

MELTON & MOORABOOL

Star Weekly

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Team Wonderland captain Elizabeth Porter and Renee Pedretti with their car and sponsors for this year's Variety Bash. (Damjan Janevski) 567662_05

Wonderland goes west

Bacchus Marsh locals Elizabeth Porter, Renee Pedretti, and Elizabeth Barby, better known as Team Wonderland, will take off on this year's Variety Bash on Tuesday 18 August, raising vital funds for children who are sick, experiencing disadvantage, or are living with disability.

The 10-day, 5200-kilometre journey will take them from Halls Gap in Victoria to Exmouth in Western Australia, featuring a colourful convoy of classic vehicles and inviting participants to visit schools and community organisations along the way.

"Every dollar raised helps create brighter futures for children who need it most," Ms Porter said.

"Participants experience the incredible landscapes of Australia while seeing firsthand the impact our fundraising has on families and communities."

Since its inception in 1985, the Variety Bash has raised millions of dollars for children's programs across Australia.

This year marks Team Wonderland's eighth event in its '85 Mercedes Benz 280SE sedan, with hopes of raising \$20,000.

Aged care standoff

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres

Melton council's decision to exit aged care services under the federal government's new Support at Home program has sparked backlash, with union leaders warning almost 100 local jobs are now in limbo.

Following a review of its aged care service model, the council confirmed it will continue delivering services through the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) until the current funding agreement ends on 30 June, 2027.

However, from 1 July next year, when the federal government's new Support at Home Program replaces the CHSP, council will no longer provide aged care services.

Australian Services Union (ASU)

secretary Tash Wark condemned council's decision.

"Melton council has decided to walk away from aged care in our community, and it's workers who are paying the price first," she said.

"Around 95 people who spend their days caring for older residents, checking on their wellbeing and keeping them safe at home are now facing an uncertain future."

Ms Wark slammed the council for leaving out of the decision-making process.

"Council didn't consult the union before making this decision, and that's a clear breach of what they've committed to under the enterprise agreement," she said.

"Workers found out their jobs were on the line the same way everyone else did, after the fact."

Council has rejected those claims.

A council spokesperson said, "Council has maintained communication with affected work groups and union representatives throughout the process and does not accept the allegation that it has breached its obligations under the Enterprise Agreement".

Mayor Lara Carli said the decision was made in the best interest of those receiving care.

"This change will ensure our community can continue to access appropriate, flexible and comprehensive care available under the new aged care system," she said.

"This decision has not been taken lightly by our council, and follows a detailed review of our ability to operate in an increasingly complex and changing aged care system."

Aged Care and Seniors Minister and Hawke MP Sam Rae has called for an urgent meeting with council and the ASU.

"While I have not received any communication from Melton Council on this matter, I was concerned to hear these reports," Mr Rae said.

"I have sought an urgent meeting with both Melton Council and the ASU to discuss these matters in more detail."

Council reassured residents currently receiving CHSP services, including personal care, respite care, meals, social support and domestic assistance, will continue to receive services as usual until 30 June, 2027.

Ms Wark said the ASU would fight the decision.

"This decision needs to be reversed. We've raised a dispute with the council over this."

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Transport forum in Melton

A free public forum will give Melton residents the chance to put their transport concerns directly to candidates ahead of this year's state election.

The Melton Transport Forum is being held on Wednesday 19 August, from 6.30-8pm at the Melton Library and Learning Hub.

The event has been organised by the Metropolitan Transport Forum, an advocacy group comprising Melbourne metropolitan local governments, associate members representing transport companies, and participants from the state government and environmental groups.

Hosted jointly by Melton council, the event will focus on the transport challenges facing Melton and surrounding areas, with residents encouraged to raise the issues that matter most to them.

Discussion topics are expected to include electrification of the Melton Line, road upgrades, and safety, proposals for additional train stations at Mt Atkinson, Thornhill Park and Calder Park, active transport and improvements to the bus network, and public transport more broadly.

The forum will be chaired by ABC journalist Margaret Paul and will feature confirmed speakers Broden Borg of the Labor party, Veronika Levchenkova from the Greens and Western Metropolitan MP David Ettershank of the Legalise Cannabis party.

Liberal Party participation is expected, with its representative yet to be confirmed.

Each candidate will outline their plans for improving transport across Melton and beyond.

A Q+A session will also be included to allow audience members to ask short questions and hear responses from each candidate.

The event is set to be livestreamed and recorded, with the recording to be made available at a later date through the Metropolitan Transport Forum website for those wishing to watch from home.

Tickets are free, but registration is essential as places are limited. Residents are encouraged to attend and let candidates know about their transport priorities ahead of the election.

The forum will be held at the Balam Balam Room, Melton Library and Learning Hub, 31 McKenzie Street, Melton.

Details: <https://tinyurl.com/mpmd8bhx>.



Student Lexi and Kevin Cole. (Supplied)

Shedder help pupils build skills backstage

A school production has brought students and older members of the local community together in the name of theatre, creativity, and craftsmanship.

Over 10 weeks, Southern Cross Grammar's year seven and eight students worked alongside members of the Taylors Hill Men's Shed to design, make, and build four moving set pieces for the school's upcoming production of *The Wizard of Oz: Youth Edition*.

Throughout the program students were taught practical skills in woodworking, drilling, measuring, and painting, all while forming new connections with their Men's Shed mentors and gaining confidence in using power tools for the very first time.

The school's head of productions, Jason Mill, said the partnership taught students of the hard work made behind the scenes, as well as practical skills they're likely to take with them through life.



Student Hailey putting her new skills to the test. (Supplied)

"Most of the students involved had never used power tools before and through the connections they've built with the

Men's Shed members they have been able to rise to the challenge and develop new skills which they will take with them into other settings across performing arts and possible career pathways," he said.

One year seven student, Hailey, said her mentor Fred taught her the simple joys in learning a new practical skill like drilling.

"Members of the Men's Shed also empowered students to take ownership of their project by entrusting them to try new things, fail, and try again until they succeeded in achieving their goal."

Students' creativity and craftsmanship will be on display as the school opens its production of *The Wizard of Oz: Youth Edition* on Thursday 6 August.

Details: <https://events.humanitix.com/the-wizard-of-oz-scg-musical-production-06aug26>

Wiki maps data boom

Residents concerned about the rapid spread of data centres across Melbourne's west have launched a new online tracker, saying communities deserve better access to information about developments planned for their suburbs.

The community-led Data Centre Wiki brings together details of existing, approved and proposed facilities making it easier for people to find out information on what is happening in their neighbourhoods.

The collaborative website has been modelled on Wikipedia and includes information on existing facilities across West Footscray, Brooklyn, Derrimut, Tullamarine, and those proposed or in the construction phase for Laverton North, Spotswood, Plumpton, Truganina, Cobblebank, Mickleham, and Campbellfield.

Community members are also invited to contribute their own information, allowing the resource to be updated as new developments emerge.

Western Metropolitan MP David Ettershank said Data Centre Wiki was a practical response to the lack of publicly accessible information about an industry expanding rapidly across the west.

"Communities shouldn't have to build their own information resource just to understand what's being proposed in their neighbourhood. But when people can't easily find the information they're looking for, they'll work together to fill the gap," he said.

"The Wiki gives residents a place to share information and better understand the scale of data centre development in their communities."

Mr Ettershank said residents had legitimate concerns about the pace of development and the lack of transparency surrounding the industry.

"Most of the proposed data centres in Victoria are planned for Melbourne's west," Mr Ettershank said.

"These are major industrial developments that can consume significant amounts of land, electricity and water, yet many local communities have had little opportunity to understand what is being planned or what the long-term impacts could be."

Mr Ettershank said he had spent considerable time chasing transparency around the proposed facilities.

"For more than a year I've been asking the government how it intends to regulate this rapidly growing industry to protect communities and the environment," he said.

Details: https://datacentremoratorium.net/index.php/Resources:Data_Centre_Tracker.

Name revealed for new community centre in Diggers Rest

Diggers Rest's new community facility is set to be named the Diggers Rest Community Centre.

Melton council endorsed the new name at its 27 July meeting, with the proposed title set to be submitted to Geographic Names Victoria for final approval.

The new facility, expected to open in January 2028, is expected to provide a range of services for the growing Diggers Rest community, including Kindergarten facilities, maternal and child health services, and a library lounge.

Councillor John Verdon said the new community facility will help address gaps in Melton's library accessibility around the municipality.

"This has been a very long-time advocacy piece for many members of the community," Cr Verdon said.

"It will be the first of its kind in Melton and expand council's library services further into the community."

The naming process officially began in March, when residents were invited to nominate their preferred naming theme and suggest potential names for the building.

Linking name to place was ultimately selected as the preferred theme, receiving half of the 16 votes submitted during the first stage of consultation.

Five names were then shortlisted for a second round of community feedback, including : Diggers Rest Community Centre, Golden Sun Children's and Community Centre, Volcanic Plains Children's and Community Centre, Goldfields Community Centre - Diggers Rest, and Vineyard Road Children's and Community Centre.

Life ban for netball coach

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres

Former western suburbs netball coach Tracy Wallace has been banned for life from all netball activities after the National Sports Tribunal (NST) Appeals Division upheld an appeal seeking harsher penalties for severe junior player abuse.

The decision, handed down on 24 June, 2026, overturns an initial 10-year ban issued by the NST general division in March.

The appeals division found the original sanction was legally unreasonable given the severity of the conduct and Wallace's lack of contrition.

The lifetime ban prohibits Wallace from participating in any capacity – including attending matches or training sessions as a spectator – under Netball Victoria, Netball Australia, or their affiliated clubs and associations.

Her coaching accreditation and memberships have been cancelled.

Wallace, a former coach at the St Albans Caroline Springs Netball Association (SACSNA) and Westside Saints Netball Club, was originally stood down under provisional action in February 2025 following formal complaints. In March 2026, the NST general division found 13 breaches proven, including verbal abuse, psychological humiliation, filming a child's exposed buttocks at training (and calling players "disgusting trash" and "bush pigs"), and engaging in inappropriate sexual conversations with junior players.

Netball Victoria and Netball Australia appealed the 10-year penalty and the spectator exemption. The appeals division ruled that a complete lifetime ban was necessary to protect participants and uphold the integrity of the sport.

In a statement to Star Weekly, Netball Victoria said more action should have been taken by the local association to "provide a safe and inclusive environ-

ment for participants".

"Netball Victoria has sought information from the affiliate association's board about how directors will better protect the safety and wellbeing of participants in future," a spokesperson said.

The spokesperson also said Netball Victoria was investigating whether further action would be needed against other parties involved.

"The safety and welfare of all participants in our game is Netball Victoria's overriding priority. We have zero tolerance for abusive, offensive or inappropriate behaviour."

Wallace was contacted for comment.

Climbing for change

Sixteen of Bacchus Marsh's finest will soon take to the stairs in the name of cancer research and crisis support.

Firefighters from the Bacchus Marsh Fire Brigade willtake part in the annual Melbourne Firefighter Stair Climb at the Crown Metropol on Saturday 12 September, where climbers will battle a gruelling 28 floors in up to 25 kilograms of operational gear and breathing apparatuses.

The stair climb serves as an important symbol of the burden of significant health and well-being issues faced by first responders and their families on a daily basis.

Taking part in his first stair climb last year as a personal challenge for himself, firefighter Jack Harbison will take to the stairs again this September.

"To be quite frank I don't want to keep attending funerals for men that should still be here," he said.

He explained his own struggles with mental health inspired him to take the challenge again, this time in the name of all those who might be struggling.

"Firefighter or not I think we all know someone, or maybe we have gone through some dark times ourselves, but that is one cause I will always fight for no matter what," he said.

"As you can imagine firefighters are in situations and places where no person belongs.

"We see things that can be very uncomfortable and quite upsetting at almost all calls we attend and that can really take a toll, so firefighters will always support any mental health causes we can."



Firefighters Garry Pugh, Jack Harbison, Cody Marshman, and Avi Sin are among those from the Bacchus Marsh Fire Brigade who will take part in the gruelling 28 floor challenge on Saturday 12 September. (Supplied)

All money raised through the annual stair climb goes toward supporting Life-line, the Peter MacCallum Cancer Foundation, and the 000Foundation.

To donate: <https://www.firefighter-climb.org.au/.../cfa/bacchus-marsh/>.

Get involved in council events

Talented performers, artists, and community groups across Melton are being encouraged to put their hands up to be part of council's major events in 2026.

Council is seeking expressions of interest from performers, workshop facilitators, and providers of interactive experiences and unique entertainment to help bring events including the Djerriwarrh Festival, Carols by Candlelight and Lakeside Alive to life.

Local artists, performers, and community groups are strongly encouraged to apply, with opportunities available for a range of entertainment and activities.

Community organisations, charities, not-for-profits, service clubs, and other groups which benefit the community can also apply to be a community engagement stallholder at Melton's 2026 Djerriwarrh Festival.

Groups looking to support local projects can also apply for community grants of up to \$10,000, with funding available for initiatives that increase community participation, strengthen community wellbeing, promote local pride, and develop community leadership.

Expressions of interest for Major Events Entertainment 2026 and Djerriwarrh Festival 2026 community stall applications are now open on council's website, with stall festival applications set to close on Sunday 6 September.

Melton's Chinese community bolstered

The Melton Chinese Friendship Association has been bolstered in continuing to bring the local community together through weekly activities after receiving support through the state government's Chinese Community Hall Hire program.

The association is among 140 recipients around the state sharing in grants of up to \$40,000 to help community organisations cover venue hire costs and continue hosting gatherings.

The funding is expected to support the association's regular program of activities, including weekly dance and singing lessons, cultural sharing, and recreational activities.

The sessions provide an opportunity for members of the local Chinese community to connect with one another, participate in cultural activities, and enjoy social and recreational opportunities

close to home.

The Chinese Community Hall Hire program is expected to support about 3500 community gatherings across 24 council areas through to early 2027.

For the Melton Chinese Friendship Association, the support aims to help it maintain its regular activities and provide a welcoming space for community members to meet and take part in shared interests.

The program is part of a broader support for Chinese community organisations across Victoria, with the state home to almost 430,000 people of Chinese ancestry.

The funding comes as community groups and organisations face rising venue hire costs, with grants intended to help groups continue providing activities and events for their members.

Delivering for Melton

- sam.rae.mp@aph.gov.au
- (03) 9070 1960
- 316 High Street, Melton 3337
- samraeforhawke.com.au
- SamRaeForHawke
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SAM RAE

Labor Member for Hawke
Minister for Aged Care & Seniors

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



CONTACT US

PHONE \ 03 8318 5777

LOCATION \ Corner Thomsons Road and Keilor Park Drive,
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westeditorial@starweekly.com.au

COMMUNITY CALENDAR ENTRIES

communitycalendar@starweekly.com.au



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Mayor Steve Venditti-Taylor and councillor Sheila Freeman at the now complete Carberry Drive Recreation Reserve playground. (Damjan Janevski). 568179_04

Play time at Carberry Drive

A \$500,000 upgrade of Hopetoun Park's Carberry Drive Recreation Reserve has been completed, delivering new play equipment, sporting facilities, and improved landscaping.

The project included the removal of the reserve's former play structure and installation of modern equipment, including a community swing and accessible spinner.

A new picnic shelter, seating, street furniture, and drinking fountain have also been installed, alongside improvements to walking paths, landscaping, and drainage.

The reserve now features a half basketball court, bike hoops, and a dog waste bag dispenser, with the upgrades aimed at creating a more accessible and family-friendly community space.

Moorabool mayor Steve Vendutti-Taylor said "The upgrades to Carberry Drive are long awaited and will be very welcomed by the local community."

"The \$500,000 project which includes investment from Council and \$50,000 from the Victorian government's Tiny Towns grant, includes new, modern play equipment, a basketball court, a picnic shelter, landscaping and paths.

"This will provide a fantastic meeting spot for families in Hopetoun Park and surrounds."

The completed reserve is now open for the community to use, with residents encouraged to visit and experience the upgraded facilities.

For more information on the upgrades, visit <https://tinyurl.com/5n7hw3ja>.

Briefs

Rego Rebate Extended

The state government has extended the application period for the 20 per cent vehicle registration rebate. More than 3.6 million Victorians have already benefited from this rebate, and now the government is ensuring even more families and workers can access this much-needed cost-of-living assistance. The rebate, which can provide up to \$186 for a single-car household and up to \$372 for a two-car family, will now be available for application until 31 August. Victorians can apply for the registration rebate through the Service Victoria app or by visiting service.vic.gov.au/rego-rebate.

Youth fest

Young people aged 12 to 25 are being encouraged to nominate outstanding peers for the City of Melton Youth Fest Recognition, celebrating leadership, creativity, academic achievement, sport, community service and all-round contributions. Nominations close at 11.59pm on Sunday 9 August, with nominees eligible if they live, work, volunteer or study across the Melton municipality. The achievements of nominees will be celebrated at the Brilliant and Beyond Celebration at Plumpton Community Centre, Fraser Rise, from 5 to 9pm on Friday 11 September 11. Bookings are essential.

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Housing emerges as Australia's biggest economic challenge

Australia's economic growth is expected to slow as lower house price growth weighs on consumer spending and broader economic activity, with CommBank economists saying housing is now expected to be a bigger drag on the economy than higher oil prices.

Speaking on the latest episode of the CommBank View: Economics & Markets podcast, CommBank Head of Australian Economics Belinda Allen said the shape of Australia's slowdown had changed over recent months.

"We've certainly seen a shift in what's going to cause the Australian economy to slow," Allen said.

"We still think that's going to happen, but it's really the housing market that's going to create that slowdown in the Australian economy, rather than higher oil prices."

The slowdown in home price growth that emerged in late 2025 has now spread across

Australia's housing market, with weaker conditions for sellers evident in most major capitals.

Allen said higher interest rates and policy changes had weighed on sentiment and prices.

"That combination of factors has seen the housing market pull back, and we've seen in past cycles that does impact the consumer through what economists call the wealth effect," she said.

Falling home values typically make households feel less financially secure, encouraging them to save more and spend less. Allen said



that dynamic was now expected to be a key drag on economic growth throughout 2026.

Consumer spending is also showing signs of moderation.

Allen said CBA's internal data suggested end-of-financial-year sales activity had softened compared with the same period last year.

"There are signs that consumers are pulling back," she said.

While household savings remain relatively healthy overall, Allen said weak sentiment and softer home prices were likely to keep consumers cautious through the remainder of the year.

Commonwealth Bank forecasts Australia's economic growth will slow from 2.5 per cent in late 2025 to 1.5 per cent by late 2026, before improving to about 2 per cent by late 2027.

Despite the housing-led slowdown, Allen

said data centre development to fuel AI compute investment was creating important longer-term opportunities for the Australian economy. She cautioned that growth would be constrained by energy availability, water use and the time required to build new facilities, and that while it would help Australia's economy, it was not going to fully make up for the slowdown in the consumer sector.



Greater Western Water's senior field officer of land stewardship Louise Kelly at the revegetation site in Balliang East.
(Supplied)

Bolstering native grasslands

Close to 34 million native grass seeds have been sowed in soil above pipeline works in Balliang as part of a Greater Western Water (GWW) revegetation project.

The Victorian-sourced seeds include a mix of local indigenous plant species which are expected to help replicate grasslands and woodlands which were once well established in the area.

The mix of plant species have been directly designed to restore endangered vegetation in one of the state's most threatened native grassland ecosystems.

An additional 400 native tubestock seedlings also common to the area have been planted near the Balliang Creek crossing.

The newly planted species have covered a massive 6.8 hectare area of roadside verge on a 5.4 kilometre stretch of Geelong-Bacchus Marsh Road, south west of Balliang East.

The revegetation works followed on from the construction of an underground recycled water pipeline for GWW's Western Irrigation Network project.

GWW general manager of service delivery Jodie Hallam said the project was an opportunity for GWW to give back to the environment where works had taken place.

The milestone planting coincided with World Conservation Day on Tuesday 28 July.

Ms Hallam said the project was crucial in light of native seeds becoming increasingly difficult to source.

"Sadly, it's getting harder to source native seeds locally due to increased urbanisation, meaning these projects are becoming more essential to preserve these species in their localised habitat."

Plant species were selected to support biodiversity and provide year-round habitat, food, and shelter for wildlife, while also creating the conditions needed for other native species including wildflowers, insects, reptiles, and grassland birds to establish and thrive.

Revegetation works are set to continue over the next two years along the roadside, including weed control and active monitoring of seedling growth and maintenance.

New paramedics are ready to save lives

A group of 53 new paramedics has joined Ambulance Victoria's ranks.

The group is the first intake of new paramedics for 2026/27 and will hit the road from 17 August. Thirteen graduate paramedics will be placed across Melbourne, including Tarneit, Cobblebank, Hadfield, Reservoir, Rowville, Brighton, Dandenong, Kew and Somerville.

The graduates commenced their four-week induction to Ambulance Victoria on Monday 27 July.

The training covers areas such as clinical education, driving, manual handling and occupational violence.

The course builds on the knowledge and experience gained during their three-year



university degree.

They'll then begin their on-road training in August - in a boost to branches right across metro and regional Victoria.

A further 35 graduate paramedics and five qualified paramedics will be in regional Victoria, including Wonthaggi,

Cowes, Ballarat, Bendigo, Echuca and Swan Hill.

Minister for Ambulance Services Harriet Shing said the new recruits will strengthen ambulance services as Ambulance Victoria continues to experience high demand.

Between January and March this year, paramedics responded to nearly 95,000 Code 1 cases.

"Our paramedics are there for Victorians when they need them most - that's why we'll always have their backs," Ms Shing said.

"We're continuing to support paramedics with more funding, training and support they need to keep providing world-class care in every corner of Victoria."



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Census

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Star Weekly looks back through the pages of our predecessors



30 years ago
31 July, 1996

Shire of Melton rates will drop by an average of two per cent in 1996-97 - a drop of about \$10, according to a council manager.



20 years ago
1 August, 2006

Mt Egerton residents have welcomed new legislation that will force mining companies to consult with communities, but fear the devil may be in the details.



15 years ago
2 August, 2011

Poker machine spending in Melton has soared.



10 years ago
2 August, 2016

Hillside residents will consider hiring private security guards to patrol their streets amid fears there aren't enough police on the beat.



Lions members Melanie Kinsey, Susie Lawrie and Robin Miller, and artists Lyn Hovey and Jarryn Pitts with a new mural at Lions Park in Riddells Creek. (Damjan Janevski) 567006_05



Residents living along Holden Road Diggers Rest are calling on Melton council for a permanent fix of potholes along the stretch of road. (Damjan Janevski) 566651_04



Terry Wells is with the Didyabringyarodalong Angling Club of Melton and Bacchus Marsh. (Damjan Janevski) 567313_03



Remnants exhibition curator Wani Toaishara. (Damjan Janevski) 563970_06



Kerrie Gottliebsehn with her posters art depicting western suburbs locations. (Damjan Janevski) 567209_01

Faces of the west

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



Di Dawe, Colleen Weste, Anne Boyle and Natalie Webb at The Gallery. (Damjan Janevski) 566318_03

Plea to slow down

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres

A Deanside resident has urged motorists to slow down and take more care on the roads.

Mario Cachia has called on drivers to take greater care after witnessing multiple crashes, collisions, and accidents along Clarkes Road and its connecting roads, including incidents which have repeatedly caused damage to his property.

Mr Cachia, who has lived at his Clarkes Road property for close to 40 years, said the road had changed dramatically as development in the area had increased, with traffic and speeding becoming growing concerns.

Mr Cachia described the most recent incident involving multiple vehicles colliding near the Clarkes Road and Neale Road roundabout as “traumatising”.

“It ripped the whole front end of a car off, threw another car on its roof, and one car went through our fence trying to avoid the action,” he said.

“One person was injured really badly.”

Mr Cachia said vehicles had crashed through his property’s fence on multiple occasions, with the latest incident adding to a long history of crashes occurring just metres from where his family sleep.

“This is probably the fifth time someone’s gone through our fence here,” Mr Cachia said.

He recalled another incident in which a driver crashed through the fence before continuing down the road and hitting another section of fencing about 100 metres away.

He also pointed to hooning in the area as a major cause for concern, recalling



Mario Cachia with his children Mariel, 10, Marco, 6, and Marytess, 4. (Damjan Janevski) 567090_03

a vehicle that had reportedly been travelling at speeds over 200km/h along the road in the early hours of the morning.

He said the increasing number of vehicles using the roads had made it more important for drivers to obey speed limits and remain alert to changing road

conditions.

“You can’t do these things, you’re risking your life as well as others,” he said.

“There could be anything on the road. If you’re going flat out and then hit something, you don’t know where you’re going to end up.”

Youth activities across Melton

With school now well and truly back for term three, young people across Melton are being encouraged to get involved in a range of free and low-cost activities still being offered through Melton council’s Young Communities program.

Young people aged 12 to 25 are invited to take part in weekly activities through the Young Communities program, with options designed to provide opportunities for recreation, social connection, creativity, and support.

The iPlay program is offering free-play sports, games, and activities at Cobblebank Stadium and Caroline Springs Leisure Centre.

Those looking to build their cooking skills can take part in Cook It. Eat It, where participants learn to prepare delicious recipes before enjoying the food they have made.

Melton’s youth can also drop into hang-out sessions at Caroline Springs Leisure Centre and Melton Youth Centre, with gaming, snacks and other activities available.

Beyond council’s regular sessions, the Young Communities program also provides opportunities to get involved in music, LGBTIQ+ meet-ups and youth leadership, as well as support services for young people who need assistance.

The program is open to young people who live, work, study, or spend time across the Melton municipality.

Details: melton.vic.gov.au/youth.

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It’s amazing what a little snooze can do

*Offer ends 23 August 2026. Advertised prices and savings shown are based on Snooze Management Pty Ltd RRP. Snooze stores are predominately operated by independent franchisees and therefore the price for products prior to the sale will vary from store to store. Snooze stores can offer discounts on any ticketed prices in store meaning that products may be sold at less than the RRP at any time. Exclusions apply. Offer not available on floor stock, Snooze Deals products, clearance, Bedgear C1 mattress, delivery, assembly and recycling services. As our stores vary in size, it is possible that not all products are displayed in all stores but all products may be ordered on request. While we aim to ensure the information provided is correct, sometimes errors occur and we reserve the right to correct any errors. New orders only. Snooze’s standard terms and conditions of sale otherwise apply. ^Extra 10% off selected mattresses and selected bed frames ends 9 August 2026. The extra 10% off is applied to the already reduced prices. Offer not available for Vispring Mattresses, Vispring headboards & Divian Bases. Images are for illustrative purposes only.

Moving Ahead

4 August 2026

Mayor's message Cr Lara Carli



As we approach the November State Election, ensuring our community's voice is heard remains a key priority for Council.

We recently launched our State Election *"Let's Get the City of Melton Moving"* campaign, calling on all major parties contesting the election to commit to the road and public transport upgrades our community urgently needs.

Council is seeking commitments to duplicate and electrify the Melton rail line by 2030, and for urgent upgrades to key arterial roads including the Western Highway, Melton Highway, Hopkins Road, Taylors Road and Palmers Road corridor.

According to Australian Bureau of Statistic data released in March 2026, the City of Melton is Australia's fastest-growing area, with our population expected to almost double to more than 455,000 residents over the next 20 years. Yet investment in transport and road infrastructure has not kept pace with this rapid growth.

Our residents are spending too much time sitting in traffic on congested roads or waiting for overcrowded and infrequent train services. That's time taken away from family and friends and the moments that matter most. Our residents deserve better main roads and a public transport network that keeps pace with our growth and helps them get where they need to go safely, reliably and more efficiently. Council must also keep investing in local roads to keep our city moving with our residential streets.

Council will continue to advocate for this much needed investment. To learn more about our state election priorities, visit melton.vic.gov.au/lets-get-moving

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

Stay Informed

Quickly and easily connect with us online:

melton.vic.gov.au

facebook.com/cityofmelton

Instagram @cityofmeltonofficial

Celebrate the joy of learning!

The City of Melton Learning Festival is back again this year, running from 29 August until 12 September 2026.

Now in its eighth year, the Festival celebrates lifelong learning for all ages and abilities, with this year's theme all about 'Expanding Your Horizons.'

Council's libraries and community centres will host a wide range of free activities throughout the festival including author talks, DIY crafts and creative workshops.

The festival kicks off with a free celebration event at the Melton Library and Learning Hub on Saturday 29 August at 10am where there will be fun activities on offer for the whole family.



To view the festival program, visit melton.vic.gov.au/learningfestival

Business Awards finalists announced

Finalists for the 2026 City of Melton Business Excellence Awards have been announced, shining a spotlight on the businesses in our community which go above and beyond.

Twenty-seven finalists have been selected from 79 applicants to be considered for the top honour in nine award categories. To view all of the finalists visit, melton.vic.gov.au/MBEA.

Winners will be announced, including the Mayoral Achievement Award and Business of the Year, at an awards evening on 16 September 2026.

Stringybark Ward with Cr Julie Shannon



Council's 2026/27 Budget was endorsed at our June Council Meeting, and in Stringybark Ward I was pleased to see investment in important road upgrades and recreation projects. These are two areas I am passionate about advocating for on behalf of our community.

In Harkness, \$350,000 has been allocated to upgrade the intersection of Minns Road and Coburns Road to a roundabout, including improved public lighting. This important project will improve traffic flow and support safer travel for our community.

The Budget also includes funding for the redevelopment of the main soccer field at MacPherson Park, as well as planning for future upgrades. These investments will help ensure our sporting facilities continue to meet the needs of our growing community.

Close by in Kurunjang, \$1.8 million has been allocated for the Kurunjang Sports Reserve soccer pavilion. This is a project I am very passionate about and advocated for on behalf of our residents. Opportunities for people to get active and connect are extremely important for our community and I look forward to seeing this project come to life.

To view the full Budget, visit melton.vic.gov.au/budget

Council's next round of Community Grants Fund applications is now open. I encourage community groups and residents with ideas that would benefit our community to apply. The program provides valuable support to the local groups and people making a positive contribution across our City. For information and to apply visit melton.vic.gov.au/grants

Feel free to contact me regarding Stringybark Ward or our City more generally on 0499 801 302; email: julie.shannon@melton.vic.gov.au

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



Mayor
Cr Lara Carli



Deputy Mayor
Cr Dr Phillip Zada



Cr Steve
Abboushi



Cr Kathy
Majdlik



Cr Brandi
Morris



Cr Sophie
Ramsey



Cr Julie
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MY PLACE

Anirban Datta is an Aintree local who collaborated with his wife to direct their own cineplay, based on Shakespeare’s Macbeth tragedy. Jack O’Shea-Ayres spoke with Mr Datta about home life, what drew him to Aintree, and the challenges that come with directing your very own production.

What’s your connection to Melbourne’s north-west?
My wife and I bought our first home in Australia in Aintree after scouting several areas on this side of Victoria. We loved the quiet and the peacefulness of Aintree, but we still feel very well connected to the city. We simply fell in love with the area and knew we wanted to move here.

What do you like about where you live?
Aintree is a very peaceful suburb, yet we are still very well connected to the city, the west and the north. It offers us the best of both worlds, combining the peace and quiet of a growing family-friendly suburb with great connectivity to Melbourne’s CBD, the western suburbs and key destinations up north. It’s convenient, and allows us to enjoy a relaxed suburban lifestyle without feeling disconnected from the city or the wider metropolitan area.

What, if anything, would you change about where you live?
If there was one thing I could change about where I live, it would be improving the transport infrastructure to better keep pace with the rapid growth of the area. Aintree has become a popular place to live, with more families moving into the suburb and surrounding communities each day, but the road network and major transport connections need to continue evolving alongside that growth. The

Melton highway needs more lanes and capacity to help manage the increasing traffic travelling through each day, and the Leakes road exit needs traffic signals for cars to be able to use the off-ramp.

Where is your favourite local place to spend time?
Woodlea Town Centre is one of my favourite places to spend time locally because it has become such a convenient and welcoming hub for the community. Whether I’m grabbing a coffee, picking up something to eat, doing a bit of shopping or simply catching up with friends and family, there’s always something going on. I like that it brings people together and gives residents a place to meet without having to travel too far from home.

Tell us about your recent cineplay, Kashmir? What was your role and what was most challenging about it?
I am the director of Kashmir. The most challenging part was to fit a classic like Macbeth in the political scenario of Kashmir. The real incidents that have happened in Kashmir is part of this play and a lot of research had to be done to bring life to the production. The challenging part was to make the soothsayer’s prophecy impossible to be achieved, yet a way was found for the predictions to happen through the course of the play.

Anirban Datta. (Damjan Janevski) 558695_01



Sanctuary of Sentient Beings founder Jodie Musto with Fleckie. (Jack O’Shea-Ayres)

Sanctuary takes root

A Beremboke sanctuary established to provide refuge for rescued animals has blossomed into a broader environmental restoration project.

Nestled in the picturesque bushland of the Brisbane Ranges National Park, the Sanctuary of Sentient Beings team have taken the reins on restoring the area’s natural beauty, with more than 5000 native trees and plants now established across the property.

The charity dedicated to providing refuge for sick, rescued, and orphaned animals was founded by city-based creatives Jodie Musto and Glenn Musto, who strived to create a more connected and compassionate way of living.

Ms Musto said the sanctuary began with a shared vision to provide a safe place for animals, while also helping people reconnect with nature.

As the sanctuary developed, its focus expanded to include the protection and restoration of the surrounding environment, including areas of land that had previously been cleared for farming.

Ms Musto said the environmental

transformation had become one of the most rewarding aspects of the project.

“Some of the trees we planted in those first few years are so big now, which is really special to see,” she said.

“You can actually watch the landscape changing and the habitat returning.”

The sanctuary has also worked with charities, environmental organisations, and volunteers on restoration projects, with the organisation now seeking to connect with more people across Moorabool and surrounding communities.

“At the heart of the Sanctuary is the idea that caring for rescued animals, caring for country and caring for the wider environment are all connected,” Ms Musto said.

Volunteers are invited to contribute through planting and restoration days, with the next planting day set for Saturday 29 August, where the sanctuary aims to plant 500 native trees and shrubs to help create habitat for local wildlife.

Details: <https://sentientbeings.org.au/>.



Are you a photographer based in the western or northern suburbs who loves shooting sports and news?

Star Weekly is looking for new team members to join its pool of casual photographers.

A driver’s licence, reliable car and photography equipment are essential. Experience shooting video is highly desirable. The role may involve Saturday work and after hours assignments.

Send your resume and examples of your work to westeditorial@starweekly.com.au

Village life made for more living at Avington in Point Cook

For many people, downsizing is not about stepping back. It is about creating more space in life for the things that matter most – time, freedom, connection and the comfort of knowing home is easy to enjoy.

That is the feeling at the heart of Avington Living in Point Cook, an over 50s lifestyle community offering resort-style facilities and designed for people who want independence, low-maintenance living and a genuine sense of belonging.

Set within a secure, gated community at 50 Saltwater Promenade, Avington offers beautifully designed one and two-bedroom homes surrounded by professionally landscaped gardens and incredible facilities.

It is a place where the practical benefits of downsizing are matched by the everyday pleasures of village life: a friendly wave from a neighbour, a morning swim, a quiet walk, a game on the bowling green, or a relaxed catch-up over coffee.

At the centre of the community is Avington's impressive clubhouse and shared facilities, designed to support an active, social and enjoyable lifestyle.

Residents can make the most of the indoor heated swimming pool, sauna, gym, cinema, library, billiards room, bowling green, tennis court, putting green, barbecue areas, private dining room, community garden, workshops and more. Whether you like to stay busy, keep fit, enjoy your hobbies or simply unwind, there is space to live life your way.

The homes themselves are thoughtfully created for comfort and ease. Light-filled interiors, practical open-plan layouts and quality finishes help make everyday living simple. Features such as stone benchtops, modern appliances, built-in robes, heating



and cooling, secure intercom access and low-maintenance design give residents a home that feels modern, manageable and ready to enjoy.

Avington's location adds another layer

of convenience. In the heart of Point Cook, residents are close to shopping, cafes, medical services, parks, walking paths, beaches and public transport. Point Cook Town Centre, Williams Landing Train Station, Sanctuary Lakes Golf Club and local health services are all within easy reach, while access to the Princes Freeway keeps Melbourne and the surrounding region well connected.

For those considering their next move, Avington's land lease model also offers a more affordable way to enjoy a new home and lifestyle. With no stamp duty, no council rates and no exit fees, it is a simpler and more transparent approach to downsizing. Residents own their home and lease the land

beneath it, helping to keep costs down while still enjoying the benefits of a professionally managed community.

Most importantly, Avington offers something that cannot always be captured on a page – the feeling of belonging. Residents can enjoy their privacy and independence, while also knowing friendship and connection are close by when they want them.

With brand-new homes now selling from \$440k, Avington Living is an opportunity to downsize your home, upsize your lifestyle and discover village life made for your next chapter.

Book a relaxed, no-pressure tour today and experience Avington Living for yourself.

Stage 10 Sold Out,
Stage 11 Now Selling

Stage 10 has sold out. Stage 11 is now selling. Come and see why homes at Avington are in demand. Open plan design, quality stone finishes and modern, sleek appliances create comfortable, low-maintenance resort-style living.

Don't miss out. Book your tour today!



(03) 8400 0408 | avingtonliving.com.au



50 Saltwater Promenade, Point Cook ✓ No Stamp Duty ✓ No Exit Fees ✓ No Hidden Costs

Lifestyle Communities presents: How to downsize with Rachel Lane

For many Australians, the family home has been the centre of family life for decades. It's where memories have been made, milestones celebrated and communities built. But as life evolves, many homeowners begin to consider whether their current home still suits the lifestyle they want for the years ahead.

Downsizing is becoming an increasingly popular choice for people looking to simplify their lives, reduce the demands of home maintenance and enjoy greater freedom to focus on what matters most. Yet knowing where to start can often feel overwhelming.

To help locals better understand their options, Lifestyle Communities is proud to present How to Downsize with Rachel Lane, an informative event designed to provide practical advice and expert insights for those considering their next move.

One of Australia's leading downsizing and retirement living experts, Rachel Lane has helped thousands of Australians navigate the complexities of selling the family home and planning for the future. At this special event, she will share valuable information on the financial, lifestyle and emotional considerations involved in downsizing, helping attendees make informed decisions with confidence.

According to Rachel, downsizing is about far more than moving into a smaller home. It can be an opportunity to create a lifestyle that better aligns with your current needs and future aspirations. For many people, it means less time spent maintaining a large property and more time enjoying travel, social connections, hobbies and family.

It's also an opportunity to unlock equity from the family home, providing greater financial flexibility and peace of mind for the



years ahead. However, the right move will look different for everyone, which is why access to trusted information and expert guidance is so important.

As a leading developer of land lease

communities in Victoria, Lifestyle Communities has spent more than two decades helping over-50s embrace a lifestyle focused on connection, wellbeing and freedom from many of the traditional responsibilities of home ownership. Through events like these, Lifestyle Communities aims to help people understand all their options and feel empowered to make choices that are right for them.

Whether you're actively considering a move, supporting a family member through the downsizing process or simply planning for the future, this event offers a valuable opportunity to hear from an industry expert and gain practical advice in a welcoming environment.

Upcoming Events -How to Downsize

with Rachel Lane

Geelong Seminar: Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre, 80 Western Beach Rd, Geelong. Saturday 22 August, 10am-12.30pm.

Caroline Springs Seminar: Punthill Apartments, Caroline Springs, 1/7 Caroline Springs Blvd, Caroline Springs. Saturday 29 August, 10am-12.30pm.

With interest in downsizing continuing to grow, these sessions present a valuable opportunity to hear from one of Australia's leading experts and gain the confidence needed to explore your next chapter. Attendance is free, however registrations are extremely limited.

To secure your spot, visit lifestylecommunities.com.au or call 1300 50 55 60

LIFESTYLE COMMUNITIES® PRESENTS

How to
downsize

Saturday 29 August,
10am to 12:30pm

Punthill Apartment Hotels
Lakeside Room
1/7 Caroline Springs Blvd,
Caroline Springs

Free event

Thinking about downsizing but unsure
what it means for your finances?

Join us for a practical session to
explore your options and move
forward with confidence.



Featuring
Rachel Lane
Downsizing & Retirement
Finance Expert



Bookings essential. Scan the
QR code to reserve your spot.

 1300 50 55 60



Tuesday, 4 August, 2026 MELTON & MOORABOOL STAR WEEKLY 13

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

Melton Sew Creative Group

The Melton Sew Creative Group meets at the Arnolds Creek Community Centre every second Wednesday 10am-2pm. People can come along to socialise with like minded people for a chat whilst doing their own craft work over a cuppa. You can bring along your own machines and equipment to make something creative. Participants can learn from each other whilst making new friends in a relaxed setting at Arnolds Creek.

■ meltonsewcreative@gmail.com

First Aid and CPR

Melton South Community Centre are offering Accredited First Aid/CPR on 15 August at 9am-noon. Enrolment encouraged.

■ msccentr@bigpond.net.au, 9747 8576, meltonsouth.org.au

Acrylic Pouring Workshop

Melton South Community Centre is hosting an acrylic pouring workshop for adults on 15 August at 11am-12.30pm, or for Children aged five years or older at 9.30-10.30am. Enrolment encouraged.

■ msccentr@bigpond.net.au, 9747 8576, meltonsouth.org.au

Moonlite Theatre Auditions

Moonlite Theatre is holding auditions for upcoming performances between 16-24 October. Auditions take place 1-4pm on Saturday 8 August.

■ <https://www.moonlitetheatre.com.au/general-8> for more information.

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 Wednesday from 5-8pm at Melton Senior Citizens and Community Centre at 1 McKenzie Street, Melton. 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 and cards and chess.

■ Trevor, 0404 494 163, <https://meltonmensgroup.home.blog/>

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

14 MELTON & MOORABOOL STAR WEEKLY Tuesday, 4 August, 2026



This week's photographer's choice picture is of 'The Sacrifice of Farinelli' writer/director Stuart Bruce and actor Matthew Da Via. (Damjan Janevski) 567823_01

Bacchus Marsh Philosophy Club

Bacchus Marsh Philosophy Club is a welcoming discussion group exploring life's big questions in a thoughtful, relaxed, and respectful way. No background in philosophy is needed, just curiosity and a willingness to listen, reflect, and share ideas. These facilitated sessions encourage people to think more deeply about topics that matter, hear a range of perspectives, and enjoy meaningful conversation in good company. They take place every second Saturday at the Lerderderg Library, 215 Main Street, 10am-1pm.

■ Andy, 0498 549 177, andy@p4e.au

Hillside Probus Club

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

■ hillsideprobus@gmail.com

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 work on your own projects. 9.30am-3pm every Tuesday. Each session costs \$5.

■ 9747 8576

Melton South Community Singers

Singers of all levels are welcome at the

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

■ Sue, 0400 082 413

Community band

The Greater Western Community Band meets every Thursday from 7.30-9.30pm. Located at the Bridge Road Community Centre, Strathulloh (Melton South). The band is available for events. Brass, woodwind and percussion players are always welcome.

■ Sally Hamond, 0401 474 582

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 2026 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

Dreams come Mac

Fleetwood Mac fans will have the chance to relive the magic of one of rock’s most enduring bands when Gypsy - The Australian Fleetwood Mac Tribute Show returns to Stoney’s Club in Maddingey.

Following a sold-out previous performance, the acclaimed tribute act is set to bring its faithful recreation of Fleetwood Mac’s timeless soundtrack to the venue for one night only on Saturday 29 August.

Known for authentic musicianship and soaring harmonies, Gypsy will perform a collection of the band’s biggest and best-loved songs, spanning generations of music fans.

Featuring the timeless songs of Fleetwood Mac, Gypsy delivers a polished live experience built around powerful vocals, rich harmonies, detailed musicianship and a strong visual presentation.

“We had such a wonderful response from the local audience last time,” the band said.



Gypsy – The Australian Fleetwood Mac Experience is returning to Stoney’s Club on Saturday 29 August. (Supplied)

“The room was full, the energy was incredible, and everyone made us feel completely at home. We’re genuinely excited to return.”

Whether Fleetwood Mac has been part of your musical journey for years or you

have discovered the band more recently, the show promises an evening packed with familiar favourites and nostalgic moments.

The night also offers the chance to make an evening of it, with Stoney’s Club bistro opening from 6pm ahead of the 9pm show.

With the previous performance selling out, fans are encouraged to secure their tickets early for what is expected to be another popular night.

Gypsy’s return to Stoney’s promises another memorable evening celebrating the music, memories and enduring magic of Fleetwood Mac.

Gypsy – The Australian Fleetwood Mac Show will take place at Stoney’s Club, 59 Grant Street Maddingley, on Saturday 29 August.

Bookings recommended: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/stoneys-club-presents-gypsy-the-australian-fleetwood-mac-show-tickets-1993624971958>.

Go star gazing during National Science Week

Curious minds wanted! National Science Week returns to Museums Victoria in 2026 with a jam-packed program of events.

Between Saturday 15 and Sunday 23 August, science-lovers are invited behind-the-scenes at Melbourne Museum, Scienceworks and IMAX Melbourne for expert talks, hands-on workshops and eye-opening tours.

As part of this annual celebration of science and technology, Museums Victoria will showcase the work of its vital Research Institute, where scientists are actively decoding the natural world, from biodiversity and space science to deep-sea exploration.

With one of the nation’s largest museum-based scientific teams, the Museums Victoria Research Institute plays a crucial role in advancing discovery and shaping our understanding of life on Earth and beyond.

This year’s National Science Week education theme is Seeds of Science: Nurturing Knowledge for All, inviting students and the wider community to explore the power of curiosity and scientific inquiry.

Melbourne Museum is sowing seeds and nurturing knowledge with two on-theme events: The Secret Life of Soil, an engaging panel talk about the microscopic organisms that shape healthy soil, featuring Gardening Australia’s Hannah Maloney; and Creative Lab: Seed Stories, a 45-minute workshop in which participants will investigate soil as a living system, select native seeds, and plant something meaningful to take home and continue caring for.

Science on Show is the place for visitors to ask any burning questions, as they meet the scientists behind the Museum. Through pop-up talks, displays, and rarely seen specimens, visitors will gain insight into how Museums Victoria Research Institute experts reveal hidden stories – from ancient fossils and deep-sea creatures to shimmering minerals and endangered species.

While every week is science week at Scienceworks, the focus turns to the stars with a special Galileo Planetarium experience in collaboration with the Italian Australian Foundation.

Guests will step into the Planetarium for an engaging one-hour session that introduces Galileo’s life and historical context, then explores his key discoveries—such as the moons of Jupiter, the phases of Venus, sunspots, and the rugged surface of the Moon.??

Through immersive visuals and storytelling, discover how Galileo’s groundbreaking discoveries changed our understanding of the universe. Stick around for gelato, pop-up activities and telescope viewing on our Arena (weather?permitting).?

No visit to Scienceworks is complete without Colour: See the World in a New Light, an interactive science exhibition from Questacon, featuring 21 playful exhibits that explore how colour is created, changed and understood. Visitors of all ages can experiment with colour, optics and light in this immersive exhibition for the whole family.



Back from left: Harry Dwan, Lewis Corry-Thomas, Tim Curruthers, Maisie Taylor, Timothy Allan, Craig Lenaine-Smith, Tom Foster and Lorretta Quinn. Front from left: Tenere De Zylva, Leigh Johnson, Andre Vikas, Jules McCarthy and Sandi Garcher. (Karlane Santamaria)

Prog-rock opera After-Light will glow

A powerful new Australian rock opera will make its full theatrical debut in Macedon in August, with the Mount Players bringing After-Light to the stage for the first time in its complete form.

The production follows a successful preview at the 2024 Melbourne Fringe Festival, where members of the Mount Players committee first saw a condensed version of the work. After discussions with composer Zac Vanstone and creator and musical director Tom Foster, Mountview Theatre was chosen to premiere the full-scale production.

Blending contemporary theatre with

progressive rock, After-Light features a seven-piece live band performing on stage alongside the cast, creating an immersive theatrical experience.

The original production follows Boy, who must confront the mistakes of his past while trapped in a life-threatening coma. As he battles addiction, paranoia and depression, he is forced to face his inner demons and find forgiveness if he hopes to awaken.

Vanstone said the work, which was written during the COVID-19 pandemic, explores themes of loss, healing and redemption.

“This is a show about learning how to let go,” he said.

“Following the break-up between Boy and Girl, Boy falls into a life-threatening coma. In order for Boy to wake, he must forgive the past, reconcile with the future and learn to let go of Girl.

“If Boy fails, his intrusive thoughts of addiction, paranoia and depression will consume his soul.”

After-Light will be performed at Mountview Theatre, Smith Street, Macedon, from 14 to 30 August. Tickets are available through the Mount Players website or by calling 0419 329 052.

Barry’s brilliant apocalypse is coming to Footscray

After more than 20 years in development, Melbourne playwright Adrian D’Aprano will finally bring his show, ‘My Brilliant Apocalypse’, to the stage in Footscray next week and it sounds like he couldn’t have timed it much better.

With bellicose billionaires throwing their weight and wallets around with increasing abandon, D’Aprano said audiences would instantly recognise the play’s central character, the boof-head Aussie billionaire, Barry Brilliant.

“He’s a bit like the Aussie Trump,” D’Aprano said, adding that there was a touch of Clive Palmer and the late Kerry

Packer in the character too.

While invoking these names - particularly that of the current occupant of the White House - might be an instant turn-off for some, D’Aprano said those were exactly the type of people who should come.

“My Brilliant Apocalypse series gives Barry hell,” he said. “In part one he goes from riches to rags and ends up homeless on the streets without an identity.”

“Our 13 person ensemble brings to life how a person like Barry deals or doesn’t deal with losing everything.”

Describing his creation as “a five part series with a Dickensian Christmas satire

spin-off,” D’Aprano said Barry was variously hero, pawn, sage and spirit as he journeyed through life searching for meaning and purpose.

He urged audiences to come along for the ride.

“It’s a funny, fast-paced exploration of what it is to exist: within yourself, within the known universe, or perhaps even within an alternative universe that lives in someone else’s head!”

My Brilliant Apocalypse is on at the Bluestone Church Arts Space from 7-9 August. Tickets: <https://www.mybrilliantapocalypse.com/tickets>



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PUBLIC NOTICES AND EVENT



Geographic naming proposal

Melton City Council is proposing to name the new spectator shelter at Bridge Road Athletic Track after Mr Barry Taylor. The proposed name is "Barry Taylor Shelter".

The feature is located at Bridge Road Athletic Track, 132 Bridge Road, Strathtulloh and identified in red on the map below:



Further information about the proposal can be found at Melton's Conversations Page on the Melton City Council website.

In line with Council's Naming Policy and the naming rules for places in Victoria, submissions for or against the proposal are now invited from members of the public in respect of the naming proposal.

Submissions can be emailed to placenaming@melton.vic.gov.au and must be made by 5pm on Friday 28 August 2026.

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SPORTS QUIZ

- 1. With the nickname 'Pogi', which Slovenian cyclist won the 2026 Tour de France?
- 2. The governor of which US state proclaimed July 24, 2026 as 'LeBron James Day'?



Lebron James

- 3. Teams including the Blaze, Talons and Volts play what sport in the US's AUSL?
- 4. The Commonwealth Games (then known as the British Empire Games) were first held in which year?
- 5. Mayo defeated which Gaelic football team in the 2026 All-Ireland Senior Football Championship final?
- 6. Australian all-rounder Ash Gardner last captained which Women's Big Bash League team?
- 7. The 2026 WNBA All-Star Game was held in which US city?
- 8. Finnie, the official mascot of the 2026 Commonwealth Games, is what type of legendary creature?
- 9. Which two Australian states will host AFL State of Origin matches over the next three years?
- 10. Which game involving dropping sticks into running water under a bridge was first mentioned in a book by A. A. Milne?
- 11. Which four teams competed in the 2026 FIFA World Cup semifinals?
- 12. In what year will the next FIFA Women's World Cup take place?
- 13. And where will it be hosted?
- 14. How many stages are there in the men's Tour de France?
- 15. And how many days are the stages held over?
- 16. Which country in the 2026 Commonwealth Games has the highest population?
- 17. Which three basketballers feature on the covers of NBA 2K27?
- 18. Cathy Engelbert is the commissioner of which US sporting league?
- 19. What was significant about the John Isner vs. Nicolas Mahut match at Wimbledon 2010?



Limp Bizkit

- 20. Rollin' (Air Raid Vehicle) by Limp Bizkit was the entrance theme for which professional wrestler from 2000 to 2002?
- 21. In which sport might someone achieve a 'turkey'?
- 22. Which teenager did CIES value at €358M post the 2026 FIFA World Cup, making him football's most expensive player?
- 23. Blernsball is a fictional sport from which TV show?
- 24. And which sport is it based on?
- 25. Madison Square Garden is home to which two professional sports teams?
- 26. Which footballer was responsible for the infamous 'Hand of God' goal in 1986?
- 27. In lawn bowls, what is the name of the smaller ball that players try to roll their bowl closest to?
- 28. In which sport will referees call a 'delayed penalty'?
- 29. AFL team Greater Western Sydney shares its nickname with which MLB team?
- 30. True or false: swimming is featured in the modern pentathlon event at the Olympics?

1. Tadej Pogacar 2. Pennsylvania 3. Softball (Athletes Unlimited Softball League) 4. 1930 5. Kerry 6. Sydney Sixers 7. Chicago 8. Unicorn 9. Western Australia (2027, 2029) and South Australia (2028) 10. Poosticks Underaker 21. Tenpin bowling 22. Lamine Yamal 23. Futurama 24. Baseball 25. New York Rangers (NHL) and New York Knicks (NBA) 26. Diego Maradona 27. Jack 28. Jack 29. Ice hockey 30. True



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Hyundai's first build in China

By Chris Riley, Marque Motoring

Koreans don't get to drive the Hyundai Elexio.

They get the Kia equivalent instead – the EV5.

Built in China, it's the first Hyundai to be manufactured outside of South Korea, no doubt in an endeavour to reduce costs and make the car more competitive.

Elexio sits between the Kona Electric and Ioniq 5 in terms of size, but is quite different in design, with a tall boxy body.

It's a made-up name, created especially for the five-seat EV and means nothing in particular – in fact it has been renamed Eo for the Chinese market.

Styling

The styling brings to mind the third generation Kia Soul, particularly those Z-shaped rear pillars and tailgate.

The eye-catching headlights incorporate eight crystal cubes, supposedly a nod to the lucky number 8 in Chinese culture.

There's just the one grade so far, the front-wheel drive Elite priced from \$59,990 driveaway.

A range-opening, entry grade is expected to be added before the end of the second quarter – that's car-speak for a cheaper one.

Elexio, we're told, is a family-focused, perfectly sized EV that is packed with smart features, showcasing a futuristic style inside and out with a sleek, minimalist layout.

Generous interior space combines with intuitive convenience and driver assistance technology to provide a practical and desirable all-electric SUV.

"As the first vehicle exported from our Beijing Hyundai joint venture, it demonstrates how we are leveraging our global manufacturing capabilities to deliver exceptional value to customers," Hyundai chief executive José Muñoz said.

That may be so, but the size and placement of the large infotainment screen is confronting.

The long, skinny 27-inch screen stretches from the centre of the dash away from the driver, terminating in front of the passenger.

How this can be described as 'practical' is eminently debatable. It does, however, facilitate the operation of several arcade-style games that can consume the entire screen when opened.

That said they can be played only when the car is stationary and presumably in Park.

After a few minutes the kids quickly lost interest.

The bone-coloured upholstery in our test vehicle is not what we'd call family friendly either.

Sitting at the base of the windscreen, a new-generation, projector-based head-up display replaces a conventional instrument cluster.

With a 30,000:1 high contrast ratio, readability should be exceptional in any lighting conditions.

But like the head-up displays of other manufacturers it is almost totally invisible to anyone who wears polarised sunglasses. When are they going to recognise and address this issue (or is the problem that it cannot be fixed)?

Elite features the usual assortment of features, including dual-zone climate air, partial leather trim, power-adjust driver and passenger front seats that are both heated and cooled, plus a heated leather steering wheel.

There's also automatic parking using the smart key, auto high beam, LED lights front



Hyundai Elexio is practical enough, even for an EV, but performance is middle of the road. (Pictures: Supplied)



and rear, adaptive cruise control, traffic sign recognition, auto lights and wipers, auto dimming rear-view mirror, front, side and rear parking sensors and a power operated tailgate – but oddly no sign of a sunroof.

Elexio is covered by a seven-year/unlimited kilometre warranty, with eight-year/160,000km cover for the high-voltage battery.

Infotainment

Elexio introduces Connect-C based on the full Android Automotive Operating System.

Infotainment consists of the aforementioned 27-inch 4K screen, together with Bluetooth, voice recognition, navigation, AM/FM and DAB+ digital radio, wired and wireless CarPlay and Android Auto.

Surprisingly, however, audio is supplied by an unbranded six-speaker sound system.

There are also two wireless charging pads and five USB-C ports (three in front), Bluelink connected car services with five-year complimentary access, plus over-the-air updates.

A Smart Scene system underpins convenience and comfort with rapid heating/cooling, camping, carwash and baby rest modes.

A 240 volt three-pin power outlet is located in the luggage area for powering external equipment.

Safety

Elexio has been awarded a full five stars for crash safety by the ANCAP

organisation, based on testing of the closely-related Kia EV5.

There's a total of nine airbags, with rear side thorax airbags and a centre airbag that gives added protection to front seat occupants in side impact crashes.

A comprehensive suite of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) includes second-generation Collision-avoidance Assist 2, Highway Driving Assist 2 and Lane Following Assist 2 technologies.

There's also Autonomous emergency braking (Car-to-Car, Vulnerable Road User and Junction and Crossing, and Backover) as well as a lane support system with lane keep assist, lane departure warning and emergency lane keeping, blind-spot collision avoidance-assist, and an advanced speed assistance system with a speed sign recognition.

Powertrain

Elexio is powered by a single electric motor with 160kW of power and 310Nm of torque,

with drive to the front wheels via a single-speed reduction gear transmission (the electrical equivalent of a CVT).

Driving

Built on Hyundai's dedicated 400-volt E-GMP platform, the five-seat, front-wheel drive EV tips the scales at a hefty 2105kg.

It measures 4615mm long, 1875mm wide and stands 1673mm high, with a 2750mm wheelbase.

Luggage capacity is 506 litres, expanding to 1540 litres with the rear seats folded.

A tyre repair kit is provided in the event of a puncture.

Build quality is first rate, but the ambience feels overly functional and utilitarian.

Running your hands over the cabin surfaces reveals some hard plastics, but thanks to clever design – nothing is directly in line of sight.

Although the lower console area provides plenty of storage for loose items, two cupholders and two phone chargers dominate the upper area, leaving little space for much at all.

This is Hyundai's first BEV to use lithium iron phosphate (LFP) rather than Nickel Manganese Cobalt Oxide (NMC) technology, with a largish 88.1 kWh battery pack.

With energy consumption cited at 18.2 kWh per 100km, range for the Elite grade with 20-inch wheels is a claimed 546km.

A heat pump reduces the amount of energy required by the air conditioning, helping to extend the range.

Charging at a rate of up to 150kW using a DC fast charger takes 38 minutes from 10 to 80 percent (that's 70 percent or 382km).

AC charging at a rate of up to 11kW with three-phase wall charger takes 10 hours from zero to 100 percent (15 hours with standard single phase).

Like other Hyundais, the ride and handling have been tuned for Australian road conditions.

This one rides on 20-inch wheels, with 255/45 profile Kumho Ecsta rubber, sacrificing 16km of range.

The ride is on the firm side, but infinitely preferable to some of the soggy fortune cookies we get to drive.

Eco, Normal, Snow and Sport drive modes are provided, along with paddles to modulate the effects of regenerative braking.

While the Elexio goes well, it lacks the

RATINGS
Looks: 7
Performance: 7
Safety: 8
Thirst: 7.5
Practicality: 8
Comfort: 7
Tech: 7.5
Value: 7
Overall: 7.4

excitement that we have come to associate with EVs, especially accelerating away from the lights.

At the same time, it is targeted at families, so this is understandable.

The screen features a rearranged version of the panels found in other Hyundai models.

Instead of climate control, a small 5.0-inch section is devoted to driver information and is located within easy sight at the end closest to the driver.

A 12.3-inch middle section is occupied by Android Auto when

it is active while another 12.3-inch section furthest from the driver handles the entertainment – at least that's the way it looks.

Just about everything is controlled from the screen, which can be challenging when you're in a hurry or simply on the move.

It supports hidden voice-activated tools like horoscopes, calculator, unit converter, currency exchange, date/time in other cities, and flight status checks.

Using what is known as NFC technology, the car can be opened and started using a mobile phone, in the same way that one can pay for things with a phone.

There's no tailgate release in the cabin, but you can ask Google to 'open tailgate' – but not close it.

The sound system, though unbranded as noted previously, delivers quite good sound.

In a minor glitch, the tyre pressure monitoring system reported there was a problem with one of the tyres the entire time we had the car.

But the system showed all tyres with a pressure of 34 psi and a visual inspection revealed none of the tyres appeared to be low.

Rated at 18.2 kWh, we clocked up between 14.9 and 16.7 kWh/100km over the course of the week and almost 300km of mixed driving, with the trip computer showing a long-term average of 18.2 kWh/100km after more than 2600km.

Summing up

Not sure what it is about the Hyundai Elexio, but we didn't warm to this model.

The ice cube headlights are pretty cool and the car is certainly practical enough, even for an EV.

Performance is middle of the road but that's okay for a family-focused wagon, it just lacks some character – some Soul perhaps.

Locals do Australia proud

By Tara Murray

It was a successful Commonwealth Games for Australia, with the sporting action wrapping up on Monday, Australian time.

The Australians topped the medal tally with 171 medals.

There were 70 gold medals, 45 silver and 56 bronze medals won by Australian athletes.

For the locals, there were some mixed results.

Keilor Thunder's Lara McSpadden won gold in the women's 3x3 basketball.

The Australian team went through undefeated despite being a player down in the finals, with Emma Clarke injured.

Tailors Lakes' Jacob Cassar and Resilience Training Centre's Aoife Coughlan both won silver medals.

Cassar made the final of the 65 kilograms men's boxing event, but couldn't get over the line in the gold medal match.

The 19-year-old said it was an amazing feeling.

"As an athlete, I'm always going to want gold, but I'm very proud to be 19-year-old and coming home with a silver medal for my country, my team, family, friends and supporters."

Coughlan was looking to defend her title in the 70 kilograms women's judo event



Lara McSpadden (left) with her gold winning teammates. (AAP Image/Lukas Coch)



Aoife Coughlan.

She fell short in the gold medal fight and was awarded silver.

Her Resilience Training Centre teammates Tinka Easton and Danny Vojnikovich both lost bronze medal matches, while Maeve Coughlan was knocked out in the repechage.

It was bittersweet for the Australian Diamonds who won bronze.

After losing the semi final to Jamaica, 46-45, the Diamonds, including former

City West Falcons Liz Watson and Kate Moloney, bounced back in the bronze medal match to beat England, 68-50.

Uneeq Palavi led the Tongan side to ninth spot despite dislocating her finger in the first game.

On the track, Linden Hall, who grew up in Riddells Creek, finished fifth in the women's 5000 metres.

Peter Bol, who lives in the 3032 postcode, faded in the men's 800 metres

final to finish seventh.

Brimbank's Chris Mitrevski finished fourth in the men's long jump, six centimetres outside the medals.

Bundoora's Tara Kinder made three finals in the pool in a massive program that included five events.

Her best finish was fifth.

On the bowling green, Deer Park Club's Aaron Teys and Corey Wedlock missed out on finals in the men's pairs.

Winter sunshine as sporting action heats up

It was another big weekend of sporting action in Melbourne's north-west. Star Weekly photographer **TIES URIE** was out shooting some of the action.



Albanvale's Jovian Goulton and Braybrook's Joshua Cassar. 568974_13



Melton Centrals' Jordan Davis. 568969_16



Melton Centrals' Imogen Sexton puts up a shot. 568967_01



Point Cook Centrals' Makayla Jones. 568957_11



Macedon's Taylah Chamra defends Melton Centrals' Imogen Sexton. 568967_15



Albanvale's Jovian Goulton and Braybrook's Joshua Cassar. 568974_13

Finals spots on the line

By Tara Murray

Melton and Bacchus Marsh seem set to battle it out for the last finals spot in the Ballarat Football League in the final three rounds.

With the Sunbury Lions making it three wins in a row with an upset win against ladder leaders, Sebastopol, they have all but sealed their finals spot.

It leaves the Bloods and Cobras in sixth and seventh spot equal on points with three rounds remaining.

East Point is a further game back and could still pinch sixth.

The Cobras did their finals hope no harm with a win against Redan on Saturday.

Bacchus Marsh was on the road at City Oval.

It was a solid performance by the Cobras, who won 13.14 (92)-9.9 (63).

Jake Owen kicked five goals for the Cobras.

It was announced last week that Owen, Tyson Shea and Luke Goetz had re-signed for next season.

Owen was named best on Saturday, along with Josh Huxtable and Adam Blain.

It was a timely win for the Cobras who had lost their last five games.

Elsewhere, the Bloods were at home against North Ballarat at Macpherson Park.

The Bloods led by three points at quar-

ter time, before North Ballarat kicked seven goals to two in the middle two quarters to take control of the game.

While the Bloods won the final quarter, they weren't able to close the gap as North Ballarat won, 11.8 (74)-7.15 (57).

Braedan Kight kicked three goals for the Bloods.

Liam Carter, Jaycob Hickey and Jack Walker were named the Bloods best.

Meanwhile, Darley had a day out against Lake Wendouree.

After an even first quarter, the Devils kicked six goals to none in the second quarter to lead by 48 points at quarter time.

The Devils continued to pile on the pain

in the second half as they kicked 20 goals to four on the way to a 30.16 (196)-7.5 (47) win.

Nick Hind kicked seven goals in a best on ground performance.

Billy Myers, who returned from injury, kicked six goals for the Devils. Skipper Brett Bewley was also back from injury.

Ethan Matthews, Mitchell Gardiner and Luther Baker were other standouts for the Devils in the win.

The Devils sit third on the ladder, a game behind the top two sides, but with a better percentage.

In round 16 action this weekend, Darley will host Melton and Bacchus Marsh will face East Point.



Zali Ward. (Hockey Victoria)

Zali Ward's hockey focus pays dividends

By Tara Murray

Darley's Zali Ward is hoping to keep the momentum going as she gets ready for the Hockey One League one season with Hockey Club Melbourne.

Ward made her senior Australian debut earlier this year, in a massive moment in her career, having previously been part of Australian age group teams.

It's been a big year on and off the field for Ward, with her Australian debut at the top of the list.

"It was definitely a surreal moment and I dreamt about growing up," she said. "Stepping out was a really special moment."

"It definitely felt right being at home in front of all my friends and family, who have felt, heard and seen my whole career."

Ward tried a number of different sports growing up including football, netball and cricket.

It was through her mum that the love of hockey came from.

She came across a league that had hockey, netball and football in the same day at

Wedderburn Redbacks when she was on holidays and the rest was history.

"I came home to Darley and Melton Hockey club was the closest," she said. I was going into year five.

"I never looked back. I liked the style and it was fierce and fast and it started me to where I am now."

There's been a lot of travel since and Ward currently spends 700 to 800 kilometres travelling back and forth between Darley and Melbourne.

She says it's a good time to reflect while also catch up with people on the phone.

While hockey is Ward's main sport, she still has connections to the local sporting community.

She played a couple of years with her mum for Darley Cricket Club, including winning a premiership.

Ward in the Victorian Football League women's competition with the Western Bulldogs.

She said that being involved in local sport was something she really enjoyed still being a part of.

She now helps out at the Darley Junior

Football Netball Club.

"There's strong family ties," he said.

"My brother plays in the under-16s and I'm a runner, mentor whatever they need. They've had an impressive season."

"I help out when I can. I love sports and the outdoors."

"I want to give back to the place where I started."

Ward said one day she would love to play hockey with her mum.

The Hockey One season kicks off in early October, with Ward again a key member of the HC Melbourne team.

"I'm super excited to play with HC Melbourne for another season," she said.

"It's a fun team... We want to go one step further."

"We were pretty close last year. We've got some good experience and some younger ones coming through."

On field, Ward has just completed her university degree having juggled that and dual careers.

Among her goals in the future is to get another opportunity with the Hockeyroos.

"I would love another opportunity."



City Oval will host BFNL finals. (Tara Murray)

BFNL finals venues announced

City Oval in Ballarat will host the Ballarat Football Netball League finals this year.

All finals across the junior, women's and senior competitions will be played at City Oval starting this weekend.

The women's football finals starts this Sunday, with the grand final to be played on 30 August.

The junior football and netball finals will start on 22 August with the grand finals to be played on 13 September.

Senior football and netball finals will begin on Saturday, 29 August, before reaching its climax with the senior grand final day on Saturday 19 September.

The league said it's excited to once again deliver a finals series that celebrates the outstanding achievements of clubs, players, coaches, umpires, volunteers and supporters.

"Finals are the pinnacle of our season and provide an opportunity to showcase the exceptional standard of football and netball across our region," the league said in a statement.

"We are delighted that City Oval will host our grand finals and provide a fantastic experience for our clubs and supporters."

The league said Ballarat council will work alongside BFNL clubs, the BFNL board and league staff through a series of consultation and engagement sessions to help shape the future direction of BFNL finals.

As part of this collaborative planning, the league acknowledges that redeveloped Mars Stadium may again be used for BFNL grand finals in future years.

Thoroughbreds into granny

By Tara Murray

Melton Thoroughbreds are through to their first Big V youth league men’s grand final. There was joy for the Thoroughbreds as they claimed victory in the semi final against Southern Peninsula on Saturday night in the semi finals. Coach Ben Whyte said it was an incredible feeling. “It was fantastic,” he said. “It took a while and we had to fight all day. Credit to the boys they worked hard and kept on fighting. “The crowd last night was unbelievable and they got us over the line.” The Thoroughbreds trailed by eight points at quarter time before reducing the

margin to four points at the main break. The second half would be all the Thoroughbreds as they outscored the Sharks 56-41 to come away with a 111-100 win. Cawuop Makuac top scored with 25 points for the Thoroughbreds, while Nicholas Hooper scored 23 points and Hunter Salmons 22 points. Whyte said they stuck to their game plan and they were able to come away with the win. The group now has a chance at history. Whyte said they are so proud of what they have achieved this season no matter the outcome this weekend. “There will be a lot of hard work this week,” he said.

“Hopefully we can come away with a premiership. We’re really proud of ourselves and what we have achieved this year regardless of the results. “We’re the first group to make a youth league group final and hopefully we can bring home the title and get to hang a banner in the stadium.” The Thoroughbreds will face the Bellarine Storm in the grand final. Whyte said they take confidence into the grand final. “We had two wins against them in the season but they smashed us in a pre-season game before the season,” he said. “We know they are competitive.” The Thoroughbreds’ division 2 side fin-

ished the season with a win, but it wasn’t enough to sneak into finals. The Thoroughbreds were at home against the Mornington Breakers in the final round clash. Melton was able to slowly build a lead throughout each of the quarters on the way to a 98-80 win. Owen Stephens top scored with 21 points as four players reached double figures. All Thoroughbreds players got on the court. It left a nervous wait for the Thoroughbreds to see if they had done enough to sneak into finals. A Warrnambool win ended that, with the Thoroughbreds finishing in seventh.



I Am The Storm. (Stuart McCormick)

Pitt closes in as Stewart opens up lead

By John Dunne

The recent revamp of the Victorian metropolitan trainers’ and drivers’ premierships continued unabated at Melton on Saturday night. Courtesy of her 11 wins in the past three weeks, Emma Stewart has reeled in the Marg and Paddy Lee stable and charged away to a five-win lead in the trainers’ title. Meanwhile, Pitt is fast closing the gap on James Herbertson (who drove one winner) in the drivers’ battle after piloting 10 winners in the same period. Pitt now sits on 26 wins and only two astern of Herbertson on 28. The pair’s recent supremacy at headquarters was never more evident than Saturday night when Stewart led in five winners while Pitt steered home four. The Stewart-trained I Am The Storm set the theme of the night in the opening event when he worked to the lead with a lap to travel and held off My Uncle Stan

and Dance Affair in a mile rate of 1:52.3. Pitt produced one of the drives of the night on the Stewart-prepared Fairplay, who proved far too strong for his rivals in the Logical Staffing Solutions Pace. Fairplay was initially crossed at the start by Soho Darkstormy, however Pitt was quick to wrest the lead back which relegated his main danger Hoorah Philtra to three horses back along the pegs. Fairplay careered away in the home straight to score by 10 metres from the fast-finishing Hoorah Philtra in a slick mile rate of 1:51.9. Pitt admitted the take two at the start was the race decider. “It looked like Soho Darkstormy was going to get across pretty easy and it was always in the back of my mind to keep Hoorah Philtra off my back, and it played out that way and that was probably the winning move at the start,” Pitt said. Pitt said the four-year-old has been on his best behaviour in his three wins back from a long spell.

“Each time he has stepped out he has got better and better, and manners are a big thing with this guy and he has brought them each time,” he said. Despite stepping out in open class for the first time, the Stewart-trained mare The Art Of Success continued on her winning way when she led from start to finish in the Hertz Melton Free For All. Sent out the favourite on the back of her previous seven consecutive wins, The Art Of Success threw a 26.5 last 400 metres at her rivals while cruising to the line holding a three-metre margin over stablemate Sir Jimmy. The legacy of the daughter of Art Major’s picket fence formline is that she has catapulted into open class ranks successfully in little more than three months since winning her first race at Melton in late April. “It’s a huge effort by her. I remember driving her in a NR 55 race Mildura not that long ago and she has come along in leaps and bounds from then,” Pitt said.

Sports Shorts

VTCA
Melton South Royals will welcome Ameer Hamza to the club for the 2026-27 Victorian Turf Cricket Association season. “Ameer joins the Royals as we continue to strengthen our playing group, and we’re looking forward to seeing the impact he’ll make both on and off the field,” the club said.

RDFL
Diggers Rest proved too strong for Riddell in the Riddell District Football League on Saturday. The Burras didn’t have any trouble as they won, 19.18 (132)-10.7 (67). Mitch Day kicked six goals in a best on ground performance for the Burras, The other winners were Macedon, Wallan, Melton South and Woodend-Hesket, with Macedon and Melton South now having a gap on Riddell and Kyneton in the top six.

EDFL
It was a rare day of joy for Hillside in the Essendon District Football League women’s premier competition on Saturday. After a tough season, the Sharks got their third win of the season as they beat Moonee Valley, 4.5 (29)-1.4 (10). After scores were level at half time, the Sharks kicked 2.2 to one point in the second half. Hannah Ibrahim and Natasha Campbell were named the Sharks best. Meanwhile, Caroline Springs will need results to go its way in the final round if its to play finals. After losing to Aberfeldie on Saturday, the Lakers need to win in the final round and hope Essendon Doutta Stars lose to Hillside to play finals.

EDFL
Burnside Heights added another win to the total in the Essendon District Football League men’s division 2 competition on Saturday. The Bears and Keilor Park stayed close all day with the Bears three goals to two in the final quarter enough to get the win, 13.6 (84)-11.11 (77). Nicholas Cugliari kicked four goals for the Bears and was named amongst the best with Anthony Petrarca and Riley Anset. The Bears now have four wins of the season. This week they face the Northern Saints.

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Phoenix part ways with coach

As Melton Phoenix battles to try and avoid relegation in FV state league 4 north-west, the club has announced that it has parted ways with its coach.

The Phoenix announced on social media last week that after discussions between it and coach Sergio Lunedei, the decision has been made to part ways, effective immediately.

“We would like to sincerely thank Sergio for his time, commitment and dedication to the club throughout his tenure,” the Phoenix said.

“We appreciate the effort he has invested in our senior men’s program and wish him and his family every success in the future.”

“Thank you to Sergio and his coaching

team.”

Lunedei was in his first season as coach of the Phoenix, having crossed from Newport Storm.

The past few seasons had been in promotion contention, but with a new squad and a new competition, the Phoenix hasn’t had the same results.

With five rounds remaining in the season, the Phoenix currently sit 10th on the ladder, only two points clear of the relegation zone.

“While the season has presented its challenges, there is still everything to play for, and our full focus now turns to finishing the season strongly,” the Phoenix said.

“As a club, we are committed to supporting our players as we work together

through the final five matches.

“We encourage all Phoenix members and supporters to get behind the team as they fight to finish the season on a positive note and avoid relegation.”

Matthew Pernasilici and Robert Spasevski were named coaches for the Phoenix’s game on Saturday.

The Phoenix faced Barnstoneworth United.

The Phoenix opened an early lead when Sergio Galeano scored in the 30th minute.

Barnstoneworth levelled the scores in the 84th minute before having a player sent from the field with a red card in the 89th minute.

It wasn’t enough time for the Phoenix to find a winner.

Westside Strikers, who sit below the Phoenix, had a 1-0 loss to Melbourne University.

Melbourne University, which went a player down in the 53rd minute when Calum Wilson received a red card, scored in injury time to steal a late win.

Melton Phoenix faces Point Cook, which is equal on points, following the bye, while the Strikers will play Moonee Ponds United.

Meanwhile in state league 6 north-west, Springs Hills had a 2-1 loss to the Truganina Hornets.

The Hornets scored the winner in the 92nd minute.

The Stallions sit eighth on the ladder with six wins and five draws.



Caroline Springs George Cross wins the Steph Catley Plate. (Mark Avellino)



Jemmika Douglas. (Ljubica Vrankovic)

Douglas is a Crow

Adelaide has signed North Melbourne Victorian Football League women’s utility Jemmika Douglas as a replacement player for the upcoming AFLW season.

Douglas, who signed with Hillside this season, made her VFLW debut for the Kangaroos in 2025 after being a member of Richmond’s Indigenous Next Generation Academy.

She has played six VFLW games this season, averaging 18.6 touches a game, along with five marks and two tackles.

Douglas played one game for Hillside, back in round one, and was named one of its best.

The 20-year-old, who stands at 166cm, represented Vic Country at under-18 level, before moving into the VFLW where she was part of last year’s Kangaroos VFLW premiership side.

Crows AFLW executive general manager Bree Brock described Douglas as a courageous and tough utility whose strengths included her foot skills and versatility.

“Jemmika combines strong footy IQ with clean skills, and what we love is that she consistently puts her body on the line for her team,” she said.

“She is familiar with elite sporting environments having trained with both Richmond in their NGA and the Kangaroos, and that shines through with her competitiveness and reliability. Jemmika has faced challenges and multiple relocations in pursuit of her AFLW dream but has never stopped working to improve and earn her opportunity and that speaks volumes of how driven she is to achieve her dream.”

Douglas will fill the final list spot left vacant by former AFLW Captain Chelsea Randall who retired last month.

Back-to-back titles for ecstatic Georgies

By Tara Murray

Caroline Springs George Cross made it back-to-back Steph Catley Plate titles on Saturday.

The Georgies headed to the Home of the Matildas to face fellow FV state league 1 north-west side Craigieburn City for the plate.

The Steph Catley Plate is for the best performing state league sides in the Nike F.C Cup, with that final also held on Saturday.

It was a day to remember for the Georgies as they won 4-0.

Georgies’ coach Davide Gualtieri said it was pretty special not just for the playing group, but the whole club.

“The team was here last year and won it together and worked really hard to come back,” he said.

“I’m super proud for the team and the club as a whole.”

While the Georgies went into the plate

final as favourites, Gualtieri said they knew every game was different, especially finals.

He said Craigieburn has a good women’s program and that he had coached several of its players before, so he knew what to expect.

While Craigieburn had a lot of experience within the side, Gualtieri was confident in what his team could achieve.

“We knew that if we worked hard as we know we can, that we would probably get the result,” he said. “It was a really good performance.”

“Our striker was sick on the day and Laura [Spiranovic] had to miss the game.

“Others stepped up and one of our younger players from our reserves came onto the bench and came on and did a job.

“It shows the progression.”

Cindy Lay, Katherine Goff, Allison Macbeth and Kisa Mori were the goal scorers for the Georgies in the win.

The win though was marred by a knee

injury to Goff.

Gualtieri said Goff was a really important player for them and they had their fingers crossed that the injury wasn’t that bad.

While the Georgies celebrated into the night, the coaches were already thinking ahead to this coming weekend.

The state league 1 north-west season resumes, with the Georgies facing Mill Park in a top of the table clash.

After 13 rounds the Georgies sit one point clear of Mill Park, with only the top team guaranteed promotion.

The Georgies narrowly missed out on promotion last season and set the goal this year to go one step further.

There are five matches left in the season.

“This is the most important game of the season,” Gualtieri said.

“The pressure is always there every week. We must perform well and train hard.

“Mill Park is a super good side.

“We can’t let our guard down.”



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