

# Sentinel-Times

COVERING SOUTH GIPPSLAND AND BASS COAST

Tuesday, January 6, 2026 | \$2.00



## Just cruisin' into 2026 on Phillip Island

The crowds and the boutique cruise ship, the Seven Seas Explorer, sailed into Phillip Island on a warm sunny New Year's Day holiday on Thursday, January 1.

# Cemetery shame

By Rick Koenig

LIFETIME Wonthaggi residents have slammed the "disgusting" condition of the local cemetery after finding it overgrown with grass and too dangerous to walk.

Gaile Fincher told the Sentinel-Times she visited the cemetery with her husband Mike on Christmas Eve to pay respects to her parents.

Ms Fincher said they usually visited at that time of year but when they arrived it was in a shocking state.

"It wasn't even mowed, it was disgusting," she said.

"I lost my parents 20-odd years ago and my husband lost his even longer ago and we always found the cemetery was beautiful.

"Whoever's doing it now, you don't treat our cemetery like that.

"You need to have respect and there is no respect there."

Ms Fincher's husband Mike said he was currently recovering from an injury and the long grass was a safety concern particularly for elderly visitors.

"The grass was probably six or seven inches long and you couldn't tell where the dips were," he said.

"I've had a back operation and my legs don't work properly currently so I just went and sat in the car because I was frightened of tumbling over.

"I didn't feel safe, a lot of older people go up there and I just didn't feel right walking around."

Mr Fincher said the whole cemetery needed top dressing because the soil had settled unevenly around graves making it treacherous to walk.

Former Wonthaggi resident Lesley Legg who now lives in Cairns visited the cem-

etary on Christmas Day and was equally disappointed.

Ms Legg said she grew up in Wonthaggi and spent 60 years there with her parents, grandparents and other relatives all buried at the cemetery.

"For Christmas Day it was a disgrace to look like that," she said.

"It hadn't been edged or whipper snipped to look nice, it was appalling.

"A lot of people were going to be visiting and it was just horrible.

"I think there's a lack of respect.

"There was more of a personal touch when council was doing it."

Their concerns echoed a post on Facebook which described the cemetery as "heartbreaking" with lawns "clearly" not mowed and the public toilet "in a disgusting state".

A visit by the Sentinel-Times found sections of the cemetery had long grass and

weeds, while the toilet block door had been removed from its hinges with sharp nails exposed.

Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust took over management of Wonthaggi Cemetery from Bass Coast Shire Council on February 1 last year.

Continued page 5

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When a visitor backed over a small power transformer on the nature strip in Royal Parade Inverloch on Friday, January 3, no one knew it would cut power to 209 Ausnet customers in the vicinity for more than 18 hours.

## Power out for 18 hours after simple driver error

A SIMPLE enough mistake by the visitor to a relative's home in Inverloch, at about 5.45pm on Friday, January 3, when the driver backed over a small power transformer on the nature strip, cut power to 209 Ausnet customers until 12.20pm the next day.

A spokesperson for Ausnet told the Sentinel-Times that a specialised crew was needed to attend to the repair work, which together with the complex nature of the job, was the reason for the delay.

"We initially gave the restoration time as 4pm on Saturday but we've finished ahead of schedule and power is being restored as we speak," said the Ausnet spokesperson on Saturday.

"The transformer is very important to the distribution of power to the area and (the damage caused) is the reason for the outage.

"We apologise to customers for the inconvenience and thank them for their patience while repairs were being affected," she said.

Witnesses to the incident in Royal Parade Inverloch said a driver, not familiar with the area, accidentally backed over the transformer, and further damaged it by driving forward again.

"There was a burst of flames, rising into the air higher than the car then it started popping and crackling and shower of sparks came out, two or three metres into the air."

"There was no explosion," said another resident, further along Royal Parade.

"But you could hear the popping and crackling from back here," they said, looking at the response by the fire brigade from more than 100 metres away.

"It was a bit of a shock," said another.

Fire brigade personnel initially held off on dousing the flames while they assessed whether live wires were involved but donned full breathing apparatus in response to the acrid smoke and used a dry chemical extinguisher to quell the flames.

They remained on the scene for some time while police cordoned off the area, to all but local traffic, as a safety precaution.

No one was injured in the mishap although there was chatter on social media about the placement of the power transformer so close to the driveway, the general inconvenience and the spoiling of food in the fridge.

# State Government offered enviro win at Venus Bay

MUCH of the focus of the Cape to Cape Resilience Plan process has been about the impact of erosion on Inverloch's surf beach and the threat posed to the town's surf lifesaving clubhouse initially and to nearby roads, infrastructure, houses and the economy over time.

However, the final Cape to Cape report, released on December 23, 2025, together with another government-funded report, 'The Venus Bay Saltmarsh Rehabilitation Feasibility Study', released by the South Gippsland Shire Council in November, has equally important implications for Venus Bay and landowners along the lower reaches of the Tarwin River.

And, as highlighted by South Gippsland Shire Councillor Sarah Gilligan at the council's November meeting, there's "huge potential" in the adaption plans outlined for Venus Bay and low-lying areas along the Tarwin River that have much wider implications for the environment than simply dealing with beach erosion and storm surge problems at Inverloch.

"It should be noted that adaptation of this land (study area of 324 hectares between the First and Second estates) is actually part of the State Government's planning already," Cr Gilligan told council recently.

"It's in the Cape to Cape resilience plan, and what this report (Saltmarsh Rehabilitation) has found is that by restoring, over a long period, in a gradual process of about 30 to 35 years, the saltmarsh on what is becoming less and less viable farmland, that this will not only provide all of the environmental benefits of biodiversity it will pay for the whole project," she said.

Cr Gilligan said saltmarsh was the most biodiverse ecosystem on the planet and in terms of a carbon sink, that is, offering a natural carbon sequestration process, the restoration of saltmarsh at Venus Bay had the potential to generate significant funding in terms of Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCUs) that would actually pay for the restoration and management of a restored Venus Bay wetlands.

Not only would the saltmarsh be able to co-exist with the adjoining farmland, she said, it would be able to buffer the area from the impact of temporary and permanent inundation, offer protection to the only access road in and out, and boost eco-tourism.

"As far as the State Government is concerned, this is work that was done as part of the Cape to Cape resilience plan that has also been a very long-held community ambition, to restore that land to saltmarsh, to engage in tourism that is not just about our boom and bust summer on the third-most dangerous beach in Victoria.

"But that it's actually welcoming the fact that where we live is a wild place.

It's a wild and beautiful place, and I think that we need to acknowledge that



South Gippsland Shire Councillor Sarah Gilligan says a long-held community ambition to reclaim farmland at Venus Bay as wetlands has now been supported as a "no brainer" by two government-funded reports.



Returning an area of farmland, between the Number One Estate and Number Two Estate at Venus Bay, to saltmarsh as a registered Blue Carbon project, is one of the preferred options coming out of the Cape to Cape Resilience Plan and The Venus Bay Saltmarsh Rehabilitation Feasibility Study.

and make as much out of that as we can."

Cr Gilligan said everyone acknowledged the saltmarsh restoration project at Venus Bay as a "no brainer" as far back as 1977 and now two government-funded reports had scientifically modelled the outcomes.

As well as endorsing the Venus Bay Saltmarsh Rehabilitation Feasibility Study, the South Gippsland Council voted to send a letter to Minister for Environment and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Steve Dimopoulos, sharing the outcomes of the study.

Meanwhile, the Cape to Cape Resilience Plan has found that Venus Bay, the Tarwin Lower township and land along the lower reaches of the Tarwin River,

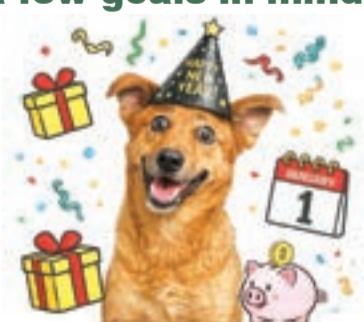
towards Anderson Inlet, will be increasingly impacted by tides, storm surge, erosion and permanent inundation.

"Liveability of Venus Bay and Tarwin Lower communities is likely to diminish due to hazard impacts while conservation, farming areas and important environmental values will also be impacted, including mangroves, saltmarsh and other coastal and estuarine vegetation.

"Agricultural land and its productivity will likely be impacted."

However, adaption pathways identified in the reports for Venus Bay and low-lying land along the lower reaches of the Tarwin River, into Anderson Inlet, offer a win-win for the government and the local community.

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## 6 Day Weather Forecast

SOUTH GIPPSLAND



**TUE | Jan 6**

Sunny.  
Wind AM: Light  
Wind PM: Light

**11° 25°**



**WED | Jan 7**

Sunny.  
Wind AM: Light  
Wind PM: NW 15-25km/h

**14° 36°**



**THUR | Jan 8**

Partly Cloudy.  
Wind AM: Light  
Wind PM: SW 15-20km/h

**18 28°**



**FRI | Jan 9**

Shower or Two.  
Wind AM: Light  
Wind PM: SE-SW 15-20km/h

**15° 33°**



**SAT | Jan 10**

Shower or Two.  
Wind AM: SW 25-40km/h  
Wind PM: SW 25-40km/h

**14° 21°**



**SUN | Jan 11**

Partly Cloudy.  
Wind AM: SW 15-25km/h  
Wind PM: S 15-20km/h

**12 20°**

## IN BRIEF

### Watch for fake \$50

SOCIAL media carried a warning last weekend that fake \$50 and \$100 notes were in circulation with some reportedly being passed to a number of San Remo businesses.

The advice is that if you think you have a fake note, take it to your local police station.

Handle the note as little as possible and place it in a plastic bag.

Note down the date, time and description of the person you believe was involved and obtain a copy of any CCTV you may have of the suspect.

### Talks underway to save MotoGP

THE campaign to save the Phillip Island MotoGP, headed up by Bass Coast Mayor Rochelle Halstead and the local face of the GP, Rosa Scarlato from Pino's Trattoria, has gained plenty of traction.

Thousands of people have signed the petition, hundreds have penned emails to the Premier Jacinta Allan and on Friday last week, the Herald Sun reported that the Australian Grand Prix Corporation boss Travis Auld had confirmed that possible contract negotiations were underway.

"We're in conversations with Dorna, who run the MotoGP globally about extending that contract and we'll continue to pursue that," Mr Auld told the Herald Sun.

The 19th round of the 2026 World MotoGP Championship will be held at Phillip Island from October 23-25 this year.

The World Super Bikes season opener will be held at the Phillip Island circuit from February 20-22.

To sign the 'Save Our Moto GP' petition go to: <https://engage.basscoast.vic.gov.au/SaveOurMOTOGP>

### The problem with Wonthaggi's new trees

THERE'S something wrong with the kerb and channeling around the controversial new Crepe Myrtle trees added to the Wonthaggi CBD as part of the 'Greening of Graham

Street' project.

But exactly what's wrong has not been revealed by the Bass Coast Shire Council.

In answer to a query from the Sentinel-Times, a shire spokesperson responded as follows:

"We are aware there are some issues identified at Practical Completion," said the shire.

"Council is working with the contractor to resolve.

"We will provide an update once there is a firm plan."

According to a report received by this newspaper, there's a fatal flaw with the way the kerbing has been added around the trees which might require some or all to be dug out and work started again.

Elsewhere, the planter boxes have been well received by traders and the response to the new trees is at least neutral, between traders and shoppers, despite the loss of lucrative parking spaces.

### CFA salutes bosses who let volunteers serve

EMPLOYERS who let CFA volunteers down tools to attend emergencies have been saluted for their vital role in keeping communities safe.

While CFA members play an incredibly important role in the community, they would not be able to attend fire calls and incidents without the support of their employers, who provide them time off during working hours to attend emergencies.

Combining a day job with being a volunteer takes great adaptability from both the volunteer and their employer.

CFA volunteers come from a diverse range of professions, jobs and industries but share the same ethos of helping others, and the CFA thanks them for the role they play.

### Backup power for San Remo SES

SAN Remo SES members were happy to receive an Energy Resilience Grant from AusNet Electricity Services, which enabled members to buy and install a diesel backup generator and changeover system.

In the event of a power outage, the new generator automatically starts and the unit continues to function as usual. This system enables members to charge equipment batteries, radios and phones, prepare hot meals, keep food chilled, have hot water and run heating/cooling. This means San Remo SES can respond to calls for assistance for the Bass Coast community during storm events.

### Phillip Island brigade urges residents to prepare for fire season

PHILLIP Island Fire Brigade hosted a fire safety chat morning in Silverleaves on Sunday, December 28, to talk all things fire safety and preparing for the fire season.

A great opportunity for brigade members to talk with visitors and locals about their risks and their fire plans.

The brigade had the CFA Mobile Education Unit at the general store, and it was very well received by all those who stopped by.

The Mobile Education Unit was in attendance with the Phillip Island Brigade from 8am until noon, discussing summer preparation, including the VicEmergency app, which is available for download to stay updated on watch zones and receive alerts during emergencies.

The brigade informed residents that bushfires can affect urban areas, especially if the property backs onto bushland, so it's still essential to be prepared in the summer season.

It's also essential to clear the property of long grass and flammable material, clean the gutters, have a bushfire readiness plan, and check danger ratings.

### Fires train to protect remote areas

A GROUP of CFA firefighters are ready to fight fires in remote areas across the state following seven weeks of intensive training to become arduous firefighters.

The pilot program is a first

for CFA where 15 arduous firefighters will have the capability to attack and suppress fires in difficult terrain that aren't accessible via a fire truck or aircraft.

The crew is made up of volunteer firefighters who respond to different types of scenarios, including lightning strikes, bushfires and preventative works such as back-burning operations.

They can be deployed to a remote area for up to 24 hours, can carry up to 20kg in their packs and are trained to walk within 45 minutes from a vehicle.

They also carry a range of mechanical tools such as chainsaws, leaf blowers, hose lay packs and small pumps, to help them create fire breaks or directly suppress fires by pumping water directly from a nearby creek or dam.

CFA Chief Officer Jason Hefernan said around 60 per cent of Victoria has privately owned land and a large portion of that is bushland.

CFA will evaluate the use and effectiveness of the arduous crew at the end of this fire season with the hope to extend the program further in 2026.

### Inverloch café suffers smoke damage in early morning fire

INVERLOCH firefighters responded to a café fire on Sunday morning after a passer-by reported smoke at 4.40am.

Crews from Inverloch, Wonthaggi and Pound Creek were on scene within five minutes, with about 20 firefighters attending.

Inverloch Fourth Lieutenant David Chugg said the fire was contained to the rear of the property but caused significant smoke damage throughout the café.

"It was a great effort by the brigade who forced entry to the rear of the property and contained it," Mr Chugg said.

The cause was determined to be an electrical fault with a freezer thermostat that short-circuited.

No one was injured and the fire is not being treated as suspicious.

## POLICE BRIEFS

### Cranbourne East driver fined at Wilsons Prom

A 28-year-old Cranbourne East man was caught allegedly doing 105km/h in an 80km/h zone at Wilsons Promontory on New Year's Day with his young child in the back seat.

Foster police said the driver claimed he was running out of fuel and needed to make it to the petrol station before it closed.

He received a \$407 fine and three demerit points.

Police urged drivers to slow

down and enjoy the world-famous national park.

### Lyndhurst man caught speeding at the Prom

A 39-year-old Lyndhurst man was fined after allegedly travelling at 121km/h in a 100km/h zone at Wilsons Promontory on New Year's Day.

Foster police said the driver had his family in the car and told officers he had no sat nav and needed to catch up to someone.

He received a \$407 fine and

three demerit points.

### Cowes speeder watches fireworks as car towed

A 24-year-old Clyde North man watched New Year's Eve fireworks from the roadside as his car was loaded onto a tow truck after allegedly travelling at 127km/h through busy Cowes streets.

Bass Coast Highway Patrol intercepted the red Mazda sedan on Church Street just before midnight after allegedly detecting it speeding on Chapel Street and

Thompson Avenue.

The streets were packed with pedestrians enjoying celebrations on the busiest night of the year in Cowes.

The driver had two female passengers and could offer no reason for his manner of driving.

His vehicle was impounded for 30 days at a cost of \$1275.

He will be summonsed to Korumburra Magistrates' Court on charges of dangerous driving and exceeding the speed limit.

# Wind farm deal branded 'bailout' by critics

THE state government's \$650 million acquisition of the Delburn Wind Farm has been branded a taxpayer-funded "bailout" by opponents who question why public money is rescuing a project abandoned by private investors.

The SEC announced it would acquire a 100 per cent stake in the 33-turbine project from developer OSMI Australia and investor Cubico, with construction to begin in early 2026.

Located in the Strzelecki Ranges about 15km northeast of Mirboo North, the wind farm will generate up to 205 megawatts when operational in 2028 - enough to power more than 130,000 homes.

State Labor MP Jordan Crugnale said the project would deliver publicly owned energy generation for the first time in 30 years.

"The Delburn Wind Farm will bring significant local economic benefits, including more than 300 local jobs and more than \$22 million in neighbour and community benefits," Ms Crugnale said.

South Gippsland Shire Mayor Cr Nathan Hersey welcomed the investment.

"This is welcome news for the Latrobe Valley, South Gippsland and surrounding regions that will support local businesses, workers and the broader economy," Cr Hersey said.

Council hopes the project will deliver employment opportunities for the South Gippsland community, stimulate the local economy and provide lasting community benefits through dedicated benefit programs.

"It's expected the SEC's investment of up to \$700 million will bring significant local economic benefits, including more than 300 local jobs."

Cr Hersey said council had written to the SEC chief executive to arrange discussions about local procurement but had not yet met due to the Christmas and New Year period.

Latrobe City Mayor Cr Sharon Gibson called it the biggest state government investment in the region since Loy Yang was built.

"We have powered the state for a hundred years and we're ready to power it for



The Delburn Wind Farm will feature 33 turbines in the Strzelecki Ranges when completed.

a hundred more," Cr Gibson said.

However, the Strzelecki Community Alliance condemned the deal, describing it as "a dead horse being resuscitated with public money".

The community group, representing more than 1000 members across 483 households in affected areas including Boolarra, Yinnar, Mirboo North and Thorpdale, said the decision was impossible to reconcile with the government's failure to fund the \$600 million West Gippsland Hospital upgrade.

"The public have been told there's no money for hospitals, but somehow there's \$700 million for a wind farm that investors walked away from," a spokesperson said.

Asked about ongoing opposition, Cr Hersey said council recognised concerns but its focus remained on economic benefits.

"The project has previously been approved," Cr Hersey said.

"Council is not the approval authority or the developer of the project."

The alliance has campaigned against the project since 2019, citing bushfire risk as a major concern.

The entire project footprint lies within a designated bushfire-prone area, with around 1600 homes within five kilometres of the proposed turbines.

A 2022 government planning panel explicitly acknowledged "the potential for a major bushfire to occur in the plantation during the life of the project".

Shadow Minister for Energy David Davis said the acquisition demanded scrutiny.

"If the project is viable, why was it not taken up by the private sector? Why is it now considered a good investment for Victorian taxpayers?" Mr Davis said.

Mr Davis noted the Opposition had moved a documents motion in the Legislative Council requiring production of SEC board minutes and investment committee records, with documents due by December 11 yet to be provided.

SEC chief executive Chris Miller defended the investment, saying the region's existing transmission network and skilled workforce made it an ideal location.

The SEC has opened a hub in Morwell for community engagement, open Monday, Tuesday and Friday from 10am to 3pm.



A huge crowd attended the New Year's Eve fireworks display on the foreshore at Cowes with a half-hour traffic jam the only issue for organisers

## Just cruisin' into 2026 on Phillip Island

HE 2025-26 cruise ship season continued on Phillip Island over the holiday break with the boutique luxury ship, the Seven Seas Explorer arriving in Western Port Bay at 7am on Thursday, January 1, 2026.

But there wasn't even time for any of the 746 passengers (capacity) to attend the world-famous Phillip Island Penguin Parade which is usually the aim of dropping anchor locally.

The ship, which set up off Rhyll, providing a spectacular backdrop for a busy Cowes front beach, sailed out again at 7pm on Thursday night.

The Seven Seas Explorer is stunning inside and out, with art by Pablo Picasso on the walls and a vivid cobalt-blue glass installation on the ceiling of the elegant restaurant Compass Rose.

It has capacity for 746 guests and a crew of 548 with 373 suites, 10 decks and dimensions of 224 metres length, 31m width and a tonnage of 55,254.

As an example of the entry cost for passengers you can book on the Northern Pacific Journey, from Tokyo to Vancouver departing on May 3, 2026, for 17 nights at an outlay of \$19,457 each.

In a reduced sailing season this year, there won't be another cruise ship in Western Port until Saturday, April 4 when the 2640-passenger Carnival Adventure ship arrives for a nine-hour stay.

The other highlight of a busy Christmas-New Year holiday period on Phillip Island was the New Year's Eve fireworks display as crowds continued to stream in last weekend and beyond.



Weeds grow through older graves at Wonthaggi Cemetery rk06\_0126



Long grass in the lawn section at Wonthaggi Cemetery rk05\_0126

In April last year community members voiced concerns after SMCT installed signage prohibiting numerous items at gravesites including artificial flowers and solar stakes.

An SMCT spokesperson said recent weather had contributed to rapid grass growth across all its cemeteries and memorial parks.

"Our maintenance teams are diligently

working across all sites to respond to this seasonal challenge," the spokesperson said.

"When maintenance challenges are brought to our attention, we act to address them quickly."

"Maintenance works including mowing and repairing the toilet facilities is underway with removing safety hazards being our highest priority."

## Cemetery shame

### From page 1

The Melbourne-based trust, which also operates Springvale Botanical Cemetery, received more than \$4 million from council to go towards a maintenance fund as part of the handover.

At the time council said it was "not an expert in managing cemeteries" and could only provide a "minimum service offering".

The transfer sparked community opposition with local cemetery historian the late Noelene Lyons telling the Sentinel-Times in 2023: "All you need is a couple of local people with careful attention to detail, an interest in the preservation of history and respect for the community to oversee the work and a local committee."

"You don't need Melbourne management for a cemetery the size of Wonthaggi with fewer than 50 burials a year."

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## Loch Village market

at the Loch Railway siding

This Sunday,  
January 11  
8am-1pm

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Something for everyone.

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 Lions Club of Strzelecki

# Mayor's Message



Cr Rochelle Halstead

SUMMER in Bass Coast is a special time. Our beaches and towns come alive with families, locals and visitors enjoying everything our region has to offer.

I want to start by reminding everyone that beach safety is essential at this time of year.

Please swim between the flags, check conditions before heading out - download the BeachSafe app, supervise children closely and look out for one another.

A safe summer is a happy summer.

Summer is also a time to stay alert to risks such as heatwaves, storms and bushfires.

Council works closely with emergency services and partner agencies such as Victoria Police to help keep our community safe and informed.

We recently launched a new emergency management dashboard on Council's website, making it easier to access up-to-date local information, warnings and road closures during an emergency.

Bookmark it on your phone, and follow our Facebook page for information and updates.

We are also right in the heart of a vibrant events season, with something on offer for all ages and interests.

These events not only bring people together but support local businesses, community groups and volunteers who help make Bass Coast such a welcoming place.

This month and into February, we look forward to the Bass Coast Summer Agricultural Show in Wonthaggi and the Ocean Sounds Music Festival at Churchill Island.

Sporting events are also a big feature of our summer calendar, including the Blitz Golf on Phillip Island, the Cape Paterson Aquathon, the Little Penguin Dash and the Cowes Classic.

Runners will lace up for the Kilcunda Running Festival, while the San Remo Channel Challenge returns as a much-loved community favourite.

International visitors will once again join us for the Superbike World Championship and the Phillip Island Pro Qualifying Series, showcasing our region on the world stage.

Council is proud to sponsor and support many of these events because they reflect the spirit of Bass Coast: active, inclusive and community-focused.

To our visitors, welcome.

We are so pleased to have you here, and we hope you enjoy not only our events but also our beaches, walking trails, cafes and local businesses.

Please take your time, respect our natural environment and help keep Bass Coast beautiful.

I wish everyone a safe and enjoyable summer, and I look forward to seeing many of you out and about at events across Bass Coast in the weeks ahead.



Celebrating the TEC2 award were, from left, Katie Chandler, Dr Megan Scott, Kate Lindsay, Cat Bunn, Lisa Oakley, Christine Henderson and Kylie Martin

## Wonthaggi Hospital slashes emergency wait times

BASS Coast Health has been recognised for improving patient flow through the Emergency Department and inpatient wards at Wonthaggi Hospital.

BCH received the Award for Achieving Sustained and Significant Improvement as part of the Timely Emergency Care 2 (TEC2) - Optimising Flow Pathway project.

The award acknowledged BCH's achievement in delivering a sustained 12 per cent reduction in Emergency Department admitted length of stay, a key measure of timely and effective emergency care.

This means patients identified as needing admission are now being accepted and transferred to an inpatient bed faster than before.

The TEC2 project is a state-wide initiative to improve patient flow across health services, from arrival in the ED through to admission, treatment and discharge.

By reducing delays and improving co-ordination, the project aims to enhance patient experience, support staff and ensure patients receive the right care at the right time.

BCH's success reflects organisation-wide work, including action-focused hurdles to drive progression of care, a focus

on earlier discharges before midday, improvements to cross-organisational communication and enhancements to flow processes and visual management tools.

These key metrics and processes are reviewed daily in freshly streamlined Daily Operating System meetings.

The Department of Health acknowledged the team's persistence, problem-solving approach and consistent effort and collaboration.

The achievement also recognises the leadership and dedication of Kate Lindsay, Lisa Oakley and Fiona Mills.

"If we can get a patient home from the ward just 15 minutes earlier, it means we can get a patient up from the Emergency Department sooner," Ms Lindsay said.

"This creates a free cubicle in the ED for ambulances to offload their patients more quickly and get back out into the community where they are needed.

"We know from the data that patients who stay in Emergency Departments longer than necessary experience poorer health outcomes.

"It is everyone's responsibility to ensure our processes support patients receiving the right care, in the right place,

at the right time.

"Our staff have worked really hard to deliver this."

Improvement advisor Ms Oakley said the team acknowledged and celebrated the contributions of both clinical teams and support services who work tirelessly every day to ensure seamless patient flow at every stage of the patient journey.

Executive director for clinical services Ms Henderson highlighted the staff's collective effort.

"From Emergency and inpatient wards to our support services, staff have worked together to redesign processes that improve the patient journey," she said.

"The TEC2 project has strengthened how we work as an organisation.

"It has improved not only our performance measures, but also our culture of collaboration and shared accountability for patient flow and safety."

The TEC2 project will continue until the end of March 2026, with activities to embed sustainable processes into everyday practice.

The project team is hopeful Wonthaggi Hospital may be considered for participation in TEC3.

## Have your say on four new play spaces in Bass Coast

FOUR Bass Coast play spaces are set for renewal and the community is invited to have its say on the designs.

The sites include Rodney Court Reserve and Strong Reserve in Wonthaggi, Park Parade Reserve in Cape Paterson and Jaycee Picnic Reserve in Ventnor.

Each upgrade will include a mix of existing and new play equipment, giving every space a fresh new look while retaining well-loved equipment that's still in great working condition.

Bass Coast Shire Council will also host pop-up sessions at each reserve on Monday, January 13 to hear directly

from families and regular users of the play spaces.

Pop-up sessions: Rodney Court Reserve, Wonthaggi, 10am-11am; Park Parade Reserve, Cape Paterson, 11.30am-12.30pm; Strong Reserve, Wonthaggi, 1pm-2pm; Jaycee Picnic Reserve, Ventnor, 3pm-4pm.



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**THE NATIONALS** for Regional Victoria



# Be fire conscious and consider lending a hand

By Andrew Paloczi

LOCAL firefighters were on hand on Sunday at Jupiter Park in Venus Bay to answer questions about how to best prepare for fire and to encourage new members in what is the Year of the Volunteer.

Sunday's event proved successful, with at least 50 people attending and an informative Q&A session with Tarwin Lower Fire Brigade Captain Mick Moore followed by audience questions.

As well as discussion of topics such as fuel loads, fire danger ratings and fire plans, interest was expressed in joining the brigade.

Recent Tarwin Lower Fire Brigade recruit Lincoln Downes attended such a session last summer, having just moved to the area a few weeks before.

"The fear of God" encouraged him to join after learning the high fire danger the area represents.

"It's a good way to get involved with your community and make friends," Mr Downes said, adding that brigade members are a great group of people.

Having completed his general firefighter training and learning about hazardous trees and burnover procedures, he looks forward to acquiring further skills such as the use of breathing



**Tarwin Lower Fire Brigade Lieutenant Michael Plant, Captain Mick Moore, and firefighter Steve Walker with Zachary McIntyre at Friday's Marketta Festival in Venus Bay. A28\_0126**

apparatus and a licence to drive fire trucks.

Mr Downes stressed there is no pressure on recruits.

"Nobody expects you to do anything you're not comfortable with," he said, a sentiment backed by Captain Moore.

Along with other members of the brigade and its fire trucks, he was at Friday's Marketta Festival in Venus Bay, where Captain Moore and the crew chatted to attendees about the importance of installing the Vic Emergency app on their phones and having a fire plan.

After 18 years in the brigade, the last 12 or 13 as captain, he continues to enjoy serving the community.

While delighted the brigade has added some young

members in recent times, more firefighters are needed.

As well as helping your community, it's a great opportunity to boost your skills and your resume.

Those interested in joining or wanting to learn more are encouraged to attend Tarwin Lower Fire Station at 10am on a Sunday or call Captain Moore on 0437 525 935.

Members will be happy to chat about operational and non-operational roles the brigade has available.

People are encouraged to visit cfa.vic.gov.au and go to the Volunteers and Careers section, where you can fill out an expression of interest form that will prompt your local fire brigade to contact you.

## Cats grounded under new council rules

AT the December Council Meeting, South Gippsland Shire Council formally adopted the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029. The plan aims to protect the environment and enhance the health and safety of the community while promoting responsible pet ownership.

The Domestic Animal Management Plan sets key actions to support a strategic approach that seeks to balance the needs of both pet owners and non-pet owners in the community. The plan features a strong emphasis on communication and education and builds on the actions of Council's previous Domestic Animal Management Plan.

Cr Sarah Gilligan moved a motion to change the planned cat curfew, stating that she would like to suggest that Council amend the introduction of a sunset-to-sunrise curfew to a 24/7 cat containment.

"I hear a lot about cats, and I'm sure we all see cats roaming around," she said.

"They are apex predators, they do so much damage, and I believe that it's every cat owner's responsibility to make sure their cats are contained to their property 24 hours a day. The time of having cats wandering around is over."

No councillors opposed the change.

South Gippsland Shire Mayor Nathan Hersey said the Domestic Animal Management Plan 2026-2029 reflects Council's ongoing commitment to helping to promote harmony around pets whilst also adapting Council's animal management practices in line with an increasing pet population.

Cr Clare Williams spoke to the Domestic Animal Management Plan on dogs, stating education around your pets is vital.

"You need to know your surroundings. This plan will say that all animals will be on leashes at all times; however, there will still be dedicated areas where you can have your dog off leash, but we are not obligated to have designated dog parks, which is an asset liability for the

council," Cr Williams said.

Cr Williams also stated that the Domestic Animal Management Plan includes a reduced rate for dogs under 12 months that aren't yet desexed.

"I've been advocating for this one since 2021, so I'm impressed to see it included. It just means rates will increase once your animal is desexed," she said.

The plan sets out priorities across seven mandatory areas as determined by Agriculture Victoria, focusing on the welfare and management of cats and dogs. These areas include officer training, responsible pet ownership, nuisance issues, identification and registration, dog attacks, dangerous, menacing and restricted breeds, and domestic animal businesses.

Key actions outlined in the plan include introducing a dog on leash order across South Gippsland Shire while identifying suitable areas to be designated as off leash, introducing a 24/7 containment order across the Shire requiring cats to remain on the owner's property, and implementing educational campaigns to promote responsible pet ownership including the benefits of microchipping and registration. The plan includes fee incentives such as free initial registration for animals adopted from recognised rescue or rehoming organisations.

The final plan was presented to Council for consideration following extensive community consultation. Community input confirmed that the community's priorities remain in support for dog leash and cat containment orders, responsible pet ownership and nuisance issues.

At the council meeting it was agreed to extend the cat curfew from the proposed 12 hours to 24 hours.

The preparation of the Domestic Animal Management Plan is a requirement for all Victorian local governments under the Domestic Animals Act 1994. The adopted plan will now be published on the Council's website and submitted to the Victorian State Government.

## NO ONE'S UNSINKABLE

To all those Unsinkable Guys out there –

You might think it's safe to have a few drinks around water, skip the life jacket when you're out on the boat or go for a swim without checking the conditions.

But statistics prove that 4 out of 5 drownings are men.

Just remember that no one's unsinkable.

Q UNSINKABLE GUY

RETHINK  
TAKING RISKS  
AROUND  
WATER



## Roaring 2026 kicks off at Welshpool Hotel

THOSE who celebrated the new year at the Welshpool Hotel by venturing back in time to the Roaring Twenties had a ball, dressing the part for 1926 and being entertained by a DJ and a burlesque performer, but greater support for such local events is needed.

While understanding people are facing cost-of-living challenges, the pub's owner Skye Dubignon said she has responded to community desire for events locally and needs to be able to justify the costs to continue doing so.

"The people that did come had an awesome night and loved it, and it was really worth it for that," she said, but stressed a lot of work went into organising the evening and it would have been great to have more people there to enjoy it.

Attendees threw themselves into the occasion, women embracing the 'flapper' look characterised by short dresses, bobbed hair, and an attitude of embracing freedom from traditional societal constraints.

Feathers, pearls, and diamantes made a spectacular display as did the gentlemen in their suits, including pin stripes, and top hats.

"They did really well," Ms Dubignon said of the way people embraced the era of a century ago.

Melbourne-based burlesque performer Nellie Noble, fresh from a tour of Europe, delivered three themed acts, one centred on feathers, another with a striptease inspiration, with the other focused on a fun vibe that got everyone involved.

Nellie moved among the audience, getting up close to its members, a striking and risqué display to the B-52s tune 'The Love Shack' being one of the highlights, the performer ensuring attention didn't

**By Andrew Paloczi**

stray from her.

In between her sets, Nellie mingled with customers, with lots of photos taken.

DJ Robbie played beats from 1926 to the current day.

Games of poker were played for fun, with some people tackling the game for the first time and friendly guidance provided.

Dancing and karaoke were popular.

"I had everyone coming up to me at the end of the night saying how much fun they had and that it was absolutely amazing," Ms Dubignon said, noting they expressed disappointment more people didn't come.

It's too early to decide what entertainment might take place at Welshpool Hotel next New Year's Eve, but Ms Dubignon is keen to get Nellie back, the performer having enjoyed the experience and happy to return.

"You normally have to travel to Melbourne and pay premium dollars to go to these events," Ms Dubignon said, with the pub charging just \$85 for a two-course meal, cocktail and entertainment, or \$40 for a cocktail and entertainment.

She is happy to continue running events but says support for them needs to increase, with the low numbers for the most recent occasion being an ongoing occurrence.

"It does make it hard to want to continue outlaying money to put on these big events," Ms Dubignon said, explaining that she goes all out to make them special.

While acknowledging it's great to get amazing artists performing in Welshpool, she feels bad for them if they don't have a big audience, noting some of the pub's gigs are free to attend.



The UpBeats, Kathy Westaway, David Panther and Andrew Brick perform, with drummer Bob Hickman obscured. A12\_0126

## The UpBeats bring in New Year in Koonwarra

**By Andrew Paloczi**

Living in Koonwarra, he was delighted to be part of an entertaining performance for the locals and showcase the value of Koonwarra Hall, which made a good case for hosting more events.

"We've done this the last two years at Koonwarra and people look forward to it," Mr Hickman remarked.

The band started out with numbers from the sixties inspired by the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and The Who, moving on to the eighties with the likes of The Jam, The Cure, and the B-52s.

The UpBeats' new bass player Andrew Brick, being younger than the rest of the group, was successful in his request for some nineties music, that featuring Oasis, The Church and other bands.

The emphasis was on delivering an uplifting performance in keeping with a celebration.

"We didn't have too many slower or moody songs, so we went for the ones that were a bit more upbeat," Mr Hickman said.



## Retirement Village

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# Embedded social workers help slash repeat violence

By Rick Koenig

A GROUNDBREAKING program that places Salvation Army social workers inside police stations is smashing barriers in the battle against family violence.

The Alexis Family Violence Response Model was introduced to Wonthaggi after data revealed regional family violence rates were almost double those in metropolitan Melbourne.

Two specialist practitioners operate from inside the police station and respond alongside officers in the immediate aftermath of family violence incidents.

Alexis Practice Leader Lani Kahn said the program targeted people who did not engage with mainstream support, including those with mental health issues, drug and alcohol problems and housing instability.

She said the program's ability to reach people at their moment of crisis was key.

"Because of the partnership with police it means we can go out in the immediate aftermath of an incident and go out alongside members to support the client," Ms Kahn said.

"If there's a victim survivor in hospital due to injuries we can go with the police to support them with risk mitigation, safety planning and understanding what police are doing for them regarding intervention orders.

"Police have that legal protection focus, but having us there brings that welfare lens to every interaction."

The embedded model allowed practitioners to engage immediately with both victim survivors and perpetrators, reaching



**The Salvation Army's Alexis program embeds social workers inside police stations to respond to family violence.**

83 per cent of perpetrators compared to about 10 per cent through mainstream services.

"For those who use violence, we can provide that opportunistic contact," Ms Kahn said.

"If police have arrested someone for interview, our practitioner can go into the cells directly after and inform them of support available.

"We need to view them through a humanistic lens because if we address those issues we reduce the risk of violence to victim survivors."

Independent evaluations by RMIT University found the program reduced repeat police

callouts from an average of 5.5 per family to just 0.8 in the 12 months after involvement.

Bass Coast's rate of 2102.6 incidents per 100,000 people sat 40 per cent above the state average.

"We know there are added barriers to accessing support in regional areas due to geography, transport, privacy issues and longer wait times," Ms Kahn said.

"We have the capacity to ensure postcode doesn't determine safety."

The program also worked with victim survivors who chose to remain in relationships.

"A lot of traditional mainstream support focuses on leaving," Ms Kahn said.

"We help them in whatever circumstance they are in, recognising they might not leave, or we plant the seed for when they have the ability to make that decision."

The state government announced \$1.5 million in funding for the program in October, enabling expansion to two additional police stations.

If you or someone you know is experiencing family violence, call 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) or in an emergency call 000.

## Mozzie virus alert for Gippsland

HOLIDAYMAKERS and residents in Gippsland are being urged to protect themselves from mosquito bites following recent detections of Ross River virus in mosquito surveillance traps.

The Victorian Arbovirus Disease Control Program has identified Ross River virus in multiple mosquito traps in Wellington and East Gippsland shires in recent weeks. Councils have implemented mosquito control operations on their land, but with warmer weather increasing mosquito breeding, mosquito levels can be difficult to manage.

With an expected increase in visitors to regional Victoria over the coming weeks, Victorians are reminded that simple precautions can significantly reduce the risk of infection.

Ross River virus is spread through the bite of infected mosquitoes. While many people do not develop symptoms, some may experience fever, joint pain and swelling, muscle aches, fatigue or rash. Symptoms can last for weeks or months in some cases.

There is no vaccine or specific treatment for Ross River virus. Preventing mosquito bites is the most effective way to reduce the risk of infection.

More information about Ross River virus and how to protect yourself from mosquito-borne disease is available on the Better Health Channel at better-health.vic.gov.au

# SWIMMING IS FUN. BUT DROWNING ISN'T.



## PACK YOUR SUMMER SMARTS

- BE AWARE OF STRONG CURRENTS AND ROUGH CONDITIONS
- KNOW THE CONDITIONS AND KNOW YOUR LIMITS
- NEVER SWIM ALONE OR IF YOU'RE UNSURE

FIND OUT HOW TO STAY SAFE  
BY THE WATER THIS SUMMER



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Government



Great club participation at the inter-club Nippers carnival.

## More than 350 nippers descend on Cape Paterson

ON Sunday, January 4, Cape Paterson SLSC hosted the Inter-Club Nippers Carnival.

This year, the club was joined by Inverloch SLSC and Venus Bay SLSC, who were each represented by their clubs' nipper contingents.

Paul MacNeill, President of Cape Paterson SLSC, said, with more than 350 nippers descending onto Cape Paterson First Surf to celebrate the season for nippers, the day brought an amazing display of athleticism and a proud display of the club's coloured caps.

Nippers of all ages showed their skills and demonstrated the athleticism of surf sports at Cape Paterson First Surf, with the competition kicking off at 9am.

"Hosting the Tri-Club Nippers Carnival is such an honour, especially seeing the beach full of families, friends and of course hundreds of nippers," said Mr MacNeill.

James Langlands, Nipper Coordinator for Cape Paterson SLSC, said this year was the first year that the club was joined by Venus Bay, who had a strong representation, with more than 70 nippers travelling to participate.

Mark 'Doogs' Legg, whose father Les was one of the CPSLSC club's founding members, watched all the action from the SES Rescue Boat, stationed behind the action.

Mr Legg said seeing the huge crowds on the beach reminded him of some of the club's historic past, where thousands of people would crowd the dunes to watch more than 1000 competitors compete in the surf carnivals of the late 1960s.

"It's great to see the colour of the carnivals returning to our beautiful beaches."

"It's been a busy few weeks at the beach over the summer, but thankfully, no incidents to report," said Mr MacNeill.

"We even had the local police visit while we were having our nippers' program over summer."

It was great to see our local officers on the beach.

"With even more events planned for the upcoming weekends, now is the perfect time to get to the beach to see Surf Life Saving in action."

But most importantly, always swim on a patrolled beach and between the red-and-yellow flags."

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The Mirboo North Secondary College Year 12 group is ready to embrace new challenges and opportunities

## Strong Mirboo North College Year 12 results

By Andrew Paloczi

ATAR greater than 90.

"We are super proud of these students, who have worked hard throughout their whole secondary journey," the college said of all its Year 12s.

The school highlighted that achievements extend beyond

the strong academic results.

"We are very proud of the students who have already gained employment, who are excelling in their apprenticeships, and who tried their absolute best sitting the exams despite various challenges and persevered right to the end," it stated.

The school stressed a score does not define you, and the door is always open if you need career advice or just a chat.

"We wish all our graduating Year 12 students the very best as they embark on their new adventures," MNSC said.

## Koala-geddon: Wildlife group challenges government narrative on French Island koala population crisis

By Rick Koenig

island.

"In a hundred-metre stretch you've probably had 50 to 60 bunnies run across the road. They're the ones eating the seedlings, not koalas."

A Parks Victoria letter to residents dated February 2025 confirms deer are also a major problem on the island, with a control program implemented because deer "can cause serious damage to native plants, animals and habitat by trampling and destroying plants, increasing grazing pressure, ringbarking young trees".

But Koala Alliance committee member Michelle Thomas, who visited French Island several times since September, says koalas are being scapegoated for damage caused by other factors.

Ms Thomas said locals told her no tree planting programs had taken place in the last 10 years.

"When I asked why, they said koalas eat the seedlings," she said.

"Then I saw the amount of bunnies on the island. We're not talking about a few bunnies, we're talking about thousands running all over that

"The time has come for drastic action. Perverse as it sounds, we need to cull koala numbers," the newsletter states.

Ms Thomas said some residents were banding trees to prevent koalas accessing food, and she encountered open hostility including residents boasting about killing koalas inhumanely.

She also questioned the population estimates used to justify culling, saying one local source initially claimed 15,000 koalas before dropping to around 3000 when challenged.

Ms Thomas said when she and colleagues drove through the national park looking for the supposed overpopulation, they found almost nothing.

She said they found it suspicious that koalas were only visible on the guided tourist routes, sitting in bare trees, while the forest was "thick full of feed" with no koalas or droppings to be found.

"We didn't see one single koala in the national park," she said.

The Koala Alliance wants DEECA to release data on how

many female koalas have actually received contraceptive implants over the past 15 years.

Ms Thomas said she had been told by island residents and former volunteers that contraceptive programs had been running twice a year for the past decade, raising questions about how the population could still be out of control.

"One resident told me they do 160 females every six months," she said.

She also questioned why re-vegetation programs like the \$1 million BushBank Budj Bim Koala Habitat Restoration Project aren't being replicated on French Island.

Parks Victoria and DEECA stated in December that relocation was "not being considered due to the severe risks to the health and wellbeing of koalas".

Animal Justice Party MP Georgie Purcell has described the situation as "a habitat restoration crisis" and "a problem created by government decisions".

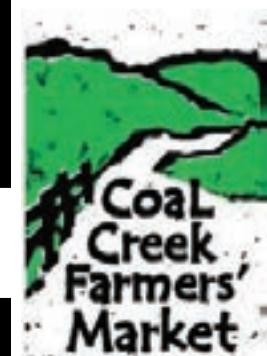
DEECA has been contacted for comment.

## COAL CREEK, Farmers' MARKET

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Skyla, Hayley, Sophie, Eleanor and Milla of Wonthaggi get into the spirit of the Show on the Ali Baba ride last year.

## Wonthaggi Show promises big day out

THE Bass Coast Wonthaggi Show will be full of entertainment for all ages, with competition exhibitions, cooking and needlecraft, games, fairy floss and show bags ready for a big day.

Organiser Rosemary Loughnan said it's an affordable community show for the whole family.

"Our stilt walkers, face painter and the circus workshop will all be in full swing by no later than 11 o'clock," she said.

"We've got a young lady who's a busker, Sage Marie, performing live."

Emergency service volunteers will have a vehicle display with SES, CFA and Ambulance Victoria on site.

"Gates open at 9am, and we usually get a crowd by 9.30am. The horses start at 8am, but the fly dogs will

kick off at 9am," Ms Loughnan said.

"This year will be a huge show. Carnival ride height limits and prices are at the discretion of the organisers, and the show will be in full swing by 10am.

"We had a hot day last year, so we've brought forward the horse events in particular."

The Alex Scott and Staff Equestrian Show will be held in the Alex Scott Arena, with ponies and Clydesdales on exhibit.

Volunteers from local clubs will be in attendance, with Rotary and the RSL on site to assist.

The Bass Coast Wonthaggi Show is on Saturday, January 10, at the Wonthaggi Recreation Reserve – the annual event not to be missed.



Elizabeth Crawford of Bass on Prez at the 2025 show.

Utes, 4x4s and mental health on show at Wonthaggi

THE Bass Coast's popular ute and 4x4 display will return in 2026 at the Wonthaggi Recreation Reserve on Saturday, January 10, with all funds raised being donated to mental health.

Launched in 2017 by organiser Jarrod Witherow, the show will display as part of the Bass Coast Wonthaggi Show. The event has grown from a handful of utes to attracting 70-100 entrants with utes and 4x4s from across Victoria and New South Wales.

"I have a great team of around 15 volunteers who manage categories, entries and on-the-day operations," Mr Witherow said. "We accept all entrants on the day."

All entrants and their immediate passengers receive free general admission to the Bass Coast Wonthaggi Show and a complementary bacon and egg breakfast donated by a local supporter.

Any make, any model, any condition can enter. The show features around 15 main categories plus several novelty classes to welcome every vehicle and owner. The

categories cover classic utes, tradie vehicles, weekend campers, competition builds and a young driver's class reserved for P-plate drivers.

"The novelty awards include 'best dog in ute' and an over-55 class lovingly dubbed for the old farts," Mr Witherow said. "In 2023, the event opened up to four-wheel-drive vehicles, broadening the field and supporting plans to evolve into a larger expo featuring multiple 4x4 brands."

Vehicles can be admitted from 7am, with public access open at 9am. Presentations are scheduled around 3pm, although organisers allow flexibility depending on numbers and weather.

"Entries are taken on the day to avoid pre-payment issues; a small on-the-day fee applies and merchandise is available for purchase," Mr Witherow said. "Note that all funds raised are being donated to Looking Good, Feeling Good for mental health, with thanks to our major sponsor SG Off Road in Leongatha and Wonthaggi and local support from Jeff Tully."

# Bass Coast Wonthaggi Show

**Saturday January 10th 2026 ~ 9am onwards**

Wonthaggi Recreation Reserve Korumburra Road Wonthaggi  
Admission: Children 12 years and under free, 13 years and over \$5.00

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# Bass Coast Wonthaggi Ute & 4x4 Show

**WONTHAGGI SHOWGROUNDS, WONTHAGGI RECREATION RESERVE**  
**ENTRY VIA KORUMBURRA-WONTHAGGI ROAD – GATE 4**

**Saturday, January 10, 2026**

**Judging starts @ 9:45AM FINISHING BY 3PM**

**CATEGORIES \$10 EACH**

Best Holden	Best Ford	Best 4x4 (Utes & Wagons)
Best Classic	Best Themed	Best Touring 4x4
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Best Trade	Best BNS	Pavement Princess 4x4
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Up they go! Among those with paintings in the second in a series of Summer Exhibitions at the Berninneit Art Gallery in Cowes until January 15 is Melinda Holt of Loch being assisted by Phillip Island Contemporary Exhibition Space (PICES) curator Warren Nichols hanging one of 42 works on display.

## Summer art series continues at Berninneit

THE PICES Summer Exhibition series at Berninneit Art Gallery is in full swing after a successful opening run with the Small Works Exhibition in December.

More than 140 artworks featured in that showcase, representing a diverse mix of talent from across the Bass Coast region and beyond.

The opening night on Friday, December 12 drew a warm crowd of artists, community members, supporters and visitors eager to explore the intimate and imaginative works on display.

Bass Coast Shire Cr Meg Ryan was the official opening speaker, highlighting the importance of arts and culture within regional communities and acknowledging the role creativity plays in fostering connection, wellbeing and a shared sense of place.

Guests enjoyed viewing a wide range of artworks including paintings, ceramics, photography, sculpture, textiles and mixed media, with many pieces purchased on the night.

Small Works has long been known as an excellent source of thoughtful and unique gifts during the festive season, with purchased artworks able to be taken home immediately.

The PICES Summer Exhibition program continues with Contempora 1, running until Thursday, January 15, followed by Contempora 2 from Saturday, January 17 to Sunday, February 1.

Each exhibition presents a fresh selection of contemporary works highlighting both emerging and established artists across a range of mediums.

The gallery is open 10am to 4pm daily.

## Tall tales and true from Wonthaggi's colourful history

IT'S a case of 'know your town, love your town' as far as one of Wonthaggi's most active community groups is concerned, the Wonthaggi and District Historical Society.

They've got so many historical research projects and other events on the go throughout the year that it never really stops at the Wonthaggi Railway Station Museum, and for many of the members, at home as well.

On Saturday, January 3 they kicked off their popular series of '15 Minutes of History' presentations for the New Year with sessions on Wonthaggi's Cordial Factories on Saturday, Childhood memories of living in a shop in McBride Avenue by Eira Thompson and then on Monday, January 5, it was all about the history of Wonthaggi Ski Club at Mt Baw Baw with long-time members Trevor Foon and Bob Wintle.

Mr Foon recalled the development of the lodge in the early 1950s, right through to handing it back to the management of the mountain about 10 years ago when the 50-year lease was up.

"It was all about having fun and learning to be a kid," said Mr Foon as he remembered problems with the lodge's generator and water supply and the workings of a mysterious piece of equipment called a 'nutcracker'.

Mr Wintle noted an interesting piece of history about an early chairlift at Mt Baw Baw which was stored at Woolamai before being relocated to the Nut in north-west Tasmania where it still ferries people to the top of the hill.

According to historical society secretary Irene Williams the presentations are the perfect opportunity to showcase the district's stories and get people interested in their own history.

"Most people don't read history books anymore, but they will listen to someone else telling their story or speaking about a subject they are passionate about,"

said Mrs Williams.

"We basically have two sorts of presentations, either someone's personal history story or something they've researched themselves in detail.

"We get people to come along and tell their story," she said.

"The first few years we did three weeks straight of 15-minute histories, but we've cut that back to nine days this year which has been quite a bit easier to organise."

Remaining sessions (11.30am-noon daily) include:

- Tuesday, January 6 Wonthaggi's State Coal Mines An overview of mines and mining operations Jim Quilford
- Wednesday, January 7 The Amazon Shipwreck Inverloch Amazon Group
- Thursday, January 8 Seed collecting Wonthaggi's Wetlands A legacy of our mining history Terri Allen
- Friday, January 9 Wonthaggi's First Fitness Club "The Wonderful World of Weights" Keith Milkins
- Saturday, January 10 Bunurong Coast Our underwater world Simon Gililand
- Sunday, January 11 Wonthaggi's Internationally Famous Axeman Kerina McLaren

Following on from the 15-minute history presentations will be a week of 'Showcasing our history displays starting at 11am on Monday, January 12 and running through to Saturday, January 17.

They include:

- Monday, January 12 The Wonthaggi Monster
- Tuesday, January 13 Miners' equipment and disasters
- Wednesday, January 14 A bullock wagon story
- Thursday, January 15 Italians making do
- Friday, January 16 Wreck Beach shipwreck history
- Saturday, January 17 Wonthaggi Co-op Store



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### OH WHAT A FEELING

# Max Grigg completes ambitious tractor project

By Chris Grigg

Heeding that advice, the member of the South Gippsland Branch of GHAC decided to restore the Dexta to its former glory.

The project extended over a few years, the tractor being completely dismantled, with bits everywhere.

While the engine was reconditioned, the reliability of the Perkins engine meant not much was required.

Some panel work needed attention, with Mr Grigg explaining "The rear guards are bigger than normal and were rusted badly down the lower end, mainly due to all the fertiliser used over the years."

Wishing to retain a factory stamp in the rusted area, he was able to cut the section out and weld the ENFO stamp back into place when he had repaired the guards.

Mr Grigg then re-bushed the worn front end, dismantled the rear end so he could change all the bearings and seals, sent the brake drums away to be machined and had the tractor rewired.

Even the steering wheel received attention.

"It needed a lot of building up so I was advised to use Araldite, and after 12 tubes I finally built it up enough to sand it to the correct shape," Mr Grigg said.

There were many small parts that needed work along the way such as linkage pins and ends but finally it was time to remove all the original paint.

It was while removing paint from the wheel centres that Mr Grigg discovered a stamp saying Ralph McKay Ltd Australia 1959.

Ralph was the brother of Hugh McKay, inventor of the Sunshine Harvester.

When all the repairs and repainting were completed, Mr Grigg was finally able to assemble the little tractor he has owned for 63 years and that has earned its restoration and its place in his shed.

LIKE many in the Gippsland Historical Automobile Club (GHAC), Nyora's Max Grigg likes a project, having succeeded in restoring his Fordson Dexta tractor that served him well as a market gardener and later as a beef farmer.

As many of the district's farming families would appreciate, Fordson has been a popular tractor since the 1950s.

The brand proved to be reliable and strong and the Power Major, Super Major, Fordson Dexta and Super Dexta were exported from England around the world and used in many different fields.

Mr Grigg purchased his Fordson Dexta in 1963 from Taig Brothers dealership in Shepparton.

It was loaded onto an open rail carriage and sent to Berwick station where then 17-year-old Mr Grigg drove it off the train onto the platform and to his parents' dairy farm where he was setting up his business.

The Dexta was high clearance and ideal for vegetable growing.

"The tractor proved to be everything I wanted," Mr Grigg said.

"The Dextas had a three cylinder Perkins diesel engine that had proved to be unbreakable and I started to get some machinery made for it."

Additions included an under-belly scarifier, bed-making plough, seeders and spray unit.

As Mr Grigg's business grew and more and larger tractors were purchased, the Dexta was mainly used for lighter jobs such as trailer and underbelly work.

When he changed from market gardening to running cattle, the tractor went with him and was used for spreading fertiliser, sowing grass seed and summer crops.

Then, after retirement from farming, the tractor was stored in a shed and Mr Grigg thought about selling it.

"It was not looking all that good after its years of service but a mate told me I couldn't sell it after it had started my business for me," he said.



Nyora's Max Grigg shows off his beautifully restored Fordson Dexta tractor that no longer displays the wear and tear of its years of service.



Mason and Freya enjoy old-fashioned fun on the merry-go-round as 2025 draws to a close. A09\_0126

## Family fun ushers in New Year in Inverloch

By Andrew Paloczi

WHILE Inverloch failed to deliver a balmy evening on Wednesday, it mattered little as locals and visitors celebrated the approach of a New Year, with plenty going on to keep families entertained.

The beach was an option despite the cool weather but many took in the sights, sounds and tastes of the Twilight Market in the Glade, run by the local Lions Club, with South Coast FM again supporting local musicians who entertained attendees.

Rides, sideshow games and a bite to eat drew people to the Inverloch carnival, that event located alongside the town's Recreation Reserve, the site of the New Year's Eve fireworks.

The crescendo to the evening was held at a family-friendly time well before the official start to 2026.



Aaron Chaston performs in the Sound Shell during Wednesday's Twilight Market. A10\_0126

## Police praise holiday crowds but warn on fireworks danger

By Rick Koenig

BASS Coast Police have praised crowd behaviour across the region on New Year's Eve but warned of the dangers of illegal fireworks after several incidents.

More than 5000 people gathered at Inverloch for New Year's Eve fireworks and the carnival with no issues reported.

Sergeant Ryan Burns said crowd behaviour was great despite brief incidents of illegal fireworks.

"People think it's fun and engaging but they are explosive devices that can cause injury," Sgt Burns said.

With hot weather forecast and the landscape drying out, he warned illegal fireworks also posed a significant bushfire risk and urged residents to check the CFA website for fire restrictions.

In Cowes, Senior Sergeant Jason Hullick said overall behaviour was "awesome" with no arrests on the night despite some alcohol-related incidents.

"We did have a couple of incidents of unauthorised fireworks being let off which were dealt with by police on the night," Snr Sgt Hullick said.

Police expressed disappointment with driver behaviour on New Year's Day after catching four drink drivers during an operation at Wonthaggi in the early afternoon.

One driver returned a reading of 0.153, more than triple the legal limit, and was also unlicensed.

Other drivers received penalty notices while the unlicensed high-range driver will be summonsed to appear in court at a later date.

Police allege the driver was travelling at excessive speed when he lost control.

"Without a doubt the worst part of our job is knocking on a door and telling a family that their loved one will not be coming home today," police said.

"This driver was three to four minutes from home."

Police were also called to a single-vehicle crash on the Bass Highway east of Kilcunda on Wednesday, December 31 and to Forest Caves on Saturday, December 27 after reports of a person in distress.

It follows the dramatic Christmas Day rescue of three women whose kayaks drifted out to sea near Corinella.

The Westpac Rescue Lifesaver Helicopter winched all three to safety.

With hot weather forecast, police said beach safety remained their main priority.

"We want people to be safe in the water, be smart," Snr Sgt Hullick said.

"If you're not a strong swimmer or don't know the area there are patrolled beaches and safer areas to swim."

Bass Coast Shire Council has launched a new Emergency Dashboard at [emergency.basscoast.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.basscoast.vic.gov.au) providing up-to-date information from VicEmergency, VicTraffic, the Bureau of Meteorology and Life Saving Victoria.

Police urged everyone to download the Beachsafe app and always swim between the red and yellow flags.

# Desal expansion mooted but drug legacy remains

DRUG trafficking and prostitution were rife in Wonthaggi during the construction of the Victorian Desalination Plant, between September 2009 and December 2012.

And dozens of former tradesmen and other desal construction workers, some of them living locally, are still struggling with the impact of addiction, especially to the illicit drug of choice, crystal methamphetamine, known as Ice, more than a decade later.

So, news being reported by The Age this week that a dramatic increase in the demand for water could force the State Government into an \$840 million expansion of the plant, within the next five years, won't be welcomed by everyone.

As reported back in 2012 by Stephen Drill in the Herald Sun, the then executive director of Independent Contractors Australia (ICA), Ken Phillips, raised the problems in a submission to the State Government's Construction Code Compliance Unit, alleging widespread use of Ice in the building sector.

He was quoted by the newspaper making specific references to the Victorian Desalination Plant project at Wonthaggi.

Contacted by the Sentinel-Times in the past week, Mr Phillips, who no longer represents the ICA, still stands by that submission.

The ICA, representing more than 300 contractors across Victoria at the time, also claimed its members had reported bikie gangs were distributing illegal drugs on other building sites.

Mr Phillips said in the 2012 Herald Sun article that a major investigation was needed into drugs and bikies in construction.

"Our understanding is that drugs were rife at the desalination plant," Mr Phillips said at the time.

"The drug trafficking on the desalination plant was significant," he said, noting the drug of choice was Ice.

He recommended that the alleged distribution of drugs be subjected to occupational health and safety investigations.

At the time the CFMEU said the claims of widespread drug use and nefarious activity by



**The arrival of the Victorian Desalination Plant in Wonthaggi wasn't without either controversy or crime so what would an \$840 million expansion project bring?**

bikie gangs was "baseless" and "an insult to workers".

But in April 2014, News Limited Newspapers published details from a confidential report by a former Construction Code Compliance Unit officer.

The claims that outlaw motorcycle gangs supplied drugs and prostitutes to construction workers at the Wonthaggi desalination plant were addressed in confidential Victorian cabinet documents referred to by the newspapers.

The documents claimed that various named motorcycle gangs used three rented Wonthaggi homes as a base for their narcotics and prostitution operations.

Bikies, according to the report, were also employed to drive construction management to and from work and to social functions.

A police spokesperson contacted by the Herald Sun in 2012 would not rule in or rule out the claims of illicit drug sales and use, on and around the Wonthaggi desalination plant project.

But there's little doubt locally that an increase in prostitution and the sale of "hard" drugs was a byproduct of the work.

Many claim the use of Ice increased dramatically at the time and remains a scourge on local law enforcement, justice and health authorities.

The Sentinel-Times has spoken to the family of a local

man, now in his late 30s, who worked on the desal construction project in his early 20s.

Already a recreational drug user he gained ready access to the drug Ice via his connections at the site and became an addict.

The young man was paid \$2000 to \$2500 weekly and received a redundancy payout around the \$100,000 mark on departure.

At least some of it went into paying for his now firmly established drug habit.

Work after the project became increasingly difficult to hold on to, initially because it didn't pay anywhere near as well as the desalination plant contract, but also because of the ill-effects of Ice addiction.

He has an ongoing problem and it's not an isolated case.

Just prior to Christmas, the Allan Labor Government raised the spectre of widespread water restrictions "as the state continues to face drying conditions despite recent rainfall".

Minister for Water Gayle Tierney was releasing the Victorian Annual Water Outlook which detailed a drop in water storage levels and "the need to continue to source new water supplies into the future".

"The state's water storages are feeling the effect of successive dry years, sitting at 61 per cent full on average – down 18 per cent from last year.

The 2025 year also marked the first time urban water restrictions have been needed since 2020."

Fifty billion litres of desalinated water was successfully delivered in 2025, they say, helping to deliver reliable supplies to more than six million people across Geelong, Melbourne, and parts of Gippsland, including Wonthaggi, Korumburra and Phillip Island.

South Gippsland Water also announced, on Christmas Eve, that they would be laying a temporary pipeline between Korumburra and Leongatha to augment failing supplies in the Ruby Creek system which serves Leongatha.

While Minister for Water Gayle Tierney made no mention of the desalination plant expansion option in the December 23 statement, she did say the Government would continue to invest in water supply infrastructure.

And in March 2025 Infrastructure Victoria recommended the expansion of the desalination plant in its draft 30-year infrastructure strategy.

The cost of operating the Wonthaggi plant reportedly adds \$421 annually to family water bills in Melbourne despite operating in only seven of the past 13 years and delivering only 455GL of water of a possible 1950GL.



**Last year's Best in Show winner Fiona Bilbrough displays her painting Blue Gum Haze. A26\_0126**

## Leongatha Art and Photography Show set to delight

By Andrew Paloczi

THE Leongatha Rotary Club Art and Photography Show opens on Saturday, January 17, the diverse range of works from locals and elsewhere available to buy.

Two expert judges will determine award winners, with Mark Jones running a watchful eye over the growing photography section while Kerry Spokes takes charge of the art categories.

South Gippsland artist Ms Spokes, whose studio is near Foster, is a passionate advocate for the local arts scene and former co-owner of Gecko Studio Gallery in Fish Creek.

Her current work using monoprint techniques explores the elements and their interaction with the landscape, capturing the dynamic forces that shape and transform the natural world.

Experienced photographer Mr Jones loves the art form's ability to capture a moment in time, enjoying teaching others the photographic basics.

The long-term Pakenham Camera Club member and former president has photographed an array of subjects including landscapes, sport, creative time lapse and wildlife, also venturing into underwater photography and film making.

Mr Jones has judged at national photographic competitions.

Bob Hickman will again work alongside Lynn Fisher as the Art and Photography Show hangers, both being artists.

"We try as best we can to hang like-minded works or colours together so it presents well," Mr Hickman said, noting he and Ms Fisher will spend a whole week hanging and rehanging until they are happy with the overall look.

Remarking that the 720 works last year were a little too much, Mr Hickman said the overall number has been capped at 650 this time to ensure nothing needs to be crammed in.

He highlighted the fact the Rotary Club changes its judges for the show from year to year, each of whom adopts a different outlook.

"Whereas, maybe last year's judge erred towards the classical or traditional, this year with Kerry, she might go for something a little bit different; she's a bit more contemporary," Mr Hickman said.

"There are so many styles in art and it covers pottery, sculpture, felting, you name it," he observed, with that and the various mediums of painting and drawing illustrating the diversity of the job judges face.

Along with lots of pieces from experienced artists, school students from the local region have taken the opportunity to display their creativity, with schools having again been provided with free canvases, along with Yooralla.

Judging includes youth and all abilities sections.

With the Art and Photography Show beginning during the school holidays, plenty of visitors are expected along with locals.

The show runs from Saturday, January 17 until Saturday, February 7 from 10am until 4pm every day.

## Dinosaurs, snakes and Clydesdales at Wonthaggi Show

THE Bass Coast Wonthaggi Show will showcase another year of historical community spirit with new attractions and old traditions on Saturday, January 10, with gates open at 9am at the Wonthaggi Recreation Reserve, Korumburra Road, Wonthaggi.

The long-running show is a blend of heritage displays, family entertainment, carnival rides and new attractions that volunteer organiser Rosemary Loughnan said will appeal to visitors of all ages.

"This show started in Grantville in the 1800s," Ms Loughnan said.

"It came from Grantville, eventually to Dalston, Bass

and now to us in Wonthaggi perhaps in the 1970s. All run by volunteers; it is our way of giving back to the community."

This year's program is a mix of traditional and modern entertainment, including vintage and modern tractors, a dog flyball and working dog demonstration and an equestrian show. The volunteers welcome back the animal nursery - Animals For All Animal Nursery and Pony Rides. Plus, the Bass Coast - Wonthaggi Ute and 4x4 Show and Black Snake Productions.

Michael Alexander's snake presentation will focus on education and safety," Ms

Loughnan said. "He'll be bringing the snake pit, educating the public on how to deal with snakes, snake bites and the role they play in the community."

At the 2026 show, organisers have booked a roaming, life-sized dinosaur puppet to tie into the region's fossil history. "We decided that was timely because of our history with dinosaur fossils," Ms Loughnan said. "Toby the T. rex and a mini dinosaur will interact with the crowd during peak times."

Gates will open at 9am, with events in full swing by 10.30am. "It's best to arrive early for the best experience,"

Ms Loughnan said. "Whilst last year's heat prompted an early finish, we expect to run until 4pm on a typical day."

Sustainability is at the forefront, with food vendors and volunteer caterers encouraged to use reusable or biodegradable serving ware. The Bass Coast Shire Council is encouraging visitors to sort recycling properly.

Entry is free for children 12 and under, with a \$5 gate fee for people 13 and over. "We all work as volunteers, local clubs and service organisers will man the gates in return for donations, and we look forward to a great start to the year."

## Sentinel-Times

### COMMENT

## Spotlight on government excess in 2026

By Michael Giles

WHAT'S the most important thing about 2026?

For most people, turning over the date to a New Year last Wednesday night was no big deal beyond seeing the fireworks on TV, if you stayed up that long, or making the effort to see the fireworks at Inverloch, Cowes, Coronet Bay or one of a number of sites around the region.

Perhaps you popped the cork on a bottle of champagne with your partner at midnight or maybe you were tucked up in bed by then, before it ticked over to 2026.

For most people, there were still a few more holiday days left to enjoy, before getting back to work and doing your best to enjoy the year ahead.

But for some people, the New Year dawned with the same old problems; cost of living, availability of affordable housing, access to health care if you need it, and concerns about safety and security.

And you've got to ask yourself, ahead of a next state election in November 2026, how you think these issues have improved over the past four years and whether the government or the opposition is best placed to make a difference in the next four years.

We're bound to hear these questions addressed on a weekly basis over the next 11 months but whether you're concerned about an ambulance turning up when you need one on Phillip Island, your ute being stolen in a late-night heist at Inverloch, finding somewhere to live in Wonthaggi or having enough to pay the bills in Leongatha...

One thing that really irks people about government at all levels is the way they waste our money, funds that could go towards much-needed services, and the extent to which they go to cover up the waste and criminal excess.

If nothing else changes in 2026, we can at least hope that the bureaucrats turn their attention to government efficiency and placing a high value on saving money to put to other worthwhile purposes.

## Vox Pop

"Are there enough police in the area, do you feel safe?"



**Jayson Caile**

Wonthaggi

"Needs to be more police, heard shots go off the other night in Wonthaggi and thought they were firecrackers."



**Sandy Kaur**

Wonthaggi

"There are enough police in the town but honestly I don't feel that safe, there is too much drug abuse and it's pretty much everywhere."



**Mikaylie Thomas**

Wattle Bank

"I'm not sure if there are enough police, there's only a certain amount they can do, yes I feel safe."



**Emma Hanslow-Sells**

Melbourne

"There seems to be enough police in Wonthaggi at the moment but if you're local you might feel different, yes I feel safe."

### Valuing the life of Peter Seccull

SOUTH GIPPSLAND will mourn the passing of local builder Peter Seccull of Coastal Property Developments. Peter's health, in recent months, took a serious turn with brain disease, and his passing will be sorely felt by all main builders / contractors.

The land holding, most recently completed on the South Gippsland Highway, was notable for its future planning for sustainable growth. A 40-year understanding of Peter's building skill and passing his knowledge on to his three sons is formidable.

Marcus, Adrian and Andrew are all highly capable, qualified operators and half-decent footballers, for that matter. His application to 'surprise' many vendors and operators was outstanding. His finishes were complete and measurable.

My understanding with Peter harked back to when he took on building Chasers nightclub in Melbourne, which became a highlight of operating many other opportunities.

This in turn led him to live in semi-retirement at Woodside, then into Inverloch, and saw his acumen as a builder with rise and fall - as it does.

His wife, Cath, was an inspiration to live life and be a 'one in a million operator' and a collective nature for the three boys and Peter's only daughter, Melissa (dec).

No one can belittle aspiration and sentiment in building in Southeast Gippsland, as Peter Seccull. His memory remains.

**By Rod Stone.**  
**Valued friend.**

### Questions over Foster land sale

AT the last council in-chambers meeting a Shire block of land at Foster was discussed for 12 minutes and I found it unusual.

Mayor Nathan Hersey failed to explain the full history of the block for the public, despite speaking about transparency.

I went to the Shire website and spoke to people and found out the Shire bought it in 2020 with ratepayers' money, then in the 2021 budget spent \$400,000 on works which some of the councillors who tried to sell it that day had approved.

I read it was for the Shire depot to move to a better location due to dust, noise and proximity to the school.

I felt the attitude of some councillors was a little tense, not the same as normal in chambers.

Now the local paper tells us of cost cutting while the Shire charges traders double and triple for footpaths, yet the Shire made the streets in Leongatha, Korumburra and Foster wider to show off shop produce.

The TV in chambers showed the CEO's list of extra cash for jobs, meaning cost blowouts again and again.

Trying to understand the budget, it looks like \$3 million in cost overruns.

With the Korumburra tennis club, costs went over by approximately 30 per cent.

Why is the Shire so far out on most jobs and why isn't there any accountability?

Our roadsides are the worst in history and I hope the paper shows how fire aware our Shire isn't.

**David Amor**

### Footpath fees a cash grab

THE South Gippsland Shire Council's new footpath trading permit fees are a disappointing and unnecessary cash grab.

Take Bair Street in Leongatha for example: the Shire significantly improved the area by widening the footpath to support outdoor dining and local traders embraced the initiative.

The street is now thriving and I've never heard a single complaint about the existing \$140 fee for those outdoor spaces.

Small businesses are the backbone of country towns and hotels continue to serve as vital gathering places for families and young people.

Yet these businesses are already burdened with rising wages, increased insurance costs, electricity and gas prices up by 40 per cent and higher rents.

Let's not kill the goose that laid the golden egg.

One has to wonder whether this idea came from someone comfortably collecting a stable wage in all weather conditions.

For the record, this new charge does not affect me.

**Glenn Wright OAM**  
**Leongatha**

### Skate park a hit

KORUMBURRA'S new skate park is successful for our youth and children of all ages.

It's fun to watch this happy outdoor activity and a much needed sport to get everyone outside to exercise.

Total enjoyment.

**Jan Morris**  
**Korumburra**

# Rates capped as councils struggle to keep pace

By Rick Koenig

than the cap, while responsibilities and expectations placed on local government have grown.

"Over time this gap has increased and will continue to reduce council's ability to maintain assets and deliver new or expanded services."

South Gippsland Shire Mayor Cr Nathan Hersey said council's finances remained sound but the cap was creating pressures.

"The 2.75 per cent rate cap means council's income is rising slower than its costs are increasing, and combined with ageing infrastructure, this creates pressures we need to consider now to avoid problems in the future," Cr Hersey said.

"Council is actively managing the budget."

Asked whether the cap would force council to cut services or projects, Cr Hersey said decisions would be made as part of forthcoming budget discussions.

"It's simply not possible to pre-empt a decision of council around the budget, services and projects," Cr Hersey said.

"Budget decisions will need to be made by the whole of council as part of the budget process."

South Gippsland Shire has previously pushed back against the system, arguing it leaves councils unable to keep pace with rising costs.

In June, South Gippsland Shire Cr Sarah Gilligan criticised the cap, stressing council had to budget to keep the lights on but was constrained in terms of new initiatives or capital works.

"This means councils haven't kept up

with CPI for almost a decade," Cr Gilligan said at the time.

Cr Gilligan's criticism was backed by Cr Hersey, who said cost-shifting from state government to council needed to be addressed.

Municipal Association of Victoria president Cr Jennifer Anderson has called for a review, arguing the cap covers only 60 per cent of actual cost increases councils face.

Mr Staikos also announced new guidelines requiring councils to ensure waste charges reflect actual collection costs.

Before the Fair Go Rates system began in 2016, council rates were increasing by an average of six per cent a year.

Bass Coast Shire Council said it would have more to say on the issue in coming weeks as it goes through its budget process.

# Korumburra skate park worth the wait

By Andrew Paloczi

SINCE its December opening Korumburra's new skate park in the town's railway precinct has been a drawcard for skateboarders, BMX and scooter riders, boosting local recreation opportunities during the school holidays.

Sentinel-Times met some enthusiastic young scooter riders on Friday who gave the new facility the thumbs up.

"The jumps are nice and some of the ramps are really good," Huxley Schmidt said, remarking on the smooth riding surface.

Another local, Connor Auddino, has been enjoying the skate park since it opened, also remarking on the jumps.

"They're really steep and you can get good air," he said.

Connor's mum Anneliese Auddino is delighted with the new skate park and its convenient location near coffee shops and other town attractions.

Korumburra's Sarah Rasmussen, mother of Sonny McGuinness, another of Friday's scooter riders, is pleased with the fact there is something new to encourage kids to exercise and have fun.

"It's really handy and gets them out of the house every day," she said.

Replacing the old skating facility at Korumburra Showgrounds, the new smoother set-up is much easier on the body when inevitable falls occur.



Local scooter riders Sonny McGuinness, Huxley Schmidt and Connor Auddino are thrilled to have a new high quality facility in town suited to scooters as well as BMXs and skateboards.

A13\_0126

The new skate park has been keenly awaited.

It was originally planned to be in a different location within the railway precinct before community feedback indicated the intended facility would be too basic.

Heritage approvals were required for the railway land.

However, progress was rapid after fresh community consultation that ended in July 2025 giving potential users the chance to contribute their ideas to the new design.

Experienced skate park designer Wade Trevan was responsible through his business EastbyWest for bringing it all together, being mindful of catering to BMX riders, skateboarders and scooter riders of varying skill levels.

He stressed during the community feedback period that while beginners will be catered for, the design will also provide scope for those with more experience, saying suggestions it will be a beginner park only are incorrect as that

would eliminate many potential users.

South Gippsland Shire mayor Cr Nathan Hersey tested his skills after the skate park opened in December, faring better on a scooter than a skateboard, council posting his efforts, those of fellow councillor Cr Brad Snell and some talented teens to its Facebook page.

Council contributed \$320,000 to the project with a further \$100,000 coming from the State Government.

## Kids relish fishing at Venus Bay this summer

FISHING'S future appears sound in Venus Bay with enthusiastic young participants enjoying their first experience of the pastime or building their skills at Saturday's Kid's Fishing Day.

Venus Bay Angling Club ran the event, with member Roslyn Shelly describing the day as "a huge success".

"We reached our maximum of 25 kids and unfortunately had to turn away a number of others, but hopefully they get a chance at our next Kid's Fishing Day," Ms Shelly said.

While the club normally has only two such days a year, the popularity of Saturday's session is likely to lead to another while the weather is still good, and the Sentinel-Times will provide details if that is the

case.

Participants Henry, Cooper and Charlie each caught a mullet and happily and safely returned their small catches to the water.

"Thanks to our team of helpers and to the Victorian Fisheries Authority and Inverloch Fishing and Outdoors for sponsoring us," Ms Shelly said.

Saturday's young fishers and families enjoyed a barbecue, with icy poles and soft drinks also provided.

Kids received showbags containing items such as tackle containers, first aid kits, fishing hats, lollies, booklets on fishing explaining the rules, and fish measuring stickers, with a couple of fishing rods up for grabs in the raffle.



The popularity of Venus Bay Angling Club's Saturday Kid's Fishing Day is apparent.

## Locally manufactured Astellite windows and doors offer style, function and durability

ASTELLITE double-glazed windows and doors are manufactured in Melbourne using premium German technology, the uPVC material from which the frames are constructed offering greater durability and versatility than is provided by aluminium or wooden options.

The extra strength of the uPVC material allows for more impressive windows that maximise your view.

"You can have bigger panels of glass, so they're great for viewing over the bay," Astelite's Shelly Gibbs said.

"They're very popular in Europe and with our customers."

She highlighted one of the window designs the business produces.

"We do a window called the 'Tilt and Turn'; it tilts outwards from the top and then when you turn it, it can open all the way into the room," Ms Gibbs said.

Other Astelite products include bay windows, sliding doors, and French doors.

Unlike aluminium window and door frames, saltwater spray won't corrode uPVC, with wooden frames also susceptible to deterioration caused by salt air.

uPVC also stands up well to the sun's harsh rays.

Brothers Lucas and Peter Kot run the business, which was established in 2018, being hands on in its operation, with the Dandenong factory producing customised windows and doors.

The precise manufacturing process welds the material together, ensuring there's no possibility of splitting.

Aluplast in Germany supplies the uPVC used in Astelite's production.

"You can get it in every colour, and it comes in a wood finish as well," Ms Gibbs said.

The double-glazed windows, with a layer of argon gas in between, are energy efficient and

reduce noise.

Astelite focuses on delivering high-performance, energy-efficient window and door solutions that give builders a competitive edge, the benefits achieved flowing on to homeowners.

The business notes that its windows and doors are made by skilled local craftsmen and are perfected to exceed Australian standards and suit climatic conditions.

Check out the range and learn more from the friendly team at Astelite's showroom located at 418 Nepean Highway, Chelsea, visit [astelite.com.au](http://astelite.com.au) or call 1300 488 848.



Newhaven College Year 11 students embarking on the new VCE Vocational Major, Amelia Raso, Elena Dimopoulos and Tyler Duell, sit with VCE coordinator Elaine Epifano after visiting Free 3D Hands.

## Newhaven College launches hands-on VCE pathway

NEWHAVEN College has introduced a new VCE Vocational Major (VM) pathway, giving families an additional senior school option that focuses on practical learning, real-world skills and work readiness. Designed for students who thrive through applied learning, the VCE VM supports confident pathways into further training, apprenticeships or employment, while ensuring every student is supported to reach their full potential.

Newhaven College's director of learning Karen Milkins-Hendry said, "At Newhaven College, honouring and enriching individual pathways is at the heart of what we do. We recognise that every child's strengths, interests and future goals are different, and one size does not fit all. Our goal is to help every student be the best they can be, whether their journey leads to university, TAFE or straight to the workforce."

The program commenced in the final weeks of Term 4 under the stewardship of VCE coordinator Elaine Epifano. The students visited local businesses and challenged themselves through physical activities to develop inspiration. After a hike up Mt Oberon in Wilson's Prom, students enrolled in the program were asked to reflect and share what they hope to achieve through the program. One Year 10 student said, "I want my Vocational Major to be as challenging and rewarding as climbing Mt Oberon. Completing a Certificate III in Fishing Operations, my goal is to become efficient at filleting and cleaning fish, as well as hauling the catch from the ocean while building strong practical skills for the industry."

One Year 10 student said, "Hiking Mt Oberon taught me resilience and teamwork, which connect to my VET Music and VET Building and Construction courses. Music helps me express myself, while building and construction builds practical skills. Together with the hike, these experiences show me the importance of persistence, problem-solving and staying committed to my goals, and I hope that a Vocational major can help me through these courses."

The skills-related business excursion opened the students' eyes to some of the types of businesses they may be interested in. Free 3D Hands, The Island Accommodation, Rip Curl and Westernport Water all inspired the students.

All students enrolled in the VCE VM are excited for the journey ahead, and the College is confident the program will deliver positive outcomes for everyone involved.

To learn more about the program, or Newhaven College in general, the College runs regular tours throughout the year, but private tours can also be arranged by contacting the Admissions Team on 5956 7505 or [admissions@newhavencol.vic.edu.au](mailto:admissions@newhavencol.vic.edu.au)



Models play Archies Creek Hotel on Sunday, January 18 with doors opening at 2.30pm. Photo: Suzie Weiss @shotbysuzie

### Models never go out of style

AUSTRALIAN band Models will return to Archies Creek Hotel on Sunday, January 18, with doors opening at 2.30pm for a laid-back afternoon of live music, where they'll treat the regional crowd to an intimate, interactive set - a chance for long-time fans to connect with the band up close.

In an interview with the Sentinel-Times, Andrew Duffield shared that from their inner-city Melbourne venues and university lunchtime slots, the band's Archies Creek set will lean into hits that generations of fans know and love.

"We'll mix big hits, including 'Out of Mind Out of Sight' and 'Barbados' to give everyone something to sing along to," Andrew said.

"And expect a respectful nod to the band's hitmaking era - including songs associated with music genius James Freud, who died in 2010 - alongside tracks like 'King of Kings'.

"I don't think we've done King of Kings live before until now; that's another side to an intimate show."

The gig will take the audience on the band's long history, with occasional improvisation onstage.

"An afternoon gig, such as Archies Creek, feels so informal.

"We love that we can walk through the crowd and engage with the audience."

"An easy-going vibe helps turn the show into a multigenerational party - parents who first saw the band decades ago bringing their kids along, sharing stories and songs across generations."

Despite the classics from the Models, Andrew said he's still in the studio after decades of performing and produces the band from there, so there is still a passion for producing new material, even if the live set predominantly celebrates familiar sounds.

On the road, the band remain active collaborators: they recently toured with Boom Crash Opera and have a string of interstate dates planned throughout the year.

Models have continued to record, recently releasing two EPs, GTK and MEMO.

For anyone heading along to Archies Creek Hotel on Sunday, January 18, Andrew said this regional show is a great start to the year.

Tickets are still available at [www.archiescreekhotel.com.au](http://www.archiescreekhotel.com.au).



The colourful cast of 30 local children is ready to entertain audiences of all ages.



Young performers bring Madagascar the Musical to life at the WTG Shed in Wonthaggi.

## Madagascar the Musical hits the stage in Wonthaggi

WONTHAGGI Theatrical Group is presenting Madagascar the Musical this January, brought to life by a vibrant cast of 30 local children.

Based on the much-loved DreamWorks animated film, the show is a fast-paced, family-friendly adventure filled with comedy, catchy songs, dynamic choreography and youthful enthusiasm.

The story follows four pampered Central Park Zoo animals Alex the lion, Marty

the zebra, Melman the giraffe and Gloria the hippo whose predictable lives are turned upside down when Marty dreams of freedom beyond the zoo.

A series of comic mishaps sees the friends unexpectedly shipwrecked on the island of Madagascar.

Adding to the magic of the production, set construction, costumes and makeup have all been created and provided by dedicated local volunteers, showcasing the strong

community spirit behind the show.

With 70 per cent of the season already sold and only 13 tickets left for opening night, audiences are encouraged to book quickly.

Madagascar the Musical runs from Tuesday, January 7 to Saturday, January 11 at the WTG Shed, State Coal Mine Wonthaggi.

Tickets at [wtg.org.au](http://wtg.org.au) or trybooking.com/DHNOU

**SOUTH GIPPSLAND GEMSTONE AND LAPIDARY CLUB GEM SHOW**

**Saturday January 10, 2026 10am-3pm**

Middle Tarwin Hall  
Tarwin Lower Rd / Middle Tarwin

• Gemstones/Fossils/Minerals  
• Displays -Stalls  
• Demonstrations

Francene 0427 777 924

**Send us your photos**

If you're having a 21st, club function, wedding, or other social event, take some photos, name the people in the snaps and email to [news@sgst.com.au](mailto:news@sgst.com.au)

**Sentinel-Times**

*It won't cost a cent to see them in print!*

### WONTHAGGI THEATRICAL GROUP PRESENTS



**7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> January 2026**  
**WONTHAGGI STATE COAL MINE**



**Tickets at [www.wtg.org.au](http://www.wtg.org.au)**

**Book by**  
Kevin Del Aguila

**Music and lyrics by**  
George Noriega  
& Joel Someillan



The Teskey Brothers. Photo: Ian Laidlaw

## Teskey Brothers headline Ocean Sounds on Churchill Island

THE stellar line-up with The Teskey Brothers, The Presets, Thelma Plum, Steph Strings, plus more will take centre stage on Churchill Island on Saturday, January 10, for the ninth Ocean Sounds festival, with gates opening at noon.

This annual event kicks off summer early with patrons devouring gourmet food and local wines while the summer sun softly sets over the ocean, and a line-up of musicians share their tracks live - get ready to sing along with some of Australia's most iconic live acts!

The Ocean Sounds bus is a sustainable and safe way to travel to and from Churchill Island, but booking is limited. Bus routes can be found on socials and online.

Final tickets are available, and for the first time, enjoy a two or three-course sit-down dinner overlooking the festival. The menu will be crafted by and served by chefs from the hatted restaurant, Pialligo

Estate by Create Catering, with a choice of entree, main course and dessert. Again, seats are limited, a valid Ocean Sounds Festival ticket is required to attend the dinner.

Otherwise, the food and wine lineup has a vast range to choose from or pre-order a grazing box from Graze Farm to Plate; boxes available for one to two people, up to five to seven people.

Founder and director Aidan McLaren said he's really excited about this lineup.

The Teskey Brothers, Sam and Josh Teskey, along with their eight-piece band, will headline the 2026 concert series and share their unique blend of blues, rock and folk sound with Phillip Island.

The headline acts are joined by Play-lunch, Holly Hebe, The Foxy Junes and a special performance from Millowl Dreaming.

Final release tickets are available at [oceansoundsfestival.com.au](http://oceansoundsfestival.com.au) for all ages.



Thelma Plum will perform live at Ocean Sounds at 5.20pm. Photo: Em Jensen

### School Holiday Fun for all Ages

## HOBBY HORSE JUMP DAYS

Thursday January

8 & 15, 2026

10-12pm

Sanders Pavilion  
Korumburra Show Grounds

Friendly participation  
for all confidence levels

Parental supervision at all times.

Thank you to  
our sponsor 

A huge thank you to the Korumburra A&P Society for kindly donating the Sanders Pavilion to host this event for the community to enjoy

Phone 0433 450 223 Email [jumpinghorseclub@mail.com](mailto:jumpinghorseclub@mail.com) 



Kids will be able to jump into hobby horse fun during the school holidays at Sanders Pavilion, Korumburra.

## Hobby horse jumping trots into Korumburra

KIDS who are keen to burn off some school holiday energy can saddle up in Korumburra without needing a real horse, with a hobby horse jumping event taking place at Sanders Pavilion next month.

Jumping Horse Club committee members Tiffany Joyce and her mum Trish Joyce are organising the sessions. They'll be held on Wednesday, January 8 and Wednesday, January 15 from 10am to 12pm at the Korumburra Showgrounds.

Tiffany said the idea was to create something fun and inclusive for local families, acknowledging that real horses often require hefty financial and time investments that many can't afford. This event was created for kids who love horses and want to get involved, without having to worry about the cost and ongoing care that comes with owning one.

"We run showjumping events and we love it, but we decided to be more inclusive in our approach," she said.

"Not everyone can afford a horse or be able to look after one, but they still might love horses and want to be active and just want to get involved. It was our way to get our club out and do our bit for the local community. To keep kids active during school holidays."

The setup is simple and designed to be welcoming for first timers. Inside the pavilion, organisers will have a course laid out with numbered jumps and a marked track to follow. Participants hold a hobby horse and complete the course at whatever pace and height feels right.

Jump heights range from 30cm to 60cm, with Tiffany saying kids can choose which jumps they are comfortable

with on the day.

"They just hold a horse on a stick, and you just have to hold that between your legs when you jump. You don't have to have any special fitness or coordination capabilities, anyone can do it," she said.

The sessions are open to a wide range of ages, from 18 months through to teenagers, with Tiffany describing it as suitable for anyone who can walk and hold onto something. Parents and carers must stay and supervise and are welcome to watch.

The cost is \$10 for one round or three rounds for \$20, EFTPOS only on the day. While families can register their interest via [Jumpinghorseclub@gmail.com](mailto:Jumpinghorseclub@gmail.com), Tiffany said people are also welcome to simply turn up.

Parking at the Korumburra Showgrounds will be free.

Tiffany acknowledged hobby horsing is still new in the local area, and some kids may feel unsure at first, but that usually fades quickly once they see others having a go.

"It is a bit of a unique thing, it is very new here," she said.

"So, I think some kids might feel some apprehension of the concept initially, but when people start doing it, we always get other kids coming and asking if they can join."

Participants are encouraged to wear comfortable shoes suitable for running.

The Joyces thanked EQ Saddlery Pakenham for supplying the jumps, and the Korumburra A and P Society for allowing the use of Sanders Pavilion. More information is available through the Facebook page 'JHC hobby horse and fun ring events'.




**WONTHAGGI BINGO**

**WEDNESDAY 1pm - 3pm**  
**THURSDAY 7pm - 9pm**

**Wonthaggi Workmen's Club, 75 Graham Street**  
 Come and join in the laughs at South Coast FM Bingo

**★ RAFFLES ★ DOOR PRIZES ★**



Rafa and Sarah of Melbourne visit the carnival in Inverloch on New Year's Eve. A07\_0126



Shonnay and Jax await customers at the Inverloch carnival on New Year's Eve, selling snow cones. A08\_0126



Andrew and Alex Milwain try out the 360-degree virtual reality racing experience at the Stony Creek Races. rk20\_0126



Darby Cripps and Gracie show off their face painting at the Stony Creek Races. rk21\_0126



Locals Gary and Karen Scott enjoy the final evening of 2025 at the Inverloch market before watching the New Year's Eve fireworks. A02\_0126



Leongatha's Grace Van Eck and Rohan Verma take it easy at the Inverloch market before checking out the fireworks. A03\_0126



Kim of Tarwin enjoys New Year's Eve in Inverloch, holding Milani. A04\_0126



Chloe, Tom and Vanessa of Melbourne visit the Inverloch Lions Club's Twilight Market on New Year's Eve. A05\_0126



Mornington Peninsula visitors Micheal, Pia, Jacob and Mahli relax at the evening market in Inverloch on New Year's Eve. A06\_0126

# Snapped Out

Pictures of you and your friends at the Inverloch carnival on New Year's Eve, Stony Creek Races, New Year's Eve at the Inverloch Lions Club's Twilight Market and Woolamai Races.



This big buck's party group posed for a photo in the winners' circle at Woolamai on Saturday with jockey Maddison Morris after she piloted Magnardo to a win in Race 3 the 'Pig Dog Plate', named after the groom, Aidan Franetic (centre).



Charlie Counsel from Yarraville enjoyed a pony ride while visiting the Stony Creek Races. rk22\_0126



Trev Thompson and Dave Manning of The Times from Phillip Island perform at the Stony Creek Races. rk23\_0126



Riley from Melbourne enjoyed shooting some hoops at the Stony Creek Races. rk24\_0126



Shayne Ashurst, Chloe Brown, Lillian and Phoenix had horse Lance Rebel running in the second race. rk25\_0126



Enjoying their day at the Woolamai Race on Saturday was this Korumburra group of friends Kelley, Ellie, Leila, Jayla, Belle and Anika.



Across from the Mornington Peninsula for a day at the races at Woolamai on Saturday were Colin and Margot Murphy and Geoff and Jan Hankinson.



It was a family day at the Woolamai Races on Saturday for Steve, Emma, Will and Immy of Phillip Island.



## CROSSWORD

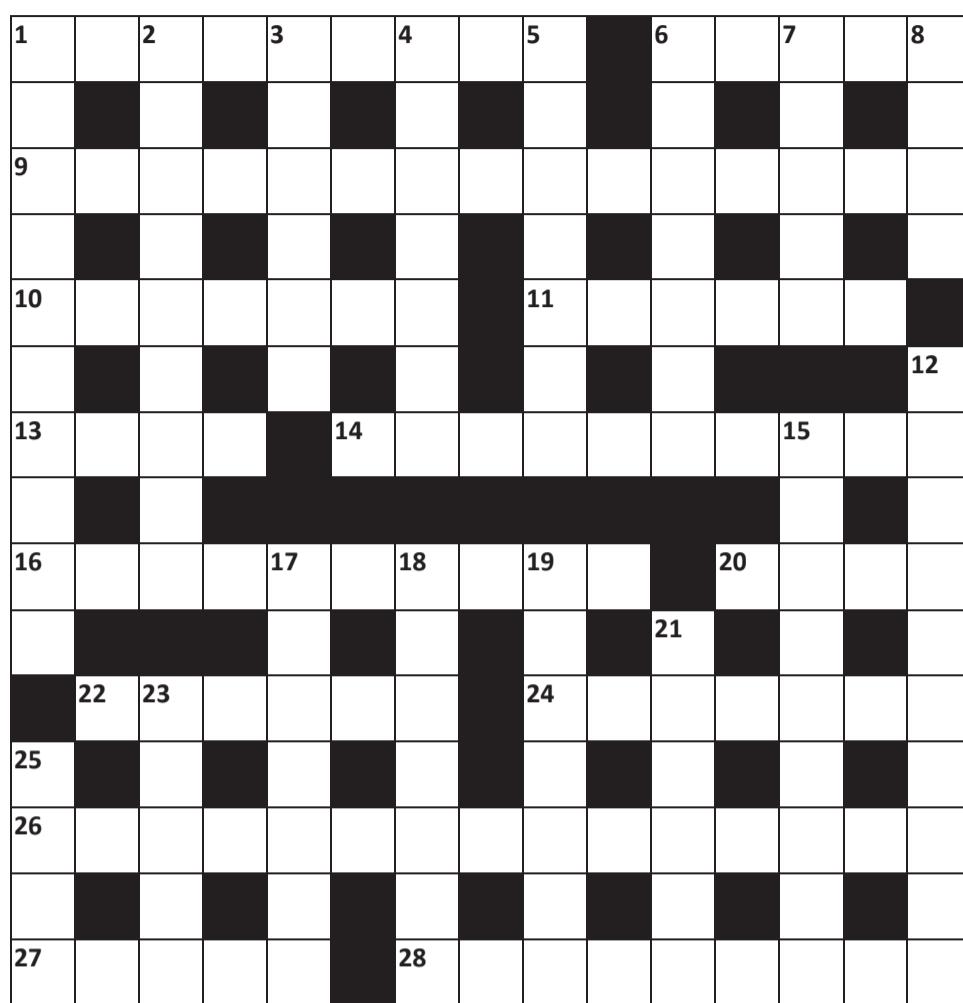
## CRYPTIC CLUES

## ACROSS

- Fantastic story told by Spooner's racey Miss? (5,4)
- Openings in ears freeze (5)
- 1-across's cooking got her into dried dill... (6,3,6,4)
- ... - a Vietnamese staple in tidy bowls (for spread by Mary, it's said) (7)
- One slice from a loaf is hardly foolish! (6)
- Sully from British Premier Division (4)
- A director's cut to *Crucible* (10)
- Once, the third stroke - by one golf narrative - anguished late beginners (4,6)
- See 9-across
- Cake entry takes gold... (6)
- ...at 'Tea' laid occasionally by Queen's Studio (7)
- Hotel lost nothing embracing dock in a greens salad for 1-across (6,3,6)
- Number is 'around 10'. Before 20 went missing! (5)
- Song follows Harrison's original, with Yoko and Ringo's intro as gestures of appreciation (9)

## DOWN

- Degenerate AFL lot? (4,2,4)
- At their best doing Year 12? (2,3,4)
- Chicken's call nothing on cow's, right? (6)
- A cross cut (7)
- Last tee? (7)
- Sore point (between player agents, industry heads and football union leaders) at the forefront (7)
- Disturbs Windsors' broadcast? (5)
- Wise move, of first senator into leadership in a long while (4)

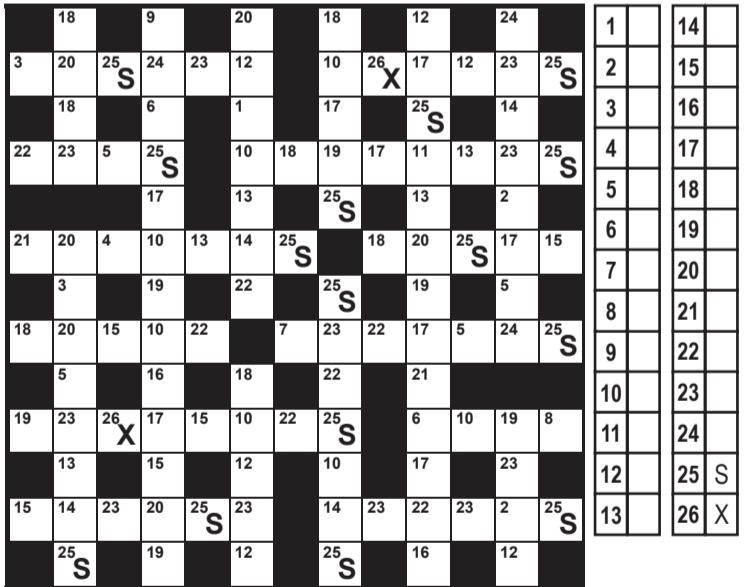


- 1-across, in *101 New Dalmatians* opening, before 'Old' version all over (10)
- She sings with others and others recoil, oddly rattled (9)
- Features of land and air, seen and rarely empty (7)
- Good odds placed on populist Centrists as hot favourite in Hungary (7)
- 1-across and a boy do lead-in (7)
- Dark essence put in beer to make porter (6)
- Henry VIII's wives 2 and 4 and 6 last - that's appropriate... (5)
- ...so, as such, at odds on reflection (4)

## CODEWORD

No. 303

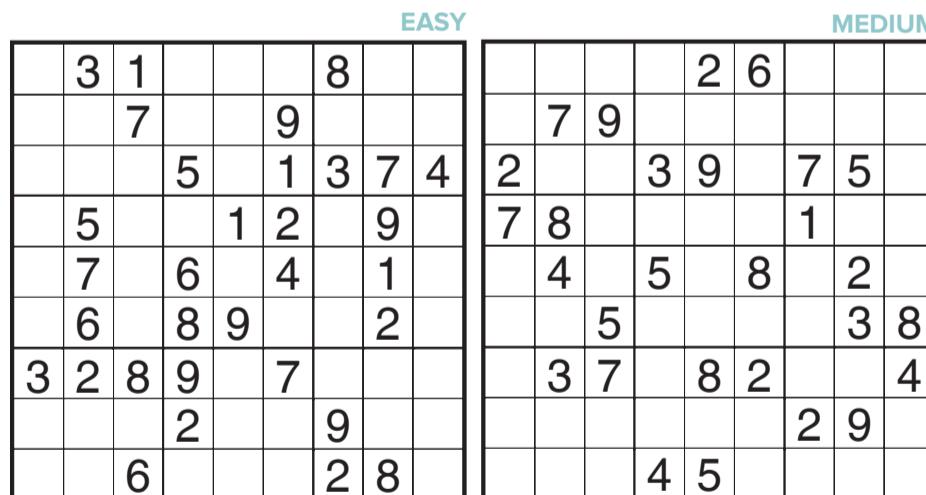
Each number corresponds to a letter of the alphabet. Two have been filled in for you, can you work out the rest?



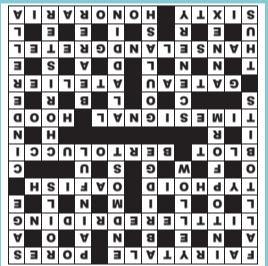
## SUDOKU

No. 312

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

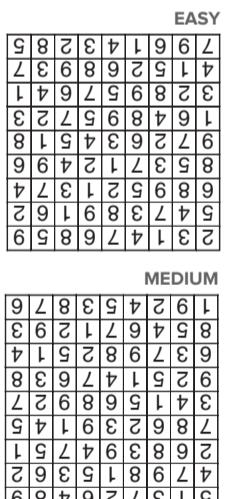


## SOLUTION



2612 | PUZZLES AND PAGINATION © pagemasters.

## SOLUTIONS



## QUICK QUIZ

- Which philosopher wrote *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*?
- Which 1950 drama film starring Anne Baxter won six Oscars?
- Which letter in the phonetic alphabet is also a country?
- What is the more common name for the tibia?
- Sarah Michelle Gellar (pictured) stars in the film adaptation of which Paulo Coelho novel?
- A square knot is more commonly known by what name?
- Which newspaper format is *The New York Times*?
- Which US band won a Grammy Award for the 1999 single *Guerrilla Radio*?
- What aquatic sport is also known as Octopush?
- In which state or territory is the Great Otway National Park?



## WORD SEARCH

No. 223



Can you find all the words listed? The leftover letters will spell out a secret message.

ANGOLA	KENYA	SUDAN
BENIN	LIBYA	TIMBUKTU
BRIK	MAURITANIA	TOGO
BURKINA FASO	MINT	UGANDA
CHAD	MOROCCO	WAT
DOMODA	NIGER	ZAMBIA
EGYPT	NILE	ZEBRA
FATA	PERI PERI	
GENFO	ROOIBOS	
GHANA	SHAKSHOUKA	
GUINEA-BISSAU	SIERRA LEONE	
INJERA	SOMALIA	
JOLLOF RICE	SOUTH AFRICA	



## Cowes home with bonus unit heads to auction

A SPACIOUS family home with a self-contained rear unit hits the auction block in Cowes on Saturday, January 24.

The property at 10 Rogan Close sits on a 605 square metre block in a quiet neighbourhood close to local amenities,

schools and parks.

The main residence features a generous master bedroom with ensuite, well-proportioned living spaces, modern kitchen and plenty of natural light.

The self-contained unit at the rear offers

a separate bedroom and bathroom, ideal for guests, teenagers or rental income.

Alex Scott & Staff Cowes are handling the sale, with auction at noon.

Contact 5952 2633 to arrange a private inspection.

3 | 2 | 1 605m<sup>2</sup>

10 Rogan Close, **Cowes**  
**Auction** Sat, 24 Jan at 12 noon  
**Agent** Alex Scott & Staff  
 Cowes Office 5952 2633



## AUCTION

**Saturday, January 17 at 2pm on site  
 198 Thompson Avenue, Cowes**



### OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS: DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL AWAITS ON A PRIME 3200m<sup>2</sup> SITE!

Don't miss this genuine offering from a genuine vendor!

This expansive 3200 m<sup>2</sup> site presents a huge development potential in a highly sought-after location. A rare and exciting prospect for developers, investors, or those seeking an extensive landholding with significant future upside.

#### Key Features & Current Infrastructure:

- Massive Land Size: A substantial 3200 m<sup>2</sup> parcel ripe for redevelopment.
- Existing Improvements: The property features two large, brick homes, providing immediate rental income or flexible living

arrangements while planning.

- Each home boasts: Three spacious bedrooms.
- An additional study/office, perfect for remote work or a fourth bedroom conversion.

#### The Investment Upside:

- Future Development Potential: Leverage the significant land size for potential multi-unit development, townhouses, or subdivision.
- Immediate Income Stream: Utilise the existing two homes for rental income, offsetting holding costs while you navigate the planning process.

- Flexibility: Live in one, rent the other, or rent both while securing future approvals.

This is an opportunity too big to miss! With two substantial homes already in place on this enormous block, the potential for future capital growth and development yield is truly outstanding. Act now to secure this prime development site!

Note: All future development, subdivision, and changes in land use are Subject to Council Planning Approval. Prospective buyers are encouraged to conduct their own due diligence regarding planning and zoning regulations.

#### CONTACT COWES:

Greg Price 0419 337 441



# Spectacular views in a great location

PERFECTLY located just five minutes from the township of Mirboo North and elevated to capture spectacular views, this beautifully presented contemporary home sits on a lovely 2.9 acre allotment.

With stunning gardens, excellent shedding and an impressive home ideal for the growing family, the entertainer or the tradesperson with plenty of machinery, it offers a lifestyle hard to beat.

The captivating outlook is complemented by established trees, landscaped gardens, raised veggie boxes, grapevines, a chook house and everything needed to enjoy a sustainable lifestyle.

The three-bedroom home includes a master suite with walk-in robe and ensuite, and an expansive open-plan kitchen, dining and living area designed for family living.

The renovated kitchen features quality appliances, a functional walk-in pantry and a huge breakfast bar.

The dining area opens onto a lovely undercover alfresco space overlooking the saltwater and chlorinated pool that is easy to maintain.

The light-filled north-facing living area has wood heating supported by ducted heating and cooling.

Additional features include solar panels and double glazing.

Excellent shedding provides storage, plus there is an additional studio and workshop.

An undercover double carport offers direct access into the home. The property is subdivided into two paddocks, perfect for a pony or running some livestock.

The property at 228 Fullertons Road is for sale for \$1,250,000. Contact Kellie Thomas on 0438 647 449 to arrange an inspection.



3 3 4 2.9 Acres\*

228 Fullertons Road, **Mirboo North**

**For Sale** \$1,250,000

**Agent** Nutrien Harcourts

Kellie Thomas 0438 647 449

kellie.thomas@nh.com.au

\* Approximately

## Nutrien Harcourts Leongatha

We make it possible

47 Bair Street (03) 5662 2292

[nutrien.harcourts.net/au/office/leongatha](http://nutrien.harcourts.net/au/office/leongatha)



### LEONGATHA

Montville

- Elegant 1913-14 federation home on a spacious block.
- Period charm, modern kitchen, renovated bathroom.
- Immaculate gardens, and excellent shedding.

\$950,000



### MORWELL

Fantastic Investment

- Solid brick 3 bedroom, 2 bathroom unit.
- Light, bright and well presented.
- Close to schools, shops, and public transport.

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## China tariff threat looms over beef exports

AUSTRALIA'S beef industry stands to lose \$1 billion under new Chinese tariffs that will slug exporters 55 per cent once quota limits are exceeded.

Beef Central reports that the treatment of various countries servicing the China market is inconsistent, with Australia to be worse off than some others.

Federal Nationals Leader David Littleproud labelled China's decision as "extremely disappointing", with Cattle Australia warning of the billion-dollar hit.

While there will be no tariff on Australian beef entering China until the trigger level is reached, Beef Central illustrates that different quota quantities have been set according to which country beef is coming from.

For the first year of the new arrangement, from January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026, Australia has a quota of 205,000 tonnes, having exported just short of 250,000 tonnes in 2025 up to the end of November.

In contrast, Uruguay's quota for 2026 has been set at 324,000 tonnes, the nation having exported 188,000 tonnes of beef to China for 2025 up to November.

Brazil, the largest exporter of beef to China has a substantial quota of 1.106 million tonnes for the first year, albeit that is only 80 per cent of last year's beef shipments to China from that source.

Argentina has been set a first year quota of 511,000 tonnes, having shipped 435,000 tonnes of beef to China last year.

"Despite having by far the largest impact on China's domestic beef industry through sheer volume, South American exporters have been heavily favoured in the safeguard measures," Beef Central argues.



Australian beef exports to China are set to be negatively impacted by hefty new tariffs that apply once quotas are exceeded. A25\_0126

By Andrew Paloczi

China's recent tariff announcement follows the country's year-long investigation into imported beef and its impact on China's domestic beef industry.

MLA Managing Director Michael Crowley noted "Australia has consistently engaged with China throughout their investigation process, making clear at every opportunity that our exports are not the cause of any alleged injury to China's domestic beef sector."

The organisation has expressed its disappointment on behalf of Australia's red meat industry and reminded China of Australia's position as a trusted free trade partner.

"Importantly, MLA will continue to work with industry and trade partners to actively promote Australian red meat in China, ensuring we remain well-positioned to capitalise on our strong reputation," Mr Crowley said.

The organisation will also continue working closely with the Australian Government.

Despite acknowledging the new tariff threat applies to other countries as well as Australia, Mr Littleproud linked China's announcement to what he called another failure on behalf of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his Government.

Mr Albanese declared that Australian officials are communicating with their Chinese counterparts and advocating for Australian industry, but argued the nation is not being singled out, saying "This is a general position that China has put."

China's newly announced tariffs will apply for at least three years with the quotas increasing annually.



Nutrien's Kev Clark and farmer Neil Couper of Willawa Grazing are pleased with the prices Mr Couper's cattle fetched at Monday's female feature sale in Leongatha A40\_0126

## Leongatha female sale small, but prices good

By Andrew Paloczi

WHILE cattle numbers at Monday's annual feature female sale in Leongatha were again down, as has been the trend in recent years, there was some good quality on offer with those sellers the Sentinel-Times chatted to happy with the prices achieved.

Nutrien South Gippsland Livestock's Terry Ginnane kicked off proceedings, with the first pens sold under Regional Livestock Exchanges (RLX) ownership of the Leongatha Saleyards being cow and calf combinations from Foster-based Willawa Grazing, being the annual draft from Neil and Anette Couper.

"Once again they've done an outstanding job," Mr Ginnane said, describing the calves as "absolute crackers", those animals being by Hazelwood and McIndoe bulls.

The eight heifer and calf combinations sold first up made \$3,700 a pair, another nine Willawa mothers and calves getting \$3,300, and a further nine making \$3,250.

Ten joined Willawa heifers weighing 561

kilos achieved \$3,350, being snapped up by Nutrien SGL's Eddie Hams for a client, while Nutrien's Brian McCormack did likewise with a pen of 11 joined Willawa heifers weighing 515 kilos.

All up, Willawa Grazing sold 26 cows and calves and 40 springer heifers.

"We were happy with today's results," Mr Couper said, the Coupers having already joined another 50 heifers for next year's Leongatha female sale.

"There's enough profit in it for us to feel that it's still worthwhile doing; otherwise we'd be fattening these heifers and selling them as fat heifers, so we've got to get enough over their meat value to make it worthwhile joining and calving them," Mr Couper explained.

The Coupers' livestock agent, Kev Clark of Nutrien SGL was also pleased with the outcome, noting the secret is trying to buy bulls with a bit of shape, such as Hazelwood Angus.

"It's worth paying a little more for your bulls," Mr Couper remarked, albeit they are affordable local bulls.

A healthy supply of repeat buyers bought the Willawa cattle offered on Monday.

"These were raised out of our dairy herd at Foster and we move them over to Dumbalk and join them there," Mr Couper said, adding he and Anette have been doing so for about eight years.

Livestock agents were kept busy throughout the sale, buying cattle for local clients.

Another Nutrien SGL agent, Stuart Jenkin, spoke of the prices fetched by Korumburra cattle from his son Jamie Jenkin and from Chris Amor, each of whom sold joined heifers.

"We were pleased with the sale," Mr Jenkin said, Mr Amor's seven joined Angus heifers having made \$3,450 each and Jamie's joined Black Baldy heifers fetching \$3,250 each.

Only between 220 and 230 cattle were at this year's female sale, down from about 800 last year, and around 2,000 head about five years ago.

Asked about the declining numbers, Mr Clark attributed the trend to the minuscule number of vealers in the market these days, with people electing to get out of that area and into straight beef cows due to a lack of financial rewards for persisting with vealers.

When vealers are ready to go, they must be sold promptly regardless of the price at the time.

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## Livestock Sales

### KORUMBURRA

David Ryan	0408 311 895	Dick Faulkner	0408 595 174
LEONGATHA		Brian Vuillermi	0429 436 040
Dane Perczyk - Livestock Manager	0408 176 063	Rob Ould - Livestock Manager	0408 595 183
Jack Curtis	0427 762 670	David Holden	0428 749 390
WARRAGUL		Alan Bolding	0419 723 255
Neil Darby - Livestock Manager	0418 595 265	PAKENHAM	
Terry Ahearn	0438 562 816	David Setches - Livestock Manager	0409 443 473
Jordan Sim	0448 058 435	Glenn Barwick	0408 975 476
Mark Malacarne	0418 654 590	Morgan Croucher	0457 001 877
Georgie Snell	0417 100 657	Tim Gibson	0420 306 599
		Imogen Price	0417 225 498

## Real Estate Sales

### KORUMBURRA

Scott McKenzie	0427 552 898	LEONGATHA	0402 940 320	MELBOURNE LAND	0474 781 711
WONTHAGGI		PETER DWYER	0428 855 244	COWES	0419 337 441
Phillip Hanley	0417 140 508	Emily Hillberg	0422 622 299	BRIAN SILVER	0407 347 509
Cal Nation	0439 334 163	Tony Giles	0407 528 192	CHASE WATTERS	0423 272 819
Mick Chambers	0418 349 783	DAN HUTHER	0418 334 801	VENUS BAY	
GRANTVILLE		ALAN STEENHOLDT	0409 423 822	DANIEL LAWRIE	0417 631 252
Angus Hall	0466 326 487			SUE LAWRIE	0419 885 489
INVERLOCH		PAKENHAM	0438 574 472	KOO WEE RUP	
Marni Lee Redmond	0403 525 413	TONY GIBSON	0438 574 472	ANGUS HALL	0466 326 487
BERWICK		LANG LANG			
Tom Gibson	0438 574 472	SCOTT MCKENZIE	0427 552 898		

SUCCESS THROUGH SERVICE

# Kooroaman-based Lesters happy with hay production

WHILE spring grass growth started slowly, rain and sunshine kicked in for Kooroaman beef farming family, the Lesters, enabling hay to be baled at the usual time over the Christmas period.

Rhonda Lester explained that extra paddocks had to be locked up for hay this season after challenging conditions saw last season's hay supply exhausted, exorbitant hay prices leading Ms Lester to borrow hay from her father.

With grass growth eventually catching up after being about a month behind at one stage, and the family teaming up to get the job done, around 1,000 5x4 bales were produced this season.

That will put hay in an extra shed compared to last season and enable Ms Lester's dad to receive the bales owing.

With the family's cattle locked out of more paddocks this season, Ms Lester's husband Warren was able to provide sufficient grazing opportunities for the herd on various properties, the spring feed having come on and some animals being sold.

"Because the other blocks are quite hilly, we just make hay on the home block," Ms Lester said.

The Lesters finished baling on December 30, daughter Sophie who also works at the Leongatha saleyards and is committed to a career in agriculture, busy doing the raking, Mr Lester cutting and baling.

"The other two girls, Chelsea and Tayla had a go at raking for the first time," Ms Lester said of the expanding family workforce.

The weather proved OK for cutting and baling.

"Warren cut on some dampish days but the grass was mature and we knew fine weather was following, so it dried out alright and has been nice and dry to bale," Ms Lester said, noting there was some prior checking of the barometer.

While the Lesters have heard from other farmers of damage to grass caused by pest caterpillars known as armyworms, the family were fortunate to discover no such damage despite finding some of the pests.

Overall, it's been a productive hay season for many farmers locally.

Ms Lester has heard some people saying they are planning to buy hay but doesn't believe there's that much available.

"I think people are replenishing their own," she said, expecting many to hang onto their supplies.

The Lesters focus entirely on hay, having done silage for milking cows in the past but with silage not fitting into their program these days.

With the operation relying on spring calving, grass usually caters to much of the feed needs for the cattle, with hay available during winter.



Hay work goes on recently at the Lester property in Kooroaman

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# Don't be afraid of a new challenge says Toora farmer Marcus Casey

By Andrew Paloczi

TOORA'S Marcus Casey enjoys being a beef farmer, also thriving in his career as an aircraft engineer.

He worked in the Middle East for 10 years prior to COVID, being employed by Etihad Airways, then returning to Melbourne where he did contract work at the airport.

"I always loved aeroplanes," he said of his motivation to reskill at age 40 to break into the aircraft engineering field, seizing an opportunity in Brisbane offered by the Queensland Government.

Mr Casey had aspirations to earn enough in the Middle East to buy a farm, now sharing 100 acres in Toora with partner Cecilia who is an engineer in the construction industry, the land bought 10 years ago.

Originally from Melbourne's Kew, Mr Casey's parents had a hobby farm in the Macclesfield area in the Dandenongs.

That encouraged him to study at Langerong Agricultural College, qualifying in Agricultural Science, eventually finding a long-term role with a major Dutch vegetable seed company prior to redundancy and choosing to reskill as an aircraft engineer.

Mr Casey and Cecilia run 50 to 60 head of cattle in Toora, with a focus on pasture improvement along with selecting animals with good bloodlines, Mr Casey crediting local livestock agent and friend Simon Henderson with being helpful.

The cattle are largely sold direct to AMG in Dandenong through Mr Henderson, with most of the meat exported to the North American market.

"So, we usually buy everything at the market here, then sell direct over the

hook," Mr Casey said at the final Leongatha Store Sale run by the VLE.

The Toora farm was run down when Mr Casey and Cecilia bought it, with work taking place since to improve it.

Those improvements included getting weeds under control, the likes of ragwort initially holding sway.

There was plenty of physical labour involved, the couple having continued to work in their engineering capacities as well.



Marcus Casey encourages others to pursue their passions, having relished his careers in agriculture and as an aircraft engineer A01\_0126

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A/c Beccon Agriculture P/L, Shady & Brandy Creek (ELDERS)  
200 Angus mixed sex weaners, 'Bowman Genetics Angus Blood', weaned, GF & ABF

A/c Kathwal Farm, Pakenham South (ELDERS)  
150 Angus mixed sex yearlings, weaned

50 Hereford mixed sex yearlings, weaned

'Bowman & Wattlewood Angus Blood', GF & ABF

A/c Riverslea Pastoral P/L, Riverslea. (ELDERS)  
170 Angus mixed sex weaners, 'Hazeldean Angus Blood', GF & ABF

A/c R & S Williams, 'Carra Falls' Carrajung South. (ELDERS)  
120 Angus mixed sex weaners, 'By West Creek Angus Bulls ex Cherry Mont Bred cows', GF & ABF

A/c E.J. G.G. M.G & R Bates, 'Maida Vale' Mountain View (ELDERS)  
100 Angus mixed sex yearlings, weaned, 'Bred By Al Hazeldean Genetics', GF & ABF

A/c Allen Angus, Rosedale (ELDERS)  
90 Angus mix sex weaners, 10-14 mths, weaned, VB, GF & ABF, NE Accred

A/c Merristock P/L, Woodstock (ELDERS)  
70 Angus mixed sex weaners, weaned, 'Kelly Angus Blood', GF & ABF

A/c G & L Bennett, Trafalgar (ELDERS)  
60 Angus mixed sex weaners, 'By Al Newground Bull

& Zeely Angus Bulls', weaned, GF & ABF  
A/c Parker Amber P/L, Krowera (ELDERS)  
60 Angus mixed sex weaners, 'By Bowman & Wattlewood Angus Bulls', weaned, GF & ABF

A/c G. Sas, Glengarry (ELDERS)  
50 Angus steer weaners, 'Leawood Angus Blood' weaned, GF & ABF

A/c Willurah Park P/L, Harkaway (ELDERS)  
50 Angus mixed sex weaners, "Al Bred to Millah Murrah Rembrant", weaned, GF & ABF

A/c C. Martell, Darnum (ELDERS)  
60 Angus mixed sex weaners, 'Bowman Angus Blood', weaned, GF & ABF

A/c G. Burley, Jindivick (ELDERS)  
60 Angus mixed sex, 12-14 mths, 'Bowman Angus Blood', weaned, GF & ABF

A/c J. McCarthy, Longwarry, (ELDERS)  
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A/c Meljar Pty Ltd, Ruby (ELDERS)  
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10 Hereford steers, Ponderosa and Mawarra blood, 14 mths, weaned, NE Accred

A/c G. Schukraft, Childers (ELDERS)  
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A/c Leighwood Farms, Woodside (ELDERS)  
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A/c M. Brady, Tyers (ELDERS)  
20 Angus steer weaners, 'Bowman Angus blood', GF & ABF

A/c L. Bond, Seaview (ELDERS)  
17 Char X mixed sex weaners, weaned, GF & ABF

G & J Tuckett, Woodside (ELDERS)  
10 Angus Steers, 10mths, weaned, Landfall blood, VB, GF & ABF, NE Acc



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SOUTH GIPPSLAND ASSOCIATED AGENTS

# Volunteers collect 27kg of rubbish from Cowes foreshore

WILDLIFE Coast Cruises led a community cleanup of Cowes last week, scheduled for the summer peak season after the New Year celebrations, a community event sponsored by Wildlife Coast Cruises and Phillip Island Nature Parks.

Environmental officers of Wildlife Coast Cruises, Mika and Georgia, led the cleanup, setting up a hub on the foreshore.

Families and school-aged children passing by donated their time to collect rubbish from along the Cowes foreshore, main street and nearby points such as Erehwon Point and

Mussel Rocks.

"We basically covered the entire foreshore around the nearby carparks," said Mika.

"We didn't get a lot of participants, but people were really passionate and spent quite a bit of time in the heat to look for rubbish around town, in the bushes and on the beach."

Organisers weighed every bag returned to the hub to track results and recycle properly, weighing in a total of 27.61kg of waste in an hour and a half.

Eighty litres of landfill, 65 litres of bottles and cans, five litres of organic waste and 20 litres of paper and cardboard.

"It was great to have support from local businesses donating prizes and supporting the event," said Mika.

"Not many people want to donate their time picking up rubbish on holidays which is understandable, so it was wonderful to have support from Phillip Island Nature Parks, Phillip Island Tenpin Bowling and Entertainment Centre, Phillip Island Sauna, San Remo Fisherman's Co-op, Field Phillip Island, Cowes Coastcare and Wildlife Coast Cruises donating vouchers for participants to go into a draw and win a few local prizes."

It was a great incentive for participation."

The event was coordinated with support from the Bass Coast Shire Council, which provided waste vouchers to allow for cost-free disposal of collected rubbish.

"Georgia was a key driver of the event, and we coordinated it together."

Last year it was held in September, but it was great to hold it after the New Year period, where we collected cans, cigarette butts and glow sticks," said Mika.

"We look forward to running more local clean-ups in the future."



Mika and Georgia, Wildlife Coast Cruises.

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#### DEATHS

##### BITOMSKY-PRYOR, Helen Margaret:

Passed away peacefully at Koorooman House, Leongatha on December 23, 2025. Aged 86 years.

Loved wife of Rudy and Ron (both dec.).

Loving Mum of Kelvin and Christine, Kiersten and Merv.

Cherished Nan to Brendan, and Taryn and Great Nan to Jett and Tully.

Adored Farmor to Tom, Clayton, Jade, and Kristy.

##### Fly high Mumma.

Helen's service was held on Monday, January 5.

##### BOTHMAN Christa:



In loving memory of Christa Bothman. Passed peacefully 20.12.2025, aged 90.

Always in our hearts - Sue, Hanna and Britta.

##### EVERITT, Kathy:

It is with much regret that we, The Lions Club of Wonthaggi, acknowledge the passing of our esteemed member Lion, Kathy, on Thursday, December 18, 2025.

She has left a great hole in our hearts and will be greatly missed.

She fought "like a lion" to the end.

##### Mum and Dad reunited.

#### DEATHS

##### FAIRBROTHER, Elizabeth May (Liz): 14.12.1976 - 25.12.2025.

Passed away suddenly and forever in our hearts.

Dearly loved daughter of Don and Dorothy.

Much loved sister of Cameron, Scott and their families.

##### A Private Burial will take place.

##### FIEK, Bodo Siegfried (Bo):

Passed away December 29, 2025.

82 years.

Husband of Joan.

Father of Andrew, Anita and Karin.

OPI to eight grandchildren.

Thank you to Leongatha Healthcare, GSH, LRH, Doctors and staff for your excellent care of Bo.

##### GARDNER, Valerie Joy:

24.1.1945 - 25.12.2025.

Passed away peacefully.

Loved wife of Francis (dec.).

Loving mum and mother-in-law of Peter (dec.) and Deb, Victor, Jacqueline and Jamie.

Adored grandma to Rick, Katie, Krystal and Sheldon.

Proud great grandma to four.

##### Mum and Dad reunited.

#### DEATHS

##### JOHNSTONE, Robert Desmond:

21.04.1959 - 29.12.2025.

Passed away peacefully.

Son of Allan and Norma (dec.).

Brother to Gwenda.

Father and father-in-law of Scott and Sam, Luke and Savannah.

Grandfather of Vivian.

##### Rest Peacefully.

##### KELLY, David John (Dave):

17.08.1960 - 16.12.2025.

Passed away suddenly at Grampians Health, Ballarat.

Son of Alexander Edgar Robert Kelly (dec.) and Beryl Elizabeth Kelly.

Brother of Edward Robert Kelly, Ian Donald Kelly (dec.) and Cheryl Robyn Lester.

A wonderful bloke, sorely missed.

For Funeral details, please visit [handleyfuneralservices.com.au](http://handleyfuneralservices.com.au) or phone 03 5662 2717.

##### McKENZIE-MCHARG, Colin Andrew:

15.11.1941 - 15.12.2025.

Dearly loved and loving husband of Chris for nearly 51 years.

Proud father of Andrew, Kate, Sarah, Cameron and Keir. Loved father-in-law of Sietske, Dafydd, Kate, and Alyssia and delighted grandfather of seven lively grandchildren.

Respected Lawyer to the South Gippsland Community for 50 years.

##### Always in our hearts.

##### McLAREN, Robert (Bruce):

Loving husband of Jan for 64 wonderful years.

Will miss you and love you forever.

Will miss your loving kiss every night.

Til we meet again my darling Bruce.

-- Love Jan xx.

Those we love don't go away

They walk beside us everyday

Unseen, Unheard, and always near

Still loved, still missed, still very dear.

Forever in our hearts, forever in our minds darling Dad.

-- Craig and Pam xx.

Dad,

If I could write a story it would be the greatest ever told.

Of a kind and loving father who had a heart of gold.

If I could write a million pages, but still unable to say, just how much I love you and miss you every day.

-- Your loving daughter and son-in-law Wendy and Geoff xx.

Let Us Create That Final Gift

#### DEATHS

##### McLAREN, Robert (Bruce):

In loving memory of my darling Poppy.

Forever in our hearts and minds.

-- Love you so much.

Nicole and Kass xx.

In loving memory of Poppy.

May you find peace and joy reunited with your loved ones in Heaven.

Thank you for your time with us, you will be deeply missed.

-- Love always Kris, Brooke, and your beautiful great granddaughter Alyssa xxx.

##### McLAREN, Bruce:

Loved brother-in-law of Lesley and loved uncle of Cheryl, Jenny, Billy and Leanne and families.

Treasured memories.

##### McLAREN, Robert (Bruce):

Retired Vic Police Number 11088.

13.11.1927 - 28.12.2025.

Loving husband of Jan for 64 years.

Father to Craig and Pam, Wendy and Geoff, loving Pop to Nicole and Kass, Kris and Brooke and great pop to Alyssa.

##### Forever in our hearts.

##### SECCULL, Peter Howard (Poppy):

18.07.1942 - 24.12.2025.

Loved husband of Cath.

Loving father of Marcus, Melissa (dec.), Adrian and Andrew.

Adored grandfather to Adam, Jarryd, Maximus, Hercules, Shelby and Raffa.

Privately Cremated.

A Celebration of Life to be held at a later date. Details to be advised.

##### THOMPSON (nee Connelly), Lila Beverley:

12.09.1938 - 28.12.2025.

Loved wife of Eric of 65 years.

Loving mum and mother-in-law of Karen and Steve, Glenn and Lisette.

Adored Nan to her six grandsons and proud Nanna B to five great grandchildren.

Bev you are now at rest and smelling the roses, looking down on us and guiding the way. -- Love Eric.

Loved mother of Glenn and mother-in-law of Lisette.

Loving Nan to Lachlan, Callam and their partners Hollie and Georgia.

Cherished memories and fun times will always be in our hearts.

Rest easy Mum.

Let Us Create That Final Gift

#### DEATHS

##### THOMPSON (nee Connelly), Lila Beverley:

Mum,

In our hearts you will always stay,

Loved and remembered every day.

Mother of Karen, mother-in-law of Steve.

Nanna of Travis, Ashley, Jayden, Brandon and their partners.

Great grandmother 'Nanna B' to Darcy, Addison, Austin, Tannah and Colby.

**TOMPSETT, William John (Bill):**  
30-3-1944 - 03-01-2026

Loved husband of Betty (Val).

Cherished father of Leanne and Danny.

Much loved Grandfather to Jay and Reece.

Father-in-law to Michelle and Shawn.

Brother to Christine and brother-in-law to Joe.

Stepfather of Stephen and Jennifer.

Step Grandfather to Eva, Kaitlyn, Jacob (dec), Joel and Thomas.

Step Great Grandfather to 6.

Passed away peacefully at the Wonthaggi hospital with family by his side.

**TOMPSETT, William John (Bill):**  
30-03-1944 - 03-01-2026

You were my soul mate and husband.

Beside each other always.

An everlasting love. Will miss you, Betty.

**TOMPSETT, William John (Bill):**  
30-03-1944 - 03-01-2026

Not just a father, you were my workmate and best friend.

Your life was a blessing, your memory a treasure.

Your laughter and strength will live on forever.

Your Son Danny, Michelle, Jay and Reece.

**TOMPSETT, William John (Bill):**  
30-03-1944 - 03-01-2026

To Dad

It happened too quick.

I will miss you very much.

Remember the memories with you. I love you, Dad, never forget you.

Leanne, (Lee and Shawn). RIP.

Go Blue Boys.

**TOMPSETT, William John:**

To my brother Billy, I will always have you in my heart.

I miss you so much.

From your sister Chris and partner Joe.

</div



## What's new?

WELCOME to 2026 – a new year with fresh possibilities.

And you probably know this, but maybe I should warn you: a new year doesn't magically change our lives or circumstances.

Some things in life are out of our control and we just have to deal with them as they come.

But there's a whole lot in our lives that we are responsible for and that we choose for ourselves.

If you want this year to be different, then you should consider living differently.

It's been said that you only ever become what you're becoming today.

In other words, what's going on in your life at the end of this year will depend significantly on how you live throughout the year – your daily habits, attitudes, behaviours and thought patterns.

So what can you do in small, daily ways to help you get to where you want to go?

Changing things in life can be

**Pastor Jeff Robertson**  
Connections Church Inverloch and Foster

uncomfortable, but lack of change can be even more uncomfortable, especially over a long period.

And you don't have to figure it all out for yourself.

The baby Jesus we celebrated at Christmas is the same Jesus who says "believe in me" and "follow me".

He wants the best for you and your life.

In following him, we're encouraged to "let the Holy Spirit guide your lives... the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 6).

May this year be one where you invite Jesus to work in you and transform you to bring about the greatest meaning, purpose and fulfilment you could know.



Deep South Brass 8 performs. A24\_0126

## Thousands flock to Marketta Festival

**By Andrew Paloczi**

SUNSHINE, good vibes and around 3500 visitors made Friday's Marketta Festival a hit for the Venus Bay Surf Life Saving Club, coordinator Simonetta Seri delighted with the community support.

Marketta has become an established local event.

"All the vendors did really well," Ms Seri said of Friday's festivities.

She remarked that many people volunteer their time to plan and run the event, noting "I'm just the captain steering the ship," and it's a long day for the team, starting early and finishing late.

While Marketta Festival generates funds for VBSLSC, it serves a wider

purpose, conveying the importance of the club as part of the community.

Ms Seri highlighted the significance of life saving patrols to the town's vibrancy, given the dangerous nature of local beaches.

"The whole community of Venus Bay, the shops, the real estate agents, the housing wouldn't be as good as it is without the club," she said.

A Beach Bar proved a popular addition to this year's Marketta, with the licensing arrangement extended to cover the whole festival area, people particularly

enjoying sipping refreshing drinks as they took in beach views and the sunset.

The inside Gin Bar was again a drawcard, VBSLSC benefiting from drink sales.

Club volunteers also sold VBSLSC merchandise, while tasty dumplings served by members of the club's Inflatable Rescue Boat team again drew crowds and raised funds.

Jazz from Deep South Brass 8 and the covers of Olly and Scuzzi had people dancing outside, while club member and solo artist Matthew Rigby entertained those in the Gin Bar.



Annika and Metale Guha explore the Marketta Festival, having heard about the event from a friend while holidaying in Wonthaggi. A21\_0126

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Applications Close: Friday, January 23, 2026 at 5pm



HM13271



Venus Bay Surf Life Saving Club volunteers show off some of the available merchandise. A23\_0126



Race winners Sam Dimopoulos and James with their winning inner tube, joined by lifeguards Eleanor, Mia Sutherland and Rosie. rk10\_0126



First-time competitor Chris Peters with his paddleboard. rk14\_0126

## Dimopoulos defends The Oar at Inverloch

INVERLOCH SLSC patrol captain Sam Dimopoulos has claimed back-to-back victories in the club's Inflatable Boat Race, navigating the surf on a black inner tube alongside youngster James to claim The Oar trophy on Saturday.

Around 20 competitors took on the waves in everything from inner tubes to inflatable kayaks, with spectators cheering from the beach. "People were chanting on

the sides, calling for their favourite lilo," Dimopoulos said.

"We had a cross-section of young and old. It went really well."

Dimopoulos announced his retirement from competition immediately after securing his second consecutive title.

"Two Oars in a row. I think it might be time for me to hang up my competition days and pass the baton to the next generation," he said.

"It feels magnificent to win the awe of the Oar."

The event grew from the club's Nippers program and was formalised last year with a perpetual trophy that hangs in the clubhouse bar.

The race drew locals and visitors alike, including first-timer Chris Peters and Frankston duo Jai Kitchen and Riley Saxon who spotted it on social media.

"Saw it on Facebook and thought we'd give it a go," they

said. Justin Cox, Xavier Cox and Benji Miriston took on the waves with a blue and white inflatable in their first attempt.

Dimopoulos said the club would look at introducing registration for next year as the event's popularity grows.

"It's growing a little bit faster than what we thought," he said.

"Come down, be part of the fun. It's a good fun day."

## Swimmers achieve their qualifying times

THE sun was shining as 200 Gippsland swimmers raced at Sale in GSI 10 on Saturday.

The event was the last chance for swimmers to get a qualifying time for the Country Championships in Geelong in a fortnight.

It was also a chance for the swimmers to get back into racing after the festive season.

Competition was fierce and the progress over the past few months was visible, with many swimmers achieving personal bests and several adding to their list of events at Countries.

There were also several swimmers who achieved National qualifying times.

Coach Lorri was thrilled with how the 33 South Gippsland Bass swimmers performed on the day.

"It was wonderful to see some of the new swimmers overcome their nerves and try their best," she said.



Lily and Ben Young raced for their first time at Sale

## Bridge Club news and results

### SOUTH GIPPSLAND

BRIDGE took a break in South Gippsland and resumed on January 2 in Inverloch.

The South Gippsland Bridge Club thanked everyone who chips in and makes the events run smoothly and every session enjoyable, with special reference to director Neville Chapman, who guides the play, does more than his share of setting up and makes possibly the best sponge in South Gippsland.

The club wished a healthy, happy and serene 2026 to all.

Anyone wanting to learn the game or join the club will be most welcome.

Please contact the president Mary on 0427 338 598 or secretary Kathy on 0438 859 561.

### PHILLIP ISLAND

MONDAY, December 29, saw Australian Bridge Champion Justin Mill and his wife Jane Rennie as guests of the club, as winners of a four table duplicate game on a massive 77.98 per cent.

Wednesday was won by Greg Nicholson and Jean Barbour on 60 per cent.

Greg Nicholson won "Best Individual Player of the Year" with 57.2 per cent, just pipping his partner Jean Barbour on 57.15 per cent.

"Best Monday Pairs" went to Greg Nicholson and Jean Barbour with 55.8 per cent and "Best Wednesday Pairs" also went to Greg Nicholson and Jean Barbour with 59.34 per cent.

## TIDE GUIDE

TIDAL PREDICTIONS FROM PORT PHILLIP HEADS

Approx. Tide Variations: Seal Rocks, Venus Bay, Waratah Bay and Cape Woolamai (Same), Tooradin +2hrs 45, Cowes Pier +50, Stony Point +40

TUESDAY  
January 6

3.01am 1.69m  
8.30am 0.69m  
2.36pm 1.46m  
8.42pm 0.19m

WEDNESDAY  
January 7

3.49am 1.71m  
9.24am 0.59m  
3.32pm 1.48m  
9.33pm 0.24m

THURSDAY  
January 8

4.33am 1.70m  
10.15am 0.50m  
4.27pm 1.49m  
10.20pm 0.31m

FRIDAY  
January 9

5.14am 1.68m  
11.01am 0.43m  
5.20pm 1.47m  
11.03pm 0.40m

SATURDAY  
January 10

5.49am 1.63m  
11.45am 0.39m  
6.13pm 1.44m  
11.44pm 0.50m

SUNDAY  
January 11

6.23am 1.57m  
12.24pm 0.37m  
7.06pm 1.41m

MONDAY  
January 12

12.22am 0.60m  
6.55am 1.50m  
1.01pm 0.37m  
8.00pm 1.38m

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## KORUMBURRA

### RESULTS:

Tuesday, December 23:

Stableford: 47 players.

A Grade winner: Barry Kerr (9)

39 points.

B Grade winner: Deb Wrigley (30) 39 points.

NTPs: first Wayne Knights, seventh Peter Van Agtmael, 10th John Kerr and 13th Peter Van Agtmael.

Thursday, December 25:

No competition: closed Christmas Day.

Saturday, December 27:

Sponsor: Esplanade.

Modified Stableford (four person teams): 53 players.

Four Person Modified Ambrose (two best Stableford scores): Michael Graham and Zach Walker, and Blake Walker and Alex Walker 96 points.

Four Person Modified Ambrose (two best Stableford scores – with best drive): John Solly and Murray Webb, and David Gow and Peter Hornibrook 100 Points

NTPs: first Zach Walker, seventh Peter McMaster, 10th Nick Besley and 13th Rob Gallagher.

Tuesday, December 30:

Stableford: 46 players.

A Grade winner: Greg Shattock (9) 39 points.

B Grade winner: Nick Besley (18) 42 points.

NTPs: first Jake Fowles, seventh Nick Besley, 10th Tim Fowles and 13th Shayne Harland.

Thursday, January 1:

A Grade winner: Roy Fleming (8) 39 points.

B Grade winner: Joseph Salvatore (28) 41 points.

NTPs: first Billy Wrigley, seventh Rob Gallagher, 10th Chris McConnell and 13th Tim Fowles.

Saturday, January 3:

Sponsor: Laurie and Sandra Webster.

Men's Monthly Medal: 62 players.

Monthly Medal winner: Brian Pope (18) 64 net.

A Grade winner: Rob Gallagher (8) 67 net.

B Grade winner: Brian Pope (18) 64 net.

C Grade winner: Jye Celebrine (24) 65 net.

Scratch winner: Matt Wrigley (1) 72.

NTPs: first Ross Crawford, seventh Zach Walker, 10th Jye Celebrine and 13th Wayne Knights.

## KORUMBURRA

ON New Year's Eve, the women played an 18-hole Stableford event with some fantastic scores coming in.

Congratulation to A Grade winner Judy Webb (26) having a great score of 45 points and also to runner up Sherrin Solly (26) with 42 points.

The B Grade winner was Maree Wittingslow (35) with also another great score of 44 points.

Runner up was Trudy Olden (31) with 41 points on a c/b.

BDTL went to Dianne Maskell 41 points, Aliesha Wrigley 40 points and Deb Wrigley 38 points on a c/b.

NTPs were on the first Merrissa Cosson (Kelly's Bakery), seventh Shelley Snooks, 10th Julie Hillberg and closest on the 13th was Jennie Loughnan.

Thursday was New Year's Day, and eight women played.

Well done to Deb Wrigley (29) winning with a handy 39 points.

Runner up was Shelley Snooks (17) with 37 points.

BDTL went to Kerri Besley with 35 points.

NTPs were on the first Chris Rickard (Kelly's Bakery), and seventh and 10th Merrissa Cosson.

Last Saturday was the start of the 2026 board events with the January RB Monthly Medal played.

Once again, the conditions were perfect for good scores and 15 players took advantage of the well-prepared fairways.

A very pleased Aliesha Wrigley (23) was the overall winner with 66 net taking home the Luscious Café voucher.

Deb Wrigley (29) rounded off an excellent run of scores with 68 net and runner up.

BDTL went to Maree Wittingslow (34) 69 net and Judy Webb (24) 70 on a c/b.

The best scratch score went to Merrissa Cosson with 83.

NTPs went to Merrissa Cosson on the 1st and 10th, while Aliesha Wrigley capped off her great day with an NTP on the 13th.

Wishing all the golfing members and families a very happy, healthy and safe new year.

Good hitting in 2026.

## LEONGATHA

TUESDAY, December 23: Invy Espy Stableford Event.

Tuesday was a Stableford round with a field of 78 members/guests entering the competition and enjoying excellent scoring on a fine day out at Leongatha Golf Club.

Thanks again to the Invy Espy Hotel for their generous sponsorship of the day.

Overall winner: Norman Hughes (43) with high score of the day of 43 points.

A Grade winner: Jeremy de Silva (7) with 37 points on a countback.

A Grade runner up: Jamie Grenville (11) with 37 points.

B Grade winner: Norman Hughes (43) with 43 points.

B Grade runner up: Roy Kleverkamp (16) with 37 points on a countback.

C Grade winner: Peter Waters (23) with 39 points.

C Grade runner up: Mick Reinhart (26) with 38 points on a countback.

NTP 5th 2nd shot: Rod Mackenzie (11) at .88m.

NTP 14th: Hugh Goodman (27) at 6.30m.

NTP 16th: Scott Rayson (19) at 3.90m.

Thursday, December 25: Christmas Day – no competition.

Saturday, December 27: Stableford.

Saturday saw a brilliant field of 129 members/guests take to the course in superb weather playing a Stableford round.

It was so good to welcome a good number of guest players to the course.

Overall winner: Leanne Costello (44) with a high score of the day of 44 points.

A Grade winner: Michael West (7) with an excellent 41 points, 72 off the stick.

A Grade runner up: Anthony Sparkes (11) with 38 points on a countback.

B Grade winner: Daniel Yeap (14) with 39 points.

B Grade runner up: Renato Monacello (14) with 37 points on a countback.

C Grade winner: Gerry Carrour (21) with 39 points.

C Grade runner up: John Housey (17) with 38 points on a countback.

D Grade winner: Leanne Costello (44) with 44 points.

D Grade runner up: Louis

Read (28) with 39 points.

NTP fifth second shot: Michael Thomas (1) at 2.27m.

NTP 14th: Bryan Roylance (18) at 1.95m.

NTP 16th: Barry Attwood (15) at .75m.

Tuesday, December 30: Stableford – 101 entries.

Overall winner: Michael Street (30) with 41.

A Grade winner: Darcy O'Halloran (13) with 40.

Runner up: Matthew Hildebrand (7) with 37 c/b.

B Grade winner: Malcolm Legge (15) with 40.

Runner up: Patrick Mitchell (15) with 38.

C Grade winner: Marie Turner (20) with 40.

Runner up: Alana Davis (18) with 39 (Keysborough Golf Club).

D Grade winner: Michael Street (30) with 41.

Runner up: Sean Munley (26) 40.

Nearest the pin: fifth Craig Hutchinson 38cm, 14th Christopher Leaver 105cm and 16th David Forbes 154cm.

Eagles Nest: Matthew Hildebrand.

Thursday, January 1: Stableford – 72 entries.

Overall winner: Fran O'Brien (28) with 42.

A Grade winner: Tony Morganati (10) with 39c/b.

Runner up: Trevor Rickard (12) with 39.

B Grade winner: Rowan Malcolm (14) with 40 (Heidelberg Golf Club).

Runner up: Anne Larkin (18) with 37 (Anglesea Golf Club).

C Grade winner: Fran O'Brien (28) with 42 (Commonwealth Golf Club).

Runner up: Cathy Gifford (44) with 39 (Box Hill Golf Club).

Nearest the pin: fifth Peter Ali 238cm, 14th Michael O'Rafferty 342cm and 16th Craig Hutchinson 230cm.

Saturday, January 3: Stableford – 130 entries.

Overall winner: Hayden Power (25) with 40 c/b.

A Grade winner: Carl Turner (7) with 37 c/b (Sale Golf Club).

Runner up: Conor Hosking (13) with 37.

B Grade winner: Trevor Bowler (17) with 36 c/b.

Runner up: John Fedderson (16) with 36 c/b.

C Grade winner: Mark O'Dwyer (20) with 36 c/b.

Runner up: Richard Harper (22) with 36 c/b.

D Grade winner: Hayden Power (25) with 40 c/b.

Runner up: Neryl Hopcraft (32) with 40 c/b.

Nearest the pin: fifth Daniel Jolley 145cm, 14th Mel Miles 410cm, 16th Neil Gray 277cm.

Thursday, December 25: Stroke.

A Grade: G. Renwick (12) 66 net.

B Grade: A. McCarthy (20) 65 net.

DTL: P. Lee 69, J. Smeriglio 69, P. Woodall 70, and D. Woodall 71 c/b.

NTP: fourth (Mirboo North Pub voucher) P. Lee, sixth P. Woodall, 13th P. Lee, and 16th (Boolarra Pub voucher) D. Blackford.

Birdies: fourth R. Kratzat and S. Beitz, 13th P. Lee, and 16th P. Lee and D. Blackford.

Lowest putts: S. Woodall 24 c/b.

Wednesday, January 4: Stroke.

A Grade: G. Renwick (12) 66 net.

B Grade: A. McCarthy (20) 65 net.

DTL: P. Lee 69, J. Smeriglio 69, P. Woodall 70, and D. Woodall 71 c/b.

NTP: fourth (Mirboo North Pub voucher) P. Lee, sixth P. Woodall, 13th P. Lee, and 16th (Boolarra Pub voucher) D. Blackford.

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Lowest putts: S.

**FISH CREEK**

FISH Creek started its two-day tournament with the Invitational Fours on Saturday, January 3.

This day was sponsored by Fish Creek Quarries and Foster Garden Centre.

The club cannot thank the Williams family enough for its continued support.

There was a great turnout of bowlers from all around the district, who enjoyed mild conditions and calm weather to play in.

The winners for the day were Rob Mortlock, Milton and Linda Heywood, and Colin Bell.

The runners up after a four-way countback were Don Cripps, Pam Widdows, and Judy and Ray Praim.

Best last game went to Dave Christie, Bokka O'Keefe, Anne Cowell and Andy Kerr.

The day was fully catered, and Sinclair's Catering did a fantastic job.

The second day of the tournament was Triples and was held on Sunday, January 4.

It was sponsored by Edneys of Leongatha.

The principal Daryl McGannon was in attendance and presented the trophies.

The club thanked Daryl for his continued support.

Sunday's winners were Errol Gregory, Andrew Stimson and Sarah Gregory.

Runners up were Phil Stimson, John Chadwick and Alan Spooner.

Best last game went to Geoff Barber, Roger Balment and Peter Hearn.

The club would like to thank

the volunteers who worked in the kitchen providing afternoon tea, the green keepers, bar staff, raffle organisers and the tournament staff.

It was two great days made all the better by the members, and visitors, who keep coming back to support the club.

**FOSTER**

JUST a short report this week as things have been quieter over the Christmas break.

This coming Saturday will be your last chance for a social roll up at 1pm.

Please get your name in by 12.30pm.

Pennant will start next Tuesday, January 13, followed by the Saturday competition on January 17.

Everyone to put heads down and keep up the good work with only five games before finals begin.

Thursday is the January Triples.

There are several club competitions drawn up and progressing nicely.

The list for the Club Pairs is now up, so get your teams in.

The next nine-week Jack Attack competition is starting back up Wednesday, January 14.

Check out the Facebook page or give Bev a call on 0408 369 298 to enter your team or for further information.

Not long now – it's finally coming to fruition.

The club is anticipating work on the back green to start late January.

Exciting times ahead. The club will keep you posted.

**WONTHAGGI**

WELL, that is the end of another year.

The club decided to have social bowls on New Year's Eve to wind up the year.

What a wonderful day it turned out to be, with 42 bowlers enjoying near-perfect conditions.

Three-bowl triples were the order of the day, played over two games of ten ends.

There were three teams that finished as two-game winners.

The unlucky team was John Migliorisi, Peter Corr (a visitor from Donvale), and Norm Evans.

Runners up were Jim Mitchell, Serena Bonicci (another visitor), and Bruce Cameron with a score of two wins and 31 points.

The winners were Roger Lee, Alan Lowe and Toney Toler with a score of two wins and 33 points.

There was no social bowls on Saturday, with Wonthaggi hosting the Champion of Champions over two days.

The club has Kathy Simpson and Kyal Birt wearing the Wonthaggi banner.

Friday night was once again a success, with people happy to get back to normal.

John and Maggie were happy meat tray winners, while Howard and Tony each took home a brekky pack.

Other winners were Raye, Jan, Rod, and Deidre.

The members' draw didn't go off, so next week it will be worth \$100.

Bowls this week:

Wednesday: Turkey Triples Day.

Saturday: Social bowls at 1pm.



The day one winners of Fish Creek Bowls Club's two-day tournament were Rob Mortlock, Milton and Linda Heywood, and Colin Bell.



Sunday's best last game winners at Fish Creek Bowls Club were Geoff Barber, Roger Balment and Peter Hearn, pictured with sponsor Daryl McGannon.



The day two winners at the Fish Creek Bowls Club on Sunday were Errol Gregory, Andrew Stimson and Sarah Gregory, pictured with sponsor Daryl McGannon.



Wonthaggi Bowls Club's social bowls winners Roger Lee, Alan Lowe and Toney Toler.

## Triple dead heat anniversary races return to Stony Creek

STONY Creek Racing Club is set to celebrate one of the most remarkable moments in Australian racing history at its Triple Dead Heat Anniversary Races on Sunday, January 18.

The race meeting marks the 39th anniversary of the famous triple dead heat that put Stony Creek on the world racing map.

On January 23, 1987, Stony Creek made global headlines with one of only four triple dead heats in Australian racing history.

SCRC chief executive Jason Benbow said the anniversary race day is a proud and significant occasion for the club and the local community.

"The Triple Dead Heat is a moment that still resonates strongly with racing fans across Australia," Mr Benbow said.

"It's a huge part of Stony Creek's story and we're proud to celebrate that legacy with a great day of racing and entertainment."

The famous finish is also remembered for the quick wit of then club chairman Alan Bell, who famously responded to the question "what do we do now?" by saying "I don't

know what you have to do, but I've got to find two more trophies."

As the third summer race date of the season, the Triple Dead Heat Anniversary Races promise a relaxed and family-friendly day out, making it an ideal school holiday activity.

Racegoers can bring their own picnic setup or choose from a range of packages available, including private marquees, picnic tables, umbrellas and bean bags.

There will also be plenty of free kids' activities, including pony rides and the popular JockeyCam VR experience.

Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$15 concession, and kids are free.

The 2025/26 summer racing season includes five race days, culminating in the Ladbrokes Stony Creek Cup Day on Sunday, March 8.

Memberships start from \$55 for full members, \$50 for seniors and \$240 for corporate memberships.

Secure your tickets at [country.racing.com/stony-creek](http://country.racing.com/stony-creek)

## AS REAL AS IT GETS

# STONY CREEK



## TRIPLE DEAD HEAT ANNIVERSARY RACES

SUNDAY 18 JANUARY 2026



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Stony Creek  
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country racing  
It's a Great Day Out!



Kookaburras' Keith Houghton and Jim Armstrong celebrated their successful cricket performances on Sunday.

## Kookaburras secure a win over the Hawks

THE South Gippsland Kookaburras Over 70s Cricket Team visited Glen Waverley Hawks Vets at Capital Reserve, Glen Waverley on Sunday, January 4.

The Hawks captain Rob Redman won the toss and sent the Kookaburras in to bat on a synthetic pitch situated on a fast ground.

Most Kookaburras batters faced their 25 balls without being dismissed.

Notable scores were from Peter Loos 44 runs including eight boundaries and one six, Neil White 25, Geoff Birnie 22, Keith Houghton 21, and Andrew Smith 18.

After 40 overs, the team had amassed three wickets for 225 runs.

Better Hawks bowlers included John Prem 1/30, Pat Dougherty 1/26, and Chris Stocks 1/31.

After lunch, Hawks batters Peter Davis 20 not out, and Andy Pardelis 18 top scored with their team making 5/133 after 40 overs.

Notable Kookaburras bowling figures were from Keith Houghton five overs two wickets for 16, Peter Little 2/2/1, Brian Mitchell 5/1/29, and Andrew Smith 5/0/5.

It was good day for cricket with an overcast sky and moderate temperature.

Keith Houghton's batting and bowling earned him the opposing captain's award of a bottle of wine and tail-end batter, octogenarian Jim Armstrong reached a career total of 50 runs, scoring a well-earned single to everyone's applause.



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[www.bccf.org.au](http://www.bccf.org.au)

## Breakers to kick off 10th season in 2026

COMING off the back of a successful 2025 season, the Bass Coast Breakers are ready to launch their 10th season in 2026.

Training is set to kick off on Wednesday, January 21, with the venue still to be confirmed.

The Breakers are looking forward to the milestone season with a couple of former Youth Girls players ready to step up into the side, and last year's first-time players settling into their roles in the team.

"We had a good, strong season in 2025 and we made finals.

We are expecting to see an increase of confidence from last season's first-time players, and we have a lot of really positive things to build on," Breakers' Ella Angarane said.

Although expecting good numbers this season, the Breakers always welcome new players into the team and are looking for a new coach.

The 2025 side was coached by Ella.

"We play in Division 2 of the Mornington Peninsula Football Netball League, which is really well-run and well-established," Ella said.

"The Breakers provide a nice place to play with girls who strive to better themselves as individuals and as a team.

We've fostered a good, inclusive culture because we want everyone to feel welcomed and confident.

"We are also looking for a new coach to give us a fresh perspective."

The Breakers drive their narrative of inclusion by hosting a

Pride Round through the season, which is always extremely well received by the team, supporters and the community.

The Bass Coast Breakers was established in 2017 and over an incredible 10-season journey have become a fixture in the local football landscape.

"It has been amazing to see it come together every year, and watch the players grow in confidence and feel like they belong," Ella said.

Primarily, the Breakers have found a home at Wonthaggi and Dalyston.

However, a game was played at the Inverloch Recreation Reserve last season and was well received, which may lead to a continued partnership.

"The Inverloch Football Netball Club made the team feel welcome and well supported.

It was a great experience," Ella said.

If you are interested in coaching or joining the Bass Coast Breakers in 2026, contact Ella on 0438 722 639.



Tess Angarane in action for the Bass Coast Breakers.



The Bass Coast Breakers participated in a Road Safety Round in 2025.

## A year of achievements celebrated at the Phillip Island Tenpin Bowling and Entertainment Centre

THE end of 2025 was celebrated with immense pride, gratitude and a deep sense of connection to the community that has supported Phillip Island Tenpin Bowling and Entertainment Centre for the past 20 years.

Reaching its 20th birthday in September was a significant milestone for PI Tenpin, one that prompted reflection not just on how far it has come, but on why it continues to do what it does.

This year, more than ever, reinforced that PI Tenpin is about far more than bowling.

It's about people, inclusion, and bringing the Bass Coast community together.

In 2025, PI Tenpin was honoured to receive recognition at both state and regional levels for values that have guided its journey for decades.

It proudly achieved Bronze at the Victorian Tourism Awards for Excellence in Accessibility, alongside being accredited for both Accessibility and Sustainability through the Victorian Tourism Industry Council, and earning the Trust the Tick accreditation, independent validation that its commitment to inclusion and responsible tourism is genuine and ongoing.

Locally, PI Tenpin was thrilled to be acknowledged at the Bass Coast Business Awards, taking

home Winner – Environmental Sustainability, runner up – Marketing and Communications, and third place – Good Access Is Good Business.

These awards reflect years of behind-the-scenes work to

ensure our venue is accessible, environmentally conscious, and welcoming to everyone: not because it has to, but because of what it and its staff represents.

Accessibility has been a core focus at PI Tenpin long before it became a headline.

This year marked the 13th year of Bowlopolis, our all-abilities bowling program, now delivered in partnership with seven different organisations.

Bowlopolis continues to be one of the proudest achievements, a program that creates joy, confidence and genuine inclusion for participants of all abilities, week in and week out.

Community support has been another defining feature of 2025.

PI Tenpin continued as major sponsors of the Phillip Island Football and Netball Club, Phillip Island Soccer Club, and the Phillip Island District Basketball Association, proudly backing grassroots sport and the volunteers who keep it alive.

Across the year, it donated

well over 3000 vouchers for bowling, laser tag and amusement games to schools, sporting clubs and community organisations to support fundraising efforts and local causes.

Christmas was a particularly special time to give back, with over \$3000 worth of vouchers donated to the annual Toy Run, helping local Bass Coast families make Christmas a little brighter.

PI Tenpin also hosted and supported a wide range of fundraising initiatives throughout the year, including a Movember fundraiser featuring ice baths, raising over \$1000 for men's health, and Bowling for Bonobos, a collaborative event with Zoos Victoria and Maru Koala and Animal Park that raised over \$800 for endangered species conservation.

Closer to home, PI Tenpin was proud to raise \$2000 for the Star of the Sea Aerobics Team, helping them travel to nationals, and over \$6800 for the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal through the much-loved PJ Party event.

These moments, big and small, are reminders of the power of community when people rally together.

Behind every event, fundraiser and achievement is our incredible team.

In 2025, the PI Tenpin family grew in the most wonderful way, with the arrival of Henry to Shayna and Fletcher to Tarryne.

The team continues to be the heart of this business, and the centre cannot thank them enough for their dedication, care and hard work throughout the year.

Twenty years in, the team at PI Tenpin feel incredibly privileged to still play a role in connecting people, locals and visitors alike and helping to strengthen the fabric of the Bass Coast region.

This year, more than any other, reaffirmed just how special that role is.

Looking into 2026, there's plenty to be excited about, including the addition of a brand-new attraction that will bring even more fun and experiences to PI Tenpin.

The team can't wait to share what's next.

To the community, partners, supporters and friends, a massive thank you.

Your support over the past 20 years means everything to the team.

From the PI Tenpin family to yours, the staff wish you a safe, happy New Year.

Here's to the next chapter of PI Tenpin.

# Phillip Island to host Australian SUP Titles

PHILLIP Island will host the 2026 Australian Stand Up Paddleboarding Titles in November, with the nation's best paddlers set to descend on Bass Coast.

The event, running from November 17-21, will be based at Cape Woolamai and utilise the best beaches and racing options around the island.

Surfing Australia announced its 2026 National Events Calendar this week, with Phillip Island among iconic locations including Gold Coast, Byron Bay, Bells Beach and Margaret River.

The SUP Titles will feature multiple surfing and racing options, offering competitors a great surfing and paddling experience.

Select division winners will earn places on the Australian Irukandjis Team, representing Australia at the ISA World Championships.

Surfing Australia's chief of sport Luke Madden said the calendar reflects the strength and diversity of Australian surfing.

"Each event has been purposefully placed to suit the discipline, the athletes and the community," Mr Madden said.

For more information visit [australian-suptitles.com](http://australian-suptitles.com)



A competitor at the 2024 Australian SUP Titles. Credit: Noah Clifford / Surfing Australia.



Logan McNeil leads in the straight ahead of his win on Montjuic Magic. rk03\_0126

## Treble for Carleen Hefel on fun race day at Stony Creek

THE sun was shining, a big holiday crowd was in, the track was in superb order and there was some great action on and off the track as racing returned to Stony Creek in earnest on Tuesday, December 30.

The highlight of the day apart from the Kids Fun Day activities out the back was the treble of wins by Carleen Hefel who boasts an impressive hit rate across the season.

From 255 starts this year many of them at the local courses at Pakenham, Cranbourne and Moe, Carleen has ridden 30 winners at 11.8 per cent and an impressive placing success rate of 30 per cent.

So it wasn't at all surprising to see her at the head of affairs at Stony Creek on Tuesday with victories on Moonbolt easily in the second, on Magic Drum a tight result in the sixth and Miss Castelvecchio after she stalked the leaders throughout the race and pounced in the closing stages.

It's been a big year for a rising star of the turf.

Carleen added some black

type to her record in 2025 with two Group 3 victories, the most recent at Caulfield on Proved in the Sportsbet How Now Stakes on November 15 and also on New York Lustre in the Kirin Ichiban Sprint on November 1.

Another highlight from the track was the double by Bailey Kinnimont.

Fields were full and there was a good standard of horses with several top city stables represented on a day of quality racing.

Club chief executive Jason Benbow said the turnout exceeded expectations.

"We're very excited with the numbers we've had through the gate," he said.

"The overcast conditions have been a nice respite from the heat and there are plenty of happy owners on course sharing in the victory."

Jockeys praised the track after recent challenges.

"To hear jockeys say the track is the best it's ever raced is extremely reassuring and something we can continue to build

on heading into 2026," Mr Benbow said.

He grew up in Gippsland and rode his first winner at Stony Creek in 2002 on a horse called Fabio.

"Stony Creek is like a homecoming for me," he said.

"You never forget your first winner. To now be part of the club in a completely different capacity is really rewarding."

He paid tribute to the volunteers who run the show.

"There's a lot of work that goes into prepping for race meetings. The committee is all voluntary and they spend a lot of their spare time dedicated to putting on the race days," he said.

"When you see a day like today with a couple of thousand people through the gate all having a great time it makes it all the more rewarding."

Club president John Schuijers said punters left happy.

"The feedback has been nothing but positive. This is what country racing is all about," he said.

Out the back kids lined up for

face painting, pony rides, a VR experience and sports activities while free showbags ran out early.

Between races The Times provided live music as racegoers spread out on the lawns with BYO picnics.

Results: Race 1 Winter Grace (P. Foster/B. Kinnimont) by half a length. Race 2 Moonbolt (C. Scott/C. Hefel) by three lengths. Race 3 Nordic Strike (C. Maher/T. Nugent) by 3.5 lengths. Race 4 Montjuic Magic (R. Griffiths/L. McNeil) by 2.5 lengths. Race 5 Juice Box (R. Kelly/B. Kinnimont) by 1.5 lengths. Race 6 Magic Drum (K. Wilson/C. Hefel) by 0.3 lengths. Race 7 That'swhatshe said (N. McPherson/L. Riordan) by 1.5 lengths. Race 8 Miss Castelvecchio (C. Littlefield/C. Hefel).

The next race meeting at Stony Creek is the Triple Dead Heat Anniversary Race Day on Sunday, January 18, followed by Publicans Day on Sunday, February 15 and the Ladbrokes Stony Creek Cup on Sunday, March 8.

## NEXT WEEKEND'S GAMES & UMPIRE APPOINTMENTS

### ROUND 9 SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 2025

#### A GRADE, Division 1

**Phillip Island v Inverloch**  
COWES  
Ashleigh Stride  
**Town v Club**  
SCORPION PARK 1  
Ken Scrimshaw  
**Imperials v Nerrea**  
LEONGATHA TURF  
John Schelling  
**OMK - BYE**

#### A Grade, Division 2

**Glen Alvie v MDU**  
GLEN ALVIE  
Michael Thomas  
**Kilcunda Bass v Koon L/RSL**  
BASS 1  
Shane Moore  
**Nyora v Korumburra**  
NYORA  
Brad Phillips  
**Foster - BYE**

#### B GRADE, Division 1

**Club v Town**  
McMAHON  
Les White  
**Nerrena v OMK**  
NERRENA  
Geoffrey Parkinson  
**Inverloch v Phillip Island**  
INVERLOCH TURF  
Graham Wightman  
**Korumburra - BYE**

#### B GRADE, Division 2

**Glen Alvie v Imperials**  
DALYSTON  
TBA  
**MDU v Nyora**  
MEENIYAN  
Geoff Birnie  
**Koonwarra L/RSL v Kilcunda Bass**  
KOONWARRA  
Tyson Tootell

### ROUND 12 SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 2025

#### C GRADE, Division 1

**Club v Nerrena**  
WONTHAGGI SC  
TBA  
**OMK v MDU**  
OUTTRIM  
TBA  
**Kilcunda-Bass v Korumburra**  
BASS 2  
TBA  
**Phillip Island - BYE**

#### C GRADE, Division 2

**Nyora v Inverloch**  
POOWONG  
TBA  
**Town v OMK**  
SCORPION PARK 2  
TBA  
**Koonwarra L/RSL v Club**  
LEONGATHA  
TBA  
**Glen Alvie - BYE**

#### Subject to Confirmation.

Any prospective  
umpires can contact  
Ash Stride 0432 350 944 or  
Ken Scrimshaw 0433 297 421

## Local cricket

South Gippsland  
and Bass Coast

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Jockey Shaun Cooper salutes the crowd at Woolamai after defying the odds on nine-year-old mare Diamanda by carrying the record top weight of 74kg to a race win at the popular picnic track on Saturday.

## Winner carries record weight to score at Woolamai

IT WAS a superb day for racing at the popular local picnic circuit, Woolamai, on Saturday, with a big crowd in for buck's parties and other summer celebrations, and some great action on the track.

The six-race card was highlighted by a double to Sale trainer Troy Kilgower, after just two races, and a double to experienced picnic campaigner Angela Bence in races four and six.

While there was a weighty win for the record books in race five when trainer Michael Binney and jockey Shaun Cooper defied the odds and the history at Woolamai with victory on the nine-year-old mare Diamanda carrying the top weight of 74kg.

As race caller Ben Sporle pointed out as the horses and jockeys were heading down to the 1908 metre starting gates, no mare had ever carried 74kg.

to victory at Woolamai, the previous best being 73.5kg a 20 years ago.

"If she does manage to do it, and history is not on her side, it will break the previous best since accurate race records were recorded."

And she did just that, leading out of the barriers, and urged on by Cooper, establishing a winning break which he held comfortably to the line for a three-length win.

Balnarring Racing Club life member and former committeeman, Mick Binney, has the mare set for an elusive Balnarring Cup on Australia Day, January 26 where she'll almost certainly have top weight again but further success would not surprise.

The day started warm and sunny with a huge crowd in and around the big shady elm trees

which are a godsend for punters on warm race days, but by mid-afternoon a thin layer of cloud had drifted over and with a nice breeze in, conditions were ideal.

All is in readiness for the next race meeting at Woolamai, on Saturday, February 7 for the running of the 2026 Alex Scott & Staff Woolamai Cup, in the local stock and station firm's 140th year in business.

### Woolamai race results, Saturday, January 3, 2026

- Race 1, first number 2 Sierra Sun for Sale trainer Troy Kilgower and jockey Sebastian Galea by five lengths from number 1 Diamond Flash One and third number 6 Mwamba.
- Race 2, the Matheson Family Celebrations Maiden Plate over 1008m was won by number 3 Flower Gallery by two lengths again for trainer Troy Kilgower,

this time with jockey Leigh Taylor from second number 6 Reeliness and third, number 7 Reisner.

• Race 3 was the unusually named 'Pig Dog' Plate Trophy Handicap over 1008m, marking the upcoming nuptials for 'Pig Dog' Aidan Franetic the following weekend. The race was won by number 3 Magnardo by two lengths for trainers Reece Goodwin and jockey Maddison Morris from second number 2 Here's To Jane and third number 5 Montgomery Bay.

• Race 4 the Fight Club Open Trophy Race over 1608m was won by the top weight, number 1 The Cruiser, in fine style by 0.75 lengths for trainer Sharyn Trolove and jockey Angela Bence, the first of her double on the day. Second was number 8 Wunambal and third number 4 Irresistible Sir.

• Race 5 was the Jimma Picks A Winner Open Trophy Handicap Race over 1608m, an all-the-way win for Number 1 Diamanda by three lengths for trainer Michael Binney and jockey Shaun Cooper with 74kg on her back. Cooper typically rides in the range of 63kg to 74kg but once booted home a gelding at Woolamai carrying 77kg. Second was number 7 Oh No George from third number 8 Acey Deucey.

• The last event, race 6, the Wonthaggi Motorcycles & Power Equipment Trophy Handicap Race over 1608m was won number 2. Box Vale in a competitive finish by one length for trainer Kerry Farrugia and jockey Angela Bence, completing a double of wins on the day. Second was number 8 Maid On Stryke and third number 5 Houdini Catarno.

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