

NORTHERN **Star Weekly**

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Thomastown library branch manager Carly McMartin with the colourful flower wall. (Damjan Janevski) 562660_01

Flower wall sprouts

A vibrant new flower wall at Thomastown Library is bringing colour, creativity and community spirit to the branch, with local crafters contributing handcrafted crocheted flowers to a growing installation.

Between 15 and 20 craft loving library users have contributed dozens crocheted flowers of various sizes and colours to the project. Flowers were collected over a two-month period before being assembled on the wall, creating a garden-inspired artwork. The artwork will continue to grow with the library inviting additional flower creations as it works towards expanding the display all the way to the ceiling.

The flower wall highlights what is possible in Thomastown Library's Makerspace, a creative hub that provides access to equipment, resources and programs designed to support hands-on learning and making.

The makerspace collection includes sewing machines, weaving looms, embroidery hoops, screen-printing sets, leatherworking tools and paper-making kits, which can be borrowed for use at home or within the library.

The library runs regular induction sessions for its makerspace which can be booked online or with library staff.

Football tragedy

By Tara Murray

Tributes are flowing for Epping footballer Nathan Fitzgerald who is receiving end of life care after an incident in a Northern Football League match on Saturday.

Fitzgerald was playing in Epping's division 3 reserves match against Lalor when it's understood he and teammate clashed heads at Lalor Recreation Reserve.

Fitzgerald also received another knock before his head hit the turf, where there's a covered cricket pitch.

Play was halted for medical assistance with trainers from both sides performing CPR before paramedics arrived.

He was taken to the Royal Melbourne



Nathan Fitzgerald. (Epping FNC)

Hospital in a critical condition.

The reserves match was called off, while the senior match between the two clubs was cancelled.

On Sunday, the Epping Football Netball

Club released a heartbreaking statement.

"The Epping Football Netball Club is devastated to share that our much loved teammate and clubman, Nathan Fitzgerald's condition deteriorated overnight and is now receiving end-of-life care," it said.

"The entire Fitzgerald family is in our thoughts during this horrible situation and we ask that you respect their privacy.

"Please take a moment to hug and kiss your loved ones; life is precious."

Speaking on ABC 774 on Monday morning, Epping president Luke De Vincentis said it had been a tough time for the entire Epping community.

He said Fitzgerald was a gentle, loving, humble soul, who had the biggest smile that

could light up a room miles away.

"The last 24 hours in particular have been really beautiful in bringing the club together but we've lost a teammate and a much loved person from the club," De Vincentis said.

"More importantly the Fitzgerald family have lost a son and a brother.

"They would have wished him all the best on Saturday to go out and get a goal and get a win and not realise that was the last time they would speak to him, it's truly heart-breaking."

De Vincentis said Fitzgerald's teammates were in a state of shock and confusion and were struggling to comprehend what happened.

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\$500m road upgrade pledge

By Laura Michell

One of the north's most notorious traffic snarls could receive a \$500 million upgrade if the Liberals win November's state election.

On Sunday, Opposition leader Jess Wilson announced her party's plan to duplicate eight kilometres of Donnybrook Road from Epping Road in Woodstock to Dwyer Street in Kalkallo, and remove the level crossing at Donnybrook station if elected. She pledged \$524 million for the works.

"Labor has left the residents of Melbourne's north stuck in traffic for too long, but my team has a plan to fix it," Ms Wilson said.

Donnybrook Road is used by about

35,000 vehicles daily. As reported by *Star Weekly*, Kalkallo and Donnybrook residents have been calling for the duplication of Donnybrook Road for a number of years, with congestion on the single-lane arterial road causing significant delays.

Northern Metropolitan MP Evan Mulholland joined Ms Wilson and Nationals leader Danny O'Brien in announcing the upgrade on Sunday and said residents reported waiting 40 minutes to exit their housing estate and join the traffic on Donnybrook Road.

"Donnybrook Road has been completely overwhelmed by rapid growth, yet Labor has ignored this community while billions of dollars are wasted on cost over-

runs and corruption on big build projects elsewhere," he said.

"Removing the bottleneck at the level crossing and duplicating the entire eight-kilometre stretch is part of the Liberals and Nationals' plan to deliver infrastructure to the very communities that have been starved of it."

In May, the state and federal government announced funding for a second bridge over the Hume Freeway on Donnybrook Road.

The federal government has provided \$37.4 million for the project, with the state contributing \$7.7 million.

The works will also include the duplication of Donnybrook Road to Dwyer

Street and will build on stage one of the Donnybrook Road upgrade.

The state and federal governments announced \$125 million for stage one, which is currently in pre-construction, last year.

Stage one upgrades include transforming the roundabout at Donnybrook Road and Mitchell Street into a fully signalised intersection and building a new bridge over Kalkallo Creek.

Stage two will include the second bridge and the duplication of Donnybrook Road between the Hume Freeway and Dwyer Street.

Intersection upgrades will also be carried out at the Hume Freeway outbound off-ramp.



Gulcan Genitsaris, Avtar Singh, Minister Community Sport Ros Spence, Tawa Manzvera, Sharin Milner and Nabil Yassine. (Supplied)

New push to leave racism on the bench

Two Hume sporting identities are spearheading a campaign to stamp out racism in community sport.

On Thursday 25 June, the state government launched a new campaign to tackle racism in community sports. The 'Racism Doesn't Belong In Our Game' initiative aims to raise awareness of the impact of racism and ensure people know how to report it.

At the heart of the campaign are seven personal stories from Victorians involved in local sports. Among them is Broadmeadows basketballer Sharin

Milner and Hume Cricket Club president Avtar Singh.

A former professional basketballer, Milner emphasised the unique power of community sports to bring people together.

"Community sport has an extraordinary power to bring people together, but that connection can only flourish when everyone feels safe to be fully themselves," Milner said.

"I love that this campaign puts human stories at the centre, because stories help us move beyond fear and remind us

of our shared humanity.

"Racism is often a felt experience, and it doesn't always show up in ways that are easy to write into a policy or point to in a rulebook. When we listen to lived experiences and see each other as people first, sport becomes one of the most powerful places we have to strengthen connection and community."

The campaign is a collaborative effort between the government and several major sporting bodies, including the AFL, basketball, cricket, football, netball, NRL, and tennis associations.

Family daycare provider stripped of federal funding

A family daycare provider operating in Whittlesea and Hume has had its funding cancelled by the federal government.

Laugh & Learn Family Day Care Education & Training was found to have seriously breached safety guidelines at two of its properties. The provider operates family daycare services out of nine residences.

The government used regulatory powers introduced last year to cut off the provider's funding, marking the first time the federal government has used these powers to cancel funding to a childcare service on the basis of safety breaches.

In April, the Victorian Early Childhood Regulatory Authority (VECRA) served an emergency action notice to Laugh & Learn after two of its family day care residences in Craigieburn were deemed to pose an immediate risk to the safety, health and wellbeing of the children attending.

VECRA said that during unannounced visits to family daycare residences operated by Laugh & Learn, authorised officers identified serious safety breaches at two residences in Craigieburn.

VECRA said the breaches included unsecured furniture including a large, heavy bookshelf, hazardous materials including bleach, paint and rat bait accessible to children in various rooms and obstructed emergency egress routes.

Other breaches identified included a free-standing chest freezer on a verandah with no child safety lock which was accessible to children, trampolines without safety matting, dog faeces in grassed areas accessible to children and unsecured and accessible water features.

VECRA ordered Laugh & Learn to ensure the two educators do not provide education and care to children at their residences in Craigieburn until the safety concerns were fixed.

It gave Laugh & Learn 14 days to submit evidence that the concerns had been addressed.

The federal Department of Education enforcement action register shows Laugh & Learn failed to fix the safety issue, resulting in the cancellation of its provider approval from 4 July.

Speaking in federal parliament on 30 June, Education Minister Jason Clare said the new laws were not an "idle threat".

"Today my department has cut funding to a service in Victoria that has been warned and continued not to meet the standard," he said.

"The truth is this work will never end and we will continue to take the steps that we need to take to keep our kids safe."

Tributes are flowing for Epping footballer Nathan Fitzgerald

From page 1:

The Epping president said the club was were told by paramedics if not for the work of the Epping and Lalor medical teams, Fitzgerald might not have made it to hospital.

Sporting clubs from across Melbourne posted tributes to Fitzgerald, who is a teacher at Mernda Central College.

On Epping's post, senior coach Brad Hol-low said Fitzgerald would be missed.

"Our thoughts are with the Fitzgerald

family. We will miss that smile that we got to see every training and game day," he said.

The Epping Cricket Club in a post said Fitzgerald was known as a fierce competitor on the football field, he will be remembered most for the quality of person he was.

"Someone who represented his club with pride, loyalty and selflessness," the post said.

"At times like these, the result on the scoreboard means nothing. Our clubs are

Hume hoon ‘buster’ blitz

By Laura Michell

Roadside acoustic noise cameras could be trialled in hoon hotspots across Hume, under a proposal being investigated by Hume council.

Last month, the state government announced a \$1.3 million, two-year trial of the technology in hotspots. The program will be delivered through Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria in partnership with Victoria Police to detect and respond to excessive vehicle noise and hooning.

The government said the acoustic cameras are triggered by noise levels to capture images and data.

Hume council will lobby the government for Hume to become the first adopter

of the technology.

During council’s 22 June meeting, councillor Naim Kurt asked his colleagues to back his push for council to formalise a ‘Screen Busters blitz’ in Hume through a partnership with police and EPA.

He said the blitz would help to “hunt down hoons” and improve safety on local streets.

“This responds to consistent concerns we hear from our community about hoons, illegal street racing and excessive vehicle noise,” he said.

“Residents regularly report dangerous and anti-social driving across residential estates, back streets of industrial areas including Tullamarine, Campbellfield and Somerton, and shopping centre car parks

such as Roxburgh Park, with incidents of ten occurring at night and on weekends, significantly impacting sleep, safety and local amenity.”

Three residents submitted comments to the council, backing the proposal.

Craigieburn local Tiago Valente addressed the meeting and urged council to take action against hoons.

He said hooning along Highlander Drive, Aitken Boulevard, and Grand Boulevard was impacting community safety and created “disruptive levels of noise”.

Irene Bencic submitted a comment about hooning in Broadmeadows’ Kinglea estate, which was read out by council chief executive Sheena Frost.

In her comment, Ms Bencic raised con-

cerns about hoons on King William Street and surrounding roads.

“The ongoing hoon activity creates an environment where people feel unsafe in their own neighbourhood and concerned that it is only a matter of time before a serious injury or fatality occurs,” she said.

“Waiting for a death or life-altering injury before stronger measures are considered is not an acceptable outcome for a family-oriented community.”

Cr Daniel English backed the proposal, saying that as someone who works in public safety, he thought the cameras were a good idea.

“As a parent with young children who ride along the streets, anything that will stop the cars is a good idea,” he said.

Sowing seeds of support

A Lalor Neighbourhood House program is striving to help neurodiverse and culturally diverse young women grow community connections.

The Sisters Who Sow program is open to young women aged 15-25 who live, work, or spent time in Whittlesea. Participants will grow fresh produce in the neighbourhood house’s community garden and then use the harvest to prepare healthy meals together.

Lalor Neighbourhood House’s Katt Glennie said the program was created to support neurodiverse and culturally diverse young women by providing an inclusive and welcoming space where they can build friendships, strengthen community connections,

develop practical and leadership skills, and celebrate their identities and achievements.

“We hope to inspire women to get creative and make the most of what they have in the pantry, fridge and freezer especially when they are trying to make ends meet. We would like to show that it’s possible to make tasty healthy meals using what you have already using simple ingredients and easy to make recipes,” Ms Glennie said.

The program runs over three terms, culminating in a gala evening for participants, friends, and family. The program will run on Wednesdays at Lalor Neighbourhood House, beginning on 15 July.

Details: www.lalornh.org.au



Atalia Roma (front), Nardine Youssef, Jeanette Fawal, Mady Morgan and Lalor Neighbourhood House manager Jo Herbig. (Damjan Janevski). 559773_01

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Loved ones mourn teen

By Nick Wilson, AAP

Loved ones of a 15-year-old boy who was allegedly stabbed and left to die outside a hospital have asked the community to keep him in its prayers.

Mickleham teenager Darweish Mohamed was found with critical wounds outside Craigieburn Community Hospital about 7.50pm on Wednesday 1 July.

A staff member from the clinic rushed to his aid and delivered CPR, but he died at the scene.

On Friday morning, police confirmed a 16-year-old boy from the Goulburn Valley was charged with murder and remanded in custody to appear in a children's court.

dren's court.

A 20-year-old man from Beveridge was charged with criminal damage by fire and bailed to appear at Broadmeadows Magistrates Court on December 1.

Police are also investigating if a burnt-out car found at Oaklands Junction is linked to the stabbing.

On Friday afternoon, police said a second teenager had been charged with murder.

The 15-year-old boy, from the Craigieburn area, will appear before a children's court.

A third teen – a 14-year-old boy from the Hume area – was charged with murder on Friday night. He will also appear

before a children's court.

A friend of the dead boy's family, Mohamed Bakhit, launched a GoFundMe campaign to raise funds to meet the family's funeral expenses.

"It is with heavy hearts that we share the passing of our beloved brother, Darweish," the fundraiser page reads.

"No family should ever have to go through a loss like this, and our hearts are with his loved ones during this incredibly difficult time."

The campaign had raised more than \$37,000 towards a goal of \$60,000 by Friday morning.

It asks those who are unable to donate to keep Darweish and his family in their

du'as, an Arabic word for a form of Islamic prayer.

Asked about the Mount Ridley College student's death, the education department confirmed it would provide support to affected school communities.

"The death of any young person is a tragedy," a spokesperson said.

"The death of the young person in a violent incident on Wednesday will be extremely distressing for the local communities involved."

A 15-year-old girl from the Fawkner area was also detained and charged with affray and theft of a motor vehicle.

She was bailed to appear in a children's court.



Whittlesea mayor Lawrie Cox (centre), with Daniel (left) and Matthew Eifermann of Eifers, the City of Whittlesea 2026 Business of the Year. (Supplied)

Whittlesea's best businesses celebrated

The Whittlesea business community came together to celebrate the inspirational achievements, contributions and success stories of local enterprises at the 2026 City of Whittlesea Business Awards on Thursday 25 June.

Held at the Plenty Ranges Arts and Convention Centre in South Morang, the awards night recognised excellence across six categories.

Civil construction company Eifers was crowned the 2026 Business of the Year.

A finalist in 2025, Eifers claimed this year's Innovation and Enterprise Award before also being presented the night's

top honour.

Open exclusively to members of the City of Whittlesea Business Network, the awards showcased the local business owners and operators whose vision, passion and innovation across a wide range of sectors continues to shape the community.

The winners were: Repurpose It (Community Contribution Award), Whittlesea Physiotherapy and Clinical Pilates (Customer Service Award), All Ability Dental (Diversity and Inclusion Award), Eifers (Innovation and Enterprise Award and Business of the Year), Ladies

That Lift (Small Business Award) and Bygen (Sustainability and Environment Award)

Whittlesea mayor Lawrie Cox said, "We are proud to celebrate the outstanding achievements of our remarkable business community," he said.

"This year's nominees reflect the diversity, dedication, strength, and resilience of businesses across the City of Whittlesea that help power our local economy and drive our municipality forward. Your commitment to quality has raised the bar."

Hume backs rates rise

A Hume councillor has contested raising rates as the council grapples with \$50 million in rate arrears.

At the 22 June council meeting the 2026-27 budget was adopted, but not all councillors were in agreement with the proposed 2.75 per cent rate rise.

Cr Jim Overend said he couldn't support a rate rise.

"With Hume being identified as having one of the highest levels of mortgage stress and with a high level of rate arrears, together with Victoria's high cost of living, residents are struggling hard to pay their bills and to put food on the table," he said.

"Because of this and my promise to our community, I can't vote in favour of anything with a rate increase."

Star Weekly reported the council is grappling with a rates crisis, with more than 25,000 households in the municipality behind on their rates bill, bringing the arrears to \$50 million.

However, only Cr Naim Kurt and Cr John Haddad voted against the adoption of the budget with Cr Overend, with all other councillors in favour.

Cr Daniel English justified the rise.

"We'd have to leave something out and some people have to miss out on something," he said.

The \$635.3 million budget includes an operating surplus of \$101.5 million for the council, however chief executive Sheena Forst said in the budget report there is an underlying deficit of \$31.47 million.

This underlying deficit has increased from \$13.01 million in 2025-26, and Ms Forst said this was due to an increase in non-cash depreciation expenses and developer-contributed assets.

The budget also includes a \$153.96 million capital works program, in which Cr Kate Hamley said the community might notice multiple carry-forward projects included from the 2025-2026 budget.

Cr Hamley said council has had challenges in delivering the capital works program.

"There's a lot of items that appeared in our 2025-26 budget that are going to be there again in 2026-27," she said.

"I just wanted to acknowledge that and say that we've really got to focus this coming financial year on delivering what we've promised and finishing what we started."

Volunteers needed to green bunjil nganga Parkland Quarry Hills

The Whittlesea community is being urged to roll up their sleeves and help transform bunjil nganga Parkland Quarry Hills as part of National Tree Day planting events.

National Tree Day brings people together to plant trees, connect with nature and help enhance the environment for future generations.

Whittlesea council will host two community planting days on Saturday 11 July and Sunday 26 July, from 10am to 1pm, to help green the parkland.

Council said the events will offer locals

a chance to get involved in hands-on environmental action while enjoying a fun day out with family and friends.

Bring your gardening gloves and dress for the weather. A coffee van and sausage sizzle will be available. There'll also be free face painting.

Council is preparing to plant 25,000 indigenous trees and wildflowers across the parkland in 2026. It said the planting days are part of the Releaf project, a habitat restoration initiative helping to restore natural environments and support

native wildlife across Whittlesea.

Mayor Lawrie Cox said council was committed to a greener future for the municipality.

"Each planting event helps grow our tree canopy, support local wildlife and make sure the community can enjoy the benefits of a healthier environment," he said.

"The community planting days are a powerful example of what can be achieved when people come together for the environment."



La Trobe University Vice-Chancellor Professor Theo Farrell, Federal Education Minister Jason Clare and La Trobe University Chancellor John Brumby. (John Jiang, Supplied)

New \$82 million health clinic opens

By Courtney Black

An \$82 million La Trobe Health Clinic has opened at the university's Bundoora campus and promises to provide thousands of locals with affordable, student-led allied health services.

The clinic officially opened on Thursday 11 June with a smoking ceremony, speeches and tours, and will begin offering health services and student placements this month.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Theo Farrell said the clinic addresses both community need and national workforce pressures.

"Australia is facing a serious shortage of health professionals and universities have a responsibility to be part of the solution," Professor Farrell said.

"This new clinical teaching building brings together high-quality education and affordable health services, delivering immediate benefits for communities in Melbourne's north while preparing more job-ready health professionals for the future."

La Trobe University School of Allied Health, Human Services and Sport dean Professor Russ Hoye said it was a privilege to lead the project over three years.

"We have 80 consulting rooms over four floors of this building offering clinical servicing of optics, audiology, occupational therapy, podiatry, physiotherapy, speech pathology, dietetics and psychology," Professor Hoye said.

"Once we get to full-scale we will eventually get to an average of seeing 300 clients a day, 1500 a week and up to 65,000 a year."

He said the facility would support more than 30,000 student placement days.

Federal Education Minister Jason Clare attended the opening and said the facility would serve not just students but the wider community.

"If you live here in the northern suburbs and you need a hearing test or an eye test you can come here. If you need help recovering from an injury or support with your mental health you'll be able to come here," he said. "If your child needs a development assessment or help to find their voice you'll be able to come here."

Education Minister Ben Carroll said "This facility will serve many thousands of Victorians at a price point that they need for... a whole range of health services and that is really important."

Details and appointments: <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/healthclinic/la-trobe-health-clinic>

Airline employee faces heroin charge

An airline employee has been charged for allegedly importing more than one kilogram of heroin into Melbourne.

The Thai national, 26, was performing work duties on board an international flight when she arrived at Melbourne Airport on 25 June and had her baggage screened by Australian Border Force (ABF) officers.

ABF officers identified anomalies during an X-ray examination of the woman's 12 tote bags.

Further examinations revealed a white powder concealed within the lining of the bags, with presumptive testing allegedly returning a positive reading for heroin, the ABF and Australian Federal Police (AFP)

said in a joint statement.

The heroin had an estimated street value of \$500,000.

ABF officers reported the matter to AFP who seized the tote bags and arrested the woman.

She was later charged with one count of importing a marketable quantity of a border controlled drug. This offence carries a maximum penalty of 25 years' imprisonment.

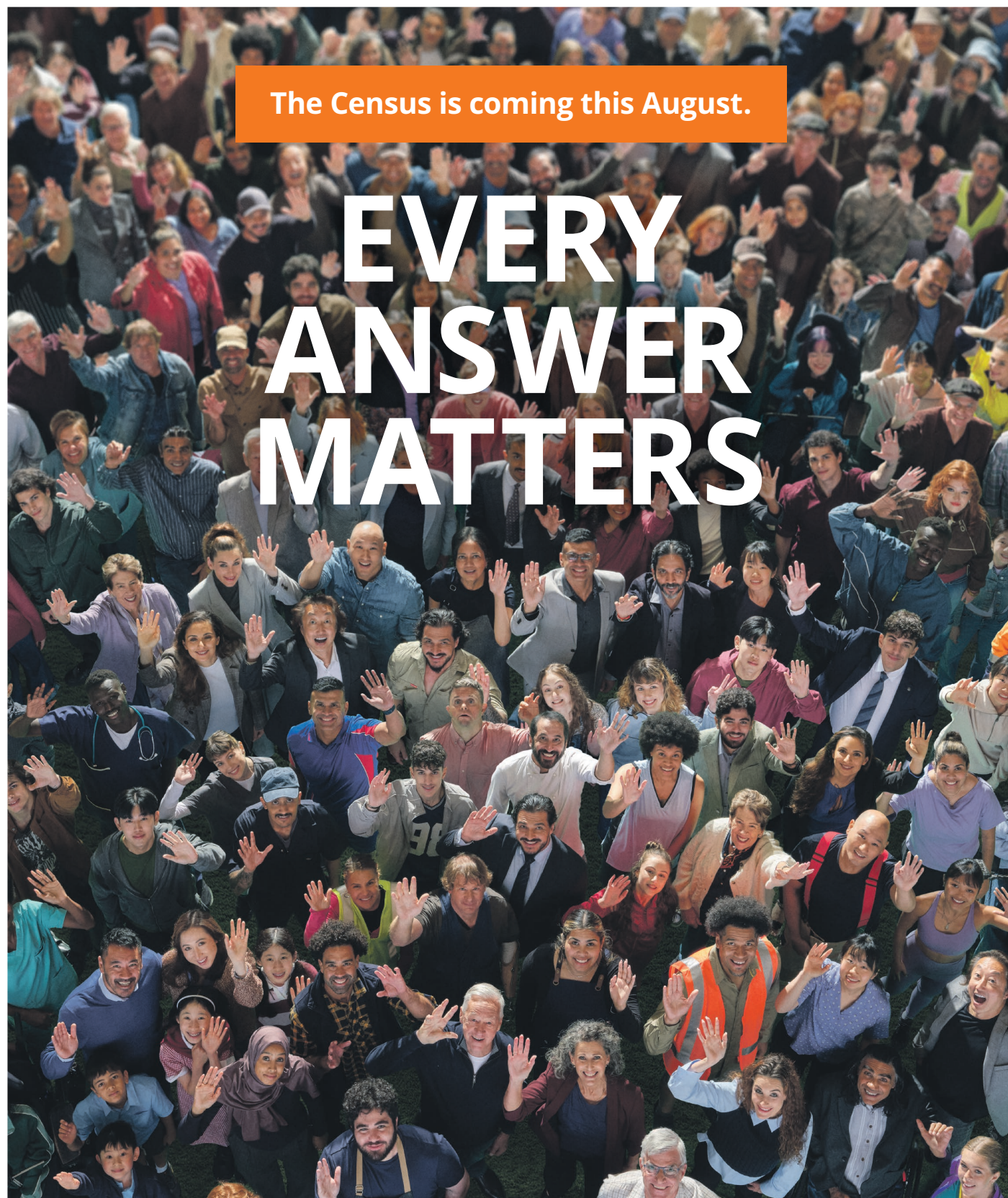
She was also charged with one count of possessing a marketable quantity of a border controlled drug. This offence carries a maximum penalty of 25 years' imprisonment.

The woman was remanded in custody on 26 June, and is expected to reappear before Melbourne Magistrates' Court on 14 September.

AFP acting commander Simone Butcher said the AFP worked closely with partner agencies to protect the community from the scourge of illicit drugs.

ABF commander Clint Sims said criminal syndicates continued to target trusted insiders to attempt to smuggle illicit substances into Australia.

"Anyone attempting to import illicit drugs into Australia, regardless of rank or position, will be targeted and face the full force of the law," Commander Sims said.



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Breaking down barriers

From Zumba to social basketball, free group fitness programs for women are building more than just active lifestyles. They are creating safe spaces for self-expression and connection. Courtney Black spoke to facilitators and participants at free programs in Melbourne's north to hear more about how making fitness accessible and comfortable can build community connections for women.

Community organisations and sporting clubs are creating safe spaces for women to participate in sport, particularly those who are mothers or culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD).

Reclink Australia, which operates many free group fitness programs across the country, recently hosted women's-only Zumba classes at the Galada Community Centre in Epping.

Reclink Australia facilitator Ashleigh Mulholland said the feedback and interest in the Epping Zumba program was incredible.

"The feedback that we've got from women around here has been so good and people have been really showing up week after week," Ms Mulholland said.

She said there is growing interest in culturally diverse municipalities like Whittlesea for women's-only group fitness classes.

"A lot of women don't play sport and they don't exercise as much because they don't have those culturally safe places to do so, especially for free where they don't feel judgment," she explained.

“ You just hear [from] so many people how it changes their lives and it changes my life to be able to bring something like that ” - Christina Masino

"Doing women's only is really important as well especially when there's a Muslim community... so that they can feel safe to come along.

"I think we've had... over 30 people in that room which is amazing for an eight-week long program. Normally it takes a lot longer to build that sort of momentum."

She said the classes not only align with cultural values, but also overcome language barriers.

"When you're doing sport and something physical it's simple enough to follow along.

"It gets rid of a lot of anxieties for people that they're not going to be stuck in a conversation where they don't want to continue it or they're having to continuously translate in their head."

When they can't connect through language, Ms Mulholland said the women connect through having fun.

"Laughing with everyone else, it builds communities," she said.

"If you're feeling... lonely or you've got economic pressures... but especially if you're a new migrant... it is a really important program."

This sentiment was echoed by the Zumba participants themselves like Sabah Abo who said she liked the fun music and catching up with friends.

"[It was] very very beautiful," Ms Abo said. "My soul is refreshment when I do Zumba."

Participant Banh Hong has embraced her local Zumba class.

"I invited some friends to come if they are available," Ms Hong said.

"Every lesson after that my body... feel more energy."



Christina Masino (front) said it has been life-changing to run free women's Zumba classes. (Damjan Janevski) 558067_01

Reclink Zumba instructor Christina Masino said running the sessions has changed her life for the better too.

"You just hear [from] so many people how it changes their lives and it changes my life to be able to bring something like that," Ms Masino said.

"I love working with them just because it's so rewarding.

"It's not just Zumba, it becomes something completely different. You form friendships and it's like a little family."

She said in each session the women started to slowly open up and express themselves in an environment that can be less daunting than a gym.

"They'll feel safe and... they'll let you in and tell you how much it means to them and they're all here for a reason.

"They bring their friends and come in their little groups and they make other friends so it's definitely a community.

"They go in there, we shut the door and it's that one hour to leave problems and be a little bit silly and have fun as well."

Ashleigh Mulholland said Reclink's programs can also be game changers for mums.

"On Fridays [in] Donnybrook... we do a wellness [class] that is 'mums and bubs,'" Ms Mulholland said.

"That's life-changing for them to be able to just be able to bring their kids. It's the feedback we're getting [that] they're finally able to get back into fitness.

"If a child needs feeding it's no big deal.

"If someone cries out you've got other women there who are also comfortable and confident around children to give them little distractions.

"It just again provides a sense of community which is especially important for people who've had kids and might be feeling a bit isolated."



Craigieburn Eagles B-All-In program coordinator Demi Albon said it the program is all about making sport fun. (Damjan Janevski) 558020_06

Another free program that aims to help women and gender-diverse people connect through sport, is Basketball Victoria's 'B-All-In' initiative.

The Craigieburn Eagles decided to host the free 'B-All-In' program for the first time this year, and program coordinator Demi Albon said it is all about making sport accessible.

"B-All-In provides a safe and supportive space where participants can build confidence, make connections, stay active, and feel like they belong," Ms Albon said.

"We know that many women and gender-diverse people can face barriers to participating in sport, so creating a program specifically designed to be

welcoming and inclusive was something that aligned strongly with our club values."

The first session was held on Friday 12 June, and Ms Albon said even though the group was small it was very successful and impactful.

"The women who attended were enthusiastic, receptive, and genuinely eager to learn, which created a really positive atmosphere from the beginning."

She said it was great to see the energy, laughter and encouragement on the court.

"One of our biggest goals is to bring the fun back into the sport. While competition can be a great part of basketball, it can also become overwhelming and place pressure on people's mental wellbeing.

"B-All-In focuses on enjoyment, connection, and personal growth rather than results."

She said participants do not need any prior basketball experience and work at their own pace in the relaxed environment.

"Family members and children are welcome to come along and watch the sessions. We want the program to be as accessible and family-friendly as possible."

She said by taking on the B-All-In program, the club hopes to become more inclusive and encourage lifelong basketball participation.

"Basketball has a unique way of bringing people together, and we're already seeing participants encourage and support each other.

"As the program progresses, I hope we continue to build a strong sense of community while helping participants become more comfortable and confident both on and off the court."

Reclink programs: <https://reclink.org/>
Craigieburn Eagles B-All-In: <https://www.playhq.com/basketball-victoria/register/a035ba>

VR paves road to recovery

By Glenn Fisher

A Bundoora transport institution is piloting a virtual reality therapy program to help drivers recovering from trauma get back behind the wheel.

When former Dysons bus driver Sarah Griffin talks about the day that changed her life, she still remembers the sound before anything else.

"There are answers I will never have. I still get emotional, but it's a normal part of my life now," she said.

Ms Griffin spent years behind the wheel – years of early mornings, school runs and greeting familiar passengers. But she also experienced the darker side of the job: aggression, intimidation, trauma.

Then, following a fatal on-road incident, Ms Griffin's recovery was long, complex and lonely.

"I drove an extra half hour every day just to avoid the accident scene. A 25-minute drive became nearly an hour ... I was terrified to come back," she said.

She's not alone. Bundoora-based Dysons has seen a steady rise in mental health injury challenges across its workforce – and that's what prompted former head of health, safety and environment Annabel Reynolds to successfully apply for an 'early intervention – mental injury' grant from WorkSafe's Return to Work Innovations.

Dysons' initiative involves a partnership with XRHealth, a clinical VR provider whose AHPRA-registered clinicians deliver immersive therapy through customised virtual environments.

The goal is to help drivers recovering from trauma safely re-enter the community



Dyson Bus Group driver Sam Boeti (front) with the VR headset, driver Sarah Griffin, and general manager Vivienne Eyles. (Damjan Janevski) 561565_01

and return to work.

For Ms Reynolds, who designed the therapy program and is a major stakeholder and adviser in its implementation, the need for a new approach was obvious.

"We have mental health injuries in transportation, particularly buses. The public can get frustrated, annoyed, and they take it out on our drivers. You can't put a bubble around them – the risks are real, and they're frequent," Ms Reynolds said.

She also sees the limits of traditional therapy for a blue-collar, multilingual workforce.

"That whole sitting on a couch talking about your problems ... it doesn't always work. Some of our drivers hold it all in. Culturally, for some men, seeking help is seen as weakness, so what do they do?" she said.

"They stay home, they do nothing and it escalates."

With XRHealth, drivers are guided through gradual exposure modules that mirror the real world in a safe, controlled way – from leaving through the front door right through to approaching the depot, stepping into a bus, driving a virtual route and practising conflict resolution in virtual

scenarios.

Clinicians track biometric signs like eye movement, heart rate, hand motion and micro-reactions to identify triggers and shape therapy in real time. Sessions can be completed from home, eliminating travel barriers for workers too anxious to leave the house.

Manpreet Singh joined Dysons in 2006 as a driver, spent 15 years on the road, and now leads a team of drivers in operations. He still steps in behind the wheel when needed – and he's seen how quickly pressure can mount.

But he said the promise of VR is practical, recreating the pressures without the danger and helping drivers rehearse safer responses.

"Giving people a way to face triggers in a controlled environment makes sense. If they can practice what they'll see and hear – before they're back in the seat – they'll be more ready," he said.

Dysons will use the WorkSafe funding to develop three transport-specific VR modules with XRHealth, including approaching and entering the depot, driving and operating a bus, and conflict and challenging behaviour.

"We can't protect drivers from everything. But we can give them real tools to help them process what happens and find their way back to being themselves," Ms Reynolds said.

Deputy Premier and WorkSafe and the TAC Minister Ben Carroll said the government was investing in "ground-breaking solution" to help workers with a mental injury "get back on their feet and back into rewarding work".

Your Exclusive Invitation Clubhouse Grand Opening

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

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The Darebin Creek Management Committee manger Danny Reddan. (Damjan Janevski) 559160_03

Help heal the woodlands

Join Darebin Creek Management Committee (DCMC) and Urban Guerrillas for a community planting day at Wollert to help heal Darebin Creek's northern Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands.

The project aims to restore a degraded remnant of the critically endangered Grassy Eucalypt Woodlands of the Victorian Volcanic Plains.

DCMD said less than 10 per cent of the woodlands remains.

Participants will replant midstory trees and shrubs, groundcovers and creek-side aquatics. Some of the plants were propagated by volunteers at recent workshops with nugal biik Plants and Seeds.

The event has been funded by the state government's Green Links program,

Melbourne Water and the federal government's Urban Rivers and Catchments Program.

Attendees should wear sturdy, closed shoes and dress for the weather – think warm jacket, raincoat, beanie – and should bring drinking water.

The morning will begin with a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony presented by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung elder Uncle Colin Hunter Junior.

The planting session will be held on Sunday 19 July, at Bindts Road, Wollert, from 10am-1pm.

No experience necessary.

RSVP: <https://events.humanitix.com/wollert-community-planting-dcmc-urban-guerrillas>

Open day at Early Learning Victoria Gamadji in July

Early Learning Victoria Gamadji is hosting an open day on Saturday 18 July, 9am – noon at 39 Mackillop Street, Craigieburn (co-located with Gamadji Primary School).

The open day will provide an opportunity to tour the centre and meet the skilled and experienced educators.

If you are looking to enrol your child, you can find out more about Early Learning Victoria's high-quality childcare and integrated kinder programs. If you are looking to grow your career as a qualified, skilled or new early learning or support professional by working in an organisation where children's needs come first, you can speak to the friendly team to learn more.

Government-run, Early Learning Victoria Gamadji offers welcoming and inclusive spaces that support learning and development for all. Staff can't wait to meet you and show you around!

Find out about enrolling your child at earlylearning.vic.gov.au/gamadji.

If you have any questions, please call Early Learning Victoria's general hotline at 03 9057 4444 or email elv@education.vic.gov.au (for workforce enquiries, general hotline option 2 or elv.workforce@education.vic.gov.au).



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SPONSORED CONTENT

More Australians are choosing life beyond the big cities

Australians are moving to regional communities in record numbers, with new data showing the shift away from capital cities continues to gather pace.

The latest Regional Movers Index found the number of people moving from capital cities to regional Australia reached its highest level since the index began. In the March 2026 quarter, people moving to the regions outnumbered those heading back to the cities by almost 30 per cent.

Regional Australia Institute chief executive Liz Ritchie said the result reflected the growing appeal of regional living.

"This is the highest level of capital to regional movement the RMI has ever recorded," she said. "Australians are continuing to choose regional life in greater numbers, even as economic conditions shift."

While Sydney and Melbourne continue to account for most people leaving capital cities, the trend is becoming more widespread, with increasing numbers of movers also coming from Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide.

The Sunshine Coast remained the most popular destination for city movers, while Greater Geelong, Fraser Coast, Moorabool and Lake Macquarie were also among the leading destinations.

The data also shows growth is spreading beyond established regional hotspots.

Toowoomba recorded the strongest year-on-year increase in people moving from capital cities of any local government area in Australia. Other locations attracting growing numbers of residents included Broome, Townsville and the Mid-Coast region of New South Wales.

Ritchie said the data helps identify emerging growth areas and gives communities an opportunity to plan for future housing, infrastructure and services.

For regional businesses, population growth can create new opportunities as communities expand and local economies grow.

Read the full story at CommBank Newsroom.



Peter and Nell are thankful for a gateway to better care

Peter didn't realise he was a carer until someone pointed it out

Peter and Nell, both in their early 80s, married in 2007 and continue to live independently together. They share a strong sense of humour and take genuine pleasure in caring for one another, spending much of their time at home. Nell enjoys cooking, while Peter has a passion for handicrafts and woodwork.

Peter spends most of his day at home with Nell. He takes Nell to her appointments and organises the calendar. He helps her administer her insulin injections and is often an extra pair of hands.

Like many people caring for loved ones, Peter didn't think of himself as a 'carer' – just a husband, doing his best. But life was starting to feel heavy and Peter had a lot on his plate.

After a friend suggested he contact Carer Gateway, Peter and Nell were able to access support that made a real difference. They have since been on several social bus trips together. Last year they attended Christmas lunch and had a lovely time.

"They're human. They're understanding, they're obliging, they're helpful. It's good two-way communication. They have no trouble in ringing me back and spending the time to hear what's going on and how they can best help. They've got a good family-like structure they've invited us into," Peter said.

He joined a monthly walking and coffee group organised by Carer Gateway, which helped improve his fitness and provided regular social connection. He has also accessed practical support, as well as weekly online Q&A sessions and free one-on-one counselling for carers.

"It's been so helpful with daily life and

Peter and Nell have been married for 19 years.



not feeling downtrodden with all the problems on our shoulders. Mental and moral support has been very important to us, and they've been very good at that. My outlook on life has become much easier," he shares.

"Now I don't have such a heavy cloud hanging over me with all the things I need to do. There's great satisfaction in knowing that they've got my back."

Whether you care for a family member or friend every day or just a few hours a week,

you're not alone. Carer Gateway offers free emotional, practical, and mental health support to help you.

Call 1800 422 727 (Monday-Friday 8am-5pm) or visit www.carergateway.gov.au to find out more.

Free Support for Carers

Are you a carer? Carer Gateway is an Australian Government program providing free services and support to help carers with their mental and emotional wellbeing.

This may include counselling, coaching, practical assistance, tailored support packages, peer support groups, and emergency or planned respite.

If you're caring for a family member or friend, remember – you're not alone.

Call 1800 422 737

Monday-Friday 8am-5pm

carergateway.gov.au



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MY PLACE

Caroline Torode is a teacher, historian and advocate whose family has called Tullamarine home for decades. She spoke to Courtney Black about her deep-rooted connection to the suburb.

What's your connection to Tullamarine?
My grandmother and father first moved from Carlton and built here in 1954, attracted by the fresh country air and quieter lifestyle. Growing up, our family was heavily involved in the Tullamarine community through the Methodist (later Uniting) church, the Tullamarine Tennis Club, scouts and more. My brother and I attended Tullamarine Primary School before moving onto secondary schools in Broadmeadows and Niddrie. After briefly living in other suburbs I bought my own place and have become the third generation of my family to call Tullamarine home.

What do you like about where you live?
Tullamarine is home. I have a deep personal connection to the community, our history, and the people who have shaped it. Growing up here has allowed me to see how our wonderful suburb has evolved from a quieter residential community into an important part of Melbourne's north-west, while still retaining a strong sense of local identity and pride. Many of the neighbours in my mum's street have lived in their homes for more than 50 years, creating lasting friendships and genuine connections. I still run into people I grew up with. It reminds me that Tullamarine is not just a suburb - it is a close-knit community with deep roots and strong relationships that have endured.

What, if anything, would you change

about where you live?
If I could change one thing about Tullamarine, it would be ensuring that our community receives greater investment in local infrastructure and services. Though we have great people who represent us, when it comes to long-term planning and funding from local, state, and federal governments, I believe Tullamarine is often overlooked. Tullamarine sits within a small pocket on the outer edges across all levels of government, which can at times leave our suburb somewhat isolated from the main centres of focus and investment.

Where is your favourite local place to spend time?
It would have to be the shops along Melrose Drive. For me, this shopping strip represents the heart of our community and captures the village atmosphere that makes Tullamarine special. Growing up, the Melrose Drive shops were always a central meeting place where locals would stop to chat, catch up with neighbours, and support local businesses. I enjoy the sense of continuity and welcoming, friendly environment our shops continue to provide.

Tell us something people would be surprised to know about you ...
Something people are often surprised to learn about me is that, alongside my work as a teacher and military historian, I am also a big fan of the Super Mario Bros. franchise.



Caroline Torode. (Supplied)

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Star Weekly looks back through the pages of our predecessors

10 years ago
12 July, 2016

Pockets of Hume, including Broadmeadows, continue to be plagued by unemployment, despite a drop in the overall jobless rate in the city and across the state.

7 years ago
2 July, 2019

Work has stopped on the redevelopment of the Broadmeadows Aquatic and Leisure Centre after the head contractor went into liquidation three months after being awarded the project tender.

5 years ago
13 July, 2021

Broadmeadows and surrounding suburbs continue to have the highest jobless rates in Victoria, four years after the state government announced funding to tackle the area's soaring unemployment.

1 year ago
8 July, 2025

A Craigieburn animal rescue service is calling for greater support from the state government and Hume council as it faces the prospect of closing its doors if it can't raise \$200,000 by November.



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Airport encounter takes flight

By Glenn Fisher

Who does one turn to when things don't quite go to plan at Melbourne Airport?

When Jude Troy accidentally left her bags in the back of an Uber just before a flight back to Sydney, airport chaplain Martyn Scrimshaw was there for her.

Three years after that interaction between Scrimshaw and Troy, who is a partner in independent television and film production company Wooden Horse, SBS is about to premiere a new series, *The Airport Chaplain*, starring Hugo Weaving as the chaplain.

Co-creator and executive producer Troy said *The Airport Chaplain* was inspired by that 'unforgettable encounter' she had with Epping resident Scrimshaw, who has been the Melbourne International Airport Chaplain for the past nine years.

“Everyone rushing around in an airport has selfish pursuits, whereas the airport chaplain sees people in need” - Jude Troy

Losing her bags was stressful at the time, Troy said, but that Scrimshaw and his team dealt with events of varying levels of stress, whether it's with a family of refugees who can't speak English arriving in the country, a wedding dress that has been loaded onto the wrong flight or the tragic passing of a relative on a plane landing in Melbourne.

“Dashing to make a flight back to Sydney after a work trip and distracted by an eventful day, I jumped out of an Uber and all too late realised I had left my bags in the back seat. Inside were my phone, laptop, and my identity. I could not board without it!” she said.

“Through the kindness of strangers, I was introduced to someone I never knew existed: the airport chaplain.

“Over the next few hours, Martyn took me on an eye-opening adventure deep into the bowels of the airport, sharing stories of humanity and connection that have stayed with me ever since.”

Scrimshaw told Star Weekly that Troy and the writing team had been in regular contact with him throughout the process, and he had acted as their guide when they visited the airport for more inspiration.

When Troy and her team arrived one day with Weaving in tow, Scrimshaw said that was the moment he realised 'these guys are serious'.



Above: Melbourne Airport chaplain Martyn Scrimshaw is the inspiration for the new SBS series, *The Airport Chaplain*. (Damjan Janevski) 562094_06

Left: Hugo Weaving and Shabana Azeez in *The Airport Chaplain*. (Supplied)



“Meeting Hugo was such a highlight, and we spoke at length. He's not only such a wonderful actor, he's an incredible human being.”

Scrimshaw said he was able to give the writers and actors an insight into his job, dealing with all types of emotions and situations on a daily basis.

“I love my job and I value my role. There is grief and loss, and sometimes I'm speaking with people in their darkest moments,” he said.

Led by a cast including Weaving, Shabana Azeez and Claudia Karvan, *The Airport Chaplain's* first season of eight

episodes is now in post-production following two months of filming at numerous locations across Victoria, including Melbourne Airport.

Written by Elise McCredie, Sarah Bassiuni, Mithila Gupta and Thomas Weatherall, with 78 speaking roles and more than 300 extras involved, Troy said the project had given a sizable injection into the state's film and TV industry.

SBS publicity describes *The Airport Chaplain* as an ambitious, bold and big-hearted workplace drama that dives into the high stakes inner workings of a bustling international airport, seen through the struggles and triumphs of the workers who keep it running.

Leading the charge is airport chaplain Tobias Wallace, played by Weaving, who races through unmarked doors with a constantly ringing phone, pockets stuffed with donated cash and a decidedly unorthodox approach to solving the daily

crises of an airport.

Troy said the team had plans for a long-running series, which had already garnered plenty of interest around the world.

“Everyone rushing around in an airport has selfish pursuits, whereas the airport chaplain sees people in need,” she said.

“The more we researched, the more we realised what a great world of emotions an international airport is.

“And from that experience with Martyn, we then delved into the daily ups and downs of other airport staff such as baggage handlers, security, cleaners and flight crews,” Troy said.

“In these times of uncertainty in the world, we believe this series full of humanity and kindness and drama and lightness is really needed.”

The Airport Chaplain will hold its world premiere at the Melbourne International Film Festival, running from 6-23 August, and will screen on SBS and SBS On Demand later this year.

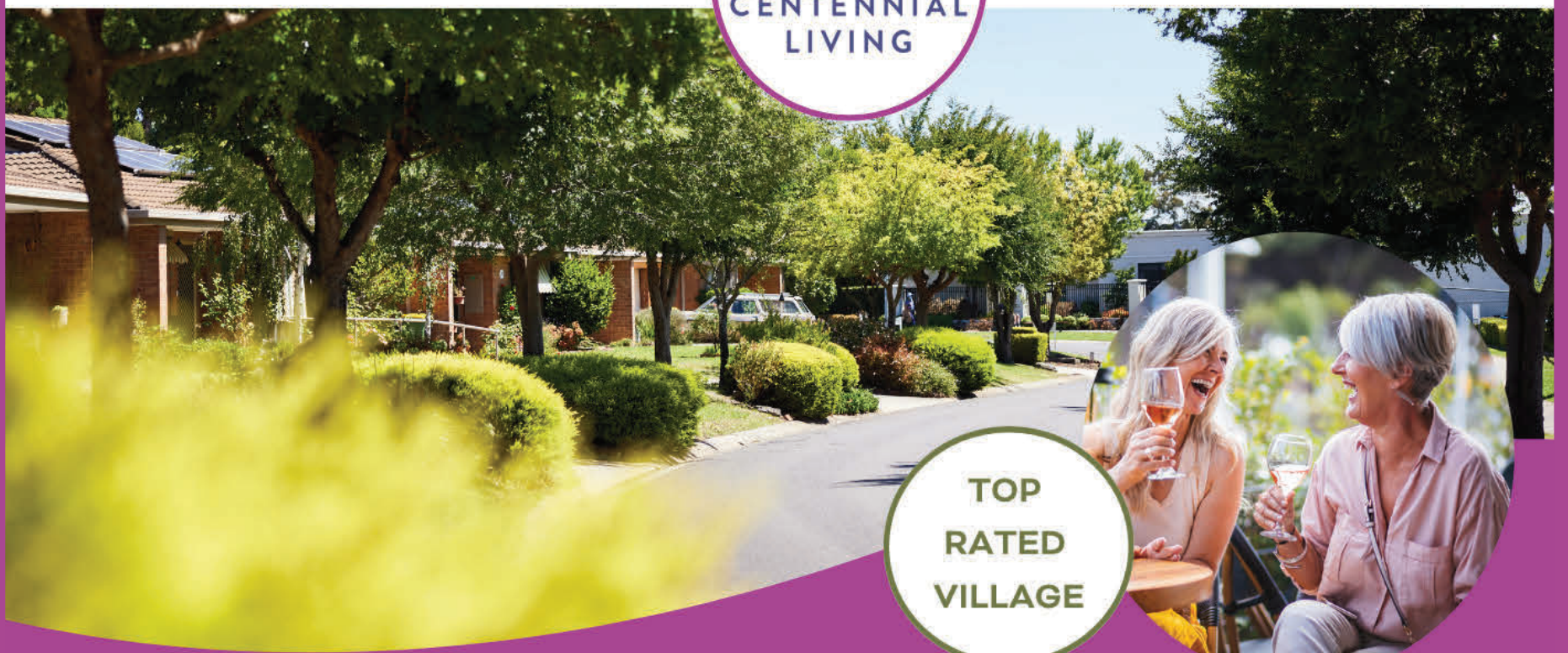
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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

WANT YOUR EVENT LISTED? Community Calendar is made available free of charge to not-for-profit organisations to keep the public informed of special events and activities. Send item details to Star Weekly Community Calendar, Corner Thomsons Road and Keilor Park Drive, Keilor Park, 3042, or email to wededitorial@starweekly.com.au by 9am Wednesday the week prior to publication

Craigieburn Residents' Association

Do you live in Craigieburn and wonder what's happening re-roads and facilities, or have a concern you'd like to raise so it can be addressed? Head to Selwyn House, Selwyn Avenue, Craigieburn on the last Wednesday of the month for the Craigieburn Residents' Association meeting. The group liaises with Hume council, as well as state and federal government organisations to get the job done. Meetings start at 7.30pm. CRA will host a sausage sizzle at Bunnings Craigieburn on Saturday 18 July.
 ■ craigieburnresidents@gmail.com, 0430 354 463

Menergise men's walk and talk

Every Thursday from 7pm, starting at the Mernda Neighbourhood House. A nightly walk for men to get some exercise and shoot the breeze in the breeze.
 ■ 0475 454 133

Senior citizens meet

The Gladstone Park Senior Citizens Club regularly meets for games of bingo, carpet bowls and a chat over a cuppa, at the corner of Carrick and Elmhurst drives, Gladstone Park.
 ■ Liz, 0433 249 995

Craigieburn Probus Club

Craigieburn Probus Club offers retired people an opportunity to socialise, go on monthly bus trips, enjoy dine outs and morning melodies among other activities like general business, morning tea and an interesting speaker. Every second Monday of the month at the Craigieburn Bowling Club, 233 Craigieburn Road, Craigieburn.
 ■ Bill, 0411 517 217, Marion, 0407 052 774

Inclusive tennis

A free weekly tennis program for people with disabilities and/or special needs, or if you're just struggling to access mainstream sport programs. Held at Epping Tennis Club, 861 High Street, Epping, on Thursdays from 5-6pm.
 ■ play.tennis.com.au/eppingtennisclub.com.au

Mernda Repair cafe

Located at Mernda Neighbourhood House, the Mernda Repair Café will be open monthly for residents to come and have their faulty or broken items fixed. Staffed by skilled volunteers from the community. A range of repairers will be available at each session with skills in repairing items including bikes, small electrical items, clothing and jewellery.
 ■ Mernda Repair Cafe Facebook page for bookings each month

Regular Storytime for Kids

Yarra Plenty Regional Library offers a range of children's services and programs across their network of libraries. They are run every day with sessions for young babies, toddlers, preschoolers, and families. Come along to help your child develop those crucial language skills and social connections.
 ■ yprl.vic.gov.au

All Seasons

All Seasons provides young adults living with disabilities and their friends, family and carers, with the opportunity to garden, craft, recycle, be creative and connect nature in a supportive setting. Tuesdays 10am-noon. Thomastown Library, 52 Main Street, Thomastown.
 ■ 0488 224 439, manager@tnh.org.au

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14 NORTHERN STAR WEEKLY Tuesday, 7 July, 2026



Through the lens This week's photographer's choice picture is of artist Justin Enrico Legaspi. (Damjan Janevski) 562213_01

activities that enrich your body, mind and spirit. Our doors are open, please come in at the Gladstone Park Community Centre, 13 South Circular Road, Gladstone.
 ■ 9330 3239, secretary@humeu3a.org.au, website: <https://humeu3a.org.au/>

Bridgewater Retirement Village Dance

Bridgewater Retirement Village is holding a free afternoon dance. There will be a bit of line dancing and some new vogue. The dance will occur on the third Sunday of every month, 1pm start. Everyone is welcome. Address 9 Wedgewood Road Roxburgh Park.
 ■ Liz Munro, 0409 712 613

Craigieburn Country Women's Association

The Craigieburn Branch of CWA welcomes women of all ages to their meetings and craft sessions which are held on the 3rd 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, Karen, 0499 821 754

Gladstone Park Probus Club

Have fun with like minded people if you live in Gladstone Park and surrounding suburbs. Monthly speakers, lunches, outings and bus tours. The probus club meets on the first Wednesday of the month at 9.45am at the Good Shepherd Parish Hall, 88 South Circular Road, Gladstone Park. Visitors and new members welcome.
 ■ Chris, 0422 017 907

Bundoora probus

Bundoora Probus meets on the second Wednesday of each month at St Peter's Anglican Church hall, Alma Road, Bundoora. Enjoy guest speakers, excursions, coffee mornings, lunches, walks and craft sessions.
 ■ bundooraprobust@outlook.com

Community singing group

Join the Broadmeadows Community Singers on Tuesdays at 7.30pm. No previous experience needed, just a love of singing.
 ■ Sonja, 0429 587 285

Chatty Cafe

Join Mill Park library's Chatty Cafe for a coffee, tea, and biscuits and meet new friends. The cafe is open every Thursday, from 6.30-7.30pm, at 394 Plenty Road, Mill Park.
 ■ <https://www.yprl.vic.gov.au/>

TAC L2P Program

The Transport Accident Commission (TAC) L2P Program is a community-based program developed to assist eligible young Victorian learner drivers between the ages of 16 and 21 who do not have access to a supervising driver, or an appropriate vehicle to gain driving experience required for a probationary licence. Volunteer mentors needed.
 ■ Cynthia Petridis, 0435 653 371

Broadmeadows Senior Citizens Club

The club meets on Mondays, Wednesdays, Saturdays and first Sunday of the month. It also has indoor carpet bowls, bingo, and snooker. Enjoy a dance between 7-11pm on

the third saturday of every month. All are welcome.
 ■ Liz Munro, 0409 712 613, lizmunro7@gmail.com

Adult education

Banksia Gardens Community Services is running adult education courses including an introduction to computers and brushing up on English skills.
 ■ 9309 8531

Homestead Walking Group

Enjoy some fresh air, beautiful gardens and meet other locals. Volunteer leaders will meet at the Homestead Community and Learning Centre at 9.30am on Wednesdays for a 30-45 minute walk.
 ■ <https://tinyurl.com/2wbet35x>

Craft and Conversation

Craigieburn library is hosting a Wednesday weekly craft group, from 1-3pm, and everyone is welcome. Join the craft and conversation group and share your love of all things crafty. Bring your current project and make new friends.
 ■ humelibraries.vic.gov.au

Community lunch in Roxburgh Park

Join the Homestead Team, along with members of the community for a free lunch and make some new friends whilst you're at it. Lunch will be prepared by the Turkish Women's Association. The lunch will be held every Wednesday, from 11.30am-1pm, at Homestead Community and Learning Centre, 30 Whitshire Road, Roxburgh Park.
 ■ <https://tinyurl.com/2wbet35x>

Orchestra brings story to life

Families can enjoy a captivating introduction to live classical music, storytelling and contemporary First Nations creativity at Wyndham Cultural Centre on Saturday 11 July.

Musicians from the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra (MCO) will perform *Wurrtoo: The Wombat Who Fell in Love with the Sky*, based on Tylissa Elisara's multi-award-winning children's novel of the same name.

Narrated by Elisara herself and featuring a quintet of MCO string players, the story follows *Wurrtoo* the wombat on his daring quest to marry the sky in a heartwarming tale of courage, imagination and belonging.

Charming for all ages but especially suited to children aged seven-12, the book was inspired by beloved classics such as *Winnie-the-Pooh* and *Blinky Bill* while



Author Tylissa Elisara. (Supplied)

drawing on stories from Elisara's own Narungga, Kurna and Adnyamathanha heritage.

A new music score by acclaimed Noongar, Yamatji and Wongi composer Aaron Wyatt, brings *Wurrtoo's* journey to life.

Curated by MCO education manager

Dr Emma Sullivan, *Wurrtoo* opens with an introduction to string instruments, followed by demonstrations and interactive activities designed to guide listening, encourage participation and help young audiences connect with the story through sound.

Elisara said it was deeply meaningful to see her story brought to life in a new creative form:

"This is a wonderful opportunity to share *Wurrtoo's* story with more children and families in a completely new way, which will introduce audiences to contemporary First Nations storytelling matched with contemporary First Nations classical music," she said.

Sullivan said she was excited to bring *Wurrtoo* to audiences across Victoria:

"When I first came across Tylissa's book,

I was struck by the way it tells a timeless tale of adventure and friendship through a distinctly Australian lens. Aaron's score beautifully compliments Tylissa's story and brings her characters to life in a really engaging way. It is particularly special to have Tylissa joining us as our narrator, offering audiences the unique opportunity to hear the story of *Wurrtoo* directly from the author. It feels especially fitting to share this exciting collaboration of a First Nations author and composer during NAIDOC Week," she said.

Wurrtoo: The Wombat Who Fell in Love with the Sky will be presented at Wyndham Cultural Centre on Saturday 11 July, from 2- 2.50pm.

Details: www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/whats-on/wurrtoo-wombat-who-fell-love-sky

Substation to host South Asian sounds

Kerfew, a collective of South Asian artists, musicians and DJs founded in 2022, will take over The Substation in Newport on 11 July with their new program *Testing*.

Described as Kerfew's most ambitious program yet, *Testing* showcases South Asian artists and performers who bridge and probe between classical, contemporary and experimental music.

Curated and produced by Kamna Muddagouni and Saieesh Shanmugarajah, the program features a line-up that includes a solo set from *Aarti Jadu*, an artist known for creating cinematic compositions

through voice and entrancing electronic compositions.

Among the other performers on the bill is Bengali born and Sydney based DJ Arsonist who will be making his Melbourne debut, violin and mridangam duo Bhairavi Raman and Nanthesh Sivarajah, renowned percussionist and sound artist R Rebeiro, and the theremin-controlled modular synthesisers of Vijay Thillaimuthu.

Beginning at 7pm, those who arrive early can enjoy South Asian food while taking in live instrumental performances steeped in classical and contemporary practices, and

then settle in as the performances get more experimental, electronic and moody as the night progresses.

Discounted early bird tickets have already sold out, but cheaper tickets for Hobsons Bay locals and concession car holders are still available, as are those for general admission.

First Nations people can attend for free.

Kerfew: *Testing* is at The Substation, Newport from 7pm-1am on Saturday 11 July. For more information and to book, go to: <https://thesubstation.org.au/program/kerfew-testing>



South Asian sound collective, Kerfew, will take over The Substation in Newport on 11 July. (Sulaiman Enayatzada)



David Alyas and Deklan Anderson. 561643_01



Isaac Wilson, David Adams and Russ Townsly. 561643_06



Mirana and her daughter Nomena, 2. 561643_03



The match was shown on a big screen in the Town Hall carpark. 561643_07

World Cup fever

Soccer fans from across Melbourne's north-west made their way to Town Hall Broadmeadows on Friday to watch Australia take on Paraguay. The match was the Socceroos final group game at the World Cup. The scoreless draw was enough to secure Australia's progression to the round of 32.

The Socceroos' next match is at 4am on Saturday against Egypt. Star Weekly photographer Damjan Janevski stopped by Broadmeadows to capture the fan action.



Graham Park and Harry Sundai. 561643_02



Russ Townsly and David Adams show off their skills. 561643_05



There was plenty of green and gold on display. 561643_11



There was plenty of entertainment for the fans at half time. 561643_04



Fans watched the game in comfort. 561643_09

SPORTS QUIZ

1. NBA superstar Giannis Antetokounmpo was recently traded to which team?
2. In diving and parkour, what is a gainer?

3. Which cricketer announced his retirement while England was taking part in the recent third Test versus New Zealand?
4. The Adelaide Thunderbirds and Melbourne Vixens played against each other in the 2026 Grand Final of which competition?
5. Which famous sisters are competing in women's doubles at Wimbledon, their first tournament together since the 2022 US Open?



Giannis Antetokounmpo

6. South Korean golfer Hae-ran Ryu recently won which tournament?
7. Which former Illawarra Hawk was recently traded from the Charlotte Hornets to the Minnesota Timberwolves?
8. Which country's men's national soccer team is known as Los Cafeteros?
9. And what does Los Cafeteros mean in Spanish?

10. Dan McKellar last coached which Australia-based Super Rugby Pacific team?
11. During the 2026 FIFA World Cup, Messi broke a record by scoring a hat trick – how many goals is this?
12. What colour are all the soccer cleats at the 2026 FIFA World Cup?
13. Which Belgium and Manchester City winger temporarily left the World Cup camp for the birth of his first child?
14. Which NBA team was the inaugural winner of the in-season NBA Cup tournament?
15. Who did Mirra Andreeva beat in the 2026 French Open final?
16. Australia advanced to the knockout stage of the 2026 FIFA World Cup after finishing second in which group?
17. Which sport features the least amount of balls: billiards, pool or snooker?
18. The FA Cup final has been played at which stadium every year since 2007?



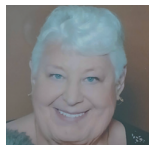
Mirra Andreeva

19. Which team selected Canadian Gavin McKenna first overall at the 2026 NHL draft?
20. Which football confederation does Australia compete in for World Cup qualification?
21. The Illyria Armadillos are a fictional soccer team from which movie?
22. In handball, how many players are on the court at once?
23. And in which year was handball first played at the Olympics?
24. Lucy Cronin has joined the leadership group of which AFLW team for the 2026 season?
25. What is the nickname of Australia's quadball team?
26. True or false: one of the six 'colour' balls in snooker is pink?
27. 'Next Stars' is a player development program in which league?
28. Who is the current WWE Women's Champion?
29. Which AIHL team plays their home games out of the Hunter Ice Skating Stadium?
30. The Pittsburgh Pirates play which sport?

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1. Miami Heat 2. A backflip with forward momentum 3. Ben Stokes 4. Super Netball 5. Serena and Venus Williams 6. 2026 Women's PGA Championship 7. LaMelo Ball 8. Colombia 9. The Coffee Growers 10. New South Wales Waratahs 11. Three 12. Pink 13. Jeremy Doku 14. Los Angeles Lakers 15. Maja Chymalska 16. Group D 17. Billiards 18. Wembley Stadium 19. Toronto Maple Leafs 20. Asian Football Confederation (AFC) 21. She's the Man 22. 14 23. 1936 24. Collingwood 25. The Dropbeats 26. True 27. NBL 28. Rhea Ripley 29. Newcastle Norsthrs 30. Baseball

Announcements

IN MEMORIAM



LEE

Beverley

03.03.1941-14.06.2025

My wife and mother to Janine, David and Russell. "Forever missed, never forgotten." Tony Lee



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Employment

POSITIONS VACANT

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It's all about style for GR

By Chris Riley, Marque Motoring

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

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

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

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

More on that in a minute.

Styling

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Toyota describes the second-generation C-HR as a premium offering.

Inside, the fit out uses a range of recycled materials and no animal-derived products.

Standard kit includes heated sport front seats with combination suede-like and fabric upholstery, powered driver seat with memory, dual-zone climate air with nanoe X air cleaning technology, ambient lighting with colour selection and privacy glass for the rear and rear-side windows.

Unique to the GR Sport is combination suede upholstery with leather accents (both synthetic), GR-branded aluminium scuff plates and floor mats, and a perforated GR Sport steering wheel with heating functionality.

There's also adaptive cruise, a digital rear-view mirror, keyless smart entry and start, auto LED lights and wipers, auto-levelling bi-LED headlights, electronic parking brake, front and rear parking sensors, and a 4.2-inch colour driver display and a powered-operated tailgate.

Koba and GR Sport both get a tyre repair kit in lieu of a spare.

C-HR is offered with the Toyota Warranty Advantage, consisting of a five-year/unlimited kilometre term with capped-price servicing for the first five years/75,000km (whichever comes first) and each 12-month/15,000km service costs \$250.

Infotainment

Infotainment comes in the form of a 12.3-inch touchscreen, with Bluetooth,



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

RATINGS

Looks:	8.5
Performance:	7.5
Safety:	8
Thirst:	7.5
Practicality:	5
Comfort:	7
Tech:	7
Value:	6
Overall:	7.1

voice recognition, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, cloud-based satellite navigation, and AM/FM and DAB+ digital radio.

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

There's also wireless smartphone charging, USB-C and 12V charging ports and a rear USB-C accessory port.

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

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

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

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

Safety

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

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

Engines/transmissions

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

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

With a 43-litre tank, it still takes standard 91 unleaded too. Combined CO2 emissions are listed at 94g/km.

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

As is always the case Toyota does not

supply a combined torque figure for its hybrids.

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

Driving

In a nutshell, C-HR priorities form over function.

While it's a great looking car that has stood the test of time, the design demands compromise.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Further, there aren't any door bins to be found in the back and only one seatback pocket on the passenger side, with one USB-C port for those in the back to share.

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

The privacy glass also makes it difficult to see out of the back.

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

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

Check out the textures, finishes and the way panels flow into each other – it's really something.

Though, closer inspection reveals much of it is hard plastic.

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

A digital rear vision mirror is fitted, but is a waste of space. It's difficult to bring into focus and liable to make you carsick – we'd ask if it could be deleted?

None of the cupholders will accommodate a sports drink bottle and the small centre cupholders will not accept a thermal mug for tea or coffee.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Based on a revised version of Toyota's TNGA-C platform, suspension is Mac strut at the front and double wishbones at the rear across the lineup.

Overseas the GR rides on 20-inch wheels, but Toyota decided to with 19s here – no doubt in recognition of our crappy roads.

Ride and handling are very good however, even on said roads, with grippy Bridgestone Turanza rubber.

Don't go getting the wrong idea, however, because the C-HR even in GR form is still no sports car.

The steering feels rubbery at times and the drive experience is far from engaging.

You need to push it hard to get the best out of the car, but the CVT's ability to deliver the goods is limiting.

Under hard acceleration, the engine becomes harsh and noisy, and sounds a bit like a lawnmower about to run out of fuel.

In the end you'll run out of power before you run out of grip.

We were getting 5.7L/100km after more than 300km behind the wheel, including some quick corners, which is still pretty good.

Summing up

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

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

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

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



Western Bulldogs' Jorja Livingstone and Williamstown's Georgia De Angelis. 563547_14



Western Bulldogs' Erica Fowler. 563547_20



Werribee's Sam Donegan. 563555_12



Werribee's Noah Gadsby is tackled by Brayden Crossley. 563555_16



Werribee Districts' Jack Fletcher. 563557_02

Big wins in big matches

There were plenty of good games across the weekend, including local rivalries, top of the table clashes and grand final rematches. Star

Weekly photographer Ljubica Vrankovic was out shooting some of the action.



Sunbury Kangaroos' Lachlan Treweek. 563558_11



Caroline Springs' Max Hudson. 563557_05



Sunbury Kangaroos' Ryan Pretty. 563558_03



The light fades at Joe Brown Reserve. 563559_01



Keilor's Liam Hude. 563559_03

Cannons' inconsistent season

By Tara Murray

The Calder Cannons are searching for more consistency in the back part of the Talent League boys season.

The Cannons, who had a bye on the weekend, have a 4-6 record.

Coach Sam Willatt said the results sum up where they are at this season so far.

"We've had some strong performances and some strong performances in moments in games but we haven't quite been able to piece it all together.

"We've been quite inconsistent. We are a bottom age heavy side so you expect that inconsistency.

"The last two weeks we haven't got the results against some really strong teams. We've been really good but didn't get the

rewards for effort."

Willatt said there was always the challenge in the Talent League competition of having your best side available.

With injuries, school football and Vic Metro commitments it is a juggling at times.

Willatt said it's about being patient at times.

Two of their stars, Blake Justice and Koby Bewick have returned in recent weeks.

Justice played one match before playing in Vic Metro's second match of the national championships.

"Koby has come back in the midfield. He was his first game back since April," he said

"He found a lot of ball and defended re-

ally nicely. He's such a good kick.

"Blake came back in the midfield the week before."

Speaking before Metro's third game of the championships on Friday, Willatt said Bewick and Nic Staropoli, who had been starring at Talent League level, would be pushing to play.

Neither were named in the final team. Willatt said Staropoli had his defensive and offensive mix right and was setting the standard for intercept marking in the competition.

Other standouts for the Cannons recently are a couple of bottom agers in Dylan Romeril and Oliver Noto, who weren't getting as much recognition as some of the others after they put together some strong football in recent weeks.

The Cannons had a bye on the weekend, with plenty of byes across the competition at this time of year.

Willatt said they tried to give the playing group as much structure as possible at this time of year, with many players getting the opportunity to play with their local clubs.

He said for others it was about freshening them up and others it's like a mini pre-season.

The Cannons now face the Eastern Ranges on 11 July, before facing Tasmania and then the Ranges again, with some byes in the middle.

"It looks like after a slow start they have found their straps the last few weeks," Willatt said of the Ranges.

"Hopefully we can match it with them and hopefully get the finished product."

RAMPAGING BULLS CHARGE TO FLAG WIN

FOOTBALL

Bundoora is celebrating a second Northern Football League premiership in three years after an astonishing final-quarter turnaround saw the Bulls storm home to beat minor premier Montmorency.

Trailing by 33 points at three-quarter time, Bundoora booted 9.8 to nothing in the final term and crushed the Magpies' hopes of a first flag since 1979, when the competition was known as the Diamond Valley Football League.

When the final siren sounded the scoreboard read 17.21 (123) to 13.16 (94).

It was an incredible finish to what had been an odd game. In the first term the Bulls looked uncharacteristically flat, struggling to get the ball into their forward half as the Magpies dominated across the ground.

When the Bulls did go inside 50, key forwards Cameron Cloke and Gary Moorcroft had little chance because of poor delivery, a number of kicks being grubbers.

It threatened to get ugly, but Montmorency was also wasting opportunities in front of goal, finishing the quarter with 3.9.

The Magpies extended their league in the second term and led by 35 points at one stage.

The Bulls' only highlight for the term was a superb Cloke torpedo goal from about 70 metres out on a tight angle.

But skill errors continued to cost the Bulls. Alex Chiocci intercepting a handpass in Montmorency's goalsquare and kicking a goal shortly before the siren.

The third quarter followed a similar pattern, the Magpies dominating early and jumping out to a 47-point lead at one stage.

The game appeared all but over, although Moorcroft, who won the AFL 'mark of the year' while playing for Essendon in 2001, showed he still has the leap by taking a screamer in the goalsquare and converting.

But moments later, when Cloke dished off a handpass to Salvatore Mamone 20 metres from goal, it was fumbled and the three-quarter time siren sounded.

With Montmorency playing only once in the previous three weeks, you'd have expected the Magpies to have the legs. But the Bulls, who started pre-season early after a disappointing straight-sets finals exit last year, made the Magpies look decidedly second-rate in a barnstorming final term.

Skipper and best-on-ground Brayden Shaw started the fightback with the first goal of the quarter (and a couple of misses). Moorcroft and Adrian Papaluca also missed before Cloke marked and goalied to cut the margin to 11. He jumped in delight, his fists pumping, and suddenly Bundoora was looking dangerous.

Montmorency couldn't get their hands on the footy out of the middle and when Cloke and Moorcroft combined for a goal for the first time all afternoon, the Bulls hit the front.

The Magpies had little fight left and the Bulls ensured there would be no heartbreak with more goals to their name.



Star Weekly's coverage of the 2013 NFL grand final, including that mark.

Grand finals re-lived in pages of new book

By Tara Murray

Sometimes there's a football grand final that sticks in your head for a long time.

It might be a thriller or a team coming from nowhere to break a premiership drought.

For former sports journalist Toby Prime, he decided to use some of those grand finals to write a book.

Famous Flags' Great Local Grand Finals relives 14 local football grand finals.

Prime said it started with a random idea to write a book with grand finals from every competition.

He soon realised that he wouldn't have time to cover every league, but picked out a select few from across the state.

"I didn't want to do it to be the best ever grand finals. Who am I to tell people what the best grand final is?" he said.

"There's a lot of great local grand finals and hopefully each of the chapters is great for its own unique reasons,

"Each chapter has a unique story to them with a few decent threads throughout them."

Among the grand finals featured is Bundoora's Northern Football League division 1 premiership win in 2013.

Prime said it was one of the first grand finals to stick out to him.

"Bundoora trailed by 47 points and ended up winning by 29 points," he said.

"Gary Moorcroft took a mark in the game



Toby Prime. (Supplied)

which was the turning point. It provided Bundoora with the spark.

"There was a rivalry between the two sides and Montmorency was known for choking in finals.

"They had an excellent home and away record, but couldn't turn that into premierships."

Prime said Phil Plunkett and Brayden Shaw, who were the Bulls coach and captain at the time, were open books in terms of looking back.

He said Shaw said at three quarter time that Montmorency thought they had the

game won.

The game came after Bundoora led Montmorency in the semi finals by 40 points and lost.

Darley's loss after the siren to Ballarat in 2008 is also features in Prime's book.

Ballarat finished fourth and since that time a club hasn't won a flag from fourth since.

The Devils were searching for their first Ballarat FL premiership and the Swans their first in 19 years.

Players were sent from the field after a brawl at three quarter time and the match came down to the final kick.

Swans captain Ash Baker kicked a goal after the siren to give his side a five point win.

Prime said the last quarter in the grand final went beyond 30 minutes and was unusually long.

"Many people had never spoke about the game before publicly," he said.

Western Bulldogs premiership coach Luke Beveridge wrote the forward for the book.

He was coach of St Bedes/Mentone Tigers in the Victorian Amateur Football Association, coaching them to three straights premierships in three different grades.

Prime said Beveridge rates the 2006 premiership up there with the Bulldogs' AFL premiership in his coaching highlights.

The book can be purchased through, tobyprime@live.com or local book stores.

Wright joins Hume

Hume City has added attacker Max Wright to its squad during the mid-season transfer period.

Hume coach Nick Hegarty told Star Weekly that they had been looking to add just one player during the window, with the Englishman that man.

Wright arrives in Broadmeadows having had a strong career in England that has seen him play in English Football League 2 and the National League, with Wright joining Hume City from FC Halifax Town.

Wright said he was looking forward to the new challenge and the opportunity to play football in Australia under coach Nick Hegarty.

"I think after a decade in England, it felt right for a change," he said in Hume's announcement.

"Doing 10 years at the same thing becomes a bit samey. So I thought I'd change it up and test the waters a little bit. And I don't think I could have any further away,

"I knew the gaffer (Hegarty) as he's from whereabouts I'm from, and when I had a chat with him where he explained the situation, the club and how it all operates - it definitely piqued my interest, and I thought I would push the boat out and try it."

Wright said his first impressions of the club that the set-up was fantastic.

He said he wants to get up to match speed and fitness and get going, make a few appearances and try and affect the games as best as possible and help out.

"We all want to play well, but the only objective of football is to win. So whether I'm on the bench, starting or not in the squad, the only objective is to win the game."

Hegarty said Wright is a fantastic addition to the squad for the last nine games,"

Hume City continues its charge for the 2026 title against Dandenong Thunder this weekend at George Andrews Reserve in Dandenong, with Wright eligible to play.

Perri returns to Kookas

By Tara Murray

A familiar face has returned to the coaching role at Rivergum for the Diamond Valley Cricket Association Money Shield season.

The Kookas announced that Matt Perri would coach the side this season, after a couple of years away from the job,

The premiership captain spent four seasons as coach in his first stint.

"I had a couple of years off but the hunger was there again," Perri said.

"Life has developed a bit more and my daughter is a bit older so there's a bit more flexibility.

"Being in the DVCA it's a bit more exciting and the club is growing..

"I'm looking forward to coaching again."

Perri said when Corey Altis stood down

from the role, he thought about taking on the role, but wanted the club to advertise it.

He said the club was still keen for him to take the role back on and he didn't hesitate.

James Bonnici has been named assistant coach.

"He's my cousin," Perri said. "As I was captain last year we spoke everyday last year about cricket.

"I was asked what I thought about it and I said definitely. We bounce ideas off each other.

"He's been a senior coach at Olympic Colts."

Altis will remain at the club in a playing capacity in a big boost for the side.

Perri said he would continue to help out where he could.

The Kookas will face a new challenge this



Matt Perri. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 541884_01

season as they play in the Money Shield for the first time after winning the Mash Shield last season.

Perri said he hadn't seen the playing group this excited about pre-season and getting into the season in a long time.

"For 15 or so years, we've gone into a lot of games knowing we would play well," he said.

"Stepping up into another grade is an unknown.

"It's a good challenge of the mental game, as we don't know if we will win or what is being thrown at us."

Perri said numbers continued to grow at the club and they were hoping some people who took last season off would return.

He said they were keen to add more depth to their squad, with their first XI premiership side all re-signing.

"We've added Dale Rigby and maybe one or two more," he said.

"We've kept the core which is important. We need to have depth throughout the squad last year."

Perri said they were also keen to get more games into younger players like Jude Colwell, Blake Ewart and Ben Lyons.



Harry Albon. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 494547_11

Eagles get job done against Moonee Valley

By Tara Murray

Craigieburn continues to prove itself up for the challenge in the Essendon District Football League division 1 season.

While the Eagles have been inconsistent in recent weeks, their best two performances have come against teams sitting in the top five.

On Saturday, the Eagles handled the conditions better to beat Moonee Valley, 14.11 (95)-13.9 (87).

Eagles' co-coach Jack Carlyon said it was a pretty strong performance by the group.

"It was a good win," he said.

"We've been a bit up and down the last month. Our two games against Tullamarine and Moonee Valley we've kept the pressure up all day against some good sides."

While there were concerns about the state of the ground on Ormond Park, Carlyon said the ground was in better shape than they expected.

The EDFL got both teams to assess the ground on Saturday morning, after a thirds match on Friday night was called off.

Carlyon said there were two or three bad

patches, but despite that it was still a pretty high scoring game.

The Eagles started well and managed to hold a lead throughout the game, but were never able to blow the Fog away.

The margin was 19 points at the last break and they managed to hold on.

Carlyon said he felt they handled the conditions better.

"Our pressure around the footy was good and we made them handily around too much," he said.

"We were able to get forward at all costs and keep territory.

"Our small forwards competed with plenty of pressure."

Harry Albon kicked four goals in a best on ground performance from the midfield.

Carlyon said his defensive pressure had increased the past couple of years and he was averaging six to seven tackles a game on top off his offensive work.

Bryce Kimuliatis, Jakeb Bruni and Brodie White were other standouts for the Eagles.

The win was the Eagles' 10th of the season.

With a match up with Oak Park this week,

Carlyon said the challenges keep coming.

He said their biggest test going forward was closing the gap.

"We thought it would be good if we could get one of the two matches against Moonee Valley and Oak Park," he said.

"We've got one and we want to win the next one and it will help secure a double chance in finals.

"We have to be more consistent. Against St Albans we weren't consistent enough and last week against Rupo.

"We said to the group yesterday [Saturday], the struggle for us is bringing our best football more often.

"There's a big gap between our best and worst ... We're up for the fight against the top teams, but we've had to win a lot of games ugly."

On Sunday, Tullamarine lost a thriller to Oak Park.

The Demons were in front for much of the last quarter having led narrowly at each of the breaks.

Oak Park kicked the last three goals of the game, including the last in the 29th minute, to sneak home, winning 9.9 (63)-9.7 (61).

Bulls in close one

Bundoora got over the line in a thriller in the Northern Football League division 1 competition.

It was hard going for the Bulls and Diamond Creek at Yulong Reserve on Saturday, with conditions making it hard to score.

The two teams went goal-for-goal in the first half, with the Bulls leading by two points.

Neither team was able to find a major in the third quarter, adding one point apiece to keep the margin at two points.

Diamond Creek got the first two goals of the last quarter to lead by 12 points 10 minutes in the final quarter.

O'Neill Moncrieff got one back for the Bulls before Liam Mallia put them back in front by a point in the 19th minute.

Peter McEvoy kicked the sealer for the Bulls, who won 6.8 (44)-5.7 (37).

McEvoy was the only multiple goalkicker for the Bulls, finishing with two goals.

He was named among the best with Luke Lo Valvo and Moncrieff.

After 12 rounds, the Bulls sit fourth on the ladder with seven wins.

The Bulls face Hurstbridge this Saturday.

Meanwhile in division 2, South Morang and Old Paradians were on the winners list while Thomastown and Whittlesea suffered close losses.

South Morang set up its 10.15 (75)-8.6 (54) win against Lower Plenty in the first half, having led by 35 points at the main break.

Teague Van Zwienen kicked four goals in the win.

Old Paradians bounced back after a disappointing loss the previous week, beating Whittlesea 11.13 (79)-9.12 (66).

The Raiders kicked five goals to two in the final quarter to come from behind for the victory.

Liam McVeigh kicked three goals for the winners.

Meanwhile it was heartbreak for Thomastown as it lost to Fitzroy Stars, 8.8 (56)-8.7 (55).

The Bears kicked the only goal of the final quarter but it wasn't enough to get the win.

Jake Nikolov and Luca Gioskos were the Bears best.

Pacers pick up, win thriller

By Tara Murray

Defence is the word for the Whittlesea Pacers as they aim to overcome a shooting slump in the Big V men's division 1 competition.

The Pacers shooting has dropped off the past few weeks and with it the Pacers haven't been able to get over the line.

That changed on Saturday night, as they won a thriller against the Craigieburn Eagles.

After a one point margin the first time the two teams, the Pacers won by 81-76.

Pacers' coach Des Radoslovic said it was nice to get the win on the board.

Whittlesea led by five points at quarter time and that would be the difference.

"We've had a couple of very close losses and played well," he said.

"We shot the ball well and it has hurt us. Our offence was OK but our defence got us the win."

The two sides are near each other on the

ladder and as neighbouring clubs there was a rivalry throughout all the age groups.

The two clubs sit fifth and sixth on the ladder.

Radoslovic said they were happy with how they played the game.

"We are improving in a lot of areas," he said. "Defence got us the win with our offence being so-so."

"Our shooting form was still not great. Defensively we've played well the last three weeks."

"Winning form is good form."

Brendan Young top scored with 22 points, while Jalen Salon had 19 points

The Pacers sit sixth on the ladder with seven wins and seven losses.

With a top six, it would take a miracle for them to miss finals with only four weeks left in the season.

"We want to win enough games to have a home final and take some momentum into finals," he said.



Oscar Percy. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 546139_21

Radoslovic said they were continuing to work on their shooting form, but said they felt they were generally shooting the right shots, but they won't sink at the moment.

"We were the best three point shooting side in the competition in the league, but the last three weeks we've not been hitting," he said.

"If we have the defence at the level we want it will be competitive whether our of-

fence is firing or not.

"That [defence] is the focus], but we think our offence will come good at the right time."

The Pacers face the Surf Coast this weekend.

Radoslovic said a win in that match was important with the Surf Coast sitting in fourth spot.

For the Eagles, Shawndale Jones Jr top scored with 30 points.

In the division 1 women's competition, both the Pacers and Eagles suffered losses.

On Saturday night, the Pacers lost to the Camberwell Dragons, 60-59 in over time.

Charlotte Lord and Sharna Ayres top scored for the Pacers with 16 points.

Coming off their first win of the season, the Eagles lost to Wyndham 75-54.

Scores were level at half time before Wyndham fired in the second half to run away with the win.

Viv Saad top scored with 19 points for the Eagles.



Ethan Derrick. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 546153_03

Magpies grind out a win against Hawks

By Tara Murray

Roxburgh Park produced some of its best football of the season to knock off Hadfield in the Essendon District Football League division 2 season on Saturday.

After a few down weeks, the Magpies made it two wins in a row as they were too good for the Hawks, 11.10 (76)-6.9 (45).

Magpies' coach Ross Terranova said it was a really good performance from his playing group.

"It was pretty average conditions to be honest," he said.

"It was a grinding, hard fought win and I'm pleased for the boys."

Terranova said the group's focus has always been what was in front of them and only taking it one week at a time.

He said they took some positive signs out of their win against Burnside Heights and were focused on doing what they needed to

do.

"The competition is so close at the moment," he said.

On Saturday, the Magpies held narrow leads at each of the three breaks, with five points at three quarter time the biggest margin at the breaks.

The Magpies kicked four goals to none in the final quarter to seal the win.

"We were able to control their ball movement," Terranova said.

"That helped us out. We got them on the turnover and we gave our forwards plenty of opportunities to score.

"We stuck to what we needed to do to get the result."

Eyad Hegazy kicked five goals for the Magpies.

Terranova said Ethan Derrick was clearly the best on ground while Thomas Baker, Hegazy, Andrew Capuano and Ryan Micallef were other standouts.

The Magpies sit in fifth spot, now a game outside the top four behind Hadfield.

Terranova said the group felt that their best football was still ahead of them.

"We need to keep moving forward," he said.

"It's taken a while to get there, to grow and gel the way that we want to play.

"It's starting to come to fruition in the last couple of weeks.

"Despite a couple of disappointing losses, the true character has shone through and we've shown what we can do in periods."

Terranova said getting the mental side of things right going into a game was the biggest thing and it went a long way to winning.

The Magpies face Westmeadows this Saturday at Lakeside Recreation Reserve.

The Magpies won the first encounter between the sides.

Westmeadows enters the match on the back of a 10.14 (74)-8.13 (61) loss to Glenroy.

Sports shorts

DVCA

Shupinder Taggar is departing Bundoora Cricket Club. The Diamond Valley Cricket Association Barclay Shield club announced that he was moving to the Eastern District League. Taggar is a 10-time club champion at the Bulls and is third for all-time A-grade games played. "These accolades only tell part of the story — Sunny's dedication, leadership and commitment to Bundoora Cricket Club have set a standard that will inspire generations to come. Sunny, thank you for everything you have given to our club. You leave with our deepest appreciation and respect," the club said.

NBA

Former Hume City Bronco Anthony Dell'Orso will play for the Sacramento Kings in the 2026 NBA Summer League. The 6'6 wing out of Melbourne averaged 8.5 points, two rebounds and 1.8 assists per game as a senior at Arizona.

A-League

Former Whittlesea Ranges player William Kengni has signed with A-League club Melbourne Victory. The Ranges took to social media last week to congratulate Kengni on signing his first professional contract. "William spent the majority of his junior football journey at Whittlesea Ranges, before also representing the club throughout part of his NPL [National Premier League] pathway," the club said. His dedication, hard work and commitment have been rewarded with this outstanding achievement."

FV

Upfield had a big win in the FV state league 1 north-west competition on Saturday. Upfield was at home against Ballarat City and came away with a 4-1 win, after leading 3-0 after 29 minutes. Upfield sits top of the ladder. Lalor United's match with Clifton Hill was postponed after a serious injury to one of its senior players who was taken to hospital.

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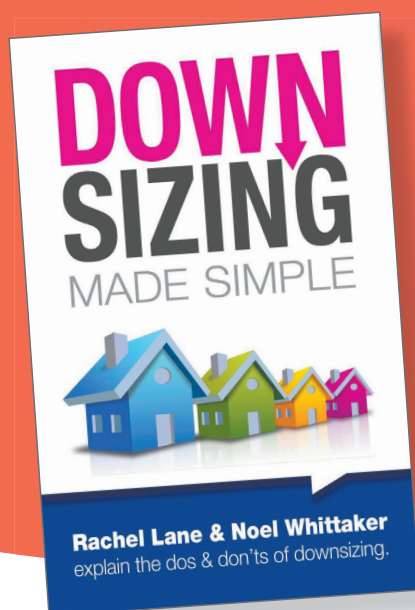
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