weekly at 1pm on Mondays (except for public holidays) at Djerriwarrh Neighbourhood House, 239 Station Road, Melton. The group can discuss most subjects that may be of help

■ <https://ow.ly/QVwJ50Q5g42>

Fleetwood's magic captured

If you never did believe in miracles, you'll be beginning to wonder why after seeing Starshine in Werribee next month.

The Fleetwood Mac and Stevie Nicks Tribute band will be rocking Studio 185 on Friday 12 June, promising to bring nostalgia, mystique and power to their performance.

The gig will be driven by a standout lineup of musicians who embrace their Fleetwood Mac counterparts, featuring former Las Vegas performer Nikki Canale as Stevie Nicks.

Krissy Keys channels the soulful feel of

Christine McVie, Mitchell Jon goes his own way like Lindsay Buckingham, Regotron brings the groove of John McVie, while Brennan Smith glues it all together as Mick Fleetwood did behind the drum set.

"Starshine is about capturing the magic people felt when they first heard these songs," Canale said.

"It's not just a nostalgia trip — it's a shared experience between the band and the audience, where every lyric, harmony and moment matters."

With sold-out performances, standing

ovations and enthusiastic word-of-mouth following the show wherever it travels, Starshine's growing reputation is certainly not a rumour.

The show appeals to lifelong Fleetwood Mac fans, music lovers, and new audiences discovering the timeless power of these songs for the first time.

Tickets can be purchased at the door, but all are encouraged to secure them online.

Tickets: <https://megatix.com.au/events/starshine-a-tribute-to-stevie-nicks-fleetwood-mac-werribee>



Nikki Canale. (Marjorie Skea).



Multi-award winning cabaret artist, Miss Friby, is preparing to unleash her inner-beast in her new show in Footscray next month. (Damjan Janevski) 551682_04

Miss Friby's new show is a different beast

Multi-award winning cabaret artist, Miss Friby, will take over Footscray early next month with her bold new immersive performance, *Beasts of Burden and Other Party Guests*.

Developed through a Maribyrnong Arts and Culture creative residency, the show blends cabaret, dance, satire, and physical theatre into an experience that is part-party, part-ritual, part-beautifully controlled chaos.

Beasts of Burden and Other Party Guests explores the invisible weight we carry in contemporary life.

Set inside a party that slowly slips into its own logic, Miss Friby said the show invites audiences not to escape that weight, but to recognise it together.

"Everyone arrives carrying something," she said. "This show doesn't ask you to define it. It just asks you to bring it with you."

Miss Friby will perform the show for a three-week season at Footscray's Bluestone Church Artspace, the same place where she staged her previous production, *Galah*, in 2023.

It should bring back good memories for the inner west performer, as *Galah* won her

the 'Most Outstanding Cabaret Artiste' and 'Best Production Design' at the following year's Green Room Awards, Melbourne's peer-presented, performing arts industry honours.

With the historic venue to be turned into a bespoke pop-up theatre for *Beast of Burden* - complete with extravagant lighting design, live soundscapes and rhinestones - Miss Friby is every chance to win even more awards this time around.

To judge for yourself, get tickets and details at: <https://www.missfriby.com.au/beastsofburden>

Slapstick chaos awaits at Melton Community Hall

Melton Performing Arts (MPA) presents Terry Pratchett's *Guards! Guards!* at the Melton Community Hall across three entertaining days.

In the sprawling chaotic city of Ankh-Morpork, the once-proud City Watch has fallen into disrepair - its remaining members, Captain Vimes, Sergeant Colon, and Corporal Nobby Nobbs are more accustomed to avoiding crime than fighting it.

But when a secretive brotherhood summons a dragon to seize control of the city, the watch is reluctantly forced into action.

With the help of the idealistic new recruit Carrot Ironfoundersson, a six-foot-tall human raised by dwarves, the watch must uncover the conspiracy, face down an ancient beast, and perhaps even rediscover what it means to be heroes.



The cast and crew behind Melton Performing Arts production of *Guards! Guards!* (Supplied)

Packed with sharp wit, slapstick chaos, and Pratchett's trademark satire, *Guards! Guards!* brings the Discworld to life on stage in an epic tale of unlikely bravery, bureaucratic absurdity, and the triumph of a few very odd men (and one very determined dragon).

MPA Secretary Josh Tooth said the community-based performing arts group had developed quite the reputation in the lead-up to their next performance.

"We have 16 actors, most of whom are playing multiple characters," he said.

"Melton Performing Arts has begun to develop a fantastic reputation as a group in general, and there are lots of sneaky little Terry Pratchett fans lurking out there in the wilderness."

You can catch MPA's production of *Guards! Guards!* from 7pm on Thursday 28 May at the Melton Community Hall.

Guards! Guards! will then be presented at the same time on Friday 29 May, and twice on Saturday 30 May for a special day-time show at 1pm, followed by a final performance at 7pm.

Details and tickets: <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1543437>.

Dreamlike photos anchor artist's first solo show

Sunbury artist Paul Melnyczuk is hosting his first solo exhibition in Kyneton.

The photographer is exhibiting his collection of works, taken across his travels, featuring landscape photography.

Titled *Impressions*, Melnyczuk said his works have a dreamlike quality to them.

"The way I like to think of it is if you have a memory sort of being on a beach, perhaps a number of years ago, a lovely day, beautiful hot sun, closing your eyes and just trying to remember that image you get."

Melnyczuk said he aims to capture the emotion and image that he saw in that moment through the lens of his camera, sometimes a more impressionist approach, utilising software and intentional camera movement to capture a radically different but equally valid memory of the moment an image was captured.

Melnyczuk has been photographing his world since he first picked up a proper camera while spending three years in Africa from 1981.

After retiring from writing and photography for magazines, Melnyczuk said he began experimenting with different technology and techniques as a way of manipulating images to create his signature impressionist style he has on display now.

He said this collection of works started in Scotland during the covid lockdowns when he began taking landscape photographs.

When he moved from Scotland to Australia in 2024, he continued to capture his new surroundings as he explored Australia from Byron Bay, Mission Beach and Ocean Grove to Mount Macedon and more.

Covering the last six years of his photographic journey, this exhibition is one not to miss.

Impressions is on display until 1 June at The Old Auction House Creative Hub and Gallery, Kyneton.



Photo from the exhibition. (Paul Melnyczuk)



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PUBLIC NOTICES AND EVENT

CLASSIFIEDS EARLY DEADLINES KING'S BIRTHDAY

Classified deadlines for Tuesday, 9th June issue as follows:

Friday, 5th June at 1.30pm

Notice of an Application for a Planning Permit

The land affected by the application is located at:	8 Caviar Circuit AINTREE, LOT: 7049 PS: 915730K V/F: 12602/261	
The application is for a permit to:	Variation of registered restrictive covenant to remove Restriction 3 from the land which requires the lot to be developed with a double-storey dwelling	
A permit is required under the following clauses of the planning scheme:	Planning Scheme Clause	Matter for which a permit is required
	52.02	A permit is required to create, vary or remove an easement or restriction.
The applicant for the permit is:	Urbis Pty Ltd	
The application reference number is:	PA2026/9553/1	
You may look at the application and any documents that support the application at the office of the Responsible Authority or alternatively at:	Melton City Council Civic Centre 232 High Street MELTON VIC 3337	

This can be done during office hours and is free of charge. Any person who may be affected by the granting of the permit may object or make other submissions to the responsible authority.

An objection must:

- be sent to the Responsible Authority in writing,
- include the reasons for the objection, and
- state how the objector would be affected.

The Responsible Authority will not decide on the application before. **9th June 2026**

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Suzuki's EV debut imminent

By Alistair Kennedy, Marque Motoring

It's been a long time coming, but Suzuki has finally produced its first fully-electric vehicle.

Called e Vitara, it's a compact crossover SUV that won't be in dealerships until late-June or early-July but with preorders being taken.

The e Vitara shares the same platform and many features but styling differences with the Toyota Urban Cruiser. Both are built in India at Suzuki's Gujarat factory on its Heartect-e lightweight dedicated electric chassis.

At this stage it's unlikely that Toyota will be importing the Urban Cruiser.

Suzuki is unique in Australia in that a separate independent company distributes its vehicles in Queensland and part of Northern NSW with the factory-backed Suzuki Australia looking after all other areas. Generally, there are only minor differences including model grades, specifications or styling trims.

In both markets e Vitara will be available in either two- or four-wheel drive with two specification levels: 2WD Motion and AWD Ultra. In Queensland a 2WD Ultra is also offered.

The long-running Suzuki Vitara remains on sale in either petrol or hybrid powertrains but differs significantly from its EV sibling which is marginally longer but with a significantly longer wheelbase that provides additional interior space as well as a bolder, more premium styling and new tech features.

Styling

The design of the e Vitara is a major departure from the fairly bland looks of previous Vitara models. It's much bolder and more adventurous with a smooth but sculpted exterior sitting above, and surrounded by prominent black plastic cladding to infer some off-road credentials.

At the front the tall erect bonnet sits over LED headlights and large LED daytime running lights. The usual narrow 'grille' that identifies most EVs, with a large Suzuki badge in the centre.

The rear doors have the annoying 'hidden' handles mounted high on the C pillars and designed to suggest a coupe appearance.

The rear mirrors have a similar design to those at the front with a full-width light bar linking them.

Both variants come with 18-inch alloy wheels.

Ultra gets a panoramic nonopening glass roof with a retractable sunshade.

There are four colour options. Arctic White is standard. Bluish Black Pearl and Land Breeze Green are an \$890 option with two-tone also available with a Black Pearl roof on the Ultra for \$1340.

Interior

The biggest design feature comes inside the e Vitara. The brown seats and trim will not be to everyone's taste but at least it's different and we loved it.

The floating centre console is piano black that's hard to view in bright sunlight and too easy to smudge. A big plus, at least in our eyes, are physical climate control switches in the centre of the dash.

There are twin large cupholders in the centre console although grippers would have helped for smaller containers. The door bins are large and wide. There's also a large space below the centre console for keeping items away from prying eyes.

Ultra gets a smartphone wireless charger at the base of the dashboard.



RATINGS	
Looks:	8/10
Performance:	7/10
Safety:	7/10
Thirst:	7/10
Practicality:	7/10
Comfort:	7/10
Tech:	7/10
Value:	6/10



Suzuki's e Vitara sits at the top end of the compact SUV EV category and will struggle to compete against Chinese rivals. (Pictures: Supplied)

Some clever design allows rear seat and boot space to be adjusted with the seats able to slide back and forwards. When the seats are all the way back for maximum legroom luggage space is just 238 litres. At the other extreme, legroom is quite cramped but luggage space is increased to 310 litres. With the rear seatbacks folded there's 562 litres.

There is a useful storage compartment beneath the boot floor but no spare wheel.

Powertrain

The e Vitara powertrain combines a lithium iron-phosphate (LFP) battery system, electric drive axles and an integrated heat pump battery management system.

The 2WD Motion variant comes with a 49kWh battery that drives a 106kW/193Nm motor mounted on the front axle. Ultra increases the battery to 61kWh and adds a rear-mounted motor for total output of 135kW and 307Nm.

The charging port is on the front passenger side of the vehicle. Charging time for both variants are an impressive 11kW with AC and 70kW with DC.

WLTP driving range is listed at 344km and 395km respectively The Queensland-only 2WD Ultra has a claimed 426km range.

Vehicle to Load (VTL) is available in both variants.

Safety

Standard safety in all e Vitara models includes seven airbags, adaptive cruise control, autonomous emergency braking, rear cross-traffic alert, lane keeping assist and departure prevention, forward collision warning, dual sensor brake support, multicollision braking, high beam assist,

front and rear parking sensors and blind spot monitoring.

Ultra AWD adds front LED foglamps, adaptive high beam, hill descent control and a trail mode switch.

The absence of a front centre airbag and a driver monitoring system contribute to the e Vitara only gaining a four-star ANCAP rating. While the extra airbag is disappointing, not being incessantly nagged by a camera pointing at the driver's face may well be a positive selling point for many drivers - including us.

Infotainment

Standard in both variants are 10.1-inch central touchscreen and 10.25-inch digital instrument cluster in front of the driver. There's a 360-degree view camera as well as front and rear USB-A and USB-C ports.

The infotainment screen falls well short of the sharp high-res screens that we're used to from Chinese vehicles.

Motion has four-speaker audio with Ultra stepping up to a premium 10-speaker Harman Infinity system.

Driving

The compact size of the e Vitara and the EV agility makes it an excellent urban vehicle.

The Ultra AWD that we tested came with a 10-way adjustable driver's seat which allowed it to settle into a comfortable driving position.

Visibility is good with a large windscreen, side and rear windows together with relatively thin A-pillars.

The gear selector is a rotary and push-down set-up with a park button above it. There are also physical buttons to adjust

brake regeneration, hill descent, parking brake and auto hold.

Zero to 100km/h acceleration is listed at 7.4 seconds from the AWD Ultra and 9.6 seconds in the FWD Motion.

The ride is relatively soft, aimed at comfort rather than sportiness.

Despite the cladding, a decent 180mm ground clearance and the eAxe. e Vitara is only suited for modest off-road conditions. Those looking for serious bush bashing will be aware that a Jimny EV is under development and will be hoping that it comes here.

Summing up

The compact EV SUV range is growing rapidly with most models coming from China and with very competitive pricing. This is Suzuki's biggest challenge because the e Vitara driveaway prices run from \$48,990 for the 2WD Motion through to \$58,990 for the AWD Ultra.

These prices drop by \$2000 with limited time cashback offers.

Even with these discounts e Vitara sits at the top end of the compact SUV EV category and it will struggle to compete against Chinese rivals such as the BYD Atto, Jaecoo J5 and GWM Ora which are more than \$10,000 cheaper.

The fact that Suzuki is a respected and trusted Japanese brand will no doubt attract buyers, provided they aren't deterred by it being manufactured in India.

It's a capable and comfortable vehicle mostly aimed at urban conditions and with a fair balance between physical and touchscreen controls that will satisfy both tech-savvy and conventional drivers.



RATINGS

Looks - 8
Performance - 7
Safety - 7
Thirst - 6
Practicality - 7
Comfort - 6
Tech - 7
Value - 8

Passenger comfort for K4

By Derek Ogden, Marque Motoring

After more than two decades and more than 200,000 sales in Australia, the Cerato was fast running out of legs.

The self-styled much loved small passenger car could have kept up with design and technical developments in the segment but Kia had other ideas.

The new K4 kicked down the door in sedan format with four trimlines – S, Sport, Sport+, GT-Line – and two petrol engines before later being joined by hatchback for MY26 models, aligning them with Kia's global naming convention.

Both sedan and hatches score an updated 2-litre MPI Atkinson Cycle engine with CVT in the lower grades, while the flagship GT-Lines retain its 1.6T GDI motor matched with an eight-speed automatic transmission.

Prices open at \$32,090, plus on-road costs, for K4 S 2-litre CVT sedan and hatchback,

rising to \$34,190 with the addition of a Safety Pack. The Sport and Sport+ follow at \$36,690 and \$39,090, respectively, with the GT-Line 1.6L T-GDI, with eight-speed auto, topping off the range at \$43,790. The last was on test.

The entry-level S model can be upgraded with an optional Safety Pack, which includes an enhanced instrument display via a second 12.3-inch instrument layout and 5-inch HVAC interface, plus dual zone climate control, plus an expanded autonomous emergency braking suite offering Junction Turning and Crossing and Direct/Oncoming Lane Change Detection.

The K4 is covered by Kia's seven-year unlimited kilometre warranty, seven years capped price servicing and up to eight years roadside assist by following scheduled Kia services.

Styling

The term hatchback could be something of a misnomer: with a wheelbase pushed out to 2720mm, the sleek K4 hatch exhibits the characteristics of a station wagon. Inspired by Kia's 'Opposites United' design philosophy, vertical headlamps and daytime running lights have been pushed

to the outer edges highlighting the car's wide stance.

Not normally a fan, I can live with the flush rear door handles integrated into the C-pillar and 18-inch wheels, which lend a sporty on-road presence, capped off in the GT-Line by an air diffuser and raked rear window.

Interior

Sitting on a relatively long wheelbase (2720mm), it offers good headroom and legroom in the second row. Adults can fit comfortably, and they score rear air-con vents and two USB-C ports as standard. Kia designers aimed to make the cabin approachable and easy to use via a bank of hard-wired switchgear on the dash.

The fulsome exterior translates to roomier proportions front and back, while front-seat occupants benefit from increased head and shoulder room.

Rear-seat passengers do not miss out on convenience kit with twin USB-C ports at the back of the centre console, together with rear air vents and a neat storage cubby. With 438 litres of boot space, cargo area is larger than some hatchback rivals (Corolla and Mazda 3 spring to mind), the K4 rivals small SUVs for room.

GT-Line emphasises its sporting image with embossed details on two-tone seats and textured console crash pad. A wide sliding sunroof is exclusive to the flagship.

Sustainability is foremost with materials such as Bio plastics, leather, foam, paint and recycled yarns and felt.

Infotainment

A shoutout to Kia for not replacing traditional hard switches with touchscreen controls.

Outsize switches operate air-con temperature and fan speed while incorporating shortcuts for navigation and audio functions. There's also a simple volume roller.

The entry-level S trim is limited to a digital driver instrument cluster with a 4-inch multi-function LCD display. Add the Safety Pack option or move up the gradings for an expansive trio of displays, comprising



Kia's K4 offers style, tech and value for money. (Pictures: Supplied)

a 12.3-inch digital cluster, 5-inch HVAC set-up and separate 12.3-inch infotainment touchscreen.

Kia Connect is a car service providing customer benefits in safety, security, convenience and real-time data including weather and traffic info. Also offered is Over-the Air software updates such as the latest maps without a visit to a service centre.

Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are standard throughout the range, while the GT-Line adds a Qi wireless charging pad and ambient mood lighting.

Engines/transmissions

The K4 GT-Line has the exclusive use of Kia's 1.6-litre T-GDI turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engine putting out 142kW of power and 264Nm of torque, driving the front wheels via an eight-speed automatic transmission.

The maker claims fuel consumption of 6.7 litres per 100km in the combined urban/highway cycle. The test car recorded 9.1 litres/100km in the city and suburbs and 5.4 litres/100km on the motorway.

Safety

The K4 Hatchback has a five-star ANCP safety rating but the base S grade (without the \$2000 Safety Pack) drops back to four stars. Apart from that all grades are subject to an increased focus on driver safety.

Standards are up with features such as Forward Collision Avoidance Assist, Smart Cruise Control with stop/go function, Lane Keep and Lane Follow Assist, Multi-Collision Braking, Blind Spot Collision-Avoidance Assist, Driver Attention Warning, Intelligent Speed Limit Assist, Rear View Monitor and High Beam Assist.

A full complement of airbags includes a front-centre side airbag.

Driving

The Aussie GT-Line, like all K4s, was put through a rugged suspension program to suit local driving conditions. The result is smooth handling of bumpy city streets and a commanding ride over challenging country roads.

In fact the flagship behaves in line with its sporty looks – with a gruff engine note, a pleasure to push to the limit.

Driver warnings and intrusive automatic voice alerts are kept to a minimum. However, Kia's latest Highway Driving Assist is on hand to chip in when travelling on freeways or motorways, incorporating adoptive cruise control with stop-and-go capability.

The system combines Lane Following Assist to keep the vehicle centred in the lane, even through curves, adding Lane Change Assist allowing the K4 autonomously to swap lanes when safe conditions are met.

Improved body rigidity, vibration and harshness are maintained throughout, the result of the use of high-strength steel and reinforced sound insulation.

Summary

With electric vehicle sales bubbling away, when it comes to the ICE (internal combustion engine) alternative, for style, tech and value for money there are few to beat the Kia K4 GT-Line Hatchback.

Oliver Dan powers to victory

By Tim O'Connor

Inter Dominion aspirant Oliver Dan reasserted his ranking among Victoria's best pacers when he returned to the winner's list in the Hertz Melton Free For All on Saturday night.

Oliver Dan enjoyed a cosy run on the back of the leader My Ultimate Barney before James Herbertson eased the son of Bettors Delight to the outside turning for home.

Oliver Dan sprinted quickly and put the race beyond doubt half-way down the running to score by three metres in a slick mile rate of 1:51 for the 1720-metre trip.

Herbertson said the Emma Stewart-trained Oliver Dan had been disadvantaged by awkward barrier draws re-

cently.

"He just hasn't been getting the right trip racing against horses having cheaper runs and that sort of thing, but tonight everything was perfect," Herbertson said.

Herbertson said the pacer's last win in August last year in Sydney underlines his raw talent.

"If you go back to his Menangle form - he was so powerful when he won up there going 48, and you just don't see horses do what he did," he said.

"He was probably up in class a little bit tonight and just got the right trip. I think it just comes down to getting the right trip with him."

Oliver Dan is one of three horses heading to Brisbane for the Inter Dominion series under the banner of Team Zav,

with Fox Dan and War Dan Buddy making up the trio.

Earlier in the night, Some American provided the Stewart stable with the first of a winning treble when he led all the way to score first-up in the Swift Signs Pace.

Some American had little difficulty in crossing to the lead from his wide draw and appeared to have something in reserve, holding a three-metre margin from Day Two in a mile rate of 1:54.4.

It was the multiple Group 1 placegetter's first appearance at the racetrack since September last year.

Driver Ryan Sanderson believes Some American can achieve success at the elite level.

"He has always been in big races and beaten home a lot of great horses, and

he is capable of winning a big race like a Grand Circuit race now," Sanderson said.

Lightly-raced three-year-old Most Exciting completed the stable treble with an authoritative win against the older horses in the final event.

Mark Pitt was allowed to dictate the terms of the race to suit himself on the \$1.20 favourite as the field settled into single file formation and the race turned into a dash to the line in a 26.8 last 400 metres.

Pitt said the son of Always B Miki still has some ringcraft to learn.

"There are some bigger fish to fry later on in the season, but he felt super tonight. He got a little bit lost out in front on his own, but I'm sure once he has a few more runs and works it out then he'll be one to watch," Pitt said.

Mannering is reaching great heights

By Peter Howe

Sliding door moments have been responsible for unearthing many Australian stars including this month's Don Deeble nominee Alanna Mannering.

Mannering once dreamt of representing Australia in gymnastics, but one athletics training session changed all that.

Maribyrnong Sports Academy athletics coach Darren Clark saw potential in Mannering when she trialled for a place in the year 7 program.

She excelled in the 100 metres, 200 metres and long jump at primary school and when she was accepted into MSA she joined the Williamstown Athletic Club.

In March last year, the teenager was at Aberfeldie Athletics Track was ready to start her pre-season campaign with a two kilometre run.

"It's a daunting task and I hated running that distance," she said. "One of our coaches asked if there was anyone who'd like to volunteer to try the pole vault."

"My hand went up without giving it too much thought, anything to get out of the two kilometre."

The rest, as they say, is history.

While Mannering still does gymnastics twice a week, it's the pole vault that has her full attention.

The decision has proven to be the right one with Mannering recently winning the under-16 national pole vault title with a personal best jump of 3.33 metres.

"I bypassed little athletics because I was doing gymnastics and I now run for Keilor-St. Bernards with my girlfriends in their relay teams," she said.

"I picked up the basics of the pole vault quickly.

"I love the feeling of controlling my body in the air. The technique and co-ordination required is quite similar to gymnastics.

"I am lucky I have natural speed, but I am still learning to run with the pole. You also can't be put off by a fear of heights either."

Mannering's training regime is fierce and she's on the track four days a week.

The upper body strength required to vault into the air and maintain control of your movements is immense.

Her training imitates that and includes drills like climbing ropes only using her arms, and climbing ropes upside down again only using her upper body.

Add push ups, yoga ball exercises, core, upper body weights and leg lifts.

Then she moves outside to work on her run up to improve her technique.

Within 12 months, Mannering had set her sights on the qualifying standards to meet the entry requirements for Victorian, national and Oceania selection.



Alanna Mannering. (Scott Sidley/@ss_athletics)

"I don't get very nervous before competitions," she said. "I am really focussed on beating myself and delivering PB's every time I compete."

At the national titles, Mannering didn't have the competition that she wanted.

She missed her first two jumps at the entry height for the competition.

"I gave myself, my family and coaches a real scare," she said. "I was lucky and got over at my last jump and went on to win the title."

"I remained composed but I was a little nervous. You can never take anything for granted."

Mannering also recently represented Australia in the 2026 Simplot Games held in America, finishing fifth in the 4x200 metres relay.

At Rare Air Meets back in Australia, she secured top 10 finishes in elite pole vault competitions, competing against athletes

much older than her.

So, what does the immediate future hold?

"My end goal is to represent Australia at the Olympic Games," she said.

"The Oceania games will be held in Darwin next year and while I cannot compete because of my age at the time, when the pole vault is conducted, I will be age ready.

"My coach Bill Georgantas has set a plan in place.

"I must be jumping 3.9 metre-plus.

"Moreover, to be at my best I must be having fun."

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.

If you would like to nominate a monthly winner, contact swrsportsclub@gmail.com or 0408 556 631.

Sports shorts

BCA

Darley has signed Lachlan Peterson for the Ballarat Cricket Association season. Peterson joins the Lions from Melton's Victorian Sub-District Cricket Association side. Last season he took 22 wickets at an average of 18.55 with Darley saying he is also a handy middle order bat.

VSDCA

Melton has announced the signings of two imports for the Victorian Sub-District Cricket Association season. The Lions announced that South African Calvin Tanner and Henry Renshaw, who is from the United Kingdom, would be joining the club for the next season. Meanwhile, Lions' veteran Brad Jones was named in the VSDCA team of the year.

RDFL

Diggers Rest bounced back with a big win against Melton Centrals in the Riddell District Football League on Saturday. Coming off their first loss of the season, the Burras controlled the game after quarter time on the way to 17.15 (117)-4.11 (35). Mitchell Day kicked five goals for the Burras, while Marcus Calvaresi named their best. For Centrals, Bradley Layton and Dylan McDonald kicked two goals each. McDonald was named their best. Elsewhere, Melton South beat Macedon in a thriller, 9.10 (64)-8.13 (61). The win was the Panthers third of the season and has them sitting in sixth/

EDFL

Hillside returned to the winners list in the Essendon District Football League women's premier division for the first time since round one. The Sharks were at home against Keilor and put in a dominant display on the way to a 15.7 (97)-0.1 (10) win. Caitlin Sargent kicked five goals and Nyakoat Dojiok kicked four goals. Kiara Rigg was named their best. The Sharks sit seventh on the ladder. Elsewhere, Caroline Springs was too strong for Maribyrnong Park, winning 12.10 (82)-0.2 (2). Jacinta Kondis kicked five goals in the win. The Lakers sit second on the ladder.

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Georgies stay focused

By Tara Murray

Caroline Springs George Cross has a better idea of where it sits in the National Premier League competition.

The Georgies had a big start to the season before slipping back into the middle of the pack as the season approached the half way mark.

Georgies' coach Eric Vassiliadis said they were fairly pragmatic about how the season has gone so far.

"You break it down to facts and it's about the outcome," he said.

"It was important to have a good start to the year and it panned out that way.

"We played a lot of the top end teams late and it was a wonderful reality check on what it takes to be at this level.

"We have a lot of work to do. We're in a

reasonable position and we want to be able to do something special."

Vassiliadis said they the focus was still to play finals.

He said currently the top six sides are long established clubs which is what they want.

On Friday night, the Georgies shared the points with the Bentleigh Greens in a 0-0 draw.

"It was a cagey affair," Vassiliadis said.

"It was a stereotypical performance by them in the first half and they missed a penalty which they would have been disappointed with.

"The second half was more us. We missed the best opportunity to win the game late.

"We were pleased with the output in the second half."

Vassiliadis said their biggest challenge so



Michael Tzoutzidis. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 534346_02

far this season had been not scoring enough goals.

It's something they will look to address in the transfer window.

"We have not scored from the striker position," he said.

"We've had a number of opportunities

we are creating and it's maybe about whether we can be in better positions.

"We need more competition and more support in the front third and a midfielder.

"It will give us more depth and replace the guys that we lost."

The big games continue for the Georgies as they play off on Wednesday night for a place in last 32 of the Australia Cup.

Vassiliadis said the game with the Preston Lions is massive for the club.

"It's big for the club to be in position one game away from the 32," he said.

"It's part of the ambition to do something special. It's difficult managing players loads with all the leagues.

"We play Green Gully three days later which is even more important.

"We need to get max points on Wednesday night and on Saturday.

Impey makes WA move in search of AFL dream

By Tara Murray

Lucas Impey has made the move from Melton to Perth in pursuit of his AFL dream.

The young ruck, who played with Williamstown's Victorian Football League side the past couple of years, is this year playing with Swan Districts in the West Australian Football League.

It was about getting a fresh start for Impey as he tries to take that next step.

"It's really good and the weather is good," he said.

"I have the goal to play in the AFL and it led me to the WAFL.

"It's a highly rated state league and it's nice to come here to have the best opportunity to fulfil my dream of playing in the AFL."

Impey said Swan Districts was the only WAFL team to reach out to him about making the move across the country.

That was all that he needed.

"They had watched some of my games and wanted me to come across and play with them," he said.

"They wanted me to be the main ruck, which I needed to be. They valued me."

Impey took a lot out of his time with Williamstown having played 10 games across the 2024-25 seasons.

With former AFL player Tom Downie holding the number one ruck spot at the Seagulls, his chances were limited.

"It was a tough gig trying to get in the side," Impey said. "I learned a lot from Tom and am thankful for him to show me and make me the player I am now.

"You have to start somewhere."

While Impey's chances were limited last season in the VFL, he played a key part in Darley's Ballarat Football League premiership last year.

He said both he and his teammates would have liked for him to be playing at the higher level, but it was nice to be part of a premiership team.

"I'm happy with how the year ended."

Impey has had an interrupted first season in the WAFL, with concussion meaning he was on the sidelines for a few weeks.

He said he was enjoying being the side's number one ruck.

"I've been given the keys and it's fulfilling knowing that I came across to play my role," he said.

"I want to string a few more consistent games together. I want to start playing my role and put my best foot forward.

"I'm happy start to season."

At just 20, Impey knows his best football is ahead of him.

Rucks are traditionally late bloomers and he didn't start playing to 2023 having



Lucas Impey. (Blake Parry/@thesportsphoto)

played basketball at a high level as a junior.

Impey said he understands the game a lot better than he did three years ago and is a lot more aware of the game.

While football is the focus, Impey did return to the court in the Country Basketball League for the Macedon Ranges Rockies in the off season.

Despite limited games, he made the all-star 5 team.

"It was a bit of fun," he said. "It was my old coach and old buddies.

"I got to get fitness up as well.

"I was a bit rusty at the start and was drawing fouls ... I knocked a few players over."

Bears break through

Burnside Heights got its first win of the season in the Essendon District Football League division 2 season, but it wasn't without drama.

Having pushed most sides this season, the Bears were able to get over the line against Keilor Park on Saturday, 16.10 (106)-14.10 (94).

Bears' coach Damien Gillman said there was a huge relief to finally get the win.

"It was outstanding for all the hard work that everyone has put in every week," he said.

"We saw glimpses throughout the match."

The Bears had pushed many sides for a half or three quarters throughout the season without finishing it off.

Gillman said they made some changes at half time to try and improve their second halves and saw that come to fruition on Saturday.

It was nine goals a piece in the second half.

"One of the bonuses," he said of the second half.

"We've now got our first win on the board. What is particularly pleasing is all the work in the pre-season and season and the group seeing what can work for them."

Gillman said there was a bit of a weird ending to the match but they were pleased to get the win.

"We had a player sent off with a red card with a couple of minutes to go," he said.

"We replaced that player and they kicked a goal and then we kicked a goal.

"Keilor Park called for a headcount ... There was nothing malicious about it.

"We knew the rules that you could replace players. We got a free kick and then the siren went.

"We still would have won by a goal had the scores been wiped."

Ethan Dalla Rosa kicked five goals for the Bears and Cade Anset kicked four goals.

Lachie Evans and Zack Williams were named their best.

Gillman said they hoped that the win would now give them more confidence.

They face Northern Saints this week, with the Saints also having one win for the year.

"We know how to win now," he said.

"We will take confidence from it. We now need to string it together for a whole four quarters not just 15 minutes.

"It's potentially another winnable game."



Bears on the board



Impey's big move



Jacinta Kondis. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 428526_06

History maker

By Tara Murray

No one sits higher when it comes to goals kicked in Caroline Springs Football Club's history than Jacinta Kondis.

At just 20, Kondis has broken Caroline Springs all-time goalkicking record.

Already the club's leading female goalkicker, she now has the overall record.

In the Lakers round six match against Oak Park in the Essendon District Football League premier division match, Kondis kicked her 326th career goal to sit number one in club history.

"It's still hard to believe actually," Kondis said about the record.

"There was talk about it for a few weeks. I was one short last week, everyone knew it was going to happen this week.

"Very special and I'm very honoured. "It's a pretty good feeling."

Having played all of her football with the Lakers, Caroline Springs Football Club has a special place in her heart.

"I'm very grateful," she said. "To be up there, I still can't believe it."

Kondis started playing with Caroline

Springs when she was 11 in juniors and has progressed through the ranks.

She said she played a number of sports as a kid and ended up landing on football.

"Shaun Rainer, my coach at the time, is still with me now and coaching me, he was a pretty big part of my career," she said.

"I've always been in the forward line.

"I started seniors when I was 16, I was pretty young when I got chucked straight into the forward line."

Kondis kicked 45 goals in 2022 in first senior season of football, with the Lakers winning their first premierships.

She has beaten that twice, including last season when she kicked 63 goals in the Lakers premierships.

Her best in a game is 15 goals.

Kondis sees herself as a leader in the Lakers forward line as they look for more success.

"At the time [2022] Caitlin Pretty was in there, she's been a mentor for me and is still a mentor for me," she said.

"It was good to be able to learn off her and be able to get to where I am now.

"There's a few young girls who are in

the forward line and having Pretty in the backline, I'm kind of that mentor figure in the forward line now and around the ground as well.

"I like leading young ones."

Kondis said she did consider playing at higher levels when she was younger but for her now it's playing with her friends.

"It's the only reason that I play, the girls are beautiful," she said. "They are best bunch of girls that you can meet and finishing off with a couple of premierships each year is pretty good as well."

The Lakers have a new challenge this season having moved across to the EDFL premier competition.

Kondis said it was the challenge that they needed.

"It's good, very different," she said. "It's just better footy, better for us girls as well and playing against better teams we work up to that standard of footy as well, it's really good."

While she already has the club's goalkicking record, Kondis is just starting out and hopes there's plenty more goals to come.

Bears make a statement

By Tara Murray

Burnside Heights is proving that it will be a contender in the Essendon District Football League women's division 1 competition. One of the unknowns this season, the Bears are continuing to impress and now sit second on the ladder with a 5-1 record.

On Saturday, the Bears had their best win of the season as they accounted for Keilor Park, 5.3 (33)-1.4 (10). Bears' coach Michael Davis couldn't be much happier with how the season has gone.

"We are now one of the teams to beat," he said.

"It reinforced that and they are a good side and they can compete with any team. "The competition is leveling out with the division 1 and 2 teams. We were a great unknown with how we would go."

Davis said they took a little bit to get going against the Devils.

He said once they got going they were able to put some scoreboard pressure on "Our defence was outstanding," he said.

"Sarah [Poni], Anj [Singh], Nikita [Asani-Davis] and Emily [Newton] held it down with a strong wind.

"They wanted to prove a point that they are the best defence in the competition."

Davis said they felt their level had increased on what they had done in previous seasons, including playing in the past two division 1 grand finals.

"The girls who were our second stringers are now first stringers," he said.

"We've got under-19s coming up and pushing us to a higher level. "We're not relying on the likes of Krissy Trang to carry the side like we previously did.

"There's four or five players doing her role. We're more unpredictable."

In more pleasing signs, the Bears had another under-19 player step up and play in the senior side on the weekend.

Davis said Chloe Wadden gave a different dynamic when she came and showed she's up to senior football.

"That's eight under-19s that have played already," Davis said. "That is fantastic."

The Bears face Taylors Lakes this Saturday.

Davis said they would continue to work on what they were doing.

"It has been ugly against Craigieburn and Keilor Park," he said. "We've had moments when we've been clean and other moments it's been like under-10s.

"We're trying to eliminate that and be more consistent." "We'll continue to rotate the group as we have a few sore players. We'll give more under-19s a go as well."

Meanwhile, Burnside Heights' division 2 men's side got its first win of the season, beating Keilor Park.

The Bears won, 16.10 (106)-14.10 (94).

Lachlan Evans, Zack Williams and Ferdinando Petrarca were named the Bears best.