

Traf District News

February 2025 – Edition 271

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Trafalgar Citizen and Junior Citizen of The Year Awards

JASON AND KERRY RANTALL

Jason and Kerry are passionate about supporting and improving our community by sharing their own challenges with mental health, and they have made a significant impact by opening the community hub, Bettermentall, in Trafalgar.

Together, they have created a safe and relaxed place where people can connect, learn about resources available, and build self-help with support. The hub has workshops, youth catch-up weekly, a men's mental health group, mental health first aid and counselling, visiting speakers, and many referral opportunities to deal with anxiety and mental illness, "to help people take that first step towards recovery and healing."

As a youth mental health first aid instructor, Kerry's aim was to help those with bipolar and their families in a quest for a normal life, starting with helping Jason through his addictions, and now expanding her support and experience to our community. Jason has transformed from barely surviving to flourishing and being an excellent role model, making small changes and practising healthy lifestyle choices.

In his encouragement for people to believe in themselves, Jason promoted these ideals with the Have a Chat Run for Mental Health and Wellbeing last year.

Highlighting the 3299 suicides in Australia in 2022,

and their impact on families and loved ones, Jason invited community members to walk and chat with him for the same number of kms over 100 days. He promoted local businesses or community members who sponsored and shared his beliefs of a healthier and informed life, and his daily experiences were widely documented in the media.

Bettermentall is a privately operated not-for-profit community service and depends solely on donations for its survival. From the Trafalgar community, thank you Jason and Kerry.

Jason and Kerry spoke through Traf District News. "We thank the community for this recognition with the Australia Day award. While we deeply appreciate this gesture, we want to emphasize that our work is always driven by passion and commitment to making a positive impact, not for recognition. It's incredibly rewarding to be part of a community that values these efforts.

"We would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the community for their ongoing support—without them, Bettermentall would not be what it is today. Together, with the community's support, we are building a more healthy, vibrant, and safe community."

AMBROSE BAJADA – TRAFALGAR JUNIOR CITIZEN OF THE YEAR

Ambrose has proven to be an outstanding example of leadership, in both his

Trafalgar High School community and his many roles within the air force cadet program in Squadron 426 - Traralgon.

Prior to and during his position as a school captain, Ambrose attended school council meetings to both share his views as a young leader and also to offer students a voice. He has chaired several Student Representative Council meetings for the junior and senior SRC groups, as well as supporting several specialist leadership teams, including the Performing Arts and Community Events captains. He has led many school assemblies during 2024, including the election of the 2025 leadership team.

In his own time outside school hours, Ambrose has attended evening sessions

and committed to training weekends with the 426 Squadron over many years. He has been a mentor to younger and lower ranked cadets and a chief instructor, supporting class planning, drill preparation, and executive training. He has shown a real passion for the planning of celebration events and supporting the ongoing Legacy Appeal, including leading ANZAC Day events in 2024. In 2023 he played a key role in supporting his squadron's participation in air shows and in open days.

Well done Ambrose, and thank you from the Trafalgar community.

Editor's Note: Traf District News will feature more about Ambrose in a future edition.

GRAHAM DAVEY (POSTHUMOUS AWARD)

Graham Davey was a stalwart of the Trafalgar business and wider community and his dedication and passion for community was an inspiration.

Graham was very active with the Trafalgar Chamber of Commerce and Industry for more than forty years, which earned him a life membership. He was known for good humour, friendships and his historical perspective on local issues.

Graham and his wife Maria, operated Traf Men's and Boy's Wear for more than 30 years. They were well known for their generous support of local sports clubs and groups.

NEIL JOINER (POSTHUMOUS AWARD)

Neil Joiner is well remembered for his passion for the

Holden brand and the impact he made on establishing a nationally significant museum here in Trafalgar. This not-for-profit museum is run entirely by more than 60 volunteers, also eager to share their knowledge of the Holden related exhibits.

Following his very successful business career, Neil and his wife Annette, purchased and improved to museum standard, the old, disused Trafalgar Butter Factory premises. Neil's vision has seen Holden-related exhibits that boast an impressive collection spanning 160 years of development.

Editor's Note: Traf District News published a eulogy to Graham Davey in the April 2024 edition and Neil Joiner in the August 2024 edition, which can be downloaded from www.trafnews.com



Kerry and Jason Rantall



Ambrose Bajada


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Traf District News

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A disaster waiting to happen!

Darren Wallace, VFBV District 9 State Councillor & Board Member
 Volunteer Trafalgar Fire Brigade

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) have recently highlighted to the State Government the emerging issue of Country Fire Authority (CFA) fleet funding. VFBV is the united voice of CFA volunteers and advocates on their behalf to CFA and other key stakeholders, including the State Government. CFA has primary fire and related emergency service responsibility for most of Victoria including 60% of Melbourne's suburbs, all of our provincial cities and

towns and all of our country areas. Each year qualified and highly skilled CFA volunteers – men and women – respond to thousands of house and industrial fires, grass fires and bushfires, road and marine accidents, hazardous materials events and a vast array of other emergencies in their community. Unpaid, CFA volunteers provide Victoria with emergency services valued at nearly \$1 Billion each year. In addition to saving lives, CFA Volunteers save untold mil-

lions of dollars in property, environment and natural resources across Victoria. They protect local economies from devastation and thereby are a key part of protecting the Victorian economy. Victoria is one of the most fire prone areas in the world. When it comes to summer, volunteers respond primarily in CFA Tankers to protect life and property from bushfires. The Governments' own climate modelling says, we are having longer and more frequent intense fire seasons

each year. CFA shows an aging fleet of tankers with approximately 700 of these trucks single cabin appliances. This means volunteers are delivering this much needed service with no respite from extreme heat, smoke and toxic fumes while riding in the open air on the back of one of these aging trucks.

Table 1, Country Fire Authority (CFA) emergency response vehicle age profile (as of 1 July 2023)

Type	AGE IN YEARS							Total
	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	
Pumper	13	38	88	48	15	14	2	218
Pumper/Tanker	1	0	19	1	9	7	1	38
Tanker	220	345	386	300	235	212	227	1925
Specialist	30	45	23	23	10	11	0	142
Total	264	428	516	372	269	244	230	

CFA only invests \$15M in truck replacements each year. CFA trucks have now become the oldest fleet of emergency vehicles in Australia with some more than 34 years old. These trucks shouldn't be on the fire ground, they should be in a museum. When it comes to State Government funding, the State will collect an additional \$186M in Fire Services Levy this year with only 25% of that levy going to fund CFA. The Fire Services Levy which is predominately collected from Regional

Victoria covered by CFA volunteers, while 75% of that fund goes to a paid metro fire service which continues to have cost overruns each year. For each year of the past five years, the State Government has cut CFA funding. They are simply ignoring Regional Victoria and putting communities at greater risk during the fire season. Investing in CFA is investing in Victoria's safety, its our insurance policy against the next Black Saturday. VFBV is calling for a bigger slice of the Fire Services

Levy to go towards funding a newer, safer CFA fleet for volunteers. Estimations show that 100 trucks per year need to be replaced with 85 of these being Tankers, the "work horses" through the bushfire season. This equates to lifting truck replacement funding from \$15M to \$50M per year every year to secure CFA's future fleet renewal. As mentioned earlier, the Government will be collecting an additional \$186M in Fire Services Levy this year alone. We ask that \$35M of that goes directly to fleet

funding. How can you help, I hear you ask! Contact the Premier, the emergency Services minister or your local State politician and voice your concerns. Your local CFA brigade of volunteers are prepared to risk their lives on your behalf this fire season. Volunteers deserve the newest, safest most advanced fire trucks available to do this work, will you support them?

Apology for mistakes in December issue

We would like to apologise to our readers for some mistakes in our previous issue. Unfortunately, when the date 'November' was changed to 'December' at the top of each page, this somehow automatically changed the word where it appeared elsewhere in the paper. This meant there were 12 of these errors throughout. We apologise for any confusion or harm caused and will endeavour to ensure this kind of mistake does not happen again.

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MEET THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT BAKE IT SOW IT OR GROW IT

New leadership at Parks Victoria as agency under review

By Jordan Ross

In late November, Parks Victoria saw its leadership change hands as Matthew Jackson stepped down and Graeme Dear was appointed as Interim CEO. Jackson had led the government agency since 2017, but left the position by mutual agreement. Graham Dear brings with him 30 years of experience in public and private sector administration and has served on the Victorian Fisheries Authority Board. Dear is also a member of the Great Outdoors Taskforce

– the group responsible for reviewing and making recommendations about future forest and land management in Victoria. The Victorian Minister for Environment, Steve Dimopoulos, expressed his confidence in this move. "His passion for the great outdoors and experience in administration means he is the right person to help Parks Victoria change," he said. "His leadership will ensure Parks Victoria continues to provide accessible, enjoyable

outdoor experiences, while protecting and enhancing the state's natural environment," he said. At the end of last year, Dimopoulos also announced that he had ordered a review of Parks Victoria. He wants to ensure that the organisation can serve the needs of Victorians to the best of its abilities. He said that "It's clear that Parks Victoria's current operations need to be improved to meet community expectations." According to reporting by

the ABC, the review will be conducted by the Melbourne based advisory firm KordaMentha. Parks Victoria ensured that during this period of change and review, that it remains focused on ensuring our parks are open, safe and clean for all Victorians to enjoy, and we will continue to prioritise this important work over summer. The agency has already shown this to be true, raising over \$800,000 to establish a conservation sanctuary at Wilsons Prom-

ontory National Park, in South Gippsland. This project has been a collaboration with a long-term charity partner, the People and Parks Foundation. Donations from generous Victorians will directly fund habitat restoration, species reintroduction, and critical pest control efforts. The sanctuary would be the largest in Victoria and would create an environment where vulnerable wildlife and habitats can thrive. A new 10 km fence will prevent pests from en-

tering the park, while continuing to provide access for Victorians and visitors to have empowering exposure to nature. This sanctuary will ensure future generations can experience the best the Prom has to offer for years to come. Parks Victoria encourages Victorians to continue to help fund this project. To donate towards the Prom Sanctuary, visit the People and Parks Foundation.



Wilsons Promontory National Park. Provided by Parks Victoria



A Parks Victoria worker at the Prom with Anser Island in the background. Provided by Parks Victoria

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The February 13 Storm Almost a Year On

By Robert Waycott

If you haven't visited Mirboo North in a few years, you would likely notice how different the town now looks. Sure, the bent over goal posts at the rec have long been replaced, and the fallen timber has been cleared away from the golf course but drive around and you'll still see houses with tarps on their roofs. This doesn't take into account houses that are no longer there nor the number of houses that are now visible due to trees that have disappeared. Support provided by things like hot showers being provided in Baromi Park to numerous agencies providing ongoing support, underscore the reality that numerous lives were upended by what could be called the 'random awfulness' of the February 13 storm. While the psychological scars will take time to heal for some, more obvious consequences for those literally rebuilding or repairing their homes have been the delays dealing with insurance companies as well as a shortage of tradies to help with the necessary rebuilds. "It was like trying to escape a war," one local described the immediate aftermath of the storm, who goes on to describe scrambling over fallen trees to safety from a house that ultimately had to be demolished. This local had had a warning of what was to come from her mother on the Mornington Peninsula and recalled assuming the storm was over when she saw a single leaf resting on the house's skylight. Another local recalls the noise of his house being hit by multiple trees and also the benefits he received from eight months of personal phone counselling. For those wanting an

awareness of the bigger picture of this event and how it impacted elsewhere, a good place to start is the Network Outage Review. This was released early in January, but it also has a segment entitled 'Mirboo North Engagement Summary.' This is based on what members of the Network Review Panel were told when they attended Mirboo North on 23 and 24 March last year, and is essential reading for anyone wanting to understand the initial response to the storm. "The response within local councils, emergency services, and the community needs to be better integrated and coordinated," is just one sentence from this part of the Review, another being, "Community members identified that the initial response from locals was great, but additional complexities occurred when local government and authorities were involved." Locals were keen to have the damaged Mirboo North Swimming Pool repaired and opened for the summer season. Its opening was delayed but is now open. The adjacent Baths Rd Reserve though shows how much still needs to be done. In Baromi Park a sapling was planted in September last year next to the stump of a tree blown down in the February 13 storms of last year. Just two days before the storm, around like 15,000 people had crammed into the park to attend the Mirboo North Italian Festa, so small wonder then that a local chaplain has described Mirboo North as "town of a thousand miracles," the wording on the plaque next to the sapling also reflecting a religious theme.



A new fence for the swimming pool, next to the destruction left by the storm.



A sapling in Baromi Park planted next to the stump of a fallen tree.

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Meet Dr Hannah Farthing: doctor by day, jigsaw champion by night

By Peace Ijiyera

Like many people, the boredom of covid lockdowns resulted in trying new hobbies and getting back into old ones. For Trafalgar medical doctor, Hannah Farthing, it was jig-sawing. Farthing traced her love for jig-sawing back to her childhood where she did her first jigsaw at around the age of three. "I always sort of did them [jigsaws] growing up, but I got back into it during covid." Farthing explained that every night during covid, she would complete a thousand-piece jigsaw whilst watching TV; something her mum thought was "weird." From there Farthing went looking and stumbled on the Australian Jigsaw Puzzle Association - which she joined - and has been a part of ever since. In 2024, Hannah competed in many competitions,

including state, national, and world. The Victorian state competition saw Farthing clean up nicely, placing first in both individuals and pairs, doing a 500-piece jigsaw in amazing time. In nationals, Farthing placed 8th in individuals, and 1st in pairs and teams. The world competition whisked Hannah off to Valladolid, Spain which saw her place 29th in individual, 10th in pairs, and 6th in teams. When asked how Hannah prepares for competition, she boiled it down to practice. "Most of the time I come home from work and do at least one, or two five hundred [piece jigsaws]." "It also goes a lot further. It's a bit of recording yourself doing puzzles, and then rewatching the footage to see what you could have done better," Farthing

said. With the right amount of practice, Farthing believes that everyone has the potential to become a jigsaw champion. "Puzzling non-competitively is something that the vast majority of people have done before. It is relatable to a lot of people." "I would certainly recommend doing some puzzles, joining a group, and seeing what is out there. A lot of people might just end up swapping puzzles or talking about how to approach a puzzle. Then if you want to be competitive, you can always lean into that," Farthing said. In 2025, the competition continues as Farthing plans to go back to defend her title as Victorian State Jigsaw Champion, and compete in the World Jigsaw Puzzle Championship, in September. "I won Victoria last year, so I am hoping to defend

that," Farthing said. Perhaps, dear reader, this is a sign for you to get back into an old hobby. You never know what could happen.



Hannah Farthing competes at 2024 World Jigsaw Puzzle Championships



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CFA Funding falling short despite huge increases in fire levy fees

By Trevor Colvin



Library Image: CFA is fighting for more funds to replace an ageing fleet

Last December the state government announced increases to the compulsory fire service levy and the increases are hefty - close to a 100% increase for homeowners, big rises for businesses and a 169% increase for farmers. The levy is collected by local councils and passed on in full to the state government. The levy is collected annually to help fund fire fighting services.

Darren Wallace is a thirty year CFA veteran and is also the state councillor for this district to the body representing CFA volunteers; Vol-

unteer Fire Brigades of Victoria (VFBV).

The state will collect an extra \$168 million dollars this year and Wallace and his colleagues believe \$60 million of that needs to go each year to replacing the CFA's ageing fleet of vehicles.

Tankers are the workhorses of the CFA and 227 in the state's fleet are more than 31 years old. Another 212 are in the 26 to 30 year range. The government is offering \$30 million a year, for four years, for replacement vehicles, but Wallace argues that buys only sixty trucks (at \$500,000 each) and at the

end of the four year period the oldest trucks will have been replaced, but the 212 trucks in the 26 to 30 year old range will then be 30 years and more old. In Wallace's view that achieves little.

He is not alone in that view. Adam Barnett, CEO of VFBV had this to say. "The government is actually defunding CFA and investing less and less. That is like reducing your insurance as the rate of theft increases. In the most fire-prone place on earth - it is just madness."

"Further analysis has revealed the tens of millions of dollars being siphoned from

CFA's budget to be diverted to public service bodies and departments."

Section 76 of the CFA Act stipulates that government contributions to the CFA are 22.5% from general revenue and 77.5% from the fire services property levy. If that formula applied to the increased funds raised from the levy, the CFA would receive an additional \$129 million, but that is not the case.

Wallace remembers when a truck was considered old and ready for replacement at twenty years of age. That was lifted to twenty five about fifteen years ago and now there is no upper limit. But vehicles wear out and more than nine hundred of the state CFA's tankers are twenty

years and older.

A lot of extra money will be collected through the levy this year and Wallace and the CFA volunteers want \$60 million of that per year to go toward vehicle replacement, arguing that the \$30 million being offered won't solve the problem.

Trafalgar CFA has one old tanker and it is a single cab appliance which means up to three firefighters have to ride on the back of the truck facing imminent danger. Coming home around midnight from a recent fire at Narracan, the volunteers on the back of the truck were freezing; and that was in summer. More than seven hundred tankers in the CFA fleet are single cab appliances

so hundreds of volunteers are exposed to danger and severe weather every time they go out to serve.

CFA volunteers give up their time and safety and comfort to fight fires for their communities and frankly they deserve the best equipment available to keep them safe and effective

Wallace also added that the Trafalgar tanker is two wheel drive which is almost useless once off the bitumen and that puts firefighters at even more risk.

The Trafalgar brigade also has a pumper truck and a general purpose vehicle for which much of the funding for that comes from a generous public.

Activities for children, young and old. There will be plenty for the adults too! Great music, food, coffee, and plenty of community and environmental groups.

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Netflix Show 'Videoland' filmed at local video store In Moe

By Peace Ijiyera

Set in Australia in the 90s, Netflix show 'Videoland' follows the story of 17-year-old girl named Hayley, who is learning to navigate her newfound sexuality. Throughout the short series, Hayley seeks to find out how to live in her sexuality by watching queer films. Lucky for Hayley, she works at a video store, so she has no trouble finding these films. 'Videoland' was filmed in Moe, Victoria, at Future Flicks, one of four remaining traditional video stores in Victoria. Owner of 'Future Flicks', Ricky Dyt, began the operation of the store in 1987. "I think [video stores] has become really nostalgic." "I have a lot of people just come in and browse around and take photos." "People want to feel the old tradition of video stores," Dyt said.

When he was approached by Jessica Smith and Scarlett Koehne from Pikelet Pictures, in late 2022, with their idea, Dyt was more than happy to work with them and transform his store "back into the 90s."

The filming of the show commenced in June, 2023, and ran for about three weeks. According to Dyt, ninety five percent of the show was filmed at Future Flicks.

"Ninety five per cent of the show was filmed here", Dyt said.

Dyt explained how the only scenes not filmed at Future Flicks were filmed in a storage room at Old Gipps town.

Videoland featured a lot of locals as extras, and the quirky comedy is now streaming on Netflix.



Future Flicks owner Ricky Dyt, Photographed by Peace Ijiyera.

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HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW FIRE?

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Frank Turra: August 14, 1940, to October 3, 2024

Frank Turra will be remembered as a gentle and kind person. He was born on August 14, 1940, in Trafalgar to Italian parents, Joseph and Emilia. Frank had a younger twin brother, Jim. He grew up on the family farm in Trafalgar South with 11 siblings. In his youth, he attended St Joseph's Catholic Primary School. To help his parents financially, he sold newspapers after school with his siblings. He was a keen salesperson at a young age. His family recalled that one time, he was so focused on securing a sale, he did not realise that the person he tapped on the shoulder for a sale was his father. The family didn't have a car until his brother, Angelo, was old enough to drive. Before this, they would walk everywhere, from the farm, to school or church. If the family was lucky, the milk carriers or the men driving quarry trucks would pick the kids up and give them a lift. The family didn't have much money growing up, but they had the love of their big Italian family. Frank's father died in 1959, leaving seven children (including Frank) under the age of 21. The loss of his father devastated Frank and his siblings, who had looked to their father for guidance and support. It was important that the siblings supported each other and got their lives back on track. When Frank's mother used to knit socks for all the kids, she would always use a red-dish brown coloured wool that matched the colour of the dirt on the farm. This

meant that dirt stains were not noticeable and having them the same colour meant his mother didn't have to try and match up pairs. Frank and his siblings worked the farm. They cleared the bush, milked cows, cut ferns, fed the pigs, built fences and made hay. Frank and Jim began farming in Yarragon as well. Together, they established a partnership, the 'Turra Bros'. After their mother passed away, Frank moved back to Trafalgar and then helped both Jim and Nick run the family farm. Frank believed strongly in the values of the Catholic church but would practice his faith in a very private and personal way. The only time he ever missed mass was when he was in hospital recovering from illness. He would usually go to church on a Saturday night before visiting his siblings to catch up with them. Frank maintained a good relationship with his siblings even into his adulthood. Despite never having his own children, he loved it when his nieces and nephews would visit him on the family farm in Trafalgar. The children also enjoyed these visits as an opportunity to stay connected with their family. He was often described as a selfless and generous person. His family would be greeted with endless servings of cakes, biscuits and lemonade when they visited him. Frank enjoyed entertaining and playing games with his adoring nieces and nephews and although he

was a shy and quiet person, he had an infectious laugh. He also performed magic tricks for them which amazed the kids. Another great passion in Frank's life was supporting

the Essendon Football Club. As a teenager, Frank and his brothers would make their way to the Trafalgar train station, catch a train to Flinders Street Station, and then a tram to Windy Hill to

watch the team. Frank is now reunited with his loving mother and father, as well as some of his siblings: Nick, Angelo, Agnese and Giovana. He will be greatly missed by

his siblings, nieces, nephews and the local Catholic church community where he was strongly connected.



Principal appointed for the reopening of the Neerim District Rural Primary School

By Jordan Ross

Neerim District Rural Primary School has appointed a new principal and hired staff, as the school gets ready to open its doors in Term 1, of 2025. In August, it was announced that the school would reopen after five years of closure. Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, Ben Carroll, recently announced Lisa Williamson is set to lead the rural school, which has a total of thirteen students enrolled for next year. Lisa's early years were spent in Poowong East, where her father was a dairy farmer. She attended the local rural primary school there before moving to Western Victoria. Since settling back in the area with her husband and four children, Lisa has been strongly grounded in Gippsland. Lisa comes to the role with over 33 years of teaching experience in a range of different schools. She has taught students from all ages throughout her ca-

reer, from early childhood through to year 12. "This reopening marks a new beginning that will allow us to deliver the intimacy of small classrooms where we can cultivate a nurturing learning environment that fosters both academic success and personal development," said Williamson. The primary school was opened in 1993, following a merger. The site itself dates back to 1895. The school has been non-operational since the end of 2019 but was never formally closed. In late 2023, government-led consultation with the Neerim community identified a growing interest in reopening the school. "Small schools play such an important role in our rural and regional communities. I'm thrilled Neerim District Rural Primary School will reopen in 2025, continuing its long history in the local community," the Minister for Education said.

Without the reopening of the school, families in Nayook and Neerim had to travel over 20 km to attend school in Neerim South. Rural schools also strengthen community bonds and encourage collaboration and support between locals. Member for Eastern Victoria, Harriet Shing is excited for the local community and what the future of the school holds. "This is such an important milestone for local families who are choosing public education. Congratulations to Lisa Williamson on her appointment and I look forward to working with her in the future," she said. She also emphasised that the Allan Labor Government is dedicated to listening to and supporting rural communities in Victoria. In order to get the school ready to be operational once again, the Victorian School Building Authority appointed a builder to undertake

maintenance and works. This included installing new fire extinguishers, adding

emergency and exit lighting, and general repairs to the flooring and roof. The

work started in November, and was finished in January.



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Heart disease in dogs and cats

By Dr Jonathan Ong of Trafalgar Veterinary Centre

The heart is arguably the most important organ in the body. It helps to pump and distribute much needed oxygen and nutrients through the bloodstream and allows the body to function appropriately. Therefore, a healthy heart is vital in maintaining a healthy body.

This is also true for our furry, scaly, and feathered friends. Coughing is a common presenting problem in dogs and cats. A cough can be caused by respiratory or airway disease, however it can also be a sign of heart disease.

The cough may start only at night, and then later progress throughout the day.

This is due to a condition called Congestive Heart Failure (CHF) where a failing heart is unable to pump blood efficiently throughout the body and fluid can pool in the lungs. If left untreated, the patient will be unable to exchange oxygen in the lungs, leading to cardiovascular compromise.

Therefore, it is important to present any coughing patients to a vet to be assessed. A vet will use a stethoscope to listen to heart and lung sounds, which is an important part of a physical exam. A heart murmur can often be heard in patients with heart failure. A murmur is the sound of altered blood flow through the heart due

to failure; often due to failure of the internal valves in the heart. This can be due to a valve problem (commonly mitral valve degeneration) or a heart muscle problem (e.g., dilated cardiomyopathy). Murmurs are graded from 1 to 6 which can help to assess the severity of the heart disease. The location of the murmur also provides clues to which heart valves are involved.

In dogs, CHF is the most common outcome from heart disease. Apart from coughing, you may also notice your pet having exercise intolerance, sudden fainting, insomnia at night, drinking and urinating more and in more severe

cases, pale or blue gums. Cavalier King Charles Spaniels and various other small breeds, have an increased risk of heart valve diseases, while large breed dogs, such as Dobermans, are at increased risk for heart muscle diseases. Chest x-rays or an echocardiogram (heart ultrasound) can be used to assist with diagnosing and assessing the severity of the problem. Patients with heart failure often have an enlarged heart from the increased workload. Unfortunately, there is no permanent treatment for patients experiencing heart failure, but we can improve the efficiency of the heart and prolong life expectancy, using

medications.

In cats, it is harder to diagnose heart disease as, unlike dogs, they do not always present with heart murmurs. Certain breeds such as Ragdolls and Maine Coons, are predisposed to heart disease. Heart failure is less common in cats compared to dogs. Sadly they sometimes present late in the disease process with blood clots due to the turbulent blood flow. The clot can lodge within the final branch of the aorta which can cut off circulation to both back legs, leading to paralysis. This condition is painful, so it is considered an emergency and should be seen by a vet immediately.

If detected early enough, some cats may recover with prolonged anti-clotting medications and hospitalisation; however, for some, the paralysis can be permanent. Occasionally, preventative medication may be recommended for cats that are detected with a heart murmur. Having a pet diagnosed with heart disease can be daunting, however the majority of cases can be managed if presented early. A yearly health check with your local vet is important to detect early heart disease, as well as other health conditions.

Trafalgar Lions Christmas Raffle

The Annual Trafalgar Lions Christmas Raffle was drawn on Wednesday 18th December by Trafalgar IGA Manager Dom Griffin. The winner of

the first prize of \$600 was Bunny Brotherton, second prize of \$300 was won by Kaz Edwards of Yarragon, with the third prize of \$150 won by Keira Swenson. The Lions of

Trafalgar would like to thank the Dom and the staff of Trafalgar IGA for their support and of course everyone who supported the raffle.

Fun with words

This is a new feature which will appear each month in Traf District News where we will explore the meaning of words we all should know, the changing nature of language, the origins of proverbs and the occasional joke.

PROVERB: CALLING THE SHOTS

Calling the shots means to be in charge, to give orders, or to control the course of action.

It originated in military marksmanship training. It refers to the practice of

calling out when a marksman successfully hits the target. The phrase is also used in billiards, where players may announce which pocket they are aiming for.

MISUSED WORDS OR WORDS WITH CHANGED MEANINGS

'How are we'?

The plural has become the singular. Many younger people, enquiring into your wellbeing, ask; "How are we?" instead of "How are you?" By using 'we' they are effectively including themselves in the question, so in effect they are asking you to tell them how they are?

What was wrong with "how are you"?

What was your name? When asked "What was your name?", which happens often, I always respond with "it hasn't changed" or "my name IS" which elicits a look of pity or a blank stare. The change from present to past tense is meaningless.

SOME COMMON PHOBIAS

- Arachnophobia: An intense fear of spiders
- Claustrophobia: A fear of confined spaces
- Agoraphobia: A fear of open spaces
- and the opposite of claustrophobia
- Xenophobia: A fear of other cultures, strangers or foreigners
- Acrophobia: A fear of heights
- Hemophobia: A fear of blood

RUSSELL BROADBENT
Federal Member for Monash

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PROUD OF OUR NATION

Authorised by Russell Broadbent MP, Independent Federal Member for Monash, Warragul

Council calls for your help in shaping the 2025/26 draft budget

The Baw Baw Shire Council has opened the community budget submission process for the 2025/26 Draft Budget. The process opened on January 28, and will be open until February 16. Baw Baw Shire Mayor Councillor, Danny Goss, is encouraging the community to provide their feedback during the budget submission process.

"In previous years, Baw Baw Shire has run the community budget submission process in May, but this year we are going out to the community earlier and want to hear from you," Cr Goss said. By opening up the submission process earlier, residents can help inform the budget from the very beginning of the process. Submissions can be made at www.bawbawconnect.com.au/budget - the council's online platform. Having used this website for the process last year, the council hopes that it will provide a flexible and user-friendly

interface for the public. Submissions can also be made in writing and posted to Baw Baw Shire Council, PO Box 304, Warragul 3820, or via email to Budget.Submissions@bawbawshire.vic.gov.au. This program gives locals the opportunity to have more say on their council's investments and priorities for the next year. "This is the first budget of our council term and will set out which long-term projects council will commit to de-

living over the term," said Mayor, Cr Goss. "Our community engagement is an opportunity for residents to share with us what their priorities are. We are keen to hear what matters to our community to ensure it delivers what our residents want and need," he said. Following this process, further community consultation will take place in April, which will allow Baw Baw Shire residents the opportunity to review council's

key documents, including the Draft Budget 2025/26, the Council Plan 2021-2025, Annual Review, the Draft Rating and Revenue Plan, and the Draft Long Term Financial Plan. In 2025/26, Baw Baw Shire Council wants to continue to build on its plan, design and deliver approach, investing in important services and infrastructure to ensure a healthy and thriving community now, and into the future. Mayor Cr Goss emphasised

the importance of planning for the future of the shire. "Our shire has a population of more than 62,000 residents, which is projected to grow to nearly 88,000, by the year 2041, meaning it's crucial we are investing not only now, but into the future for Baw Baw Shire," he said. It is with this in mind, that the Baw Baw Shire Council calls for your input.

Click go the shears boys; forty years on

By Trevor Colvin

Les Rowlings grew up in the spud and sheep country of Thorpdale. He wasn't particularly interested in continuing with schooling, so his dad bought him a potato fork and young Les went to work digging spuds. He recalls watching the school bus go by that first day and wondered if he had made the right decision. He did. Les is now ninety and

his life has panned out well. He married his childhood sweetheart and raised three daughters. Les now lives at Encore Retirement Living and is by far the oldest and perhaps the fittest bloke there. I know because he is my neighbour and I see how active he is. He is still as lean as a whip-pet and enjoys an active and busy life.

When he was a young gun, Les learned to shear and his best was two hundred and ten sheep in eight hours; that translates to one fleece every two and a half minutes which is a considerable effort. Shearers in Australia are predominantly paid by the fleece, not the hour, so speed is critical. However, they can be docked if they don't take the fleece well, or

nick the animal too often, so speed combined with care makes a good shearer; it is back-breaking work. Les made himself a promise to shear a sheep when he reached ninety and he did that last week. It wasn't a record breaking time, but the old veteran still has the skills.



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COUNCIL News.

Improvement works underway in Queen Street.

Works have commenced to improve pedestrian and traffic safety and accessibility along Queen Street in Warragul between Mason Street and Peace Avenue.

The civil and landscape works are expected to be finished in March 2025,

while the toilet block reconstruction is expected to be done during May.

During construction, Council and the contractor will make every effort to minimise noise and impact on the community. At times, some measures will be implemented impacting pedestrians,

road traffic access and parking spaces during delivery.

For more project information, including the full scope of works, visit www.bawbawshire.co/streetscapeimprovement



Invest in your mental health.

Baw Baw Shire Council has partnered with Bettermentall Together Inc to deliver a series of selfcare workshops across the Shire.

Attending these sessions will help participants learn strategies to enhance their mental, emotional and physical health.

The sessions will be held from 9.30am - 2.30pm on the following days:

- Wednesday 19 February, Yarragon Bowls Club
- Wednesday 12 March, Longwarry Public Hall
- Wednesday 26 March, McGregor Park Hall, Trafalgar

Scan the QR code on this page to register yourself today!



Our Roads. Your Roads. Better Baw Baw Roads.

Did you know that Council has routine grass slashing and road grading programs to help ensure that our local roads remain safe?

As part of its road grading program, Council routinely grades unsealed roads across the whole network and completes reactive grading upon assessment.

Roadside grass mowing is conducted twice a season - once between September and December and the second between January and April the following year. The roadside is required to be mowed 1.5 metres behind the line of guideposts. Where there are no guideposts mowing is done to a width of 3 metres from the edge of pavement, if practicable.

If you spot a site that you think poses a safety risk or hazard, we encourage you to advise Council. Lodge your request via Snap Send Solve, or call us on 1300 229 229.



UPCOMING COUNCIL MEETINGS:

Wednesday 12 February at 5.30pm

The Fountain Room, West Gippsland Arts Centre

All community members are welcome to attend in person, or tune in via the Live Stream on our website.

For a full list of the meetings for 2025, visit www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/Councilmeetings

Remembering Alexander Matheson

By Ciele Towb

"If you want to move forward, often look back, otherwise you'll forget where you came from and where you need to go."

An important part of being Australian is understanding our past and that is not forgotten in Trafalgar. Our hardworking Historical Society has information on almost everything, including when Trafalgar and surrounds were first established, as well as the important figures from our town's history.

There were many pioneering families in Trafalgar who made this town what it is today; one outstanding man was Alexander Matheson. Matheson was one of the first residents of Trafalgar and contributed to the farming industry, while also

being a significant figure in the town. He played a part in the building of the area and led a full and hardworking life.

Matheson was born in Perthshire, Scotland, in 1845, and immigrated to Warrnambool in the early 1870s, with his two friends Charles Mitchell and James Falconer. They were Christadelphians, which is a branch of Christianity. They differ from other Christians due to their practices and specific interpretations of the Bible.

In 1877, the trio decided to purchase land in Gippsland and built the railway line from Sale to Melbourne. Matheson bought land west of Loch's Creek and opened a farm there. At the time, Trafalgar was unsuitable

for farming because it was a wetland, but with lots of hard work and modern farming practices, Matheson soon had a very successful farm.

His farm was so successful that it won awards. In 1900, and 1901, Matheson won two 2nd prizes for the best managed farm in Victoria, from the journal, Leader, before winning another two 2nd prizes for the best dairy farm in 1899, and 1901. It was known as 'Model Farm', and many farmers would come to see his successful practices to try to better their own farms.

As a Christadelphian, Matheson regularly attended meetings in Trafalgar, with other members, to practice their faith. These meetings were usually host-

ed by Charles Mitchell in his home, but when he died in 1888, Matheson became the leader of the church group due to his good reputation.

In terms of family, Matheson had a large family and was married to Sophia Matheson. He and his wife moved to Hawthorn just before World War 1 and lived there until their deaths in 1931 and 1934, respectively. With Sophia, he had ten children, Jane, Sophia, Elizabeth, Sarah, Margaret May, Alex, Alice, Flor, Annie and Charles. Before leaving Scotland, he had a son, James, who was born out of wedlock to Mary Kelly, who died thirteen days later. He took James with him when he moved to Australia.

On 5 November, 1891, Isaac Evans opened a butter fac-

tory on his property and Matheson, along with Evans, Sam Giblett, H. E. Webb and Charles Murray, was a pioneering director of the factory. Charles Murray raised the idea in a meeting in May, and many farmers showed their interest. Due to the Great Depression, it was a slow start to get the factory on its feet, but in the first year, they were able to export 155 cases of butter to England.

Matheson commented on Trafalgar's transformation into a successful farming area due to the tireless work of the community.

"To note now the cosy little homesteads and well kept farms dotted here and there, jets of steam issuing from factory and creamery roofs, smiling, waving areas

of maize and other fodder crops, herds of cattle grazing on all sides, the former sheets of water now controlled and flowing within, the luxurious but profitless growth of bullrushes and ti-tree replaced by well-kept artificial pastures, all combine to give undeniable evidence of the hard work, well directed, that has brought about so marvellous a revolution."

His pride to be a resident of Trafalgar is evident. The town is full of hardworking and passionate people and this continues to be true to this day. Matheson truly was an outstanding character in our town's history and remains a role model for dedication and excellence in our community.

Differences between a retail lease and a commercial lease

By Jade MacGregor of MacGregor Legal, Trafalgar

WHAT IS A LEASE?

A lease agreement outlines the rights and responsibilities of both the property owner (referred to as the Landlord or Lessor) and the individual or entity occupying the premises (referred to as the Tenant or Lessee). In the context of non-residential property, leases can be classified into two types: Commercial Leases and Retail Leases.

The classification of a lease is determined by the nature of the Tenant's use of the premises. It is crucial for both Landlords and Tenants to understand the differences between these leases as the rights, obligations and protections vary for each.

RETAIL LEASES

A Retail Lease applies to a premises where the

permitted use is predominantly for the sale and supply of goods and/or services. Retail Leases in Victoria are regulated by the Retail Leases Act (Vic) 2003, which aims to balance the power between Landlords and Tenants by offering several protective provisions for Tenants that are generally not available to those with Commercial Leases. Examples of these

provisions include mandatory Landlord disclosure requirements and restrictions on the Landlord's ability to recover certain expenses and outgoings from the Tenant, such as Land Tax.

COMMERCIAL LEASES

Conversely, Commercial Leases usually apply to businesses or premises used for warehousing,

storage, or commercial buildings without retail activity. These leases are regulated by general commercial and contract law, rather than specific legislative provisions. Accordingly, Landlords have a considerably stronger bargaining position with Commercial Leases. These leases can differ considerably between different properties and often tend

to be one-sided (usually in favour of the Landlord). The extent of a Tenant's liability under a Commercial Lease will largely depend on their ability to negotiate favourable terms. Given these differences, it is generally more advantageous for a Tenant to classify a lease as 'retail' in nature, while for a Landlord the opposite is true.

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Restaurant review

“I think I’ve died and gone to heaven!”

By Trevor Colvin

In this instance, heaven was close by; just twenty minutes up the road to Neerim South and my wife, Susie, made the comment about being transformed to the heavenly realm. It wasn't the drive up which did it, although from the valley to Neerim South is a pretty drive. It wasn't the town which transported her, although it is certainly a pleasant undulating town with curves and bends. It was the food at Neerim Nuff which had her excited. Neerim Nuff Wine Bar and Kitchen certainly provides fabulous food because chef, Connor Turnbull, from the UK, was trained at Whatley Manor; a traditional luxury hotel and getaway in the Cotswolds which has earned the Michelin Star twice for excellence. Learning under the Michelin system requires extensive training and the ability to present creatively, using local ingredients. Before com-

ing to Gippsland, Connor worked at Vue de monde and The Society restaurants in Melbourne, after many years in the UK and Norway and travelling the world with the Grand Prix Circuit. Neerim Nuff is the brainchild of Bruce and Margaret MacDougall, and this is their first venture into hospitality and in my view, they got it right. The restaurant is smallish, catering for up to 25 diners and a few more at the cocktail bar and this means for hearing challenged like your scribe, conversation is easy and background noise is minimal. There is plenty of room between tables. Service was excellent and our waitress was Hratika (pronounced Ratika) who was brilliant at her job and remembered our orders between one visit and the next. (Neerim Nuff has become my wife's restaurant of choice.) Margaret and Bruce have

a farm where chef Connor also lives and which provides a lot of their ingredients, fresh every day, to the kitchen. All three of them know wines and it shows in the vast selection on offer; much of it local. Now for the food which is what had Susie believe she'd died and gone to heaven. It is heavenly. What sets Neerim Nuff apart from almost every other restaurant in our part of the world is the creativity behind each dish and the amount of thought and effort which goes into putting it together. It looked almost too good to eat, but eat it we did. There were six of us there that day so we got to jointly experience a lot of dishes. Five of us opted for two courses and one chose three entrees, Meredith goat cheese tartlet, smoked Noojee trout and prawn sourdough toast. I ordered their homemade

bread and black treacle butter which is the most amazing spread I have ever tasted and it was a generous serving of both bread and butter (see photograph). That was followed by Monkfish which was firm and incredibly tasty). Other mains ordered by our table were confit of

salmon (see photograph) and Gippsland beef sirloin. Everyone was happy with their choices. 'Small Bites' ranged in price from \$8 to \$20, mains from \$35 to \$48, cheese plates from \$15 to \$36 and dessert from \$18. And the menu changes often, so return vis-

its are well worthwhile. Neerim Nuff is open from Thursday dinner to Sunday Lunch. Booking would be wise - 0474 642 924 - or info@neerimnuff.com.au and it is easy to find at 115 Main Road, Neerim South.



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Weeds – a plant out of place

By Diana Mattea

WHAT IS A WEED?

The simplest definition of a weed is an unwelcome plant growing in the wrong place. Their size is irrelevant. Big trees fit into this category – *Acacia baileyana* (Cootamundra Wattle), *Pinus radiata* (Pine), *Paraserianthes lophantha* (Cape Wattle).

Buying bulbs and plants from online catalogues and retailers marketed as “trendy” may have the potential to escape into the environment becoming problematic if not properly maintained. On my travels I have seen retailers selling Ivy as indoor plants. In time the plant outgrows its indoor space and is relocated outside. Left to grow vigorously, Ivy does not know boundaries.

The financial burden to

manage weeds along roadways and pastoral land is incurred by the taxpayer, landowner, and farmers. Our bushland suffers too. Habitats, native flora, and fauna suffer immeasurable cost as these unwelcome plants thrive. The tireless efforts of many voluntary groups are to be applauded in hand weeding and regenerating bush areas.

HOW DO WEEDS SPREAD?

1. Birds disperse through their droppings.
2. Cheap composts, manures that have not been properly heated (composted), to kill off seeds and pathogens. Take care when buying mulch, ensure it is good quality and produced here.
3. Seedlings growing in pot-

ted plants sold at nurseries, markets. If you notice any seedlings ask the retailer / seller to remove them prior to purchase.

4. Travelling abroad and locally seeds get caught on clothing or footwear (please check your belongings and follow Customs regulations when reentering the country).
5. Irresponsible people dumping their unwanted greens in bush land or thrown over the fence. These plants settle into the environment quite happily expanding along roadways or the bush.
6. Ivy is one plant that suffocates trees as it grows upwards, winding its invasive tendrils. It is sad to see, and in most situations avoidable.
7. Wind dispersal.
8. Europeans, early settlers brought in many plants that have comfortably found a new home. *Agapanthus praecox* is one to name. My first task was hand removing all agapanthus from our property.
9. Disturbed land where building has occurred becomes exposed and bare. Mother nature protecting her ground.
10. Storms – water carrying seeds to new areas, *Alternanthera philoxeroides* (Alligator weed) is notoriously noxious in our shire.
11. Mowing lawns – best thing to do is remove seed heads where possible. Wash down mower or any equipment used to avoid spreading.
12. Relocating to a new ad-

dress – check the relevant Shire's weed list ensuring you are not bringing noxious weeds.

SOIL BIOLOGY

Soil biology supports our invisible army of workers constantly regenerating soil into humus and nutrition available to plant roots. Weeds have purpose, indicating soil health; observing and interpreting their message guides us to what is occurring and how to better manage their removal. Never apply plastic or any synthetic material on the soil. This creates an unwelcome environment starving soil of oxygen.

WHAT IS THE REMEDY?

1. Botanical identification – every plant has one botanical name. Observe,

take note where plants are growing and their life cycle – are they an annual, perennial, or biennial weed?

2. Ensure all tools, including mowers, are clean and washed.
3. Check council / shire resources (noted below). If unsure, take a photo and ask appropriate skilled people (as myself).
4. Use vinegar and salt mix applied on a very hot day.
5. Solarising.
6. Hand removal (always wear gloves and appropriate clothing). The Eco Organic Garden product range offers a ready-to-use spray, Slasher Organic Weedkiller. Remember to download the SDS (safety data sheet) when purchasing products.



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Comment column: Russell Broadbent M.P.

Editor's Note: Russell Broadbent is the sitting member for Monash, your electorate, and he has represented this area for a very long time. We asked Mr. Broadbent if he would write a regular column for this newspaper. The views expressed by Mr. Broadbent are not necessarily those of this newspaper and this newspaper is open to hearing alternate points of view.

RECKLESS RESPONSE DEMANDS ROYAL COMMISSION

Despite optimistic rhetoric from the Albanese Government, Australians are worse off than they were five years ago, before

the pandemic. Cost-of-living pressures have eroded our world-class standard of living, and relief is not expected anytime soon.

Australians are still experiencing the result of hasty, short-sighted government decisions which were clearly driven by fear, or to incite fear. To lock down the states, mandate the workers, and inflate the economy was just reckless.

Australians will have their own view about the 'public-health' aspect of the COVID response and I accept that. But this remains certain; buying groceries, paying bills and going on holiday is much

harder now than we can remember. All Australians feel their money is worth less. Just this week we heard that inflation is once again on the rise. Perhaps it has to do with printing money out of thin air?

Did you know that the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) bought \$281 billion of government bonds between November, 2020 and February, 2022? Buying bonds isn't controversial, except the RBA was essentially creating money from nothing to make the bond purchases. This 'money printing' injected hundreds of billions of dollars into the coffers of the federal and state govern-

ments. While the RBA downplays their impact on inflation, we cannot ignore the flow on effects of rapidly increasing government debt, and how it got there. More debt leads to higher taxes, which leads to higher costs of goods and services because businesses will inevitably pass on the cost of taxes to consumers. We also see it in housing, where unprecedentedly high land taxes and increased compliance costs for landlords translate into higher rents, as landlords try to maintain their desired rate of return to pay their own mortgages. We see it in food, wherev-

er more restrictions on farmers, manufacturers and transporters result in higher costs on the supermarket shelves. And we see it in energy costs, with electricity retailers passing on green compliance costs imposed by government.

On another front, accountability for government decisions can be brought by a proper investigation into the COVID response, and it should be a royal commission. After all, Prime Minister Albanese was elected on that promise, but something changed his mind.

The restrictions, the mandates, the spending;

all of it needs thorough examination at all levels of government. It is my view that if this royal commission is undertaken, it would be a step in the right direction to restore transparency and trust.

Meanwhile, the Treasurer is on TV claiming you should be optimistic for 2025 when it's their own policies that are 'putting Australians under the pump'. Australians have tuned out of rhetoric and will look to representatives with real, tangible solutions to the growing list of challenges they face.

Russell Broadbent MP - Independent Member for Monash

IGA Trafalgar gives back to local community

by Peace Ilijera

It was the week before Christmas, and to spread some Christmas cheer and give back, IGA, Trafalgar, hosted a free Christmas barbecue breakfast for the

local community. On the menu was bacon and egg rolls, sausages, orange juice, tea, and coffee. Though the wind proved a challenge, the breakfast

was a success with customers coming to get some breakfast before and after their shop. Manager Meghan Douglas, said it was IGA's way of 'giving back to the

community." Customer Marianne Tyler, said it was "wonderful" that IGA put this on for the community. Customers Norm and Julie Sanson, had

similar remarks saying it was "great", with Norm highlighting the other ways IGA gives back to the community through sponsorships and donations.

"They are good for the community", Norm said. Manager Dom Griffin hopes that this is something IGA can continue in the future.



IGA staff Meghan Douglas, Jay Kelly, Matilda Matthews & Darby Richards



Mrs B enjoying an egg and bacon roll, and orange juice



Norm and Julie Sanson enjoying an egg and bacon roll



Marianne Tyler enjoys egg and bacon roll

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Creative Arts Alliance providing artistic outlets in 2025

By Caron Monson

Most people start each new year with resolutions, such as learning a new skill. Try starting 2025, by being involved in the creative arts. The Baw Baw Arts Alliance - a not-for-profit co-operative of professional artists and those interested in the creative arts - has grown rapidly over the last few years and has many opportunities for you to develop artistic skills through regular groups, workshops and chats, with artists of all skill levels.

The Arts Alliance now operates out of three venues; the Yarragon 'Station Gallery', the Trafalgar 'Artspace' at the former Trafalgar Railway Station, and the latest addition, the VRI Hall in Queen Street, Warragul.

The first activity for 2025, was a morning of creative art activities in the Trafalgar Public Hall, conducted for children and their accompanying families. This January event was part of the annual 'NGV Kids on Tour' programme, supplemented by other activities provided by members of the Arts Alliance. Evidence of the popularity of this free offering was in the increase of attendance, from the starting point some years ago when there were 12 children, to the 2025 programme when almost 60 people attended. Activities available covered a wide range of artistic forms from jewellery making, crafts with wool and felt, and painting.

Keep an eye on the Arts

Alliance website for the many art functions and activities conducted during the year. Two recent additions to the calendar are 'Poetry Bauhaus' at the VRI Hall in Warragul, which is attracting increasing numbers wanting to read their poetry and listen to creative writing. This costs a mere \$5 to attend at 2pm on the first Saturday of each month. Also at the VRI Hall in 2025, is a fibre and fabric group commencing on February 4, from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

Other drop-in groups covering creative writing, textiles, painting, drawing, mosaic, hand building in clay, printing, and so much more, can be found at the ArtSpaces at the former Trafalgar Railway Station.

Meanwhile do not forget the regular exhibitions at the 'Station Gallery' in Yarragon. In February two new artists, Georgia Robinson and Alex Rojas, are exhibiting their vibrantly coloured painted works.

For more information go to <https://www.baw-bawartsalliance.org.au>



Deb Churchill ready to run one of the many children's Art activities at the Trafalgar Public Hall.

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Next round of community grants opens

Round two of Baw Baw Shire Council's Community Grants Program will open in February. The council encourages local groups to prepare their applications for submission. The program will be open from February 3, to February 28.

The Community Grants program supports non-profit groups and organisations in undertaking activities, or making purchases for the benefit of the local community. Grants of up to \$5,000, are available to fund events, projects, programs, environmental initiatives, and equipment purchases.

"Our local community groups are the fabric of our shire, and this is one of many ways in which Council supports them to continue their operations," said Mayor Cr Danny Goss.

In September, 2024, the council distributed more than \$95,768, in Round One of Community Grant fund-

ing through the Community Projects category, supporting 25 non-profit organisations and groups in Baw Baw Shire.

The result for this round of applications will be announced in May.

For community groups that wish to learn more about what kinds of projects align with the criteria for the grant program, applications by appointment are now available. The applications also provide guidance on what supporting documents and information need to be included.

For an Application by Appointment, contact Council's Social and Community Planning team at 1300 229 229 or email grants@bawbawshire.vic.gov.au.

Additional information can be found at www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au.

Update from the Probus Club

By John Atwell

Having recently celebrated 40 years of Probus in Victoria, the Trafalgar Probus Club has recently reached a mile-

stone of over 120 members. They inducted six new members in January and are now one of the largest clubs in the Baw Baw Shire.

To celebrate the anniversary of Probus Victoria, over 100 members gathered at the Downtowner, in Warragul, in November. They enjoyed

food, guest speakers, raffles and a quiz.

The club finished the year with an annual Christmas luncheon, held at Moe Rac-

ing Club. It was a great day and there was even a visit from Santa – who dished out many prizes. This celebration marked the end of a

great year for the club.

The club will hold its Annual General Meeting in March.



Victorian Farmers Federation welcomes new leadership

By Jordan Ross

In late December, 2024, the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF), announced that Brett Hosking had been elected as president, following elections held earlier that month. Peter Star was appointed vice-president.

Hosking is an experienced agricultural advocate who has previously served as vice-president of the organisation. He is a fifth-generation farmer from Quambatook in Northern Victoria.

"Now's an opportunity for fresh leadership," said Hosking.

The CEO of the VFF, Brendan Tatham congratulated the newly elected officials.

"I congratulate both Brett and Peter and look forward to working with them and the wider VFF team to help deliver for farmers and regional Victorians, in the coming years," he said.

The VFF has been the voice of Victorian farmers and rural communities since it was formed in 1979. They promote sustainable and socially responsible agricultural practices, protect the interests of farming communities, and unite farmers across the state.

Earlier in 2024, the VFF sparked controversy by resigning from the National Farmers' Federation. This decision came after a string of issues with finances and membership fees which resulted in the VFF losing its voting rights within the national farming body. Throughout the last few years, the VFF has suffered from internal turmoil and several attempts to oust former president, Emma Germano.

Hosking said that he would revoke their resignation from the NFF but would still need to negotiate membership fees with the nation-

al body.

"We need to hit the ground running," said Hosking as they tackle the issues left by the previous administration.

The Australian Dairy Farmers (ADF) and Grain

Producers Australia (GPA) acknowledged and congratulated the new leadership and are both prepared to work with the federation to support Victorian farmers.



Baw Baw's water network gets a high-tech check

By Jordan Ross

Gippsland Water is working to identify leaks across parts of Baw Baw's water network using acoustic listening technology.

Managing director, Sarah Cumming, said the program would help minimise water losses and keep customer bills down.

"Water is a precious resource and we want to make

sure we're doing all we can to conserve it," Ms Cumming said.

From January, Drouin, Warragul, and surrounding towns, have been included in a large-scale leak detection program. Gippsland Water identified that there are large amounts of water loss in the area, but need to be able to pinpoint the location of the leaks.

The technology finds leaks by detecting a distinct sound. The sound is produced by water escaping a pipe under pressure. The technology is used to survey active leaks or determine potential leaks. Experts agree that high-tech and electronic devices provide better results than manual alternatives.

"This is the first time

Gippsland Water has used this technology on a large scale, and we're excited to see the results it will bring for our team and our customers. If it's successful, we hope to use it in other parts of our service area," said Ms Cumming.

"Our team will fix any leaks we find from the meter back to the mains, and they'll also endeavour to let custom-

ers know if we suspect there may be a water leak on their property," she said.

The program began in January and will continue through the coming months, covering areas including Buln Buln, Nilma, Darnum, Jindivick and Rokeby.

All accessible water mains fittings, like fire plugs, will be surveyed.

A Sydney-based trial

using similar technology helped save almost 10,000 megalitres of water. Initially conducted between 2020 and 2022, there are now over 600 of these devices deployed throughout the Sydney water network.

If you would like more information about this initiative, you can visit the Gippsland Water website.



Baw Baw's water network is the focus of a large-scale leak detection program

Trafalgar Rotary Club welcomes back a past exchange student

By Michael Fozard

On December 28, 2024, the Rotary Club of Trafalgar welcomed back Mr. Jens Arkil from Denmark, who was a Rotary Exchange student in 1998, and is now the board chair of a Danish engineering firm.

Jens was selected by the Rotary Club of Haderslev (Denmark) to come to Australia in 1988, and chose to

spend his twelve months in Trafalgar. When he initially arrived, he was hosted by Chris and Len Makin, and their family. Jens was enrolled at Trafalgar High School and was fortunate to have Chris as the librarian at the school.

After three months he moved to Peter Cooke's house and again he had the benefit of a local teacher

(Peter) as the IT teacher, who was able to assist him in his induction to the school structure. Peter found Jens to be highly skilled in IT.

Jens next move was to Michael and Ruth Fozard's dairy farm at Willow Grove. Jens reflected on this during his visit in that he was easily able to travel out to the bush. With

their family, he settled into a typical Aussie way of life. At the time of his visit the president of the club was Glenn Doolan. Glenn was impressed with Jens' sporting ability, with the Dane being a keen golfer. Glenn played off 34, and Jens was 4. Jens now plays off 5, and Glenn 28.

Jens was a great ambassador for Denmark, and he

left a lasting impression as a likeable and personable young man. All of his host families have had the opportunity to visit Jens and his broader family in Denmark, over the years.

The Rotary exchange program is an excellent way of developing a young person's character, understanding of the world, resilience and a broader out-

look on life. But the benefit is also in our local community, and its role in building understanding in our roles within our communities. The visit of Jens has highlighted some of the past activities that the Trafalgar Rotary Club has undertaken to the greater benefit to the local community.

Traf pair undone

By Liam Durkin

Practice makes perfect. Actually, that is not entirely correct - as the great Ron Barassi said: "only perfect practice makes perfect."

Pakenham's Neville Brown and Heathmont's Nick Dawe showcased as close to bowling perfection as possible to win the Moe Bowling Club Classic Pairs title.

The out-of-towners took an early lead in last month's final, and were rarely challenged against Trafalgar's Ian Miles and Peter Rosenboom.

Despite a 6-2 final score, there was certainly no shame for the local pair considering

they were up against Brown, currently the Number 1 ranked bowler in the state and in the top 10 nationally.

While it took a combined effort with Dawe, Brown demonstrated his class at each end, consistently drawing inch-perfect bowls with precision.

He did it his way too, delivering with a somewhat unorthodox action that saw bowls start extremely wide, only to curl back into play dramatically.

The Jasprit Bumrah of lawn bowls perhaps?

Brown's accuracy was exceptional, although not all

that unsurprising given he reportedly enters every single bowls event there is and practices fastidiously.

Even after winning in Moe, Brown was straight in the car on the way to play pennant for his home club that night.

The Trafalgar pair competed honestly, but were undone by finishing quality that often saw their last bowl run long.

If the winners borrowed from Barassi, the plight of the losers might well have been summed up by Jack Dyer and one his many 'Dyerisms':

"We made too many wrong mistakes."

Tight margins played some part as well, none more so when Rosenboom looked to have drawn perfectly and dissected a cluster around the jack, only for his bowl to brush all comers and end up in the ditch.

Frustration was showing by the third end for the Trafalgar duo, who were trying to keep the Moe Pairs title in their clubrooms for the second year running after club-mate Matt Schreyer saluted last year.

Schreyer again paired with Webconnen's Gary Johnson, but they endured a tough run defending their title, failing to

progress past sectional play.

Miles and Rosenboom trailed 6-2 at the end of the fourth, and with one end to play, knew a virtual miracle was needed.

The scoreboard did not change from there. Miles was forced to go for broke and kill an end to try and keep the contest alive, but his shot missed, signing the win for Brown and Dawe.

The victorious pair were gracious in victory, saying their early led allowed them to control the match.

"If you get a lead you've just got to play it smart, bit like chess, you can't just put them (bowls) there and hope they'll stay there," Brown said.

Brown has a great affinity with Moe, and has now won the club's classic pairs five times.

The winners were also glowing in their praise of the event itself, noting the work of coordinator Sandy Caines.

"Couldn't speak more highly of the job Sandy does, one of the best going around," Dawe

said.

Caines knows the classic pairs better than anyone, having been involved in all 49 instalments.

While next year is sure to be even bigger for the 50-year celebration, the 49th saw a full field of 24 pairs entered.

"Very pleased, everything's gone off well, good field, good weather, been very good," Caines said.

"This is our prestige event in Moe, we get a lot of good teams here, good players, some top bowlers from all over the place."

Formal presentations were made in the clubrooms, with Moe Racing Club officials on hand to congratulate winners and place getters.

The racing club put on complimentary breakfast for players, and have been a major support for the club, with whom it facility neighbours.

Spectators were treated to high class bowls, and easy-listening from Roy Orbison playing over the PA, making for a serene Friday afternoon.

Boomers take the battle to Gippsland

Basketball Australia alongside Visit Victoria, Latrobe City Council, and TEG Sport, announced that Traralgon will host the Boomers for their final window of the FIBA 2025 Asia Cup Qualifiers.

Australia will play two games at the Gippsland Regional Indoor Sports Stadium. The Boomers facing Indonesia, February 20, and Thailand, February 23.

The games will be the first Boomers international fixtures in Traralgon, an area which continues to rise as a basketball hotspot for talent and participation.

"Latrobe City is excited to host the Boomers in Traralgon in 2025. This is a fantastic opportunity to bring international level basketball to the region. We have a huge local number of local basketball fans that I know will be so excited to watch the qualifiers," said Latrobe City Mayor, Dale Harriman,

Basketball Australia representatives, Matt Scriven - CEO, Jason Smith - Executive General Manager of High Performance, and Boomers player Jack White, joined Harriman in Traralgon in December to announce the double-header.

"We are excited for the first ever Boomers games in

Traralgon and we thank the community and the City of Latrobe for embracing this double-header in February," said Matt Scriven.

Traralgon as a host city aligns with the connection of basketball in regional hubs following the sold-out February games in Bendigo, against Korea. Taking an international standard tournament to Gippsland will be a boom for the basketball com-

munity and local industry. Gippsland continues to produce exceptional basketball talent including Olympic bronze medallist Jade Melbourne, Australian Opals representative, Jaz Shelley, Melbourne United's, Jack White, and coach Dean Vickerman.

"My aspirations started as a kid playing junior basketball at St Michael's, so to be a part of the first Boomers

games in Traralgon is a cool moment," said Jack White, Australian Boomers.

"It's been about ten years since I've played in my home town, so hopefully the stars align and I'm on the court for the double-header in February," he said.

Tickets went on sale in December and are still available on Ticketek from \$19.00.

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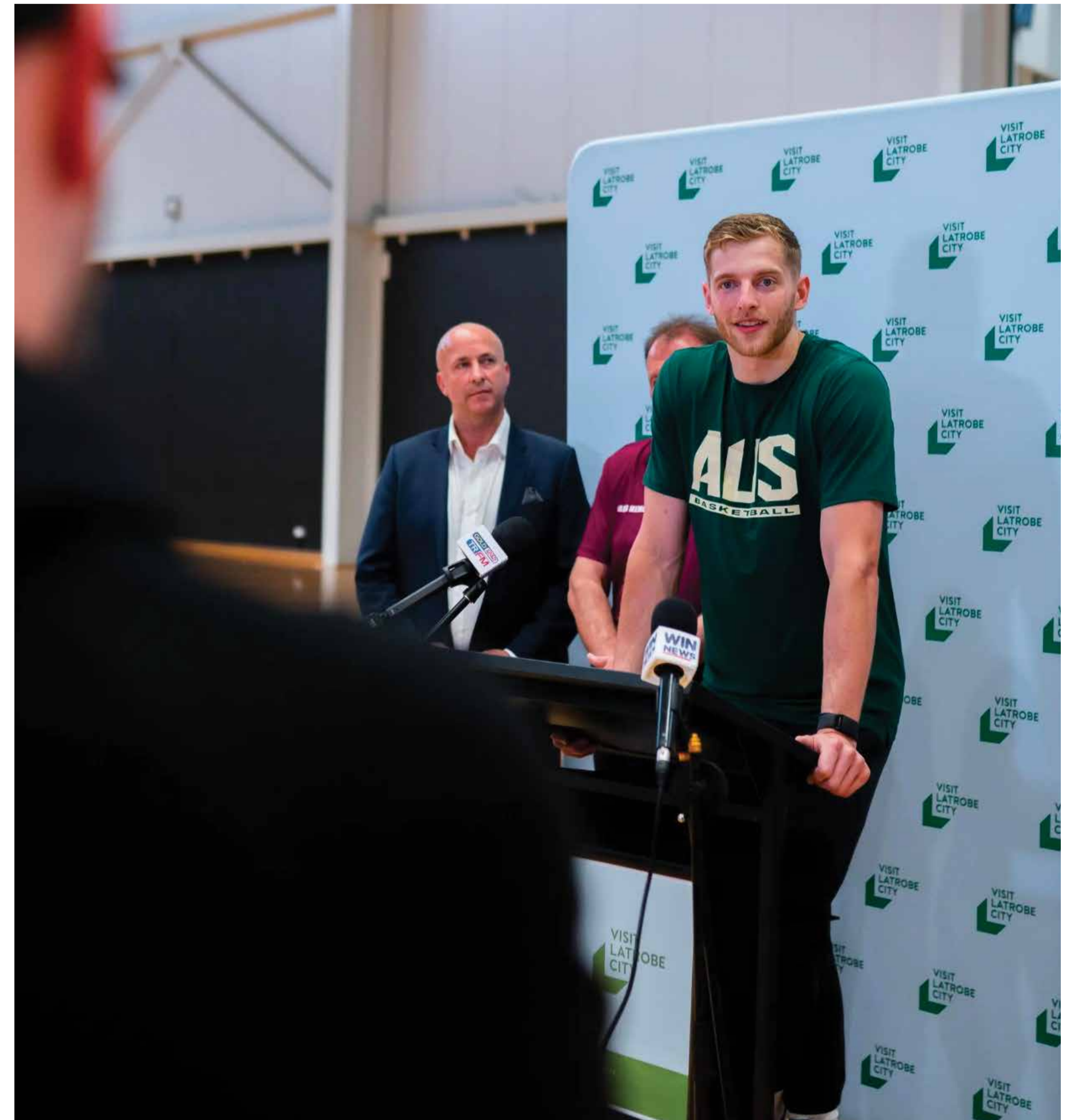
Baw Baw Shire Council Community Grants.

Community groups are encouraged to apply for the latest round of Baw Baw Shire Council's Community Grants, which are now open!

Groups should also make an Application by Appointment with a member of Council's Grants team. These appointments provide groups the opportunity to meet with Council to discuss their project idea to ensure it aligns with the grant guidelines.

Council's Community Grants program supports non-profit groups and organisations to undertake activities or make purchases that are for the benefit of the local community. The Community Projects funding supports the delivery of community events, projects, programs, environmental initiatives and equipment purchases. Grants of up to \$5,000 are available.

For more information, visit www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/grants



Melbourne United's Jack White joined officials for the announcement in Traralgon.

Traf Bowls Club

Dave Cook Traf Bowls Club Champion/David Cook Strzelecki North Champion of Champions

David Cook is the newest Trafalgar Bowls Club A Grade Singles Champion, not only beating some quality opposition along the way but having to face his son in the final!

David and Nathan Cook not only play in the same team at Traf on a Saturday in Pennant, but they play in the same rink, which was always going to make for an interesting final in the singles championship as they went head to head.

The final lived up to all expectations, with quality bowls down to the finish. David found himself in the lead early, but every time he tried to pull away, Nathan found a way to fight back. In the end

David's lead proved unassailable as he won 25-22.

Adding his name to a rare and elite list, David Cook went on to claim the Strzelecki North region Champion of Champions title, an event where each club's A Grade Singles champion plays in a knockout tournament to determine the winner.

After beating three other club champions on his way to the final, David ultimately proved himself the Champion of Champions by beating Matt Ferrari from Traralgon Bowls Club, 25-15 in a dominant display.

David goes on to play the Strzelecki South Champion of Champions where the

winner will progress to play the other region winners of Victoria.

LADIES A GRADE SINGLES CHAMPION CROWNED

Helen Robertson added to her previous A Grade Club Championships this year with another win in the Ladies Singles.

Helen played Heather Taylor, another previous winner of the event on multiple occasions, showing that it was going to be no easy feat for either player to prevail.

Despite her best efforts and some excellent bowling on show, Heather was unable to stay with Helen who pulled away to win 25-19 and

take this years 2024/25 A Grade Singles Club Championship.

TED HIGGS TOURNAMENT RUN AND WON FOR ANOTHER YEAR

The annual Ted Higgs Memorial Triples Tournament was held at the beginning of the year, marking the first of Traf's major tournaments.

With great representation from around the state and beyond again, teams from Yarraville/Footscray, Mildura, and of course the much-loved regulars from Moruya in New South Wales were some of the many who came to enjoy the always en-

joyable and competitive two-day event.

Battling opposition bowlers, and unfortunately the weather, day two proved difficult in a repeat of the previous year. Despite the interruption of rain however, the event was able to be completed and winners announced. A local composite team from Morwell Club and Mirboo North consisting of Alan Campbell, Neil and Tom Whitelaw, having been the only team to win every game, took home the prize money and bragging rights for another year.

WILL MCILWAIN LOOKS TO GO BACK TO BACK

After winning the Victorian State Singles with partner James Scullin last year, Traf's Will McIlwain looks to do it all again.

Partnering up with James again, Will took on other teams of pairs in the region to begin his charge to represent Victoria in the Australian Championships again. They were again too strong for their opposition in the Strzelecki North competition, cruising through their games and locking in a date against the Strzelecki South winners. The winner of that game will go on to take on the other region winners across Victoria.



A Grade Champion singles: David Cook winner of the A Grade Singles Championship with son Nathan - runner up



Ladies A Grade: Marker Sue Robinson with winner Helen Roberston (centre) and runner up Heather Taylor



B Grade Singles: Mandy Miles (left) runner up with Joanna Reekie, winner

Strzelecki Bushwalking Club

By Carolyn Dyke

2025 has definitely arrived, and the holiday season is beginning to fade into our memory. We've had time to think

about our New Year's resolutions and how we are going to spend our spare time this year. If getting fit and meeting

new people are part of your new year's resolutions, then consider contacting the Strzelecki Bushwalking Club. The SBWC is a

highly active and inclusive club with members mostly residing between Drouin and Traralgon, although there are members from

outside this area as well. 2024 was a bumper year for the club with events held at both ends of the state from Portland through to Merimbula, and everywhere in between.

We have a dedicated group of leaders who regularly host events such as day hikes, multi day hikes, base camp hikes, bike rides and regular kayaking events. Our members are of all ages and abilities, but all share a love of the outdoors.

January 2025, already has a host of great activities on offer including a two-night hike in the Licola region, a one night hike to the Alpine region, a walk along

Stringers Creek, and an evening bike ride and meal along the South Gippsland Rail Trail.

Our first club night of the year will take place in McGregor Park, Trafalgar on Wednesday, February 12, beginning at 6pm, for a BBQ dinner. BYO food and drinks. This is a wonderful way to meet up again with club members and start out the new year. Visitors are welcome.

If these activities are appealing, do not hesitate to contact the club for more information on the website at sbwc.org.au, on our Facebook page or by emailing publicity@sbwc.org.au.



Members of the Strzelecki Bushwalking Club at Wilson's Prom

Work underway for upgraded infrastructure in Yarragon

By Jordan Ross

As a part of their 2024/25 Long Term Infrastructure Plan, two infrastructure projects commissioned by the Baw Baw Shire Council began in January.

The first is the Downton Park Sport Pavilion and the second is a major bridge works.

Downton Park's existing sports pavilion will be replaced by a new fit-for-purpose facility. The current pavilion is no longer suitable for the needs of local sporting groups.

East Ward Councillor, Brendan Kingwill said this

was a great outcome for the local community, particularly the Yarragon Football Club, Yarragon Junior Football Club, Yarragon Netball Club and the Yarragon Cricket Club, all of which are regular users of this facility.

"Delivering outcomes like this for our residents and sporting clubs is a great part of what we do, and I am very proud to see this multimillion-dollar project come to fruition in 2025," he said.

The project is valued at over \$3.9 million and is expected to be completed by March 2026, having started last month. Warragul-based

company, Kubale Constructions Pty Ltd, will undertake this work, having recently completed a \$15 million expansion to the Warragul Leisure Centre.

The pavilion was built in 1988 and local users have been lobbying for improvements to the sports precinct for years. The building has suffered from water damage, does not meet accessibility requirements and is generally outdated.

The existing pavilion and coaches' box will be demolished and reconstructed. Works to the pavilion will include new car parking, stairs

and an access ramp (in-line with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992). Electrical works will also be done, improving wiring and providing power to more of the facility.

These plans were informed by community consultation with user groups of the pavilion.

It was important for the council to ensure that there will be minimal disruption to the users for the next 15 months.

"It will have long lasting impacts for the broader Yarragon community and it's time this pavilion got the upgrade it so desperately needs,"

said Cr Kingwill.

Works are also due to have begun on a bridge along Factory Road in Yarragon. Council awarded the construction contract to Road & Bridge Pty Ltd. They are expected to be completed by July 2025.

The existing timber decking and steel girder bridges across the Moe River and Contour Drain north of Yarragon at Factory Road will be replaced as part of this project.

Council has ensured measures are in place to guarantee that the current structure will still safely accommodate the traffic up until the new

bridges are completed.

East Ward Councillor, Kate Wilson said this project will mean a lot for people who have to use this bridge regularly, as the current structure is overdue for replacement.

"The new modern replacements will be suitable for decades to come and mean our road users in the area can be more reassured that they will get to their destination safely," she said.

"We also look forward to delivering further future opportunities in other areas of the community too," said Cr Kingwill.



The existing pavilion at Downton Park which was built in 1988



The timber bridge along Factory Road

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