

MELTON & MOORABOOL

Star Weekly

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Ducks in danger

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres

A Brookfield local has started a community petition calling for the installation of speed bumps on Black Dog Drive following concerns about speeding drivers and endangered wildlife.

Roman Kondrat, a daily user of Black Dog Drive, said he started the petition after becoming sick of seeing dead birds on his daily commute.

"This has been going on for at least several months from what I have seen," Mr Kondrat said.

"Personally I had to move two dead ducks and one swamphen off the road. This is not including others that I had found on the side of the road."

He believes the issue stems from drivers who speed along the bridge which extends above Arnolds Creek, where the birds' habitats are situated.

“ Not everyone is an animal lover, but at the end of the day we have to share the road ” - Roman Kondrat

"Seeing the way some drivers carelessly drive along that road, even in some cases when they can see the birds crossing the road they would continue driving as if they weren't there," he said.

Mr Kondrat said he had contacted Melton council to notify it of his concerns and was told a traffic management officer would inspect the area within four weeks, informing him of the result.

"I am waiting for a response," he said.

The issue has gotten so out of hand for Mr Kondrat that he has had to step in and help to remove wildlife from the road during peak-hour traffic, when risks are highest.

"I just recently had to stop traffic to make sure ducks could pass safely across the road, and even then drivers were speeding past me," he said.

"Some good people stopped, and luckily the birds could cross safely."

A Melton spokesperson said council had



Above: Roman Kondrat is advocating for speed bumps along Black Dog Drive to slow down drivers for wildlife and ducks using the road to cross. 558105_03
Left: Arnolds Creek. (Pictures: Damjan Janevski) 558105_05



received reports on the issue, which led to the implementation of a range of safety measures.

"Council has received previous reports on this matter and has undertaken

reviews and assessments which resulted in the implementation of a range of safety measures in the area, including installation of a roundabout at the intersection of Black Dog Drive and Campaspe Crescent, installation of pedestrian refuge islands and traffic Islands at various intersections, a speed reduction from 60km/h to 50km/h along Black Dog Drive, and line marking of parking lanes to narrow the road and slow motorists down," the spokesperson said.

"Council is investigating the current report to determine if further measures are required."

Mr Kondrat's petition has close to 100 signatures.

He said instead of posting the petition online and expecting people to do the right thing, he preferred door-knocking and starting conversations with people around wildlife safety and the risk speeding poses to all road users.

"People appreciate when you take the effort," he said. "Not everyone is an animal lover, but at the end of the day we have to share the road."

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A plan to expand Ballan

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres

A major expansion on Ballan's south-western fringe has moved a step closer after Moorabool council voted to seek authorisation from the planning minister to progress a planning scheme amendment which could deliver housing for up to 3800 people.

Council unanimously approved to seek the planning minister's approval at its 3 June meeting after consideration of planning scheme amendment C106moor, which proposes the rezoning of approximately 128.5 hectares of land south-west of the township for future urban development.

The land, which is currently used for cropping and grazing, is bounded by the

Melbourne-Ballarat railway line, Geelong-Ballan Road, Rowett Lane, and Denholms Road.

If approved, the amendment would facilitate a master-planned residential community comprising about 1255 lots, alongside significant community infrastructure including parks, sporting facilities, a neighbourhood activity centre, land for a future school, and a community hub.

Council officers noted the proposal aligns with the Ballan Strategic Directions originally adopted in 2019, which identified the area as a future residential growth precinct capable of supporting the town's long-term expansion, while maintaining Ballan's country character.

The amendment would rezone most of

the land to the general residential zone, establish a two-hectare commercial 1 zone for a future neighbourhood activity centre, and apply planning overlays to guide development and address environmental considerations.

Plans for the precinct include four local parks, an eight-hectare active recreation reserve, walking and cycling paths, wetlands, and a connected open space network, with almost all future homes to be located within 400 metres of a local park.

The proposed activity centre would include a supermarket and a range of retail and service businesses, while development contributions would help fund sporting facilities, community infrastructure, road upgrades, and shared path con-

nections.

The report presented to council noted the development would generate substantial additional traffic, with supporting infrastructure planned to accommodate future growth across Ballan South.

Before any rezoning can occur, the amendment must be authorised by the planning minister and undergo a public exhibition process.

Residents, landowners, and community members will have the opportunity to review the proposal and lodge submissions.

Any unresolved submissions could later be considered by an independent planning panel before council determines whether to adopt the amendment.



Different Journeys chief executive Mel Spencer. (Damjan Janevski). 554711_07

Support for carers to ease their journey

Different Journeys is helping to shine a light on the often-overlooked challenges faced by unpaid carers through its Melton Carers Cuppa event, a community initiative designed to provide connection, support and understanding.

The organisation supports autistic and neurodivergent people, their families, and unpaid carers through peer support, education, and community programs, meeting with Melton's carers for a morning of conversation and peer support on 11 June.

Chief executive Mel Spencer said one of the biggest challenges carers face is navigating complex systems while managing

the daily demands of supporting a loved one.

"Many carers are under enormous pressure and are dealing with stress, burnout, social isolation, and financial pressure," Ms Spencer said.

"One of the biggest gaps we fill is lived-experience support. People often tell us they rarely get the chance to speak openly with someone who truly understands what they are going through."

The Melton Carers Cuppa was born from a desire to combat social isolation among carers.

"We wanted to create a relaxed and wel-

coming space where carers could step away from their caring role for a moment, have a coffee, connect with others, and feel part of a supportive community," she said.

Ms Spencer believes more support is needed for carers across the community, particularly before they reach crisis point.

"No one gives you a guide when you suddenly become a carer. Often, the best way to learn is from people who have walked the path before you.

"Hearing someone say, 'This is the first time I've felt heard in a long time,' reminds us why community connection and peer support matter so much."

Have your say on future events

Melton council is calling on residents to share their views on the Djerriwarrh Festival as planning begins for the upcoming 2026 event.

The all-day event is presented jointly by council and Victoria Police each year, and includes live performances, fireworks displays, market stalls, food stalls, live music, and a mix of different activities aimed at the young and old, drawing crowds from across the municipality.

The consultation process seeks feedback on what people enjoy most about the festival and what could be improved, helping to shape future programming and experiences.

Forming part of council's Wellbeing Plan, the feedback will be used in an aim to strengthen access to local events as well as building a more connected community, being used to guide the 2026 Djerriwarrh Festival, ensuring it reflects community needs, interests, and expectations.

Residents are also invited to weigh in on their favourite festival activities across all council's events, helping to guide what they see more or less of at future events, gatherings, and programs.

Residents and community members can provide their input until Sunday 21 June via a short online survey or by emailing conversations@melton.vic.gov.au.

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Police rule the roads on long weekend

Police have recorded 103 speeding drivers in Moorabool during a four-day operation which took place over the King's Birthday weekend.

Victoria Police increased visibility and targeted high-risk driving behaviour across the state's roads in an effort to reduce road trauma, as part of Operation Regal between Friday 5 June and Monday 8 June.

As well as the speeding drivers, Moorabool police also detected six unregistered vehicles and three unlicensed drivers, three drink drivers, three seatbelt offences, two drivers who disobeyed signs or signals, and one disqualified driver.

Of the 125 offences recorded across Moorabool's roads, four drivers had

their vehicles impounded.

In Melton, police recorded 54 total offences for the area over the four-day enforcement period, including 17 speeding drivers, 13 unregistered vehicles, five drink drivers, five drug drivers, five unlicensed drivers, four drivers who failed to follow signs or signals, and four mobile phone offences.

One driver also had their vehicle impounded.

Across the state, a total of 7221 traffic offences were detected over the four-day enforcement period, representing a 20 per cent increase on the same time last year.

Family's law change push

By Glenn Fisher

Despina Havelas understandably finds it difficult to find much humour in the tragic loss of her younger sister less than two months ago after a long battle with a mental health illness.

But a doll is the one and only keepsake from the belongings of Dr Anastasia Kalantzis that brings a smile to Despina's face.

Not just any doll.

"Ana loved horror movies and heavy metal music like Metallica and Megadeth, and I've kept her Chucky doll to remind me what a vibrant, bubbly, spirited woman she was," Despina said.

While Ana's doll from the Child's Play horror movie franchise might help lighten the mood for Despina and her daughter Aristeia, the fact they were not legally allowed to know about Ana's medication or treatment plan during and after any of the numerous stays inside a mental health facility definitely remains a bone of contention.

Ana's long battle with her mental health ended shortly after she was discharged from the last in a long line of public and private mental health facilities across Melbourne and returned home to be with her 80-year-old mother in Glenroy.

Dr Kalantzis was a respected lecturer at the Royal Dental Hospital in Melbourne and in dentistry at the University of Melbourne, admired and acclaimed for her compassion and dedication to dentistry, education and mental health advocacy.

She was 44.

Now a new battle has started, with Despina and Aristeia pushing for Victoria's



Despina Havelas and daughter Aristeia Havelas, holding a photo of Anastasia Kalantzis.

(Damjan Janevski) 558849_01

Mental Health and Wellbeing Act (2022) to be either changed or for a nationwide piece of legislation to cover all states and territories.

"Whenever Ana was in a facility, we as caregivers and close family members had no legal right to get information about her medication, treatment plan or to even be included in discussions about her health, because it's all deemed as private," Despina said.

"We just want more rights for caregivers,

so others don't have to go through what we did.

"Ana was discharged without a safety plan, and there was no discussion about her family history or past. We could see the change in her every time she was discharged, but the medical people in those facilities couldn't," she said.

"She stopped eating, her mood changed ... we know she was masking her illness to the medical staff while in those facilities."

Since Ana's death, Despina and Aristeia

have attempted to contact and meet with state MPs from both sides of parliament, to raise concerns about the current legislation blocking loved ones from getting access to more information about a patient.

While changing the laws is the aim, Aristeia says they are not on any political witch hunt.

"Mental health is not a political issue, it is both a health and educational issue," she said.

"We are just trying to help the process, not hinder it."

On Friday, Deputy Premier Ben Carroll's office notified Despina that he would be "unable to meet" with them to discuss mental health in Victoria and sent his "best wishes".

Star Weekly also sent a list of questions to Mental Health Minister Ingrid Stitt last week, but there had been no response before this newspaper's deadline.

While Despina and Aristeia can never get Ana back, her memory will live on after the family started the Anastasia Kalantzis Memorial Dentistry Scholarship (advancement.latrobe.edu.au/giving/anas-legacy) in partnership with La Trobe University, where Ana completed her bachelor of health sciences/master of dentistry at the Bendigo campus. Donations will help support students pursuing a pathway into dentistry, who demonstrate a dual commitment to dentistry and mental health.

If you, or anyone you know, is experiencing mental health challenges and/or dealing with suicidal thoughts, contact Lifeline on 131114, the Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467 or Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636.

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Sharing stories of new lives

Shared cultures, lived experiences, and Australia's rich diversity will be celebrated across Melton during Refugee Week from 15 to 21 June.

Refugee Week has been observed annually across Australia since 1986, and this year marks 40 years of recognising the resilience, contributions, and stories of those who have built new lives across Melton's communities.

This year's theme, A Million Stories, invites observers to reflect on the million journeys which have helped to shape Australia into the diverse and vibrant nation it is today.

To mark the occasion, council is hosting a free community event and an inspiring storytelling session.

From 11am to 1pm on Wednesday 17 June, residents are invited to A Million Stories: Journeys of Strength, Belonging and Community at the Melton Community Hall, an uplifting community event featuring powerful storytelling and vibrant cultural performances.

Participants will be given the opportunity to hear personal accounts of refugee journeys and the experiences that shape Melton's diverse community.

On Thursday 18 June, Refugee Stories for Change at the Melton Library and Learning Hub kicks off at 2.30pm and includes a presentation from guest speaker Safi Taye, an ambassador with the Refugee Council of Australia.

Taye will share his deeply personal story of displacement, rebuilding, and belonging, explaining the journey of his growing up in Afghanistan, fleeing Iran with his family, and his arrival to Australia.

Melton mayor Lara Carli said refugee week is the perfect opportunity to come



Safi Taye will share his story at the Melton Library and Learning Hub on Thursday 18 June. (Supplied)

together, listen and learn from others' diverse cultural backgrounds.

"By sharing stories, we deepen our understanding and strengthen the sense of belonging that makes our city more inclusive, compassionate and connected," she said.

Both events are free to attend. To register, visit melton.vic.gov.au/refugee-week

Briefs

The West Party registration

The Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) has received an application from The West Party for registration as a political party. Objections to the proposed registration must be submitted to the VEC in writing no later than Sunday 12 July 2026. Valid reasons for objection include: the party is not an eligible political party as defined under the Electoral Act 2002 (the Act), the application is not in accordance with the requirements of section 45 of the Act or the proposed name should be refused under section 47 of the Act. Objections can be made to rppregistration@vec.vic.gov.au or posted to the VEC, Level 11, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne Vic, 3000. Objections must be signed and include the objector's address. Details of any objections will be made available to the applicant.

Men's Health Week

Running from 15 June to 21 June, the week highlights the importance of physical, mental and social health through connection, regular health check-ups, staying active and seeking support when needed. As part of the program, a screening of the film Uproar will take place on Friday 19 June at 4pm, exploring identity, masculinity and community during New Zealand's 1981 Springbok tour protests.

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Published by MMP Star Pty Ltd ACN 168 220 399
 Head Office Corner Thomsons Road and Keilor Park Drive, Keilor Park, 3042
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Group anchored in Melton

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres

The North West Metro Sub-Section of the Naval Association of Australia has undergone one of the most significant transformations in its history, evolving from a small inner-west Melbourne sailors' club into a revitalised regional hub for veterans across western Victoria.

Its origins trace back to 1946, when the Footscray Sub-Section was formed in the immediate post-war period under the then Ex-Navalmen's Association of Australia.

Early meetings were modest affairs, held in an upstairs room above shops in central Footscray. As membership grew through the late 1940s and 1950s, the group shifted between venues before establishing permanent purpose-built clubrooms in 1961 on Graham Street in West Footscray, on land provided by Maribyrnong council.

The Graham Street site became a cornerstone of naval camaraderie in Melbourne's west for more than five decades.

Built through public donations and supported under the state government Patriotic Welfare Fund, the club operated from about 1961 until 2017.

During its peak, it played an important social and welfare role, regularly hosting visiting sailors and providing a temporary home base for naval personnel attached to the Williamstown Naval Dockyard.

"It was a very successful Naval club," North West Metro Sub-Section president Dale Borthwick said.

From there, it continued to provide support for naval personnel who were accommodated at the Maribyrnong Immigration Centre whilst working at the



President Dale Borthwick, with members David Pratt, Russell Pettis and Clinton Hall with his dog Timmy. (Damjan Janevski) 558100_04

dockyard.

However, privatisation saw the crews move out.

"Unfortunately, that activity stopped after the dockyard was privatised and the crews no longer stayed with the ships in refit but were posted to other ships," Mr Borthwick said.

Combined with an ageing membership base, the sub-section faced a steady decline. Structural issues with the

Graham Street building, exacerbated by land movement and prolonged drought conditions in the early 2000s, ultimately led to its condemnation by council inspectors.

In 2018, a move of the sub-section to the Footscray Park Bowls Club was facilitated by Maribyrnong council, breathing new life into the club.

However, scheduling constraints eventually created further instability for the club.

"The committee and members at the Footscray Park Bowls Club welcomed us with open arms and made us very welcome," Mr Borthwick said.

"But unfortunately, over time, the bowls club were holding more functions on a Sunday afternoon, which meant our meetings were cancelled more often than not."

Over the ensuing years, the club grew even smaller, with members lost through age-related illnesses and most of the remaining members living west of Deer Park.

The sub-section faced times of uncertainty, with the risk of a club closure just over the horizon.

However new hope was found as several of the remaining members were also members of the Melton RSL Sub-branch as well as the Melton Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA).

"They suggested that the sub-section explore moving to Melton and meeting at the VVAA clubrooms," Mr Borthwick said.

"Negotiations then commenced with the RSL and the VVAA and a successful outcome was achieved."

The inaugural meeting at the VVAA clubrooms in Melton was held on 26 May, 2024.

Members voted to rename the group the North West Metro Sub-Section, reflecting both its new base and broader geographic reach, helping the club to achieve camaraderie and inclusivity.

Now firmly re-established, the sub-section is preparing to mark its 80th anniversary with a commemorative lunch at the Melton Country Club on 20 September.

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Maritime history captured

Fifty years ago next week, Laurie Dilks had a front row seat to one of the most dramatic events in Williamstown's history and has the photos and the memories to prove it. He spoke to Cade Lucas.

As a shipwright with the former Victorian Ports and Harbours Branch in Williamstown, Laurie Dilks didn't normally bring a camera to work.

"I never carried a camera normally unless I thought there was something worthwhile to take a photograph of," Mr Dilks recalled.

So when he made sure to pack his camera before heading to work on the morning of 23 June, 1976, Mr Dilks clearly knew he was about to witness something worth capturing for posterity.

"I thought I'll get a photograph of this," Mr Dilks, now 81, recalled thinking that morning nearly half a century ago.

"And I'm very pleased I did."

So too are many other people, especially those with an interest in maritime history of which Williamstown and Hobsons Bay has plenty.

But of all that history, few moments resonate like the one Mr Dilks photographed 50 years ago next week: the burning down of the Point Gellibrand Pile Light.

It's a moment that locals who were alive at the time can recall like it was yesterday and even those who weren't are still well aware of.

The images Mr Dilks took that day are a big reason why.

He and his fellow shipwrights were standing on a boat about 25 metres from the historic lighthouse, roughly a mile off Williamstown's Shelly Beach, when the fire began at about 11am on a sunny, still Wednesday morning.

Floating nearby were a number of other craft including one packed with journalists from the evening TV news and Melbourne's then afternoon paper of record, *The Herald*.

They all watched as the lighthouse, perched above the water atop 33 wooden piles, its living quarters surrounding the bottom of the tower and its pile light at the top, became enveloped in smoke, then engulfed in flames.

Then the tower and its pile light, which had guided ships into Hobsons Bay since 1906, preventing them from crashing into Gellibrand Reef, crashed into the water itself.

"The support around it (the tower), which was the house, diminished and it fell into the water and was trapped by the piles that held up the lighthouse so it didn't go to the bottom," Mr Dilks said of the tower and pile light which would later be recovered.

The pile light itself now sits on display at the Seaworks Maritime Precinct in Williamstown, near where Mr Dilks and his fellow Ports and Harbours shipwrights used to work and where a Winter Solstice Festival will be held on 19 June that will double as a 50th anniversary commemoration of the lighthouse fire.

"Of all the iconic structures that Williamstown's history has produced, the Gellibrand Light must be the most cherished and best known" Seaworks executive officer Glenn Jones said.

"Not only by seafarers, for whom it had a special significance, but by the thousands of residents and tourists. After a long journey from the bottom of the bay, to beside the Polly Woodside and even central Victoria, it's now back in Williamstown and Seaworks is its home".

Along with seeing the pile light itself, those attending the winter solstice festival can also visit a special display on the lighthouse inside the Seaworks Maritime Museum.

Included in the display are some of the dramatic images Mr Dilks took that day.

While the photos capture the pile light's



Above: Seaworks executive officer Glenn Jones and former shipwright Laurie Dilks below the pile light from the Point Gellibrand Lighthouse which was burnt down 50 years ago. (Damjan Janevski) 557888_01

Right: Workers prepare the damaged pile light to be burnt. (Laurie Dilks)



fiery end, they don't explain how it came about; how the state government of the day found itself in the extraordinary position of having to set fire to a beloved historic landmark.

Fortunately, Mr Dilks' memory remains as vivid as his photos.

"I was working in the depot and the officer in charge, a Mr Jack Manser, came out into the yard where I was working with a couple of other fellows," he recalled of the morning two days before the fire on Monday 21 June.

"He said 'I've heard the Gellibrand Lighthouse has been struck by a ship'. He said apparently it's been quite extensively damaged and we'll have to get out there and have a look when we can."

This was about 8.30am.

Roughly an hour earlier, the Melbourne Trader, a 7000 tonne roll-on roll-off cargo ship, had ploughed into the Point Gellibrand Pile Light while returning from its regular run to Tasmania.

The thick fog that blanketed Port Phillip Bay that morning and was already blamed for the collision and was also preventing Mr Dilks and his colleagues from immediately heading out to inspect the damage.

Once the fog cleared later in the morning and they did get out to the pile light, not much of an inspection was required.

"It was severely damaged," Mr Dilks recalled.

"Many of the piles had been broken."

With the many of the piles supporting the lighthouse snapped off at the waterline, its tower was tilting badly to one side.

The lighthouse keeper's residence at the base of the tower was also badly damaged, though, remarkably, the keeper himself was unscathed.

He'd spent the night ashore, a decision which probably saved his life.

Returning to the depot, the shipwrights reported what they'd seen to Mr Manser who then sent it up the chain of command.

Things were moving quickly.

The next day, Mr Dilks and his colleagues arrived at the depot to be told that a decision on the pile light's future would be made later that day.

In the meantime they were to go back out there and strip it of any of any valuables.

"We had to be very careful because it (the lighthouse) was on a precarious angle and the boat landing there was underwater," Mr Dilks said, adding that once on board they removed and took whatever they could, though some items would soon go missing.

"We got up and removed the windvane of the tower but we don't know what happened to that in the end."

They also cleared out the keepers quarters which Mr Dilks likened to a floating home. "It was a unique situation as seaborne lighthouses are," he said.

"Before the current lighthouse keeper, on occasion there had been others who'd lived there with their wives. It was a house with a bathroom, kitchen and bedroom."

Sadly, like the rest of the structure, it was also damaged beyond repair and given its



The Gellibrand Pile Light fire on the morning of 23 June, 1976. (Laurie Dilks)



Laurie Dilks took this photo of the burning pile light from a boat 25 metres away. (Laurie Dilks)

importance to nearby shipping lanes, it had to be removed and replaced as soon as possible.

Before the shipwrights left for home that day, their boss delivered the news.

"Mr Manser had told us that the lighthouse was to be burnt at 11am on the morning, 23 June, 1976," Mr Dilks said.

"It was a unique situation, but we understood that was what the government had ordered. It was a sad situation."

With camera in hand, he and his colleagues returned to the pile light for the final time the following morning to prepare it for burning.

They were joined by another crew from Ports and Harbours who'd travelled up by boat from Queenscliffe.

Mr Dilks suspects it was they who finally set it alight.

"They had a small drum of kerosene with them and were sprinkling it around when me and my workmates realised it was close to 11am and we'd better be getting off."

From there, it took about 20 minutes to destroy 70 years of maritime history.

A navigational light was installed in place of the lighthouse and there hasn't been another collision in the 50 years since.

Mr Dilks lamented that if only today's shipping technology was available back then, the Point Gellibrand Pile Light would still remain.

"Unfortunately that incident happened because in that era they didn't have the navigational aids they have now," he said.

"At the time everyone wished it hadn't happened but it did and thank goodness nobody was injured."



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Betty McGuire, 91, received a Medal of the Order of Australia for her services to softball. (Damjan Janevski) 557417_02



Dean Lewis, former member of the Australian Defence Force, with his restored a 1942 World War II Ford Jeep. (Damjan Janevski) 557049_04



Cassandra Ame is releasing her debut single, Home. (Damjan Janevski) 555813_06



Above: Valerie Agu. (Damjan Janevski) 556641_05
Right: Laverton Community Choir is gearing up for its annual concert. (Damjan Janevski) 556461_05

Faces of the west

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



Jennifer Kearney, OAM. (Damjan Janevski) 557528_02

COMMENT STARWEEKLY.COM.AU



Turn an old sock into a puppet

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

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

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

This month, Stephanie is creating a crazy sock puppet.



Stephanie Martinez.



Crazy sock puppet

Materials

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

Equipment

- Scissors
- Glue gun / glue stick
- Masking tape

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

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

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

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

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



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Pre-poll voting opposed

Melton council has ruled out reconsidering its decision preventing the Caroline Springs Scout Centre from being used as a pre-poll voting facility.

Council reaffirmed its position during public question time at its 25 May meeting, despite renewed calls from local scouts and assurances from both Scouts Victoria and the Victorian Electoral Commission (VEC) that they are willing to work collaboratively to address concerns.

The issue was raised by First Caroline Springs Scouts leader Claire Mouser, who questioned why the facility could not be used as an early voting centre despite past usage and given the site's lease agreements.

Ms Mouser noted the Scout centre's land lease expressly permits third-party hire and argued the lease takes precedence over council's Lease and Licence Policy.

"This decision actively hurts our kids and volunteers," Ms Mouser said.

"Hosting pre-poll voting provides a vital stream of financial support that directly funds our Scouting programs, camping equipment, and hall maintenance.

"By denying us this approval, the council is effectively taking money out of the pockets of local youth."

She also highlighted the facility is owned and managed by Scouts Victoria, not council, and said both Scouts Victoria and



The First Caroline Springs Scout Group is pushing back against council's decision to use its scout centre as a pre-poll voting location. (Jack O'Shea-Ayres)

the VEC had expressed a willingness to work with council to resolve any issues.

"The Scout centre is a community asset," she said.

"It is deeply unfair that the council has made a decision that restricts democratic access for voters and simultaneously strips a grassroots, volunteer-run organisation of essential revenue, that benefits local youth in being active, community-minded young

people."

In response, council maintained its position, citing concerns about the suitability of the site and the impact on the surrounding community.

Council stated that while the Scout centre operates under a lease agreement, provisions within that lease allow council to ultimately approve the use of the site by third parties.

It also said the venue had resulted in significant costs to council associated with managing compliance issues and that the VEC had confirmed those responsibilities would continue to fall to council if the site were used again.

"Council has considered options to mitigate these risks, and has discussed these matters directly with the VEC, but does not consider there is a reasonable and safe way for the facility to be used in this way," a council spokesperson said.

A VEC spokesperson said the commission is currently securing venues for the upcoming state election and considers a range of sites to ensure voting locations are accessible and conveniently located for voters.

They said all potential venues undergo accessibility audits and are assessed through detailed planning and research before being selected.

"We work closely with the relevant agencies to secure appropriate sites, in compliance with the relevant requirements for use of these venues," they said.

The council spokesperson said council did not believe there was a reasonable or safe way for the facility to operate as an early voting centre.

Ms Mouser said the Scouts group are prepared to fight the decision legally.

MY PLACE

Swastika Ganguly is an Aintree local who recently, with the help of her husband, developed her own cineplay, based on Shakespeare's Macbeth tragedy. Jack O'Shea-Ayres spoke with Ms Ganguly about home life, what drew her to Aintree, and the challenges that come with acting in your own production.

What's your connection to Aintree?

We have bought our first house in Australia in Aintree. So the area is really special to me and my hubby.

What do you like about where you live?

I like that Aintree is a relatively new suburb built around the Woodlea development. Unlike many older suburbs that grew organically, much of Aintree was designed with parks, schools, sports facilities, walking paths and shopping areas planned from the beginning. What drew me to Aintree is the amount of open space. The Woodlea development includes numerous parks, wetlands, walking trails and areas around Kororoit Creek. We're very close to a park on all sides of our home.

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

I love Aintree, but the main trade-off is

it remains an outer-growth suburb, so traffic and transport limitations can be frustrating at times.

Where is your favourite local place to spend time?

Woodlea Town Centre is my favourite place to spend time. It's close, convenient, and has everything we need.

Tell us about your recent cineplay, Kashmir? What were your roles and what was most challenging about it?

Our English cineplay, Kashmir, is inspired by famous English playwright William Shakespeare's timeless tragedy, Macbeth. The adapted story, developed by my husband Anirban Datta and penned down by me, is based in Kashmir, year 1999, on the premise of the Kargil Conflict, where unending violence is resulting in disruption of common man's life, where

soaring ambition is resulting in loss of humanity and quest of power is leading to brutal assassination. The story of William Shakespeare has been etched thoughtfully through the volatile valleys of Kashmir and will represent one of the first South Asian adaptations of Shakespeare's work to be showcased in Melbourne in a cineplay format, if not the first. My character as Lady Macbeth (Yasmin in the cineplay) is often considered one of the most difficult female roles in theatre because she is far more complex than a simple villain or ambitious wife. At the beginning of the play, Yasmin appears fearless, ruthless, and determined. She urges Macbeth (Azar) to seize power and suppresses any hesitation. Yet later, she becomes consumed by guilt, paranoia, and psychological torment. An actor must convincingly portray both extremes and the gradual transition between them.



Swastika Ganguly. (Damjan Janevski) 557199_05

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Left: Cooper, Estee and Holly learning the art of pottery. Right: Charlie and Ethan working on their robot at the Southern Cross FRC Championship. (Pictures: Supplied)

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

Acrylic pouring

Melton South Community Centre is offering two new workshops for adults about acrylic pouring on Saturday 20 June. Learn a silicon cell pull between 10am-noon and balloon kisses at 1-3pm. Bookings are essential.

■ 9747 8576, msscctr@bigpond.net.au

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 the 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.

■ hillsideprobus@gmail.com

Lawyer appointments

Melton South Community Centre is offering free lawyer appointments for immigration, family law, or Justice of the Peace matters every Tuesday at 2.30 or 3.10pm.

■ Bookings essential: 9747 8576, or msscctr@bigpond.net.au or visit us.

Pipe Band

North Western District Pipe Band The North Western District Pipe Band meets every week at the Diggers rest Bowling Club and are looking for any pipers or drummers out there retired or beginners for social play outs.

■ Hank, 0412 169 576

Volunteer opportunity with L2P Driving program

Help a disadvantaged young person gain essential driving hours by becoming an L2P Volunteer Driving Mentor. A few hours a week can make a life changing difference. Full training and support provided, with the car and all expenses covered.

■ 8746 1000, or L2P@djerriwarrh.org.

Computer Classes

Computer classes are available at the Melton South Community Centre. From absolute beginners, to being safe online, Canva and more.

■ 9747 8576

Sewing in Melton

If you love sewing, head on down to the Melton South Community Centre. Bring along your machine and materials and make new friends as you swap tips and work on your own projects. 9.30am-3pm every Tuesday. Each session costs \$5.

■ 9747 8576

Melton South Community Singers

Singers of all levels are welcome at the Melton South Community Singers. This free and friendly group meets at the Melton South Community Centre and rehearses to perform at local venues and events. The group meets from 12.15-2pm on the first and third Tuesday of every month.

■ Sue, 0400 082 413

Community band

The Greater Western Community Band meets every Thursday from 7.30-9.30pm. Located at 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

Lights of Wisdom

The Bahá'ís of Moorabool warmly invite you to 'Lights of Wisdom' – a monthly event providing an opportunity to relax in a tranquil environment and reflect on inspiring themes. The event is held

14 MELTON & MOORABOOL STAR WEEKLY Tuesday, 16 June, 2026



This week's photographer's choice picture is of Seaworks chief executive Glenn Jones. (Damjan Janevski) 558131_01

on the first Friday of each month from 7.30-8.30pm at the Lerderberg Library in Bacchus Marsh.

God, movie and chat

A free community event is held every second Friday with a film with spiritual themes screening followed by a discussion. All thoughts are welcome. Tea, coffee, and popcorn are provided. The event is hosted at Holy Trinity Anglican Church Hall, 19a Gisborne Road, Bacchus Marsh.

■ 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

Bacchus Marsh Ladies Probus Club Meet 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 meet

every second Friday each month at 10am at Melton Country Club. New members are welcome.

■ Ann, 0425 705 150

Caroline Springs Rotary

The Rotary Club of Caroline Springs is inviting new guests to join its meetings in person or via Zoom. Meetings are held every Wednesday at the Western Emergency Relief Network in Ravenhall from 7pm.

■ rotarycarolinesprings@gmail.com

Fishing club

Didyabringarodalong Angling Club of Melton and Bacchus Marsh is a fishing club that welcomes and encourages people of all ages, genders and fishing abilities to partake in enjoying the outdoors in a relaxing and friendly environment. The club holds monthly fishing competitions at various locations, fresh and saltwater. New members are most welcome.

■ Andrew, 0407 303 438, or Wayne, 0414 785 366

Darley Neighbourhood House

The Darley Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre is at 33-35 Jonathan Drive, Darley. It offers free and low-cost activities for all. There is a monthly repair cafe, a community pantry, a fortnightly chatty cafe and venue hire is available.

■ www.bit.ly/DNHnow, or 5367 4390

Metal bands make a noise

Five local heavy metal bands will take a stand against war when they play a charity gig in Footscray on the afternoon of Saturday 20 June.

Metal Against War is a multi-artist show at Mama Chen's hosted by the Workers' Weekly Guardian.

All profits from the show will go towards the Palestinian Australian New Zealand Medical Association (PANZMA), an organisation that places clinicians from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific in Palestinian hospitals.

Headlining Metal Against War will be Melbourne thrash outfit Electric Funeral

l who are no strangers to voicing their opposition to war and calling for peace.

Electric Funeral recently released a version of Men Behind The Wire in protest of Israeli president Isaac Herzog's visit to Australia in February.

"We're very troubled by intensification of violence and repression over the past few years, particularly towards the people of Palestine, Iran, Lebanon, Sudan, Congo, and Venezuela," a band spokesperson said explaining why they were playing the gig.

"We think that as westerners living within the imperial core, it's our responsibility to not only make our

ideological opposition to this clear, but also to materially contribute to the wellbeing of these people to the best of our ability."

Joining Electric Funeral on the bill will be young Melbourne outfit Dehumanizer, death metal and grindcore act Hand of Fear, industrial death metal band Knife and so-called "crusty death metal satirists" Kuntsquād (pronounced Kountskard).

The first band starts at 1pm.

Tickets are available online now and will also be sold on the door.

Details: <https://mammachens.com.au/26-06-20-metal-against-war/>



Melbourne thrash outfit Electric Funeral will headline Metal Against War at Mama Chen's in Footscray on 20 June. (Supplied)



The Neon Cowboy himself Edward Kays will lead the Country Hoedown at Ballan Bakehouse and Bar on Saturday 20 June. (Damjan Janevski). 505720_02

Ballan plays host to a country hoedown

Ballan is set to go full country on Saturday 20 June, with the Ballan Bakehouse and Bar hosting an all-day Country Hoedown packed full with live music, dancing, and plenty of western-style flair.

The festivities kick off from 12.30pm as Bryan Sadler takes the stage with live music to get the crowd warmed up. Then, from 4pm, Dean Smith will keep the tunes rolling into the afternoon, creating the perfect soundtrack for a laid-back country gathering.

From 7pm, the hoedown shifts into high

gear as bootscooting takes over the venue, with guests encouraged to dust off their cowboy hats, pull up their boots, and slip into their flannels to hit the dance floor for an evening of country-style line-dancing and western fun.

The event promises a relaxed atmosphere where locals and visitors can round up their friends, grab a cold drink and enjoy a classic Saturday day and night out in Ballan.

Organisers say the hoedown is all about good music, great company, and embracing a bit of that country spirit.

Whether you're a seasoned line dancer or just looking for a fun night out, the Ballan Country Hoedown is shaping up as one of the town's standout entertainment events this winter.

So get on down to Ballan Bakehouse and Bar, located at 110 Inglis Street, Ballan, from 12.30pm for a jam packed day of country and western shenanigans.

Details: <https://welcometomoorabool.com/events-bacchusmarsh-ballan-gordon-blackwood-greendale/country-hoedown-at-ballan-bakery-and-bar>

Somaia explores the Ranges

A new artist is taking over The Gallery this June to showcase her new home.

Itta Somaia recently moved to the Macedon Ranges, with her exhibition showcasing the dramatic beauty of her new home.

An avid hiker, Somaia regularly sets out with her painting kit, stopping to record fleeting moments of colour and light that define the local landscape.

Somaia said she is deeply influenced by the impressionist movement through her family of artists, prompting her to develop a bold intuitive style beginning with acrylic under-painting before completing each piece in water-based oils.

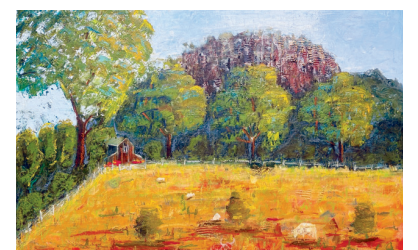
She favours palette knives to build a rich textured surface and incorporates oils for the vivid colours and blazing sunsets she's seen around the Macedon Ranges.

Her exhibition features a mixture of large and small works, with all pieces celebrating Somaia's mission to bring abundant colour and light into homes.

She invites the community to visit her exhibition and experience the Macedon Ranges as seen through the eyes of an artist who walks its trails and paints its joy.

Somaia's exhibition is on display now until Sunday 5 July.

The Gallery is open 10am to 4pm Friday to Tuesday at 684 Mount Macedon Road, Mount Macedon.



Hanging around the Rock by Itta Somaia is on display now at The Gallery. (Supplied)

There's plenty to do in Brimbank in June to ward off the winter blues

From pickleball to the magic of butterflies, Brimbank has something to encourage you out of the house this winter.

As part of Men's Health Matters on Wednesday 17 June, visit the Tin Shed in St Albans for a men's health information session, circuit workout, a coffee and a relaxed chat.

On the same day, learn how to play pickleball at West Sunshine Community Centre.

On Thursday 18 June, Westvale

Community Centre will host Brimbank's Men's Health Day event from 11am-2pm. Attendees can hear from former AFL footballer Russell Robertson, enjoy a fresh haircut from the barber, relax with a massage, grab a coffee from the barista, and dig into a sausage sizzle.

There'll also be giveaways, health service information, and more to explore.

On Tuesday 30 June, an interactive educational and hands-on school holiday butterfly incursion will take centre-stage

at Westvale Community Centre in Kings Park.

Butterfly Kidz will demonstrate the fascinating life cycle of these amazing creatures.

Children will also have an opportunity to observe butterflies up close inside a special butterfly tent.

Brimbank mayor Virginia Tachos said Brimbank's jam-packed June events calendar has something for everyone.

"With cost-of-living pressures at the

front of all of our minds, I'm really looking forward to the food dehydration workshop at the Brimbank Aquatic and Wellness Centre on Saturday 20 June," she said.

"Sustainability educator Anna the Urban Nana will guide you through all the techniques. You'll also enjoy some samples and make your own blend of dehydrated foods to take home, so it should be a lot of fun."

Details: www.events.brimbank.vic.gov.au



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SPORTS QUIZ

- Which two ice hockey teams competed in the 2026 Stanley Cup Final series?
- Which American golfer recently won the 2026 US Women's Open?



Oscar Piastrì

- For which club was Carlton coach Josh Fraser the first pick in the 1999 AFL draft?
- Australian athlete Kurtis Marschall competes in which track and field event?
- Which two Big Bash League cricket franchises are reportedly set to merge?
- Which Russian tennis player won the 2026 French Open women's singles title?
- Defensive end Myles Garrett was recently traded to which California-based NFL team?
- San Antonio Spurs guard Dylan Harper is the son of which five-time NBA champion?
- Oscar Piastrì recently appeared operating a tractor on which television series?
- Which soccer superstar left PSG before the club went on to win back-to-back Champions League finals?

- Which German tennis player won the 2026 French Open men's singles title?
- What sport is also known as 'the sweet science'?
- In which film does Tom Cruise star as a sports agent?
- Who was the only previous Grand Slam champion to play in the quarterfinals at the 2026 French Open?
- Which three AFL clubs reportedly have over 100,000 club members each in 2026?
- What was the only world record broken at the 2026 Enhanced Games?
- As well as performance-enhancing drugs, what else contributed to breaking the record?
- Mat Hoffman is considered one of the greatest athletes to ever compete in which sport?
- Which soccer player gained five million followers after an influencer labelled him the least known player at the FIFA World Cup?



- In 2026, who became the lowest ranked tennis player in history to reach the French Open final?
- Which arena does the Canberra Brave play ice hockey out of in the AIHL?
- What is the nickname of Jacksonville's NFL team?
- How many points is the black ball worth in snooker?
- Which two NBA teams did Australian Andrew Gaze play for?
- In which year did the Matildas reach the semifinals at the FIFA Women's World Cup?

- Wilhelm Steinitz is the first universally recognised champion of which sport?
- True or false: tug of war was once an Olympic sport?
- Which four Premier League teams have 'United' in their names?
- Which company provides the official game balls for the WNBA, NBA and NCAA?
- Who won the first AFLW Best and Fairest award?

1. Carolina Hurricanes and Vegas Golden Knights 2. Nelly Korda 3. Collingwood 4. Pole vaulting 5. Melbourne Stars and Melbourne Renegades 6. Mirra Andreeva 7. Los Angeles Rams 8. Ron Harper 9. Clarkson's Farm 10. Kylian Mbappé 11. Alexander Zverev 12. Boxing 13. Jerry Maguire (1996) 14. Anya Sabalenka 15. Collingwood, West Coast and Carlton 16. Men's 50m freestyle 17. Usage of banned swimsuit 18. BMX 19. Tim Payne 20. Maja Chwalinska 21. AIS Arena 22. Jaguars 23. Seven 24. Washington Bullets (now Wizards) and San Antonio Spurs 25. 2023 26. Chess 27. True 28. Manchester, Leeds, West Ham and Newcastle 29. Wilson 30. Erin Phillips



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Best value plug-in electric

By Alistair Kennedy, **Marque Motoring**

In what is a major milestone, monthly sales figures released by the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries have shown that, in February, China became Australia's largest source of new vehicles overtaking Japan for the first time since 1998.

The data also showed four Chinese brands now sit in the top ten positions led by BYD, now the sixth biggest seller, ahead of GWM (7th), Chery (9th) and MG (10th).

Almost half of BYD sales are of its four-model Sealion SUV range, with either fully electric or plug-in hybrid drivetrains.

The most recent arrival, and our review here, is the BYD Sealion 5. At 4.7 metres it's around the same size as Toyota RAV4, Kia Sportage and Hyundai Tucson but unlike them, it's a plug-in hybrid (PHEV).

Marginally larger than the Sealion 5 is the Sealion 6, also a five-seat PHEV, but with the option of a second motor, therefore AWD. The Sealion 7 is slightly larger again, still with five seats but EV only with single or dual motors. Top of the range is the Sealion 8, a seven-seat premium PHEV people mover.

The Sealion 5 PHEV comes in two variants. The headline act is the entry-level Essential which, with a price of \$33,990 plus on-roads, is currently the cheapest plug-in hybrid vehicle on the Australian market.

The other variant, Premium, which comes with a larger battery and extra features is priced at \$37,990 plus onroad costs.

Styling

Design of the Sealion 5 is relatively conservative in comparison to other recent BYD offerings. It's a relatively old-style boxy wagon with a mildly sloping roofline.

The front features what BYD calls a 'Dragon Face' design dominated by a wide bold grille flanked by recessed three-beam LED headlights and daytime running lights.

Above the grille is a full-width satin metallic bar with an integrated BYD logo.

Both variants get 18-inch dual-tone alloy wheels.

The rear features a full-width LED taillight strip and an integrated roof spoiler.

Sealion 5 Premium adds a panoramic sunroof, roof rails, one-touch powered tailgate, heated and powered folding side mirrors and auto-dimming interior mirror.

There are four colour options: Aurora White, Cosmos Black, Atlantis Grey and Harbour Grey.

Interior

Synthetic leather seats with orange stitching are standard. The chunky steering wheel also gets the same finish. The driver and front passenger both get powered seats with the driver's also adding heating and ventilation.

Both models get a 8.8-inch digital instrument panel. Essential has a 10.1-inch infotainment screen compared to the 12.8-inch screen in the Premium. The resolution is sharp and clear on both screens but are let down seriously by a very small typeface.

The centre console has a cylindrical gear selector. It's in piano black with the gear selection difficult to read in bright sunlight. The start/stop button sits below it with a number of physical buttons on either side.

There's a large storage box as well as some extra space below the console.

Premium adds a wireless phone charger.



BYD looks to be on a real winner with its Sealion 5. (Pictures: Supplied)

The 2.7-metre wheelbase together with the underfloor battery location provides excellent rear seat space.

There are large, easily adjustable air vents both at the front and rear.

Boot space is 463 litres with the rear seatbacks in place, 1410 litres with them folded. There's some partitioned storage space beneath the boot floor but no spare wheel, just the rarely reliable puncture repair kit.

Powertrains

Both Sealion 5 variants combine a 1.5-litre naturally-aspirated four-cylinder petrol engine with a choice of two BYD Blade Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) batteries.

The Essential's battery has a 12.9 kWh capacity and a claimed 71km EV driving range. The Premium's 18.3 kWh battery extends that range to 100km.

However, these numbers come from the outdated NEDC testing method. Using the more real world WLTP system range drops to about 62km and 86km.

Power and torque from the engine are a modest 72 kW and 122 Nm.

During low-to-medium speed driving and when a surge of acceleration is needed, both the engine and battery supply power to the drive motor in parallel.

Transmission is through BYD's DM-1 Super Hybrid system where the engine charges the battery and, most of the time, the motor powers the vehicle.

Sealion 5 has a towing capacity of 750 kg, both braked and unbraked.

Safety

Sealion 5 has yet to undergo ANCAP testing but has a similar range of safety features as the Sealion 6 and 7 models which have gained five-star ratings so should achieve the same.

Active safety features include front and rear collision warning, electronic brake force distribution, lane-keep assist and lane-change warning, blind-spot detection, rear cross-traffic alert, adaptive cruise control, and an intelligent high beam system.

Infotainment

Premier gets a nine-speaker HD sound system compared to the six-speaker system in the Premium.

Other features are shared including satellite navigation, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, voice controls, front and rear USB-A and USB-C ports, DAB radio and 4G cloud services.

The BYD app provides a range of connected services including pre-setting climate control, unlocking and locking the doors, opening the sunroof, monitoring of charge levels and system functions, checking tyre pressures and Over The Air (OTA) updates.

Driving

Fellow Boomers often find getting into and out of vehicles challenging so we were delighted to be able to slide into the front seat of the Sealion 5 with minimal effort.

External visibility is excellent all round with a large windscreen and side windows.

Likewise, the rear windscreen is large with low-slung headrests. Kids will appreciate the low sills on the rear windows.

Sealion 5 is a relatively heavy family SUV so, while it has the usual sharp acceleration that we expect from a battery powered vehicle it's more sedate than pure EVs.

Once underway the Super Hybrid drivetrain provides a smooth and comfortable driving experience. The transition from electric to hybrid and back

is barely noticeable and can be operated manually through a small switch on the centre console.

We were able to take the Sealion 5 over a couple of our favourite rural drives including plenty of hills, hollows and bends. As with most mid-sized SUV's it doesn't have any sporting pretensions but handling is safe with little body roll.

Suspension is relatively firm but not at the expense of comfort.

While there are the latest safety and convenience features that are now commonplace in the latest vehicles, many use physical controls rather than through

the screens. Those that do are easy to locate and rather than the usual beeps and bongs most of the alerts are by voice and we found that the only feature we bothered turning off was the lane correction.

BYD claims a combined driving range of 1001km with the Essential and 1030km from the Premium. Like the claimed electric only ranges quoted earlier these are based on the older NEDC test method. On the more realistic WLTP method these drop to around 800km.

Both variants only come with an AC charging port, with the Essential grade able to achieve maximum battery charge in around four hours, the Premium with its larger capacity battery near six hours.

A Vehicle to Load (V2L) function is standard, enabling the onboard battery to be used as a power source for external appliances, lighting or camping.

Plug-in hybrids make a lot of sense, combining the economy of an EV but without the stress of being stranded away from a charging point.

Regular readers can skip the next bit because each time we review a PHEV we need to explain how the manufacturers come up with extremely low fuel consumption numbers. In the case of the Sealion 5 Premium that we tested its around 1.3 litres per 100km.

Such a number can only be achieved by starting with a fully-charged battery and driving until, when battery power drops below 25 percent, the vehicle switches to hybrid mode for the remainder of the 100 km trip. To continue to achieve that 1.3 L/100km it will now be necessary to stop and fully recharge the battery. Without DC charging this isn't an option so recharging on long-distance trips will typically be at overnight stays.

To its credit BYD does quote the fuel consumption after the battery drops out as 4.5 L/100km. Perfectly respectable usage for a typical hybrid SUV of similar size.

Summary

Plug-in hybrid vehicles are still relatively rare in Australia. Indeed, during our week-long test of the Sealion 5, we often found ourselves having to explain the technology to fellow road users.

While its combination of EV economy without the risk of being stranded makes perfect sense, the price surcharge of previous PHEVs above conventional petrol and hybrids kept budget-conscious buyers away.

That barrier disappears with the price of Sealion 5 sitting around and even below those of well-established mid-sized non-PHEV SUVs.

The lack of DC, or even fast AC, charging is disappointing but owners will no doubt build their routines around these limitations.

BYD looks to be on a real winner here.



Melton's Blair Murphy. 559189_02



Melton's Rajwant Siolhu. 559189_14



Sunbury Jets' Abby Hildebrand. 559186_02



Sunbury Jets' Chloe Hildebrand. 559186_13

Sunny Sunday of action

Star Weekly photographer Ljubica Vrankovic Sunday, with plenty of action on the court and on the field.



Altona Gators' Jenna Mae Ellsworth. 559190_23



Footscray's Emily Prentice. 559195_01



Newport's Taylah Comeadow. 559195_08



Newport watches on. 559195_04



Wyndham women's team. 559190_01

Warriors go down again

By Tara Murray

The Western Warriors were left to rue a poor second quarter in their loss to the Casey Demons in the Victorian Netball League.

Like most of the season, the Warriors were in the thick of the action in Wednesday night's game but weren't able to get the job done.

A 16-9 second quarter in the favour of the Demons proved to be the difference in the 65-57 loss.

"We were in the game," Warriors' coach Kim Bailey said.

"Our last quarter was exceptional and one of our best last quarter's that we've had for a long time.

"It wasn't a bad game. It was frenetic,

fast paced and both teams had heaps of speed."

Bailey said the Demons pressed them in the second quarter and shut them down.

While they thought the Demons couldn't continue it for the whole game, the margin was too much for the Warriors.

"We had to bide our time," Bailey said. "I think we got it back to five but we just couldn't maintain it.

"You just can't give teams 9-16 quarters and expect to win games."

The Warriors again had to juggle player restrictions.

Ruby Shannon missed the game, while Kiara Boyd and Mia Lavis were again limited.

Veteran goaler Kim Borger was also on

restrictions after a surprise call up to the Melbourne Vixens team.

She played in the Vixens round 13 loss to the Melbourne Mavericks.

"We'll take that every day of the week," Bailey said of Borger getting an opportunity.

"That's fabulous for her and we're very proud of her. Hopefully she gets another go this weekend."

Bailey said it was frustrating to lose another close match and they just needed to learn how to win.

She said it's just a real roller coaster.

Kali Dolphin was named the Warriors best and continues to form a really strong partnership with Ellie Bird.

Bird shot 50 goals for the Warriors.

Eliza Gollant was strong in defence after concerns about an elbow injury on Saturday in the Ballarat Netball League, saw her head to hospital.

The Warriors sit second bottom with three wins.

They face the Gippsland Stars in round 14.

Bailey said while finals hopes are likely over they want to help shape the top six and get some wins on the run home.

"It's got to turn sooner or later," she said. "We're going to get one of those close wins.

"There spirits were really good and we tried our best.

"It just needs to click."

The 23 and under side had a bit of a struggle against the Demons, losing 63-56.



Daniela Tobon. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 556977_06

Spring Hills players are sticking to the task

By Tara Murray

Spring Hills know that the small moments will count in the back part of the National Premier League women's season.

Spring Hills sits 12th on the ladder with four wins as all teams had a bye on the weekend.

The side hasn't won in its last three matches while was also knocked out of the Nike FC Cup by the Bulleen Lions.

"We played two top teams," Spring Hills coach Tom Markovski said of the side's past two games.

"We played Bulleen in the cup and lost 1-0. We had a couple of opportunities to win the game but didn't take those opportunities.

"Against Essendon we had one error and conceded the second goal.

"The top teams punish you and that is the difference between the top teams and the rest of the competition.

"We need to get on a roll. If you get one win it will get the confidence up and about

and hopefully start picking up some more results."

Markovski said injuries hadn't helped them with five players out of their team currently on the sidelines.

He said most of those players would be back in three to four weeks.

"Hopefully we'll get some players back from injury in the next few weeks and it makes us stronger for the last third of the season," Markovski said.

"We would love to get them back after the break, but want to be cautious and don't want to rush anyone back."

Markovski said while he never likes a break during the season, they had a number of players with some sore bodies and it would be good for them to have the week off.

"We'll regroup and work on a few things to help improve our squad," he said.

Spring Hills added three players during the recent transfer window, who have all added to the squad.

Katie Godden is a former junior Matilda who has been playing overseas.

Eva Mcgorian is fresh out of the American College system, while Nao Kawasaki, who is from Japan, comes to the club having been playing in America.

Spring Hills are back in action on Friday night against Box Hill United Pythagoras.

While Spring Hills women's side has some work to do this season, the future is bright for the club.

A group of under-16 and under-17 players recently headed to America and claimed the Albion Las Vegas Memorial Cup.

It's the second time the club has headed to the tournament and this time it went through undefeated.

Markovski, who was part of the group, said it gave the players an insight into what that next level of soccer is about.

College scouts were at matches while they got to train at high class facilities.

"It was a great experience for the girls," Markovski said.

Meanwhile, Spring Hills men's side sits fifth on the ladder in the FV state league 6 north-west competition.

Sports shorts

FV

Melton Phoenix got an important win in the FV state league 4 north-west competition, while Westside Strikers had to settle for a draw on the weekend. The Phoenix was at home on Friday night and proved too strong for Melbourne University, winning 4-0. The Phoenix scored two goals in each half. The Phoenix sit seventh on the ladder with four wins. On Saturday, the Strikers had a 4-4 draw with the Sebastopol Vikings as the two sides traded goals throughout the game. The Strikers have slipped to 10th on the ladder.

RDFL

Melton South was able to further cement its spot in the top six with a victory against Woodend-Hesket, while Diggers Rest had a big win in the Riddell District Football League. The Panthers led at every break against the Hawks on the way to a 12.10 (82)-9.9 (63) win. Trent Angwin kicked four goals for the Panthers, while Blake Souter was named their best. Diggers Rest was too strong for the Tigers, winning 23.15 (153)-4.8 (32). Callum Moore kicked six goals for the Burras. Meanwhile Melton Centrals lost to Riddell, 10.13 (73)-4.9 (33) win.

Western FL

Tarneit had a tough day out against the Western Rams in the Western Football League division 2 competition on Saturday. The Rams were goalless in the first half as they Falcons took control of the game early on. While the Rams were able to hit the scoreboard in the second half, the Falcons continued on as they won, 24.15 (159)-3.2 (20). Jakob Lewer and William Markovski were named the Rams best. The Rams sit eighth on the ladder after nine rounds.

Ballarat NL

Darley was able to hold off Ballarat in the Ballarat Netball League on Saturday. The Swans were boosted by the inclusion of former New Zealand international Ellie Bird and she helped the side push the ladder leaders. The Devils were able to do enough to win, 49-46.

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Lovemeto confirms status

By John Dunne

This time last year, Lovemeto was in the paddock with a question mark hovering over his immediate future on the racetrack.

The highly-talented Chris Svanosio-trained New Zealand-bred trotter has battled soundness issues for the majority of his career.

Winding the clock forward 12 months and Lovemeto has not only returned to the track, he has emerged as a genuine contender for next month's Inter Dominion series in Brisbane.

On Saturday night at Melton, the son of What The Hill lined up in the Aldebaran Park Free For All Trot and Kerry Manning drove him as if he was the best horse in the

race.

Circling the field with a lap to travel, Lovemeto (\$3.40) sat parked outside leader Keayang Stuka before outstaying that horse in the concluding stages to get the verdict by a head over the 1720 metre sprint trip.

Svanosio, who has the largest draft with six horses nominated for the Queensland series, revealed that Lovemeto is clearly his number one seed with the first round of heats only three weeks away.

That revelation may raise eyebrows when you consider among Svanosio's muster is the reigning champion and number one ranked horse, Arcee Phoenix.

Arcee Phoenix, who has not won a race since his 2025 grand final triumph, resumed from a let-up with a midfield finish behind

I Am Wilma last week and his place in the series is likely to be determined by his next racetrack appearance.

"He was only just fair first-up here last week and he will need to go a lot better next Saturday night, but I am not going to take him just to make up the numbers" Svanosio said.

Svanosio believes Arcee Phoenix may be feeling the effect of constant racing at the elite level in recent years.

"He raced non-stop for 18 months and perhaps it is starting to catch up with him now," he said.

"He is working well at home along with Lovemeto, but he needs to produce it on race night."

Lovemeto will head north in peak form.

"The long distance will suit him up there and he is fit and well," he said.

Svanosio believes the horse will handle the arduous heats and final campaign.

"I have been ticking him over running him every two weeks and up there I can get him to the beach each afternoon," he said.

Svanosio is a little surprised by Lovemeto's 16th ranking, down from his opening position of 20th in order.

"He is a Group 1 winner and his form has been exceptional all the way through," he said.

"Last year he ran second to The Locomotive in track record time, and I sat parked on him in the Grand Prix running second to Keayang Zahara and that's as good a form as any."



Lucas Failli. (Sport Star Photos)

Sharks fight to final siren to secure win

By Tara Murray

It was hearts in mouth stuff again for Hillside as it recorded its third one point win of the Essendon District Football League premier division season.

The Sharks caused its third upset of the season to go one step further to cementing its spot in the top flight, beating Maribyrnong Park.

Just like their wins against Airport West and Aberfeldie, the Sharks had to fight to the final siren with the margin just one point.

"They don't make it easy for us," Sharks coach Mo Kaakour said.

"It was really important with an eight-point game coming up next week with Greenvale.

"I thought we trained really well during the week and there was a little bit of form at training."

Coming off the bye, Kaakour said it had come at the perfect time after back-to-back losses against last season's grand finalists Strathmore and Keilor.

He said it allowed them to reset and rest

a few bodies.

The Sharks brought back in Robbie Castello for Saturday and he was instrumental in the win.

Theo Peteinarias also came into the side after knocking down the door in the reserves and played some good footy.

Kaakour said the match with the Lions was a tale of two halves, with the Sharks winning 10.7 (67)-8.18 (66).

"I thought we came out of the blocks with plenty of pressure," he said. "We forced them back and were able to play the game in our front half with our forward pressure.

"We knew at half time that they would come out and have a real crack. We were able to force those shots that they missed from wide angles, not in front.

"The last quarter was a see-saw and they got a little bit of momentum. We were able to hold on."

Kaakour said having played in those close matches and getting results earlier in the season helped them against the Lions.

He said they had to hold on for a minute and half after the Lions got the margin with-

in one kick.

"Every Tuesday night we have full scale match simulation in those situations," Kaakour said.

"It holds us in good stead, but we don't want to get in too many more."

Castello, Lucas Failli and James McNaughton kicked two goals each for the Sharks.

Castello, Fort Caruso and Atu Bosenavulagi were named the Sharks best.

The win moves the Sharks to eighth on the ladder with three wins in their first season in the top flight.

Since 2012, just one team has won three matches in the top flight and finished bottom and been relegated.

Kaakour said they need to continue to get better each week, which they believe they have been doing.

"We will take 3-6," he said. "We could have won a couple more and been 5-4.

"We want to be competitive and compete with the best.

"We want to stay in games for longer and pinch a few more wins."



Elijah Davy. (Meagan Verstappen)

Two in a row

The Melton Thoroughbreds have doubled their win tally in the space of two rounds with back-to-back wins in the Big V men's division 2 competition.

Having had their struggles early on, the Thoroughbreds are starting to find that winning momentum.

On Saturday night, the Thoroughbreds were on the road against the Collingwood All Stars. A strong start had the Thoroughbreds leading by eight points at quarter time and the margin was extended to 14 points at the main break.

The All Stars finally got going in the third quarter were able to reduce the margin back to seven points heading into the final quarter. Both sides struggled to score in the final quarter.

The margin got as close as five points before the Thoroughbreds had some composure at the free throw line to ensure they did enough to come away with a 74-66 win. Elijah Davy top scored for the Thoroughbreds with 21 points, while Nicholas Hopper had 15 points. The Thoroughbreds are now up to sixth on the ladder and have a bye this weekend.

In the youth league men's division 3 competition, the Thoroughbreds lost a thriller to the Craigieburn Eagles.

The Eagles started strongly before the Thoroughbreds had the better of the middle two quarters to lead by six points heading into the final quarter. The Eagles finished strongly with a 26-19 final quarter to come away with an 84-83 win. William Lord top scored with 19 points for the Thoroughbreds.

The Thoroughbreds sit fourth on the ladder with seven wins and five losses. The Thoroughbreds are on the road this Sunday against the Bellarine Storm.

Myers puts on a show

By Tara Murray

Billy Myers put on a show to help Darley held off Ballarat in the Ballarat Football League on Saturday.

Coming off a rare loss, the Devils were again tested, this time by a Swans team that entered the contest in strong form.

The Devils jumped out of the blocks and led by 23 points at quarter time and then 43 points at the main break.

It became a game of two halves, as the Swans got going in the second half.

The Swans kicked five goals to two in the third quarter to reduce the margin to 19 points heading into the last quarter.

Myers kicked the first two goals of the final quarter to give the Devils some breathing room.

The Swans kept coming and kicking four goals in eight minutes to bring the margin back within a kick,

Time ran out, with the Devils holding on to win, 13.7 (85)-11.14 (80).

Myers kicked seven goals in a best on ground performance for the Devils.

Matthew Brett and Lachlan George were others named among the best.

The Devils move to fourth on the ladder.

This week they face the Sunbury Lions in the second grand final rematch of the season.

In other matches, Bacchus Marsh and Melton were both on the wrong side of the ledger.

The Cobras were on the road against Sebastopol.

The Burras kicked the only four goals of the first quarter to lead by 29 points at the first break. It could have been more had they kicked straight.

The Cobras got on the board in the second quarter and were able to reduce the margin to 20 points at half time.

Sebastopol was able to extend the margin back out to 36 points heading into the final quarter.

With the conditions getting tougher with the weather, the Burras made sure of the win, winning 13.15 (93)-8.5 (53).

Luke Goetz, Rye Penny and Cody Gates were named the Cobras best.

The Cobras slip to fifth on the ladder, now a game behind Darley.

Melton had a good old slog fest in its loss with Redan.

Having travelled to Ballarat, it was hard going for both sides.

Redan led by five points at half time, with both sides having kicked four goals each in the first half.

Neither side kicked a goal in the third quarter and it didn't get any easier in the last.

Melton kicked the first goal of the quarter to lead by three points.

Redan was able to get one back and that would be it, with the Lions winning, 5.10 (40)-5.9 (39) as both sides missed chances in the last.

Kyle Borg and Caleb Burquest were named the Bloods best.

The Bloods now sit in seventh spot.



Brodie Stevens. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 546141_13

Lakers bounce back, cement top four spot

By Tara Murray

Caroline Springs bounced back in the best possible way as they returned to the winners list in the Essendon District Football League premier division.

Having had a disappointing day out against Aberfeldie before the King's Birthday weekend bye, the Lakers cemented their spot in the top four with victory against Hillside.

It was the first time the two neighbouring clubs had faced each other.

Lakers coach Mick Gerada said Hillside is a side that they respect and said the two neighbouring clubs could form a real good rivalry in the years to come.

"It was a really good competitive game," he said.

"Hillside is a really highly rated club and were last year's premiers.

"It's always a challenge and we were able to put out a really strong performance, it was exciting to see."

Gerada said they were keen to get off to a strong start and set the tempo of the match.

They led 16-0 at quarter time and the margin was out to 21 points at half time and 27 points heading into the final break.

While the Sharks finally got going in the final quarter, it was too late with the Lakers winning, 6.11 (47)-4.2 (26).

"We were really solid for the first half and at our best," Gerada said.

"We had a 21 point lead and were able to hold that for the rest of the game. Hillside came hard in the last quarter and had their back up.

"We were able to hold on."

Jacinta Kondis kicked two goals for the Lakers.

Charlotte Gerada and Kondis were named their best.

For the Sharks, Brooke Kerrigan and Emily Paterno were their best in the loss.

After eight rounds, the Lakers sit in third spot with a 6-2 record.

All four sides in the top four have the same record showing the closeness of the competition.

Hillside's premiership defence is in trouble, sitting 2-6 and eighth on the lad-

der.

Gerada said they had taken a lot out of their two losses for the year and know they have things to work on in the second half of the season.

He said they had aimed to play finals in their first season in the competition, and that hasn't changed now they've played everyone once.

"Looking at some of the results, we've only won games by a couple of goals," he said.

"Each week is a different challenge and you have to be at your best.

"In the second half we have to be at our best."

The Lakers though will have to do without Mira Diab who suffered a serious knee injury in the loss to Aberfeldie.

Gerada said they were hopeful to get Nyomi Stowers back at some point, having not played since round one.

While missing some of their stars, Gerada said it was exciting to see the youth coming through with five under-19s part of their regular team.



Melton celebrates a goal on Sunday. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 559189_15

Big wins for Melton

It was a good weekend for Melton in the Vic League 3 competition, with both its women's and men's sides having good wins.

Both sides have had strong seasons so far as they look to return to the pointy end of the season, having made it deep into finals last year.

The Mustangs women's side was at home on Sunday against the Melbourne Razorbacks.

Melton was able to come away with a 4-0 win.

Captain Chloe Schwarze scored twice for the Mustangs, while Rachel Jeffs and Blair Murphy also found the back of the net.

After nine matches, the Mustangs sit second on the ladder with seven wins and two draws.

They have conceded just four goals for the season, the best in the competition.

Melton will face the Croydon Ranges on Sunday in round 10.

Meanwhile, the Mustangs men had a day out in the Vic League 3 competition.

Also facing the Razorbacks, the Mustangs had a 7-1 win.

Captain Riley Lawrence scored three goals for the Mustangs, while Nick Lye, Mark Scalzo, Mitchell Simpson and Zak Bahramis all scored one goal each.

The Mustangs sit third on the ladder with seven wins, a draw and a loss. The Mustangs head to Drouin this Saturday in the next round to face the Gippsland Strikers.

The Strikers sit atop the ladder, having not lost a game this season.

Meanwhile in the Vic League 2 men's competition, Caroline Springs lost to Frankston, 5-1.

Caroline Springs sits bottom after nine rounds without a win.



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