

MELTON & MOORABOOL

Star Weekly

starweekly.com.au

Pathway progress

By Jack O'shea-Ayres

A long-awaited clean-up of the Vineyard Road overpass connecting Diggers Rest and Sunbury has been welcomed by residents, but community advocates believe the work should mark the beginning of a regular maintenance program rather than a one-off response.

The shared user path, which runs alongside the busy Vineyard Road bridge over the Calder Freeway, provides a key active transport link for pedestrians and cyclists travelling between neighbouring communities across the Melton and Hume municipalities.

Residents were recently given reason to celebrate after accumulated debris, gravel, and overgrown vegetation were removed from the path following sustained community advocacy.

However, campaigners are now calling on the relevant authorities to establish an ongoing maintenance schedule to ensure the route remains safe year-round.

Long-time Diggers Rest resident David O'Connor, who has advocated for improvements to the busy corridor for more than a decade, said campaigning had evolved from securing the pathway's construction to ensuring it remained safe for everyday users.

While welcoming the pathway's completion, Mr O'Connor said ongoing maintenance had become a significant safety concern.

"While the shared pathway has provided an essential active transport link between Sunbury and Diggers Rest, it continues to present serious and ongoing safety concerns," he said.

"Users travel immediately adjacent to high-speed traffic and are regularly exposed to hazards including loose gravel, vegetation encroachment and debris deposited on the pathway.

"These conditions significantly increase the risk of serious injury or, in the worst case, a fatal incident."

Mr O'Connor said the current advocacy campaign was focused on securing a proactive maintenance regime to keep the pathway safe, while also looking towards longer-term improvements.

"Looking to the future, the substantial population growth across both Sunbury



David O'Connor and Hector Bugeja want to see an ongoing maintenance schedule following their campaign for a clean-up of the busy Vineyard Road overpass. (Damjan Janevski) 564576_04

and Diggers Rest further strengthens the case for duplication of the Vineyard Road overpass, delivering a safer and more resilient long-term connection for pedestrians and cyclists," he said.

Campaigning from community members called on Sunbury MP Josh Bull to support efforts to ensure the transport connection received appropriate inspection, maintenance, and attention.

Mr Bull said he had raised residents' concerns with the state government and agreed that the current maintenance arrangements needed improvement.

"I speak regularly to the minister for roads and road safety. I have notified her office that the current maintenance schedule is not meeting community expectations," Mr Bull said, adding regular maintenance responsibilities required a joint effort.

"Maintenance responsibilities here

rest with VicRoads, Hume City Council and Melton City Council – requiring a coordinated maintenance approach."

Hume council assets, operations and sustainability director Matthew Irving said council both welcomes and supports the proposed maintenance and inspection works, but that it was up to the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) to get the ball rolling.

"The bridge and shared pathway are the responsibility of the Department of Transport and Planning and council is not currently aware of any formal discussions regarding its management," Mr Irving said.

"Where council receives reports about maintenance issues on assets owned by an external authority, this information is generally referred to the responsible agency for investigation and action.

"Council does support regular inspection and maintenance of public assets to ensure they remain safe,

accessible and fit for purpose for the community."

Mr Bull did however confirm additional works were planned to address issues with the bridge itself.

"... Works will be taking place over the next month to rectify the expansion joints," Mr Bull said.

"Recent resurfacing works raised the height of the road slightly, and these upcoming rectification works will re-position the expansion joints to match."

A Department of Transport and Planning spokesperson said expansion joints on the Vineyard Road bridge over the Calder Freeway were being replaced to ensure they are level with the surrounding asphalt.

"Our crews complete regular inspections right across the network to ensure the safety of all road users," the spokesperson said.

Melton council was contacted for comment.



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Metro train need in spotlight

By Jack O’Shea-Ayres

Melton council has called for the immediate fast-track of the electrification of the Melton line following a telecommunications outage which crippled the V/Line rail network for more than 24 hours.

Many Melton residents were left stranded on 8 July after a Telstra outage disrupted services and prevented commuters from getting to work and other commitments.

It’s a disruption Melton mayor Lara Carli said highlighted the need for a more reliable regional train service network.

“[The] disruption further reinforces the urgency for our residents to have reliable metropolitan rail services like other parts of metropolitan Melbourne,” Cr Carli said.

“When a single outage can bring services to a standstill and leave commuters stranded on platforms in the middle of winter with no other options to get to work, it highlights the urgent need for a more reliable and resilient public transport network.”

The incident has strengthened calls from council on the need to fast-track the electrification and duplication of the Melton rail line, a project which was first promised under the Western Rail Plan in 2018 and identified as critical to supporting Australia’s fastest-growing community.

Council said it has been long advocating for the electrification and duplication of the Melton rail line with residents often cramped into overcrowded and infrequent

regional train services.

With Melton’s population expected to double over the next two decades, more than 300,000 residents will ultimately rely on the Ballarat rail corridor, yet the network is already under significant pressure.

“That is why we need a clear commitment, funding and a timeline for delivery so our residents can get where they need to go without spending hours each week dealing with unreliable and infrequent public transport,” Cr Carli said.

Train services are reportedly reaching capacity during peak periods, while station car parks fill up before 7.30am.

Modelling shows electrification of the rail line would increase public transport use by 27 per cent and remove 12,000 cars

from local roads each day, while delivering faster, more frequent and more reliable services for residents.

The state and federal governments have committed \$152.7 million towards planning and preparation works for the electrification of the Melton rail line.

However, council is calling for a fully funded commitment to deliver electrification by 2030, as well as two additional stations at Mt Atkinson and Thornhill Park, in line with Infrastructure Victoria’s recommendation.

“We can’t afford to wait another 10 years for it to be delivered,” Cr Carli said.

A Department of Transport and Planning Spokesperson said electrification of the Melton line was on the way.

Vote local in ‘Pick My Park’

Melton residents are being encouraged to help secure vital funding for Melton parks and reserves by casting a vote in the state government’s latest round of Pick My Park funding.

A total of 124 projects are in the running for funding ranging from \$20,000 to \$250,000 to upgrade existing parks and open spaces to create new urban parks, with community voting used to help decide which projects receive funding.

Four of Melton council’s projects are among those being considered for funding through the Pick My Park program in the western Melbourne group.

Taylor’s Hill Sports Park includes planned improvements for outdoor gym equipment, an expanded picnic area, a new shelter, barbecue facilities, improved paving, additional play elements, more trees, and natural seating areas in a bid to encourage recreation and community connection.

Springlake Village Park in Caroline Springs includes the proposed delivery of new play equipment for all ages, more trees and shade, upgraded pathways, additional seating and gathering spaces, a drinking fountain with a dog bowl, and landscaping improvements.

Harkness’ Scarlet Oak Reserve includes proposed upgrades of inclusive play equipment, an improved kick-around space, additional trees, upgraded pathways, new seating and gathering areas, and an improved landscaping scope.

Finally, Diggers Rest proposed off-leash dog park includes plans for a fully fenced dog park featuring accessible pathways, shaded seating and shelter, signage, natural rock and log features, and a drinking fountain with a dog bowl.

Melton mayor Lara Carli encouraged residents to get involved and cast their vote.

“Our parks and reserves are at the heart of our local communities. They are places where people connect, unwind, and enjoy the outdoors together,” she said.

Victorian residents aged 16 years and over are now eligible to vote, with each voter encouraged to pick up to three projects they think should receive funding.

Voting closes on Monday 3 August . Details: engage.vic.gov.au/pick-my-park



Lions Club president John Peebles and volunteers spent a frosty morning installing the new planter boxes at Young Street Kindergarten in Bacchus Marsh. (Damjan Janevski). 564403_03

Lions members help kindergarten bloom

Young Street Kindergarten’s outdoor learning space has been given a fresh lease on life, thanks to a team of community volunteers who swapped a warm morning indoors for a daybreak of hammers, timber, and hard work.

Fourteen members of the Lions Club of Bacchus Marsh gathered on a crisp winter morning to install two new timber planter boxes, creating a space where children will soon be digging, planting, and watching their very own gardens grow.

The project was made possible with

materials donated to the Lions Club, while volunteers prepared the timber in advance and worked closely with kindergarten staff to ensure the planter boxes suited the needs of the outdoor learning program and the next generation of Young Street’s green thumbs.

For the volunteers, the reward came not from the construction itself, but from knowing the boxes will soon be filled with flowers, vegetables, and herbs nurtured by curious young hands. Lions Club president John Peebles said the project re-

flected what could be achieved when the community worked together.

“When local volunteers and businesses come together, we see real results,” Mr Peebles said.

“These projects make our town stronger and give our young people more opportunities to learn and thrive.”

The planter boxes will become part of the kindergarten’s hands-on education program, giving children the chance to explore gardening while learning about nature, sustainability, and healthy eating.

Give a yelp for off-lead parks as dog action plan takes shape

Melton dog owners are being invited to help shape the future of dog off-lead areas across the municipality, as council seeks feedback on potential new locations as part of a long-term planning process.

Melton council is developing a four-year Dog Off-Lead Action Plan (DOLAP) to guide the future planning, development, and upgrades of spaces where dogs can exercise off-leash.

Home to more than 50,000 registered dogs, Melton has registered growing community interest in expanding access to dedicated dog off-lead areas.

The action plan follows community consultation undertaken in 2022, which explored how residents and their pets use local open spaces, what facilities are working well, and where additional dog-friendly areas may be needed.

Using feedback from residents, customer requests, a city-wide gape analysis, population data, and site suitability assessments, council has identified a number of potential future dog off-lead sites for investigation.

The proposed plan aims to improve access to off-lead spaces, identify gaps in the existing network, plan for future population

growth, upgrade current facilities and establish consistent service standards across the municipality.

Melton council is currently consulting on potential future locations through an interactive map and community survey, inviting residents to review and rate the sites being considered, with feedback helping to inform the future planning and decision-making.

Further consultation will also be undertaken for upcoming dog off-lead projects and planned upgrades to existing facilities.

Details: <https://conversations.melton.vic.gov.au/dog-lead-action-plan>

Melton twins hit the court

By Jack O'shea-Ayres

What began as a desperate scramble to field a single junior netball team has turned into one of Melton's most remarkable sporting stories — complete with four sets of twins.

At the start of the year, Melton Centrals junior netball program was struggling for members for the Riddell District Netball League season.

After some conversations, and a little bit of convincing, Centrals went from barely enough players for one team, to boasting five skilled netball teams, ranging from the under-9s to under-17s.

Amazingly, there's also four sets of twins playing for Centrals, with twins Evie and Amelia in the under-9 team, and twins Macy and Mia, Aliyah and Leilani, and Lexie and Ellie playing in the under-11 competition.

It's a hobby all four sets of twins agree is a fun and competitive way to spend even more time together.

"We already have a strong connection...we have a lot of laughs when things get competitive," Ellie and Lexi said of the experience.

Evie and Amelia said the sport has brought them closer together.

"We are always together anyway and she always knows where I'm going to throw the ball," Evie said.

"We play well together and I can always read her mind...we have some sort of telepathic twin thing," Amelia commented.

The group's under-11 coach Anne Latta called the experience a great phenomenon for the club, following a slight learning curve.

"At the beginning of the season there were mix-ups, but as their individual personalities become known you now hear names being called on the court instead of 'here,'" she said.

"It's a rare and unique phenomenon to our team and for the club. I'm just so extremely proud of how far they have all come."



Twins Mia and Macy (9) (front), Evie and Amelia (9), Aliyah and Leilani (9), and Lexie and Ellie (10). (Damjan Janevski). 562910_01

Apply to be part of the 2026 Moorabool Seniors Festival

Community groups, clubs, and organisations are invited to be part of the 2026 Moorabool Seniors Festival by hosting an event during October. .

This year's theme, Connect, Create, Celebrate, inspires communities to come together, try something new, and celebrate older people.

Groups are encouraged to host events that are one-off activities or existing programs they would like to showcase. Ideas include workshops, creative classes, gentle fitness sessions, live music, cultural experiences, film screenings, community morning teas, open days, and come and try activities.

Participating organisations are responsible for planning and delivering

their own event, including selecting the date, venue, catering, and entertainment.

Council is encouraging events that are free or low-cost, welcoming, inclusive, and accessible to older residents from across the shire.

Mayor Steve Venditti-Taylor said "This is the best opportunity to show-

case your organisation, attract new members, celebrate positive ageing, strengthen community connections and have your event promoted through Council's official Seniors Festival marketing, including the printed festival program and online channels," he said.

Expressions of interest close on Sunday 26 July.

Local businesses invited to WRL Meet the Builder Events



When

4-6 August



Regional suppliers, Traditional Owner and First Nations businesses, social enterprises and small to medium businesses in western Victoria are invited to attend the **Western Renewables Link Meet the Builder Events** in Melton, Creswick, Stawell and Lexton.

These free events are an opportunity to meet the WRL project team and delivery partners, hear about current and upcoming work packages and learn how to become a supplier to the project if it is approved to proceed to construction.

Where	When
Melton Melton Entertainment Park 2 Ferris Road, Melton	Tuesday 4 August, 4-6pm
Creswick RACV Goldfields Resort 1500 Midland Highway, Creswick	Wednesday 5 August, 4-6pm
Stawell North Park Community Sports Centre Function Hall, Lamont Street, Stawell	Thursday 6 August, 12-2pm
Lexton Mt Mitchell Estate 3056 Sunraysia Highway, Lexton	Thursday 6 August, 4-6pm

Register today

Attendance is free, but registration is required. Scan the QR code to register for your preferred event. Registration will close on 3 August 2026.



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www.westernrenewableslink.com.au/opportunities/businesses-and-suppliers

 www.westernrenewableslink.com.au

 1800 WRL WRL (975 975)

New bus link for the west

Residents in Thornhill Park and Cobblebank will soon have a new public transport option, with a direct bus service set to begin later this month.

Route 451 will officially commence on Sunday 26 July, providing a new seven-day service between Thornhill park and Cobblebank Station.

The new bus service is expected to improve access to schools, shopping centres, community facilities, and the conjoining rail network across Australia's fastest-growing municipality.

The new route is set to connect passengers with key destinations including Cob-

blebank Station, Central Square Shopping Centre, Cobblebank Village, Kolorer College, and the Cobblebank Campus of St Francis College.

The route has also been designed to serve the future Melton Hospital, providing a public transport link once the facility opens to the public.

Weekday services will operate from 5.15am through to midnight, while Saturday and public holiday services will run from 6.20am until 11.30pm.

On Sundays, buses will operate between 6.20am and 10.50pm.

The new route is aimed at improving

transport options for residents in Melbourne's rapidly growing western suburbs while attempting to make it easier to access employment, education, and essential services.

The introduction of Route 451 allows further planned improvements to Melton's bus network announced in the state budget, including two new routes connecting Weir Views and Strathulloh with nearby train stations.

Route 454 is also set to receive more frequent services, with the timetable to double in frequency and the route extended to Woodgrove Shopping Centre.

Melton MP Steve McGhie said the new route would provide practical benefits for local families.

"This new service is all about making it easier for families to get to the train, school, the shops, and work," Mr McGhie said.

"We're backing Melbourne's west with the public transport it needs, so local families can spend less time in the car and more time getting where they need to go."

Timetables and details on the new Route 451 will be available through the Transport Victoria website from Friday 10 July, ahead of its start on Sunday 26 July.



Melton City Relay for Life returns for one epic 24-hour event on Saturday 12 September. Committee members Jackie Krizmanic, Tiarni Caiafa and Warren Maynard. (Damjan Janevski). 564312_06

Stride to make a difference as relay returns

Melton's Relay for Life returns in September for one massive 24-hour event.

More than just walking laps around the track, Melton's Relay for Life is a chance to honour those loved ones lost, celebrate cancer survivors, support those currently facing cancer, and raise vital funds for Cancer Council's life-saving research, prevention programs and support services.

Melton City Relay for Life Committee president Tiarni Caiafa said the event was born out of the merging of two great ideas - one epic, continuous 24 hour event and the resurgence of a Relay for Life event in Melton after it had ceased.

With the event now in its sixth year, Ms Caiafa said it was more important than ever to raise funds and awareness.

"Since then I and the committee members have personally had friends and family diagnosed and passed away from cancer, so over the years this event has become more important to all of us," she said.

There are several ways you can be part of Relay For Life, including becoming a team captain or joining a team, becoming a member of your local Relay For Life committee or volunteering at your local Relay For Life event, where every step makes a difference.

Ms Caiafa encouraged everyone to get in-

involved and help fund cancer research.

"It's important to get involved as everyone knows someone who has had to fight this disease," she said.

"Treatment has come a long way and it's fundraising like this that leads to the research that helps our friends and family fight this disease."

The Melton Relay For Life will be held at Bridge Road Recreation Reserve, Strathulloh from Saturday 12 September through to Sunday 13 September.

Details: <https://www.relayforlife.org.au/event/melton-2026?lightbox=/event/melton-2026/relayers>.

Coaches replace evening trains

Commuters using the Ballarat line are advised to check and plan ahead as coaches replace evening trains for the entire journey from Sunday 19 July.

Coaches are set to replace evening trains on the Ballarat Line for the entire journey from Sunday 19 July to Wednesday 22 July, due to planned V/Line maintenance works.

For those travelling to Southern Cross on Sunday 19 July, coaches will replace trains from 8pm through to the last service for the entire journey between Wendouree and Southern Cross.

From Southern Cross, coaches will replace trains from 7.30pm through to the last service for the entire journey between Southern Cross and Wendouree.

Sunday's 9.15pm Southern Cross to Ararat service will also be replaced by coaches for the entire journey.

From Monday 20 July to Wednesday 22 July, coaches are set to replace trains travelling to Southern Cross from 8pm to the last service between Wendouree and Southern Cross.

For services travelling outbound from Southern Cross toward Wendouree, coaches will replace trains from 7pm until the last service for the entire journey between Southern Cross and Wendouree.

Customers are advised to allow an extra 40 minutes of travel time while the disruptions take place.

For more information and updates, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/3wmf6hum>.

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Moorabool shares customer results

Moorabool council is making moves to lead the way in transparency and keeping the community informed, with its Voice of the Customer (VoC) program results now available for the community to view through a new dashboard on its website.

The VoC program was developed as part of Moorabool council's Customer Experience Strategy as a way to help council better understand customer's experiences and improve the way council delivers services.

Data is gathered via a quick survey of people who contact council, with feedback focussed on overall satisfaction, ease of resolution, and how much contact a person needed to have their query resolved.

The program focuses on working to ensure council understands the needs of the community, is easy to deal with, and keeps the community informed, while also holding council to account.

Feedback is now presented in a dashboard for anyone to view on council's website.

"This gives the community greater visibility of the customer experience by presenting quarterly results from our VoC program," mayor Steve Venditti-Taylor said.

"Moorabool is a transparent Council... we are proving this through this dashboard, which sits alongside other data we gather through customer enquiries.

"When we say it, we genuinely mean we will listen to community feedback, share performance information openly and use customer insight to improve services," Cr Venditti-Taylor said.

For more information and to view the dashboard: <https://www.moorabool.vic.gov.au/About-Council/Our-commitment-to-you/Our-voice-of-customer-program>.

Support group rejected, again

By Jack O'shea-Ayres

Moorabool council has stood by its decision not to formally acknowledge a report supporting the feasibility of a bereaved parents peer support group, after councillors voted down an attempt to overturn the decision.

At its July 1 meeting, council rejected a rescission notice lodged by councillor Rod Ward, who sought to reverse a vote taken in May when councillors decided, 5-3, not to formally note a report examining the feasibility of establishing a non-clinical, community-based bereaved parents support group in the shire.

The rescission motion was lost 4-5, leaving the original decision unchanged.

"I was disappointed to see that this notice

of motion had not been passed," Cr Ward said. "It's purely an administrative step."

Had the motion succeeded, council would have formally noted the report's findings and acknowledged its ongoing advocacy role in supporting positive community outcomes.

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

Rather than operating the service itself, the report recommended the council play a facilitating role by improving awareness and referral pathways, brokering partnerships and potentially providing access to council-owned venues.

Councillor Sheila Freeman supported the rescission saying correspondence from a resident who had lost a child highlighted a gap in local support services.

She said many bereaved parents felt existing services failed to meet their needs.

"This report identifies that a peer support bereavement group is feasible," she said.

"But most importantly, it validates the experience that even though you've lost a child, you're still a mother and a father"

However, councillor Ally Munari suggested the rescission was an unnecessary use of council resources

"Rescission notices should be reserved for circumstances where there has been a genuine error, significant new information, or a compelling reason to revisit a decision,"

she said.

"I am concerned by the repeated suggestion that notices of motion come at no cost to the ratepayers. The reality is that whenever an officer picks up a pen or opens up their council laptop, it is costing ratepayers."

Cr Ward insisted the community would benefit.

"Fundamentally, we're here to listen to the community. The community put forward a very strong case for this."

The report acknowledged specialist bereavement services were already available through online resources, counselling providers and helplines, but found there was limited access to consistent, locally based, in-person peer support for bereaved parents.



Former Rotary Club president Martin Farrugia with new president Dr Nivedita Nagarale and Melton councillors Steve Abboushi, Lara Carli, Julie Shannon, and Bob Turner. (Supplied)

Rotary president reflects on year of growth

The Rotary Club of Caroline Springs has a new president.

New president, Dr Navedita Nagarale, has taken over the mantle following a changeover from former president Martin Farrugia.

Mr Farrugia's was president in 2025-26 as well as president of the Rotary Club of Melton in 2022-23.

He said he had proudly watched the Rotary club grow over his time as president.

"I've seen the Rotary Club of Caroline Springs continue to grow in both membership and community impact," he said.

"New members have joined our club, bringing fresh energy, skills, and diversity. We've also strengthened our relationships with a number of local community groups, deepening our partnerships and expanding the reach of our service projects."

Mr Farrugia said the club was continuing to develop a lasting impact on its community.

"The club is becoming increasingly recognised as a trusted, active, and collaborative force within the Caroline Springs and wider Western Melbourne community," he said.

Despite handing over the role to Dr

Nagarale, Mr Farrugia said he would continue to serve the club and his community.

"I will continue to serve Rotary and our community with the same commitment and passion," he said.

"My focus now shifts to supporting the incoming leadership team, mentoring new members, and helping drive key projects that strengthen our club culture, community engagement, and long-term impact."

"Rotary service doesn't end with the presidential year — it evolves, and I look forward to contributing wherever I can add value."

Apply to use hub

Moorabool council is inviting community organisations, sporting clubs, schools, service providers, and other stakeholders from across the shire who are interested in using the new sports hub at the Bacchus Marsh Racecourse and Recreation Reserve (BMMR) to submit an expression of interest.

Council is preparing to activate the new BMRRR Community and Multi-Sports (CAMS) Hub, a purpose-built, multi-purpose community and sporting facility designed to support a wide range of activities, programs, and services.

The expression of interest process will inform the future use of spaces, shared-use arrangements, operational planning and programming, and assessment of community demand.

Any sporting clubs, community organisations, schools, service providers, and any other relevant organisations are encouraged to apply and outline how they would like to use the facility.

Criteria will be assessed on community benefit, participation outcomes, inclusion, and alignment with council's priorities for the hub and its proposed purpose.

Activation of the hub is expected to commence at the project's completion, set for December.

Details: <https://tinyurl.com/2n-tr5dt3>.



Keep your meter cosy

We're all reaching for extra layers this winter.

Your water meter needs one too.

A bucket, blanket or cover can help stop freezing overnight and keep your water running when you need it most.

www.com.au/prevent-frozen-pipes



Keeping the curtain raised

On any given rehearsal night for an amateur community theatre company, the magic doesn't just begin when the curtain rises, it starts much earlier, in the quiet hum of conversation as volunteers unpack their costumes, adjust lighting, shuffle scripts, and welcome newcomers through the door. For the people behind Moonlite Theatre in Bacchus Marsh, those moments matter just as much as the applause when that faithful curtain draws, as Jack O'Shea-Ayres discovers.

Since its early beginnings in 1917, the Bacchus Marsh-based amateur theatre company has quietly become a creative home for performers, directors, writers, and backstage volunteers across the west.

It's a place where first-time actors share the stage with experienced performers, where local stories are given a voice, and where confidence often grows as steadily as friendships.

The company's existence almost feels like the continuation of a story left unfinished decades earlier.

For much of the 20th century, Bacchus Marsh had its own amateur theatre company in the Bacchus Marsh Players.

But after the group faded away, the town went years without a company theatre organisation that welcomed people of all ages and experience levels.

The idea of changing that began not on a stage, but around a table.

Moonlite Theatre vice-president Tim Hawthorne said the seeds were planted through informal discussions among members of the Bacchus Marsh Arts Council back in 2015.

"We were exploring ways to increase the use of the public hall," he said. "At the same time, an idea was floated of forming a group to produce an amateur stage production, recognising that nothing had replaced the then-defunct Bacchus Marsh Players."

A working group slowly took shape.

A small grant from the Bacchus Marsh Arts Council allowed organisers to hold a public meeting at the Bacchus Marsh Library on 8 July, 2017.

Avid interest from the community quickly turned conversations into rehearsals, rehearsals into productions, and then before long the newly incorporated Bacchus Marsh & Melton District Community Theatre was born.

The lengthy official title would eventually give way to the far more memorable Moonlite Theatre, carrying a uniquely distinct local flavour.

Rather than reviving the Bacchus Marsh Players title, members instead chose to preserve it as part of the town's theatrical history.

Members looked further back into local folklore, naming the company after Captain Moonlite, the bushranger persona adopted by Andrew George Scott, whose remarkable life included a stint as a lay reader in Bacchus Marsh before he turned to crime in the late 1860s.

It's a name steeped deeply in local history, but the company itself has always been focused firmly on the future.

The newly formed theatre company's first production was modest by design, a staged radio play, using the little equipment Moonlite's volunteers could get their hands on at the time, presented in a cabaret setting at the Holy Trinity Church Hall.

"The rest is history," Mr Hawthorne said.

From those humble beginnings, Moonlite Theatre has steadily expanded its ambitions while holding onto the very values which first inspired its creation.

Unlike large, professional theatre companies driven by commercial success, community theatre thrives on something less tangible, but perhaps more enduring.

Enthusiasm drives the volunteers who dedicate countless hours not because they're chasing financial gain, but because they truly enjoy creating something together.



Bruce Carboon, Carl Reeson, Shannon Nicholson in *Donuts Can Kill You!* by local Bacchus Marsh Playwright Deb Barker.



Top: Cast of *Rope* by Patrick Hamilton. Above: One of Moonlite Theatre's early radio play productions of *Jane Serves on a Jury*. (Pictures: Supplied)

"Community theatre plays an important cultural and social role in Bacchus Marsh," Mr Hawthorne explained.

"Our members come from many different backgrounds, ages, and experience levels, yet everyone works together toward the same goal: producing shows the community can enjoy.

"This creates a welcoming and supportive environment where people can learn new skills, build confidence and form lasting friendships."

That sense of belonging has become one of the company's defining characteristics.

For some, joining Moonlite Theatre is about rediscovering a passion left behind after school.

Others arrive having never stepped foot onto a large stage before.

Some prefer to remain behind the scenes, discovering talents in lighting, sound, costumes, stage management, or set construction, talents they may have never found in themselves had it not been for Moonlite Theatre's welcoming environment.

Everyone has a role to play in the company. Monthly free workshops held on the fourth Saturday of each month reflect that very philosophy through improvisation games, play readings, technical workshops, and performance exercises, where members continue developing their skills in an environment which values encouragement over perfection.

The company has also carved out their own unique niche by championing an

almost forgotten theatrical form.

Each autumn, Moonlite Theatre typically stages radio plays, a style rarely performed by contemporary amateur companies.

While audiences may no longer gather around wireless sets, the format continues to offer actors something invaluable.

Without elaborate staging or visual spectacle, performers rely entirely on their voice, reigning accents, pacing, and emotional expression.

For Moonlite Theatre, preserving radio drama holds the same importance as preserving its grassroots theatre company.

It's also a practical way of strengthening performers while keeping an important theatrical tradition alive.

Moonlite also places a strong emphasis on showcasing local creativity, with productions like *Double Trouble* featuring works by regional playwrights, giving local writers and performers opportunities that are often overlooked in a regional backdrop.

Despite its strong foundation in Bacchus Marsh and its surrounding areas, Moonlite Theatre faces its own challenges.

Unlike larger metropolitan theatre groups, Moonlite Theatre does not have the luxury of a permanent performance venue complete with purpose-built stage and backstage facilities.

Every dollar earned through ticket sales or community grants is reinvested into improving productions, whether through purchasing lighting equipment, curtains, staging, or technical resources.

Finding performers can also be difficult when larger metropolitan companies offer more frequent productions and greater resources.

"We are constantly competing with metropolitan groups for community actors, and we are working to improve Moonlite Theatre's resources so we can continue to grow and provide productions for the local community to enjoy," Mr Hawthorne explained.

Yet, those challenges make each achievement feel all the more significant.

One of the company's proudest milestones came in 2025 when Moonlite Theatre entered the Victorian Drama League Awards for the first time with its production of *Rope* by Patrick Hamilton.

The production marked a new chapter for the company, but the celebration became even sweeter when Chantelle Fernandez received her first acting nomination, winning Best Actress in a Minor Role for *Sabat*.

"From humble beginnings with limited theatre equipment to now staging plays in a state community theatre awards program," Mr Hawthorne called the experience.

For a theatre company that began with little more than enthusiasm and borrowed equipment, state-level recognition was a powerful reminder of how far it had come.

Still, awards tell only part of the story.

The greater achievement may be measured in the quieter moments - the nervous newcomer who discovers confidence through performance, the retiree who finds a new social circle, the young actor who catches the theatre bug, or the audience member who sees a locally written story brought to life.

In a growing regional community like Bacchus Marsh, organisations such as Moonlite Theatre do more than stage plays.

They create places where people gather, collaborate, and tell stories together.

As the town continues to grow, so too does the importance of spaces where creativity belongs to everyone, not just the professionals.

"In another 20 or 30 years, Moonlite Theatre would like to be remembered as a welcoming and creative community organisation that brought people together through a shared love of theatre," Mr Hawthorne said.

"We hope to be known not only for our productions but also for the opportunities we provide for people to learn, grow in confidence, and form lasting friendships."

Long after the final bows are taken and the lights are dimmed, those are the stories that continue long after the curtain falls.

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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
Publisher/Managing Director, Paul Thomas
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Winning the science race

Secondary school students from across the state with a flair for science and technology can now get involved in the Young Scientist Competition of Victoria.

The competition, which has been running successfully in the Wyndham area for the past seven years, will this year expand to all of Victoria in collaboration with the RMIT University's School of Science.

Entrants have until the end of July to register, with a big judging day event on 22 August to help identify, nurture and celebrate outstanding young talent in science, technology, engineering and innovation.

Competition organiser Vijisha Venkatram is the founder of Wyndham-based VJ Academy, a not-for-profit organisation that promotes arts, wellbeing and education.

"The Young Scientist Competition of Wyndham has been running successfully for seven years, last year with 35 participants, so this year we decided to explore something different with RMIT," Ms Venkatram said.

"Our aim has always been to provide opportunities to a wider community and offer students broader exposure to scientific research, innovation and engagement.

"The competition provides a platform for students to present original ideas, inventions, and scientific solutions that address real-world challenges and contribute to a better future for Victoria," she said.

A panel of five judges will assess the project entries on 22 August, with a team of young adult volunteers from STEM backgrounds assisting.

This competition is open to students aged from 13 to 18, either individually or in teams of two, and the judging panel will



Aakanksha at a previous Young Scientist competition. (Supplied)

include respected academics, industry professionals, researchers, and community leaders with experience across the science, technology, innovation and education sectors.

Ms Venkatram said the Young Scientist Competition of Wyndham would resume from next year onwards.

Registrations for this year's competition close on 26 July, with details at youngscientist.org.au

Briefs

Emergency alert

Residents using a concealed or safety phone as part of a family violence safety plan are being urged to prepare ahead of a national test of the new AusAlert emergency warning system on Monday 27 July. The test, scheduled for 2pm, will trigger a loud siren-like sound, vibration and automatically turn on the screen of compatible mobile phones, tablets and smartwatches, even if devices are on silent or do not disturb. Safe and Equal warns the alert could expose hidden safety devices. People are encouraged to switch devices off or place them in aeroplane mode at least one hour before the test, or leave them with a trusted person.

Kindergarten registrations

Melton families planning for kindergarten in 2026 or 2027 are being reminded that registrations for three and four-year-old programs remain open. Melton Council has advised that applications for 2027 Round Two close on 24 July, with parents encouraged to complete registrations online through the council website. Council's kindergarten team is available to assist families who need help with registrations or the offer process. Register online: www.melton.vic.gov.au/Kindergarten.

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A new place to remember

On Monday 22 June, residents of Caesia Gardens Retirement Village and members of the Caroline Springs RSL Sub Branch gathered for the unveiling of a new Place of Remembrance, where residents can pay their respects on Anzac Day and Remembrance Day or take a moment to reflect on Australia’s war history. Joint Place of Remembrance project co-orinator Kim Bright explains how the project came about.

Caesia Gardens Retirement Village has been in existence since 2009. In 2015 an ANZAC Day Service was held in the village, in the area adjacent to the village’s flagpole. In those early days, this area was not particularly ‘flash’ – just a flagpole sticking out of a garden bed - but it served the purpose at the time. A yearly Anzac Day Service has been held ever since.

The main organisers in those earliest days were John Greaves, who passed away in 2018, and current resident John Le Sueur.

Just prior to his death, Mr Greaves approached me, as an ex-serviceman, to ask if I could become involved in the planning of future Anzac Day events.

Mr Le Sueur and I have been organising and conducting these services ever since.

Over the years, both of us have attempted to keep the service and the day’s activities fresh each year, by introducing various features, such as speakers from the Caroline Springs RSL, a display of military memorabilia (owned by residents) and this past Anzac Day featured a talented vocalist from Southern Cross College.

Although a specific project, to enhance the aesthetics of the service area, was never formalised, Mr Le Sueur and I saw such a course as a natural component in our ef-



From left, Anne Greaves, the widow of John Greaves the inaugural Caesia Gardens Anzac service organiser, Kim Bright, joint Place of Remembrance project coorinator, Tom Oughtred, president of the Caesia Gardens Residents Association, Bobbie Matthewman and Ross Wiltshire, both members of the Caroline Springs RSL, Peter Burquest, president of the Caroline Springs RSL, John Lesueur, joint project coorinator and village manager Kumar Ellawala. (Supplied)

forts to keep Anzac Day alive and thriving in our village.

To this end, an approach was made to

around the flagpole. This did not happen. However, we were successful in having decorative stones placed, which finally gave us a clearly defined focus point for our services.

Our village subsequently underwent a change of ownership. The newmanager, Kumar Ellawala, immediately undertook many long overdue improvements around the village.

Shortly following this year’s Anzac Service at the village, Mr Le Sueur and I approached Mr Ellawala with the idea of (finally) making the area something special for the residents.

Mr Ellawala immediately came on board, with the result that a number of adornments were added to the area, and by May 2026, Mr Le Sueur and I finally felt that we had achieved the ultimate space; in essence, a cenotaph, but which we have more appropriately called our village’s ‘Place Of Remembrance’.

What does it represent?

I would say that the majority of our residents would find it, physically, very difficult to attend the wonderful RSL Dawn Service celebrated each Anzac Day by Lake Caroline. Our Place of Remembrance will continue to be used to enable our residents to participate in what is, to all of us, a solemn and special day – Lest We Forget.

MBC re-staging
Development Licence Application





Have your say!

Maddingley Brown Coal (MBC) is preparing a Development Licence Application to change the order of its landfill stages at its site on Tilleys Road, Maddingley.

The proposal involves starting Stage 3 earlier than originally planned. There is no change to the site footprint, waste volumes or truck movements. The changes aim to improve rehabilitation, groundwater protection and site operations.

Community feedback is invited on aspects such as landscaping, monitoring and reporting, and community benefits.

You can learn more about the plans at:
www.maddingleybrowncoal.com.au/landfill-re-staging-program

We are also hosting two community information sessions for you to learn more.

Darley Market Saturday 18 July 2026 9 am – 1 pm Cnr Fitzroy and Grey Streets, Darley Park	Bacchus Marsh Public Hall (Supper Room) Thursday 30 July 2026 5 pm – 8 pm 207 Main Street, Bacchus Marsh
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If you can't make it to a session, scan the QR code to complete our community survey by **Sunday, 9 August 2026.**



 **Contact us**

Phone: **03 5367 7277** Email: mbcfeedback@callejagroup.com.au



Greta Holt, Lisa Grey and Josh Warner from Moorabool council’s People and Culture team

Council’s People & Culture team awarded

Moorabool council’s People & Culture team has been recognised on the national stage, taking out the Innovator of the Year - Best Use of AI award at the National HR Innovation Awards.

The national recognition celebrates three key initiatives developed in-house by council’s People & Culture team: Maddi, an AI-powered People and Culture assistance, the section AI Academy, and the Smarter Ways of Working program.

Together, these projects aimed to help streamline administrative tasks, build staff capability, and create more opportunities for strategic, creative, and community-focused work.

Mayor Steve Venditti-Taylor said the award was a significant achievement for council and reflected its commitment to innovation and continuous improvement.

“This is a fantastic achievement for our People & Culture team and one that should make the entire organisation proud,” Cr Venditti-Taylor said.

“To receive national recognition for innovation demonstrates that Moorabool Shire Council is leading the way in how local government can embrace technology while keeping people at the centre of everything we do.”

The award-winning initiatives were designed to use technology to reduce administrative burdens, enabling staff to dedicate more time to strategic planning, creativity, and service delivery.

The projects were developed with a strong focus on building trust, empowering employees and fostering a culture of innovation across the organisation.

“These initiatives were developed by our own staff and showcase the creativity, expertise and forward- thinking culture that exists within our organisation,” Cr Venditti-Taylor said.

“We are investing in our people, building their skills and creating an environment where innovation is encouraged and supported.”

10 MELTON & MOORABOOL STAR WEEKLY Tuesday, 14 July, 2026

MY PLACE

High-achieving Footscray teen Taihan Rahman recently received the Les Twentyman Youth Leadership Award at the 2026 Maribyrnong Civic Awards. It was the latest in a growing list of honours for the 17 year-old who was last year elected Youth Premier of the Victorian Youth Parliament and who serves on both the Footscray and Maribyrnong Youth Advisory Committees. The year 12 student at Melbourne High School spoke to Cade Lucas about his life in Melbourne’s north-west.

What’s your connection to the north-west of Melbourne?
I was born, and am living and learning here in Maribyrnong. My leadership journey began as school captain of Footscray City Primary School, where my letter of recognition for my teacher was read out in the Victorian Parliament by our local MP, Katie Hall. Since then, I’ve represented the perspectives and experiences of young people in Maribyrnong at a state and federal level, as well as contributing as a member of the Maribyrnong Youth Advisory Committee.

What do you like about living/working here?
What I love most is the sense of connection and community wherever you go. In a time where our nation feels increasingly divided, it’s incredibly empowering to know that I’m part of a community that embraces its diversity. As a young person growing up in today’s world, it can feel overwhelming to think about the future that we will inherit, but it gives me so much hope not only to see the community we have established, but also the many young people leading incredible change here in Maribyrnong.

What, if anything, would you change about the area?
I’d want our community to meaningfully empower young people with the



Taihan Rahman recently won the Les Twentyman Youth Leadership Award at the Maribyrnong Civic Awards. (Damjan Janevski) 562860_01

confidence and capability to be more involved in shaping the future of Footscray and Maribyrnong. I’ve been incredibly

fortunate to represent young people to all levels of government, from local, state and federal advisory committees. These

experiences instilled in me a desire to make these kinds of opportunities were more accessible to the young people I represent. I advocated to the local council to install a zebra crossing at the intersection between Hyde and Parker streets to improve the road safety of our community. This took some years but it was incredibly rewarding that I was able to use my voice to make it a reality.

Where is your favourite local place to spend time?
One of my favourite places to spend time is Yarraville Gardens. It really stands out as an incredible example of how accessible green spaces can bring a community together. Sport has been a huge part of my life, especially soccer and cricket, so I love being able to head down for a kick or run, or play with my friends whenever I get the chance.

Tell us something people would be surprised to know about you.
People are often surprised to know I’m a pretty quiet person. If you asked most people who know me, they’d probably describe me as reserved. But around my family and close friends, I love being my joking and silly self. I think that’s also why people are surprised to learn about the leadership roles I’ve taken on, because to me, leadership isn’t always about being the loudest person in the room.



T123 Transport Hub Airport Assist Mobility Hub. (Supplied)

Melbourne Airport trials new pick-up, drop-off zones

Trials are underway at Melbourne Airport’s new pick-up and drop-off zones. Construction of the new areas is nearing completion, with the airport aiming to officially open them in October. The \$500 million pick-up and drop-off zones will separate private cars from commercial vehicles while more than doubling the capacity for hellos and goodbyes at the airport, ending the congested arrivals and departures. the airport said. The new road network will also make way for the \$4.5 billion expansion of Melbourne Airport’s international terminal into the forecourt. Built within the T123 multi-level car park, the T123 Transport Hub will become the single pick up and drop off point for all passengers travelling on Qantas, Virgin Australia and all international flights, with new, express ramps connecting the Tullamarine Freeway to the Transport Hub.

During the trials, Melbourne Airport will work with Get Skilled Access and Traveller’s Aid to also conduct accessibility trials in to ensure all passengers are well supported. Melbourne Airport chief executive Lorie Argus said the new Transport Hub was an essential piece of infrastructure to support the growing number of people using the airport. “This project will mean fewer traffic jams and make more room for hellos and goodbyes, while also unlocking the ability for us to expand the international terminal into the forecourt,” she said. “Our current road network simply doesn’t have capacity to cope with our forecast passenger growth, with traffic modelling showing that without this project, passengers would be waiting an additional 28 minutes in peak periods by 2029. **Details:** www.melbourneairport.com.au/pick-up-and-drop-off-hub



Help shape local projects in the City of Melton by joining Council’s Community Grants Assessment Panel.

As a volunteer panel member, you’ll review grant applications, help recommend applications for funding, and help support projects that strengthen our community. Panel members may be called on once or twice a year to assess applications online and attend an assessment panel meeting. It’s a rewarding opportunity to give back and help ensure funding supports projects that make the City of Melton an even better place to live, work and connect. **Apply via the QR code or visit conversations.melton.vic.gov.au**

Applications close Friday 31 July 2026.

Apply now

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Star Weekly looks back through the pages of our predecessors



30 years ago
10 July, 1996

The Melton Regional shopping centre has been sold in a deal worth \$10 million to the Queensland Investment Corporation, the company behind the Sydenham regional shopping centre.



20 years ago
11 July, 2006

A sharp rise in the number of rescues of bushwalking groups in Moorabool - with three retrieved by he SES and police in just four days last week - has prompted a warning for walkers to be prepared, or risk exposure to hypothermia from record low temperatures.



15 years ago
12 July, 2011

Melton police hope a new family violence unit will encourage more victims to come forward.



10 years ago
12 July, 2016

A spate of violent home invasions across the western suburbs has left local families living in fear.



Donna Southern (front) with fellow Leakes Need Lights campaigners Robyn Kennedy and Stacey Fraser. (Damjan Janevski) 562966_03



Architect Steffen Welsch and owner Dan Thompson, with his dog Stewie, outside a Seddon house taking part in Open House Melbourne. (Damjan Janevski) 563203_07



Mercy Hospital staff and Wyndham Rotary members are gearing up for a fun run. (Damjan Janevski) 561917_04



Axel, 6, builds a cubby. (Damjan Janevski) 561881_10

Faces of the west

Each week Star Weekly photographers are out and about capturing the people and events from across Melbourne's north-west.



Sarah Miles, Tamara Collins and Ruby Watts are calling for improvements to Tony Clarke Reserve's facilities. (Damjan Janevski) 561125_03



Andy Vaszolyi, founder of Bacchus Marsh Philosophy Group. (Damjan Janevski) 561738_04



Summer, 10.
563218_03



Blake, 9.
563218_01



Evie, 10.
563218_02



Harry, 3.
563217_01



Daisy, 5.
563217_02



Ashton, 8. 563217_04



Emily, 9. 563217_03



Ariah, 7. 563217_05



Michael, 8.
563218_04



Fletcher, 5.
563217_06

Moorabool holiday fun

As kids buckle up for another term of school, they won't be entering the classroom empty handed. Star Weekly photographer Damjan Janevski caught up with some of the youngsters who were taking advantage of Moorabool council's free school holiday events on Wednesday 8 and Thursday 9 July, where it was all things creative craft and slippery slime at the Ballan and Bacchus Marsh libraries.

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

Lower Power Bills Expo

Melton residents can learn how to reduce their electricity bills at the free Lower Power Bills Expo on Thursday 16 July. Hosted by Melton Council in partnership with the Smart Energy Council, the event will run 4.30-7pm at the Melton Community Hall. Energy experts, community organisations, State Electricity Commission representatives and local solar companies will offer practical advice on cutting energy costs, improving efficiency, accessing rebates and exploring solar and electrification options. Open to homeowners, renters and small business owners, the expo also includes guest speakers, information stalls, refreshments and a chance to win a free induction cooker.

■ Details and registration: <https://tinyurl.com/2u6v5bby>.

Zonta Club of Melton

Zonta is an international organisation bringing women together to support women & girls in the Melton area. The Zonta Club of Melton meets on the first Monday of each month at Melton Country Club, Reserve Road, Melton. Meetings include guest speakers, projects on the go and other social events.

■ Jane, 0447 291 049, info@zontaclubofmelton.org.au

Melton South Community Centre

Melton South Community Centre offers a range of Social Groups. Free Men's Fella-ship Group on Wednesdays 1.30-3pm, Neighbourhood Group for ladies on Wednesdays 1-3pm \$2 per week, Free Knit & Natter on Mondays 10am-noon, Free Community Garden group on the last Thursday of month 1.30-3pm, Free Community Singers group on 1st and 3rd Tuesdays 12.15-2pm, Free Al-Anon Family Groups on Fridays 7-8.30pm, and Free MelMarsh Prostate Cancer Support Group on the first Thursday of the month between 12.30-2.30pm. 41 Exford Road, Melton South

■ 9747 8576, msccentr@bigpond.net.au

Free 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, msccentr@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, 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



Through the lens

This week's photographer's choice picture is of 12-year-old Eliana from West Footscay, who is staring as Bonnie in Bonnie and Clyde at the Altona Theatre. (Damjan Janevski) 563623_01

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, Strathtulloh (Melton South). The band is available for events. Brass, woodwind and percussion players are always welcome.

■ Sally Hamond, 0401 474 582

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, EmploymentSupport@cotavic.org.au

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, Judy, 0428 463 538

Lights of Wisdom

The Bahá'ís of Moorabool invite you to Lights of Wisdom, a tranquil space to share the insights from the great spiritual traditions of mankind. Sessions are held at the Lerderderg Library, Bacchus Marsh, every first Friday of the month, 7.30pm. Next session on 7 August on the theme Overcoming Racial Prejudices. Entry is free.

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 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

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, 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

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

Melton Men's Group

Melton Men's Group meets every Thursday from 5-8 pm at Arnolds Creek Children's and Community Centre at 19 Claret Ash Boulevard, Harkness. Focusing on senior men's mental and physical wellbeing. Join them for a cuppa and a chat, listen to guest speakers and participate in activities including, carpet bowls, pool, table tennis, cards and chess.

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SPORTS QUIZ

1. Who did Australia defeat to win the 2026 ICC Women's T20 World Cup final?

2. When played by women, which sport is called camogie?
3. In early July 2026, Australian runner Cameron Myers set a new Oceanic record over which distance?

4. Bryce Cotton debuted for the Boomers against which men's national basketball team?

5. The Adelaide Thunderbirds defeated which team 61-40 to win the 2026 Super Netball Grand Final?

6. Which country defeated host nation Türkiye to claim bronze at the 2026 FIBA Under-17 Basketball World Cup?

7. Luciano Leilua left the NRL's St. George Illawarra Dragons for which French team?

8. Which North African country's men's national soccer team is known as the Atlas Lions?

9. Which 2011 film starred Brad Pitt as Billy Beane, general manager of the Oakland Athletics?

10. What is the term for a score of zero in tennis?
11. As of 2026, who is the current captain of the US women's national ice hockey team?

12. Alysa Liu is a competitor in what sport?

13. In volleyball, which player is not allowed to serve?

14. Opened in March 2026, the multi-use sports arena known as Te Kaha is in which New Zealand city?

15. Which country has won the most medals in the Winter Olympics?

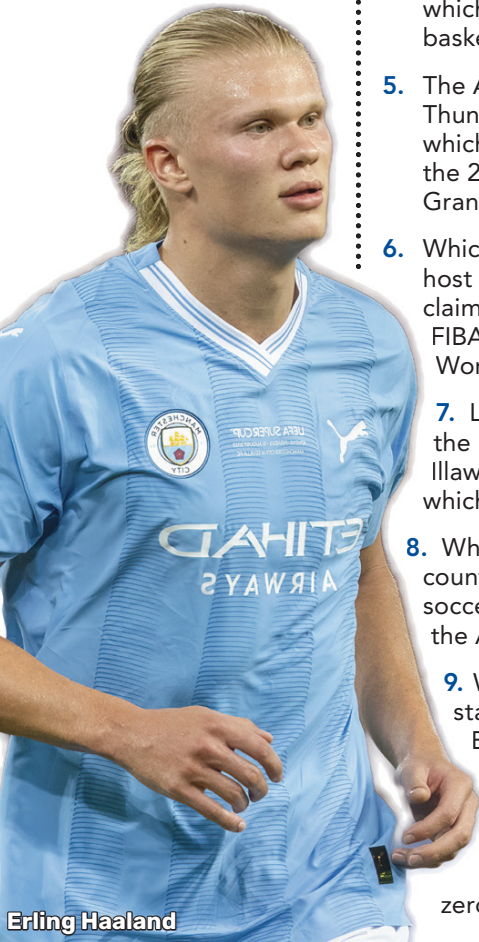
16. What is scoring two goals known as in soccer?

17. Erling Haaland scored two goals against which team in this year's World Cup Round of 16?

18. And who scored two goals in England's elimination of Mexico in the same round?

19. After eliminating Iga Swiatek at Wimbledon, who became the first Filipino tennis player to reach the fourth round of a Grand Slam?

20. The WBSC governs which two major sports?



Erling Haaland



Iga Swiatek

21. As well as being a wedding venue, Madison Square Garden is also home to which NBA team?

22. Which company provides the official basketballs for the Olympics?

23. In the TV show Riverdale, what is the nickname of the high school's football and basketball squads?

24. And what is the name of the official cheerleading and dance squad?

25. Before 1908, for what reason was did English law prohibit darts from being played in pubs?
26. What is the first name of the man mentioned in the AFL song Up There Cazaly?

27. True or false: lawn bowls is a Commonwealth Games sport?

28. How many players are allowed in the water at any given time for a single water polo team?

20. Debuting in July this year, the Nations Championship pits Northern Hemisphere against Southern Hemisphere teams in which sport?

30. In which year did the Melbourne Mustangs last win the Goodall Cup?

1. England 2. Hurling 3. One mile 4. Guam 5. Melbourne Vixens 6. Australia 7. Catalans Dragons 8. Morocco 9. Moneyball 10. Love 11. Hilary Knight 12. Figure skating 13. Libero 14. Christchurch 15. Norway 16. A brace 17. Jude Bellingham 18. Brazil 19. Alexandra Eala 20. Baseball and softball 21. New York Knicks 22. Molten 23. Bulldogs 24. River Vixens 25. It was considered a game of chance 26. Roy 27. True 28. Seven (six field players and one goalkeeper) 29. Rugby union 30. 2023

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It's all about style for GR

By Chris Riley, Marque Motoring

Great to finally catch up with the Toyota C-HR GR Sport.

We missed out on driving this car the first time around when it just got the suspension job.

But it was worth the wait because the GR Sport now gets some extra power, with a larger 2.0-litre based hybrid system.

And it shows, remaining responsive to the throttle even with two adults and a couple of kids on board – although we weren't surprised when they complained about a lack of legroom in the back.

More on that in a minute.

Styling

Launched in late 2016 and now in its second generation, a rationalised lineup sees three models, all of them hybrid with a choice of two powertrains and either front- or all-wheel drive.

Adopting Toyota's new 'Hammer Head' design language, C-HR is distinguished by 17- or 19-inch alloys, LED lights with automatic high beam, a rear spoiler plus a grained pattern for the front grille, black bumpers and pillar trim.

Originally priced from \$29,990, the price has grown, with the GR Sport added in 2019.

Entry GXL is priced from \$46,940 and the flashy, better equipped Koba is priced from \$53,890.

Both come with a 1.8-litre four-cylinder hybrid powertrain, together with a seven-speed CVT style transmission and front-wheel drive.

This hybrid setup is shared with many of Toyota's other models, including Corolla, Corolla Cross and the Lexus CT hatch.

Our test vehicle, top of the line GR Sport, is priced from \$58,890 plus on-roads, with all-wheel drive and a larger 2.0-litre hybrid.

Two-tone paint adds \$775, two-tone plus premium paint \$1550 and two-tone plus premium paint and a panoramic sunroof \$2700.

Infotainment

Infotainment comes in the form of a 12.3-inch touchscreen, with Bluetooth, voice recognition, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, cloud-based satellite navigation, and AM/FM and DAB+ digital radio.

Both Koba and GR Sport score premium, nine-speaker JBL audio.

There's also wireless smartphone charging, USB-C and 12V charging ports



The previous 1.8-litre hybrid has been replaced by a larger, more powerful 2.0-litre unit. (Supplied)

and a rear USB-C accessory port.

Cloud-based navigation requires a network connection for the latest map, traffic, and routing information.

When connectivity is limited, it uses previously downloaded info to maintain coverage across the entire route.

Specifically, the cloud feature requires an active Drive Connect subscription.

A complimentary one-year subscription includes Safety and Security features, Remote Connect, Multimedia Connect and Driving Insights, accessible through the myToyota Connect app.

Safety

Comprehensive five-star safety includes 10 airbags, panoramic view camera, colour head-up display and forward collision warning, brake assist and autonomous emergency braking.

The Toyota Safety Sense suite includes the pre-collision safety system, active cruise control, lane trace assist, parking support brake, road sign assist (speed signs only), safe exit assist and more.

Engines/transmissions

Initially the GR Sport was all show and no go, but the previous 1.8-litre hybrid has been replaced by a larger more powerful 2.0-litre unit that produces a substantial 146kW of power in total – 43kW more than before.

That's a significant increase and, even better and it is impressive that this has been achieved without any adverse effect on fuel consumption, which remains 4.1L/100km for this model.

With a 43-litre tank, it still takes standard 91 unleaded too. Combined CO2 emissions

are listed at 94g/km.

Overseas, Toyota offers a 164kW plug-in hybrid (PHEV) version.

As is always the case Toyota does not supply a combined torque figure for its hybrids.

If it helps, the petrol engine produces 188Nm at 4400 rpm and the two electric motors chime in with a combined 290Nm.

Driving

In a nutshell, C-HR priorities form over function. While it's a great looking car that has stood the test of time, the design demands compromise.

For a start, although marketed as a five-seater, rear legroom is tight and it is better viewed as a 2+2 (part-time back seat).

Even then it's a bit of a squeeze and the plunging roofline is problematic. It means you need to duck when getting in and out of the car – or pay the penalty (ouch).

Indeed, at 4362mm in length, the Euro-designed C-HR is actually 28mm shorter than before, although the wheelbase remains the same 2640mm.

But it's 37mm wider than its predecessor which means more shoulder room, but you'll still find yourself fighting over the centre armrest.

Settling into the driver's seat it becomes clear it was designed to accommodate a smaller, younger frame – so older drivers take note.

The back seat meanwhile is claustrophobic, lacks legroom, doesn't have any air outlets and there's no fold down armrest.

Thankfully, Toyota has dispensed with the awkward, concealed rear door handles, which have been replaced by pop-out

handles.

The boot is on the smaller side and conceals a tyre repair kit.

However, the cabin has a premium feel and as before it's worth taking a minute to check it out.

Check out the textures, finishes and the way panels flow into each other – it's really something. Though, closer inspection reveals much of it is hard plastic.

The infotainment screen is angled towards the driver, but remains separate units to the instrument cluster.

There's a single USB-C port at the front of the console, with another USB-C port and 12-volt outlet inside the console.

GXL and Koba are front-drive while GR Sport is all-wheel drive.

The extra power shows behind the wheel, with greater electrical assistance where it is needed around town.

The car also spends more time in EV mode, thanks to the better battery and electric motor combination.

But this is offset to some extent by the extra weight of two electric motors and all-wheel drive, which pushes the weight up to 1575kg – 85kg more than Koba and a whopping 120kg more than GXL.

The eCVT transmission provides seven steps or simulated gears that provide a sportier drive, but it lacks any way to change gears manually.

There are three drive modes – Normal, Eco and Sport – along with a Custom mode that allows drivers to set up things the way they want it.

That said, you can't change modes quickly and certainly not on the fly.

The only way to do so seems to be via the touchscreen and that requires the car to be in Park.

There is however an EV or stealth mode button located in the centre console, but this is restricted to low speeds.

The petrol engine will kick in if you punch the accelerator too hard.

Summing up

Damn. The C-HR is a car I like the look of but one that always seems to fall short.

It's a hybrid clad in a sporty disguise, short on power, short on space and short on practicality.

Maybe the fully-electric C-HR will be the one that does the trick when it arrives around the middle of 2027?

The letters C-HR stand for Compact High Rider, Cross Hatch Runabout or Coupé High-Rider – in case you're wondering.

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You've read the review. Now it's time to experience it for yourself.

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OH WHAT A FEELING

News around the grounds

Sunbury Netball Association players Olive Gadd, Jocelyn Howlett, Paige Mashaa and Millie Stewart have each been recognised by Netball Victoria's talent identification program, earning invitations to trial for the next stage of the Netball Victoria Talent Academy pathway.

These athletes impressed throughout the Association Championships,

Olive Gadd, Jocelyn Howlett and Paige Mashaa represented the Sunbury Netball Association side the Sunbury Sonics at the championships.

Millie Stewart, who is part of the association, was talent identified by Netball Victoria.

The association said their selection is a testament to the dedication they have shown both on and off the court through the Sunbury Sonics representative program, and the dedication of its fantastic coaches putting in their time and effort coaching the young athletes week in and week out.

Association Secretary Mel Lofts said it was pretty massive for the association to have three players talent ID.

"To have these athletes recognised through Netball Victoria's Talent Identification Program is a fantastic achievement and a testament to the dedication and commitment shown by both our players and the Sunbury Netball Association representative program," she said.

"These young athletes have worked incredibly hard throughout the season, supported by our passionate coaches



Olive Gadd, Jocelyn Howlett and Paige Mashaa represented the Sunbury Sonics. (Supplied)

who generously volunteer their time to develop and inspire the next generation of netballers. This recognition is thoroughly deserved."

Young basketball star Aria Leonor has earned a prestigious Maribyrnong Sports Academy scholarship

At just 11 years old, Aria is already making a name for herself on and off the basketball court.

The talented young basketballer has been offered a coveted scholarship position at Maribyrnong Sports Academy for year 7 in 2027, securing one of only 75 scholarship places available across the academy's specialist sports programs.

Aria currently plays representative basketball for Wyndham Basketball

Association's 12.1 girls team at Victorian Championship (VC) level.

As a player competing against older athletes, she has continued to impress with her determination, work ethic and love for the game. Her basketball journey began at Power Basketball Club, where she has played since her junior years and developed a strong foundation in the sport. Through countless training sessions, games and tournaments, Aria's passion for basketball has continued to grow, helping her progress to the representative level with Wyndham.

For Aria and her family, the scholarship offer was an emotional moment and recognition of years of dedication and sacrifice.



Aria Leonor (left).

"Basketball has always been more than a sport for Aria," her family said. "It has taught her resilience, teamwork and confidence. To see her rewarded with this opportunity is incredibly special."

As she prepares for the next chapter of her journey, Aria remains focused on representing both Wyndham Basketball and Power Basketball Club with pride.

Want your club or athlete to feature in our around the grounds section? Send us an email to westeditorial@starweekly.com.au with a small run down of what is happening along with a photo, which we have permission to publish, by 5pm Sunday. This section doesn't include advertising or sponsors.

Emotional day on field as fallen footballer honoured

Star Weekly photographer **LJUBICA VRANKOVIC** was out shooting the action on Saturday as local sporting clubs remembered Epping footballer Nathan Fitzgerald, who tragically died after an on field incident. There were plenty of thrillers and standout moments across the region.



A dog watches the soccer action. 564784



Calder Cannons' Oliver Noto. 564783_04



Craigieburn's Nathan Stewart. 564749_02



Nathan Fitzgerald's family. 564735_12



Burnside Heights' Holly Taylor. 564732_02



Epping players. 564735_39

Women’s team for Burras

By Tara Murray

It’s been a couple of years in the making, but the time is now right for Diggers Rest Bulla to aim to have a women’s side in the Gisborne and District Cricket Association.

The Burras are seeking players for a women’s side, while are also keen to try and get a couple of girls teams up and running for this season.

Burras’ president Corey Goforth said it was an exciting time for the club.

“It’s something we’ve been looking into it since I took over as president three or four years ago,” he said.

“It’s something we have been building towards. There’s some interest so far to get it up and running.

“We want to get behind the women who want to play for our club.”

The Burras are one of several clubs in the GDCA aiming to get a women’s side this season for the first time.

Goforth said it was really good to see clubs embracing it and that it would just add to the competition that is already running.

“It’s not just great for the club and league, it’s good for women in the area that are interested in playing sport,” he said.

Goforth said from the interest they’ve had so far they would be able to enter a women’s side.

He said if they had enough numbers they would look to have a second wom-

en’s side but want to make sure they have certainty of numbers to do that.

“We’re confident of getting a side up with the consistent numbers that we’re looking to have,” he said.

“We might have too many numbers and we’ll look at having a second side. We are open to having two sides as we don’t want to turn anyone away.

“If we have two sides, we don’t want to get to every Thursday and Friday and be calling for fill-ins.”

Goforth said they might be able to use to some juniors who are willing to step up and help fill a second side if needed.

He said the club was aiming to have under-13 and under-15 girls sides as well.

Goforth said if they don’t have the

numbers for full sides they would work with other clubs to put teams in to give their girls somewhere to play.

Men’s coach Evan Long is set to help look after the women’s side from a coaching perspective for the first season.

Goforth said Long had jumped on board to help get the side up.

“We have a couple of women who have played some decent cricket themselves and are interested in helping look after the group.

“We’ll give them whatever guidance we can for them.”

Details: goforth102297@gmail.com or burraret@yahoo.com



Burnside Heights’ Tonja Davis. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 564732_03

Back to basics pays off as Bears score a win

By Tara Murray

Burnside Heights got back to playing its brand of footy as it came away with a big win against Coburg Districts in the Essendon District Football League women’s division 1 competition.

After a couple of tough weeks conditions wise, the Bears relished some better conditions at Cole Reserve on Saturday.

The Bears led 21-0 at quarter time to set the tempo and increased that to 51 points at three quarter time, with the Lions still scoreless.

The Lions finally hit the scoreboard in the final quarter, but the damage had been done as the Bears won, 7.9 (51)-1.5 (11).

Bears’ coach Michael Davis said they got back to playing their type of football.

“It was good,” he said. “There were opportunities to score and we took them.

“We’re starting to come together and getting that early season form of run and carry.

“It was more team based football. A little

bit of individual football had come out the last couple of weeks.

“The girls get to feel happy about themselves and we enjoyed getting back to basics.”

Olivia Antonello kicked three goals for the Bears, while Kiara Asani-Davis and Isabelle Young kicked two goals each.

Holly Taylor, Abbey O’Mara and Tonja Davis were named their best.

Davis said the previous two weeks against East Sunbury and Gisborne, when they scored 24 total, as they got a draw and a win were difficult with the conditions.

He said they didn’t take their opportunities against East Sunbury, so were left disappointed they didn’t get the win.

Burnside Heights remains in second spot, six points off top, and two points clear of third.

Davis said they wanted to lock in second spot and the double chance.

“Similar to last year we’ve set a plan to hit form at the right time of the year,” he said.

“Once we got on a roll with a number of

wins in a row, we wanted to create space [on the chasing sides] and keep developing.

“We’ve worked hard through training.”

The Bears face the Sunbury Lions this Saturday at Clarke Oval.

Davis said with their under-19s having a bye they would look to bring some of those players up and allow some injured players break ahead of the back end of the season.

Meanwhile in the women’s premier division, Caroline Springs suffered a big loss to Essendon Doutta Stars.

The Stars led early and kicked the only two goals of the first half.

Three goals to one in the third quarter pushed the margin out to 28 points.

While the Lakers narrowly won the final quarter, the Stars had already locked up the win, winning 6.7 (43)-2.4 (16).

Caitlyn Volpe and Alicia Azzopardi were named the Lakers best.

The Lakers sit in fourth spot, but the Stars are now only a game behind in the fight for finals spots.

Hillside had a bye.

Sports shorts

Ballarat CA

Ballan has signed Woodend premiership player James Morley for the Ballarat Cricket Association season. “Fresh off a first XI premiership in the GDCA (Gisborne and District Cricket Association), where he played a starring role with the new ball, James brings a wealth of experience, leadership and success to Ballan,” the club said. “His knowledge of the game and passion for player development will be a tremendous asset, particularly as he works closely with our talented young bowling group.”

Bacchus Marsh has announced two new signings for the Ballarat Cricket Association season. Saga Wijemanna joins the club from Victorian Turf Cricket Association senior club Aberfeldie, where he scored more than 400 runs last season. The Bulls say that he is a natural leader who will bring plenty of experience to the whole playing group. Joe Wright is joining the Bulls from Himley in the United Kingdom. “Joe is 18 years old, a classy batsman who can also wicket keep if needed, and is coming over to Australia to develop his cricket and hone his skills,” the Bulls said.

Cricket

Cricket Victoria has announced its emerging players programs for the 2026-27 season. Under-17 and under-19 teams have been named for the boys, while there’s under-16 and under-19s for the girls. In the under-19 boys metro squad is Jackson Martin, whose community club is Caroline Springs, while Tanish Taneja, who is from Melton Centrals, is in the under-17 metro squad. Included in the under-19 girls metro squad is Jasmine Kamboj, who has played at Sydenham-Hillside, as is Mia Gordon, who has previously played for Caroline Springs. Tulip Sharma, who is from Caroline Springs, is named in the under-16 metro squad while Darley’s Layla O’Brien has been named in the under-16 country squad and Ballan’s Sarah Burton in the under-19 country squad.

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Parkside wants to move

By Tara Murray

Parkside could be set to leave the Western Football Netball League next season after putting in a club transfer.

The deadline for club transfers was 30 June under new guidelines, with Parkside putting in an application to join the Essendon District Football League.

Parkside already has a connection with Ascot Vale Panthers Junior Football Club, which plays in the EDFL junior competition.

In a letter to clubs, the EDFL chief executive Andrew Johnston confirmed that Parkside had notified the AFL Victoria community manager of its intention to enter the Essendon District Football League from the Western Football Netball League

for season 2027.

“The PFC notified the WFNL in writing of its intention to transfer prior to submitting the formal AFL Victoria intention to transfer form,” the statement said.

“The EDFL and WFNL met to address the justification and supporting evidence of the transfer prior to PFC submitting their application.

“The PFC then lodged with AFL Victoria and the EDFL an intention to transfer form before the cut-off date of 30 June.

“The WFNL now can either decline or accept the transfer.”

Parkside is seeking membership as an affiliated club under the EDFL rules and proposes that its respective senior teams compete in the relevant EDFL competitions.

The club has both senior men’s and

women’s sides.

The club has also informed the EDFL that it has in principle, agreed to amalgamate-merge with the Ascot Vale prior to the 2027 EDFL season.

This would then allow it to be a junior and senior club within the EDFL.

“This proposal is fully dependent on both club’s members voting in favour of the merger at their respective annual general meetings,” the EDFL statement said.

The EDFL board met on 1 July and is now considering the application in line with EDFL and AFL Victoria processes.

While there had been rumours about Caroline Springs also making the move, no application was put in.

Star Weekly understands that Parkside is the only club to have put in an application to

leave the WFNL.

The Western Football League had previously released two scenarios for next season, based on whether any teams left the competition.

The first scenario is if all current men’s teams were to remain, the division 2 premier would be promoted next season while the bottom side of division 1 would be relegated.

If one team was to leave, the division 2 premierships team would be promoted into division 1, while the bottom two teams of division 1 would be relegated to division 2, excluding any club that exits the league.

Parkside would become the latest team to join the EDFL competition, with Deer Park and St Albans joining the competition ahead of the 2023 season.



Alrighty. (Stuart McCormick)

Memories of Maoris come flooding back

By John Dunne

With the spotlight firmly pointed at Albion Park on Saturday night, the authoritative win of Alrighty at Melton rekindled memories of a feat we will never see again.

The Andy Gath-trained and Kate Gath-driven Alrighty resumed from a spell in style with an easy all-the-way win in the Logical Staffing Solutions Trot.

The winner carried the green with yellow stars made famous by Maoris Idol, the greatest trotter ever seen in this part of the world.

Seemingly a lifetime ago in 1978, Maoris Idol took on some of the best pacers in the land including Paleface Adios, Rip Van Winkle, Roma Hanover and Koala King in the Clive Uhr Championship at Albion Park.

In an extraordinary chapter of the sport, Maoris Idol won both his heats before finishing a gallant runner-up behind Rip Van Winkle in the final.

Alrighty was bred and is raced by Bryan Healy, the man who drove Maoris Idol

throughout his stellar career.

After the race, Kate Gath acknowledged the privilege of donning the silks.

“It’s always great to wear these colors and to get a winner for Bryan. He’s such a lovely horse and we’re grateful that we’ve got him,” Gath said.

Gath completed a driving double when she partnered the Emma Stewart-trained Some American to victory in the Happy 40th Shannon O’Connor Pace.

Despite the two-metre margin on the line to the runner-up Hoorah Philtra, Gath said the result was never in doubt.

“He got it easy in front tonight and I let him slide at the 600 (metres), and gee he felt terrific around the bend and he was still getting to the line even though the second horse was making ground,” she said.

Chris Alford took the driving honours on the night with a treble.

Alford’s wife Alison produced a fine training performance when Unclad scored in the Hip Pocket Castlemaine Pace in his first appearance since finishing fifth in the Breeders Crown (2YO Trotting Colts and

Geldings) Final in December.

Unclad enjoyed the sit behind the leader Prohibited Grace and made full use of the sprint lane to score from Aldebaran Abel and Freight Shaker.

Multiple Group 1 winner Gatesys Gem provided Alford with the middle pin of his treble when she held off Hoppy to take out the Garrards Horse and Hound Free For All Trot at only her second start since December.

Alford expects the Glenn Hunter-trained mare to build on her imposing career strike rate of 11 wins from 22 starts.

“She’ll keep up with the real good ones. She’s probably better with a sit maybe, but she’ll win a lot more races yet,” Alford said.

Alford completed his successful evening when he steered the Brent Lilley-prepared juvenile Kyvalley Dixon to victory in the Aldebaran Park 2YO Trot.

Alford peeled out of the one-out, one-back trail with 400 metres to travel and Kyvalley Dixon reeled in the leader and short-priced favourite Remembrance Time in the home straight to score by four metres.

Devils, Bloods fire

Darley and Melton both had big wins on Saturday in the Ballarat Football League, while Bacchus Marsh’s finals hopes took a hit.

Fresh off a week off, the Devils had no issues accounting for East Point at Darley Park.

The Devils led by 22 points at quarter time and the game was all but over at half time, with the Devils leading by 52 points.

The Devils continued to extend the lead in the second half as they ran away with a 19.8 (122)-6.14 (50) win.

Will Johnson kicked six goals for the Devils, while Jayven Tanner kicked three goals.

Lachie George, Johnson and Nick Hind were named the Devils best.

The Devils now sit second on the ladder with nine wins from their 12 games.

Melton’s strong recent form has continued as it accounted for Lake Wendouree at Macpherson Park.

There were 11 goals kicked in the first quarter as both teams were able to hit the scoreboard early on.

Leading by 16 points at quarter time, the Bloods then kicked nine goals to none in the second quarter to lead by 72 points at the main break.

The Bloods continued to hold the momentum in the second half and were able to run away with a 22.18 (150)-6.7 (43) win.

Skipper Braedan Kight kicked six goals in a best on ground performance for the Bloods.

Jordyn Cotter and Liam Carter were other standouts.

The Bloods sit in fifth spot and are now a game clear of the Sunbury Lions and Bacchus Marsh.

The Cobras had a tough day against North Ballarat at MARS Stadium.

After leading 18-0 at quarter time, the Cobras kicked just two goals for the rest of the match as they lost, 13.12 (90)-4.8 (32).

Luke Goetz, Jamie Fulton and Zach Vesty were the Cobras best.

The Cobras remain percentage outside the top six.

Sharks rally against Lions

By Tara Murray

The consistency is growing for Hillside as it claimed another scalp in the Essendon District Football League premier division on Saturday.

The Sharks claimed their fifth win of the season on Saturday, as they came from behind at half time against Deer Park.

The Sharks kicked nine goals to two after half time as they won, 13.8 (86)-9.11 (65).

Sharks’ coach Mo Kaakour said it was another good day for the club.

“The boys played some good footy after they started slowly,” he said.

“They were really good after half time, especially in the third quarter.”

Kaakour said they didn’t play to their

structure and system in the first half and Deer Park was able to make the most of it.

The Lions led by 23 points at half time.

Kaakour said the message to the group at half time was to go back to what they do well.

“We went back to what we know in terms of stoppage wins,” he said.

“We were able to get out of the front of the stoppage and our forwards got some good looks.

“We had some repeat entries and put the pressure back on their backs.”

The Sharks also made the positional move of Robbie Castello going from the midfield into the forward line.

Jackson Heidrich went into the midfield and the pair were named the Sharks best.

“Jackson Heidrich was the spark in the

middle,” he said.

“He’s a good young kid and he’s got some good football ahead of him. He’s a 300-350 game player and there’s so much more growth to come.”

“Robbie was instrumental in turning the game.”

Daniel Barker kicked four goals for the Sharks.

The Sharks remain in eighth spot, but are now three games clear of the relegation battle.

They are also just two games outside the top five.

While many people predicted the Sharks to be in the relegation battle, Kaakour said internally they had confidence in the group.

“In our four walls we knew how good we

could be,” he said. “We knew that if we were in games for long periods that we would knock off one or two of the better sides.

“We’ve been pretty lucky to knock off some good sides.”

Kaakour said they were focused on continuing to build for the rest of the season.

He said they were starting to get more consistent from week-to-week which was really pleasing.

“We spoke about it after the Airport West game,” he said.

“We were able to back it up with three good quarters against Pascoe Vale which is a quality outfit.

“We were good until three quarter time and to back it up this week against a quality outfit like Deer Park, which has had a good month, so to know them off was pleasing.”



Carly Sanders outstretches Fionnuala McKeagney-Stubbs. (Ivan Kemp) 564164_16

Finals hopes dashed for gallant Warriors

By Tara Murray

Western Warriors finals hopes came to an end on Sunday after a disappointing road loss to the Geelong Cougars in the Victorian Netball League.

Coming off one of their best ever performances, the Warriors needed to beat the Cougars in Geelong to stay in finals contention heading into the final round.

While the Warriors were again in the match, with scores level at the final break, they weren’t able to find the right connections in the final quarter.

The Cougars finished the match with a 16-10 final quarter to seal the 56-50 win.

Warriors’ coach Kim Bailey was disappointed knowing that they had their opportunities again.

“We made silly passes at crucial moments,” she said.

“Fundamental errors cost us. Off such a great game we thought momentum was building but we let ourselves down.

“It’s a disappointing way to end the season, we can’t make finals now.

“Had we won and won on Wednesday

night we could have made finals.”

Bailey said while they would have been missing Ruby Shannon and Mia Lavis had they made finals, it was still disappointing not to qualify for them for the first time.

After trailing by eight goals at half time, the Warriors got back into the game as they won the third quarter 19-11 to level the scores.

Bailey said it was a fantastic quarter and they needed to take that concentration into the final quarter, which they weren’t able to do.

She said while the Cougars put in a strong performance, they ran out of legs.

“We had a couple under the weather,” she said. “They started to struggle a little bit, but there’s no excuses.”

Ellie Bird shot 34 goals for the Warriors and was named their best.

The Warriors sit in 11th spot with five wins, but just two games separate them and sixth placed Gippsland Stars.

The Warriors finish their season on Wednesday night against the Boroondara Express.

With a couple of players missing, Bailey

said it was a good opportunity to give some other players some more minutes and finish the season on a high.

While it was disappointment for the championship side, the Warriors’ 23 and under side now has its finals hopes in its hands.

Causing an upset for a second straight week, the Warriors beat the Cougars, 62-54.

Bailey said the side was amazing from the get go, with everyone getting court time.

Ella Closter shot 44 goals, while Grace Hay was amazing.

Kiara Boyd played two quarters as well as two in championship, adding to the mid-court.

Ebony Porter stepped back into the side having been part of the division 1 side this year, shooting 10 goals.

Tilly Allen made her 23 and under debut which Bailey said was really pleasing.

The Warriors sit sixth heading into the final round against the Express which sits below them on the ladder.

Bailey said there was nothing stopping then if they continue to play the way they are.

Thoroughbreds pick up win

Melton Thoroughbreds were able to overcome a slow start to get another win on the board in the Big V men’s division 2 competition.

The Thoroughbreds were on the road against the Wallan Panthers on Saturday night.

The Panthers led by seven points at quarter time before a 28-15 second quarter for the Thoroughbreds allowed them to take control.

The lead stayed at six points heading into the final quarter with the Thoroughbreds winning the final quarter to hold off the Panthers and win, 87-78.

Nicholas Hooper top scored with 25 points, while Elijah Davy had 17 points and Rossi Stevens scored 16 points off the bench.

The Thoroughbreds sit seventh on the ladder with five wins from their 15 matches.

The Thoroughbreds are at home this Saturday night against Southern Peninsula.

It was a double header for the Thoroughbreds youth league 3 men’s side on the weekend.

On Saturday night, the Thoroughbreds lost to the Surfcoast Chargers, 106-94.

The Thoroughbreds led by eight points at half time, before the Chargers reduced the margin to two points heading into the final quarter.

The Chargers came home strong, winning the final quarter 37-24 to win the match 106-94.

On Sunday, the Thoroughbreds were at home to Gippsland United.

They were able to bounce back to win, 90-73.

A strong second half was the key as they outscored Gippsland, 42-29.

Hooper top scored with 17 points.

The Thoroughbreds sit third on the ladder heading into the final round.

They face the Mornington Breakers on Sunday in the final round.

Meanwhile, the Thoroughbreds have announced their coaching line ups for the Country Basketball League season.

Jess Kivimets will coach the women’s side for a second straight season, with Ash Breukers as her assistant coach.

John Allison will continue as the men’s coach, with Xavier Cassar the assistant coach and Tim Brown being named the development coach.



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