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Star Weekly
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Data centre revolt

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres



The Plumpton Action Group members on the site of the proposed Plumpton mega-hub. (Damjan Janevski) 588878 03

A community outraged by plans for one of Australia's largest AI data centres has united to demand it be stopped.

There is growing community opposition to a proposed 350-hectare mega-hub planned by Syncline Energy in Plumpton.

The data centre is expected to cover an area as big as 175 MCG playing fields.

Plumpton Action Group and Melton People Power are leading the charge, calling for an immediate moratorium on new AI data centres because the proposed development could further pressure an already under-resourced region.

The grassroots groups have raised concerns over the proposed Plumpton data centre's size, pointing to the potential strain on surrounding communities if development proceeds.

The two groups hosted hundreds of residents at a community meeting in September to voice concerns about the proposal, including its potential effects on health, fire safety, water, and electricity supplies.

Representatives also addressed the Senate inquiry into AI data centres at a hearing in Yarraville, where they presented their concerns to parliamentarians.

The groups have received support from Socialists candidates Anneke Demanuele (Western Metropolitan) and Shania Khan (Sydenham), who criticised the AI facilities for lacking community benefit.

"Data centres are only being built for the benefit of tech company profits, not for our communities," Ms Khan said.

Plumpton Action Group coordinator Ella Bourne said local communities deserved more of a say in how data centres are regulated and built.

"Technology is meant to improve our lives, but data centres are extracting our water, land, and electricity," Ms Bourne said.

"Communities deserve a say in how data centres are regulated and where they go."

Fellow coordinator Samantha Demjancuk said residents were concerned about the pace of data centre developments across all of Melbourne's west.

"We are watching our government fast-track AI data centre developments all throughout the west without considering the detrimental impacts they may have on surrounding suburbs," she said.

"In what other circumstance is it okay to build facilities without proper regulations in place?"

Both groups also criticised the state government's proposed Sustainable Data Centre Action Plan, arguing it does not go far enough in protecting communities.

"As a collective, we do not think the Sustainable Data Centre Action Plan proposed by the Labor government goes far enough, nor does it protect our communities," they said.

They said investment in the region should instead prioritise hospitals, community services, affordable housing and adequate public transport, particularly as surrounding suburbs continue to grow.

"We know that these AI data centres pose numerous risks, including impacts on health, fire safety, strain on water and electricity, and contribute nothing meaningful to the Community," Plumpton Action Group said.

"Plumpton and many of its surrounding suburbs lack so much basic infrastructure, it is particularly insulting that this can be approved well in advance of a local hospital, social services, or adequate public transport in one of Australia's fastest growing regions."

Both groups continue to advocate to the community, local council, and state government, calling for an immediate moratorium on all new AI data centres proposed for Victoria.

Melton council previously joined the calls for a moratorium on new data centre approvals following concern over their hunger for electricity, water, infrastructure and industrial land at its August meeting.

The state government and Syncline Energy were contacted for comment.

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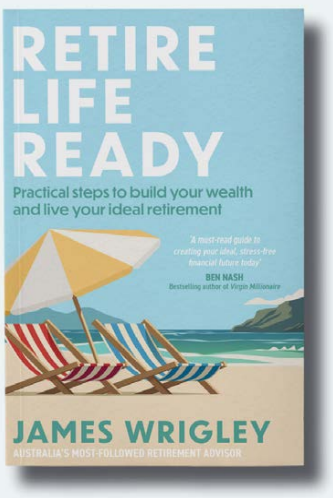
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12882863-KF45-26

Djerriwarrh Festival probe

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres

Melton council has requested a briefing on community sentiment towards the 2026 Djerriwarrh Festival after criticism over the absence of two long-standing attractions at this year's event.

At its 26 October meeting, council unanimously moved to request a briefing outlining the outcome of community consultation undertaken in relation to this year's Djerriwarrh Festival.

The briefing will outline feedback gathered during and after the festival, overall community sentiment, and what residents want to see included in future events.

Council previously announced a "refreshed format" ahead of the longstanding festival's 44th instalment this year.

The new program included the disbandment of The Lions Club of Melton's annual carnival, which has traditionally run alongside the annual event each year, due to what council described as the "logistical and risk management requirements" involved.

The street parade has also been scrapped, with schools instead invited to take part in arts workshops, with students' work to be displayed at the Melton Civic Centre.

Councillor Sophie Ramsey, who brought the motion forward, said she did so in a bid to address the negative feedback council had received from the community.

"I think a lot of our community were quite shocked at some of the changes in the Djerriwarrh Festival, " Cr Ramsey said.

"People's expectations, community sentiment, and the like is something that we all value as a council."

Cr Ramsey said she wished to find out more about what the community wanted to see from the festival looking ahead into the future.

"After this refreshed 2026 Djerrwarrh Festival has been completed I'd like to get some takeaways from our community to see what they appreciated, what they liked, what they'd like to see in the future," she said.

The Melton community was originally informed of changes to the festival's format, including the scrapping of the carnival, due to fleeting attendance rates following a review of the festival.

This year's Djerriwarrh Festival will be held along High Street Melton on Saturday 7 November, between 2 and 9pm.

The festival will include a BMX showcase, circus performances, roving performers, art installations, children's activities, sports and fitness workshops, and more than 20 food and drink vendors.

Put it away to give it away this Christmas

The Bacchus Marsh community is being invited to give back this festive season.

St Andrews Uniting Church in Bacchus Marsh is once again coordinating the distribution and collection of Reverse Advent Calendar boxes for the local area.

A Reverse Advent Calendar (RAC) begins as an empty box, but with the help of the local community grows into a gift of compassion and care for those who need a little extra support around the festive season.

RACs flip the tradition of a standard advent calendar: instead of opening a door to take a treat out each day, you place an item into a box to give away.

For 20 days in the lead-up to Christmas, participating community members place one item (non-perishable food, toiletries, or a Christmas treat) into the box.

After 20 days, the box is returned to the church, filled with goodies, to be given to food relief agencies to distribute to people in and around the immediate community experiencing food insecurity.

The boxes are distributed to a number of food and family support services, including local Bacchus Marsh program Soul Food, and Children and Family Services (Cafs).

Common items to donate include canned soup, beans, tuna, pasta, rice, cereal, and canned vegetables, or toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, and deodorant.



St Andrews Uniting Church Bacchus Marsh Reverend Ikani Vaitohi and church member Kylie Lumb, with boxes for the church's annual Reverse Advent Calendar initiative. (Damjan Janevski). 588871 05

Coordinator Iris Blythe encouraged local residents to get involved.

She said it's been an absolute pleasure to watch the initiative grow over the years.

"It's just been growing year after year," Ms Blythe said.

"I just love the fact that there's all sorts of people ringing up to provide help and support for others who might otherwise experience a terrible Christmas period."

Boxes are available for pickup every Sunday morning between 9 and 11.30am, at St Andrew's United, located at 12 Gisborne Road, Bacchus Marsh.

Illegal river red gum haul

More than $8,000 worth of equipment used to illegally cut down river red gum in the Goulburn Valley will be destroyed after a Melton man was convicted this month over illegal firewood collection near Nagambie.

The 42-year-old was caught at Reedy Lake Wildlife Reserve last year with close to four cubic metres of freshly cut river red gum and was convicted in the Seymour Magistrates' Court this month

Conservation Regulator and Parks Victoria Authorised Officers intercepted the man and seized the firewood, a trailer, two chainsaws, and other equipment.

The man pleaded guilty to charges related to illegally cutting and removing river red gum from the wildlife reserve, damaging wildlife habitat, and driving on protected public land.

He was fined $1,500 and ordered to pay $398 in legal costs, while his trailer, chainsaws and other seized equipment were forfeited and ordered to be destroyed.

The man was intercepted by the Conservation Regulator's Taskforce Ironbark, which targets criminal groups illegally cutting down thousands of trees from forests, parks, and reserves each year to sell as firewood.

Taskforce Ironbark is a statewide initiative, led by the Conservation Regulator in partnership with Parks Victoria, aiming to crack down on commercial firewood thieves.

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Freeway safety works begin

Construction works to make the Western Freeway safer near Ballan are underway.

Works on the Western Freeway, between the one-kilometre west-bound section at Pykes Creek Reservoir are currently taking place.

The existing stretch of road winds uphill, potentially creating dangerous conditions and the need for drivers to reduce speed.

The upgrades are planned to realign and replace the Ballarat-bound lanes with two wider lanes delivering safer driving conditions and supporting a consistent 110km/h speed limit.

The road shoulders will also be widened in a bid to provide more space and better access to manage incidents for the 13,000 vehicles that use the stretch of freeway every day.

The upgrade will also include the installation of new safety barriers and line marking.

The upgrade is expected to be completed by mid-2027, with speed reductions and lane closures in place during construction to keep roadside teams safe.

The works are in addition to the state and federal governments' $1.55 billion commitment to upgrade the Western Freeway between Melton and Caroline Springs.

Eureka MP Michaela Settle said the upgrades aimed to benefit every road user who travels the route each day.

"This is about doing the work that needs doing to improve safety for every driver, rider and truckie on the Western Freeway," Ms Settle said.

Federal Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government Minister Catherine King said as a key freight corridor, the upgrades are critical.

"This may be a smaller section, but these upgrades at Pykes Creek are still critical," she said,

"They'll get families home sooner and safer, and improve conditions for truck drivers along this important freight corridor."

The project is costed at $21 million, funded through $14.5 million from the federal government and contributions from the state government and the Transport Accident Commission (TAC).



Melton mayor Lara Carli at the construction site of the new Diggers Rest Children's and Community Centre. (Damjan Janevski). 586814 01

Construction begins on children's centre

Ground has been broken on the The Diggers Rest Children's and Community Centre.

Construction has commenced on the new Diggers Rest Children's and Community Centre, marking a major milestone for the growing community and bringing families one step closer to having access to a modern hub for learning, connection and support.

The purpose-built centre is expected to become a vibrant community facility for local families, bringing together essential early years services including kindergarten programs and Maternal and Child Health services.

The centre will also feature a Library Lounge, the first of its kind across the Melton municipality.

The welcoming space will bring council's library services closer to the growing Diggers Rest community, creating new opportunities for residents to read, learn, work and connect.

The project has been supported through the state government's Building Blocks Partnerships Fund.

The Diggers Rest Children's and Community Centre is expected to open in early 2028.

Mayor Lara Carli said the new facility would provide local families with access to vital early years services.

"It's exciting to see construction commence on this important project for Diggers Rest, which will give local families access to vital early years services while creating new opportunities to learn, connect and participate in their local community," Cr Carli said.

"The Diggers Rest Children's and Community Centre will be a place where children can learn and grow, and families can access support close to home for many generations to come."

Details: https://conversations.melton.vic.gov.au/diggers-rest-childrens-community-centre.

Share your thoughts on proposed footpath around Killarney Dr

The Melton community is being invited to weigh in on a proposed footpath connecting several streets in the Killarney Drive area.

Melton council is currently investigating options to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility in Killarney Drive and surrounding streets, with the project currently in its initial planning stage.

The proposal includes a footpath along one side of Killarney Drive, with a nature strip separating it from the road.

Additional sections of footpath are proposed for Connemara Circuit, Sherwin Court, and Old Park Drive.

Council said the improvements could create a continuous walking route through the neighbourhood, improving connections between local streets and providing safer access for pedestrians, families, older residents, and people with mobility needs.

The project is also expected to encourage more active transport, including walking and jogging for local residents.

However, if the project proceeds, existing vegetation and items within three metres of property boundaries would need to be removed.

Some driveway sections may also need to be reconstructed to meet safety and accessibility standards.

Council is seeking community feedback before any formal decisions are made, with residents encouraged to share their experiences and views through council's online portal.

Feedback can be submitted through council's website until midnight on Sunday 22 November.

The consultation will help inform the next stage of planning for the potential footpath network.

Details: https://conversations.melton.vic.gov.au/killarney-drive-footpath

Residents invited to shape budget

The Melton community is being invited to share its ideas to help shape future investment across the municipality.

Each year, council develops a budget and annual action plan to guide investment in the services, facilities and infrastructure that support Melton's growing community.

This year, council is again inviting residents, community groups, sporting clubs and local organisations to put forward ideas for projects and initiatives that could make a real difference in their community.

Council said ideas should support the community vision and council and wellbeing plan and be able to be delivered by council on land or in buildings it owns or manages.

Last year, council allocated funding for 64 projects put forward by the community through the council plan and budget ideas process.

This year, residents can also have their say on council's broader budget priorities through a new participatory budgeting tool.

The tool aims to support the community in better understanding the range of services council provides.

Community members are invited to consider how every $100 of council's budget should be allocated across services, facilities, infrastructure and initiatives, helping council better understand the community's priorities for future investment.

Mayor Lara Carli encouraged residents to share their ideas, big or small, to help guide council's decision making process.

"Whether it's an idea to improve a local park, make it easier to get around, support young people or create more community spaces, we want to hear from you," Cr Carli said.

"Your ideas will help inform our annual action plan and give councillors a clearer understanding of what our community wants to see prioritised."

To submit an idea for council to consider as part of the 2027-28 budget and annual action plan, or to have your say through the participatory budgeting tool, visit conversations.melton.vic.gov.au.

"Every budget involves balancing different needs and priorities. By taking part in this process, residents can learn more about those choices while telling us which services, facilities and initiatives matter most to them," Cr Carli said.

Feedback is open until Sunday 15 November.

Shannon is mayor

By Jack O'Shea-Ayres

Councillor Julie Shannon is Melton's mayor.

Cr Shannon was elected mayor 2026-27 at a council meeting held on Thursday 5 November, replacing outgoing mayor Lara Carli.

Amid cheers from the sidelines of the council chamber from her family members, Cr Shannon said she was truly honoured to be elected mayor for the first time.

Cr Shannon is serving her second term on council and was elected to the role of deputy mayor in 2022-23.

"Thank you to my fellow councillors for placing their trust in me to lead our beautifulc ity over the next 12 months. I promise to lead with integrity, transparency and passion," Cr Shannon said.

"The City of Melton is one of the fastest growing cities in Australia. I don't take that lightly and I am very aware of our urgent need for investment in roads, infrastructure and services. I will wholeheartedly advocate for the things our growing city needs."

Cr Shannon said her priorities were centred on building an inclusive, supportive, and thriving community, where residents feel valued, supported and heard.

"I care deeply for those doing it tough, value the wisdom of our seniors, celebrate the contribution of volunteers, and stand alongside people living with disability or invisible illness," she said.

"I believe in a community where business, sport and tourism should thrive. Where children should learn, families should be celebrated, safety should be a given, residents should be heard and council's role is to lead and support the city well."



Councillors Steve Abboushi and Julie Shannon were elected to the roles of deputy mayor and mayor respectively at a council meeting on Thursday 5 November. (Supplied)

Cr Steve Abboushi was elected to the role of deputy mayor, replacing outgoing deputy mayor Phillip Zada.

Cr Abboushi is serving his third term on council and was deputy mayor in 2019-20 and 2023-24, and mayor in 2024-25.

Have your say on park plans

Melton residents are being invited to help shape the future of the Hannah Watts Park Precinct and Melton Recreation Reserve, with council seeking feedback on two master plans.

Melton council is updating its 2018 Hannah Watts Park Precinct Master Plan and developing a new plan for the Melton Recreation Reserve in a bid to help guide future improvements across the 22-hectare precinct.

Spanning both sides of Toolern Creek, the precinct includes Hannah Watts Park, Melton Recreation Reserve, The Willows Historical Park, and Police Paddock.

Council said the plans aimed to improve connections between the precinct's different areas, enhance recreation opportunities, protect the natural environment, and cater for the needs of a growing community.

The draft Melton Recreation Reserve Master Plan outlines future planning for sporting facilities, access, and potential upgrades, while preliminary findings for the broader precinct plan will inform further development in 2027.

Residents are being asked to provide feedback on proposed improvements to the reserve's south-west area, future park design, and walking paths and pedestrian connections.

Feedback can be submitted through council's interactive master plan map and survey, or emailed to conversations@melton.vic.gov.au.

Consultation closes on Sunday 29 November.



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Employment boost for the west

Ravenhall and Truganina will become major centres for jobs in Melbourne's booming west as the state government gets planning underway for new employment precincts across the growing suburbs.

Planning Minister Sonya Kilkenny recently announced the start of planning works in the Ravenhall and Warrawee precincts, which are expected to deliver more jobs closer to where thousands of homes are planned for construction.

Under a new industry led approach, planning for the new precincts will happen under a joint venture between developers and the state government throughout parts of the planning process.

The proponents – Boral, Dexus, and Pelligra – will fund the planning and infrastructure improvements to unlock the land in the long term.

The state government said community members and local residents can expect to have their say on major upgrades as community consultation is set to play a role in the planning and delivery of upgrades to arterial roads in the area, in a bid to ensure infrastructure keeps up with development.

Over 72 hectares of land was recently rezoned to be used for Industrial usage in the same precinct, creating over 1000 jobs through the Development Facilitation Program.

"Melbourne's west is driving Victoria's economy, creating more jobs and is a key location for Australia's freight and logistics industry," the state government said.

The new employment precincts are also expected to be backed by Melton East, a new suburb projected to deliver 12,000 homes, seven schools and more than five MCGs worth of parks and reserves.

Once complete, Melton East is expected to become home to more than 36,000 residents and support around 1600 jobs.

Kororoit MP Luba Grigorovitch said infrastructure was being prioritised as part of the planning process.

"We are planning our new suburbs the right way, making sure we build the infrastructure needed to support our growing communities," Ms Grigorovitch said.

Ms Kilkenny said the project centered around planning for growth "the right way".

"This is about planning for growth the right way - creating opportunities for working Victorians while getting more investment into Victoria," Ms Kilkenny said.



Families have enjoyed all the fun of Greendale's movie drive-in night since the early 2000s. (Supplied)

Help save beloved Greendale drive-in event

A much-loved Greendale community tradition is on the brink of collapse.

The Greendale CFA Drive-in Movie Night, a popular community event held at Egan's Reserve in Greendale since the early 2000s, is facing an uncertain future.

Back in the norties, the drive-in movie nights were a huge community event, held twice annually and bringing families together from across the region.

Like many community traditions, the event eventually fell by the wayside.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, event manager Kristin Sargent brought the event back in an effort to reconnect the community.

"The response post COVID was fantastic, with two sold-out screenings bringing people together again," Ms Sargent said.

"However, in more recent years, ticket sales have struggled."

The event was cancelled in 2023 due to low sales, despite many people expressing interest in purchasing tickets closer to the date.

Now, the event is back in support of Greendale CFA - but with ticket sales needing to pick up, its future is once again uncertain, and the same question looms; could this be the last Greendale CFA Drive-In Movie Night?

"We genuinely hope not," Ms Sargent said.

"But without community support in the coming weeks, cancellation may once again become a reality."

This year's screening will feature The Super Mario Galaxy Movie. The night will also include pre-film entertainment, music, food trucks, face painting, door prizes and family activities - pending ticket sales.

Greendale CFA will host the beloved Drive-In Movie Night on Saturday 28 November, with gates opening at Egan's Reserve Greendale at 5.45pm. The movie will commence at dusk.

Tickets: https://www.trybooking.com/au/event/GreendaleCFADriveIn2026-1670639.

Telstra conducting maintenance in Kurunjang

Telstra customers in Kurunjang could experience temporary mobile disruptions as the telecommunications provider carries out maintenance on a local mobile site.

Essential maintenance works are scheduled to begin on Tuesday 10 November, with the site to be switched off for short periods to allow the work to be completed safely.

The works will not affect NBN, satellite internet, PSTN landline services or mobile coverage provided by other networks.

If the Telstra mobile network is unavailable, compatible mobile phones will automatically attempt to connect to triple-0 via another available mobile network through emergency camp on.

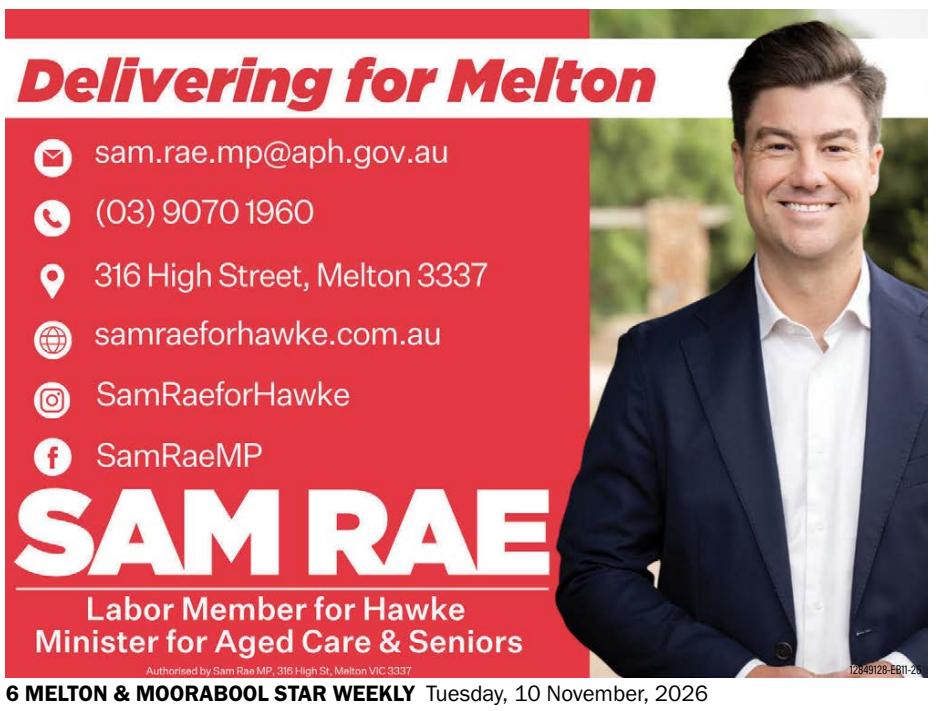
Telstra has advised customers who rely on medical or personal safety devices, including fall detection systems and alarm pendants, to contact their provider about potential impacts.

Businesses using EFTPOS terminals reliant on the Telstra mobile network have also been urged to check their systems can connect through NBN or Wi-Fi.

Customers can use Wi-Fi calling, available on most popular mobile phone models, to continue making and receiving calls when connected to Wi-Fi during periods of disruption.

Customers can find more information and tips on how to prepare by visiting, https://tel.st/planned-work.

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Green wedge rules up for review in Melton

Melton residents, landowners, and community groups are being invited to have their say on proposed planning changes affecting the municipality's green wedge.

Melton council is seeking submissions on Amendment C245melt, which aims to implement recommendations from the Western Plains South Green Wedge Management Plan 2024 and the Melton Planning Scheme Review 2024.

Proposed changes include identifying priority areas for agriculture, tourism, and cycling and pedestrian trails, adjusting earthworks, permit requirements, and clarifying rural zone mapping.

The amendment would also update planning statistics, background information, and reference documents, while identifying potential areas for future strategic planning works.

However, the amendment will not change subdivision rights or requirements, or the Urban Growth Boundary, which can only be changed by the state government.

Council said the Western Grasslands Reserve, Outer Metropolitan Ring freeway reservation, and Western Renewables Link are also outside council's control.

Submissions must be made in writing, include the submitter's name and contact details, and state whether the amendment is supported or opposed.

Feedback can be submitted online, by email to council's City Strategy team or by post to Melton City Council, PO Box 21, Melton 3337.

Submissions close Monday 16 November.

Details: https://conversations.melton.vic.gov.au/c245melt.

A year of mayor milestones

First-term councillor Steve Venditti-Taylor is reflecting on a year as Moorabool mayor, ahead of the election of a new mayor later this month.



Councillor Steve Venditti-Taylor has served as Moorabool's mayor over the past 12 months. (Damjan Janevski) 587901 01

Looking back on your year as mayor, what do you consider your biggest achievements, both personally and for the Moorabool community?

When you look at the biggest achievement …everything's growing. I think council's had a really good year. I couldn't be any prouder and as a mayor, you have to be objective, but credit is due where credit's due. Green waste November, a $25 million commitment for the Bacchus Marsh pool, and $836,000 for the civic centre. All the things I promised at the start of my mayoral term have basically all been moved forward. Everything's growing and really positive. We're working towards some good solutions - there's so many positive things happening in Moorabool.

What has been the most challenging aspect of the mayoral role, and was there anything that surprised you about the position?

It's one achievement to become mayor, but when you've got nine councillors it's important to unite the team for the greatest good of the community. That's what we're here for at the end of the day.

Is there a particular decision, project or moment from your term that you are especially proud of?

The Bacchus Marsh pool. People have doubted it, but we've just gone through the tenure process. By next year this project that people have been waiting for is going to get going and it could very well be the biggest building in Moorabool's history. Bacchus Marsh's Civic Precinct, The $25,000 grant for Blackwood's recreation reserve playground, and of course the Seniors Festival - the whole buzz and vibe of the festival has been absolutely fantastic.

What do you believe are the most pressing issues facing Moorabool residents as your mayoral term comes to an end?

I think the crossing removal at Grants Street and Parwan Road is still an issue, the bypass is something we have to form a long-term solution for. When Merrimu gets built we can't have people going through the centre of Bacchus Marsh's Main Street to get onto the highway to Ballarat. Having roads that are safe… we need long-term solutions for these problems. This is going to be the biggest issue going into the state election - getting fixes for roads, potholes, etc. The state roads through Moorabool at the moment are not in great nick. Cost of living is another one, someone needs a plan to reign it in and address what the issues are, but roads are probably the biggest one, along with all the usual suspects…it really comes down to the funding.

Are there any projects or commitments you believe the next mayor and council must prioritise to ensure they are not delayed or overlooked?

I think the next mayor has to prioritise getting roads right; repairs, getting bridges right, etc. We deserve to be relevant in the western suburbs, because at the moment it feels like we've been left on the backburners.



Mental health promise

The state government has committed to investing $400,000 to establish the Live4Life mental health program in Bacchus Marsh if re-elected at the November state election.

The youth mental health and suicide prevention organisation has welcomed the commitment to introduce the award-winning program in the Bacchus Marsh area, saying it highlights the importance of sustained investment in youth mental health promotion and suicide prevention across rural and regional Victoria.

Live4Life chief executive Jeremy Wiggins said the announcement recognised the importance of investing in prevention, rather than waiting until young people reach crisis point.

"Young people in rural and regional Victoria face significant barriers to accessing mental health services, particularly specialist and crisis care," Mr Wiggins said.

"We need to invest earlier, equipping young people, schools and communities with the knowledge and confidence to recognise mental health challenges earlier and seek support."

The commitment would be delivered in partnership with Moorabool council and the local high school, in a bid to get more support for young people when they need it most.

Eureka MP Michaela Settle said she had personally been pushing for improved mental health services for the state's youth.

"I've been pushing for better mental health services for young people in Bacchus Marsh because I know just how much they're needed," Ms Settle said.

Mr Wiggins said the announcement highlighted the opportunity to strengthen community-led prevention across regional Victoria.

"Every young person deserves access to mental health education and support, regardless of where they live," he said.

"We have communities wanting to take action, an established program and strong evidence of impact.

"We're seeing growing demand from regional communities. Many of them are well-positioned to introduce the program. Further investment is needed to turn that local readiness into action."

Live4Life works in partnership with local governments and community organisations to deliver a statewide prevention system which currently supports approximately 9000 young people annually.

The program has been implemented across 13 regional communities in Victoria, with independent evaluations demonstrating the program has supported improvements in mental health literacy, confidence to support others and help-seeking.

The Live4Life program was first established in 2010 in Woodend, in response to a reported increase in anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicide amongst young people in the Macedon Ranges.



Live4Life chief executive CEO Youth Live4Life Jeremy Wiggins with Eureka MP Michaela Settle, and Bacchus Marsh College principal Dionne Fenton. (Supplied)

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Liberal for Melton

Emma Muir
Liberal for Eureka

Jess Wilson
Victorian Liberal Leader

"And we're ready to get started."



See our Plan

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1291662-AF46-26



Police dog Devil and handler Leading Senior Constable Michelle Dench (supplied)

Beloved police dog heads off to retirement

Victoria Police is saying goodbye to one of their most accomplished police dogs as he hangs up his collar and heads off into retirement.

After eight years of keeping the community safe and being a committed service police dog, Devil, retired on 30 October.

Together with his handler Leading Senior Constable Michelle Dench, they have formed one of the longest partnerships in Dog Squad history.

"His retirement is such an emotional milestone as we've been a team together for the past eight years. He's had my back and never let me down. It won't be the same without him and I will miss not having him at work with me every day," Leading Senior Constable Dench said.

Devil was feared by offenders and he was known in the force for his tracking ability and siege work. Some of his best work included during a police vehicle ramming in Vermont.

Leading Senior Constable Dench and Devil were travelling to a job at high speed. The driver of the stolen vehicle fled at the scene and Devil chased him down, leading to his arrest.

Leading Senior Constable Dench and Devil were lucky to have no injuries.

Devil turns 10 this year and while he remains fit and healthy, the Dog Squad have made the difficult decision to retire him given his age so he can enjoy his final years.

"Devil has always been more than just a dog, he's a much loved member of the force. He is my family," Leading Senior Constable Dench said.

MELTON & MOORABOOL Star Weekly

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CONTACT US

PHONE \ 03 8318 5777

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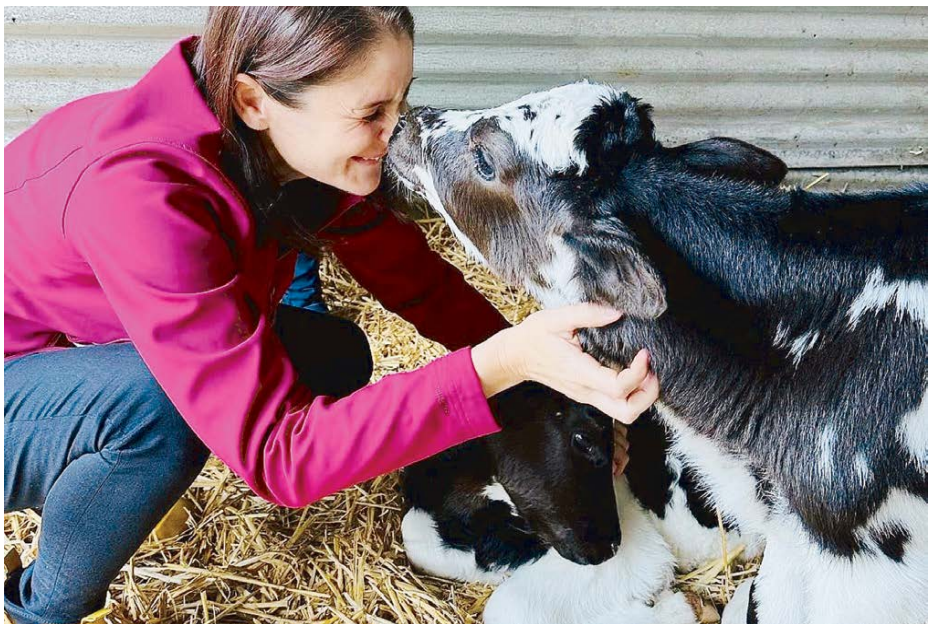
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GENERAL EDITORIAL INQUIRIES
westeditorial@starweekly.com.au

COMMUNITY CALENDAR ENTRIES
communitycalendar@starweekly.com.au

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Sentient Beings co-founder Jodie Musto. (Supplied)

Sanctuary project flourishes

A sanctuary in Beremboke has planted hundreds of native trees and shrubs after receiving a grant from the Greater Western Water's (GWW) Thriving Communities grants program.

The recipient of the grant, Sanctuary of Sentient Beings, has used the grant in contribution to it's Rewilding and Living Habitat Restoration project.

GWW strategy and partnerships general manager Kessia Thomson said that investing in grassroots initiatives like the Sanctuary's helps strengthen environmental sustainability, waterway health and community connection.

"As our region continues to grow and face the impacts of climate change, it's more important than ever that we invest in the strength and resilience of our communities," Ms Thomson said.

Sanctuary of Sentient Beings president and co-founder Jodie Musto said their goal is to bring together volunteers, assist in the restoration of the property, strengthen biodiversity and improve the health of local waterways.

"For a small volunteer-run charity like ours, the Thriving Communities grants program makes a huge difference." she said. "It helps fund everything from site preparation and buying plants to fencing, weed management, and the ongoing care needed to establish new habitat."

The sanctuary is set to carry out further restoration works and plantings later this year.

Briefs

Green garden waste disposal

Melton residents will be able to dispose of household green garden waste for free at the Melton Recycling Facility between 13 November and 12 January. The initiative is open to homeowners and renters across the Melton municipality, with proof of residency required. Only green garden waste will be accepted, with food waste, mixed loads and commercial operators excluded. Branches and limbs must be no larger than 30cm in diameter. The facility, located in Melton, is open seven days a week from 8am to 4.30pm, excluding Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Details: https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Services/Waste-and-recycling/Free-green-waste-disposalF

Fire season

Moorabool residents can dispose of unlimited green waste for free throughout November as part of efforts to prepare properties for the upcoming fire season. Proof of residency, such as a driver's licence or utility bill, is required, while commercial customers and vehicles are excluded. Residents removing native vegetation are advised to check regulations through the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action before disposal. Details: https://www.moorabool.vic.gov.au/Waste-and-environment/

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Moving Ahead

10 November 2026



Mayor's message Cr Julie Shannon

I am honoured to have been elected Mayor of the City of Melton for the next 12 months and to have the opportunity to serve and lead our wonderful community.

I would also like to congratulate Cr Steve Abboushi on his election as Deputy Mayor. I look forward to working closely with him, my fellow Councillors and Council officers to deliver positive outcomes for our residents.

The City of Melton is one of the fastest growing areas in Australia. I am very aware of our community's urgent need for investment in roads, public transport, community infrastructure and essential services. As Mayor, I will be a strong advocate for the projects and funding our growing city needs.

I care deeply about ensuring no one is left behind. I value the wisdom of our seniors, the contributions of our volunteers, and stand alongside people living with disability or invisible illness. A strong community is one that supports and includes everyone.

I also believe in a city where local businesses can prosper, sport continues to bring people together, and tourism helps showcase everything our region has to offer. Our children deserve every opportunity to learn and succeed, families should be supported and celebrated, and residents should feel safe, connected and heard.

Over the coming year, I promise to lead with integrity, transparency and passion. I am committed to listening to our residents, working collaboratively, and ensuring Council continues to serve our community with care, respect and purpose.

I am excited for the year ahead and all that we can achieve together.

Feel free to contact me about Stringybark Ward or our City more generally on 0499 801 302 or email at: Julie.Shannon@melton.vic.gov.au

Stay Informed

Quickly and easily connect with us online:

melton.vic.gov.au
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Instagram @cityofmeltonofficial

Mayor and Deputy Mayor elected

Councillor Julie Shannon was elected the City of Melton Mayor and Councillor Steve Abboushi elected Deputy Mayor for 2026/27 at a Council meeting last week.

Mayor Shannon is serving her second term on Council and was Deputy Mayor in 2022/23. This will be her first term serving as Mayor. Deputy Mayor Abboushi is serving his third term on Council and was Deputy Mayor in 2019/20 and 2023/24, and Mayor in 2024/25.

We wish our new Mayor and Deputy Mayor all the best in their new roles.

To get in touch with your Ward Councillors, visit **melton.vic.gov.au/councillors**

Free garden waste disposal

Summer is just around the corner and that means getting ready for the fire season. To help with that, City of Melton residents can drop off garden waste for free at the Melton Recycling Facility from 13 November 2026 until 12 January 2027.

This available to both property owners and renters. Proof of residency is required.

The Melton Recycling Facility is open seven days a week between 8am to 4.30pm (except for Christmas Day and New Year's Day).

Conditions apply. For information, visit **melton.vic.gov.au/greenwaste**

Save the date: Carols by Candlelight 2026!

Saturday 12 December, 5-9:30pm
Police Paddock, 249 High Street, Melton

Mark the date in your calendar and join us for this year's free family friendly Carols by Candlelight event hosted by Melton City Council.

A special screening of a family favourite Christmas movie will kick-off the event, followed by community performances and Carols by Candlelight. There will be food trucks, face painting, a festive neon trail, Christmas craft workshops and the opportunity to write a letter to Santa and to meet him!

For information, visit **melton.vic.gov.au/carols**

Coolibah Ward with Cr Brandi Morris



There's plenty happening across Coolibah Ward, with new recreation facilities, community services and improvements to local parks helping shape our growing neighbourhoods.

Planning is progressing on the future Weir Views Active Open Space, which will include soccer pitches, a cricket oval, a pavilion and a district-level playspace. These spaces are about more than sport. They help people stay active, connect with others and build a stronger sense of community, supporting the health and wellbeing of our growing neighbourhoods.

The Cobblebank Community Hub is also a step closer to opening, with construction complete and internal fit out to commence in early 2027. The five-level facility will bring a range of allied health and social support services together under one roof, making it easier for residents to access the support they need.

Meanwhile, Council will soon be seeking community feedback on plans for a new fenced dog off-lead area at Bill Cahill Reserve, Melton South. The proposed space will include open grass areas, dog agility features, shade and seating. Residents will have an opportunity to provide their feedback via an online survey or at an in person drop-session. Keep an eye on our City of Melton Conversations page for more information.

Finally, congratulations to Cr Julie Shannon on being elected Mayor, and Cr Steve Abboushi on being elected Deputy Mayor at last week's Statutory Meeting. I look forward to working with them both to help deliver positive outcomes for our community.

Feel free to contact me regarding Coolibah Ward or our City more generally on 0418 999 577 or email Brandi.Morris@melton.vic.gov.au

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



Mayor Cr Julie Shannon



Deputy Mayor Cr Steve Abboushi



Cr Lara Carli



Cr Kathy Majdlik



Cr Brandi Morris



Cr Sophie Ramsey



Cr Bob Turner



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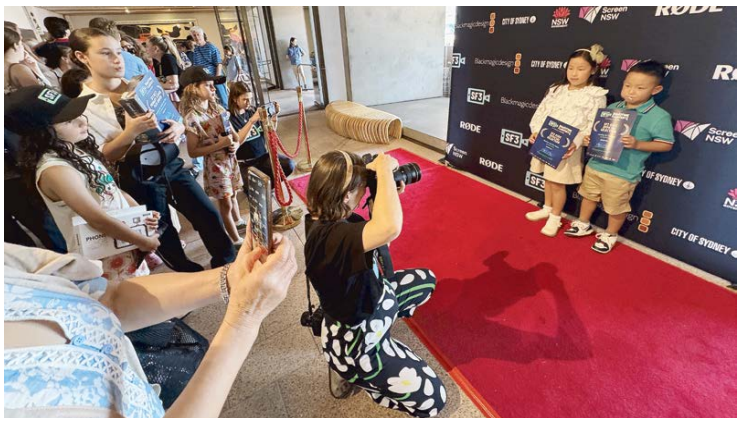
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Tez Vi Truong with children Alexis and Charlie at the Sydney Opera House for the SF3 Smart Fone Film Festival on 1 November.



Maribyrnong's Truong siblings Alexis and Charlie shoot their smart phone films.



Alexis and Charlie pose for the paparazzi after being announced as finalists in the 2026 SF3 Smart Fone Film Festival. (Pictures: Supplied)

Film festival a family affair

Armed with nothing more than their phones, a heap of ideas and a tonne of enthusiasm, a western suburbs family is making films on small screens that are being shown on big screens. Cade Lucas reports.

In an era where many parents are concerned about the amount of time their children spend staring at screens and often seek to limit or even prevent them from accessing smart phones and tablets, it's fair to say Maribyrnong's Truong family go against the grain. Not only do Tez Vi Truong and his wife Doris allow their children Alexis, 8, and Charlie, 6, to use smartphones, they actively encourage it.

The Truongs, especially dad and the two kids, probably spend more time using their smart phone devices than just about any family, let alone those with kids aged under 10.

Far from it being detrimental, recent evidence suggests that the Truong's smartphone fanaticism is paying dividends.

After all, how many primary school students, when asked on a Monday morning what they did on the weekend, are able to answer that they attended a film festival at the Sydney Opera House and were awarded first prize?

Well, the answer is at least two, because that's exactly what happened to both Alexis and Charlie Truong at the 12th annual SmartFone Flick Fest (SF3) on Sunday 1 November.

One of the world's largest and most prestigious smart phone film festivals, the 2026 SF3 attracted a record 400 entries from around the globe, including 19 feature films and 16 AI films, all vying for a share in $50,000 in prizes.

While finalists in the festival's 'Mini' and Feature Film sections were screened and winners announced at the White Bay Power Station in Rozelle on Halloween, both the SF3 Kids and Gala Finals sections were held on Sunday at the Sydney Opera House Playhouse.

Alexis and Charlie won the Best Documentary and Touch Finished on Mobile categories, respectively, in the kids section announced on Sunday morning.



Alexis Truong's 102 year-old great-grandfather Chiec Thau Ngo, the subject of her award winning smart phone film 'My Great-Grandfather.' (Supplied)

Not to be outdone, their father won his second consecutive Best AI Film award at the festival's grand finale held on Sunday night.

While Tez Vi Truong thought he stood a good chance of winning again, he wasn't banking on his two children making it a Truong family trifecta.

"Absolutely ecstatic," the proud father said when asked how he was feeling the day after.

"The kids winning was really unexpected."

Proving good things come in threes, not only did all three Truongs take home prizes, but this was the third year in a row they had all entered SF3 together.

Truong said having witnessed how far smart phone filmmaking had come in that time made Alexis and Charlie's triumphs all the more meaningful.

"Last year and even the year before, the quality of the work was great, but this year the quality was really fierce. Some of the people from last year didn't even get accepted (into the festival) this time. Not only are we proud of them getting accepted but winning, that's next level."

Alexis Truong was named joint winner of the best documentary award for her short film, 'My Great Grandfather,' a two-minute celebration of the life of Chiec Thau Ngo, the Truong family patriarch.

The 102-year-old is still alive, though at the time of writing he'd not yet been made aware he was now the star of an award-winning film.

"We haven't seen him yet but we're about to," Truong said of his grandfather and his daughter's great-grandfather.

Alexis shared the award with Wolfe and Lucette Meisner and students from Scarborough Public School in Wollongong for their film 'Between the Mountains and the Sea.'

Younger brother Charlie also shared his prize, having been named joint winner of the Touch Finished on Mobile Award for his autobiographical film 'Charlie's Secret'.

As the name suggests, Charlie reveals some of his biggest secrets and takes the audience on a fun, honest, and unexpected journey through his imagination and personal world in the film he recorded when he was just five.

He won alongside students from the Hills Drama School in Rouse Hill near Sydney for their film 'The New Prisoner.'

Truong was named the sole winner of the Best AI Film award for 'No.08' which he described as: "basically it's an exploration of what we perceive as values and what we consume."

Coming it at 4:44 in duration, No.8 is more than two minutes longer than Alexis' or Charlie's films and joins Truong's 2025 film "The 5-Minute Empire" in winning the best AI film category.

In contrast to other categories, Truong said AI films didn't involve any camera work and were generated solely on smart phones rather than being edited on other devices.

A former screenwriter at Disney, Truong has a background in the film industry but said filmmaking became a family affair after Alexis entered a storytelling competition at a local library.

"She didn't get into (the storytelling competition) so then we looked for other avenues for her work and stumbled upon SF3."

While offering them guidance here and there, Truong said Alexia and Charlie generate their own film ideas and execute them themselves.

And while she mightn't have any awards to her name, mum Doris also plays a significant role.

"She's the backbone," Truong said of his wife who organises the logistical side of the family filmmaking along with various other off-camera roles.

"She's even involved in the production design and make-up with the kids."

After taking a break for the festival, the Truongs are now busy brainstorming more film ideas and hope to eventually screen some of their work at home in Victoria.

With screenings mostly confined to festivals such as SF3, Truong said the best way for people to keep up to date with the family's work was via his Instagram page at: https://www.instagram.com/tezfrost/?hl=en

To learn more about SF3, go to: https://sf3.com.au/

Steps to reducing violence

As part of Star Weekly's ongoing We Deserve Better campaign about crime in Melbourne's west, Glenn Fisher takes a look at the state's new Violence Reduction Unit and how it operates.

The noise from the community has been getting louder over the past few years. Noise about rising violence and crime rates, with a particular focus on 'out of control' youths in our midst.

When the state government appointed Youth Justice Commissioner Andrea Davidson as chief executive of the new Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) 12 months ago, her goal was to set up a reference group to bring together local organisations and community leaders to guide the government on the challenges and opportunities facing the VRU.

The VRU says its focus is on stopping violence before it starts, working with young people, families, schools, community organisations and government agencies to address the underlying causes of violence.

The VRU model, which is based on similar units in Glasgow, Scotland, and London, England, but is tailored to Victoria, has seen the state government partner with Blue Light Victoria, which already has a successful youth mentoring program operating in schools to address the issues of school disengagement, isolation and limited access to positive role models.

More than $30 million has been invested in the VRU, with recent announcements including $10 million towards 17 new violence prevention programs in communities most affected by youth crime, the launch of a $13 million targeted grants program called Ground Up to help organisations already doing the work on the ground, and $9.5 million to boost Blue Light Victoria's youth mentoring program.



Attorney-General Sonya Kilkenny (left) and Werribee MP John Lister (centre) were at Werribee station recently with outreach workers for the expansion of the VRU's Community Connectors program. (Supplied).

"There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to violence prevention," Ms Davidson said.

"By supporting local programs to deliver solutions that work for them, we can make communities safer for everyone."

The new violence prevention programs will help deliver early intervention in schools and communities, including knife-crime prevention, homework clubs and youth mentoring, with programs such as the Melton-based Airtime Cobblebank Basketball Program already giving young people a positive place to connect and keep them away from bad influences.

Another VRU initiative involves community organisation 1000 Generations providing youth drop-in centres across Brimbank and Melton that will give young people a dedicated place to build strong positive relationships, access education, employment, wellbeing and community support services, and to develop practical life and employment skills.

Blue Light Victoria may be remembered by older generations for its popular police-run discos in the 1970s and '80s, but it's much more than that these days with its youth mentoring and early intervention programs such as Blue EDGE.

Run in partnership with police and emergency services, Blue EDGE blends fun fitness activities with life skills to boost resilience, encourage healthy and safe decision making, and strengthen community connection in the 10-21 age group.

Train stations in Melbourne's west have also benefitted from VRU funding, with Attorney-General Sonya Kilkenny visiting Werribee late last month with Werribee MP John Lister to announce the expansion of the Community Connectors program.

Community Connectors are specialist outreach workers who patrol train stations and provide proactive support to community members to prevent incidents arising.

Two outreach workers will be based at Werribee station by the end of 2026, providing on-the-ground support for people experiencing challenges such as homelessness, mental health concerns, trauma, family violence, alcohol and other substance issues.

The outreach workers build meaningful connections with the people they're there to help, and also provide training, mentoring and support to Metro Trains staff in managing people with complex needs.

Werribee is the third station funded through the VRU, with Community Connectors also present at Sunshine and St Albans. Outreach workers were also introduced at Footscray and Broadmeadows stations earlier this year.

Details: https://www.vic.gov.au/what-violence-reduction-unit-vru

Sagalee is proud to represent Victoria as a top Aussie

By Ella Burns

A western suburbs man who has been transforming the lives of young people through sport, education and community action has been named among Victoria's nominees for the 2027 Australian of the Year Awards.

Twenty-eight-year-old Sagalee Omer is one of 16 Victorians recognised across four award categories, joining 130 nominees from across Australia celebrated for their contributions to their communities.

He is nominated as the Young Australian of the Year for Victoria.

National Australia Day Council chief executive Carrie Leeson said the Victorian nominees demonstrated the many ways people could support those around them.

"The nominees for Victoria are standing up for what matters, providing support to people when they need it most and helping to shape better futures for the next generation," Ms Leeson said.

Mr Omer is the founder and social impact leader behind Shooters Shoot, a youth-led organisation creating opportunities through sport, education, culture and community initiatives. It operates across the west.

The organisation emerged from Mr Omer's 23rd birthday celebration that he transformed into a basketball tournament to create connections through sport coming out of covid lockdowns to raise money for young people's mental health. The event raised $16,000 for Foundation House.

"Being Michael Jordan's jersey number (23), I thought I'd do something creative for my Jordan year and organise a basketball tournament to bring people together," he said.



Australian of the Year Awards for Victoria nominee Sagalee Omer. (Damjan Janevski) 587800 02

Since then, Shooters Shoot has grown to engage more than 5,000 young people and raised more than $100,000 through its programs and events. It has also distributed more than 400 bicycles and funded over 200 therapy sessions for young people needing support.

"It wasn't just about the games being played, but the conversations, relationships and opportunities that came from bringing people together," he said.

"That's when I realised basketball could be the vehicle for something much greater."

For Mr Omer, from Tarneit, the greatest achievements are not measured by numbers but by the personal growth of the young people he supports.

He recalled one young person who was struggling when they first connected through Shooters Shoot and through the help he helped provide, the young person grew in confidence and is now working towards publishing a book about their experiences.

"Sometimes the greatest achievement is seeing a young person begin to believe in themselves, recognise their own potential and take ownership of their future," Mr Omer said.

Mr Omer combines local action with global advocacy. He is a member of the Refugee Advisory Group for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and contributes to conversations about refugee inclusion and representation. He has also worked with Foundation House to develop culturally safe programs for young people from refugee backgrounds.

Mr Omer said one of the most important lessons he has learned is the value of making young people feel heard.

"Every young person has their own story, experiences and challenges," he said.

"When we take the time to genuinely listen and understand them, we create an environment where they feel valued and supported."

This west local has become a standout on both the community and national stage through his commitment to helping young people access opportunities, build connections and shape stronger, more inclusive communities.

The Victorian award recipients will be announced in Melbourne on 12 November. Winners will then represent Victoria as finalists in the national Australian of the Year Awards, which will be announced in Canberra on 25 January 2027.

Mr Omer said he was "extremely honoured" to be nominated for the Australian of the Year Awards.

"This recognition isn't just about myself," he said.

"It's a reflection of the incredible team, volunteers, partners, supporters and young people who have all played a part in building Shooters Shoot into what it is today."

The nomination was a reminder to Mr Omer of how far Shooters Shoot has come after more than five years of supporting young people. Shooters Shoot's next event will be held on 28 and 29 November at RS Studios in Maidstone. Details. https://thefifth.shootersshoot.com.au/#top

Djerriwarrh festival a hit

Melton's biggest festival, Djerriwarrh, took over the town over the weekend, delivering a refreshed new-look format for the longstanding town-favourite festival. Despite taking place without the crowd-favourite carnival and street parade, this year's Djerriwarrh Festival was a major hit.



Some performers were juggling a great time.



A BMX showcase was all the hype at this year's festival.



Shannen James delivered the hits.



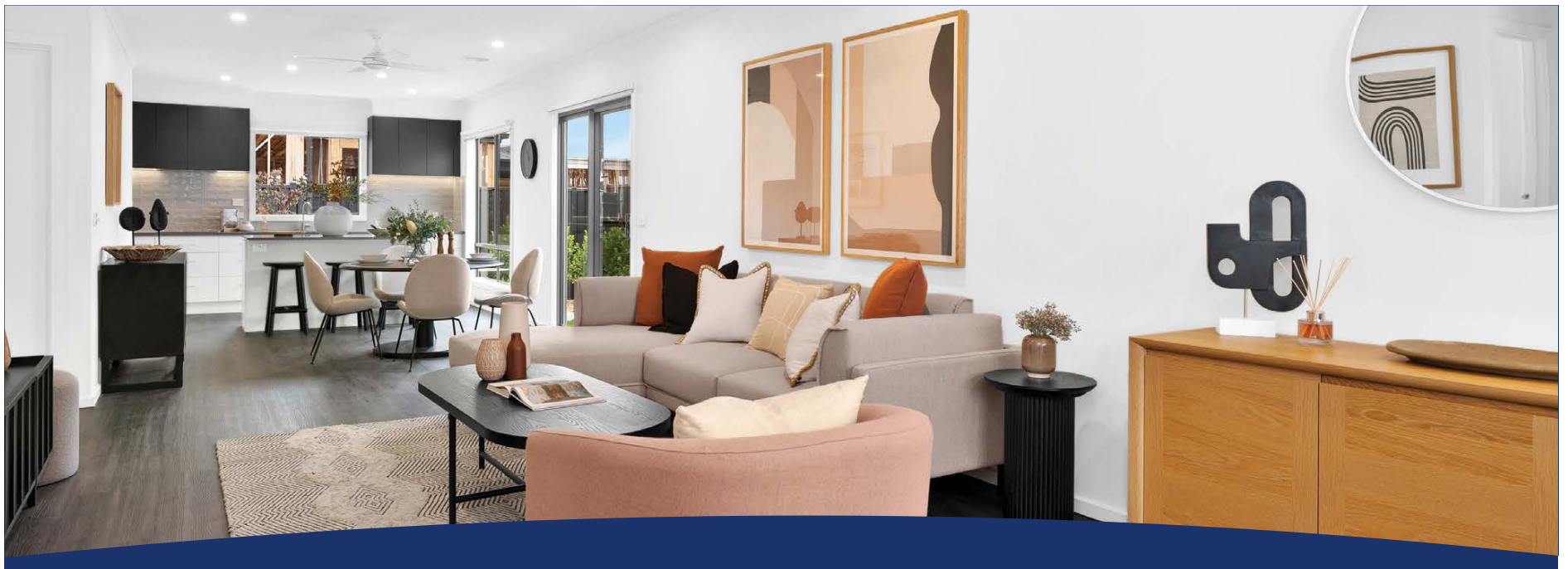
Roaming performers came in all shapes and sizes.



Guitarist Jason Singh shredded the night away.



Taxiride brought the high-octane energy the festival needed.



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^Based on homeowners who sold their previous home and purchased a home at Lifestyle Communities Deanside, using recorded sale and purchase prices as at October 2026. The $297,000 figure is the median difference between those prices. It does not take into account transaction costs associated with selling or buying. Individual circumstances and outcomes vary.

1291972-EB46-26

A reckoning and a player

Romsey movie buff Evan Turok is Star Weekly's film reviewer. Each month he shares his take on recent releases, cult classics, modern favourites and everything in between.



Evan Turok.
(Damjan Janevski)
545799_04

★★★★☆

The Player

1992's 'The Player' features Tim Robbins playing Griffin Mill, a studio executive in charge of separating the thousands of yearly film ideas from the mere 12 that will be produced. With an apathetic indifference to the countless writers he rejects on a daily basis, it becomes impossible to know which of them has begun to send death threats his way. What follows is a witty and tense comedy thriller supported by technical filmmaking excellence.

Having to constantly crush the dreams of writers is sure to lead to some enemies. Soon after being the last straw to an unstable writer, Mill becomes embroiled in a murder mystery in which he himself is the main suspect. What worries me is that, with the waves of unwatchable garbage that we already have to sift through to find something enjoyable, I can't help but lose sleep imagining what kind of ideas couldn't even get a look in!

Director Robert Altman opens with an incredible nine minute single shot sequence. Choreographing a series of actors, a camera, a crew, as well as hundreds of extras is not only wildly impressive, but is the heart and soul of directing a film. Blocking a scene from start to finish allows the audience to witness the dynamic nature of a well written scene. Altman uses this long take to make the world of the film feel lived in, as if each character is only a small piece of the puzzle in the lively yet mysterious world of Hollywood.

★★☆☆☆

The Social Reckoning

Written and directed by the writer of the original, Aaron Sorkin, The Social Reckoning continues on from the 2010 film 'The Social Network'. We follow Frances Haugen (Mikey Madison), an ex-employee of Facebook who attempts to expose the media conglomerate's greedy willingness to promote hateful content.

What was once an unnerving, gripping thriller has become a melancholic math mission with no personal emotional weight. The fact that 'private message shares carry a 3.2x higher algorithmic weight than a standard passive reaction' means nothing to me and should not be the sort of statistics that become the sole focus of the film. (If it means anything to you, please call me and explain. Talk slowly.) My point being, the detrimental difference between the two films is that the original understands that human connection is much more valued to an audience than a series of facts and statistics.

None of the characters have any distinctive personality besides the mutual fast talking wittiness found in all Aaron Sorkin dialogue. Unfortunately, when every single character has the same personality trait, it ceases to be one at all.

Visually, there was nothing defining about Sorkin's vision, a simple dot-to-dot approach that lacked a style and failed to do its part to create desperatel needed tension to enhance this so-called 'thriller'.

Jeremy Strong plays Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg with an uncanny perfection. His presence on screen is the clear highlight but not enough to save this 'colour in the lines', non offensive but emotionally void film.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Star Weekly looks back through the pages of our predecessors


Melton Express Telegraph
Wednesday, November 6 1996
CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN: Only 7 weeks in which to shop
Preps at play
BFL GRABS CLUBS
YOUR GUIDE TO THE DJERRIWARRH FESTIVAL: 72-PAGE LIFTOUT

30 years ago
6 November, 1996

Melton and Melton South football clubs, along with Darley and Sunbury, will play in the Ballarat Football League next year.


Bacchus Marsh Express Telegraph
Look for our djerriwarrh festival program booklet: centre pages
SHIRE WATER TRIAL
Coal comfort
Renovation dream
ELECTION FEATURE: TRANSPORT IN MELTON AND MOORABOOL UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT – PAGE 20

30 years ago
7 November, 2006

Water will be extracted from brown coal as part of a pilot project being undertaken in Bacchus Marsh, which may provide a solution for the shire's water woes.


NEWS
Glimmer of light in blackouts
LAMINATED FLOATING FLOORS

15 years ago
8 November, 2011

Exford and Parwan residents say they're fed up with frquent power blackouts causing major disruptions to farms, households and home businesses.


MELTON & MOORABOOL STARWEEKLY
NEWS + SPORT + PROPERTY GUIDE
Roundabout delayed
Festival unites town

10 years ago
8 November, 2016

The deadline to remove a Delahey roundabout described as "the most dangerous and hazardous in the state" has been dragged out by at least six months.

From Point Cook to Telluride

By Ella Burns

For western suburbs filmmaker Ravi Chand, telling multicultural Australian stories is deeply personal.

After reconnecting with his grandmother he thought had died decades earlier, he rediscovered his language, culture and identity, a journey that inspired his short film, Coconut.

The 12-minute comedy has travelled from its world premiere at the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF) to the prestigious Telluride Film Festival in Colorado, one of the world's most respected film events.

Written, directed and produced by Chand as part of his master of film and television studies at the University of Melbourne and Victorian College of the Arts, Coconut follows 19-year-old Dev, who unexpectedly becomes best friends with his non-English-speaking grandmother after the death of his grandfather.

While the film is packed with humour, its emotional core stems from Chand's own life.

Chand migrated from Fiji to Melbourne in 1982 and grew up near Moorabbin Football Ground, barracking for St Kilda and embracing Australian culture.

"I was obsessively playing Aussie Rules footy and developed an Australian accent stronger than Mick Dundee," he said.

But despite feeling Australian, Chand said he rarely saw people who looked like him.



Point Cook filmmaker Ravi Chand. (Damjan Janevski). 586231 01

Fast forward to today after 15 years living in Point Cook, he is surrounded by what he describes as a "wonderfully diverse" community.

"When I see children who remind me of myself when I was their age, it brings home why the stories I tell exist," he said.

The inspiration for Coconut came after Chand discovered his maternal grandmother, who he believed had died decades earlier, was in fact still alive in Fiji.

The reunion reconnected him with a language he had barely spoken for about 30 years.

After being laughed at for speaking Fiji-Hindi as a child, Chand stopped using the language altogether. His grandmother, who speaks Fiji-Hindi, Tamil and iTaukei but no English, helped him reclaim that part of his identity.

"My grandma never judged me or cared how I sounded. She was just overjoyed to have her grandson back and hear him talk," he said.

Having lost his mother in a car accident shortly before his 12th birthday, Chand said hearing his grandmother's voice felt like reconnecting with her.

"Whenever my grandma spoke it was like having my mother whisper in my ear," he said.

Now speaking with his grandmother in Fiji-Hindi every week, Chand said the experience continues to shape the feature-length version of Coconut, which he is currently developing.

The film is also a love letter to Melbourne's west, with locations including Point Cook, Werribee, Altona, Newport and Yarraville deliberately selected to act as a "silent character" in the story.

Chand spent an entire summer exploring the region, narrowing more than 40 potential locations down to six.

"When people from around the world are struck by the locations, it's a great feeling," he said.

The film's success has resonated beyond Australia, drawing messages from Fijian-Indian communities across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Fiji and beyond, proving that a story born in Melbourne's west can connect with audiences around the world.

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MY PLACE

Derrimut mortgage broker Niti Bhargava is a powerhouse in the financial world. Through her work, she empowers migrant women toward financial independence. She chats with Jack O'Shea-Ayres about her pride as a long-time resident of the west.

What's your connection to Melbourne's north-west?
Melbourne's north-west is home for me. I have lived in Melbourne's west for almost two decades, and over the years I have built not only my business here but also deep personal and community connections. My career in finance and banking spans around 18 years, and I have seen first-hand how access to the right financial information can change the direction of a family or a business. My connection to the west goes well beyond finance. I am passionate about creating opportunities for people, particularly women and migrant communities, to build financial confidence and independence. Through financial literacy workshops and community programs, I have supported hundreds of people across Melbourne's west, including migrant and culturally diverse women, young people and small business owners. I am also the co-founder of Business Women of Melbourne, a grassroots network created to connect, support and celebrate women in business across Brimbank, Melton and surrounding communities.

What do you like about where you live?
What I love most is the sense of community. The west is incredibly diverse, ambitious and entrepreneurial. You meet people from different cultures, backgrounds and walks of life, but there is often a shared desire to build something better for their families and their community. I also love that people here genuinely support local businesses. As a business owner myself, I understand how meaningful it is when someone chooses to support a local business, refer a friend or simply says, "I know someone who can help you." There is a real sense that the west is growing and evolving, while still retaining that strong community spirit.

What, if anything, would you change about where you live?
I would love to see even more investment in opportunities for local people, particularly young people, women and small business owners. The west has enormous talent and entrepreneurial energy. I would like to see more accessible mentoring, business education, financial literacy programs, networking opportunities and pathways into leadership. I also believe financial wellbeing should be treated as an important part of community wellbeing. Understanding money, credit, debt, home ownership and business finance can have a profound impact on people's lives.

Where is your favourite local place to spend time?
For me, it is often the places where people come together rather than one particular destination. I love attending local community events, networking with women in business, meeting local business owners over a coffee and being involved in events across Brimbank and Melton. Some of my favourite moments have simply been sitting with another local businesswoman and hearing her story, talking about her challenges and working out how we can support each other. Those conversations are often where the most meaningful connections happen.



Niti Bhargava. (Damjan Janevski) 577609 01



Each week, Star Weekly photographers are out and about capturing the people and events across Melbourne's western and northern suburbs.



Above: Sharon Murphy from Keeley's Cause. (Damjan Janevski) 585064_04
Left: Ekram Hassan-Ali is the One Wyndham recipient for October. (Damjan Janevski) 584723 03
Right: Karen Spaull and Gisborne Golf Club general manager Brett Campbell. (Damjan Janevski) 584822 05





Sunshine Hospital palliative care unit director Maria Coperchini with staff Sacha McDonald, Carmen Camilleri and Mariana Grgat. (Damjan Janevski) 587239 04



InFUse Lab participant Millie Sanchez Montoro, program facilitator Augustine Ang and participant David Soderlind. (Damjan Janevski) 587195 04



Altona Meadows Primary School students Max (front), Ethan, Ayman, Emily, Imogen, Liam and Rose. (Damjan Janevski) 585921 05

A tough Christmas ahead

Christmas should bring joy, not financial worry. Yet more than half of Australian adults (52 per cent) feel more financially stressed heading into Christmas than they did a year ago, a new YouGov survey commissioned by the St Vincent de Paul Society reveals.

Launching the 2026 Vinnies Christmas Appeal nationally, the society is calling on Australians who can afford to give to help bring practical support and hope to people facing hardship this festive season.

The survey also found 57 per cent of Australian adults will have to prioritise essential expenses over Christmas spending this year, while 36 per cent have felt the need to hide financial hardship from friends and family at Christmas.

"Christmas should be a time of connection and celebration, but for many Australians it brings added financial pressure and worry," said the society's national president, Mark Gaetani.

"When the household budget is already stretched, the prospect of buying presents or sharing a Christmas meal can feel overwhelming.

"These findings also remind us that hardship is not always visible. Someone close to us may be struggling without feeling able to talk about it."

Among adults with children under 18 in their household, 60 per cent say they will have to prioritise essential expenses over Christmas spending, and 55 per cent feel more financially stressed heading towards Christmas than they did a year ago.

"No parent wants to disappoint their children at Christmas. But keeping a roof overhead, paying the bills and buying groceries must come first," Mr Gaetani said. "For a family with little left after the essentials, practical support can ease the pressure and make room for some Christmas joy."

The research also highlights the hidden nature of financial hardship among younger Australians. Almost half of adults aged 18 to 24 (49 per cent) have felt the need to hide financial hardship from friends and family at Christmas.

To donate to the Vinnies Christmas Appeal, visit donate.vinnies.org.au/christmas-appeal



Inaya's second prize creation.



Avyaan's first prize creation. (Supplied)

Abuse charges

By Melissa Meehan, AAP

A 38-year-old man has become the first person charged under Victoria's new animal abuse material legislation.

Detectives from Victoria Police's Joint Anti-Child Exploitation Team executed a search warrant in Melton West on Wednesday as part of an ongoing investigation into child abuse material.

During the raid police seized several electronic devices from the property after finding alleged child abuse and animal abuse material. The Melton West man was arrested at the scene.

He was charged with transmit child abuse material, cause child abuse material to be transmitted to self, two counts of possess child abuse material and possess animal abuse material.

The arrest marks the first time Victoria Police have laid charges under Victoria's new animal abuse material laws, which took effect on November 1.

Those offences now carry maximum sentences of three to five years' imprisonment for producing, distributing, possessing or accessing animal abuse material.

Detective Inspector Mark Chapman said the new legislation allowed police to hold offenders accountable for their actions.

"The alleged offending is deeply disturbing, and this legislation marks an important milestone," Det Insp Chapman said on Monday.

"These new offences give police stronger powers to target those who produce, share, possess or access animal abuse material. The legislation sends a clear message that cruelty towards animals will not be tolerated."

The accused man was bailed to appear at Melbourne Magistrates Court on Tuesday.

Student Water Week creativity rewarded

Students from Bacchus Marsh have been awarded hundreds of dollars in prizes for their incredible displays of creativity, artistry, and ingenuity as part of Greater Western Water's (GWW) National Water Week.

More than 2320 students from across GWW's service area showcased their creativity as part of this year's competition, with children and students from early learning up to year eight putting their own spin on this year's theme, Water Heroes: Make Every Drop Count.

Students used painting, drawing, digital media, and other creative materials to demonstrate how they can be water heroes and help save water for everyone.

Students Anika, Avyaan, Laksh, Naunidh, Amaya, Anweshi, and Inaya from Bacchus Marsh Grammar took home first, second, or third place prizes across the competition's age categories for their creations.

Water saving tips, the importance of water in everyday life and the need to protect water as a precious resource were among the themes showcased in this year's poster designs.

Winning students received praise from water minister Michaela Settle for leading the way in water education.

"Through the Schools Water Efficiency Program, schools are fixing leaks and showing us all how to value water and make every drop count," Ms Settle said.

"Through your artwork, you've shared creative ideas, powerful messages and inspiring visions of how we can all become water heroes."

GWW's general manager of strategy and partnerships Kessia Thomson said the competition helped build water literacy by encouraging children and young people to explore the value of water through art and creativity.

"National Water Week is a great opportunity for young people to think about the important role water plays in our lives and the simple actions they can take to save water every day," she said.

The competition was open to children and students from early learning and kindergarten through to year 8, with individual prizes valued at up to $100.

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Every container counts: Cash in and clean up



National Recycling Week (9-15 November) is a reminder that recycling is about more than what goes in the bin. It's about keeping valuable materials in use, reducing waste and building a circular economy where products are remade rather than discarded.

One of the simplest ways to be part of that cycle is by returning eligible drink containers through Victoria's Container Deposit Scheme (CDS Vic).

Single-use drink containers remain the third-most commonly littered item in Australia, behind soft plastics and non-food packaging, according to Clean Up Australia's Annual Litter Report FY25. When bottles, cans and cartons are littered, they can pollute waterways, harm wildlife and create costly clean-up challenges for communities.But when they're returned through CDS Vic, those same containers become a valuable resource that can be recycled into new products and kept in circulation for longer.

CDS Vic helps keep eligible drink containers in the recycling loop so they can be remade into new products, preventing them from ending up as litter or landfill. Receive a 10-cent refund for every eligible bottle, can and carton returned.

With more than 600 refund points across Victoria, returning containers through CDS Vic is easy. Most eligible aluminium, glass and carton drink containers between 150mL and 3 litres can be returned and recycled into new products. Keep the lids on,as they can be recycled too.

Whether you're collecting a handful of containers at home or managing a larger volume through a school, sporting club or community group, there are many ways to take part in CDS Vic and help power Victoria's circular economy.

Reverse vending machines: Perfect for smaller volumes, reverse vending machines scan and verify containers one by one before providing a refund or donation option. Refunds can be received electronically or as a supermarket voucher, or donated directly to a registered charity or community group.

Depots: Ideal for larger volumes, depots offer walk-in and drive-through services, making it easy to return multiple bags or trailer loads of containers and receive a refund in just a few minutes.

Over-the-counter sites: At participating local businesses and organisations, these refund pointsprovidea timelyoption for returning smaller numbers of containers.

Public bin baskets: Bin baskets and rails attached to public litter bins provide an easy way to dispose of emptieswhile you're out and about. Leave them behind for someone else to collect and cash inat a CDS Vic refund point.

Gifting containers: Not planning to visit a refund point yourself? Pass eligible containers on to family, neighbours, schools, sporting clubs or community groups so they can collect the refund and support local fundraising efforts.

Matt Davis, CEO of scheme coordinator VicReturn, said CDS Vic proudly supports Planet Ark's National Recycling Week, which has encouraged Australians to reduce, reuse and repurpose their wastesince 1996.

"National Recycling Week shows us how everyday actions can have a lasting environmental impact," he said.

"By returning eligible drink containers through CDS Vic, you are helping to reduce litter, conserve valuable resources and keep materials in circulation."

Since launching in November 2023, CDS Vic has helped Victorians recycle more, reduce litter and keep valuable materials out of landfill. Victorians have returned more than 3.7 billion drink containers, earning $370 million in refunds while helping power Victoria's circular economy.

This National Recycling Week, whether you choose to keep your 10-cent refund, donate it to a local cause or simply make recycling part of your routine, every returned container plays a role in turning waste into a resource.Visit cdsvic.org.au/locationsto find your nearest refund point and join the cycle.



PUZZLES

SUDOKU

No. 315

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every number from 1 to 9 must appear in: each of the nine vertical columns, each of the nine horizontal rows and each of the nine 3 x 3 boxes. Remember, no number can occur more than once in any row, column or box.

easy

	8	3	9			2		
2				8	3	6		
4				2		3		
	6	7		3	1		5	
	5		7	6		1	8	
		8		9				1
		6	4	5				7
		9			8	4	6	

medium

			2			8		
7				4		1	9	
			7		3			2
	8			2				4
3	2						8	1
9				6			7	
2			5		4			
	5	6		7				8
		9			2			

hard

		5	7				9	
					2		4	7
				9	1	2		
1				4	3			
		8				9		
			5	6				2
		2	8	1				
9	7		2					
	3				9	4		

easy

3	6	4	8	7	1	9	2	5
7	2	8	9	4	5	6	3	1
1	5	2	9	6	3	8	4	7
2	8	1	6	9	7	4	5	3
6	3	7	2	5	4	1	8	9
5	4	9	1	4	8	3	7	2
8	9	6	4	3	2	7	1	6
4	7	3	5	2	6	9	1	8
9	1	5	3	8	9	2	7	4

medium

5	1	4	2	3	6	9	7	8
2	8	9	4	7	6	1	3	5
7	4	6	8	9	5	3	1	2
3	5	4	7	6	9	8	2	1
9	1	8	6	5	4	7	3	6
6	3	7	9	2	8	4	5	9
1	6	8	7	9	3	5	4	2
4	9	5	6	2	7	3	1	8
8	2	3	9	1	4	2	7	5

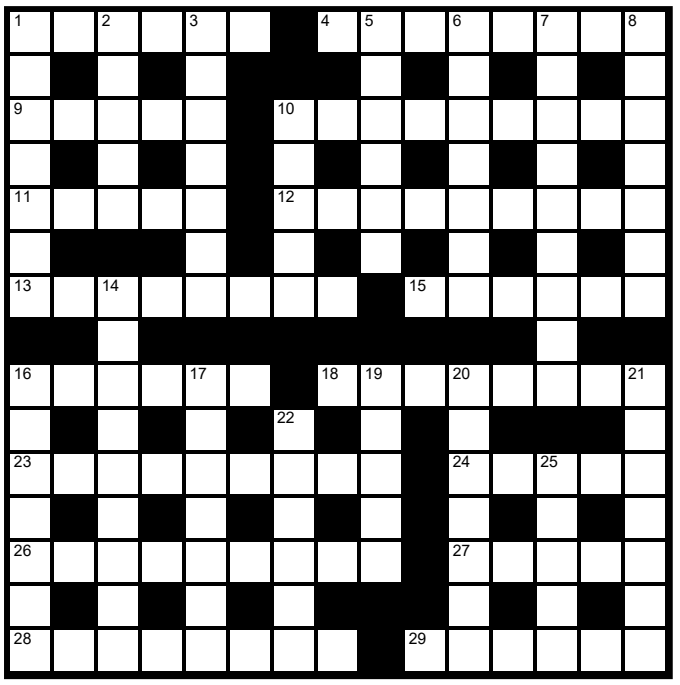
hard

8	3	1	6	7	9	4	2	5
9	7	4	2	3	5	6	8	1
5	6	2	8	1	4	7	3	9
4	9	3	7	5	6	8	1	2
3	5	8	1	2	7	9	6	4
1	2	6	9	4	3	5	7	8
7	8	3	4	9	1	2	5	6
6	1	9	3	5	2	8	4	7
2	4	5	7	8	6	1	9	3

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QUICK CROSSWORD

No. 315

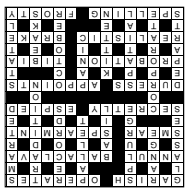


ACROSS

1 Gaudy (6)
4 Manages (8)
9 Cancel (5)
10 Warm knitted hood (9)
11 Daub (5)
12 Common chewing gum flavour (9)
13 Covertly (8)
15 Spotted (6)
16 Illegal compulsion (6)
18 Names (8)
23 Test period (9)
24 Shinbone (5)
26 True to life; practical (9)
27 Slow (5)
28 Bee activity? (8)
29 Frigid (6)

DOWN

1 Spectacles (7)
2 Scope (5)
3 Indulge, – on (7)
5 Makeshift bed (6)
6 Accounts (7)
7 Custom (9)
8 Stung (7)
10 Herb (5)
14 Relating to a large company (9)
16 Exits (7)
17 Having three dimensions (7)
19 Be overcome by a sudden fear (5)
20 Sean Connery starred in *The Hunt for Red* – (7)
21 Majestic (7)
22 Young cat (6)
25 Bird jaws (5)



DECODER

No. 347

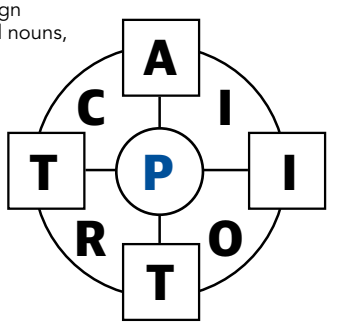
4	16	8	19	19	13	6	■	2	8	7	2	17
16	■	6	■	13	■	11		8	■	11	■	19
26 A	20	26 A	8	21	13	6		21	8	22	13	14
7	■	25 H	■	16	■	1	■	13	■	19	■	8
2	24	11	20	24	■	13	19	17	8	10	11	24
■	■	■	■	8	■	6	■	■	■	13	■	21
9	11	5	8	26 A	10	■	23	10	13	18	13	17
26 A	■	26 A	■	■	■	17	■	13	■	■	■	■
16	24	24	13	14	5	13	■	1	25 H	11	17	21
24	■	16	■	26 A	■	8	■	16	■	16	■	16
21	14	26 A	8	24	■	3	11	22	12	8	13	17
13	■	21	■	7	■	13	■	13	■	9	■	2
6	11	16	1	25 H	■	17	26 A	17	25 H	26 A	15	17

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25 H	26 A

1 G	2 K	3 Z	4 Q	5 V	6 D	7 C	8 I	9 J	10 L	11 O	12 B	13 E	14 R	15 Y
16 U	17 S	18 X	19 P	20 W	21 T	22 M	23 F	24 N	25 H	26 A				

9-LETTER WORD

Using the nine letters in the grid, how many words of four letters or more can you list? The centre letter must be included and each letter may only be used once. No colloquial or foreign words. No capitalised nouns, apostrophes or plural nouns ending in 's'.

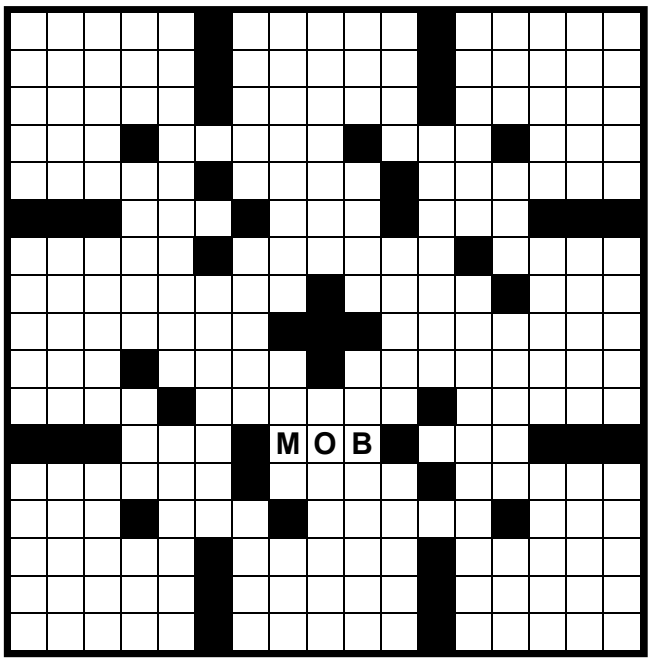


Today's Aim:
12 words: Good
18 words: Very good
24 words: Excellent

apricot, atop, captor, carp, copra, crop, optic, pact, pair, part, patio, patriot, PATRIOTIC, pica, picot, pita, pitta, port, rapt, tapir, topic, trap, trip, tropic

WORDFIT

No. 315



3 LETTERS
ACE
APE
AVO
AWE
BIN
BYE
DAD
DOE
ERA
FOX
ICE
IRE
~~MOB~~
ODE
ORE
OUT
PIE
RAM
REV
SIT
TON
TRY

4 LETTERS
EDGY
ERRS
EYED
GODS
LEWD
MESH
PEAR
RAMP
SAME
SHIP

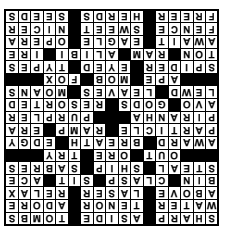
5 LETTERS
ABOVE
ADORE
ALIBI
AORTA
APPAL
ARROW
ASIDE
ATLAS
ATONE
AWAIT
AWARD
BLADE
BRACE
CLASP
DELTA
DIETS
EAGLE
ERRED
FENCE
FREER
GREEN
HABIT
HERDS
INANE
LASER
MOANS
MOLAR
NICER
OPERA
PIECE
POWER
PROXY
RELAX
SEARS
SEEDS
SEXES
SHARP
STAFF
STEAL
SWABS
SWEET
TAPES
TENOR
TOMBS
TYPES
WAIVE
WATER
YARDS

6 LETTERS
BREATH
LEAVES
PERTER
SABRES
SPIDER
TARTAR

7 LETTERS
CHOLERA
INSPIRE
ISTHMUS
PIRANHA
PURPLER
VOYAGER

8 LETTERS
PARTICLE
REBELLED
RESORTED
SEASHORE

10 LETTERS
PRECLUDING
PROMOTIONS



13-11-26

5x5

R		P		D
	B		D	
D		I		N
	S		E	
R		E		S

No. 422

Insert the missing letters to make 10 words – five reading across the grid and five reading down.

NOTE: more than one solution may be possible

S	D	E	E	R
T	E	S	S	A
N	G	I	E	D
E	D	O	B	A
E	D	P	E	R

QUICK QUIZ



1. Which nursery rhyme characters travelled by sea in a pea-green boat?
2. What is the term for a male duck?
3. In what year was the first Samsung Galaxy phone released?
4. Gillian Anderson (pictured) portrayed which historical figure in *The Crown*?
5. Moose Jaw is a city in which country?
6. How many total players are on the court in a game of volleyball?
7. Commemorated with a famous basilica, who is the patron saint of Venice?
8. What is the southernmost point of the Australian mainland?
9. Not counting re-recordings, *The Life of a Showgirl* is what number studio album by Taylor Swift?
10. The Orionids meteor shower is associated with which well-known comet?

ANSWERS: 1. The Owl and the Pussy-cat **2.** Drake **3.** 2009 **4.** Margaret Thatcher **5.** Canada **6.** 12 (six per side) **7.** Saint Mark the Evangelist **8.** Wilsons Promontory **9.** 12th **10.** Halley's Comet

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.



This week's photographer's choice picture is of an Australian king parrot at Mount Macedon. (Damjan Janevski) 588000 01

Reverse Advent Calendar [RAC] boxes
St Andrews Uniting Church in Bacchus Marsh is again coordinating the distribution and collection of Reverse Advent Calendar boxes for this area. A Reverse Advent Calendar begins as an empty box. For 20 days in the lead-up to Christmas, you place one item (non-perishable food, toiletries, or a Christmas treat) into the box. After 20 days, you return your filled Reverse Advent Calendar box to the church, which passes it on food relief agencies to distribute to people in our immediate community experiencing food insecurity. Boxes will be available for pickup on Sunday mornings, between 9 and 11.30am.
▪ St Andrews Uniting Church Bacchus Marsh, 12 Gisborne Road

Over 50s games and cards
Melton Club 50+ runs a games and cards afternoon every Sunday from 2pm to 4pm at Kurunjang Community Hub, 33 Mowbray Crescent, Kurunjang. Come along and meet and make new friends over games and a cuppa.
▪ Denise, 0403 840 241

Darley Neighbourhood House
The Darley Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre is at 33-35 Jonathan Drive, Darley. It offers free and low-cost activities for all. There is a monthly repair cafe, a community pantry, a fortnightly chatty cafe and venue hire is available.
▪ www.bit.ly/DNHnow, or 53674390

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

Probus Club of Melton Ladies
The Probus Club of Melton Ladies meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 10am at the Melton Country Club. It is a social club where all ladies are welcome.
▪ Glenda, 0418 504 616

Women Working Together
A program connecting women aged 50 above in need of assistance, with mentors and mentees. Open to women across the western suburbs, including Melton.
▪ 9655 2131, or EmploymentSupport@cotavic.org.au

Melton Over 50s Social Group
Join a friendly group of people aged 50 and older who enjoy each other's company while attending events such as dinners, shows, dancing, cinemas and more. If you live in the Melton area and would like to meet new friends, in a welcoming group environment, this is for you.
▪ Marlene, 0498 329 290

Rose carers of Maddingley Park
The group meets every Wednesday from 10am-noon at the Commemorative Rose Garden, Maddingley Park on the corner of Taverner Street and Grant Streets, Bacchus Marsh. They maintain the two rose gardens at the park. Volunteers are welcome and no experience is necessary to join.
▪ Elaine, 0400 052 857 or Judy, 0428 463 538

Bacchus Marsh Ladies Probus Club
Bacchus Marsh Ladies Probus Club Meet on the first Thursday of every month from 10am-noon at the Avenue Bowling Club on 254 Main Street, Bacchus Marsh.
▪ Krystyna, bacchusmarshladiesprobus@gmail.com

Melton Valley Ladies Probus
Melton Valley Ladies Probus Club meet every second Friday each month at 10am at Melton Country Club. New members are welcome.
▪ Ann, 0425 705 150

Bacchus Marsh Senior Citizens
The Bacchus Marsh Senior Citizens are inviting new members to meet at the Andy Arnold Centre, 10 Bennett Street, Bacchus Marsh.
▪ hopem@optusnet.com.au

Melton Concert Band
Rehearsals are on Thursdays from 7.30-9.30pm at the Bridge Road Community Centre, Bridge Road, Melton South. Musicians of any age who are able to read music are welcome to come along with their instrument, including oboe, bassoon, flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, tuba, percussion.
▪ 0401 474 582

Cancer Support Group
MelMarsh Prostate Cancer Support Group is for prostate cancer patients and their carers and meets on the first Thursday of the month, from 12.30-2pm, at Melton South Community Centre. Attendees are encouraged as members share their journeys through what could be a very traumatic time of their lives. Explanations of medical terminology used in the treatment of this cancer are given in this group.
▪ Grenville, 0412 741 865

Friendship Group
For all aged 60 and older – are you looking for some new friends? Then this group is for you. The Melton and Surrounding areas Friendship Group meets fortnightly for a coffee and chat night and organises affordable outings such as dinners, movie nights and many social events – plus occasional weekends away, and local or overseas holidays.
▪ Shirley, 0419 006 525 or Vera, 0406 493 734

Women's Support Group
Women's Support Group Melton is for any women who feel they would like to attend a peer support group which is relaxed, friendly and non-judgemental. The group meets weekly at 1pm on Mondays (except for public holidays) at the Melton Library.
▪ Val, 0418 667 150

Melton Singers
If you love to sing, come join the Melton Singers. The group rehearses regularly and also performs at aged care facilities. The group is very relaxed and sings songs mainly from the 1960s and 70s. It meets Tuesdays at 10am.
▪ Val, 0418 667 150

Melton Trauma Teddies
Melton Trauma Teddies are seeking volunteers to assist with knitting, stuffing, or stitching teddy bears that go to children in their time of need.
▪ Jean, 0412 931 498

Boomerang Bags Bacchus Marsh
Boomerang Bags Bacchus Marsh make reusable shopping bags from rescued fabric. They need people to cut, sew, iron and market our bags. The group meets on the first Sunday each month at Darley Neighbourhood House, 2-5pm.
▪ https://63ec55b8628d6.site123.me/

Bacchus Marsh and District Garden Club
The club meets on the second Tuesday of each month except January, from 7.30pm, at The Laurels, 229 Main Street, Bacchus Marsh. Guest speakers and supper provided.New members welcome.
▪ Michelle, 0421 106 268

Fishing club
Didyabringyarodalong Angling Club of Melton and Bacchus Marsh is a fishing club that welcomes and encourages people of all ages, genders and fishing abilities to partake in enjoying the outdoors in a relaxing and friendly environment. The club holds monthly fishing competitions at various locations, fresh and saltwater. New members are most welcome.
▪ Andrew, 0407 303 438, or Wayne, 0414 785 366

Family bootscootin' night

Dust off your boots and get ready for a night of country fun at the Commercial Hotel in Ballan.

Country music, line dancing, and family-friendly fun will take over the Commercial Hotel in Ballan this month, with locals invited to dust off their boots for a lively country night out.

Family Country Night will take over the Commercial Hotel on Friday 13 November, promising to bring a taste of country hospitality to Ballan from 5 to 10pm.

The evening is set to kick off with free face painting and pony rides for the kids,



before the dancing gets underway.

The Boot Scooting Society will lead a free line dancing session from 7pm, welcoming everyone from seasoned dancers to first-timers keen to learn a few new steps.

Live country music will follow, with performer Tristan Ross taking to the stage to keep the country atmosphere going throughout the evening.

Entry to the live music costs $10 per adult, while the line dancing session and children's activities are free.

Organisers are encouraging families and friends to come along, get involved and enjoy a night of entertainment close to home.

Those planning to stay for dinner are encouraged to contact the hotel ahead of time to secure a table.

Tickets can be purchased through Eventbrite or at the venue.

So bring your friends, round up the family, and join in on the fun for a boot-scootin' good time!

Family Country Night will run from 5pm to 10pm on Friday 13 November, at the Commercial Hotel, 151 Inglis Street, Ballan.

Details and tickets: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/line-dancing-country-music-night-at-the-commercial-hotel-ballan-tickets-2003750484639.



Organiser of storytelling salon, Between The Lines, Aud Pitch, at The Chestnut Tree Bookshop in West Footscray where the monthly event is held. (Damjan Janevski) 554512_01

Saturday night live storytelling salon

Live storytelling salon, Between The Lines, returns for the final time in 2026 on Saturday 28 November at The Chestnut Tree Bookshop in West Footscray.

Held on the last Saturday of each month, Between the Lines is an invitation for people to share something true to a room full of strangers who are there to listen.

You don't need to be a writer, a poet, a performer, or really anything other than someone willing to tell a story that is true, that is your own and which is in keeping with a chosen theme, which for November is 'the long day.'

You must register beforehand and then on the night wait and your name is drawn at rundown from a storytelling pool.

If it is, you will get handed the mic and the attention of the audience for 10-12 minutes to tell them your story. Selected speakers also get a glass of wine on the house to ease any nerves.

If it's not, you get to remain a member of the audience and enjoy a night of bold, honest, and unfiltered storytelling.

Whether on stage or in the crowd, everyone pays for a ticket in order to keep the event fair and sustainable.

To register, book tickets and learn more about Between the Lines, go to: https://events.humanitix.com/between-the-lines-storytelling-salon

Raise a glass to the 35th annual Budburst festival

Get ready for a weekend of food, wine and country hospitality as Budburst Wine Festival is back in the Macedon Ranges celebrating 35 years.

Every year, the wineries of the Macedon Ranges region come together, open their doors and showcase their cool climate wines and local food.

Budburst not only features the region's established cellar doors but also producers not normally open to the public, small batch wines and special releases.

The event spans across Saturday 14 November to Sunday 15 November, from 10am to 5pm, with tastings, curated good menus, live entertainment and the chance to chat with the winemakers at every stop.

Passes start from $39 with weekend passes $55.

Tickets come with a keepsake Plumm crystal Macedon Ranges wine glass, a festival passport with all the details you need for the weekend and wine tastings across participating wineries.

The festival welcomes all and is a family friendly event with designated drivers and children under 18 are invited to join the festival for free.

Participating venues will offer visitors the chance to taste their wines, hear their stories and learn what makes the region so special.

Details: https://www.macedonrangeswineandfoodfest.com.au/



Lyons Will Estate owner and winemaker Renata Morello celebrating the upcoming Budburst Festival. (Damjan Janevski) 586977 04



Explore your creativity with Way Out West

Deaf and disabled artists across Brimbank are being invited to unleash their creativity, develop new skills and connect with fellow artists through Way Out West (WOW), an inclusive multi-arts studio presented by Arts Access Victoria.

Open to artists aged 18 and over, Way Out West provides a welcoming and supportive space for people to experiment with different art forms, share ideas and explore new ways of creative expression.

The program offers opportunities to explore visual arts, performance, installations, music, animation and video. Participants can combine traditional art techniques with digital technology, including iPads, musical instruments and sound-making equipment.

More than simply a place to make art, WOW is about building connections, sharing stories and celebrating the diverse experiences and creative talents of deaf and disabled artists.

Artists can work alongside others, explore their individual interests and develop their artistic skills in an environment that encourages collaboration, experimentation and creative freedom.

For Brimbank residents interested in exploring their artistic side, the workshops offer an opportunity to try something new, build confidence and become part of an inclusive creative community.

The final Way Out West workshops for 2026 will be held on Saturday 21 November and Saturday, 5 December at St Albans Community Centre, from 10am - 4pm.

Way Out West welcomes deaf and disabled artists aged 18 and over, whether they are experienced creatives or looking to take their first steps into the arts.

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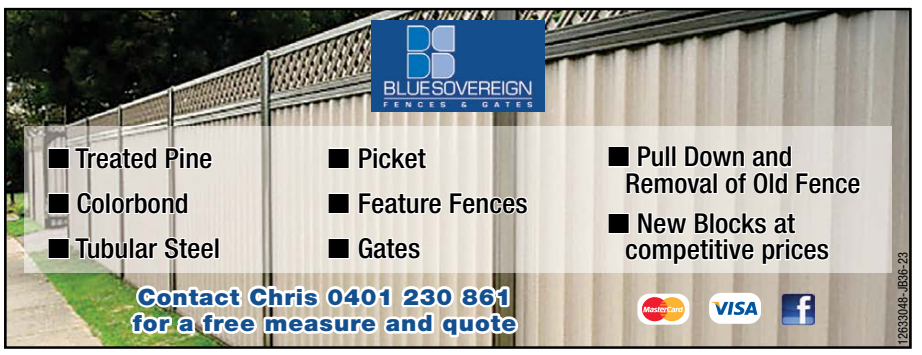
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SPORTS QUIZ

1. 2026 WNBA Finals MVP Gabby Williams won the award playing for which team?
2. Which country's men's national rugby league team is known as The Cedars?


Alex De Minaur

3. The 2026 Liz Ellis Diamond was recently awarded to which Adelaide Thunderbirds player?
4. American sports identity Pat McAfee played his entire career with which NFL team?
5. Which horse did jockey James McDonald ride to victory in the 2026 Victoria Derby?
6. The Connecticut Sun has been sold and will relocate to which Texas city for the 2027 WNBA season?
7. Australia's national wheelchair rugby league team is known by what nickname?
8. Former Brisbane Lions coach Chris Fagan recently joined which AFL club as Director of Coaching?
9. Anthony Ippolito portrays which famous actor in a 2026 biographical drama based on the development of a 1970s sports film?
10. 2026 World Series MVP William Contreras won the award playing for which team?
11. Who is the current captain of the Jillaroos?
12. In what place did Australia's Haftu Strintzos finish the 2026 New York City Marathon?
13. In June, high diver Molly Carlson made history as the first woman to dive off what?
14. What is the only country with a single FIFA World Cup win?
15. Which of these singers has run a marathon: Bruno Mars, Harry Styles or Mick Jagger?
16. Who is the youngest F1 World Champion in history?
17. Pencak Silat is a class of martial arts that originated in which country?
18. Sensei, in karate, is equivalent to what role in kung fu?
19. Who defeated Alex de Minaur in the 2026 Vienna Open final?


Steve Smith

20. What is the maximum number of free throws you can be awarded at once in basketball?
21. How many teams qualify for the AFL Women's Finals Series each year?
22. Steve Smith suffered an injury to which part of his body during the recent Test cricket series against South Africa?
23. English soccer team Fleetwood Town defeated which iconic EPL team in a recent EFL League Cup match?
24. The Socceroos are scheduled to play which two nations in the Middle East this month?
25. Which state has won the most Sheffield Shield titles?
26. In 1972, who became the first woman to win five individual swimming medals at a single Olympic Games?
27. In soccer, the penalty spot is how many metres from the goal line?
28. What is the highest score you can get in a single turn of darts?
29. Which Australian city is currently hosting the inaugural SWIM GP event?
30. Karen Rolton Oval is a cricket venue in which Australian city?

1311

1. Golden State Valkyries 2. Lebanon 3. Georgie Horjus 4. Indianapolis Colts 5. Stormy Marco 6. Houston, Texas 7. The Wheelaroos 8. Carlton 9. Sylvester Stallone 10. Milwaukee Brewers 11. Isabelle Kelly 12. Fifth 13. A free-standing iceberg 14. England 15. Harry Styles 16. Kimi Antonelli 17. Indonesia 18. Shifu (or sifu) 19. Carlos Alcaraz 20. Three 21. Eight 22. Neck 23. Arsenal 24. Qatar and Jordan 25. New South Wales 26. Shane Gould 27. 11 metres 28. 180 29. Melbourne 30. Adelaide



Tiggo super in name only

By Chris Riley, Marque Motoring

Let's get something straight.

Wheels magazine (is it still a magazine?) may have recognised the Chery Tiggo 9 as Australia's best value large SUV.

But they're talking about the top of the range Ultimate model, not the entry Elite which is the one most punters will end up buying at this end of the market.

And the Elite is a quite different beast, front-wheel drive, with a smaller battery, less powerful drivetrain, less electric only range and of course less equipment. But it costs less and it still seats seven.







It's expensive, but the Tiggo 9 is decent value, but with some drawbacks. (Pictures: Supplied)

Styling

There are two grades, Elite FWD (our test vehicle) priced from $52,990 and Ultimate AWD priced from $59,990.

Although both are described as 'super hybrids' with the same 1.5-litre turbocharged petrol engine, Track has two electric motors, while the Ultimate adds a third motor and larger battery. This means more power and greater range.

Standard kit for Elite includes synthetic leather trim and two-zone climate air with rear outlets, heated power-adjust front seats, acoustic glass for windscreen and front doors, colour selectable ambient interior lighting, cooled console box, power tailgate and a tilt-slide panoramic sunroof with powered sunshade.

There's also 19-inch alloys, puddle lights, pop-out door handles, walk-away locking, LED head, tail and daytime running lights, auto high beam, auto lights and wipers, and front and rear parking sensors.

Ultimate adds 20-inch wheels, real leather, auto dimming mirror, a heated steering wheel, heated and cooling for both the front and rear seats, massage for the front seats, head-up display, automatic parking assist, additional side parking sensors, and a 14-speaker Sony system.

Tiggo 9 is covered by a seven-year unlimited kilometre warranty, plus an eight-year battery warranty, with capped price servicing and roadside assistance for seven years.

Service is due every 12 months or 15,000km, with servicing capped at a total of $3174 for the first seven years.

Infotainment

Infotainment consists of a 15.6-inch touchscreen and 10.25-inch instrument display, with Bluetooth, intelligent voice control, built-in navigation, AM/FM and DAB+ digital radio, wired and wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

Audio is provided by an eight-speaker Sony sound system.

There's also 50W wireless phone charging, USB-A and -C ports front and back, 12-volt outlet front.

Safety

Tiggo 9 has not been rated for safety yet but features an array of active and passive safety features.

There are 10 airbags that include front, front side and centre, rear side, driver knee and side curtain airbags.

The advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) incorporate the likes of Autonomous Emergency Braking (AEB), Emergency Lane Keeping (ELK), Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC) and Forward Collision Warning (FCW) – just to mention a few.

Engines/transmissions

Powering the Tiggo 9 Elite is a 1.5-litre turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engine, which produces maximum 105kW of power and 215Nm of torque, together with two electric motors, both of which are located at the front – delivering 75/170Nm and 90kW/220Nm apiece.

Combined output is 225kW of power and 315Nm of torque.

With three electric motors, Ultimate, in comparison, delivers 315kW and 580Nm.

Torque is the more significant figure because it's the stuff that gets you moving quickly and makes short work of hills when the car is fully loaded.

In the Elite driving force is sent to the front wheels via a three-speed dedicated hybrid transmission.

Driving

You're buying this car primarily for the seven seats, right? So, let's have a look at the seats first.

The key figures are the length and wheelbase which dictate how much room it has inside. The Tiggo 9 is 4.8m long with a 2750mm wheelbase.

To give this some perspective, Toyota's soft road Kluger is 166mm longer with a 100mm longer wheelbase, which means more room for longer legs.

There's a smaller Tiggo 8 that seats seven too, but at 4724mm/2694mm it has even less legroom – it is however $10K cheaper.

Other alternatives include the Jaecoo J8 or fancier Omoda 9 (also produced by Chery).

But back to the Tiggo 9.

Getting in and out of the third row presents some challenges.

First, to raise the two third row seats with the straps provided, you need to slide the second row forward to provide clearance for the headrests.

Second, the single, second row, tilt and slide seat that provides access is located on the driver's side of the vehicle, not ideal in our neck of the woods where it exposes those getting in and out to the risk of passing traffic.

By rights it should have been switched to the other side as most manufacturers normally do.

Third, returning the access seat to its original position proved problematic, requiring the driver's seat to be moved all the way forward before it too could be moved all the way forward.

This unlocks the seat and allows it to be returned to its original position. Talk about a major pain in the butt.

Once ensconced, there's just enough room for smaller children and even then, some negotiation may be required with those in the second row. Adults can forget it.

The seat adjustment, by the way, is located on the door, like a Mercedes.

With the seats in use there's little room leftover for luggage, as is the norm for most seven-seats SUVs, but at least the third-row packs flat when not required.

Cargo capacity is limited to 143 litres, with 819 litres when the second row is folded, or 2021 litres with both rows folded.

There's no spare under the rear floor either, just a tyre repair kit.

Four driving modes are available, accessed by a large circular control knob in the centre console: pure electric, series, parallel, and energy recovery.

Despite the fact it plays second fiddle to the Ultimate in terms of power, the front-drive Elite with its single electric motor is by no means a slouch.

Chery doesn't provide acceleration figures, but it feels around the 8.0 or 9.0 second mark from 0-100km/h.

Of course, you need some charge to receive assistance from the battery.

With a 70-litre fuel tank the Tiggo takes premium 95 unleaded and has claimed fuel consumption of 1.5L/100km, but that depends on keeping the battery topped up – otherwise it reverts to normal hybrid operation.

Power consumption is 15.6kWh/100km. You can expect to get about 77km (WLTP) driving on electric power alone (1250km combined).

Driving mainly in normal HEV or hybrid-electric mode, we clocked up just under 400km at a rate of 6.0L/100km.

In our defence, sometimes it is not convenient to charge the battery, but it's great to have the option.

AC charging is limited to 6.6kW, but with a fast DC charger it can be charged at a rate of up to 41kW.

Access to the car is via walk-up/walk-away locking, with pop-out door handles and a drivetrain that powers up automatically in readiness for departure.

There's no start/stop button. However, before the transmission will engage, you must have your seatbelt fastened.

It sounds like a great idea, but in practice it wears thin fairly quickly.

Surprisingly at this price point the steering wheel is power-adjust, but disappointingly offers very little range of adjustment.

You can also choose between Comfort and Sport settings in the system that alters the amount of steering effort required.

Of note, sometimes the transmission wouldn't go into gear and at other times it jumped out. This happened on more than one occasion.

RATINGS
Looks: 7
Performance: 7.5
Safety: 7.5
Thirst: 7
Practicality: 6
Comfort: 7.5
Tech: 7.5
Value: 7.5
Overall: 7.2

Once up and running however the Tiggo is an easy, inoffensive car to drive and that is a compliment.

It accelerates briskly and even handles pretty well as we discovered, pushing hard through a few corners.

Ride and handling is a pleasing balance of comfort and control and it doesn't porpoise the way some SUVs do on undulating roads.

The Tiggo just feels a little disconnected, but that won't be a problem for the majority of drivers.

Three-level regenerative braking is offered, but there doesn't seem to be a way to adjust it that we could find.

On a downhill run you can actually see the battery level begin to rise.

Thankfully, most of the driver assistance stuff isn't too intrusive. The Chinese seem to be getting better at this stuff.

A complete lack of physical controls however became annoying after a while.

Want to change the temperature? See the touchscreen. Turn the radio down.

Touchscreen. Anything else. Touchscreen.

Not only is it annoying, it is also difficult once you're on the move.

Limited control is accessible via the steering wheel buttons, but these can be difficult to see in strong sunlight.

Alternatively, there's always voice control, but after a minute trying – like us – you'll probably give up, swearing.

We've been doing this job for a long time. Once upon a time glitches in test vehicles were rare.

These days they have become commonplace, and point to a lack of research and development.

Summing up

Is the Tiggo 9 value for money? Sure.

Is it cheap? Not really, not when you consider that it costs almost $60K to put on the road.

We wonder when this became the price point for a family wagon?

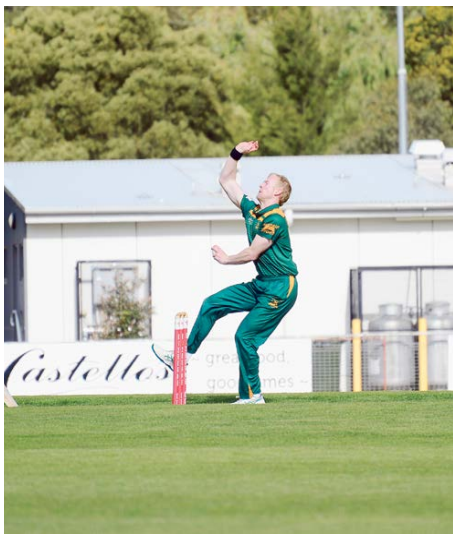
The quality of Chinese vehicles may have come on in leaps and bounds, but so too has the price. What next?



PEGS' Charith Sylvester. 589009 15



Woodend's Thomas Robson bowls to Gisborne's Keaton Jennings. 589012 02



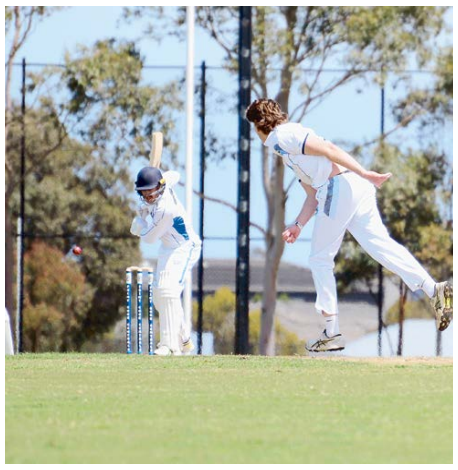
Woodend's Harrison Sheahan. 589012 12

Weather again plays havoc

It was another wet and windy day on Saturday, leaving many cricketers on the sidelines yet again. Star Weekly photographer Valerius Boenawan was out shooting some of the action that went ahead.



Yarraville Club players wait around. 589004_02



Point Cook Centrals' Max Pritchard bowls to Melton South Royals' Steven Szabo.



Caroline Springs celebrate a wicket. 589009 06



Williamstown's Jarrod Flood Bauce bowls to Ralf Beer. 589005 17



Point Cook Centrals' Mitchell Waugh. 589006 07



Williamstown's Sean Sturrock. 589005 02

Jack drives half the card

By John Dunne

Accomplished reinsman Nathan Jack turned on a masterclass at Melton on Saturday night, driving a personal-best four winners.

Former Kiwi pacer Captain Moonlight launched Jack's night when he proved too strong for his rivals after working to the lead with 1700 metres to travel.

Captain Moonlight comfortably held a three-metre margin over Ferrigno and Thunderfire at the finish to record his first win in Victoria since arriving at Russell Jack's stable two months ago.

A winner of three races in New Zealand, Captain Moonlight is still a work in progress, according to Jack.

"We were confident that he would run well tonight, but I think we might need to make a few more gear changes on him to get the best out of him, but we quite like him," Jack said.

Multiple Group 1 winner Fox Dan is locked away as Team Zav's representative in the $1.5 million TAB Eureka after he outstayed his rivals in the Mimosa Homes Free For All.

Despite sitting parked outside leader My Ultimate Barney, Fox Dan ($1.35 fav) surged to the front halfway down the straight before holding off the fast-finishing Yambukian to score by a head in a slick mile rate of 1:51.5.

Fox Dan, who was runner-up to Bay Of Biscay in last year's Eureka, is raced by Team Zav principal Danny Zavitsanos.

Jack was having his first drive behind Fox Dan.

"The camp gave me a lot of confidence, and if they're confident it makes my job a lot easier that's for sure," Jack said after the race.

Jack believes Fox Dan is a genuine chance in The Eureka.

"I can't see why not, he's a great little racehorse with good manners and he's a great trier," he said.

Half an hour later, Jack made his third return to the winner's stall in as many races when he steered Rapid Return to victory in the Aldebaran Park Trot.

The Group 1 winner was sent out at the surprisingly generous odds of $16 from the pole, and Jack gave the David Abrahams-trained mare the run of the race behind leader and $1.95 favourite Timmy Turtle.

Timmy Turtle appeared set for victory in the home straight, but Rapid Return refused to yield and grabbed the lead in the shadows of the post to score by a head in a mile rate of 1:57.

Jack admitted he was quietly confident Rapid Return would figure in the finish from the inside alley.

"She's been trialling quite well and David gave her a push and said she was going to win last week before she galloped. It looked a good race for her on paper where she was going to map well," he said.

"She's a funny one where I scrubbed the ears off her early and I was never confident until the last 20 metres."

The Emma Stewart-trained three-year-old Lowrider rounded out Jack's quartet of wins when he easily accounted for his rivals in the Nevele R Stud Pace.



Trinity Steele. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 582783 13

Lions' consistent run as they eye the finals

By Tara Murray

Bacchus Marsh Lions couldn't have asked for much more than what they've done in the Country Basketball League women's north-west.

The Lions sit second on the ladder with a 6-1 record with their only loss coming against ladder leaders Melton Thoroughbreds by just one point.

Lions' coach Bec Marshall said while it would have been nice to be undefeated they're happy with how the season has gone so far.

"It's reassuring that you know you basically need to find one basket in the course of a game and we're right there," she said.

"It made everyone realise that we're in with a real shot at taking it all the way.

"We will just spend the back half of the year fine-tuning some stuff and hopefully we're ready come finals time."

Marshall said having had most of the group together for a couple of seasons was a big part of the side's consistency this season.

She said the playing group knows what to expect and they're putting it out on the court.

"Even some of the spectators and club coaches have said just watching it that we move the ball well," she said.

"I think the team chemistry is pretty evident on the court. We know what to expect from each other each week which is nice.

"We're usually pretty certain of what we're doing going into each game. As long as we know everyone is up for it, we know what to expect.

"I think it holds us in good stead each week."

As well as continuing to stack up the wins, the Lions have been able to get some minutes into some of their younger players.

Marshall said at times it is hard to find minutes for everyone with having such a deep squad.

"They practice against the girls all week, so they sort of know what it takes," she said.

"Most of them have been able to get some points on the board at some point, which is always nice."

The Lions returned to the court on Saturday night, after the Bendigo Braves forfeited the previous round.

Marshall said it was a little frustrating as they had been looking forward to facing the Braves, who are one of the benchmarks of the competition.

They will face the Braves now in the final round of the season.

The Lions faced the Castlemaine Cannons on Saturday night.

Having beaten them by more than 80 points the first time they played, Marshall said before the game the emphasis was just being ready for everything and playing four quarters.

On Saturday, the Lions won 76-43.

Every Lions player hit the scoreboard with Kayla Salmons top scoring with 18 points.

Marshall said now the focus was continuing to be consistent for the rest of the season.

In the men's north-west, the Lions lost to the Cannons, 94-70.

The Lions now sit sixth on the ladder.

Warriors into championship

Melton Warriors are set to join Rugby Victoria's championship competition next season.

Following Kiwi Hawthorn's decision to withdraw from the championship at the end of 2026 and compete in the conference competition, Rugby Victoria sought expressions of interest.

Rugby Victoria said two clubs, Melton and Shepparton Bulls, will join the championship competition after expressions of interest.

Both clubs competed in the country conference of the Conference Cup, with the Bulls beating the Warriors in the grand final this year.

The Bulls then won the overall Conference Cup grand final.

"Following consultation with its committee and members, Melton Warriors have voted to join the Rugby Victoria Championship in 2027," Rugby Victoria said.

"The club enters the competition after celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2025 and brings a proud history, including three premierships in the previous iteration of the Ward Shield."

Shepparton joins the championship competition after four consecutive premierships including three Ward Shields in the previous iteration.

The season will begin on 10 April with an opening phase spanning 11 rounds, during which each of the 11 teams will play every other team once.

Following round 11, the competition will split into two divisions.

The top six teams will contest the Dewar Shield, while the remaining five teams will compete for the Ward Shield.

Each team will then play a further five rounds within its respective competition to determine the final ladder positions.

The top four teams in each competition at the end of round 16 will qualify for the finals, marking a return to the traditional three-week finals series.

Grand final day will be held on 28 August.

The final structure of the second grade and third grade competitions will be determined and communicated following the receipt and assessment of all team nominations by Rugby Victoria.

The women's Lindroth competition structure will also be decided following team nominations.

Burnside and Cougars tie

By Tara Murray

Burnside Springs United and Sunshine YCW couldn't be split as the two teams played out a tie in the Victorian Turf Cricket Association Clark Shield on Saturday.

The Cougars' total of 88 never looked like it would be enough, but the match proved to be one of the bowlers and the Cougars were able to share the points.

After resuming on Saturday at 5-21, Burnside worked at chasing down the runs.

At 9-74, the odds were back in favour of the Cougars.

The final pair for Burnside of Stafan Ediripullige and Joshua Kelly continued to fight, falling just short as their side was also bowled out for 88.

Burnside captain-coach Ashan Ranaweera said it was a crazy result.

"We still had a few batsmen," he said. "We had a collapse but we still had our two top order batters, Shohan [Rangika] and Mathew [Sanders].

"We kept them to bat yesterday [Saturday]. That was the plan.

"The wicket was not easy and it was turning and it was wet conditions.

"We had hoped that the last ball would get one run, but unfortunately he was out."

Ediripullige top scored with 22.

Ranaweera said they had hoped to try and force an outright result and sent the Cougars back in.

They were in trouble at 4-38 before they settled to ensure they batted out the day, finishing 7-148.

Ranaweera said they always knew it would be tough with just 39 overs to force a result.

"They had one guy who batted really well [Dylan Payne] and made 70-odd not out."

Payne finished 77 not out off 105 balls.

Rangika took three wickets for Burnside in the second innings, as eight bowlers got a bowl.

After five rounds, Burnside Springs United sits atop the ladder and is the only undefeated team.

Ranaweera said they were happy with how they were playing in their first season in the division 4 competition, having won the Russell Pollock Shield last season.

"The youngsters' mindset has been really clear and how they are playing," he said.

"They are playing with freedom and we're allowing them to attack the ball.

"We want to play our own game and it's about always sticking to the game plan."

Ranaweera said they felt confident at this level but they weren't getting ahead of themselves.

He said they just continue to take it week-by-week.

"So far, so good," he said. "I'm proud of the guys.

"They are working hard and training hard."

Burnside faces bottom side Bellbridge in a two-dayer in the next round.

Ranaweera said they won't underestimate them and they would look to make fewer mistakes from this week.

Meanwhile in the Russell Pollock Shield, Melton Centrals lost to Glenroy outright.

Chasing 155, Centrals were bowled out for 86.

Glenroy made 2-77 in its second innings before bowling Centrals out for 56 to get the full 10 points.



Salman Afridi bowls to Sam Ainsworth. (Valerious Boenawan) 589009 03

Falcons undefeated after win over PEGS

By Tara Murray

Caroline Springs held its nerve to turn its game with PEGS on its head to keep its winning start to the Victorian Turf Cricket Association McNamara Shield alive.

Both sides entered the round five clash undefeated, and halfway through day two it seemed that PEGS would be the one to continue on.

Two overs turned the game in the favour of the Falcons, who would go on to win.

Falcons' coach Ian Shattock said it had been a really good start to life in the McNamara Shield.

"It has been excellent, and we're really happy," he said.

"There haven't been any easy games, and the boys are really connected and have put in some great performances so far."

Shattock said they entered every game expecting to win, but they weren't taking anything for granted.

He said they thought they were as good as any other side in the competition and have their eyes on doing as well as they did last season, when they won a premiership.

The Falcons batted first on day one of the clash and finished the day at 8-223.

They added just one run on Saturday as they were bowled out for 224.

Shattock said it was good to see some different players contribute with the bat.

"Last week was pretty solid," he said.

"We lost a few wickets early and a few things didn't go our way before Flynn Rice was outstanding.

"He gutsed it out in tough conditions and showed a lot of commitment and frustrated them a little bit.

"Ashan [Abeykoon] was really good last week and turned the game with his batting."

Abeykoon top scored with 77 off 83 balls after coming in at number eight.

Rice finished 47 not out with Shattock saying that he deserved to get a half century.

At 1-116, PEGS was in control of the run chase and looked set to continue its winning run.

But things quickly changed.

"It was not ideal, but we were never out of the game," Shattock said.

"We had to keep playing the way we wanted to.

"We took 4-6 or 4-7 in a couple of overs, and it turned the game for us.

"Salman Afridi bowled well."

PEGS wasn't able to regain the momentum and was bowled out for 182 in the 62nd over.

Abeykoon took four wickets for the Falcons, while Afridi took three wickets.

Shattock said conditions weren't easy for the bowlers, with a strong wind from one end meaning the spinners couldn't bowl from that end.

The challenges keep coming for the Falcons, who will face Williamstown Imperials in the next round.

The Imperials are the team to beat this season.

Elsewhere, Grand United got the win against West Coburg St Andrews.

Having made 187, the Gorillas kept the Redbacks to 162.

All matches in the top two grades were called off on the weekend due to the weather.

Sharks add recruits

Hillside has added some key players as it aims to strengthen its squad for next year's Essendon District Football League women's premier division season.

The Sharks have started to announce their first new signings under new coach Angelo Lamanna.

Former Western Jet Kensley Ward joins the Sharks and has proven her ability up forward and in the midfield.

"Kensley joins the Sharks from Westbourne Grammarians in the VAFA [Victorian Amateur Football Association], having also previously come through the Western Jets pathway program. "A strong contested mark and reliable goalkicker, Kensley was the round one VAFA rising star nominee in 2025 after an impressive eight-goal haul versus Coburg."

Caitlin Kelly returns to the game having last played with Point Cook in the Western Football League in 2024.

"A versatile key position player who can also play in the ruck, Caitlin has previously represented the WRFL in interleague and played in back-to-back under-18.5 grand finals in 2023 and 2024.

"Consistent and reliable, Caitlin loves a game day task and always delivers."

Janella Manalo also previously played at Point Cook but has spent three years playing competitive rugby union.

The Sharks said she is quick and explosive and is a tackling machine and prides herself on her sportsmanship and teamwork.

"We're looking forward to seeing Nella continue to develop her skills in a wing or defensive role and bring her rugby strengths to the footy field."

Point Cook Centrals' teammates Sally Hoang and Nya Chuol are also making the move across to the Sharks.

"A quick and dynamic player, Sally's set to bring plenty of energy to our side and will love the wide expanses of the wings at Shark Park," the Sharks said.

"Nya joins the Sharks from Point Cook Centrals in the WRFL, where she finished runner-up in their senior women's best and fairest in 2026.

"Well known for her athleticism and work rate around the ground, Nya is most at home across half back."

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