

# NORTHERN **Star** Weekly

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Whittlesea Food Collective manager and chef Gloria Marrocchino, staff member Nina Pham and student Inderjeet Kaur. (Damjan Janevski) 556593\_03

## Hospitality training

People from refugee and migrant backgrounds are encouraged to apply for the Whittlesea Food Collective's next 10-week hospitality course.

The Whittlesea Food Collective is a café and catering kitchen at Melbourne Polytechnic in Epping operated by Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC) with support from the Scanlon Foundation.

The free course gives people from migrant and refugee background hands-on experience in a kitchen and front-of-house café while offering wrap-around support.

WCC's Narelle Sullivan said the program helps students gain the skills and confidence for future work.

"This is the kind of an environment where they can ... get enough experience and enough contact with people to ... figure out what their next step is."

She said each student is matched with a staff member in a buddy system and supported by a job mentor throughout the entire program.

The next course will run from 13 July to 18 September. Registration closes on 3 July.

Details: [www.foodcollectivecatering.org.au/training-and-employment-program](http://www.foodcollectivecatering.org.au/training-and-employment-program)

# GoGet green light

By Courtney Black

A car share program will be piloted in Hume for 12 months after council agreed to provide the company with three car parks.

Car share company GoGet asked council to enter into the pilot program at no direct cost to council.

Under the program, residents can sign up for a 'GoGet' membership and access local hire cars when and where they need it.

The hire cars can be booked by the hour or the day and are picked up and returned to designated car parks.

Council officers and GoGet selected two car spaces in Craigieburn (one on Clarendon Avenue and another on the corner of Grand Boulevard and Millicent Drive) and a third space on Sahi Crescent in Roxburgh Park. These car spaces will be reserved exclusively for GoGet cars for 12 months from October.

Councillor Ally Watson said the program will provide real tangible community benefits.

"This would be the first initiative of its kind in our municipality, providing residents with a flexible, affordable, and

practical new transport option," Cr Watson said.

"It is likely that Hume would be looking to charge, if it was to go beyond a 12-month trial, for ongoing use of public assets and that type of decision would come back to council."

Cr Sam Misho said giving away community assets to a business for free does not benefit residents.

"We're giving away something that belongs to the community," he said.

"We're giving them exclusive use for 12 months and then after that we're going

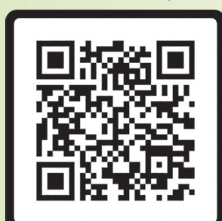
to actually try to see what competitive measures that we can take. Well, why aren't we doing it now?"

Cr Jarrod Bell said the trial will give the council a wealth of information when it considers long-term opportunities in 12 months.

"Without actually doing the doing, everything is just theory and so I'm keen to actually see the doing done," Cr Bell said.

"These are three spots in very underutilised areas, these aren't spots in the middle of town which are in massive demand with rapid turnover."

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# Planning reform concerns

By Courtney Black

Whittlesea council fears sweeping state planning reforms will reduce neighbourhood liveability and community input in future development decisions.

At its 19 May meeting, council noted an officer's report and a Municipal Associations Victoria (MAV) report outlining concerns with the Planning Amendment (Better Decisions Made Faster) Act 2026.

Whittlesea mayor Lawrie Cox said the reforms, which come into effect from October 2027, may diminish trust in the planning system.

"We're concerned that the changes to

the act (Planning and Environment Act 1987) significantly reduce community input into decision-making and the rights to appeal," he said.

"These changes also have the potential to negatively impact the character of some of our existing and future neighbourhoods and create environmental and safety issues."

The community has previously held rights to appeal and be notified of most planning permit applications but under the reforms council will only have to notify residents of proposals categorised as high-risk or complex.

Residents will also no longer have rights

to appeal planning permit applications categorised as small-scale or low-impact.

According to the MAV report, the development proposals with reduced community input may include small dwellings, subdivisions, townhouses and low-rise apartments.

Council raised concern that small-scale proposals will be deemed 'approved' if councils fail to respond within 10 business days.

It also objected to the deletion of "fairness" and "safe living and working environment" from the planning objectives and said this may impact the safety and equity of future developments.

Cr Blair Colwell said the reforms will likely lead to rushed, poorly planned developments.

"Growth cannot come at the expense of community identity, green space, infrastructure capacity and expectations of existing residents who invested their lives in their neighbourhoods," Cr Colwell said.

A state government spokesperson said projects must still meet strict requirements.

"We've delivered the biggest overhaul of Victoria's planning laws in decades — cutting red tape, speeding up decisions and getting things built faster so more young people can have a home of their own," the spokesperson said.



Councillors Naim Kurt and Steve Gagen, mayor Carly Moore with council's Jessamy Nicholas and Cherry Grimwade, council's Danielle Delalande, deputy mayor Ally Watson, Calwell MP Basem Abdo and council's Maria Majid. (Courtney Black)

## World Cup Festival hits Broadmeadows

Broadmeadows is set to come alive over a four-day World Cup Festival of Football.

Major World Cup matches will be broadcasted across two big screens as football fever and festival favourites take over the Town Hall Broadmeadows carpark.

The free festival kicks off on Sunday 14 June at 8am ahead of the Socceroos starting their World Cup campaign.

Hume mayor Carly Moore said she is excited to welcome football fans to the festivities.

"Broadmeadows is a diverse communi-

ty, we are bringing the world game to our suburbs," Cr Moore said.

Join in the thrilling atmosphere alongside Australian and Turkish football fans and watch as the Socceroos take on Türkiye from 2pm on 14 June.

Head back for round two on Friday 26 June and jump between screens to watch the Paraguay v Australia and Türkiye v USA matches from noon.

A jam-packed weekend follows on Saturday 27 June and Sunday 28 June with the final screened matches including Egypt v Iran and Colombia v Portugal.

The festival also offers live music, food trucks, movies, football activities and a rock-climbing wall.

There are no tickets or registration for the free-entry festival and you can watch all the action from the provided seating.

You can also bring your own chairs, food and beverages, though alcohol is not permitted.

Calwell MP Basem Abdo said he is proud to back the program.

"[We] are bringing the world game to screens across our community," Mr Abdo said.

## Police station hours cut

Police station reception opening hours were cut across the northern suburbs last month and The Police Association Victoria (TPAV) fears this trend will continue.

Reception counter hours were reduced on Sunday 31 May at Mernda, Mill Park, Whittlesea and Epping police stations.

Meanwhile, the Whittlesea police station reception is open by appointment only.

TPAV secretary Wayne Gatt said the opening hour reductions in the Whittlesea police service area point to a wider issue.

"It's disappointing to us that not a single police station in that region appears to be operating without significant reductions in service delivery for the community," Mr Gatt said.

"This highlights the desperate situation we have been confronting for some time in regards to the severe lack of police we have in Victoria."

However, Victoria Police claim the changes means more police out on the streets tackling crime.

Mill Park police station reception hours have been reduced from 24 hours-a-day to eight hours each day, opening from 1pm-9pm Monday to Friday and 10am-6pm on Saturday and Sunday.

Mernda police station reception is open between 10am and 6pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Epping police station reception is only open from 10am-6pm on weekdays.

Mr Gatt said there are 1507 police job vacancies across Victoria.

"We need a recruitment surge, the likes of which we saw in 2016, when the government committed to 3000 more police, and frankly, we need it yesterday."

"If that fails to happen, we'll see this trend of police stations reducing their hours or closing altogether, continue."

A Victoria Police spokesperson said the police stations are not closing, and officers would continue to work and deploy from them.

"The changes to reception counters also reflect quieter times when there are often less people attending to visit the police station," the spokesperson said.

"These changes will not impact the 24-7 response we provide - in fact, it will boost it by adding extra police vehicles on the road when the community need us the most."

The nearest stations with 24-hour reception are Preston, Heidelberg, Broadmeadows and Wallan.

## Grants open for Hume community and neighbourhood events

Applications are open now for Hume council's 2026-27 Event Grant Program.

The second round of the program is for funding of community and neighbourhood events, held between 1 January, 2027 and 30 June, 2027.

Council said it is seeking applicants for small events with up to 1000 attendees, with up to \$2000 in funding support available.

Medium community events with up to 3000 attendees are also able to apply for up to \$12,000 in funding support.

Council is also hosting three online information sessions for applicants to find out more about the program and how to apply.

The first session is held from 1-2pm on Thursday 4 June.

The second will be held from 6-7pm on Tuesday 23 June and the third session will be held from 11am-midday on Wednesday 1 July.

Mayor Carly Moore encouraged the community to apply for the grants.

"I regularly attend events across Hume,

and nothing makes me prouder than seeing our community come together to showcase the best our city has to offer," she said.

"Community events play a vital role in everyday wellbeing and fostering pride in where we live. These grants make sure organisers have the support they need to bring people together in a meaningful way."

Applications for the second round will close at 4pm on 6 July.

Details: [hume.vic.gov.au/Things-to-do/Events/Event-Grants](https://hume.vic.gov.au/Things-to-do/Events/Event-Grants)

# Farmer honoured

By Courtney Black

Fifth-generation farmer Judith (Judy) Clements has been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for her service to the Whittlesea community.

Ms Clements has dedicated decades to groups including the Whittlesea Agricultural Society, Yan Yean Cemetery Trust and the Victorian Farmers Federation.

She said it is incredibly humbling to receive such an honour.

"It's overwhelming because you just sort of chip away at the things that you feel passionate about without greater thought, its about the motivation, its about the things that cause you to be involved," she said.

She said the motivation to give back to her community is deeply rooted in her family.

"My fathers involvement set me down that path of getting involved from a fairly young age with various community projects and pursuits and advocating.

"I think that it makes it even more emotional to think of people who are no longer with us who have set us on such special paths in life.

"My whole psyche is deeply rooted in the district and I just feel a connection with it.

"It's something that comes from having your hands in the soil."

She said it was particularly significant to be involved in assisting farmers recovering from the 2009 Black Saturday fires.

"It was such a horrific time for people, so traumatic that there were people who were far worse off and that puts life into perspective in thinking of how fortunate I am, and for me is very good motivation for stepping forward.



Judith (Judy) Clements. (Supplied)

"Having been through fires and floods ourselves from a farming experience and knowing just how enormously challenging it is... your world is turned upside down

with one event." Ms Clements said she hopes to continue advocating for farmers and helping authorities prepare for and understand the impact of natural disasters.

## Name changes for community centres

The names of two community centres in Meadow Heights will be changed.

The 'Visy Cares Learning Centre' on Hudson Court will be renamed to the 'Meadow Heights Community Centre'.

The previous 'Meadow Heights Community Centre' on Buchan Street will be renamed the 'Buchan Street Community Centre'.

At the 25 May meeting Hume councillor John Haddad said council decided to rename the Hudson Court facility after the Pratt Foundation stopped funding the centre.

"For more than 20 years the Visy Cares Learning Centre has supported the Meadow Heights community and we as a council acknowledge the Pratt Foundation's important historical contribution," Cr Haddad said.

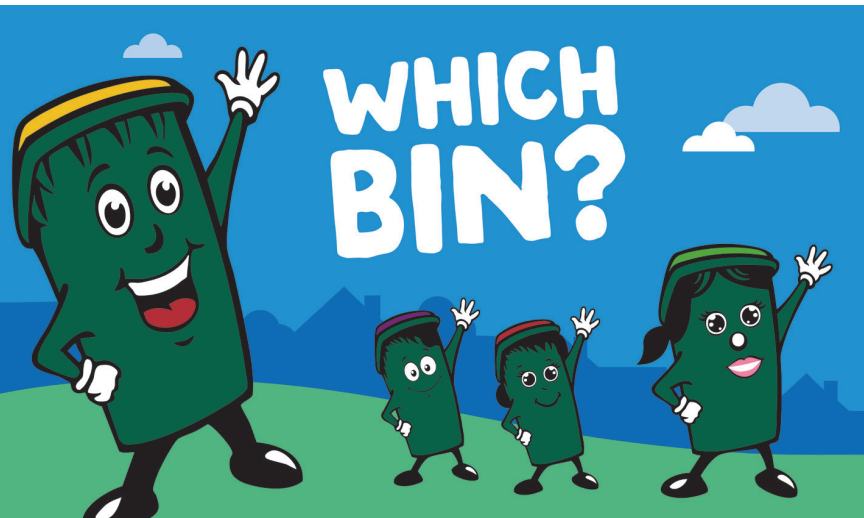
He said the council is restoring the 'Meadow Heights Community Centre' to its original name.

"In the past it used to be known as the Buchan Street Community Centre," he said.

As reported by the Star Weekly in March, a Hume council report found that the Buchan Street Community Centre would not survive long-term even with council investment.

Council will update signage and marketing to inform the community of the name changes.

## What's on



### Which Bin? app - Never miss bin day again

The City of Whittlesea's official Which Bin? app makes managing your waste simple.

- Set reminders for your bin collection days
- Find information on hard waste services and disposal vouchers
- Check which bin to put out each week, including public holiday changes

Free to download and easy to use, the app is available for Apple and Android devices. Download today at [whittlesea.vic.gov.au/binapp](http://whittlesea.vic.gov.au/binapp).



### Education and Employment Services Fair

Join the City of Whittlesea for the Education and Employment Services Fair as part of Refugee Week 2026 - One Million Stories.

This free community event helps students and community members explore pathways to education, training and employment.

Connect directly with settlement services, TAFE and training providers, employment support agencies and community organisations.

**When:** Tuesday 16 June, 11am - 1pm

**Where:** Epping Memorial Hall, 827 High Street, Epping

For more information, visit: [whittlesea.vic.gov.au/refugeeweek](http://whittlesea.vic.gov.au/refugeeweek)



[whittlesea.vic.gov.au](http://whittlesea.vic.gov.au)

# Council strikes resume

By Georgia Tacey

Council workers across eight councils are resuming protected industrial action, with another full day stoppage planned.

The Australian Services Union (ASU) has said more than 500 members endorsed taking strike action on Wednesday 17 June, which could potentially see another full stoppage of services similar to the previous rally on 5 May, once again marching to parliament's steps.

"Our members do not take the decision to strike lightly, but the next major strike on 17 June will take in over 1500 workers and is being done because we haven't received a single wage offer from any of these eight councils," ASU acting branch secretary for Victoria and Tasmania Zoe Edwards said.

The eight councils - Hume, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Greater Dandenong, Darebin, Melbourne, Merri-bek and Yarra - have experienced disruptions since industrial action began in early April.

In Hume, more than 26,000 bins were not emptied as council's waste workers walked off the job.

Hume chief executive Sheena Frost said councils are continuing to negotiate in good faith with all unions as part of the multi-employer bargaining process, with the ASU calling for a 10 per cent pay increase in the first year, followed by four per cent increases per year after.

"The Australian Services Union's industrial action is being undertaken very early in the

bargaining process," Ms Frost said.

"None of the eight councils have been officially notified of any ASU strike action on 17 June.

"While we acknowledge the legal right of the ASU to take protected industrial action, any adverse effects on our communities are regrettable.

"We will keep our communities informed as much as possible."

Ms Frost said council asks the community for patience while negotiations continue.

## Food charity feeling the pinch

Thomastown charity Turbans4Australia (T4A) is calling for direct state funding for grassroots food relief providers amid growing demand and cost of living pressures.

T4A president and founder Amar Singh said local charities can't keep up with the surging demand for food relief.

"People are coming out to us in the suburbs, seeking food relief weekly and we are just struggling," he said.

"Since the fuel crisis began, [demand] jumped up by about 25 per cent."

He said an average T4A food hamper will save a family of four about \$150 a week.

"People just don't have the equity in the bank every week to be able to purchase food and that's why they're coming to us to top up," Mr Singh said.

"We're fundraising to buy products at basically retail price to cope with the demand, there needs to be subsidies for us."

Mr Singh said T4A received none of the \$2.7 million emergency food relief package announced by the state government in April.

"We need to go further in providing immediate relief to charities on the cold face of it, who are serving the communities," he said.

He said the number of volunteers and donations have also dropped amid cost of living pressures.

"When making sure that local communities can have food on the table, we have to allocate resources and time and people, to go out to the other side of Melbourne to pick up the produce.

"It doesn't come cheap when you're running on donations. The sad part is we're seeing a huge drop in donations as well, so how do we keep going?"

A state government spokesperson said the 2026-27 state budget invests \$8.5 million for food relief including fuel vouchers for volunteers.

The spokesperson said this funding contributes to a 2026-27 food security grant program, which food relief providers can apply for subject to criteria and department assessment.

Mr Singh said T4A urgently needs volunteers on Sundays from 9am-11am.

Donate or volunteer: [www.t4a.org.au/](http://www.t4a.org.au/)



Craigieburn Country Women's Association celebrated its 80th anniversary with a community tea party. (Damjan Janevski) 547351\_02

## Craigieburn CWA marks eight decades

Eighty years of community service, fundraising and crafting were celebrated at the Craigieburn Country Women's Association (CWA) anniversary tea party on 20 May.

Past and present Craigieburn CWA members were joined by community leaders and members of other CWA branches for the 80th anniversary celebrations at St Thomas' Church.

Craigieburn CWA treasurer Rhonda Attwood said the group has met at the church on the third Wednesday of each

month for about 40 years.

"Craigieburn CWA began 80 years ago in May 1946 when a group of ladies who had been knitting items for the war effort and sending food parcels overseas decided they would like to keep on meeting," Ms Attwood said.

"They decided to join the Country Women's organisation which had begun in Victoria not quite 20 years before."

Ms Attwood said the CWA has always

prioritised assisting women, children and families who need a helping hand.

She said the 80th anniversary celebrations were particularly special for 20-year veteran Dot Short.

Among the tea party guests were Hume mayor Carly Moore and Central Highlands Group president Christine Jessup.

To learn more about the Craigieburn CWA or attend future meetings contact [craigieburncwa@gmail.com](mailto:craigieburncwa@gmail.com).

## Thomastown painting company in court over unpaid entitlements

A Thomastown-based painting and restorations company is facing allegations that it failed to pay more than \$4000 in entitlements to an apprentice towards the end of his employment.

The Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) has commenced legal action against M.J. Harris Painting & Restorations Pty Ltd and the company's sole director, Michael Harris.

A Fair Work inspector issued a compliance notice to the company in June 2025 after forming a belief that it failed to pay

the 23-year-old male apprentice painter at all for his entitlements in October 2024.

His entitlements amounted to \$4169 and included minimum wages for ordinary hours, overtime, leave entitlements as well as an allowance.

The company allegedly made a \$500 payment to the worker in July 2025 but the rest of the worker's entitlements remain outstanding.

FWO alleges the company, without reasonable excuse, failed to comply with

the notice and back-pay the worker's entitlements. It is alleged Mr Harris was involved in the contravention.

The FWO is seeking penalties for the alleged failure to comply with the notice.

Penalties of up to \$99,000 apply for small businesses and up to \$495,000 for other businesses, and Mr Harris faces a maximum penalty of \$19,800.

The regulator is also seeking a court order requiring the company to pay the alleged outstanding amount, plus superannuation and interest.

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Chandara Naoun watches as his daughter Alethea, 2, explores bell sounds. (Damjan Janevski)

## Borrow toys for world play day

Celebrate the International Day of Play on Thursday 11 June by borrowing free toys from your local library.

Families can borrow three toys for up to three weeks for free from Yarra Plenty Regional Library's (YPRL) Lalor and Whittlesea library branches.

YPRL showcased its expansive toy library (Lalor) collection on Tuesday 26 May, inviting families and children to gather for a morning of shared play.

The event celebrated the International Toy Library Association's World Play Day (28 May) which emphasises the importance of toys in learning.

Kids from across Whittlesea enjoyed hands-on activities and exploring a range of new toys, including puzzles, musical instruments, sensory resources and First Nations learning materials.

YPRL chief executive Nicole Rudden said play supports children's development,

particularly in building early literacy skills.

"Play is fundamental to learning, not separate from it," Ms Rudden said. "Young children develop the building blocks for literacy through everyday experiences like talking, singing and playing, which strengthen language and brain development in those crucial early years."

YPRL's Learning and Toy Library offers a wide selection of items for children up to six years old, while also providing robotics equipment and science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) based resources for children aged six to 14.

"By offering resources like our Toy Library we're helping families create rich, playful learning experiences at home that support a lifelong love of reading and learning."

Toy Library items must be returned to Lalor Library or Whittlesea Library.

Details and opening hours: [yprl.vic.gov.au](http://yprl.vic.gov.au)

**Briefs**

**Whittlesea launches Which Bin? App**

Whittlesea council has launched a free app called 'Which Bin?' to help residents stay on top of household waste and recycling. Residents can access a personalised 12-month bin calendar and receive updates about service changes and use quick links to report missed or damaged bins. The app sends collection notifications and provides guidance on which bins to put out as well as how to dispose of waste. Details: <https://www.whittlesea.vic.gov.au/Services/Rubbish-and-bins/Which-Bin-app>

**Calling young water heroes**

The 2026 National Water Week poster competition is now open giving local schools and preschools an opportunity to get creative while learning about water conservation. Victorian students up to year 8 can design and enter their own unique posters with the theme 'Water Heroes: Make Every Drop Count' for a chance to win \$150, \$100 and \$50 Dymocks gift cards. You can create your poster by drawing or painting, mixing materials or even using digital tools. Entries close at 5pm on 9 September. Category winners will be announced in October and every winner will automatically progress to the state-wide competition. Details: [www.nationalwaterweek.com.au](http://www.nationalwaterweek.com.au)

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SPONSORED CONTENT

# Australian businesses urged to seize AI opportunity

**Artificial intelligence is already helping Australian businesses improve customer service, lift productivity and support workers, but leaders say success depends on building confidence in how the technology is used.**

At CommBank's Accelerate AI event in Sydney, CEOs and founders said AI was moving from experimentation to practical use, with benefits emerging across retail, technology and professional services.

Bunnings is one example. Earlier this year, the retailer launched Buddy, an AI shopping assistant that helped 25,000 customers with DIY projects in a single week. It has also rolled out an AI chatbot for 50,000 staff across 400 stores nationwide.

Chief customer officer Rachael McVitty said Bunnings had taken a simple approach to building trust: customers always know when they are interacting with AI, the tool uses verified information, and people can still speak to a team member when needed.

At Canva, co-founder Cliff Obrecht gave ChatGPT an unorthodox test shortly after it launched: plan a global camel delivery service, including logistics, routing and turnaround times.

The model produced a complete operational

plan, despite the abstract challenge Obrecht expected would break the technology. At that moment, he knew what needed doing.

"If we weren't going to disrupt ourselves, we were going to be disrupted," he said of Canva's approach to implementing AI into its operations.

While speakers pointed to growing use of AI across Australia, some noted the technology remains in its infancy.

"If the ultimate measure is impact, we are less than one per cent of the way in," Seek founder and technology investor Paul Bassat said.

But that doesn't mean people should wait for the technology to mature before adopting it.

"If you don't adopt AI, almost certainly you will lose market share. And ultimately, you will go out of business."

Read the full story at CommBank Newsroom.

[https://www.commbank.com.au/articles/newsroom/2026/05/australias-ai-moment-opportunity-in-front-of-us.html?utm\\_term=External&utm\\_medium=Native&utm\\_source=Star&utm\\_campaign=weekone&utm\\_content=accelerate](https://www.commbank.com.au/articles/newsroom/2026/05/australias-ai-moment-opportunity-in-front-of-us.html?utm_term=External&utm_medium=Native&utm_source=Star&utm_campaign=weekone&utm_content=accelerate)



Canva CEO Cliff Obrecht at Accelerate AI 2026.



CommBank Accelerate AI: Mel Silva, Vice President and Managing Director, Google ANZ; Dr Nicole Gillespie, Chair of Trust and Professor of Management, University of Melbourne; Rachael McVitty, Chief Customer Officer, Bunnings; and Stephanie Crowe, Head Australian Cyber Security Centre

# Unpaid rates top \$50mill

By Georgia Tacey

More than 25,000 households in Hume are behind on their rates bill, taking the city's overdue rates bill to \$50 million.

A report to the 25 May Hume council meeting revealed the municipality was experiencing a rates crisis with unpaid rates across the municipality totalling \$50.77 million as of 31 March.

The report said \$26.69 million of that was overdue from previous years while \$24.08 million related to the 2025-26 financial year.

According to council, 25,030 properties have overdue rates – 6649 of which are already on payment plans.

The report said 3580 accounts were

with debt collectors, totalling \$26.76 million in unpaid rates.

Overdue text messages were sent to affected ratepayers after 31 March, officers said, with \$2.95 million paid by 24 April, bringing the total amount of overdue rates to \$47.83 million with 21,762 accounts still unpaid.

Northern Community Legal Centre said the organisation is witnessing ongoing and increasing financial pressure on Hume residents.

The legal centre said the people it assists are facing compounding cost-of-living pressures that are continuing to rise, and for households on low or fixed incomes, council rates are often one of several bills they simply can't afford.

"What we're seeing in Hume is not just a budgeting issue for households — it's a reflection of sustained financial pressure and growing inequality. Many families simply do not have enough income to cover basic living costs, let alone keep up with rates," Northern Community Legal Centre chief executive Jenni Smith said.

"Financial hardship rarely exists in isolation. We regularly see people facing a combination of housing stress, family violence, separation, and insecure work. These overlapping challenges make it incredibly difficult to stay on top of bills and avoid falling into debt."

The legal centre said it has seen a 92 per cent increase in demand for debt-related legal assistance over the past two

years.

In response to ongoing demand, the centre has established a dedicated economic justice team of lawyers and a financial counsellor focused on housing stress and financial hardship.

However, Ms Smith said the demand continues to exceed what the centre can provide.

"The number of ratepayers on payment arrangements and those referred to debt collection agencies highlights how widespread financial stress has become," she said.

"While payment plans can help, they are not always enough when households are already stretched beyond their means."

## Refugees tell their stories

A group of people from refugee backgrounds have come together to plan, create and deliver the A Million Stories: Journey to Hope event at Town Hall Broadmeadows.

The event on Saturday 20 June will celebrate Refugee Week, with locals and visitors invited to join together for fun, food, culture and music.

Volunteers and staff from local migrant, refugee and asylum seeker services have been meeting fortnightly to plan the event.

Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre's Sihem Sayand said every activity was planned by refugees themselves.

"This is our community, this is the

people we support. I am very proud of this event because it's about inclusion and belonging and also participation," Ms Sayand said.

Arabic Welfare volunteer Lama Hannoun said it was a great opportunity to be involved.

"I'm a new refugee here and I know about two to three per cent about the country," Ms Hannoun said.

"You feel yourself as a refugee that you became part of this society and this community, you can say belong."

Arabic Welfare's Rose Raad said volunteer Laith Alghareeb has recruited 20 children to form a choir for the event.



Lama Hannoun, Rose Raad, Laith Alghareeb, Celia Chang and Sihem Sayand. (Damjan Janevski) 556599\_02

## Your Exclusive Invitation Clubhouse Grand Opening

Explore the brand-new clubhouse and wellness precinct at Ingenia Lifestyle Springside, Beveridge.

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Pictured: Ingenia Lifestyle Sanctuary



with Evan Turok

# A surprising hit and a polarising miss

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.



★★★★☆  
The Drama - MA15+

Going into the cinema, I had a feeling that Kristoffer Borgli's 2025 film *The Drama* wouldn't be for me ... I was wrong.

The drama follows the soon-to-be-married couple of Charlie Thompson (Robert Pattinson) and Emma Harwood (Zendaya).

While preparing for their big day, the pair and some of their friends begin discussing the worst things each of them have done.

In a drunken state, Emma lets out a secret from her past that turns the entire situation upside down, leading to a series of painful situations unfolding until finally coming to a head on their wedding day.

The two most important aspects of a film are if it entertains and if it can affect your emotions in the intended way.

Two big ticks for the drama. There were countless occasions where the tense, awkward situations, paired with realistic dialogue and naturalistic acting, left me wanting to curl up into a ball and disappear into the chair in the best way possible.

The Drama was funny, heart-breaking, and artistically creative.

Each new scene was willing to be bold and true to life, leaving us with a film that was so easy to relate to and get lost in.

This is why I was so disappointed in its ending, which so quickly abandoned the risk-taking style replaced by a forced happy ending that took away from the film in its entirety.

From the first second *The Drama* started, there was a beautiful look to it. It wasn't long before I noticed some flashes of white on the screen and immediately realised what made this movie so easy on the eyes, was the fact that it had been shot on 35 millimetre film.

Borgli's decision to make a movie the old-fashioned way added so much to the tone and atmosphere of the film and doubled as indisputable proof that 35 millimetre film should once again become the standard for capturing movie magic in its purest form.

The drama shows us that it's impossible to know someone truly is until you have seen every side of them and begs the question, how would you react in the same situation?

A well-made film, earning 4/5.

★★★★☆  
EraserHead - M

David Lynch is a polarising film director, no one would be more opinionated and passionate about his films than him, a true perfectionist to his imagination.

His film *EraserHead* 1977 is without a doubt the strangest film I have ever watched.

Jack Spencer and his wife Mary are suddenly thrust into parenthood as the mother and father of a horrific alien baby.

The constant screaming and lack of sleep gets to Mary who leaves Jack as the sole parent, soon a series of unnerving, grotesque visions plague Jack while he struggles to care for the creature the best he can.

*EraserHead* is a visual and cinematic masterclass, starting with wide, still simplistic shots that demonstrate the nature of life in the melancholic urban environment the film takes place in.

It steadily transitions into a truly unsettling horror that is so incredibly uncomfortable on the eyes.

Lynch follows the philosophy of 'the only way past is through' and leans so hard into the style that you can't bring yourself to look away.

There is so little dialogue in this film it's hard to know exactly what the story is, and I believe that is exactly the point.

When people watch *EraserHead* they are desperate to find a cohesive beginning, middle and end style story that simply isn't here.

Although *EraserHead* is thin on story and hard to follow, it isn't about leaving you confused, it's about leaving you curious, the film demands to be rewatched, debated, studied and ultimately, never agreed upon. That's what makes *EraserHead* such a revolutionary film for its time.

At the end of the day this isn't my type of film, it is very slow paced and made ninety minutes feel much longer than it was.

The story is replaced with strange and striking visuals that can sometimes be hard to get on board with.

Ultimately this film made about as much sense as a football bat, so, if you are willing to take a risk and leave a film thinking to yourself 'what the heck just happened?' then *EraserHead* is for you, if not, give it a miss. *EraserHead* gets 3/5.

## A modified version of Soccer suitable for all ages

- **No running** – Players must always have one foot on the ground.
- **Non-contact sport** – Tackling and physical challenges are minimized to prevent injuries.
- **Modified rules** – Smaller pitches, lower-intensity gameplay, and reduced ball heights make it safer and
- **Team-based environment** – Encourages communication, teamwork, and social interaction.

**Craigieburn Sports Stadium,  
127 – 141 Craigieburn Road,  
Craigieburn  
Tuesday 14th July, 10am – 11am**

**For more information**

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Website - <https://wf4h victoria.org.au/>  
Walking Football 4 Health Victoria Group  
@walkingfootball4health.vic



**WALKING FOOTBALL  
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Kelvin Thomson is seeking volunteers for the adopt-a-creek program. (Damjan Janevski) 554432\_01

## Adopt a creek, collect litter

Calling all local conservation enthusiasts and nature lovers, this is your chance to help save Moonee Ponds Creek from litter.

Moonee Ponds Creek Chain of Ponds Collaboration (MPCCPC) litter lead Kelvin Thomson is calling for volunteers to 'adopt' a northern section of Moonee Ponds Creek.

"Adopt-a-creek gets volunteers to look after specific sections of the creek, and do their best to keep the creek free from litter," Mr Thomson said.

"Litter is a major and growing problem for both the environment and for people."

Australia produces 2.5 million tonnes of plastic waste each year, an average of 100kg per person, according to Clean Up Australia.

About 11 per cent of plastic waste is recycled yearly, according to a 2022-23 National Waste and Resource Recovery report.

"Ninety per cent plastic is not recycled, it either goes to landfill, or even worse, ends up in waterways, in our case the Moonee Ponds Creek and then Port Phillip Bay.

"Also areas of public open space with litter become unsightly, and prone to more litter, graffiti, and vandalism."

He said volunteers are needed in suburbs like Westmeadows, Attwood and Gladstone Park.

"Cleaning up litter develops civic pride and community spirit, a sense that we value our public spaces, and that we're all in this together.

"Many hands make light work, and together, we're gonna clean up this creek!"

Any individuals, families or groups in Hume can get in contact to help look after a section of the Moonee Ponds Creek.

Details: <https://chainofponds.org/>



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## GROUP A

- 1 MEX v RSA - JUN 11
- 2 KOR v CZE - JUN 11
- 25 CZE v RSA - JUN 18
- 28 MEX v KOR - JUN 18
- 53 CZE v MEX - JUN 24
- 54 RSA v KOR - JUN 24

## GROUP B

- 3 CAN v BAH - JUN 12
- 8 QAT v SUI - JUN 13
- 26 SUI v BAH - JUN 18
- 27 CAN v QAT - JUN 18
- 51 SUI v CAN - JUN 24
- 52 BAH v QAT - JUN 24

## GROUP C

- 5 HAI v SCO - JUN 13
- 7 BRA v MAR - JUN 13
- 29 BRA v HAI - JUN 19
- 30 SCO v MAR - JUN 19
- 49 SCO v BRA - JUN 24
- 50 MAR v HAI - JUN 24

## GROUP D

- 4 USA v PAR - JUN 12
- 6 AUS v TÜR - JUN 13
- 31 TÜR v PAR - JUN 19
- 32 USA v AUS - JUN 19
- 59 TÜR v USA - JUN 25
- 60 PAR v AUS - JUN 25

## GROUP E

- 9 CIV v ECU - JUN 14
- 10 GER v CUW - JUN 14
- 33 GER v CIV - JUN 20
- 34 ECU v CUW - JUN 20
- 55 CUW v CIV - JUN 25
- 56 ECU v GER - JUN 25

## GROUP F

- 11 TUN v NED - JUN 25
- 12 SWE v TUN - JUN 14
- 35 NED v SWE - JUN 20
- 36 TUN v JPN - JUN 20
- 57 JPN v SWE - JUN 25
- 58 TUN v NED - JUN 25

## GROUP A

- MEXICO
- SOUTH AFRICA
- KOREA REPUBLIC
- CZECH REPUBLIC

## GROUP B

- CANADA
- BOSNIA & HERZEGONIA
- QATAR
- SWITZALAND

## GROUP C

- BRAZIL
- MOROCCO
- HAITI
- SCOTLAND

## GROUP D

- USA
- PARAGUAY
- AUSTRALIA
- TÜRKIYE

## GROUP E

- GERMANY
- CURAÇAO
- CÔRTE D'IVOIRE
- ECUADOR

## GROUP F

- NETHERLANDS
- JAPAN
- SWEDEN
- TUNISIA

- 73 JUN 28 2A v 2B
- 74 JUN 29 1E v 3ABCD
- 75 JUN 29 1F v 2C
- 76 JUN 29 1C v 2F
- 77 JUN 30 1I v 3CDEFGH
- 78 JUN 30 2E v 2I
- 79 JUN 30 1A v 3CEFIH
- 80 JUL 1 1L v 3EHIJK

- 89 JUL 4 W74 v W77
- 90 JUL 4 W73 v W75
- 91 JUL 5 W76 v W78
- 92 JUL 5 W79 v W80

## QUARTER FINALS

- 97 JUL 9 W89 v W90
- 98 JUL 10 W93 v W94
- 99 JUL 11 W91 v W92
- 100 JUL 11 W95 v W96

ROUND

ROUND

FIN

JUL W101 v



# WALKIN 4 HEALT



OF 32

- 81 JUL 1  
1D v 3BEFU
- 82 JUL 1  
1G v 3AEHIJ
- 83 JUL 2  
2K v 2L
- 84 JUL 2  
1H v 2J
- 85 JUL 2  
1B v 2EFGIJ
- 86 JUL 3  
1J v 2H
- 87 JUL 3  
1K v 3D/E/N/J/L
- 88 JUL 3  
2D v 2G

OF 16

- 93 JUL 6  
W83 v W84
- 94 JUL 6  
W81 v W82
- 95 JUL 7  
W86 v W88
- 69 JUN 30  
W85 v W87

**SEMI FINALS**

- 101 JUL 14  
W97 v W98
- 102 JUL 15  
W99 v W100

**THIRD PLACE**

- 103 JUL 18  
L101 v L102

AL

19  
W102

GROUP G	GROUP H	GROUP I	GROUP J	GROUP K	GROUP L
BELGIUM	SPAIN	FRANCE	ARGENTINA	PORTUGAL	ENGLAND
EGYPT	CABO VERDE	SENEGAL	ALGERIA	DR CONGO	CROATIA
IR IRAN	SAUDI ARABIA	IRAQ	AUSTRIA	UZBEKISTAN	GHANA
NEW ZEALAND	URUGUAY	NORWAY	JORDAN	COLOMBIA	PANAMA

- GROUP G**
- 15 IRN v NZL - JUN 15
- 16 BEL v EGY - JUN 15
- 39 BEL v IRN - JUN 21
- 40 NZL v EGY - JUN 21
- 63 EGY v IRN - JUN 26
- 64 NZL v BEL - JUN 26
- GROUP H**
- 13 KSA v URU - JUN 15
- 14 ESP v CPV - JUN 15
- 37 URU v CPV - JUN 21
- 38 ESP v KSA - JUN 21
- 65 CPV v KSA - JUN 26
- 66 URU v ESP - JUN 26
- GROUP I**
- 17 FRA v SEN - JUN 16
- 18 IRQ v NOR - JUN 16
- 41 NOR v SEN - JUN 22
- 42 FRA v IRQ - JUN 22
- 61 NOR v FRA - JUN 26
- 62 SEV v IRQ - JUN 26
- GROUP J**
- 19 ARG v ALG - JUN 16
- 20 AUT v JOR - JUN 16
- 43 ARG v AUT - JUN 22
- 44 JOR v ALG - JUN 22
- 69 ALG v AUT - JUN 27
- 70 JOR v ARG - JUN 27
- GROUP K**
- 23 POR v CON - JUN 17
- 24 UZB v COL - JUN 17
- 47 POR v UZB - JUN 23
- 48 COL v CON - JUN 23
- 71 COL v POR - JUN 27
- 72 CON v UZB - JUN 27
- GROUP L**
- 21 GHA v PAN - JUN 17
- 22 ENG v CRO - JUN 17
- 45 ENG v GHA - JUN 23
- 46 PAN v CRO - JUN 23
- 67 PAN v ENG - JUN 27
- 68 CRO v GHA - JUN 27

**Craigieburn Sports Stadium,  
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The members are happy to be together again for another catch up. 557377\_06



President Miguel Demetrio Ortega heads the weekly lunches and activities. 557377\_01

## Seniors speaking Spanish

Every Wednesday at Dallas Neighbourhood House members of the Spanish Seniors Group meet to converse in their first language. From 9.30am to 2.30pm the members enjoy eating lunch together and participating in social activities. Star Weekly photographer Damjan Janevski went along to the 3 June catch up to capture the friendships and fun.



Vice president Isabel Escudero welcomes Spanish-speaking seniors to join in the group. 557377\_04



Secretary Nina Marino works with the group to ensure all runs smoothly every Wednesday. 557377\_02



Treasurer Martha Vargas is all-smiles about meeting up with her friends. 557377\_03

# Catch Vika & Linda on tour

Iconic Australian vocalist duo Vika & Linda are stopping off in South Morang in July as part of a national tour celebrating their ninth studio album - 'Where Do You Come From?'

Sisters Vika and Linda Bull said the idea for the title track came from a memory they have carried since childhood.

Growing up in suburban Melbourne they were repeatedly asked 'Where do you come from?' and when they answered, 'here' the response was often, 'No, where do you really come from?'

"Where Do You Come From?" was written because of a memory of being a child in

primary school being teased and given the nickname 'Coke,'" the duo said. "The memory is very vivid because there weren't a lot of Tongan/Australian kids wandering the streets of Doncaster in those days."

The sisters find singing their own songs fulfilling.

"It is not the first time exactly, Grandpa's Song (1996) was written telling our story as children being embarrassed to be seen with our Tongan grandfather and this is a continuation of that story.

"The process of songwriting and producing our own stories is a lot more honest. A bit of soul searching happened

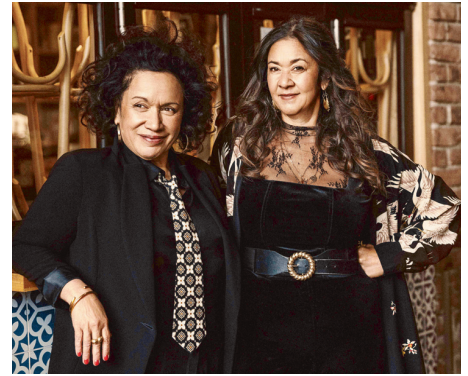
which is such a good thing because in a way it was therapy."

Vika & Linda are excited to share renditions of their old releases, and songs from the new record with local audiences.

"A lot of audiences seem to be connecting with the new songs which is a wonderful feeling."

Experience the soaring vocals of Vika & Linda live in 'Where Do You Come From?' at Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre on 10 July from 7.30pm.

Tickets: <https://www.pracc.com.au/Whats-On/All-Events/VIKA-LINDA-Where-Do-You-Come-From>



Vika & Linda. (Supplied, Brian Purnell)

## Broadway comes to Gisborne stage thanks to Sunset Six

The Sunset Six are bringing your Broadway favourites to a Gisborne stage.

Macedon Ranges singers Tasha Luke, Rexine Perry, Lucy Watson, Erin Haberecht, Kate Kennedy and Katy Somerville will present a cavalcade of songs from an array of musical theatre favourites.

Featuring classics from 42nd Street, Les Miserables, Funny Girl, Company, Waitress and more, in a concert featuring music for all tastes.

Tasha, Rexine and Lucy have been performing around the Ranges for the past few years as The Sunsets, performing locally at carols, markets and more across the region.

The group said they are thrilled to have Erin, Katy and Kate join them to make The Sunset Six.

Helping bring the sound to life will be pianist Dan Rigby.

The group all individually have backgrounds in musical theatre, starring in productions across Australia and even beyond.

The group have also performed with Kyneton Theatre Company in shows such as Mamma Mia!, The Wiz, Legally Blonde and Joseph & His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat - and the upcoming musical showcase, Broadway, Baby.

The seasoned performer and local talent is also seen as the accompanist for the Kyneton Theatre Company, an organ scholar at the Anglican Parish of Gisborne and a member of the Bendigo Symphony Orchestra.

The group said they are excited to bring audiences this original 'mixtape show' celebrating the incredible music of Broadway and the West End.

The Sunset Six do Broadway concert will take place on Sunday 21 June at 2pm at the Gisborne Uniting Church, 23 Brantome Street, Gisborne.

Tickets will cost \$25 for adults, and \$20 for concession and students, with afternoon tea to follow the concert.

Details: [macedonrangesunitingchurch.org.au](http://macedonrangesunitingchurch.org.au)



Tasha Luke, Rexine Perry, Lucy Watson, Dan Rigby, Erin Haberecht, Kate Kennedy and Katy Somerville. (Supplied)

## 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](mailto:westeditorial@starweekly.com.au) by 9am Wednesday the week prior to publication

### Refugee Week Event

Celebrate Refugee Week on Saturday 20 June with the free A Million Stories: Journey to Hope event at Town Hall Broadmeadows. This event is organised by people from refugee backgrounds. From 1-5pm enjoy cultural performances, art, music, dance and food. Learn about the services and programs available in Hume. You are welcome to dress up in your cultural attire.

■ [communitydevelopment@hume.vic.gov.au](mailto:communitydevelopment@hume.vic.gov.au)

### Whittlesea Probus

Members of The Combined Probus Club of Whittlesea will meet on Monday 6 July at Whittlesea Bowls Club at 9.30am. A member of the club will talk about personal experiences. Visitors are welcome. Probus is open to all retired and semi-retired members of the community.

■ [whittleseaprobust@hotmail.com](mailto:whittleseaprobust@hotmail.com), or 0427 021 592

### Mill Park Community House Groups

The Neuro Group is a social group catering for people with multiple sclerosis (MS) and neurological disabilities. The group runs Mondays and Fridays and includes bingo, card games, group outings and much more. There is a \$10 yearly fee and a gold coin donation for tea, coffee and snacks. The carers friendship group supports families and friends who care for someone experiencing mental illness and meets on the fourth Wednesday of every month. The Coffee & Chat runs every Thursday, 1-3pm, and is a relaxed and friendly space where



This week's photographer's choice picture is of Yarraville actor Scott Middleton, who is playing Groucho Marx in *Between The Lines - The James Joyce/Groucho Marx Letters*. (Damjan Janevski) 555176\_01

everyone is welcomed in for a gold coin donation. The seniors Recycled Teenagers Group runs every Tuesday noon-3pm. \$10 yearly fee, includes tea, coffee and afternoon tea every week.

■ Natasha, 0408 561 597

### Craigieburn Residents' Association

Do you live in Craigieburn and wonder

what's happening about roads and facilities, or have a concern you'd like to raise so it can be addressed? The Craigieburn Residents' Association is the perfect platform to share your concerns. The association liaises with Hume council, as well as state and federal government organisations to get the job done. It also gives donations to local charities

each year. The group meets on the last Wednesday of the month at Selwyn House, Selwyn Avenue, Craigieburn, at 7.30pm.

■ [craigieburnresidents@gmail.com](mailto:craigieburnresidents@gmail.com), or 0430 354 463

### Kalkallo English Classes

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■ Sussex Neighbourhood House, 9354 2210

### Craigieburn Country Women's Association

The Craigieburn Branch of CWA welcomes women of all ages to its meetings and craft sessions which are held on the third Wednesday of every month. Meetings begin at 10.30am followed by lunch and a craft or socialising session. Meeting venue is St Thomas's Uniting Church corner of Rayfield and Dianne Avenues in Craigieburn.

■ [craigieburncwa@gmail.com](mailto:craigieburncwa@gmail.com) or Karen, 0499 821 754




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**Dr. Tony Stubbs**  
Eye Surgeon

MB BS BSc(Hons)B Med Sc MS FRANZCO



Dr. Tony Stubbs, Eye Surgeon, says that just about anyone can have their vision restored and be rid of their glasses for most of the time. And this is without the use of laser surgery.

Dr Stubbs formerly at the Royal Victorian Eye Hospital who has worked with the Fred Hollows eye department at the Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney, says he began his career through the inspiration of his father, Dr Maxwell Stubbs.

"My father was a pioneer in cataract implant surgery from 1963! He has now passed away but some of his patients still come in for a check-up. Not only is this inspirational, it also demonstrates that good surgery outlasts the surgeon," Dr Stubbs says.

A specialist who helps people who have been advised they are unsuitable for laser surgery, Dr Stubbs is also committed to demonstrating that age, corneal distortion or astigmatism are no barriers to eliminating the need for glasses.

One of my best moments was treating a 12-year-old girl who was struggling at school because of poor vision due to congenital cataracts even with the use of thick glasses. Now 10 years later, she still has 20/20 vision without glasses. That inspires me.

"Seeing my patients' bright smiles after surgery, as they stop squinting and can read without glasses, is definitely the best part of my job."

No referral is needed and no out-of-pocket expenses are incurred for an assessment to enable all options available to be considered.

The Williamstown Eye Centre  
120 Ferguson Street, Williamstown 3016, Victoria, Australia

Tel: +613 9397 8989  
Fax: +613 9397 8984

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# PUZZLES

## SUDOKU

No. 293

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

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

medium

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

hard

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

easy

medium

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

hard

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

Puzzles and pagination © Pagemasters | pagemasters.com

## QUICK CROSSWORD

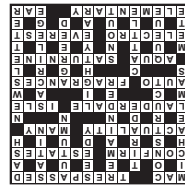
No. 293

### ACROSS

- Raincoat (coll) (3)
- Wrongfully entered (10)
- Ratify (7)
- Landed properties (7)
- State of existing in reality (9)
- Oodles (4)
- Florida city, Fort - (10)
- Small island (4)
- Car (4)
- Scents (10)
- Prefix meaning water (4)
- Gloomy (9)
- Spider-Man villain (7)
- Highest mountain (7)
- Simple (10)
- Organ used to hear (3)

### DOWN

- The feast of St Michael (10)
- Compile (9)
- What's left (9)
- Ill-reputed (5)
- Season (6)
- Glossy fabric (5)
- Elan (4)
- Harangue (6)
- Informal bulletin (10)
- Toy Story's Buzz - (9)
- Desecration (9)
- Tallied (6)
- Farm animals (6)
- File (5)
- Schnoz (coll) (5)
- Measure (4)



## DECODER

No. 325

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

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	26
										C	D	

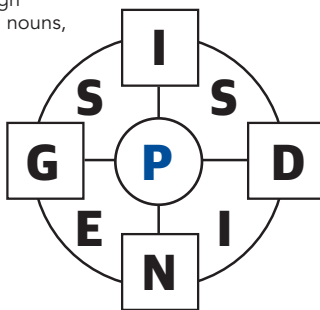
26	C	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26							
27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60

## 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:**  
15 words: **Good**  
22 words: **Very good**  
30 words: **Excellent**



DESPISING, dips, dips', pips, pips', peps, peps', pend, pends, pens, pens', pidgin, pied, pine, pined, pines, ping, pinged, pings, pins, pins', snip, snipe, sniped, snipes, snips, sped, spend, spends, spied, spies, spin, spine, spins

## 5x5

F		L		S
	S		A	
S		N		E
	D		E	
D		E		S

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	D
D	G	E	D	E
E	C	N	I	S
S	U	A	L	
F	A	L	L	S

No. 400

## QUICK QUIZ



- Michelle Yeoh (pictured) won a Best Actress Academy Award for which 2022 film?
- Which landlocked country in Eastern Europe translates to English as 'White Russia'?
- In the food industry, what does UPF stand for?
- Which iconic Australian landmark is playfully known as 'Nuns in a Scrum'?
- Which aptly named flower symbolises remembrance?
- In Greek mythology, how many labours did Hercules endure?
- The Buddhist temple Angkor Wat is located in which country?
- What animal is responsible for the most human deaths each year?
- Which British prime minister survived an IRA assassination plot in 1984?
- Melbourne hosted which major global exhibition event in 1880?

**ANSWERS:** 1. Everything Everywhere All At Once 2. Belarus 3. Ultra-Processed Foods 4. Sydney Opera House 5. Forget-me-not 6. 12 7. Cambodia 8. Mosquito 9. Margaret Thatcher 10. World's Fair



## RATINGS

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

# LBX has a little bit of luxury

By Derek Ogden, Marque Motoring

Yaris by Lexus: an automotive oxymoron? Nothing could be further from the truth.

The new Lexus LBX luxury compact is built on the Toyota Yaris Cross platform (GA-B).

The LBX is the smallest model in the Lexus range and the brand's first B-segment SUV.

Enter the progeny of the Yaris Cross. Imbued with the Lexus philosophy of Kaizen (continuous improvement) across all its brands. Now it is bringing this to the small SUV segment with the LBX.

Lexus sees the need for the LBX to meet the demand for signature craftsmanship, cutting-edge design and high levels of technology in an attractive package for a diverse and growing customer base.

"The first LBX breaks new ground," says Lexus Australia chief executive John Pappas, "It is proof that luxury is not dictated by vehicle size and is in keeping with our electrified strategy, offering the latest in hybrid technology with an advanced fuel-efficient powertrain."

Available in Luxury 2WD, or Sports Luxury 2WD or AWD variants, prices start at \$47,550, plus on-road costs, and top out at \$56,990 for the flagship, aimed at appealing to youthful buyers with active lifestyles. The entry-level Luxury 2WD was on test.

All come with a five-year unlimited kilometre warranty, and Lexus being what it is, a three-year complimentary subscription to the manufacturer's Lexus Encore lifestyle program boasting benefits such as exclusive offers from luxury hotel partners, invitations to premium events and fuel discounts at participating Ampol service stations.

## Styling

Designers set out to make its mark for future generations of compact city-slicker SUVs.

Based on the rigid GA-B platform, the all-new LBX is one of the best-looking compacts around, the trademark Lexus spindle dominating the front, vertically compressed to sit low in the vehicle body to accentuate sportiness.

The bonnet leading edge seamlessly molds into the slim high-set LED headlights, which include a high/low-beam light and bi-functional daytime running light and turn signal with an inverted version of the L-shaped signature lighting.

Minimal overhangs and rugged wheel

arches, dark side sills and wheel arch moldings complement the expressive SUV design. Lexus SUV family features anchor the rear with combination lamps joined by an LED light bar spanning the width of the tailgate, before framing the tail lamp cluster with a distinctive L shape.

Dynamic 18-inch alloy wheels are standard across the range, with Luxury grade fitted with dark grey metallic wheels with a bright machined finish highlighting the twin Y-spoke design. Two-tone body finish includes a black roof.

## Interior

In the cabin there's black seat upholstery, steering wheel, door and instrument panel trim and front and rear floor mats. Front seats are heated. Dual zone climate control has remote function.

Occupants have the benefit of wireless phone charging, ambient interior lighting, smart entry and start and power tailgate. The driver gets an auto dimming rear-view mirror.

As for occupant comfort, Lexus says the split-folding rear seat and optimization of rear cargo space provide customers with active urban lifestyles the carrying flexibility they need for work, family and fun requirements. However, rear legroom is cramped, even with average-size front row occupants.

## Infotainment

The dashboard is dominated by an integrated 9.8-inch multimedia display set behind an anti-reflective glass coating. There's a single external knob for power on/off and volume control. A 12.3-inch instrument cluster greets the driver on sitting down.

The display apes a smartphone layout and offers voice recognition and wireless compatibility with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto. Luxury grade is paired with a six-speaker audio system.

Native navigation is cloud-based, storing map data, downloading it to the sat nav as needed using the data communication module built into the vehicle. This also facilitates over-the-air software updates for the head unit and instrument cluster.

Up to three users can save personal settings for multimedia, vehicle settings and active safety parameters through a Bluetooth device or smart key. Customers can also pre-set audio and navigation settings, seat position, interior illumination, and parameters for the



The LBX offers the latest in petrol/electric hybrid technology. (Pictures: Supplied)

Pre-Collision System warning timing, blind spot monitor sensitivity and other settings.

## Engines/transmissions

All LBX grades share the same petrol/electric powertrain, teaming a 1.5-litre internal combustion engine with an electric motor generator and nickel-metal hydride battery for fuel economy with refined performance.

Peak power for the petrol motor is 67kW at 5500rpm and 120Nm of torque from 3800 to 4800 revs. It is mated with a continuously variable transmission.

The petrol engine is paired with a hybrid transaxle on the front axle including a permanent magnet synchronous motor producing 69kW/185Nm, powered by a compact nickel-metal hydride battery stored underneath the rear seat.

Peak combined output for the three-cylinder hybrid powertrain is rated at 100kW, with low combined fuel consumption of 3.8 litres per 100km on the combined urban/highway cycle and average carbon dioxide emissions of 85 grams per kilometre.

## Safety

The all-new LBX offers excellent protection for occupants and other road users with a full suite of Lexus Safety System+ features. Active safety uses a combined radar and

camera sensor, operating high-tech. For example, the Pre-Collision System with Pre-collision Braking, which detects leading vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists in the daytime, as well as oncoming vehicles and motorcycles in the daytime.

Dynamic Radar Cruise Control offers a broad range of associated features, allowing four levels of preset distances to vehicles in front and three levels of acceleration strength.

The DRCC system can also offer stop-start and low-speed following, with smooth acceleration or deceleration as required.

In a first for Lexus, owners can set a speed limiter linked with Road Sign Assist (Speed Signs Only) to limit the vehicle's speed in accordance with the associated speed limit.

The LBX comes equipped with eight airbags for excellent passive occupant protection.

## Driving

The front suspension of the LBX two-wheel drive variants features a new MacPherson strut system with updated suspension geometry ensuring excellent straight-line stability and minimal understeer. At the rear, the front-drives incorporate a lightweight rigid torsion beam. It all goes into making the ride and handling steady and sure footed.

While it's no bitumen burner, engineers improved the hybrid system's responsiveness and acceleration thanks to the strong output of the motor and hybrid battery.

Acceleration and deceleration characteristics are sensitive to up and downhill inclines and can adjust the drive force accordingly.

The new hybrid powertrain ensures the LBX provides refined mid-range performance while offering excellent fuel economy and low carbon dioxide emissions. After an average working week the test LBX had managed to average 4.5 litres per 100km of fuel use.

There's a stillness in the well-insulated cabin, mostly free from wind and tyre noise, until the 'loud' pedal is pushed, then it's a raspy retort.

## Summary

The LBX delivers big on Lexus fundamentals of quality and craftsmanship, while offering the latest in petrol/electric hybrid technology with an advanced fuel-efficient powertrain.



Mernda's Joshua Caputo. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 557014\_03



Lincoln Coffey in action against Kilmore. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 557014\_08



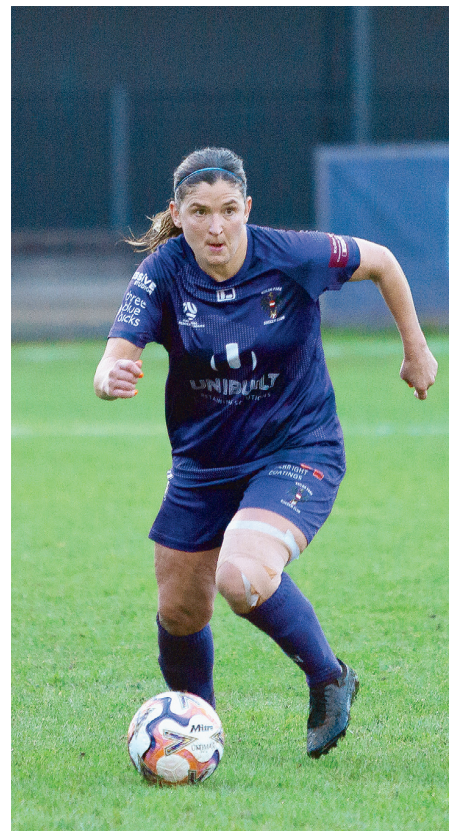
Spring Hills' Katie Godden. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 556977\_01

# Long weekend sport action

While many people took the opportunity to mark the long weekend, *Star Weekly* photographer Ljubica Vrankovic was out and about shooting the football and soccer action from across Melbourne's north-west.



Captain Aleksandra Sinclair. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 556977\_02



Keilor Park's Abby Holmes. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 556984\_06



Georgia Henderson in action against Bulleen. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 556984\_14



Jenna Ibrahim. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 556977\_07



James Sekulovski. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 557014\_13



Keilor Park celebrates. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 556984\_19



Maggie Byrne. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 556984\_18

# Sharp steps up at Mernda

By Tara Murray

Mernda is hoping to continue building under new coach Gareth Sharp in the Diamond Valley Cricket Association Money Shield.

The Demons made finals last season in their first season back up in the Money Shield, with Sharp playing a big role in that.

After being an assistant coach in his first season at the club, Sharp has taken on the head coach role for next season.

"It will be good to step up and hopefully have a really successful season," he said.

"I have not been a head coach before of as many teams so it will be a learning experience.

"Having been an assistant coach last season I know how teams there are and how to manage the player development and what they need to put the club heading in the right direction."

Sharp has previously been coach at Broadford and said he had seen the step up from country cricket to metropolitan competitions.

He's also done some coaching in England.

"I love that ability to help people," he said. "I've come to a club that is serious about cricket and developing and getting better.

"The training is really good at Mernda and there's excitement to be there.

"The group won Mash Shield before moving to Money Shield and trying to stay up in Money with the divisions being re-structured."

At 24, Sharp is one of the older blokes at the club which has a lot of young talent coming through.

He for the group having worked so hard to get back into Money Shield after a tough few seasons, they wanted to start.

"It was our first year back and hopefully we're on an upward trend," he said.

"Winning the T20 was good but we're not looking too far into that.

"It doesn't help you go up the grades. Our under-19s did well and they will go again.

"With the teams coming down from Barkley Shield we need to be able to compete again.

"In the pecking order we're probably closer to the bottom than the top, we have something to prove."

Sharp said their recent season was a tale of two halves as they dropped several matches after the Christmas break.

He said with a young group there was still a lot of growth across all the grades.

"It's about making sure they put their best foot forward as a team," he said.

"We've got a few people coming in and hopefully a big name recruit or to."

The Demons have since announced a couple of big signings.

The biggest is former Sri Lankan international all-rounder Dilhara Lokuhettige will be joining the club later this year as a playing assistant coach.

"Dilhara brings a wealth of experience from across the world game, including international cricket for Sri Lanka, domestic T20 competitions around the globe, and many successful seasons in Australian club cricket," the Demons said.

"A powerful middle-order batsman and seam bowler, he has built a strong reputation for his knowledge of the game, professionalism and passion for developing players.

"Beyond his playing resume, Dilhara has extensive coaching and mentoring experience working with developing cricketers across senior and junior programs."

James Taylor also returns to the club.



Joel Fitzgerald, Hugo Hall-Kahan, Flynn Riley and Mitch Podhajski. (Ljubica Vrankovic/EDFL/Collingwood FC)

## Three locals named in World

By Tara Murray

Three players whose soccer careers started in Melbourne's north-west have been named in the Socceroos squad for the FIFA World Cup.

Tony Popovic's squad features a mix of new faces and experienced campaigners. Notably, 17 members of the squad have been selected for a FIFA World Cup for the first time.

The squad also includes five Australian-based players - Patrick Beach, Aziz Behich, Mathew Leckie, Paul Okon-Engstler and Nishan Velupillay.

Behich started his career with Meadow Heights and spent time with Green Gully and Hume City in his early career.

It will be Behich's third World Cup appearance for the Socceroos.

Mathew Leckie, along with Mat Ryan, are poised to equal the national record held by Tim Cahill and Mark Milligan by being selected for a fourth FIFA World Cup.

Having been on the outer of the Australian set up the past couple of years and having not played since 2024 Leckie earned a recall to the squad ahead of the World Cup.

Leckie grew up in St Albans in his younger years, before his family moved further west where he attended Kurunjang Secondary College. He started his career with the Brimbank Stallions, but had spent a year playing football with St Albans first.

Jordan Bos will make his World Cup debut. Bos grew up in Point Cook and played with both Point Cook and Hoppers Crossing in his junior career.

He joined Melbourne City and is now playing in Europe.

"We are delighted to finally announce the 26 players who will represent the Socceroos at the FIFA World Cup," Popovic said.

"I'd like to acknowledge the players who contributed to our direct World Cup qualification but are not part of this squad. Their contribution should not be forgotten. "Our focus now shifts to finalising our preparations for the upcoming friendly against Switzerland and for our World Cup group matches."

## AFL dreams comes true for northern trio

By Tara Murray

Greenvale's Mitch Podhajski and former South Morang juniors Flynn Riley and Joel Fitzgerald were selected in the AFL mid-season draft.

The three heard their names called out on Tuesday night as 18 players found their way onto AFL lists.

Eleven players were selected from Victorian Football League clubs, while six from South Australian National Football League clubs,

Riley was taken by Carlton at pick four. Riley, who has been playing locally for Aberfeldie in the Essendon District Football League, was on Carlton's reserves list.

Standing at 206 centimetres and on the back of some key development with the VFL Blues in recent years, Riley will get his chance on an AFL list after numerous years of commitment to his craft.

The ruckman has played 11 games for the Carlton Reserves since the beginning of last year, including winning the coaches award last year.

Riley played his junior football at South Morang before moving to Montmorency and playing for the Northern Knights in the Talent League competition.

Carlton football general manager Chris Davies said the acquisition of Riley was an exciting moment for the club for a number of reasons.

"To be able to reward Flynn with a spot on our list is reward for effort for someone who's not only an exciting young prospect, but also a great person," he said.

"Flynn has made himself known to a lot of people across our football club as a member of our VFL team, and has been so committed to making himself better every single day."

Fitzgerald was selected by Melbourne at pick 16.

Following an impressive run of form at VFL level, Fitzgerald arrives at Melbourne after successfully transitioning from defence into the midfield this year. After spending time in Essendon's VFL program before moving to Williamstown ahead of the 2024 season, Fitzgerald has emerged as one of the competition's leading ball-winners in 2026. He is averaging 34 disposals per game, the third-highest figure in the league, including a standout 40-disposal, two-goal performance.

Fitzgerald also played junior football at South Morang.

Demons recruiting manager Jason

Taylor said Fitzgerald continues to get better and better,

He's never suffered from not finding the ball Joel even back at Northern Knights back in covid years, he played as half back then, always got his hands on the ball 20 plus times a game

Very clean and doesn't fumble, sees the game well more recently transfer his game into the midfield under Justin Plapp and Danny Ryan at Williamstown.

Podhajski at 27, finally gets his AFL opportunity after being taken by Collingwood at pick 19.

A versatile forward, Podhajski is known for his strength around the contest, agility and accurate kicking.

Coming to the Pies from Coburg, the Greenvale product has booted an impressive 123 goals in 77 VFL appearances.

This season he has kicked 28 goals in eight games for Coburg and is the current leading goalkicker in the VFL.

"We are hoping Mitch can come straight in, play in our forward line and kick goals for us. He has been doing it at Coburg for a couple of years now in the VFL system and we think the way he plays will help fill the role of losing Jamie on the weekend," Collingwood AFL national recruiting manager Shane O'Bree said.



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