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BUSINESS
OF THE YEAR
EQ Leaders

WYNDHAM
BUSINESS
AWARDS 2026

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Nurse Next Door®

home care services

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Our Greatest Reward is Making Lives Better® in Wyndham.

We are honoured to be recognised at the 30th Wyndham Business Awards. At Nurse Next Door Werribee, our core purpose is Making Lives Better. We are dedicated to our local community, empowering our clients to stay in their own home, on their own terms, with a focus on Positivity, Possibility and Purpose.

The Making Lives Better Million

To give back to all our local communities, Nurse Next Door Home Care Services is offering \$1,000,000 in free, short-term care. We want to bridge the gap for older Australians and their families who are waiting for government funding but urgently need care. This immediate support provides essential personal care, nursing, and companionship. Google 'Nurse Next Door The Making Lives Better Million' to learn exactly how we can help, and apply online.



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nursenextdoor.com.au



Office and retail opportunities at Hudson Hub

Hudson Hub is a completed strata office building at 87 Overton Road, Williams Landing, with office suites and two ground-floor retail shops available for purchase. Developed by Cedar Woods, it opened in late 2025 in the heart of the town centre.

Approximately 20 kilometres from Melbourne's CBD, Hudson Hub is a short walk from Williams Landing Station, with trains into the city taking approximately half an hour. The Princes Freeway (M1) connects the precinct with Melbourne and Geelong, while bus services and cycling paths provide additional travel options.

These connections can make commutes more flexible for staff and visits easier to plan for clients and customers. Nearby cafés, shops and everyday services also allow people to combine work, meetings and errands in one location.

Hudson Hub's strata offices come in a range of sizes, with a communal meeting room, rooftop terrace, showers, secure bicycle storage and on-site parking. For businesses comparing leasing with buying, owning premises may provide greater control over their space and an opportunity to hold a long-term property asset.

Fronting Overton Road, the two retail shops could suit neighbourhood-focused retailers or service providers, subject to permitted uses and fit-out requirements. Their ground-floor position puts them alongside the building's offices and within reach of the wider town centre.

Beyond Hudson Hub, Williams Landing



Town Centre contains more than 300 office suites across its commercial buildings, alongside shops and everyday services. For businesses considering a move, this established setting offers opportunities

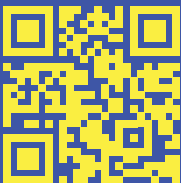
to connect with local organisations and become part of the business community. Prospective buyers can inspect the completed building and consider which spaces suit their needs.

To discuss current office and retail opportunities or arrange an inspection, contact the Williams Landing commercial sales team on 0498 001 489.

Hudson Hub

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WILLIAMS LANDING



CEDAR WOODS
DEVELOPING TOMORROW TODAY

MESSAGE FROM THE
MAYOR

On behalf of Wyndham City, I am delighted to congratulate and thank every entrant, finalist and winner of the Wyndham Business Awards 2026.

Wyndham City's annual Wyndham Business Awards, now in its 30th year, is one of our premier and long-standing annual business initiatives in Wyndham and has grown to become one of the most prestigious in Victoria, shining a spotlight on the entrepreneurs, innovators, industry leaders and dedicated business operators who help make Wyndham such a vibrant and prosperous community.

The annual Wyndham Business Awards recognise the vision, determination and excellence that drive our local economy forward and acknowledge the businesses and individuals who continue to inspire, create opportunities and truly make a difference in Wyndham.

This year's awards proudly showcase the remarkable diversity of our local business community with an Awards' record of 173 entries across 13 award categories from start-ups, social enterprises to medium and large employers, local and global, across key industry sectors. The calibre of entries demonstrates why Wyndham continues to be one of Victoria's most dynamic places to do business.

As one of Australia's fastest-growing municipalities, Wyndham's future prosperity depends on a strong, innovative



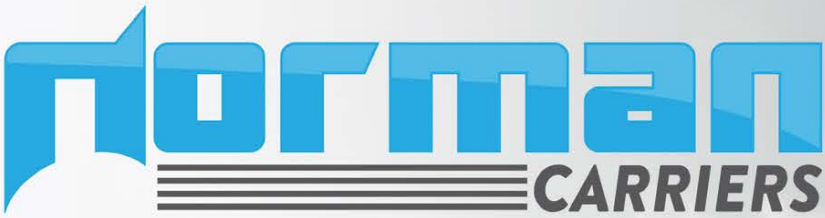
and entrepreneurial ecosystem. With just under 38,000 GST-registered businesses calling Wyndham home, our local economy is powered by people who turn challenges into opportunities and ideas into success.

To everyone who entered this year's awards, thank you for sharing your stories with us. Your passion, grit, resilience and commitment are helping shape Wyndham's future and strengthening our local economy. Being recognised among such a talented and diverse field is an outstanding achievement and one that you should be very proud of.

On behalf of Wyndham City, congratulations once again to all finalists and winners of the 30th Wyndham Business Awards 2026.

BUSINESS OF THE YEAR
HONOUR ROLL

2026 EQ Leaders	2013 Aus Lock & Safe Company	2003 Claytons Kitchens Australia
2025 Werribee Open Range Zoo	2012 Plum Heating and Cooling	2002 The Mansion Hotel
2024 All Green Nursery & Garden	2011 Werribee Open Range Zoo	2001 Cowland North Architects
2023 Fruit2Work	2010 Alex Fraser Group	2000 Claytons Kitchens Australia
2022 Cake Creations by Kate	2009 Essence Food Studio	1999 Redmond Repetition Engineers
2019 Aquatap Plumbing	2008 Rodpak	1998 Hudson's Drycleaning Group
2018 Class Plastics	2007 Nufarm Australia	1997 Rick Wolany Toyota
2017 Hopper Motor Group	2006 Cat Logistics Services	1996 AB Oxford Cold Storage Co
2016 Encore Tissue	2005 Agfab Engineering	1995 Down Under Produce
2015 ebm-papst A&NZ	2004 Costa's Mitre 10	
2014 MainstreamAquaculture		



75+ YEARS IN MELBOURNE'S WEST.
PROUD TO BE NOMINATED IN 2026.

Norman Carriers was founded in 1949 with two trucks and a commitment to keeping freight moving. Three generations later, we're still at it — located in the same community where we started.

We're proud to be named a finalist in the 2026 Wyndham Business Awards — Business Resilience category. This recognition belongs to every person who has ever been part of Norman Carriers, and to the clients and community who have kept us going for 75 years.



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BUSINESS

OF THE YEAR

EQ LEADERS

What began as a vision in Little River has grown into an internationally recognised business demonstrating that a world-class enterprise can thrive in Wyndham.

EQ Leaders delivers experiential leadership and executive education to organisations across Australia and internationally, combining a distinctive learning model with commercial strength and a commitment to community impact.

Its international reach has expanded through a partnership with Melbourne Business School Executive Education, delivering programs for senior leaders and global organisations, alongside executive engagements in Malaysia and growing relationships with business schools and education providers.

As a certified social enterprise, EQ Leaders uses its corporate work to create opportunities for people with limited access to professional development. Through Stable Steps, it has supported migrant and multicultural women in Wyndham to build confidence, workplace skills and pathways into employment with the model now being considered for expansion across Victoria.

EQ Leaders brings executives and international visitors to Wyndham, generating benefits for local accommodation, hospitality, tourism and



Emma Costin, founder of EQ Leaders, and her husband Andrew are congratulated by Laurence Hutt representing major sponsor Cedar Woods.

conservation providers.

Founder Emma Costin also contributes through local mentoring and leadership initiatives.

Its Little River facility is solar powered and supported by extensive native habitat restoration, reflecting the business's commitment to social and environmental impact alongside commercial growth.

EQ Leader is also the winner of the Excellence in Education & Training Award.

What the judges said ...

"EQ Leaders embodies what we believe a Business of the Year should represent. It has built an internationally recognised and commercially successful enterprise from Wyndham, while remaining deeply connected to the local community. The judges were particularly impressed by the way EQ Leaders combines business growth with meaningful social and environmental impact, from creating professional pathways for women through Stable Steps to investing in its Little River environment. Its ability to attract international executives to Wyndham and generate broader economic benefits demonstrates a business creating value well beyond its own bottom line."

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BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR



Anthony Pante is congratulated by Ethan Smith representing Waterman Workspaces

ANTHONY PANTE – AQUATAP PLUMBING

Anthony Pante is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Aquatap Plumbing, a Tarneit based business he has built over more than two decades, following his passion for plumbing and the building industry.

After completing his plumbing apprenticeship through Victoria University, Anthony established Aquatap in 2002, initially working from the back of a van with an apprentice.

From the outset, his focus was on quality workmanship, building trusted relationships and creating opportunities for the next generation of tradespeople.

Those principles have continued to shape Anthony’s approach as Aquatap has grown to a fleet of over 50 vehicles and a significant presence across Melbourne and regional Victoria.

His commitment to developing people

is reflected in the business’s longstanding apprenticeship and training programs, which have supported hundreds of young people entering the trade.

Anthony has also built strong relationships across Victoria’s building and construction sector, while maintaining a close connection to Wyndham through local employment, suppliers and community involvement.

What the judges said ...

“For 20 years Anthony Pante has led Aquatap Plumbing from nothing in 2002 to 90-plus team members and the west’s leading residential construction plumbing company. With a unique blend of business IQ, people leadership, and humility, Anthony found Aquatap’s niche in the early 2000’s and set out to do it better than anyone.”

RISING STAR



Jason Go is congratulated by Sunil Kumar and his team representing Reliance Real Estate

JASON GO – NORMAN CARRIERS

Jason Go is the Transport Manager at Norman Carriers.

Since joining the business in July 2024 as a Transport Supervisor with three direct reports, Jason has progressed rapidly to oversee transport operations, the maintenance workshop and a workforce of approximately 75 employees, drivers and subcontractors.

Jason’s rise reflects not just rapid career progression, but a significant expansion in capability, accountability and trust.

He has played a key role in establishing the company’s PM shift, increasing fleet utilisation and adding 25 per cent to the business’ delivery capacity while his container reuse initiative has generated significant savings.

What truly distinguishes Jason is the culture he has created. He actively breaks down silos, promotes cross-training and

upskilling, personally coaches his team and empowers people to make decisions. Under his leadership, the transport division has experienced high morale and zero voluntary resignations since he took the helm; an exceptional result in the freight and logistics industry.

What the judges said ...

“The judges were highly impressed by Jason’s leadership journey, vision and genuine commitment to servant leadership. He is a driver of positive change, building a culture founded on respect, recognition and meaningful engagement tailored to individuals.. Above all, Jason’s genuine gratitude and belief in teamwork set him apart. His leadership empowers people, strengthens culture and inspires others to achieve their best.”



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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



Mondelez Australia team is congratulated by Joel O'Halloran representing STACK Infrastructure.

MONDELEZ AUSTRALIA

Mondelez is one of the world’s leading snacking companies, bringing much loved brands including Cadbury, Oreo, Ritz, belVita, LU, Milka and Toblerone to consumers in more than 150 countries.

In July 2025, Mondelez strengthened its connection to Melbourne’s west with the opening of its \$130 million Truganina National Distribution Centre. Spanning 47,000 square metres, the state of the art facility is the largest automated distribution centre in Mondelez’s global network, supporting warehousing, co-packing and production activities.

The investment has delivered significant local benefits, creating more than 200 new jobs, with 90 per cent of positions filled by residents from Melbourne’s west.

Importantly, the centre has also created employment opportunities for members of the Chin refugee community from

Myanmar, demonstrating a commitment to building an inclusive and diverse workforce.

With the strength of a global business and a growing commitment to Melbourne’s west, Mondelez is proving that world-class operations can deliver lasting local impact.

What the judges said ...

“Mondelez Australia is a deserving winner for its authentic, community-centred approach to creating meaningful and measurable impact. Through local investment, inclusive employment pathways, support for refugee communities, food security initiatives, environmental leadership and long-term partnerships, Mondelez demonstrates how social responsibility can be embedded into everyday operations and business strategy.”

TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION



ClinicTech team is congratulated by Professor Mathews Nkhoma representing RMIT University.

CLINICTECH

ClinicTech, built in Wyndham, is transforming the way healthcare is experienced by connecting the entire patient journey before, during and after the consultation.

At the heart of the platform is Thea, an AI-powered digital assistant that can communicate with patients in more than 50 languages through voice, text and images. Thea captures the patient’s story before their appointment, supports clinicians during consultations, and automatically generates notes, referrals and follow ups. Patients leave with a plain language summary and their own portable health record.

ClinicTech’s innovation lies in bringing together voice, vision and text to reflect the reality of a clinical conversation, where patients speak, show images, share documents and describe their history.

By connecting these different forms of information into one continuous clinical understanding, ClinicTech reduces administrative burden while helping clinicians stay focused on their patients.

ClinicTech is giving healthcare a memory helping clinicians get time back and ensuring patients are heard.

What the judges said ...

“Many technology businesses begin with a great idea, but commercialising it requires discipline, persistence and, above all, listening to customers. ClinicTech exemplifies this approach, drawing on the real world challenges of medical practice to “give healthcare a memory” and improve patient care. Its innovative, holistic use of AI to strengthen the doctor-patient relationship distinguishes the business in a complex and competitive market.”

norman

CARRIERS

GROWING THE NEXT GENERATION OF BUSINESS LEADERS IN MELBOURNE’S WEST.

Norman Carriers is proud to recognise Jason Go as our 2026 Wyndham Business Awards Rising Star finalist.

Jason joined Norman Carriers in July 2024, and after just two years he now oversees the full transport division as Transport Manager.

At Norman Carriers, we believe business growth happens through growing our people. We don’t just move freight, we move careers.

Well done, Jason!



EXCELLENCE IN MANUFACTURING OR TRANSPORT



Laverton Cold Storage team is congratulated by representatives of Committee for Wyndham.

LAVERTON COLD STORAGE

Established in 1975, Laverton Cold Storage is a proud family-owned business with almost five decades of experience delivering reliable temperature controlled storage and specialist cold chain solutions. The business began in North Geelong with a 4000-pallet facility and grew steadily in response to customer demand, expanding its capabilities to include blast freezing and increased storage capacity. In 2012, Laverton Cold Storage relocated to a 5000-pallet facility in Cherry Lane, Laverton North. Continued growth led to the development of a purpose-built, state-of-the-art 20,000-pallet facility in Foundation Road, Truganina, completed in 2015. The facility provides significant capacity for cold storage and blast freezing and supports customers across Melbourne and the wider supply chain. Built on family

values and a commitment to operational excellence, Laverton Cold Storage continues to invest in its people, facilities and capabilities to deliver dependable, high quality, cold chain solutions.

What the judges said ...

“Laverton Cold Storage is an outstanding example of a family-owned business that has become a global leader through sustained investment in people, infrastructure and contemporary technology. A market leader in robotic technology, Laverton Cold Storage has improved productivity and efficiency while sustaining staffing levels and reducing occupational health and safety risks. The business has also demonstrated resilience, supporting customers through major supply chain disruptions, including Covid.”

EXCELLENCE IN RETAIL, TOURISM & HOSPITALITY



Hopheads team is congratulated by representatives of Werribee Tourism and Business Association.

HOPHEADS

Hopheads is locally owned craft beer hospitality venue with locations across Melbourne's west including Point Cook. Specialising in independent Australian craft beer, Hopheads offers a carefully curated range of beer, cider, wine, spirits, organic soft drinks and light snacks in relaxed and welcoming venues. Beyond its product offering, Hopheads is focused on creating exceptional customer experiences through knowledgeable service, brewery events, tastings, live music and community initiatives. Its three weekly Hopheads Run Club sessions, partnerships with local musicians and music schools, and support of schools, sporting clubs, charities and community organisations have established Hopheads as a genuine community hub. At its core, Hopheads combines quality independent products, warm hospitality

and meaningful community connections to create welcoming neighbourhood spaces where customers can discover, connect and socialise.

What the judges said ...

“Hopheads’ impact extends well beyond its own doors. Through partnerships with local cafés and restaurants, it helps promote and strengthen the broader local hospitality economy. Its support for musicians creates opportunities for local talent, while its run club encourages wellbeing, participation and social connection. Hopheads’ family-friendly approach makes the venue accessible to a wider cross-section of the community. Collectively, these initiatives create opportunities for collaboration, increase community participation and help people feel connected to the place in which they live.”



THREE CO-FOUNDERS. ONE IMPACTFUL IDEA.

What if we could reimagine healthcare?



Co-founders Dr Chamira Ranatunga (Chief Medical Officer); Kushan Kahadugoda (CEO); and Prabash Galagedara (Chief Financial and Commercial Officer)

* Sources: ABS CENSUS 2021 via Wyndham City; ClinicTech platform data, October 2026.

Your story, before your visit

More than half* of Wyndham households use a language other than English at home. Sharing health concerns in a preferred language can help patients feel heard.

ClinicTech’s Thea helps patients share their concerns before an appointment, in 50+ languages. It brings that information into the consultation and helps clinicians prepare notes and follow-ups.

Clinicians review the notes and remain in control of care.

We’re proud to be part of Wyndham’s business community.

We have already supported over 25,000 consultations through ClinicTech. This year, we won Wyndham City’s 2026 Pitch Competition. Became iAwards national finalist and Patient’s Choice Awards finalist for Outstanding Digital Health Organisation.

We’re chuffed. Thank you, Wyndham.

Wyndham first.

The Doctors Werribee is our key pilot site: new features go live there first, shaped by the doctors, nurses and admin team who use it every day. We now work with local specialists and other GP clinics across Wyndham. Patients, ask your clinic whether they use ClinicTech.

EXCELLENCE IN SOCIAL IMPACT



Fruit2Work team is congratulated by Genna Hughes representing Victoria University.

FRUIT2WORK

Fruit2Work combines fresh food distribution with meaningful employment opportunities for people with lived experience of the justice system. For the past 10 years, the business has supplied workplaces and community organisations across Melbourne with fresh seasonal fruit, milk, pantry items and other products, backed by reliable delivery and quality service. What sets Fruit2Work apart is that social impact is at the heart of its business model. With 81 employees, 98 per cent of whom have lived experience of the justice system, Fruit2Work provides real employment, wages, accountability and flexibility to support people rebuilding their lives after prison. The business also sources from local growers, suppliers and fellow social enterprises, ensuring its commercial

activity creates broader community benefit. By turning an everyday workplace service into a vehicle for employment, opportunity and social change, Fruit2Work demonstrates that commercial success and meaningful social impact can help build stronger families, safer communities and better futures, one job at a time. What the judges said ... “Its work supporting people with lived experience of the justice system is particularly impactful, providing mentorship, employment pathways and genuine opportunities for a second chance. We acknowledge the recent passing of co-founder Rob, whose legacy lives on through Fruit2Work and Simon’s continued leadership, demonstrating the transformative power of opportunity and second chances.”

EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH & WELLBEING



The Dental Gallery team is congratulated by Wyndham Mayor Mia Shaw representing SPARK Business & Innovation Hub.

THE DENTAL GALLERY

For more than 22 years, The Dental Gallery has been a trusted part of the Point Cook and wider Wyndham community. As Point Cook’s first dental practice, the independently owned family practice has cared for more than 16,000 patients, building lasting relationships with generations of local families. What sets The Dental Gallery apart is its belief that great dental care goes beyond treating teeth. Its holistic approach brings together dentists, oral health therapists and myofunctional therapists to look beyond symptoms and understand the underlying causes of dental, breathing, sleep and developmental concerns. Its multidisciplinary approach to sleep and airway health is particularly distinctive, bringing together dental

professionals, a visiting sleep doctor and therapists to provide integrated care for patients with breathing and sleep concerns. The practice employs more than 30 local staff and has supported local residents to pursue higher dental qualifications. What the judges said ... “The Dental Gallery stood out for its consistency, innovation and commitment to the Wyndham community. The judges were particularly impressed by its holistic approach, integrating dentistry, sleep medicine, early orthodontics and myofunctional therapy, with a strong focus on prevention and underlying causes. Its formal accreditation, held by only five practices across Wyndham, reflects its commitment to quality.”

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Cowork+Create

A badge for the Wyndham Business Awards 2026. It says 'FINALIST' and 'EXCELLENCE IN PROFESSIONAL & BUSINESS SERVICES'. There is also a 30th anniversary logo.

Wednesday, 21 October, 2026 WYNDHAM STAR WEEKLY 9W

EXCELLENCE IN TRADE & CONSTRUCTION



Sylvia Moretti from ARK Industrial is congratulated by Andy Bugeja representing The Gordon.

ARK INDUSTRIAL

ARK Industrial is a modern industrial and commercial builder delivering tailored spaces that help businesses operate, grow and succeed.

From planning and design through to construction, ARK manages the entire project lifecycle, ensuring every development is practical, efficient and built around the client's needs.

What sets ARK apart is its commitment to best fit solutions rather than a one size fits all approach. Every project considers the site, operational requirements and long-term performance, creating facilities that deliver genuine value today while remaining adaptable for the future.

Quality, integrity and clear communication sit at the heart of the business. ARK works closely with clients, consultants and stakeholders throughout every stage of a project, taking a proactive

approach to problem solving and accountability.

Beyond individual projects, ARK Industrial contributes to the broader Victorian economy by delivering the warehouses, facilities and commercial spaces that support supply chains, logistics and business activity.

What the judges said ...

"It's no surprise that ARK Industrial has achieved enormous growth in the commercial/industrial construction sector, since launching in 2020. The success of the business is based on a strong leadership team who genuinely care for their people, vast experience in commercial construction, and a unique vertical supply chain model which sees them involved with their clients from concept to completion."

EXCELLENCE IN PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES



Nanak Accountants and Associates team is congratulated by Luciana Manrique representing Kenstra.

NANAK ACCOUNTANTS AND ASSOCIATES

Founded by Puneet Singh in 2020, Nanak Accountants & Associates has grown from a sole-operator practice into a national accounting, tax and advisory firm with seven offices, more than 25 staff and over 10,000 clients serviced annually.

The firm provides accounting, taxation, compliance and advisory services to individuals, entrepreneurs, families, small businesses, property investors and growing organisations. But its approach goes beyond traditional compliance. Nanak uses technology, structured processes and plain English education to help clients understand their finances and make confident, informed decisions.

Through national media appearances and financial education across platforms including SBS Hindi and SBS Punjabi, the firm helps demystify complex financial matters for everyday Australians and

multicultural communities.

By combining technical expertise with technology, education and genuine client care, Nanak Accountants & Associates is redefining accounting as a strategic partnership not simply a once a year compliance service.

What the judges said ...

"The standout was communication: a bespoke CRM and website with real time dashboards, automated lead routing and monitored response times ensures clients are never left waiting. Platform operation and procedure are exemplary, with remote based servers and strict controls, while their community and education commitment includes payroll training for local businesses, pro bono charity applications and funding the Teenagers Club for elderly migrants."

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NEW & EMERGING



Nurse Next Door team is congratulated by Jayne Ramlakan representing Wyndham Biznet.

NURSE NEXT DOOR

Nurse Next Door Werribee opened in May 2024 and has since experienced remarkable growth. The business now supports 41 active clients, ranging from young children to people in their 90s, and has grown from two owners to a team of 50 employees.

Nurse Next Door Werribee has invested in its people, creating flexible employment opportunities and supporting team members to develop new skills and progress into nursing, payroll, people experience and operational roles.

Its commitment extends into the wider Wyndham community through education sessions on aged care, the NDIS, dementia and falls prevention, as well as partnerships supporting young people with additional needs. Eugene also

contributes through local mentoring and disability advocacy initiatives.

At the heart of the business is a simple philosophy: clients are not care packages or rostered shifts, they are people and families who deserve to feel heard, supported and valued.

What the judges said ...

“Nurse Next Door is purpose driven leadership at its best. Eugene and Shalini’s migrant and healthcare backgrounds translate into authentic, community led care, grounded in compassion and humility. Together, they have built an exceptional culture through values based recruitment, genuine internal progression and developing caregivers into leadership roles.”

BUSINESS RESILIENCE



Gareth Hearnden from Norman Carriers is congratulated by representatives of the Asian Business Association of Wyndham.

NORMAN CARRIERS

For more than 75 years, Norman Carriers has helped keep Melbourne’s western freight corridor moving.

Founded in 1949 by Norman Hearnden with two trucks, the family- owned business has grown through three generations. Today, under third generation Managing Director Gareth Hearnden, Norman Carriers operates from Laverton North with an owned vehicle fleet, accredited biosecurity facilities and 18,000 pallet spaces.

The company’s history is one of continual adaptation. From containerisation and industry deregulation to the unprecedented supply chain disruptions of Covid, Norman Carriers has responded by investing, adapting and finding ways to keep customers moving.

Since Gareth’s appointment in 2016, investment in trucks, technology and

people has further modernised the business while preserving its strong family culture.

For Norman Carriers, resilience means emerging stronger, continuing to invest and saying “yes” when customers need them.

What the judges said ...

“Norman Carriers demonstrated the resilience, professionalism and forward thinking approach of an outstanding family business. The judges were impressed by its professional presentation, exceptionally well maintained facilities and strong third generation succession planning. Investment in in-house training has created a capable, committed workforce, supported by a strong focus on finding solutions for customers facing complex freight challenges.”

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Congratulations to the 2026 Finalists

Business of the Year

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EQ Leaders
Fruit2Work
Mondelēz Australia
Norman Carriers

Business Person of the Year

Presented by Waterman Workspaces

Anthony Pante - AquaTap Plumbing
Dr Preeti Khillan - Western Specialist Centre
Lizzy Jacobs - Cowork + Create & Lizzy Jacobs Photography
Simon Fenech - Fruit2Work

Business Resilience

Presented by Asian Business Association of Wyndham

Bouquet Creative
Lions Club of Werribee
Norman Carriers
Outwest Concrete

Corporate Social Responsibility

Presented by STACK Infrastructure

Capture Recruitment
ebm-papst A&NZ
Mondelez Australia

Excellence in Education & Training

Presented by 3Minds Consulting Group

Cassandra Ame Artist Development
EQ Leaders
STEM birds
WebOptiMark

Excellence in Health & Wellbeing

Presented by Spark Business & Innovation Hub

Athlete Fitness Index (Affy) by BibVault
Healthy Kids at Play
Kinesis Healthcare
The Dental Gallery

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OYO Movers

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Carter & Ko
Cowork + Create
Nanak Accountants & Associates
The Pooch Beauty Salon
Westend Business Hub

Excellence in Retail, Tourism & Hospitality

Presented by Werribee Business & Tourism Association

FoodWithATwist
François Eatery
Hopheads
Notorious Espresso

Excellence in Social Impact

Presented by Victoria University

Australian Multicultural Women Association
Big Group Hug
Comfort Care and Community Services
Fruit2Work

Excellence in Trade & Construction

Presented by The Gordon

ArcStructural
ARK Industrial
Perform Projects
RF Pest Management

New & Emerging

Presented by Wyndham BizNet

EcoRepair Labs
Multicultural Migrant & Community Services
Nurse Next Door Werribee
Rockstead
Zhani

Rising Star

Presented by Reliance Real Estate

Jason Go, Norman Carriers
Kylah Palis, Kylah Owo
Thurah Maung, Comfort Care and Community Services

Technology Innovation

Presented by RMIT University

ClinicTech
DATAAIT Technologies
FifthArk
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WYNDHAM

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Member of the Wyndham Community Garden Swap group Glenda Johns. (Damjan Janevski). 584956 02



Garden variety swap meet

A trip to Byron Bay in 2010 proved to be the inspiration behind avid gardener Rita O'Sullivan starting the Wyndham Community Garden Swap group.

"Most of us know what Byron Bay is like and the reputation it has," Ms O'Sullivan said. "The place is very laid back, casual, and yes, it has that hippy vibe ... but there were also 'swaps' everywhere: clothes, food, crafts."

As soon as she arrived home, Ms O'Sullivan contacted the many gardeners in the area she knew and organised to meet and swap gardening produce. That was 16 years ago. The WCGS group now meets on the first Sunday of every month at 10am in a park in Hoppers Crossing.

Ms O'Sullivan said it's become more than a friendly group of local gardeners who loathe waste.

"It's a social gathering as well, and we've become very multicultural. We all love to chat and share knowledge while having a cuppa and some morning tea."

The next swap is on 1 November. Enquiries: admin.wcgs@gmail.com

V/Line reroute call

City of Greater Geelong and Wyndham councils want the Warrnambool to Southern Cross V/Line train service to reroute through Werribee

The two councils have written to Public Transport Minister Vicki Ward calling for the immediate trial, which would connect two of Victoria's fastest-growing municipalities.

The current service follows the same route as the Waurm Ponds to Southern Cross trains that travel via Wyndham Vale, Tarneit, Deer Park and Sunshine.

The Geelong and Warrnambool lines previously travelled via Werribee, but were replaced with the new route in 2015 as part

of the state government's push to separate regional and metropolitan trains.

The tracks between Little River and Werribee remain active for freight and are maintained, meaning the trial would be making use of existing rail infrastructure, rolling stock and crews.

"This trial is a simple way to test the demand for a direct link between our two growing regions," Wyndham mayor Mia Shaw said.

"Listening to our residents, this is something that is desperately needed and would reopen an important connection for work, learning, visiting loved ones and travel.

"We're not asking for a new railway. We're asking to use infrastructure and services that already exist, collect the evidence and see what works."

"This is a low-cost, practical opportunity to reconnect two communities that have a strong case for being better connected."

A direct Geelong-Werribee service would improve access to jobs, education, healthcare, Avalon Airport and other key destinations for communities across Greater Geelong and Wyndham, both councils said.

"This proposal is a practical first step towards better connecting two rapidly growing communities," Greater Geelong

mayor Stretch Kontelj said.

"We know the long-term case for reconnecting Geelong and Werribee is strong, but our communities shouldn't have to wait years to start seeing the benefits."

"This trial makes use of the infrastructure and services we already have, while giving us an opportunity to demonstrate what a direct connection could mean for commuters."

"Better connections between Geelong and Melbourne's west mean better access to jobs, education, healthcare, economic and social opportunities. That's something worth acting on now."



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West’s electric bus boost

Melbourne’s west is set to get its largest electric bus depot, with plans to equip a Truganina facility to support more than 130 zero-emission buses.

Bus operator ComfortDelGro Australia (CDC) Victoria is partnering with international fleet electrification specialist Zenob to transform its Truganina depot, supporting the transition to cleaner public transport across the region’s rapidly growing western corridor.

The project forms part of CDC Victoria’s delivery of the Victorian government’s Metropolitan Zero Emission Bus Franchises, awarded to the operator in 2024.

Once complete, the depot will feature

65 dual-lead direct-current chargers, with provision for another 20 charging points, alongside the required electrical and civil infrastructure.

The charging network has been designed to accommodate future fleet growth, with Zenob also overseeing power modelling and the depot’s grid connection.

CDC Victoria chief executive Jeff Wilson said the project was a significant milestone in the company’s transition towards zero-emission transport.

“As a long-time operator in Melbourne’s west, we’re delighted to deliver greener, more sustainable public transport for customers and communities in this region,” he

said.

“The electrification of our Truganina depot is a significant milestone that will support the rollout of electric buses, providing customers with cleaner, quieter and more sustainable journeys.”

Zenob Australia and New Zealand country director Gareth Ridge said electrifying a depot on this scale required infrastructure capable of supporting both current operations and future demand.

The partnership builds on Zenob’s work with CDC sister company Metroline in the United Kingdom, where it has delivered more than 450 charging points across five depots to support London’s electric bus

fleet.

The Truganina project is part of the state government’s broader plan to transition Victoria’s public bus fleet to zero emissions by 2035.

CDC Victoria said services across Melbourne’s west had also expanded under the new franchises, adding 470 weekly trips across routes 170, 180, 190 and 192, including more frequent services and longer operating hours.

The company said the depot would support a significant increase in electric buses operating on those routes, helping meet growing transport demand across Melbourne’s west.



Wyndham volunteer Mahendrakumar Patel. (Damjan Janevski). 584875 03

Standout Wyndham senior recognised

Wyndham local Mahendrakumar Patel has been recognised as a standout in the community receiving the Emerging Impact Award at this year’s Victorian Senior of the Year Awards.

The Victorian Senior of the Year Awards are announced annually in October during the Victorian Seniors Festival. The awards celebrate the senior citizens and permanent residents across the state who volunteer in their community.

The Emerging Impact Award recognises

an individual who is new to volunteering and is making a significant impact in their local community.

This award is Mr Patel’s first major honour and he said he values the recognition.

“I am really excited and it shows I am doing good in the community and inspiring others to do good,” he said.

“It has been very, very hard to keep a secret, my family are very excited.”

Since joining the United Seniors Club in 2022, Mr Patel has served as secretary for four

years, supporting more than 380 members. He loves making friends, solving problems and helping others feel confident in their daily lives. He often helps older migrants with language barriers and tutors in Gujarati and Hindi so they can complete tasks such as sitting their driver’s licence tests independently.

He has also helped provide over 10,000 free meals to older migrants, a gesture he said is about more than just food.

“Food is very important for bringing people closer to each other,” Mr Patel said.

Werribee a storm damage hotspot

By Ella Burns

Werribee has been found to be Victoria’s most consistent storm hotspot, with a spot in the state’s top rankings every year for the past five years.

A new AAMI analysis of home insurance claims between 2022 and 2026 in the state has revealed that severe storms don’t always stick to a single location.

A mix of storm, flood, hail, lightning, rain, wind and tornado damage have seen Melbourne’s west and south-east, Greater Shepparton and Greater Geelong appear as severe storm hotspots over the past five years.

Werribee claimed the top spot in 2022 following thunderstorms and flash flooding. In 2023, Shepparton took the number one position due to the floods that occurred in late 2022. Mulgrave rose to the top in 2024 after the Valentine’s Day storms, before Highton took over in 2025. In 2026, the top spot returned to Werribee following a tornado event.

Cranbourne, Craigieburn and Hoppers Crossing have also had frequent features among the state’s most impacted areas.

AAMI home insurance executive general manager Anna Cartwright said that as a result of the five years of claims evidence, the lesson is not to focus on which suburb topped the list last year, but that every Victorian household should prepare for severe storms before they arrive.

“Some communities appear in our claims data repeatedly, while others can move from outside the top position one year to becoming the leading hotspot the next,” she said.

Suncorp Severe Weather Forecaster Justin Noonan said that this spring is expected to be less active than normal but Victorian’s should still be prepared for severe storms.

“A quieter season does not mean a risk-free season,” Mr Noonan said.

Victoria SES chief officer operations Alistair Drayton has given advice that simple actions should be taken early such as cleaning gutters and drains, trimming overhanging branches and tying down loose outdoor items to protect properties in the event of a severe storm.

“No two storms are the same and while our volunteers are highly skilled and ready to respond in their communities, preparedness is always the best defence against storms and can greatly reduce your risk of requiring a VICSES visit.”

Upgrades underway for Werribee South Beach

Upgrades have begun on Werribee South Beach as part of the Werribee South Beach Masterplan.

The \$4.6 million project is set to make a range of improvements, including upgrades to the Wyndham Bay Trail, a new wetland deck that overlooks the Grahams Wetland Reserve, wildlife-friendly solar lighting and coastal planting.

Wyndham mayor Mia Shaw said the goals of this project are to improve accessibility, safety and amenity as well as

making the most of the much-loved destination and creating a welcoming environment for locals and visitors.

“This project is about making the most of one of Wyndham’s beautiful natural assets and creating more reasons for people to visit, explore and spend time at Werribee South Beach,” she said.

“These upgrades will make it easier to walk and ride along the Bay Trail, enjoy spectacular views from the new wetland deck and experience more of what makes

this coastline so special.”

Further upgrades are expected to be delivered as part of the Wyndham Coastal and Marine Management Plan across two more stages.

The project is supported by \$1 million from the Victorian Government’s Growing Suburbs Fund and \$150,000 from the DEECA Coastal Public Access and Risk Grant Program.

Taking care of business

By Glenn Fisher

Encore Events Centre in Hoppers Crossing was abuzz with excitement on Friday night when Wyndham's business community gathered to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Wyndham Business Awards.

More than 170 entrants across 13 categories were gradually whittled down over many months by the handpicked, expert judging panel to about 50 finalists, with Little River personal training and professional development business EQ Leaders a popular Business of the Year winner.

Much-loved television personality Livinia Nixon kept the high-spirited and at-times raucous crowd under her spell as MC, while the exquisite three-course meal gave everyone food for thought – and kept the huge attendance quiet for a short time.

While all finalists and eventual category winners were deservedly acknowledged, the evening's biggest cheers came for EQ Leaders founder Emma Costin when she accepted the Excellence in Education & Training and Business of the Year awards, and for the team at Fruit2Work when it won the award for Excellence in Social Impact.

EQ Leaders delivers programs for senior leaders and global organisations, alongside executive engagements in Malaysia and growing relationships with business schools and education providers. As a certified social enterprise, EQ Leaders uses its corporate work to create opportunities for people with limited access to professional development.

Through Stable Steps, it has supported migrant and multicultural women in Wyndham to build confidence, workplace skills and pathways into employment with the model now being considered for expansion across Victoria.

Fruit2Work has supplied workplaces and community organisations across Melbourne with fresh seasonal fruit, milk, pantry items and other products from local growers and suppliers for the past decade,



Emma Costin, founder of EQ Leaders, accepts the Business of the Year award.

backed by reliable delivery and quality service, with the workforce of more than 80 people rebuilding their lives after prison or a lived experience of the justice system.

Wyndham Mayor Mia Shaw congratulated all category finalists and winners, with special mention for the team at EQ Leaders.

"It's been a huge year for EQ Leaders and it's wonderful to see them recognised for their outstanding commitment to inspiring purpose-driven leadership and

creating positive impact across business and the community," Cr Shaw said.

"The awards shine a light on the diversity and capability of Wyndham's business community from established businesses and emerging entrepreneurs to businesses driving innovation, creating jobs, investing locally and making a positive impact on our city and community.

"Wyndham City appreciates our major sponsor Williams Landing – Cedar Woods, as they celebrate 10 years of supporting

the Wyndham Business Awards. A significant decade long partnership that demonstrates the value of strong, ongoing collaborations.

"We also acknowledge the generous support of our event supporter, Commonwealth Bank; and our category sponsors, whose commitment helps council deliver a program that celebrates, connects and supports our business community."

For a full list of winners see this week's special awards wrap.

Victoria's Governor tours Wyndham

By Ella Burns

The Governor of Victoria visited some of Wyndham's key industries, institutions and attractions last week as part of a tour of the area.

Her Excellency Professor Margaret Gardner was shown a cross-section of local sights including Wyndham Cultural Centre and Art Gallery, Wyndham Tech School, Wyndham Community and Education Centre (CEC), MainStream Aquaculture, Werribee Park Mansion, Werribee Open Range Zoo, Fresh Select and Mondelez International.

At Mainstream Aquaculture the Governor toured the world's largest aquaculture facility of its type.

Managing director Boris Musa said the visit included taking a look at the hatchery, which supports over 30 per cent of the world's barramundi production.

"It was a real privilege to host the Governor, with Mainstream given the opportunity to showcase an aquaculture business at the leading edge of innovation and technology," Mr Musa said.

The Governor also visited CEC where she learned about the centre's programs such as adult education, employment support, settlement services, youth engagement initiatives, Julia Gillard Community College, and community capacity-building programs that support people from all cultural backgrounds.

Wyndham CEC chief executive officer Dr Jennie Barrera said the visit was a recognition of the resilience, aspirations and achievements demonstrated by the learners, community members, staff and volunteers who work everyday to open up doors for learning, employment, settlement and social participation.



Governor of Victoria Margaret Gardner (third from left) with Wyndham mayor Mia Shaw, Mainstream managing director Boris Musa and Wyndham chief executive Stephen Wall. (Supplied)

"Our work is grounded in the belief that education and community connection can transform lives," she said. "We are proud to support people from all walks of life and to contribute to a stronger, more inclusive

Wyndham and wider Victorian community."

Wyndham mayor Mia Shaw took to social media to thank those who showcased some of the people, places and industries helping "shape our growing city".

"Thank you to everyone who helped share the stories, innovation and community spirit that make Wyndham such a great place to live, learn and work," she wrote.

Wyndham waste hotspots two months waste free

Illegal waste dumping hotspots that were targeted by Environment Protection Authority (EPA) Victoria and Wyndham council have remained waste-free two months after the illegal waste dumping taskforce crackdown.

Over two days, the EPA and council inspected skip bin operators and 36 building sites that resulted in 22 clean-up and intelligence-gathering notices and 18 leads to help identify and catch offenders.

Wyndham mayor Mia Shaw said illegal dumping is not something council can do on its own.

"While we invest significant time and resources into preventing and responding to illegal dumping, operations like this highlight the value of working alongside EPA Victoria to protect our community and the environment," she said.

EPA operations executive director Rachel Gualano said the goal of the crackdown is to stop those who make and transport the waste instead of waiting for the waste to end up in parks and roadsides. Under Victorian law, this waste must be disposed of at an EPA-authorised facility to avoid fines or prosecution.

"We're also putting waste dumping criminals on notice that their actions will not go unnoticed or unpunished," she said.

AI alerts on crime

As part of an ongoing series examining the causes and solutions to crime in the west, Cade Lucas spoke with one young entrepreneur working on a solution to the crime plaguing his community. Business ideas are often born out of personal experience as Altona Meadow's Amanuel Bayu can attest.

The Ethiopian-born 31-year-old is the founder of AI security start-up RaeyLink which makes software designed to detect and prevent retail theft.

Unsurprisingly, Mr Bayu's decision to develop the product came after he fell victim to thieves himself.

"There was a time when I was developing a plant-based milk," he said of his previous, very different, business venture which took years of work and lots of his own money just to get a prototype product sent to his then Footscray home.

"It got delivered while I was at work and when I came back from work it was gone," Mr Bayu recalled.

"That moment was devastating for me at that time and I've carried it with me. I know how it feels to lose something you've worked hard on and I think that's one reason that led me to this solution."

It's a solution aimed at small to medium-sized retailers that marries vision from their existing CCTV cameras with AI trained to analyse customers' physical movements and behaviour. When RaeyLink detects movements indicating possible theft such as products being removed from shelves and placed in pockets or bags, it sends an alert to staff through their various devices. What happens next is up to them.

"We never ask them to intervene, and we



Founder of AI security start-up RaeyLink, Amanuel Bayu, at his Altona Meadows home where he developed the retail theft prevention product. (Cade Lucas)

recommend they follow their store's policies and guidelines," Mr Bayu said

So far, RaeyLink has been rolled out at a handful of retailers across Melbourne's west, including IGA Saltwater in Point Cook.

Co-owner Amanjot Kaur said retail theft was a major problem that affected staff as well as stock and that early signs from using the product were positive.

"Within a day of running RaeyLink, we

picked up suspected thefts and were able to deal with them," Mr Kaur said.

"It's given us more visibility and control, and our team feels safer."

Mr Bayu stressed that RaeyLink wasn't a replacement for police, didn't include facial recognition technology or identify customers and that an alert alone wasn't proof of stealing.

Details: <https://www.raeylink.com/>

Heat on tobacco crackdown

By Allanah Sciberras, AAP

Businesses in Melbourne will continue to be targeted by arson attacks if authorities rely on reactive measures to tackle the booming illicit tobacco trade, an expert warns.

A spate of firebombings has swept through Melbourne over the past week.

The west has been particularly hard hit with suspected firebombings targeting businesses and vehicles in Melton, Taylors Lakes and Deer Park in September. So far in October there have been incidents in Taylors Hills, Keilor, Werribee and Maidstone.

Victoria Police closed 61 stores caught selling illicit tobacco, with alleged links to organised crime, over the past four weeks.

The state has continued to face what authorities say is the fallout from illegal tobacco sales, with a spate of suburban firebombings involving young offenders.

Recent attacks could be linked to these measures, believes Deakin University criminologist James Martin.

"Criminological research shows that violence often increases when you do a law enforcement crackdown, which is kind of counter-intuitive," he said.

Dr Martin warned the frequency in attacks could continue if authorities kept adopting reactive interventions.

"They don't take care of the underlying drivers, which is strong persistent demand for nicotine. Increasing cigarette prices or cracking down on illicit stores, none of that gets rid of the underlying demand for nicotine. The more restrictions we put on the legal supply of nicotine, that plays directly into the hands of the organised crime groups who are now are making a killing, literally and figuratively."



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Initial planning for the intersection upgrade will be complete in late 2027 and will be used to inform government decisions on future funding.

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Mita Chowdhury (Supplied)

Wyndham artist is bound for Venice

Local interdisciplinary artist Mita Chowdhury has been named the recipient of the 2026 Venice Biennale Mentorship.

The prize will enable Chowdhury to travel to Venice from 19 until 24 October, for the Venetian Kind program, hosted by the European Cultural Centre.

The mentorship gives an artist based in Wyndham the opportunity to work alongside other creatives and receive a professional development experience to practice on the international stage across six days.

Wyndham mayor Mia Shaw said the program fosters cross-cultural exchange and offers a local artist a platform to explore ideas and approaches as well as expand professional networks.

"2026 The Venice Biennale Mentorship is designed to foster the creative skills of a local practitioner while building the creative capacity of the broader Wyndham community," she said.

"We look forward to following Mita's journey from Wyndham to Venice and seeing how this experience shapes the next chapter of her artistic practice."

Born in Bangladesh, Chowdhury's work spreads across digital image-making, expanded painting, installation, textiles and socially engaged art. Her inspiration comes from personal and family histories that explore memory, migration, place and belonging. Chowdhury's research focuses on first-generation Bangladeshi Australian women, exploring the ways identity is built through memory, creative practice, and material culture.

Chowdhury has exhibited across both Australia and Bangladesh, her most recent exhibition being Inheritance at RMIT First Site Gallery in 2026. Since 2021, she has presented seven solo exhibitions and has been awarded the RMIT Cultural Vision Scholarship in 2022 and the ADFAS Yarra Young and Emerging Artist Award in 2023.

The works produced in the Venetian Kind program will be presented at Palazzo Mora, Venice, in November. Deakin University will return the works to Melbourne following the exhibition for curators to work towards further exhibition opportunities.

Cycling to support sick kids

Robert Freeman is raising vital funds for kids with childhood brain conditions through the Ride for the Kids cycling challenge. He sat down with Jena Carr to speak about the month-long challenge, as well as his own experience of having a brain injury.

After surviving cancer and a stroke, Robert Freeman is using his love of cycling to support kids living with brain disorders.

The 71-year-old spent most of his professional life supporting kids, including those with brain conditions, but never suspected that he would suffer a similar condition.

It all started on 10 July when, during the night following a routine surgery in the morning, Robert began not feeling well, couldn't communicate and was struggling to remember basic information like where he lived and his name.

"I had surgery on my hip in the morning and felt okay, but hours after the surgery I had a stroke," he said.

"Since then, I have had some issues with one of my hands, which is ongoing, so I've got no sense of temperature, hot or cold, with that hand.

"My speech initially was really impacted, and I was really struggling to get words together, and it's a work in progress, so I've come a long way.

"I had to go through the process of having speech therapy, which is ongoing, and physio, not just for the hip but for the brain as well."

Doctors later determined that Robert's stroke was the result of a blood clot in his brain and had not been caused by the surgery he had earlier in the day.

"They (doctors) don't know where the clot came from, but it broke into two and went to two different places in my brain," he said.

"I'm very lucky, because some people have strokes and they can lose their vision or they can't walk properly, but...the coordination side of things and the speech seem to be the two major issues for me.

"My speech is coming back, but I do have to pause with certain words, so the speech therapist has done a bit of work on helping me with that, and my coordination is a lot better.

"My doctor has also told me to make sure that I have some rest time during the day, as one of the issues with brain injuries is that you need to switch off and let the brain have a rest."

Just seven years before suffering his stroke, Robert was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2019 while living in England.

"When I was in the United Kingdom, doctors decided on brachytherapy (a type of internal radiation therapy) because it had fewer side effects," he said.

"So, they actually put radioactive seeds into the prostate, which was supposed to kill the cancer, but it didn't work.

"Then COVID-19 hit, so we came back to Australia where a doctor monitored the cancer before we eventually decided to have the prostate removed in April 2021."

Robert is participating in Ride for the Kids this month and will ride his bike to help raise money and awareness for kids with childhood brain conditions.

He has raised more than \$350 as of 10am on 15 October through the cycling initiative for Brainwave Australia to continue supporting families experiencing childhood brain disorders across the country.

"Cycling has always been one of my passions, so I'm trying to ride 600 kilometres for the month," he said.

"The charity does a lot of work to help families; they have camps for the kids, and they help them in hospital.



Robert Freeman with his wife Louise.
(Pictures: Ivan Kemp)
583522 02



Robert Freeman has survived prostate cancer and a stroke. 583522 06

"I saw the initiative and thought that it would be a really good thing for me to do for the kids, but also to help my own recuperation."

Robert said that his stroke experience further opened his eyes to some of the difficulties caused by childhood brain conditions and the impact it has on families.

"That hit home to me about the challenges that young children go through and for their families," he said.

"I was a teacher for 35 years so I have dealt with many young children, including some who had conditions that were impacting their brains.

"Having a child is hard work at any time, but when you've got a child that's going through those difficulties, it's really hard for the families.

"I can only imagine what some of these young children must be going through, and there's such a range of brain traumas

as well, so it's not just one thing; it can be a whole range of things."

Robert's wife Louise said the pair were grateful to the medical professionals involved in Robert's cancer and stroke journey.

"When Rob gets out on his bike, he's as free as a bird and having a wonderful time," she said.

"Rob had his prostate removed and didn't need any further treatment, which is just remarkable, and the medical professionals have been really helpful in his stroke recovery."

Louise said it was important for families of loved ones living with brain conditions, or other medical issues, to be patient.

"To see kids who go through medical trauma in their childhood, it's just so hard," she said.

"It's important for families to recognise that it takes time for their loved one to recover and learn how to live with a brain

condition, so it is important to be patient, calm and understanding."

Brainwave Australia chief executive Paul Bird said that every kilometre ridden and dollar raised by people like Robert through Ride for the Kids helped more kids and families impacted by childhood brain conditions.

"Many families are counting on us for support, and we hope you will all ride with us for the kids with brain injury," he said.

"We are thrilled to be holding this event and hope to bring together every Australian for an important cause such as ours."

Ten children in Australia are diagnosed with a neurological condition every day, leading to 3000 families each year whose lives are changed forever.

Visit rideforthekids.org.au/fundraisers/robertfreeman/ride-for-the-kids-2026 for more information and to support Robert's fundraising efforts.

An ‘everyday’ mural artist

In a monthly series, Star Weekly reporter Sebastian Conidi profiles the many interesting and innovative artists working off-grid in the north-west.



If you don't know Lukas Kasper personally, you may know his art. Kasper has spent years contributing public murals to Melbourne's north-west. A recent notable project was the dog mural which now adorns Sydenham Basin Reserve.

Kasper's journey however began many kilometres away in Caboolture, Queensland.

From a young age his art was inspired by a hobby one might not expect.

"I got into art mostly through skateboarding," Kasper said.

"I saw lots of graffiti and street art and just became obsessed with it. I decided to give it a go myself."

Kasper's early work was channelled through many different mediums.

"I started with spray paint. I would also draw in my studio. I mostly used acrylic paints and standard pens."

Beginning with standard wording and letters, Kasper's street art began to acquire certain themes.

"I always try to integrate these little monster type characters. They're always there. It's all based around mental health."

Kasper says these art characters reflect his own personal journey.

"The reason I became so obsessed with art is because it felt like therapy for me. Painting was the thing that allowed me to switch off, fade away and be happy. So not for any particular reason, I found I would always paint these little monster guys."

Kasper says he tries to implement these



Lukas Kasper with his mural in Sydenham. (Damjan Janevski) 584332 04

monsters everywhere, even if they are not always visible in a literal sense.

"If you look at the mural at Sydenham Basin Reserve, it has the flowing line work and a certain type of imagery. It doesn't have the scary side though. It's a dog park after all."

Kasper has lived in Melbourne for eight years and cites the city's flourishing art culture as a core reason for the move.

"It's a fantastic place to be able to pursue a creative practice, especially with the murals. It offers opportunities that are rare in any other state in Australia. Here you can go into the city and paint in lane-ways.

It allows you to learn your craft, practice, paint big and have these prime spots that thousands see every day."

Kasper says his passion for street art is informed by how it distinguishes itself from other art mediums.

"You instantly get feedback from people. There's plenty of times where you're humbled or complimented. It's much more collaborative too. It creates an everyday type of artist. It really works for a working class person."

With years of experience, Kasper says he is now more deliberate in what he tries to create.

"These days I have much more intention. I'm more mature with my practice. I'm able to implement forms of realism whether it's dogs at the Sydenham mural or a local animal at another. I've practiced long enough where I have more flexibility in what I want to represent."

Kasper says his involvement with the community is central to his passion for art.

"I love to do community art with my work where I can."

Kasper shows no signs of slowing down, as he looks forward to future projects.

"The need to create is an undeniable desire inside of me."

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Star Weekly looks back through the pages of our predecessors



40 years ago
22 October, 1986

A Werribee father has made an anguished plea for emergency medical services in Werribee after his teenage son bled to death from a gunshot wound in the stomach.



30 years ago
23 October, 1996

Fears of a chemical catastrophe have been heightened after a tanker spill of 2000 litres of concentrated caustic soda on the Princes Freeway last Friday morning.



20 years ago
18 October, 2006

A Hoppers Crossing shipbuilder has won a \$450,000 payout from his former employer, Tenix Defense Systems, after the firm was found guilty in the Supreme Court of negligence.



10 years ago
19 October, 2016

With only three days until the polls close, just a third of the Wyndham electorate has cast their vote in the local government election.

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Former parish priest at Mary Help of Christians Catholic Church in Altona, Fr Michael Kalka, has retired. (Damjan Janevski) 584885 04

Father Kalka says goodbye

A farewell mass was held at Mary Help of Christians Catholic Church in Altona on Sunday 11 October for Father Michael Kalka, who was retiring after 9 years as Archpriest and 45 serving the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Born and bred in the west, Altona was a fitting location for Fr Kalka's career to end, though when speaking to Star Weekly a few days later, he pointed out that just as being a priest wasn't an ordinary job, so too was retiring from it.

"I remain a priest, I'm just not as heavily involved in the public ministry anymore," the 69 year-old said, adding that he wouldn't be lost to the church or the west.

"Its becoming clear the men we have working as priests are getting older and being presented with more and more

workload so to have some retired priests that they can call on for assistance becomes an important ministry on my part," Fr Kalka, who is six years below the church's mandatory retirement age of 75, said.

From his new base in Werribee, Fr Kalka will be providing assistance to priests throughout Melbourne's west.

He picked out Pope John Paul II's visit in 1986 and serving as a chaplain in the athletes village at the 2006 Commonwealth Games as among his career highlights, while urging the church to get back representing the life and ministry of Jesus in order to remain relevant.

"I think with sexual abuse crisis in the church, a lot of the priests drifted from their relationship to Jesus."

Briefs

Station feedback

Those who use Werribee Station Precinct can provide feedback on what they would like to see prioritised in future improvements. The Department of Transport and Planning wantes to understand what is important to commuters and to ensure the station continues to meet the needs of the growing community. The precinct includes the station, car park, bus interchange and the areas immediately surrounding the station and does not include footpaths, the shopping area, the river, or train and bus services. The online survey is open until Sunday 25 October or an in-person at a pop up session at the Werribee Station underpass will be held on Thursday 22 October from 2pm until 3.30pm.

Pick My Park

Williams Landing will receive funding for new and upgraded parks as part of the Pick My Park program. Wyndham has been awarded \$250,000 for the Greening the Pipeline project that will deliver a new playspace, picnic facilities, trees and landscaping to the Zone 5 East Local Park on the corner of Mclachlan Drive and Lukis Avenue, Williams Landing. The Pick My Park program had over 22,000 people vote for their favourite park projects from a list of 124 eligible projects put forward by councils and land managers across Melbourne.

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Point Cook most expensive

Point Cook has taken over as the most expensive Wyndham suburb for housing, according to the latest quarterly median data released by the Real Estate Institute of Victoria (REIV).

Despite a dip of 1.2 per cent in the third quarter of 2026, Point Cook's median house price sits at \$850,000 and is more than \$100,000 ahead of the next highest suburb, Williams Landing.

Williams Landing suffered a huge drop in its median house price for the three months to the end of September, decreasing 20.9 per cent to \$740,000 from \$935,500 in June.

Hoppers Crossing also suffered a significant drop in its median house price, down 8.2 per cent to \$652,000, while Werribee decreased 2.9 per cent to \$658,000.

Wyndham Vale and Tarneit decreased marginally to record media house prices of \$600,000 and \$665,000 respectively.

The only suburb to record an increase in its media house price was Truganina, up 1.2 per cent to \$680,000 at the end of September.

Of the three Wyndham suburbs with enough unit sales to record changes in the September quarter, the REIV reported that Point Cook led the way with a

median unit price of \$593,000 (up 2.2 per cent), followed by Werribee at \$470,000 (down 1.1 per cent) and Tarneit, which recorded a sharp drop of 8.2 per cent to a more affordable price of \$450,000.

The REIV reported that successive interest rate rises had reduced borrowing capacity and demand grew for the relatively more affordable homes.

In metropolitan Melbourne, overall median prices for both houses and units softened 0.7 per cent over the quarter, with the median house price at \$943,000 and unit price at \$634,000.

Despite the softer metropolitan re-

sult, pockets of growth remained across Melbourne. Mount Eliza recorded the strongest quarterly house price growth at 9.1 per cent to \$1.8 million, followed by Brunswick, up 7.8 per cent to \$1.25 million, Glen Iris, up 7.7 per cent to \$2.412 million, Yarraville, up 6.6 per cent to \$1.2 million, and Port Melbourne, up 6.3 per cent to \$1.53 million.

Over the year, metropolitan Melbourne also remained in positive territory, with house prices up 3.8 per cent and units and apartments increasing 2.4 per cent, demonstrating continued underlying strength.

My Place

Jacob Thang (Cung Hlei Thang) was named Brimbank Citizen of the Year earlier this year for his work advancing opportunities for refugee and migrant communities in Victoria. A refugee from Myanmar, he is the founder of Chin Myanmar Community Care (CMCC), the Auschin, and Auschin Group, a Social Traders-certified social enterprise delivering landscaping and grounds maintenance across Melbourne. He spoke with Laura Michell

Where is your favourite local place to spend time?
Honestly? Brimbank itself - not one single spot, but the community as a whole. Whether I'm attending a local event, chatting with a resident at a park, or simply being present in this incredibly multicultural area, I feel at home. The energy of the people here is something I never take for granted.

How does it feel to be named Brimbank Citizen of the Year?
Overwhelming, humbling, and deeply meaningful. When I first stepped foot in Australia as a refugee with very little, I never could have imagined standing here receiving this honour. It tells me that this community sees me - truly sees me - and that the work I do matters. It doesn't make me want to slow down. It makes me want to do more.

Why is volunteering in your community important to you?
Because I remember what it felt like to be lost, uncertain, and in need of a hand. When I first arrived, there were people who showed me kindness and helped me find my footing. That generosity changed my life. Volunteering is how I honour that gift - by passing it on to others who are walking the same difficult road I once walked, and letting them know they are not alone.

Tell us something people would be surprised to know about you...
When I arrived in Australia, I could barely speak English. I had to rebuild my entire life from scratch - language, culture, identity, everything. There were moments of real hardship and self-doubt. But those struggles shaped me in ways

What's your connection to Melbourne's north-west?
Melbourne's north-west is where my story in Australia truly began. When I arrived as a refugee, this region welcomed me with open arms - it gave me safety when I had none, opportunities I never expected, and a community that made me feel I truly belonged. It's not just where I live. It's where I became who I am today.

What do you like about where you live?
What I love most is the people. You walk down the street, and you see the whole world - different faces, languages, traditions - yet everyone lives side by side with genuine respect. That diversity isn't just something you notice, it's something you feel. It reminds me every day why Australia is such a special place.

What, if anything, would you change about where you live?
I'd like to see stronger, more consistent support for the people who need it most - newly arrived families, young people finding their way, and those doing it tough. I've seen firsthand what the right support at the right time can do for a person. When we lift individuals up, the whole community rises with them.



Mayor Virginia Tachos with Citizen of the Year Jacob Thang. (Picture: Bernie Phelan)

I'm now deeply grateful for. They gave me resilience, empathy, and an unshakable appreciation for every opportunity. Today, I am proud - genuinely proud - to

call Australia home, and prouder still to give back to the country and the community that gave me a second chance at life.

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Discover your next chapter at Avington Living's Open Day

Thinking about downsizing? Avington Living's Over 50's community in Point Cook, invites you to its Open Day on Saturday 14 November, from 11am to 2pm.

Whether you're ready to downsize or you're simply exploring your options, come along and discover the benefits of low-maintenance living in a welcoming, established village. Families are always welcome too. Visitors can tour the beautiful new display homes and explore Avington's impressive resort-style facilities, including an indoor heated swimming pool and spa, bowling green, cinema, gym and clubhouse.

For residents Greg and Karen, who moved to Avington Living earlier this year, the decision has brought greater peace of mind and a more enjoyable lifestyle.

"We decided to move to Avington Living because we were looking for a secure, community-focused lifestyle," they said.

"What we love most about living here is the sense of safety, the great amenities, and the variety of activities available."

Greg and Karen also appreciate the transparent financial model, with no exit fees, stamp duty or council rates, and the convenience of living close to their family.

The Open Day offers a wonderful opportunity to ask questions, meet the friendly team as well as some Avington residents and learn more about land lease living.

Enjoy complimentary morning tea and free parking, with no pressure. It's your opportunity to see why Avington residents love living here, wander through the community and display homes and see if this style of living could be right for you. The Open Day will be held from 11am-2pm, at 50 Saltwater Promenade, Point Cook. Register your interest at www.avingtonliving.com.au or call 03 8400 0408. Walk-ins also welcome.



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

Don't miss out. Book your tour today!



(03) 8400 0408 | avingtonliving.com.au



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

A festival full of colour

By Glenn Fisher

The ‘full house’ sign was up on both days at Encore Events Centre in Hoppers Crossing when Durga Utsav 2026 hit the west earlier this month.

Sponsored by Wyndham City Council and organised by not-for-profit community organisation Bongosathi – The Bengali Cultural Association, Durga Puja (or Utsav) is a major Hindu festival each year that celebrates the victory of the goddess Durga over the evil demon king Mahishasura.

Bongosathi founder Dr Rabindra Nath Shaw said West Melbourne Durga Utsav 2026 was a wonderful celebration of faith, culture and community.

“We were delighted to welcome thousands of people across the two days, with more than 400 performers bringing the stage alive through a truly multicultural cultural program,” Dr Shaw said.

“On behalf of Bongosathi, I sincerely thank our attendees, volunteers, performers, sponsors, partners and the wider Wyndham community for making this celebration so memorable. Our aim has always been to create a welcoming space where families and communities can come together, celebrate diversity and carry forward our cultural traditions with pride.”

Apart from the smorgasbord of delicious food, the event also featured market stalls offering hand-crafted fashion, jewellery, accessories and much more, as well as plenty of exciting activities for children and teenagers.

The equally spectacular Diwali & Moon



Just a small sample of the colour and excitement from Durga Utsav 2026 in Hoppers Crossing. (Pictures supplied).



The dancing was a highlight at Durga Utsav 2026 in Hoppers Crossing.



The occasion brought the community together.



Smiles all round at Durga Utsav 2026 in Hoppers Crossing.

Festival will be held over the weekend of 24 and 25 October at the large community space in Overton Road, Williams Landing.

Organised by the Asian Business Association of Wyndham in collaboration with Wyndham City Council and Bongosathi, the two-day festival will be a vibrant, family friendly event filled with lights, music, dance, Indian culture, food and community spirit.

Whether you’re coming to enjoy the performances, discover delicious food,

shop at the markets, entertain the kids or simply celebrate the spirit of Diwali with family and friends, there promises to be something for everyone.

Come dressed in your festive best, bring your loved ones and be part of a celebration that brings communities together through culture, diversity and joy.

The Diwali & Moon Festival will run Saturday, 24 October 11am-9pm and Sunday, 25 October 10am-5pm, with enquiries on 0425 406 467.



4 2 2 554m²

20 Sinclair Crescent, Tarneit
Family Living in an Established Location

This four-bedroom home offers a spacious open-plan living and dining area, a kitchen with ample bench space and storage, a separate sunroom, backyard and double garage with internal access. Positioned in Tarneit, close to schools, shopping, parklands, childcare and public transport.

AUCTION
Saturday 31st October at 11:30am



Enquire today



4 2 2 336m²

20 Josephine Street, Werribee
An Opportunity with Plenty of Potential

Offering a single-storey design, this four-bedroom home features two separate living zones, two bathrooms and plenty of natural light throughout. The design provides good space for living and dining, complemented by an undercover outdoor area, fenced backyard and double garage.

AUCTION
Saturday 7th November at 11:30am



Enquire today



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

Werribee Bushwalking Club

The Werribee Bushwalking Club offers a range of planned walks, car-pooling to and from each walk and experienced guides. Bushwalking is a wonderful way to explore Victoria, stay active and share an appreciation of the experience. Whether you're new to walking or already experienced, you'll find the club provides outings to suit different abilities.

- For more information go to Werribee-bushwalking.com

Garden swap

Calling all gardeners. The Wyndham Community Garden Swap has been running for more than years. It is a friendly group of local gardeners who loathe waste and like to share surplus produce, plants, or all things relevant to gardening. The group meets at 10am on the first Sunday of each month at a park in Hoppers Crossing. It is free to join and no money is involved.

- All queries to admin.wcgs@gmail.com

The Grange Community Centre

The Grange Community Centre hosts weekly Bingo moves on Monday at 10am. Stay active and have fun with this unique combination of bingo and gentle exercises, tailored for all fitness levels and abilities. Chatty Cafe at The Grange Community Centre is a relaxed and welcoming social catch up where community members can drop in, enjoy a cuppa and a chat. Every Wednesday at 10am

Seniors House of Fun at The Grange Community Centre is held every Friday at 11am. Connect with others while enjoying craft activities, a cuppa and plenty of conversation.

- Contact 9116 3705 for further information

Bridge in the west

The Williamstown Bridge Club has bridge sessions each week on Wednesday night at 7.15pm and Friday afternoon at 1.25pm for experienced players and a supervised session Friday 10am at Hobsons Bay Sport & Game Fishing Club, 17 Altona Road, Seaholme. All levels welcome and partners can be provided. Bridge lessons for beginners start on Friday 9 Oct 10am.

- Peter, 0427 302 236, Alan, 0430 309 255, lessons Jwtownbridge@gmail.com or www.bridgewebs.com/williamstown

Werribee Probus Club

Werribee Probus Club provides retirees with the opportunity to connect socially, improve wellbeing and quality of life by making new friends and enjoying a range of social activities with fellow members. The club meets at 10 am on the third Monday of each month at the Werribee Bowling Club at Chirnside Park, 239 Watton Street, Werribee. Each meeting features an interesting guest speaker and prospective new members are welcome to attend

- All inquiries to werribeeprobus@gmail.com or phone 0447 774 743

Pain support group

Iramoo Community Centre hosts a Chronic Pain and Depression Support Group every second Wednesday, 10am- noon. Everyone is welcome. Find support, friendship, arts and crafts, barbecues, coffee and a listening ear. The centre is at 84 Honour Avenue, Wyndham Vale.

- Admin@iramoooc.com.au



Classic, retro and special interest vehicles will roll into Williams Landing on 15 November for the Outwest Concrete Wyndham Retro Motor Show 2026, bringing the local community together for a morning of motoring, entertainment and family fun. The Outwest Concrete Wyndham Retro Motor Show 2026 is hosted by Wyndham Health Foundation and will be held from 9am to 1pm at 70 Overton Road, Williams Landing. Alongside the cars, visitors can enjoy live entertainment, food trucks, family activities and more throughout the day. Vehicle + Driver: \$20, General Admission: \$5, Children under 12: free.

- wyndhamretromotorshow.com.au

CWA Werribee South Branch

The Country Women's Association's Werribee South Branch is inviting ladies seeking friendship, personal development and advocacy in support of social issues to come and join them. The group does everything from cooking, crafts and raising money for charity. Meets third Wednesday of the month at the Diggers Road Hall, Werribee South at 7pm.

- Julia, 0409 045 306

Social Pickleball

A fun blend of tennis, badminton and table tennis, pickleball is a fun, active and inclusive sport that has a low impact on the body and is easy for beginners of all ages to learn. Sessions run 10am-noon Tuesdays and Thursdays at Eagle Stadium. Coached sessions are also available.

- stadiumbookings@westernleisureservices.com

Thee Coffee Table in Manor Lakes

Thee Coffee table aspires to be a safe space for the local community to share, to connect with others to create positive change in their home and communities. Runs Wednesday, 9am-2pm, at the Manor Lakes Community Learning Centre.

- theecoffeetable2022@gmail.com

Inclusive employment support

SYC's Inclusive Employment Australia Program supports people living with disability to find and maintain meaningful employment. Through the free program, you will get the chance to create a personalised job plan to help achieve your work goals. Runs 9am-5pm on Fridays at the Tarneit Community Learning Centre.

- 9036 5350

Community Breakfast Program

Life Community Kitchen and Dianella Community Centre are coming to together provide breakfast on Wednesdays and Fridays. The program is free and runs 8-9.30am.

- dianellacc@wyndham.vic.gov.au

One on One IT help

Free IT help sessions run each Tuesday, 10-11.30am, at the Manor Lakes Library, covering everything from using email, creating

accounts and accessing the online library. People can get help with their Macs, PCs and phones.

- 8734 8930

Community connectors

Wyndham Council has launched a community connections and care service to support residents who may need help navigating life's challenges. Whether you're looking for mental health support, food relief, or guidance accessing government services, this free and confidential service is here to help. Meets 8am-noon on Wednesdays at The Element's Activity Park and Cafe.

Community Kitchen

Wyndham-based not for profit group Pulse with Purpose sells delicious meals each Tuesday 10am-5pm at the Dianella Community Centre in Tarneit. Each purchase helps provide free meals to families in need. Meals are by pre-order, the menu is typically updated every Sunday.

- bpulsewithpurpose@gmail.com

Wyndham Turkish Coffee Club

A place for older Turkish and Cypriot Turkish migrant women in Wyndham to gather, connect, learn and advocate for one another over coffee. Anyone is welcome to join the group at the Wyndham Park Community Centre from 1-2pm on the first Tuesday of each month.

- Lutfiye, 0474 533 923

Beginners' Code Club

Code Club is for 8-14 year-olds and will cover the very basics of coding. Attendees can book into the whole term's sessions. Each lesson builds on previously learnt skills and is designed to support beginner coding learners. Runs on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month from 3.30- 4.30pm.

- CodeClub@wyndham.vic.gov.au or 8734 8999

The Creative Corner

A program to create an inclusive environment for young people from different schools to come together and learn new skills and ways to be creative. The program will aim to teach a variety of different skills and allow young people to create projects

with different mediums each week. Meets every Monday from 3.30-5.30pm at the Youth Services Centre, 1 Everton Road, Truganina.

- Jordyn Griffiths, YouthInWyndham@wyndham.vic.gov.au

Soulful Spreads Community Cafe

Soulful Spreads is a purpose-driven social enterprise based in Tarneit that looks to create meaningful work and training opportunities for women and young people with disabilities. Come meet for a meal and support inclusion, empowerment and connection. Meets 8.30am-12pm every Monday and Thursday at the Tarneit Community Learning Centre.

- info@soulfulspreads.com

National seniors meeting

On the first Wednesday of every month at 1.30pm, the metro west branch of national seniors meets at the Deer Park Club, with meals available to purchase. The group also holds lunches on different Fridays each month, as well as activities such as theatre visits, bus trips and more.

- 0425 713 004, or lesley1.collins@outlook.com

Lizzy Bizzy Food Swaps

Come along to the Manor Lakes Community Centre to exchange excess homegrown food. From vegetables, fruits, eggs to seeds and oils, members of the community are encouraged to participate and help reduce food waste. Runs between 10am-noon last Saturday of every month.

- Liz, 0448 781 111

Resume Help

Wyndham council is providing resume workshops for young people aged 15-25. Book into a one-on-one session, online or in person, with an education and youth services librarian to get some help crafting your resume and answering interview questions. Sessions run at 9am, several times a week.

- resumehelp@wyndham.vic.gov.au

Wrestling rumble mayhem

Get ready to rumble this Halloween as Mayhem Pro wrestling returns to Bacchus Marsh for a Halloween night of live professional wrestling, headlined by the fifth annual Relentless Rumble – a huge 30-person match to decide who will be the last wrestler standing.

Halloween Havoc brings together Mayhem Pro wrestlers and rising talent from the Relentless School of Pro Wrestling for an action-packed, family-friendly night at the Bacchus Marsh Public Hall on Saturday 31 October.

Mayhem pro is a professional wrestling

promotion based in Melbourne's western suburbs, promising to provide an Australian pro wrestling experience suitable for all ages and full of plenty of high-flying, drama-filled entertainment, with the match set to see 30 wrestlers battle it out to determine who will be the last one standing.

Wrestling fans and newcomers alike can expect plenty of rivalries, surprises, and over-the-top wrestling action, with a full bar and barbecue available throughout the jam-packed evening.

Mayhem Pro wrestlers will share the ring

with emerging talent from the Relentless School of Pro Wrestling, giving fans the chance to see established performers alongside the next generation of wrestling talent.

Organisers are promising a family-friendly night packed with larger-than-life characters, ongoing rivalries and unexpected twists.

Junior tickets will be available for children aged six to 14, while children aged five and under can attend for free, making the event an option for families looking for something different to do on

Halloween.

Tickets can be purchased at the door, with fans encouraged to book online in advance to save \$5.

Halloween Havoc will be held at Bacchus Marsh Public Hall on Saturday 31 October. Doors open at 6.30pm, with the first bell set to ring at 7.30pm.

Details and tickets: <https://welcometomoorabool.com/events-bacchusmarsh-ballan-gordon-blackwood-greendale/mayhem-pro-wrestling-halloween-havoc-relentless-rumble-5>.

Art without borders

An intimate celebration of cultural heritage, creativity and connection is set to arrive at the Bowery Theatre this November, with Forest Living Room, an interdisciplinary performance by Melbourne-based collective Resonate Heart.

Taking place on Saturday 21 November, from 6pm to 7.30pm, the performance weaves together original and traditional music, dance, gesture, shadow puppetry and multilingual poetry to create a shared artistic experience centred on belonging.

Resonate Heart is a collective of female artists championing diverse perspectives through collaborative creative practice. Its current members are Nela Trifkovic, Elnaz Sheshgelani, Irine Vela, Vahideh Eisaei, Kelly Dowall, Sarita Mcharg and Lizzy Kuoth, whose varied disciplines come together to form intimate creative rituals.

Developed by artists within the collective, Forest Living Room pays homage to their cultural heritages through songs and poems performed in Farsi, Nuer, Hindi, Bosnian, Serbian, Ladino and English. The work explores how language, movement and shared artistic expression can foster connection across cultures.

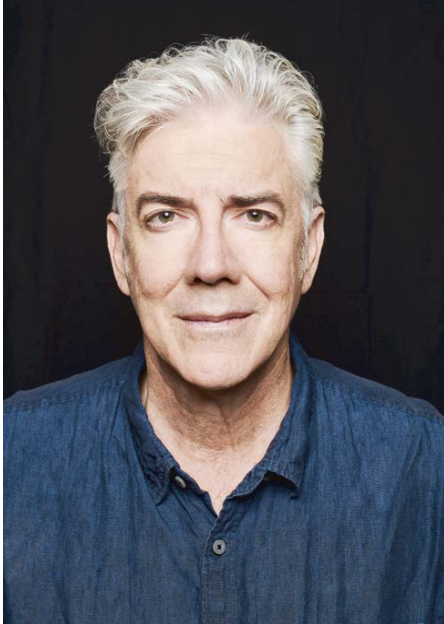
Alongside the performance, Resonate Heart will offer a series of free community workshops at St Albans Community Centre on November 7, 13 and 20.

Distinct from the stage production, the workshops invite participants of all ages to collaborate directly with the collective through hands-on activities exploring language, rhythm and embodied expression across different art forms.

Supported in partnership with Creative Partnerships Australia, the sessions aim to encourage artistic development, cultural learning, professional growth, conflict resolution, creativity and well-being.



The Resonate Heart. (James Morris Photography)



A free screening of Shaun Micallef's *Going For Broke* will be held at the Sun Theatre in Yarraville on 29 October.

Catch *Going For Broke* at the Sun Theatre, Yarraville

The Sun Theatre in Yarraville is hosting a free community screening of Shaun Micallef's *Going For Broke* on Thursday 29 October, with the man himself in attendance.

The Williamstown based comedian, writer and actor and filmmaker will be on hand for a panel discussion and Q&A following the screening of selected clips from *Going For Broke*, a documentary exploring Australia's complex relationship with gambling.

Hosted by Maribyrnong and Hobsons Bay councils and IPC Health, the evening will explore gambling harm through a range of perspectives, including lived experience, research and community voices. It will provide an opportunity for audience members to hear from experts and those who've experienced gambling addiction, reflect on the impacts of gambling, and consider what the broader community can do to reduce gambling-related harm.

Those interested in coming along are warned that the event will include images and discussion of gambling and gambling-related harm, which some people may find distressing or triggering.

IPC Health will have a qualified counsellor on site during the event should anyone need support or just someone to talk to.

The event runs from 6-8pm and entry is free, though bookings are essential and can be made at: <https://shorturl.at/8NCAK>

If you or someone you know is experiencing gambling harm and needs needs support, call 1800 858 858 or visit: <https://gamblershelp.com.au/get-help/online-support/>

Season of spooky makes it way to Animal Land

Animal Land is turning spooky for a Twilight Halloween Trick or Treat Trail.

This Halloween Animal Land, Diggers Rest is bringing the scare with local families being invited to attend the farm for an afternoon of trick or treating, farm fun and Halloween surprises.

The event will run on Saturday 31 October from noon to 6pm.

The day will include a trick or treat trail, Halloween activities, Animal Land farm experiences, local makers and market stalls, treats and family fun with prizes and

surprises.

The event will be fundraising for the Good Friday Appeal with all proceeds going to The Royal Children's Hospital.

Costumes are encouraged for the kids to have an immersive dress up day full of Halloween fun. Tickets are available with children costing \$30 and adults \$25.

Details on the event can be found at <https://cloud.itmprojects.com.au/tours2/Tours?cID=ALD&tID=Halo26&date=31&percent;2F10&percent;2F2026#tour-info>



Animal Land Farm bringing the Halloween spirit. (Supplied)



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SPORTS QUIZ

1. Izzi Batt-Doyle broke the Australian women's marathon record running which US city's 2026 marathon?

2. Which NBA team is Aussie Ben Simmons currently signed to?
3. 2026 Melbourne Marathon men's winner Eliud Kipchoge represents which country?

4. Which two Dick Johnson Racing drivers won the 2026 Bathurst 1000?

5. 2026 Melbourne Marathon women's winner Camille French represents which country?

6. Valerie is the costumed snake mascot for which Victoria-based WNBL team?

7. Teenage Australian basketballer Luke Paul is set to play at which North Carolina-based US college in 2027?

8. What sport features in the 2003 film *Air Bud: Spikes Back* (also known as *Air Bud 5*)?

9. Lachlan Cowan and Will Hayward last played for which AFL team?

10. Which US city hosted the 1932 Summer Olympics?

11. What martial art is the national sport of South Korea?
12. The Kentucky Derby is also known as the fastest how many minutes in sports?

13. What animal is featured in the Pittsburgh NHL logo?

14. The film *Next Goal Wins* depicts the infamous American Samoa soccer team who lost in the 2001 FIFA match with a final score of what?

15. What is the most popular sport in Japan?

16. Who recently became the first Chinese person to win the China Open tennis tournament?

17. Who was the No.1 pick in the most recent NBA draft?

18. The Wallabies have not beaten the All Blacks at Eden park in how many years: 10, 20, 30 or 40?

19. South Melbourne FC upset which A-League team to win the 2026 Australia Cup?

20. The 2020 sports documentary series *The Last Dance* centres around which team in the NBA?

Ben Simmons



21. Kenya has only won Olympic medals in athletics and what other event?

22. What team does Max Verstappen race with in the Formula 1 Championship?

23. In what year did Australian cricketer Nic Maddinson last play a Test before his recent recall in the South African Test series?

25. Which AFL Women's team plays home games at RSEA Park?

20. Who did Lando Norris collide with during the last lap of the Singapore Grand Prix Sprint?
26. Against which country did the Matildas lose 4-2 during a recent international friendly?

27. Melbourne's Junction Oval will be able to host what type of cricket matches in the 2026/27 season?

28. Zak Butters will play for which AFL team in 2027?

29. Anthony De Ceglie was most recently CEO for which team, set for a 2027 NRL debut?

30. Ilia Malinin and Kaori Sakamoto are current world champions in which sport?

1. Chicago 2. Sacramento Kings 3. Kenya 4. Brodie Kostecki and Todd Hazelwood 5. New Zealand 6. Geelong Vengeance 7. Duke University 8. Beach volleyball 9. Carlton 10. Los Angeles 11. Taekwondo 12. Two 13. Penguin 14. 31-0 15. Baseball 16. Qinwen Zheng 17. Ai Dybantes 18. 40 19. Melbourne Victory 20. Chicago Bulls 21. Boxing 22. Red Bull Racing 23. 2016 24. St Kilda 25. Oscar Piastri 26. Germany 27. Night matches 28. Western Bulldogs 29. Perth Bears 30. Figure skating

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Wednesday, 21 October, 2026 WYNDHAM STAR WEEKLY 15

Crosstrek a worthy option

By Alistair Kennedy, Marque Motoring

Crosstrek is the smallest model in the Subaru SUV range.

Previously branded as the XV it sits below the mid-sized Forester and larger Outback.

In between are the Solterra and Trailseeker, both of which are EV only, as is the sportier Uncharted hatchback.

Crosstrek competes against vehicles such as MG ZS, Mitsubishi ASX, Kia Seltos and Mazda CX-30.

Five Crosstrek variants are offered: 2.0L, 2.0R, 2.0S (petrol), plus Hybrid L and Hybrid S, with prices ranging from \$34,990 to \$45,090 plus on-road costs.

Our test was in the top-spec Hybrid S.

As with all Australian Subaru models, except for the Toyota re-badged BRZ coupe, Crosstrek comes with all-wheel drive.

LED headlights, plus cornering lights, improve visibility at night and add to power savings, while LED rear combination lamps feature a sharp 3-D C-shape.

Rear-view mirrors are smaller, improving aerodynamics and present a less obstructive view.

All Crosstrek variants come with dusk-sensing LED headlights, roof rails and power-folding door mirrors.

Crosstrek 2.0R, 2.0S and Hybrid S also get LED daytime running lights with the top-spec 2.0L and Hybrid L featuring bulb type DRLs.

Styling

While the general appearance of the Crosstrek is a carry-over from the XV, the bonnet and radiator grille have been updated.

Use of lightweight aluminium for the bonnet contributes to improved pedestrian protection with a softer head impact zone, while aluminium front fenders save 2kg and optimises weight distribution all round.

While the grille retains the signature hexagonal shape, it's now larger with an aggressively styled honeycomb design.

Interior

The cabin of the Crosstrek Hybrid S has a real premium feel, which it should, given that it will cost close to \$50,000 on the road.

It's light and spacious with a friendly soft-touch material on the dashboard and steering wheel.

The front seats are comfortable and supportive with eight-way power adjustment and lumbar support for the driver in the R and S models.

There's good leg, head and shoulder room, although the centre-rear seat position is best suited to young children as expected in a relatively small vehicle.

Boot space in the Crosstrek hybrid is a reasonable 315 litres although it doesn't come with a spare wheel of any sort.

Instead, it relies on a puncture repair kit, a feature likely to deter those who may be considering using the car's AWD and 220mm ground clearance to take it off-road.

Petrol-only models do get a space-saver spare which reduces the boot capacity to 290 litres.

Engines/transmissions

Petrol-only Crosstrek variants are powered by the latest version of Subaru's 2.0-litre four-cylinder horizontally-opposed (Boxer) engine, delivering maximum power of 115kW at 6000 rpm and top torque of 196Nm at 4000 revs.

The same engine in the hybrid models get slightly less power (110 kW at 5800 rpm) but the same torque figure.

The mild hybrid electric motor adds 12.3kW of power and 66Nm of torque and



Subaru Crosstrek is a relatively conservative vehicle designed for couples or small families with all the latest in safety features. (Pictures: Supplied)

is self-charging, capturing kinetic energy through regenerative braking and coasting.

The electric motor is placed near the vehicle's centre of gravity, while the battery and other components are positioned above the rear axle, providing balanced front/rear vehicle weight distribution.

Drive from the e-Boxer engine is sent to the all-wheel drive system through a CVT automatic with seven-steps for manual override.

Safety

Although it's yet to undergo ANCAP testing the outgoing XV scored a maximum five stars and with a comprehensive range of safety features the same rating is likely for Crosstrek.

Standard features in all variants include nine airbags, blind spot monitoring, front side radar, lane change assist, rear cross traffic alert, rear parking sensors, reversing camera, reverse automatic braking, driver inattention warning, tyre pressure monitoring and Isofix child seat anchor points.

R and S variants add front and side view monitors, high beam assist and a 360-degree camera.

Standard across the range is Subaru's EyeSight Driver Assist system which includes adaptive cruise control, autonomous emergency braking, numerous lane control and pre-collision alerts and braking assist features, speed sign recognition and speed limiter.

The two hybrid models also come with a pedestrian alert system.

Infotainment

Crosstrek combines an 11.6-inch infotainment touchscreen in the centre of the dashboard with a 4.2-inch

Multi-Information Display (MID) in front of the driver.

The central screen is in portrait mode. It has large buttons and fonts and is within easy reach of the driver.

There are physical knobs for the audio system and, although the climate controls are on the touchscreen they can be adjusted with a minimum of distraction.

Wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto smartphone connectivity are standard across the range.

The nine-speaker Harman Kardon audio system provided excellent sound reproduction.

It's standard in the two S variants with the lower-spec models getting a more basic six-speaker system. Likewise, embedded satellite navigation is only available with the top-spec S petrol and hybrids.

All models get USB-A and USB-C ports in the front console and there are also USB charge ports in the R and S. A wireless Qi smartphone charger is standard.

Driving

Unlike most other hybrids which start silently and smoothly under battery power, the Crosstrek Hybrid's engine kicks in immediately, taking away much of the appeal of the EV component.

That means missing out on the instant torque that's such an appealing feature of electric vehicles.

On the plus side the engine will shut down when the vehicle is coasting or in slow-moving traffic and run solely on battery power.

The e-Boxer logic adjusts the power split between petrol and electric to match driving conditions. It automatically changes between three modes: Motor Assist EV driving; Motor Assist electric (EV)

+ petrol engine driving and engine-only driving. The lower centre of gravity and greater rigidity provides excellent driving dynamics, both on and off the bitumen.

When cornering, there is little evidence of body roll and it doesn't get fazed by rapid changes in direction.

The electric power steering is well-weighted and provides plenty of feel on both bitumen and loose surfaces.

The steering wheel is both reach and tilt adjustable.

Crosstrek's 220mm ground clearance is regarded by many as being the minimum for a genuine off-road vehicle.

You wouldn't call it a genuine 4WD in appearance, but under its station wagon body it's close to being one.

Summing up

XV was a consistent seller for Subaru throughout its decade on the market.

There's no reason why the more-sensibly named Crosstrek won't continue that trend.

It's a relatively conservative vehicle designed for couples or small families with all the latest in safety features.

While its ground clearance and all-wheel drive means that it can cope with moderate off-road conditions.

Subaru is at pains to describe Crosstrek Hybrid as a 'mild' hybrid and it falls a fair bit short of the sub-5.0L/100km fuel consumption figures that we're used to from Toyota hybrids such as the similar-sized Corolla Cross.

On the combined urban/highway cycle, Crosstrek hybrid uses a claimed 6.5L/100km compared to 7.2L/100km for the petrol model, making it hard to justify the \$3600 surcharge.

At the same time performance is hampered by the hybrid's extra weight.



Keilor's Nathan Beever. 584728 03



Westmeadows celebrates a wicket. 584728 15



Sunbury Kangaroos' Avtar Singh. 584732 03



Merrifield's Harmandeep Bhatthal. 584732 08



Sunbury's Ashley McKinley. 584734 07

Cricket action heating up

It was perfect weather for cricket on Saturday as powerful batting and stunning bowling performances were on show. Star Weekly photographer Ties Urie was out shooting some of the action.



It was a tough day for Melton Centrals. 584737 07



Plenty Valley have a chat. 584741 09



Melton Centrals' Jarrod Roe walks off at Wyndham Vale celebrates. 584737 15



Newport Digman's Rohan Parag. 584734 09



Melton's Archie Cairns. 584741 16

Giants focus on youth

By Tara Murray

Youth is the focus for the Werribee Giants in the Baseball Victoria summer league premier 1 first nine competition this season.

The Giants enter the season with one of the youngest playing groups in the competition and know it will take some time to come together.

New coach Jimmy Bent said they always knew it would be a challenging start.

“It hasn’t been an ideal start but the two teams we have played are last year’s premiers and the favourites to win it this year,” he said.

“It has been a tough start.

“We have such a young group and for a lot of the guys it’s the first time in the division.”

Bent said about half the squad are under-18.

He said they wanted to give the younger guys who were coming through the club an

opportunity to perform at the highest level that they can.

“The juniors are doing the right things at training and off the field, so we’re giving them a chance on the field and they are taking it.”

Bent said they still had some players to come back into the side, having been unavailable the first few weeks.

For Bent, it’s his first time as a head coach and he’s enjoying it.

“I moved to Werribee about six years ago, but have played in the summer since then,” he said.

“I knew a couple of players and I live near the ground and I got the opportunity and thought why not?

“I get to help those younger guys and come hang out with my mates.

“They’re a good bunch of guys and they’re eager to learn and to put in the work.

“It makes my job easier when they want to be there.”

Bent said he had already seen an improvement between round two and three.

On Saturday, the Giants lost to Essendon 13-2.

He said they were expecting to see the development continue from week to week.

“The rewards will start to come our way if we stick to the process,” he said.

“From week one to two, improvement was there and if we keep doing the right things, the wins will start to build and the confidence will continue to grow.”

One of the highlights so far for the Giants, was former Australian player Bronwyn Gell becoming the first woman to play for the Giants in the premier competition in round two.

Gell is the club’s women’s coach this season.

“There’s not many people in the league with her knowledge,” he said. “The club’s juniors get to learn from someone of her calibre and it was incredible.”



Judi Donovan. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 530333_07

VTCA women’s comp expands

The Victorian Turf Cricket Association women’s competition will be three divisions, up from one last season.

With the Cricket Victoria women’s community cricket competition no longer running, the VTCA has benefited with a number of teams coming across.

Greenvale Kangaroos, Melbourne University, Craigieburn/Donnybrook, Werribee, Coburg and Monash Uni make up the senior women division.

All of those sides are new to the VTCA competition.

Edinburgh, Greenvale Kangaroos, Indigos, Melbourne University, Melton, Point Cook Centrals, Westmeadows and Youlden Parkville are in division 1.

Westmeadows is the only one of those clubs that was in the VTCA last season.

The division 3 competition involves a number of teams that were in the VTCA women’s competition last year.

Aberfeldie, which won the premiership, Maribyrnong Park St Mary’s, Taylors Lakes, Pascoe Vale Hadfield, Glenroy, Point Cook and Oak Park St Francis.

Westmeadows will field its second side in the competition, while Caroline Springs will return to being a standalone side after having a combined side with Burnside Springs United last season.

Coburg’s second side, which competed in the VTCA last season, is also in division 3.



Tayla Olivieri. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 486897_05

Olivieri’s quick rise through the ranks

By Tara Murray

Western Jets’ Tayla Olivieri quickly fell in love with football and is now hoping come the end of the year she’ll be on an AFLW list.

Olivieri didn’t start playing football until she was 14, but it hasn’t stopped her being on the radar of AFLW clubs to be taken in the draft later this year.

“I started footy at 14 and did it just for fun as my friends wanted to play,” she said.

“I wanted to tag along with them and after the first year of playing footy with them, I wanted to take my game to the next level.

“I wanted to be elite with how I treat footy and not just do it for fun, although I still play footy as I enjoy it and have fun with my mates.

“I think I’ve taken it to another level and something that I really strived for.

“All the hard work that I have put in over the last couple of years, has led to where I am right now and I have just one more goal to tick off.”

Olivieri started playing football with her twin sister at Keilor, while she had some battles in the backyard with her brothers growing up.

In the short time since she has picked

up the football, Olivieri has started to make her mark.

Having represented Vic Metro at the under-18 national championships earlier this year, she recently tested at the AFLW state combine.

“I think it’s been a really big year for me,” Olivieri said after the combine.

“I’ve been lucky enough to be part of the Jets program for the last couple of years.

“I think just this year I’ve taken my game to another level being part of Metro and being at the higher level and working on what my coaches have been telling me to work on and being consistent with it.”

Olivieri knows that the opportunities that she has gotten this year, will help hold her in good stead for the future.

She said the draft combine was stressful to start with, but she soon just trusted her preparation.

“I think it’s a really big thing in the lead up towards the draft and getting the combine invite,” she said.

“To even get the combine invite, it’s pretty special. Most girls don’t get the invite and some still end up getting drafted so I think it’s a great opportunity that I have been given.”

Olivieri said speaking to different AFLW clubs at the combine was a different experience and really embraced it.

“It was really fun, I enjoyed all the interviews I had,” she said.

“Each and everyone was different in their own way, some were fun, some pretty serious. It was pretty special, as not many get the opportunity to speak to a few clubs.”

Olivieri, who can play forward and the midfield, said she thought she fitted in well with the Vic Metro squad earlier this year.

She played three games, including kicking goals in one game.

Olivieri said Keilor has had a massive impact on her career.

“One of the biggest parts of my football journey, starting there, the first club it’s a pretty big

“They treat training and game days at a really high level for a local club.

“I was playing under-18s as a 15-16 and even got to play in a grand final with they have looked after me pretty well, thankful for them.”

Olivieri said between now and the draft would continue to work on her strengths and weaknesses.

Five re-sign with Werribee

By Tara Murray

Werribee has locked in five key pieces for next year's Victorian Football League season. Ryan Evers, Jake Smith, Jack Riding, Jaelen Pavlidis and Harry Grintell have all signed new contracts to keep them at the Tigers next season.

Evers will be at the Tigers for a third season.

He's coming off another outstanding campaign that earned him VFL state team selection and sixth place in the Bruce Montgomery Trophy.

Evers said he was excited about what lay ahead for the group.

"Really keen to be back with Werribee for another season," he said. "It's a super exciting period to be involved at the club,

and I've loved my time here over the last couple of years. I can't wait to see what we achieve as a group in 2027."

Midfielder Smith has also put pen to paper.

Werribee's first third-generation player, Smith's 2026 campaign featured some of his best football yet, with a move to the outside midfield helping him average career highs in disposals (20.6), marks (5.3), score involvements (5.5) and inside 50s (3.7).

A knee injury in round 12 sidelined him until finals.

"I am super stoked to have re-signed for next year," Smith said.

"The Werribee Football Club is such a special club, and I love all the boys and everyone involved in the club."

"Missing a fair chunk of the season this year made me realise how lucky I am to play for such a great club and with such a great group! Everyone's hungry to go one step further next year, and I can't wait to give it another crack in 2027."

Meanwhile, Riding has committed to a fifth season in the black and gold, re-signing with Werribee for 2027 after earning his first VFL team of the year selection and a career-best third-place finish in the Bruce Montgomery Trophy.

Riding said the playing group and opportunity to chase further success made the decision an easy one.

"It's an exciting time for the footy club, and it's something I want to be a part of again, so it was an easy decision to sign on!"

"We have a great group with plenty of

potential heading into 2027. I'm hungrier than ever to get back to finals and right the wrongs from our 2026 finals campaign.

"A lot of my best mates are at the footy club, and I love coming in each and every day to see them and work towards the ultimate goal. It would be great to replicate what we achieved in 2024."

Pavlidis has committed for a fourth season with the Tigers.

"It was a super easy decision for me to re-sign for next year. I really enjoyed the 2026 season, and despite the disappointing finish, I know both the rest of the group and I are hungrier than ever to go one step further and try to win it all," Pavlidis said.

Grintell will return for a fifth season. He had an injury interrupted 2026, playing just eight games.



Dean Taylor. (Ljubica Vrankovic) 537374_08

Bees remain focused on the premiership

By Tara Murray

Werribee is ready for another tilt at premiership success in the Bowls Victoria weekend pennant division 2, section 2 competition.

The Bees kicked off action in both the midweek and weekend competitions in the past week, and are keen for another big season.

The club will have five weekend sides and five midweek sides, with the top teams both in division 2.

Bees' director Gavin Joyce said the division 2 weekend side remained focused on the top prize, having fallen short at the final hurdle twice in the past three years.

"After narrowly losing in the grand final last year, the club is committed to going one better, and getting promotion into division 1 this year, as well as winning some pennants for the club," he said.

"The offseason has seen the club add some new bowlers, as well as seeing the return of both Brendan Barker and Mick O'Neil after both played premier league last year at Altona.

"We are looking forward to Brendan and Mick bringing their high end talent back to our club after playing at the highest level last season, and not having had many changes out of the club, Werribee should present a stronger club overall in all divisions."

Barker and O'Neil have previously been skips for the Bees' top side.

Joyce said there hadn't been many changes across the whole club in the off-season.

"Werribee should present a stronger club overall in all divisions," he said.

"We all understand success in sport just doesn't happen, and we have done the work during the preseason that we need to collectively produce each week.

"After two grand finals in three years, the group is really motivated to get back to that point and hopefully go one better.

"The first team is in a section that is quite tough, with a few different teams to last season, so we need to consistently be at our best to give ourselves an opportunity to be playing finals at the back end of February."

The Bees started their season on Saturday against Aberfeldie CBC.

Joyce said before the match that Aberfeldie CBC is a traditionally strong side.

It was a mixed day for the Bees as they lost, 80 (14)-65 (4).

Joyce's rink won 17-16, while Robert Pantons rink won 24-14.

It was a tougher day for Barker's rink which lost 23-8, while Robert Smith's rink lost 27-16.

Joyce said overall the target right across the club is to have all teams qualify for finals first and then, as a club, they are looking for all sides to gain promotion and win pennants.

"There is no reason why we can't have success right across the club," he said.

"The offseason has been good, with lots of work going into the club, both on and off the greens. The environment is welcoming and encouraging, and we would love to see plenty of locals come down and get involved in our club."

Werribee faces Yarraville Footscray 3 this Saturday.

Sports shorts

Western FL

Tarneit has announced the return of Liam Meyrich for next year's Western Football League division 2 season. Meyrich first donned the maroon in 2024, establishing himself as one of the premium ruck of division 2 and won the Titans best and fairest that year.

"With ruck craft for days and footy IQ to boot, Liam is a gun and his follow up work allows him to compete when the ball has hit the ground," the Titans said on social media. "Liam returns following a boomerang stint at Bell Post Hill where he has previously played in senior premierships and grand finals; including the 2026 GDFL [Geelong and District Football League] reserves grand final."

The Suns have announced the signing of Nicholas Papakalodoukas for the 2027 Western Football League division 2 season. The Suns said that Papakalodoukas joins the club with an impressive football resume, bringing plenty of senior experience, premiership success and individual accolades to the club. Among his achievements is being named in the Western Football League team of the year three times, including this year when he was part of North Footscray's premiership team.

WSCCA

Williams Landing and West Point made it two from two in the Western Suburbs Churches and Community Cricket Association A.E Lowe Shield on Saturday. Williams Landing faced Manor Lakes and made light work of the game. Manor Lakes was bowled out for 57, with Williams Landing finished 3-59 in reply. West Point finished 7-141 in reply to Tarneit Central's 139. Altona Sports were the other winner on Saturday.

Western NL

The Suns have announced that Wayne Cachia will step away from his roles at the Western Netball League club.

"Wayne has played a significant role in shaping and growing our netball program into what it is today," the Suns said on social media. "His passion for the game, commitment to our players and willingness to go above and beyond have made a lasting impact on our club and the wider netball community."

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Bees underway



Tigers re-sign five



Wynham Vale appeals for a wicket. (Ties Urie) 584737 12

Win for Vales

By Tara Murray

Wynham Vale finally took to the field and it got the win on Saturday after a frustrating couple of weeks to start the Victorian Turf Cricket Association Russell Pollock Shield season.

With round one washed out and then having a bye in round two, the Vales had to wait until round three to get things underway.

Despite a rusty performance at times, the Vales were able to come away with a strong win against Melton Centrals on Saturday.

Vales' president Jay Dolliver said it was good to finally get out and play and getting the win was even better.

The Vales won the toss and decided to bat. They finished 7-225 off their 40 overs.

Vinuja Kiriella top scored with 70, while Trent de Villiers finished 50 not out.

"Not many people wouldn't be happy with 225," Dolliver said.

"We were 2-100 and then 5-111 before getting to 7-225.

"With strengthening the team different batters are now able to play roles further down the order.

"We don't always have to rely on the top

five. It was a good even spread."

The Vales then started well with the ball to ensure they remained in control of the match.

Dolliver said it was a good team performance with the ball.

He said they did take the foot off the pedal in the middle of the innings, when they had the game in control.

"It kept us in the field longer than we needed to be," he said. "Melton batted well to bat most of the way through."

Four players took two wickets each for the Vales.

The Vales have been busy in the off season, adding some more experience to the group.

Dolliver said they wanted to strengthen their whole playing group, not just the first XI.

He said there's still some players to come into the sides.

"We've had a few players come back to the club and we've recruited a few as well," he said.

"Our second side made the grand final last year. We've strengthened the first XI and it helps strengthen the second XI and strengthen the lower grades as well.

"There's quite a few new guys in the seconds."

Dolliver said the younger players who had played the past few years now had plenty of experience and they expected them to take the next step as well.

The key for the Vales now is consistency.

"Hopefully we can have a few more wins than the last few seasons," he said. "We've got more experience and that hopefully helps."

It's something they've lacked in recent seasons.

The Vales now face Donnybrook this Saturday.

Donnybrook suffered a shock loss to Williamstown Congs.

Dolliver said they were aiming to play the same way as they did on the weekend to continue the momentum.

In other matches, Point Cook had a big win against Keilor Park in the Roy Picone Shield, while Point Cook Centrals lost to Laverton.

In the Clark Shield, Werribee Centrals beat Sunshine YCW and Bellbridge lost to East Coburg.

Cats bat out overs

By Tara Murray

Hoppers Crossing finally batted through its 80 overs but still wasn't content in the Victorian Sub-District Cricket Association north-west on Saturday.

The Cats have shown in past seasons that they can pile on the runs, but haven't always made the most of their batting power.

After a poor performance in round one against Brunswick, the Cats had an improved performance against Coburg on Saturday.

The Cats finished day one of the clash at 8-318.

Cats' captain-coach Simon Lambert said it was a much better performance from the group.

"We didn't produce our best effort in round one," he said. "It was a decent response yesterday [Saturday]. We had a bit of an early wake up call."

Lambert said while they were happy with a score of more than 300, some of the top order still went home disappointed.

The Cats slipped to 4-117 before Brett Smith and later Justin Goegan were able to put on some runs to get them to a decent score.

"We were 4-120 which was a little bit disappointing but then we put on a partnership," he said. "We then lost three wickets after tea and I thought we'd struggle to get 250.

"Brett with a century and Justin with 40 not out pushed us to a big score. It was good to bat out the 80 overs. If you do that, you'll win a lot of games of cricket."

Smith made 112 as he made a century in round two for a second straight season. Lambert made 70 at the top of the order but felt like he left runs out there, while Goegan finished 42 not out.

"Brett was the only one in the top seven that was happy," Lambert said.

"If you have six players go home disappointed and you have 320 on board, you're not in a bad position."

Lambert said a win like this could help set up their season.

He said the key was to know to back it up this week with the ball.

Meanwhile Werribee is in a good position to make it two-from-two as it finished day one against St Bernard's OC in a strong spot.

The Snowdogs won the toss and decided to bat and were bowled out for 160 in the 73rd over.

Jonathan Burton took 4-2 off his 13 overs, which included 12 maidens.

The Tigers openers got through 11 overs unscathed and will resume at 0-44.